

ON ONTOLOGICAL OPENNESS: WHO IS OPEN? RESONATING THOUGHTS FROM CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHERS AND MUSLIM MYSTICS

Arman Rahmim*

Abstract: Being “open-minded” is considered a definite virtue in today’s world. What does it mean to be open-minded? What we refer to as ‘openness’ in this writing moves beyond the ability to see and entertain other views. It cuts deep into both the intentionality and content of what one contemplates. This work focuses on ontological openness, reflecting parallel and resonating thoughts by prominent continental philosophers Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Though Gadamer appears after Heidegger, we find it fruitful to read Gadamer as leading to Heidegger. We compare their thoughts with those of Muslim mystics, focusing on the highly influential and ground-breaking thinker Ibn Arabi and thinkers in his tradition.

Introduction

“You are a very open-minded person” is an important compliment many may seek. What does this really mean? What does it mean to be open? Who is the open one? In the present work, we will not use the term *open-minded*, given that “mind” and “reason” in the modern sense are often limited to logical and epistemological considerations. There is an entire realm and world before logic, a commanding space within human beings from which logical and epistemological constructs originate, which we discuss elsewhere (Rahmim, 2024). In this work, we emphasize *ontological* openness, penetrating a cascade of why’s and what’s one contemplates and is open to.

We will discuss the thoughts of two prominent continental philosophers in this realm, Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Despite Gadamer (1900-2002) appearing after Heidegger (1889-1976), we find it beneficial to approach Gadamer as leading to Heidegger. In this context, we draw comparisons between these philosophers and the perspectives of Muslim mystics, particularly the seminal thinker Ibn Arabi (1165-1240) and subsequent commentators and thinkers in his intellectual lineage. Our ongoing efforts, including this essay, claim that works by key thinkers in the continental and Islamic mystical traditions have remarkable resonances that critically bring out new perspectives and deeper understanding of respective discussions. In the present work, we focus on ontological openness and the dance and resonance in understanding who the open one is, according to Gadamer, Heidegger, and Ibn Arabi. To recognize what openness is, we begin by discussing what the open one is *not*, followed by what the open one is. As discussed later, we seek an interplay of entangled negation and affirmation of qualities for the open one.

I. What the Open One is Not

(i) The open one is not “knowledgeable”

Gadamer, in his 1960 magnum opus *Truth and Method*, especially develops the notion of “historically effected consciousness” (towards proper hermeneutics), which, according to

* Dr. ARMAN RAHMIM, University of British Columbia. Email: arman.rahmim@ubc.ca.

him, has the structure of *experience* (Erfahrung). (Gadamer, 1989, 341) He disagrees with Hegel that experience culminates in knowledge and that it is to be understood by it. On the latter, he asks, how is a thing to be understood in terms of that which surpasses it? (Ibid., 349) On the former, he tells us, "Experience stands in an ineluctable opposition to knowledge and to the kind of instruction that follows from general theoretical or technical knowledge. The truth of experience always implies an orientation toward new experience. That is why a person who is called experienced has become so not only *through* experiences but is also open *to* new experiences." (Ibid., 350). So being experienced is not at all about knowing everything or knowing more than others, but "the experienced person proves to be ... someone who is radically undogmatic" and "well equipped to have new experiences and to learn from them." As such, being experienced "has its proper fulfillment not in definitive knowledge but in the openness to experience that is made possible by experience itself." (Ibid., 350) We may say the open one is not "informed" or "knowledgeable." In fact, knowledge *is* what emanates from the experienced one, the open one, not the other way around.

(ii) The open one is not manipulative or assertive

The hermeneutical experience encounters tradition as what is to be experienced: it is "not simply a process that experience teaches us to know and govern; it is *language*—i.e., it expresses itself like a Thou." (Ibid., 352-354) Unlike an object, a Thou "relates itself to us." We need to uncover the change in the structure of experience when experiencing the Thou. Gadamer goes on to mention three kinds of experiences of the Thou:

1. The first one aims to "discover typical behavior in one's fellowmen" and to "make predictions about others on the basis of experience." However, this attitude towards the other is self-regarding and contradictory to "the moral definition of man" since, agreeing with Kant, "the other should never be used as a means but always as an end in himself." The open one is not manipulative.

2. In the second experience, the Thou is acknowledged "as a person," but the understanding of the Thou is still "a form of self-relatedness." The I brings a counterclaim to every claim. It thus makes it possible "to outdo the other." One may claim "to know the other's claim from his point of view and even to understand the other better than the other understands himself." Subsequently, the Thou "loses the immediacy with which it makes its claim." It is, therefore, "co-opted and pre-empted reflectively from the standpoint of the other person." By claiming to know the other, one, in fact, "robs his claims of their legitimacy." Gadamer provides an example of the dialectic of charitable or welfare work, "penetrating all relationships between men as a reflective form of the effort to dominate." The claim to understand the other person in advance will serve a notable function, "to keep the other person's claim at a distance." Gadamer refers to this in hermeneutics as *historical consciousness*.¹ The open one is not assertive. The open one does not assert itself in the I-Thou relation.

3. The third and highest type of experience in human relations is "to experience the Thou truly as a Thou." The open one does not overlook the other's claim but lets the other "really say something to us." Gadamer goes on to add that openness to the other

¹ Gadamer says about *historical consciousness* that it "knows about the otherness of the other, about the past in its otherness, just as the understanding of the Thou knows the Thou as a person." Yet, "by claiming to transcend its own conditionedness completely in knowing the other, it is involved in a false dialectical appearance, since it is actually seeking to master the past, as it were." (Ibid., 354).

