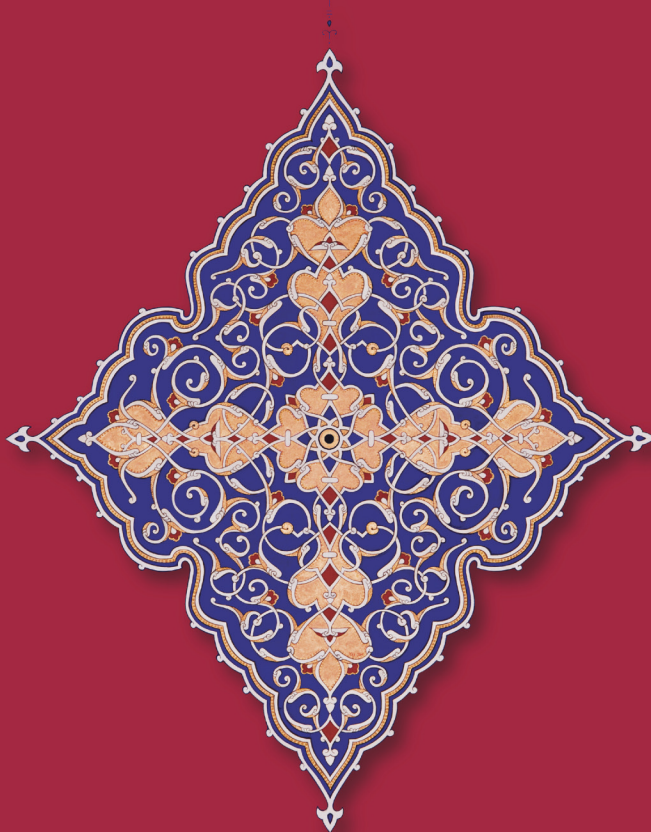


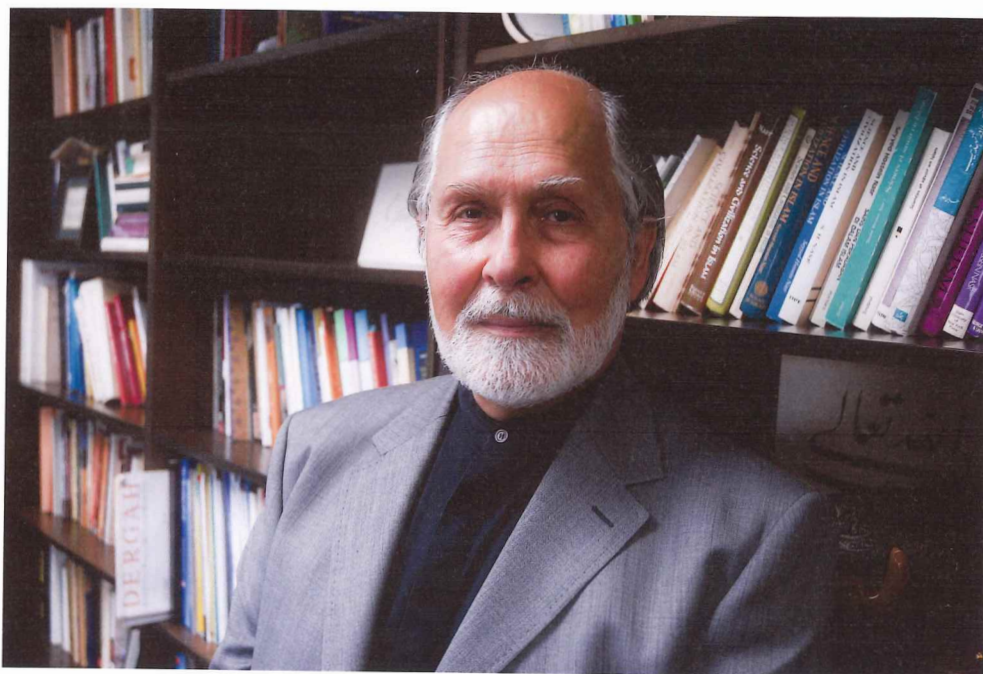
I of the Heart

*Texts and Studies in Honor of
Seyyed Hossein Nasr*



EDITED BY
MUHAMMAD U. FARUQUE,
ATIF KHALIL,
AND MOHAMMED RUSTOM

BRILL



Seyyed Hossein Nasr
PHOTO BY HARUN TAN

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CHAPTER 11

Devotion and Metaphysics in a Litany Ascribed to 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī

Gregory Vandamme

1 Introduction: "Sufi Philosophy" in Action

The text presented here belongs to a still relatively under-studied part of the Sufi textual heritage: devotional literature. In fact, although devotional literature occupies a much more central place in Sufi practice than doctrinal treatises or collections of learned poetry,¹ very few translations—and even fewer analyses—of this vast corpus are available to date.² One of the reasons for this is probably to be found in the often rambling, allusive style of these texts, whose nature does not at first glance seem amenable to detailed textual analysis. The text with which we are concerned here, that of the *Litany of support* (*Ḥizb al-naṣr*) attributed to 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166) is no exception. At first glance, it consists of a long imprecation formulated against a series of enmities from which the reciter of the litany seeks protection through the help of God. But we shall see that a careful reading of this short litany allows us to perceive an unexpected theological and metaphysical background, which contrasts in many respects with the anti-intellectualism often associated with the figure of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī and his Hanbali rooting.

