

MYSTICAL TREATISES OF MUHYIDDIN IBN 'ARABI

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IBN 'ARABI



*The Universal Tree  
and the Four Birds*

Translated by Angela Jaffray

The Universal Tree  
and the Four Birds

MYSTICAL TREATISES OF  
MUHYIDDIN IBN 'ARABI

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*FORTHCOMING TITLES*

**The Four Cornerstones of the Way**  
(*Hilyat al-abdāl*)

**Annihilated in Contemplation**  
(*Kitāb al-fanā' fi'l-mushāhada*)

**Technical Terms of Sufism**  
(*al-Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfīya*)

Muḥyiddīn Ibn ‘Arabī

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The Universal Tree  
and the Four Birds

Treatise on Unification (*al-Ittiḥād al-kawnī*)



Introduction, Translation and Commentary

*ANGELA JAFFRAY*



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I am in love with no other than myself,  
and my very separation is my union ...

I am my beloved and my lover;  
I am my knight and my maiden.

Muḥyiddīn Ibn ʿArabī



# CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	viii
Of the Tree and its Four Birds, by Rafi Zabor	1
Biography of Ibn 'Arabi	9
Introduction	16
Overview	16
Stylistic Considerations	18
Treatise on Unification	21
Dedication	26
Discourse of the Universal Tree	35
Discourse of the Ringdove	38
Discourse of the Royal Eagle	42
Discourse of the Strange ' <i>Anqā</i> '	46
Discourse of the Jet-Black Crow	47
Commentary	53
The Title	53
The Proemial Poems	61
The Dedicatee	63
The Fourth Poem	77
Meetings in the <i>Barzakh</i>	78
Soliloquies of the Universal Tree and the Four Birds	80
Cosmic Marriage and the Genealogy of the Birds	103
Appendix: The Edition of the Text	111
Bibliography	115
Index of Qur'anic Citations	123
Index of Names and Terms	125
Arabic text	



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*Lā tawfīq illā bi-llāh*

# OF THE TREE AND ITS FOUR BIRDS

RAFI ZABOR

It is He who is revealed in every face, sought in every sign, gazed upon by every eye, worshipped in every object of worship, and pursued in the unseen and the visible. Not a single one of His creatures can fail to find Him in its primordial and original nature.

*Muḥyiddīn Ibn ‘Arabī*

Ibn ‘Arabī – or Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn al-‘Arabī at-Ṭā’ī al-Ḥātimī, also called Muḥyiddīn, the Revivifier of the Faith – was born in 1165 CE in the city of Murcia in Muslim Andalusia, and died seventy-five years later in Damascus: a narrative traversal of the Islamic world more than mirrored by his encompassment of its internal, esoteric aspect. Called within the Sufi tradition the Shaykh al-Akbar, or Greatest Master, and seen as its ultimate exemplar of esoteric Knowledge, he was, among many other things, the author of approximately three hundred books, some of them no longer than a pamphlet, others comprising several volumes. The best known and doubtless most important of these are the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, in many ways the crystallization of a lifetime’s gnosis, and the enormous *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, which combines the functions of a spiritual encyclopedia and intimate autobiography. The work translated here (*Risālat al-ittiḥād al-kawnī*, likely written before the author’s arrival in Mecca circa 1203 CE), combining verse, prose, and rhymed prose, is certainly one of Ibn ‘Arabī’s most beautiful and, while quite unlike

any other of his books so far translated into English,<sup>1</sup> it is wholly characteristic of his genius.

In it the reader will encounter a work of extraordinary literary and spiritual artistry, followed by a commentary whose lucidity and acuity of articulation will introduce the neophyte – its thoroughness should also please the specialist – to some of the details of the cosmological order to which our author's imagery, in this work and elsewhere, belongs; but there ought also to be room for a few general words of introduction for the general reader who might happen by.

In the history of monotheistic spirituality, in particular its Western, Abrahamic branch incorporating Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, you may find an aspected resemblance here and there, but there is really no one, from taproot to topmost leaftip, like Muḥyiddīn Ibn 'Arabī. In Islamic esotericism per se, especially with regard to its metaphysical and exegetical component, virtually everyone before him is an anticipation and everyone after a commentator or interpreter.

In encountering him you come upon the ultimate implications of monotheism whole and unaltered. Since in exoteric Islam the Unity and Absoluteness of God is the primary axiom, it follows that for its definitive esotericist a One and Absolute God implies the non-existence of anything other than Himself – since that would qualify His Singleness and Absoluteness – so that there is not, in existence or the many shades of relative existence and non-existence in the eighteen thousand Universes anything other than Him *tout court*. From this vantage point we pass to a world of apparently infinite paradox, actually a series of antinomic affirmations logically exclusive of each other but united in the suprarational fact that is the One Existence: the Universes are His appearance, He is the same as the existence of the things, although nothing can be associated with Him and He is transcendent from all qualification, even that of transcendence; everything that exists is the self-manifestation of possibilities latent in His essence, existentiated by His Mercy, yet the possibilities themselves choose their modes of being and demand existentiation from

1. It has been translated into splendidly lyrical French by Denis Gril as *Le Livre de l'arbre es des quatre oiseaux*, Paris: Les Deux Océans, 1984.

Him, so that their will is free and their own, and the consequences of their actions rebound upon themselves, although there is essentially no will but His, and He is transcendent from the existent things without difference although He is their being and substance, and He guides them, perpetually, because He is their inextricable essence. The conscious, perfected human being – the normal run of humans are veiled from the Reality by the illusion of their own self-existence – is the complete reflection of its infinite and eternal Source, and it is precisely for the sake of this mirroring that the Absolute breathed His mercy upon the possibilities and potentials latent in Himself and permitted the Universes to become, although their existence is pure contingency, a veil, an illusion, and also the Truth in Truth, while there is only He, and nothing with or beside Him, ever. And so on, almost ad infinitum, according to each particular face of revelation implicit in the nature of the Reality. Ibn ‘Arabī’s cosmology sometimes seems as detailed as the Universe whose ontology it addresses; at other times he demolishes all secondary consideration in a totalizing affirmation of the indivisible and unconditionable One: these two components of his vision do not exclude each other but are essentially the same, and cannot be halved. And as the Shaykh sometimes likes to put it: if you understand it that way, fine; and if not, then not.

What after Ibn ‘Arabī’s death came to be called the doctrine of the Unity of Being was not, however, some ultimate ingenuity of exegesis but the result of profound self-experience, and when you read one of his books you encounter in some measure the extraordinary individual who experienced it. His is a flavor one comes to recognize and distinguish from all others, a genius both inclusive of and beyond rational compass, a forthrightness challenging all complacencies, and at times a robustly humorous overturner of all cognitive convention. His complications dazzle and bewilder the intellect and imagination; alternately his bluntness can, at times, make even so bold a visionary as William Blake seem almost an equivocator by comparison.

He is also a poet of extraordinary expressive power, as a reader of the *Ittiḥād* will quickly discover. The book begins with a preludinal poem which even in translation seems one of the great one-time-only coups of the world-long poetic tradition:

*From my incompleteness to my completeness, and from my  
inclination to my equilibrium  
From my grandeur to my beauty, and from my splendour to my  
majesty  
From my scattering to my gathering, and from my exclusion to my  
reunion  
From my baseness to my preciousness, and from my stones to my  
pearls . . .*

For thirteen lines Ibn ‘Arabī’s contemplation swings like a pendulum between the polarities of a self whose sphere of allusion and reference is the entire subsolar and sublunary world with its risings and settings, breezes, boughs, and shade, its steeds and gazelles – an extraordinary ambit of discourse that shudders to a halt with the abrupt discovery of that self’s isolation and the limits of its enclosed love. The last line of the section reveals the reality behind even so inspired and inevitable a self-absorption and uncovers the crux of its anguish – *Do not blame me for my passion. I am inconsolable over the one who has fled me* – but if we have left the sphere of the passional self and the romance of its poetics, it is not in obeisance to the dictates of a conventional mysteriosophy; neither will Ibn ‘Arabī, as his accustomed readers know, end his quest with a conventionally diffuse devotional yearning for the Infinite as traditionally conceived: when the Shaykh al-Akbar seeks something he almost invariably finds it, on a large scale and in plenty.

When, after this reflective pause, the tolling of the polarities resumes, a measure of discrimination inserts itself into the cascade of couplets – *Continuous is the light of knowledge; ephemeral the light of intuition* – even, shortly, a teleology, and a changing a sense of quest:

*So that I might bring to light what lies hidden in night’s core . . .*

*To explain the mysteries' roots and express the realities' enigmas.*

The author ends this phase of his invocation by affirming the Spiritual nature of his inspiration and by distinguishing it from that of the willfully ignorant.

Ibn 'Arabī then calls his book to order, announces its title, and dedicates it to Abū al-Fawāris Ṣakhr b. Sinān, a “master of the triads and dyads” in whose nature, manner, or teaching must surely lie the root of the introduction’s uniquely “dyadic words of praise”. Ibn 'Arabī then praises God, with reference to a particularly important Qur’anic passage – “Surely We created man with the most beautiful of constitutions”, that is, in the essential image of God, “then We reduced him to the lowest of the low” (Q. 95: 4–5), which in part is to say the mortality and limits of this world but especially the blinkered consciousness we typically have in it – before resuming a rapturous poetics one might have thought eliminated by so firm a theological intrusion. In the following strophes, self and Self, essence and Essence, humanity and the properly Divine are both distinguished from each other – with particular reference to some occulted aspects of the individuated subjectivity – and revealed as inextricable.

In the last moment of this introductory section the author delineates still more precisely the book’s locus of revelation: situated “on the equator”, that is to say at the meeting-point, of “the most beautiful of constitutions” and the “lowest of degrees” that encompass between them the essential human state – the comprehensive conjunction of the Transcendent and the Manifest, in other texts the place where “the two seas meet”, and where the Arc of Necessarily-so-ness and the Arc of Possibilities converge – metaphorically rendered here as the City of human habitation and the Sinai that is the archetypal site of human receptivity to the continuous Divine self-revelation.

Having articulated the book’s metaphysical context, Ibn 'Arabī plunges us into the heart of a drama drawn on a consciously cosmic scale – there is tremendous urgency behind the narrative from the first – evincing an impetuosity and directness, a singleness of feeling

whose impassioned expressiveness is quite distinct from the Persian genius for decoration and ameliorative address to a normative audience, most familiar in the West in the work of Ibn 'Arabī's great near-contemporary Jalāluddīn Rūmī. In fact Rūmī, recognized within the Sufi tradition as its ultimate exemplar of divine and spiritual Love, is not Ibn 'Arabī's opposite but his complement. Ibn 'Arabī is alleged to have seen the child Rūmī and to have remarked upon his future greatness, but the two are more substantially and convincingly linked through Ibn 'Arabī's adopted son and great disciple Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, who later was a friend and collaborator of Rūmī's in Konya, the capital of thirteenth-century Seljuk Turkey; and it may be that Ibn 'Arabī and Jalāluddīn Rūmī are ideally understood in terms of each other, one expressing explicitly what is implicit in his counterpart.

Unlike the Turkish–Persian master, who usually took care to veil his *jalāl*, or fierce majestic aspect, Ibn 'Arabī not only rushes straight at the Truth but trusts It to let the chips fall where they may: subjective after-effects and secondary concatenations are not his responsibility. Our author exemplifies not only the Arabic genius but the compressive power of the Arabic language, which like its cousin Hebrew and perhaps metaphorically the cosmos those languages characteristically describe, parlays a finite number of consonantal roots into an improbably multiform eloquence of expression.

Ibn 'Arabī shouts, “Alas, my burning heart. I fled from the universe and here I am in it. Where is what I seek?”, and is answered by a voice remarkably like the one that addressed Job from the whirlwind – the author scruples to note that it comes from neither inside nor outside him – demanding where he was at the setting up of the Throne and the placement of the celestial couches, not to mention before the establishment of the supreme horizon, and so on for a staggering paragraph delineating the utter incommensurability of the human and the Divine.

The Voice from the Whirlwind quite silenced Job's inquiries, but the ever-impetuous Ibn 'Arabī, registering that voice and its implications completely within himself, goes onward and inward through

aspect after aspect in his quest for the entire unedited human reality's reflection of the Divine Itselfness. Through an audacity of question and answer, in a sort of active submission to the Reality's fullness of will, in a dialogue of extreme spiritual subtlety dense with Qur'anic allusion and references to the Shaykh's own extensive terminology – much of which will be lost upon the neophyte reader but which registers as strong gnostic drama regardless;<sup>2</sup> also see the Commentary – Ibn 'Arabī finally arrives at the book's central image of revelation: a Tree with four birds in its branches. Our author will converse with each of them.

Up to this point the protagonist's struggle has been to detach himself from the last traces of contingent creation and so address himself appropriately to the unqualified Reality. (Along the way, the reader will have noted Ibn 'Arabī's characteristic combination of the evocative and the categorical: "If you extract me from the crashing waves and deliver me from the horror of this gloomy night I will never more pronounce the adverb or the preposition of place." Later on, the Crow will tell him: "I am the lamp and the winds. I am the chain against the rock and the wing. I am the sea whose waves constantly strike one another. I am, of the countable, the singular and the paired.") Beginning with his converse with the Tree, our author has reached his goal, and everything that follows is fruition and harvest.

At the very end of the text, Ibn 'Arabī tells us what the Tree and the birds represent, so it is probably best for the reader first to submit to their unassisted poetic authority. Still, for a reader unacquainted with the tradition and its symbology a few words of explication will probably not go amiss. Much of Ibn 'Arabī's personal terminology is a more abstract rendering of the language of the Qur'an, hence the Pen appears as the First Intellect, the Tablet as Soul, and so forth. Of the birds in the Tree, the third, or "strange *'Anqā'*", could certainly use a small interpretative assist and a bit of speciation. Sometimes translated as Phoenix, the strange *'Anqā'* in any case is proverbially

2. The indispensable glossary of his terminology and précis of his metaphysics is *The Twenty-Nine Pages*. Robertson, Roxburghshire: Beshara Publications, 1998.



a bird that has a Name but no manifest Being – *Ismi var, varlık yok*, as almost any Turk can tell you – and hence is associated with the Reality of Realities, a mercurial entity which is the foundation of the world. The Reality of Realities is, as Ibn ‘Arabī writes in *The Book of the Description of the Encompassing Circles*:

the All-embracing Universal which includes the temporal and the eternal, increasing by the multiplicity of existents without however subdividing by their fractioning . . . It is neither existent nor non-existent; it is not the world, and yet it also is; it is other without being other, given that otherness implies [at least] two existents, whereas sameness implies matching . . . resulting in a third notion qualified as form.<sup>3</sup>

It is co-eternal with the eternal and co-temporal with the temporal. The Reality of Realities is the core of Ibn ‘Arabī’s logos doctrine, and ultimately it is perfectly manifested in the heart of the Perfected Human Being. (Further ambiguities of its indeterminacy are treated within the translator’s Commentary.)

Amid all the beauty and allusiveness of Ibn ‘Arabī’s dialogue with the Tree and its birds, I would especially point out the peroration of the Crow, which is in part a reproach to spiritual types who disdain the created world of bodies and limitation and night. The Shaykh says elsewhere that there are People of the Right Hand, who care only for spiritual things, and People of the Left Hand, who care only for the things of this world; then there are the people who make no distinction between the spiritual and the mundane, and they are Those Who Have Been Brought Near – yet another piece of a rich, meticulously and majestically developed perspective that this short, lyrical and evocative book, youthful but already magisterial, with a conceptual spine strong as tensile steel, makes palpably real to the reader through the eloquence of its imagery and the uniqueness of its author’s unforgettable voice.

3. Translated by P. Fenton and M. Gloton, in *Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi: A Commemorative Volume*, ed. S. Hirtenstein and M. Tiernan. Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element, 1993, pp. 25–6.

# BIOGRAPHY OF IBN ‘ARABĪ<sup>1</sup>

Muḥyiddīn Muḥammad Ibn ‘Arabī, known as “al-Shaykh al-Akbar”, or Greatest Shaykh, was born in 1165 in Murcia, Spain. His father held an important post in the government, first of Ibn Mardanīsh and later of his rival Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf, the Almohad ruler. When he was seven, his family moved to Seville where, despite an initial attraction to youthful diversions, an even stronger inclination toward the devotional life began to emerge. Even as a very young man he began to undertake retreats, spent considerable time in cemeteries communing with spirits, and realized astounding mystical insights.

Ibn ‘Arabī tells us little about his first formative retreat, other than to say that, unlike most other mystical wayfarers, he was seized by a kind of divine attraction or ecstasy (*jadhba*), instead of proceeding slowly and laboriously by disciplined stages.<sup>2</sup> This illuminative event, if the later report of al-Qāri’ al-Baghdādī (d.1418) is to be believed,<sup>3</sup> had its inception in the midst of a typical Andalusian fête attended by the teenaged Ibn ‘Arabī. About to raise a cup of wine to his lips, the young man heard a voice proclaim: “O Muḥammad, it was not for this that you were created!”<sup>4</sup> He left the party abruptly and fled to a cemetery, where he engaged in solitary invocation of God.

1. I have relied on two excellent biographies of Ibn ‘Arabī: *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, by Claude Addas, and *The Unlimited Mercifier*, by Stephen Hirtenstein.

2. Ibn ‘Arabī’s initial spiritual opening is described in Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge* (hereafter *SPK*), p. 383, n. 12: “at twenty he began his ‘wayfaring’ (*sulūk*) in the technical Sufi sense, while in his early teens he had undergone his first opening as the result of a divine attraction (*jadhba*), through the intervention of the prophets Jesus, Moses, and Muḥammad.”

3. See Hirtenstein, *Unlimited Mercifier*, p. 254, n. 3.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

## Biography of Ibn 'Arabī

It was there in the cemetery that Ibn 'Arabī experienced a triple vision of the Prophets Jesus, Moses, and Muḥammad.<sup>5</sup> Each of these three masters illuminated certain aspects of the Path: from Jesus he learned the necessity of asceticism; from Moses, he learned that he would attain *'ilm ladunī*, the kind of knowledge bestowed by God as a gift rather than the result of striving followed by acquisition.<sup>6</sup> Finally, in the midst of a vision in which he was threatened by assailants, the young man saw the Prophet Muḥammad, standing on a hill. The Prophet urged him to “hold fast to me and you will be safe.”<sup>7</sup> From that point on, Ibn 'Arabī became an ardent student of hadith, those traditions that recount the Prophet's words and actions, taking them as a model for his own behaviour.

This extraordinary retreat, however, was followed by a period of “abandonment” (*fatra*), which is not at all uncommon in either prophets or friends of God (*awliyā'*).<sup>8</sup> The Prophet Muḥammad himself experienced it. It is a period of silence from the divine side. The mystic finds himself, as it were, in a desert, completely without sustenance, tormented by doubts and unsure of how, or even whether, to proceed. It is a state in which one may wander compassless forever; or one can emerge safely, as Ibn 'Arabī did, hearing the divine voice recite to him the Qur'anic verses:

And He it is who sendeth the winds as tidings heralding His mercy, till, when they bear a cloud heavy [with rain], We lead it to a dead land, and then cause water to descend thereon and thereby bring forth fruits of every kind. Thus we bring forth the dead. Haply you will remember. As for the good land, its vegetation cometh forth by permission of its Lord. (Q. 7: 57–58)

5. See *Fut.* IV. 172. For the significance of this unprecedented triple vision, see Hirtenstein, *Unlimited Mercifier*, pp. 52–6.

6. See *Fut.* I. 254. Although common to the prophets, this form of knowledge is rarely found in anyone else, a noted exception being al-Khiḍr, Moses' mysterious companion, whose remarkable tale is found in Surat al-Kahf (Q. 18: 65–82).

7. Hirtenstein, *Unlimited Mercifier*, p. 55.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 58–60.

## Biography of Ibn 'Arabī

Hearkening to the advice of Jesus, his “first master,”<sup>9</sup> whom the Shaykh was to meet numerous times in visions, the young man pledged himself to an ascetic life and gave away all his possessions to his father. From then on, as he recounts in the *Futūḥāt*, he lived on gifts and alms, trusting in God for his needs.<sup>10</sup> Henceforth, the young Ibn 'Arabī became a bona fide man of the Sufi Way. He studied the traditional Islamic sciences with some of the foremost scholars of Andalusia, and concurrently realized, in a very short time, the panoply of mystical stations he describes in his various writings.

By around the age of twenty, Ibn 'Arabī had acquired his first Sufi teacher, Abū al-'Abbās al-'Uryabī,<sup>11</sup> an illiterate peasant whom he met in Seville. Among this shaykh's many virtues was that he had realized the station of perfect servitude, the highest of all stations. Al-'Uryabī was not the only shaykh that the young Muḥyiddīn frequented during the thirty years he spent in Andalusia prior to his departure to the east. In his two compendia devoted to Andalusian saints, he lists and describes some seventy-one Sufi shaykhs, four of them women, from whom he received important spiritual direction.<sup>12</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī's own spiritual state was made clear to him in three successive visions between 1190 and 1202. In them, he saw all of the messengers and prophets as well as “all the believers – those who have been and those who will be – until the Day of Resurrection.”<sup>13</sup> He learned that the major reason why the prophets and messengers had assembled in the spiritual world was to congratulate him at being designated the Seal of the Muḥammadan Sainthood – the heir to the Seal of the Prophets, Muḥammad. As he explains in his *Futūḥāt*, the Seal of the Muḥammadan Sainthood combines all the qualities

9. *Fut.* III. 341.

10. *Fut.* II. 548.

11. Some accounts give his name as al-'Uryanī.

12. Many of the Sufi masters with whom Ibn 'Arabī studied are described in his *Rūḥ al-quds* and *al-Durra al-fākhira*, partially translated by Austin as *Sufis of Andalusia*.

13. *Fut.* III. 323; trans. Addas, *Quest*, p. 74.

of all the saints; and since prophets are also saints, it includes all the qualities of all the prophets, excluding those pertaining to their legislative roles.

In 1193, Ibn 'Arabī made his first journey beyond the Iberian Peninsula, to North Africa. He stayed in Tunis for a year, studying with Shaykh al-Mahdawī, a disciple of the famous Algerian saint Abū Madyan, whose tomb is a site of pilgrimage to this day. When Ibn 'Arabī returned to al-Andalus, he began to compose the first of his more than 300 works. His primary activity, however, seems to have been spiritual wayfaring in order to learn from Sufi masters and study Prophetic Traditions. Between the years 1195 and 1200, he was engaged in constant travel between Spain and North Africa, while concurrently traversing another landscape, not visible to the physical eye. To many of these purely spiritual locales he gave evocative names, such as “God’s Vast Earth” where “the spiritual takes body and the body becomes spiritual,”<sup>14</sup> and the “Abode of Light”, where all destinies are known from beginning to end.

But the greatest vision he experienced at this time was no doubt the spiritual ascent (*mi'rāj*) he made in imitation of the Prophet’s corporeal ascent to the seven heavens and to the Divine Presence Itself. Mounted on the “Burāq”<sup>15</sup> of his spiritual aspiration, he travelled through the seven celestial spheres, each one presided over by a prophet. Beyond the seventh heaven lies the goal of every *mi'rāj*: the “Lote Tree of the Limit”, alluded to in the Qur’an. It was here that he became, as he puts it, “nothing but light”.<sup>16</sup> He realized that, despite the multiplicity of God’s names, attributes, and acts, there is but a single Being to which they refer, and that “the journey that [he] made was inside [him]self, and it was toward [him]self he had been guided.”<sup>17</sup>

14. Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, p. 4.

15. The fabulous steed on which the prophets are said to be transported on their celestial ascent. Ibn 'Arabī often uses this image metaphorically. See *Fut.* III. 345, *R. al-ittiḥād*, p. 30.

16. *Fut.* III. 350; trans. Addas, *Quest*, p. 156.

17. *Fut.* III. 350; trans. Addas, *Quest*, p. 156.

The year 1200 marks the beginning of Ibn 'Arabī's journey to the east. He was never again to return to Spain. From North Africa he went first to Cairo, then to Hebron – where he visited the tomb of Abraham – then Jerusalem, where he prayed at the al-Aqsa Mosque. His final goal was Mecca, where he intended to perform the pilgrimage. Among his many visions and meetings with remarkable men and women, two merit special mention. The first was his astonishing encounter with the strange personage he calls the *Fatā*, or youth, evocatively described in the first chapter of the *Futūḥāt*. One evening, when he was performing the ritual circumambulations of the Ka'ba, a mysterious youth accosted him. Was he an angel or a human being? The embodiment of the Black Stone, or the personification of the Holy Spirit? Ibn 'Arabī's celestial twin or an epitome of the *Futūḥāt* itself? Perhaps he was all of these and more. After describing their conversation, recounted in poetry and rhymed prose, a pact between the young man and the Shaykh was concluded. The result of this epiphany is the some 2000 tightly-packed folio pages of the *Futūḥāt*, a masterpiece of mystical literature.

It was also in Mecca that he made the acquaintance of the young woman Nizām, who would become the inspiration for his love poems, written approximately fifteen years later (1215) and collected in the *Tarjumān al-ashwāq* (The Interpreter of Desires). Nizām was a young Iranian lady of considerable beauty, piety, and intelligence – “the ornament of our gatherings”,<sup>18</sup> as Ibn 'Arabī says in his Preface to the *Tarjumān*. Commentators have seen in Nizām the archetypal Eternal Feminine, the embodiment of Sophia, the equivalent of Dante's Beatrice, and the coincidentia oppositorum.<sup>19</sup> She is not only the muse of the *Interpreter of Desires* but also may have inspired the paeon to Woman found in the final chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ*, on the Wisdom of Singularity in the Word of Muḥammad.<sup>20</sup> “Contemplation

18. *Tarjumān*, p. 11. (Unless otherwise noted, all references are to the Nicholson edition.)

19. See Austin, “The Lady Nizām”, pp. 35–48.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

of the Reality without formal support is not possible”, he says. “The best and most perfect kind [of contemplation] is the contemplation of God in women.”<sup>21</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī was to spend roughly two years in Mecca. It was at Mecca, during a brief period of dissatisfaction with the aptitude of his students that, in a dream vision, the Shaykh was given the divine advice to “counsel God’s servants”.<sup>22</sup> Whether addressing jurists or Sufis, rulers or simple folk, for the remainder of his life the Shaykh made it a point to convey his message, orally and in his many writings, to all the believers he encountered and at the level of their varied understandings. Some of the texts he wrote were short, composed at a single sitting; some ran to hundreds, even thousands, of pages, as in the case of the *Futūḥāt*, and were the products of years of labour and revision.

Just as his early years were devoted to constant wayfaring throughout Andalusia and the Maghreb, Ibn 'Arabī spent the years spanning 1204 to 1220 travelling back and forth across Syria, Palestine, Anatolia, Egypt, Iraq, and the Hijaz. During this time he acquired many disciples, continued his literary output, and even became an advisor to the Seljuk sultan Kaykā'ūs. It was not until the final twenty years of his life that he ceased his peregrinations and in 1221 settled permanently in Damascus.

At the end of 1229, an event occurred that resulted in the writing of the Shaykh’s best known book, the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, or “Bezels of Wisdom.” In a dream, he saw the Prophet Muḥammad, holding a book. The Prophet told him: “This is the book of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. Take and give it to humanity so that they may find benefit from it.”<sup>23</sup> The twenty-seven chapters contained therein – each one devoted to a different prophet and elucidating a particular facet of wisdom – were, according to Ibn 'Arabī, inspired by the Prophet with no personal input on his part whatsoever. The *Fuṣūṣ* has remained to this day his most provocative and most frequently commented-upon work.

21. *Fuṣūṣ*, p.217; trans. Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, p.275.

22. See Addas, *Quest*, p.218.

23. *Fuṣūṣ*, p.47; trans. Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, p.45.

## *Biography of Ibn 'Arabī*

Ibn 'Arabī died in Damascus in November 1240. Over the centuries, his teachings spread east as far as China, disseminated by devoted students – many of them gifted mystics and poets in their own rights. For the past century, the West has also played a part in this process, as scholars and translators continue the effort to bring the Shaykh's remarkable writings to the attention of the contemporary world.



# INTRODUCTION

## Overview

The *Ittihād al-kawnī* is one of Ibn ‘Arabī’s early works, most likely written before the author’s journey to the eastern Islamic lands in 1201/02 CE (AH 598).<sup>1</sup> Written primarily in rhymed prose and poetry, it shares the charm of its cousins among the visionary mystical–philosophical fables of the Islamic world, such as those penned by Avicenna, Suhrawardī, and ‘Aṭṭār.<sup>2</sup>

It also belongs to the genre of mystical ascent literature. Although ascent literature is represented in many of the world’s traditions,<sup>3</sup> in Islam the model derives from the Prophet Muḥammad’s ascension through the seven heavens to the Divine Presence as allusively recounted in Suras 17: 1 and 53:4–18. In later years, Sufis undertook to imitate the Prophet’s ascent and, beginning with Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī (d.874 CE), several described their visions, either orally or in treatise form. Abū Yazīd’s strange account of his *mi‘rāj*, for example, was recounted by (pseudo-?) al-Junayd (d.910)<sup>4</sup> and interpreted by al-Sarrāj (d.988).<sup>5</sup> Having flown in the form of a bird to the Tree of Unity, the Lote Tree of the Limit, described in Sura 53: 14, Abū

1. See Gril, *Le Livre de l'arbre*, p.29; Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood*, p.165. Although the precise dating of the treatise is not known, in all likelihood it was preceded by such works as *Mashāhid al-asrār al-quṣiyya*, *al-Tadbīrāt al-ilāhiyya*, *Mawāqī‘ al-nujūm*, *Inshā‘ al-dawā‘ ir*, and other treatises that were probably lost when Ibn ‘Arabī left al-Andalus. Its subject matter bears a close resemblance to that of another early work, *‘Uqlat al-mustawfīz*.

2. See Corbin, *Avicenna*; Thackston, *Mystical and Visionary Treatises*; and Aṭṭār, *Manṭiq al-ṭayr*.

3. Among the many studies devoted to this subject in world literature, see Couliano, *Out of this World*, and Cuiianu, *Psychanodia I*.

4. See Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, pp.242–50.

5. See al-Sarrāj, *K. al-luma‘*.

Yazīd remarked that it was “all a cheat”<sup>6</sup> – a remark interpreted by Sarrāj as meaning that Abū Yazīd found anything but attention to God a useless vanity.

Besides the *Ittiḥād al-kawnī*, Ibn ‘Arabī wrote at least two independent works,<sup>7</sup> *K. al-isrā’* and *R. al-anwār*, devoted to the subject, and included two extensive *mi’rāj* accounts in his *Futūḥāt*.<sup>8</sup> In addition, treatises such as *K. al-isfār*,<sup>9</sup> a spiritual itinerary, cover much of the same ground as the *mi’rāj* accounts. It is evident that the Shaykh found the ascent genre a fitting one to describe both the boons and the perils of the spiritual path.

Despite its shimmering surface, the *Ittiḥād* is not an easy work to fathom because of its dense symbolism and enigmatic style. The initial series of poems immediately plunges the reader into a veritable sea of perplexity, as the author “swings like a pendulum between the polarities of [the] self.”<sup>10</sup> The poems are then followed by a dedication whose dedicatee appears to be a long-dead Arabian prophet, while all the while the author claims to be addressing none other than himself. At last the narrative begins, but where? It appears that the reader has been set down at the centre of the world, the symbolic locus of balanced oppositions. Here the tension aroused by the constant fluctuation from state to state, amply elaborated in the opening verses, turns to lament as the author engages in an obscure dialogue with the Supreme Being of his very self. From this place

6. Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, p. 219.

7. See Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, Chap. 10, which translates most of *R. al-anwār* and provides an illuminating commentary on it. *R. al-anwār* has also been translated by Harris as *Journey to the Lord of Power*, and more recently in the study by Radtke, *Neue kritische Gänge*.

8. See *Fut.* II, Chap. 167 (French translation by Ruspoli, *L’Alchimie du bonheur parfait*); and *Fut.* III, Chap. 367. See also Morris’ partial translation and commentary of this latter in Chodkiewicz, *Meccan Revelations*, as well as his excellent study, “The Spiritual Ascension”.

9. See Gril, *Le Dévoilement des effets*. See also Jaffray, *Unveiling the Effects*, forthcoming.

10. See Zabor’s Foreword (“Of the Tree and Its Four Birds”), p. 4.

of momentary equilibrium, the author ascends on a Night Journey<sup>11</sup> to the outer limits of creation. There, in a garden at the farthest boundary of the cosmos, he hears the discourse of a Tree and four Birds, whose charming tales and flowery speech mask the fact that they are none other than the awesome images of the Perfect Human Being and his four cosmic faculties: the First Intellect, the Universal Soul, Prime Matter, and Universal Body. Never before have these abstruse philosophical concepts been described in such an elliptical and suggestive way.

## Stylistic Considerations

The *Ittiḥād al-kawnī* is written in a combination of rhymed prose (*saj'*)<sup>12</sup> and poetry. As a youth Ibn Arabī seems to have been particularly taken with belles-lettres and his early works, despite their complex metaphysics, are remarkably lyrical. He never lost his love of either rhymed prose or poetry, as we see in many of his works. His *Dīwān* contains more than 800 verses and his *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*, a collection of sixty-one mystical love poems, is considered one of the finest collections of Arabic verse. His 560-chapter magnum opus, the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, begins with a lengthy proemium, embellished with flowing *saj'* and punctuated by many lines of verse. Nearly every chapter of this lengthy summa begins with poetry and many of the chapters contain additional lines of original verse.