“involves recognizing that I myself must accept some things that are against me, even though no one else forces me to do so.” Similarly, in hermeneutical understanding of a given tradition, “I must allow tradition's claim to validity, not in the sense of simply acknowledging the past in its otherness, but in such a way that it has something to say to me.” Gadamer refers to this as *historically effected consciousness*, requiring a “fundamental sort of openness.” The hermeneutical consciousness culminates “not in methodological sureness of itself, but in the same readiness for experience that distinguishes the experienced man from the man captivated by dogma.”

(iii) The open one is not a “universalist”

The open one does not aim to bring all beings under the same universal truth. Heidegger, in his second magnum opus, *Contributions to Philosophy*, written in the late 1930s and published posthumously in 1989, says:

Where truth is veiled in the form of “reason” and the “rational,” its distortion is at work, that destructive force of the “valid for all” whereby everyone is arbitrarily placed in the right and the pleasure arises that no one may exceed anyone else with respect to something essential. (Heidegger, 2012, 271)

The open one does not pursue “this ‘magic’ of universal validity” to bring things under broad labels and universal truths, does not fall into the trap of treating “truth as correctness,” and thus does not reduce ontological truths, namely unconcealments of Being, into concepts and correspondences.

(iv) The open one is “not yet”; it is not dead

Da-sein (being-there), as Heidegger puts it in *Being and Time*, has anticipatory resoluteness; i.e., it is being ahead of itself (*Sein sich vor Weg*). The anticipation refers to the “not yet.” In the utterly open human being, “something is always still *outstanding* [*aussteht*] ... which has not yet become ‘real’ as a potentiality-of-its-being.” (Heidegger, 2010, 227-228). As such, Da-sein “always already exists in such a way that its not-yet *belongs* to it.” (Ibid., 234) Thus, in Da-sein, there is “inevitably a constant ‘lack of wholeness’ which finds its end in death.” The open one is not dead. In *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger comments, “The opening up of the open region, and the clearing of beings, happens only when the openness that makes its advent in thrownness is projected.” Da-sein is a “thrown project” directed towards possibilities. It is handed over to itself, driving toward its own possibilities of being. The human being’s death is the end of his open possibilities. The end of his openness is his death.

In an interesting parallel, Ibn Arabi pays unique attention to the Islamic term *fitra*. Commonly translated as “disposition,” *fitra* is often understood as an innate nature to human beings, even in a fixed way. Nonetheless, Ibn Arabi (and others in his tradition) emphasize the utter openness of it, negating any closing of potentialities. Commenting on *despair* as the greatest sin, the mystical hermeneuticist Abd al-Razzaq Kashani (b. between 1252–61, d. between 1329–35) says, “Despair is the sign of the demise of [human] potential and fall from *fitra* by being veiled.” Thus, *fitra* is intact if any “grip of the primordial light” remains, and “despair does not take place except with complete veiling.”² Another great commentator, Sa’id al-Din Farghani (1231-1300), says, “*Fitra* is

² Tafsir of Kashani, also known as Qasani (*Ta’wilat al-Qur’an*). This work of mysticism is sometimes incorrectly attributed to Ibn Arabi. The author here provides a mystical exegesis of

an innate knowledge which originally accompanies Being, and is, from a perspective, equivalent to Being.”³ Limitations imposed by different degrees of habits “veil utmost manifestation of *fitra*.” Society and guardians impose “their own habits” on the human being, “veiling him from *fitra*.”

In his major work, *The Meccan Revelations* (Ibn Arabi, 1972-1992, vol. 12, p. 264-271), Ibn Arabi answers the question⁴ “What is *fitra*?” and comments that [the root] *f-t-r* is to split open. The human being is “the entirety of the world,” thus, “his *fitra* encompasses all *fitras* of the world.” His *fitra* is the venue by which the “divine manifestation which is his (belongs to him).” Ibn Arabi adds that in *fitra*, there is the “potential of each being in the world.” Thus, the human being is “a worshipper with any religion, glorifier with any tongue, and receiver of any manifestation.” It occurs “when he received the truth of his own humanity, and has knowledge of himself, for none knows his Lord except one who knows himself.” He also adds, “If anything veils him from realizing all of him/Him, he is a transgressor upon himself.” We may conclude that the human being is that being which, by its *fitra* and openness, is utterly unrestricted and creates the greatest possibilities of new manifestations by Being.

(v) The open one is not an essentialist

The open one who is “not yet” and “always still *outstanding*” cannot have an identity, an essence. The open one is thus not an essentialist.⁵

Similarly, in the transcendent philosophy of Mulla Sadra (1571-1635)⁶, the human being “transcends essence,” (Hassan-zadeh Amoli, 1994, 128), not just corporeality, which prior philosophies had only attributed to Being: as such, the human being “has no limits at which it stops.” If a being is not limited by essences and identities, “it has no specified stations to halt at.” In other words, as Being transcends even transcendent identities (which we elaborate elsewhere (Rahmim 2022)), the human being similarly does so. Thus, human beings are not at all like animals. In ordinary taxonomy, the human being is a species, and under it are individuals; Mulla Sadra teaches that, by contrast, each human being is a species of its own (Hassan-zadeh Amoli, 1994, 117). This has resonances in Heidegger’s thought, e.g., in *Contributions* (Heidegger, 2012, 49):

The most severe impediment to inceptual thinking, however, is the tacit self-apprehension of humans today. Quite apart from individual interpretations and aims, humans take themselves as objectively present “exemplars” of the species “human being.” ... This ... aberrant demand arises from a lack of recognition of the essence of

Qur’anic verse 39:53: “Say: O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of God; for God forgives all sins; for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

³ *Mashariq al-Darari*, p. 419. Farghani was a disciple of Sadr al-Din Qunawi (1207–1274), himself the stepson and disciple of Ibn Arabi. Farghani was also possibly one of Kashani’s teachers.