- 1 The devotional literature in question here is that of the textual supports used ritually in the individual or collective meditation and invocation practices of Sufism, and not the broad game of poetic genres such as *madīḥ*, which praise God or prophetic reality, but do not constitute a ritual oration.
- 2 This absence has already been pointed out in McGregor, Richard A., "A Sufi legacy in Tunis: Prayer and the Shadhiliyya," in *IJMES* 29.2 (1997), 255–277. However, we must mention the study by Padwick, Constance E., *Muslim devotions: A study of prayer-manuals in common use*, London: S.P.C.K., 1969. We also find several references to devotional texts in Schimmel, Annemarie, *And Muhammad is His messenger: The veneration of the Prophet in Islamic piety*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985. A translation and brief commentary on the prayer for the Prophet (*taṣliya*) attributed to the Moroccan Sufi Ibn Mashish (d. 626/1227) has also been presented by Burckhardt, Titus, "La prière d'Ibn Mashish," in *Études Traditionnelles* 399 (1967), 29–39.

Where devotional texts are usually only approached from the point of view of the history of their dissemination or the aesthetics of their reception,³ they are still all too rarely considered as a corpus in its own right for the study of the metaphysical doctrines of the Sufi tradition. Yet these texts have the advantage of placing their subject matter at the heart of spiritual experience. In this respect, they undoubtedly constitute a privileged formulation of the mystical philosophy of Sufism, in that they combine the primacy of mystical experience and the mode of discursive speculation, which correspond to the two axes of philosophy such as defined by Pierre Hadot as a way of life centered on spiritual exercises giving rise to philosophical discourse.⁴ In other words, according to this approach to the history of philosophy, the devotional texts of Sufism illustrate its proper philosophy, in the sense that the complexity of Sufi philosophical discourse aims above all to account for the complexity of mystical experience itself. Any philosophical discourse emanating from the Sufi tradition is therefore not an end in itself, but is first and foremost intended to draw us back to an experience, to a way of being in the world.

Although the work of Seyyed Hossein Nasr has focused primarily on the philosophical relevance of the doctrines of the Sufi tradition, the importance of their experiential and ethical dimension has not escaped him.⁵ The philosophical analysis of devotional literature, of which this modest study is more of a

- 3 As an example, we can mention the recent outstanding works that have been carried out around the collection of the *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* by al-Jazūlī (d. 870/1465), none of which, however, addresses its doctrinal content as such: Abid, Hiba, "Un concurrent du Coran en Occident musulman du Xe/xviiie à l'aube du xiiie/xviiiie siècle: les *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* d'al-Jazūlī," in *JQS* 19.3 (2017), 45–73; Burak, Guy, "Collating the signs of benevolent deeds: Muḥammad Mahdī al-Fāsi's commentary on Muḥammad al-Jazūlī's *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* and its Ottoman readers," in *Philological Encounters* 4 (2019), 135–157; Chih, Rachida, "Prophetic piety, mysticism, and authority in premodern Arabic devotional literature: al-Jazuli's *Dalā'il al-Khayrat* (15th century)," in *IJMES* 54.3 (2022), 462–483.
- 4 Hadot, Pierre, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique?*, Paris: Gallimard, 1995.
- 5 See for instance Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, *Sufi essays*, New York: Schocken Books, 1977; and *The garden of truth*, New York: HarperOne, 2007. The practical and ethical implications of presentation by Nasr of Sufi metaphysical doctrines have been synthesized in Cancelliere, Justin, "Becoming what one is: Liberative knowledge and human perfection in the writings of Seyyed Hossein Nasr," in Bilal Orfali, Atif Khalil, and Mohammed Rustom (eds.), *Mysticism and ethics in Islam*, Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 2022, 461–472. On the integration of the Sufi tradition into the history of Islamic philosophy in general, see for instance Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, *Islamic philosophy from its origin to the present: Philosophy in the land of prophecy*, Albany: SUNY Press, 2006, 107–108. Nasr refers in this regard to the importance of his collaboration with Henry Corbin in renewing the approach to Islamic philosophy. It should be noted that Corbin was particularly insistent on the relevance of devotional formulations to fully grasp the spirit of religious thought. See for example Corbin, Henry, *En*

call than a first achievement, should enable us to deepen our understanding of Sufi doctrines in terms of their own originality. The study of Sufi thought would therefore benefit from approaching the litanies and orations of this tradition as performative formulations of its philosophical doctrines. By actively involving those who use them as the basis for their spiritual exercises, these texts express Sufi doctrines in a performative rather than explanatory way.⁶

