

Ibn 'Arabī and the Ṣūfis

THE ṢUFĪ TRADITION

SUFISM as a way of spiritual realization and the attainment of sanctity and gnosis is an intrinsic aspect of the Islamic Revelation of which it is in fact the heart and inner, or esoteric, dimension.¹ It received its name at a later period and it drew some of its formulations from doctrines of Neoplatonic and Hermetic origin, but the reality of Sufism, its basic doctrines and methods, reach back to the origin of the Revelation and are intimately entwined with the spirit as well as the very form of Islam as it is contained in the Quran, which is its most tangible and concrete embodiment.² For a person who participates in Sufism, who lives the life of a "follower of the Path,"³ the first and most perfect Ṣūfī was the Prophet Muḥammad — upon whom be peace — and after him the representative *par excellence* of Islamic esotericism, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.

At the time of the Prophet, when one might say the gates of heaven were open, the very intensity of the spiritual life and proximity to the source of the Revelation did not permit of a total separation of the Tradition into its exoteric and esoteric, or *Sharī'ah* and *Ṭarīqah*, components, although both existed in essence from the beginning. The whole of the Tradition was at first like a molten lava in a state of fusion and did not "congeal" and separate into its various elements until the withering influence of time and the corrupting con-

ditions of this world had gradually “cooled” and “solidified” it. We see, therefore, that during the first two centuries of its life, while the Tradition was extremely strong, as proved by its rapid expansion and power of assimilation, there was neither a definitely codified school of law nor a clearly organized Ṣūfī brotherhood, or order.⁴ We also note that in the 3rd/9th century the schools of law, or the *Shari‘ah*, became codified and at the same time Sufism began to manifest itself as a distinct element in the Islamic community, its doctrines and methods being propagated by the brotherhoods, each of which was directed by a master and often named after him.

The spirit that was “in the air” and “everywhere” at the beginning of the Revelation thus became consolidated within various orders so that it could continue as a living spiritual tradition. The later Ṣūfis did not practice anything which the Prophet and his companions had not practiced before them, especially such companions as ‘Alī, Abū Bakr, Abū Dharr, Salmān, Bilāl, and others who received his “esoteric instructions.” The Prophet used to make spiritual retreats (*khalwah*) in quiet and faraway places such as the cave on Mount Hīrā’, especially during the middle part of Ramaḍān and also in later life in the mosque of Medina, in all of which he performed the fundamental rite of invocation (*dhikr*). He also called upon his companions to “remember God” and invoke His name in private as well as in gatherings.

It is upon these and other practices of the Prophet and his sayings that the Ṣūfis have based their methods and practices to the present day. They have always considered themselves as the most ardent followers of the Prophet’s teachings and have sought to follow his personal example at every moment of their lives so that we hear a great Ṣūfī master of the 3rd/9th century saying, “All the Paths (of Sufism) are completely closed except to him who follows in the steps of the Apostle.”⁵ Sufism is thus the inner aspect of the teachings

of the Prophet as it gradually took form during the 2nd/8th and 3rd/9th centuries, gaining meanwhile the name Sufism by which the esoteric dimension of Islam has been known ever since.⁶

One cannot properly speak of a history of Sufism because in its essence Sufism has no history. However, since at each epoch it has presented its principles in a language conforming to the general mental and psychological conditions of that age, and since there have developed over the centuries various schools of interpretation, again depending on the "needs" of different types of men, it is possible to speak of the distinct features of the Šūfī tradition in each period.⁷ One can speak of the early ascetics, readers of the Quran and transmitters of *ḥadīth*, who kept the teachings of the Prophet alive for the generation immediately following that of the Companions and many of whom were among the early saints of Islam. And one must consider that very important figure of the first two Islamic centuries, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, whose long life, stretching from 21/643 to 110/728, linked three generations of Muslims to the time of the Prophet himself.⁸

Of utmost importance also during the first two centuries are the Shī'ah *Imāms*, of whom the first eight especially, play a cardinal role in the early phase of Sufism. In Shī'ism, which is essentially the "Islam of 'Alī" and is based on supporting 'Alī as the spiritual and temporal successor of the Prophet, the *Imāms*, who include 'Alī himself and his descendants, are the bearers of the prophetic light and the esoteric representatives of the Prophet. Also, many of them had an essential share in the formation of the Šūfī orders that have developed in the Sunnī world and figure prominently in their spiritual chain (*silsilah*). Nearly all the Šūfī orders trace their origin to the first Shī'ah *Imām*, 'Alī, and many of the later Šūfis were disciples of various *Imāms*, especially the sixth *Imām*, Ja'far al-Šādiq (88/702–148/765), and the

eighth *Imām*, 'Alī al-Riḍā (around 148/765–203/818). Moreover, several of the *Imāms* have left behind some of the most beautiful and exalted pages of Islamic gnosis of which the *Nahj al-balāghah* of the first *Imām* and the *Ṣaḥīfat al-sajjādiyyah*,⁹ by the fourth *Imām*, Zain al-'Ābidin, are among the most notable.

The third century marks the advent of many famous Ṣūfī figures whose eloquent and penetrating utterances have survived and re-echoed within the soul of the Ṣūfis of later generations. Among the well-known figures of this century are the Egyptian Dhu'l-Nūn, the saint of Baghdād al-Muḥāsibī,¹⁰ the prince Ibrāhīm ibn Adham, who, like Gautama the Buddha, left the courtly life in order to gain a knowledge of things divine, and the sage from Khurāsān, Bāyazīd al-Basṭāmī,¹¹ whose antinomian utterance, or "theophanic locutions," based on his experience of ultimate union have made him celebrated as a representative of the most intellectual form of Sufism.

Toward the end of the 3rd/9th century we find the sober school of Baghdād headed by Junaid around whom such figures as Nūrī and Shibli assembled and with whom the martyr of Sufism, Ḥallāj, associated. This great Ṣūfī, who is quite well known in the Western world, thanks to the many studies that Massignon devoted to him, represents in many ways the spiritual type of Christ within the Islamic tradition and his "passion," as Massignon calls it, presents certain similarities to that of Christ. It was the vocation of Ḥallāj to divulge esoteric doctrines before the common crowd and to be witness to the conscience of the Islamic community as it stood before the reality of the spiritual life contained within Sufism. Ḥallāj left some beautiful Arabic poems behind; he also uttered certain phrases which have never ceased to dominate the horizon of Sufism. His *ana'l-ḥaqq* (I am the Truth) has become perennial witness to the fact that Sufism is essentially gnosis and that ultimately it is God within us

who utters "I" once the veil of otherness has been removed.

During the 4th/10th century, at the same time that the Islamic arts and sciences reached their zenith,¹² the Šūfi tradition began to express itself in large didactic works as well as in the new vehicle of Persian poetry which henceforth became one of its main forms of expression. In this century appeared such classical manuals of Sufism as the *Kitāb al-luma'* (*The Book of Flashes*) of Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj,¹³ *Kitāb al-ta'arruf* (*Doctrine of the Šūfis*) of Kalābādhi,¹⁴ *Kashf al-maḥjūb* (*The Unveiling of the Hidden*) of Hujwiri, the first Šūfi prose work in Persian, *Qūt al-qulūb* (*The Nourishment of the Heart*) of Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, and the celebrated *Risālat al-qushairiyah* (*The Treatise of Qushairi*). All of these works are studied still by adepts of Sufism, especially the last, which is the most widely read didactic work on the practical aspect of Sufism. The beautiful locutions, the ecstatic utterances, the wise aphorisms of the earlier Šūfis, were collected and the rules and conditions for following the "Path" delineated.

In this century, also, the first Šūfi quatrain in Persian was composed by Abū Sa'īd ibn Abī'l-Khair, the contemporary of Avicenna.¹⁵ And one of the most important of all Šūfi authors, Khwājah 'Abdallāh al-Anṣārī, whose *Manāzil al-sā'irīn* (*The Stations of the Travelers*) has been the subject of so much study and so many commentaries over the centuries, wrote several important treatises in Persian. His *Munājāt* (*Supplications*)¹⁶ is now among the best-known classics in that language. Thus Persian became, in addition to Arabic, a major vehicle for the expression of Šūfi doctrine, preparing the ground for Sanā'ī, 'Aṭṭār, the incomparable Rūmī, Shabistārī, Sa'dī, and Ḥāfiẓ, with whom the "alchemical" usage of Šūfi poetry reaches its culmination. Through these eloquent poets the doctrines of Sufism were expounded in the eastern provinces of the Islamic world — in Persia, Central Asia, and India, as well as in Java and Sumatra —

and it was through the translation of some of these works that the attention of such Europeans as Goethe and Herder was first attracted to Sufism.