⁴ Ibn Arabi answers question 42, previously posed by Hakim Tirmidhi (9th-century scholar and Sufi).

⁵ The open one is not an *existentialist* either, in the common sense of the philosophy, which entirely misses, according to Heidegger in his *Letter on Humanism*, that man “is claimed by Being” (Heidegger, 2008, 227). In addition, the vagueness of existence in existentialism is not there for Heidegger, for Being is a light, a lightning, that reveals itself and has an identity.

⁶ Arguably the most influential Muslim philosopher in the last four centuries, Mulla Sadra had significant breakthroughs in morphing his “transcendent philosophy,” considered by many to significantly harmonize a number of religious, philosophical, and mystical traditions. In mysticism and his analysis of the Unity of Being, he particularly eyes and is influenced by Ibn Arabi.

truth as the clearing-concealing of the “there” which must be withstood in the steadfastness of questioning.

In *Being and Time*, “Dasein is never to be understood ontologically as a case and instance of a genus of beings objectively present.” (Heidegger, 2010, 42) Meanwhile, Heidegger comments that this is because Dasein has, in each case, mineness (*always-being-my-own-being*) [Jemeinigkeir] and comments in a marginal note that this “means being appropriated” [Ubereignetheit]. It reminisces about Ibn Arabi’s above-mentioned saying that in human beings, there appears the “divine manifestation which is his (belongs to him).” This “mineness” and appropriation by Being of becoming a venue of manifestations, we elaborate on later.

II. What the Open One Is

So far, we have mentioned what the open one *is not*. In what follows, we discuss what the open one *is*. Nonetheless, we must remember that with the abovementioned “negative qualities,” the utter denial of any station and limit for the open one is to be persistently thought, along with any “positive qualities” ascribed to him. According to Ibn Arabi, this is the practice of entangled negation/affirmation that must always be in play, which we have elaborated on (Rahmim, 2022), including how Heidegger’s views on *Identity/Difference* (Heidegger, 1969) are closely linked with this principle.

(i) The open one commands knowledge, sings new songs

The open one does not learn new knowledge or follow a command already given, but imposes it, commands it. In the words of Heidegger, “the essence of knowledge has the essential nature of command deep within it.” (Heidegger, 1979, 117-122) The command “does not mean merely *making* a demand *known* and requiring its fulfillment.” Rather, commanding is the very “erecting” and “venturing” of the demand. It is “always more difficult than obeying in the sense of following the command already *given*.” In fact, “true commanding is obedience to what is taken on in free responsibility.” This commanding is a “founding,” arising “only from *freedom*.” The open one, the living one, is “*in the direction of commanding and poetizing, of the perspectival and horizontal: in the direction of freedom*.” The open one, thus, can shatter regimes of truth, singing new ones, new constructs, and new logic (which we elaborate on elsewhere) (Rahmim, 2024).

(ii) The open one is actively “there”; is actively passive

To be open is to participate, to be “there,” to be “present.” Discussing festivals and dramas, Gadamer notes, “Being present does not simply mean being there along with something else that is there at the same time. To be present means to participate ... watching something is a genuine mode of participating.” (Gadamer, 1989, 122) He recalls the concept of sacral communion, underlying the original Greek concept of *theoria*. “*Theoros* means someone who takes part in a delegation to a festival. Such a person has no other distinction or function than to be there ... In the same way, Greek metaphysics still conceives the essence of *theoria* and *nous* [i.e., intellect] as being purely present to what is real, and for us too the ability to act theoretically is defined by the fact that in attending to something one is able to forget one’s own purposes.” He then emphasizes that *Theoria* is not to be understood “as subjective conduct, as a self-determination of the subject, but in terms of what it is contemplating.” It is a “true participation, not something active but

something passive (pathos), namely being totally involved in and carried away by what one sees”

(iii) The open one steps outside himself

Gadamer notes that being present is “a subjective accomplishment in human conduct” and “has the character of being outside oneself.” (Ibid., 122) He reminds us how, in the *Phaedrus*, Plato pointed out “the blunder of those who take the viewpoint of rational reasonableness and tend to misinterpret the ecstatic condition of being outside oneself, seeing it as a mere negation of being composed within oneself and hence as a kind of madness.” Being ecstatic, outside oneself, is not a privative condition, does not show a lack, but an accomplishment. It is “the positive possibility of being wholly with something else.” In fact, “this kind of being present is a self-forgetfulness, and to be a spectator consists in giving oneself in self-forgetfulness to what one is watching.” Such self-forgetfulness is “anything but a privative condition, for it arises from devoting one's full attention to the matter at hand, and this is the spectator's own positive accomplishment.”