The presence of distinctly philosophical terms, in the sense that they are borrowed from the developments of the Hellenizing *falsafa* tradition, usually through their integration into the technical vocabulary of *kalām* theology, often prevents us from considering what is properly original and endogenous to Sufi thought itself. In other words, the emergence of a "Philosophical Sufism" at the turn of the 6th/12th and 7th/13th centuries, around the axial figures of Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191) and Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240), often overshadows the presence of a "Sufi philosophy" in its own right, whose formulation in many ways precedes the adoption of the vocabulary and concepts inherited from the philosophy of Avicenna (d. 428/1037). The figure of Junayd (d. 298/910) perfectly illustrates this ambiguous situation of Sufi philosophy, since we already find in his work a current and precise use of the terms *wujūd* and *mawjūd*, but taken in an experiential and practical sense.⁷ However, the theological training of Junayd, who is generally associated with Ibn Kullāb (d. 241/855), prevents us from assuming that his use of the terms *wujūd* and *mawjūd* was simply naive, and that he was unaware of their eminently ontological significance.

The text of the *Litany of support* presented here contains few vocabulary elements of properly ontological significance, but we shall see that the metaphysical perspective underlying it is not without echoes of the doctrinal developments of Ibn 'Arabī and his commentators. The uncertain origin of this text and its debatable attribution to the tutelary figure of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī allows all sorts of historical hypotheses in the attempt to identify its provenance. It is not, however, this historical question that will primarily interest us here, and this even though the field of the interpenetrations between the doctrinal heritage of the Qadiriyya and the work of Ibn 'Arabī remains to be explored and certainly constitutes one of the most promising fields of research

islam iranien: Aspects spirituels et philosophiques. Tome IV, l'école d'Ispahan, l'école shaykhie, le douzième Imam, Paris: Gallimard, 1973, 452.

6 See Knysh, Alexander, *Sufism: A new history of Islamic mysticism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017, 40–43, for a discussion on the different biases involved in studying Sufism solely through texts.

7 See the introduction in Junayd, *Enseignement spirituel: Traités, lettres, oraisons et sentences*, trans. Roger Deladrière, Paris: Sindbad Actes-Sud, 1983.

in Akbari studies. Rather than proposing a series of answers to the multiple historical questions raised by such a text, we will instead focus on highlighting how the example of the *Litany of support* allows us to question our conceptions of Sufi philosophy, its formulation and reception.

2 The *Litany of Support* and the Polymorphous Development of the Qadiriyya

The *Litany of support* is at first glance a rather marginal text in the literary legacy ascribed to 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī.⁸ Its uncertain origin and its importance in certain forms of the Qadiriyya illustrate perfectly how polymorphous and multi-polar the school developed, right from the earliest days of its dissemination, both in the East and in the West.⁹ The various hotbeds of the propagation of the Qadiriyya were thus the occasion for incorporating and formalizing doctrinal perspectives that we may legitimately suspect were exogenous to 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī himself. Although the text of the *Litany of support* has, to the best of my knowledge, been exclusively attributed only to al-Jīlānī, it is certainly not part of the very limited corpus that can be considered his authentic compositions,¹⁰ nor does it appear in the long list of—for the most part apocryphal—works surveyed by Brockelmann.¹¹ On the other hand, it is found in one of the main compilations of orations and prayers of the Qadiriyya: *al-Fuyūḍāt al-rabbāniyya fī l-ma'āthīr wa-l-awrād al-Qādiriyya*, whose current version is, however, recent.¹² Depending on the different versions, the text is sometimes also referred to as the *Great litany of support* (*Ḥizb al-naṣr al-kabīr*),

8 On the figure of 'Abd al-Qādir and his legacy, see the two recent studies: Held, Pascal, *Baghdad during the time of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī*, Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2022; and Malik, Hamza, *The grey falcon: the life and teaching of Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī*, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2019.

9 On the historical problems and open questions surrounding the development of the Qadiriyya, see Demeerseman, André, *Nouveau regard sur la voie spirituelle d'Abd al-Qadir al-Jīlānī et sa tradition*, Paris: Vrin, 1988; and Zarccone, Thierry, "La Qādiriyya," in Alexandre Popovic and Gilles Veinstein (eds.), *Les voies d'Allah. Les ordres mystiques dans le monde musulman des origines à aujourd'hui*, Paris: Fayard, 1996, 461–467.

10 The current consensus of academic research considers only *al-Ghunya li-ṭālibī ṭariq al-haqq*, *Futūḥ al-ghayb* and *al-Fath al-rabbānī* as authentic works. See Held, *Baghdad* 13–23.