During this same century Sufism began to have some contact as well as friction with the tenets of philosophy, theology, and jurisprudence. We have seen how the master of Peripatetic philosophers, Avicenna, was attracted to certain elements of Sufism as was his contemporary Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī. Likewise, the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity, even when treating of the sciences, present certain similarities to Ṣūfī doctrines as does the Jābirian corpus, attributed to Jābir ibn Ḥayyān, who was a Ṣūfī and who in all likelihood did write some of the works in the vast corpus bearing his name. But there was also the reverse tendency of certain Ṣūfis' adopting cosmological doctrines to be found in the writings of Avicenna, the Brethren of Purity, and others and integrating them into their metaphysical perspective. Of special interest in this connection is the Andalusian sage, Ibn Masarraḥ, whose cosmological doctrines foreshadowed those of Ibn 'Arabī, who drew much from his teachings.¹⁷

There was opposition as well, however, among both theologians and jurists, an opposition which made itself felt more strongly during the 5th/11th century as the domination of the Seljuqs and the establishment of the new universities changed the less organized and more unrestricted atmosphere of the previous century. And it was against this background that Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī appeared upon the scene to "legitimize" Sufism in official juridical circles and bring about a concordance between the esoteric and exoteric aspects of Islam, in both of which he participated actively. As we mentioned in the previous chapter, al-Ghazzālī essentially exteriorized certain teachings of Sufism in order to give it freedom to carry on its inner life in the bosom of the Muslim community. Thus, his defense of Sufism served an important

function in determining the status granted to the orders and their doctrines and practices in the general religious community. Moreover, in some of his more esoteric treatises, like *Mishkāṭ al-anwār* (*The Niche for Lights*)¹⁸ and *al-Risālat al-laduniyah* (*Treatise on Divine Knowledge*), he began to discuss the doctrines of Sufism in a manner which foreshadowed the works of Ibn 'Arabī.

Between al-Ghazzālī and Ibn 'Arabī there are still many significant Ṣūfī figures who must not be overlooked. In Persia there were Aḥmad al-Ghazzālī (the brother of the more famous Abū Ḥāmid), who wrote a famous treatise on Divine love called the *Sawānīḥ al-'ushshāq* (*Auspices of Divine Lovers*),¹⁹ and 'Ain al-Qudāt, who also discussed Ṣūfī doctrines in a manner reminiscent of Ibn 'Arabī. As for the Maghrib, or the West of the Islamic world, one may recall the figure of Ibn al-'Arīf, the author of the well-known *Maḥāsin al-majālis* (*The Virtues of Ṣūfī Gatherings*)²⁰ of Abū Madyan, the master of Ibn 'Arabī, mentioned so often in his works; and of Ibn Qasyī, the founder of the "Monastic state" of the Murīdīn (or "adepts") in Algarbes in southern Portugal, with whom Ibn 'Arabī had intimate contact.

Also, returning once again to the Orient of Islam, we meet, just before the time of Ibn 'Arabī, not only with the originator of the school of Illumination, Suhrawardī, but also with the founders of some of the most important Ṣūfī orders. In this category we may include Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī, after whom the Rifā'īyah order is named; 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, the most universal saint in Islam, whose Qādirīyah order stretches today from Morocco to the Pacific islands; and Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā, the founder of the Kubrawīyah order.²¹ When Ibn 'Arabī came upon the stage of Islamic history the tradition of Sufism was a well-established one, possessing, through the orders, an effective means of preserving and transmitting its spiritual methods and doctrines. It possessed, too, a rich heritage of works, both prose and poetry, in Persian as well

as Arabic, in which the illuminations and insights, the experiences and "observations," of the Šūfī saints, going back generation by generation to the time of the Prophet, had been preserved.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IBN 'ARABĪ

With Ibn 'Arabī we suddenly encounter a complete metaphysical and cosmological, as well as psychological and anthropological, doctrine of monumental dimensions which seems at first to indicate a break or turning point within the tradition of Sufism. It is true that certain earlier Šūfī like Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and Bāyazīd al-Bastāmī treat of metaphysical questions and that the writings of 'Aṭṭār or Ibn Masarraḥ contain cosmological doctrines, but not in the same dimension and proportion as is to be found in Ibn 'Arabī. The earlier Šūfī writings are for the most part either practical guides for the followers of the Path or utterances of various Šūfīs expressing the state of realization each has attained. There is little theoretical exposition of metaphysics aiming in any way to be total and complete. There are only flashes of light which illuminate a particular aspect of reality with which the Šūfī is concerned at a particular moment.

With Muḥyī al-Dīn the doctrines of Sufism, which up to his time had been contained implicitly in the sayings of various masters, became explicitly formulated. He thus became the expositor *par excellence* of gnosis in Islam.²² Through him the esoteric dimension of Islam expressed itself openly and brought to light the contours of its spiritual universe in such a manner that in its theoretical aspect, at least, it was open to anyone having sufficient intelligence to contemplate, so that he could in this way be guided toward the Path in which he could come to realize the metaphysical theories in an "operative" manner. We encounter in the writ-

ings of Ibn 'Arabī such formulations as the transcendent unity of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) and the Universal Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), which are given this designation for the first time although their reality had existed from the beginning of the Tradition.

The importance of Ibn 'Arabī consists, therefore, in his formulation of the doctrines of Sufism and in his making them explicit. His advent marks neither a "progress" in Sufism by its becoming more articulated and theoretical, nor a deterioration from a love of God to a form of pantheism, as has been so often asserted against Ibn 'Arabī. Actually, the explicit formulation of Ṣūfī doctrines by Muḥyī al-Dīn signifies a need on the part of the milieu to which they were addressed for further explanation and greater clarification. Now, the need for explanation does not increase with one's knowledge; rather, it becomes necessary to the extent that one is ignorant and has lost the immediate grasp of things through a dimming of the faculty of intuition and insight. As Islamic civilization drew away gradually from its source of revelation, the need for explanation increased to the degree that the spiritual insight and the perspicacity of men diminished. The early generations needed only a hint or directive (*ishārah*) to understand the inner meaning of things; men of later centuries needed a full-fledged explanation. Through Ibn 'Arabī Islamic esotericism provided the doctrines which alone could guarantee the preservation of the Tradition among men who were always in danger of being led astray by incorrect reasoning and in most of whom the power of intellectual intuition was not strong enough to reign supreme over other human tendencies and to prevent the mind from falling into error. Through Ibn 'Arabī, what had always been the inner truth of Sufism was formulated in such a manner that it has dominated the spiritual and intellectual life of Islam ever since.

THE LIFE OF THE SAGE FROM MURCIA

Ibn 'Arabī, whose complete name is Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-'Arabī al-Ḥātimī al-Ṭā'ī, was born in Murcia in southern Spain in 560/1165 in a family of pure Arab blood of the tribe of Ṭā'ī. He is best known in the Islamic world as Ibn 'Arabī and was entitled by posterity al-Shaikh al-akbar (Doctor Maximus) and surnamed Muḥyī al-Dīn (The Revivifier of Religion). Like other great saints and sages, his greatest "masterpiece" was his own life, a most unusual life in which prayer, invocation, contemplation, and visits to various Ṣūfī saints were combined with the theophanic vision of the spiritual world in which the invisible hierarchy was revealed to him.²³ In studying his life, therefore, we gain a glimpse of the spiritual character and stature of the sage whose intellectual activity is visible in his many metaphysical works.

After spending his early years in Murcia, Ibn 'Arabī went to Seville where he grew up and received his early education and where his well-to-do family could provide a comfortable and leisurely life for him in which he was left free to pursue his natural inclination toward things spiritual. He met at this early period of his life two women saints, Yāsamin of Marshena and Fāṭimah of Cordova, who had a strong influence upon the orientation of his life. This was especially true of Fāṭimah of Cordova, who was a very old woman, yet possessed of a radiance and beauty which Ibn 'Arabī compared to that of a young girl of sixteen. She acted as his spiritual guide for two years and considered herself as his spiritual mother.

As a young man of twenty, with great intelligence and already possessed of profound spiritual insights, Ibn 'Arabī began to travel about various cities of Andalusia, meeting saintly men and women wherever he could find them. It was during one of these trips, while he was staying at Cordova,

that he met Averroes, the master interpreter of Aristotle, in an encounter which is full of significance, for in it two personalities meet who symbolize the paths to be followed in the future by the Christian and the Islamic worlds. In this meeting two men faced each other, one of whom was a follower of the edicts of reason and who became the most influential of all Muslim thinkers in the Latin West, and the other a gnostic for whom knowledge meant essentially "vision," who became the dominant figure in Sufism, towering like a giant over the subsequent intellectual life of Islam. Since the meeting of two such figures is of so much general interest, we give Ibn 'Arabī's own account of this memorable event, an account which also reveals a great deal of the spiritual personality of its author: ²⁴

I went one fine day to the house of Abu'l-Walid ibn Rushd [Averroes] in Cordova. He had expressed the desire to meet me personally because he had heard of the revelations which God had accorded me in the course of my spiritual retreat and had not hidden his astonishment concerning what he had been told. That is why my father, who was one of his intimate friends, sent me one day to his house under the pretext of having to perform some kind of commission but in reality in order for Averroes to be able to have a talk with me. At this time I was still a beardless young man.

