

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE CONCEPTS OF
“DIVINE LOVE” AND “COSMIC SYMPATHY” IN
THE COSMOLOGIES OF THEURGY AND THE
SUFISM OF IBN ‘ARABI**

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ABSTRACT

This study assesses the degree to which the cosmologies of the two esoteric traditions of theurgy and the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabi, from different time periods and cultures, display correspondences rooted in the continuity of a historical line of influence from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Arabic world.¹ A comparative analysis of the major concepts of divine love and cosmic sympathy, so precious to the theurgists, has not been attempted before in relation to Sufism, and the goal of this research is to ascertain the degree to which both concepts are common to the two traditions. The methodology has taken the form of a text based theoretical analysis and critical discussion of translations of relevant primary sources relating to both theurgy and the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabi. Despite the fact that theurgy is based on polytheism with many gods and goddesses while Sufism developed out of monotheism and is closer to monotheistic ideas, there are important points in common. Both traditions maintain the paradoxical position of transcendence and immanence of God or the Neoplatonic One. The overall goal is similar which is the ascent of the soul to the divine and the embodiment of the divine in human form. In the metaphysics of the two systems there is an important difference which is that for the Neoplatonists or theurgists the One is beyond being while in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabi God is pure being. Each tradition, however, believe that there are correspondences between the macrocosm and the microcosm and their understanding of divine love as the binding force of the universe is a common position. The paper concludes that the major difference between theurgy and Ibn ‘Arabi is on the concept of cosmic sympathy.

¹ Wouter Hanegraaf defines ‘esoteric’ as an inner tradition concerned with a ‘...universal spiritual dimension of reality, as opposed to the merely external (‘exoteric’) religious institutions and dogmatic systems of established religions.’ From Hanegraaf, Wouter, *Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed*, (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), pp.10-12.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This thesis is mainly a comparative study of the concept of “divine love” (θεία φιλία), as well as that of “cosmic sympathy” (συμπαθεία) in the cosmologies of theurgy and Sufism. Cosmic sympathy is not a Sufi term; thus, the study proposes to analyse whether there is any equivalent concept in the Sufi tradition of Ibn ‘Arabi. The purpose of the research is to compare and contrast the cosmologies of theurgy, as attested in the work of Iamblichus (c.242-c.325 CE) and Proclus (410/412-485 CE), and the Sufism of the Andalusian ‘rationalizing mystic par excellence of Islam’, Ibn ‘Arabi (1165-1240 CE).² According to R.J.W Austin ‘Ibn ‘Arabi gave expression to teaching and insights of the generations of Sufis who preceded him’ and ‘he drew on a treasury of technical terms and symbols greatly enriched by centuries of intercourse between the Muslim and Neo-Hellenistic worlds.’³

Some nine hundred years separated the lives of Iamblichus and Ibn ‘Arabi and yet the Neoplatonic intellectual paradigm, to which both Iamblichus and Proclus adhered to, exercised a considerable influence on Islamic philosophy generally, and on Ibn ‘Arabi.⁴ Neoplatonism refers to a philosophical school of the late antique period (from the third to seventh centuries CE); the term was first coined by German eighteenth century scholars to describe a movement inspired by Plotinus (204-270 CE) compared to the original academy of Plato (c. 387- 83 BCE) and those referred to as ‘Middle Platonists’ (80 BCE-220CE).⁵ The

² <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/iamblichus/>; <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/proclus/>; Rizvi, Sajad H., *Mysticism and Philosophy: Ibn ‘Arabi and Mulla Sadra*, *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. by Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) p.225. According to Rizvi, the ‘rationalizing mystic’ was also recognized by Neoplatonists who believed there existed different ways to the ‘truth’ and a rationalizing mystic is one ‘who is capable of articulating a philosophical and discursive language for his experiences that are non-propositional, non-conceptual, and even lacking in cognitive content.’ p.225.

³ Ibn ‘Arabi, *Sufis of Andalusia*, Trans. with Introduction by R.J.W. Austin, (Bershara Publications, 1988) p.48.

⁴ Rizvi, Sajad, *Mysticism and Philosophy: Ibn ‘Arabi and Mulla Sadra*, *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, p.225.

⁵ *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/neoplatonism/>, accessed 15/09/2018; Redondo, José Manuel, *The Celestial Imagination: Proclus the Philosopher on Theurgy, Culture and Cosmos*, Vol.19, Nos. 1 &2, 2015, p.28; *Neoplatonism*

Neoplatonic influence on Arabic philosophy was made possible by a large translation movement that took place between the eighth and tenth centuries CE, which rendered a large array of Greek scientific and philosophical works into Arabic. These included works of Plato and Aristotle (384-322 BCE), and Neoplatonists such as Plotinus, Iamblichus and Proclus.⁶

Parviz Morewedge observes that ‘for the Muslims, Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus are part of the Islamic tradition’ and identifies four main reasons why there is an undeniable affinity between Neoplatonism and Islamic thought.⁷ First, there is a similarity of origin since both Islam and Neoplatonism drew extensively on Plato in developing their philosophies; second, the availability of Neoplatonic texts in the early Islamic world; third, there was a spatial and temporal proximity in the sense that the Neoplatonists lived only a few centuries before the rise of Islam and many of them were Syrians and Egyptian Greeks, and finally, as will become evident in this study, there was an affinity of mystical perspectives.⁸ Islamic Sufism has parallels with the Pythagorean tradition, Platonic works and Neoplatonism. In relation to many issues Muslim philosophers from Ibn Sina (Avicenna, 980-1037 CE) to Ibn ‘Arabi embraced Neoplatonic doctrines over Islamic theology in choosing emanationism over creation theory or seeking an ultimate unique source of all unity.⁹ Emanationsim (from the Latin *emanare*) is based on the idea that all things are derived from a first principle or reality, like God, and descend step by step to lesser degrees of perfection.

and *Gnosticism*, ed. Richard T. Wallis, Introduction by R.T. Wallis and J. Bergaman, (Albany: State University of New York, 1992), p.1.

⁶Adamson, Peter and Taylor, Richard C., Introduction, *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, p.4. Cf. Michael Ebstein who notes that the Arabic Neoplatonic tradition is mainly based on the famous work the *Theology of Aristotle*, erroneously ascribed to Aristotle. It is actually a 9th century Arabic translation of and adaptation of Plotinus’ *Enneads*. Ebstein, Michael, The Word of God and the Divine Will: Isma’ili Traces in Andalusī Mysticism, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, Vol.39, (2012), p.253.

⁷ Morewedge, Parviz, Introduction, *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, ed. Parviz Morewedge, (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), p.1.

⁸ Iamblichus was a Syrian and Syria was part of the Greek Eastern half of the Roman empire in late antiquity (an area where Islam also took hold). Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, Trans. with Introduction and Notes by Emma.C. Clarke, J.M. Dillon, and J.P. Hershbell, (Atlanta; The Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), p. xviix.

⁹ See Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, trans. Michael. E. Marmura, Islamic translation series, (Provo, Utah: Brigham University Press, 2008) p. Trans. Introduction p.xxi; Morewedge, Parviz, *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, pp. 1 and 2.

Thus, as emanation takes place contingent beings becomes less pure, less divine and less perfect.¹⁰

The aim of this research is to draw out the way in which the Neoplatonist theurgist-philosophers of the late antique Graeco-Roman world argued that divine love is the cause of cosmic sympathy and compare and contrast this to Ibn ‘Arabi’s concept of *wahdat al-wujud* (unity of being) in which there is only one being hidden in all the objects manifested in the universe, and bound by the oneness of love. As Ibn ‘Arabi observed, ‘The movement which is the existence of the universe is the movement of love.’¹¹ This dissertation begins with an introduction to theurgy and to Sufism and is followed by a section on methodology and a literature review. Thereafter the metaphysics of Proclus and Ibn ‘Arabi are analysed and discussed before focusing attention on the interconnected universe in theurgy, which is the foundation of cosmic sympathy. Cosmic sympathy as it relates to Sufism will follow, and finally divine love will be assessed across both traditions.

1.1 Theurgy and its Major Philosophers, Iamblichus and Proclus

Theurgy (*theourgia*) literally means ‘god work’ or ‘divine work’ and was adopted by prominent Neoplatonist philosophers during a period of some three hundred years that began with the *Chaldean Oracles* (c. second or third century CE).¹² The *Chaldean Oracles* is a compilation of mystical pagan oracles that Neoplatonist philosophers regarded as the sacred text of theurgy, which according to legend was revealed by the gods to Julian the theurgist and his father Julian the Chaldean.¹³ The two major Neoplatonist philosophers who embraced theurgy were Iamblichus

¹⁰ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05397b.htm>; *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd edition, General Editor, Robert Audi, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) p.258; Sedgwick, Mark, *Western Sufism, From the Abbasids to the New Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) p.35.

¹¹ Ibn ‘Arabi, *Futuhat al Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, in <http://www.ibnarabisociety.org>, accessed 06/09/2018.

¹² Emma C. Clarke’s Introduction to Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, trans. and edited by Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon and Jackson P. Hershbell, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), p.xxix.

¹³ *The Chaldean Oracles*, Text, Translation and Commentary by Ruth Majercik, (Lydney, Gloucestershire: The Prometheus Trust, 2013), Introduction p.1.

and Proclus.¹⁴ Iamblichus was born in Chalcis (Syria), and according to Eunapius ‘was of illustrious ancestry’ and ‘attained to the highest distinction in philosophy he had a multitude of disciples, and those who desired learning flocked to him from all parts.’¹⁵ Iamblichus founded a philosophical school which was almost certainly located in Apamea, Syria and it is thought that he had probably been a student of Porphyry, (c.234 – c.305 CE) who in turn had been a student of Plotinus the founder of Neoplatonism.¹⁶ In comparison, Proclus was born in Constantinople and according to Marinus of Neopolis was a very talented child.¹⁷ He studied in Alexandria and was a student of Syrianus (died c.437 CE) when he moved to Athens in 430 CE.¹⁸ Marinus describes Proclus as someone who ‘seemed that he spoke under divine inspiration’ and that his ‘eyes seemed to be filled with a sort of brilliance and the rest of his visage had a share of divine illumination.’¹⁹ Furthermore, Proclus the philosopher ‘easily penetrated the whole theology of Greeks and barbarians, clouded as it was by mythical fictions, and brought it to light.’²⁰ Evidently Proclus was an extremely gifted and virtuous individual. He became head of the Athenian Academy and was initiated into theurgic rites by Plutarch’s daughter Asclepigeneia (430-485 CE).²¹

Iamblichus and Proclus can be regarded as the religious representatives of Neoplatonism who tried to defend pagan religious tradition at a time when traditional polytheistic Hellenic religion was

¹⁴ Addey, Crystal, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism, Oracles of the Gods*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), p.24; Chlup, *Proclus, An Introduction*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) p.168.

¹⁵ Philostratus and Eunapius; *Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists*, trans. Wilmer Cave Wright, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921) ch.458, p.363.

¹⁶ Eunapius, *Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists*, ch.458, p.363; Porphyry: On the Life of Plotinus and the Arrangement of his Work, in *Neoplatonic Saints: The Lives of Plotinus and Proclus by their Students*, Trans. Mark Edwards, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000) ch.5, p.11; Emma C. Clarke’s Introduction to Iamblichus, *De Mysteriorum*, trans. and edited by Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon and Jackson P. Hershbell, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) pp. xviii-xxvi.

¹⁷ Marinus of Neopolis, Proclus, or on Happiness, in *Neoplatonic Saints: The Lives of Plotinus and Proclus by their Students*, Trans. Mark Edwards, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), ch. 6-10, pp.65-72.

¹⁸ Marinus of Neopolis, Proclus or on Happiness, ch. 23, p.93.

¹⁹ Marinus of Neopolis, Proclus or on Happiness, ch. 23, p.93.

²⁰ Marinus of Neopolis, Proclus or on Happiness, ch. 22, p.91.

²¹ Chlup, Radek, *Proclus an Introduction*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.34.

going through a crisis due to the rapid encroachment of Christianity.²² Chlup observes that ‘If in the sixth to fifth centuries BC philosophy emerged out of religion as an independent cultural phenomenon, in the fifth to sixth centuries AD she in turn received religion in her womb.’²³ Iamblichus in his major work, *De mysteriis*, was perhaps the first philosopher of his time to expound theurgy as both a religion and a philosophy, involving extensive ritual practices.²⁴

According to Crystal Addey, ancient philosophers considered theurgy ‘as a way of life or strictly speaking, as a way of being, as well as a nexus of ritual practices.’²⁵ Iamblichus emphasized that theurgical questions required ‘experience of actions for their accurate understanding’ and that ‘it will not be possible to deal with adequately by words alone.’²⁶ The emphasis on living and experiencing theurgy meant that it was unlike theology in the sense that it represented ‘god work’ rather than ‘god talk.’²⁷ The stress on experience suggests a way of life in which there was individual spiritual development, an inner rather than an outer development that matched the goal of theurgy: the cumulative contact, assimilation and union with the gods and, ultimately, union with the One. Iamblichus considered theurgy a ‘lifelong endeavour’ and since its highest purpose was to ‘ascend to the One, which is supreme master of the whole multiplicity (of divinities)’, union with the One ‘does not come about except at a very late stage and to very few individuals, and one must be satisfied if it occurs even in the twilight of one’s life.’²⁸

Addey suggests that theurgy involved ‘a set of ritual practices alongside the development of ethical and intellectual capacities which aimed to use symbols to reawaken the soul’s pre-ontological causal

²² Chlup, *Proclus an Introduction* p.32; Addey, Crystal, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism: Oracles of the Gods*, (London and New York, Routledge, 2016) pp.277-280; Tanaseanu-Döbler, *Theurgy in Late Antiquity: The Invention of a Ritual Tradition*, (Göttingen, 2013) p. I.

²³ Chlup, *Proclus an Introduction*, p.32.

²⁴ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, trans. Emma C. Clarke et al. 1.2 (6-7); Addey, Crystal, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p.4.

²⁵ Addey, Crystal, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p. 24.

²⁶ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 1.2, (6.8-9), p.11.

²⁷ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, Clarke Introduction, p.xxix.

²⁸ Addey, Crystal, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p. 24; Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 5.22, (231.1), p.265.

connection with the gods,’ functioning mainly through divine love and only ‘subordinately through cosmic sympathy.’²⁹ Since divine love and cosmic sympathy are a major focus of this dissertation, they will be both discussed separately in sections three and four of this study. What is important to stress at this stage is that since the goal of theurgy was the ‘ascent of the soul to the divine’ and the manifestation of the divine in embodied, human life, the means by which this could be achieved was through the purification of the intellect, the attainment of moral virtues and symbols made active through cosmic sympathy.³⁰ Cosmic sympathy was however, in turn rendered possible by divine love.³¹ Within a theurgic context symbols could be anything in nature like stones and plants and could also be a physical object (like a statue) in sympathy with a particular god, which include what Iamblichus refers to as secret names of the gods or ‘barbarian names’.³² The latter were non-Greek words invoked during theurgic rituals, but which could be inscribed on cultic statues (*telestika*) and other talismans.³³

One of the central elements of theurgy was divination and this is expressed succinctly by Proclus who defines theurgy as a power ‘greater than all human wisdom and knowledge, embracing the blessings of divination, the purifying powers of initiation, and in a word all the operations of divine possession.’³⁴ Addey notes that theurgic ritual consisted in invoking the epiphany of a deity, either ‘within the soul of a

²⁹ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p.24; See Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 5.9 (209. 10) ‘It is better, then, to seek the cause (of the efficacy of sacrifices) in friendship and affinity, and in the relation that binds together creators with their creations and generators with their offspring’; and *De Mysteriis* 4.3 (185.1-5), ‘For if it is the communion of a friendship based on like-mindedness and an indissoluble bond of unity that gives coherence to the performance of hieratic rites in order that they may be truly divine’; *De mysteriis*, 5.23 (232.5), ‘So it is as a consequence of the conjunction of divine causal agencies and of mortal preparations aligning themselves with those that the performance of sacrifices achieves its end, and confers its great benefits.’.

