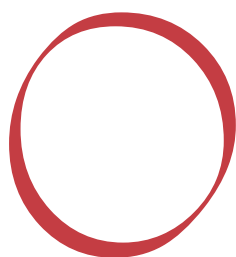


CHAPTER 1

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Youth



On recognizing the Spirit (who took on a body to visit the Ka'bah and who would reappear to me to support me with this book) from whom I took from a segmentation (of six sections) of his configured body (which was cobbled like the paving stones at the bottom and sides of a well) what I was made to write (by following ruled guidelines) into this book (whose architecture is the six-fold segments I saw etched internally in his moonlit skin, and transcribed, with the interstices between the cobblestones being my interlaced efforts to convey to you, the reader, what I saw) and the mysteries there were between me and him.

Recognition (ma'rifah) is what the recognizer ('arif) recognizes: your understanding and recognition of the Divine. From 'araf-tu-hu, I found, or experienced, its 'arf (odor). This first of six sections of the work is on ma'arif (sg. ma'rifah), from Chapter 1 to Chapter 73.

Segmentation (tafṣīl): from faṣṣala 'l-naẓma, He put between every two of the strung beads (or pearls) a bead such as is termed fāṣilat.

Configuration (nashā't): the flooring stones interlaced with clay on the bottom of a well. The earth that is behind the stones that are set up around the tank, the interstices between which stones are filled up with kneaded clay. And note the description of the poem following - it is called a naẓm, which is the interlacing of pearls and beads. For 'I was made to write': the imagery is the miṣṭarat, an instrument with which a book is ruled made of a piece of pasteboard with strings stretched and glued across it, which is laid under the paper, the latter being ruled by being slightly pressed over each string. Note that the underlying string is in the 'unseen' while the effect, the ruled line, is in the 'seen'.

For 'me and him': this follows the classical Arabic convention of addressing the 'closest' neighbor (which is the self) first and is not impolite as it may sound in English. The oft-heard statement in the Friday sermon is, 'and I ask God the Great for forgiveness, for me and for you'.

نظم

Some of this are these interlaced verses:

*interlaced verses -
a string of pearls, a
poem; something ar-
ranged and ordered*

The ṭawāf is the
seven times circling
of the Ka'bah

I said upon circling the Ka'bah during the ṭawāf,
'Why shall I circle,
as it is blind to perceiving our inner selves -

Petrified, an unintelligent rock with no recognition of
my circling movements?'

Then was said: 'You are totally confused, you
have lost out!

Just look at the House! His light streams
to purified hearts, bared, exposed to the light.

They see him by means of God without a veiling
curtain,
as his inner self begins to shine forth, elevat-
ed, lofty.

Ibn 'Abbās prais-
es the Prophet ﷺ
'When you were
born the Earth
became bright,
and the horizon,
with your light
illuminating'

He shines brilliantly with tajallī to the hearts from the
horizon of a majestic
true Moon which never experiences eclipse.

The tajallī is the radiant brilliance made to shine, a display and
a disclosure, from the Divine to all beings in creation, whether
they perceive it or not. The usual effect of the perceived tajallī, Ibn
al-'Arabī will tell his audience later, is for the recipient to be thun-
derstruck, erased, eclipsed, and to lose consciousness.

If you had noticed the friend when *he* saw the House,
you would have called him "crazy, thirsting
for love!"

He kisses (the) inner secret in the right hand, the Yeme-
ni Black Stone:
just 'inner secret' - if it were named with the
definite noun the,

Here, yamīnī is right hand, right side, south, and Yemen. Yeme-
ni is the adjectival form, like Makkī, pertaining to Makkah. Later,

Ibn al-'Arabī will speak of this corner being the Right Hand of the Divine, stretched out for taking-hand, the oath of fealty.

**Its Substance (dhát) would be unknowable,
some arguing that it is coarse, and others,
fine.**

The dhát **f** is the sub-stance which stands under (or beyond) everything, manifesting itself from beyond. It is a substance, or thing that subsists by itself, a real substantive (as opposed to an ideal substantive), and hence it signifies also a word that is independent in its meaning, a 'substantive noun', as opposed to an adjective, which is not independent in its meaning). In Arabic, this word dhát is indefinite, having no definite article. As with x, 'it' is unknowable, so we can say there is an x but not the x, because 'the' tries to define and make definite what is indefinable and unknowable. The ma'rūf here is the 'active voice', also called the ma'lūm. Typically, this is called the 'action of which the agent is known', but here, if the substance - which should be the 'known' - is actually unknown or unknowable, then the question is, will the substance be 'coarse' (more solid, less abstract) or 'fine'?

He said to me when I asked why people are ignorant of him:

**'Seers with the all-encompassing perspective
recognize those who see.**

Registers change rapidly in poetry. Here, it seems that Ibn al-'Arabī has recognized the validity of the rebuke and now starts to see the House differently. The elliptical response is a foreshadowing that the Youth speaks in a special metaphorical way.

**They recognize him and stay with him a time;
and the kind, the gentle presides over their
rituals.**

The kind, the gentle is Muḥammad ﷺ. His Law includes the rituals performed during the pilgrimage, and how the Right Hand is taken.

They stand upright and never is any deviation seen in
their circling of his Substance.'

So stand up, neighbor of My House m, and from Me give
good tidings of safety: You have no cause to
fear him.

If they die, I make them 'delighted with meeting' Me,
Or if they have a long life, their garb is new
and splendid.

The second delight of fasting comes when meeting one's Cherisher after death. Garb (thawb) may be figurative; recall wa thiyābak fa-ṭahhir, 'And your clothes, purify them' from al-muddaththir 74:4, and the Prophet ﷺ calling for new clothes on his death-bed: 'Verily the dead will be raised in the garments in which he dies.' The last word, nazīf, in Lisān al-'arab, among other meanings, is 'beautiful, splendid'.

اعلم

Learn!