Upon my entering [the house] the philosopher rose from his place and came to meet me, showering upon me signs that demonstrated his friendship and consideration and finally embraced me. Then he told me, "Yes." And I in turn told him: "Yes." Upon this his joy increased in noting the fact that I had understood him. Then, becoming myself conscious of what had provoked his joy I added: "No." Immediately Averroes shrank, the color of his features changed; he seemed to doubt that about which he was thinking. He asked me this question: "What kind of solution have you found through illumination and Divine inspiration?" I answered him: "Yes and no. Between the yes and the no souls take their flight from their matter and the necks become detached from their bodies." Averroes became pale; I saw him trembling. He murmured the ritual phrase: "There is no force

but in God," because he had understood that to which I had alluded.

Later, after our interview, he interrogated my father concerning me, in order to compare the view he had reached about me and to know if it coincided with that of my father, or that on the contrary, it differed from his view. It is certain that Averroes was a great master of reflection and philosophic meditation. He had thanked God, I have been told, to have lived at a time when he could have seen someone who had entered into spiritual retreat ignorant and had left it as I had done. He said: 'It was a case whose possibility I had affirmed myself without however as yet encountering someone who had in fact experienced it. Glory be to God that I have been able to live at a time when there exists a master of this experience, one of those who open the locks of His doors. Glory be to God to have made me the personal favor of seeing one of them with my own eyes.'

I wanted to have at another time a new interview with Averroes. Divine Mercy made him appear to me in a state of ecstasy in such a form that between his person and myself there was a light veil. I saw him across this veil without his seeing me or knowing that I was there. He was in fact too absorbed in his meditation to take notice of me. Then I said to myself: "His deliberation does not lead him where I am myself."

I had no more occasion to meet him until his death which occurred in the year 595 of the Hegira [A.D. 1198] at Marrākush. His remains were transferred to Cordova, where his tomb is located. While his coffin, which contained his remains, had been loaded on the side of a beast of burden, his works had been placed on the other side in order to counterbalance it. I was there standing motionless; there was with me the jurist and man of letters Abu'l-Ḥusain Muḥammad ibn Jubair, secretary of Sayyid Abū Sa'īd [an Almohade prince] as well as my companion Abu'l-Ḥakam 'Amr ibn Sarrāj, the copyist. Then Abu'l-Ḥakam turned toward us and said: "Do you not see what is serving as the counterweight of the Master Averroes on his mount? On one side the master, and on the other his works, the books composed by him?" Then Ibn Jubair answered: "You say that I do not see my child? But of course I do. May your tongue be blessed!" Then I gathered within myself (this phrase of Abu'l-Ḥakam) since it is for me a theme of meditation and remembrance. I am now the only survivor of this group of friends — may God keep them in his

mercy — and I tell myself regarding this subject: On one side the master, on the other his works. Oh! how I would like to know if his hopes have been fulfilled!

Until 595/1198 Ibn 'Arabī spent his life in various cities of Andalusia and North Africa meeting Ṣūfis and scholars and occasionally holding debates with such diverse groups as the Mu'tazilites who had made a rationalistic interpretation of Islam. During this period he traveled as far away as Tunis where he made a study of the *Khal' al-na'lain* (*Taking off of the Sandals*)²⁶ of Ibn Qasyī, and wrote a commentary upon it. He also visited Almeria, which had been the center of the school of Ibn Masarraḥ and later of Ibn al-'Arīf, and where, according to Asin Palacios, Ibn 'Arabī had received his formal initiation into Sufism.²⁶

During these years the Shaikh continued to have his theophanic visions. He had already had a vision of the invisible hierarchy ruling the Universe, consisting of the Supreme Pole (*Qutb*); the two *imāms*; the four "pillars" (*awṭād*) governing the four cardinal points; the seven "substitutes" (*abdāl*) the influence of each of whom reigns over one of the climates; the twelve chiefs (*nuqabā'*), dominating the twelve signs of the Zodiac; and the eight nobles (*nujabā'*) corresponding to the eight heavenly spheres.²⁷ He also had a vision of all the spiritual poles of the revelations anteceding Islam, and realized the transcendent unity of all the traditions revealed by God to man. And it was also in a vision, which he received in 595/1198 in Murcia, that he saw the Divine Throne held up by pillars of light with a bird flying around it who ordered Ibn 'Arabī to depart from his homeland and set out for the Orient of the Islamic world where he was to pass the rest of his days.²⁸

With this pilgrimage to the East a new period commenced in Ibn 'Arabī's life. In 598/1201 he visited Mecca for the first time, where he was "commanded" to begin the composition of his *magnum opus*, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyah* (*The Meccan*

Revelations) and where in a family of Persian Šūfis from Ispahān he met a young girl of great devoutness and beauty who henceforth became the embodiment of the eternal *sophia* for him and fulfilled a role in his life which resembles that of Beatrice in the life of Dante.

From Mecca, Ibn ‘Arabī traveled to different cities and was at this time initiated into the Divine mysteries by Khidr,²⁹ or al-Khaḍir, the prophet who initiates men directly into the spiritual life without their becoming attached to a regular initiatic chain. He thus became a “disciple of Khidr” as he had been of various Šūfī masters belonging to regular initiatic lines. His initiation into the “line” of Khidr is shown most clearly of all in 601/1204 when in Mosul he received the mantle (*khirqah*) of Khidr from ‘Alī ibn Jāmi’ who himself had directly ‘received’ it from the “Green Prophet.”

During these years also, Ibn ‘Arabī came into occasional conflict with some of the jurists, as in 604/1207 when he was threatened with mortal danger in Cairo and had to take refuge in Mecca. After spending some time in the holy city, he set out for Anatolia, where in Quniya he met Šadr al-Dīn al-Qunawī, his most celebrated disciple, who later became the most important commentator and propagator of his works in the East. From Quniya he traveled eastward toward Armenia and then south to the Euphrates Valley and Baghdād where in 609/1211 he met the famous Šūfī master, Shihāb al-Dīn ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī, the namesake of the Master of Illumination, with whom he is often mistaken.³⁰ Ibn ‘Arabī also visited Aleppo where he was warmly received by Malik Zāhir, who a generation before had been the patron and friend of Suhrawardī, and whose death he had tried in vain to prevent.

Finally, in 621/1223, Ibn ‘Arabī decided to settle in Damascus, after he had become famous over the whole of the Islamic world and was invited and wooed by wisdom-loving rulers and princes from lands near and far. But now, after

a life spent in traveling, he wished to spend the last years of his terrestrial existence in quiet and peace, and also in intense work. During this period he completed the *Futūhāt* which contains the spiritual diary of thirty years of the most fruitful period of his life. And it was in Damascus that the great Shaikh died in 638/1240, leaving an indelible mark upon the whole spiritual life of Islam. He was buried at Šālīhiyah, at the foot of Mt. Qāsiyūn north of Damascus, in a spot that was already venerated, before he was interred there, as a place sanctified by all the prophets. After his burial it became an even greater center of pilgrimage. In the sixteenth century Sultan Salim II built a mausoleum upon it which still stands, and the tomb continues as a place of pilgrimage, especially for the Šūfis. One finds interred next to the greatest master of Islamic gnosis, not only his two sons, but also the famous Algerian patriot 'Abd al-Qādir who, after being exiled by Napoleon III, spent the rest of his life in editing the works of Muḥyī al-Dīn, whose ardent disciple he was. Now he lies buried next to the "Most Grand Shaikh" to whom he was so devoted and for the publication of whose works he is to some degree responsible.

THE WORKS

The very large number of works written by Ibn 'Arabi seems almost sufficient proof of their "supernatural" inspiration. Various traditional sources have attributed several hundred works of which a very large number survive, most of them still as manuscripts in various libraries in the Islamic world and Europe.³¹ These works range from short treatises and letters of a few pages to the monumental *Futūhāt*; from abstract metaphysical tracts to Šūfi poems in which the realized aspect of gnosis appears in the language of love. The subject matter of these works also varies widely, covering metaphysics, cosmology, psychology, Quranic commen-

tary, and nearly every other field of knowledge, all approached with the aim of bringing to light their inner meaning.