Ibn 'Arabī's sheer love of the Arabic language can be felt on every page of his work, both poetry and prose. Among the various schools of thought concerning the origin of language, Ibn 'Arabī would have to be put in the category of those who favoured the divine institution

11. The Night Journey, or *Isrā'*, alluded to in Sura 17:1 of the Qur'an, was Muḥammad's celestial ride on the fantastic steed Burāq to the Sacred Precinct of Jerusalem. From there he ascended through the seven heavens to the Divine Presence. This ascent, known as his *mi'rāj*, is recounted in Sura 53:4–18.

12. One of the meanings of the word "*saj'*" is the sound a pigeon (or dove) makes – quite fitting for a treatise in which a ringdove plays a major role!

of language. Thus for him, to take a word back to its root meaning and then to extend it to its full semantic range is a process that reflects the nature of the primal divine speech as one/many: “God takes one of these words and makes it many, for He says, Our only word to a thing, when We desire it, is to say to it ‘Be!’ (*kun*) (Q. 16:40).”<sup>13</sup> On the one hand, as a Qu’ranic hermeneut, he insists on a sometimes shocking literalism that peels away incrustated layers of traditional interpretation. On the other hand, he allows for a word in the hands of a spiritually realized interpreter to bear any meaning as long as it lies within the range of understandable Arabic. God, he says, is fully aware of all the possible meanings of any given word, thus the gnostic interpreter is encouraged to open himself up to the full spectrum of interpretations, as long as there is evidence for them, based on the actual Qur’anic text.<sup>14</sup>

Drawing from nearly all the disciplines of his time – the traditional Islamic sciences, mysticism, theology, philosophy, and even alchemy and magic, Ibn ‘Arabi’s working vocabulary is astoundingly rich. Anchoring himself on the (primarily) tri-consonantal Arabic root, he leaves his imagination free to explore a complex world of interpenetrating meanings and associations attainable by acceptable morphological permutations.<sup>15</sup> Although this approach generally produces a scintillating multifaceted gem whose surfaces delight and whose deep hues attract, the reader is often at a loss when trying to fathom the seemingly endless potential meanings, both lexicographical and symbolic, of any given word or phrase. The end result

13. *Fut.* III. 283; trans. Chittick, *Self-Disclosure of God* (hereafter *SDG*), p. 196.

14. See *Fut.* II. 119, Chap. 73, Question 128. Note, however, that for Ibn ‘Arabi, interpretation is more often than not a dangerous enterprise in the hands of most people, so he frequently condemns the ignorant use of *ta’wīl*, esoteric interpretation, that strays far from the literal meaning of the text.

15. Not all critics have found the Shaykh’s ventures into etymology as fruitful as they might seem. Jaroslav Stetkevych takes him to task for relying too heavily on the etymological method for commenting on his own poems of the *Tarjumān*: “Words run the danger of appearing like denuded, uprooted stems, leaving the imagination at best in amazement” (*Zephyrs of Najd*, p. 94).

is a thoroughly over-determined text that loses much in the effort of its commentator to explain it.

Unlike the *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*, on which the author himself – for better or worse – wrote a mystical commentary, the *Ittiḥād al-kawwī* provides no such aid, and there are seemingly no commentaries by the Shaykh's followers to guide us.<sup>16</sup> Other writings by Ibn 'Arabī, especially his *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, are essential to ferreting out clues, but, as is the case of all his works in general, the Qur'an – and to a somewhat lesser extent, the Prophetic Traditions (*hadith*) – remains the touchstone.

Thus, in its brief compass, the *The Universal Tree and the Four Birds* manages both to engage the reader's imagination and to introduce him to some of the major themes of Ibn 'Arabī's cosmology and metaphysics in a highly compressed and ciphered form. For that reason, it is an excellent entrée to Ibn 'Arabī's writings as a whole.

The following translation is based on the edition of Denis Gril in *Annales Islamologiques* 17, 1981. A description of the manuscripts he used can be found in the Appendix (Edition of the Text). I have generally used Muḥammad Marmaduke Pickthall's translation, *The Glorious Qur'an*, for Qur'anic quotations, altering it when necessary to reflect Ibn 'Arabī's interpretation.

The annotated translation is followed by a commentary that, while necessarily far from being conclusive, aims to provide some hints in order to make the reader's voyage in the company of the Shaykh a bit less baffling.

16. See Yahia, *Histoire et classification*, p. 325.

# TREATISE ON UNIFICATION

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Blessings upon our master, Muḥammad, and upon his family and companions. This is a noble treatise in which I have consigned a tremendous discourse.

From my incompleteness to my completeness, and from my inclination to my equilibrium  
From my grandeur to my beauty, and from my splendour<sup>1</sup> to my majesty<sup>2</sup>  
From my scattering to my gathering, and from my exclusion to my reunion<sup>3</sup>  
From my baseness to my preciousness, and from my stones to my pearls  
From my rising to my setting, and from my days to my nights  
From my luminosity to my darkness, and from my guidance to my straying  
From my perigee to my apogee, and from the base of my lance to its tip<sup>4</sup>

1. The words *sanā'* (grandeur) and *sanā* (splendour) form a *tajnīs zā' id*, that is, they are homonymous save for the addition of the letter *hamza* to the first term.

2. Majesty and Beauty are two Divine Attributes that seemingly oppose one another much as the Kabbalistic sefirot Gevurah (Rigour) and Hesed (Mercy) do. See *Fut.* II. 133, 541, 542; IV. 251, 269.

3. The terms *ṣudūd* and *wiṣāl* suggest opposing gestures on the part of the Beloved, who at times obstructs union and at times allows it, in keeping with His Attributes of Majesty and Beauty.

4. Gril points out (*Arbre*, p.36, n.4), that *zijāj* and *'awālī*, terms pertaining to the measure of a lance, signal “descending and ascending tendencies along an axial line”.

*Treatise on Unification*

From my waxing to my waning, and from the void of my  
moon to its crescent  
From my pursuit to my flight, and from my steed to my  
gazelle<sup>5</sup>  
From my breeze to my boughs, and from my boughs to my  
shade  
From my shade to my bliss, and from my bliss to my wrath<sup>6</sup>  
From my wrath to my likeness, and from my likeness to my  
impossibility<sup>7</sup>  
From my impossibility to my validity, and from my validity  
to my deficiency.  
I am no one in existence but myself, so –  
Whom do I treat as foe and whom do I treat as friend?  
Whom do I call to aid my heart, pierced by a penetrating  
arrow,  
When the archer is my eyelid,<sup>8</sup> striking my heart without an  
arrow?<sup>9</sup>  
Why defend my station? It matters little to me; what do I  
care?  
For I am in love with none other than myself, and my very  
separation is my union.<sup>10</sup>  
Do not blame me for my passion. I am inconsolable over the  
one who has fled me.

5. There is a nice parallel drawn here between the hunter on his steed in pursuit of the fleeing gazelle and the poet, who is both hunter and gazelle.

6. For this translation of *miḥāl*, see Q.13:13: “He launcheth the thunderbolts and smiteth with them whom He will while they dispute concerning Allah, and He is mighty in wrath (*miḥāl*).”

7. *Muḥāl*, “impossibility”, nicely complements *miḥāl*, “wrath”, in the previous line.

8. *Jafn*, “eyelid”, can also mean “scabbard” or “sheath”. See Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Part 2, p. 434, s.v. *jafn*.

9. The glance of the beloved, who is none other than the poet himself, pierces his own heart and causes him to fall in love with himself.

10. Ibn ‘Arabī repeats these lines in *Fut.* II. 390.

In this book I never cease addressing myself about myself and returning in it to myself from myself.

From my heaven to my earth, from my exemplary practice to my religious duty,<sup>11</sup>

From my pact to my perjury,<sup>12</sup> from my length to my breadth.<sup>13</sup>

\* \* \*

From my sense to my intellect and from my intellect to my sense,

– From whence derive two strange sciences, without doubt or confusion.

From my soul to my spirit and from my spirit to my soul,

– By means of dissolution and coagulation, like the corpse in the tomb.<sup>14</sup>

From my intuition to my knowledge and from my knowledge to my intuition,

– Continuous is the light of knowledge; ephemeral the light of intuition.

From my sanctity to my impurity and from my impurity to my sanctity,

– Sanctity is in my present and impurity is in yesterday.

11. *Fard* and *sunna* are two terms drawn from Islamic law, the first having to do with required religious duties, the second with recommended ones, based on the Prophet Muḥammad's practice.

12. The Arabic pair *ibrām* and *naqd*, in addition to the concrete meaning of braiding and unbraiding a rope, suggests in legal terms the conclusion of a pact and its violation.

13. *Ṭūl* (length) and *ʿarḍ* (width) again suggest movement along an axis. Ibn ʿArabī was much influenced by al-Ḥallāj's esoteric interpretation of this pair of terms. See, for example, *Fut.* I. 169, Chap. 20, in which he attributes to al-Ḥallāj the notion that length has to do with action in the world of spirits and width has to do with action in the world of bodies.

14. These two terms, *tahīl* and *tarkīb*, are, in addition to their common meaning of “dissolving” and “composition”, an allusion to the alchemical process.



From my human-nature to my jinn-nature, and from my  
jinn-nature to my human-nature,  
– For my jinn-nature seeks to disquiet me and my human-  
nature seeks to set me at ease.

From the narrowness of my body to the vastness of my soul,  
And from the vastness of my soul to the prison of my body,  
– For my soul denies my intellect and my intellect my soul.

From my entity to my nonentity, and my nonentity to my  
entity,  
– Where I rejoice to find my composition and lament to find  
my dispersion.

From my likeness to my opposite and from my opposite to  
my likeness,  
– Were it not for Bāqil no light of excellence would shine in  
Quss.<sup>15</sup>

From my sun to my full moon and from my full moon<sup>16</sup> to  
my sun,  
– So that I might bring to light what lies hidden in night's core.

From Persian to Arab and from Arab to Persian,<sup>17</sup>  
– To explain the mysteries' roots and express the realities'  
enigmas.

From my root to my branch and from my branch to my root,

15. Quss and Bāqil are two semi-legendary pre-Islamic figures. Quss ibn Sā'ida, a *ḥanīf* of Najran, was an orator of the highest rank, and Muḥammad committed an excerpt of one of his sermons to memory (see Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, p.222). Bāqil, on the other hand, was a stutterer. The eloquent Quss and the tongue-tied Bāqil became proverbial (see Gril, *Arbre*, p.39, n.12).

16. The Perfect Human Being is sometimes compared to the full moon, which reflects the sun (the Real) most completely.

17. Although the terms '*urb* and '*furs* refer to the peoples designated by these names, there is another sense here of things that are clearly stated (from the root '*-R-B*) versus unintelligible (from another name for the Persians: *al-'ajam*). See Gril's note (*Arbre*, p.39, n.13): "These two terms refer to the state of non-manifestation or of revelation of divine mysteries to which two modes of expression correspond: allusion (*ishāra*) and clear expression ('*ibāra*). Ibn 'Arabī employs *mu'jam* (from '*ajamī*) and *mu'rab* (from '*arabī*) in the same sense."

*Treatise on Unification*

– For the sake of a life that was buried in death, animate or inanimate.  
Pay no heed, my soul, to the words of that jealous spite-monger,  
Or to the remarks of that ignorant presumer, O myrtle of my soul!  
How many ignoramuses have slandered us spiritual beings!  
While my revelation descends from the Spirit of inspiration and sanctity,  
He is like a man possessed by a demon whose touch makes him tremble.<sup>18</sup>  
On the matter of spiritual realization mankind does not cease to err,  
For God’s secret is poised between the shout and the whisper.

I have called this treatise “Cosmic unification in the presence of essential witnessing, through the assembling of the Human Tree and the Four Spiritual Birds.” I have dedicated it to Abū al-Fawāris Ṣakhr ibn Sinān, master of the reins of generosity and eloquence. I seek help from God. He is my support and my assistance, glory be to him!<sup>19</sup>

18. See Q.2:275: “Those who swallow usury cannot rise up save as he ariseth whom the devil hath prostrated by [his] touch.”

19. I have chosen to place all third-person singular pronouns in lower case in light of the ambiguous nature of the divine–human relationship in this treatise. There is additional justification for this in that Arabic pronouns, even when referring to the Divinity, are not indicated by capital letters.

## Dedication

To the third and the second – the master of the triads and dyads – the one alluded to in the doubled words of praise,<sup>20</sup> the evanescent conqueror who restrains his mount, the one who turns toward his shadow and bows his head in humility; the generous one whose generosity never runs dry, the perfect being whose existence is not known, the one who is sent from the two divine presences and the envoy of the two powers; he whose foundations are certain, whose possibility is discounted, and whose place is known; channel of subtle graces, reality of time, goal of faith, seat of Mercy, subtlety of the moment, sultan of men and jinn, Jānn son of jinn,<sup>21</sup> pupil of man’s eye, beneficent giver, Abū al-Fawāris Ṣakhr b. Sinān, master of the reins of generosity and eloquence. I ask God to give him the most perfect and elevated of ranks.

May he receive the scent of the most perfect and the most pure of greetings, as well as the mercy and benedictions of God, the most Exalted.

20. As Gril mentions, this refers to the opening sura of the Qur’an, the Fātiḥa, often called “the seven doubled” or “oft-repeated” since it contains seven lines and is recited repeatedly in every ritual prayer. According to Ibn ‘Arabī, the Perfect Human Being “opens” or initiates (*fataḥa*) existence just as the Fātiḥa opens the Qur’an. See Gril, *Arbre*, p. 10. The inner structure of the Fātiḥa is based on a division of the sura into two parts, one of which belongs to the Lord and one to the servant. At the same time, it is a synthesis of the entire Qur’an. These three aspects are echoed in the first verse of the Fātiḥa: “In the Name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate”. The Name Allah embraces all Divine Names and Attributes while All-Merciful and All-Compassionate express nuanced modalities of Mercy (*rahma*). See *Fut.* I. 102, Chap. 5.

21. Arabic: Jānn ibn Jānn. *Jānn* is a plural of *jinnī*, the shape-shifting, fiery spirits mentioned frequently in the Qur’an. It also can mean “father of the jinn” (see Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Part 2, p. 462, s.v. *jānn*) or “a small white serpent, a great serpent, or a species of serpent having black-bordered eyes, inclining to yellow, harmless, and abounding in houses” (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Part 2, p. 464, s.v. *jānn*). *Jānn* with this meaning is found twice in the Qur’an (Q.27:10; 28:31) in connection with Moses’ staff: “But when he saw it writhing like a *jānn*, he turned to flee headlong.”

## *Dedication*

I praise God who has “fashioned” me and “balanced” me,<sup>22</sup> and cast me in “the most beautiful of constitutions”.<sup>23</sup> For he made me know myself through myself and caused me to appear to myself, so that I became enamoured of only myself. Between my distance and my proximity I have become mad with love for myself, and I address myself alone.

Were I to see myself when I came to myself by myself,  
secretly or openly,  
And said, “Greetings” and answered, “At your service”,  
And if my turning were from me to me,  
My very “Here I am!” would annihilate me from myself,  
From my enemies and my trusty friends,  
From my threat [of punishment] and my surplus [grace],  
From my delight and my promises [of paradise],  
From my witnessing and my testimony.  
What wonderful favour would be mine through myself!  
Oh I! Return me by me to me until I see my stability.  
He returned me by me to me from me, and only my qualities  
subsisted in me.  
My palm grasped my stick, my staff smote my rock;  
The river of constellations flowed from it: Twelve heralds!<sup>24</sup>

22. See Q.82:7–8: “Who created thee, then fashioned, then proportioned thee, into whatsoever form He will, He casteth thee.”

23. Q.95:4: “Surely We created man in the most beautiful of constitutions.”

24. See Q.2:60: “And when Moses asked for water for his people, We said: Smite with thy staff the rock. And there gushed out therefrom twelve springs [so that] each tribe knew their drinking place.” See also Q.7:60: “We divided them into twelve tribes, nations; and We inspired Moses, when his people asked him for water, saying: Smite with thy staff the rock! And there gushed forth therefrom twelve springs, so that each tribe knew their drinking-place.” See also *Fut.* II. 441, where the rivers mentioned in the verse are placed within the three different Gardens of Paradise: four in the Garden of the Elites, four in the Garden of Inheritance, and four in the Garden of Deeds. The rivers are then assigned various types of sciences. The river of unbrackish water = the science of life; the river of wine = the science of states; the river of honey = the science of revelation; and the river of milk = the science of the secrets.

I said to myself: Oh I! Add constancy to my constancy!  
These are the sciences of life, scattering light from all that  
grows upon my being.  
Where in me does that subtle secret reside that God has  
placed within my essences?  
I was filled with what I sought from myself, but my desire for  
death remained.  
I took to complaining to myself of my passion so that my  
signs would appear  
Upon my eyelids from the essence of my creation.  
Then he lavished gathering on my scattering.  
My essence conjoined passionately with my essence,  
for my essence, my whole life long.  
I did not hold my harshness against myself,  
Or the length of my abandonment or my misdeeds –  
I am my beloved and my lover; I am my knight and  
my maiden.<sup>25</sup>

This book came to me from the city situated on the equator, assigned to the temperate clime,<sup>26</sup> fortified by [spiritual] powers: Mount Sinai, the Land Made Safe,<sup>27</sup> fashioned of water and clay,<sup>28</sup> uniting the “most beautiful of constitutions” with the “lowest of degrees”. This treatise informed me of what passed between myself and myself and what my existence contemplated of my existence.

25. Ibn ‘Arabī repeats these lines in *Fut.* II. 390.

26. Arabic: *mustawā*. Gril (*Arbre*, p. 44, n.29): “The line of the equator or the equinoxes cuts in its centre the horizontal plane of manifestation (*mustawā*) or the place of the divine establishment on the Throne (*al-istiwā* ‘*alā l-‘arsh*).”

27. Mecca. According to Gril (*Arbre*, p. 44, n.30), Mount Sinai = “the most beautiful of constitutions”, that is the Perfect Human Being who is created upon the divine form; the Land Made Safe = Mecca, at the heart of which is the cube of the Ka’ba, draped in its black covering. For dark things being ideal receptacles for divine lights and secrets, see our Commentary, p. 103. This passage relates particularly to Q. 95: 1–5: “By the fig, by the olive, by Mount Sinai, by this land made safe. Surely We created man of the most beautiful constitution. Then We reduced him to the lowest of the low.”

28. See Q.6:2; 15:26; 25:54.

When the signs of witnessing were lifted from me and the suffering of spiritual combat was removed, and harmony and succour began to flow through me, I mounted the Burāq<sup>29</sup> of my spiritual aspiration and departed from the cycle of this grief. I fell into the sea of hylc matter, and beheld the next world and the present one.<sup>30</sup> I said: “May he perish, whoever denies the gardens and the abode of life, the sporting boys and embracing houris,<sup>31</sup> and the union of bodies with bodies! He who sees the Preserver affirms the existence of the Speaker, for the line of equilibrium does not waver.” I understood here that those who deny the resurrection of the body will continue to waver and will never be rid of the noose of the four and the two.<sup>32</sup>

Then I shouted: “Oh alas!” and “Alas, my burning heart. I fled from the universe and here I am in it. Where is what I seek?”

I heard a voice coming from me – but neither inside me nor outside me – say: “Why do you demand a high station when you are on the road? What have you to do with the sittings [on the Throne]<sup>33</sup> What have you to do with the celestial couches and sublime litters?<sup>34</sup> What have you to do with the uppermost horizon?<sup>35</sup> What have you

29. Fabulous steed on which the Prophet rode on his Night Journey to the highest heavens. For the mystic, it is often linked to the initial stages of the Path, when spiritual concentration and correct intention are of particular importance.

30. The vision of heaven and hell takes place in the *Barzakh*. See Commentary, p. 79. Note that one variant reads: “I fell into the sea of destruction and beheld he who affirms and he who denies.”

31. For the beautiful women of Paradise, see Q. 44: 54; 52: 20; 55: 72; 56: 22.

32. Four and two are both even numbers that are polarized without resolution. Among the four things that have such an antagonistic relationship to one another are the four elements. Some of the Divine Names are also polarized, for example He who gives life and He who causes death, and are metaphorically engaged in “disputing with” one another. See, for example, *Fut.* I, Chap. 56; *Fut.* II, Chap. 73, question 86; *Fut.* II, Chap. 154; *Fut.* III, Chaps 306, 336.

33. Arabic plural: *istiwā’ūt*. See Q. 53: 6 and Gril’s note (*Arbre*, p. 46, n. 35): “*Istiwā’* is thus for the creature the equilibrium between contrary tendencies and the deliverance from existential limits.”

34. See Q. 55: 76: “Reclining on green cushions and fair carpets.”

35. See Q. 53: 7: “When he was on the uppermost horizon.”

to do with the screens of splendour? What have you to do with the radiant curtain? What have you to do with the Cloud?<sup>36</sup> What have you to do with the impenetrable Veil of Sublimity?<sup>37</sup> What have you to do with the absolute ipseities? What have you to do with the confirmed realities? What have you to do with the presence of allusions? What have you to do with the conversations? What have you to do with the nightly confidences? What have you to do with the sublime Tree? What have you to do with the branches of the world? What have you to do with the strange *'Anqā'*? What have you to do with the Ringdove? What have you to do with the Jet-Black Crow? What have you to do with the Royal Eagle? O you who are veiled, how can you ask 'where?' about the Essence, when you are in a station that does not admit lies!"

I answered: "Oh you who rebuke me, your words have wounded me.<sup>38</sup> Do you not know that you speak from your own station? You are in the presence of the Essence, divested of time and place, while I am in this dark<sup>39</sup> abyss,<sup>40</sup> in this black gloom and this fearful calamity,<sup>41</sup> in this mine of lies and doubt, this place of faults and defects. Does the prisoner of quantity and the one confined to wise maxims not cry out: Woe! If you extract me from the crashing waves and deliver me from the struggles of this gloomy night I will never more pronounce an adverb or stop at a particle."

Through his irresistible power he attracted me to himself and said to me: "You are vanquished, so seek help!"<sup>42</sup>

36. The Cloud is referred to in a hadith in which, before creation, God is said to have been in a Cloud above and below which there was no air.

37. See *Fut. I*, Chap. 73, question 153: "... it is blindness and perplexity." None can penetrate it and gain knowledge of God's Essence.

38. The root *K-L-M* has to do with both speech and wounding. For this latter, see Ibn 'Arabī's discussion of the Prophet Idrīs as the Healer of Wounds (*Muḍāwī al-kulūm*), *Fut. I*, Chap. 14.

39. The root *'-M-Y* conveys the sense of blindness and obscurity. The word *'immiyyā* also means "trial", "slaughter", and "conflict." See Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Part 5, p. 2162, s.v. *'immiyyā*.

40. *Lujja* can also mean "sea".

41. In Arabic, the expression uses two words from the same root: *dāhiya al-dahyā*.

## Dedication

I said: “I will save myself by your right hand, for both your hands are right hands.<sup>43</sup> For he is the powerful, the trustworthy, the faithful, and the true one who never lies.”

He said: “How can one mock me whose hope abides in me?”

I said: “Just like one who praises you bestows favour upon you.”

When he attracted me to himself I saw myself in another form than my previous one. I established myself there and took a firm position.

I said: “Oh I!”

He said: “I, welcome!”

I said: “No welcome, no greetings, no make yourself at ease!”

He said: “Oh eye-balm, what is disquieting you? Oh prisoner of creation, what is afflicting you?”

I answered: “You do not cease from veiling me from myself. Unveil me to myself so that I can know myself! Here is my tablet outspread, my banner is raised, my knowledge is delimited, my station is praised, my secret self<sup>44</sup> is witnessed, my heart<sup>45</sup> is found, the goal I seek is lost, and I, in my world, am what is sought.<sup>46</sup> I am called the word of existence.<sup>47</sup> If these entities were to become annihilated, if these creatures were to vanish, and if I were to retreat from the Throne of Mercy and the lordly name, I would be able to enjoy the divine regard and not be harmed by this favour.”<sup>48</sup>

42. See Q. 54: 10: “So he [Noah] cried unto his Lord, saying: I am vanquished, so give help!”

43. Reference to a hadith: “Both the hands of my Lord are blessed right hands.”

44. Arabic: *sirr*. Another meaning is the innermost part of the heart.

45. Arabic: *lubb*. The kernel, or inner part of the heart.

46. The text gives “*ma’ būd*” (worshipped), but I translate according to the variant. See the Universal Tree’s discourse, p. 37, n. 79, where the Tree describes himself as the “intended meaning”.

47. This refers to the Arabic word *Kun* (Be!), God’s Word that brought all creation into existence. The Universal Tree also gives this as one of his epithets. See p. 38, n. 80.

48. Gril (*Arbre*, p. 49, n. 49), points out the qualities that the Perfect Human Being must have in order to accomplish his spiritual goal. This paragraph contains references to the prophetic accoutrements: banner (*liwā’*) and praised station (*maqām mahmūd*).



He said: “The pens have been spent, the signs have gone away, the names have departed, the Throne has been veiled, the tablets have been put away, and the hearts and spirits have been lost. But these are necessary: the dark-green<sup>49</sup> gloom of the Garden, the sphere of water, the Supreme Pen, the first step, the hidden letter *nūn*,<sup>50</sup> and the guarded right hand.”<sup>51</sup>

When I heard that there was still a trace of createdness before me, I feared that it would cut me off from my cognizance. So I rose from that gloomy darkness, leaving the Burāq of my aspiration in it. I was transported to the thrones of subtle grace and the couches<sup>52</sup> of the celestial cushions,<sup>53</sup> until I reached the station of rejoicing where I set myself to oscillate like a hanging lamp.<sup>54</sup> I said: “What have I to do with the state of audition?”<sup>55</sup>

Someone said: “It is the beauty of the rhythm that has set you in motion.”

49. Possible reference to Q. 55: 64.

50. The letter *nūn* is found at the beginning of Sura 70 of the Qur’an, called “The Pen”.

51. The right hand moves the Supreme Pen.

52. Arabic: *muttākā’ūt*. See Q. 12: 31: “And when she [Zulaykha] heard of their sly talk, she sent for them and prepared for them a cushioned couch.”

53. Arabic: *rafārif*. See Q. 55: 76: “Reclining on green cushions (*rafraf*) and fair carpets.” Note also that *rafrafu* means to flutter like a bird, hence the *rafraf* was sometimes considered to be one of the vehicles Muḥammad was transported in on his celestial ascensions.

54. See also Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Risālat al-anwār*, p. 189; English trans. (Harris, *Lord of Power*) p. 47. See also notes from al-Jilī’s Commentary of *R. al-anwār*, entitled *al-Isfār ‘an risālat al-anwār*, translated in *Lord of Power*, p. 88, n. 21: “Know ... that this place is a stage demanding the greatest courage from seekers. For if they arrive in it and this oneness manifests itself to them ... they suppose that they have arrived in the Presence of the Unity and triumphed in the essential revelation. This is because of the divine bliss they find in this stage and the fact that any reality other than their own is absent from it.”

55. Arabic: *samā’*. Gril (*Arbre*, p. 50, n. 52) notes that audition for Ibn ‘Arabī consists of two sorts: one in which the hearer delights in the harmonies and rhythms of sensible melodies and songs; the other in which the hearer is absorbed in the supra-sensible realm and does not engage in movement at all. See *Fut.* I. 210–11 and *Fut.* II. 366–9.

## Dedication

I said: “I didn’t feel it.”

Someone said to me: “Be careful! For you are with yourself and not with him!”

I said: “Reality is beyond the rhythms of song. What it demands is extinction within extinction.”

Then a veil was lowered between my essence and its Essence and a state came between me and it.

Then he said to me: “Where are you, do you belong to the world or to me?”

I said: “[I am] between drudgery and desire. My goal is the blinding Cloud<sup>56</sup> while I am in the water. My spirit is in the heavens while my throne is in the primordial Dust and my family is in Sabā.<sup>57</sup> My kingdom is in the Throne and my authority in the two feet of equivalence.<sup>58</sup> My constellation is in the celestial sphere,<sup>59</sup> my veil is in the angel, my obscurity is in prime matter, and my trial is in this world.<sup>60</sup> My beginning is the first state<sup>61</sup> while my end is the next world. My intimacy is in the intimate friend Abraham; my conversations are in Moses, who spoke with God; my vicegerency is in Aaron, the sage; my elevation is in Idrīs; my form is in Joseph; my knowledge in its diversity and multiplicity is in Jesus; my body is in Adam, the father of mankind; my heart is from Abraham, the greatest of masters; and my physical frame is in the four elements.”<sup>62</sup>

56. A reference to a much-cited hadith. The Prophet Muḥammad was asked, “Where was our Lord before He created the creatures?” He answered: “He was in a Cloud, neither above which nor below which was there any air.” Ibn ‘Arabī explains that the Cloud is “the nearest of existent things to God” (*Fut.* II. 310). Within it the cosmos takes shape.

57. See Q. 27: 22; 34: 15.

58. The two feet of equivalence (*sawā’*) are found at the level of the Footstool (*al-kursī*). It is at this level that the cosmos is polarized into opposing Names and Attributes.

59. Arabic: *fulk* and *falak*, whose orthography is identical.

60. Literally, the first. This world, as contrasted to the “last” world mentioned in the following line.

61. See Q. 79: 10–11: “Shall we really be restored to our first state even after we are crumbled bones?”

62. The seven prophets enumerated in this series are the same ones encountered

He said: “That is your portion from my creation, but where is your portion from my essence?”

I said: “Oh you, who speak by allusion! Relationship exists either with something contrary or something similar, and when the similar is inherent [to this relationship] it is inherent essentially and necessarily.”

The one who speaks by allusion said: “I mean the relationship of the similar.”

I said: “My trace is yours and my attribute is yours. Summation is better than particularization<sup>63</sup> in this manner, for the sake of the Wayfarers.”

He said: “You’ve spoken correctly. But where is the relationship of the contrary, according to reality, not according to equivocation?”

I said: “In my non-existence is your existence and in my avarice is your generosity; in your speech is my muteness and in your discourse is my bell-peal. In my impossibility is your eternity and in my beginning is your precedence.”

He said: “I know now that you know. How excellent is your judgment!”

Then the Universal Tree of the garden, described as the Likeness,<sup>64</sup> was unveiled to me. I observed a tree “whose root is firm and

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by the Prophet Muḥammad during his *miʿrāj*. They are associated with seven planets and seven attributes: Saturn – Abraham – intimacy; Jupiter – Moses – face-to-face-conversation; Mars – Aaron – vicegerency; Sun – Idrīs – elevation; Venus – Joseph – form of beauty; Mercury – Jesus – diverse sciences; Moon – Adam – body.

It is odd that Abraham should be mentioned twice, occurring both at the head and the foot of the list. It may be, as Stephen Hirtenstein has suggested to me, that when the Real, in descending through the levels of existence, reaches the lowest heaven, that of the Moon, It is met by the heart of the Perfect Human Being, symbolized here by Abraham, the custodian of the heart. The heart, in turn, is the synthesizing spiritual organ in which the four elements combine. In the *miʿrāj* literature, Abraham’s place is the Visited House (*al-Bayt al-Maʿmūr*), the celestial equivalent of the Kaʿba, whose microcosmic equivalent is the heart of the believer. See Hirtenstein, “The Brotherhood of Milk”.

63. Arabic: *tafṣīl*. For these two opposing terms, described in terms of the Supreme Pen and the Preserved Tablet, see *Fut.* I. 295; *Fut.* II. 283.

whose branches are in the heavens.”<sup>65</sup> Its fruit is in the hand of the Deity, who sits upon the Throne. Among its branches sat the Crow and the strange ‘*Anqā*’, and in the shelter of its boughs perched the Eagle and the Ringdove. I greeted the Tree and it answered, greeting me even more finely. It said: “Listen, O wayfarer, O king.”

## *Discourse of the Universal Tree, Described as the Likeness*

I am the Universal Tree of synthesis and likeness. I have deep roots and my branches are lofty. The hand of the One<sup>66</sup> planted me in the garden of eternity, protected from the vicissitudes of time. I have spirit and body. My fruit is gathered with no hand touching it. These fruits contain more sciences and knowledge than sound intellects and subtle hearts can bear. My leaves are “raised couches”,<sup>67</sup> my fruits are not “out of reach nor yet forbidden”.<sup>68</sup> My centre is the desired goal. My branches perpetually draw nigh and come down.<sup>69</sup> Some come down to provide benefit and aid, while some draw nigh gradually to bestow favour. My constitution is like the celestial sphere in roundness and my branches are homes to the winged spirits. My flowers are like the stars whose course engenders the minerals, flowing in their bodies.

I am the Tree of light, speech, and the eye-balm of Moses,<sup>70</sup> upon whom be peace. Of directions mine is the most excellent right-

64. Arabic: *mithliyya*. The Perfect Human Being is often described as being the likeness (*mithl*), since he was created upon the form of the Real.

65. Q.14:24.

66. The Tree was planted by God’s one hand while Adam was created with God’s two hands.

67. Q.56:34.

68. Q.56:33.

69. See Q.53:8.

70. See Q.20:10; 27:7–8; 28:29–30. Moses was in search of fire for his family when he chanced upon the Burning Bush.

handed one, of places mine is the holy valley.<sup>71</sup> Of times mine is the instant. Of dwelling places, mine is the equator<sup>72</sup> and the temperate climes.<sup>73</sup> I have perpetuity, everlastingness, and felicity without misery. The fruits of my two gardens are near to hand<sup>74</sup> and my bough sways loftily as if intoxicated. It bestows grace and tenderness on all living creatures. My branches always offer frankincense to the spirits of the Guarded Tablet, and my foliage is a protection for them against the diurnal rays. My shade extends over those whom God envelops in his solicitude and my wings are spread over the people of sainthood. The spirit-winds blow on me from many different directions<sup>75</sup> and disarrange the order of my branches. From this entanglement one hears such melodious sounds. They enrapture the supreme intellects in the utmost heights and set them running on the course inscribed upon their scroll.