³⁰ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p.25.

³¹ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 1.12 (42. 5-10).

³² Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 1.12 (42.10) *DM* 7.4 (255.10 and 256. 5-10); Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neaplatonism*, pp.114-115.

³³ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p.30.

³⁴ Proclus, *Theologia Platonica*. 1.26.63 (trans. by Dodds) quoted in Luck, Georg, *Theurgy and Forms of Worship in Neoplatonism*, ed. J Neusner, E.S. Frerichs and P.V. McCracken Flesher, *Religion, Science and Magic*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989) p.211; Cf. Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, on theurgic rituals p.25, and relationship with magic p.32; See Section 3.1 of this study on The Interconnected Universe in Theurgy.

human or as an external vision' and often also involved the 'construction and animation of telestic statues' that were considered to become animated by the deity or god who would in turn 'bestow oracles during the course of the ritual.'³⁵ As a general introduction to theurgy it is worth noting that theurgic rituals, while containing some magical practices of the time, also derived their practice from the religious traditions of Greece, Egypt and Chaldaea.³⁶

1.2 Sufism

Sufism is considered, by both practitioners and scholars, to be the esoteric, mystical or inner aspect of monotheistic Islam.³⁷ According to William Chittick, Sufism can be described as the 'interiorization and intensification of Islamic faith and practice.'³⁸ The first and most perfect Sufi is considered to be the Prophet Muhammad and the inner aspects of his teachings gradually took form from the eighth to the ninth centuries CE.³⁹ The Sufi contemplative aspires to the spiritual state of *baqa*, which represents subsistence beyond all form not unlike the theurgic aim of the soul's union with the One.⁴⁰ Sufism is essentially an oral tradition and while many scholars believe that it has been influenced by non-Islamic sources - Persian, Hindu, Neoplatonic and Christian - Titus Burckhardt believes the Islamic influence has been under-emphasized.⁴¹ Burckhardt and Hossein Seyyed Nasr favour a Muhammadan origin of Sufism arguing that it relies on the symbolism of the Qur'an and that 'everything that forms an integral part of the spiritual method of Sufism...is drawn out of the Qur'an and from the teaching of the Prophet.'⁴² The first Sufis expressed themselves in a language that was close to the Qur'an, but later their doctrine became more explicit which, according to Burckhardt, is considered normal in esoteric traditions since, 'doctrine grows not so

³⁵ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p.25.

³⁶ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p.32.

³⁷ Burckhardt, Titus, *An Introduction to Sufism*, pp.15-16.

³⁸ Chittick, William, *Sufism A Beginner's Guide*, (Oxford, OneWorld, 2008), p.21.

³⁹ Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, *Three Muslim Sages*, (Delmar, New York: Caravan Books, 1976) p. 101.

⁴⁰ Burckhardt, *An Introduction to Sufism*, p.16.

⁴¹ Burckhardt, *An Introduction to Sufism*, pp.16-17.

⁴² Burckhardt, *An Introduction to Sufism*, p.17.

much by the additions of new knowledge, as by the need to refute errors and reanimate a diminishing power of intuition.’⁴³ The suggestion is that Sufi teaching became more doctrinal as it moved from its original source. An important consideration is that while Sufism can be thought of as the spirit or the heart of Islam at the same time it is ‘most free in relation to the mental framework of that world.’⁴⁴ This freedom can be observed in the philosophy of Ibn ‘Arabi whose philosophy was at times viewed as contrary to classic Islamic theology.⁴⁵ The way of Sufism involves the process of inner transformation whereby the powers of the soul are turned towards God and one of the most important practices is *dhikr* or remembrance of God.⁴⁶ Remembrance of God in Sufism can be paralleled to Plato’s theory of recollection as set out in the *Phaedo* where he describes the soul remembering the Forms.⁴⁷

From its ascetic beginnings Sufism gradually came to designate a group who differed from other Muslims through stressing certain specific teachings of the Qur’an and the Prophet. These teachings were built on two foundations – *islam* or submission to God (the practice of the Sharia⁴⁸ and the prophetic model) and *iman* or faith (acceptance of basic Islamic teachings concerning God, prophecy and the last day).⁴⁹ Once Sufis had developed sufficient grounding in these two dimensions they could advance to ‘worshipping God as if they see him’, which means worship Him while seeing Him.⁵⁰ As an oral tradition, Sufism is passed on to disciples from a master (called a *shaykh*) and the transmission can be traced back through a chain of authorities to the Prophet.⁵¹ There is a similarity with Neoplatonism, since Neoplatonist philosophers considered themselves part of a ‘golden chain’ of philosophers stretching back to Plato and Pythagoras and other wise sages of the Hellenic

⁴³ Burekhardt, *An Introduction to Sufism*, p.17.

⁴⁴ Burekhardt, *An Introduction to Sufism*, p.16.

⁴⁵ Chittick, William, *Sufism*, p.2.

⁴⁶ Chittick, William, *Sufism*, p.63.

⁴⁷ Plato, *Phaedo*, ed. C.J.Rowe, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 73c-75d.

⁴⁸ Islamic canonical law based on the Qur’an and traditions of the Prophet.

⁴⁹ Chittick, William, *Sufism*, p.19.

⁵⁰ Chittick, *Sufism*, p.19.

⁵¹ Chittick, *Sufism*, p.28.

tradition, such as Homer and Orpheus.⁵² One of the duties of the Sufi master is to actualize the divine character traits which are latent in the soul of a disciple by the adoption of certain practices which may vary according to different Sufi orders. *Dhikr*, the remembrance of Allah called for in the Qur'an and emphasized in Sufism, involves devotional acts such as the repetition of divine names, supplications as well as aphorisms which are taken from the *hadith* (record of the words/sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) literature and the Qur'an.⁵³

1.3 Ibn 'Arabi

Ibn Arabi, the 12th/13th century Sufi master and philosopher was known as al-Shaykh-al-Akbar or "the greatest master"; for most Sufis after the 13th century his writings represent the apex of mystical theories.⁵⁴ Born in Murcia (Andalusia) Spain or the far West end of the Muslim world (invaded by the Moors in 711 CE) Arabic was the common language of all educated people and the three major traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam flourished side by side in Andalusia.⁵⁵ Ibn 'Arabi was born in an environment where the great classics of Greek philosophy had been translated into Arabic and he apparently was familiar with the works of Plato, Aristotle and the Neoplatonists.⁵⁶ Highly educated, Ibn 'Arabi received a rigorous formal Muslim education.⁵⁷ His father was a man of standing and influence who was a

⁵² Uzdavinys, Algis, Introduction to the Golden Chain, http://www.worldwisdom.com/public/viewpdf/default.aspx?article-title=Introduction_to_The_Golden_Chain_by_Algis_Uzdavinys.pdf, accessed 7/6/19.

⁵³ Chittick, William, *Sufism*, p.29.

⁵⁴ Schimmel, Annemarie, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, (The University of North Carolina Press, 1975) p. 263.

⁵⁵ Hirtenstein, Stephen, *The Unlimited Mercifier, The Spiritual Life and Thought of Ibn 'Arabi*, (Oxford and Ashland, OR: Anqa Publishing and White Cloud Press, 1999). P.10-12.

⁵⁶ Suleyman, *From Rabi'a to Ibn al-Farid*, p.214; *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed. M.M. Sfarif, (Pakistan Philosophical Congress, 1963) <http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/hmp/>, PDF, p.405. See Rosenthal, Franz, *The Classical Heritage in Islam*, trans. E. and J. Marmostein, (London: Routledge, 1975) Rosenthal suggests that Iamblichus was also translated into Arabic, particularly his commentary on the Pythagorean *Golden Verses*. On Neoplatonic sources see, Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, *Three Muslim Sages*, (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1997) p.73; Keith Critchlow in his introduction to Burckhardt's, *Mystical Astrology According to Ibn Arabi*, (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2001) states 'that Ibn 'Arabi was surnamed "Son of Plato" because of this fundamental viewpoint within the revelation of Islam, that asserts the dependence of the sensible world on the intelligible world, and the intelligible in return on the ontological principle of Unity.' p. 7.

⁵⁷ Suleyman, *From Rabi'a to Ibn al-Farid*, p.216.

friend of philosophers like Ibn Rushd (d. 1198 CE), known as Averroes, as well as contemporary Sufi masters.⁵⁸ Ibn ‘Arabi benefited from the company of Sufis from an early age and in particular was close to two-woman saints, Fatima of Cordova and Yäsamin of Marshena.⁵⁹ He became a Sufi himself at the age of twenty, his conversion accomplished through vision, and mastered various subjects from theology to metaphysics, to cosmology, psychology and poetry.⁶⁰ He was a prolific writer having authored over 400 works of which the *Meccan Revelations* (*al-Futuhat al-Makkiyya*) consists of some 560 chapters while the *Ringstones* or *Bezels of Wisdom* (*Fusus al-hikam*), represents the quintessence of Ibn ‘Arabi’s spiritual teaching.⁶¹

Ibn ‘Arabi claims divine inspiration for his works and regarding the *Bezels of Wisdom* he states, ‘I saw the Apostle of God in a visitation granted to me...He had in his hand a book and he said to me, “This is the book of the Bezels of Wisdom; take it and bring it to men that they might benefit from it.”’⁶² It is worth noting that Iamblichus adopted the guise of the Egyptian priest/prophet Abamon in *De mysteriis*: by taking on the persona of a priest/prophet, Iamblichus like Ibn ‘Arabi suggests that his words are also divinely inspired.⁶³ In the case of Iamblichus, the inspiration comes from more than one god while for Ibn Arabi it is the prophets. Fredrica Halligan observes that Ibn ‘Arabi was likely born with strong mystic and prophetic potential nurtured through long years of study with the Sufis and esoteric masters.⁶⁴ It is important to emphasize the strong mystical character of Ibn ‘Arabi because while his language may display the syncretism of different traditions, he affirmed experience

⁵⁸ Suleyman, *From Rabi’a to Ibn al-Farid*, p.216.

⁵⁹ Schimmel, Annemarie, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975) p.263.

⁶⁰ Nasr, Hossein Seyyed, *Three Muslim Sages*, (Delmar, New York: Caravan Books, 1976) p.98.

⁶¹ Ibn Arabi Society, <http://www.ibnarabisociety.org>, accessed 7 February 2019; Suleyman, *From Rabi’a to Ibn al-Farid*, p.216.

⁶² Ibn ‘Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, trans. R.J.W. Austin, (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1980) Preface, p.45. Each chapter is dedicated to one of twenty-seven prophets.

⁶³ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, (1.1) p.3.

⁶⁴ Halligan, Fredrica R., The Creative Imagination of the Sufi Mystic, Ibn ‘Arabi, *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Summer 2001), p.282.

over philosophy.⁶⁵ As L. Gardet suggests, Ibn ‘Arabi’s philosophy ‘integrated mystic resonances and experiences’ and compares it to a ‘wisdom gnosis (*gnose sapientiale*) which commands a spiritual experience that in its very texture is accessible only through recourse to a certain experience.’⁶⁶ Similarly, Iamblichus emphasizes in *De mysteriis* that theurgy needs to be experienced directly, rather than just talked about.⁶⁷

Ibn ‘Arabi’s essential doctrine or teaching is the unity of all being or *wahdat al-wujud*, which will be discussed later in relation to his conception of divine love. Like other Islamic and theurgic philosophers, Ibn ‘Arabi views the human soul as having unlimited potential and believed that the goal of life is to actualize that potential.⁶⁸ One of the problems with Ibn ‘Arabi’s works is that he is forever trying to reconcile his theory of the unity of being with the monotheistic doctrine of Islam and this leads often to what may appear to be inconsistent views across his works.⁶⁹ But a proper reading of Ibn ‘Arabi displays his pre-eminently mystical qualities, and as he stated himself, ‘All that I put down in my books is not the result of thinking or discursive reasoning. It is communicated to me through the breathing of the angel of revelation in my heart.’⁷⁰ Ibn ‘Arabi states that his mystical knowledge was the result of his ecstatic experiences, often referred to by him as ‘unveiling’ and that the process of unveiling occurs through the mystically accessible ‘imaginal world’, which is the intermediary plane between humankind and the divine.⁷¹ If his works are a curious blend of reasoned truths and intuitive (mystical) knowledge that combine the exoteric (Islamic

⁶⁵ *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Ed. M.M. Sharif, p.403; Cf. Chittick notes that ‘...many Islamic philosophers followed paths that attempted to harmonize reason, mystical intuition and revelation.’ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Ibn Arabi, 2014, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ibn-arabi/>, ch.1, Accessed 12th February 2019.

⁶⁶ Gardet, L, ‘Expérience et gnose chez Ibn ‘Arabi’ in Rosenthal, Franz, Ibn ‘Arabi Between Philosophy and Mysticism, *Oriens*, Vol 31., (1988), p.6.

⁶⁷ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 2.11 (97.1-10).

⁶⁸ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Ibn Arabi, Entry by William Chittick, 2014, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ibn-arabi/>, ch.6, Accessed 12th February 2019.

⁶⁹ For excellent discussions on this subject see Alsamaani, Nader Ahmed, *An Analytical Philosophical Approach to Ibn ‘Arabi’s Conception of Ultimate Reality*, PhD Dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2017, pp. 26-83. And, *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Ed. M.M. Sharif, pp. 402-406.

⁷⁰ *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, p.404, quoted from Sha’rami, Yawequit, p.24.

⁷¹ Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p.4.

religious law) with the esoteric, it explains the apparent contradictions such as his explicit dismissal of the world as non-existent and yet he sometimes seems to support a duality within reality.⁷² On the surface there is a certain tension in Ibn ‘Arabi’s thought between transcendence and immanence of the divine, that is between the mystical perception of the divine in all things, and the doctrinal demands of Islamic monotheism.⁷³

The general introduction of both theurgy and Sufism has sought to provide the necessary background for a more detailed comparison that follows on how both traditions approached the concepts of divine love and cosmic sympathy. In summary, both theurgy and Sufism have their inspiration in divine revelation, see the divine as both transcendent and immanent, have a similar goal which is the soul’s union with the divine and both emphasize experience over words. An apparent difference is, however, that theurgy is based on polytheism while Sufism mainly developed out of monotheism. As will be discussed it can be suggested that both traditions contain important similarities, in particular they believed in the essential unity of the cosmos.⁷⁴

1.4 Methodology and Literature Review

This dissertation takes the form of a text-based theoretical analysis and critical discussion of relevant translated primary sources. In relation to theurgy the two critical primary sources are Iamblichus’ *De mysteriis* (dated sometime between 280 and 305 CE by Clarke)⁷⁵ and Proclus’ *Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*⁷⁶ (dated as an early work of Proclus – c.440 CE) with some additional discussion and analysis of the cosmological notions attested in the earlier *Chaldean Oracles* (dated to

⁷² Alsaamani, *An Aalytical Philosophical Approach to Ibn ‘Arabi’s Conception of Ultimate Reality*, pp.82-83.

⁷³ Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1998), p.xxxvii.; Shah, Idries, *The Sufis*, (New York: Doubleday, 1964) p.143.