The largest and most encyclopedic of Ibn 'Arabī's works is the *Futūḥāt* which consists of 560 chapters treating of the principles of metaphysics, the various sacred sciences as well as Muḥyī al-Dīn's own spiritual experiences. It is a veritable compendium of the esoteric sciences in Islam which surpasses in scope and depth anything of its kind that has been composed before or since. Ibn 'Arabī asserts in the work more than once that it was written under Divine inspiration, as, for example, when he says: "Know that the composition of the chapters of the *Futūḥāt* is not the result of free choice on my part nor of deliberate reflection. Actually, God dictated to me everything that I have written through the angel of inspiration." ³²

The *Futūḥāt* contains, in addition to the doctrines of Sufism, much about the lives and sayings of the earlier Ṣūfis, cosmological doctrines of Hermetic and Neoplatonic origin integrated into Ṣūfī metaphysics, esoteric sciences like *Jafr*, alchemical and astrological symbolism,³³ and practically everything else of an esoteric nature which in one way or another has found a place in the Islamic scheme of things. Thus it has constantly been the main source book of the sacred sciences of Islam, and each of its chapters has been studied and contemplated by generations of Ṣūfis who have written many treatises that are in reality commentaries upon various threads from which the vast tapestry of the *Futūḥāt* is woven.

Without doubt Muḥyī al-Dīn's most widely read work and his spiritual testament is the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, the *Bezels of Wisdom*,³⁴ which has twenty-seven chapters, each devoted to the basic doctrines of Islamic esotericism. The work was composed in 627/1229, and according to Ibn 'Arabī's own words, stated in the introduction, it was inspired by a vision

of the Prophet holding a book in his hand which he ordered the Shaikh to "take" and to transmit to the world so that men might benefit by it.³⁵ The very title, *Bezels of Wisdom*, symbolizes the content of the book in that each "bezel" contains a precious jewel which symbolizes an aspect of Divine wisdom revealed to one of the prophets. Metaphorically speaking, each bezel is the human and spiritual nature of a prophet which serves as a vehicle for the particular aspect of Divine wisdom revealed to that prophet.

The human and individual nature of each prophet is in turn contained in the logos, or word (*kalimah*), which is his essential reality and which is a determination of the Supreme Word, or the "primordial enunciation of God."³⁶ That is why the chapters are entitled "The Bezel of Divine Wisdom in the Adamic Word," "The Bezel of the Wisdom of Inspiration in the Word of Seth," and so on, until it ends with the "Bezel of the Wisdom of Singularity in the Word of Muḥammad." Whereas, humanly speaking, the human and individual aspects of the prophets seem to "contain" their essential and universal aspects as the bezel "englobes" the precious jewel, in reality the relation is reversed. It is the inner reality, the supra-individual aspect of the prophet that contains and determines the bezel. The divine revelation is "colored" by its recipient while from a universal point of view the recipient itself is a divine possibility determined from above and contained by its celestial prototype.

The vast corpus left by Ibn 'Arabī includes, besides these two major works, numerous treatises on cosmology, such as *Inshā' al-dawā'ir* (*The Creation of the Spheres*), *'Uqlat al-mustawfiz* (*The Spell of the Obedient Servant*), and *al-Tad-bīrāt al-ilāhiyah* (*The Divine Directions*)³⁷; on practical methods to be followed by adepts traveling on the Path, such as *Risālat al-khalwah* (*Treatise on the Spiritual Retreat*) and *al-Waṣāyā* (*Spiritual Counsels*); on various aspects of the Quran,³⁸ including the symbolism of some of its letters, on

the Divine Names and Qualities, on law and *ḥadīth* and practically every other question connected with matters religious and spiritual.³⁹ His writings include also some exquisite Ṣūfī poetry, as, for example, the *Tarjumān al-ashwāq* (*The Interpreter of Desires* ⁴⁰) and his *Dīwān*. Indeed, he is considered by many to be the best of the Ṣūfī poets in the Arabic language after Ibn al-Fārīd.⁴¹

Altogether, the scope of Ibn 'Arabī's writings is so vast that it is difficult to describe their contents. Books and treatises poured forth from his pen like waves from the ocean, covering nearly everything in sight. In this large body of writings in Arabic his style is sometimes poetic and at other times laborious. Some of his works, like those concerned with method, are clear and simple and others on metaphysics highly condensed and elliptical. In fact, he had a language of his own and brought into being a technical vocabulary, based partly on that of the earlier Ṣūfīs, a knowledge of which is indispensable to an understanding of his writings.⁴² The reader must learn not only the precise meaning of his words but all the nuances and images connected with them. In other words, with him, as with other Muslim authors, one has to learn to read "between the lines" in order to discover the treasures hidden beneath his elliptical and antinomian formulations and his dazzling, and at times complex, symbolic language.

THE "SOURCES" OF IBN 'ARABĪ

One cannot speak in an ordinary historical sense about the origins and sources of the works of any Ṣūfī writer because the Ṣūfī who has realized the goal of the Path receives inspiration directly and "vertically" and is not dependent upon "horizontal" influences. He receives his knowledge through the illumination of his heart by Divine theophanies and only in the expression and formulation of his inner experiences

may he depend upon the writings of others. In the case of Ibn 'Arabī, also, his primary source is his gnostic knowledge received in states of contemplation and made possible through the grace (*barakah*) of the Prophet which he received through his initiation into the Šūfī Path.

But on the level of interpretation of ideas and formulations we may speak of the "historical sources" of Ibn 'Arabī in the sense that the doctrines of many schools found their profoundest interpretation in the writings of the Shaikh. Within the tradition of Islam, Ibn 'Arabī followed, most of all, the earlier Šūfis, especially Ḥallāj, many of whose utterances he discussed in his works; Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, whose *Khatm al-awliyā'* (*The Seal of Sanctity*) became the subject of the Shaikh's special study; Bāyazīd al-Bastāmī, whose gnostic utterances he often quoted; and al-Ghazzālī whose later works he followed and whose themes he expanded in many ways. He also adopted certain cosmological ideas found among the philosophers, especially Avicenna — not to speak of the "Neo-Empedoclean" schemes of Ibn Masarraḥ — and made frequent use of the dialectic of the theologians. In addition, the influence of earlier Islamic Hermetic writings, such as those of the Jābirian corpus, as well as the *Epistles* of the Brethern of Purity with their Neopythagorean tendencies, and other writings associated with Ismā'īlism, are to be discovered in Ibn 'Arabī's works.⁴³

As for doctrines of pre-Islamic origin, we find in Muḥyī al-Dīn the interpretation of Alexandrian Hermeticism at its most elevated level of meaning, where the concept of Nature itself takes on a significance transcending the order of formal cosmic manifestation.⁴⁴ We also find doctrines belonging to the Stoics, Philo, the Neoplatonists, and other schools of antiquity which are interpreted metaphysically and integrated into the vast panorama of Ibn 'Arabī's theosophy. It is through the prism of his mind that not only gnostic doctrines but also cosmological, psychological, physical, and logical

ideas gain a metaphysical dimension and a transparency which reveal the nexus that all forms of knowledge have with the *sapientia* possessed by the saints and sages, just as the root of all things, of all orders of reality, is plunged in the Divine.

THE DOCTRINE

It would be more than pretentious to seek to present even a bare outline of the doctrines of Ibn 'Arabī, doctrines which generations of seers and sages have contemplated and in the comprehension of which men have spent the greater part of their earthly life.⁴⁵ Our aim is no more than to give an indication of the general characteristics and language of the doctrines and to mention a few of the principles which are dominant themes in his vision of the Universe, a vision so vast that it is difficult to trace in it even a single theme in all of its amplifications and dimensions. In the case of Ibn 'Arabī we are not dealing with a philosopher either in the modern or the Aristotelian sense, and his doctrines should not be treated as philosophy.

The resemblance between metaphysical and gnostic doctrines of this order and philosophy are more apparent than real. Muḥyī al-Dīn, unlike a philosopher, does not try to encompass all of "reality" in a system and to give a systematic exposition of its various domains. He writes under immediate and direct inspiration so that his writings do not possess the coherence one expects of ordinary works of purely human inspiration.⁴⁶ What he shares with the philosophers is the use of human language and the treatment of ultimate questions, but his purpose is different as is the manner in which he makes use of language.⁴⁷ His aim is not to give an explanation that is mentally satisfying and rationally acceptable, but a real *theoria*, or vision of reality, the attainment of which depends upon the practice of the appropriate methods of realization. With Ibn 'Arabī, as with other masters of tradi-

tional wisdom, doctrine and method are the two legs which must be coordinated in order to be able to climb the spiritual mountain.⁴⁸ Method without doctrine may become a blind travail and doctrine without method may develop into a mental trifling with concepts, giving one an agility which is as far removed from traditional wisdom as the acrobatics of a monkey from the soaring flight of an eagle.⁴⁹

The Language of Symbolism

The language of Ibn 'Arabī, although at times abstract, is essentially a symbolic one and he makes use of all forms of symbolism ranging from the poetical to the geometrical and mathematical. The principle involved in the use of symbols is a basic one. It is what Ibn 'Arabī, like the Shī'ah for whom it is also fundamental, calls *ta'wīl*, meaning literally to take something back to its origin or beginning. In the Universe nothing is just what it appears to be — that is, its reality is not exhausted by its exterior. Every phenomenon implies a noumenon, or, in Islamic terms, every exterior (*ẓāhir*) must have an interior (*bāṭin*). The process of *ta'wīl*, or of spiritual hermeneutics, means going from the *ẓāhir* to the *bāṭin*, from the outward reality to the inner one.

