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The Concept of Al-Barzakh in the Thought of Muḥyiddīn Ibn ‘Arabī: A Philosophical and Mystical Analysis

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Abstract

This study explores the concept of al-Barzakh in the thought of Muḥyiddīn Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240), arguing that Barzakh is not merely an eschatological waiting period but a fundamental ontological principle that governs the relationship between opposites—existence and non-existence, seen and unseen, finite and infinite. Through a detailed analysis of Ibn ‘Arabī’s metaphysical system, the paper examines how Al-Barzakh functions as a bridge between realms, particularly between the physical world (‘ālam al-shahāda), the unseen world (‘ālam al-ghayb), and the imaginal realm (‘ālam al-mithāl). The study further explores the epistemological and linguistic dimensions of Al-Barzakh, revealing its role as an intermediary in human perception and language. Ibn ‘Arabī’s insights anticipate modern poststructuralist theories, particularly Derrida’s différance, by highlighting how language remains forever suspended between revealing and concealing meaning. This research situates Ibn ‘Arabī’s cosmological and linguistic Barzakh within a broader comparative framework, engaging with Neoplatonic, Taoist, and contemporary philosophical thought. Ultimately, it demonstrates that Al-Barzakh is not only a concept within Islamic eschatology but a dynamic and universal structure of existence, perception, and knowledge.

Keywords: Al-Barzakh, Ibn ‘Arabī, Mystical Philosophy, Tajallī (Divine Manifestation), Neoplatonism, Post-Structuralism and Language.

Introduction

Ibn ‘Arabī (1165–1240) was one of the most influential figures in Islamic mystical philosophy, leaving a lasting impact on Sufi metaphysics, theology, and epistemology. Born in Murcia, al-Andalus, he traveled extensively across the Islamic world, engaging with scholars, mystics, and philosophers from North Africa, the Levant, Anatolia, and the Arabian Peninsula (Hirtenstein, 1999, p. 32). His career was marked by a deep engagement with Sufi doctrines, producing a vast corpus of writings, including his two most significant works: *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya (The Meccan Illuminations)* and *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (1980), where he articulated his cosmological and metaphysical ideas (Chittick, 2005, p. 1).

A cornerstone of Ibn ‘Arabī’s philosophy is his doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd (the Unity of Being)*, which posits that all existence is ultimately a manifestation of divine reality. His works explore divine self-disclosure (*tajallī*), the perfect human (*al-insān al-kāmil*), and the structure of reality, offering a comprehensive vision of existence as an interconnected web of divine presence (Corbin, 2014, p. 76). Within this vast metaphysical system, his reinterpretation of *al-Barzakh* stands out as one of his most groundbreaking contributions.

In traditional Islamic thought, *al-Barzakh* refers to the intermediate realm between death and resurrection, a liminal space where souls await the final judgment (Ibn ‘Arabī, 2011, pp. 7–11). However, Ibn ‘Arabī expands its role beyond eschatology, redefining it as a fundamental ontological principle that structures the relationship between opposites—existence and non-existence, the seen and unseen, the finite and infinite (Chittick, 2018). According to him, *al-Barzakh* is not merely a temporary phase in the afterlife. Rather, it is a necessary metaphysical link that enables all forms of existence to emerge and interact.

In *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, Ibn ‘Arabī describes *al-Barzakh* as the space where divine realities become accessible to human perception, arguing that without *al-Barzakh*, the divine (*al-Haqq*) would remain beyond human comprehension (Ibn ‘Arabī, 2011, pp. 9–14). It is through *al-Barzakh* that the unseen world (*‘ālam al-ghayb*) interacts with the physical realm (*‘ālam al-shahāda*), and through which the imaginal world (*‘ālam al-mithāl*) serves as a medium between the two (Chittick, 1994, pp. 106–107). His concept of *al-Barzakh* as a bridge between realities closely parallels Neoplatonic thought, where emanations from the One must pass through intermediary levels before becoming perceptible (Plotinus, VI.9.3; Addas, 2019, p. 9).