Learn dear intimate, generous, sincere friend, that when I reached the Makkah of blessings, a treasure-trove of spiritual rests and stirrings, surds and vowels, and my situation was as it had been, I circled His ancient House a number of times; and while I was circling and celebrating God with saying, Exalted is God beyond! and saying, He is Majestic and He is Great, and saying, There is no god but God - sometimes kissing the Black Stone and touching the Yemeni corner, and sometimes adhering to the *multazam* - Lo! while standing before the Black Stone, I was thunderstruck, suddenly encountering the elusive Youth, the silent speaker, the one who is neither living nor dead, the composite simple, the encompassed encompassing.

From the Muwaṭṭā': Ibn 'Abbās used to say that between the corner of the Black Stone and the door of the Ka'bah is the multazam.' Prayers are said here, and one presses the chest to the wall.

As soon as I saw him circling the House **m**, a circling (*ṭawāf*) of the Living

The Living is *ḥayy*, a Divine name (noun) and attribute (adjective). Throughout, 'life' is knowledge and the rain that falls on the lifeless dead earth to revive it, lifeless and dead meaning being ignorant and needing life-giving knowledge. The House, the letters, our skeletons are lifeless lumps into which is breathed the life-giving kindness of being, making letters meaningful and us alive.

around the lifeless, I recognized his truth and his metaphor, and I knew that circling the House is like the prayer for the dead on the bier, veiled. So seeing the Living circling the dead forms, I recited some verses (which the Youth overheard): a poem.

When I saw the House being circled by
those with the unseen inner secret of the
Revelation,

And circled by a people who are the Way and the
Intelligence;
they have wide-open, kohl-lined eyes - they
are not blind to him -

The Intelligence: *ḥijā* is sagacity, the sheltering veil which prevents one from acting badly. The dark circles around their eyes are from staying up at night praying.

I wondered at the lifeless being circled by Living,
Inaccessible, Eternal One, none like Him.

Then He shone a radiant brilliant tajallî to us from a
light-essence radiating from within his luminescence.
But he was not one of the angels: he was
instead human.

I was certain that the situation was something from
the unseen,
but if there is a disclosure of kashf and a ver-
ification for oneself, he is living, seen.

Omitted in B (I said) When these verses occurred to me, and I was some-
how made to reach His honorable House from some direction, on
the lifeless side, he wrenched something from me with a forcible
wresting and cautioned me against misconceptions, and said (as
if from the Qur'ân), urging: 'Look again at a secret of the House
before departing to the next world. You will find him splendidly
lit up by the circling guides and the circling pilgrims in his stone
blocks, as he looks at them from behind his veil and his curtain.'
Then I *did* see him shining splendidly, as he said, and so I did jus-
tice to him in eloquent formal Arabic in the world of Exemplars
(where patterns are made in the unseen, the 'bulk of the iceberg',
and sent down here to the tip of the iceberg). Without premedita-
tion I spontaneously chanted these verses:

*Local Makkans
guiding the pilgrims*

I saw the House splendid with the guides circling
around him,
but the splendor was only from the Wise One
who designed him.

This stone does not feel and does not see,
and he has no intellect nor does he have
hearing.

*shukhayṣ, someone
large-bodied; pos-
sibly the person we
meet in Chapter 25.*

But a large man said, 'This is a ritual obedience f for us;
the Law fixed her to be lifelong for us.'

I said to him, 'For you, this is sufficiently demonstrated, but listen to

an argument of the one who disclosed the
established wisdom for me.

I saw a stone not alive in its essence,
and it had no ability to harm or to benefit.

But through the eye of the heart, if there were no weakness or rift,
there would be viewing of vistas;

He would be seen as inaccessible, if he shone brilliantly with his true essential dhāt,
but the creation is unable to bear his
vastness.'

So I was Abû Ḥafsa and I was 'Alí;
on my part both the abundant gift and
constriction with interdiction.

The critical editor 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Manṣūb notes that these are 'Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb and Imām 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib. The ḥadīth is as follows: When we entered for ṭawāf, we faced the Stone, and he said, 'I know you are a stone that cannot harm or benefit, and if I had not seen Messenger of God ﷺ kissing you, I would not kiss you'; then he kissed it. And 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib said to him, 'No, Leader of the Believers, he can harm and benefit.' Then he said further, 'It is in God's blessed Book.' He asked: 'Where is that in the Book of God?' He said, 'God said, When your Lord took from the progeny of Adam their offspring, and they testified about themselves (answering 'Am I not your Lord?'), they said, Yes. God created Adam and rubbed his back; and they confirmed that He is the Lord, and they are creatures; and He took their promise and their covenant from them, and He recorded that in a parchment; and this stone has eyes and tongue. And He said to him, 'Open your mouth.' He said, 'Then he opened his mouth and swallowed that parchment; and he said, I testify for the one who fulfills his loyalty

to You on the Day of Arising for Judgment. And I testify, I heard Messenger say, The Black Stone will come on the Day of Judgment - he has a tongue, and an articulate one at that - to testify to the one who kisses him in tawhîd. So, Leader of the Believers, he can harm and he can benefit.' 'Umar said, 'I take refuge in God that I might have had to live among a people among whom there is not you, father of Ḥasan!'

Link

Now let us make clear the connection: I was made to know the station of that youth and his being untouched by Where or When. When I recognized his station and alighting place, and with my own eyes I saw his place in existence and his spiritual states, I kissed his right hand (*yamīna-hu* also means, His Yemeni corner), and I wiped the 'sweat from the revelation' (which the Prophet ﷺ would experience) off his brow; and I said to him, 'See here one who seeks to sit near you and wishes to converse companionably with you.'

He pointed to me with an enigmatic gesture, intimating that he was innately configured to speak only in metaphor and to be spoken to only metaphorically. When you know and understand him, and verify him for yourself, you know that the purest language of the pure speakers does not grasp his meaning, and his expression is not reached by the eloquence of the most eloquent.

I said to him: 'Wondrous bearer of good tidings, this is a great goodness. Please teach me your vocabularies and instruct me in the ways of turning your opening key. I want to be your companion (*musāmarah*) in night time conversations (*muṣāharah*) and I love the family member who is connected to you.'

