

# The Ideas of Pseudo-Empedocles in Baghdad Mysticism of the Ninth-Tenth Centuries CE: Al-Ḥallāj's Cosmology

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This paper looks at the cosmological texts of the eminent Sufi al-Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309 AH/922 CE) through the prism of pseudo-Empedocles's influence. The medieval scholar Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Daylamī was the first to juxtapose pseudo-Empedoclean doctrine and al-Ḥallāj's passionate love (*maḥabba*). A connection between the two was postulated by L. Massignon, who reconstructed the line of succession of the Baghdad believers in pseudo-Empedocles's ideas and assumed a link between the Nestorian monastery of Dayr Qunnā and these ideas. Analysing al-Ḥallāj's cosmology reveals an influence of some pseudo-Empedoclean ideas as they appear in Arabic sources. Al-Ḥallāj's fragmentary works and his quotations will be examined by considering some fragments in al-Daylamī's *Kitāb 'Aṭf al-alif*, a Persian text from the *Sharḥ al-shaḥīyāt* of Rūzbihān Baqlī, and some fragments from al-Sulamī's *Tafsīr*. There are also short cosmological fragments in the *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn*, and some are known from quotations. Several concepts such as *azal*, *khiṭāb* (as *logos*), *qudra*, *dahr*, *ma'ānī*, and *ṣuwar* are encountered in pseudo-Empedocles's texts. For al-Ḥallāj, the crucial concept in creation is passionate love (*ishq*, *maḥabba*), which serves as the catalyst for creation. Desire (*mashī'a*) is the first mode of the divine essence. Divine eternity (*azal*) is opposed to perpetuity (*dahr*). In al-Ḥallāj's cosmology we find the concept of secrets (*asrār*) that resemble *ma'ānī*. But at the same time, they resemble intelligent matter underlying the higher world. The question of two creations in these texts seems to go back to the understanding of the creation of the *materia prima* (*unṣur*) and material bodies (the first and second creations). Al-Ḥallāj's source for these ideas was probably connected with the Nestorian church, and this may go some way toward explaining the links between the Sufis of Baghdad and the Christian milieu in monasteries such as Dayr Qunnā.

*Keywords:* al-Ḥallāj, pseudo-Empedocles, Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Daylamī, Rūzbihān Baqlī, eternity (*azal*), passionate love (*ishq*), love (*maḥabba*), desire (*mashī'a*)

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### *The Legacy of Pseudo-Empedocles*

The name of pseudo-Empedocles or the Arabic Empedocles is linked with a group of texts for which Greek originals have not (yet) been found. When and under what circumstances these texts were written is unclear, though they are certainly not authentic texts of Empedocles.<sup>1</sup> Before considering the main ideas of pseudo-Empedocles and their influence on the Sufi al-Ḥusayn b. Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), it is worth noting how we know about the ideas of pseudo-Empedocles.

One of the main sources of the Arabic Empedocles's doctrine is *Kitāb Amūniyūs fī ārā' al-falāsifa* (The book of Ammonius on the opinions of the philosophers), a Neoplatonic doxographical work, whose author is sometimes referred to as pseudo-Ammonius. The doxography was likely written about 850 and is known from a single manuscript only (Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya 2450). The author puts into the mouths of the ancient philosophers views that have little to do with their actual teachings: its text contains some undoubtedly Gnostic themes, and owes its philosophical inspiration to various Neoplatonists (especially Plotinus, but also Porphyrios and Proclus). The chapter on Empedocles is the richest section of the text. It differs from other sections in form, as all the preceding sections relate personalities to a specific theme, while the chapter on Empedocles focuses on the person rather than a topic, and the topics are not discussed in detail, but only mentioned in short sentences or brief hints. There are indications that pseudo-Ammonius took some of his ideas from Neoplatonic treatises ascribed to Empedocles, several of which were circulating in the early Islamic period and on which many later authors depended. Although the doxography has no specifically Shiite elements, it must have spread to Ismā'īlī Shiite circles very early, since it was quoted by well-known Ismā'īlī authors such as Aḥmad al-Nasafī (d. 332/943) and Abū Khātim al-Rāzī (d. 327/938).

Fragments of the Arabic Empedocles and references to him are found in a wide range of works: Abū l-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmirī's *Kitāb al-Amad 'alā l-abad* (The book on the afterlife); the *Siwān al-ḥikma* (The depository of wisdom literature) attributed to Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī; Abū l-Ḥasan al-Daylamī's *Kitāb 'Aṭf al-alif al-ma'lūf 'alā l-lām al-ma'ṭūf* (The book of the inclination of the familiar *alif* toward the inclined *lām*); Ṣā'īd al-Andalusī's *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt al-umam* (The book of the classes of nations); Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a's *'Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'* (The best accounts of the classes of the physicians); Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī's *Kitāb al-Milal wa-l-niḥal* (The book of religions and sects); Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn al-Qiftī's *Ta'rīkh al-ḥukamā'* (The history of sages); Shams al-Dīn al-Shahrastānī's *Nuzhat al-arwāḥ wa-rawḍat al-afrāḥ* (Promenade of souls and garden of rejoicings); pseudo-Majrītī's *Kitāb al-Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* (The book of the aim of the sage); and the *Corpus Gabirianum*. Some parts of the work of pseudo-Empedocles seem to have existed in Hebrew translation, and fragments of his *Book of Five Substances* are preserved in three late medieval Jewish works.<sup>2</sup>

In order to establish the reality of any pseudo-Empedoclean impact on al-Ḥallāj in what follows, it is necessary to first highlight the main points of his doctrine, which will be done in the following subsections.

1 For a brief characterization of the Arabic Empedocles, see De Smet, Empedocles.

2 Rudolph, *Pseudo-Ammonios*, 130-131; De Smet, *Empedocles Arabus*, 31-37.

*Tawḥīd (Oneness of God)*

God is the True One, who fundamentally cannot be multiplied in any way. »He is One, because there is nothing that is with Him« is a Neoplatonic interpretation of the Islamic concept of *tawḥīd*, also attributed to other Arabic pre-Socratics in pseudo-Ammonius's work. This is a distinctive element of the Neoplatonic tradition in Islam. On the one hand, pseudo-Empedocles refers to the Creator as the source of being and non-being (*al-shay' wa-lā al-shay'*); on the other, he identifies God with being (*wujūd*).

*Ṣifāt (Attributes)*

In the account of Ṣā'id al-Andalusī's *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt al-umam*, »Empedocles was the first whose approach combined the entities of God's attributes (*ma'ānī ṣifāt Allāh*), saying that they all come down to one thing, and that, although He is described by [the terms] ›knowledge‹, ›benevolence‹, and ›power‹, He does not possess distinct entities (*ma'ānī*) which are characterized specifically by these diverse names.«<sup>3</sup> Although some passages deny all God's attributes without exception, most representative texts provide a list of positive divine attributes. Abū l-Ḥasan al-Āmirī (d. 381/992), for example, lists four attributes: knowledge (*ilm*), liberality (*jūd*), will (*irāda*), and power (*qudra*).<sup>4</sup> In the account of pseudo-Ammonius, »He is pure knowledge (*ilm*), pure will (*irāda*), He is liberality (*jūd*), might (*izz*), power (*qudra*), justice (*adl*), goodness (*khayr*), and truth (*ḥaqq*).«<sup>5</sup> This list contains attributes of various origins, some of which belong to the Neoplatonic tradition, while others – such as liberality, might, power, and justice – are closer to Islamic traditions. Pseudo-Ammonius identifies the will (*irāda*) with the being of the Creator. This fact reminds us of the Christian Neoplatonic concept. According to pseudo-Ammonius, these divine attributes are not something independent and therefore distinct from His essence, but rather are fully identical with the being of the Creator. The attributes do not denote Neoplatonic »powers« (sg. *quwwa*); they are indistinguishable from the divine hypostasis (*huwīyya*).<sup>6</sup> Al-Āmirī gave as his list of attributes the Mu'tazilite *ma'ānī* rather than the Neoplatonic powers».

*Azaliyya (Eternity) and Dahr (Perpetuity)*

The hypostasis (*huwīyya*) of the Creator exists from eternity. His eternity (*azaliyya*) in contrast to perpetuity (*dahr*) exists before the beginning of time. All eternities beneath his eternity exist from eternity too. Thus, pseudo-Empedocles alludes to the plurality of eternities, which are situated below the eternity of the divine hypostasis. The lower eternities correspond to the first created principles that directly participate in the higher eternity.