⁷⁴ See Conclusion.

⁷⁵ Emma C. Clarke, Introduction, Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, p.xxvii.

⁷⁶ Proclus, *Commentary on the First Alcibiades*, Text ed. L.G. Westerink, Trans. and Commentary, William O’Neill (Westbury: The Prometheus Trust, 2011)

the first or second century CE by Ruth Majercik)⁷⁷, which were crucial to the formation and development of theurgy in late antiquity. Also, Proclus' *On the Hieratic Art* is sourced for its importance in any discussion on cosmic sympathy within theurgy.⁷⁸ In Sufism, Ibn 'Arabi was a prolific writer, but the majority of his texts have not been translated. This research will rely on one of his best known works, *Fusus al-hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)* translated by RWJ Austin as well as abstracts from Ibn 'Arabi's monumental (560 chapters) *Al-Futuh al-Makkiya* (translated as the *Meccan Openings* or *Revelations*) translated and commented by William C. Chittick as *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* and *The Self-Disclosure of God*. According to Sharif, Ibn 'Arabi's two major works were written between 1223 CE and the year of Ibn 'Arabi's death, in 1240 CE.⁷⁹ I have consulted a range of translations where they are available, in order to arrive at a balanced view. To the best of my knowledge there is no secondary literature that directly compares theurgy with Sufism, although Polymnia Athanassiadi suggests in her 1993 article on theurgy that the Sufis were the real heirs of Iamblichus and recommends further comparative research on this topic. Athanassiadi observes,

Iamblichus' natural environment is, of course, the mystical dimension of Islam, as it developed from discussion in Sufi circles. That the teacher of Apamea was actually known in these milieux is established, though how and to what extent he was exploited by them is a subject awaiting research.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ *The Chaldean Oracles*, Text, Trans. and Commentary by Ruth Majercik, (Lydney, Gloucestershire: the Prometheus Trust, 2013) pp.1-2.

⁷⁸ Proclus, *On the Hieratic Art According to the Greeks*, Trans. and Comments by Brian Copenhaver, in 'Hermes Trismegistus, Proclus and a Philosophy of Magic in the Renaissance', in *Hermeticism and the Renaissance*, ed. I. Merkel and A.G. Debus (Washington, DC: Folger Books, 1988)

⁷⁹ *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed. M.M. Sharif, p.402.

⁸⁰ Athanassiadi, Polymnia, Theurgy and Freelance Divination: The Testimony of Iamblichus, *The Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol.83 (1993) p.130.

2.0 METAPHYSICS

The following chapter discusses the metaphysics of Proclus and Ibn ‘Arabi separately before comparing and contrasting them in section 2.3.

2.1 The Metaphysics of the Neoplatonist Proclus

The metaphysical background of theurgy can be discovered in the metaphysical systems of Iamblichus and Proclus. They, as well as Porphyry and other later Neoplatonist philosophers, elaborated on Plotinus’ metaphysical system as set out in the *Enneads*. Since Iamblichus’ metaphysical conceptions are often difficult to ascertain given that some of his works have not survived and others are fragmentary, the focus will be on Proclus’ metaphysical system as it is well attested as a complete whole in his *Elements of Theology*, as well as, in other Proclean works.⁸¹ It is well known that Proclus’ metaphysics is especially close to that of Iamblichus, who influenced Proclus greatly.⁸² In *Elements of Theology*, Proclus establishes the concept of the One, that is to say, the assumption of the wholly transcendent One without any multiplicity, which is the ultimate cause of reality. For Proclus (and other Neoplatonists such as Iamblichus), the most important consequence of the One having no multiplicity is that it is also beyond being (since if it were ‘one being’ it would be two things in their view).⁸³ Like Plotinus, Proclus believes that broadly there exist three fundamental levels of reality, which he calls ‘hypostases’ (self-subsistent entities) and they are the One, Intellect and Soul.⁸⁴ It should be noted that Proclus elaborates and adds further intelligible realities which he calls the Limit and Unlimited that exist below the One and represent

⁸¹ Iamblichus, *The Platonic Commentaries*, Trans. Preface and Introduction by John M. Dillon, Preface i.

⁸² Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, Revised Text with Trans. Introduction and Commentary by E.R. Dodds, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁸³ Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, Propositions 2,4,5,8,12, which discuss the nature of the One and its lack of multiplicity; Plotinus, *The Enneads*, v 5, 11.3-4 in Chlup, *Proclus an Introduction*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012) Kindle ed. p.48.

⁸⁴ Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 3.1.

a sort of ‘interface’ between the One and the lower levels.⁸⁵ He adds a further triad below the Limited and Unlimited which are Being, Life and Intellect, however Being corresponds to Limit, Life represents the Unlimited ‘stream of energy’ and Intellect the mixture of both.⁸⁶ Chlup suggests that we may regard Being as the moment of existence of the general Intellect, Life as its potency while Intellect as its activity.⁸⁷

Proclus’ metaphysics is essentially holistic and dynamic in character. This can be observed in his treatment of the One when he states that it is not just a remote metaphysical abstraction, ‘but an actual power that despite its transcendence remains continuously present in the horizon of all that happens around us.’⁸⁸ Proclus agrees with Plotinus that the One ‘is therefore not limited in relation to itself or to anything else: since if it was, it would be two.’⁸⁹ This is an important difference from the unity of being of Ibn ‘Arabi. For Proclus the One is the highest principle of all things and while it contains no multiplicity within it, Proclus mentions that ‘Every multiplicity in some way participates in unity.’⁹⁰ This suggests that what emanates from the One always contains within itself a germ of unity despite its move away from perfection. The One is not only transcendent but also incomprehensible and ineffable since any attempt at understanding it would impose limits on it and thus, would encroach on its perfection.⁹¹ According to Chlup, the One is not just what keeps everything together but what all things long for and aspire to.⁹² As mentioned, a characteristic feature of Proclus’ metaphysics is a triadic structure to reality, but before discussing this issue, it is worth pointing out that the creation of the universe from the One is markedly different from Ibn Arabi’s metaphysics, which will be analysed later. In the *Enneads*, Plotinus states: ‘This, we may say, is the first act of generation: the One, perfect because it seeks nothing, has nothing, and needs nothing, overflows, as it were,

⁸⁵ Chlup, *Proclus an Introduction*, p.77. See p.77 for further explanation of the relationship to the One and Proclus, *Théologie Platonicienne*, text established and trans. by H.D. Saffrey and L.G. Westerlink, (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968-97) III 8, 32.19-28.

⁸⁶ Chlup, *Proclus an Introduction*, p.93.

⁸⁷ Chlup, *Proclus an Introduction*, p.93.

⁸⁸ Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 1.

⁸⁹ Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. by A.H. Armstrong, Vols I-VII (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), v 5, 11.3-4.

⁹⁰ Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop.3.

⁹¹ Chlup, *Proclus an Introduction*, p.48.

⁹² Chlup, *Proclus and Introduction*, p.48; Cf, Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop.13.

and its superabundance makes something other than itself.⁹³ The concept of the overflowing of consciousness or energy⁹⁴ from the One can be viewed as somewhat paradoxical considering that the One is absolutely perfect, complete and self-sufficient. The suggestion is that the overflowing of energy from the One is spontaneous.⁹⁵

The underlying principle of all of Proclus' triadic structures of reality is his theory of the cycle of remaining, procession and reversion, which does not appear to have an equivalence in Ibn 'Arabi's metaphysics. This theory states that three coordinated movements form the basis of all activity in the universe.⁹⁶ The first movement is the movement of 'remaining' (*mone*) in which the highest principle remains within itself; the second is that of 'procession' (*prohodos*) where an unlimited stream of energy flows out, and the final movement is that of reversion (*epistrophe*) of the stream of energy to its source.⁹⁷ The importance of this triad is that for Proclus all causes unite with their effects at all the different levels of the ontological ladder. Emanation is a step by step process as one level hands over responsibility to a successor creating one new level below it until it reaches matter. The One gives rise to Intellect, Intellect to Soul and Soul to matter. Each level seeks to revert back to its primal cause by imitation.⁹⁸ So soul is caused by Intellect and only indirectly by the One, but it is nourished by both and seeks to revert back to both; to intellect as Form and the One as unity. The triads that follow are Being, Life and Intellect, and the participating, participated and unparticipated.⁹⁹ The key to understanding these triads is to recognize that the universe is an animated entity and that everything in the cosmos is connected.

⁹³ Plotinus, *The Enneads*, v 2, 1.7-21.

⁹⁴ Consciousness or energy will be used interchangeably in this dissertation and is considered to be the first effect of the activity of the One.

⁹⁵ Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 5, 11.

⁹⁶ Chlup, *Proclus an Introduction*, p.64; Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 72,73,74.

⁹⁷ Chlup, *Proclus an Introduction*, p.66-67. As Proclus states 'Every effect remains in its cause, proceeds from it, and reverts upon it. For if it should remain without procession or reversion, it would be without distinction from, and therefore identical with, its cause, since distinction implies procession. And if it should proceed without reversion or immanence, it would be without conjunction or sympathy with its cause.' Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 35.

⁹⁸ Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop.32; Chlup, *Proclus an Introduction*, p.66. Cf. The Metaphor of the Stone.

⁹⁹ For Being, Life, Intellect see Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop.103; Chlup, *Proclus an Introduction*, p.94. For participating, participated, unparticipated see Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 98; Chlup, *Proclus an Introduction*, pp.99-100. Cf. Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 7.3 (253.5) on participation of the sun, 'All things in the universe receive the

To summarize, each hypostasis has three aspects: the hypostasis in its purest form as in the unparticipated Monad of Intellect or *Nous*; the hypostasis as participated in a lower level of being and lastly the hypostasis as reflected in the lower level of being. Proclus states that ‘Every order has its beginning in a monad and proceeds to a manifold co-ordinate therewith; and the manifold in any order maybe carried back to a single monad.’¹⁰⁰ The universe is arranged as a hierarchy of realities or hypostases and every reality is slightly inferior to the one above it, but is capable of reverting back to it ¹⁰¹. Emanation comes from the One who represents supreme Goodness. This is followed by Intellect or *Nous*, which exists below the One. Intellect is a fragmented image of the One, deriving its form from contemplating the One. It is the home of the Platonic Forms and can be viewed as corresponding to intuitive thought. The third reality is Soul, which derives from intellect. Its characteristic is that it can only contemplate its objects in succession moving from one to the other, therefore creating time and space. But when soul reverts to intellect it can contemplate from a more unified perspective. Soul generates the next level of reality which is Nature, the principle of life and growth. Lastly there is matter and material objects.

2.1.1. Henads

Integrated into Proclus’ model of reality are the gods of traditional Greek religion. Proclus, like Iamblichus before him understood the plurality of gods as closest to the One as the first emanations of the One.¹⁰² They are the participated aspects of the unparticipated monadic Intellect. In *Elements of Theology*, Proclus states, ‘Every Henad is a beneficent Henad and has this mode of existence qua god; but the primal God is the Good unqualified and Unity unqualified, whilst each of those posterior to him is a particular goodness and a particular Henad.’¹⁰³ Proclus thus postulates a plurality of henads that are

potencies emanating from the sun Even as the sunlight, then, envelops, what it illuminates, so also the power of the gods embrace from the outside that which participates in it.’ Chlup states, ‘The important thing is that while the sun exists in itself and for itself, its light may be regarded as only existing in relation to us. Sunlight is the sun as it appears from our perspective’, Chlup, *Proclus an Introduction*, p.100.

¹⁰⁰ Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 21.

¹⁰¹ Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 42.

¹⁰² Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 159; Chlup, *Proclus an Introduction*, p.123.

¹⁰³ Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 133.

‘beneficent’ because of the One (which is also the Good), so their goodness derives from the One and the ‘whole number of gods has the character of unity.’¹⁰⁴ The henads are a crucial interface between the One and the lower realms, each plays a specific role but remain absolute unities within themselves although they have distinguishing characteristics to anything that perceives them externally. In proposition 115 (*Elements of Theology*) Proclus states that ‘Every god is above Being, above Life, and above Intelligence.’¹⁰⁵ By intelligence he means intellect and he argues that the gods as henads are beyond being while at the same time stating in the same proposition that the First Principle or the One is also beyond being. This remains a major difference with Ibn ‘Arabi where God is pure being. In the realm of the emanational model of remaining, procession and reversion, the gods, which are dominated by Limit are on each level the patrons of its remaining – Proclus calls them ‘paternal’ (*patrikoi*). The unlimited derived gods control the procession of the lower levels and are referred to as ‘generative’ (*gennetikoi*).¹⁰⁶ Lastly, those gods who combine Limit and the Unlimited to an unknown degree are named the ‘perfective’ (*telesiourgoi*), guaranteeing all inversion.¹⁰⁷

2.1.2 Theurgy

In *Elements of Theology* Proclus notes that ‘Every god is a measure of things existent. For if every god has the character of unity he defines and measures all the manifolds of existent things.’¹⁰⁸ What is striking is that by implication matter is entirely subordinated to the One. With reference to theurgy this tends to suggest the reason why symbols are used to contact the gods. Symbols and tokens are visible manifestations of the gods in so far as they contain specific attributes and characteristics of the gods themselves that can help the soul in its ascension to higher levels.¹⁰⁹ Within Proclus’ *Elements of Theology*, divine providence resembles the divine love that will be discussed in chapter four. Proclus writes ‘Every god embraces in his substance the

¹⁰⁴ Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 113.

¹⁰⁵ Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 115.

¹⁰⁶ Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 151-159.

¹⁰⁷ Chlup, *Introduction to Proclus*, p.123.

¹⁰⁸ Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 117.

¹⁰⁹ See Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 118.

function of exercising providential care towards the universe,’ stressing the providential care of the gods for all the lower things.¹¹⁰ This care is a form of divine love and Proclus describes it as a systematic activity which is an integral part of the gods’ existence.¹¹¹ Thus, in theurgy there is the love that emanates from the gods downwards, but this love changes direction becoming also a desire to revert back to the source and the objective of ritual is to aid in this reversion. Here it is interesting to contrast theurgy with Ibn ‘Arabi since there is not the same emphasis on symbols and ritual in his writings. Ibn ‘Arabi avoided discussion of certain aspects of the practical side of Sufism since he considered it prone to dangerous misunderstanding.¹¹²

2.2 The Metaphysics of Ibn ‘Arabi

One of the distinctive features of Ibn ‘Arabi compared to the Neoplatonists’, and theurgy in general, is that Ibn ‘Arabi was a conformist in religion (Islam) while remaining an esotericist in his inner life.¹¹³ This has led to different interpretations of his work and explains the difficulty that scholars sometimes encounter in reconciling Ibn ‘Arabi’s Islamic theology with his esotericism.¹¹⁴ This is apparent in the metaphysics of Ibn ‘Arabi where he explains his thought through the exegesis of existing religious scripture (i.e. *Quran* and *Hadith*) while at the same time reflecting his mystical experiences which he referred to as ‘unveiling’.¹¹⁵ According to Ibn ‘Arabi, the process of unveiling happens via the mystically accessible ‘imaginal world’, which is the intermediary plane between mankind and the divine.¹¹⁶ The *alam al-mithal* or the world of imagination was extremely real for Ibn ‘Arabi and it is where he obtained most of his revelations. It is viewed by Ibn ‘Arabi as the creative source of manifestation, the very cause of human existence and the major intermediary that links humanity with the infinite and

¹¹⁰ Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 120, and see prop.122.

¹¹¹ Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 120; Chlup, *Introduction to Proclus*, p.242.