I am the music of wisdom that removes care through the beauty of its rhythmic song. I am the luminous light. Mine is the green carpet and the most resplendent round face. Assisted by the powers and ennobled by the one who is seated on the Throne, I have become like prime matter,<sup>76</sup> receiving all forms in the afterworld and the present one. I am not too narrow to bear anything! I am never apart from a faithful light that shines upon me; it consoles the one who leans upon me.

71. See Q. 20: 12; 79: 16. It was from the right side of the valley that the tree called to Moses (Q. 28: 30).

72. Arabic: *khaṭṭ al-istiwāʾ*. The word “*istiwāʾ*” is also associated with the All-Merciful’s sitting on the Throne (Q. 20: 5).

73. Arabic: *iʿtidāl al-arkān*. It can also mean “moderation of elements”. The sense here is that the Tree is positioned in the centre of creation, the pivot-point of existence.

74. See Q. 55: 54: “... the fruit of both gardens near to hand.” Note the alliteration here: *janā jannatayya*.

75. Arabic: *bi-ikhtilāfi taṣārīfihā*, literally, with the opposition of their vicissitudes. The sense here is of the opposing attributes of the Divine Names.

76. See Commentary, p. 96, for the relationship between the Perfect Human Being and Prime Matter.

I am the “spreading shade”,<sup>77</sup> the clustered plantains,<sup>78</sup> the intended meaning,<sup>79</sup> the word of existence,<sup>80</sup> the most noble of originated beings, the most transcendent of limited beings. My power is unsurpassable, my place most holy, my lamp most elevated.<sup>81</sup> I am the source from which issue the lights, the synthesis of the divine words,<sup>82</sup> the mine of secrets and wisdoms.

Mine are the vast earth and the heavens.  
In my centre are equivalence and straightness.<sup>83</sup>  
Mine are the firmly-rooted<sup>84</sup> majesty, the splendour,  
The secret of the worlds, and the exaltation.<sup>85</sup>  
When thoughts betake themselves to my essence  
The distance and the blinding Cloud bewilder them.

77. Q.56:30.

78. Q.56:29.

79. Arabic: *al-ma'na al-maqṣūd*. A possible reference to the offspring of dyadic oppositions, the “singularity” (*fardiyya*) that equilibrates contraries. Thus, for example, in the syllogism, it is the conclusion, the “third thing” that results from the “cosmic marriage” of two premises. In alchemy, it is the gold that is the product of the marriage of sulphur and mercury (see *Fut.* II. 270, Chap. 167). For more on the cosmic marriage, see Commentary, p. 103.

80. A reference to God’s cosmogonic word: Be!

81. A reference to Q.24:35–6.

82. The Prophet Muḥammad is called by this epithet.

83. Arabic: *al-sawā' wa-l-istiwā'*. These two terms suggest ontological levels as well as the ideas of straightness, likeness, and moderation. The first is often equated with the Footstool, the second with the Throne upon which the All-Merciful sits (see Q.20:5). As Gril remarks (*Arbre*, p. 56, n. 72), *sawā'* has been defined by Ibn 'Arabī in his *Iṣṭilāḥāt* as “the occultation of God in the creature and the creature in God.” See also *Fut.* II. 128, Chap. 73, which has the same definition, adding: “This is only in one who knows that he is a locus of manifestation for the Real.”

84. Arabic: *mu'aththal*. The word conveys the sense not only of being firmly rooted but also suggests permanence. The *athl* is a kind of tamarisk tree, mentioned in the Qur'an (Q.34:16) in connection with the gardens of Sabā (Sheba).

85. Also: ascension, as one ascends the throne.

No one in the universe knows my existence  
Save one undelimited by praise.<sup>86</sup>  
He disposes over and governs us.  
The choice is his<sup>87</sup> – he does what he wills.<sup>88</sup>

## *Discourse of the Ringdove*

When the Ringdove heard the Universal Tree's discourse and the eternal knowledge it brought forth, she uttered a cry in the garden of her sanctity, declaring about herself:

When God wished to bring my creation into existence, he made me contemplate my own essence; he encircled my neck with the ring of splendour and he gave me the "Lote Tree of the Limit"<sup>89</sup> as a dwelling place. He called to the Eagle, assuring him that he would be preserved from punishment.<sup>90</sup> The Eagle, who was in the courtyard<sup>91</sup> in front of his door, answered obediently: "Your call is heard." He told him: "Now you are in exile, even though you remain in the locus of my proximity. I am not of your kind, so you must feel lonely. But in you is eye-balm. Make her appear in reality. Enjoy"<sup>92</sup>

86. It is impossible to praise God as befits Him, by any quality or Name, since "every one of His names known to us is assumed by the servant as his own trait and by it he becomes qualified to the measure that is appropriate for him" (*Fut.* III. 148; trans. Chittick, *SPK*, p. 71). As Chittick adds, parenthetically, "Hence there is no name worthy of God's unique Essence."

87. Literally: "He is the Chooser" (*al-mukhtār*).

88. Q. 3:40; 14:27; 22:18: "Allah doth what He will." This line is repeated in *Fut.* IV. 198 at the end of a poem on the Lordly Presence.

89. See Q. 53:13–16.

90. A play on words here. "Punishment" (*iqāba*) is from the same root as "eagle" (*uqāb*).

91. Another play on words, in that *finā'* (courtyard) and *fanā'* (annihilation) are from the same root *F-N-Y*. The Supreme Pen is often said to have been singled out from among the Enraptured Angels, who are annihilated in the beauty and majesty of the Real. See, for example, *Fut.* I, Chap. 13; I. 295.

92. From the same root as "soul" (*nafs*) and "breath" (*nafās*).

her company and be cheered by her conversation, because familiarity with me is impossible, for I am ‘mighty in power’.”<sup>93</sup>

The Eagle asked: “How can something be manifested from me when my station is weakness and my power and might have no authority?”

He answered him: “Continue to call plaintively and that very one will appear before you, face to face. This is the second harmony and union through doubling.”

The Eagle obeyed. He doubled his plaint and I appeared; the Real called me and I hastened. The Eagle, however, had not understood what was happening, since he was preoccupied with the dower and my coming into existence from his loins. When he heard me respond to the divine call, he asked: “What is this that has appeared?”

As soon as he had seen me, he fell in love with me. The beauty God had surrounded<sup>94</sup> me with made him mad with love. Passion made him groan with pain: “I’m burning! I’m drowning!” He was like a nightingale, warbling his plaint,<sup>95</sup> trying to heal his condition, but the burning only became more extensive and solace more impossible. I would not permit him to kiss me, although his cure was in lying with me and embracing me. The veils of doubt were raised, and from behind the pavilions of the Unseen someone called: “What is wrong with you that you don’t regard her lineaments and the performance of her song? Why have you not looked upon her qualities and the marvels of her wisdom?”

He called me to him. “Here I am!” I responded. He commanded me to sit before him. He said: “I was so inflamed with ardour at your form that I overlooked the knowledge of your spiritual qualities.

93. Q.13:13. Note the paronomasia between *muḥāl* (impossible) and *miḥāl* (power).

94. Arabic: *ṭawwaqanī*. It could also mean “he embraced me”.

95. Arabic: *balbala bulbulun balbālahu*. A fine play of words here on words from the quadrilateral root *B-L-B-L*, meaning “nightingale” (*bulbul*), to disquiet (*balbala*), and anxiety (*balbāl*), which the author complements by ending the following line with *bāl* (mind /state).



The divine order has come that you make yourself known to me and that a ray of your sunlight shine for me.”

I said: “God has brought me into existence from you, face to face.<sup>96</sup> And he has made me manifest from your loins, following our inclination for one another. I emanate from your power and am manifested through your form. God has entrusted me with two realities and has given me two subtle threads:<sup>97</sup> one reality by which I know and one reality by which I bring into existence what I wish by means of its occasion.<sup>98</sup> One thread is attached to you; it is sent down to me when I desire you and draws me to your presence. The second joins me to him and is sent down to me when he calls me to him.”

When he heard that a subtle thread extended from me to him, and having verified the realities of love, the Eagle descended toward me along this thread. My essence mingled with his,<sup>99</sup> my qualities disappeared into his, and we were absorbed in the pleasures of union, cheered by the attainment of harmony. The spiritual wedding took place. The two waters flowed together in the womb of the moment, which received them in virtue of that divine wisdom that bestows grace to some and accords misery to others.<sup>100</sup> The lover recovered from his malady and found rest in a desire to answer the divine call. Wavering between two desires, he set in the two wests and rose in the two easts.<sup>101</sup>

96. Arabic: *'inda al-taqābul*. The sense is both of facing and opposing.

97. Arabic: *raqīqa*. See Commentary, pp. 85–6.

98. Arabic: *sabab*. This means the secondary cause, the primary cause being God who, in reality, is the only true cause.

99. See our Commentary, pp. 53–4, regarding the possibility of the intermingling (here *imtizāj*) of essences.

100. Arabic: *man ḥurima wa-man ruḥima*, literally “one who is refused and one who is accorded mercy”. Note the transposition of the letters *ḥā'* and *rā'* to give opposite meanings. As Gril notes (*Arbre*, p. 14), the Eagle represents the pole of severity and the Ringdove the pole of mercy, already inherent in the right and left branches of the Tree.

101. See Q. 55: 17: “Lord of the two easts, and Lord of the two wests.” The exoteric sense of “two easts” may refer to the extreme points where the sun rises in winter and summer, while the “two wests” may be the extreme points where the sun sets in

When he had recovered from his suffering and had departed to his abode, I found in myself a fullness that I had never before known. The paths and roads to him were blocked. The divine thread moved and I said: “Oh, my God. What is this that has befallen me?”

He said: “Exhale<sup>102</sup> when you mention me so that the word of my command may manifest from you.”

So I exhaled like one oppressed. And there was the ‘*Anqā*’, who filled my refuge with life. Ask the ‘*Anqā*’ about herself and she will tell you what God has deposited in her of his subtle graces and what he has given to her of knowledge.

I am the Dove of oft-repeated praises.<sup>103</sup>  
My dwelling is in the Garden of spiritual meanings.  
I am an essence in the entities. I have nothing but dualities.  
They call me “O second!” – but I am not second.  
Everything in creation ends up at my existence.  
I come after the one whose essence is too high for sight.  
My authority is useful to those most far and near.

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summer and winter. See Pickthall, *Glorious Qur’an*, p. 590, and Yūsuf ‘Ali, *Meaning of the Glorious Qur’an*, p. 1474, n. 5184. The latter adds “extreme” to qualify the points and says that they include all points in between. Hence God is everywhere. Additional esoteric meanings are given by Ibn ‘Arabī in another early work, the ‘*Anqā*’ *mughrib*. The east in general is associated with the world of manifestation, while the west is associated with the world of transcendence (see Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood*, p. 493). With respect to the two solar risings, he says: “Even as the sun necessarily changes its time of rising and shifts its place – similarly your own ‘Sun’ must rise upon the exterior of your physical constitution. And know that the sun, by an inherent [motion] is constantly circulating from the west to the east, even as it proceeds by [compulsion from] another from the east to the west, though sight is unable [to perceive the former movement] and the mind is staggered [by its computation]. But it must be that one day [the Sun rising from the West] will openly manifest its [inherent] movement [eastwards] and [freely] bestow its blessing.” (Trans. Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood*, p. 487.) Note: the sun’s rising in the west is a sign of the Mahdi’s coming.

102. This command suggests the Breath of the All-Merciful, which relieves the non-existent fixed entities (*al-a’yān al-thābita*) from the distress of their latent possibility by bringing them into existence.

103. Arabic: *mathānī*. See Commentary, pp. 87–8.

I have no likeness save one whose nature is similar to mine.  
Reproach me if you wish for what my tongue brings forth:  
Beautiful realities descend upon threads  
Toward the hearts that turn from the ornaments of the  
gardens  
In search of the one who transcends the vicissitudes of time.  
He is the singular, the exalted. No second shares his  
authority.  
He is the one who elected me;  
He is the one who selected me.  
He has placed me in equilibrium between pot and potter.<sup>104</sup>  
I banish every distant one and draw each near one closer.  
I befriend every friend and I afflict all the wretched.  
When I swoop down low, it is with the spirit of diffusing,  
And when I rise high above, bodily constitutions dissolve.  
It is I who confer sense and leave the inhabited places  
deserted.<sup>105</sup>

### *Discourse of the Royal Eagle*

When the Eagle heard what the Ringdove had mentioned and what she had related about the certain sciences, he said: “What she has affirmed is true. She has disclosed to you all the sciences she encompasses.”

I said to him: “Fly through the air of your eloquence and tell us clearly about your nature.” The throne of the Eagle shook. He flapped his wings joyfully and said:

104. Arabic: *bayna dann wa-dannān*. *Dann* is literally an earthen wine-jar with a tapered bottom. See Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Part 3, p.918, s.v. *dann*. Both the imagery and the Arabic root *D-N-N* suggest the soul’s intermediate station between God the Craftsman and His product here below, *al-dunyā*.

105. Arabic: *maghānī*. See Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Part 6, p.2304, s.v. *maghnan*. The sense here is of a place whose inhabitants were satisfied but then departed from or were removed from it.

*Discourse of the Royal Eagle*

I am the Eagle.

To me belong the most elevated station, beauty, and the  
most brilliant shining light.

I carry out everything according to its determined rank  
On this world's shores, but my power is more inaccessible.

I am his sublime effusion, the light of his existence.

I am he who summons existence and it obeys.

I am the one who never ceases to be the "handful" of my  
creator,<sup>106</sup>

The instrument of his openhandedness.

The realities hurry toward me to seek their fill.<sup>107</sup>

I give to and withhold from whomever I wish.

If I approach, the beauty of his being dazzles me.

If I retreat, his most magnificent splendour summons me.

Approach confers upon me a pleasing wisdom

But it rends the heart of the high one.

Distance invests me with an apportioned command

Whose light illuminates their borders.<sup>108</sup>

When I am distant I am the commander –

My misery is in my command and my felicity when it is  
removed.

The most pleasing of my moments is when I see the essences  
of the new moons arising.

I was still non-existent as an entity in one of the levels of creation when the divine solicitude came forth and made my existence the beginning. Having manifested himself to himself, my existence was prolonged in my contemplation. I received the supreme rank

106. See Q.39:67: "... the whole earth is His handful on the Day of Resurrection ..."

107. Arabic: *mā fī shirbihā*. *Shirb* is "a share, or portion that falls to one's lot of water." Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Part 4, p. 1527, s.v. *shirb*.

108. Arabic: *arjā'*. See Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Part 3, p. 1050, s.v. *rajan*. See also Q. 69: 17: "The angels will stand at its borders (*arjā' ihā*) and eight will uphold the Throne of their Lord that day, above them."

through the form,<sup>109</sup> and the most secret part of my being became his Throne.<sup>110</sup> The divine all-encompassing Name sat itself down upon me. His two viziers, He-who-gives and He-who-withholds, and his two chamberlains, He-who-confers-harm and He-who-confers-good, stood at his two stirrups.<sup>111</sup> When the sitting had taken place, and the other<sup>112</sup> appeared, and the names “mighty” and “sublime” were given to me, the courtyard became filled. Subsistence and annihilation<sup>113</sup> appeared; just allotment and effusive plenty followed one another in alternating course, and expansiveness and contraction were firmly established. By the kingdom the king was confirmed, by the message the angel became manifest, and by the stars the sphere was set in motion.

Then he called me to instruct me with the language of arbitration: “Look into your essence, bringing together all that delights you.” When I began to look and could distinguish between those that required precedence and those that required contemplation, I laid down the different laws and divided the lights between merits and graces.<sup>114</sup> I said to those enraptured spirits whom I surveyed: “Adhere to the enrapturing presence!” And I said to the subjected spirits whom I surveyed: “Adhere to the subjecting stations!” And I said to the governing spirits whom I surveyed: “Adhere to the governed bodies!” Each of these departed to seek its waystation in order to contemplate there the one who had caused them to descend. I had already seen the Ringdove, pregnant with the strange *ʿAnqāʿ*, but in dividing up the waystations, I had neglected the one who shares my waystation.<sup>115</sup>

109. There is a near homophony between *sūra* (rank) and *ṣūra* (form). This is particularly fitting, as it is the divine form that gives the Intellect its high rank.

110. A play on words between *sarīr* (throne) and *sarīra* (secret).

111. A reference to the Footstool at which level polarities enter creation.

112. Arabic: *al-siwā*. What is other than the Real, that is, creation.

113. Note the near *tajnīs* between *fināʿ* (courtyard) and *fanāʿ* (annihilation).

114. Arabic: *al-makāsib* (what is earned) and *al-mawāhib* (what is bestowed). For this distinction and its relation to prophecy, see, for example, *Fut.* II, beginning of Chap. 73.

115. Arabic: *al-munāzil*. Translation unsure. I follow Gril’s translation (*Arbre*,

I am the knowledge of creation concealed in the cloak of the divine inviolability. A band of philosophers invented lies<sup>116</sup> about me and a gang of noblemen tried to capture me. They set up the fowler's net of their thoughts to hunt me and used against me the very means that I myself had provided them with in order to gain from my toil. And when their spiritual aspirations were sufficient to grasp me in their fowler's net of thought, there fell into it an eagle with my form from the country of illusion. They said, "This is the clear truth!" Would that they knew that the truth is not clear to them and never will be. Knowledge of me and my existence depends upon what is granted as a gift or recompensed for merit.<sup>117</sup> Satan incited them to doubt and they imagined that they had alighted at the summit when their station was the low plains. They mistook anteriority for eternity,<sup>118</sup> declaring me eternal and that my existence did not stem from non-existence.<sup>119</sup> I abandoned them to their confusion "like meat on the butcher's block." Those who commit an injustice to the divine command must be oppressed! I am free from what they attribute to me, and an unbeliever<sup>120</sup> in what they set up. For God, may his glory be magnified, was from all eternity while I was under the decree of non-existence. Then he brought me into existence from non-existence through a pre-eternal precedence, and my essence became manifest. He illuminated my existence with his knowledge and entrusted me with poverty and weakness, turning me away from might

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p. 64). The form is masculine, but from the narrative of the Ringdove, we may assume she is the one who has been overlooked.

116. Arabic: *iftarā*. In the Qur'an, this word is used for the attribution of an associate with God. See Q. 4:51: "And whoso attributeth a copartner to God hath devised an enormous sin."

117. Again, a reference to earning and divine bestowal. The Shaykh is suggesting here that the philosophers will never discover the truth about the First Intellect; such knowledge belongs only to the Messengers, Prophets, and Friends of God.

118. Note the play on words between *qidam* (eternity) and *qadam* (anteriority), which have the same orthography.

119. In other words, the philosophers mistook the First Intellect for the Real.

120. Arabic: *kāfir*: Gril's translation (*Arbre*, p.65), "I disavow the worship that they offer me", though less literal, conveys the sense of the phrase very well.

and glory. I am the humble one who has no glory and the powerful one who does not cease to be weak.<sup>121</sup>

## *Discourse of the Strange 'Anqā'*

When the Eagle completed his discourse and finished explaining his station, the 'Anqā' began to speak clearly about her existence and spoke strangely<sup>122</sup> about the high rank of her limit.<sup>123</sup>

She said: I am the strange 'Anqā'. My dwelling is forever in the west,<sup>124</sup> in the middle station, on the banks of the surrounding sea.<sup>125</sup> Glory embraces me on two sides without my entity ever becoming manifest at all.

I am the one who has no existent entity, the one who lacks no  
property,  
Strange 'Anqā', they've come to call me.  
Although the door of my existence is sealed  
The Merciful has not made my mention in vain  
But it has to do with a meaning whose secret must be sought –  
It is that I am the one who bestows gnosis to their innermost  
beings.  
Our straight path stretches on, and the wayfarers are each at  
the levels of their light:  
The greatest one is he whose light is sheer detachment.

121. Ibn 'Arabī plays nicely on the rhyming sounds of these two opposing verbs: *ya' izz* (to be powerful) and *ya' jiz* (to be weak).

122. Arabic: *tu'ribu* (to speak clearly) and *tughribu* (to say strange things). This paronomasia is particularly elegant in that the letters 'ayn and ghayn are distinguished only by the dot above the latter.

123. Arabic: *ḥadd*. Could also mean "definition".

124. Arabic: *maghrib*. Note the use of words based on the root *GH-R-B*: meaning strangeness, west, exile.

125. Arabic: *al-baḥr al-muḥīṭ*. This is also the name for the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. For an esoteric meaning of this "surrounding sea", see *Fut.* II. 40, where it is equated with knowledge of union and separation.

## *Discourse of the Jet-Black Crow*

Limits<sup>126</sup> derive from me, and upon me existence depends. One hears mention of me but I am invisible, and the report of me is not one that can be declared a lie. I am the strange one, the *'Anqā'*. My mother is the Ringdove and my father the Royal Eagle. My son is the Jet-Black Crow. I am the element of light and darkness, the place of trust and suspicion. I do not receive the unqualified light, for it is my contrary. I am unacquainted with knowledge, for I cannot produce or reproduce.<sup>127</sup> Everyone who praises me is far from understanding me, subdued by the sultan of imagination. I have no might in which to seek protection. The bodily frames of superior and inferior creation trace their origin to me. I am the reality that has no character, because of the vastness that I have. I clothe every condition with either happiness or misery. I am capable of bearing any form. I have no rank in any known form. But I have received the gift of transmitting the sciences although I am no knower, and of bestowing determinations although I am no judge. Nothing can be manifested that I am not in, but no seeker can attain it as something grasped or perceived in its entirety. I am of very great value in the eyes of those who realize the truth. I wander through the gathering of those with bowed heads.<sup>128</sup> Thus I have explained my state and have made manifest what is true and what is impossible about myself.

## *Discourse of the Jet-Black Crow*

The Crow arose and said: I am the body of lights and the bearer of the receptacle of secrets,<sup>129</sup> the receptacle of quality and quantity, and the cause of joy and sorrow. I am the leader who is led. Sense and sensible are mine and through me appear the traces [of existence].

126. As Gril says (*Arbre*, p. 67, n. 92): "Limits are what defines a being; they are of three kinds: essential, descriptive, and linguistic." See *Fut.* II. 63.

127. See Q. 85: 13: "It is He who produceth, then reproduceth."

128. Arabic: *majlis al-muṭṭriqīn*, from the fourth form of the root *Ṭ-R-Q*. This root is also associated with the word *ṭarīqa*, meaning "the Sufi Path".

129. See *Fut.* II. 647.



From me arises the world of material bodies. I am the source of figures, and likenesses are struck according to the levels of my form. I am the lamp<sup>130</sup> and the winds. I am the chain against the pebbles<sup>131</sup> and the wing. I am the sea whose waves constantly strike one another.<sup>132</sup> I am, of the numbers, the singular among counted numbers and its pair. My width is the abode of the charismatic gifts of his friends and my depth is the abode of abuse to his enemies. My height has not ceased to be face to face with his essence, through eternity without beginning and end, ever since I was brought into existence. I am the alembic of wisdom, the music of melody, and the one who brings together the realities of the words. In directing oneself toward me, one reaches the limit,<sup>133</sup> and those who are endowed with intelligence<sup>134</sup> rely upon me. I am the most precious gift<sup>135</sup> that has been bestowed, the final goal that has no end.<sup>136</sup> For my sake some are accepted and others rejected. I am those who are rolled and held in his right hand, and I am enclosed in the grasp of the evident truth.<sup>137</sup> The Real summoned me into his presence and I came. He called me to his knowledge and I readily responded. I am the form of the celestial sphere and the place of royalty. Upon me he established the Throne and I was given the name “place where it was established”.<sup>138</sup> I am the subsequent<sup>139</sup> who is not overtaken, just

130. See Q.24:35: “The similitude of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp.”

131. According to a prophetic report, this was one of the forms in which the revelation came to the Prophet.

132. See Q.24:40: “Or as a darkness on a vast, abysmal sea. There covereth him a wave, above which is a cloud. Layer upon layer of darkness.”

133. Arabic: *ilayya al-munahhī*. *Munahhī* can also mean “one who forbids or warns”. I follow Gril’s translation here, as it seems to make more sense. The Arabic root *N-H-W/Y* has the meanings: to forbid, restrain, reach (a limit).

134. See Q.20:54 and 20:128: “Herein verily are signs for men of thought.”

135. Arabic: *luhā*. The root of this word generally has to do with entertainment of a light sort; however, one of the manuscripts consulted by Gril glosses it as “gift”.

136. Although matter is the limit of manifestation, the individuals that come to be in embodied form are endless.

137. See Q.39:67: “... when the whole earth is His handful on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens are rolled in His right hand.”

138. See Gril, *Arbre*, p. 44, nn.29 and 30 for the connection between the equatorial

as the Eagle is the precedent<sup>140</sup> who is not outstripped. He is the first and I am the last. His is the non-manifest dimension and mine is the manifest one. Existence has been divided between myself and him. I manifest his might and his creation, while his judgement depends on me. My knowledge flows in him, and his knowledge flows in me. When its bestower offers it, it is for our benefit, and when I acquire it, he thanks me for increasing it even more.

Some alleging to be endowed with unshakeable reason made their claim and imposed their dubious judgement. They showered me with unseemly derision and divested me of the robe of seemly praise. But the evil consequences of their actions will turn against them and their mocking will encompass them when, in the depths [of my hell]<sup>141</sup> they will call for help and be answered: “Begone therein and speak not unto me”,<sup>142</sup> while in the breadth [of my paradise]<sup>143</sup> those who praised me well will make merry with their spouses “in a garden made joyful”.<sup>144</sup> The Law has already praised me so what do I care? The received text has made clear my rank, so why say more?

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line, the place of the Throne’s establishment, and the “dark bodies” that are the most secure places to hide the divine lights.

139. Arabic: *al-lāḥiq*. It is interesting to note that both this word and its pair here, *al-sābiq* (see below), were used by the Ismā‘īlīs to designate levels in their hierarchical structure, be it human – as is the case with *lāḥiq*, which signifies the Hidden Imam’s deputy during his occultation – or cosmic, as is the case with *sābiq*, described below.

140. Arabic: *al-sābiq*. The Ismā‘īlīs, drawing on Neoplatonic emanationist doctrines, associated this word with the First Intellect. See Corbin, *Cyclical Time*, pp.87–9. While there is ample proof in Ibn ‘Arabi’s writings to refute any Shi‘ite proclivities on his part, the linking of these two terms does suggest that there is a stronger connection between Intellect and Body than is immediately perceptible. For a refutation of Ibn ‘Arabi’s supposed Shi‘ism, see al-Ghorab, “Muhyiddin Ibn al-‘Arabi Amidst Religions and Schools of Thought”, pp.202–6.

141. Literally: “in my depth”.

142. Q.23:108.

143. Literally: “in my breadth”.

144. Q.30:15; 43:70.

I am, with respect to my Lord, a wisdom for one who sees me,  
For I am the secret whose nature was fashioned without  
fingertips.

My creator ordered everything within himself when he  
constructed me,

For I am a rock, and from me the spiritual meanings flash.<sup>145</sup>

Together with the superior beings, [we are] like contesting  
racehorses,

Yet I am one who conceals himself modestly from view.

I'm the one who answered my Lord obediently when he  
summoned me.

He who, because of time's vicissitudes, sees my existence

Like the heart of Moses' mother, empty of spiritual  
meanings,<sup>146</sup>

Is completely void<sup>147</sup> of the verities of explanation.

I am the source of habitations and the foundation of songs.

I am the secret of an Imam, a noble one, high in place,

Whose knowledge is the most perfect knowledge

And whose rank is the greatest rank.

He fell in love with me when he saw me in the enclosures of  
the gardens.

I do not name him for I fear the spearhead's<sup>148</sup> sharpness.<sup>149</sup>

145. See Q.2:60; 7:160. See Commentary, p. 72, for this line's connection to the dedicatee of the treatise.

146. See Q.28:10: "And the heart of the mother of Moses became void, and she would have betrayed him if We had not fortified her heart, that she might be of the believers."

147. Arabic: *al-khalī*. See Commentary, p. 101, for a discussion of this term.

148. Arabic: *ḥadd al-sinān*. A pun on the name of the dedicatee, found in the following line. The Arabic root *H-D-D* conveys a number of senses, including: sharpness, definition, limit, impediment, and legal punishment.

149. It is possible that Ibn 'Arabī is also alluding to a tradition of the Prophet: "No verse of the Qur'an has come down without it having an exoteric (*ẓāhir*) interpretation, an esoteric (*bāṭin*) interpretation, a limit (*ḥadd*) and a place of ascension (*muṭṭala'*)." If limit – the *barzakh* between the exoteric and esoteric interpretation – belongs to Sinān, the place of ascent where one solves the riddle, belongs to Ṣakhr,

*Discourse of the Jet-Black Crow*

But he who understands my riddle is Ṣakhr ibn Sinān –  
The one who possesses the most generous hand  
And the one who is most steadfast in combat.  
Mother, Grandmother, Grandfather, and I:  
The spiritual meanings of our existence derive from God,  
timelessly,  
Like what becomes visible to the eye in the air brightened  
with lightning.<sup>150</sup>

Oh Ṣakhr ibn Sinān, I have explained to you some of the stations of the sources of the creatures: the universal human being, the first intellect, the unique soul, prime matter, and universal body. Investigate them like an intelligent man who seeks the salvation of his soul.

Peace be upon its author and upon us!

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the rock from which one gains a perspective of the totality. I thank Stephen Hirstenstein for his suggestive comments on this puzzling verse. See also Chap. 25 of the *Futūḥāt*.

150. This line can also be found in '*Uqlat al-mustawfiz*, p. 56, where it begins the chapter on the Throne of the All-Merciful, which brings together the “four existing things”: Nature, Dust, [Universal] Body, and Sphere.



# COMMENTARY

## *The Title*

The full title of the treatise is long and complex: *Cosmic Unification in the Presence of the Eye-witnessing through the Assembly of the Human Tree and the Four Spiritual Birds* (*al-Ittiḥād al-kawnī fī ḥaḍrat al-ish-hād al-‘aynī bi-maḥḍūr al-shajara al-insāniyya wa-l-ṭuyūr al-arba‘a al-ruḥāniyya*). As is generally the case with Ibn ‘Arabī’s titles, each word is carefully chosen for its semantic as well as symbolic resonance. While we will discuss the “human tree” and the “four spiritual birds” later, let us briefly look at the other key terms in the title.

### *Ittiḥād*

*Ittiḥād* is the verbal noun deriving from the eighth form of the consonantal root *W-H-D*, which conveys the basic meaning of “one, unity, uniqueness”. The eighth form of the verb primarily gives the sense of reflexivity and reciprocity. Thus the first-form verb *waḥada*, meaning “to be one, unique”, becomes in the eighth form *ittahada*, meaning “to unite”, to make oneself and/or others one. As Ibn ‘Arabī defines it, “*Ittiḥād* is that two essences become one, whether servant or Lord”,<sup>1</sup> thus the term suggests a mystical union in which one essence is subsumed or annihilated in the other. But, as Souad al-Ḥakīm has written, “the *ittiḥād* in which two essences become one is impossible according to Ibn ‘Arabī”.<sup>2</sup> As the Shaykh tells us, “There can be no *ittiḥād* other than with respect to number and nature.”<sup>3</sup>

1. *Fut.* II. 130, Chap. 73, Question 153.

2. Al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Mu‘jam al-ṣūfī*, p. 1180.

3. *Fut.* II. 130, Chap. 73, Question 153. In the case of numbers, one remains the essence of every number; two, although it has a different name, is nothing but one

The doctrine of *ittiḥād* is censured by both the exoteric scholars, such as the theologians and philosophers, and by the mystics, albeit in a qualified sense. Not only can there be no intermingling of essences, either as an apotheosis of the human being or as an incarnation (*ḥulūl*) of the divine in human form, but the entire notion of *ittiḥād* rests on the false assumption that there is anything at all other than the One Essence.<sup>4</sup> *Ittiḥād* thus, from one point of view, is a meaningless concept.

This, however, is not the full story, for there are situations in which, Ibn ‘Arabī claims, the declaration of *ittiḥād* is not only permissible but necessary for the mystic to profess. In the highly allusive Chapter 399 of the *Futūḥāt*, Ibn ‘Arabī discusses *ittiḥād* at length. The paradoxes of this notion are evident in the chapter’s title: On Knowledge of the Mutual Waystation of “He who enters it, I smote his neck [that is, behead him], and no one remains who does not enter it.” It is inevitable, in other words, that the creature will profess *ittiḥād*, whether he realizes the true situation or is completely unaware. Everyone and everything attributes his own action to himself, everything says “I”. God Himself ascribes action to His creatures, as Ibn ‘Arabī points out in a series of quotations from the Qur’an. Hence, although the gnostic knows that God is the only agent, there are times when his spiritual state or even a command from God allows him to attribute God’s action to himself, as in the case of spiritual annihilation (*fanā’*) where God, as a result of the servant’s drawing near to Him through the supererogatory acts of worship (*nawāfil*), “becomes”, in the *ḥadīth qudsī*,<sup>5</sup> the servant’s

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plus one. The name “one” has disappeared. In the case of nature, various names designate the many forms of existing things, but the essence remains one, hidden.

4. See also *Fut.* IV. 71, Chap. 456, and Gril’s translation (*Arbre*, p. 19) concerning the identity of the Voice that addressed Moses from the Burning Bush (here simply the Tree). The upshot is that the Real is both the Speaker in the form of the Tree and the Hearer in the form of Moses, without the Tree ceasing to be a tree or Moses ceasing to be Moses. There is no *ḥulūl* (dissolving of essences) because, as we have seen above, a thing cannot unite with its own essence.