For Ibn 'Arabī, as for other Ṣūfīs, symbolism is of vital importance, to the extent that the Universe speaks to them in the language of symbols and that everything, besides its external value, has a symbolic significance as well.⁵⁰ The Ṣūfīs have always kept alive the "symbolic spirit," a spirit which was once shared by mankind in general but which has been lost in the modern world and can only be found among the ethnic and racial groups that have not been too deeply affected by the transformations of the past few centuries.⁵¹ For Muhyī al-Dīn the process of *ta'wīl* can be applied to all phenomena of Nature and all that surrounds man in his terrestrial life. Moreover, the tenets of religion and the events occurring within the soul of man are also subject to this funda-

mental process of inner penetration and symbolic interpretation.

In Arabic the phenomena of Nature, the verses of the Quran in which the Revelation is contained, and the inner states of the soul are all called *āyāt*, that is, portents, or signs, because their inner meanings, as discovered through *ta'wīl*, are related. The Šūfī penetrates into the inner meaning of the manifestations of Nature, then into the rites and beliefs of religion, and finally into his own soul, and discovers within all of them the same spiritual essences for which these diverse realities are so many symbols. The writings of Ibn 'Arabī clearly depict the application of the method of symbolic hermeneutics to the revealed text — the Quran — as well as to the Universe whose creation is based upon the prototype of the "macrocosmic Quran," and to his soul which as the microcosm contains all of the realities of the Universe within itself. There is thus a macrocosmic as well as a microcosmic aspect to Revelation, as there is a "revealed aspect" to both the macrocosm and the microcosm, to both the Universe and man. To all of these domains Ibn 'Arabī applies the method of symbolic exegesis, the process of *ta'wīl*. Moreover, his own works express the realities that he has thus discovered in a symbolic language and must in turn be penetrated "in depth" in order to reveal the inner meaning (*ramz*) hidden behind the veil of the external forms of words and letters.

The Unity of Being

The basic doctrine of Sufism, especially as interpreted by Muḥyī al-Dīn and his school, is that of the transcendent unity of Being (*wahdat al-wujūd*) for which he has been accused by many modern scholars of being a pantheist, a panentheist, and an existential monist; and more recently a follower of what is called natural mysticism. All of these accusations are false, however, because they mistake the metaphysical doc-

trines of Ibn 'Arabī for philosophy and do not take into consideration the fact that the way of gnosis is not separate from grace and sanctity. The pantheistic accusations against the Ṣūfis are doubly false because, first of all, pantheism is a philosophical system, whereas Muḥyī al-Dīn and others like him never claimed to follow or create any "system" whatsoever; and, secondly, because pantheism implies a substantial continuity between God and the Universe, whereas the Shaikh would be the first to claim God's absolute transcendence over every category, including that of substance.⁵² What is overlooked by the critics who accuse the Ṣūfis of pantheism is the basic difference between the *essential* identification of the manifested order with its ontological Principle and their *substantial* identity and continuity. The latter concept is metaphysically absurd and contradicts everything that Muḥyī al-Dīn and other Ṣūfis have said regarding the Divine Essence.

The term "panentheism," used by Nicholson and several other scholars who knew only too well that pantheism could not be applied to the Ṣūfis, appears somewhat less distasteful. It is true that God dwells in things but the world does not "contain" God, and any term implying such a meaning is not appropriate as a description of the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujūd*. Nor is the term "existential monism" a suitable one, for here again monism implies a philosophical and rationalistic system, opposed, let us say, to dualism, and the adjective "existential" again mistakes the essential continuity of all things with their Principle for the substantial one, or the "vertical" for the "horizontal." The unity of the Ṣūfis is the integration of paradoxes and ontological contrasts; it is the union of all the diverse qualities which characterize the order of multiplicity and has nothing to do with philosophical monism of which Ibn 'Arabī and others have been accused.

Nor can natural mysticism be attributed to Ibn 'Arabī with any justification. This term was created by certain Catholic

authors to classify essentially gnostic forms of spirituality that they contrast with "supernatural mysticism" found mostly in Christianity.⁵³ There is no absolute break between the natural and the supernatural. The supernatural has a "natural aspect" because its "trace" can be found in the very existence of things; and the natural has a supernatural aspect because the "vestiges" of the supernatural are to be found in the created order, and because grace, or *barakah*, flows through the "arteries" of the Universe.⁵⁴ Moreover, to consider "mysticism" ⁵⁵ in one religion to be supernatural and in other religions to be natural, or to be supernatural only in certain cases and then only "accidentally," is to limit the mercy of God. It is to fall into a dangerous provincialism which one can ill afford at a moment when the understanding of other forms of spirituality has become a matter of "urgency" and of immediate concern.

The doctrine of the transcendent unity of Being or "the unicity of Reality," as expounded by Muḥyī al-Dīn and other Ṣūfīs is, then, neither pantheism, nor panentheism, nor existential monism. Nor is it the fruit of a natural mysticism which fails to transcend the created order and which is devoid of the salutary guidance of revealed wisdom and grace. It means, rather, that while God is absolutely transcendent with respect to the Universe, the Universe is not completely separated from Him; that the "Universe is mysteriously plunged in God." It signifies that to believe in any order of reality as autonomous apart from the Absolute Reality is to fall into the cardinal sin of Islam, namely, polytheism (*shirk*), and to deny the *Shadādah* (*Lā ilāha ill'Allāh*) — there is no divinity but the Divine — which means ultimately that there is no reality other than Absolute Reality. The formula begins with a negation in order not to imprison the Principle in any affirmation whatsoever. The world and the things in it are not God but their reality is none other than His; otherwise they would be completely independent realities,

which is the same as considering them to be deities along with Allah.

Ibn 'Arabī, who is so often accused of pantheism, goes as far as the human language allows to affirm the transcendence and Unity of God. As is written in the *Risālat al-aḥādīyah* (*Treatise on Unity*): ⁵⁶

He is, and there is with Him no after nor before, nor above nor below, nor far nor near, nor union nor division, nor how nor where nor when, nor time nor moment nor age, nor being nor place. And He is now as He was. He is the One without oneness and the Single without singleness. He is not composed of name and named, for His name is He and His named is He. . .

Understand therefore . . . He is not in a thing nor a thing in Him, whether entering in or proceeding forth. It is necessary that thou know Him after this fashion, not by knowledge, nor by intellect, nor by understanding, nor by imagination, nor by sense, nor by perception. There does not see Him, save Himself; nor perceive Him, save Himself. By Himself He sees Himself, and by Himself He knows Himself. None sees Him other than He, and none perceives Him other than He. His veil is [only a "consequence" and effect of] His oneness; nothing veils other than He. His veil is [only] the concealment of His existence in His oneness, without any quality. None sees Him other than He — no sent prophet, nor saint made perfect, nor angel brought nigh know Him. His Prophet is He, and His sending is He, and His Word is He. He sent Himself with Himself to Himself.⁵⁷

It seems difficult to accuse one of pantheism who goes to such extremes in asserting the transcendence of God. What Ibn 'Arabī wishes to assert is that the Divine Reality is distinguished from its manifestations and is transcendent with respect to them, but that the manifestations are not in every respect separate from the Divine Reality which somehow encompasses them. As with the symbol of the bezel and the precious stones discussed above, the recipient of a Divine manifestation, or revelation, seems to "color" the revelation it receives; or, in other words, the revelation conforms itself to the nature of its recipient. But from a more profound

point of view the recipient itself is determined from "on high" by the spirit or the Divine revelation so that both the "container" and the "contained" are encircled by the Divine Reality which transcends them.⁵⁸

This principle applies to knowledge as well as to being, to the contemplation of the celestial essences in the heart as well as to the consideration of the Universe as a Divine theophany. In both cases the recipient of the theophany "determines" and "colors" the mode of the theophany; but also it is itself in reality determined by the Divine Essence from which the theophany originates and which is a unity encompassing complementary and opposing terms; a center in which all oppositions are united and which transcends all the polarizations and contradictions in the world of multiplicity. It is the center of the circle in which all is unified and before which the mind stands in bewilderment for it involves a *coincidentia oppositorum* which cannot be reduced to categories of human reason and cannot be explained away as a monism which annihilates ontological distinctions and which overlooks the transcendent position the center occupies vis-à-vis all the oppositions that are resolved in it.⁵⁹ The Exterior (*ẓāhir*) and the Interior (*bāṭin*), the First (*awwal*) and the Last (*ākhir*),⁶⁰ the Truth (*haqq*) and the creature (*khalq*), the Lover (*āshiq*) and the Beloved (*ma'shūq*), the intellect (*ʿāqil*) and the intelligible (*ma'qūl*), are all apparent oppositions that are resolved in the Divine Essence which encompasses and contains all these polarities without being reduced to them.