¹¹² Ibn Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, p.158; Austin Introduction to Ibn ‘Arabi’s *Bezels of Wisdom*, p.37; Gardiner, Noah, *Stars and Saints: The Esotericist Astrology of the Sufi Occultist Ahmad al-Buni, Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft* (Spring, 2017), p.40.

¹¹³ Shah, Idries, *The Sufis*, (New York, Doubleday & Company, 1964), p. 143.

¹¹⁴ See Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 104-105.

¹¹⁵ Chittick, *The Self Disclosure of God*, p. XXXVII.

¹¹⁶ Chittick, *The Self Disclosure of God*, pp. XXXVII – XXXVIII.

absolute.¹¹⁷ This ‘imaginal world’ can be compared to the notion of *phantasia*, ‘image making faculty or imagination’ among the Neoplatonist philosophers.¹¹⁸ According to Addey, the faculty of the imagination or *phantasia* ‘not only receives images that are purely human (and derived from sense perception) but also has the potential to receive images from the gods.’¹¹⁹ There is a clear parallel with the imaginal world of Ibn ‘Arabi described by Henry Corbin as a world potentially filled with divine visions.¹²⁰

Ibn ‘Arabi affirms the transcendence of God as the Neoplatonists affirmed the transcendence of the One. In his *Treatise on Unity* Ibn ‘Arabi asserts that the divine reality is distinguished from its manifestations and is transcendent relative to them, but that the manifestations are not in every respect separate from the divine reality which somehow encloses them.¹²¹ It is interesting to note that Iamblichus also states several times that the natural world and humans are somehow contained in the Gods.¹²² Resembling the Neoplatonic One, Ibn ‘Arabi maintains an aspect of the divine or God is that it is impersonal and unknowable. According to Ibn ‘Arabi, God created man and the cosmos for his self-disclosure. He often mentions the *hadith qudsi* of the ‘Hidden Treasure’ as the justification of creation. The hadith in the words of God says, ‘I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known thus I created the

¹¹⁷ Akkach, Samer, The World of Imagination in Ibn ‘Arabi’s Ontology, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, (1997), 24 (1), p.97.

¹¹⁸ Addey, Crystal, In the Light of the Sphere: The Vehicle of the Soul and Subtle Body Practices in Neoplatonism, *Religion and the Subtle Body in Asia and the West: Between Mind and Body*, ed. Geoffrey Samuel and Jay Johnston, (London: Routledge, 2013) p.149. See Iamblichus, *De mysteriis* 3.11 and 3.14.

¹¹⁹ Addey, In the Light of the Sphere, p.154; Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 3,14 (133.1-7) in discussing divination ritual he states, ‘the imagination is inspired because it is not roused by itself, but by the gods, to modes of imagination when normal human behaviour has been completely displaced.’

¹²⁰ Corbin, Henry, *Alone with the Alone*, p.190.

¹²¹ Ibn ‘Arabi states ‘He is, and there is with Him no after or before, nor above nor below.... He is the One without oneness and the Single without singleness...He is not composed of name By Himself he sees Himself and by Himself he knows Himself. His veil is [only a “consequence” and effect of] His oneness ...his veil is the concealment of His existence in His oneness. His prophet is He, and His Word is He. He sent Himself with Himself to Himself.’ Ibn ‘Arabi, *Risalat al-ahadiyah (Treatise on Unity)*, in Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, p.107.

¹²² Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 3, 16 (138. 5-10).

creation and presented myself to them therefore they know me.’¹²³

Concerning this self-disclosure Ibn ‘Arabi observes,

The Real wanted to see the essences of His Most Beautiful Names or, to put it another way, to see His Own Essence, in an all-inclusive object encompassing the whole [divine] command...For the seeing of a thing itself by itself, is not the same as its seeing itself in another.¹²⁴

The above quotation suggests that Ibn ‘Arabi sees no distinction ontologically or in terms of being between God and the divine names. This remains a major difference in relation to theurgy and Neoplatonism: Proclus calls the gods henads because the gods are unique ‘onenesses’ that have a separate identity from the One and the One is beyond being, thus the One is distinguished from being. In Ibn ‘Arabi’s metaphysics God is the real and is being.

In the ontology of Ibn ‘Arabi there is a triadic structure to the universe which resembles Proclus’ three levels of reality despite the fact that the reason for creating the universe can be viewed as different. For Ibn ‘Arabi creation was an act of love on the part of God while for the Neoplatonists’ there is the suggestion that creation happened as an overflowing of energy from the One in a spontaneous manner.¹²⁵

The triadic structure of Ibn ‘Arabi’s system comprises the essence, the divine names (and their attributes) and creation.¹²⁶ A major difference from theurgy and Neoplatonism where emanation begins from the One beyond being, the emanative aspect of Ibn ‘Arabi’s ontology begins with the essence, which is eternal, ineffable and unknowable. But, in seeking to know itself beyond the insularity of His self-reflection, God discloses himself by causing the ‘possibilities’ to appear from ‘nothingness’ into

¹²³ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p.391. This *hadith* is not mentioned in the mainstream canonical compendiums, but its authenticity was verified according to Ibn ‘Arabi on the basis of his own unveiling.

¹²⁴ Ibn ‘Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, Trans. Austin, p.50. Cf. The Neoplatonists often call ‘being’ essence and Iamblichus states of the gods in *De mysteriis* 1.5 (18.10-1) ‘.... the conception of being unmixed and transcendent alike in essence, potency and activity – all such characteristics should be attributed to the gods.’

¹²⁵ Ibn ‘Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, p.50; Plotinus, *The Enneads*, v 2, 1.7-21.

¹²⁶ Chittick states, ‘every relation established between God and the cosmos can be named, and naming it establishes a divine name.’ *The Self-Disclosure of God*, pp. XVII and XVIII.

existence (*wujud*).¹²⁷ These ‘possibilities’ are the divine names that play a fundamental role in the world view of Ibn ‘Arabi. The remembering or the invocation of these names produces a visionary knowledge within the being of the spiritual traveller.¹²⁸ The goal of this knowledge is to entirely actualize within oneself the divine perfection that each name denotes.¹²⁹ The divine names act as archetypes through which God manifests himself in the universe and what is created can be considered as the mirror that reflects these names and attributes.¹³⁰ Corbin observes that for Ibn ‘Arabi, ‘God who is revealing Himself to Himself, produced the world as a mirror in which to contemplate His own image and beauty.’¹³¹ God, is therefore above all qualities and He manifests himself only through the divine names and not by His essence.¹³² Schimmel states, ‘On the plane of essence, He is inconceivable (transcending concepts) and nonexperiential (transcending even nonrational cognition).’¹³³ This suggests that in their actual existence humanity, like all created things, are not identical to God, but are just reflections of His attributes.

Using a different language, Proclus also maintained that the One is absolutely perfect and incomprehensible, for to know it would be to apply a limit to what is essentially unlimited.¹³⁴ Transcendence and immanence bind the metaphysics of the Neoplatonists and of Ibn ‘Arabi together. In Ibn ‘Arabi’s system the divine names represent the beginning of the divine manifestation and they are made manifest into created things producing the phenomenal world. The essence is transcendent but immanence is made possible through the perception and emanation of the

¹²⁷ Addas, Claude, *Ibn ‘Arabi: The Voyage of No Return*, trans. David Streight, (Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 2000) p. 91.

¹²⁸ Chittick, William, Ibn al-‘Arabi’s Myth of the Names, ed. James T.H. Martin, *Philosophies of Being and Mind*, (Dealmarn New York: Caravan Books, 1992), p. 207-208. Cf. Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 7, 4 (255-256).

¹²⁹ Chittick, Ibn al-‘Arabi Myth of the Names, p.17.

¹³⁰ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 271.

¹³¹ Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabi*, p.148.

¹³² Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p.267.

¹³³ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p.267.

¹³⁴ See section on the Metaphysics of Proclus 2.1.

divine names.¹³⁵ For Ibn ‘Arabi the cosmos is thus a theophany of the divine names and qualities of God and according to Nasr can be compared to an ever flowing river whose water is renewed each moment but which maintains its general form determined by the structure of its bed.¹³⁶ Ibn ‘Arabi also compares creation to the voicing of sound from the human mouth, which then become articulated words.¹³⁷

Ibn ‘Arabi states: ‘Everything whose building is seen is suspended from a form in our essence.’¹³⁸ Forms refer to names and what this suggests is that all things that exist within the cosmos are derived from the names, which emanate from the essence. This compares again with theurgy where the gods are the closest entities to the One. Because the divine names are derived from the essence and yet are responsible for creation, they have two faces, one face towards the essence and the other toward creation.¹³⁹ Essence, names and creation, represent the ultimate unity and Ibn Arabi states that the entire cosmos is the manifestation of the divine.¹⁴⁰ There is both the transcendence of the divine as well as the immanence of god through His self-disclosure. There is unity of the concept of the divine self-disclosure as disclosed to and for God alone with the concept of God as immanent within all of creation. Unity is achieved through the association of these ideas in which the divine becomes both the source and the recipient of the divine self-disclosure. The divine names emerge from the transcendental essence yet remain dependant on it as it emanates outward into creation. Thus, Ibn ‘Arabi describes the ultimate unity of reality through the concept of the divine

¹³⁵ Ibn Arabi states ‘This is a (direct) self-manifestation of the Essence of which invisibility is the reality and through this self-manifestation the He-ness is actualized...The Absolute (at this stage) is eternally and everlastingly “He” for itself’, quoted in Izutsu, Toshihiko, *Sufism and Taoism*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), p.43.

¹³⁶ Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, p.112. Nasr states, ‘The water is a symbol of the light of Being which emanates at every moment throughout the Universe, and the bed symbolizes the archetypes which determine the general direction of the flow.’

¹³⁷ Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, p.112. See also Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, pp. 69-72. Cf. Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 3. 8 (117. 5) and 3.9 (118.13-119.3).

¹³⁸ Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, p.72.

¹³⁹ Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, p.100.

¹⁴⁰ Ibn ‘Arabi states, ‘That God himself is the very proof of Himself and his divinity, that the world is nothing other than His appearance in the forms of their (created beings) fixed essences whose existence is impossible without Him and that He is manifold in appearance as forms, according to the natures of these essences and their modes.’ Nettler, Ronald L. *Sufi Metaphysics and Qu’ranic Prophets*, (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 2003) p.80.

self-disclosure in which the divine is both that which discloses and that which is disclosed.

The main levels of cosmic existence for Ibn ‘Arabi are based on five divine presences of Being. These are in ascending order as the world of human bodily forms (*al-nasut*). The second is the world of subtle lights or psychic substance (*al-malakut*) such as the angelic world.¹⁴¹ In this world lies the world of imagination. Third, the world of spiritual existence beyond form where existentialization takes form. Fourth, the world of the divine nature revealing itself in its perfect qualities (*al-lahut*) or divine attributes. In the final fifth world stands the divine essence (*al-hahut*) which transcends all other determinations.¹⁴² The goal of the Sufi is to pass through all these states of cosmic manifestation in order to attain the state of union with God. Union does not mean ‘the union between the Creator and creation... Union means our becoming aware of our nothingness before God.’¹⁴³ The objective is to realize that there is no real existence but the existence of God alone.

2.2.1. Ibn ‘Arabi’s Oneness of Being (*Wahdat al-Wujud*)

At the heart of Ibn Arabi’s cosmology is the concept of the ‘oneness of being’ and his perspective on reality. The mainstream position in Islam is that God created the universe *ex nihilo* and therefore that there is a duality between God and man and as a consequence each has separate entities, which do not intermingle.¹⁴⁴ In addition creation has an objective existence that is real as opposed to imaginary. *Wahdat al wujud* has been variously translated as ‘unity of being’ ‘unicity of being’ and ‘unity of existence’, but the term *wujud* also basically means ‘finding’ or ‘to be found’, which makes it more dynamic than mere ‘existence.’¹⁴⁵ According to Schimmler it refers to the unity of existentialization and to the perception of this act so everything gains its existence or *wujud* by ‘being found’ or perceived by God so that ‘only

¹⁴¹ Cf. Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 2.3 (71.1-5).

¹⁴² Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, p.113.

¹⁴³ Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, pp.114-115. Cf. Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 7.2 (251.5-10).

¹⁴⁴ Deryl, Suleyman, *From Rabi’a to Ibn al-Farid*, p.217.

¹⁴⁵ Schimmler, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p.267.

their face that is turned to God is real, the rest is pure not-being.’¹⁴⁶ It is important to stress that the concept of ‘oneness of being’ does involve a continuity between God and creation and thus can be contrasted to the Neoplatonic concept of the One which lies at a different ontological level to being. Ibn ‘Arabi observes the multiplicity of creation but does not identify it as real existence since the attributes and divine names have no independent existence of their own apart from the essence of God. As Ibn ‘Arabi states,

The names have never ceased belonging to Him from eternity without beginning. They are the divine storehouses, within which are the storehouses of the possibilities, within which are stored the things. So, bringing together is the counterpart of bringing together, manyness...and number, despite the unity of the Entity. And this is the unity of bringing together.¹⁴⁷

What has been ‘brought together’ are the different attributes of existence to form a unity of the totality and since entities gain their existence by ‘being found’, and since God is transcendent and immanent at the same time, creation is neither Him nor independent of Him. To clarify the above concept further it can be said that God is believed to be the ‘One’ in terms of his attributes, but ‘the Single’ in terms of his essence.¹⁴⁸ In the Neoplatonic/theurgic system the One is never ‘single’ since it is beyond being and thus marks a major contrast with Ibn ‘Arabi’s concept.

2.3 Closing Remarks: A Comparison of both Systems

The language used by Proclus, Iamblichus and Ibn ‘Arabi to describe their metaphysics is different but there is some similarity in content. The notion that human beings are the microcosm of the divine and that the cosmos represents the divine macrocosm is upheld in both systems. Transcendence and immanence go hand in hand since human beings contain a spark of the divine yet are distant from the divine as a consequence of their physical and cosmic nature. Both Proclus and Ibn ‘Arabi maintain the complete transcendence of the One and God and yet what emanates from the One or God always contains within itself a

¹⁴⁶ Schimmler, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p.267.

¹⁴⁷ Ibn Arabi in Chittick, William, *The Self Disclosure of God*, p.171.

¹⁴⁸ Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, p. 109.

possibility of unity despite its move away from perfection or His essence. Yet a difference exists between the two systems in that for the theurgists, the One is immanent throughout all levels of being and creation while for Ibn ‘Arabi it is the divine inner nature of human beings that represents the descent of the divine from transcendence to immanence. In both systems, the transcendent aspect of the divine is unknowable but for Proclus and Iamblichus mystical union with the One is possible. The point in which emanation begins in Proclus’ metaphysics is from the henads or gods, while for Ibn ‘Arabi it is the divine names.

It is important to state that Ibn ‘Arabi describes several different cosmological schemes in his writings, which although drawing on different traditions, are essentially based on the Quran and as Nasr observes, are specifically Islamic concepts closely related to the very forms of Islamic revelation and the letters and sounds of the Arabic language.¹⁴⁹ Interestingly both Proclus and Ibn ‘Arabi affirm that the point of emanation is the point in which the divine energy (Proclus) and essence (Ibn ‘Arabi) becomes the source of what is hidden in creation. This suggests that the transcendent divine becomes immanent and paradoxically that it becomes potentially accessible to the mystic (Ibn ‘Arabi) or the soul (Proclus). However, both Proclus and Ibn ‘Arabi maintain that knowledge which is gained of the One or essence from a position of immanence is by definition limited.¹⁵⁰ Thus, an aspect of what is transcendent always remains.