5. A *ḥadīth qudsī* is the extra-Qur’anic speech of God, transmitted on the authority of the Prophet Muḥammad.

hearing, seeing, speaking, and all his faculties.<sup>6</sup> When the servant enters the station of *ittiḥād*, God “smote[s] his neck”; that is, He severs the connection between the absolute and the relative with respect to the servant’s perception of his ontological condition, and only Oneness (*aḥadiyya*) remains, a Oneness that belongs to the Real alone, never to the servant.<sup>7</sup> This, of course, is the reason for the “blasphemous” and unruly utterances of such well-known Sufis as al-Ḥallāj, who said: “I am the Real”, and Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, who said: “Glory be to me.”

Another instance of the permissibility of declaring *ittiḥād* is discussed briefly by Ibn ‘Arabī in the *Futūḥāt*’s Chapter on Love,<sup>8</sup> with reference to the *ḥadīth qudsī* mentioned above, as well as the Qur’anic dictum to the Prophet: “You did not throw when you threw but God threw” (Q. 8: 17). Further on in the chapter,<sup>9</sup> he describes the goal of spiritual love as *ittiḥād*, in which the essence of the Beloved becomes the essence of the lover, a statement that would seem to contradict his statements elsewhere. He relates this to the infamous heresy of incarnation (*ḥulūl*), but says that those who proclaim it are unaware of the real meaning of this unification.

6. See Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Mishkāt al-anwār*, trans. Hirtenstein and Notcutt as *Divine Sayings*, hadith 91, p. 88 (English), p. 51 (Arabic) for the complete text. Note that, for Ibn ‘Arabī, only the human being, fashioned upon the divine Form, can participate in God’s creativity by engaging in supererogatory acts of worship; angels, on the other hand, have a certain one-dimensionality in that they can only engage in what is obligatory. See *Fut.* IV. 30, Chap. 421 (trans. Chittick, *SPK*, p. 328): “The angels are servants by compulsion, while we are servants by compulsion through our obligatory works and by free choice through our supererogatory works.”

7. See *Fut.* II. 31, Chap. 73: “If it were not for the dependence of the essence of the servant, the authority of these two Names [the First and the Last] would not become manifest, since the essence (*‘ayn*) [with respect to God] is one and it is not united (*muttaḥida*), while with respect to the servant it is united, not one. Oneness (*aḥadiyya*) belongs to God while unification (*ittiḥād*), not Oneness, belongs to the servant. For the servant cannot be conceived as other than [dependent] on someone else, not on himself, so he has no whiff of Oneness ever. One can conceive Oneness of the Real and one can conceive relation (*idāfa*) of Him, because everything belongs to Him, or rather He is the essence (*‘ayn*) of all.”

8. *Fut.* II. 322, Chap. 178.

9. See *Fut.* II. 334.



The sense of unification between the lover and the Beloved is later explained in terms of natural love, in which two lovers exchange breath, that is, spirits, and saliva in intimate embrace. “When this breath becomes the spirit in the one toward which it is transferred and the breath of the other becomes the spirit of the first, it is interpreted as unification (*ittiḥād*) ... So it is correct to say [as the poet al-Ḥallāj has said]:

I am the One I love, and the One I love is me!”<sup>10</sup>

A final example, taken from this same chapter on love, shows the bewilderment of the lover who does not understand the situation as it really is. Taken from an enumeration of various essential characteristics of the lover, the passage in question has to do with the lover whose essential characteristic is that he is “annoyed (*mutabarrim*) by the company of what comes between him and meeting his Beloved.”<sup>11</sup> As Ibn ‘Arabī explains, nothing comes between the gnostic and meeting God but non-existence, which is nothing. Existence is nothing other than God. God Himself is the Contemplator in every eye that sees Him. The only veil between lover and Beloved is creation, and the lover is unable to remove creation for it is his very essence. As Ibn ‘Arabī explains, “A thing cannot remove itself from itself, and his self is what comes between him and meeting his Beloved ... so he remains ever annoyed.”<sup>12</sup> He imagines that when he is separated from his body, he will be separated from composition and he will become something simple in which there is no duality. He multiplies his own oneness (*aḥadiyya*) with the Oneness of the Real, and this constitutes the meeting. But multiplication results only in him, not in Him. And this makes the lover even more annoyed. On the other hand, the lover who is a knower of God does not become

10. *Fut.* II. 334, Chap. 178. See also *Fut.* II. 390 where Ibn ‘Arabī makes an explicit connection between this line of al-Ḥallāj’s poem and two lines from the Shaykh’s own *Risālat al-ittiḥād*. See our translation, p. 24, n. 10 and p. 30, n. 24.

11. *Fut.* II. 351, Chap. 178.

12. *Ibid.*

annoyed because “he knows the affair as it really is, as we have mentioned in the *Treatise on Unification (Risālat al-ittiḥād)*.”<sup>13</sup>

And how is the affair as it really is? In one sense, one can explain it only by paradox: there is / is not unification, depending on one’s particular understanding of the word. Ibn ‘Arabī himself explains it in terms of the Prophet’s supererogatory supplication that God make him into a light since God has said: “God is the light of the heavens and the earth” (Q.24:35). The Shaykh explains: “The glories [of God’s Face] are lights, and light is not burned away by light. Rather, it is included within it, that is, it coheres with it because it is of the same genus. This is conjunction and unification (*ittiḥād*).”<sup>14</sup> The Muḥammadan light is thus consubstantial with the Divine Light. The servant, who, in himself, has only possible existence, is by his very nature something added (*nafl*), “light upon light” (Q.24:34) as it were: “You are fundamentally extra with respect to existence, since God was when you were not, and then you were.”<sup>15</sup>

Thus *ittiḥād* can only occur when the servant realizes his superfluous or supererogatory nature vis-à-vis the Real. By engaging in the supererogatory, an act that engages his will and creativity, he assumes the attributes of the Real, whereby the Real becomes his hearing, seeing, and all his faculties. It is only in this way that the Real becomes manifest in the form of the servant and the servant becomes manifest in the form of the Real. Then there is an interpenetration of attributes rather than the disappearance of one essence into another.<sup>16</sup>

It is, as Ibn ‘Arabī remarks in his chapter on Abraham in the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, like the dying of a garment, where colour penetrates the cloth.<sup>17</sup> This interpenetration of attributes is known as *khulla*, or intimate friendship, from which the designation of Abraham as

13. Ibid. This appears to be the only explicit mention of the *R. al-ittiḥād* in the *Futūḥāt*.

14. *Fut.* II. 184, Chap. 101. See also *Fut.* II. 126.

15. *Fut.* IV. 449, Chap. 560.

16. *K. al-masā’il*, pp. 164–5 (*mas’āla* 41).

17. *Fuṣūṣ*, pp. 80–1; Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, pp. 91–2.

*al-Khalīl* derives. As the Shaykh explains, “*Khulla* can only be between God and His servant. It is the station of unification (*ittiḥād*).”<sup>18</sup> It is a reciprocal intimacy, then, in which the loving servant plays both an active and a passive part, following the two-part structure of the aforementioned *ḥadīth qudsī*.<sup>19</sup> In the first stage: “My servant does not approach me by something I love more than by those acts which I have prescribed.” In this first movement, one involving the performance of obligatory acts, Abraham “penetrates and encompasses”<sup>20</sup> the Divine Attributes. This is followed by a second stage in which: “He does not cease approaching Me with supererogatory acts until I love him.” This love consists of the “penetration” by the Divine Spirit, which courses through every organ and limb of the servant’s body: “And when I love him, I am his ear with which he hears, his eye with which he sees, his hand with which he grasps.”<sup>21</sup>

*Ittiḥād*, then, is the state in which God is “nearer” to His servant “than the jugular vein” (Q. 50: 16), but neither Lord nor vassal disappears. As Ibn ‘Arabī concludes, in the chapter on Abraham in the *Fuṣūṣ*:

We are His as has been shown,  
 As also we belong to ourselves.  
 ... I have two aspects, He and I,  
 But He is not I in my I.  
 In me is His place of manifestation,  
 And we are for Him as vessels.<sup>22</sup>

18. *Fut.* II. 22, Chap. 73.

19. See above, pp. 56–7.

20. *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 80.

21. In *Fut.* IV. 24, Chap. 417, Ibn ‘Arabī notes that: “obligatory acts (*farā’id*) are higher and more loved by God than supererogatory ones (*nawāfil*). ... God the Most High said: [My servant] does not draw near to Me by anything I love more than by that which I have prescribed for him.” He then quotes the rest of the *ḥadīth qudsī*, and remarks: “This is the result of supererogatory acts, so what do you think about the result of obligatory acts by which the servant will be God’s hearing and sight?!” See also *Fut.* II. 173, IV. 30, 449–50.

22. Trans. Austin (slightly modified), *Bezels of Wisdom*, p. 95.

### *Kawnī*

*Kawnī* is an adjective derived from the verbal noun *kawn*, cosmos, creation. It can also refer to the individual creature. The consonantal root is *K-W-N*, whose meanings include “to be”, “to create”, “to bring into existence”. God’s command “Be!” (*kun*)<sup>23</sup> is the occasion for all existence. Ibn ‘Arabī finds an esoteric meaning within the structure of this command. Although it is written with only two letters, the *kāf* and the *nūn*, the *wāw* lies hidden within, appearing only as the short-vowel *ḍamma*, pronounced “u”. The seeming polarity of the Real and creation is bridged by a third thing, the linking letter *wāw*, which represents the Perfect Human Being.<sup>24</sup> This Perfect Human Being thus serves as an isthmus, or *barzakh*, partaking of both sides of creation as a whole, the divine and the cosmic,<sup>25</sup> yet preserving the tension inherent in them.<sup>26</sup>

### *Ishhād*

*Ishhād* is the fourth-form verbal noun of the verb *ashhada*. Its root *SH-H-D* has to do with seeing, witnessing. One of the senses of fourth-form verbs is causative, hence in this case “to make see or witness”. For Ibn ‘Arabī, seeing possesses an inner as well as outward sense. The Essence or Being of the Real can never be grasped but His manifestation in the cosmos can be witnessed in its infinite self-disclosures.<sup>27</sup> In the state of annihilation of self (*fanā’*) and the

23. Q.2:117, 3:47, 16:40, 19:35, 36:82, 40:68.

24. See, for example, *Fut.* III. 283.

25. “‘Engendered existence’ translates *al-kawn*. It may be that Ibn al-‘Arabī means by this term ‘all that is,’ including both God and the cosmos. Then, when we ‘leave aside’ the totality, we observe the two sides. However, although the word *kawn* can apply to the *wujūd* [being/finding] of God in some contexts, *al-kawn* is typically a technical term meaning everything other than God, everything that has come to be as the result of the divine command *kun*.” Chittick, *SDG*, p. 407, n. 29.

26. For extensive discussion of the Perfect Human Being in Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought, see Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, pp. 218–83; Takeshita, *Theory of the Perfect Man*.

27. “God is present and finds Himself in all things, and man witnesses this

subsistence of God (*baqā'*), the gnostic realizes that it is God who is both Witness and witnesser.

### 'Aynī

'*Aynī* is an adjective related to the consonantal root 'Y-N. '*Ayn* is the paradigmatic homonym, with a wide range of meanings as diverse as "eye", "spring", "source", "essence", "entity", and "self". Ibn 'Arabī fully exploits the range of possibilities of this word's meaning in his title and throughout the treatise. What the author is being made to witness with the eye of his inner vision is the Root of his existence and his very self. The title could easily be read: *Cosmic Unification in the Presence of the I-witnessing*.

\* \* \*

There is an unmistakable affinity between the paired terms *al-ittiḥād al-kawnī* and *al-ishḥād al-'aynī*.<sup>28</sup> While the first term may suggest to some the notion that has mistakenly been ascribed to Ibn 'Arabī through the centuries, *waḥdat al-wujūd*, oneness or unity of being, the form of the word *ittiḥād* is much more in line with Ibn 'Arabī's manner of thinking. The fact that the word is in a form that implies reflexivity and reciprocity provides a dynamism that we do not find in the more static word *waḥda*. Since we know from the Shaykh's own words that two incommensurable essences – the Real and the servant – cannot enter into a true unity, and that in reality there is only one absolute unqualified Being, the effort is directed to the realization of what it means to be the locus where absolute and relative being meet.

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presence and finding to the extent of his capacity." Chittick, *SPK*, p. 226.

28. See Gril, *Arbre*, p. 8. Gril notes that the alternating symmetry in the title's words (*ittiḥād/ishḥād* and *kawnī/'aynī*) is echoed in the introductory poems, which depict the bi-polarity of Man. Hence, he says, the treatise comprises two parts, one devoted to the supreme realization of the Perfect Man, the other to his universality as symbolized by the Tree and the four Birds.

## The Proemial Poems

The *Ittihād al-kawnī* begins abruptly with a series of proemial poems – a *Stemning*, in Kierkegaardian terms – that sets the tone for the first part of the *risāla*. The series consists of three poems of differing lengths and metres, interspersed by prose remarks, including the dedication and naming of the treatise. In reality, the three poems form a single poem, regularly repeating the refrain: “From my ... to my ...” They are all marked by end rhymes to which the letter *yā*’ (transliterated “ī”) or the shortened variant “i” is appended. The first poem’s end rhyme is in *lām* plus the additional “ī” – *ālī* (for example, *i’tidālī // jalālī*); the second’s is *qād* plus “ī” – *ardī*: (*farqī // ‘ardī*); the third’s is *sīn*, hence –*sī*: (*hissī // labsī*). The result is fifty lines of verse, all ending with the long “ee” sound. In Arabic, the long consonantal “yā”, which gives the sound of a long “ee”, is the marker of the first person possessive pronoun suffix. Thus the author truly does not cease to speak about himself throughout the entire initial sequence and beyond. Imagine the effect if we were to read an English poem of equivalent length, all ending in the word “me”.

The first poem, in the metre *basīt*, is nineteen lines in length, thirteen of which present paired terms in each hemistich for a total of twenty-six paired terms. Nine lines consist of dyads that are not repeated: incompleteness / completeness; inclination / equilibrium. Represented by letters, the pattern would be: A → B → C → D. This pattern is repeated for nine lines, after which come four lines in which the second of the dyads is repeated, while the fourth is new: breeze, boughs / boughs, shade. The pattern here is A → B = B → C. Following the thirteen lines of paired terms are six lines with no paired terms.

The first thirteen lines are full of dyadic fluctuations, oppositions, ascents, and descents, in dizzying succession. Some of the terms are states, some things. Generally, the movement is along a variety of horizontal axes, but at the mention of the moon, a cyclical variant of this fluctuation is brought into consideration. This is made even

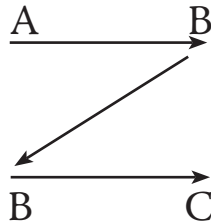
more apparent as the author begins to repeat the last term of the line as the first term of the next line: breeze to boughs, boughs to shade, and so forth.

The reader is caught in the sheer instability of human – nay all – nature, and the words of the Prophetic tradition may come to mind: “The heart is between two of the fingers of the All-Merciful; He makes it fluctuate as He desires.”<sup>29</sup>

The second poem consists of only two lines in the rare metre *muḍāriʿ*. The pairs here: heaven, earth; exemplary practice, religious duty // pact, perjury; length, breadth, are contraries. There are no repeated terms among the eight, hence we return to the first pattern of the first sequence:  $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C \rightarrow D$ .

The third poem consists of twenty-nine lines in the metre *hazaj*. The first pair of each hemistich, with one exception, is presented in reverse order in the second: sense, intellect / intellect, sense. Thus the pattern here is  $A \rightarrow B = B \leftarrow A$ . A line of explanation or elaboration follows each of these pair-embedded lines. As we have mentioned, all but one of the pairs in the first hemistich are repeated in reverse order in the second. The exception is the eleventh line: body, vastness; vastness / prison.<sup>30</sup> This gives a total of eleven pairs made up of five individual terms plus the extra “prison”. A final contrasting pair, shout / whisper, is given in the last line.

We have mentioned the pattern of the three proemial poems for a reason. The movement of the first sequence is along a horizontal line:  $ABCD \rightarrow$ . The second can be seen as a Z:

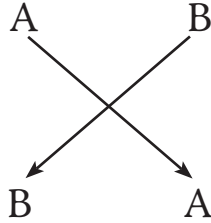


29. For variants of this hadith, see Muslim, Qadar 17; Tirmidhī, Qadar 7, Daʿawāt 89; Ibn Māja, Muqaddima 13; Aḥmad II, 168, 173; VI, 182, 251, 302, 315.

30. A variant gives: vastness/narrowness; narrowness/the Footstool.

## The Dedicatée

The two-lined third sequence returns to ABCD→ and the fourth forms a perfectly self-contained X:



We also note that the terms in each line have been reduced in sequences one, two, and four from four terms to three and then to two. The wild ricocheting has settled down to an even swing as equilibrium approaches. The poet seems to have progressed from the sensation of being caught in the dualities at every level of existence to a realization of the Unity at the core.

## The Dedicatée

As we have already noted, Ibn ‘Arabī states often in the treatise that he addresses only himself. What, then, is his relation to the dedicatée of the work? The *Ittiḥād al-kawnī* is dedicated to a mysterious personage who, as Ibn ‘Arabī says, “understands my riddle”. In the *Ittiḥād* he is called by the name Abū al-Fawāris Ṣakhr ibn Sinān, but as Gril has pointed out,<sup>31</sup> there is no doubt that he is the semi-legendary prophet Khālīd ibn Sinān b. ‘Ayth (or al-Ghayth)<sup>32</sup> al-‘Absī,<sup>33</sup>

31. Gril, *Arbre*, p.22.

32. See ‘Afifī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 317.

33. According to al-Jāḥiẓ, he belonged to the Banū Makhzūm of the Banū Qutay‘ah b. ‘Abs. (*K. al-ḥayawān*, Vol. IV, p.476). While some accounts place his tribe of the Ṭā‘y in central Arabia – Gril points out that this is also the tribe from which Ibn ‘Arabī himself is descended (*Arbre*, p.22, n.11) – other accounts, such as Jāmī’s *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, place him in Aden (see Chittick, “Ibn ‘Arabī’s Own Summary of the *Fuṣūṣ*”, p.87). Gril also remarks that Ṣakhr was the name of one of the factions of that tribe.



to whom Ibn ‘Arabī devotes his penultimate chapter in the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. In the *Ittiḥād*, however, he is not called Khālid but Ṣakhr. Nonetheless, the two men are one and the same, as will become clear later when we deconstruct these names.

The dedicatee’s role in the narrative seems minor at best, appearing only once in the Jet-Black Crow’s poem at the end, but this insignificance is only apparent. In reality, he holds a major key to the work, as a possible alter ego of the author himself and as a symbol for the Perfect Human Being as a *barzakh*, or isthmus, whose nature will be discussed below. Some delving into Khālid’s history and the various components of his name yields important clues.

Khālid, whom some, including Ibn ‘Arabī, regard as a pre-Islamic Arabian prophet,<sup>34</sup> is said to have lived at the time of what is known as the *fatra*<sup>35</sup> – the intermediate period between specific legislative revelations, in this case between Jesus and Muḥammad.<sup>36</sup> He is considered to be a *ḥanīf*, a natural monotheist or Muslim *avant le lettre*, in part because of a Prophetic tradition that links him with the message of *tawḥīd* – the declaration of God’s Oneness. According to this tradition, when the Prophet recited the Sura of Sincerity, Surat al-Ikhlās: “Say: He, Allah, is One, Allah the Eternal Refuge (*al-Ṣamad*)”, Khālid’s daughter informed him that she had heard her father recite the very same verse.

Khālid is not mentioned by name in the Qur’an,<sup>37</sup> and his status as a prophet is sometimes cast into doubt by the Prophet’s having said, “I am the nearest of men to Jesus son of Mary, for there is no prophet between him and me.” But as Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī says in the *Fukūk*,

34. Other Arab prophets such as Ḥūd, Ṣāliḥ, and Shu‘ayb, were also sent to the peoples of the Arabian peninsula, but they did not bring with them a divine law for their community.

35. The word “*fatra*” is also applied to a condition of stagnation in an individual. It is that time known to prophets and saints – indeed to artists and scholars as well – when the fire of inspiration cools and the well runs dry.

36. Some accounts place him before Jesus. See ‘Aḥīfī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 317.

37. Note that the chapter devoted to Khālid in the *Fuṣūṣ* is the only one in which no Qur’anic verses or hadith are cited.

this was due to the fact that Khālid “did not manifest prophecy on the sensory plane”.<sup>38</sup>

Why Khālid failed to manifest his prophecy in this world is associated with a strange story, several versions of which are recounted by the Shaykh and his followers. We will mention first the more extensive account given in Jāmī’s commentary on Ibn ‘Arabī’s own chapter headings of the *Fuṣūṣ*.<sup>39</sup> The story goes as follows. Khālid lived with his people in Aden.<sup>40</sup> One day, a great fire (traditionally called “*nār al-ḥarratayn*”),<sup>41</sup> accompanied by billows of smoke and a deafening noise, came out of a cave and wreaked havoc upon the people, their farms, and their livestock, causing them to flee to Khālid for refuge. Khālid approached the fire and beat it with his staff until it retreated back into the cave. He told his sons that he was going to follow the fire into the cave and extinguish it completely. He then instructed them to call him after three days, and warned them that if they called him before that, he would come out but that they – presumably the sons as well as their father – would die. The sons waited two days before their patience wore out – or as Jāmī says, Satan made them restless – and they began to suspect that their father had died. So they called him before the appointed time. Khālid emerged from the cave, his head wounded by their call. He told them, “You have caused me to perish, and you have let my words and instructions perish.”

He then told them that he was going to die and ordered them to bury him and watch over his grave for forty days. At that time a flock of sheep would come to them, led by a bob-tailed donkey. When the donkey stopped in front of his grave, they were to disinter him. He would then tell them about the states of the *barzakh*, the isthmus between life and death.

The people waited forty days, as instructed, and the flock, led by the bob-tailed donkey, came by, just as Khālid predicted. When it

38. *Fukūk*, p. 307.

39. Chittick, “Ibn ‘Arabī’s Own Summary of the *Fuṣūṣ*”, pp. 86–7.

40. Some place this incident in the lava fields near Yathrib (= Medina).

41. ‘Afīfī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 317.

stopped in front of his grave, the believers among his people wanted to open the grave and hear Khālīd's message. His sons, however, once more thwarted their father's plans, fearing the disgrace of being called "the sons of him whose grave was opened". "So it was the pagan ignorance of the Arabs that caused his instructions to perish and let him perish."<sup>42</sup>

The sign that confirmed his prophecy – his revelation concerning the *barzakh* – was to become manifest after death but, as Ibn 'Arabī says, "He let his sign perish, since he did not manifest it during his lifetime, and he let his people perish also, for he did not show it to them, so they let him perish."<sup>43</sup> This is alluded to in another tradition linking Khālīd to the Prophet, in which the latter is reported to have said to one of Khālīd's daughters: "Welcome to the daughter of a prophet whose people let him perish!"<sup>44</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, however, points out that the blame was to be assigned only to Khālīd's sons.

A second version, recounted by Ibn 'Arabī in his *Muḥāḍarāt al-abrār wa-musāmarāt al-aḥyār*, a work of belles-lettres, stays close to the hadith reports. It traces the report to Ibn 'Abbās, and places the story in the steppe lands between Mecca and Medina during the *fatra*. The fire that appeared was called "Budā" by the Bedouin and some of them were on the point of worshipping it like the Magians. Khālīd, presumably because of his monotheism, sought to stamp out the root of this heresy. He confronted the fire with his staff, beating it until God put it out.<sup>45</sup> The exertion seems to have mortally wounded Khālīd. The remainder of the story is as above, complete with burial instructions and donkey (full-tailed here). Khālīd promises to tell the people how things are in the world of the dead. The rest of the story passes as already recounted, the sons once more being assigned the blame for the failure to exhume their father. A coda links the story to two sayings of the Prophet, one of which we

42. Chittick, "Ibn 'Arabī's Own Summary of the *Fuṣūṣ*", p. 87.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

44. See *Muḥāḍarāt al-abrār wa-musāmarāt al-aḥyār*, p. 105.

45. In some accounts, he threw himself into the fire. See Pellat, s.v. Khālīd b. Sinān, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, revised edition (hereafter *EI* 2).

have encountered above, that is, the Prophet's greeting to Khālid's daughter, the other of which reflects the aborted message: "Then [the Messenger of God] said, 'Had they disinterred him, he would have told them about me and my community and what would come to be from them.'"<sup>46</sup>

We should also mention al-Qāshānī's version that provides the intriguing detail that from the fire that terrified Khālid's people emerged an 'anuq – a male 'anqā' – whose body partly resembled a camel and partly a snake.<sup>47</sup> It was this serpent-like creature that Khālid beat back into the cave with his staff, his tribe following timorously behind.

The *Fuṣūṣ*, however, reflects yet another version,<sup>48</sup> in which Khālid tells his people that he will reveal the secrets of the *barzakh* only after his death and disinterment; he claims that the *barzakh* is in the form of this world,<sup>49</sup> thus confirming what the messengers had revealed. As the Ottoman commentator remarks in his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*, "It was not that Khālid was manifested with the prophecy of *barzakh*hiyya, but that he would first die and would witness the states of the *barzakh* and then, after becoming alive again by divine order, he would be manifested with the prophecy of *barzakh*hiyya."<sup>50</sup> Hence Khālid's failure to manifest his prophecy is the reason for the Prophet's statement: "I am the nearest of men to Jesus son of Mary, for there is no prophet between him and me." According to this commentator, then, Khālid did not become manifest with the prophecy of the *barzakh*, since his pronouncements upon its joys and sorrows were not confirmed by his resurrection: "Because for the general public, if a prophet dies and comes back, the effect of the news he gives of the other world is more definite than the

46. *Muḥāḍarāt al-abrār*, pp.104–5.

47. 'Aḥfī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 317.

48. The account in the *Fuṣūṣ* draws from the story of Hanzalah b. Safwān. See Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood*, p. 191, n. 167.

49. As Ibn 'Arabī says regarding the disputed nature of the *barzakh*, its people alter in state there just as they do here. See *Fut.* III. 395.

50. *Ismail Hakki Bursevi's Translation and Commentary*, Vol. 4, p.1047.

information of the other world given by a prophet who is not dead but who is alive in this world.”<sup>51</sup>

In the *Fuṣūṣ* version, Khālid is also attributed with foretelling Muḥammad’s mission. Khālid’s desire, according to Ibn ‘Arabī, was that all mankind believe in the message of the prophets and particularly in Muḥammad’s mission as a mercy to the universes, which he apparently foresaw. His people, however, did not allow him to fulfil his purpose. Thus this version differs in that the message concerning the *barzakh* is delivered, but not confirmed, and the role of harbinger of universal mercy is denied him.

The prophecy of Khālid is in many ways the exact opposite of Muḥammad’s. While Muḥammad’s was fully visible, Khālid’s was hidden. While Muḥammad’s mission was successful, Khālid’s was a failure. While Muḥammad ascends to the heavens during his *mi’rāj*, Khālid is best known for his descents underground – practising a sort of *katabasis* in a cave, pursuing knowledge in the tomb. Like a seed deposited in the ground, or an embryo in the dark womb, Khālid awaits the time when his people will disinter him, enabling him to proclaim his message, confirming the words of the messengers before him. But Khālid himself could not achieve his wish. His message remains in sheer potentiality with respect to this world.

At this point, a certain constellation of notions discussed at great length in the *Futūḥāt* comes to mind. These include the opposing states of seclusion (*khalwa*) and society (*jalwa*), the various stages of annihilation (*fanā’*) and perdurance (*baqā’*),<sup>52</sup> and the spiritual voyage that ends either in arrival (*wuṣūl*)<sup>53</sup> and halting (*waqfa*) or arrival and return (*rujū’*). Considered in relation to these discussions, Khālid’s prophecy was imperfect for it was entirely concerned with *khalwa* and *waqfa*. He was not granted the possibility of manifesting his prophecy in public and was not able to return to his people. Muḥammad’s

51. Ibid., p. 1049.

52. See Ibn ‘Arabī’s treatise *al-Fanā’ fī al-mushāhada*; English trans. Hirtenstein and Shamash, *JMIAS*, IX (1991); French trans. Vâlsan, *Études Traditionnelles*, 363 and 364 (1961). See also *Fut.*, Chaps 220, 221, and 286.

53. From the same root as *ittiṣāl* (conjunction).

prophecy, on the other hand, was perfect for it embraced these opposites. The initial stage of his spiritual initiation, before the coming of the angel Gabriel, took place in the cave of Hirā. Thus it was a period of seclusion and flight from the world. In the wake of the descent of revelation upon him, however, his apostolic mission demanded that he manifest within the world. And his heavenly *miʿrāj* did not culminate in any permanent absorption in the divine but was followed by a return to his community. As the Shaykh says in his *Futūḥāt*, “The perfection of the heritage of the prophets and the messengers consists in the return to the creatures.”<sup>54</sup> And Khālid is a clear example of a prophet who arrived and halted, unable to make the return to the world.

### Secrets of the Name Abū al-Fawāris Ṣakhr [= Khālid] ibn Sinān<sup>55</sup>

The first *kunya*, or agnomen – Abū al-Fawāris – means “father of the knights”. The *fawāris* were “a class of Arab chivalrous heroes distinguished by eloquence (*bayān*) as well as courage and generosity (*jūd*)”.<sup>56</sup> The appellation suggests pre-Islamic values and may have a connection with the *fatā*, or chivalrous knight, of the *Futūḥāt*’s first chapter. Ibn ʿArabī makes reference to these values in his dedication and again at the end of the *Risāla* when he praises Ṣakhr ibn Sinān for his generosity and steadfastness in combat.<sup>57</sup>

Gril points out that the word *jūd* (generosity) calls to mind the word *wujūd* (existence) and vice versa; as an Arabic proverb states, “*Al-wujūd fī al-jūd*” (Existence is – or consists – in generosity). *Bayān* (eloquence) brings to mind the Qurʾan, since this is one of its

54. *Fut.* I. 251, Chap. 45.

55. ʿAbd al-Bāqī Miftāḥ has provided many of the clues enumerated below concerning the name Khālid as well as other interesting information regarding this figure in his *Maḥātīḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, pp. 135–8.

56. Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood*, p. 193, n. 180.

57. The name Khālid also appears in Ibn ʿArabī’s *K. al-ʿabādila*, pp. 168–9, where it is linked with the attribute of generosity. See Gril, *Arbre*, p. 23, n. 15.

appellations. Hence not only are generosity and eloquence evoked in this passage but existence and revelation as well.<sup>58</sup>

The root *F-R-S* is also connected with the quasi-occult science of *fīrūsa*, or physiognomy. A *fāris* discerns the unseen nature of things, and especially human beings, from visible signs. To be *fāris* of something, says Ibn Manzūr in *Lisān al-‘Arab*, is to know it.

The dedicatee’s second *kunya* – Ibn Sinān – means “son of a spearhead”. This again suggests the notion of pre-Islamic warrior values.

\* \* \*

The name Khālīd has two main meanings, one concerned with rocks (*ṣakhr/hajar*) and the other with everlastingness (*ṣamādiyya*). But let us begin with the name Khālīd itself and the Arabic root *KH-L-D* from which it is derived.

***Khālīd-eternal* = *ṣamad* = *rock* = *ṣakhr***

“*Khālīd*” is an active participle, deriving from the verb *khalada*: to remain or last forever; to be immortal; to remain in a place. In the fourth form, *akhlada*, it has many of the same meanings as form one, but it also means: to incline, lean, tend to. In this form it appears in the Qur’an: “And had We willed We could have raised him by their means, but he inclined toward [or clung to] the earth (*akhlada*) and followed his own whim” (Q.7:176). *Khālīda* (pl. *khawālīd*) are rocks or mountains,<sup>59</sup> “the immovable ones, ... the earth-riveted, unchanging, ... clasping the ground”.<sup>60</sup> Addressed by the poet Labīd, they are “the mute immovable ones whose speech yields no sense” (*ḍumman khawālīda mā yabīnu kalāmuhā*).<sup>61</sup>

The verbal noun *khuld* conveys the sense of infinite duration and eternity. *Dār al-khuld* is an epithet for the hereafter. Jaroslav

58. Gril, *Arbre*, p.22.

59. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Part 2, p.784, s.v. *khālīd*.

60. Stetkevych, “Toward an Arabic Lexicon”, p.101.

61. *Ibid.*, pp.93, 108.