Beyond its cosmological significance, *al-Barzakh* functions as an epistemological threshold, shaping how humans perceive reality and engage with language. Ibn ‘Arabī’s insights into linguistic *al-Barzakh* anticipate modern poststructuralist critiques of language, particularly Derrida’s *différance*, which argues that meaning is always deferred and never fully grasped (Derrida, 1997). Ibn ‘Arabī states that all human speech operates within a Barzakhic space, where language is both a means of revelation and a veil that conceals ultimate reality (Chittick, 2005, p. 5). In this sense, *al-Barzakh* is not merely an eschatological space but a universal condition of existence and understanding (Addas, 2019, pp. 12–14).

By drawing on Qur’ānic exegesis, classical Islamic thought, *Ṣūfī* metaphysics, and comparative philosophical frameworks, this study argues that *al-Barzakh* in Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought is a dynamic ontological principle that governs existence itself. Engaging with Ibn ‘Arabī’s work through multiple lenses—theological, mystical, linguistic, and philosophical—this research reveals the profound implications of *al-Barzakh* beyond its traditional theological context. Through this exploration, *al-Barzakh* emerges as both a metaphysical necessity within Islamic thought and a conceptual bridge that intersects with other traditions, including Neoplatonism, Taoism, and postmodern linguistic theory (Corbin, 2014, p. 76).

Qur’ānic and Classical Foundations of *Al-Barzakh*

Al-Barzakh is an Arabic term meaning "obstacle," "hindrance," "separation," or "barrier" (Hovannisian & Sabagh, 1998, p. 49; Bosworth et al. 1993, 1960, pp. 1071–1072). In Islamic theology, it denotes the intermediate state between an individual's death and their resurrection in the Hereafter (Ali, Surah 23:99-100; McAuliffe, 2001, p. 205; Al-Qazwini, 2014, p. 107). This phase is also understood as a place where souls rest until the Day of Judgment (Shirazi, 2013). The concept bears resemblance to the Christian notion of the intermediate state between death and resurrection (Shirazi, 2013).

Islamic scholars have varied interpretations of *al-Barzakh*. Al-Ghazālī describes it as a realm for those who are destined for neither hell nor heaven (Ibn Adam, 2022). Meanwhile, Ibn Ḥazm posits that *al-Barzakh* is also the dwelling place of unborn souls, which are otherwise said to

reside in the lowest of the seven heavens, where an angel breathes them into human wombs (Griffel, 2015 p. 100).

The etymology of Barzakh originates from the Arabic root b-r-z, meaning "a protruding object" or "a barrier" (Griffel, 2015, p. 100). Some scholars argue that the term was borrowed from Middle Persian or Parthian (Wehr, 1979, p. 65). In the Quran, *al-Barzakh* appears three times. In *Surah Al-Mu'minoon* (23:99-100), it is depicted as a barrier separating the soul from the body after death, preventing further actions but allowing contemplation of past deeds (Cheung, 2016, pp. 4-5; *qurano.com*, 2021). The other two occurrences refer to *al-Barzakh* as an impenetrable division between fresh and salt water, emphasizing the distinction maintained by divine decree (*qurano.com*, 2021). And in *Hadīth* literature, Ibn al-Qayyim states that souls in *al-Barzakh* are grouped according to their purity or corruption (Ali, *The Qur'an*, Surah 23:99-100). This suggests a preliminary sorting before the final judgment, reinforcing the idea that moral actions in life influence one's state in the afterlife.

Thus, *al-Barzakh* is portrayed as a state of waiting and reflection, bridging the material world and the Hereafter while illustrating the moral consequences of one's earthly actions.

In Islamic belief, the soul and the body are independent entities, and in *al-Barzakh*, only the soul enters this intermediate realm while the physical body remains in the grave (Esposito, 2003). This concept is significant because *al-Barzakh* is seen as a barrier preventing any further action—a person's deeds are finalized upon death, and no further good or bad deeds can be performed (Islam, 2008). The Quranic verse, "Before them is a Partition till the Day they are raised up" (Q.23:100), is widely interpreted as referring to *al-Barzakh* (Ghazālī, 1989, p. 176). This passage emphasizes that individuals cannot alter their fate after death; however, some interpretations suggest that the spiritual pain in *al-Barzakh* serves as purification for the soul (Shirazi, 2013).