3 Stroumsa, Ibn Masarra's third book, 94.

4 De Smet, *Empedocles Arabus*, 182.

5 De Smet, *Empedocles Arabus*, 73. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

6 The term *huwīyya* translates Greek εἶναι »essence«.

*ʿUnṣur (Materia Prima)*

The doctrine of the *materia prima* (*ʿunṣur* rather than *hayūlā* and *mādda*), the receptacle of bodily form, is one of the main ideas of pseudo-Empedocles. It is not the Intellect that stands at the beginning of creation, as one would expect in a Neoplatonic context, but *ʿunṣur*. The *materia prima* does not resemble a hypostasis, because there is no intermediary between God and matter. In the account of the Hebrew fragments of pseudo-Empedocles, matter is the first thing to be created. Constantly receiving »impressions« from the Creator, matter carries in itself all the forms of the universe. Through the *materia prima* God creates the Intellect, which is connected with it and receives from it the light, the forms, and the perfections which it has acquired from the Creator. Thus, the *materia prima* becomes the genus or »matter« for the Intellect. According to Ulrich Rudolph, Ammonius's *materia prima* does not mean the material substratum of corporeal things, but intelligent matter (ὄλη νοητή) underlying the formations of the higher world. Rudolph states that pseudo-Empedocles picked up Neoplatonic thought, but distorted and vulgarized it.<sup>7</sup> Daniel De Smet relies in particular on the interpretation of the first matter in the commentary on the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl by Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī and the Druzian work *Kitāb al-Nuqat wa-l-dawā'ir*. He supposes that pseudo-Empedocles uses the term *ʿunṣur* to mean a phase of uncertainty, of pure potentiality, preceding the formation of the Intellect. This is the first hypostasis in the genesis of the Intellect, preceding its constitution.<sup>8</sup>

*Mantiq (Reasoning)*

*Mantiq* is used solely to refer to discursive human reasoning. Since God has nothing in common with His creatures, He cannot be comprehended by them in any way. He remains beyond the reach of the human mind and cannot be expressed in language. *Mantiq* consists of parts and therefore is divisible, whereas the Intellect is one and unites the divisible.

*Jism (Celestial Sphere) vs. Jirm (Lower World)*

Empedocles classifies created things into different kinds. He distinguishes between simple (*basīṭ*), spiritual (*rūḥānī*) substances and composite (*murakkab*), corporeal (*jirmānī*) substances, roughly corresponding to the Neoplatonic distinction between »pure forms« of supralunar world and sublunar »forms in matter«. He also introduces a third, middle category, the celestial bodies, to which he attributes both simplicity (*basīṭ*) and a certain corporeality (*jismānī*). Among bodies, pseudo-Empedocles thus distinguished between two kinds of bodies: the incorruptible sphere of celestial bodies (*jism*) and the temporal lower world (*jirm*).

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7 Rudolph, *Pseudo-Ammonios*, 135-136.

8 De Smet, *Empedocles Arabus*, 109-110.

*The Cosmic Hierarchy: 'Unşur (Materia Prima), 'Aql (Intellect), Nafs (Soul), Ṭabī'a (Nature)*  
 As a convinced Platonist, pseudo-Empedocles recognizes that above the natural world there exists a luminous spiritual world ('*ālam rūḥānī nūrānī*), whose beauty and splendour cannot be perceived by reason. Only the pure human soul (*al-nafs al-zakiyya*) aspires to this world during its purification. At the head of the world of simple, spiritual, and mental substances (*jawāhir basīṭa rūḥāniyya ... ma'qūla*) stands the *materia prima*. Then the entities of the intelligible world arise, each of which is intermediary (*tawassuṭ*). Thus, inferior degrees are formed. Thus, the Intellect is established through the mediation of matter, the soul through the mediation of matter and the Intellect, and finally nature through the mediation of matter, Intellect, and soul. Each essence appears as a husk (*qishr*) or image (*ṣanam*) for that which precedes it, and as a heart (*lubb*) for that which yields to it. The husk is compared with the body (*jasad*) and the heart with the spirit (*rūḥ*). Each entity is »within the horizon« (*fī ufq*) of its predecessor. De Smet associates *qishr* with *zāhir*, the outward manifestation of a being. He sees in the pair *qishr* and *lubb* the equivalent of *zāhir* and *bāṭin*.

#### *Maḥabba (Love) and Ghalaba (Victory)*

This is the most significant point of the unique pseudo-Empedoclean system. The term »victory« (*ghalaba*) rather than »strife« (*munāza'a*), like Empedocles's philosophy, seems to be linked with the word *νῆκος* (strife) becoming pronounced in the same way as *νῆκος* (victory) as a result of the regular Middle Greek process of itacism.<sup>9</sup> Love (*maḥabba*) and victory (*ghalaba*) created three categories of substances: simple spiritual substances of which the mental world is composed, simple bodily substances (*jusmāniyya*), and bulky compound substances (*jirmāniyya*). Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 414/1023) indicates that love predominates in the formation of celestial bodies and spheres, and victory in the genesis of the elements that make up the world of generation and corruption. As one descends to lower degrees, love diminishes and victory increases. Pure love is at the level of primal principles. Victory is associated with crude matter, the lowest degree of creation.

#### *Al-Nash'a al-Thāniyya (Second Birth)*

The supreme moment when the parts return to the whole and are transformed into their deepest essence is described by pseudo-Empedocles as the »second birth« or »second creation«. He appeals to the quranic notion of the »next creation« (*al-nash'a al-ākhirā*). Muslim authors are almost unanimous in condemning the cyclicity of this doctrine.<sup>10</sup>

9 The erroneous *ghalaba* is often found in Arabic Empedocles's quotations, up to al-Shahrastānī's time (6th/12th century). However, the texts also record the correct term »strife« (along with *niṣwah* »quarrel« in the Hebrew fragment). Besides *ghalaba*, pseudo-Ammonius uses the term *munāza'a* (to translate the Greek *στάσις*); see Rudolph, *Pseudo-Ammonios*, 136-137.

10 Rudolph, *Pseudo-Ammonios*, 37-38, 71, 72, 74, 82-83, 106, 108, 132-140; De Smet, *Empedocles Arabus*, 62-149.

### *Reflection of Pseudo-Empedocles's Ideas*

Pseudo-Empedoclean ideas spread in Islamic thought, although how these ideas were originally transferred into Arabic remains disputed. Miguel Asín Palacios (1871-1944) theorized that it was scholars in Islamic Spain – specifically Ibn Masarra (Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad, d. 319/931) and Spanish Jewish philosophers – who explored the pseudo-Empedocles tradition, ultimately leading to its broader reception. Asín Palacios, who based his theories upon the secondary informants Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153) and Shams al-Dīn al-Shahrastūrī (d. after 687/1288), developed a complex theory of the transfer of pseudo-Empedocles's doctrine from scholar to scholar in Islamic Spain, until Ibn 'Arabī (Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad, d. 638/1240) then propagated it throughout the Muslim world. Asín Palacios was criticized, however, for mistakenly identifying various Neoplatonic and Hermetic ideas with pseudo-Empedocles.<sup>11</sup>

An analysis of the sources shows that the line of the Arabic Empedocles represented a rather narrow phenomenon within the broader Islamic intellectual tradition. For example, for Ibn al-Nadīm (Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad ibn Ishāq, d. 380/990), who is generally well versed in Greek translations, Empedocles is just one name among others. In the *Fihrist* he does not report anything specific.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, Empedocles was held in high esteem by some Muslim intellectuals who called him the »divine sage« (*al-ḥakīm al-rabbānī*). This phrase was probably based on apocryphal texts, such as the work of pseudo-Ammonius. It is hard to say whether any Arabic translations of pseudo-Empedocles's texts circulated among a limited circle of medieval Islamic intellectuals.

In *Kitāb al-Amad 'alā l-abad*, al-'Āmirī affirmed Empedocles to be the possessor of prophetic wisdom (*ḥikma*). He received this wisdom from Luqmān, whom al-'Āmirī called a friend or vizier of David. Luqmān gave Empedocles the teaching of *tawḥīd* (divine oneness), who transferred it from Syria to Greece and became the first Greek sage (*ḥakīm*) and the originator of the philosophy of Ancient Hellas. In al-'Āmirī's account, Empedocles did not grasp the teachings of Luqmān very well. After Aristotle, there was a fragmentation of knowledge which led to a certain distortion. Charlatans such as Galen spread erroneous doctrines. The heretical positions advocated by some *falāsifa* (probably Abū Bakr al-Rāzī and al-Farābī) have nothing to do with the pure original wisdom as taught by the Five Sages (Empedocles, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle). Al-'Āmirī reports a double transmission of wisdom between the East and Greece: a Syriac line (Luqmān/David to Empedocles) and an Egyptian one (Solomon's companions to Pythagoras to Socrates to Plato to Aristotle). The Syriac branch, however, does not develop beyond Empedocles, since there is no direct connection between Empedocles and Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.<sup>13</sup> Al-Shahrastūrī (or his source) went even farther than al-'Āmirī. He shows Empedocles as a Muslim ascetic, even a venerable Sufi.<sup>14</sup>

11 De Smet, *Empedocles Arabus*; De Smet, *Influence of the Arabic Pseudo-Empedocles*; Stern, Ibn Masarra; Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy*.