Stetkevych has discussed the “binary semantic tension that inheres in the word *khuld* itself”.<sup>62</sup> In the Qur’an, this noun appears both in a positive (Q. 21: 15) and negative (Q. 10: 52; 32: 14; 41: 28) sense; and verbs and participles based on this root reflect the same ambivalence: “Where did *khuld* begin – in ‘heaven’ or in ‘hell’, or rather: in the higher regions of the awareness of self or in the lower ones? Is it an origin or an aspiration? ... Is it the future or the past?”<sup>63</sup> *Khuld* is also a word for mole, a blind burrowing creature who lives underground. Thus both the prophet Khālid and the animal *khuld* are associated with the chthonic realm. Stetkevych remarks that even the celestial associations of this root in the Qur’an, wherein the term *khuld/khālid* is frequently coupled with the term *jannah*, garden/paradise,<sup>64</sup> cannot be divorced from the chthonic: “... *jannah* ... may itself only be ‘projected’ into the eschatological ‘heavenly’ sphere out of its primary chthonic ‘hiddenness,’ ‘buriedness,’ ‘darkness,’ and also ‘protectedness.’”<sup>65</sup> For the semantic range of the root *Ḷ-N-N* includes such words as “to veil”, “to conceal”, “fetus” (*janīn*), “jinn”, and “grave” (*janān*). Ibn ‘Arabī’s appellation of Khālid as “Jānn ibn Jānn” (Jānn, son of the Jinn) in his dedication is thus entirely appropriate.<sup>66</sup>

62. Ibid., p. 101.

63. Ibid.

64. For example Q. 20: 76; 25: 15.

65. Stetkevych, “Toward an Arabic Lexicon”, p. 102.

66. Gilis (*Livre des Chatons*, p. 681) has suggested an intriguing connection between the other meaning of *jānn*, a great serpent, and Khālid, translating the phrase in question as “Serpent son of Jānn”. He points out parallels between Moses’ staff, which turns into a serpent in his contest with Pharaoh’s magicians and splits the rock from which issue twelve streams of water (as mentioned by Ibn ‘Arabī in his final poem), and Khālid’s staff, with which he beats back the fire into the cave. If this “fire” is either a serpent/*jinnī* or an ‘*anqā*’, as some accounts have it, the Khālid legend becomes even more complex.



*Ṣakhr-rock = ḥajar = khālid = jabal*

The word “*ṣakhr*” appears three times in the Qur’an: (1) “Didst thou see, when we took refuge in the rock” (Q.18:63). The context is the voyage undertaken by Moses and Khidr; (2) “though it be in a rock, or in the heavens, or in the earth ... God will bring it forth” (Q.31:16). The context is Luqmān’s advice to his son; and (3) “and Thamūd, who hollowed the rocks in the valley” (Q.89:9). Thus rocks may be refuges, hiding places, and ruins of a pre-Islamic people who disobeyed their prophet Hūd.

The other word for rock is *ḥajar*. This is the word used in the Qur’an in connection with Moses: “Strike with thy staff the rock” (Q.2:60; 7:160), and “for there are stones from which rivers come gushing” (Q.2:74). Ibn ‘Arabī seems to be referring to this image in the final poem of the *Ittiḥād*, “I am a rock (*ṣakhr*), and from me the spiritual meanings flash.”

The Moses/rock analogy is evident in another early work of Ibn ‘Arabī’s, *Mashāhid al-asrār*. One of the contemplations involves the “light of the Rock (*ṣakhra*)” at the end of which the Real addresses the Moon: “Tell the rock to let twelve springs pour forth ...”<sup>67</sup> According to Ibn Sawdakīn, who commented on this work, the rock is a symbol of the body and its knowledges, the Moon represents the knowledge of Nature, the twelve springs are the constellations.<sup>68</sup>

*Ṣamad*

“*Ṣamad*” is a curious word that appears only once in the Qur’an, in Sura 112. It is variously translated in that context as “eternal refuge”, “everlasting”, and “resource”. As such it is an epithet for God.

The legends of Khālid emphasize Khālid’s role as the support and refuge of his people. It is to him that they turn in times of danger or need, as in the case of the fire that came out of the cave. We have also

67. Beneito and Twinch, *Contemplation of the Holy Mysteries*, p. 74.

68. *Ibid.*, pp. 75–6.

seen that in the traditions, Khālid is specifically associated with Sura 112, which calls God “*Aḥad*” and “*Ṣamad*”. Thus, the two elements of dependable recourse and strict monotheism are brought together as Khālid’s distinguishing features.

In the *Fuṣūṣ*, these suppositions are tacitly understood, for the particular wisdom associated with Khālid ibn Sinān is *ṣamadiyya*.<sup>69</sup> The chapter on Khālid does not specifically mention what the precise connection is between Khālid and *ṣamadiyya*, although Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnāwī in his *Fukūk* interprets *ṣamad* as “aim”.<sup>70</sup> In the *Fuṣūṣ*, this is one of the two main foci of the chapter – the other being the *barzakh* – since Khālid is associated with the notions of intention and fulfilment. Khālid’s mission, as we have noted, was a failure. Yet Ibn ‘Arabī concludes in the *Fuṣūṣ* that God “allow[ed] him to achieve the reward (*ajr*) of his wish (*ummiyya*)”. But he adds: “There is doubt and dispute as to whether he attained the reward (*ajr*) of his quest (*maṭlūb*).”<sup>71</sup> In other words, is wishing to perform an action equivalent to accomplishing the act itself, and does desire merit a reward even if it fails to be carried to fruition?<sup>72</sup> “In the outward sense”, says Ibn ‘Arabī, “they are not equal. Therefore, Khālid b. Sinān sought to attain both so he could have the station of bringing

69. *Ṣamad* is also mentioned in the *Fuṣūṣ* in connection with the prophet Aaron: “He is summoning to a God who is eternally resorted to, universally known, but not seen. ... The eyes cannot see Him, just as they cannot see the spirits that govern their shapes and outer forms” (*Fuṣūṣ*; trans. Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, p. 248).

70. *Fukūk*, p. 307. See also Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Part 4, p. 1726, s.v. *ṣamad*, for this sense of the word.

71. *Fuṣūṣ*, I, 213. Austin’s English translation (*Bezels of Wisdom*, p. 268) does not preserve the meaning of *ajr* as “reward”, which is essential to the legal discussion that follows. In addition, to translate both *ummiyya* and *maṭlūb* as “wish” obscures the distinction between them. Dagli’s new English translation (*Ringstones of Wisdom*, p. 276) maintains this distinction; he translates *ajr* as “reward”, *ummiyya* as “hope” and *maṭlūb* as “sought after thing”.

72. This is an issue debated in *fiqh*, of which Ibn ‘Arabī himself gives two examples: the person who makes the effort to attend the congregational prayer, but misses it, and the person of limited means who would like to perform the good deeds that the wealthy are able to perform but cannot because of his poverty. In both these cases, the reward for intending and accomplishing is said to be the same.

together both things and thus gain two rewards.”<sup>73</sup> His success, however, is inconclusive.<sup>74</sup>

Another word belonging to this root is “*ṣamda*”, which is “a rock firmly imbedded in the earth, even with the surface thereof” or “somewhat elevated”.<sup>75</sup> Thus we find again associations connecting Ṣakhr / Khālīd ibn Sinān with enduring rocks and subterranean existence.

“*Ṣamad*” also means “solid, not hollow”<sup>76</sup> and is applied to someone who takes no nourishment yet neither hungers nor thirsts in war.<sup>77</sup> Thus it is connected in particular with fasting. Ibn ‘Arabī, for example, calls Ramadan “*ṣamadiyya*”.<sup>78</sup> One finds this same connection in the Shaykh’s small treatise *Hilyat al-abdāl*: “The station is that of universal sustenance. It is a very elevated condition characterized by intellectual secrets, contemplative unveilings, and spiritual states.”<sup>79</sup>

Finally, the Presence of *ṣamad* is discussed in the *Futūḥāt*, Chapter 287. The particular self-disclosure of this Presence has to do with the descent of the Qur’an on the Night of Power, which occurs during the fasting month of Ramadan.<sup>80</sup>

73. *Fuṣūṣ*, I. 214. Cf. Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, p. 268.

74. See *Ismail Hakki Bursevi’s Translation and Commentary*, Vol. 4, pp. 1049–50, for further illumination of this point. His conclusion is: “there is no equality between the two deserts of intention and action ... because had there been equality [Khālīd] would have been satisfied with desiring.”

75. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Part 4, p. 1727, s.v. *ṣamda*.

76. Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnāwī includes this meaning of “recourse” and “aim” in his brief discussion of *ṣamad* in the Khālīd chapter. See *Fukūk*, p. 307.

77. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Part 2, p. 784, s.v. *khālīd*.

78. See ‘*Anqā’ mughrīb*, trans. Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood*, p. 442; *Fut.* I, Chap. 71: On Fasting. Ibn ‘Arabī speaks also of the *ṣamadāniyya* retreat, most appropriately undertaken during the month of Ramadan, in his *K. al-khalwa al-muṭlaqa*, currently being edited and translated by Stephen Hirtenstein. This thirty-day retreat consists of fasting and nightly vigil.

79. *Hilyat al-abdāl*; French trans. Vâlsan, *Parure des abdāl*, p. 34.

80. In addition to the sources mentioned above, see also Rauf, *Addresses*, pp. 52–6.

## Khālid ibn Sinān, Prophet of the *Barzakh*

When we bring together all the etymological clues with the legendary account of Khālid's mission, we find that this final Arabian prophet before the advent of Muḥammad is admirably suited to be called "Prophet of the *barzakh*". We have already encountered one meaning of *barzakh* in connection with the content of Khālid's message. It is "the interval between the present life and that which is to come, from the period of death to the resurrection".<sup>81</sup> But in its broadest definition a *barzakh* is anything that separates two things, anything that is neither one thing nor another: it is the dream world that partakes of both life and death, the image in the mirror that both is and is not the observer; it is the unperceivable instant between past and future; the dawn and dusk when it is neither fully light nor dark; and the moon as it waxes and wanes in its cycle, forever in transit from crescent to void.<sup>82</sup> As Chittick has noted,

A *barzakh* is something that stands between and separates two other things, yet combines the attributes of both. Strictly speaking, every existent thing is a *barzakh*, since everything has its own niche between two other niches within the ontological hierarchy known as the cosmos.<sup>83</sup>

Chittick goes on to say: "Existence itself is a *barzakh* between Being and nothingness."<sup>84</sup> Between the One, unchanging Being and the equally unchanging nothingness (*'adam*) lies the *barzakh* of the ever-fluctuating existent things.

81. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Part 1, p. 187, s.v. *barzakh*.

82. For an extended study of the *barzakh* in Ibn 'Arabī's thought, see Bashier, *Ibn al-'Arabī's Barzakh*.

83. Chittick, *SPK*, p. 14.

84. Ibid. This, in Ibn 'Arabī's terms, is called "non-delimited imagination" (*al-khayāl al-muṭlaq*), the Supreme *Barzakh* (*al-barzakh al-a' lā*) or the *Barzakh* of *Barzakhs* (*barzakh al-barzāzikh*). It is also called (although they are not exact synonyms): the Cloud, the Breath of the All-Merciful, the Real through whom creation takes place, the Universal Reality, Nature, and the Reality of the Perfect Human Being.

Two contradictories never stand opposite each other without a separator through which each is distinguished from the other and which prevents the one from being described by the attribute of the other. ... This is the Supreme *Barzakh*, or the *Barzakh* of *Barzakhs*. It possesses a face toward Being and a face toward nothingness. It stands opposite each of these two known things in its very essence. It is the third known thing. Within it are all possible things. It is infinite, just as each of the other two known things is infinite.<sup>85</sup>

When we take this passage into consideration, the initially puzzling reference to Şakhr's being "master of the dyads and triads" becomes a bit clearer.<sup>86</sup> The Perfect Human Being, as we have stated above, brings together opposites and provides the resolving bridge between them. Thus he is able to reflect in response to the moment all the divine attributes on either side of the cosmic divide – mercy and severity, beauty and majesty, transcendence and immanence – while simultaneously preserving the oddness and singularity inherent in the whole, representing, as he does, the human axis of unity. While in himself he is non-existent, as a locus for the infinite manifestations of the divine in every instant, he is God's representative (*khalīfa*) in the world. For its part, the triplicate order is evident everywhere. There are three levels of existence: Real, creation, and *barzakh*; three points of articulation for the letters: throat, lips, and middle of the mouth; three levels within the human being: reason, sense, and *barzakh*.<sup>87</sup>

*Barzakh* is the world of the imagination that stands as a mesocosm between the spiritual and material worlds. It is the "interworld", as Henry Corbin calls it,<sup>88</sup> the place where psycho-spiritual events including miracles, spiritual ascents, and theurgical operations take

85. *Fut.* III. 46, Chap. 312; trans. Chittick, *SPK*, p.204.

86. The dyadic and triadic structure of existence is discussed by Ibn 'Arabī in many places. See, for example, *Fuṣūṣ*, Chap. on Şāliḥ and Chap. on Muḥammad.

87. See *Fut.* II. 391.

88. Corbin, *Spiritual Body*, p. 79.

### The Fourth Poem

place. “Imagination”, as the Shaykh tells us, “is neither existent nor non-existent, neither known nor unknown, neither negated nor affirmed.”<sup>89</sup> It is the broadest of universal planes, since, unlike the world of the senses, it contains everything that exists, “real” and “imaginary”. It is in this world of image-exemplars that the dialectical-monologue between the narrator and the various personae and faculties of himself takes place.

### The Fourth Poem

After explaining the title and offering homage to the Prophet of the *barzakh*, the author turns again to rhyme. The fourth poem consists of eighteen lines in the metre *basīṭ*. Although separated from the preceding three poems, the fourth poem is connected with its predecessors through its end rhyme *tā'* coupled with the first person singular pronoun suffix *yā':-ātī*: (*bi-dhātī // iltifātī*).

In addition, the author continues to group things in pairs, five of which are contrasting pairs: secretly/openly; enemies/friends; threat/grace; gathering/scattering; knight/maiden. Their effect here is more subdued than in the first three poems since they are not marked by the repeated refrain: “from ... to ...” (*min ... ilā ...*).

In this poem, the author engages in a clever repartee with himself. It is replete with paradoxes. His very assertion of self (*innanī*: here I am, or indeed I)<sup>90</sup> would cause his annihilation. To utter “I” throws the speaker into a state of *fanā'* – annihilation – in which friends and enemies, grace and punishment, disappear. There is only One who can properly say “I”.

89. *Fut.* I. 304, Chap. 6; trans. Chittick, *SPK*, p. 118.

90. As Ibn 'Arabī defines this emphatic particle in *Fut.* II. 130, Chap. 73: “If you ask: What is *inniyya*?, we answer: It is the Reality by way of attribution. [The people of *inniyya*] are those who are engaged with the Tablet, witnessing the Pen, observing the *Nūn*, drawing [the ink] from the Ipseity, speaking with *anniyya* [the personal pronoun “I”], expressing themselves with unification (*ittiḥād*).

## Meetings in the Barzakh

The author now finds himself in a land “situated on the equator”, that is, in a momentary state of equilibrium where opposites are joined and realization of the Oneness of Being prevails. It is both a placeless place from which he will begin his ascent through the celestial spheres in imitation of the Prophet Muḥammad, and a balance-point within his very nature, anchoring his corporeal and spiritual dimensions. Thus we find both a cluster of sacred sites connected to this place of ascent: Mount Sinai, Mecca, Jerusalem (as the locus from which the Prophet was taken on his heavenly journey), and an allusion to the father of humanity, Adam, “fashioned of water and clay”, the synthesis of what is highest and lowest in creation.

The first stage in the ascent paradoxically involves a “plunge” into the sea of *hayūlā*, prime matter, later in the narrative to be symbolized by the ‘*Anqā*’ bird. *Hayūlā* is yet another *barzakh*, the matrix of all form, spiritual and material. It is here that the levels of heaven and hell are made sensible to the inner vision. The Shaykh insists on the reality of these realms as they are depicted in the Qur’an.

Then he engages in a popular rhetorical device he had made good use of in earlier works: “Question and answer” (*su’āl wa-jawāb*). This abstruse exchange between the author and his unnamed interlocutor – who alludes to rather than explains his meaning clearly – serves to heighten the narrative’s drama.<sup>91</sup> Used with unequalled power by the tenth-century Sufi al-Niffarī to describe the ineffable dialogue between the servant and God,<sup>92</sup> his Andalusian admirer finds the opportunity to engage in riddled speech with the divine aspect of his being. In a speech that recalls Job’s Interlocutor from the Whirlwind, this alter ego, who both is and is not the author, both is and is not the Real, seems to be seeking to cut the author down to size: Where were you when I created the world and the spiritual realities?

91. For a discussion of this term in Persian poetry, see Schimmel, *Two-Colored Brocade*, p.44.

92. See al-Niffarī’s *Mawāqif and Mukhātabāt*.

The truth demanded by the station demands that the servant realize his utter nonentity with respect to the transcendent and all-powerful God.

Seeking deliverance from the sea of matter, he is transformed into a more subtle form, which, despite its station, is still connected to the material world and at some remove from the One Reality. At the point where he leaves his Burāq – just as the Prophet dismounted and tied his steed to a post at the Masjid al-Aqṣā – we know that the author has begun his upward ascent. In a state of oscillation, like a lamp set swinging to celestial music, that brings to mind the poems at the beginning of the treatise, he realizes that he is still within the world of form, spiritual though it may be. What he longs for is annihilation in annihilation (*al-fanā' fī al-fanā'*), and the state of *baqā'*, subsistence, where all of the servant's faculties are realized to be, in truth, God's.<sup>93</sup> When asked by his interlocutor where he is, whether established in this world or in the Essence, he can only answer in dualities and then invoke the prophets who are the guardians of the seven heavens through which he passes, high to low: Abraham, Moses, Aaron, Idrīs, Joseph, Jesus, and Adam.<sup>94</sup> Despite what he acquires from the prophets, all of this pertains to the created world, not to the Essence itself. It seems that there is no escape on any level from his essential creatureliness.

The conversation that follows seeks to define the relationship between the Real and creation (*ḥaqq* and *khalq*). It culminates in the realization that, as God says in the aforementioned Prophetic tradition: "I am his hearing through which he hears, his eyesight through which he sees, his hand through which he holds, and his

93. For these technical terms, so vital in understanding Ibn 'Arabī's ideas concerning the possibility of union between the Real and the servant, see *Fut.* II, Chaps 220 and 221 and his short treatise *Kitāb al-fanā' fī al-mushāhada* (Arabic, pp. 11–18; French trans., see especially pp. 40–1 and Vālsan's commentary, especially pp. 27–33; English trans. p. 6, and Hirtenstein and Shamash's notes, p. 15, n.11).

94. These are the prophets traditionally encountered in the mystical ascent. See *Fut.* II, Chap. 167, *Fut.* III, Chap. 367; *Kitāb al-isfār*; and *Risālat al-anwār*, in which the prophets are not mentioned but merely suggested (see Chodkiewicz's excellent commentary concerning this, *Seal of the Saints*, pp. 147–73).



foot through which he walks.” The servant now knows the meaning of *ittiḥād* as the coincidence of opposites – relative and absolute – in one locus, the Perfect Human Being: “Insofar as he manifests the Divine Attributes through his positive qualities, Man finds himself with God in a relation of similitude, but insofar as being is concerned, the difference is absolute, for Being (*al-wujūd*) belongs only to God.”<sup>95</sup>

At this point, the Universal Tree and the Four Birds are revealed – an echo of the Prophet’s arrival at the Lote Tree of the Limit.<sup>96</sup> Each of the fantastic creatures, imaginatively conceived representations of the Perfect Human Being’s own faculties, addresses him both with an elegant speech in *saj’* and a poem.

## *Soliloquies of the Universal Tree and the Four Birds*

### **The Universal Tree (*al-shajara al-kullī*)**

If you ask: What is the Tree?, we answer: [It is] the Perfect Human Being who governs the bodily temple (*haykal*) of the Crow.<sup>97</sup>

The first to address the author is the Universal Tree, otherwise known as the “human tree”, for it symbolizes the Human Being writ large, the archetypal “Perfect Human Being”, exemplified by such individuals as the Prophet Muḥammad, who reflect the totality of the Divine Names and Attributes in a synthetic form.

The Universal Tree is found in many of the world’s traditions, symbol of life eternal. Positioned as the central axis of the cosmos, it serves as a pivotal point around which creation revolves.<sup>98</sup>

95. Gril, *Arbre*, p. 11.

96. Q. 53: 14–16.

97. *Fut.* II. 31, Chap. 73.

Significant trees are found in numerous places in the Qur'an, including: the "goodly tree" (Q. 14:24–5); the "green tree" (Q. 36:80); Adam's Tree of Immortality (Q. 20:12); Moses' Burning Bush (Q. 28:30); the desiccated palm tree that Mary shook to provide her with dates (Q. 19:25); the tree underneath which the believers swore allegiance to Muḥammad (Q. 48:18); the Lote Tree of the Limit (Q. 53:14); the "Blessed Olive Tree" (Q. 24:35); and, on a far less pleasing note, the "Accursed Tree" (Q. 17:60), the Tree of Zaqqūm, "a torment for wrongdoers" (see Q. 37:62–8) and "the food of the sinner" (see Q. 44:43–6). Prophetic reports give us the Ṭūbā tree, planted by God in the Garden of Paradise with His hand<sup>99</sup> and the tree in which Muḥammad and the angel Gabriel nested during one of the Prophet's Night Journeys.<sup>100</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī's works are also replete with trees. In the *Futūḥāt*, for example, all of the prominent trees mentioned in the Qur'an and hadith are discussed and interpreted, some at great length.<sup>101</sup> Man himself, at one point, is called a tree.<sup>102</sup>

In a work once ascribed to Ibn 'Arabī, entitled *Shajarat al-kawn*, or the Universal Tree,<sup>103</sup> this symbol is extended and described in detail. The axial trunk of the cosmic Tree splits into two branches<sup>104</sup> that represent the multifarious opposing qualities manifesting in all

98. See Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, especially pp.32–42, for a discussion of the symbolism of the central pole or cosmic tree. See also Philpot, *Sacred Tree*.

99. See Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* III, 71. According to some traditions, the Ṭūbā tree is situated at the top of Mount Qāf, is associated in some way with Mount Sinai, and is made of green light. Its height is said to reach the sun. See Gloton, *L'Arbre du monde*, p. 132.

100. See *Fut.* III. 3; III. 214; III. 554.

101. See, in particular, his extensive discussion of the Ṭūbā tree in *Fut.* III. 433, Chap. 371.

102. See *Fut.* III. 137ff., Chap. 336.

103. See Jeffery, "Ibn 'Arabī's *Shajarat al-kawn*"; Gloton, *L'Arbre du monde*. According to Chodkiewicz (*Ocean without Shore*, pp. 143–4, n. 13), the recent research of Y. A. Mdaghri has shown this work to be by 'Abd al-Salām b. Aḥmad b. Ghānim al-Maqdisī (d. 1280).

104. Note that in *Fut.* III. 315 the boughs of the tree of existence represent the Divine Names, and its fruit represents human beings.

of creation: male/female; active/passive; Pen/Tablet; and so forth. Thus a ternary structure consisting of right-hand branch, left-hand branch, and central axis can be imagined. When leaves, symbolizing the myriad and ever-renewed forms of creation, are generated, a fourth element results, and a circle, encompassing this cruciform structure, comes into view. Quaternity embraces such notions as the four elements: fire, air, water, and earth, and four temperaments: hot, cold, dry, and wet – the basic building blocks and qualities of the embodied world. In our treatise, in keeping with this quaternity, Ibn ‘Arabī has placed four birds among the branches, representing the four-fold structure of the cosmos.

In Ibn ‘Arabī’s mapping of correspondences, the Universal Tree finds its human counterpart in the *Quṭb*, or Spiritual Pole, who anchors the coincidentia oppositorum and balances creation. “The Pole is the point round which everything turns – hence another symbol of the [S]elf”.<sup>105</sup> Were he to disappear, the cosmos would dissolve into chaos. Mircea Eliade has noted, in his studies of symbols of sacred space,<sup>106</sup> that whatever is privileged with centrality – be it mountain, city, or tree – provides a threshold between heaven and earth. The human representative of this mediation, the Pole, serves the same function in Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings, and is thus considered a *barzakhī*, or liminal figure.

In the *Ittiḥād*, the Tree is described as the Likeness, that is, the likeness of the Real, “whose root is firm and whose branches are in the heavens”.<sup>107</sup> The likeness of the Tree / Perfect Human Being consists of its being modelled “upon the form” of the Divinity, hence it has both unity – represented by the well-rooted trunk – and multiplicity, reflected in the appearance of its branches, leaves, and fruits, as well as in its very name itself. One of the meanings of the Arabic root *SH-Ḥ-R* is “difference in opinion, dispute”.<sup>108</sup> This is alluded to

105. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, p. 183.

106. See Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, Chap. 1; Eliade, *Images and Symbols*, Chap. 1.

107. Q.14:24.

108. See Q.4:65. Ibn ‘Arabī’s chapter on Shu‘ayb in the *Fuṣūṣ* is particularly eloquent on this theme. Shu‘ayb’s name suggests branching (*tasha‘ub*), hence the

in the *Futūḥāt*, where the Shaykh states: “[God] made [man] a tree in which there is contentiousness (*tashājūr*), because of his being created from contraries.”<sup>109</sup>

The Perfect Human Being is a copy (*nuskha*) of the divine, a synthesis of all the Divine Names and Attributes, and a heart<sup>110</sup> capable of assuming any form.<sup>111</sup> Like the Ṭūbā tree, the Universal Tree is planted with God’s own hand in the “where”-less place in the centre of the cosmos.

### *The Universal Tree’s Poem*

The Tree’s poem consists of but five lines, in the metre *wāfir*. Its end rhyme is appropriately *hamza*, the first pronounced letter of the Arabic alphabet. In the majestic sway of the Tree’s recitation, the themes of straightness, balance, all-encompassment, and non-delimitation by form are reiterated.

### **The Ringdove (*al-muṭawwaqa al-warqā’*)**

The Dove is the Soul that is between Nature and the Intellect.<sup>112</sup>

The dove is the universally recognized symbol of peace and universal love. In alchemy, as in Christian iconography, the dove represents pneuma, or spirit.

The Ringdove is more often called *ḥamāma* in Arabic literature, but her name here is *muṭawwaqa warqā’*. What do we make of this less common appellation given to her by Ibn ‘Arabi? Again we must look to etymology. The consonantal root *T-W-Q* is connected with rings.

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chapter concentrates on the ability of the fluctuating heart of the believer both to embrace its Lord in every aspect and to accommodate any form of belief.

109. *Fut.* III. 137, Chap. 336.

110. “The Real can only be embraced by the heart.” *Fut.* I. 289, Chap. 58; trans. Chittick, *SPK*, p. 112.

111. See *Tarjumān*, Poem XI.

112. *Fut.* II. 130, Chap. 73, Question 153.

The Ringdove is famous for her fidelity. Because of her dark neck-ring (*ṭawq*), she is faithfully bound forever to her mate.<sup>113</sup> Despite her devotion, she is a weak bird and can be easily seized by birds of prey, such as the eagle, just as the heart can be seized by love.<sup>114</sup> *Mutawwaqa* (ringed) is a passive participle, hence a receptacle of action. The Ringdove is something ringed by an agent, in this case the Eagle. The ring encircling the dove's neck is sometimes interpreted by Ibn 'Arabī as the covenant entrusted to her by the Real.<sup>115</sup>

What first comes to mind from the root *W-R-Q* is “leaves” or “paper”, in other words, something that is written upon. Since the Ringdove in Ibn 'Arabī's mystical aviary represents the Tablet (*lawḥ*) that receives the writing of the Supreme Pen (the Eagle), this is appropriate. Ibn 'Arabī himself makes a connection between the Ringdove and leaves in Poem IX of his *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*: “A ringdove flitted past and a twig put forth leaves (*awraqa*).”<sup>116</sup> *Warqā* also means silver, a metal that suggests the shimmering of the moon and the reflection of the sun's superior light. *Ḥamāma*, on the other hand, is associated with the root *Ḥ-M-M*, hence with the colour red and with heat.<sup>117</sup>

The Ringdove is a messenger bird. In Ibn 'Arabī's writings, doves are sometimes seen as bearers of inspiration. In Poem XXX of the *Tarjumān*, for instance, doves – here called *ḥamām* – bring inspiration so overwhelming that their song causes the poet to become unconscious.<sup>118</sup> Ibn 'Arabī obligingly interprets doves here as “spirits of the intermediate world, the bearers of the inspiration that comes at the tinkling sound, which is like the noise of a chain when it strikes a rock. They cause this heart to vanish, even as they themselves vanish on hearing that sound.”<sup>119</sup>

113. See Ibn Ḥazm, *Ṭawq al-ḥamāma*.

114. Schimmel, *Two-Colored Brocade*, p. 184.

115. *Tarjumān*, p. 73.

116. *Tarjumān*, pp. 18 (Arabic), 64; Sells, *Stations of Desire*, p. 67; Giese, *Ibn 'Arabī: Urwolke und Welt*, p. 240.

117. Stetkevych, “Toward an Arabic Lexicon”, pp. 103–4.

118. *Tarjumān*, pp. 33 (Arabic), 112, 116 (commentary).

The Ringdove – when not seen with her loving partner – is more often than not found moaning and lamenting her loneliness. Poem XIII of the *Tarjumān*, in fact, makes reference to a ringdove who has lost her child – her unity (*wahḍāniyya*) as the Shaykh interprets it: “the special quality which distinguishes her from all things else ...whereby she knows the unity of Him who brought her into being. The loss of it consists in her not knowing what it is and in its not being plainly discerned by her.”<sup>120</sup>

Another symbol represented by the ringdove is Jesus, the symbol of the universal spirit breathed into the human form.<sup>121</sup> He, in turn, breathes life into the dead and the clay birds.

The Ringdove in philosophical terms is the Universal Soul.<sup>122</sup> It is also occasionally called the Spirit (*rūḥ*) blown into forms, the first among existing things to come into existence through being sent forth (*inbiʿāth*), and the first existent whose existence is the effect of a created being, a cause – that is, the First Intellect, which, in turn, was brought into existence by the Divine Command.<sup>123</sup> The Universal Soul is thus passive in relation to the Intellect, just as the Intellect is passive in relation to the Real, and in this way is somewhat akin to matter’s reception of form.

The Soul, while it enjoys a high rank, occupies a subordinate level to the Intellect because of its duality, a fact that is reiterated throughout the Ringdove’s speech and poem. It has, for example, two “causes” or, as they are called in the *Ittiḥād*, “subtle threads” (*raqāʾiq*).<sup>124</sup> One is the “special face” that is turned toward God,<sup>125</sup>

119. *Ibid.*, p.116. The sound described here is a reference to the sound accompanying the descent of prophecy that the Prophet found most unendurable.

120. *Ibid.*, p.73. See also Sells, *Stations of Desire*, p.105, and Giese, *Ibn ʿArabī*, p.253.

121. See *Tarjumān*, p. 73, commentary on Poem XIII.

122. For the Ringdove as Universal Soul in Ibn ʿArabī’s poetry, see *Tarjumān*, p.64, commentary on Poem IX.

123. See *Fut.* II. 427, Chap. 198, section 12.

124. On *raqāʾiq* and their relation to “faces” see *Fut.* III. 260, Chap. 357:

Between these high celestial forms and the low elemental forms extend tenuous (*raqāʾiq*) that belong to the divine names and the lordly realities. These are the specific faces belonging to each possible thing that has proceeded from

which, in philosophical terms, is the efficient cause of the Soul's existence. The other "face" is turned toward the First Intellect, which is the secondary cause (*sabab*) or, philosophically speaking, the formal cause, of its existence.

The Soul contains the attributes of both knowledge (*'ilm*) and effectiveness (*'amal*).<sup>126</sup> Its effective attribute brings the forms of the cosmos into existence: sensory forms – which are bodies and their sensible accidents – and supra-sensible forms – which are various sciences, knowledges, and desires pertaining to these bodies.<sup>127</sup> Its attribute of knowledge is called "a father, for it produces an effect, while the attribute related to action is a mother, for it is the object of an effect";<sup>128</sup> that is, it is because the Soul has received all that exists in its undifferentiated state that it can generate it in differentiated form.

Duality also pervades the Soul in terms Ibn 'Arabī describes as light and darkness, again sometimes related to the notion of "face". The light face is turned toward the Intellect, from which it receives light like the moon from the sun; the dark face is turned toward the material world.<sup>129</sup>

In theological terms, the Ringdove is equivalent to the Preserved,

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Him – from the word *Be* through the divine face-turning (*tawajjuh*) of desire. The occasioned thing does not know the specific face belonging to anything else, even though he has a specific face in himself, whether or not he knows it.

From this face everything is poor toward God, not toward its engendered occasion (*sabab*). This is the divine occasion that is nearer than the engendered occasion, for the engendered occasion is separate from the creature, but this occasion is qualified neither by separation from it nor by a proximate joining, even if, in the case of the human being it is *nearer than the jugular vein* (Q. 50: 16) – so its nearness is nearer than that.

Trans. Chittick, *SDG*, p. 143. See also *Fut.* III. 28ff., Chap. 307, where the *raqā'iq* are described as forming a cosmic chain, or ladder, of reciprocal interactions, stemming from God to Intellect to Soul and beyond.

125. See *Fut.* I. 428.

126. See *Fut.* I, Chap. 7.

127. See *Fut.* I, Chap. 11.

128. *Fut.* I. 140, Chap. 11.

129. See *'Uqlat al-mustawfiz*, p. 56.

or Inscribed Tablet, hence the notion of materiality is continued. The Tablet contains everything that the Pen writes upon it in detailed form, everything that God wills concerning creation until the Day of Resurrection.<sup>130</sup>

The Ringdove is also the equivalent of Eve, who is born from the sleeping Adam, “as if the intellect had not become aware of its creative power”.<sup>131</sup> It is only when the receptive female element becomes manifest that the active male element is able to contemplate most perfectly its own ability to know and act in this mirror that both is and is not itself.<sup>132</sup>

### *The Ringdove’s Poem*

Although we might expect the Eagle to address us first because of his precedent rank, he does not. Instead it is the Ringdove who regales us from her perch on the Tree with nineteen lines of poetry, whose end rhyme is *-ānī (ī)*. This is a fitting end rhyme for a creature whose poem both manifestly and subtly alludes to duality and doubling. First of all, there are four words in the first three lines, and an additional one in the twelfth, that are based on the consonantal root *TH-N-Y*, whose basic meaning is “two”. Another meaning of this root has to do with praise. The word *mathnā*, and its variant spelling *mathnah*, the plural of which in both instances is *mathānin*, is replete with symbolism, combining notions of repetition and praise. In particular we should note that *al-mathānī* can signify: (1) The Qur’an altogether, since it contains repeated mentions of certain dyads, such as reward and punishment, mercy and wrath; also that one reads it repeatedly without becoming weary. (2) The opening sura of the Qur’an, the Fātiḥa, which is repeated in every ritual prayer and at the beginning of the recitation of every Qur’anic verse, or because it contains praise of God. The Fātiḥa is often called, in fact, the

130. See *Fut.* I, Chap. 11.

131. Gril, *Arbre*, p. 13.

132. *Ibid.*, p. 14. This is best explained by the Shaykh in his chapter on Muḥammad in the *Fuṣūṣ*.