In this allusive passage, the first pair is *musāmarah* and *muṣāharah*. For 'family member connected to you', Lane cites: 'He took to himself a wife from among them, and so he connected himself with them, and became an object of inviolable respect, by a covenant of mutual protection, or by relationship, or by marriage'. There are at least seven possible interpretations. The *muṣāharah* could refer to a consanguinity, and to the hair of the Prophet which is the *suṭṭāna* of Ibn al-ʿArabī's core being (see *The Address*). She could also be a daughter, as *shaʿrat* is hair and a metonym for daughter.

Indeed alongside you are the suitable partner, the good match (the one who keeps coming down to face your *dhát*), and the imperator.

The *kuf* is the suitable partner for marriage. The *naẓīr* looks at you and corresponds to you; a synonym for *mithl*. The *amīr* is the one who commands: cf. *amr*, the imperative. If the creative process *kun* is being alluded to, the *kāf* is the particle 'like', the *nūn* is the matchless creation, and the imperative grammatically hides the *wāw* inside.

If not for what you manifest as a visible reality,

The feminine word *ḥaqīqat* is the one it behooves one to defend, or protect, 'of the people of one's house, or such as the wife, and the female neighbor'. The *ḥaqīqat al-ẓāhirat* is the visible truth of Divine descent to the creature, being 'with you', and all the revealed verses and Divine statements that seem to go against Divine transcendence of space and time, and creation-based adjectives. In his discussion about 'awrat, the private parts that must be covered, Ibn al-'Arabī speaks of these kinds of Divine statements, such as 'I was sick and you visited Me not,' as 'awrat, needing to be covered up lest someone ill-prepared think God is corporeal or limited. These truths need to be protected, but they are also the means of Divine interaction with creation.

no "bright and radiant faces" would be raised to look eagerly at Him, "gazing".

See *al-qiyāmah* 75:22-23: 'Faces, on that Day, bright and radiant - toward their Lord gazing.' Tirmidhī records: 'and the most honored of the people of the Garden by God is the one who gazes at His Face morning and night; then Messenger of God ﷺ recited, "Faces, on that Day, bright and radiant - toward their Lord gazing"'. The reader may realize that Ibn al-'Arabī is also being put into such a position to encourage bright faces to look up eagerly at God.

He gestured significantly,

The secret gesture is the *ishārat* which the people in the know use to communicate with each other when hostile forces are around. There is nothing especially communicative about this mode, so when they are among themselves, the people who know speak directly again. However, the Youth (who is the silent speaker) speaks only in this mode, not to guard the secret but because there is no speech which captures him - even the 'purest language of the pure speakers'.

and I knew. Then he shone in *tajallī* to me a truth of his beauty and I was dizzied with rapture. I sank down fainting before him,

overcome. When I recovered, with shoulders trembling from fear (*khashūyah*), he knew that knowledge of him had arrived, and he laid down his walking staff and sat. His state of revelation

Later, Ibn al-ʿArabī will explain that while the door of prophethood is bolted shut, there is access by grace to the site (*mazhar*) of the revelation of each verse of the *Qurʾān*. Such a visitor attends the provision of a verse given to the Messenger of God and hears it as if directly, for the first time. This visitation to the site of the moment of revelation is the *istizhār* in the famous statement about Abū Yazīd al-Bastāmī not dying until he had *istazhara* the *Qurʾān* completely - that is, until he had visited each site of each verse of the *Qurʾān*. The Youth put himself in a state of the revelation of the verse below and recited from 'there' to Ibn al-ʿArabī.

fāṭir 35:28 recited to me that verse which the prophets brought, that verse which the angelic guardians descended with - namely, *Of His slaves, the ones who fear God are the ones who know*; thus he took *khashūyah* as a proof that I had received knowledge, and he deemed the awe and fear to be a confirmation that knowledge had arrived to me.

I said to him, 'Show me some of your mysteries, so that I may be among your calligraphers transcribing you.'

The critical editor notes that another handwriting in the margin has *anṣārik*, 'your helper', for *aḥbārik*. The word *aḥbār* is a plural of paucity and means calligraphy and ink, 'because it is one of the means of beautifying writings' (Lane). The helpers would be the friends who help Ibn al-ʿArabī transcribe the vision into the *Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah*.

He said: 'Look at the sectioned segments of my configuration and the ordered arrangement of my shape, and you will find that what you are asking of me is imprinted throughout me;

Something that is *marqūm* is stamped, imprinted, impressed upon. The animal is called *marqūmat* when he has a *raqm*, a small mark of cauterization, on the leg. And the *Qurʾān* describes a record which is a *kitāb marqūm* (*al-muṭaffifīn* 83:9,20). An imprint is 2-dimensional, but this is *n>2*-dimensional.

for I am neither a *mukallim* who speaks for himself nor a *kalīm* who speaks for another, as Moses did, and my knowledge is not anything but me, and my *dhāt* is not different from my names (nouns). I am the knowing, the known, and the one who knows. I am the

ḥikmat (wisdom), the *muḥkām* (the fount of wisdom secured from ambiguity), and the *ḥakīm* (who decides wisely).’

Then he said to me: ‘Circle the Ka‘bah following my tracks, and look at me with my luminescent moonlight, so you may take from my cobbled configuration what you will be recording in your book and dictating to your transcribing friends. The True has informed me of what you saw in your circling, the fine, subtle, invisible things, which not everyone circling sees, so that I would recognize your inspired enthusiasm and who you are and what you mean. It is what I learned of you there.’

Ibn al-‘Arabī is describing two realms, one this conventional world and the other the world where things have their ultimate meaning. For example, the widow’s mite here may be a few pennies, but the value - the meaning - of her charity in the other world is immense. Here, Ibn al-‘Arabī is recognized for having seen these invisible ‘fine things’. Next, Ibn al-‘Arabī says the Youth met him in the Ideal, bulk universe of the Exemplars, or image forms, which we may take to be the invisible bulk of the iceberg below the surface. And recall above, ‘I did justice to him in eloquently formal Arabic in the world of Exemplars.’