Ibn Arabi’s divine names act, like the gods for Proclus, as the intermediaries between God/One and humanity. For William Chittick the divine names in many ways play the same role as the gods in polytheistic traditions by, for example, providing a way of understanding how ultimate reality shapes and controls the ontological levels of the cosmos.¹⁵¹ Chittick states, ‘one can conclude that the “cult of the names” as found in popular Islam and Sufism plays a function not unrelated to

¹⁴⁹ Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, p.113.

¹⁵⁰ Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 122; Ibn ‘Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, p.182.

¹⁵¹ Chittick, William, Ibn al-‘Arabi’s ‘Myth of the Names’, in *Philosophies of Being and Mind*, ed. James T.H. Martin, (New York: Caravan Books, 1992) p.207.

the cultic role of a multiplicity of divinities in certain other traditions.¹⁵² Thus, it can be argued that the henads in Proclus' metaphysics are close to the divine names of Ibn Arabi since the plurality of both arises from their individual nature and their individuality derives from the One or God. But, in contrast to Ibn 'Arabi, Proclus' henads have their own being and individual identity and are not just parts or aspects of the One or of God.

Emphasis in this study has been placed on Proclus' metaphysics but Iamblichus in the context of theurgy discusses the 'unknowable names' considered to be secret names of gods.¹⁵³ Addey observes that the 'unknowable names' operated at a high level of the Neoplatonic hierarchical schema: 'they are united with the gods in the divine realm and are superior to all human knowledge.'¹⁵⁴ There is a connection with the divine names of Ibn 'Arabi particularly in relation to the symbolic character of these names, since they were a potent means for bringing about spiritual transformation both in Sufism and in theurgy.¹⁵⁵ The theurgists, however, have a concept of the gods and their 'unknowable names' whereas Ibn 'Arabi's Sufism only has the divine names. Finally, a striking difference in the metaphysics of both systems is the reason for creation. For Proclus creation was an act of overflowing from the One, while for Ibn 'Arabi it was an act of love as God desired to know himself.

¹⁵² Chittick, Ibn al-'Arabi's 'Myth of the Names', p.207.

¹⁵³ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 7.4 (255.1- 256.2); Addey, Crystal, Assuming the Mantle of the Gods: 'Unknowable Names,' Hieratic Formulae and Invocations in Late Antique Theurgic Ritual, *Sacred Words: Orality, Literacy and Religion*, ed, André Lardinois, Josine Blok and M.G.M. van der Poel, (Brill, 2011) p.282.

¹⁵⁴ Addey, Crystal, Assuming the Mantle of the Gods, p.282; Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 7.4 (255.10-13).

¹⁵⁵ For a more detailed discussion see Chittick, Ibn al-Arabi's 'Myth of the Names', pp.207-208; Addey, Assuming the Mantle of the Gods, pp.282-284.

3.0 COSMIC SYMPATHY IN THEURGY AND DIVINE COMPASSION IN SUFISM

3.1 The Interconnected Universe in Theurgy

In relation to defining the nature of theurgy, Crystal Addey states, ...theurgic ritual aimed to use *symbola* (symbols) to re-awaken the soul's inherent causal connection, through divine *philia* (divine love) and *sympatheia* (cosmic sympathy), with the gods, thus allowing the soul to attain *anagoge*, the ascent of the soul to the divine intelligible realm.¹⁵⁶

For Iamblichus, theurgy is a method of salvation for the soul which aims at unification with the gods and of 'unification with the divine first principle.'¹⁵⁷ The divine first principle is the One of Neoplatonism, which, as described in a previous section, lies beyond being itself, representing a major difference with Sufism. It is clear that the idea of an interconnected universe was essential for the understanding and practice of theurgy, while in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi it does not appear to be emphasized beyond the expression of its essential unity. In the section on Neoplatonic metaphysics it was shown that the universe is considered a holistic and dynamic whole composed of different hierarchies of levels and populated by a multitude of different gods. In comparison, in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi the metaphysical construction of the universe is less detailed and the relationship between different ontological levels is implied rather than explicitly stated. In Sufism this means that although everything emanates from God and goes back to God the relationship of the constituent parts of God's manifestations (the divine names) do not connect together in the same way as in theurgy where there is cosmic sympathy between the different levels of reality.

Iamblichus describes the unity and reciprocity of the cosmos as follows:

The One (of these extremes) is at the summit, and transcendent and perfect, while the other is at the bottom, deficient and relatively imperfect; the One can achieve all things simultaneously, in the present

¹⁵⁶ Addey, *Crystal, Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p. 25.

¹⁵⁷ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 1.12-13; Iamblichus states in 5.22 (231.1), 'But come now, you say is it not the highest purpose of the hieratic art to ascend to the One, which is supreme master of the whole multiplicity (of divinities).'

instant, unitarily, while the other can achieve neither all things nor all at once nor suddenly nor indivisibly.¹⁵⁸

Iamblichus expresses the main difference between the One on the one hand and the souls of human beings on the other. Clearly the latter are imperfect, and it is only through theurgy that their souls can be rendered more perfect and ascend to the One. As has been previously stated one of the essential elements of theurgy was divination. As Addey observes theurgic ritual involved invoking the epiphany of a deity, either within the soul of a human or as an external vision (considered to occur both in dream divination or while awake): for example, epiphanies of Hekate are attested in the *Chaldean Oracles* and in Marinus' *Life of Proclus*.¹⁵⁹ In addition to invoking the epiphany of a particular deity, theurgic ritual also consisted in building, consecrating and animating telestic statues (*telestika*) that were believed to become animated by the deity and deliver oracles during the course of the ritual.¹⁶⁰ A further form of divination was when the theurgist became divinely inspired or possessed (oracular divination) and as a consequence would articulate oracles from the gods. Iamblichus observes on the subject that 'Divination is accomplished by divine acts and signs, and consists of divine visions and scientific insights.'¹⁶¹ Other rituals such as prayer and sacrifice were also considered important.¹⁶² But, as Iamblichus states, divination is not a 'human achievement at all.'¹⁶³ In fact Iamblichus warns against thinking that divination is activated by humans and emphasises that the 'supreme power belongs to the gods, and is bestowed by the gods.'¹⁶⁴ What this suggests is that there is a potential connection between human beings and the gods, which can be developed, leading to a state of human receptivity where 'divinisation' can occur.¹⁶⁵ This receptivity that leads to the ascent of the divine (*anagogê*) is based on the principle of

¹⁵⁸ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis* 1.7 (21.1-5).

¹⁵⁹ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p.25; Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*, fragments 219, 221, 222; Proclus' visions of Hekate: Marinus, *Life of Proclus*, Chapter 28.

¹⁶⁰ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 5.23 (234.1-5); Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p.26.

¹⁶¹ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 3.1(101.1).

¹⁶² Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism* p.26.; For the importance of prayers and sacrifices see Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, Book 5.26.

¹⁶³ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 3. 1 (100.5).

¹⁶⁴ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 3.1 (100.1).

¹⁶⁵ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p.26.

cosmic sympathy (*sympatheia*) where like is assigned to like.¹⁶⁶ The human theurgist aimed to assimilate themselves to the gods by using symbols which were ontologically linked with specific gods or goddesses. So, each symbol has a specific affinity with the deity.

Before addressing cosmic sympathy in more detail, it is worth briefly to consider the idea of the connected cosmos and summarise the cosmological world view that is critical for theurgy. In the section on Neoplatonic metaphysics the construction of the universe was explained, and it is worth reiterating that for Iamblichus (and for Proclus as well) the gods are simultaneously both transcendent and immanent throughout the universe. As Gregory Shaw observes, the aim of Iamblichean theurgy is to,

...sustain the continuity of the gods with our physical world ... by recognizing their presence in material existence: in animals, plants, and even stones, and further, that human beings have the capacity to engage this presence by ritually embodying the divine activity, the theurgy, through which it is revealed.¹⁶⁷

Therefore, the highest is in the lowest just as the ineffable, transcendent One who is beyond being is present in the densest material reality.¹⁶⁸ This applies to the henadic gods as well since they are symbolically revealed in ‘unifying activities’ which are seen, felt and met in the ordinary day to day world.¹⁶⁹ So everything in the cosmos is connected and these connections are based on the hierarchical schema which characterises the metaphysical system of Neoplatonism.¹⁷⁰

Every lower level of reality is penetrated by emanations arising from the cosmic divine order and therefore the connections between the divine, cosmic order and lower levels of reality can be described as cosmic sympathy. In contrast, Ibn ‘Arabi appears rarely to turn his attention to the animal kingdom and the densest forms of matter. Faithful to monotheistic Islam Ibn ‘Arabi focuses his attention almost exclusively on the relationship between God and human beings and it can be suggested that the rest of the cosmos has

¹⁶⁶ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 5.20 (227.10-1).

¹⁶⁷ Shaw, Gregory, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*, (Kettering, OH, Angelico Press, 2014) Kindle Ed. p.xxii; Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 5.23 (233. 9-13).

¹⁶⁸ Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p.xxii.

¹⁶⁹ Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p.xxii.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Smith, J.Z., *Map is not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions*, (Leiden: Brill, 1978) p.132, who discusses a ‘locative’ world view of ancient Mediterranean religions.

less symbolic meaning than for the theurgist.¹⁷¹ Ibn ‘Arabi talks of the principle of divine permeation in which the Cosmos and each of its constituents is wholly permeated by the divine agent, where the multiplicity of the Cosmos conceals the all-pervading reality of God.¹⁷² This principle of permeation is reciprocal in the sense that all creation is also implicitly and essentially present in God. However, while this permeation resembles the overflowing of the One in all things of theurgy, it is not cosmic sympathy since Ibn ‘Arabi does not appear to specifically address this issue in his writings. As shall be discussed in the next two sections, it is the view of this thesis that cosmic sympathy is primarily a theurgic concept.

3.2 Cosmic Sympathy (*sympatheia*) in Theurgy

Cosmic sympathy is an important component in the interconnected cosmos of theurgy. In the *Chaldean Oracles*, cosmic sympathy bears a certain similarity to the widely used term ‘connectors’ in the *Oracles*, whose chief purpose is to harmonise and protect various parts of the universe.¹⁷³ Both Iamblichus and Proclus consider *sympatheia* a key element in theurgy, but according to Iamblichus theurgy is primarily dependant on *theia philia*, a divine friendship or love, which causes cosmic sympathy.¹⁷⁴ This will be discussed in chapter four on divine love, but it is worth pointing out that if cosmic sympathy reflects the principle of *theia philia*, it stands at a lower ontological level, suggesting that cosmic sympathy is a derivative of a higher principle, thereby differentiating theurgic ritual from ordinary magic (*goeteia*).¹⁷⁵ Iamblichus believes that the cosmic force of cohesion that draws the different parts of the universe ‘towards mingling’ with each other can be

¹⁷¹ Chittick, *The Self Disclosure of God*, p. xxiii.

¹⁷² Ibn ‘Arabi states ‘Know that whenever something permeates another it is assumed into the other. That which permeates, the agent, is disguised by that which permeated, the object of permeation. Thus, the object in this case is the manifest, while the agent is the unmanifest, the hidden [reality]. The latter is as nourishment for the former, even as a piece of wool swells and expands because of the water that permeates it.’ Ibn, ‘Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, p.90.

¹⁷³ *The Chaldean Oracles*, Text, Trans. & Commentary by Ruth Majercik, Fragments 80, 81 and 82. Introduction, pp.10-11.

¹⁷⁴ Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop.140; Proclus, *Procli Diadochi in Platonis Timaeum Commentarii*, ed. Erenestus Diehl, Vols I-III, (Leipzig: Teubner, 1899-1901) I. 139.27-9; Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 4.3 (188.1).

¹⁷⁵ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p.29.

artificially aroused.¹⁷⁶ But, any ritual that ended at the horizontal level of sympathy did not ‘preserve the analogy with divine creation’ and was thus sorcery and not theurgy at all.¹⁷⁷ Proclus was convinced that ‘all things are full of gods,’¹⁷⁸ and that the dominance of the gods extended to the lowest things.¹⁷⁹ So everything down to the lowest entity belongs to one of many divine ‘series’ or ‘chains’ (*seirai*), which extend or stretch from the henads or gods to the ultimate reaches of the cosmos.¹⁸⁰ As Proclus states, ‘The distinctive character of any divine order travels through all the derivative beings and bestows itself upon all the inferior kinds.’¹⁸¹ As Addey observes, *sympatheia* is based on the idea that certain ‘chains of noetic Forms’ (originating from the realm of the *nous* or intellect) ‘..and symbols (*symbola*) emanate from the gods through all subsequent ontological grades of reality, permeating every strand of the cosmos, including the physical world.’¹⁸² Iamblichus observes the same *sympatheia* when he states,

...the participants (in divine influences) are in each case of such a nature that they participate in them either through the medium of aether or of air, or yet of water; and it is by observing this that the art of divine works makes use of correspondences.’¹⁸³

The suggestion is that there is a system of vertical and horizontal chains of connection between various parts of the universe, although theurgy primarily concentrates on the vertical.¹⁸⁴

Addey believes that the notion of sympathy encompasses the idea that truth is expressed in different levels of reality in the way most appropriate to that level and refers to proposition 103 in Proclus’ *Elements of Theology* where he says, ‘all things are in all things but in each according to its proper nature.’¹⁸⁵ The Platonic Forms are in the end what the notion of *sympatheia* is

¹⁷⁶ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 4.12. (196.1-3).

¹⁷⁷ Shaw, Gregory, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p.191.

¹⁷⁸ Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 145.

¹⁷⁹ Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 140.

¹⁸⁰ Chlup, *Proclus an Introduction*, p.128.

¹⁸¹ Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop.145.

¹⁸² Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p.29.

¹⁸³ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 1.9 (33.4-7).

¹⁸⁴ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, Emma C. Clarke footnote 60, 1.9; Cf. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 145, ‘The distinctive character of any divine order travels through all the derivative beings and bestows itself upon all the inferior kinds....’.

¹⁸⁵ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p.29; Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop.103.

based on since it is the Forms, which enform all physical phenomena. Shaw indicates that theurgic ritual, of which *sympatheia* is a key component, is dependent on the Platonic Theory of Recollection where all human beings have prior knowledge of the Forms and thus can perceive them by observing physical phenomena which are inherently ‘imprinted’ with these Forms.¹⁸⁶ So human beings use objects in the material world rather like ‘memory prods’ to remind the soul of Platonic Forms.¹⁸⁷ As described, the concept of vertical chains is from a theurgic point of view important for both Proclus and Iamblichus. Since each particular thing is linked to the gods, the theurgist can evoke divine powers and establish contact with the gods through ritual.¹⁸⁸ Iamblichus speaks of ‘a pure and divine form of matter; for matter also issues from the father and the creators of all’.¹⁸⁹ Similarly Proclus describes the use of *sympatheia* within theurgy.¹⁹⁰

The idea of chains of things emanating from the gods, that are similar in nature, led Proclus to the conviction that deep in the core of every single thing there is to be found a ‘token’ (*synthema*) or ‘symbol’ (*symbolon*) of some god by which the entity in question is permanently linked to its divine patron.¹⁹¹ Chlup observes that just as ‘each mineral, plant or animal is a reflection of some Form in respect of its basic physical structure, at a deeper level of its existence it is also a manifestation of some god in whose chain it belongs.’¹⁹² The point is illustrated in Proclus’ treatise *On the Hieratic Art According to the Greeks* in which the heliotrope (sunflower) opens and moves its leaves in accordance with the light of the sun, making the heliotrope a

¹⁸⁶ For the Platonic Theory of Recollection see Plato’s *Meno*, trans. and introduction by Dominic Scott, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 81d. See note 268.

¹⁸⁷ Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p.24.