12 De Smet, *Empedocles Arabus*, 56.

13 De Smet, *Empedocles Arabus*, 39-40.

14 Daniel De Smet states that Arab tradition agrees with the ancient views of Empedocles as a »madman of God« who descended into this world to exhort souls and remind them of their heavenly origins; De Smet, *Empedocles Arabus*, 54.

We find pseudo-Empedocles's supporters in both the east and west of the Islamic world. In the east, al-ʿĀmirī, a native of Khurasan, wrote his above-mentioned *Kitāb al-Amad ʿalā l-abad* in Bukhara in 375/985. Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī (d. after 391/1001), known as al-Mantiqī («the logician»), went to Buyid Baghdad from Sijistan (Sistan) and joined Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī (d. 364/974). Al-Sijistānī's disciple al-Tawḥīdī reports that he commented on a passage of Empedocles regarding the meaning of love and victory in the philosophical meetings (*majālis*) held in al-Sijistānī's circle. Al-Sijistānī commented on this passage.<sup>15</sup> In turn, we find an analysis of pseudo-Empedocles's ideas in the work of al-Tawḥīdī's disciple Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Daylamī (d. early fourth/tenth cent.), entitled *Kitāb ʿAtf al-alif al-maʿlūf ʿalā l-lām al-maʿtūf*. This eastern line thus leads to Baghdad.

Louis Massignon reconstructed the line of succession of the Baghdad supporters of pseudo-Empedocles's ideas: Mattā b. Yūnus (d. 328/939), to Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī, to Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī, to al-Tawḥīdī, to al-Daylamī. He assumes there is a link between these ideas and the Nestorian monastery of Dayr Qunnā, and stressed that pseudo-Empedocles's ideas gained popularity in Syrian monasteries, linking Dayr Qunnā with a number of Islamic mystics. The transfer of pseudo-Empedoclean ideas is a marker of this influence.<sup>16</sup> But his hypothesis was based on an unclear foundation.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, we have no information on personal contacts between these mystics and scholars at Dayr Qunnā. Thus, this hypothesis can be discussed only through a detailed examination of the ideas themselves. The pseudo-Empedoclean tendencies in the commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* by Mattā b. Yūnus – an eminent representative of the local scientific tradition, who started his Aristotelian education in the school of Mar Mari attached to Dayr Qunnā – would seem to support Massignon's belief that pseudo-Empedocles's ideas acquired popularity in Dayr Qunnā. In reality, however, Mattā was one of the key figures of Baghdad Aristotelianism and did not have any special empathy toward Empedocles. The popularity of pseudo-Empedoclean ideas among Nestorian intellectuals in the Abbasid era, including at Dayr Qunnā, proves nothing. There is no reason to give Dayr Qunnā a special role. While some pseudo-Empedoclean ideas seem to have had some impact, this influence should not be overstated. Mattā b. Yūnus, Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī, and Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī were included in the nucleus of the so-called Baghdad School of philosophers, a group of Syriac and Arabic thinkers, who based their ideas on Aristotelian logic and late antique authorities. Even though they relied on some Neoplatonic sources, it was Aristotle who was regarded as the highest authority.<sup>18</sup>

15 De Smet, *Empedocles Arabus*, 59, 162.

16 Massignon, *Interférences philosophiques*. In the fourth/tenth century, the monastery of Dayr Qunnā was a Nestorian centre of learning and intellectual work with special patronage. This monastery was situated 90 kilometres from Baghdad on the left bank of the Tigris. It was founded by Mar ʿAbdā at the end of the fourth century. In the Abbasid period this centre trained personnel for the state administration. Some influential Nestorian clans of secretaries of the ninth and early tenth centuries, like the Banū Makhlad and Banū l-Jarrāh, came from this monastery. See Massignon, *La politique islamo-chrétienne*.

17 See, for example, Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 221.

18 Janos, *Active nature*, 166; Janos, *Philosophical and scientific learning*, 542, 547; Twetten, *Aristotelian cosmology*.

The author in fourth/tenth-century Baghdad who conveyed pseudo-Empedoclean ideas most directly was al-Daylamī. He was a disciple of al-Tawḥīdī, who belonged to a tradition cultivated in the cosmological ideas of pseudo-Empedocles. Al-Tawḥīdī was deeply immersed in the ideas of the scholars of the Church of the East (i.e., Nestorians). For example, in the *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ* he reported the famous debate between Abū Bishr Mattā b. Yūnus, who was associated with Dayr Qunnā, and Abū Saʿīd al-Sīrāfī on the merits of logic and grammar.<sup>19</sup> Massignon stressed the link between al-Tawḥīdī and al-Ḥallāj, because al-Tawḥīdī's friend Zayd b. Rifāʿa was a pupil of Abū Bakr al-Shiblī, the famous Sufi *shaykh* (master) of Baghdad and a follower of al-Ḥallāj.<sup>20</sup> But this fact is not proof for this link. Some ideas of al-Ḥallāj and al-Tawḥīdī may have a similar origin, without a link between them. In some accounts, Mattā b. Yūnus and his disciple Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī were the teachers of Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī, the eminent Islamic philosopher. Al-Sijistānī's *Risāla fī l-kamāl al-khaṣṣ* shows a set of ideas which would be developed by Sufism. These included, for example, union (*ittihād*) with the essences of the celestial bodies from old astral cults of the Sabians; the Nestorian union with the human nature (*nāsūt*) of the Christ; and the philosophical idea of union with the Active Intellect.<sup>21</sup> These ideas probably reflect the background of thought at Dayr Qunnā, which could have been a source for several scholars residing in Baghdad at the time, but they may also have been associated with Nestorian personalities not directly linked to the monastery.

In the *Kitāb ʿAtf al-alif al-maʿlūf ʿalā l-lām al-maʿtūf*, al-Daylamī describes Empedoclean ideas in this manner: »Empedocles said: The first principle (*mabdaʿ*) created by the Demiurge (*al-mubdiʿ al-awwal*) was a (pair): love (*maḥabba*) and victory (*ghalaba*). They created the simple spiritual substances, and the bodily simple substances, and the bulky compound substances.«<sup>22</sup> This description reveals his knowledge of pseudo-Ammonius's work.<sup>23</sup>

Then al-Daylamī states that it was Heraclitus who postulates the teaching on love and strife: the First Intellect (the intellectual light, *nūr ʿaqlī*) created love (*maḥabba*) and strife (*munāzaʿa*). The higher (supralunar) worlds are created by love, and the sublunar (earth) by strife.<sup>24</sup> This confusion of Heraclitus with Empedocles is inherent in the Arabic tradition, and al-Daylamī repeats pseudo-Ammonius here.<sup>25</sup>

Heraclitus and Empedocles state that love in this world is the »efficacies« or »influences« (*taʿthirāt*) of that primordial love (*maḥabba aṣliyya*) from which everything in the lower and higher worlds, divine and natural emanated (*inṣadara*) by the grace of the Demiurge.