“seven doubled ones” (*al-sab‘ al-mathānī*).<sup>133</sup> (3) Qur’anic verses that are repeated often – especially the Fātiḥa – in order to avert evil.<sup>134</sup> The Ringdove, as a symbol of the Umm al-Kitāb, or heavenly prototype of the Qur’an, inscribed by the Supreme Pen, thus aptly names herself as the “doubled one”.

An additional doubling is fortuitously found in the Ringdove’s own name: *al-muṭawwaqa al-warqā*. The first part contains a doubled *wāw* and the second a *qāf* with two dots!

The Ringdove continues to allude to the notion of duality as she remarks: “They call me ‘O second!’” But as she tells us, and as we have already intuited by her preceding the Eagle in her address, she is not in actuality the second. As Ibn ‘Arabī explains elsewhere, the four spiritual beings: Intellect, Soul, Prime Matter, and Body, represented here by the four birds, in one sense occupy one rank.

Additional – less obvious – allusions to duality appear in the end rhyme of the poem itself: the suffix *-ān* in Arabic is a mark of the dual. Furthermore, the Ringdove has a penchant for repeating certain roots. Besides the five instances of words derived from *TH-N-Y*, there are two derived from *‘-N-Y* (meaning), three derived from its permutation *‘-Y-N*, and two from a closely related root *‘-W-N*. There are two derived from *‘-L-Y* (high) along with three from the closely related *W-L-Y* (friend). Then there are two derived from *D-N-N* (earthen jug), along with three from its close relative *D-N-W* (near, low). Finally, there are three from *Q-Ṣ-W* (far).

The Ringdove makes repeated references to things high and low, near and far. As we have mentioned above, she is connected to the Eagle and to her Lord by “subtle threads” (*raqā’ iq*) that connect level to level in the hierarchy of existence.

133. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Part 1, p. 360, s.v. *mathnā*.

134. Steingass, *Persian English Dictionary*, p. 1172.

## The Eagle (*'uqāb*)

If you ask: What is the Eagle?, we answer: [It is] the Divine Spirit which the Real breathed into the bodily temples as if they were their moving and quiescent spirits.<sup>135</sup>

Eagles have long been connected with royalty and temporal power. The most regal of the birds of prey, they are known for their dizzying ascents and swooping descents, lingering on earth just long enough to grasp the unsuspecting field mouse. They have a reputation for inaccessibility, living in mountain eyries. Their vision is so powerful and acute that they are said to be able to look at the sun without blinking.

In alchemy, the Eagle, especially the double-eagle, is a symbol – along with the raven – for Mercurius, the double-natured symbol of the philosopher's stone. The Eagle is “synonymous with phoenix, vulture, raven”.<sup>136</sup>

Why does Ibn 'Arabī call the Eagle *'uqāb* rather than the more common *nasr*? Etymology may have something to do with it. The consonantal root *'-Q-B* has a semantic range that includes: heel, coming after, following, taking one's place (as, for example, a vicegerent), punishment, consequence, result of an action, time or state of subsequence, recompense, offspring, mountain road, retaliation, sinews, and tendons. It is also described in ancient sources as a rock or mass of stone protruding in the side of a mountain like a stair or series of stairs. From this derives the meaning of *'aqaba* as a place that is difficult to ascend. The root also has the meaning of a “chief” or a “lord”. The Eagle plays the role of a grand old shaykh. He is Adam as first vicegerent of God (*khalīfa*).

The word *'uqāb* is also associated with the Prophet Muḥammad. First of all, it was his standard or banner, to which rallied his supporters for battle. Secondly, the Prophet assigned the name “al-'Āqib” to

135. *Fut.* II. 130, Chap. 73, Question 153.

136. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, p. 202.

himself because he came after the other prophets and was the last of the prophets.

In philosophical terms, the Eagle is the First Intellect. The Prophet is reported to have said: “The first thing that God created was the Intellect.”<sup>137</sup> It came into existence from nothing (*marwjud al-ibdā’ī*), meaning directly from God without intermediary or secondary cause.

The Essential Attribute connected to the Intellect is Life.<sup>138</sup> The Intellect is also compared to Light from which all other lights, that is, intellects, are kindled.<sup>139</sup> As such, it is analogous to the primordial Muḥammadan Light of prophecy, from which all prophets throughout time drew their derivative light.

In theological terms specific to Islam, the Eagle is the Supreme Pen. It is created from the Breath, which Ibn ‘Arabī in places equates with the Cloud. Ibn ‘Arabī describes the Intellect as “the bearer (*ḥāmil*) of everything that is known, high and low ... which takes from God without intermediary”.<sup>140</sup> It receives the dictation of all that is to be in summary form and inscribes it on the Tablet, which preserves it in detailed form.

### *The Eagle’s Poem*

The Eagle recites ten lines in *kāmīl* (meaning: “perfect”) metre, whose end rhyme is *‘ayn*. The Eagle’s poem expresses well the Intellect’s high role in the hierarchy of existence. A subtext of the verse is the Qur’anic story of Adam’s creation (Q. 2: 30–9) as God’s vicegerent on the earth. When God announced His plans, the angels were dismayed: “Wilt Thou place therein one who will do harm therein and shed blood?” (Q. 2: 30). Thus the lines: “Approach confers upon me a pleasing wisdom but it rends the heart of the elevated spirit.” What the angels did not know was that Adam was created

137. According to a similar hadith: “The first thing that God created was the Pen.”

138. See *Fut.* I. 293.

139. See *Fut.* II. 66–7, Chap. 73, Question 39.

140. *Fut.* I. 92, Chap. 3.

“upon His form”, as a perfect reflection of his Creator. Moulded with two hands, he encompassed more of the Divinity than the angels could, as they were created only to praise and obey. As vicegerent, the Intellect/Adam was taught “all the names” – whether these are thought of as the Divine Names or the names of everything in creation: “The realities hurry toward me to seek their portion”, that is, their names. It was because of this all-encompassing knowledge that the angels – with the exception of Satan – realized Adam’s superiority and obeyed God’s command to prostrate themselves before Adam.

The poem plays with the ideas of closeness and distance, approach and retreat. As in the story of Adam, it is the Intellect’s disobedience and setting itself up as independent arbiter that causes distance from the Real, while realizing its servanthood and utter dependence is what brings it near.

### The ‘*Anqā*’

If you ask: What is the ‘*Anqā*’?, we answer: [It is] the Dust (*habā*’), which is neither existent nor non-existent, although it assumes form in the vision-event.<sup>141</sup>

The ‘*Anqā*’ is the Dust in which God reveals/opens (*fataḥa*) the bodies of the world.<sup>142</sup>

The ‘*anqā*’, sometimes translated into English as either gryphon or phoenix, is a mythical bird. Early Arabic lexicographers struggled to define this creature none had ever seen. It is said to be perhaps a kind of eagle (*‘uqāb*) or vulture (*rakḥama*) or a crested black bird or one that is bald and has a long yellow beak.<sup>143</sup> Sometimes those seeking an etymological connection describe it as long-necked (*‘unuq* in

141. *Fut.* II. 130, Chap. 73, Question 153.

142. *Al-Iṣṭilāḥāt*, p. 310.

143. Kopf, “The Bird ‘Anūq”, p. 125. For other descriptions of the ‘*anqā*’ under its various guises as phoenix, gryphon, and so forth, see Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood*, pp. 184–5.

Arabic means “neck”). The form ‘*anūq*, according to the lexicographers, is either male or female, singular or plural, but the form ‘*anqā*’ is feminine. The ‘*anqā*’ is said to live atop the inaccessible Mount Qāf. Sometimes her high mountain habitat itself is called ‘*anqā*’.<sup>144</sup>

Many proverbs exist concerning this odd bird, and from the beginning it was associated with all that was marvellous, occult, and strange. “Rarer than the eggs of the ‘*anūq*’<sup>145</sup> was one such proverb, and the Turkish *ismi var cismi yok* – it has a name but not a body – came to symbolize “everything that exists only in the imagination”.<sup>146</sup>

The ‘*anqā*’ has certain similarities to another fanciful female bird, the *simurgh*, described as “the manifestation of spiritual reality”.<sup>147</sup> The *simurgh* is the object of the birds’ quest in ‘Aṭṭār’s famous parable. The ‘*anqā*’ and the *simurgh* find a felicitous pairing in the avian symbolism of a follower of Rūzbihān Baqlī: “These are the places of the descent of the *Sīmurgh* of the spirit ... [and] the ascent of the ‘*Anqā*’ of the heart.”<sup>148</sup>

The phoenix plays a major role in alchemical texts, in which the very alchemical process is said to begin in chaos and end in the birth of the phoenix, or philosopher’s stone.<sup>149</sup>

In Ibn ‘Arabī’s symbology, as we have discovered, etymology provides a rich mine to explore. In the case of the “Strange ‘*Anqā*’” (‘*anqā*’ *mughrib*, or sometimes *mugharrib*), the consonantal root *GH-R-B* conveys the following semantic range: distance, removal, exile, foreignness, hiddenness, the setting sun, west, strangeness, improbability, obscurity, and incomprehensibility.

It is also connected with the quality of blackness. For instance, it is a certain intensely black grape, and intensely black hair.<sup>150</sup> Note that both the ‘*Anqā*’ and her son the Crow (*ghurāb*) are connected

144. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Part 5, p. 2177, s.v. *a’naq*.

145. Kopf, “The Bird ‘Anūq”, p. 125.

146. Schimmel, *Two-Colored Brocade*, p. 188.

147. Ibid.

148. See Ernst, “The Symbolism of Birds and Flight”, p. 366.

149. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, p. 202.

150. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Part 5, p. 2177, s.v. *a’naq*.

with this root, the *'Anqā'* primarily with connotations of hiddenness and strangeness, while the *Ghurāb*, as we shall see, is primarily associated with distance and blackness. It was no doubt quite intentional, on Ibn 'Arabī's part, to choose his four birds with an eye to the symbolic gradations of light. The Eagle, as we have seen, is pure light; the Ringdove, a mixture of light and darkness, with light predominating; the *'Anqā'*, an ambiguous twilight, tending toward dark; and the Crow, jet-black midnight.

On the negative side, the term *'anqā' mughrib* is also connected to the notion of calamity or misfortune. The expression *ṭārat bihi 'anqā' mughrib* means: calamity or misfortune carried him away.<sup>151</sup> Moreover, the early animal encyclopaedists did not hesitate to put the *'anūq* in the category of dung-eaters.<sup>152</sup> In a similarly negative vein, the *'anqā'* was sometimes associated with the jinn. In a tradition, *inna fī-kum mugharrībīn* means: "Among you are those in whom the jinn have a partnership or share" because of their coming from remote or foreign stock.<sup>153</sup>

Because among its meanings is "west", it is also associated both with the geographical west, that is, the Maghreb, where Ibn 'Arabī spent much of his youth, and the spiritual meaning of "west" as esoteric knowledge. This contrasts with the Illuminationist school, founded by the martyred Suhrawardī, which saw the west as the dark realm of the body and the east as the source of spiritual knowledge and light. In Ibn 'Arabī's early work *'Anqā' mughrib*, the narrator alludes cryptically to the Seal of the Saints, Jesus, both as the *'anqā' mughrib* and as the Sun which, according to Islamic tradition, will rise in the west at the end of time.

There is an obvious parallel between the Phoenix (often the translation of choice for *'anqā'*) and Khālīd, both of whom are connected with fire, death, and resurrection.<sup>154</sup> Here is 'Aṭṭar on the Phoenix:

151. Ibid.

152. Kopf, "The Bird 'Anūq", p. 129.

153. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Part 5, p. 2177, s.v. *a'naq*.

154. Another reference to the story of Khālīd and the fiery *'Anqā'* may be found in Ibn 'Arabī's *'Anqā' mughrib*. See Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood*, pp. 481–2.

The Phoenix is an admirable and lovely bird which lives in Hindustan. It has no mate and lives alone. ... The Phoenix lives about a thousand years and he knows exactly the day of his death. When his time comes he gathers round him a quantity of palm leaves and, distraught among the leaves, utters plaintive cries. ... His lamentations express the sorrow of death, and he trembles like a leaf. At the sound of his trumpet the birds and the beasts draw near to assist the spectacle. Now they fall into bewilderment, and many die because their strength fails them. While the Phoenix still has breath, he beats his wings and ruffles his feathers, and by this produces fire. The fire spreads to the palm fronds, and soon both the fronds and the bird are reduced to living coals and then to ashes. But when the last spark has flickered out a new small Phoenix arises from the ashes.<sup>155</sup>

In philosophical parlance, the ‘*Anqā*’ is a metonym for the Greek notion of *hylē* (Arabic: *hayūlā*), or prime matter,<sup>156</sup> which Ibn ‘Arabī, citing precedent in the Qur’an,<sup>157</sup> ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and the Sufi Sahl al-Tustarī (d.896),<sup>158</sup> generally prefers to call Dust (*habā*’). In its original meaning, *habā*’ was the dust particles that dance in the rays of the sun. Appropriated by Arabic alchemists such as Jābir, *habā*’ was seen as the constitution of the material world in formation.<sup>159</sup> Associated with the sheer potentiality<sup>160</sup> and the female principle

155. ‘Aṭṭār, *Mantiq al-ṭayr*, pp. 66–7.

156. The Greek philosophers discussed prime matter extensively, basing their doctrines on Aristotle’s writings on material cause, Plato’s notions of the receptacle, or a combination of the two. It is primarily this hybrid doctrine that penetrated the Islamic milieu through the late Hellenistic Neoplatonic commentary tradition.

157. See *Fut.* I. 122, Chap. 7. “It was scattered dust” (Q. 56:6).

158. See *Fut.* I. 119, Chap. 6. For Sahl, the Muḥammadan Light was akin to *habā*’ in that it was shaped by God from His own Light. See Böwering, *Mystical Vision of Existence*, p. 150.

159. See Kraus, *Jābir ibn Ḥayyān*, p. 142 and his long note concerning *habā*’ on p. 154, n. 6.

160. See also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a.76.7; *Summa contra Gentiles* I, Chap. 43; II, Chap. 96; III, Chap. 6.

– hence the feminine gender of the ‘*Anqā*’ in the *Ittiḥād* – prime matter is capable of taking on any form and as such is the matrix and ground for the universe.

The notion of prime matter is a particularly difficult one to grasp, especially since the term “matter” in modern terms suggests the stuff of reality that we can physically sense and grasp. But prime matter is nothing of this sort. As the Ikhwān al-Ṣāfā’ (Brethren of Purity) write, “It is a simple intelligible substance that cannot be perceived by sense.”<sup>161</sup> It is completely dimensionless, unquantifiable, and devoid of actual content, while containing at the same time the potential forms of all existence. As such, even understanding it becomes impossible. One is left only with knowledge of its name and the faculty of imagination, which is its domain, to give it form.

The origin of this Dust, according to Ibn ‘Arabī, is God’s desire to bring the cosmos into existence and His theophany “in the Universal Reality<sup>162</sup> – a reality called Dust”.<sup>163</sup> The Shaykh compares it to the plaster with which a builder moulds whatever forms he wishes. God manifests Himself as Light to the Dust, and every thing existing in potentia in this Dust receives His light according to its particular predisposition, “as the corners of a room receive the light of a torch, and are more fully and brightly lit up the nearer they are to the torch”.<sup>164</sup>

*Habā’*, says Ibn ‘Arabī, is present in all natural forms, and cannot be divided, separated, or decreased. He compares it to the whiteness that can be perceived in every white thing.<sup>165</sup> In this it appears to be equivalent to the philosophical universal accident that has no reality save when it manifests in an underlying subject or substance. Another example, given in the *Futūḥāt*, makes this even clearer. Knowledge, says the Shaykh, in itself is neither eternal nor temporal. In

161. *Rasā’il*, II, p. 6.

162. Universal Reality is synonymous with Reality of Realities (*ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqā’iq*). For more on the relationship between these terms and the ‘*Anqā*’, see below, p. 107.

163. *Fut.* I. 119, Chap. 6.

164. *Fut.* I. 119, Chap. 6; trans. Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, p. 68.

165. *Fut.* I. 122, Chap. 7.



the Eternal One, knowledge is eternal; in the creature, knowledge is temporally originated. “In every essence it accords with its own reality and entity. But it has no existential entity except the entity of that which it describes. So it remains in its root: an intelligible thing, not an existent thing.”<sup>166</sup>

*Hayūlā*, moreover, is not only associated with cosmology and epistemology but is also used in connection with the Perfect Human Being. For example, Ibn ‘Arabī tells the reader in his *Fuṣūṣ*, “Be the *hayūlā* of all the doctrinal beliefs”,<sup>167</sup> meaning: Do not limit yourself to any particular Face that God shows to the believers, for they are infinite. It is to this all-encompassment that he refers when he says in what is perhaps his most memorable lines of verse: “My heart has become capable of every form: it is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks, / And a temple for idols and the pilgrim’s Ka’ba and the tables of the Tora and the book of the Koran.”<sup>168</sup>

In his *Dīwān*, the Shaykh composed a poem to the ‘*Anqā*’, which we give here in full as it expresses so well the nature of this strange creature:

I marvel at a being that comprises every form,  
Whether of essential angels, jinn, or humankind;  
Whether of this world or of the world-supernal,  
Of animal, vegetable, or mineral.  
These are naught beside it,  
Nor yet are they its essence,  
But in any form it wills, it manifests itself.  
It is what appears, by definition, to perception,  
Yet it is what remains veiled from conception.  
For minds cannot know it by the force of their thinking,  
But Imagination makes it manifest to sense.  
It is the Living, although no life supports its Essence

166. *Fut.* II. 432, Chap. 198, Section 14; trans. Chittick, *SPK*, p. 139.

167. *Fuṣūṣ*, I. 113; Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, p. 137.

168. *Tarjumān*, pp. 19 (Arabic), 67.

In the way that all the forms subsist in [life].  
Inform me then, who it may be that I have indicated  
In what we have described (and cast aside conceptions):  
There it is – concealed, but without being absent;  
And there, again, envisaged, but hidden from vision!  
I would like to know: Of the likes of it have you  
Ever heard or no? – Inform me, then, who is it?  
But no one knows what we have adduced here  
Except for One, and that is God.  
No creature can ever comprehend it.  
None there is like unto it, except one personage:  
I marvel at the One Perfect that he epitomizes!<sup>169</sup>

### *The ‘Anqā’'s Poem*

The ‘*Anqā*’'s poem, like that of the Tree,<sup>170</sup> has but five lines, whose end rhyme is *dāl*, primarily *-ūd* with the exception of the final word of the poem that ends in *-īd*. A long “u”, inserted between the final two consonants of a first-form verb, indicates the passive participle, the recipient of an action, for example *mamdūd*. This participle is particularly apt for the ‘*Anqā*’ who, as a metonym for prime matter, receives all forms.<sup>171</sup>

169. Trans. Elmore (slightly altered), *Islamic Sainthood*, pp.614–15. He bases his trans. on the 1855 edn. of the *Dīrwān*.

170. It is not by mere chance that the poems of the ‘*Anqā*’ and the Tree are equal in length. The author wants to draw our attention to the ‘*Anqā*’'s similarity to the Tree as Perfect Human Being.

171. For more on the ‘*Anqā*’, see Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood*, pp.184–95.

## The Jet-Black Crow (*al-ghurāb*)

If you ask: What is the Crow?, we answer: [It is] the Universal Body, which the Eagle made appear by means of the Dove.<sup>172</sup>

The raven or crow is a bird that is often, perhaps because of its colour, connected with the occult. In alchemical lore, the raven – like the eagle and the phoenix – is one of the symbols for Mercurius, the *lapis philosophorium*.<sup>173</sup> It is thus associated with everything that is solid, dark, and earthy. It represents the first stage of the alchemical process, *melanosis* or *nigredo*, “either present from the beginning as a quality of the material prima, the chaos or *massa confusa*, or else produced by the separation ... of the elements”.<sup>174</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī appears to be well acquainted with the alchemical art when he has the *Ghurāb* call himself the alembic (*būṭāqa*), an alchemical term. Jung tells us that the alembic’s ideal shape was perfectly round – or sometimes egg-shaped, in imitation of the womb and the heavenly bodies.<sup>175</sup> Universal Body, the *Ghurāb*’s metaphysical reality, is also created round: “The first shape that this body received was the circular shape.”<sup>176</sup>

Crows inhabit “the hibernal-material world”<sup>177</sup> and are associated with death and entombment. The *ghurāb* is found in the Qur’an in this connection in the remarkable story of Cain and Abel. Following Cain’s murder of his brother: “Allah sent a raven scratching up the ground, to show him how to hide his brother’s naked corpse. He said: Woe unto me! Am I not able to be as this raven and so hide my brother’s naked corpse? And he became repentant”(Q. 5: 31).

In Arabic literature, the crow or raven – the two are not distinguished – generally has a negative connotation for the reasons we have alluded to above.<sup>178</sup> In Rūmī’s poetry, for example, the crow is

172. *Fut.* II. 130, Chap. 73, Question 153.

173. Jung, *Philosophy and Alchemy*, p. 134.

174. *Ibid.*, p. 230.

175. See *ibid.*, pp. 87, 236.

176. ‘*Uqlat al-mustawfiz*, p. 57.

177. Schimmel, *Triumphal Sun*, p. 118.

considered an ugly and predacious bird, a consumer of carrion and dung. By extension, it is a symbol of those attracted by the material world. It also has a reputation for sharp-sightedness, caution, and pride.

Crows are almost invariably birds of ill-omen. In many a pre-Islamic poem, the *ghurāb al-bayn* – archetypal bird of separation – signals the impending separation of lover and beloved. Ibn ‘Arabī employs the motif of the *ghurāb al-bayn* in his poetry upon occasion. In Poem XV of the *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*, for example, he writes: “Gone, gone, / cawed the crows of separation, / God leave rotting on the path / a crow that caws! // And what are the crows of separation / but camel stallions / pacing hard, / taking those we love away.”<sup>179</sup>

In pre-Islamic Arabia, Ghurāb was a personal name which, according to tradition, Muḥammad would not allow the Muslims to keep because of its etymological association with separation from one’s homeland (*ghurba*) and its natural association with the foul carrion-eating bird.

In philosophical terms, the Jet-Black Crow represents Universal Body. Universal Body is sometimes known as “Second Matter”,<sup>180</sup> the first metaphysical step to concrete existence.<sup>181</sup> It is absolute, unqualified body which, because it receives effects from Nature in the form of the four elements, is the first natural form.<sup>182</sup> Unlike *hayūlā*,

178. For more on the raven in Arabic literature, see Stetkevych, *Muḥammad and the Golden Bough*, p. 117–18, n. 11.

179. Trans. Sells, *Stations of Desire*, p. 114. Nicholson gives a more prosaic English trans., *Tarjumān*, pp. 21 (Arabic), 76.

180. The designation of Universal Body as “second matter” in Arabic philosophy can be found in the *Rasāʾil* of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ (Vol. III, p. 187): “The First Hyle receives measurements, which are length, width, and depth, and with that it becomes the Absolute Body, which is the Second Hyle.”

181. Philosophical discussions concerning first and second matter began early in Greek philosophy, probably in response to Stoic ideas concerning matter, and lasted well into the Hellenistic period. See de Haas, *John Philoponus’ New Definition*. The Arabic philosophers continued the debate, formulating their own opposing notions. See Hyman, “Aristotle’s ‘First Matter’ and Avicenna’s and Averroes’ ‘Corporeal Form’”.

182. See Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil*, II, p. 6. See also Nasr, *Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, pp. 58–9.

Universal Body is quantifiable and determinate; it has length, width, and depth. A “corporeal sphere”, it “fills the Void”, and “within it every corporeal thing in the cosmos takes shape”.<sup>183</sup>

As Ibn ‘Arabī says in the *‘Uqlat al-mustawfiz*: “The first form that received the form of the body is length, breadth, and depth. ... Its length is from the Intellect, its width from the Soul, and its depth is the space that extends to the centre [of the earth]. For this reason, these three realities were in it, and it was three-dimensional.”<sup>184</sup>

The Universal Body is given the shape of a circle, the most perfect of shapes,<sup>185</sup> and it has movement, not from place to place but around its axis, “like a hand-mill”.<sup>186</sup> This movement is caused by heat, for, if the elements of the body were perfectly equilibrated, it would be stationary and there would be no manifestation whatsoever. Thus the series of revolving celestial spheres are the first and finest of the corporeal bodies to come into existence in Universal Body.

Universal Body is associated with fullness (*malā’*) as contrasted to void (*khalā’*), and it is in the Shaykh’s chapter on Retreat (*khalwa*) in the *Futūḥāt* that some of his most intriguing remarks concerning Universal Body can be found. The first thing to fill the void, according to Ibn ‘Arabī, was the dimensionless Dust, a “dark substance”.<sup>187</sup> Then the Real manifested Himself to this substance with His Name the Light, dyeing it and removing from it the darkness of non-existence. It then was attributed with existence and became what the early philosophers called the “Great Man” (*al-insān al-kabīr*), in other words, the macrocosm. The forms of shapes were unfolded within this body: shapes of the celestial spheres, the elements, and all generated beings, the human – called the “Small Man” – constituting the last of them. This human being, created upon the form of

183. Murata, *Tao of Islam*, p. 156.

184. *‘Uqlat al-mustawfiz*, pp. 56–7.

185. As Corbin points out (*Temple and Contemplation*, p. 216), the circular form should be conceived in terms of function rather than of geometrical shape.

186. *Fut.* II. 433, Chap. 198, Section 14.

187. *Fut.* II. 150, Chap. 78. See also *Fuṣūṣ*, Chap. on Joseph, for the description of the cosmos in its latent form as “shadow” and its relation to the Imagination.

the Real and the cosmos, bringing together every attribute, is God's vicegerent, the Perfect Human Being. Thus, as the Shaykh elegantly puts it, "the Dusty-Substance impregnated with Light is the basic element (*al-basīṭ*), the manifestation of the cosmos in it is the intermediary (*al-wasīṭ*), and the Perfect Human Being is the summary (*al-wajīz*)".<sup>188</sup>

In Chapter 198 of the *Futūḥāt*, the Divine Name associated with Universal Body is the Manifest (*al-zāhir*), because it is the final outcome of the divine creative process, the complete filling of the void or womb of non-existence with life in all its manifest forms. The prophetic wisdom exemplified by this Name is that of Abraham, who, with his epithet "the Intimate Friend" (*khalīl*) exhibits the complementary qualities of voiding (*khalā'*)<sup>189</sup> of self and filling (*malā'*) with God. Permeated with divine qualities, as light permeates inchoate matter, Abraham becomes the manifest locus of the hidden God: "If ... the creature is considered the manifest and the Reality the Unmanifest within him, then the Reality is in the hearing of the creature, as also in his sight, hand, foot, and all his faculties, as declared in the [well-known] Holy Tradition of the Prophet."<sup>190</sup> To deprecate the material world is thus to fail to witness the fullness of God's Self-disclosure in the manifold vessels of the cosmos and to be ignorant of both oneself and God. "The spirit cannot rationally understand itself without the body, which is the locus of 'how many' and manyness. ... It does not know its humanness without the existence of the body along with it."<sup>191</sup>

An additional connection between Abraham and the *Ghurāb* should be noted. Corbin has pointed out that the site of the *Maqām Ibrāhīm* (Station of Abraham) is located in the western area of the Ka'ba precinct. Hence, the notions of setting and exile are appropriately

188. *Fut.* II. 151, Chap. 78.

189. *Khulla* (intimate friendship) and *khalā'* (void) are not derived from the same root, but Ibn 'Arabī often makes use of assonant words to draw startling parallels.

190. *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 81; trans. Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, p. 92.

191. *Fut.* II. 618, Chap. 282; trans. Chittick, *SPK*, p. 235.

attributed to this archetypal monotheist, who refused to worship what sets, and chose exile over idol worship.<sup>192</sup>

### *The Jet-Black Crow's Poem*

The Jet-Black Crow has twenty lines of verse, whose metre is *ramal* and whose end rhyme is *-ānī*, like the Ringdove's. The world-shunning philosophers have maligned the Body as the source of darkness and evil, but the Crow seeks to set the record straight. As a manifestation of the Divine Name "the Last",<sup>193</sup> he is the very crown of creation; as a manifestation of the Name "the Manifest" he is the matrix for the corporeal entities of the universe. Although dark himself, he is the source of the myriad sparks of light in that the stars and planets are all derived from Universal Body. His poem thus contains an extended allusion to the Light verse of Sura 24.

Since the cosmos is created upon principles of arithmetic, geometry, and music, all these principles receive their first determination in the Universal Body. For that reason, the Crow rightly calls himself the "foundation of songs".

The Jet-Black Crow, because of his darkness, is a keeper of secrets and a repository of the Trust.<sup>194</sup> The one who can unravel his secret is someone who is also associated with the chthonic realm: Ṣakhr ibn Sinān, prophet of the *Barzakh*.

192. Corbin, *Temple and Contemplation*, p.231.

193. Note also the connection between the Name "the Last" (*al-Ākhir*) and the next or "last" world (*al-ākhirā*). Many of the secrets of the Crow – archetypal harbinger of death – have to do with the fate of the body after death. In this he is very like the man whose secret he conceals.

194. See *Fut.* II. 647.

## *Cosmic Marriage<sup>195</sup> and the Genealogy of the Birds*

According to Ibn ‘Arabī, the entire universe is the locus of marriage and procreation, not only among material beings but in the divine and spiritual realms as well. God, for example, engenders the universe in nothingness when He brings the fixed entities (*al-a’yān al-thābita*) into existence.<sup>196</sup>

The Pen and the Tablet are also paired as a cosmic couple:

Between the Pen and the Tablet there is an intelligible spiritual marriage and a visible sensory effect. The effect that was deposited in the Tablet was like the sperm that is ejaculated into the womb of the female. The meanings deposited within the celestial letters that became manifest from that writing are like the spirits of the children deposited within their bodies.<sup>197</sup>

Even syllogisms are engaged in procreation. Deductive knowledge can only result from the “marriage” of two premises, which takes place when a single term is repeated. This constitutes the marriage act between them, and the conclusion that is “born” from them is thus called their “child”.<sup>198</sup>

In many places throughout the *Futūḥāt*, as we have alluded to above, Ibn ‘Arabī speaks about the relations between the ontological levels in terms of fathers, mothers, and children.<sup>199</sup> He states this principle as follows: “Everything that exercises an effect is a father, and everything that receives an effect is a mother. ... That which is born between the two from the effect is called a son or a child.”<sup>200</sup>

195. For a masterful treatment of this theme in Islamic philosophy, see Murata, *Tao of Islam*, especially Chap. 5 (Macrocosmic Marriage).

196. See *Fut.* II. 656, Chap. 292.

197. *Fut.* I. 139, Chap. 11.

198. *Fut.* I. 138, Chap. 11.

199. See especially *Fut.* I, Chaps 11 and 21.

200. *Fut.* I. 138, Chap. 11; trans. Murata, *Tao of Islam*, p. 145.



God is thus the “First Father” and (non-existent) “thingness” is the First Mother. Marriage on this level takes place through the existential command: Be! The child that results is the possible thing upon which existence has been bestowed.<sup>201</sup> This cosmic pattern appears at every level of creation, but other than the role of First Father, which is fulfilled by God alone, the rest of the existing entities take turns at being fathers and mothers, depending on whether they have an active or a passive role. For this reason, the Eagle/Pen/Intellect is a mother as well as a father, a Tablet as well as a Pen, although we see him in the *Ittiḥād* primarily in his masculine role.

The four birds are thus related to one another in a variety of ways, the most evident of which is through a hierarchical descent. The Eagle, brought into existence by the Real, gives birth from himself to the Ringdove, through the agency of the Real’s command. Their mating, the tale of which constitutes a large portion of the Ringdove’s soliloquy, results in the *‘Anqā’*, who is the mother of the Crow. We are not told who the Crow’s father is, and the narrator does not pursue the genealogy further.

The bird’s family tree, if we may call it that, is complicated, however, by the fact that they represent cosmological figures whose relation to one another is a serious matter of dispute. One member of the family, for example, appears to be altogether missing.

## Nature

Anyone acquainted with the Shaykh’s extensive writings on cosmology in the *Futūḥāt* and elsewhere will note the absence of Nature among these cosmic principles making up the family tree of the four birds. In Chapter 198 of the *Futūḥāt*, for example, we find an enumeration of the twenty-eight levels of existence that places Nature between the level of the Universal Soul and that of the Dust. In fact, the Shaykh explains that the level of Nature can only be between the Soul and the Dust, for “Every body that the Dust accepts, down to

201. See *Fut.* I. 139.

the last existing body, is natural.”<sup>202</sup> Nature’s authority extends from the Dust to everything below it, while the Universal Soul’s authority extends from Nature to everything below it. As for what is above the Soul, that is, the Intellect and what is above it, neither Nature nor Soul have any authority over it.