The Names and Qualities

Although the Divine Essence (*al-dhāt*) is absolutely transcendent and above all differentiation and distinction, it has certain modalities on the plane of its first self-determination. In His state of absolute Unity, God is above all qualities, and so this plane is called that of indivisible and unconditional Unity (*aḥadiyyah*). But on the plane of unicity, or "oneness"

(*wāḥidiyah*), there are principal modalities, or qualities, from which all qualities of being and all modalities of knowledge derive.⁶¹ God is thus above all qualities and yet is not devoid of them, as is implied by the famous Ṣūfī adage that the Divine Qualities "are neither He nor other than He."⁶²

The *Shahādah* (*Lā ilāha ill'Allāh*) implies also the same apparently contradictory relations. On the one hand every quality, every form of "divinity," is negated from God so that he is absolutely transcendent, this being the view of *tanzīh*; on the other hand the same formula implies that there cannot be any quality completely separate from the Divine Quality, so that it must be a reflection of a Divine Reality with which it is compared (*tashbīh*).⁶³ Ibn 'Arabī's view of the relation between the Qualities and the Divine Essence lies between *tanzīh* and *tashbīh*, positing at the same time God's transcendence and His possessing Qualities of which all cosmic qualities are reflections and images.

Although the Divine Qualities are beyond number, in the Islamic revelation they are summarized in a definite set of Names by which God is described in the Quran.⁶⁴ These Names are the Divine possibilities immanent in the Universe; they are the means by which God manifests Himself in the world just as He describes Himself in the Quran through them. The Names are thus the pathways leading toward God and the means by which one can ascend to the unitive knowledge of the Divine Reality. And since they are fundamental aspects of knowledge as well as of being, they manifest themselves in the Universe and in the spiritual life in which they become the object of contemplation. It is through them that Ibn 'Arabī, like other Ṣūfis, envisages the process of creation as well as that of spiritual realization so that the Names and Qualities play a fundamental role in every aspect of his world view and provide the "language," based on the terminology of the Quran, with which he expounds the doctrines of Sufism.

The Universal Man or the Logos

One of the basic esoteric doctrines of Islam, again formulated for the first time in its present terminology by Ibn 'Arabī, is that of the Universal Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), which is so dominant in the Ṣūfī perspective that it has been called the "privileged myth" of Sufism.⁶⁵ The Universal Man, who is also the Logos, is the total theophany of the Divine Names; he is the whole of the Universe in its oneness as "seen" by the Divine Essence. He is the prototype of the Universe as well as of man by virtue of which man, the microcosm, contains within himself all the possibilities found in the Universe. The microcosm and the macrocosm face each other as two mirrors in each of which the other is reflected, while both "echo" in themselves their common prototype, who is the Universal Man. The Universal Man is also essentially the Spirit, or First Intellect, which "contains" all the Platonic "ideas" within itself, like the Logos in the doctrines of Philo who is "the first born of God" and in whom all the "ideas" are assembled.

In Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine, the Universal Man has essentially three different aspects, namely, the cosmological, the prophetic, and the initiatic.⁶⁶ Cosmologically and cosmogonically, he is the prototype of creation containing all the archetypes of Universal Existence within himself so that all of the levels of cosmic existence are no more than so many branches of the "Tree of being" which has its roots in heaven, in the Divine Essence, and its arms, or branches, spread throughout the cosmos. From the point of view of revelation and prophecy, the Universal Man is the Word, the eternal Act of God, each particular "dimension" of which is identified with one of the prophets. As such, each chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ* is dedicated to an aspect of the Universal Man, to a prophet who reveals to the world an aspect of the Divine Wisdom whose embodiment he is in his inner reality. Seen in this

light, the Universal Man is the Reality of Muḥammad (*al-ḥaqīqat al-muḥammadiyah*), which found its terrestrial realization in the Prophet of Islam. Just as a seed when sown in the ground first shoots out a stem, then branches, then leaves, then flowers, and finally a fruit which again contains that seed, so did the Universal Man, or the Reality of Muḥammad, who was "the first creature of God," manifest itself fully on earth in Muḥammad, the last of the prophets of the present cycle of humanity.

From the point of view of spiritual realization, the Universal Man is the model of the spiritual life for he is the person who has realized all the possibilities, all the states of being, inherent within the human state and has come to know, in all its fullness, what it means to be a man. As such, the Universal Man is, first of all, the prophets, especially the Prophet of Islam; and secondly the great saints, and especially "Poles" (*Qutb*) of each age whose outer reality is that of other men but whose inner reality includes all the possibilities inherent within the Universe because they have realized in themselves all the possibilities inherent in the state of man as the microcosm and center who reflects all the universal qualities. Potentially every man is Universal Man but in actuality only the prophets and the saints can be called by such a title and can be followed as prototypes of the spiritual life and guides on the path of realization.

Creation and Cosmology

Creation in the school of Ibn 'Arabī is envisaged as the effusion of Being upon the heavenly archetypes, thus bringing them from their state of non-being or that of a "hidden treasure" into externalized existence.⁶⁷ Being may be symbolized by light, and the archetypes, or the universal Names and Qualities, as so many colored pieces of glass through which the light shines, reflecting various colors upon the "mirror of non-being." The cosmos is essentially a set of mir-

rors in which the Divine realities are reflected; it is a theophany of the Divine Names and Qualities contained in the Universal Man.⁶⁸ And from another point of view it is an ever-flowing river whose water is renewed at every moment but which preserves its general form determined by the structure of its bed. The water is a symbol of the light of Being which emanates at every moment throughout the Universe, and the bed of the river symbolizes the archetypes which determine the general direction of the flow.

Creation is also compared by Ibn 'Arabī to the articulation of sound from the human mouth. Just as through the human breath words which are in an undifferentiated state become distinct and articulate, so does the "Breath of the Compassionate" (*nafas al-rahmān*), the "Breath" of God, considered in His aspect of Mercy and Compassion, bring the principal possibilities, symbolized by the letters of the alphabet, into existence.⁶⁹ Moreover, in the same manner that the human breath goes through the cycle of contraction and expansion, the Universe undergoes the two complementary phases of the same cycle. It is annihilated at every moment and re-created at the next, without there being a temporal separation between the two phases. It returns back to the Divine Essence at every moment while in the phase of contraction and is remanifested and externalized in that of expansion. The Universe is thus a theophany of the Divine Essence, which is renewed at every moment without being repeated "identically," for, as the Ṣūfīs say, "There is no repetition in theophany."⁷⁰ Creation is renewed at every instant, and its apparent "horizontal" continuity is pierced by the "Vertical Cause" which integrates every moment of existence into its transcendent Origin.

With this concept of creation as the background, Ibn 'Arabī describes several different cosmological schemes in each of which diverse aspects of the cosmic realities are depicted. Sometimes he conceives of the cosmic order as a tree

whose branches symbolize various degrees of cosmic existence and at other times he envisages the Universe in terms of the Quranic concepts of the Pen and the Guarded Tablet, the traditional Quranic angelology, and the four natures and qualities of Hermetic cosmology.⁷¹ There is no question here of being limited by necessity to only one cosmological scheme because the cosmic domain can be envisaged in different lights, each of which reveals an aspect of the cosmic realities. But in nearly all of these forms of cosmology, Ibn 'Arabī, although often making use of elements drawn from such pre-Islamic schools as Hermeticism, bases his views essentially on the Quran and specifically Islamic concepts tied closely to the very forms of Islamic revelation and the letters and sounds of the Arabic language.⁷²

The cosmological scheme seeks basically to relate the various cosmic orders to their principle and to show how the different worlds are so many determinations (*ta'ayyun*) of the Principle. These determinations can be considered in any number of ways: they may be thought of as the traditional seventy-two thousand veils of light and darkness which cover the "face of the Beloved"; or they can be reduced to a few principal states which contain within themselves the main levels of cosmic existence. They can be summarized in ascending orders as the world of human and bodily forms (*al-nāsūt*); the world of subtle lights or psychic substance (*al-malakūt*), which is also envisaged as the world of imagination or similitudes (*'ālam al-mithāl*); the world of spiritual existence beyond form (*al-jabarūt*); and the world of the Divine Nature revealing Itself in Its perfect qualities (*al-lāhūt*). Above these stands the Divine Essence (*al-hāhūt*) which transcends all determinations.⁷³ These worlds, which are also "presences" if considered from the point of view of realization and the attainment of knowledge, comprise the main levels of cosmic existence consisting of the corporeal, psychic, and spiritual manifestation as such. The Šūfī deline-

ates these worlds and outlines a science of the Universe based on them in order to be able to realize all these states and finally pass beyond these determinations to attain the state of union with God who is the goal of his journey through all the realms of cosmic manifestation.