11 Brockelmann, Carl, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur*, vi, Leiden: Brill, 2008, 560–564.

12 The available text appears to be a collection produced by the shaykh Ismā'īl b. Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Jīlānī al-Qādirī of Baghdad, the first edition of which dates from 1864–1865: *al-Fuyūḍāt al-rabbāniyya fī l-ma'āthīr wa-l-awrād al-Qādiriyya*, Cairo: Muṣṭafā l-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-Awlāduhu, 1864–1865, 170–171. All available editions seem to depend on this

to distinguish it from the *Small litany of support* (*Ḥizb al-naṣr al-ṣaghīr*), which precedes it in the compilation of the *Fuyūḍāt*, or even as the *Supplication of support* (*Duʿā al-naṣr*).¹³

Another version of the text, with slight variants noted in the translation that follows, occupies a central place in the orations of a western branch of the Qadiriyya: the Būdshīshiyya of Morocco. The *Litany of support* is featured in the version of the *Dalāʾil al-khayrāt* specific to this school, where it appears alongside the Jazūli collection with the renowned prayer of Ibn Mashīsh.¹⁴ This original assemblage of sources from different traditions is characteristic of the transformations of the Qadiriyya in the Muslim West. However, it is not possible to historically situate the reception of this text and the origin of its variants in the current state of our knowledge. The presence of the *Litany of support* in a compilation dedicated to praying over the Prophet, alongside the most famous litany of its kind in the Maghreb, is somewhat surprising. Although the text does not initially appear to focus on the prophetic reality¹⁵ (unlike the prayer of Ibn Mashīsh), we will explore the possibility of identifying subtle allusions to metaphysical conceptions of the Muhammadan Reality, as developed by Ibn ʿArabī and his commentators.

The metaphysical background of the *Litany of support*, as well as the diversity of its reception in the various developments of the Qadiriyya, render the identification of the historical origin of the text almost impossible. However, it is not out of the question to bring this text closer to other works bearing the mark of the seemingly paradoxical encounter between the Hanbali heritage of the Qadiriyya and that of Ibn ʿArabī. The origins of this rapprochement are undoubtedly to be found upstream of the work of Ibn ʿArabī himself, around the figure of Abū Madyan Shuʿayb (d. 594/1198), whose teaching was very early associated with that of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī in the Maghreb.¹⁶ Perhaps it was through the profound influence that Abū Madyan and his disciples exerted

version. This is certainly the case of the recent extended edition published in Damascus: Dār al-Nūr al-Qādiriyya li-l-Naṣr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, 2022.

13 It also seems to be circulating under the name of *Oration of the Greatest Support* (*Wird al-naṣr al-akbar*), but I did not find the source of this appellation.

14 Al-Jazūli, Muḥammad b. Sulaymān, *Kitāb Dalāʾil al-khayrāt wa-shawāriq al-anwār fī dhikr al-ṣalāt ʿalā l-nabī al-mukhtār*, Fez n.p., 2000, 219–222.

15 It does not appear, for example, in the commentary devoted by ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1731) to the prayers on the Prophet attributed to ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Kawkab al-mabānī wa-mawkiḥ al-maʿānī fī sharḥ ṣalawāt al-shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Kīlānī*, ed. Ḥasan al-Sayyid al-Jazāʾirī, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2012.

16 See Held, Pascal, “Comparing the teachings of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī and Abū Madyan,” in *Journal of Sufi Studies* 6 (2017) 165–189.

on Ibn ʿArabī that the latter developed a particular attachment to the figure of al-Jīlānī. This proximity between the anti-intellectualist asceticism of the master of Baghdad¹⁷ and the metaphysical audacity of the Andalusian mystic has left more than one Sufi scholar perplexed.¹⁸ The metaphysical doctrines of Ibn ʿArabī were, however, received early on and appropriated in original ways by Qadiriyya circles. Several apocryphal works widely circulated as writings by Ibn ʿArabī himself thus emerged from these circles, among which the most emblematic are undoubtedly the *Tadkhirat al-khawāṣṣ wa-ʿaqīdat ahl al-ikhtisās*,¹⁹ and the *Kitāb Shajarat al-kawn*.²⁰ Conversely, the Quranic commentary generally attributed to ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, and still edited under his name today, is most likely the work of an Azeri Qadiri scholar, al-Nakhjawānī (d. 920/1514), who makes extensive use of the vocabulary of Ibn ʿArabī in his exegesis.²¹ The proximity between the two traditions is such that a “Qadiriyya-Akbariyya” brotherhood is even listed among the schools of India in the colonial inventory by Depont and Coppolani.²² For what directly interests us here, we may note, for example, that the recent enlarged edition of the *Fuyūḍāt* published in Syria includes, a few pages before our Litany of Support, a litany attributed to Ibn ʿArabī: the *Litany of the supreme cycle* (*Ḥizb al-dawr al-aʿlā*).²³

17 The Sufi revival movement in Baghdad, of which al-Jīlānī was one of the spearheads, was marked by his distrust of intellectual elaborations, see Held, *Baghdad* 254. On an anecdotal and symbolic level, it should be noted that the young al-Jīlānī arrived in Baghdad in 488/1095, the year al-Ghazālī left for his itinerant retreat, and died there in 561/1166, a few months after Ibn ʿArabī was born in the West.