In some instances, however, the Shaykh places Nature and Dust at an approximately equal level, Nature being slightly higher only because of its priority in time:

Among those things that were cast [into the Soul] through a most sanctified, spiritual casting [that is, from the First Intellect] were Nature and the Dust. Hence the Soul was the first mother to give birth to twins. The first thing she cast down was Nature, which was followed by the Dust. Hence Nature and the Dust are brother and sister from a single father and a single mother. Then [God] gave Nature in marriage to the Dust. Born from them was the form of the Universal Body, which was the first body to become manifest. Nature is the father because it produces effect. Dust is the mother because within it effects become manifest. The result is the Body.<sup>203</sup>

This appears to answer the question of the Crow’s progenitor: his father is Nature. We should not be surprised at seeing Mother Nature personified here as masculine, for it only means that Nature is the active force in the marriage act between it and the Dust. But this does not solve the problem of why Nature does not appear in the *Ittihād* at all.

It is possible that a clue to this mystery can be found in a passage of the *Futūḥāt* in which Ibn ‘Arabī appears to completely reverse his position regarding the relative positions of the entities in question: “[T]hose who have placed Nature in a level below the Soul and above the Hyle ... have no witnessing”,<sup>204</sup> that is, they have not seen

202. *Fut.* I. 261, Chap. 47.

203. *Fut.* I. 140, Chap. 11; trans. Murata, *Tao of Islam*, pp. 156–7, modified.

204. *Fut.* III. 420, Chap. 371; trans. Chittick, *SPK*, p. 140.

things as they really are. He goes on to resolve this contradiction by explaining that:

If a person does have witnessing and [nonetheless] holds this view, he means [by it] that Nature which becomes manifest through its authority in the translucent corporeal bodies, that is, in the Throne and what it surrounds. This second Nature is to the first as the daughter is to the woman who is the mother; like her mother, she gives birth, even if she is a daughter born from her.<sup>205</sup>

Nature, it now appears, occupies two rungs on the genealogical ladder. Thus far, we have only been concerned with that aspect of Nature which gives rise to physical bodies, from the celestial spheres to the four elements and everything in between. This “second Nature” is the cosmogonic *‘Anqā’*. But as the Shaykh tells us above, there is an aspect of Nature that transcends this second Nature and occupies a rank even higher than that of the First Intellect and Universal Soul – a Nature which, Ibn ‘Arabī says, “is more worthy to be attributed to the Real than anything else, since everything else becomes manifest only in that which becomes manifest from Nature, that is, the Breath [of the All-Merciful], which permeates the cosmos.”<sup>206</sup>

Nature as first Mother is all-inclusive. Ibn ‘Arabī equates this Nature with the Breath of the All-Merciful: “Universal Nature, by its form, comes before those things that derive their being from her. In reality, Nature is the Breath of the Merciful in which are unfolded the forms of the higher and lower Cosmos.”<sup>207</sup> Breath manifests as a vaporous Cloud – that symbolic representation of the totality of animated entities, generated at every instant through God’s loving mercy. With every flash of metaphysical light, the cosmos comes into existence, returns to non-existence, and receives new existence perpetually within God’s knowledge of Himself. In every moment,

205. Ibid.; trans. Chittick, *SPK*, p. 140, modified.

206. Ibid.; trans. Chittick, *SPK*, p. 140.

207. *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 219; trans. Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, p. 277.

an endless process of divine exhalation and inhalation breathes life into the entities, annihilates them, and revivifies them eternally.

This Cloud is sometimes equated with the Reality of Realities, or Universal Reality. It is, so to speak, *hayūlā* writ large. To give an example which, although provided by Ibn ‘Arabī, is probably more familiar to readers of Plato, it is the Form of Knowledge as opposed to the Form of the chair. There is nothing that this Reality does not contain, since it embraces every concept, from the Real to the real, including the very notion of being itself:

The Cloud is that which we have mentioned as eternal in the eternal and temporally originated in the temporally originated. This is like your words, or identical with your words, concerning Being/existence. When you attribute it to the Real, you say it is Eternal, but when you attribute it to creation, you say that it is temporally originated. So the Cloud inasmuch as it is a description of the Real is a divine description, but inasmuch as it is a description of the cosmos it is an engendered description.<sup>208</sup>

Since this Reality is qualified neither by existence nor by non-existence, Ibn ‘Arabī sometimes calls it the “third thing” and the “All-embracing Universal”, and says that it is from this third thing that the world becomes manifest.<sup>209</sup> Embracing all realities, particularizing them at will in a myriad of forms, this is the ‘*Anqā’* in her noetic aspect. “Call it, if you wish, the Reality of Realities, or hylē, First Matter, or supreme genus. ... This third thing can never be separate from the Necessary Being, standing parallel to It, without having entified existence.”<sup>210</sup>

There is still one more step we must take, one more form that the ‘*Anqā’* must assume to complete the triplicate aspect of her nature: that of the Universal Tree, symbol of the Perfect Human

208. *Fut.* II. 63, Chap. 73, Question 31; trans. Chittick, *SPK*, p. 137.

209. *Inshā’ al-dawā’ ir*, p. 18.

210. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Being, whose “shade extends over those whom God envelops in His solicitude”.

The Perfect Human Being, and Muḥammad in particular, is sometimes depicted as the microcosmic counterpart of the Breath of the All-Merciful. We should recall that the *Fuṣūṣ* begins with the divine exhalation that gives form to the cosmos and its likeness Adam, and it ends with Muḥammad, the perfect vessel of mercy, who receives and gives form to the Divine Breath: “When Muḥammad was created a pure servant, he had no ambition for leadership, but continued prostrating and standing [before his Lord], a passive creation, until God effected [His purpose] in him, when He conferred on him an active role in the realm of the Breaths.”<sup>211</sup>

Muḥammad, then, also occupies two levels: he is both the principle and the aim of creation. The highest of these levels is called the primordial Muḥammadan Reality, or the Muḥammadan Light, which lies above the levels of spiritual and material creation. It is to this that the Prophet’s claim, “I was a prophet when Adam was between water and clay”, refers. The other level is his specific universal mission as the Prophet Muḥammad, the embodied Seal of the Prophets, who lived and died as a fully human being.

The Perfect Human Being embraces all reality, divine and human, never known in itself, but only through relationship. The Perfect Human Being is a synthesis of all the words of existence, all Names of beauty and all Names of severity; a kaleidoscope of light and darkness; a heart that embraces every form, from mosque to fire temple; a microcosmic *mundus imaginis*, where what is and what is not happily co-exist.

The secret of the birds’ genealogy, therefore, lies in the *‘Anqā’*’s unique position as First and Second Mothers – a fact that allows her to rightly claim that “nothing can be manifested that I am not in”. The *‘Anqā’*, as First Mother, gives life to all. In this sense, she strangely gives birth to her father, the Intellect, bringing to mind

211. *Fuṣūṣ*, p.220; trans. Austin, p.278.

the paradoxical lines from al-Ḥallāj's cosmological–alchemical poem  
“*Uqtulūnī yâ thiqātī*”:<sup>212</sup>

My mother has given birth to her father,  
What a marvel is mine!  
And my daughters, 'though my daughters, are my sisters,  
Not by the act of time, no,  
Nor by the act of adultery.<sup>213</sup>

212. *Dīwān al-Ḥallāj*, p. 125. See French trans. by Massignon, *Ḥusayn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj*, p. 54.

213. See Ibn 'Arabī's reference to this poem in *Fut.* II. 656, Chap. 292. Henry Corbin has discussed the perplexing line: “My mother has given birth to her father” in *Creative Imagination*, pp. 169–70. He also notes that the appellation of the Prophet's daughter Fātima as “mother of her father” (*umm abīhā*) – an appellation attributed in Shi'ite sources to the Prophet himself – is an indication of the “Creative Feminine” alluded to in al-Ḥallāj's poem (see *Creative Imagination*, p. 345, n. 65; p. 347, n. 70).



# APPENDIX

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## The Edition of the Text

Ibn 'Arabī mentions the *Ittiḥād al-kawnī* once in his *Futūḥāt* (II.351), as well as in two bibliographical works, the *Fihrist* and the *Ijāza*. Osman Yahia lists twenty-three manuscripts,<sup>1</sup> all conserved in the libraries of Istanbul. Denis Gril consulted ten manuscripts, two of which (nos. 5 and 8 below) were not mentioned by Osman Yahia, to establish the text. They are:

### 1. Shehit Ali 2813 / no. 6 (fols. 26–33b), copied in AH 621

Part of a collection of nine surviving treatises by Ibn 'Arabī, copied by one of his disciples, Ayyūb b. Badr b. Maṣṣūr al-Muqrī (or al-Maqqarī), in the presence of the author. The beginning of the Treatise bears a *samā'* in the hand of the copyist, also apparently describing the work as *Risālat al-aḥadiyya*. At the bottom of the page in his Andalusī script, Ibn 'Arabī has appended an attestation of its accuracy:

*ṣaḥḥa mā dhakarahu a' lāhu wa-kataba al-munshi' fī tārikhihi* (the above-mentioned is correct, as written by the author on this date)

This copy, certified by the author, constitutes the base manuscript. Some of its readings, however, remain tentative because of damage to the page margins and the copyist's highly cursive script.

### 2. Veliyuddin 51 / no. 6 (fols. 48–56), copied in AH 736

Part of a collection of seventeen treatises of Ibn 'Arabī, copied by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Muthabbīt in Jerusalem, who claims to

1. *Histoire et classification*, Vol. I, p. 325, no. 317.



have taken it from an autograph copy, transmitted by ‘Abdallāh Badr al-Ḥabashī, Ibn ‘Arabī’s beloved disciple, who died around 618. The original manuscript, therefore, would antedate no. 1.

**3. Beyazit 3750 / no. 18 (fols. 277–286), copied in AH 782**

Part of a collection of thirty treatises by Ibn ‘Arabī (excluding no. 12), taken from a copy in the hand of Shaykh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Zāhidī in Aleppo. Contains some variants tracing back to an original that is probably different from nos. 1 and 2.

**4. Murad Bukhari 207 / no. 5 (fols. 71–95), copied in AH 875**

Part of a collection of six treatises by Ibn ‘Arabī, copied by Jamāl al-Dīn ‘Abdallāh b. Ibrāhīm from an original copy apparently in the author’s hand, which was read back to him and certified by him as correct. Derives from no. 1.

**5. Laleli 3741 / no. 6 (fols. 113–122b), copied in AH 904**

Evidently derived from no. 1.

**6. Carullah 2111 / no. 10 (fols. 63–69b), copied in AH 915**

Part of a collection of twenty-three treatises, nineteen of which are by Ibn ‘Arabī, copied by ‘Abd al-Ṣamad al-Ṣāliḥī al-Ḥanafī al-Ṣūfī. Numbers 7, 8, and 9 seem to derive from this copy.

**7. Fatih 5322 / no. 19 (fols. 151–153b), copied in c. AH 934**

Part of a collection of thirty separate works, mostly treatises by Ibn ‘Arabī, some of which are commented on by Ibn Sawdakīn. The poetry at the beginning is missing. It offers some variants similar to those in nos. 1 and 4.

**8. Hacı Mahmud 2510 / no. 1 (fols. 1b–16b), copied in AH 958**

Part of a collection of two treatises by Ibn ‘Arabī; bears similarities to no. 5.

**9. Halet Efendi 245 / no. 17 (fols. 353b–366), copied after AH 936**

Part of a collection of twenty-six treatises, mostly by Ibn 'Arabī; bears similarities to no. 5.

**10. Esad Efendi 1777 /no. 9 (fols. 158–172b), copied in AH 1004**

Part of a collection of eleven treatises attributed to Ibn 'Arabī, some of which are apocryphal. Copy is very defective, and derives from no. 2.

There appear, then, to be three families of manuscripts whose transmission cannot be traced with precision. In the Arabic edition, all variants have been provided.



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# INDEX OF QUR'ANIC CITATIONS

2:30	90	28:31	26n
2:60	27n, 72	30:15	50
2:74	72	31:16	72
2:275	25n	36:80	81
3:40	38n	37:62	81
4:51	45n	39:67	43n, 48n
5:31	98	43:70	50
7:57–58	10	44:44	81
7:60	27n	50:16	58
7:160	72	53:7	29n
7:176	70	53:14	16
8:17	55	54:10	30n
12:31	32n	55:17	40n
13:13	22n, 39	55:54	36n
14:24–25	81	55:76	29n, 32n
14:27	38n	56:29	37
16:40	19	56:30	37
17:60	81	56:33	35
18:63	72	56:34	35
20:54	48n	69:17	43n
20:128	48n	79:10–11	33n
22:18	38n	82:7–8	27n
23:108	50	85:13	47n
24:34	57	89:9	72
24:35	48n, 57, 81	95:1–5	28n
24:40	48n	95:4	27n
27:10	26n	95:4–5	5
28:10	50n	112:1–2	72



# INDEX OF NAMES AND TERMS

- Aaron 33, 34n, 73n, 79  
 Abel 98  
 Abraham 13, 33, 34n, 57, 58, 79, 101  
 Abū al-‘Abbās al-‘Uryabī/‘Uryanī 11, 11n  
 Abū al-Fawāris Ṣakhr ibn Sinān 5, 25, 26, 50n, 51, 63, 69–76; *see also* Khālīd  
 Abū Madyan 12  
 Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf 9  
 Abū Yazīd al-Bistāmī 16, 17, 55  
 Adam 33, 35n, 78, 79, 81, 87, 89, 90, 91, 108  
 alchemy 23n, 37n, 83, 92, 98, 109  
 ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib 94  
 ‘*amā*’ *see* Cloud  
 ‘*Anqā*’ 7, 30, 35, 41, 44, 46–7, 67, 71n, 78, 91–7, 104, 106–8  
 ‘*Anqā*’ *mughrib* 41n, 93, 93n  
*al-Anwār* 17, 17n, 32n, 79n  
*al-‘aql al-awwal* *see* Intellect  
 Aristotle 94n  
 ‘Aṭṭār, Farīduddīn 16, 92, 93  
*a‘yān thābita* (fixed entities) 41n, 103  
 Avicenna 16  
 ‘*aynī*’ 60  
 Bāqil 24, 24n  
*barzakh* (isthmus, barrier) 29n, 50n, 59, 64–8, 73, 75–8, 82, 102  
 Blake, William 3  
 Body, Universal (*jism kullī*) 18, 51n, 88, 99–102, 105  
 Breath (of the All-Merciful) 41n, 90, 106–8  
 Burāq 12, 29, 29n, 32, 79  
 Cain 98  
 Cloud (*al-‘amā*’) 30, 30n, 33n, 37, 90, 107  
 Corbin, Henry 76, 101  
 Crow (*ghurāb*) 7, 8, 30, 35, 47–51, 64, 80, 92–3, 98–102, 104–5  
*Dīrwān* 18, 96  
 Dove *see* Ringdove  
*al-Durra al-fākhira* 11n  
 Dust (*habā*’) 33, 51n, 91, 94–5, 100–1, 104–5  
 Eagle (‘*uqāb*’) 30, 35, 38, 39, 40, 42–6, 47, 49, 84, 88–91, 93, 98, 104  
 Eliade, Mircea 82  
 Eve 87  
*fanā*’ (annihilation) 54, 59, 68, 77, 79  
*al-Fanā’ fī al-mushāhada* 79n  
 Fātiḥa 26n, 87  
 First Intellect *see* Intellect  
 Footstool (*kursī*) 33n, 44n, 62n  
*Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* 1, 13, 14, 57, 58, 64, 64n, 65, 67, 67n, 68, 73, 73n, 76n, 82n, 87n, 96, 100n, 108  
*al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* 1, 11, 13, 14, 18, 20, 54, 55, 57n, 68, 69, 74, 81, 83, 95, 100, 101, 103, 104, 105  
 Gabriel 69, 81  
*ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqā’iq* *see* Reality of Realities  
 al-Ḥallāj 23n, 55, 56, 109  
*habā*’ *see* Dust  
*hayūlā* *see* Prime Matter

*Index of Names and Terms*

- Hilyat al-abdāl* 74  
 Ḥūd 64n, 72  
 Hyle *see* Prime Matter
- Ibn Mardanīsh 9  
 Ibn Sawdakīn 72, 112  
 Idrīs 30n, 33, 34n, 79  
 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' 95, 99n  
*Inshā' al-dawā'ir* 8, 16n  
 Intellect (First) (*al-'aql al-awwal*) 7, 18, 45n, 49n, 85–6, 88, 90–1, 100, 104–6, 108  
*Isfār* 17, 79n  
*ishhād* 59–60  
*Isrā'* (Night Journey of the Prophet Muḥammad) 18, 18n  
*K. al-Isrā'* 17  
*ittiḥād* (unification) 53–8, 77n
- Jābir ibn Ḥayyān 94  
 al-Jāmi' 65  
 Jānn ibn Jānn 26, 26n, 71  
 Jesus 9n, 10, 33, 34n, 64, 79, 85, 93  
 al-Jilī 32n  
 Job 6, 78  
 Joseph 33, 34n, 79  
 Junayd 16  
 Jung, Carl 98
- Kaykā'ūs 14  
*kawn* (creation; cosmos) 59, 59n  
 Khālid ibn Sinān 63–76, 93; *see also* Abū al-Fawāris Ṣakhr ibn Sinā  
 Khiḍr 10n, 72  
*Kursī see* Footstool
- Labīd 70  
*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūz see* Tablet  
 likeness (*mithl, mithliyya*) 34, 35, 35n, 37n, 82  
 Lote Tree of the Limit (*sidrat al-muntahā*) 12, 16, 38, 80, 81  
 Luqmān 72
- al-Mahdawī, 'Abd al-'Azīz 12  
*mādda see* matter  
*Mashāhid al-asrār* 16n, 72  
 matter (*mādda*) 79, 87, 94–5, 101  
*Marwāqī' al-nujūm* 16n  
 Mercurius 89, 98  
*mi'rāj* 12, 16, 17, 34n, 68, 69  
*mithl see* likeness  
 Moses 9n, 10, 26n, 27n, 33, 34n, 35, 35n, 36n, 50, 50n, 54n, 71n, 72, 79, 81  
 Mount Qāf 81n, 92  
 Mount Sinai 28, 28n, 78, 81n  
*Muḥādarāt al-abrār* 66  
 Muḥammad 9n, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18n, 23n, 29n, 32n, 33n, 34n, 37n, 48n, 50n, 54n, 57, 64, 66, 67, 68, 69, 75, 76n, 78–81, 85n, 87n, 89, 90, 94n, 99, 108
- al-nafs al-kullī see* Soul  
 Nature 51n, 54n, 62, 72, 75n, 83, 99, 104–6  
 al-Niffarī, 'Abd al-Jabbār 78  
 Night Journey (*see Isrā'*)  
 Nizām 13  
 Noah 31n
- Pen (*qalam*) 7, 32, 34n, 38n, 77n, 82, 84, 87, 88, 90, 90n, 103, 104  
 Perfect Human Being (*insān kāmil*) 8, 18, 26n, 28n, 31n, 34n, 35n, 36n, 59, 60n, 64, 75n, 76, 80, 82, 83, 96, 101, 107–8  
 Phoenix *see 'Anqā'*  
 Plato 94n, 107  
 Prime Matter (*hayūlā*) 18, 33, 36, 36n, 78, 88, 94–6, 98, 107; *see also* Matter
- al-Qāri' al-Baghdādī 9  
 al-Qāshānī 67  
 Quss ibn Sā'ida 24, 24n  
*Qutb* (spiritual Pole) 82

*Index of Names and Terms*

- raqīqa/raqā'iq* (subtle thread/s) 40, 42, 85, 85n, 86n, 88
- Raven *see* Crow
- Reality of Realities (*haqīqat al-haqā'iq*) 8, 95n, 107
- Ringdove (*al-muṭawwaqa al-warqā*) 30, 35, 38–42, 44, 45n, 47, 83–8, 93, 104
- Rūḥ al-quds* 11n
- Rūmī, Jalāluddīn 6, 98
- Rūzbihān Baqlī 92
- Sabā 33, 37n
- Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī 6, 64, 73, 74n
- Sahl al-Tustarī 94
- Ṣakhr ibn Sinān *see* Abū al-Fawāris
- Ṣāliḥ 64n, 76n
- ṣamad/ṣamadiyya* 72–4
- al-Sarrāj 16, 17
- Second Matter 99; *see also* Matter
- Shajarat al-kawn* 81
- Shu'ayb 64n, 82n
- Simurgh* 92
- Soul, Universal (*al-naḥs al-kullī*) 7, 18, 85–6, 88, 100, 104–6
- Stetkevych, Jaroslav 19n, 71
- Suhrawardī 16, 93
- Tablet (*lawḥ*) 7, 34n, 36, 77n, 82, 84, 86–7, 90, 103–4
- al-Tadbīrat al-ilāhiyya* 16n
- Tarjumān al-ashwāq* 13, 18, 20, 84–5, 99
- Thamūd 72
- Throne (*al-'arsh*) 28n, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36, 43n, 44, 49n, 51n, 106
- Tree 7, 8, 30, 31n, 34, 35–8, 80–3, 97, 107–8
- Ṭūbā 81, 83
- Universal Body *see* Body
- Universal Soul *see* Soul
- 'Uqlat al-mustawfiz* 16n, 51n, 100
- waḥdat al-wujūd* (Unity of Being) 3, 60
- Zaqqūm 81





*al-Ittihād al-kawnī*  
*fī ḥadrat al-ishhād al-‘aynī*  
*bi-maḥdūr al-shajara al-insāniyya*  
*wa-l-tuyūr al-arba‘a al-ruḥāniyya*

Muḥyī al-dīn Muḥammad  
b. ‘Alī b. al-‘Arabī



*Arabic text by Denis Gril*

## رسالة الإتحاد الكوني

### في حضرة الإشهاد العيني

### بمحضر الشجرة الإنسانية والطيور الأربعة الروحانية<sup>1</sup>

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(1) رموز التحقيق: - 1 شهيد : شهيد على 2813 (ق 26 - 33 ب) وهي النسخة الأصلية. - 2 ولي : ولي الدين 51 (ق 48 - 51). - 3 با يزيد : با يزيد 3750 (ق 277 - 286). - 4 لاله لي : لاله لي 3741 (ق 113 - 122 ب). - 5 جار : جار الله 2111 (ق 63 - 69 ب). - 6 مراد : مراد بخاري 207 (ق 71 - 95). - 7 فاتح : فاتح 5322 (ق 151 - 153 ب). - حاجي : حاجي محمود 2510 (ق 1 ب - 16 ب)، حالت : حالت افندى 245 (ق 353 ب - 366)، أسد : أسد افندى 1777 (ق 158 - 172 ب). انظر وصف النسخ في آخر المقدمة باللغة الإنكليزية.

شهيد: رسالة الاتحاد. كتبه لنفسه أيوب بن بدر (... ) (يليه سماع لغير هذا الكتاب ثم: ) وقرأت هذه الأوراق رسالة الأحدية (ولعله الاتحاد لأن الأحدية تلى هذه الرسالة في المجموعة) على ناظمها متع الله الإسلام بطول حياته محيي الدين ابي عبد الله محمد بن علي بن أحمد بن العربي الحاتمي الطائي وأنا أيوب بن بدر بن منصورالمقرى فسمعها القاضي الفاضل معز الدين أبي اسحاق إبراهيم ولد القاضي عز الدين عبد الله القرشيين نفعه الله و نفع به وهياؤه للعلم وأعانه على نفعه وحفظه وذلك في سنة إحدى وعشرين وستمائة بدار المسمع ... (غير واضح بعد ذلك)

[يخط كبير أندلسي وهو خط المؤلف نفسه:] صح ما ذكره أعلاه وكتب المثنى في تاريخه.

ولي: + كتب بها محمد بن علي بن محمد أبو عبد الله بن العربي الطائي الحاتمي الأندلسي إلى أبي الفوارس صخر بن سنان مالك أزمة الجود والبيان وفقهما الله تعالى. رواية الصوفي المسعود أبي محمد عبد الله بدر بن عبد الله الحبشى عتيق أبي الغنائم بن أبي الفتوح الحراني عنه وفقه الله وإياكم. علقها المغترف من بحر جود ربه أحمد بن محمد بن مثبت من خط مرسلها رحمه الله تعالى.

جار: + كتب بها مؤلفها سيدي الشيخ العلامة محيي الدين بن عربي الحاتمي الطائي إلى أبي الفوارس محمد بن سنان وفقه ورحمه.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

وصلى الله على سيدنا محمد وآله وصحبه وسلم<sup>2</sup>

هذا كتاب كريم وخطاب جسيم كتبتُ به

شعر: [بسيط]

من انحرافي إلى اعتدالي	من انتقاصي إلى كمالي
ومن سنائي إلى جلالي	ومن سنائي <sup>3</sup> إلى جمالي
فمن صدودي إلى وصالي	ومن شتاتي إلى اجتماعي
فمن حجاري إلى اللآلي	ومن خسيسي إلى نفيسي
فمن نهار <sup>4</sup> إلى الليالي	ومن شروقي إلى غروبي
فمن هُدائي إلى ضلالي	ومن ضيائي إلى ظلامي
فمن زجاج إلى العوالي	ومن حضيضي إلى استوائِي
فمن محّاقِي إلى هلالي	ومن دخولي إلى خروجي
فمن جَوادي إلى غزالي	ومن طلابي إلى نفوري <sup>5</sup>

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(2) شهيد: + قال شيخنا وسيدنا وإمامنا الشيخ الأمام المحدث نسيج دهره وفريد عصره شيخ الطريق وإمام التحقيق محيي الدين أبي عبد الله محمد بن علي بن محمد بن العربي الحاتمي الطائفي نفعه الله ونفع به ولي - حاجي: + يقول عبد الله الفقير إلى الله محمد بن علي بن محمد بن العربي الطائفي الحاتمي ثم الأندلسي عفا الله عنه وختم بالحسن.

جار - حالت: + قال الشيخ الإمام العالم الأوحّد الصدر الكبير المؤيد المنصور النور المخصوص برحمة من ربه أبو عبد الله محمد بن علي بن محمد العربي الطائفي الحاتمي الأندلسي رضى الله تعالى عنه ونفعنا ببركاته وعلومه

(3) ولي - با يزيد : سنائي.

(4) ولي - با يزيد - أسد: نهاري.

(5) أسد: ومن مضيقِي إلى نفودي.

ومن غصوني إلى ظلالي	ومن نسيمي إلى غصوني
ومن نعيمي إلى محالي	ومن ظلالي إلي نعيمي
ومن مثالي إلي محالي	ومن محالي إلى مثالي
ومن صحيحي إلي اعتلالي	ومن محالي إلى صحيحي
فما أعادي وما أوالي	فما أنا <sup>6</sup> في الوجود غير
من أجل سهم <sup>7</sup> ماضى النصال	وما أنادي على فؤادي
إلى فؤادي بلا نبال	فإن رامي النصال جفني
وما أغالي فما أبالي	فما أحامي <sup>8</sup> على مقامي
فعين فصلي هو اتصالي	فإنني ما عشقتُ غيري
فلستُ عن هاجري بسالي	فلا تلمني على هواي
وإني لا أزال في هذا الكتاب أخاطبني عنى وأرجع فيها إلى مني:	

[مضارع]

ومن سنّتي إلى فرّضي	فمن سمائي إلى أرضي
ومن طولي إلى عرّضي	ومن إبرامي إلى نقضي

[هزج]

ومن عقلي إلى حسي	فمن حسيّ إلى عقلي
بلا شك ولا لبس	بعلمين غريبين

(6) با يزيد: أتى.

(7) ولي - با يزيد - أسد : رام.

(8) أسد: ولا أداني.

ومن نفسي إلى روعي	ومن نفسي إلى روعي
بمثل الميت في الرمسِ	بتحليل وتركيب
ومن علمي إلى حدسي	ومن حدسي إلى علمي
ونور الحدس ما يُمسي	فنور العلم ممدودٌ
ومن رجسي إلى قُدسي	ومن قدسي إلى رجسي <sup>9</sup>
ورجسي كان في أمسِ	فقدسي كان في وقتي
ومن جنبي إلى إنسي	ومن إنسي إلى جنبي
وإنسي يبتغي أنسي	فجنبي يبتغي همي
ومن سعتي إلى حبسي <sup>10</sup>	ومن جسمي إلى سعتي
على عقلي وبالعكس	لنكر قام في نفسي
ومن ليسي إلى أيسي	ومن أيسي إلى ليسي
كما في شتته نحسي	بسعد فيه تألّفي <sup>11</sup>
ومن ضدي إلى جنسي	ومن جنسي إلى ضدي
نور الفضل في قسّ	فلولا بأقل ما لاح
ومن بدري إلى شمسي	ومن شمسي إلى بدري
بطون نواشي دُبس <sup>12</sup>	لإظهاره الخفايا في

(9) أسد: طبعي.

(10) با يزيد - أسد: + ومن سعتي إلى ضيقي ومن ضيقي إلى الكرسي.

(11) ولي - جار: تأليف.

(12) جار: دمس. أسد: اللبس.

ومن عُربي إلى فُرسي	ومن فُرسي إلى عُربي
ورمز حقائق نُكس <sup>14</sup>	لشرح قوام <sup>13</sup> أسرار
ومن فرعي إلى أُسي	ومن أُسي إلى فرعي
بحسّ أو بلا حسّ	لعيش دُسّ في موت
لقول الحاسد النُكس	فلا تهتمّ يا نفسي
يا ريحانة النُفس <sup>15</sup>	وقول الجاهل المغرور
في أرواحنا الجرس <sup>16</sup>	فكم من جاهل قد قال
بروح النفط والجبس <sup>17</sup>	لدى تنزيل تنزيلي
تخطه من المسّ	كأنس فيه شيطان
من التحقيق في لبس	فإن الناس مازالوا
بين الجهر والهمس	فسرُّ الله ممدود <sup>18</sup>

وسميتُ هذه الرسالة بالإتحاد<sup>19</sup> الكوني في حضرة الإشهاد العيني بمحضر الشجرة الإنسانية والطيور الأربعة الروحانية، خاطبت بها أبا الفوارس<sup>20</sup> صخر بن سنان مالك أزمة الجود والبيان وهذه أول الرسالة وبالله أستعين فهو المؤيّد سبحانه والمعين.

(13) ولي [في الهامش]: عيون.

(14) أسد: لشرح حقائق المعنى ومن دقائق تكسي.

(15) ولي - جار - حاجي: الانس. يا يزيد - أسد: القدس.

(16) في بقية النسخ: الخرس.

(17) أسد: في القدس.

(18) في بقية النسخ: موجود.

(19) جار - حالت: الإيجاد.

(20) لاله لي: + بالحقائق التي كالعرائس.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم    وصلى الله على الرؤف الرحيم

إلى الثالث والثاني ورب المثلث والمثاني والمشار إليه في المثاني القاهر الفاني  
والسائر الثاني، الناكس لظله والناكس لذله، الجواد الذي لا يُقبل جودهٌ والموجود  
التام الذي جهل وجوده، المنبعث من الثنتين والمبعوث بالقوتين، معتمد الأركان  
ومعدن الإمكان ومستند المكان رقيقة المانٌ وحقيقة الزمان ومنتهى الأمان  
ومستوى الرحمن ودقيقة الآن وسلطان الإنس والجان جان بن جان الإنسان في  
الإنسان الواهب المحسان، أبي الفوارس صخر بن سنان مالك أزمة الجود  
والبيان، أستوهب الله له من المواهب المقدسة أسهلها وأحلاها ومن المراتب  
المؤسّسة أكملها وأعلاها، سلام طيب<sup>21</sup> مبارك يخص مقامكم الرفيع أتمّه وأزكاه.  
ورحمت الله تعالى وبركاته.

أما بعد فاني أحمد الله إلى الذي سوانى وعدلني وفي صورة أحسن تقويم ركبني  
ثم عرفني بي وأظهرني لي فعشقتني فلا أحب سوىَ وهيّمت<sup>22</sup> فيّ بين بعدى وقُربي  
فما أخاطب إلا إياي.

[بسيط]

فلو أراني إذا أتاني	سراً وجهراً أنا بذاتي
وقلت أنعم فقلت طوعاً	وكان مني لي التفاتي
فنيّت عنى بعين إنّي	وعن عداتي وعن ثقاتي
وعن وعيدي وعن مزيدي	وعن نعيمي وعن عدّاتي
وعن شهيدي وعن شهودي	وكنت لي بي نعم المواتي
فيا أنا رُدني بعيني	إليّ حتى أرى ثباتي
فَرَدني بي إليّ مني	فلم تقم بي سوى صِفاتي

(21) ولي - با يزيد: + أثير.

(22) لا له لي - فاتح: همت.



وصال عودي على صفتاي	وصال <sup>23</sup> كفي على عصاي
عشرا وثنتين مُعلّمت	فسال نهر البروج منها
مني ثباتاً على ثباتي	فقلت لي يا أنا وزدني
على وجودي من النبات	هذي علوم الحياة لاحت
فدام شوقي إلى مماتي	فأين سرّي اللطيف مني
إليّ كيما تبدو سماتي	فصرت أشكو الغرام مني
فجاد جمعي على شتاتي	إلى جفوني من عين كوني
من أجل ذاتي مدى حياتي	وصلت ذاتي وجداً بذاتي
وطول هجري وسيّاتي	ولم أعرج على جفائي
أنا فتاي أنا فتاتي	أنا حبيبي أنا محبّي

ثم أما بعد فالكتاب إليّ من المدينة<sup>24</sup> الممكنة بالاستوا والمعينة في المستوى المحصنة بالقوى، طور سنين والبلد الأمين المسوى من الماء والطين والجامع بين أحسن تقويم وأسفل سافلين، معرفاً إياي بما طرأ بيني وبينني وما شاهده كوني من كوني، وذلك أنه لما رفعت لنا أعلام المشاهدة ووضعت عنا آلام المجاهدة وكان<sup>25</sup> التجاري بحكم الموافقة والمساعدة، امتطوت براق الهمة وخرجت عن كور هذه الغمة ووقعت في بحر الهيولى فعابنت الآخرة والأولى،<sup>26</sup> فقلت: تباً لمنكري الجنان والدار الحيوان وملاعبة الولدان ومعانقة الحور الحسان ولصوق الأبدان بالأبدان، من عين الحافظ أثبت اللافظ، فإن خط الاعتدال غير ميّال، وعرفت هناك أن منكري حشر الأجساد ما برحوا من الميلين وما انفكوا من ربقة الأربعة والإثنين.