Next, al-Daylamī moves toward al-Ḥallāj and affirms that the aforementioned ideas resemble the doctrine of al-Ḥallāj, except that Empedocles and Heraclitus refer to two Demiurges, the first and the second (= the intellect). He states: »Among other Sufi masters, no predecessor of [al-Ḥallāj's] theory is known. This doctrine brought him [al-Ḥallāj] a large number of followers.«<sup>26</sup>

19 Vagelpohl, 'Abbasid translation movement, 256.

20 Massignon, *Interférences philosophiques*, 241.

21 Massignon, *Interférences philosophiques*, 241-242.

22 Al-Daylamī, *Kitāb ʿAtf al-alif*, ed. Vadet, 24-25.

23 De Smet, *Empedocles Arabus*, 128.

24 Al-Daylamī, *Kitāb ʿAtf al-alif*, ed. Vadet, 25.

25 Rudolph, *Pseudo-Ammonios*, 67-68.

26 Al-Daylamī, *Kitāb ʿAtf al-alif*, ed. Vadet, 25-26.



### *Al-Ḥallāj's Cosmological Legacy and pseudo-Empedocles's Influence*

The eminent Baghdad Sufi master al-Ḥallāj was probably influenced by the ideas of the Arabic Empedocles. Scholars other than Massignon have also signalled al-Ḥallāj's inspiration from Hellenistic notions. However, absolutization of this influence (e.g., by Herbert Mason and Saer El-Jaichi) has sometimes distorted the analysis of al-Ḥallāj's doctrine and led to neglecting the influence that Sufi tradition had on him.<sup>27</sup>

The roots of al-Ḥallāj's doctrine came from earlier Sufi tradition, but some points of his teaching about divine love, the annihilation of the human nature in God, the incarnation (*ḥulūl*) of the divine nature (*lāhūt*) in the human nature (*nāsūt*), and unity with God (*ittiḥād*) have clear parallels with Syriac Christian doctrines. For example, al-Ḥallāj used the famous Christian metaphor of mixing water with wine (i.e., the mixing of the two natures in Christ).<sup>28</sup> However, this influence is also problematic: on the one hand, some of these parallels probably connect with ideas from the monastery of Dayr Qunnā; on the other, we have no information on al-Ḥallāj having any personal contact with scholars there. We know that some of his partisans and scholars close to him were associated with this monastery, including his patrons Ishāq b. 'Alī and Muḥammad al-Qunnā'i; the former later became a secretary of al-Khāqānī, the vizier of al-Muqtadir, and was arrested as one of al-Ḥallāj's disciples, but we know nothing about the ideas of either of these patrons.<sup>29</sup> Some scholars have gone so far as to posit that al-Ḥallāj was a hidden Christian;<sup>30</sup> nonetheless, even Roger Arnaldez, who titled his book *Hallāj ou La religion de la croix*, came to the conclusion that al-Ḥallāj's religion is not devoid of echoes of Christianity, but that no direct Christian influence can be traced.<sup>31</sup> Some similarities between al-Ḥallāj's ideas and those of scholars of the Church of the East, such as the doctrine of the relation between the divine nature (*lāhūt*) and the human nature (*nāsūt*), are not disputed. However, to trace his entire doctrine, which has clear Sufi roots, to Christianity is unjustified and groundless.

Al-Ḥallāj's central idea was the unity of the human soul and God, which was considered to be the final goal for a human being. That this unity could be achieved through an ascetic lifestyle was an idea that was also very popular in Islamic mysticism. Al-Ḥallāj may have taken the principle of unity with God from his teacher Sahl al-Tustarī (d. ca. 283/896). Cosmological ideas of Syrian and Mesopotamian Islamic mystics were based on an illuminative theory of descending divine lights, and this came to the fore in Sahl al-Tustarī's doctrine. The concept of »manifestation« (*tajallī*) in early Islamic mysticism is directly connected with seeing God and with His revelation to people, but not with sophisticated cosmological structures. Sahl's crucial idea that is similar to Neoplatonic content and may be adopted from Greek heritage is that God created good and evil by the act of desire (*mashī'a*) and will (*irāda*).<sup>32</sup>

27 Mason, *Al-Hallaj*, 6; El-Jaichi, *Early Philosophical Sūfism*, 2. For example, El-Jaichi criticized Massignon for only accepting the influence of Hellenistic ideas on al-Ḥallāj in moderation; however El-Jaichi's arguments, such as that the Sufi had a high degree of familiarity with the vocabulary of Neoplatonic philosophy (based on the list of the [lost] al-Ḥallāj works in Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*) cannot be taken seriously; see El-Jaichi, *Early Philosophical Sūfism*, 5-7.

28 Blum, *Geschichte der Begegnung*, 542-543.

29 Cabrol, *Les fonctionnaires*, 199-200; Massignon, *La passion*, I, 245.

30 Hatem, *Hallaj et le Christ*; Blum, *Geschichte der Begegnung*, 527-566.

31 Arnaldez, *Hallāj*.

32 Böwering, *Mystical Vision*, 176-180, 199, 216-220, 249-250.

Al-Daylamī draws from al-Ḥallāj's texts to quote the interpretations of *ishq* from some ancient scientists and philosophers (such as Ptolemy, Galen, Aristotle, and Plato), *mutakallimūn* (sg. *mutakallim*), dialectical theologians – including Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām, 'Alī b. Manṣūr, Abū l-Hudhayl al-'Allāf, Hishām b. al-Ḥakam, Thumāma b. Ashras) – and eminent Sufi masters –including Dhū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī, al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, al-Junayd, Sahl al-Tustarī, 'Amr al-Makkī, Yaḥyā b. Mu'ādh, Ruwaym, Ibn Khafif, Bishr al-Ḥāfi, Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī, Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī, Ibn 'Aṭā', Abū Bakr al-Shiblī, Abū Bakr al-Rūdhabārī.<sup>33</sup> Al-Daylamī stressed that al-Ḥallāj separated himself from other *shaykhs* because he considered love as an attribute of the divine essence. Al-Ḥallāj pointed to the union of lover (*muḥibb*) and beloved (*maḥbūb*) in the state of ultimate love (*maḥabba*). In this process, the attributes of the lover are destroyed in the beloved, or human nature is destroyed in the divine nature.<sup>34</sup>

El-Jaichi values al-Daylamī's text as a combination of Neoplatonic and Aristotelian philosophy, and he identifies three »axioms« of al-Ḥallāj in it: the Neoplatonic self-desire, the quranic creation *ex nihilo*, and the self-thinking thoughts of Aristotle's Prime Mover. El-Jaichi treats al-Ḥallāj's cosmogony as a blend of Arabic Plotinus, the Proclus Arabus, and pseudo-Ammonius. He believes that al-Ḥallāj's ideas were linked with the circle of Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb b. Isḥāq al-Kindī (d. ca. 260/873), an eminent Muslim philosopher.<sup>35</sup> But this complex composite of ideas makes al-Ḥallāj a sophisticated philosopher, shaped, according to El-Jaichi, within »the Graeco-Arabic renaissance«,<sup>36</sup> meanwhile he was above all a mystic.

Al-Daylamī's comparison of al-Ḥallāj's cosmological ideas with the constructs of pseudo-Empedocles prompts the question of whether this comparison is based in a historical link between the two or is simply a hypothesis made by al-Daylamī. To evaluate this, we need to consider more carefully the cosmology of al-Ḥallāj himself.

The crucial cosmological fragments of al-Ḥallāj are the following: some fragments in al-Daylamī's work mentioned above, one Persian text from the *Sharḥ al-shaḥīyāt* of Rūzbihān Baqlī, and a fragment from al-Sulamī's *Tafsīr*.<sup>37</sup> In all these texts we can find some Neoplatonic influence. Other small cosmological fragments are also found in al-Ḥallāj's *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn* and in quotations of various authors, particularly in al-Sulamī's *Tafsīr*.

We find a detailed picture of the divine manifestation in a large passage in al-Daylamī's work and in a Persian translation in the *Sharḥ al-shaḥīyāt*. Massignon supposed these texts to be citations of al-Ḥallāj's lost work entitled *Khazā'in al-khayrāt* from Ibn al-Nadīm's list.<sup>38</sup> Three stages are distinguished.

33 Al-Daylamī, *Kitāb 'Atf al-alif*, ed. Vadet, 28-44.

34 Al-Daylamī, *Kitāb 'Atf al-alif*, ed. Vadet, 44.

35 El-Jaichi, *Early Philosophical Sūfism*, 128-153.

36 El-Jaichi, *Early Philosophical Sūfism*, 2.

37 Al-Daylamī, *Kitāb 'Atf al-alif*, ed. Vadet, 26-28; Baqlī, *Sharḥ-e Shathiyāt*, ed. Corbin, 441-444; al-Sulamī, *Tafsīr*, fol. 215a-215b.