I said: ‘May I convey to you, O Seer of the Vision, some of what was shown to me of mysteries of being? - the trailings in the sheets of light

In Chapter 8, Ibn al-‘Arabī describes these trailings as rays traveling to and from the other world, and as the dream images that come to us in this world.

and the multitudinous things coming together as one well-spring, behind the curtains the True configures to veil Him as a partition raised up and a sky which is the canopy of the Earth set down. The verb, compared with the substance,

The *ismu dhātin* is a substantive, a noun that is independent in its meaning, as opposed to a *ṣifat* (adjective, quality), which is not independent in its meaning, or ‘stand-alone’.

is something fine; and because it cannot be perceived, it is something strong, looking over all.’

Consider that in ‘Zayd runs’, we see the substantive (Zayd), but we cannot perceive his ‘running’ - that is, the verb. The tripartite cosmological grammar that Ibn al-‘Arabī is developing here is substantive, adjective, and verb. ‘Zayd, son of ‘Amr, runs.’ The ‘son of ‘Amr’

is intangible and minute (fine), almost invisible, compared with the solid substantive 'Zayd'. His running is 'finer still than his adjective'.

The Youth's adjective is finer than his substance,
and his verb is finer still than his adjective.

He deposited the All in my substance,
just as he deposited the meaning of the thing
in its letter.

The imagery is the skeletal Arabic word made of surd consonants moved and voiced by vowels, which then becomes a word that has meaning.

So the creation is something sought, searched for,
intended, on account of meaning (the sense of a word),
just as the substance of musk in the vesicle of
the musk-deer is searched for by its scent.

Meaning is sought for in creation. Following the scent, the vesicle is reached, the sac, containing the musk.



If not for what was deposited in me, which my true being required, and which connected my path to him, I would not have found a chance to drink deep with the Youth, nor felt attracted toward his *ma'rifah*. Because of that deposit, I was returned to myself and regained consciousness in the end. This returning is just as the arm of the draftsman's compass returns, during the opening of the circle, after reaching the end of the circle's being, to the beginning point. Thus the last matter is connected to the first, and its endlessness curves with kindness into its timelessness, and there is nothing but a *wujūd* (being) continuous and a vision stable, enduring.

The visualization is of a two-armed compass, the one arm fixed on a centerpoint. With the pencil fixed on the paper, the other arm is stretched out to 'open' the circle. There is now a line from the centerpoint to the

arc of the circle. The pencil goes around and joins back to the circle - it is now 'continuous being' - joining the last to the first. Following the pencil trace, one travels endlessly around the circle, and/or one gazes at the seen centerpoint, which remains fixed and stable without regard to the journey along the circumference. The points along the circumference are like paving stones and cells, one per particle (or person).

But the circumference path is long, because one is viewing the created beings. If creatures turned to face their adjacent neighbor, without entering his cell-space there, they would gaze at the travelers as they arrived with a look of *Terrible*, by God, *what they did*.

Al-mā'idah 5:79. That is, for their having worshiped idols which have 'no power either to harm or benefit', overstepping proper bounds (al-mā'idah). The picture Ibn al-'Arabī is painting is of the circle of existence, the circumference paved with stepping-stones along which every being, the travelers, travels. Ahead is the future as if behind a veil, and behind is the past, unveiled. Everyone is moving onwards to 'find' something, but the movement is along the circumference, from creation (and this idol) to creation (and that idol). How terrible (wrong-headed) is each movement!

But had the travelers recognized their cell-space, they would not have moved. Instead, they were veiled by even numbers from recognizing the realities of the odd number (witr) of the True, the Creator, the *witr* by which God created the Earth and the coursing of planets.

The even-number here is duality, as in the duality of 'do and don't do', and 'secondary causes', and 'cause and effect'. The path is long because all that you see are created beings. The fault of the people cited above is worshiping other than God and not recognizing the Oneness of the Creator.

The Prophet ﷺ said: 'God has 99 names, 100 less 1; who holds them goes to the Garden, and He is *witr* and loves the *witr*.' Ibn al-'Arabī will explain later that God jealously protects His being an odd number.

The travelers observe the staircase of the names, and they seek routes with way-stations for the night-ascensions, and they imagine them to be the greatest alighting places to be pursued, and the most radiant and desired state in which the True may be proceeded toward. Some are given to journeying along the routes atop the horse Burāq the truthful and his fluttering silken brocades - he

verifies for them what they see of His signs and verses and His fine subtleties.

For the very precise imagery of *rafārafa* (fluttering silken brocades), see Chapter 8, end. In Lane, 'A bird moved, or agitated his wings in the air (or fluttered in the air), without moving from his place.' The dove, for instance, which flutters the wings while remaining in one place, also has a shivering movement which fluffs up the feathers or casts off the last water droplets.

When the observation is north-based,

Standing on the circumference of the circle (corresponding to the counter-clockwise circling of the Ka'bah), facing the northerly direction, the centerpoint is seen; the right-hand direction is forward along the circle, and the left-hand direction (west) is backward along the circle.

and the innate nature of the configuration is wholly complete, you face (when first placed on the circumference) the centerpoint of the circle. The directional vector of your heart-soul from the right-hand side (forward along the circle) is veiled with a *niqāb* (with only eye slits toward the future); and from the western side behind, the veil has been swept off. If the veil had been swept off the *right* (forward) side, you would have been given from the very first glance a stable footing in a vision of the individuations.

It is the individuations, the particulars (*ta'īnu*, from 'ayn) along the circumference that distract the sight from the One.

How strange! They think they are at the *lowest of the low* when actually they are where they should be, at the highest of the heights. *I take refuge in God that I not be one of the ignorant ones!* Her left (north) is the right hand (south) of her *mudīr*.

al-baqarah 2:67

The *mudīr* is the Leader in the center of the circle; His Right Hand from the center 'reaches' the circumference of the circle at your left hand (on the inside, heart-side of your circling). This positioning is a theme Ibn al-'Arabī connects to the Right Hand of God that is the Yemeni corner *ḥ* of the Ka'bah and her exalted standing. The 'ones who stand' (*wāqifūna*) in their place are in the highest spiritual station, as Ibn al-'Arabī will explain later, but they are also lost to themselves and to others - precisely because they do not function in the realm of secondary means and causes and effects (along the circle's circumference). They go to the deep part of the ocean and are lost,

whereas prophets and others keep close to the shore so as to be useful to others, staying in the spot in which they find themselves at the end of their journey.