In the words of Hafez of Shiraz (1325–1390),

*Void is this city of lovers; may it be that from a quarter,
Out from himself, a man comes and a work accomplishes?*

(iv) The open one suffers, realizes; renounces

In discussing the experienced one, Gadamer says, “What a man has to learn through suffering is not this or that particular thing, but insight into the limitations of humanity, into the absoluteness of the barrier that separates man from the divine.” It is “ultimately a religious insight—the kind of insight that gave birth to Greek tragedy.” The experienced person has taken human finitude “to heart.” Thus, “experience teaches us to acknowledge the real. The genuine result of experience, then—as of all desire to know—is to know what is. But ‘what is,’ here, is not this or that thing, but ‘what cannot be destroyed’ (Ranke).” (Ibid., 351) In the words of another thinker, Norman O. Brown, “Open is broken. There is no breakthrough without breakage. A struggle with an angel leaves us scarred or lame. Every dream is a struggle; the possible confronting the real, abruptly.” (Brown, 1990, 185-186)

As mentioned previously by Ibn Arabi, to be human is to split open, to crack open. Even literally, *fitra* is the emergence of change that breaks one from one's original state. (Mostafavi, 1991,112) In Islamic mysticism, there is significant attention to how the Real is with the heart that breaks. Back to Brown (Brown, 1990, 184-185), “To be is to be vulnerable ... Frailty alone is human; a broken, a ground-up (contrite) heart.” Moreover, “There is a seal or sepulcher to be broken, a rock to be broke open, to disclose the living water; an eruption. Begin then with a fracture, a cesura, a rent; opening a crack in this fallen world, a shaft of light.”

The human being comes soberly, utterly, *really*, face to face with Being. According to Heidegger in *Contributions*, knowledge ought to be thought of as openness and “as *preservation* of the truth of what is true (preservation of the essence of truth in *Da-sein*).” (Heidegger, 2012, 50) It conceives of the human being (not merely a “rational animal”) as a *steward* of Being. The highest knowledge is “the one that becomes strong enough to be the origin of a *renunciation*.” It is *not* the kind of renunciation we may conceive as “a matter of weakness and evasion, a suspending of the will ... [a] giving way

and abdication.” It is a renunciation that “not only does hold fast but even brings forth something through struggle and suffering.”

In The Meccan Revelations, Ibn Arabi comments extensively on a related sentiment: to be mindful of Being, as “demanded by true mindfulness” to Being, is to acknowledge the finitude of the human being, that it can *not* do so (Ibn Arabi, 1972-1992, vol. 13, 411-415). Like “gratefulness,” “mindfulness” of Being only occurs when this renunciation is made. According to him, being mindful as much as possible is more difficult than renouncing it, thus achieving it. The open one is not “independent,” does not even “seek help,” but renounces. He does not claim but denies; he does not force but gives in. “The human being is not self-sufficient except by what he owns,” but he ought to recognize that his might is temporary and only as a “trust [with him] that he does not own,” and he is commanded to “return it” now and every moment. When this occurs, i.e., the human being becomes a being of Being, then the Being of being achieves his task.

(v) The open one shelters the truth

Continuing with Heidegger, the renunciation “arises as the preparation for the *refusal*, i.e., as the holding fast to this alienation.” (Heidegger, 2012, 50) That positive alienation is “that in-the-midst [*Inmitten*] with respect to beings and divinization.” It grants “the open ‘between’ in whose playing field of time-space the sheltering of truth in beings interpenetrates with the absconding and advent of the gods.” In utterly giving in, in only and only being with Being, the open one shelters the truth and brings out untruth to the open, manifesting it. According to Perennialist and Islamic philosopher Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Nasr, 1989):

The concept of man as the pontiff, pontifex, or bridge between Heaven and earth, which is the traditional view of the *anthrōpos*, lies at the antipode of the modern conception of man which envisages him as the Promethean earthly creature who has rebelled against Heaven and tried to misappropriate the role of the Divinity for himself ... Pontifical man is the reflection of the Center on the periphery and the echo of the Origin in later cycles of time and generations of history ... Pontifical man is aware of his role as intermediary between Heaven and earth and his entelechy as lying beyond the terrestrial domain over which he is allowed to rule provided he remains aware of the transient nature of his own journey ... [for him] life is impregnated with meaning and the universe peopled with creatures whom he can address as thou.

In the teachings of Ibn Arabi, the human being acts as the intermediary (or limit; *barzakh*), which “separates the divine from creation and at the same time unites them.” (Bashier, 2012, 460-464) A true *barzakh* can separate two things if it is that which it faces (otherwise, it would introduce further barriers between them and itself); so it has a comprehensiveness, able to separate yet connect the two. (Ibn Arabi, 1911, 518) The human being is that. It acts as the intermediary between the essence of Being (where no names exist) and the realm where names are. If this intermediary, which faces the two sides, is not, Being and beings will be unrelated.

(vi) The open one is empty

Openness is “the *emptiest of the empty*.” (Heidegger, 2012, 268) It is “something like an *inner recess* [*hohle Mitte*], e.g., that of a jug.” It is a negative space, but it is not “a haphazard emptiness that arises purely on account of the surrounding walls and happens not to be full of ‘things’”. It is the opposite: the inner recess itself is what deter-mines,

shapes, and bears the walling action of the walls and their surfaces.” Openness “radiates out” those walls and surfaces, allowing it “to come into play by summoning up, round about itself and toward itself, such-and-such walls.” As such, the open realm receives an “essential occurrence” that “radiates back from and in the embracing walls.” Thus, the more open this realm is, the more oscillatory and transitive the essential occurrence, i.e., the dance and radiation between Being and beings.

