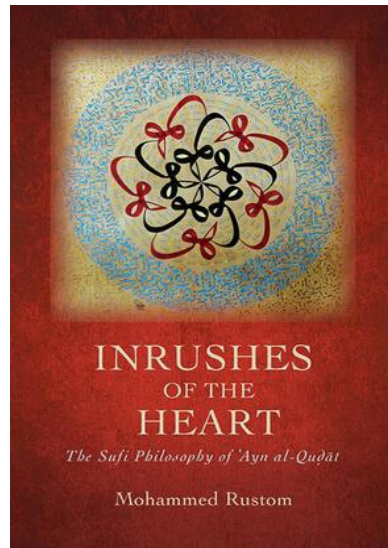


Book Review

Mohammed Rustom. *Inrushes of the Heart: The Sufi Philosophy of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2023. Pp. 400. Hardcover. ISBN: 9781438494296. Price: \$99.

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Rustom's *Inrushes of the Heart* is a welcome addition to the corpus of scholarly literature regarding 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, a list of which he thoughtfully provided in the back matter of this book. Regarding the book's structure, the author himself says that he has taken "inspiration" from William Chittick's approach by providing a "facilitating commentary" for each of the nearly eight hundred passages he has chosen from the prose of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt. Rustom has also left most of Seer's poetry untouched because he feels that a lot of textual work needs to be completed before we can correctly attribute these verses to the Shaykh.



The range Rustom tries to cover is vast. It makes the book an excellent guide for someone new to 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, giving the reader a spectacular overview and a holistic and comprehensive outline of the philosophy of the Sufi of Hamadan. To the specialist, cursory comments over such a broad spectrum would probably be too short an analysis.

The first chapter, as expected, covers the biography of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt. Rustom chooses to "let him speak," quoting copiously from the various writings of this Sufi saint. We are informed about his influence from Muḥammad Ghazālī and his younger brother Aḥmad al-Ghazālī; his *wāridāt*, the "inrushes," which refer to the spiritual inspiration he receives; the concept of "tasting" in Sufi parlance; and other aspects of his transcendental experiences.

The second chapter covers another aspect of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's life, which is his imprisonment and execution. The issue is studied from the perspective of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, where we get a glimpse of his defence and a preview of his assessment of this predicament: disclosing "the secret of lordship" is his offence, as was the offence of al-Ḥallāj before.

Chapter three observes the fundamentals of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s theology. Concepts like the Divine Essence (*dhāt*), the Necessary Existent (*wājib al-wujūd*), God’s “withness” (*ma’iyyah*), His names (*asmā’*) and attributes (*ṣifāt*), simplicity (*basāṭah*), unity (*waḥdāniyyah*), unification (*ittiḥād*) and the oneness of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) have all been woven into the tapestry of the text succinctly. We are reminded of Rustom’s disclaimer in the preface, where he says that he has kept his interpretations of these ideas aside for other studies; the short analysis of each concept suffices for the framework upon which this book is built.

Other concepts coined as “earthly concerns” have been considered in chapter four. It starts with the problem of evil, which ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt does not affirm, as the author explains. He also explains how ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s thinking is informed by Avicenna regarding cosmic well-being. Many other sages who have influenced ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt have been identified in the book, with a useful diagram provided at the end of this chapter on page 88, which illustrates his spiritual network.

The author names the fifth chapter with the phrase “Inside Out, Outside In,” which refers to the Sufi emphasis on the inner dimension (*bāṭin*), so beautifully elucidated by Seyyed Hossein Nasr in his works. Rustom, too, is indebted to this savant, as he mentions in the acknowledgements, along with the long list of colleagues who have supported this endeavour, which reminds us that no academic pursuit functions in a vacuum; there is an “inner dimension” to every exoteric exegesis! ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s take on common theological concepts related to intentions, sincerity, inner purity and “death before death” has been explored in these pages.

A transcendental experience cannot be attained by watching YouTube alone, is what the sixth chapter tells us with respect to ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s philosophy! Named “Wayfarers and Masters,” the chapter highlights the Shaykh’s insistence on the role of a master for the wayfarer to be successful in his/her quest. “Habit-worship” and egotistical attachments to the materialistic have been derided, while a pure heart and an ineffable spirit have been admired and considered prerequisites for a *sālik* (wayfarer).

The seventh chapter deals with the transcendental, the core of theology and mysticism. Going through it reminds us of various schools of thought in Islam like Ismailism, in which we find overlap of all the aspects the Shaykh of Hamadan speaks about, be it deliberations on epistemic faculties or self-recognition. Al-Mu’ayyad al-Shīrāzī from the Fatimid era, for example, has his own interpretations of the saying, “He who recognizes himself recognizes his Lord” (*man ‘arafa nafsah fa qad ‘arafa Rabbah*) regarding which ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt has extensive expositions. The differences between interpretations of various sages affiliated with

Sufi thought, dealt with briefly in this book, can also be compared to works like *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, in which interesting parallels can be found to the concepts covered here.

These reflections into inner dimensions and the transcendental lead us towards the Qur'ān in the eighth chapter, which explains how 'Ayn al-Qudāt uses his patent hermeneutical devices to delve into esoteric interpretation, particularly of the disconnected letters and dots, which ultimately lead the inspired wayfarer to the final stage of annihilation (*fanā'*) and obliteration (*maḥw*).

After describing 'Ayn al-Qudāt's Quranic interpretation, which is obviously at odds with mainstream Sunni *tafsīr*, Rustom moves in the ninth chapter to another of the Seer's contested views, which are regarding the positive role of Satan. Iblīs is depicted in 'Ayn al-Qudāt's Satanology as "a fallen lover of God"; the tresses on the beautiful face of the Beloved are nothing but Iblīs' black light. In the Shaykh's view, Iblīs chose the love of God over all else, even if it meant being abandoned and cursed by Him.

Finally, in chapter ten, Rustom analyses 'Ayn al-Qudāt's reflections regarding the basic Sufi fundamentals of transcendental love. Fantastic Sufi notions like "Real unbelief" (*kufr-i-ḥaqīqī*) being tantamount to faith, the Sufi being none other than God and God looking inside us to see His Self, have been expounded. Along with this chapter, the book ends on an emotive note with the following mystical quotation from 'Ayn al-Qudāt's *Tamhīdāt* regarding this superior state of love:

A traceless beauty love for You is,
The root of its existence perfection is.
At every moment imaginalized it is.
Alas for this love! What a state it is!

The lack of any conclusion or concluding remarks does leave the reader groping in the space of "perceptionlessness" and "limitlessness," which probably is where 'Ayn al-Qudāt and the author of this book wanted us to reach—"delivered from all forms, including the form of himself!"

A major strength of this study is that Rustom has provided details of the sources of the Qur'ānic verses and Prophetic traditions used by 'Ayn al-Qudāt. The copious notes are a testimony to the efforts and expertise that led to the production of this work. However, if the author had presented the original Arabic texts along with the translations, it would have certainly been more rewarding. This probably was not feasible due to the sheer volume of quotations.

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