38 Massignon, *Interférences philosophiques*, 230; Massignon, *La passion*, II, 819.

The first stage postulates the existence of a single, transcendent Absolute before the beginning of time (*azal*). He existed by Himself, through Himself (Ar. *bi-nafsi-hi*, Pers. *bi-nafs-i xōd*). That is, there was only His essence (*dhāt*); hence the Absolute was devoid of any attributes. At this stage, the True God was not manifested, as there is no existence of any kind. »The True One was continually one, Himself through Himself.«<sup>39</sup>

Then the divine Absolute expressed the wish to manifest Himself in some reality that was not yet present and needed to prepare the basis for this manifestation. For this purpose, individualities (*ashkhās*), forms (*suwar*), spirits (*arwāh*), knowledge (*ilm*), and mystical cognition (*ma'rifa*) appeared.<sup>40</sup> This led to the emergence of the principle of individuation, the key to which is the emergence of speech (*khiṭāb*).<sup>41</sup> Speech, in turn, plays a crucial role in the emergence of a triad – the act of possession, the possessor, and the thing possessed (*mulk*, *mālik*, and *mamlūk*) – which is identical with another triad – action, subject, and object (*fi'l*, *fā'il*, and *mafūl*). This triad's character is a deep structure containing within it the potential property of generating subject-object relations between new realities. Thus, the process of manifestation takes the form of conversation and an exchange of speeches (*al-muḥādatha wa-l-mukhāṭaba*).

The Absolute looked at Himself, for nothing was manifested in *azal* apart from Himself. In al-Daylamī's version, from this point onward God turned from one attribute toward another attribute (*aqbala min ... 'alā*), and sometimes He »looked« (*naẓara*) from one attribute at another.<sup>42</sup> All divine attributes (such as knowledge,<sup>43</sup> power (*qudra*), love (*maḥabba*), passionate love (*ishq*), wisdom (*ḥikma*), greatness (*aẓama*), beauty (*jamāl*), and greatness (*jalāl*) were His essence (*dhāt*) – all that by which God is described as the Most High, in regard to compassion (*ra'fa*), mercy (*rahma*), and holiness (*quds*). Thereafter, the Absolute became aware of His loneliness in the face of the emergence of attributes and the emergence of the *mulk-mālik-mamlūk* structure. The spirits and other attributes of forms were included in His essence, owing to His perfection (*kamāl*). He began to manifest and objectify His attributes through other attributes. However, for the first attribute, He had to manifest Himself. This attribute was passionate love (*ishq*), which contains all the entities (*ma'āni*).<sup>44</sup> And so God abided in this attribute an immeasurable amount of time (*mudda*). By contemplating something, the True One thereby endowed it with a form from Himself. This form is thus analogous to the spirit He bestows upon humanity. To objectify the attribute, He used speech and then a set of actions to create a subject-object relation between Himself and the entity contained in an attribute. There is speech (*khiṭāb*), story (*ḥadīth*), greeting (*taḥiyya*), deception (*makr*), war (*ḥarb*), and courtesy (*talaṭṭuf*). These actions were stages of the objectification of the entity, stages which al-Ḥallāj calls *maqāmāt*, the number of which is so large that al-Ḥallāj does not enumerate them all.<sup>45</sup>

39 Al-Daylamī, *Kitāb 'Atfal-alif*, ed. Vadet, 26. The Persian text attributes to God eternity (Pers. *azaliyyat*), perfection (*kamāl*), seclusion (*infirād*), and desire (*mashī'a*); Baqli, *Sharh-e Shathiyāt*, ed. Corbin, 441.

40 The Persian text enumerates a triad: individualities, forms, and spirits.

41 The Persian text enumerates three concepts: knowledge, mystical cognition, and speech.

42 The Persian translation always uses the verb »to look«.

43 Knowledge is present only in the Arabic version, not the Persian text.

44 This final element, that passionate love contains all the entities, is found in the Persian version but is absent from the Arabic text.

45 This statement about the stages is found in the Persian text, but not in the Arabic.

Then God turned from love to seclusion (*infirād*). The Absolute began to turn<sup>46</sup> from attribute to attribute, objectifying them (»to achieve perfection«), first from one attribute to another, then from two to two others, from three to three others, and from four to four others. God turned from the attribute of *ishq* to the completeness (*kullīya*) of this attribute because *ishq* inherently has its own attributes and combines many entities. God manifested the attributes from one of the attributes of *ishq*. Then He praised Himself, and praised His attributes and names.

Finally, God manifested Himself. He created knowledge, power, movement, will (*irāda*), and other attributes in this form. Thus, God was becoming His true self (*huwa huwa*). The True One then objectified perpetuity (*dahr*). He became the Creator (*khāliq*) and the Provider (*rāziq*). These two attributes give life to creation: »He has created you through His power and endowed you with sustenance through His knowledge. Thus, these attributes are attached as His attributes, while He remains in seclusion.«<sup>47</sup>

El-Jaichi is correct when he postulates a Neoplatonic source for this depiction, starting with Plotinus's idea of God's pure perfect self-vision. The Absolute looking at Himself does indeed have an apparent parallel in Plotinus's *Theology of Aristotle*: »When He acts, he only gazes at Himself, and thus performs His act all at once.«<sup>48</sup> However, El-Jaichi continually uses the Neoplatonic tradition alongside Aristotle's texts in discussing al-Ḥallāj.<sup>49</sup> This approach hides the problem of the explicit sources for al-Ḥallāj's text, and makes him appear to be a sophisticated expert in Greek philosophy. While I freely admit that al-Ḥallāj's text resonates with then-popular Hellenistic trends, it is important to try to discover more precisely the connection between al-Ḥallāj and the Arabic Empedocles, basing this on specific details in the works.

A number of concepts such as *azal*, *khiṭāb* (as *logos*), *qudra*, *dahr*, and *ma'ānī* are encountered in the texts of the Arabic Empedocles. We find a resemblance between al-Ḥallāj's ideas and pseudo-Empedocles's ideas of God's eternity (*azal*). This eternity, as opposed to perpetuity (*dahr*), exists from eternity as in the texts of the Arabic Empedocles.

Pseudo-Ammonius attributes the term »forms« (*ṣuwar*) to Empedocles. God has not willed the forms, but rather caused them. »The Creator did not create the forms knowingly or willingly (*bi-naw' ʿilm wa-irāda*), but in such a way that He is only their cause.«<sup>50</sup> Pseudo-Ammonius also uses the term *ṣuwar* for atoms.<sup>51</sup>

The term *arwāḥ* (spirits) is not found in Arabic Empedoclean texts. We find it in a listing of the ideas of Democritus. *Arwāḥ* means the mental pneumata, which dwells in temporary, visible elements. This pneuma is too subtle to be subject to decay. The world contains these eternal particles.<sup>52</sup> Importantly, this example shows that some probable Hellenistic parallels in al-Ḥallāj's work can be traced to a Hellenistic legacy beyond the Arabic Empedocles.

46 »Look« is used throughout in the Persian text.

47 Al-Daylamī, *Kitāb ʿAtf al-alif*, ed. Vadet, 26-28; Baqlī, *Sharh-e Shathiyāt*, ed. Corbin, 441-444. The quotation is from the Persian text, and not found in the Arabic.

48 Note, though, that El-Jaichi makes al-Ḥallāj's text similar to the Greek. For example, he translates *fa-kāna nāzir ilā nafsi-hi fī azali-hi bi-nafsi-hi fī l-jamī' wa-lā zuhūr* as »He was gazing at Himself; contemplating the splendour of His Essence by Himself«; El-Jaichi, *Early Philosophical Sūfism*, 134.

49 El-Jaichi, *Early Philosophical Sūfism*, 134-153.

50 Rudolph, *Pseudo-Ammonios*, 38, 82.

51 Rudolph, *Pseudo-Ammonios*, 55, 199. On the use of the term *ṣūra* in pseudo-Ammonius's work see *ibid.*, 126.

52 Rudolph, *Pseudo-Ammonios*, 41, 150-151.

In al-Ḥallāj's text, cosmological content from the Arabic Aristotle is used as well, with vocabulary that was elaborated in the Dayr Qunnā school by Yaḥyā b. 'Adī and Mattā b. Yūnus,<sup>53</sup> and employing concepts that al-Ḥallāj seems to have adopted from the same source with pseudo-Empedoclean ideas. The first principle exists in a perfect way or in perfect actuality (*kamāl*). The duration (*mudda*) of time is numbered by movement. The term *ashkhāṣ* (sg. *shakhṣ*, corresponding to Greek πρόσωπον, »individualities, individuals«) means heavenly entities.<sup>54</sup>

In the tenth chapter of the *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn*, al-Ḥallāj links the being intuited through the mode of purification (*tanzīh*) to four circles inscribed into each other, which no one can comprehend: *azal*, things understood (*mafḥūmāt*), things knowable (*ma'lūmāt*), and modalities (*jihāt*). Al-Ḥallāj concludes in the spirit of pseudo-Empedocles: »There is no essence (*dhāt*) without attributes.«<sup>55</sup>

Al-Ḥallāj said that primordial cognition (*ma'rifa aṣliyya*) is embedded in the Quran. This knowledge contains knowledge that is directly related to *azal* and *mashī'a*: »There is everything in the Quran. The knowledge of the Quran is in the letters which are in the first suras, the knowledge of the letters is in *lām* and *alif*, the knowledge of *lām* and *alif* is in *alif*, the knowledge of *alif* is in the point, the knowledge of the point is in primordial cognition, the knowledge of primordial cognition is in eternity, the knowledge of eternity is in desire, the knowledge of desire is in His hiding, the knowledge of hiding is that »there is nothing like Him.«<sup>56</sup> And no one knows Him but Himself.«<sup>57</sup> Another version of this saying has the following order: letters – *lām* and *alif* – *alif* – point – primordial cognition – primordial knowledge – desire – concealment of divine essence (*ghayb al-huwiyya*).<sup>58</sup> This version conforms to pseudo-Empedoclean cosmogony as well.