Emptiness is receiving, is listening. The magnificent *Masnavi-i Ma’navi* (“Spiritual Couplets”) by Rumi begins with the word “listen” (Rumi, 1994):

*Listen to this Ney (reed flute) how it complains
Lamenting tales of banishment from its home*

Listening is, in fact, the overarching theme of the entire *Mathnavi*. Kashani makes the following commentary on listening:⁷

The more that the self is tender in temperament, sound in heart, and effortless in acceptance, the more it is receptive of perfection and the more intensely it is prepared for it. This tenderness does not belong to the category of weakness and naiveté, which would imply receptivity to everything that one hears, even the impossible, and influenceability from everything that reaches one and that one sees, even lies, evils, and error. Rather, [this tenderness] is in the category of subtlety and swiftness in acceptance of the goodness and truth that corresponds to him.

The open one appears empty, hollow, weak, meager, but he is the mightiest of the mighty. Shams of Tabriz (spiritual guide of Rumi) relates an interesting story:

A person brought an Indian sword to another and said, ‘This sword is Indian.’ The man asked, ‘What is an Indian sword?’ He replied, ‘It is such that whatever you strike it with shall split.’ He said, ‘... we will try it on this upright stone.’ He brought the sword, striking the stone. The sword was split! [The man, having seen this failure] said, ‘You mentioned that an Indian sword is one that splits anything that it strikes!?’ He replied, ‘Yes, but even though this sword was Indian, the stone was more Indian!’ [Shams continues] Moses was more Pharaoh than the Pharaoh! He was *wali*, but this [Moses] was more *wali* than him!⁸

The critical word “*wali*” in Islamic literature is challenging to translate. It is sometimes rendered as a guardian, connoting authority and power. The root actually indicated proximity. A true *wali* finds authority over others because he is in proximity to the higher realm. He is fully receptive. To the people, he is kind and gentle (sometimes even mistreated and oppressed), projecting no authority over them. Nevertheless, a world is hidden within him, and he has become the venue where Being is manifested. Subsequently, he overpowers the people and pulls them under his influence. However, there is more.

(vii) The open one is needed by Being

⁷ See Footnote 2. Kashani is providing mystical exegeses of Qur’anic verse 9:61 - “Among them are those who harass the Prophet and say, He is (all) ear. Say, He is ear to what is best for you: he believes in God and has faith in the believers, and is a Mercy to those of you who believe.”

⁸ *Maqālāt* (sayings of) *Shams Tabrizi*, edited by Mohammad Ali Movahhed, 2017.

Ibn Arabi, in his important compendium of mystical teachings, *Fusus al-Hikam* (Bezels of Wisdom) (Abrahamov, 2015; Austin, 1980) ⁹, notes that conventional teaching is that *Haqq* (the Real; Reality that cannot be falsified) “has mercy, but is not the object of mercy.” (Abrahamov, 2015, 86) However, for mystics, the Real (*Haqq*) is both. It is described as “breath (*nafas*), derived from exhalation (*tanfis*).” This is a condition of anguish (the Real is anguished): as commentators point out referring to *Tanfis* (exhalation) of *Karb* (anguish), “the one who exhales does not exhale except to repel anguish.” The anguish of the Real is for its *divine names* to realize their concrete manifestations. (Kharazmi, 2000, 592)

A deep eagerness and desire corresponds to this. Ibn Arabi says the *names* “seek the realities they bestow ... which are none but the Cosmos.” Divinity “seeks” those in awe. Lordship “seeks” those it nourishes. It depends on them; otherwise, it does not have “concrete and assumed existence.” As such, “The First Breath” from the Merciful “brought into existence the Cosmos, which Lordship and all the divine names seek.” The Real has mercy and is the object of mercy. This is also reminiscent of the verse of Hafez:

*Why shouldn't the [loving] shadow of the Beloved fall upon the Lover?
We were in need of Him, and He was in eagerness of us*

In Heidegger's preface to Father William Richardson's *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*, he says (Richardson, 1974, 75):

If, however, we understand “Phenomenology” as the [process of] allowing the most proper concern of thought to show itself, then the title should read “Through Phenomenology to the Thinking of Being.” This possessive [*of Being*], then, says that Being as such (Beon) shows itself simultaneously as that which is to-be-thought and as that which has want of [*Braucht*] a thought corresponding to it.

In his footnote, Richardson remarks that *Braucht*, in this context, might be translated by “needs,” but he prefers “has want of” for reasons that appear later in the text. ¹⁰ We also understand *Braucht* similarly as the above-mentioned need, want, and desire in the works of Ibn Arabi. As we note later, Ibn Arabi speaks of the *longing* of the Real for those who are near Him, who manifest Him, and who yearn for Him. It is very interesting to compare these with Heidegger's reflections on anxiety (*Angst*) in *Being and Time* and distress / dire need (*die Not*) in *Contributions*, which we postpone to a future study.

Additionally, Heidegger notes in *Contributions* that Being is “of humans” in such a way that Being “itself needs the human being as the preserver of the site of the moment for the absconding and advent of the gods.” (Heidegger, 2012, 207) It is also desirable to

⁹ Besides referring to these two translated works, we sometimes modify English translations towards greater accuracy and faithfulness to the text based on an important commentary (Kharazmi, 2000). This commentary (in Persian) by Kharazmi (14th-15th century) significantly follows commentary (in Arabic) by Dawud al-Qaysari (c.1260-c.1350).