When it is confirmed with the discerning people what I have secretly pointed out to them, and they authenticate and really know that *to Him is the Return*, then they do not quit their standing place. But the hapless one presumes there is a knocking at and opening a door (already open), and asks, ‘Could there be opposite constriction and constraint anything but expansiveness and opening up?’ Then this hapless one recites that sentiment as a Qur’ān against the antagonists.

They are referred to as the *akābir* (leaders) in *al-anām*. They seem to be the ‘discerning ones’ who are arguing with the hapless one.

Whom God wants to be guided, He expands his chest toward surrender, and whom He wants to be misguided, He makes his chest constricted, constrained, as if he were climbing to the heavens. But just as expansion happens only after constriction, so the sought-for goal is reached only after traveling along the path. Thus the hapless one disregards his initial inspiration in favor of what is worked out only by thinking and evidence from the people of ‘sharp’ minds and clever intellects. *al-anām 6:125*

Now what the hapless one said was true from one perspective, because he is an observer with a northern view. The discerning ones grant him his state and they confirm him in his absurdity (*muḥāl*), and they double his contrivance (*miḥāl*), and they tell him, ‘You need to seek help, if you want to reconnect with what you exited, without doubt (*maḥālah*).’ They conceal the neighboring regions from him, and they talk up the rewards of the visit and the mutual visitor and the assistance he will get in his journey. He will grieve upon regaining what he had left, but he will rejoice in what he experienced on his path of mysteries and the things that started to happen to him along the way.

If the Messenger ﷺ had not sought a Night-Ascension, he would not have journeyed, and he would not have ascended to the heavens, nor would he have come back down. He had been given an experience of the higher angels and signs from his Lord in his own place (so he did not ‘need’ to journey), just as the Earth was contracted and gathered together for him (*zuwīyat liya’l-ard*, ‘The Earth was wrinkled and contracted altogether for me and I saw

her Easts and her Wests') while he was in his bed. But it is a Divine mystery, so whoever wishes may deny it, because he has not been given the foundation; and believe in it if you wish, because you have collected everything together.

When I had been given this knowledge which the intellect cannot reach by itself alone and which cannot be understood fully, the Youth said in his way: 'You have told of a wondrous mystery, and you have disclosed a wondrous meaning I had not heard before from such a friend as you, and I have not seen anyone so perfectly completed in these truths as you are. As to myself, though, they are well known, and they are throughout my self imprinted. All shall appear clearly to you upon the lifting of my veils and your close attention to my signifying gestures. But He told me what He showed you when you visited His sacred precinct (*ḥaram*) and He informed you of His sacred things.'



Witnessing the scene of Divine contractual hand-taking

I said: 'You who are pure speech that does not converse, you whom I ask about what you know: Know that when I got to the Ka'bah with faith (*īmān*) and I visited Him in the Presence of sincerity (*iḥsān*), He lodged me in His sacred precinct and He taught me His sacred things.'

These recall Gabriel's *ḥadīth* (which will figure throughout this work) of the pillars of *islām*, *īmān*, and *iḥsān*, the last being 'worship as if you see Him'.

And the Youth said: 'I increased the number of times I did ritual acts as part of the pilgrimage, eager in my search for you. If you had not found me here, you would have found me there; and if I were veiled from you in Gathering (Muzdalifah - the meaning of *azlaf-nā* is we gathered together), I would shine with *tajallī* to you in the Decreed moment (*minā* is the decreed moment and *Minā* is the place visited during the pilgrimage). However, I have already taught you in another one of your standing places

(the halt at 'Arafat), and I have advised and set you astir (*ashaṛtu*) more than once in your esoteric writings:

Making an *ishārat* is making a sign or indication, as when one asks, May I? 'and the latter makes a sign with his hand or with his head, meaning that he should do it or not do it'. (In this context, it is not a device used to communicate when hostile people are around.) Here, the *ishārat* is advising and counseling, and also stirring up the fire, or making it flame up.

'I am; and even if I am concealed by veils, it is a *tajallī* not every mystic recognizes - only one who encompasses through knowledge what you encompass of recognitions (*ma'ārif*).

Ma'ārif: the subject of the first of the six sections of the *Futūḥāt*. Then below: a long *ḥadīth* from *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* is referenced throughout this entire book, in which the Divine appears to people after they die, who send Him away because He is in a form they do not recognize. He returns in the form they recognize and they rejoice, but their earlier inability to perceive the Divine in whatever form He may take is clearly a shortcoming on their part. The emblem is 'alāmah, a sign, a distinguishing mark.

'Did you not see me giving them *tajallī* on the Day of Arising, with another image and mark than the one they recognize? They deny my status as Lord (in contrast to *al-āraf* 7:172, *Am I not your Lord? And they said, Yes!*). They start taking refuge from the form, and in it, but they are not aware of what they are doing. They are saying to this site of Divine *tajallī*, "We take refuge in God from you! We will wait here for our Lord!"

There is 'I take refuge in God from the accursed Satan,' 'I take refuge in God from this form,' and 'I take refuge in this form from this form.'

"Then when I come out to them in the form which they had seen previously in this world, and they acknowledge My status of Lord, and they confirm that they should indeed worship - well then, they are slaves to the badge they recognized and to the image which identified for them what they were seeing.

Worship: a gloss for 'ubūdīyah is the state of lowliness which is appropriate for creatures, and for rubūbīyah, lordliness, a state of ownership which is appropriate for the Divine. So the worst thing is to be a slave to anything other than God, whether person or idol or one's lower self.