18 See for instance the remarks in Chittick, William C., *The self-disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-ʿArabī's cosmology*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1998, 376–386. Ibn ʿArabī himself seems to have a different take on this heritage, since he repeatedly affirms that al-Jīlānī's disciple, Abū Suʿūd b. al-Shibl, was “the most rational (ʿāqil) man of his time,” see Chittick, *Self-disclosure* 383. On the importance of the figure of al-Jīlānī in Ibn ʿArabī, see also Abrahamov, Binyamin, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Sufis*, Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 2014, 151–155.

19 On the properly Qadiri roots of this treatise and its attribution to Ibn ʿArabī, see Denis Gril's review of its French translation by Roger Deladrière: Gril, Denis, “Ibn ʿArabī: La profession de foi (*Tadkhirat al-hawāṣṣ wa-ʿaqīdat ahl al-ikhtisās*), introduction, traduction et commentaire par Roger Deladrière, Paris, Editions Orientales, 1978,” in *Bulletin Critique des Annales Islamologiques* 1 (1984), 337–339.

20 See Alaoui Mdaghri, Younes, “Critical study of the erroneous attribution of the book *Shajarat al-Kawn* to Ibn ʿArabī instead of to Ibn Ghānim al-Maqdisi,” in *The Journal of Rotterdam Islamic and Social Sciences* 1.1 (2010), 1–16.

21 Al-Jīlānī, ʿAbd al-Qādir, *Tafsīr al-Jīlānī*, ed. Muḥammad Fāḍil Jīlānī al-Ḥasanī al-Taylānī al-Jamazraqī, 5 vols., Istanbul: Markaz Jīlānī li-l-Buḥūth al-ʿIlmiyya, 2009.

22 Depont, Octave and Xavier Coppolani, *Les confréries religieuses musulmanes*, Paris: Maisonneuve-Geuthner, 1897, 319–320.

23 Al-Jīlānī, ʿAbd al-Qādir, *Fuyūḍāt al-rabbāniyya fī l-maʿāthīr wa-l-awrād al-qādiriyya*, ed.

Although no historical evidence allows us at this stage to link the text of the *Litany of support* to the tradition of Ibn 'Arabī and his commentators, several aspects of its content could suggest that it is yet another witness to these hybridizations between the heritage of the Qadiriyya and the Akbari doctrines. In the absence of decisive markers, all historical hypotheses naturally remain open. Should we see here the primitive formulation of a metaphysical perspective that precedes the introduction of philosophical vocabulary into Sufi thought? The presence of the couple substance (*jawhar*) accident ('*araḍ*) in § 3, admittedly taken here in a very vague sense, casts even more doubt. On the contrary, should we see it as the mark of a late composition, which formulates already well-established philosophical doctrines in a devotional language? Recourse to the work of Ibn 'Arabī to read and make sense of this text does not necessarily imply a form of historical back-projection, and this despite the fact that the history of ideas authorizes us to postulate an interpenetration between his doctrines and the corpus of the Qadiriyya from which the text derives. While leaving the heuristic question open, we can ultimately observe that viewing a devotional text like this through an Akbari lens enables us to discern elements and a structure that are distinctly metaphysical in nature.

3 Text and Commentary

Apart from a few sections that stand out for their short, rhythmical supplications or their series of Quranic passages, the text of the *Litany of support* does not appear to be organized in any structured way. For the sake of translation and commentary, however, it is divided here into nine paragraphs. The text followed is that of the Būdshīshīyya.²⁴ The few variations from the *Fuyūḍāt* version are indicated in the notes. As for the commentary that follows, it does not aim to cover the whole text and unfold all its subtleties, but simply to point out some of the elements that give it a metaphysical significance.

The *Litany of support* is primarily focused on an appeal for divine protection and supplications against all manifestations of enmity, whether human or demonic. The reciter seeks refuge from these hostilities by retreating behind the veil of the divine Presence, which is repeatedly described in the text as a "venerable splendour" (§§ 1–6). It is this way of situating both the reciter and his enemies within this divine presence and articulating the inner and outer

Mukhlif Yahyā al-'Ulwī al-Qādirī, Damascus: Dār al-Nūr al-Qādiriyya li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī', 2022, 182–187.

24 Al-Jazūlī, *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* 219–222.

aspects of its various levels, that gives the text its metaphysical dimension. The litany thus seems to find its culmination in § 7, where the invocation of the Name of God in the six directions of space finally situates the reciter at the heart of what emerges as a cubic refuge, constituted by the protective veil invoked throughout the litany (§ 3–5–6).