¹⁰ Richardson particularly refers to pp. 597, 600, 614. On page 597, he comments that this needing or wanting, based on the Greek term that Heidegger uses, “suggests a process of handling that does not simply use that which is handled but lets it be according to its own essence, lets it appear as what it is and conserves it thus.” On page 600, he quotes from Heidegger's *What e-vokes thought?* (p. 97): “... We have the power only for that which we want. But in turn we truly want only that which for its own part wants us ... insofar as it addressed itself to our essence as that which sustains this essence...” And on page 614, he comments that Being and thought (by *Da-sein*) have a mutual “eyeing” as previously also called a mutual want-ing.

study Heidegger's *gods* in detail in relation to Ibn Arabi's *divine names*, which, as mentioned above, the Real is anxious to realize their concrete manifestations in the human being. In any case, how is it that the human being, utterly limited, receives Being, becomes "of Being" and "sought by Being"? In Islamic mysticism, the answer is: because the human being has a heart!

(viii) The open one has a heart

The *Bezels of Wisdom* by Ibn Arabi mentioned above contains 27 chapters, each linked to the "logos" of a Prophet, manifesting new truths of Being. Ibn Arabi devotes chapter 12 to "The Quintessence of the Wisdom of the Heart in the Logos of Shu'aib (Jethro)." As noted by commentators, Shu'aib literally means "branching out," and this meaning is connected to the human heart (i) affecting every part of the body and (ii) its ability to change and adopt various ideas. (Abrahamov, 2015) Another commentary notes that the focus is on the heart (*qalb*, literally meaning to transform, change, or turn) because of its turning towards and within different realms. (Kharazmi, 2000, 589)

Ibn Arabi comments, "The Real changes His forms when He reveals Himself. Also, when the heart encompasses Him, it does not encompass anything else with Him, and it is as if the Real filled the heart." The being is only of Being. "How can a heart which contains the Eternal feel the existence of those coming into being?" Ibn Arabi disagrees with those that say the Real manifests Himself according to the receptive human's predispositions and characters. It is the other way around: Being bestows being and manifests Itself. "If the forms of the Real's manifestation are diversified, the heart necessarily becomes wide or narrow in keeping with the form of the divine manifestation, for the heart can contain only the form in which the manifestation takes place." He refers to the verse "for whoever has a heart" (Quran, 50:37), saying the heart is critical because one who has a heart "knows the change of the Real in forms by his own change in shapes. Through his self, he knows His self, which is not different from the Real's identity ... he takes on different forms in his/His transformations." Thus, he is where He is.

In another text by Ibn Arabi, *Naqsh al-Fusus* (Imprints of the Bezels of Wisdom), concisely summarizing his *Bezels of Wisdom*, he comments (Chittick, 1984, 26):

Do you not see that the Real "Every moment is in a state" (Quran 55:29)? In the same way, the heart is constantly undergoing transformation ... Therefore He said, "Surely in that there is a reminder to him who has a heart". He did not say, "who possesses a reason", because the reason becomes limited in contrast to the heart. So understand!

Mu'ayyid al-Din Jandi (13th century) is one of the first commentators on Ibn Arabi's *Bezels of Wisdom*. In his *Breath of Spirit and Gift of Openings* (Jandi, 1983)¹¹, he has a remarkable chapter, *On the Heart and its Secrets*, in which he comments that the heart is not the spirit nor the body, yet it is both. It is "the collective unity of the realities of the human spirit and the realities and faculties of corporality, and their characteristics and subtleties." The heart "sometimes takes the form and characters of the spirit as though it is devoid and purified from characters of physicality" and "sometimes appears with the characters and shapes of physical forms" and sometimes "in spirituality with the characters of physicality" and sometimes "in physicality with the forms of spirituality." Sometimes, it is so sublime that "all spirits of the heavens and earth are under its rule and

¹¹ Jandi wrote this book in Persian during his stay in Sinope, which is dedicated to a lady princess he praises with knowledge.

control.” It exists, and yet it does not: it has “togetherness” of following and being followed with the Real, so much so that a singular pronoun can be invoked for them. As a result, the truth “of the complete human being, which is his heart, turns incessantly with the Real and in It and with It and for It, and this is why it expands so much to contain the Real” whom the heavens of spirits and earth of physicality cannot contain.

(ix) The open one is solitary, unique; singular

Man is claimed by Being and is appropriated by it. The term Heidegger uses, *Ereignis*, has been translated as the event of appropriation or enowning; however, *Ereignis* “can no more be translated than the Greek *λόγος* [logos] or the Chinese Tao ... and is ... a *singulare tantum*.” (Heidegger, 1969, 36) In fact, “what it indicates happens only in the singular, no, not in any number, but uniquely.” As this being solely belongs to Being, it is most solitary. Elsewhere, when commenting on *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger says (Heidegger, 2008, 191):

The more solitarily the work, fixed in the figure, stands on its own and the more cleanly it seems to cut all ties to human beings, the more does the thrust come into the Open that such a work *is*, and the more essentially is the extraordinary thrust to the surface and the long-familiar thrust down. But this multiple thrusting is nothing violent, for the more purely the work is itself transported into the openness of beings—an openness opened by itself—the more simply it transports us into this openness and thus, at the same time, transports us out of the realm of the ordinary.

As “man is the neighbor of Being,” (Ibid., 245) and all beings are beings *of* Being, man neighbors all beings. He is most near to them, does not oppose them, accepts them, recognizes them, and preserves them. This he does while, and *because* of, having been transported out of the realm of the ordinary. He has been displaced. Heidegger comments (Ibid., 191):

To submit to this displacement means: to transform our accustomed ties to world and to earth and henceforth to restrain all usual doing and prizing, knowing and looking, in order to stay within the truth that is happening in the work. Only the restraint of this staying lets what is created be the work that it is. This letting the work be a work we call the preserving of the work. It is only for such preserving that the work yields itself in its createdness as actual, i.e., now: present in the manner of a work.