In both *Sunni* and *Shia* Islam, *al-Barzakh* is understood as an intermediary phase between life and resurrection, a waiting period before the Day of Judgment (Esposito, 2003). However, interpretations of its experience and nature vary. *Sunni* scholars generally believe that the experience of *al-Barzakh* is based on a person's deeds. Good individuals experience a heavenly state, while sinners suffer punishment (*Azaabul-Qabr*) in their graves (Islam, 2008). Some scholars, such as Al-Ghazālī, describe *al-Barzakh* as a temporary resting phase where the soul awaits resurrection (Ghazālī, 1989, p. 176). In contrast, *Shia* scholars elaborate further on *al-Barzakh*'s role in purgation. The Imams, particularly Ja'far al-Šādiq, explain that souls go through seven checkpoints in *al-Barzakh*, including prayer, fasting, charity, and trustworthiness (Qummi, 2015). Some *Shia* scholars argue that there is no experience of physical pain or pleasure in *al-Barzakh*, as it is a spiritual realm rather than a physical one (Shirazi, 2013).

Islamic scholars hold varying opinions on the significance and role of Barzakh. Traditionalist scholars stress that Barzakh is a crucial stage, where the dead experience either blessings or punishment based on their deeds (*Prognostication in the Medieval World*, 2020, p. 415). The concept of *Azaabul-Qabr* (Punishment of the Grave) is commonly emphasized in *Hadīth* literature (Islam, 2008). Some modern scholars downplay the role of *al-Barzakh*, focusing instead on one's earthly life and the Day of Judgment (Ahmad, 1896). In this view, *al-Barzakh* is a transitional period rather than an active experience. The *Šūfī* scholar Ibn 'Arabī describes *al-Barzakh* as a spiritual bridge between the material world and the divine (2006, pp. 29, 50, 59,

64-68). He conceptualizes it as an "isthmus" (barrier) that allows the soul to move between the worlds of spirits and corporeal existence (Chittick, 1979, p. 135).

Ṣūfism, which places emphasis on spiritual experiences, affirms that *al-Barzakh* is a realm after death and add it is an accessible space during dreams and meditation (2006, p. 75). Ibn 'Arabī explains that *al-Barzakh* is necessary for the existence of both the spiritual and physical worlds—without it, these realms would be disconnected (Chittick, 1979, p. 145). The term *al-Barzakh* can also refer to a Perfect Human Being, an individual who serves as an intermediary between God and the material world, such as Prophet Khalid, whom Ibn 'Arabī believed was a "hidden prophet" (2006, p. 102).

Beyond theological discourse, *al-Barzakh* has entered modern culture. Several bands, including an Indonesian black metal group and a Tunisian oriental metal band, have adopted the name "*al-Barzakh*." The 2011 documentary *al-Barzakh* explores the experiences of people searching for a lost friend, metaphorically linking it to the idea of transitioning between worlds (Kvedaravičius, 2011). Scholars like Nasrin Qader discuss *al-Barzakh* in fiction, viewing it as a metaphor for exile, displacement, and liminality (Qader, 2002).

This section, as we have seen, critically examines the concept of *al-Barzakh* across various Islamic traditions, highlighting its diverse interpretations and evolving significance. The concept of *al-Barzakh* is central to Islamic eschatology, yet interpretations vary among *Sunni*, *Shia*, and *Ṣūfī* traditions. While some scholars emphasize *al-Barzakh* as a phase of judgment and purification, others describe it as a resting place before resurrection. *Ṣūfī* thinkers like Ibn 'Arabī conceptualize it as a spiritual passage, allowing interactions between the corporeal and divine realms. In contemporary culture, *al-Barzakh* has evolved beyond religious discourse, finding significance in music, film, and philosophy, where it represents themes of transition, exile, and the unknown. Regardless of interpretation, *al-Barzakh* remains a profound and dynamic element of Islamic thought, shaping understandings of life, death, and the hereafter.