Quotations or allusions to Quranic vocabulary are present throughout the text. In § 1, the enmities against which the reciter seeks refuge are described in terms that punctuate the last two prophylactic suras of the Quran, the "envious" (Q 113:5) "among men or *jinn*" (Q 114:6). As for § 5, it appeals to the "*zabāniya*," the angels who guard Hell (Q 66:6, 96:18, and 74:30), as well as to the eight angels who carry the divine Throne (Q 69:17), which are invoked to undermine the foundations of these enmities. Certain Quranic verses are mobilized in § 2 to describe their defeat and destruction. This incantatory use culminates at the end of the text, in § 8 and § 9, which are mainly made up of excerpts from verses emphasizing the undivided dominance of the divine Presence (Q 1:1, 6:45, 26:4, and 85:20–22), and which conclude with the invocation of a series of isolated letters (Q 19:1 and 42:1–2).

The central theme of the text is the articulation between the outer (*zāhir*) and inner (*bāṭin*) aspects of the veil of divine Presence, behind which the reciter seeks refuge (§ 1). The inner face of this veil is a light through which divine support of the words and deeds of the reciter takes place (§ 2), it preserves him, both in his substantial and accidental being, from all imperfection (§ 3), and purifies him inwardly and outwardly from all ambiguity (§ 4). The outward face of the veil of divine Presence is a fire that destroys any link between the reciter and the enmities that beset him (§ 2), so that this inner light is preserved, and the illusory lights of enmities are extinguished (§ 4). The reciter of the litany seeks refuge behind the inner aspect of the veil of the divine Presence, while its outer aspect shields him by annihilating hostile alterities, akin to a purifying fire. In other words, in both instances, the veil obliterates any presence other than the Divine. However, this obliteration is voluntary and beneficent in the case of the reciter (§ 2), whereas it is imposed and destructive in the case of the enmities from which he seeks protection (§ 6). This polarization in the action of the protective veil is underscored by the dual qualifiers "powerful" and "most-powerful" (*qādira muqtadira*), which are invoked in § 1 and reiterated in § 6.

A second level of articulation describes the veil of divine Presence as being polarized between the divine face itself, which remains concealed (§ 3), and the divine name "the Light" (*al-nūr*), through which the archangel of lights and the various lights of the divine names—behind whose veils the reciter also seeks refuge—are manifested (§ 3). In turn, the veils of the names appear similarly

polarized, as they are associated with the angels responsible for the destruction of enmities (§5). It is worth noting in this context that the *zabāniya*—mentioned in §5—have often been regarded in exegetical tradition as angels created from fire rather than light,²⁵ a notion that evokes the earlier interplay between the aspects of light and fire.

The support sought by the reciter is found in his concealment in the divine light, not through his own effort, but through the graces he receives (§3). The disappearance of the enmities is thus correlated with the inner illumination and clarification of the reciter (§4). They cease to be when the divine Presence encompasses them, just as it encompasses him and all things (§6). This inner disposition is mirrored by an outer order, structured around the framework of the divine names and the acknowledgment of what is owed to them (§5). The litany concludes (§9) with an invocation of various names and two opening verses from the Quran (Q 19:1 and 42:1), whose single letters have often been interpreted by exegetical tradition as initials of divine names.²⁶ This structural use of the divine names throughout the litany is undoubtedly the element that aligns it most closely with the metaphysical doctrine of Ibn 'Arabī, who himself composed several invocations centered on this theme.²⁷

The reintegration into the divine order of the names culminates in §6 and §7, when, after invoking a series of names counting among His “highest attributes” and “highest glory,” the reciter invokes subsequently the divine throne and the one who establishes Himself on it to reign over all things, i.e., the whole of divine manifestation and non-manifest reality (§6). It is at this point that the most perplexing Quranic passage in the text appears, as it comprises excerpts from the verse typically interpreted as an allusion to the culmination of the heavenly ascent (*mi'rāj*) of Muhammad (§6): “He was at the supreme horizon, then drew nearer and lowered himself. He then stood at the distance of two bows, or closer. It was then that He revealed to His servant what He revealed to him” (Q 53:7–10). Could this be an echo of the concept of the Muhammadan light (*nūr Muḥammadī*), which in this context might correspond to the veil of light behind which the reciter seeks refuge? The pres-

25 Cunial, Stefania, “Spiritual beings,” in Jane D. McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, v, Leiden: Brill, 2006, 117–121.

26 See Nasr, Seyyed Hossein et al. (eds.), *The study Quran: A new translation and commentary*, New York: HarperOne, 2015, 765 and 1173. Note that those are the longest series of isolated letters (Q 19:1) and the only verse in the series of the *ḥā-mīm* to be redoubled with other letters (Q 42:1).