Ibn Arabi devotes the final chapter of his *Bezels of Wisdom* to the “Wisdom of *Fardiyya*,” which has been rendered as uniqueness (Abrahamov, 2015, 172) or singularity (Austin, 1980, 223). It is a condition of not having *a distinct other*; all that can be imagined is he. In fact, in some manuscripts, “Wisdom of *Kulliyya*” (i.e., encompassing-all) has been mentioned. (Kharazmi, 2000, 1065) He is “given all the words” (Abrahamov, 2015, 172) and is “the greatest signifier (proof; *dalil*),” and yet “the signifier is signifier to itself.” It is because there is no separation between him and the Real; thus, there is no distinct other for him to signify (Kharazmi, 2000, 1068). In the words of Rumi,

*The Sun arrives to signify the Sun
If you seek a signifier, do not turn sideways*

Ibn Arabi says that his “knowledge of himself precedes his knowledge of his Lord”; the latter results from the former. He is “the clearest signifier to his Lord.”

Ibn Arabi focuses in this chapter on a narration where we encounter love, “I was made to love women and fragrance, and prayer was made the light of my eye.”¹² There have been numerous commentaries on this narration. Ibn Arabi notes (Abrahamov, 2015, 174) that the statement is in the passive tense, not active: one is made to love women (instead of saying I love). This is not one’s choosing but a choosing for him. Women represent receptivity, as he is to the Real. “Women are beloved to him, and he yearned for them because this pertains to the yearning of the whole for its part.”

Ibn Arabi speaks of the longing of the Real. “The Real longs for those near Him, although He sees them; however, he wishes them to see Him.” And the open, singular, unique one does. “Since the Real has made it clear that He breathed His spirit into him, He longs for none but Himself.” So “the breath of the Real became hidden through that by which the human being is a human being.”

He “yearns for His Lord, his source, just as the woman yearns for him. So, his Lord made women beloved to him, just as God loves one who is in His image.” In fact, “his love belongs [only] to his Lord, in whose image he is, even in his love for his wife, for he loves her through God’s love for him, assimilating the divine love.” According to commentary (Kharazmi, 2000, 1081), he “loves the Real and none else, yet the Real makes him love women for the manifestation of Himself in them.” In fact, “his beholding of the Real in the woman is the most complete and perfect because in this way he beholds the Real with respect to Him being both active and passive.” (Abrahamov, 2015, 175) It can be interpreted as His manifestation in her being utmost receptive to the active one while also completely possessing him, taming him, and making him loving towards her (Kharazmi, 2000, 1084). Ibn Arabi says elsewhere about the unique, singular one that “since he was created a servant in essence and origin, he never raised his head to masterhood; in fact, he never ceased to be in prostration [and] stillness while being receptive, until God made from him what He made, so He gave him the rank of active-ness [power to create and influence] ...” He never ceases to be utmost receptive, and as a result, actively and uniquely manifests the Divine will.

As such, he loves women “because of the perfect beholding of the Real in them, for the Real is never beheld without materials.” Ibn Arabi says this is because the essence of the Real is in no need of beings (in this sense, there is no relationality between the very essence of Real and beings). Nevertheless, for this reason, that which can occur of beholding the Real only occurs in beings, and “beholding of the Real in women is the greatest and the most perfect beholding.” Furthermore, the strongest union is sexual intercourse (conjugal union; *nikah*), which resembles divine turning to the one whom He created in His image in order to make him His vicegerent so that He might see in him His form, in fact, Himself.” Thus, Ibn Arabi concludes that his appearance is that of creation, but his inner reality is the Real.

Ibn Arabi later says that women are “venues of receptivity,” reminiscent of “how Nature is to the Real, in which He revealed the forms of the Cosmos by directing toward it the divine Will and Command.” (Austin, 1980, 229)¹³ As such, “Whoever loves women in this way loves with divine love, while he whose love for them is limited to natural lust,

¹² This is a famous narration from Prophet Muhammad, in whose Logos this chapter is named. The narration appears in various compilations; e.g. *Musnad* of Ahmad ibn Hanbal; *Sunan* of al-Nisa’i; *Mustadrak* of al-Hakim.

¹³ Ibn Arabi adds that this is “conjugal union (sexual intercourse) at the level of realm of elemental forms, [spiritual] concentration in the realm of luminous spirits, and the ordering of premises towards a conclusion (in the realm of thought), all of which correspond to the consummation of the Primordial Singularity in all these aspects.”

lacks knowledge of that desire. For such a one, it is mere form devoid of spirit.” He then utters a poem,

*People rightly say of me that I am a lover
Only they know not whom my love is for!*

Conclusion

The thinkers we have studied in this work resonantly claim that we really do not know beings. Only the open one does. In the words of Heidegger, “We can never grasp beings by explaining and deriving them on the basis of other beings.” (Heidegger, 2012, 182) Knowledge of them occurs “only out of their grounding in the truth of beyng.”¹⁴ However, “very seldom do humans advance into this truth. How easily and quickly they make do with beings and thus remain disappropriated of being. How compelling is the appearance of the superfluosity of the truth of being.”