¹⁸⁸ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 5.23 (233. 9-13); Chlup, *Proclus an Introduction*, p.129.

¹⁸⁹ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 5.23 (232.5-7)

¹⁹⁰ Proclus states: ‘.... priests – observing how all things are in all from the sympathy that all visible things have for one another and for the invisible powers – have also framed their priestly knowledge. For they were amazed to see the last in the first and the very first in the last; in heaven they saw earthly things acting causally and in a heavenly manner, in the earth heavenly things in an earthly manner.’ Proclus *On the Hieratic Art*, Trs. Copenhagen (1988), 148.5-1. See Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, 5.23 (233.1-5), 2.2 (97.1-10).

¹⁹¹ In *Platonic Theology*, II 8, 56.16-25, Proclus states, ‘For he who has caused the universe has “sown into all things” tokens (*synthemata*) of his own perfect transcendence, and by means of these has established all things about himself: he is ineffably present to them, and yet transcends them all. Every single thing, therefore, by plunging into the ineffable zone of its own nature finds there the symbol (*symbolon*) of the Father of all.’

¹⁹² Chlup, *Proclus an Introduction*, p.130.

symbol of the sun god.¹⁹³ The lotus also shows this kind of sympathy since when the sun rises its petals slowly unfold. In the mineral kingdom the sunstone imitates the rays of the sun while in the animal kingdom, the solar series is represented by the lion and the cock.¹⁹⁴ According to Proclus each 'chain' increases in number as it proceeds to its lowest expressions.¹⁹⁵ So, symbols are physical and verbal expressions of divine, sympathetic 'chains', which the theurgist uses in order to obtain direct, practical understanding and wisdom of the divine world and the nature of the metaphysical universe, along with the relationship between the divine and mortal worlds.¹⁹⁶ As Iamblichus states,

..the theurgic art in many cases links together stones, plants, animals, aromatic substances, and other such things that are sacred, perfect and godlike, and then from all these composes an integrated and pure receptacle.¹⁹⁷

Theurgy, in using symbols in this way, appeals to the sympathetic connections that exist between all grades of reality and gives access to the actual cause of the connections, which are the gods.

3.3 Compassion in Sufism

A major contrast between Theurgy and Ibn 'Arabi concerns the concept of cosmic sympathy. Each succeeding degree of creation in Ibn Arabi's cosmological system represents a logical rather than ontological progression towards manifestation.¹⁹⁸ This is a major difference with Neoplatonic metaphysics. Cosmic sympathy in the theurgic understanding of the term does not feature in the philosophy of Ibn 'Arabi despite the fact that certain interpreters of Ibn 'Arabi's works refer to the existence of a human-divine *sympatheia*.¹⁹⁹ Henry Corbin talks of a nostalgia of the divine names which are yearning to be revealed

¹⁹³ Proclus, *On the Hieratic Art According to the Greeks*, 149.12-25.

¹⁹⁴ Proclus, *On the Hieratic Art According to the Greeks*, 150.10-12.

¹⁹⁵ Proclus, *On the Hieratic Art According to the Greeks*, 150.1-4.

¹⁹⁶ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 7.1-2.

¹⁹⁷ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis* 5.23 (233. 10-13).

¹⁹⁸ Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, p.xxix, Chittick states, 'Ibn Arabi does not refer to all these degrees as actually existing entities. Some being conceptual tools and have no external existence save in the traces that they leave in the cosmos or in our minds.'

¹⁹⁹ Corbin, *Alone with the Alone*, pp.105-111.

by God who experiences anguish 'in his unknowness'.²⁰⁰ This anguish or sadness is manifested in the form of a sigh of compassion which marks the release of the divine sadness sympathizing with the divine names that have remained unknown. The idea that Corbin establishes is that of divine sympathy as the initial act of a metaphysic love.²⁰¹ Ibn 'Arabi states 'The world is made manifest in the Sigh of Compassion by which God (by exhaling them) appeased the sadness of the divine names.'²⁰² Corbin goes on to state that there is an *unio sympathetica* between the divine names. But this is not exactly cosmic sympathy in the theurgic sense of the term since Ibn 'Arabi makes no reference to the divine 'series' or 'chains' which extend from the henads or gods (divine names for Ibn 'Arabi if one takes Chittick's argument that they are similar to the gods of polytheistic religion) to the ultimate reaches of the cosmos.²⁰³

The theurgic concept of cosmic sympathy in which there is a complex system of sympathetic correspondences and likenesses (related to the different gods) that precisely match cosmological phenomena to their divine causes does not seem part of Ibn 'Arabi's cosmology.²⁰⁴ However, it is arguable that a sense of sympathy is enclosed within Ibn 'Arabi's concept of divine love, despite the fact that the term is not present in his terminology. Support for this claim can be found in the following statement of Ibn 'Arabi:

The beauty of God's handiwork permeates his creation, while the cosmos is the place where he becomes manifest. Therefore, the love of the different parts of the cosmos for each other derives from God's love for himself.²⁰⁵

It is clearly stated that love is a binding force between different parts of the cosmos and thus as Chittick observes despite the fact that love brings about separation (the creation of the cosmos) it also brings about union, or the return of the cosmos to its given place in God.²⁰⁶ According to Ibn

²⁰⁰ Corbin, *Alone with the Alone*, p.115.

²⁰¹ Corbin, *Alone with the Alone*, p.116.

²⁰² Ibn 'Arabi, *Fusus*, 145 in Corbin, *Alone with the Alone*, p.117.

²⁰³ See Chittick, Ibn al-'Arabi's 'Myth of the Names', p.207.

²⁰⁴ See next section 3.4 on astral correspondences.

²⁰⁵ Ibn 'Arabi, *Fusus II*, 114.8 in Chittick, The Spiritual Path of love in Ibn al-'Arabi and Rumi, *Mystics Quarterly*, Vol.19, No.1 (March 1993) pp 8-9.

²⁰⁶ Chittick, The Spiritual Path of Love, p.9.

‘Arabi, ‘Nature is in reality nothing other than the Sigh of Compassion’ of God.²⁰⁷ This leads Corbin to suggest that the ‘mystic has come to know that the very substance of his being is a breath (*spiritus*) of that infinite Compassion; he is the epiphanic form of a Divine Name’.²⁰⁸ As such, the mystic’s prayer does not consist in a request but is his actual mode of being, which can be compared, according to Corbin, to the prayer of Proclus’s heliotrope when it turns towards its heavenly Lord – the sun.

It is interesting to observe that Corbin uses Proclus’ *On the Hieratic Art* to argue for a *sympatheia* in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabi. The comparison of the *sympatheia* shown by the heliotrope towards the sun and human-divine sympathy works only partially. What Corbin calls *sympatheia* appears more like compassion, which is related to love. In fact Corbin talks of the, ‘Breath of Compassion as a phenomenon of primordial Love,’ which is ‘at once an active, creative and liberating potency and a passive potency, that it is to say, it is the very substance, the “immaterial matter” constitutive of all beings from the angelic Spirits to the beings of the supra-elementary Nature and those of sublunar Nature.’²⁰⁹ Every degree of being has this twofold dimension similarly to the divine names which are at once active and passive. They are active because they determine the attribute that they invest in and the concrete form they aspire to, and passive since they are determined in and by that form that manifests them according to the requirement of its eternal condition.²¹⁰ As Corbin suggests there is a passion which is lived, a compassion and in his view a sympathy.²¹¹ Ibn ‘Arabi states,

Those to whom God remains veiled pray the God who in their belief is their Lord to have compassion with them. But the intuitive mystics ask that divine Compassion be fulfilled [come into being, exist] through them.²¹²

²⁰⁷ Ibn ‘Arabi, *Fusus II*, 328, in Henry Corbin, *Alone with the Alone*, p.117.

²⁰⁸ Corbin, *Alone with the Alone*, p.116.

²⁰⁹ Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.116.

²¹⁰ Corbin, *Alone with the Alone*, p.116.

²¹¹ Corbin, *Alone with the Alone*, p.116.

²¹² Ibn ‘Arabi, *Fusus I*, p.178 in Corbin, *Alone with the Alone*, p.117.

Ibn 'Arabi thus observes that it is through the mystics' breath of compassion that the divine being is actualized.

In conclusion it is the view of this study that cosmic sympathy does not form part of the language or cosmology of Ibn 'Arabi. There is, however, a connection between what Ibn 'Arabi describes as compassion between beings and God and something that could be described as sympathetic, based on God's infinite love for all creatures. This is not the cosmic sympathy described in theurgy and which is particular to its polytheistic culture, its cosmology and ritual practices.

3.4 Astral Correspondences in Theurgy and Sufism

In theurgy 'symbols' (*symbola*) and 'tokens' (*sunthemata*) are related to the system of astral correspondences since the planets were considered by theurgists such as Iamblichus as the visible bodies of the gods.²¹³ Thus, for example, symbols in the chain of the sun god (for instance the lion, the cockerel and the sunflower) are also linked to the sun through cosmic sympathy.²¹⁴ Another example would be that symbols in the chain of the goddess Aphrodite are also linked to the planet Venus through sympathy. The planets, therefore, are closely allied to the incorporeal essence of the gods and as Iamblichus states, 'It must be remarked that heavenly body is closely akin to the incorporeal essence of the gods... Thus, then, the entities visible in heaven are all gods, and all in a certain way incorporeal.'²¹⁵ Astrology can be considered as an epiphany of the divine and the potencies which emanate from the sun activate the entire zodiac along with every portion of the heavens.²¹⁶ Shaw argues that for Iamblichus the sun is a *sunthema* of the One itself, the powers descending from the sun exhibit the constantly changing face of the gods emanating from the One.²¹⁷

²¹³ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 1.9 (32.1-5)

²¹⁴ Proclus, *On the Hieratic Art According to the Greeks*, 150.

²¹⁵ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 1.17 (51.9-10); 1.18 (52.13-14).

²¹⁶ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 7.3 (253.2-7)

²¹⁷ Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p.195; Iamblichus states, '...all things in the universe receive the potencies emanating from the sun, some of which are immanent in these, while others remain transcendent from commixture with them, the symbolic method of signification represents these as well: it indicates through words the change in shape according to the signs of the zodiac and the change in forms by the hour, but it also indicates his immutable, stable,

In his opus *Al-Futuhāt al Makkiyya*, Ibn ‘Arabi observes, ‘So the cosmos is all lover and beloved and it all goes back to Him.’²¹⁸ Astrology exists within the *Futuhāt* as a symbolic language integrated into Ibn ‘Arabi’s cosmology with the aim of showing how ‘it all goes back to Him.’²¹⁹ Faithful to his unity of being, Ibn ‘Arabi revealed the Unity ‘in a multiplicity of cosmological guises.’²²⁰ According to Titus Burckhardt, who translated fragments of the *Futuhāt* to compile his *Mystical Astrology of Ibn ‘Arabi*, Ibn ‘Arabi used a medieval cosmological schema that is built as concentric spheres, with a central earth added to sub-lunar and planetary spheres.²²¹ It is not in the remit of this dissertation to elaborate on the complex scheme established by Ibn ‘Arabi but simply to observe that the sun, like in theurgy, is considered the centre of the six known planets. The degree of detail in the exposition of Ibn ‘Arabi’s cosmological ‘edifice’ is not found in extant (surviving) theurgic sources, although Iamblichus and Proclus do discuss the concept of the Music of the Spheres and related ideas from which the Medieval cosmological schema of Ibn ‘Arabi almost certainly derives – the latter is clearly influenced by the former.²²² What is interesting is that Ibn ‘Arabi affirms (like Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 7.3, 253. 2-5) that the sun is the ‘heart of the world’ and that it ‘communicates light to all the other stars, including the fixed stars, and that itself is illuminated by the direct and incessant irradiation of a Divine Revelation.’²²³ The sun is therefore an important symbol of the One in both theurgy and Sufism. Iamblichus, while analysing Egyptian symbolism in book 7 of *De mysteriis*, states that the sun is ‘transcendentally in charge of the helm of the whole world.’²²⁴ Neoplatonist philosophers also

unfailing, and, at the same time, complete gift to the whole universe at once.’ *De mysteriis*, 7.3 (253.1-10).

²¹⁸ Ibn ‘Arabi, *Futuhāt II*, 326.18, quoted by Chittick, *Sufi Path*, p.181.

²¹⁹ Broadbent, Christine, Celestial Magic as the ‘Love Path’: The Spiritual Cosmology of Ibn ‘Arabi, *Culture and Cosmos*, Vol.19, No.1 and 2 (Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter 2015) p.150.

²²⁰ Broadbent, Celestial Magic, p.150.

²²¹ For an analysis of the schema see Burckhardt, Titus, *Mystical Astrology According to Ibn ‘Arabi*, Trans. by Bulent Rauf, (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2001.) p.13; Broadbent, Christine, Celestial Magic, p.151.

²²² See Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 8.8.

²²³ Burckhardt, Titus, *Mystical Astrology*, p.27.

²²⁴ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 7.2 (252.9-11). He states, ‘Just as the helmsman presides over the ship while taking charge of its rudder, so the sun is transcendentally in charge of the helm of the whole world.’

believed the sun to be an image as well as a symbol of the divine intellect and of the One.²²⁵

In theurgy there is a very precise system of symbols and tokens which encapsulate and embody astral correspondences, includes everything in the natural world in addition to the unknowable names, invocations and other formulae and speech. Thus, in theurgy the gods are seen as working through all of nature and through human beings via a precise system of astral correspondences contained within the symbols which are linked via cosmic sympathy, and of course, ultimately and primarily, via divine love (*theia philia*).²²⁶ This is a major difference with Ibn 'Arabi's thought, whereby God illuminates the world and everything in it via the divine names, love, compassion and the One being. It can be argued that in a sense Ibn Arabi's system is perhaps vaguer since he sees everything in terms of unity and does not seem to explain how the divine can be related to and can illuminate each specific and differentiated entity and being in the natural world.

Burckhardt observes that for Ibn 'Arabi the planetary spheres are identified with the Prophets so that Abraham resides in the sky of Saturn, Moses in that of Jupiter, Aaron in that of Mars, Enoch in that of the Sun, Joseph in that of Venus, Jesus in that of Mercury and Adam in that of the moon.²²⁷ This is a major contrast with theurgy where the planets, being the visible bodies of the gods, are linked with everything in the natural world and all human beings as part of that, whereas for Ibn 'Arabi they seemed to be linked with the human prophets only. Furthermore, Burckhardt suggests that Ibn 'Arabi viewed the human being as microcosmic in relation to the planets suggesting once again that there is a link between the planets and humans in Ibn 'Arabi's thought, but he does not mention or apparently include animals or the natural world.²²⁸

This section aimed to briefly highlight the importance of astrology as a symbolic language in both theurgy and Sufism, by using the sun as an image.

²²⁵ Cf. Plato, *Republic*, (digital edition: 2017), Book VII, 514a2-517a7. Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 7, Plotinus, *Enneads*, I.7, 1.25-29.

²²⁶ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p.119.

²²⁷ Burckhardt, Titus, *Mystical Astrology*, p.31.

²²⁸ Burckhardt, *Mystical Astrology*, p.34-35.