(23) ولي - با يزيد - جار الله - فاتح: فصال.

(24) جار - فاتح - حالت: + القصوى.

(25) في بقية النسخ: صار.

(26) جار - فاتح - حالت: فوقعت في بحر الهلاك فعابنت من أجاب وأبا.

ثم صَحْتُ: وَأَحْرَبَاهُ، وَأَحْرَقَ قَلْبَاهُ مِنْ الْكِيَانِ هَرَبْتُ وَهِيَ أَنَا فِيهِ فَأَيْنَ مَا طَلَبْتُ؟  
 فسمعت الخطاب مني لاداخل في ولا خارج<sup>27</sup> عني، وهو يخبرني أنني على المدرجة  
 فكيف تطلب الدرجة؟ أين أنت و الاستواءات أين أنت والانتكاءات، أين أنت  
 والرفارف العلي أين أنت من الأفق الأعلى، أين أنت وحجُب البها أين أنت والستر  
 الأزهى، أين أنت والعماء أين أنت وحجاب العزة الأحمى، أين أنت والهويات المطلقة  
 أين أنت والإنيئات<sup>28</sup> المحققة، أين أنت وحضرة الإشارات أين أنت والمحدثات<sup>29</sup>  
 أين أنت والمسامرات، أين أنت والشجرة العُلَيَا أين أنت والفروع الدنيا، أين أنت  
 والغريبة العنقا أين أنت والمطوقة الورقا، أين أنت والغراب الحالك أين أنت  
 والعقاب المالك؟ يا محبوب كيف تسأل بالآين عن العين وأنت في مقام لا يحتمل  
 المين!

فقلت: أيها الزاجر لقد أكلمت، أما علمت أنك في مقامك تكلمت؟ أنت في حضرة  
 العين، معرّي عن الآن والآين وأنا في هذه اللجة العمياء والدلجة<sup>30</sup> السوداء والداهية  
 الدهيأ، معدن المين والزيب ومحل النقص والعيب، وهل يصيح "واحرباه!" إلا أسير  
 الكم وحبيس الحكم؟ فان أنت أخرجتني من بين تلاطم هذه الأمواج وأرحتني من  
 معاناة هذا الليل الأليي الداغ، فاني لا أفوه بظرف<sup>31</sup> ولا أعرج على حرف.

فجذبني إليه جذبة عزيز مقتدر وقال: إنك مغلوب فانتصر<sup>32</sup>. فقلت: أنتصر بيدك  
 اليمنى من كلتي يديك يمنى. فإنه القوى الأمين والوفى الصادق الذي لا يمين. فقال  
 كيف يهجوني من يرجوني؟ قلت: كما يمدحك من يمنك. فلما جذبني إليه رأيتني  
 في غير الصورة التي فيها كنت وقد ثبت فيها وتمكنت فقلت: ياأنا! فقال: انا

(27) ولي: داخلا ... خارجاً ...

(28) فى الأصل: إنيئات.

(29) فاتح: المحاورات.

(30) جار - فاتح: اللجة.

(31) فى بقية النسخ: طرف، ويبدو أصح.

(32) انظر سورة القمر ٥٤: ٤٢، ١٠.

مرحباً! فقلت: لا مرحباً ولا أهلاً ولاسعة ولا سهلاً! فقال: ياقرة العين ما رابك ويا أسيرة الكون ما أصابك؟ فقلت: كم ذا تحجبني عني فاكشفني لي حتى أعرفني، هذا لوحى ممدود ولوائى معقود وعلمى محدود ومقامى محمود وسرى مشهود ولبي موجود ومطلوبى مفقود وأنا في عالمي معبود<sup>33</sup> أدعى كلمة الوجود فلو فנית هذه الأعيان وتلاشت هذه الأكوان وغبت عن الاستواء الرحمانى والاسم الربانى، أمكنني أن أسرَّ باللمحة<sup>34</sup> ولا أتضرر بالمنحة.

قال: وقد فנית الأقلام وزهبت الأعلام وراحت الأسماء واحتجب الاستواء ورفعت الألواح وفقدت<sup>35</sup> الألباب والأرواح ولكن لا بد لك من ظلمة الجنة الدهما ودائرة الما والقلم الأعلى والقدم الأولى والنون<sup>36</sup> المكنون واليمين المصون.

فعندما سمعت أن أثراً من الكيان أمامي، خفت أن يقطعني عن إمامي فنهضت من تلك الظلمة المدهمة وتركت بها براق الهمة ورفعت على أسرة اللطائف ومكتات الرفارف، إلى أن وصلنا مقام الإبتهاج أتمايل فيه تمايل السراج، فقلت: ما لي وحالة السماع؟ فقيل: حرّك حسن الإيقاع، فقلت: ما أحسست به، فقيل لي: انتبه فإنك بك ما أنت به! فقلت: الحقيقة في غنى عن إيقاع الغنا ومطلبها الفنا في الفنا، فحجب عن عيني عينها وحال بيني وبينها. ثم قال لي: أين أنت من العالم ومني؟ قلت: بين التعتني والتمني، مطلبى في العما وأنا في الما وروحي في السما وعرشي في الهبا وأهلي في سبا وملكي في الاستواء وحكمي في قدمي السواء وفلكي في الفلك وحجابي في الملك وظلمتي<sup>37</sup> في الهيولى ومحنتي في الأولى وبدأتي<sup>38</sup> في الحافرة وغاياتي في الآخرة وخلتي في الخليل إبراهيم ومناجاتي في موسى الكليم

(33) جار - فاتح - حالت: مقصود.

(34) لا له لي: المحنة.

(35) يا يزيد: قعدت.

(36) جار - فاتح - حالت: النور.

(37) ولي: تتليشى.

(38) ولي: بدايتي.

وخلافتي<sup>39</sup> في هرون الحكيم ورفعتي في إدريس<sup>40</sup> وصورتني في يوسف<sup>41</sup> ومعارفي مع إختلافها وأصنافها في عيسى وجسدي<sup>42</sup> في آدم أبي البشر وقلبي في ابراهيم السيد الأكبر<sup>43</sup> وهيكلني في العنصر<sup>44</sup> المربع<sup>45</sup>.

قال: هذا حظك من كوني وأين حظك من عيني؟ فقلت: أيها المشير<sup>46</sup> ، المناسبة تكون بالنقيض والنظير والنظير الملازم يكون بالذاتي واللازم. فقال المشير: أريد مناسبة النظير. فقلت: في رسمي رسمك وفي نعتي نعتك والاجمال أحسن من التفصيل في هذا القبيل من أجل أبناء السبيل. فقال: صدقت فأين مناسبة النقيض بحكم الحقيقة لا بحكم التعريض؟ فقلت: في عدي وجودك وفي بخلّي جودك وفي كلامك خروسي وفي قولك جروسي وفي استحالتني قدّمك وفي بدايتي قدّمك. قال: علمت أنك علمت ونعم ما به حكمت.

ثم كشف لي عن شجرة البستان الكلية الموصوفة بالمثلية فنظرت إلى شجرة "أصلها ثابتٌ وفرعها في السماء"<sup>47</sup> وثمرها بيد إله الإستواء بين أغصانها وأوراقها الغراب والغريبة العنقا وفي ذرى أفنانها العقاب والمطوقة الورقا فسلمت على الشجرة فحيّت بأحسن من ذلك، قالت اسمع أيها السالك المالك!

(39) جار - فاتح - حالت: + الانسانية.

(40) جار - فاتح - حالت: وقلبي في إدريس الرفيع.

(41) جار - فاتح - حالت: وحسني في يوسف - عليه السلام - وامضائي.

(42) جار - فاتح - حالت: وخلافتي الإلهية.

(43) جار- فاتح - حالت: - (قلبي... الأكبر).

(44) جار- فاتح - حالت: العالم.

(45) ولي، با يزيد، حاجي: وختلي في زحل ومناجاتي في المشتري الأكمل وخلافتي الانسانية في المريخ الأحمر وقلبي في السيد الأبراهيمي الأكبر وحسني في زهرة الأحكام وإمضاي في عطارذ الافهام وخلافتي الالهية في البدر الأرفع وهيكلني في العنصر المربع.

(46) جار، فاتح، حالت: المنشئ.

(47) سورة ابراهيم ١٤: ٢٤

## خطبة الشجرة الكلية الموصوفة بالمثلية

أنا الشجرة الكلية الجامعة المثلية ذات الأصول الراسخة والفروع الشامخة،  
غرستني يد الأحد في بستان الأبد، مستورة عن تصارييف الأمد فأنا ذات روح  
وجسد وثمرتي مقطوف دون يد، حملت من ثمر العلوم و المعارف ما لا يستقلُّ  
بحمله العقول السليمة وأسرار اللطائف، ورقي "فُرْشَ مَرْفُوعَةٍ" وفاكهي غير  
"مُقْطُوعَةٍ وَلَا مَمْنُوعَةٍ"<sup>48</sup> وسطي هو المقصود وفروعي في هبوط وصعود فالهابطة  
للتدلي والإفادة والصاعدة للتداني والإستفادة، نشأني كالفلك في الاستدارة  
وفروعي منازل الأرواح الطيَّارة وزهري كالكواكب السيارة تتكون المعادن عن  
سريانها في أبدانها.

أنا شجرة النور والكلام وقررة عين موسى - عليه السلام -، لى من الجهات اليمين  
الأنفس ومن الأمكنة الوادي المقدس ولي من الزمان الآن ومن المساكن خطُّ  
الاستواء واعتدال الأركان فلي الدوام والبقاء والسعادة دون الشقاء، جَنَى جَنَّتِيَّ  
دَانٍ وَفَنَّنِي يَمِيسٍ كَأَنَّهُ نَشْوَانٌ لَهُ لَطَافَةٌ وَحَنَانٌ عَلَى جَمِيعِ الْحَيَوَانَ، لم تنزل أفناني  
للأرواح اللوحية كنادرا وورقي لها عن تأثيرات الشعاعات اليومية ساترا، ظلُّ<sup>49</sup>  
ممدود لأهل العناية وجناحي منشور على أهل الولاية، تهبُّ عليَّ الأرواح باختلاف  
تصارييفها فتخرج أغصاني عن ترتيب تأليفها فتسمع لذلك التداخل نغمات تُولِّه  
العقول العلوية على سموٍّ أوجها وتجري بها على حسب ما رقم في درجها. فأنا  
موسيقى الحكمة ومزيل الغموم بحسن إيقاع النغمة.

فأنا النور الأزهر ولي البساط الأخضر والوجه المستدير الأنضر، أيدت بالقوى  
وشرفت بالمستوى وصرت كالهيبولى أقبل على جميع الصور في الآخرة والأولى، [لا

(48) انظر سورة الواقعة ٥٦: ٢٣، ٢٤

(49) لعله: ظلي.

أضيق عن حمل شيءٍ ولا أنفكَّ عن نورٍ وفيَّ فنورٍ عليٍّ<sup>50</sup> فيئني لمن استند إليَّ.  
وأنا الظلُّ الممدود والطلح المنضود والمعنى المقصود وكلمة الوجود وأشرف  
محدث موجود وأنزه محدود، عزيزة السلطان مقدسة الكان، رفيع المنار ينبوع  
الأنوار، جوامع الكلم معدن الأسرار والحكم.

[وأفر]

لى الأرض الأريضة والسماءُ	وفي وسطيَّ السواءُ والاستواءُ
لى المجد الموثل والبهاءُ	وسر العالمين والإعتلاءُ
إذا ما أمت الأفكارُ ذاتي	يُحيرها على البعد العماءُ
فما فى الكون من يدرى وجودي	سوى من لا يقيدته الثناءُ
له التصريف والاحكام فينا	هو المختار يفعل ما يشاءُ

## خطبة المطوقة الورقا

ولما سمعت المطوقة كلام الشجرة الكلية وما جاءت به من المعارف الازلية<sup>51</sup>،  
صدحت في روضة قدسها معربة عن نفسها. فقالت: لما أراد الله إيجاد كوني  
وإشهاد عيني وان يطوقني بطوق البهاء ويسكنني في سدرة المنتهى، نادى بعقابه:  
الأمن من عقابه وهو بفناء بابه فأجابه مطيعاً وقال: ناديتَ سميعاً. [فقال له: إنك  
فى أرض غربة وإن كنت منى فى محل القربة]<sup>52</sup> فاني لست من جنسك فلا بد من  
استيحاش نفسك وفيك قرّة عين فأظْهرها فى العين تأنسُ بمجاورتها وتتنفّس  
بمجاورتها فان الأُنس بي محال وإنّي شديد المحال.

فقال العقاب: كيف يظهر عني شيءٍ ومقامي العجز وما في قوتي سلطان ولا عز؟

(50) [ ] : سقط من الأصل.

(51) ولي: الإلية.

(52) [ ] : الزيادة من ولي.

فقال له: الزم المناوحة فسيظهر عينها عند المكافحة وهذا هو الانتظام الثاني والالتحام بالمثاني. فناوح الأمر فظهرت وناداني الحق فبادرت وما عرف العقاب ما جرى به النهر لشغله بالمهر<sup>53</sup> وكوني منه في الظهر فعندما سمع إجابة النداء، قال: ما هذا الذي بدا؟ فصرف النظر إلي فعشقتني وهيّه ما به الحق من الجمال طوقني فشكا الغليل والأليل ونادى بالحريق والغريق بلبل بلبل بلباله وتعمل<sup>54</sup> في إصلاح باله ويأبى الخرق<sup>55</sup> إلا اتساعا والعزاء الا امتناعا وما أبيع له لثمي وشفأؤه في مضاجعتي وضمي فرفع عنه حجاب الريب ونودي من خلف سرادقات الغيب: ما لك تنتظر في أعطافها وتوقيع نغمتها ولا تنتظر في أوصافها وبيدع حكمتها؟

فدعاني إليه فلبيت وأمرني بالعود بين يديه فجتوت فقال لي: تهيامي في حسن مبانك<sup>56</sup> أذهلني عن معرفة معانيك وقد ورد الأمر بأن تعرفيني بنفسك وتطلع<sup>57</sup> لي بارقة من سني شمسك. فقلت: إن الله أوجدني منك عند التقابل وأظهرني من ظهرك على التمايل فأنا من قوتك صادرة وبصورتك ظاهرة، أودعني حقيقتين ووهبني رقيقتين، حقيقة أعرف بها وحقيقة أكون ما شئت بسببها ورقيقة مني إليك تنزلني إذا اشتهيتك عليك وبها حضرت بين يديك ورقيقة مني إليه تنزلني إذا دعاني إليه. فلما سمع أن بيني وبينه رقيقة ممتدة وهو قد تحقق بحقائق المودة، نزل في تلك الرقيقة إلي حتى امتزجت ذاتي بذاته وغابت صفاتي في صفاته وغبنا في لذة الالتحام وطبنا بحصول الانتظام ووقع النكاح المعنوي واجتمع المان في الرحم الآن وقبلة الرحم لحكمة من حرم ومن رجم، وبلى العاشق من دائه وارتاح شوقا إلى ندائه، فهو يتردد بين شوقين ويعرب في غريبين ويشرق في شريقين.

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(53) جار، حالت: القهر.

(54) فاتح: تعلق.

(55) لا له لي: معانيك.

(56) با يزيد، فاتح، حالت: الحرق.

(57) جار، حالت: تطلعي.

فَعِنْدَمَا اسْتَبَلَّ مِنْ أَلْمِهِ وَنَزَحَ إِلَى مَعْلَمِهِ وَجَدَتْ فِي ذَاتِي امْتِلَاءً لَمْ أَكُنْ أَعْرِفُهُ قَبْلَ ذَلِكَ فَانْسَدَّتْ<sup>58</sup> الْمَجَارِي لَهُ وَالْمَسَالِكُ فَحَرَكْتَ الرِّقِيقَةَ الإِلَهِيَّةَ فَأُجَابَنِي فَقُلْتُ: يَا إِلَهِي مَا هَذَا الَّذِي أَصَابَنِي؟ فَقَالَ: تَنْفَسِي بِذِكْرِي لِتُظْهِرَ عَنْكَ كَلِمَةَ أَمْرِي. فَتَنْفَسْتَ تَنْفُسَ الْمُثْقَلِ فَإِذَا بِالْعِنْقَاءِ قَدْ عَمَرْتَ الْمَعْقَلَ فَسَلُّوا الْعِنْقَا عَنْ شَأْنِهَا فَسْتَخْبِرْكُمْ بِمَا أَوْدَعَ الْحَقُّ فِيهَا مِنْ لَطَائِفِهِ وَمِنْحَهَا مِنْ عَوَارِفِهِ.

[رمل]

أنا ورقا المثنائي	مسكني روض المعاني
أنا عين في العيان	ليس لي غير المثنائي
فينادينني يا ثان	وأنا لست بثانِي
ينتهي إلى وجودي	كل شيء من الكيان
أنا أتلو من تسامت	ذاته عن العيان
لي حكم مستفاد	في الأفاصي والأدان
ليس لي مثل سوى من	شأنه يُشبهه شائي
فانتقد إن كنت تبغي	ما أتى به لساني
من رقائِق <sup>59</sup> تدلّت	بحقائق <sup>60</sup> حسان
لقلوب قد تولّت	عن زخارف الجنان
طالبات من تعالي	عن تصاريف الزمان
فهو الفرد المعلى	ما له في الحكم ثان
وهو الذي اجتباني	وهو الذي اصطفاني
وأقامني عديلا	بين دن <sup>61</sup> ودنان

(58) في الأصل: انشأت.

(59) جار، حالت: رقيقات ... حقيقات.

(60) جار، حالت: رقيقات ... حقيقات.

(61) لا له لي، حاجي، حالت: دن.



وأداني كل داني	فأقاصي كل قاصٍ
وأعاني كل عان	وأوالي كل والٍ
فبِروح السريّان	فإذا هَوَيْتُ سَفْلاً
فلتحليل المباني	وإذا صعّدت علواً
وأنا أخلي <sup>62</sup> المغاني	فأنا أعطي المعاني

### خطبة العقاب المالك

فلما سمع العقاب ما ذكرته المطوقة وما قررته من العلوم المحققة قال: صدقت فيما ادّعته وأظهرت لكم ما وسعته فقلت له: طرّف في جوّ بيانك وأعرب لنا عن شأنك! فاهتزّ سرير العقاب وصفّق بجناحه وطاب وقال:

[كامل]

والحسن والنور البهّيّ الأسطعُ	أنا العقاب ليّ المقام الأرفعُ
في العدوة الدنيا وعزّي أمنع	أمضي الأمور على مراتب حكمه
وأنا الذي أدعو الوجود فيخضع	أنا فيضه السامي ونور وجوده
فالجود جودي والحقائق توضع	وأنا الذي مازلت قبضةً موجدي
فأعطي من أشياء وأمنع	نحوى لتطلب ما لها في شربها
أنأى فيدعوني البهاء الأروع	أدنو فيبيهرني جمال وجوده
لكن لها قلب العلى يتصدّع	فإذا دنوت فحكمة مقبولة
والنور من أرجائها يتشعشع	وإذا بعدت فإمرة مقسومة
في إمرتي وسعادتي إذ أنزع	فأنا الأمير إذا بعدت، شقوتي
عابنت أعيان الأهلة تطلع	فأسرُّ أوقاتي وأسعدها إذا

لم أزل في مرتبة من مراتب الكون وأنا معدوم العين إلى أن سبقت العناية فكانت

(62) لاله لي، جار، حالت: أجلي - حاجي: أخل.

بوجودي البداية وذلك أنه تجلى بنفسه لنفسه فامتدَّ وجودي بشهودي فنلت السورة بالصورة وكنت سريرهً بالسريرة فاستوى عليَّ الاسم الجامع وحف بركابه وزياره المعطى والمانع وحاجباه الضارَّ والنافع، فلما تحقق الاستواء وبان السوى ودعنتي الأسماء بالأعزَّ الأسمى فعُمِّرَ الفنا وبرز البقاء والفنا، وتوالى القسط والفيض واستمر وثبت البسط والقبض واستقرَّ وصح بالملك الملك وظهر بالمألكة الملك ودار بالفلك الفلك. ثم نداني نداء التعليم بلسان التحكيم أن انظرُ في ذاتك بجامع لذاتك. قلما وقع مني النظر وميزت بين من يجب له التقدم ممن يجب له النظر وشرعت المذاهب وقسمت الأنوار بين المكاسب والمواهب، وقلت لمن عاينت من الأرواح المهيَّمة: الزموا الحضرة المهيَّمة! وقلت لمن عاينت من الأرواح المسخَّرة: الزموا المقامات المسخَّرة! وقلت لمن عاينت من الأرواح المدبَّرة: الزموا الهياكل المدبَّرة! فراح كل صنف يطلب منزله ليشهد مُنزلَه وكنت قد عاينت المطوقة الورقا وحملها الغريبة العنقا غير أني لتقسيم المنازل ذهلت عن المنازل.

فأنا علم الكون والمخبوء في أودية الصون، افترى على جماعة من العقلاء وتعصب لأخذي عصابة من الفضلاء فنصبوا شركَ أفكارهم لصيدي وأحالوا علي ما مددتهم به ليستخرجوا جدِّي، ولما كانت الهمم قد توفرت لتحصيلي في شركهم الفكري وحصل فيها عقابٌ على صورتني من الموطن الوهمي، قالوا: هذا هو الحق المبين! ولو علموا أن الحق ما بان لهم ولا يبين، فإن المعرفة بي وبموجودي موقوفة على الوهب مصروفة على الكسب، فاستنفرهم بشبهته الشيطان وتخيلوا أنهم قد حلوا بالرُّبي ومنزلهم الغيطان واشتبه عليهم القدم بالقدم فحكموا علي بالقدم وإن وجودي لا عن عدم، فتركهم بشبهتهم لَحماً علي وضمَّ وهكذا ينبغي لمن اهتضم الأمر الإلهي أن يهتضم وأنا برئ مما نسبوا وكافر بما نصبوا فان الله جل جلاله في القدم وأنا [إذ ذاك<sup>63</sup>] محكوم<sup>64</sup> علي بالعدم، ثم أوجدني عن عدم لسابقة القدم

(63) جار- با يزيد - فاتح: + إذ ذاك.

(64) با يزيد: موصوف.

فظهر عني وأناار بعلمه كوني وناط بي الفقر والعجز وأماط عني الأرز والعزِّ فأنا  
الذليل الذى لايعز والقوى الذى لم يزل يعجز.

## خطبة الغربية العنقا

فلما فرغ العقاب من كلامه وأتى على بيان مقامه قامت العنقا تعرب عن وجودها  
وتغرب بعزة حدها، قالت: أنا عنقا مغرب، مازال مسكني بالمغرب بالمقام الوسيط  
على سيف البحر المحيط، اكتنفتني العز من الجهتين وما ظهر قط لوجودي عين.

[كامل]

فأنا التي <sup>65</sup> لا عين لي موجود	فأنا التي <sup>66</sup> لا حكم لي مفقود
عنقا مُغْرَبٌ قد تُعْرَفُ ذكراها	عُرْفًا وباب وجودها مسدود
ما صير الرحمن ذكري باطلاً	لكن لمعنى سره المقصود
هو أننى وهابة أسرارهم	عرفانها فصرطانا ممدود
والسالكون على مراتب نورهم	فأجلهم من نوره التجريد

بي تكون الحدود وعليّ توقف الوجود، يُسمع بذكري ولا أرى وليس الحديث بي  
حديثاً يفتري، أنا الغيبة العنقا، امي المطوقة الورقا ووالدي العقاب المالك وولدي  
الغراب الحالك أنا عنصر النور والظلم ومحل الأمانة والتُّهم، لأقبل النور المطلق  
فانه ضدي ولا أعرف العلم فإنني ما أعيد، لا أبدي، كل من أتنى علي فهو بعيد  
الفهم مقهور تحت سلطان الوهم، ما لي عزة فأحتمي وهياكل الكون الأعلى  
والأسفل إليّ تنتمي، أنا الحقيقة الإمعة لما عندى من السعة، نلبس لكل حالة  
لبوسها إما نعيمها وإما بؤسها، لأعجز عن حمل صورة وليست لي فى الصور  
المعلومة سورة لكن وهبت أن أهب العلوم ولست بعالمة وأمنح الأحكام ولست

(65) كذا فى الأصل وفى سائر النسخ: الذى.

(66) كذا فى الأصل وفى سائر النسخ: الذى.

بحاكمة، لا يظهر شيء لم أكن فيه ولا يحصله<sup>67</sup> طالب مدرك ولا يستوفيه، فهذا  
القدر عظمتُ في أعين المحققين ولي جولان في مجالس المطرقيين فهذا قد أبنتُ  
عن حالي وأظهرت صدقي من محالي.

## خطبة الغراب الحالك

فقام الغراب وقال: أنا هيكل الأنوار وحامل محل<sup>68</sup> الأسرار ومحل الكيف والمكم  
وسبب الفرح والغم، أنا الرئيس المرؤس ولي الحس والمحسوس، بي ظهرت  
الرسوم ومني قام عالم الجسوم، أنا أصل الأشكال وبمراتب صورتي تضرب  
الأمثال، فأنا المصباح والرياح وأنا السلسلة على صفوان والجناح، أنا البحر الذي  
يصطفق موجه وأنا فرد المعدود وزوجه، عرضي دار كرامته لأوليائه وعمقى دار  
إهانته لأعدائه، وطولي مذ وجدت لم يزل يقابل بذاته الأبد والأزل، فأنا بوطريقي  
الحكم وموسيقى النغم وجامع حقائق الكلم، إلى المنتهى وعلى عول أولو النهى وأنا  
أسنى ما منح من اللهي<sup>69</sup>، أنا الغاية وليست لي غاية، من أجلي أخذ من أخذ  
وبسببي نبذ من نبذ، أنا المطوية باليمين وأنا في قبضة الحق المبين، دعاني الحق  
إلى حضرته فأنتيت وناداني إلى معرفته فلبيت، أنا صورة الفلك ومحل الملك، على  
صح الاستوا وعنى كنى بالمستوى، أنا اللاحق الذي لا ألحق كما أن العقاب  
السابق الذي لا يسبق هو الأول وأنا الآخر وله الباطن ولي الظاهر، قسم الوجود  
بيني وبينه وأنا أظهرت عزه وكونه، توقف علي حكمه وسرى فيه علمي وسرى في  
علمه إذا دفعه واهبه فألى لنفيده وإذا أفدته شكرني لأزيده.

قامت طائفة ممن تدعى العقل الرصين على زعمها وقضت على شبهتها بحكمها  
فناطوا بي قببح الهجاء وخلعوا عني حلة حسن الثناء فحار عليهم وبال ما كانوا

(67) في معظم النسخ: يحصره.

(68) ولي: محال.

(69) ولي، بالهامش: معناه العطايا.

يعملون وحقاق بهم ما كانوا به يستهزؤون كأني بهم في عمقي يستصرخون فيجابون  
 "أخسَنُوا فيها ولا تُكَلِّمُون" <sup>70</sup> إذا كان في عرضي أهل الثناء الحسن في حقي  
 فالكهين هم وأزواجهم "في رَوْضَةٍ يُحْبَرُونَ" <sup>71</sup> وقد أثنى عليَّ الشرعُ فما أبالي وبين  
 مرتبتي السمعُ فما أعالِي.

[رمل]

حكمةٌ لمن يراني <sup>72</sup>	إنني من حيث ربي
خُلِقَهُ بلا بَنانٍ	فأنا السر المسوَّى
خالقي لِمَا بناني	رتب الأمور فيه
تتفجّر المعاني	فأنا صخرٌ ومِنِّي
مثل أفراس الرهانِ	وأنا مع العوالي
حشمة عن العيانِ	وأنا الذي تواري
طائِعاً لِمَا دعاني	والذي أجبْتُ ربي
لتصاريف الزمان	فالذي يرى وجودي
فارغاً من المعاني	كفؤاد أم موسى
من حقائق <sup>73</sup> البيان	فهو الخَلِيُّ حقاً
وأنا أسُّ الأغاني	فأنا أصل المغاني <sup>74</sup>
فاضلٍ سامي المكانِ	وأنا سرُّ إمامٍ
شأنه أعظم شأنٍ	علمه أكمل علم
في المقاصير الجنان	هام بي لما رأني
خائف حد السنان	لأسميه فإنني

(70) سورة المومنون ٢٢: ١٠٨

(71) سورة الروم ٣٠: ١٥

(72) البيت ناقص في الأصل وبا يزيد وحاجي.

(73) جار، حالت: حقيقات.

(74) با يزيد، جار، فاتح، حاجي، حالت: المعاني.

والذي يفهم رمزي  
أكرم الوجود كفاً  
وأنا والأم والجدة  
في وجودنا عن الحق<sup>76</sup>  
مثل مالاح بعين  
هو صخر بن سنان  
ثابت<sup>75</sup> عند الطعان  
والجد المعاني  
معاً بلا زمان  
في الهوا برق يمان

فهذا يا صخر بن سنان قد أوضحت لك مقامات أمهات الأكوان وهو الإنسان الكلي  
والعقل الأول والنفس الواحدة والهيولى والجسم الكلي<sup>77</sup> فابحث فيها بحث العاقل  
الطالب نجاة نفسه والسلام على منشئها وعلينا<sup>78</sup> .<sup>79</sup>

(75) ولي: بطل.

(76) ولي، جار، فاتح، حالت: الجود.

(77) جار، فاتح، حالت: والقلم الأعلى واللوح المحفوظ والهباء والجسم.

(78) فى بقية النسخ: والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته.

(79) شهيد: + وصلى على محمد وآله وسلم تسليماً كثيراً كتبه لنفسه أيوب بن بدر بن منصور من أصل الشيخ  
وكان بخطه حفظه الله.

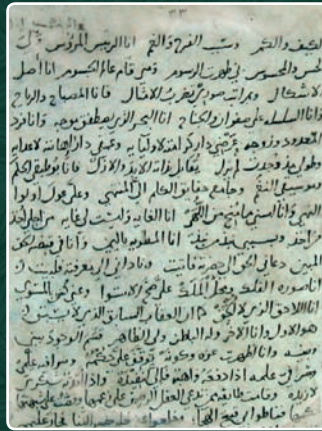
ولي: + علقها الفقير أحمد بن محمد مثبت من خط منشئها ابن العربي رحمه الله (وبالهامش: قرأتها معارضاً  
بها الأصل فصحت لدي.

با يزيد: + قويل على النسخة المنقولة منها وهى بخط الشيخ بدر الدين محمد الزاهدى.

جار: + كملت والحمد لله رب العالمين والصلاة على سيدنا محمد خاتم النبيين وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين  
والحمد لله وحده ووقع الفراغ من تعليق هذه النسخة من نسخة معتمدة فى اليوم المبارك تاسع عشرين شعبان  
المكرم سنة خمس عشرة وتسعمائة أحسن الله عاقبتها وختم لنا بخير ولجميع المسلمين أمين وحسبنا الله  
ونعم الوكيل.

مراد: + كتبه الفقير إلى الله تعالى جمال الدين عبد الله بن ابراهيم لأخيه الفقير الشيخ السالك الناسك العالم  
الورع الزاهد قطب الدين محمد بن تقى الدين المشتهر بابن الكبكى البروى (؟) أعاد الله علينا من بركاته  
ومفعتها به والمسلمين فى تاريخ أواخر شهر رمضان المبارك هـ ع ض (= 875) والحمد لله وحده.  
فاتح: + تمت الرسالة بحمد الله وعونه وحسن توقيفه وصلواته وسلامه على سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه  
وسلم أبداً.

حاجى: + تمت الرسالة المباركة الموسومة بالإتحاد الكونى فى حضرة الإشهاد العيني بمحضر الشجرة  
الإنسانية والطيور الأربعة الروحانية للشيخ محيي الدين بن العربي رحمه الله تعالى أمين ووافق الفراغ من  
كتابتها نهار الأربعاء



*The Universal Tree and the Four Birds*, one of Ibn ‘Arabī’s early works, is a dazzling blend of poetry and rhymed prose, encompassing a number of themes that were of perennial concern to the Shaykh al-Akbar. Based on the mystical framework of the ascent, the stages of the journey to union with the Real are described in an intriguingly enigmatic way. Beginning with a dizzying series of poems that explain the existential fluctuation of the human heart, the narrator goes on to describe his meeting with his Essential Self in a place outside of space and time. He then finds himself in a garden with the Universal Tree and four delightful birds: an Eagle, a Ringdove, a fabulous ‘*Anqā*’, and a Jet-Black Crow. Each in turn regales the author with a tale of its origins and essential characteristics, but only at the end are their true natures revealed.

The elegant translation is complemented by Angela Jaffray’s illuminating commentary on key elements in the text and extensive notes, and a Foreword by Rafi Zabor. The Arabic text, critically edited from the best manuscripts by Denis Gril, is also included.

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