On the other hand, al-Ḥallāj often juxtaposed *azal* and *abad* as »beginninglessness« and »endlessness«. This pair transmitted two Greek lexemes: ἀφθαρτος (»incorruptible, eternal *a parte post*«) and ἀγέννητος (»ungenerated, eternal *a parte ante*«).<sup>59</sup> Al-Ḥallāj's special attention to *azal* and *abad* resembles the *azaliyya* (eternity) and *dahr* (perpetuity) of the Arabic Empedocles.

53 Janos, *Active nature*, 144; Baffioni, *Movement as »discrete«*, 292; Stroumsa and Sviri, *Beginnings of mystical philosophy*, 234.

54 Neoplatonic and Gnostic astrology claimed that πρόσωπα (»masks«) are the faces of the planets. In Gnosticism planetary »masks« dominate individual celestial decans and zodiac signs; cf. Bouché-Leclercq, *L'astrologie greque*, 225; Pleše, *Poetics of the Gnostic Universe*, 187, 190, 198, 200. El-Jaichi compares *shakhṣ* in the phrase »When the Supreme [God] manifested individuality (*shakhṣ*), He became *huwa huwa*« with the Neoplatonic Intellect »understood in the terms of a vertical subordination«; El-Jaichi, *Early Philosophical Sūfism*, 145-148. However, I find this proposal unwarranted.

55 Al-Ḥallāj, *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn*, ed. Massignon, 66.

56 Quran 42.9.

57 *Akhbār al-Ḥallāj*, ed. Massignon and Kraus, 95-96; al-Sulamī, *Tafsīr*, fol. 74b.

58 Al-Sulamī, *Tafsīr*, fol. 294b.

59 Al-Sulamī, *Tafsīr*, fols. 122b, 211b, 303b; *Akhbār al-Ḥallāj*, ed. Massignon and Kraus, 50; van den Bergh, *Abad*. In ecstatic Sufism, *azal* is the source of eternity, and *abad* is a synonym of subsistence in God (*baqā'*).

Al-Ḥallāj describes desire in the seventh chapter of the *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn*. Desire is the first mode of the divine essence and at the same time the first obstacle to the knowledge of God. In this chapter, al-Ḥallāj enumerates three modes after desire: wisdom, power (*qudra*), and knowable eternity (*azaliyya ma'lūma*). Al-Ḥallāj describes them as four isolated circles.<sup>60</sup>

The will (*irāda*) has a special place in pseudo-Ammonius's work. He identifies it with the being of the Creator, as stated above. On the other hand, Sahl al-Tustarī, the master of al-Ḥallāj, developed the idea of desire (*mashī'a*) and will (*irāda*). Al-Ḥallāj's interpretation here resembles Hellenistic ideas.

The crucial concept of al-Ḥallāj's creation is passionate love (*ishq*, or *maḥabba* in al-Daylamī's transmission).<sup>61</sup> *Ishq* is one of the specific features of al-Ḥallāj's doctrine in the eyes of scholars.<sup>62</sup> This passionate love was the first divine attribute, and God abided in it an immeasurable amount of time. *Ishq* has its own attributes and combine many entities. *Ishq* thereby holds the cosmic potential, »passionate overflowing« (according to Schimmel), or »emanative impulse« (according to El-Jaichi, who equates *ishq* with the Plotinian εἶδος as »an originating and creative force«).<sup>63</sup> In al-Ḥallāj's doctrine, this concept plays a major role as the catalyst of union with God. The mystic reveals a part of divine nature (*lāhūt*) into created human nature (*nāsūt*). The human ego perishes in the state of unity (*'ayn al-jam'*).

A quote from al-Daylamī gives an exhaustive explanation of *ishq* as a key catalyst for being:

Passionate love is the flame of the light of the primordial flame. It is coloured with every hue in eternity and manifests every attribute. Its essence is inflamed with His essence, its attributes sparkle with His attributes. It is realized (*mutaḥaqqiq*) in itself, traversing from beginninglessness to endlessness. It appears from ipseity (*huwiyya*) and is free from haecceity (*anniyya*). The inside of the outside of His essence is the reality of being. The outside of the inside of His attributes is the perfect form in concealment (*istitār*), elevated from completeness in perfection.<sup>64</sup>

The conjunction of *lām* and *alif* was cited in al-Sulamī's quotation above. This conjunction plays an important role in al-Ḥallāj cosmology. Their coupling is a cause of cosmic motion. Al-Daylamī quotes a verse in which passionate love is a cause of the attraction between *lām* and *alif*:

60 Al-Ḥallāj, *Kitāb al Ṭawāsīn*, ed. Massignon, 56-57.

61 Massignon, *Interférences philosophiques*, 235.

62 See, for example, Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 72; El-Jaichi, *Early Philosophical Ṣūfism*, 93-153.

63 Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 72; El-Jaichi, *Early Philosophical Ṣūfism*, 132-133.

64 Al-Daylamī, *Kitāb 'Atf al-alif*, ed. Vadet, 44.

Passionate love in the pre-eternity of pre-eternities from a former age  
 It appears in Him, to Him, from Him.  
 Desire is not contingent [on anything], since it is the attribute  
 Of the attributes for the One who kills and resurrects.  
 His attributes, from Him and in Him, are not created things.  
 The Creator of things is not one whose origin is things.  
 When He set the beginning in motion, and showed His love as an attribute  
 His glow shone in what He had set in motion.  
*Lām* with the *alif* was connected.  
 Both were predestined to be One.  
 They are divided when they are combining,  
 But their only difference is between the servant and lord.  
 Such are the realities, the fire of love is ignited  
 By reality whether they are near or far apart.  
 They dwindle, losing strength, when they are infatuated (*waliha*)  
 And become strong when they obediently submit to love.<sup>65</sup>

For al-Ḥallāj, love is the sum total of all entities (*ma'ānī*). In a cosmological sense, »all entities [are] in God and with God«. <sup>66</sup>

But is this love the same thing as pseudo-Empedoclean love? Al-Ḥallāj's love as a pre-eternal principle, an origin of everything that exists, speaks in favour of this. After manifesting passionate love, God manifests speech (*khiṭāb*), story (*ḥadīth*), greeting (*taḥiyya*), deception (*makr*), war (*ḥarb*), and courtesy (*talaṭṭuf*). In this list, *ḥarb* and *talaṭṭuf* are highlighted and appear similar to love and strife. The term »war« appears instead of the word »victory« (*ghalaba*) that is found in the Arabic Empedocles (with the latter word probably having been corrupted by a translator, as mentioned above).

It should be kept in mind that al-Daylamī states that it was Heraclitus who postulated the teaching on love and strife.<sup>67</sup> Al-Ḥallāj seems to be inspired by this idea. It is difficult to trace *khiṭāb*, *ḥarb*, and *talaṭṭuf* to an Islamic origin, and this idea must have come from the Hellenistic arena.

In al-Ḥallāj's cosmology, we find the concept of secrets (*asrār*). These secrets are mentioned in the ninth chapter of the *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn*: »Secrets remove from God (*nāzi*), ascend to Him (*bāzi*), keep in Him (*wāzi*), but are not necessary for Him.«<sup>68</sup> The cosmological function of *asrār* is non-typical for Sufi thought and seems to be coming from outside. These secrets appear similar to *ma'ānī*, but at the same time they resemble intelligent matter underlying the higher world.

Al-Ḥallāj tries to preserve *tawḥīd* through God's seclusion (*infirād*), but faces some problems in doing this, which we have seen before in pseudo-Empedoclean ideas.