27 See Atlagh, Riyad and Ridha Atlagh, “L'oraison de personne: Donation et Noms divins chez

ence of the *Litany of support* in a collection of prophetic devotions such as the *Dalā'il al-khayrāt*, where it is placed immediately after Ibn Mashīsh's prayer—centered on this metaphysical conception of prophetic reality—indeed allows us to consider that the text may have been interpreted in this way within the Būdshīshiyya. Conversely, we might understand this verse as referring to the divine reality itself, which draws near to the one who attains perfect self-effacement and thereby occupies the Muhammadan station, approaching “the distance of two bows, or closer” (Q 53:9). Ultimately, the two readings seem to converge, as they express the same proximity viewed from two distinct perspectives.

Be that as it may, at this point in the litany (§6), complete effacement seems to have been achieved, as indicated by the repetition of the opening supplication (§1), in which the reciter asks to immerse himself in the “venerable splendor” of the divine Presence, which “dominates and subdues” and is “powerful and all-powerful,” but is now invoked only in its manifest aspect (*ẓāhira*). Presumably this alludes to the fact that the inner aspects of the divine Presence and the reciter have now become one, so that the gaze of the latter is directed entirely outward. This prospect is further reinforced in the following passage, when, having invoked the name of God in all six directions of space, the reciter is now positioned at the very center of the divine presence (§7).

∴

The Litany of Support (*Ḥizb al-naṣr*)

[§1]

My God, I ask You to immerse me in the ocean of the light of Your venerable splendor (*hayba*), which dominates and subdues, manifest and hidden (*ẓāhira bāṭina*), powerful and all-powerful (*qādira muqtadira*); until my face shines with the rays of Your venerable splendor, dazzling the eyes of all the envious, the arrogant, and the satans (*shayāṭīn*) among humans and *jinn*s; so that they do not shoot the arrows of their envy and their hidden or manifest wiles at me, that their gazes become humble before my vision, and that their necks bow before my thrust.

Ibn 'Arabī (À propos de *Da'wat asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā* attribuée à Ibn 'Arabī), in *BEO* 51 (1999), 41–107.

[§ 2]

Veil me, my God, with the veil of which the interior (*bāṭin*) is light—that my states may be rejoiced by its intimacy and my words and deeds sustained by its sensation—, and of which the exterior (*ẓāhir*) is fire—that it may burn the faces of my enemies, and that this burning may detach their matters from me, until they turn from their purposes, driven away, losing, disappointed, humbled, subdued, lowered—; “let them turn their backs” (Q 33:15) and lay waste the dwellings; and “let them wreck their houses with their own hands, as with the hands of the faithful” (Q 59:2).

[§ 3]

I ask You my God, by Your name “the Light”—by which is veiled the sustenance (*qiwām*) of the archangel (*nāmūs*) of lights—, and Your face of light—by which You are veiled from the perception of the eyes²⁸—, that You veil me by the lights of Your names, in the light of Your secrets; with a thick veil that keeps away from me every imperfection that mingles with my substantial being (*jawhariyya*) or my accidental being (*‘araḍiyya*), and that stands between me and anyone who wishes me harm; in everything by which You revive me, among Your favors (*faḍā’il*) with which You gratify me and Your graces (*fawāḍil*) with which You cover me; as well as what is towards me, on me, through me, for me, of me and in me. You are the One who removes all evil and harm, and You have power over all things.

[§ 4]

O You who illuminate all light, clothe me with Your light; with a garment that clears for me all that is ambiguous in my inner (*bāṭin*) and outer (*ẓāhir*) states. Blot out the lights of my enemies and those who envy me, so that they come to me only in abasement, hindrance, ruin, and exhaustion, and that no remnant of transgression, tyranny and arrogance remains of them.

[§ 5]

Remove them from me by the *zabāniya* (Q 96:18), bring down their pillars by the eight angels (Q 69:17), and take them on all sides by what is due (*ḥaqq*) to every Name that belongs to You—“by which You have named Yourself, which You have revealed in Your book, which You have taught to one of Your crea-

28 In the *Fuyūḍāt* version the two aspects are one and the same: “I ask You the light by which is veiled the sustenance of the archangel of the lights of Your face, the light by which You are veiled from the perception of the eyes,” al-Jilānī, *al-Fuyūḍāt al-rabbāniyya* 171.

tures, or which You have kept exclusively with You, in the knowledge of the unseen”—²⁹ and by Your duty (*ḥaqq*) to Yourself and by Your duty to anyone who has a duty to You.

[§ 6]

O Real! O Evident! O Living! O Eternal! O God! O supreme Lord (*rabbāhu*)! O supreme Succour (*ghayyāthāhu*)! I ask You, by Your most beautiful names; by Your highest complete attributes and by Your highest glory; by Your throne and what it contains, and by the one who “establishes Himself on the Throne” (Q 20:5) and who seizes the dominion (*mulk*), by the one who “drew near and lowered himself” and who “stood then at the distance of two bows, or nearer” (Q 53:8–9), may You raise upon my face the sun of the venerable splendor (*hayba*), which dominates and subdues, manifest (*ẓāhira*), powerful, and all-powerful (*qādira muqtadira*); until everyone who observes me through the eye of enmity, contempt or mockery is blinded; let it turn them away when they approach me, repressed³⁰ by the fear of being destroyed and by the omen of calamities, and let it encompass them by Your encompassment of all things, until nothing remains of them and they find no way to preserve themselves from it.