***Al-Barzakh* and Intermediate States in World Religions**

Across various religious traditions, the concept of an intermediate state after death serves as a significant element in eschatology, often embodying themes of purification, judgment, and transition between worlds. In Islam, as we have already illustrated, this role is played by *al-Barzakh*, which acts as a barrier between the living and the afterlife (Qur'an 23:100). While Islam's concept of *al-Barzakh* shares similarities with Christian Purgatory, Jewish Gehinnom, Buddhist Bardo, and Hindu Naraka, it also presents unique theological characteristics that differentiate it from these traditions.

In Christianity, particularly within Catholic doctrine, Purgatory functions as a temporary state where souls undergo purification before they can enter heaven. Similar to the Islamic view of *al-Barzakh* as a phase of purification, Catholicism teaches that souls in Purgatory experience a refining process, ensuring they achieve the necessary holiness for eternal salvation. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death, they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven" (Catholic Church 1997, §1030). However, a key distinction lies in divine intercession. While Catholic doctrine holds that prayers from the living can help souls in Purgatory progress toward heaven, Islamic theology generally rejects the idea that prayers from the living can change a soul's state in *al-*

Barzakh, apart from a few exceptions such as continuous charity, beneficial knowledge left behind, or pious descendants praying for the deceased (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2007, *Ḥadīth* 1631).

In Judaism, the notions of Gehinnom and Sheol serve roles similar to both Purgatory and *al-Barzakh*. Gehinnom is a purgative space where souls undergo atonement for up to twelve months before ascending to Gan Eden (Paradise) or descending further based on their deeds (*Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 17a*). This aligns with the Islamic belief that sinners in *al-Barzakh* may suffer consequences for their actions before the final resurrection (Shirazi, 2013). Sheol, on the other hand, is described as a shadowy realm where all souls reside, awaiting divine judgment. Unlike *al-Barzakh*, which is distinctly a transitional state leading to resurrection, Sheol is often seen as a passive resting place (Berlin 2011).

In Buddhism, the Bardo (Tibetan: bar do) is a transitional realm between death and rebirth, described in the *Bardo Thodol* (Evans-Wentz, 2000). It encompasses various states of consciousness, where the soul encounters visions that determine the nature of its reincarnation. The *Bardo Thodol* explains:

O nobly-born, listen. Now thou art experiencing the Radiance of the Clear Light of Pure Reality. Recognize it. O nobly-born, thy present intellect, in real nature void, not formed into anything as regards characteristics or color, naturally void, is the very Reality, the All-Good.

Unlike Islamic *al-Barzakh*, where the soul remains in a fixed waiting state, Bardo offers an opportunity for enlightenment or karmic determination, influenced by past actions (Evans-Wentz, 2000).

And in Hinduism, Naraka functions as a temporary realm of atonement before a soul undergoes reincarnation. The *Garuda Purāṇa* describes various hells (Narakas) where souls experience punishments corresponding to their sins before rebirth. Similar to Islamic eschatology, these punishments are not eternal, but serve as a phase of purification (*Garuda Purāṇa*, 2.1-2.7). However, the cyclical nature of *karma* and rebirth in Hinduism contrasts with Islam's linear eschatology, where souls progress from *al-Barzakh* to either Paradise or Hell for eternity (Shirazi, 2013).

Despite these thematic similarities, Islamic *al-Barzakh* remains distinct due to its emphasis on final judgment rather than reincarnation. Unlike Purgatory, Gehinnom, and Bardo, where souls undergo a transformational process, Islamic theology asserts that souls in *al-Barzakh* do not experience change in their deeds but rather await the final Day of Judgment (*Al-Bukhārī* 1997, *Hadith* 1361). The mystical interpretation of *al-Barzakh* in *Ṣūfism* further expands on its role. Ibn 'Arabī presents *al-Barzakh* as more than an eschatological phase; it is a transcendent intermediary that links different levels of reality (2006, pp. 29, 50, 64-68). This mirrors concepts in Jewish *Kabbalah*, where the soul passes through multiple spiritual layers before reaching its final destination (Matt, *Zohar, 1:100b*). Ibn 'Arabī's perspective suggests that *al-Barzakh* exists as an ongoing bridge between the physical and spiritual worlds, even within life through dreams and mystical experiences (Chittick, 1979, p. 135).