65 Al-Daylamī, *Kitāb 'Atf al-alif*, ed. Vadet, 44.

66 Al-Ḥallāj, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Shaybī, 66.

67 Al-Daylamī, *Kitāb 'Atf al-alif*, ed. Vadet, 25.

68 Al-Ḥallāj, *Kitāb al Ṭawāsīn*, ed. Massignon, 60; al-Ḥallāj, *Kitāb al Ṭawāsīn*, ed. Nwiyā, 212 [30].

In al-Ḥallāj's construct as represented in the passage from al-Sulamī's *Tafsīr*, the sequence is given in which the divine manifestation progressively unfolds. Al-Sulamī mentions two stages of creation with six elements (six things, *ashyā'*) and six emanations (six modes, *wujūh*). Thus, God »determined it [the creation] with determination (*taqdīr*)« (Quran 2.25). The primary foundation of the creations is divine light, which is given the status of divine emanation. The first mode is desire (*mashī'a*), which was created over the light. The other modes are the soul (*nafs*), spirit (*rūḥ*), form (*ṣūra*), letters (*aḥruf*), and names (*asmā'*). The six things are the five pairs and breath (*rā'iḥa*): colours (*alwān*) and taste (*ṭam*), perpetuity (*dahr*) and measure (*miqdār*), blindness (*amā'*) and light (*nūr*), motion (*ḥaraka*) and rest (*sukūn*), being (*wujūd*) and nothingness (*'adam*). Creation comes to be in two stages. The six modes are identified with the divine attributes, which God objectifies through these things.

The following creations relate to the second stage: perpetuity (*dahr*), power (*quwwa*), substance (*jawhar*), form (*ṣūra*), and spirit (*rūḥ*). Each pair is objectified into one of these things and related to the above-mentioned modes: (1) names – perpetuity (time) and measure – perpetuity (*dahr*); (2) letters – colours and taste – power (*quwwa*); (3) soul – blindness and light – substance (*jawhar*); (4) form – motion and rest – form; (5) spirit – being and nothingness – spirit (*Figure 1*).

If we superimpose al-Daylamī's scheme on al-Sulamī's scheme, we get the picture shown in *Figure 2*. The model in the text of al-Sulamī seems to go back to the *materia prima* and material bodies, the six elements and six emanations.<sup>69</sup> The question of two creations in this text seems to go back to the understanding of the creation of the *materia prima* and material bodies. These two stages can be compared with simple spiritual (*rūḥānī*) and composite (*murakkab*) corporeal (*jirmānī*) substances, the sphere of celestial bodies (*jism*) and the temporal underworld (*jirm*) in pseudo-Empedocles's oeuvre. Six modes and six things coincide with the constructions of the Neoplatonists.<sup>70</sup> The pseudo-Empedoclean idea of the »second birth« or »second creation« does not fit here.

69 Al-Sulamī, *Tafsīr*, fol. 215a-215b; al-Ḥallāj, *Kitāb al Ṭawāsīn*, ed. Massignon, 148-149. This passage is copied in al-Baqlī, *Tafsīr*, fol. 361b-362a. Massignon offered another explanation for this difficult text. He divided all the entities into three sixes – aspects, things, and modes of balance. He considered each member of the oppositions as a separate unit; Massignon, *La passion*, II, 632-633.

70 Ibn Rushd, in his work *On the Soul*, describes the six components of al-Farābī's ontology as the prime cause, the second cause, the active intellect, the soul, the form, and the matter; cf. al-Ḥallāj, *Kitāb al Ṭawāsīn*, ed. Massignon, 149-150.



The last text of al-Sulamī's *Tafsīr* enumerates four roots (*uṣūl*) of the creation: divinity (*ilāhiyya*), traces of lordship (*āthār rubūbiyya*), the luminous essence (*nūriyya*) («in which management (*tadbīr*), desire, knowledge, cognition (*ma'rifa*), understanding, thought, insight (*firāsa*), comprehension (*idrāk*), discernment (*tamyīz*), and languages of speech are found»), and motion and rest.<sup>71</sup>

A very interesting assessment of al-Ḥallāj's doctrine through the prism of Christian or perhaps Neoplatonic views is given in the *Kitāb Masālik al-mamālik* of the famous Arabic geographer al-Iṣṭakhri. This passage is thought to be a quotation of a lost work by Abū Zayd al-Balkhī (d. 322/934), who was an expert on Greek tradition and the founder of an Islamic geographical tradition based on Hellenistic science, the school of terrestrial mapping in Baghdad, to which al-Iṣṭakhri and Ibn Ḥawqal also belonged. Al-Balkhī may have belonged to the tradition of al-Tawḥīdī and al-Daylamī, and was one of the closest disciples of al-Kindī. Al-ʿĀmirī, who transmitted the ideas of the Arabic Empedocles, was his disciple.<sup>72</sup> Al-Balkhī was also interested in the doctrine of al-Ḥallāj and wrote one of the most concise and precise descriptions of his doctrine. In the account of al-Balkhī, al-Ḥallāj taught that the mystic raises his body and when obedience possesses his soul, he reaches the stage of proximity to God (*muqarrabūn*). When there is nothing left of human nature, the spirit of God is embodied in him, from which spirit Jesus, son of Mary, came. The mystic's actions become God's own act.<sup>73</sup>

Scholars such as Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī and al-Tawḥīdī developed the idea of *ḥikma khālida* (»perennial wisdom«, *sophia perennis*). This idea was developed by Miskawayh (d. 421/1030) based on the »wisdom of the nations« and later also by Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl. The upholders of this doctrine included Sufi successors of the ancient philosophers like Dhū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī, Sahl al-Tustarī, and al-Ḥallāj. The eminent Andalusian Sufi and poet Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Shushtarī (d. 668/1269), the disciple of Peripatetic philosopher and Sufi ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq Ibn Sabʿīn (d. between 668/1269 and 669/1271), who was burned for adherence to the doctrine of incarnation (*ḥulūl*), reckoned al-Ḥallāj in the Greek tradition. He brought al-Ḥallāj and some other Sufis and Peripatetics like al-Niffarī, al-Ghazālī, al-Shiblī, Ibn al-Fārīd, al-Suhrawardī, Ibn Masarra, Ibn Ṭufayl, Ibn ʿArabī, Abū Madyan, Ibn Sinā, and Ibn Rushd into a single line with Hermes, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and others. Apparently, the reason for this comparison was his knowledge of some of their Hellenistic ideas.<sup>74</sup>

71 Al-Sulamī, *Tafsīr*, fol. 204a.

72 See also De Smet, *Empedocles Arabus*, 32 f. 90.

73 al-Iṣṭakhri, *Viae regnorum*, ed. De Goeve, 148-149. This unusual passage first attracted the attention of Silvestre de Sacy. Massignon attributed al-Balkhī to the Christian Baghdad tradition of Dayr Qunnā on the basis of this passage; al-Ḥallāj, *Kitāb al Ṭawāsīn*, ed. Massignon, 135; Massignon, *Interférences philosophiques*, 242.

74 Massignon, *Recherches sur Shushtarī*, 419. The idea of *ḥikma khālida* was developed by Miskawayh on the basis of pre-Islamic Iranian tradition alongside with Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī and al-Tawḥīdī; cf. Grunebaum, *Parallelism, convergence, and influence*, 99.

Ibn al-Faraḍī gives an account in which al-Ḥallāj's close follower Abū Ya'qūb Ishāq al-Nahrajūrī (d. 330/941) was the teacher of the eminent Andalusian philosopher Ibn Masarra,<sup>75</sup> who studied in Baghdad. Ibn Masarra's original works, other than a group of passages in the works of Ibn 'Arabī and Ibn Ḥazm, were discovered about 50 years ago. Ibn al-Qiftī, following Ṣā'īd al-Andalusī, attributed to Ibn Masarra the development of pseudo-Empedoclean ideas and their transfer to Muslim Spain, where they spread as a doctrine of the Almerian philosophical tradition that combined Peripatetic and Sufi ideas.<sup>76</sup> Ibn Masarra perhaps acquired this knowledge in the course of communicating with Baghdad Sufis. Some ideas of Baghdad Sufism (like the phenomenon of divine will, *irāda*) definitely did enter into Ibn Masarra's philosophy. As mentioned earlier, Asín Palacios proposed that ideas that circulated in the monastery of Dayr Qunnā formed a part of the intellectual background of Muslim Spain in this way. While Asín Palacios was criticized for portraying Ibn Masarra incoherently,<sup>77</sup> the discovery of Ibn Masarra's original works has weakened this criticism,<sup>78</sup> and it would seem that some elements of pseudo-Empedocles from Baghdad may indeed have formed part of his thinking.