'If someone among these says that he is worshiping Me, his statement is a lie; he is misrepresenting Me! How could that be true? - when I give him *tajallī*, he denies Me! The one who binds

and defines Me in one form and not in another, it is the image he formed in his imagination that he worships - and all the while *hu* is the deeply hidden truth in his heart, sheltered by veil after veil. He *imagines* that he worships Me, but he is actually renouncing Me.

'The 'arifūn recognize Me. I am not concealed from their sights in the world of the enabled beings, as the 'arifūn withdraw and hide from creation, and from their own inner selves (seeing only Me). Nothing ever appears to them except Me, and they never understand anything to exist except My names. To everything that appears to them and shines in *tajallī* they say, "You are the One to be celebrated! The Exalted!" This is all they do. But these other people are between the Absent and the Present - and both are, for them, the same thing!'

When I heard these words and I clearly understood his signifying gestures and his signs, he pulled me to him as close as possible, protectively, and straightened me up before him.

Educating addresses and generous gifts given by the secret Ka'bah from just being there, and circling

۱ *ḥayy*, *Living*. The right hand stretched out and I kissed her, This kiss is ritualistic and does not give Ibn al-'Arabī what he hopes for: he complains (below), 'Why did you reject me and not honor my covenant with you?'

and the form which I had been made to passionately love was joined up to me. He transformed

The word *taḥawwala* is to shift from one place to another, transmute, and transform, as in *taḥawwala-hu bi'l-maw'izat*, 'He sought to avail himself of the state in which he might be rendered prompt, or willing, to accept admonition.' Ibn al-'Arabī shifts among pronouns: when the identity is predominant, it is 'he, the Youth', or 'I' or 'he' referring to himself; when the altering state is predominant, it is 'she, the image form'.

for me into a form of Life, so I transformed for him into a form of something Lifeless.

His transformation turns out not to be the right one. We have just

heard in the ḥadīth from Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim of the inability to recognize the Divine in different forms. The following seven forms are 'reflexive' adjectives and also the seven circuits of the Ka'bah: Living, Seeing, Knowing, Hearing, Speaking, Desiring, Powering. The transformations for each follow this pattern: the actor seeking an object but finding the opposite. The true goal of the human being is 'ubūdīyah, to be the subject of God, not rabūbīyah, to be a lord; if the result is not the passive object but the opposite of the Active, one has 'not done the course well'.

The form (f, here Ibn al-'Arabī) sought allegiance

This is the Yemeni corner (the Right Hand), which is ritually touched during the seven laps of ṭawāf around the Ka'bah. It is a taking of the hand in fealty (allegiance), tabāyū'u: 'The making a covenant as though each of the two parties sold what he had to the other, and gave him his own special property, and his obedience, and all that pertained to his case. Hence, he promised, or swore allegiance to the prince, in doing which it was usual for the person making this covenant to place his hand in the hand of the prince, in confirmation of the covenant, like as is done by the seller and buyer' (Lane). The Youth and Ibn al-'Arabī are circling the Ka'bah touching the 'Right Hand' with each circuit.

from the other form, but she said to her, 'You have not done the course well.' So she withdrew her right hand from my form, which then said to her, 'I do not acknowledge her in the seen world as something true and solid.'

2 *baṣīr, Seeing*. Then he transformed for me into a form of Sight, so I transformed for him into a form of one whose sight has been Blinded. This was after the ending of a circuit around the Ka'bah and a supposed breach of a stipulation.

The breach is only presumed, because touching the Right Hand is not stipulated each time, if there are crowds and the way is barred. The one form sought allegiance from the other form, but she said the same thing again ('you have not done the course well').

3 *'ālim, Knowing*. Then he transformed for me into a form of Universal Knowledge, so I transformed for him into a form of the Completely Ignorant. The form sought allegiance from the other form, but she repeated the now familiar statement.

4 *samīʿ*, Hearing. Then he transformed for me into a form of the Hearer of the Call, so I transformed for him into a form of the Deaf to the Invitation. The form sought allegiance from the other form, and the True draped His curtains between the two forms.

Now the True intervenes directly, with the draped curtains being this world (*dunyā*), which should be a sign pointing to the Divine but for most people instead is a veil hiding the Divine. This is the ‘primitive’ stage of Ḥayy ibn Yaḡṣān (which is Ibn Ṭufayl al-Andalusī’s story demonstrating that the lone human being can recognize that there is a Creator who is One). The next stage is the revealed Book.

5 *mutakallim*, Speaking. Then he transformed for me into a form of the Addresser, so I transformed for him into a form of the Silenced from Answering. The one form sought allegiance from the other form, and the True sent between them a Tablet inscribed and etched upon.

6 *murīd*, Desiring. Then he transformed for me into a form of Desiring (and when God desires something to be, it is), so I transformed for him into a form essentially and conventionally falling short, not becoming. The one form sought allegiance from the other form, and the True made His abundant illumination and His Light overflow between the two.

Irādat, one of the 6+1 adjectives (where all depend on the +1, Life). If God desires something to be, He says to it *Be!* and it becomes. The Qur’ānic verse is 16:40: *innamā qawlu-nā li-shay’in idhā aradnā-hu an naqūla lahu kun fa-yakūn*. The oppositional scene here derives from the fact that (as Ibn al-ʿArabī tells us) nothing desired in creation is less than perfect in any way.

7 *qādir*, Powering. Then he transformed for me into a form of Able and Capable, so I transformed into a form of Unable and Destitute. The one form sought allegiance from the other form, and the True displayed to me, the creature, its (my) shortcomings.

inna-Allāha ʿalā kulli shay’in qādir (al-baqarah 2:20) for Ibn al-ʿArabī is that each thing that God desires to be is commanded to *Be!* and it becomes; what becomes is measured and apportioned, and the power of that becoming persists in each being. ‘Indeed, God measures out every

thing with power.' Here the final intervention is inability, which should have evoked Abū Bakr's statement, 'The incapacity to perceive what is to be perceived is perception.' Below, note that as soon as we leave 1-dimension, 'opposite' can be 'conjugate', and a movement in one place may be reflected and 'opposite' in more than one place. Thus the opposite of 'making alive' could be both 'ready to receive enlivening' and 'lifeless'.