These cross-cultural perspectives highlight the universal human preoccupation with the afterlife, manifesting in doctrines of purification, judgment, and transition. Islamic *Barzakh* integrates elements of purification and separation, akin to Christian and Jewish beliefs, while rejecting the cyclical rebirth found in Buddhism and Hinduism. Ibn 'Arabī's philosophy further broadens *Barzakh*'s scope, portraying it as a cosmic structure that connects the material and divine realms.

Barzakh as the Intermediary between Opposites

Ibn 'Arabī conceptualizes al-Barzakh as the necessary intermediary between opposites, a liminal reality that reconciles paradoxes and sustains the structure of existence. In his metaphysical system, all of creation is governed by duality—light and darkness, manifest and hidden, known and unknown, created and uncreated. However, absolute opposites cannot interact directly; therefore, *al-Barzakh* functions as an essential reconciliatory space where they coexist without merging or annihilating each other. He describes it as a paradoxical state, declaring: "*Al-Barzakh* is neither existent nor non-existent, yet it is both." (*Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, Ch. 198).

This view lines up with Neoplatonic metaphysics, where reality is structured in hierarchical emanations flowing from the One (al-Aḥad) down through Intellect (al-'Aql), Soul (al-Nafs), and the Material World (Plotinus, VI.9.3). Each level in this chain requires an intermediary (*wasīṭ*) to link the higher and lower realities (Gutas, 2001). Ibn 'Arabī integrates this framework into Islamic thought, proposing that *al-Barzakh* serves as the ontological threshold between different realms of existence. Without such an intermediary, transitions between different existential states—such as life and death, body and soul, divine and created—would be impossible (Chittick, 1989, p. 120).

Ibn 'Arabī's *al-Barzakh* also resonates with Taoist and Eastern philosophical traditions, particularly the yin-yang dynamic. In Taoist cosmology, *yin* and *yang* represent opposing forces that must remain in balance, and this balance is maintained through a mediating principle (*Tao* or *Dao*) (Laozi, Ch. 42). Similarly, in Ibn 'Arabī's cosmology, *al-Barzakh* is the principle that enables the coexistence of dualities without allowing one to dominate or negate the other (Chittick, 1998, p. 85).

In *Ṣūfī* mystical thought, *al-Barzakh* functions as an active state of being, allowing one to experience both the corporeal and the spiritual at the same time. This is particularly relevant in the realm of dreams and visions (*mukāshafāt*), in which the individual perceives images that are neither entirely material nor purely abstract (Ibn 'Arabī, 1980, p. 35). The dream world, therefore, functions as a microcosm of *al-Barzakh*, allowing the dreamer to interact with both physical and metaphysical realities (Corbin, 1998, p. 213).

Thus, Ibn 'Arabī's conception of al-Barzakh transcends its eschatological role, emerging as a fundamental structure of existence that bridges opposites and ensures the continuity of divine emanation into creation. It serves as the liminal space where realities unfold, maintaining the delicate balance between the manifest and the hidden, the human and the divine, time and eternity (Sells, 1994, p. 102). Central to this framework is Ibn 'Arabī's integration of al-Barzakh with his concept of 'ālam al-mithāl, the imaginal world that functions as a link between material and immaterial existence, where visions, dreams, and divine disclosures occur. Unlike the purely corporeal or intellectual realms, 'ālam al-mithāl operates as a Barzakhic space in which divine knowledge becomes perceptible (Chittick, 1989). This relationship between imagination and al-Barzakh aligns closely with Henry Corbin's interpretation of Islamic mysticism, in which the imaginal realm (*mundus imaginalis*) constitutes a distinct ontological category, serving as the medium through which metaphysical truths take form and become accessible to human perception (Corbin, 1998).

Linguistic *Barzakh*: The Limitations of Human Language

Ibn ‘Arabī’s concept of *al-Barzakh* reaches beyond ontology and cosmology, permeating the very fabric of language and meaning, highlighting the inherent limitations of human expression when attempting to articulate divine realities. For him, language itself functions as a *Barzakh*, caught between the absolute truth (*haqq*) of the divine realm and the limited, contingent expressions of human speech. Words attempt to capture reality, yet they remain suspended between revealing and concealing—a paradox that is central to Ibn ‘Arabī’s linguistic and mystical philosophy. As Chittick explains, Ibn ‘Arabī "saw language as an intermediary veil—one that reveals even as it conceals" (1989, p. 205).