[§ 7]

In the name of God from before us. In the name of God from behind us. In the name of God from above. In the name of God from beneath us. In the name of God on our right. In the name of God on our left.

[§ 8]

O Master (*sayyid*)! O Suzerain (*mawlā*)! Hear our prayers (*du‘ā*) and grant our requests “so the people (*qawm*) are extirpated from those who acted unjustly. Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds” (Q 6:45), “God surrounds them from behind. It is indeed a glorious Quran [inscribed] on a preserved Table” (Q 85:20–22), “if We willed, We would send down a sign from heaven upon them, before which their necks would bow in submission” (Q 26:4); “Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds” (Q 1:1).

29 This supplication comes from a Hadith found notably in Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad*, ed. Shu‘ayb al-Arna‘ūṭ et al., Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Risāla, 2001, vol. 6, 247, n° 3712, and vol. 7, 341, n° 4318.

30 The text here reads *musharrad*^{an}. In the *Fuyūḍāt* version *mustaradd*^{an}, “retired,” al-Jilānī, *al-Fuyūḍāt al-rabbāniyya* 171.

[§ 9]

In the name of God, the All-Merciful, the Most-Merciful. O God! O Most Gracious! O Most Merciful! O Living! O Eternal! *Kāf-Hā-Yā-ʿAyn-Sīn-Qāf* (Q 19:1). O Affectionate! O [You] whose help we implore (*mustaʿān*)! *Hā-Mīm, ʿAyn-Sīn-Qāf* (Q 42:1–2). May God bless our master Muhammad, his relatives and companions, and give them Peace.

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CHAPTER 12

La pauvreté selon Ibn 'Arabī

Denis Gril

Ceux qui suivent une voie vers leur Seigneur ont été appelés *faqīr* (pl. *fuqarā'*) ou derviches « pauvres », parce qu'on a considéré la pauvreté (*faqr*) comme leur principale qualité, celle qui les mène le plus directement à Dieu.

Dans l'expression *faqīr ilā Llāh*, lit. « pauvre envers Dieu », la particule *ilā* indique un mouvement vers quelque chose ou quelqu'un, donc un cheminement. Mais la racine *FQR* comporte également le sens de besoin de quelque chose, d'où le verbe *iftaqara ilā* (avoir besoin de). Ce double sens se retrouve dans le contraire de la pauvreté et du pauvre, la richesse (*ghinā'*) et le riche (*ghanī*), qui signifie aussi indépendant de ..., avec la particule *an* qui marque la séparation. Pauvreté et richesse, nécessité et indépendance, relie et différencie Dieu et les créatures, les hommes en particulier, que le Coran interpelle : « Ô vous les hommes, vous êtes les pauvres envers Dieu et Dieu lui est le Riche, le Louangé » (Q 35:15). Ce verset fonde la pauvreté existentielle de l'homme et la richesse absolue de Dieu. Les maîtres du soufisme ont donné différentes définitions de la pauvreté. Elles vont dans le sens du dépouillement total et de l'absence de recours à tout autre que Dieu.

Abū 'Abdallāh Ibn al-Jalā' (m. 306/918) répond à celui qui l'interroge à ce sujet : « La pauvreté, c'est de ne rien avoir » (*al-faqr allā yakūna laka*). Abū Muḥammad al-Jurayrī (m. 311/923–924), le disciple de Junayd, répond de son côté : « La pauvreté, c'est de ne pas rechercher l'inexistant (*al-ma'dūm*), tant qu'on n'a pas perdu l'existant (*al-mawjūd*) ».¹ Pour Ibrāhīm al-Khawwāṣ (m. 291/903–904), le pauvre est « celui qui ne possède rien, qui ne demande rien à personne ni extérieurement ni intérieurement, qui n'attend rien de personne et qui, si on lui donne quelque chose, ne prend pas ».² D'autres, comme Kat-tānī (m. 322/934), considère comme équivalente la pauvreté envers Dieu ou le besoin de Dieu (*al-iftiqār ilā Llāh*) et la richesse ou l'indépendance par Dieu

¹ Al-Kalābādī, Abū Bakr Muḥammad, *al-Ta'arruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf*, éd. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, Le Caire, 'Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1960, ch. 38, 95; al-Sarrāj, Abū Naṣr 'Abdallāh, *Kitāb al-Luma' fī l-taṣawwuf*, éd. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, Le Caire: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1960, 74.

² Al-Sarrāj *Kitāb al-Luma'* 74.