Union

The aim of all Sufism is union with the Divine which comes as a result of the love created in man for Divine Beauty. This union is generally conceived in terms of a gradual purification of the heart and the attainment of various spiritual virtues leading finally to the state of "annihilation" (*fanā*) and "subsistence" (*baqā*) in the Divine. Ibn 'Arabi envisages the state of union, the supreme experience which is impossible to describe in any adequate formulation, in terms somewhat different from that of other Šūfi masters. According to him, knowledge of God and union with Him in the supreme state of contemplation does not mean a ceasing to exist individually (*fanā*), or a ceasing of that ceasing (*baqā*), as most gnostics have asserted. Rather, it means to realize that our existence from the beginning belonged to God, that we had no existence to start with which could cease to be. It means the realization that all existence as such is a ray of the Divine Being and that nothing else possesses any existence whatsoever. Or, as it is expressed in the *Treatise on Unity*:

Most of those who know God made a ceasing of existence and a ceasing of that ceasing a condition of attaining the knowledge of God and that is an error and a clear oversight. For the knowledge of God does not presuppose the ceasing of existence nor the ceasing of that ceasing. For things have no existence, and what does not exist cannot cease to exist. For the ceasing implies the positing of existence, and that is polytheism. Then if thou know thyself without existence or ceasing to be, then thou knowest God; and if not, then not.⁷⁴

From the "operative" point of view, spiritual union, brought about through the force of love for the Divine

Beauty, implies that the Divine Nature becomes the content of human nature, and human nature becomes surrounded and immersed in the Divine. Since this state is considered from the point of view of spiritual experience rather than theory, each relation must be said to present an aspect of the total experience whose essence is ineffable. That is to say, God is present in man, and man is immersed in God. Envisaged in the first mode, union implies that God becomes the Subject who "sees" through the eyes of man and "hears" through his "ears." In the second mode, man is plunged in God so that he "sees" through God and "hears" through Him according to the well-known sacred *ḥadīth*: "He who adores Me never ceases to approach Me until I love him, and when I love him, I am the hearing by which he hears, the sight by which he sees, the hand with which he grasps, and the foot with which he walks."⁷⁵

In the state of union the individuality of man is illuminated and so becomes immersed in the Divine light. The world and man are like the shadow of God; it is this shadow in the spiritual man that becomes transparent and luminous through the presence of the Divine in him. Or, as Ibn 'Arabī states in the *Fuṣūṣ* regarding the relation of the individual to God:

It is like light that is projected through shadow, a shadow which is nothing but the screen [for light] and which is itself luminous by its transparence. Such also is the man who has realized the Truth; in him the form of the Truth, *ṣūrat al-ḥaqq* [the Divine Qualities], is more directly manifested than in the case of others. For there are among us those for whom God is his hearing, his sight, his faculties and organs according to signs given by the Prophet in his message proceeding from God.⁷⁶

This supreme state of union, which is the ultimate goal of the gnostic and the perfection of human life, is the fruit of the practice of spiritual methods, beginning with the canonical prayers and culminating in the prayer of the heart or the creative prayer,⁷⁷ in which the innermost center of the Ṣūfi

reverberates in the rhythm of the invocation of the Divine Name which is the epitome of all prayer. Muḥyī al-Dīn asserts over and over again the vital importance of the prayer of the heart and of the inner purification which gradually attracts the Divine unto Itself by that "sympathy" which draws all theophanies toward their source and origin.⁷⁸

In the prayer of the saint, man prays to God and God "prays man" and the prayer fashions man's soul. In the state of pure contemplation, which is the fruit and at the same time the most perfect mode of interior prayer, in which the heart is purified of all its dross and loses all its opaqueness, man realizes that "God is the mirror in which you see yourself, as you are His mirror in which He contemplates His Names and their principles; Now His Names are not other than Himself, so that the reality [or the analogy of relations] is an inversion." ⁷⁹ Ultimately, therefore, the Lord (*rabb*) remains the Lord and the servant (*marbūb*), the servant, but at the same time God becomes the mirror in which the spiritual man contemplates his own reality and man in turn becomes the mirror in which God contemplates His Names and Qualities, so that in the heart of the saint the purpose of creation is achieved in that God comes to "know" the essences which had been in the "hidden treasure," a knowledge for the sake of which the Universe was created.

The Unity of Religions

Of great interest in the doctrines of Ibn 'Arabī is his belief in the unity of the inner contents of all religions, a principle generally accepted by the Sūfis but rarely explored in as great detail as was done by the Andalusian sage.⁸⁰ As already observed, early in life he had the theophanic vision of the Supreme Center from which all revelations have been brought forth and in his later years wrote often of the "spiritual poles" of the traditions preceding Islam. His doctrine of the logos, in fact, contains implicitly the principle of the

universality of revelation by asserting that every prophet is an aspect of the Supreme Logos and is himself "a logos," or a word of God. Moreover, Ibn 'Arabī sought to study the specific details of the other religions and to separate the universal meaning hidden in their outer structures as far as it was possible and feasible for him to do so.⁸¹ All attempts at a profound *rapprochement* with the other religions made by Muslims today can and should be based on the rich foundations prepared by Ibn 'Arabī and Rūmī.

Ibn 'Arabī's attempt to transcend the external forms of revelation in order to reach their inner meaning did not in any way imply a rejection of them "from below"; that is, a refusal to accept the outward ritual and dogmatic forms of religion. Rather, he sought to transcend the exoteric level by penetrating into the heart of the exoteric rites and practices which themselves are an integral aspect of religion and are revealed by "Heaven," and to which man must conform if his quest of the spiritual life is to be really fruitful. It was through these formal, or exoteric, aspects of religion and not in spite of them that Ibn 'Arabī, like other Ṣūfīs, sought to reach the inner and universal meaning of the Revelation.

Essentially, the "burning of images," or the rejection of the external and formal aspects of religion, means that one must first possess these images and formal aspects. One cannot reject what one does not possess. And it must be remembered that when Muḥyī al-Dīn and the other Ṣūfīs declared their independence of religious forms and rites, they addressed a collectivity in which the observance of religious practices of all kinds was taken for granted and not a world like that of the present day in which the possibility of rejecting the formal aspects of religion, without having ever practiced and lived them, looms very large on the horizon of the reader's consciousness. Ibn 'Arabī spent much of his life in praying the traditional Islamic prayers, in repenting before God for his sins, in reading the Quran, in invoking the Divine Name, and

it was by means of these practices and not in spite of them that he came to realize that the divinely revealed paths lead to the same summit and that to have lived one religion fully is to have lived them all. It was at the very heart of the revealed forms that he found the formless and the Universal so that he could sing in his famous and oft-quoted poem:

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 Torah, and the book of the Koran.
I follow the religion of Love: whatever way Love's camels take, that is my religion and my faith.⁸²

SUFISM AFTER IBN 'ARABĪ

It is not possible to describe the extent of the influence of Ibn 'Arabī upon the life of Sufism except to say that after him there was practically no exposition of Şūfī doctrine which did not come in one way or another under the influence of the works of the great Andalusian sage, even if certain later schools did disagree with some of his formulations.⁸³ His writings spread immediately over the whole of the Islamic world; his prose works began to be studied by the devotees of Sufism and his poems chanted in the centers (*zāwiyah*) of the various orders, and they continue to be studied and chanted today as they were seven centuries ago.

The spread of Ibn 'Arabī's doctrines in the East is due most of all to Şadr al-Dīn al-Qunawī, himself one of the great masters of Sufism, who commented on the Shaikh's works and wrote many of his own to elucidate his master's doctrines.⁸⁴ It is essentially through him that several important "lines of influence" of Ibn 'Arabī's doctrines in the East can be traced. Şadr al-Dīn was the close associate of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, whose *Mathnawī* many a later Persian Şūfī has called the *Futūḥāt* of Persian poetry, and in fact served as Rūmī's *imām* during the daily prayers. It is through Şadr al-

Dīn that one must trace the link between Muḥyī al-Dīn and Rūmī, who stands as the other great mountain of Islamic spirituality dominating the landscape of Sufism wherever the Persian language is known and spoken. Ṣadr al-Dīn was also the teacher of Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, who, as we noted in Chapter II, wrote the most famous commentary upon the *Hikmat al-ishrāq* of Suhrawardī, and corresponded with Quṭb al-Dīn's teacher, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, regarding essential questions of metaphysics.⁸⁵ Also, it was due to the inspiration received at one of the sessions of Ṣadr al-Dīn's class on the doctrines of Ibn 'Arabī that Fakhr al-Dīn al-'Arāqī, one of the great Ṣūfī poets, or *fedeli d'amore*, of Persia, composed his *Lama'āt* (*Divine Gleams*) which more than any other work helped to introduce Ibn 'Arabī into the Persian-speaking world.