The open one directly faces Being, becomes *of* Being, sings its songs, becomes solitary in Him, transported out of the ordinary. He is not a universalist and refuses to nullify Being by analyzing it and deriving it in abstractions. Despite the popular view, Being is “assuredly not ... the most general property of beings and thus their emptiest determination, as if we already knew “beings” and the task were merely to abstract that “general” feature.” (Ibid., 185)

The open one is not “knowledgeable,” is not assertive, yet participates in thinking and shelters the truth as the open “playing field of time-space.” Meanwhile, he does this as he is wanted and desired by Being (Ibid., 186):

... thought can prepare the open realm, which as time-space (site of the moment) makes the fissure of beyng accessible and endurable in Da-sein. Only in appearance is the event something carried out by humans; actually, being human occurs as historical through the appropriation that summons Da-sein in one way or another.

The open one is deeply wounded and cracked. He is split open. He comes soberly face to face with Being. He holds fast and persistently and awaits in his firm renunciation, in his “not yet.” He awaits:

The intrusion of beyng granted to historical human beings does not ever manifest itself to them immediately but only in a hidden way, in the modes of the sheltering of truth. Yet the intrusion of beyng, as seldom and sparse as it is, always comes out of the *persistent* remaining absent of beyng, for the mass and endurance of the absence are not less than those of the intrusion.

And also,

It is always only a few who arrive at the leap, and they do so on different paths. By creating and sacrificing, they always are the ones who belong to the grounding of Da-sein in the time-space of which beings as beings are preserved and thereby the truth of beyng is sheltered.

¹⁴ “Beyng”, similar to the German term “Seyn”, is an archaic spelling for “Being” (“Sein”). Heidegger began using this archaic spelling in the 1930s, especially in his *Contributions to Philosophy*, to emphasize a non-metaphysical notion of Being.

Being essentially occurs to him and is manifested in him. In doing this, “he does not accomplish anything, except for catching on to the oscillation of appropriation, i.e., entering into this oscillation and thus for the first time becoming itself: the preserver of the thrown projection, *the grounded one that grounds the ground.*” (Ibid., 188-189)

In the words of Rumi,

*I'm servant of the Sun, so I speak only of the Sun
I'm neither the night nor worship it; I don't narrate night-tales
As I am messenger of the Sun, as a translator:
I ask Him in Secret, and answer you in Public*

The open one has a heart that turns where the Real, Reality, Being turns. The open one is in a state every moment. His truth is his heart, which “turns incessantly with the Real and in It and with It and for It, and this is why it expands so much so as to contain the Real.” (Jandi, 1983) The open one is solitary, alienated, transported, incomprehensible, and can only say:

*People rightly say of me that I am a lover
Only they know not whom my love is for!*

References

1. Abrahamov, B. 2015. *Ibn Al-Arabi's Fusus Al-Hikam: An Annotated Translation of The Bezels of Wisdom*, Routledge.
2. Austin, R. 1980. *Ibn al-Arabi: The Bezels of Wisdom*, Paulist Press.
3. Bashier, S.H. 2012. *Arabi's Barzakh: The Concept of the Limit and the Relationship between God and the World*. SUNY Press.
4. Brown, N.O. 1990. *Love's Body*, Univ of California Press.
5. Chittick, W. 1984. *Ibn Arabi's Own Summary of the Fuṣūṣ: The Imprint of the Bezels of Wisdom*, Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arābi Society.
6. Gadamer, H.G. 1989. *Truth and Method*. 2nd edition, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, New York: Continuum.
7. Hassan-zadeh Amoli, 1994. Treatise *Anna Hu al-Haqq* (Indeed He is the Reality). Qiyaam Publication, Qum, Iran.
8. Heidegger, M. 2012. *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, Trans: Rojcewicz, R. and Vallega-Neu, D. Indiana University Press.
9. ———. 2010. *Being and Time: A Revised Edition of the Stambaugh Translation*, Schmidt, D.J.
10. ———. 1969. *Identity and Difference*. Trans. J. Stambaugh, University of Chicago Press.
11. ———. 1979. Ed: Krell, D.F., 1979. *Nietzsche*, Volume III (The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics).
12. ———. 2008. Ed: Krell, D.F., 2008. *Basic writings: from Being and Time to the Task of Thinking*. Harper Perennial.
13. Ibn Arabi. 1911. *al-Futuhat al-Makkiyya* (The Meccan Revelations). 3rd Edition of Bulaq in 4 volumes; vol. 3.
14. ———. 1971-1992. *al-Futuhat al-Makkiyya* (The Meccan Revelations). Edition of Osman Yahia in 14 volumes.
15. Jandi, Mu'ayyid al-Din. 1983. *Nafha al-Rooh & Tohfa al-Futuh* (Breath of Spirit & Gift of Openings). Edited by Najib Mayel Heravi, Mola Publications.
16. Kharazmi, Taj al-Din Hossein. 2000. *Commentary on Fusus al-Hikam*, edited by Ay. Hassan-zadeh Amoli.
17. Mostafavi, H. 1991. *al-Tahghigh fi Kalamat al-Quran al-Karim*, vol. 9.

18. Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. 1989. *Knowledge and the Sacred*. Suny Press.
19. Rahmim, A. 2022. *Entanglement of Being and Beings: Heidegger and Ibn Arabi on Sameness and Difference*. *Journal of East-West Thought*, vol. 12(4), pp. 57-67.
20. ———. 2024. *A Pre-Logical World to Begin With: Singing New Paradigms*. In Submission.
21. Richardson, W.J. 1974. *Heidegger: Through phenomenology to thought*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
22. Rumi, J. 1994. *Masnavi Manavi*. Trans: E. H. Whinfield. Amir Kabir Publication, Tehran, Iran; Book I.