This view resonates with postmodern linguistic theories, particularly Derrida’s concept of *différance*, where meaning is perpetually deferred, never fully graspable, much like *Barzakh* in Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought (Derrida, 1997). Derrida argues that language is an infinite chain of signifiers, where each word only derives meaning in relation to others, but never reaches absolute presence. This is consistent with Ibn ‘Arabī’s assertion that words, no matter how precisely chosen, can never fully encompass divine realities, because God’s truth transcends the limitations of human speech (Ibn ‘Arabī, 1980, p. 37).

Modern structuralist and poststructuralist theories, such as those developed by Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Lacan, emphasize that language cannot offer new meanings, as everything has already been said (Foucault, 1972; Barthes 1977, 142-8; Lacan, 2006). Barthes argues that language does not belong to the speaker but rather exists independently of individual intention, much like Ibn ‘Arabī’s view that human speech is merely an echo of divine revelation, never the source of ultimate meaning. Ibn ‘Arabī extends this idea by suggesting that God’s revelation (*wahy*) itself is Barzakhic—a necessary intermediary between the Unknowable Essence (*Dhāt*) and human understanding. Revelation, therefore, must be interpreted symbolically, since literal interpretations reduce divine speech to human limitations (Chittick, 1998, p. 212).

For Ibn ‘Arabī, human discourse operates within a Barzakhic space, where language is both a bridge and a barrier. It allows the seeker to glimpse divine truths, yet simultaneously restricts their access to them. He writes: "Every utterance about God is true in one respect and false in another, for it is limited by the capacities of the speaker and the listener, and neither can comprehend the infinite" (*Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, Ch. 60).

This paradox echoes the Neoplatonic idea of language as a medium that both discloses and veils reality. Plotinus, the founder of Neoplatonism, describes human speech as a shadow of the divine Logos, capable of hinting at ultimate truth but never fully capturing it (Plotinus, V.1.7). Ibn ‘Arabī expands upon this by suggesting that words are veils over divine meaning and that true knowledge can only be accessed through inner perception (*kashf*), not linguistic articulation (1980, p. 49).

This idea also resonates with Heidegger’s philosophy of language, particularly his notion that words serve as “houses of Being” (Heidegger, 1927). Like Ibn ‘Arabī, Heidegger recognizes that language is never fully adequate in expressing ultimate reality, and that meaning emerges through a tension between what is said and what remains unsaid (Heidegger, 1971, p. 56). Ibn ‘Arabī prefigures this by insisting that divine realities cannot be grasped directly but only hinted at through paradoxical expressions.

Ibn ‘Arabī’s linguistic *Barzakh* also finds an interesting parallel in *Ṣūfī* poetics, where the ambiguity and fluidity of mystical language become essential tools for conveying ineffable experiences. Classical Persian *Ṣūfī* poets such as Rūmī and Ḥāfīz employ metaphor, irony, and paradox to illustrate the tension between the seen and the unseen, the finite and the infinite (Sells, 1994, p. 97). Similarly, Ibn ‘Arabī views the names of God (al-Asmā’ al-Ḥusnā) as linguistic *Barzakh*s, mediating between the infinite nature of God and human comprehension. Each name reveals an aspect of divine reality while simultaneously concealing the totality of God’s essence, which remains beyond human grasp (*Futūḥāt*, Ch. 211).

From an epistemological standpoint, Ibn ‘Arabī’s understanding of language as *Barzakhic* underscores a fundamental issue in hermeneutics—the process of interpreting divine and mystical texts. He warns against the dangers of literalism, arguing that strict legalistic readings of the Qur’ān overlook the inner meanings (*bāṭin*) hidden beneath the surface (*Futūḥāt*, Ch. 198). This mirrors Gadamer’s theory of the “fusion of horizons”, which posits that meaning arises in the interaction between the reader’s context and the text’s historical background (Gadamer, 1960). Ibn ‘Arabī forestalls this by suggesting that each seeker encounters divine speech according to their spiritual capacity, making interpretation an ever-evolving process rather than a fixed absolute (Chittick, 2005, p. 192).