4.0 DIVINE LOVE IN THEURGY AND SUFISM

4.1. Origins and Definition

Iamblichus, like Proclus drew on Plato's concept of *erōs* to arrive at their definition of divine love (*theia philia*).²²⁹ It is also worth noting that Ibn 'Arabi combines the connotations and meaning both of *theia philia* and *erōs* in his definition of divine love.²³⁰ In Plato's *Symposium*, Diotima's speech (as reported by Socrates) explains that love occupies the middle ground and that it 'lies between mortality and immortality', making love an important spirit (*daimon*) that occupies 'the middle ground between humans and gods'.²³¹ Love acts as a mediator between gods and human beings; it is also a binding force.²³² As Harry Neumann observes, the final goal of Diotima's 'love is not the beautiful but the acquisition of happiness by giving birth in or through the beautiful.'²³³ The goal of love is the realization of absolute beauty, which is the ultimate object of knowledge and of the attainment of the good.²³⁴ Love is compared to the rungs of a ladder where 'you start by loving one attractive body' and you end up ascending 'to that final intellectual endeavour, which is no more and no less than the study of that beauty, so that you finally recognize true beauty'.²³⁵ In addition, Diotima's characterisation of *erōs* reveals a lack or a want of something; in her account, this relates to Eros' role as the child of Poverty and Plenty (i.e. between lack and abundance) and the nature of *erōs* as a kind of desire or a love that desires. As Diotima states, 'if a person isn't aware of a lack, he can't desire the thing which he isn't aware of lacking.'²³⁶ In Plato's *Palinode* speech in the *Phaedrus*, love (*erōs*) is presented as a kind of

²²⁹ *Philia* also means friendship. See Diotima's speech in Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Robin Waterfield, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 201d-212c. pp.41-56.

²³⁰ See section 4.3.

²³¹ Plato, *Symposium*, 202e, p.43.

²³² Plato, *Symposium*, 202e, p.44.

²³³ Neumann, Harry, Diotima's Concept of Love, *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol.86, No.1 (Jan. 1965) p.42.

²³⁴ Neumann, Diotima's Concept of Love, p.42.

²³⁵ Plato, *Symposium*, 211b and 211c. p.55.

²³⁶ Plato, *Symposium*, 204a and 203a-e. Cf. Proclus, *Commentary on the First Alcibiades*, 328:15 – 329:1 '...love is a powerful and intense desire for something, and everything that loves desires something it lacks.'

madness ‘sent by the gods to help us achieve the greatest happiness’²³⁷

Plato explains the role of love in the metaphysical life of a human being and as in the *Symposium* love is presented as a ladder in which ‘the souls which have seen the most are to enter the seeds of men who will become philosophers, lovers of beauty, men of culture, men who are dedicated to love.’²³⁸ Love is the mediator by which the soul can reach its highest potential in this earthly life.

For the theurgists divine love involves human love of God/gods and has both an ascending and descending quality, it has a double movement.²³⁹ As a consequence *theia philia* may display little difference from *erōs*; the way that Proclus presents Socrates in the *Commentary on the First Alcibiades* suggests that divine love or *theia philia* can be manifested by the enlightened human being (or theurgist) when they care for others and when they assimilate themselves to the gods through imitation - so a human theurgist can manifest divine love.²⁴⁰ It is possible to argue that *erōs* is broadly equivalent to *theia philia* and vice versa. There exists, however, one noticeable difference, which is that *erōs* often refers to lower entities and their desire to ‘revert’ to higher entities while *theia philia* is mainly used to characterise the perspective and love of the gods (and of the human theurgist when she or he assimilates themselves to the gods).²⁴¹ For example, as already mentioned, in Plato’s *Symposium*, Diotima’s speech implies that *erōs* as desire is characterised by a lack of and longing for something greater – an almost unfulfilled

²³⁷ Plato, *Phaedrus*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 245b.

²³⁸ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 248d.

²³⁹ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 4.2. (184. 2-6), ‘the whole of theurgy presents a double aspect. On the one hand, it is performed by men, and as such observes our natural rank in the universe; but on the other, it controls divine symbols, and in virtue of them is raised up to union with the higher powers....It is in virtue of this distinction ...that the art both naturally invokes the powers from the universe as superiors...and yet on the other hand gives them orders, since it invests itself with the hieratic role of the gods.’

²⁴⁰ See Proclus, *Commentary on the First Alcibiades*, ed. L.G. Westerink, Trans. and Commentary, William O’Neill, (Westbury, Wiltshire: The Prometheus Trust, 2011) 26 and 29.

²⁴¹ Iamblichus states on *theia philia* ‘...it is rather in virtue of the divine love which holds together all things that they provide a union of indissoluble involvement... ‘not only ‘...inclining the mind of the gods to humans, but rather, as the truth itself desires to teach us, disposing the human mind to participation in the gods, leading it up to the gods and bringing it into accord with them through harmonious persuasion.’ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 1.12. (42.3-10)

desire.²⁴² *Erōs* is often referred to in this way as a deep longing-desire.²⁴³ Thus, in this sense the two terms can be considered as slightly different although both are used to denote the binding force that holds the universe together and are most often used interchangeably.²⁴⁴

4.2 Love as *Theia Philia* in Theurgy

As stated in the previous section, Iamblichus believed that theurgy is primarily dependant on *theia philia*, a divine friendship or love which acts or operates as the cause of cosmic sympathy. The community of gods were considered by Iamblichus as an ineffable and supracosmic process that caused *sympatheia* to arise: ‘one single bond of friendship, embracing the totality of beings, effecting this bond through an ineffable process of communion.’²⁴⁵ Love, Iamblichus states, disposes ‘the human mind to participation in the gods, leading it up to the gods and bringing it into accord with them through harmonious persuasion’.²⁴⁶ *Theia philia* can be regarded as ‘supracosmic sympathy’ since it allows for the phenomenon of cosmic sympathy to arise although its place is at a lower ontological level than divine love.²⁴⁷ Thus, according to Iamblichus the unifying principle which transformed the soul in theurgy was the same principle that binds the cosmos together, universal *philia*. As Shaw observes, ‘The unifying power of *philia* defined the steps of theurgic ascent at the same time as it revealed the cosmogonic procession.’²⁴⁸ This suggests that *philia* supports both the cosmos and every act of theurgy. Iamblichus views *philia* as an effective agent that draws the soul back to the gods: for example, when talking about prayer he says it,

...stimulates persuasion and communion and indissoluble friendship (*philia*), augments divine love (*erōs*), kindles the divine element in the soul...in a word, it renders those who employ prayers, if we may so express it, the familiar consorts of the gods.²⁴⁹

²⁴² Plato, *Symposium*, 204a and 203a-e.

²⁴³ Plato in *Phaedrus* has Socrates state ‘Well then, it is clear to everyone that love is a kind of desire.’ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 237d.

²⁴⁴ *The Chaldean Oracles*, frag. 39, 48.

²⁴⁵ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 5.10 (211.10-14).

²⁴⁶ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 1.12 (42.10).

²⁴⁷ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p.29.

²⁴⁸ Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p.140.

²⁴⁹ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 5.26 (239.5).

In a similar fashion each theurgic ritual, from sacrifice to divination uses the agency of love to communicate with the gods.²⁵⁰ In fact, Iamblichus suggests that each divine work is accomplished through identity, unity and concord.²⁵¹ Iamblichus also talks of a divine madness as a form of ecstasy which is ‘turned towards the higher’.²⁵² As Shaw observes, although the heavenly cycles described in the *Phaedrus* and the *Timaeus* were the goal to which the Platonist aspired, it was erotic madness that brought him there.²⁵³ Thus, *philia* contains within itself a form of ecstasy that is comparable to a divine or erotic madness (as *erōs*) as described by Plato in *Phaedrus*.²⁵⁴ In the *Chaldean Oracles*, the Paternal Father ‘mixed the spark of soul with two harmonious qualities, Intellect and divine Will, to which he added a third, pure Love (*erōs*), as the guide and holy bond of all things.’²⁵⁵ According to the *Chaldean Oracles* the Paternal Father or Demiurge filled the soul with a ‘deep love’ in order to draw the soul back to the gods.²⁵⁶ Iamblichus also argues that love (*theia philia*) induces the mind of humans to participate in the gods, leading the mind upwards to the gods and bringing it in concordance with them through ‘harmonious persuasion.’²⁵⁷

Shaw argues that the love of the *Chaldean Oracles*, like the essential desire of the *De mysteriis*, was present in the soul before consciousness.²⁵⁸ It was this desire that led the soul to incarnate in a physical body and then led it back to the gods. As Shaw states ‘the theurgist received this *erōs* from the gods and returned it to them in the form of a ritualized cosmos. Embodiment was simply the pivot through which the *erōs* of the Demiurge returned to itself.’²⁵⁹ This suggests that in fact love circulates and is the motivating force by which the soul separates from divinity and then inverts back to its source. Shaw adds

²⁵⁰ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 5.9 (209.9-11).

²⁵¹ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 4.3 (185.12).

²⁵² Iamblichus, *De mysteriis* 3.25 (158.10).

²⁵³ Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p.140.

²⁵⁴ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 90.1-2. It is the view here that *philia* and *erōs* are equated with one another.

²⁵⁵ Frag.39 of the *Chaldean Oracles*, trans. by R. Majercik, states ‘For after he thought his works, the self-generated Paternal Intellect sowed the bond of Love (*erōs*), heavy with fire, into all things...In order that the All might continue to love for an infinite time and the things woven by the intellectual light of the Father might not collapse ...With this Love (*erōs*), the elements of the world remain on course.’

²⁵⁶ *The Chaldean Oracles*, frag. 43.

²⁵⁷ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 1.12 (42.5-10)

²⁵⁸ Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p.141. Cf. Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 7.14, 8.2.

²⁵⁹ Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p.141.

‘For only in the embodied soul, in its self-alienation and inversion, could the divine genuinely experience separation and, consequently an *erōs* for itself.’²⁶⁰ On this basis it is possible to speak of the divine as yearning for itself through the agency of love and, within the framework of the cosmology of theurgy, the cosmos and soul would not exist without *theia philia*.²⁶¹

Proclus’ *Commentary on the First Alcibiades (CFA)* contains considerably more discussion of *erōs* than Iamblichus’ *De mysteriis* and his portrayal of love draws substantially from Diotima’s speech in Plato’s *Symposium* and on the characterisation of *erōs* as one of the four kinds of divine madness in Plato’s *Phaedrus*.²⁶² In Proclus’ *CFA*, Socrates’ relationship to the young Alcibiades allegorically represents the relation between the higher and the lower entities of the ontological realm. *Erōs* is related to the reversion of the lower entities to its highest principle and as Proclus stated,

...the whole order of love is for all beings the cause of reversion to the divine beauty, on the one hand elevating to, uniting with and establishing in it all that is secondary, and on the other filling there from what lies subsequent to itself and radiating the communications of divine light that proceed from it.²⁶³

Love unites and binds the desired object to what desires it and as discussed in Plato’s *Symposium* and Proclus’ *CFA*, the separation of the lover from the beloved (as is the case of Socrates and Alcibiades in *The CFA*) is a necessary condition of their attraction and eventual unification. As Shaw argues, in Iamblichean theurgy the *sunthema* (token) had the same function as the beloved (*eromenon*) in Plato’s as well as in Proclus’ erotic ascent in the *CFA*.²⁶⁴ Shaw concludes by suggesting that theurgy could be viewed as the ritual elaboration of both the Platonic doctrines of *erōs* and *anamnesis* (Theory of Recollection).²⁶⁵

²⁶⁰ Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p.141.

²⁶¹ Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p.141.

²⁶² Discussed in section 4.1.

²⁶³ Proclus, *Commentary on the First Alcibiades*, 30.14-15. Cf. Markus, Donna, Anagogic Love between Neoplatonic Philosophers and Their Disciples in Late Antiquity, *The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 10, (2016) pp.6-7.

²⁶⁴ Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p.142.

²⁶⁵ Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p.142. The Platonic doctrine of recollection or *anamnesis* comes from the idea that the soul is embodied possessing all knowledge but has forgotten it through the disorientating process of descent into a human body. Human realization of that knowledge is contingent on discovery of it. See, *Plato’s Meno*, Dominic Scott, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 81d.

A recurrent theme in Proclus' *CFA* is the role that *erōs* plays as mediator and referring to Plato's *Symposium* states that Diotima calls love a 'mighty spirit' (*daimon*). Proclus further observes,

As the whole spiritual [i.e. daimonic] sphere depends on the mediacy of love, so also the account of the spiritual accompanies that of love and is akin to it. Love lies in the middle between loved object and lover, and spirit (*daimon*) between god and man.²⁶⁶

Love then binds and unites the desired object and what desires it, and acts as a bridge between the gods and mortals. Proclus argues that love binds together what is divided and unites 'what precedes and is subsequent to it, and makes the secondary revert to the primary and elevates and perfects the less perfect.'²⁶⁷ In section 26 of the *CFA*, Proclus discusses the close relationship between *erōs* and *philia* (as friendship) in maintaining the whole world together and refers to the *Chaldean Oracles* when he states 'as the oracles say, the father "has sown the fire-laden bond of love (*erōs*)"'²⁶⁸ Love proceeds from the intelligible father and is dependent upon beauty. As Dimitrios Vasilakis suggests, what *erōs* actually does is to implant its own characteristic i.e. desire for beauty, to the lower entities of his/her rank and thus, becomes a mediator between beauty and the lower desiring entities.²⁶⁹ The whole allegory of Socrates and Alcibiades' love can be described as ascending the different ontological levels to re-unite the soul with the divine.²⁷⁰

In conclusion it is the view of this dissertation that *erōs* and *theia philia* are broadly equivalent terms used to denote divine love although it should be noted that *erōs* is more often used to refer to lower entities who desire to 'revert' to higher entities, while *theia philia* is often used to characterise the love of the gods. In theurgy *theia philia* can be viewed as 'supracosmic sympathy' which acts as a unifying principle that binds the universe together (universal *philia*).²⁷¹ It is through the agency of *philia* that the soul is drawn

²⁶⁶ Proclus, *Commentary on the First Alcibiades*, Prop.67, p.88.

²⁶⁷ Proclus, *Commentary on the First Alcibiades*, Prop.53, p.70.

²⁶⁸ Proclus, *Commentary on the First Alcibiades*, Prop.26. P.32.

²⁶⁹ Vasilakis, Dimitrios, *Neoplatonic Love: The Metaphysics of Eros in Plotinus, Proclus and the Pseudo-Dionysius*, PhD Dissertation, King's College London, 2014. p.172.

²⁷⁰ Cf. *The Neoplatonic Socrates*, ed. Danielle A. Layne and Harold Tarrant (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), Introduction p.10.

²⁷¹ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p.29.

back to the gods. Thus, theurgic ritual uses the agency of love to communicate with the gods.

4.3 Divine Love in Ibn ‘Arabi Compared and Contrasted to Theurgy

One of the consequences of Ibn ‘Arabi’s concept of ‘Oneness of Being’ on the question of divine love is that for him it is not possible to love something exclusive of God. Loving creation means loving God because he is a ‘Hidden Treasure’ in all the objects that are manifested in the universe. This idea comes close to the theurgic idea that symbols are inherently connected with the divine and contain a divine trace directly linked to the gods. As Derin Suleyman observes on Ibn ‘Arabi’s concept, ‘there is only the One Being in reality, and there is only one Beloved in reality, that is God.’²⁷² From this Ibn ‘Arabi’s view of *wahdat al-wujud* can be more accurately described as *wahdat al-hubb* that is the oneness of love.²⁷³ Ibn ‘Arabi therefore suggests that whatever it is we love, we love God in it, but these objects of love are only veils between human beings and God. Ibn ‘Arabi states ‘In reality everybody only loves the Creator, but God is veiled by Zainab, Suad, Hind, money or position.’²⁷⁴ The indication is that even profane love (like the *erōs* in Plato’s *Symposium*) contains the seeds of divine love, but it is veiled, and it needs to be brought into consciousness. As Suleyman states,

The important thing is that man needs to be consciously aware of the relationship between the Creator and the creation. It is in this recognition that men are distinguished from each other as far as divine love is concerned.²⁷⁵

He goes on to suggest ‘...man must realise that, in essence, all his love is directed to God even though on the surface it appears to be the love for a non-divine object.’²⁷⁶ Therefore, love is truly one, and like in theurgy, love is not dualistically separated into an earthly and heavenly kind, but is seen by Ibn ‘Arabi as continuous throughout the universe. Ibn ‘Arabi

²⁷² Suleyman, Derin, *From Rabi’a to Ibn al-Farid*, p. 218.