On the other hand, scholars have found links between pseudo-Empedoclean and Ismā'īlī philosophical ideas. For example, al-Shahrastānī probably drew on pseudo-Empedoclean ideas through Ismā'īlī doctrine.<sup>79</sup> The Iranian philosopher al-'Āmirī said that Empedocles influenced all *bāṭinī* philosophers and mystics; this appellation seems to refer to the mystical trend of their ideas without necessarily having an implication of a philosopher or mystic being an Ismā'īlī.<sup>80</sup>

### Conclusions

Some conclusions can be drawn from the above survey. It is perhaps not clear whether al-Ḥallāj's cosmology has Neoplatonic or Gnostic roots. Gnostic themes in pseudo-Ammonius's text have already been noted. Adam Mez saw an influence of Gnosticism on al-Ḥallāj's construct, comparing it to that of Basilides of Irenaeus, which contained λόγος, φρόνησις (wisdom), δύναμις (power), and σοφία (knowledge).<sup>81</sup> But in the case of the cosmological ideas of al-Ḥallāj that we have covered, Neoplatonic influence seems a more reasonable suggestion: Gnostic influence on Islamic personalities was probably marginal because of the insularity of Gnostic groups, whose movements are hard to follow.<sup>82</sup>

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75 Ibn al-Faraḍī, *Ta'rikh 'ulamā' al-Andalus*, ed. al-Suwayfī, 323-324.

76 Salomon Munk believed that it was because of this development that Ibn Gabirol adopted some pseudo-Empedoclean ideas later. Munk, *Mélanges*, 3.

77 Arnaldez, Ibn Masarra.

78 Stroumsa and Sviri, *Beginnings of mystical philosophy*.

79 Rudolph, *Pseudo-Ammonios*, 137; Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy*, 379.

80 Stroumsa and Sviri, *Beginnings of mystical philosophy*, 210. De Smet notes that it is not clear who was hidden behind the vague label of *bāṭinī*, whether magicians and alchemists or instead members of Ismā'īlī or other Shiite communities; De Smet, *Empedocles Arabus*, 58.

81 Mez, *Renaissance of Islam*, 300.

82 See Durkin-Meisterernst, *Zoroastrians, Manichaeans and Gnostics*.

El-Jaichi tried to justify his hypothesis that al-Ḥallāj was inspired by Neoplatonism based on examining Neoplatonic sources including Arabic Neoplatonism.<sup>83</sup> Pseudo-Empedoclean texts, in my opinion, provide more useful food for thought in considering the juxtaposition of these ideas.

De Smet has already deconstructed the previous tradition and made himself out to be an iconoclast destroying the »pseudo-Empedoclean myth« which his predecessors built on a fragile foundation.<sup>84</sup> He noted that »only the notion of matter as the first creature and of love and strife as contradictory principles might be specific to the Arabic Empedocles«.<sup>85</sup> However, the supposition that al-Ḥallāj drew from pseudo-Empedoclean ideas is not a fiction. It is unlikely that al-Ḥallāj was acquainted with pseudo-Empedocles from written works – it is more likely that his source was specific people – and oral transmission of these ideas probably distorted them, particularly because they were unusual for the times. Whether this was through East Syriac Christians, as has been suggested, remains an open question, but such a supposition is supported by his echoing of certain Christian ideas (for example, the idea of mixing), which suggests an extended contact with Christians or at least Christian ideas, and these connections are confirmed by the details of his biography. It is also likely that Neoplatonic ideas reached him from the same source, which seems to be the Aristotelism of the monastery of Dayr Qunnā, as elaborated by Yaḥyā b. 'Adī and Mattā b. Yūnus, two philosophers of the Church of the East connected to that monastery; their translations and commentaries do sometimes refer to Empedoclean ideas. However, the direct influence of Dayr Qunnā on al-Ḥallāj is difficult to determine. Echoes of the pseudo-Empedoclean ideas may have been associated with personalities not directly linked to the monastery. In particular, recent research on the Baghdad School of philosophers mentioned above – for whom Empedocles lives only in the shadow of Aristotle – shows that there is no reason to assign Dayr Qunnā's tradition a special role in the popularization of pseudo-Empedoclean ideas. There was also interest in pseudo-Empedoclean ideas from Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī, his disciple al-Tawḥīdī, and especially al-Daylamī, the student of the latter.

On the other hand, al-Ḥallāj appears to have been a Qarmaṭī preacher for some time<sup>86</sup> and, as a judicial inquiry into him revealed, he was familiar with Manichaeism.<sup>87</sup> We find a reflection of extreme Shiite ideas and even what appear to be Manichaean ideas in his legacy. But in the cosmological texts analysed above, a direct Neoplatonic influence is evident. Al-Daylamī may have later adjusted al-Ḥallāj's ideas slightly to those of the Arabic Empedocles, and the later Arabic tradition may have found an even more detailed resemblance between his ideas and those of pseudo-Empedocles, since that tradition had access to the works of al-Ḥallāj that have not survived to our time. Given all of this, it seems unnecessary to demand that pseudo-Empedocles's ideas should be conveyed accurately in what we know of al-Ḥallāj's work. The sources of those ideas and the form in which they came to this Sufi master are not entirely clear.

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83 El-Jaichi, *Early Philosophical Sūfism*, 10-12.

84 De Smet, *Influence of the Arabic Pseudo-Empedocles*, 12.

85 De Smet, *Influence of the Arabic Pseudo-Empedocles*, 229.

86 See Basharin, *O statute »mahdistiskikh« dvizhenij*.

87 See Basharin, *O statute »mahdistiskikh« dvizhenij*.

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### Figures

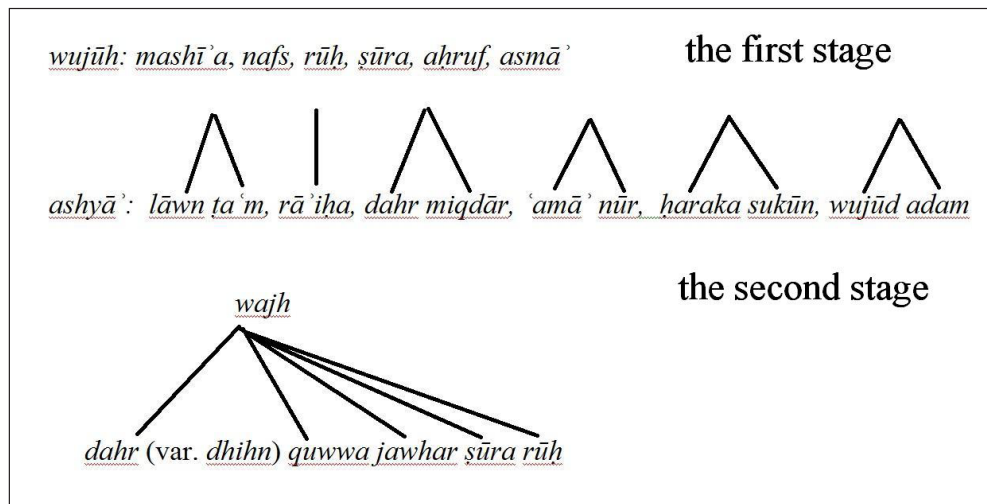


Figure 1: The schematization of things and modes in al-Ḥallāj's cosmology.

| <i>Al-Daylamī</i>                           | <i>Al-Sulamī</i>   |
|---|--|
| <i>ashkhāṣ, ṣuwar, arwāḥ, 'ilm, ma'rifa</i> | six <i>wujūh</i> : <i>mashī'a, nafs, rūḥ, šūra, aḥruf, asmā'</i>   |
| <i>'ishq</i>                                | probable, <i>mashī'a</i> , as the first mode of the Divine essence   |
| <i>'ilm, quwwa, ḥaraka, irāda</i>           | six <i>ashyā'</i> : <i>alwān</i> and <i>ṭa'm</i> (1), <i>rā'iḥa</i> (2), <i>dahr</i> and <i>miqdār</i> (3), <i>'amā'</i> and <i>nūr</i> (4), <i>ḥaraka</i> and <i>sukūn</i> (5), <i>wujūd</i> and <i>'adam</i> (6) |
| <i>dahr</i>                                 | <i>dahr, quwwa, jawhar, šūra, rūḥ</i>  |

Figure 2: The schematization of things and modes in al-Ḥallāj's cosmology.