In summary, Ibn ‘Arabī’s concept of language as *Barzakh* reveals profound insights into the limitations of human speech, the paradox of divine communication, and the endless deferral of meaning. His ideas prefigures modern poststructuralist and hermeneutic theories and offer a unique metaphysical framework for understanding the interplay between the ineffable and the expressed. Through this lens, language itself becomes a mystical threshold—a space of both clarity and obscurity, forever mediating between what can be known and what must remain beyond words.

Conclusion: Al-Barzakh as a Foundational Principle of Reality

Ibn ‘Arabī’s conception of *al-Barzakh* transforms it from a mere eschatological waiting period into a fundamental metaphysical inevitability that underpins existence, perception, and knowledge. Throughout this study, we have explored how *al-Barzakh* functions as a connection between contraries, linking the corporeal and spiritual, the manifest and hidden, the finite and infinite. It is not merely a static realm between death and resurrection, but rather a structural principle that allows reality to unfold in a dynamic and layered manner.

What distinguishes Ibn ‘Arabī’s vision from conventional Islamic eschatology is his insistence that *al-Barzakh* is not just an event in time, but an ever-present condition of being. This insight leads to profound implications beyond mystical philosophy—it suggests that human perception, knowledge, and even the act of meaning-making itself occur within a *Barzakhic* space. Our understanding of reality is always mediated, veiled, and contingent, and *al-Barzakh* provides the ontological mechanism that makes both divine manifestation (*tajallī*) and human interpretation (*ta’wīl*) possible.

From an epistemological perspective, Ibn ‘Arabī’s linguistic *Barzakh* challenges the idea of language as a transparent medium of meaning. Much like modern structuralist and poststructuralist thought, his theory anticipates the limits of linguistic representation, highlighting how words are never fully adequate to express absolute truths. His approach is reminiscent of thinkers such as Derrida, Barthes, and Heidegger, who emphasize the

indeterminacy of language and the impossibility of reaching absolute meaning. This offers a compelling pre-modern critique of language's failure to fully encapsulate divine knowledge, reinforcing the eternal deferral of meaning (*différance*) in human discourse.

Moreover, Ibn 'Arabī's cosmological *Barzakh* opens avenues for comparative engagement with Neoplatonic, Taoist, and Buddhist thought. His vision of *Barzakh* as an intermediary that prevents opposites from collapsing into one another mirrors the yin-yang balance in Taoism, the Neoplatonic emanation of reality, and the Buddhist concept of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*). Such parallels demonstrate that Ibn 'Arabī's insights go beyond an Islamic framework, forming part of a broader mystical and philosophical discourse that transcends cultural boundaries. Perhaps the most groundbreaking aspect of Ibn 'Arabī's theory is its reconfiguration of *al-Barzakh* as a metaphysical principle while also making it relevant to everyday human experience. *Al-Barzakh* is more than an afterlife state—it is a fundamental aspect of human existence itself. Every moment of perception, every act of interpretation, and every encounter with the unknown occurs within a Barzakhic field of mediation. Thus, to recognize *al-Barzakh* is to recognize the fundamental relationality of existence, where no knowledge, no experience, and no reality can be understood in isolation.

This study has shown that Ibn 'Arabī's concept of al-Barzakh is more than a theological construct; it is a comprehensive ontological framework that offers a philosophical model for understanding reality, knowledge, and language. Future research could further explore how Ibn 'Arabī's Barzakh challenges traditional dualisms—between subject and object, self and other, matter and spirit—and offers a more fluid, dynamic, and relational vision of existence. Additionally, engaging Ibn 'Arabī's thought with contemporary quantum physics and cognitive science could reveal how his insights into intermediacy and perception resonate with modern understandings of consciousness and the structure of reality.

Thus, Ibn 'Arabī's *al-Barzakh* is both a bridge between worlds and the essential framework that sustains their existence. It is a perpetual threshold, an ever-unfolding liminality, and the hidden architecture that sustains both divine and human knowledge.

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