After experiencing these events, and not receiving the fulfillment of all my hopes and expectations, I said, 'Why did you reject me and not honor my covenant with you?' He said to me: 'You rejected Me yourself, My creature! If you had kissed the Stone during every circuit, O circler, you would have kissed My Right Hand just here at this corner in each of the (seven) intricate forms, because My House here corresponds to the *dhāt*, and because the rounds of the circlers correspond to the seven adjectives - attributes of the Perfect Whole (not attributes of the Sublime Fear-some, too great to be comprehended); these are attributes for contacting you and reflexive adjectives. So the seven circuits are the seven adjectives, and the House, the Ka'bah, standing in front of you really points to a *dhāt*, even though I sent the Ka'bah down on My *carpet unfurled*, and I said to people, "For you this will correspond to My Throne encompassing the universe, and My *khalīfah* behind whom I act in the Earth is the one who has settled therein and encompasses the universe." So look at the angel with you circling and standing at your side.'

I looked at him; then he returned to his throne, and he passed over me in his palanquin rising high.

This palanquin is *na'ṣh*, which is the word for the bier when a dead person is not upon it. The chapter began with the *janāzah*, which is the bier upon which the veiled dead person is placed.

I smiled with happiness and spontaneously spoke:

O Ka'bah! The Messengers circle her,
after the honored ones have circled her.

Note how the Ka'bah for Ibn al-'Arabī has gone from a stone (first translated here by the neuter in English, even though the Arabic has no neuter), to a 'he' with personality, and now to a 'she'.

Then after them came a people
circling her, among them the high and the low.

He sent her down as an exemplar of His Throne,
and we (angels) are her honored circlers.

If one said, 'Of his circlers, I am the more splendid;
I am better. Do they hear?'

By God, he did not come with a clear text,
and he came only with something not
explained.

*The argument con-
cerns angels and
humankind, in
al-baqarah 2:30.*

Is this one not simply Light circling him,
their lights circling, while we are despicable
fluid, born from semen?

The thing is drawn to its like,
and we are all creatures, firmly implanted
(like the zygote) at His Side.

Why will they not recognize what they did not see?
They circle what we circle, though they are
not made of clay as Adam is.

*Recall that in the
khuṭbah the
Prophet ﷺ was
stripped from the
orbit of the khulafā'.*

If the finest (the verb, 'finer still') of us were stripped off
and abstracted, he would settle -
as He settles on the Throne - on this which
the circlers are circling.

Declare them too holy to be ignorant of the truth of the
one for whose sake God subjugated the
worlds.

How is it for them? Their information is that I am a
child
of the one to whom they were bowing down.

And they acknowledged, after opposing
our parent Adam, that they had been
ignorant.

The individual who had refused felt despair (ublisa,
Iblís),
and he was the most excessive of the deniers.

Holy are they, holy are they;
they are protected from making the missteps
of the ones who do wrong, meaning to do
right.



I (Ibn al-ʿArabī) say: Then I turned a facet of my heart away from him, and I drew near with my heart to my Lord. The Youth said to me: 'You gave succor to your father Adam; my blessing is loosened to you, so farewell. Hear of the station **f** of the one you were praising and what you sent ahead of goodness before her. (This is the testimony furlled up that the Ka'bah promises she will guard and present on the Day of Judgment for Ibn al-ʿArabī.) What is your level compared with the level of the angels made closest? Blessings of God on all of you, and all of them, and peace!

'This My Ka'bah is a heart of *being*. My Throne belonging to the heart is a bounded body. But neither one of them encompasses Me, and not reported about Me is what is reported of them.

The 'arsh is the Throne that encompasses the universe.

Ḥadīth qudsī (a statement spoken by God): Not vastly spacious enough for Me are My heavens and My Earth, but vastly spacious enough for Me is the heart of My faithful slave.

'My house - which is vast and spacious enough to encompass Me - is your heart sought out, set down in your seen body. The circlers of your heart are the secret souls, and they correspond to your bodies circling these stones. The circlers encircling Our encompassing Throne are like the ones circling within you, in the written world.

This is the universe of takhṭīṭ (from khaṭṭ), the mapped, drawn world, described next in Chapter 2.

Thus, just as the body with regard to you is arranged and composed, unlike your elemental, simple heart - in the same way is she, the Ka'bah, with the encompassing Throne.

The composite body has a simple heart; the composite universe has a simple heart - the Ka'bah. The simple being is substance.

'The circlers of the Ka'bah correspond to the circlers of your heart because both the Ka'bah and your heart share in being hearts. The circlers of your body are like the circlers of the Throne because of their having in common the adjective of encompassing. So just as the world of mysteries circling the heart which is "vastly spacious enough for Me" is the most radiant mansion compared with others (and the highest), in that way, all of you, with the quality of panoramic nobility and mastery, are - compared with the circlers of the encompassing Throne - the best. You are the ones circling the heart of the *being* of the universe, and you correspond to the mysteries of the ones who truly know. They are the ones circling the body of the universe, and they correspond to water and air. How can they be otherwise? Other than all of you nothing is 'vastly spacious enough for Me', and I do not give *tajalli* in a complete form except in your meaning dimension.

The meaning dimension is the bulk of the iceberg. As *tajalli* is visual, its truth is always a slice, a sharp and particular facet; it is therefore not visually comprehensive here in the tip of the iceberg.

Therefore recognize the measure of what you have been gifted from the highest overlooking post. And after that, well then, I am the Great, the Elevated Over; no boundary bounds Me, and no master recognizes Me, nor slave.

'Divinity *f* is too holy and too transcendent for Her to be perceived and for any to share with Her in Her place.

You are the vessel and I am I.

anta'l-inā' wa anā anā. Visually, the written vessel *al-inā'* looks like *al-anā* (the I). Taken visually, the writing suggests that 'you are the I, and I am I.'