²⁷³ Suleyman, Derin, *From Rabi’a to Ibn al-Farid*, p. 218.

²⁷⁴ Hifni, ‘A, al-Mawsua’ah al Sufiyyah, p.290, quoted in Suleyman, Derin, *From Rabi’a to Ibn al-Farid*, p. 218.

²⁷⁵ Suleyman, Derin, *From Rabi’a to Ibn al-Farid*, p.219

²⁷⁶ Suleyman, Derin, *From Rabi’ia to Ibn al-Farid*, p.219.

states, 'The beauty of God's handiwork permeates his creation, while the cosmos is the place where he becomes manifest. Thus, the love of the different parts of the cosmos for each other derives from God's love for himself.'²⁷⁷ Hence, love represents a continuous thread between the material and divine worlds.

The hadith of the 'Hidden Treasure', as has already been mentioned, suggests to Ibn 'Arabi that the main motivation behind creation is love and as he states himself, 'Every movement, every action in the universe is only directed by love,': as he says in one of his verses 'We came from love, we are created in love.'²⁷⁸ It is possible to suggest that since the manifestation of creation was started by love, love also provides the means by which humans can ascend to God. In this sense, there are major similarities with Iamblichus, who envisaged love as an effective agent that drew the soul back to the gods.²⁷⁹ In *De mysteriis* (1.12), Iamblichus suggests that love is a dominating force which creates unity between the intelligible and material world and disposes the human mind to be receptive to the gods.²⁸⁰ Similar to theurgy, Ibn 'Arabi conceives divine love (*ishk*) as the mutual relationship, which originates both from man and God. Ibn 'Arabi states, 'In love, there is Divine, spiritual and natural...Divine love is the love of God for us, and also our love for Him can be called Divine.'²⁸¹ Love, therefore, also has an ascending and descending quality in Sufism.²⁸² According to Henry Corbin, of all the masters of Sufism it is Ibn 'Arabi who carried furthest the analysis of the phenomena of love and in his *Meccan Revelations*

²⁷⁷ Ibn Arabai, *al-Futuhat* v2, 114.8 in Chittick, William, The Spritual Path of Love in Ibn al-'Arabi and Rumi, *Mystics Quarterly*, Vol.19, No.1 (March 1993) p.9.

²⁷⁸ Ibn Arabi, *al-Futuhat*, v2, p.318 in Suleyman, Derin, *From Rabi'ia to Ibn al-Farid*, p.222.

²⁷⁹ See section 4.2, Love as *Theia Philia* in Theurgy.

²⁸⁰ Iamblichus states that the link between the priests and the gods is in 'virtue of the divine love which holds together all things that they provide a union of indissoluble involvement' and love disposes 'the human mind to participation in the gods'. Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 1.12 (42.5-10).

²⁸¹ Ibn Arabi, *al Futuhat al-Makkiya*, (Cairo: Bulaq, 1911) 2:327.

²⁸² Suleyman, Derin, *From Rabi'a to Ibn al-Farid: Towards Some Paradigms of the Sufi Concept of Love*, PhD Dissertation, University of Leeds, September 1999, p.229.

(*Futuhat*) he gives quite a detailed, involved and protracted exposition of love.²⁸³

In Proclus' *CFA* it was observed that *erōs* is related to the reversion of the lower entities to higher principles as exemplified by the love of Alcibiades for Socrates and vice versa. *Erōs* was thought to guide and catalyse the reversion (or ascent) of lower entities to each level of higher principles. In a similar fashion, love for Ibn 'Arabi causes a kind of transfiguration of the beloved, by which the physical person becomes the vehicle for something infinitely higher than their mere physical reality. Ibn 'Arabi writes,

If we love an existing being, we only love the manifestation of our [true] beloved which is within that sensible being from the world of dense matter. When we love that being, we "lighten" that being [i.e., make into subtle matter], by raising it to the level of the imagination.²⁸⁴

Thus, love for Ibn 'Arabi has a fundamentally transformative aspect, which turns the beloved into something higher and more exalted. The extensive love poetry written by Ibn 'Arabi holds the same intensity and passion as Proclus' *CFA* and testifies to how love becomes the means by which the lover and the beloved can ascend to higher realms of divinity while retaining their external earthly persona.²⁸⁵

4.4 The Binding Quality of Love in Both Systems

Love as described in both Theurgy and Sufism is the binding quality that connects humans to the Gods. Ruth Majercick observes in the *Chaldean Oracles* that *erōs* or love acts as a cosmic principle 'whose "binding" quality preserves a sense of harmony not only in the universe

²⁸³ Corbin, Henry, *Alone with the Alone Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, Mythos Ed., 1997) pp.145-146.

²⁸⁴ Ibn 'Arabi continues, 'There we clothe with a beauty that was above its beauty [as a physical being of dense matter], and we raise it to a plane where there is no possibility of conflict with it or no separation from it. As such, one never ceases to be united with it.... Because my beloved is in my imagination, then I will never cease being close to him. As such, my beloved is from me in me, and with me.' From Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futuhat al-Makkiyah*, Vol 2, in 'Abd al-Hakeem Carney, The Discourse of the Divine in Islamic Mysticism, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol.73, No.3 (Sep.2005) pp.728-729.

²⁸⁵ Chittick, William, *The Spiritual Path of Love*, pp.4-5.

but in the human soul as well.²⁸⁶ Proclus, in his *CFA*, writes that love ‘binds together what is divided,’ it unites both what precedes and is subsequent to it and elevates and perfects the less perfect.²⁸⁷ The universal binding quality of love can also be attested in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabi since as R.W.J. Austin states,

He (Ibn ‘Arabi) sees the outgoing movement of creation as being impelled by Love (*mahabbah*), that is the divine Love, yearning, or desire to know Himself, to love Himself and ultimately to unite with Himself in the consummation of Reality’.²⁸⁸

Ibn ‘Arabi observes that in the Cosmos ‘movement is for love, there being no movement in existence except for love.’²⁸⁹ Thus, all love is set in motion by God and directed toward him and in the final analysis God alone is both the lover and the beloved.²⁹⁰

4.5 The Experience of Love in Both Systems

In arguing that theurgy is ‘god-work’ rather than ‘god-talk’, Iamblichus emphasizes the importance of experience combined with an intellectual approach in order to attain the highest level of theurgic union.²⁹¹ In *De mysteriis*, it is stated that divine love is a force that unifies the intelligible with the material world and a force that engenders the receptivity of the theurgist so that he or she is ready to receive the gods.²⁹² The actual experience of love, is not discussed although there is reference to ‘the communion of a friendship based on like-mindedness and an indissoluble bond of unity that gives coherence to the performance of hieratic rites’.²⁹³ There is, however, perhaps a hint of the experience of love when Iamblichus talks of a ‘divine fire, which shines universally on its own initiative, self-summoned and self-energising.’²⁹⁴ Emma C. Clarke notes that Iamblichus’s sequence of adjectives have a

²⁸⁶ Majercik, Ruth, *The Chaldean Oracles*, Introduction, p.16. See also fragments 42, 43 & 44.

²⁸⁷ Proclus, *Commentary on the First Alcibiades*, text ed. by L.G. Westerink, trans. and commentary by William O’Neill, (Bodmin and King’s Lynn: The Prometheus Trust, 2011), 53.4-7.

²⁸⁸ Ibn ‘Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, R.W.J. Austin introductory Note, p.251.

²⁸⁹ Ibn ‘Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, p.258.

²⁹⁰ Chittick, William, *The Spiritual Path of Love*, p.9.

²⁹¹ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, note 88, p.61 and 2.11 (96.9-97.1).

²⁹² Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 4.12 (196. 1-6).

²⁹³ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 4.3. (185.1-5).

²⁹⁴ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 4.3. (185.5-6).

Chaldean ring and in the *Chaldean Oracles* divine love is described as a fire that leaps forth from the noetic fire.²⁹⁵ Proclus also equates love with fire in his *CFA* when he quotes from the *Chaldean Oracles* 'love proceeds from the intelligible father' and the father 'in all things has sown the fire-laden bond of love.'²⁹⁶ Again love is compared to a fire. In contrast, and despite the fact that Ibn 'Arabi provides quite a detailed, involved and protracted exposition of love in his works, he regards the essence of love as indescribable.²⁹⁷ Ibn 'Arabi suggested that the essence of love could only be understood when people had tasted and experienced it for themselves. Ibn 'Arabi calls love 'a knowledge of tasting (*dhawq*)'²⁹⁸ Since for the Neoplatonists divine love is thought to be closely related to divine providence, they presumably would also describe its essence as unknowable and ineffable. According to Ibn 'Arabi the essence of love can be considered as *suigeneris* and transcends forms of language.²⁹⁹ It is important to stress that Ibn Arabi divided the objects of perception into what is definable and undefinable, and divine love falls into the latter distinction while love that can be expressed in words is 'the mere appearance or reflection of love.'³⁰⁰ In the long series of love poems that Ibn 'Arabi wrote in the *Futuhat* the following is an example of the appearance or reflection of love stated in poetic language:

I am the slave of passion and the slave of the Beloved.
The *fire* of passion *burns* my heart
And the One I love is in my mind.³⁰¹ [italics my own]

For Ibn 'Arabi, the experience of love, like for Iamblichus and Proclus is compared to a burning, a fire. There is a close analogy between the passion or ecstasy felt by Ibn 'Arabi in the above passage and Iamblichus

²⁹⁵ Marjercick, *The Chaldean Oracles*, fr.42, p.16.

²⁹⁶ Proclus, *Commentary on the First Alcibiades*, 26, 2-5.

²⁹⁷ Derin, Suleyman, *From Rabi'a to Ibn al-Farid*, p.216.

²⁹⁸ Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futuhat*, IV 7.2 quoted in Chittick, William, *The Divine Roots of Human Love*, <http://ibnarabisociety.org/articles/chittick.html>, p.2-3.

²⁹⁹ Derin, Suleyman, *From Rabi'a to Ibn al-Farid*, p.217.

³⁰⁰ Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futuhat*, 2, p.315 quoted in Derin, Suleyman, *From Rabi'a to Ibn al-Farid*, p.216.

³⁰¹ From the *Futuhat* quoted in Addas, Claude, "The Experience and doctrine of love in Ibn 'Arabi," paper presented at the Symposium of Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society held under the title, "The Service of Love", Oxford, May 4-6, 2002, p.3.

who also talks of a divine madness as a form of ecstasy which is ‘turned towards the higher.’³⁰²

³⁰² Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, 3.25 (158.10).

5.0 CONCLUSION

This thesis was mainly a comparative study of the concept of “divine love” as well as that of “cosmic sympathy” in the cosmologies of theurgy and the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabi. In order to arrive at an understanding of how divine love operates in each tradition the metaphysics of both systems required an extensive discussion highlighting some important differences in particular with regard to the notion of cosmic sympathy that appears to be a specific theurgic concept with little echo in the philosophy of Ibn ‘Arabi. Overall, there is an affinity of mystical perspectives between theurgy and Ibn ‘Arabi. The goal of both is ultimately union with the One or God and have their source in divine revelation. Paradoxically each tradition sees the divine as both transcendent and immanent in creation and each embraced emanationism over creation theory, seeking a unique source for all being. Both Sufism and theurgy are oral traditions that can be traced back through a chain of authorities. In the case of Sufism, it is the Prophet while for the Neoplatonists it is Plato and Pythagoras. Clearly a major difference between the two systems is that theurgy is polytheistic while Sufism is monotheistic. This difference can be overstated since Ibn ‘Arabi’s divine names can be considered to play a similar role to the multiple gods of theurgy. However, a tension does exist in Ibn ‘Arabi’s thought on such questions as transcendence and immanence since he is forever trying to reconcile the mystical perception of the divine in all creation with the doctrinal demands of monotheism.

The outer forms of theurgy and Sufism are different in the sense that for theurgy it is the cumulative contact (using symbols and ritual), assimilation and union with the gods, while for Ibn ‘Arabi it is the devotional acts related to the divine names. In fact, the use of symbols and ritual in order to ascend to the divine does not appear to form part of the language of Ibn ‘Arabi: he avoids writing about the practical side of Sufism, believing it to be prone to dangerous misunderstanding. The metaphysics of both traditions contain similarities and also important differences. The Neoplatonic ‘One’ like Ibn Arabi’s God are absolutely perfect and incomprehensible and both traditions hold the notion that human beings are the microcosm of the divine and that the cosmos represents the divine macrocosm. Both believe in the essential unity of the

cosmos. A major difference, however, in the metaphysics of each tradition is that for Proclus and Iamblichus the gods are unique 'onenesses' which have a separate identity from the One and the One is beyond being. In comparison Ibn 'Arabi sees no distinction in terms of being between God and the divine names making this a major point of contrast with theurgy. In addition, for the Neoplatonists the One is immanent throughout all levels of being and creation while for Ibn 'Arabi it is the divine inner nature of human beings that represents the descent of the divine from transcendence to immanence. In the ontology of Ibn 'Arabi there is a triadic structure to the universe that resembles Proclus' three levels of reality despite the fact that the reason for creating the universe is different. For Ibn 'Arabi it was an act of love while for the Neoplatonists creation happened as an overflowing of energy from the One in a spontaneous manner.

The interconnected universe in theurgy where the ineffable, transcendent One who is beyond being, is present in the densest material reality and is dependent on cosmic sympathy, appears to be solely a theurgic concept. Cosmic sympathy in which a divine 'series' or set of 'chains' extend or stretch from the gods to the ultimate reaches of the cosmos does not seem to have an exact equivalent in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi. However, it is possible to conclude that within Ibn 'Arabi's cosmology is sown God's breath of compassion that ties the universe together. Like the cosmic sympathy of theurgy, this compassion is tied to love. A very precise system of symbols and tokens exists within theurgy which encapsulate and embody astral correspondences as well as everything that exists in the natural world in addition to the unknowable names, invocations and other formulae and speech. Therefore, in theurgy the gods are seen as working through all of nature and through human beings via a precise system of astral correspondences that are contained within the symbols, which are linked via cosmic sympathy and primarily and ultimately through divine love. This is a major difference from the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi whereby God illuminates the cosmos and everything within it through the divine names, compassion, love and the One being. It is possible to conclude that Ibn 'Arabi's system is vaguer than theurgy since he sees everything in terms of unity and does not appear to explain how the divine

can be related to and can illuminate each specific and differentiated entity and being in the natural world.

Fundamentally, it is on divine love that the two traditions of theurgy and Sufism come together. Ibn 'Arabi, like the Neoplatonists' before him, draws on Plato's concept of *erōs* to arrive at his definition of divine love. Love acts as a mediator between God/gods and human beings, it is a binding force in the universe and can be compared to the rungs of the ladder since it has an ascending and descending quality in both traditions. Love is not dualistically separated into an earthly and heavenly kind but in both theurgy and Sufism is considered continuous throughout the universe. The experience of love is felt like a burning fire, a form of ecstasy which turns the beloved in both systems into something higher and more exalted. For the theurgist and the Sufi, the universe is held together by love.

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