انت الانا و انا انا

So do not seek Me within yourself, imposing on yourself difficulty and distress, nor externally, to no good end. But do not give up searching for Me, or you will be wretched. Search for Me until you meet Me; therefore ascend onwards, but follow honorably, with courteous protocol in your search, and be present from the very start with your practice.

madhhab: the legal school. Courtesy is *adāb*, a crucial concept on the spiritual path. Being ‘present’ connects semantically to *ḥaḍrat*, the feminine force we will encounter soon below, and the *Ṣūfī* gathering.

Distinguish between Me and you, because you do not see Me; rather, you see your core self. So of course stop short at the attribute of commonality and just be a creature, and just say as Abū Bakr did, “The incapacity to perceive what is to be perceived is perception.” Stay with that, as did the ‘*atīq* and you will be an honored *ṣaḍīq*’

These are two honorifics of Abū Bakr, relating to his maturity (*‘atīq*) and to his affirmation (*ṣaḍīq*) of the Prophet’s statements concerning his Night-Ascension.

Then He said to me, ‘Leave My inaccessible Presence, as someone like you is not suited for My service.’ So I left, banished. Then the Presence shouted and said, *Leave Me with the one I created alone.* *al-muddaththir*
74:11 Then He said, ‘Bring him back.’ And I was thrown back, and I found myself in front of Him for a short while. It was as if I never ceased being in the midst of His vision and never left a Presence f (*ḥaḍrat*) of His Being.

Then He said: ‘How would one come to Me, in My Presence, who is not suited for My service? If you do not have the sense of the sacred that necessitates service, the *ḥaḍrat* will not come near to you, and She will toss you away at the first glance. You were there! You saw some of Her kindness to you and Her generous welcome which increased your sense of the sacred and, at the moment of Her *tajallī*, your shyness.’

Then He asked: ‘Why did you not question Me about My ordering you to leave and returning you to your ascension? I know you are an expert in proof and language. How fast you forget, O human being!’ I replied: ‘The greatness of the vision of Your substantive blinds me. I was at a loss because of Your gripping the right hand of fealty in Your radiant *tajallīyāt* to me.’

I continued to look again and again - what might come suddenly of good from the unseen? If I had turned in at that moment to me, I would have known that *from* me it was being brought to me. But Presence made it so that nothing but She was seen, and that no honored face would be seen but Her honored face.

The muḥayy is the honored face to which one gives greetings of blessing and long life.

He said, 'You are right, O Muḥammad (Ibn al-'Arabī), so stay fixed in the stance of the Unique, and beware of number, because in quantity is everlasting destruction.' Then there came to pass addresses and reports; I shall discuss them in the chapter on pilgrimage and on Makkah, with all the other mysteries.

Link

The friend entrusted with my secrets said, 'O generous and sincere friend, you have not told me anything that I did not know already, and it has been made into an inscription that is visible, preserved in my *dhāt*.' I replied, 'You have made me yearn in anticipation of your arising and where you arose from, so that I will be predicated on you.'

He said, 'Yes. You, the exiled arriving, and you, the distant near, enter with me the Ka'bah of the ḥijr.'

The ka'bah al-ḥijr, where ḥijr is the sacred enclosure, with the wall called al-Ḥaṭīm, where 'Ā'ishah was told to pray.

This is the House elevated over the veil and the curtain; it is the entrance point of the ones who recognize God (the 'arīfīn), and in there the circlers rest.

Thus it was that with him I entered the House of the ḥijr all at once, and he put his hand on my chest

Did We not open your chest for you? (al-sharḥ 94:1)

and said: 'I am the seventh step-level of the encompassing of the cosmos and of mysteries of the thing itself and the Where. The True made me a segment of encompassing light unmixed and with regard to all things made me mixed.'

While I was eagerly waiting for what was being cast to my side (taught) or coming down to me, suddenly the teacher, the Highest Pen, came down onto my *dhāt* from his high place, riding a charger that was standing on three legs.

This detail about Burāq may be connected to Ibn al-ʿArabī's description of angels, who beat their wings to stay in a particular dimension and return by not flapping; the horse walks with three feet on the ground and one lifted. He later writes: 'When the angels descend to the Earth, they descend flying with these wings such that if they did not make their wings move, they would ascend back to their settling place and their station, automatically. But with a bird, he makes his wings move for the ascent, and if he stopped moving his wings, or spreading them out, he would fall to the Earth by his nature' (Chapter 357). Thus, a three-legged horse stays in this dimension by walking; when he rests on four feet, he returns to the other dimension.

The charger lowered his head toward my *dhāt* and scattered the lights and the darknesses and blew into my heart all of the worlds, and cleaved my Earth and my heaven, and taught me all my names. I recognized myself, and others, and I distinguished between my bad and my good; and I sundered what was between my Creator and my truths. Then that angel turned away from me and said, 'Learn that you are in the Presence of the King.'

In Lisān al-ʿarab: 'In a ḥadīth, the holy spirit blew into my rūḥī, my core/heart.'

I prepared myself for descent and the advent of the messenger. The angels came near to me and the orbits circled around me, and the All was at my right hand, arriving from the south, coming toward my presence. I saw no king (*malik*) come down nor angel (*malak*) shifting from standing in front of me. I regarded some of my sides and I saw the circular shape of timelessness; and I knew that descending was impossible, so I stayed fixed in that condition. I later informed some of the special ones about what I had seen, and I poured out for them from myself everything I had found.



The Youth said: 'I am the ripened meadow, the universal harvest, so lift my veils and recite what is contained etched in my lines. What you learn from me, put in your book, and speak directly in it to everyone dearest to you.' I lifted his veils and I observed his etched lines, and there shone to my eyes his light that was deposited within him, all that he contained and encompassed of hidden knowledge. The first line I recited and the first mystery from that

line which I learned are what I shall cite now in this second chapter following. And God is the guide leading us to knowledge and to an evened path, *exalted is hu beyond!*

In the margin: Heard (audited) up to here before its author, may God be most fine to him! - by Muḥammad bin ʿĀlī bin Muḥammad al-Muṭarriz, with my recitation; written down by Aḥmad bin Abū Bakr bin Sulaymān al-Ḥamawī, in his house.