Included among the disciples of Muḥyī al-Dīn's school are all the famous commentators — al-Nāblusī, al-Kāshānī, al-Qayṣarī, Bālī Afandī, and the great Persian poet Jāmi, who wrote several commentaries on Ibn 'Arabī's works as well as on the *Lama'āt* of 'Arāqī, the latter being called *Ashī'at al-lama'āt* (*Rays of Divine Gleams*). This work continues to be studied today in Persia as a "handbook" of Ṣūfī doctrine. One may also name 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, whose *Universal Man* is a systematic exposition of the *Fuṣūṣ*; and Maḥmūd Shabistarī whose *Secret Rose Garden* summarizes the doctrines of Sufism as expounded by Ibn 'Arabī in Persian verses of celestial beauty and dazzling lucidity. Also of special interest is the group of Shī'ah gnostics, among them Ibn Turkah, Sayyid Ḥaidar Āmulī and Ibn Abī Jumhūr,⁸⁶ who gradually introduced the doctrines of the Andalusian sage into Shī'ism so that it soon became one of the main props of Shī'ah spirituality and played a dominant role in the doctrinal formulations of later Persian sages like Mullā Ṣadrā, who relied heavily upon the teachings of the master from Murcia.⁸⁷ In other Muslim countries, also, students and disciples of Ibn 'Arabī's

doctrines flourished over the centuries, as seen by the large number of commentaries upon his works that have appeared in India, Anatolia, Syria, and Egypt, where such writers as al-Sha'rānī devoted many large volumes to the exposition and clarification of his writings.

Similarly, in the West, Ibn 'Arabī was not without influence although his works were not known in official circles. But in a more hidden and profound way he left his imprint upon the *fedeli d'amore* of the West and especially upon Dante, the great Florentine poet, who reveals many profound similarities with the Ṣūfīs, not only because of a certain historical contact with them through the Order of the Temple, but primarily because he depicts fundamentally the same spiritual experiences and a similar version of the Universe in the context of the Christian tradition.⁸⁸ Muḥyī al-Dīn's direct influence can also be discerned in Raymond Lull and in some of the other Christian esotericists belonging to that period of history when the Christian West and the Islamic East lived in two similar types of civilization, sharing ultimately the same views about man and the Universe even if formal differences of various kinds existed on the theological, social, and political plane.

In modern times the influence of Ibn 'Arabī can be seen wherever Sufism continues to flourish. In the East his writings are still taught and read in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Persia, and commentaries continue to be written on them.⁸⁹ In Damascus his tomb is the meeting-place of the Ṣūfīs, and in Egypt and the rest of North Africa his odes are chanted in the weekly gathering of the brotherhoods. And the well-known Ṣūfī masters of this century, like the Moroccan Shaikh Muḥammad al-Tādīlī⁹⁰ and the Algerian Shaikh al-'Alawī,⁹¹ one of the greatest and most influential saints of Islam during this century, have essentially followed the teachings of Muḥyī al-Dīn.

It is true that the essence of Sufism is the spiritual experi-

ence attainable through the means of grace contained within the various methods of realization, compared to which all metaphysical formulations are relative. But to the extent that the inner fire of Sufism has given off sparks and has expressed its ineffable hidden treasures in doctrines that lead other men toward the truth, the spirit of Ibn 'Arabī has hovered over it. He has provided over the centuries the precious doctrinal language in terms of which Šūfī masters have sought to expound the mysteries of gnosis, the mysteries of an inner illumination that issues forth from the imponderable dimensions of the Divine Name. Their hearts reverberate in the light and grace of the Name by which they are illuminated as Ibn 'Arabī was before them, and the older masters, before him, reaching back to the source of the Revelation which gave the method of Sufism its spiritual efficacy and the inner life which has permitted it to survive as a spiritual tradition to the present day. *Wa'llāhu a'lam.*

tashayyu'. He is also editing the new edition of Mullā Ṣadrā's *Asfār* with his own commentary, which is being currently published in Tehran.

CHAPTER III: IBN 'ARABĪ AND THE ṢŪFĪS

1. It is the refusal by the vast majority of orientalists to accept this fundamental aspect of Islam as a part of the Islamic tradition and an intrinsic element of its orthodoxy that has made the picture of Islam in most Western eyes such a dry and sterile one, devoid of any spirituality or beauty. Among the few well-known Western scholars who have conceded the Quranic origin of Sufism one can name Margoliouth, and especially Massignon and Corbin, whereas most of the other famous scholars, like Horten, Nicholson, Asin Palacios, and, more recently, Zaehner and Arberry, have posited a Hindu, Neoplatonic, Christian, or even Zoroastrian, origin for Sufism, mistaking too often the borrowed formulations of the Ṣūfīs with the inner experience and realization which is based absolutely on the grace, or *barakah*, issuing from the Prophet.

For the view of Sufism as the inner dimension of Islam, see the illuminating work of F. Schuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, trans. P. Townsend, especially chap. III, and his *Comprendre l'Islam* (Paris, 1961), Chap. IV; also R. Guénon, "L'Esotérisme islamique," in *L'Islam et l'Occident*, Cahiers du Sud (Paris, 1947), pp. 153-159.

2. See Abu Bakr Siraj al-Din, "The Origins of Sufism," *The Islamic Quarterly*, 3:53-64 (April 1956); also Mir Valiuddin, *The Quranic Sufism* (Delhi, 1959).

3. The followers of Sufism are never called Ṣūfīs in the Islamic languages, this being considered as lack of courtesy; for a Ṣūfī is one who has already realized the goal and achieved the state of "Supreme Identity." A follower of the Ṣūfī Path is usually called a *faqīr* ("poor in spirit," from which the English "fakir" originates), or *mutaṣawwif*, that is, one who participates in Sufism (*taṣawwuf*); or in Persian, *darwish* (the English "dervish"), as well as several other names connected with various aspects of the "Way" or "Path."

4. Since the spiritual life presents itself essentially as a "way," as can be seen, too, in Taoism, the Ṣūfī order is called a *ṭariqah*, a way (pl., *ṭuruq*) and the adept is often designated as "one who follows a way" (*ahl al-ṭariqah*). Concerning the Ṣūfī orders, see the article on "ṭarīka" in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* by Massignon, and the classical works of O. Dupont and X. Cappolani, *Les Confréries religieuses musulmanes* (Alger, 1879), and L. Rinn, *Marabouts et Khouanes* (Alger, 1884).

5. This saying is quoted in the famous *Risālat al-qushatriyah* (Cairo,

1940), p. 20. See also "The Origins of Sufism," in the *Islamic Quarterly* (April 1956), p. 58.

There has been much debate among traditional Muslim scholars as well as among Western students of Sufism on the derivation of the word *ṣūfī*. Opinions have differed as to whether it comes from *ṣūf*, meaning wool which the early Ṣūfis wore, or *ṣafā*, meaning purity, or *ṣaff*, meaning the line of prayer, since the Ṣūfis occupied the first line of prayer behind the *imām*; or even from the Greek *sophia* (this being the most unlikely derivation because *sophia* in Arabic would be with an *s* rather than an *ṣ*). There has also been the view expressed by certain masters that the term *ṣūfī* is too exalted to be derived from anything else and that its basic significance is indicated by the fact that *taṣawwuf* is numerically equivalent to Divine Wisdom (*al-ḥikmat al-ilāhiyah*) according to the traditional calculation of *Jafr*. See the article by R. Guénon, "L'Esotérisme islamique" (n. 1 above).

Concerning the various meanings given to the term *ṣūfī*, see R. A. Nicholson, "An historical inquiry concerning the origin and development of Sufism, with a list of definitions of the terms *ṣūfī* and *taṣawwuf* arranged chronologically," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of London* (1906), pp. 303-348.

7. Although there is no complete "history of Sufism," there have been several attempts made to study various Ṣūfī schools over the centuries and to correlate their doctrines and practices. Of these the most important in European languages are the numerous studies of Massignon, especially his *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane* (Paris, 1954), especially chaps. III-V; also *La Passion d'al-Hosayn Ibn Mansour al-Hallaj, martyr mystique de l'Islam* (Paris, 1922), which contains a wealth of information on the spiritual life of the first three centuries of Islam; and his article on *taṣawwuf* in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Also, the first section of the recent study by G. C. Anawati and L. Gardet, *La Mystique musulmane* (Paris, 1961), is devoted to the history of Sufism. In this connection may also be mentioned the work of famous scholars like R. A. Nicholson, especially his article cited in n. 6 above; *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge, 1921); *The Mystics of Islam* (London, 1914); *The Idea of Personality in Sufism* (Cambridge, 1923); and his annotated translation of Hujwiri's *Kashf al-mahjūb* (Leyden, 1911). See also M. Asin Palacios, *El Islam cristianizado, estudio del sufismo a través de las obras de Abenarabi de Murcia* (Madrid, 1931); E. Dermenghem, *Les Saints musulmans* (Alger, 1944); and M. Smith, *Studies in Early Mysticism in the Near and Middle East* (London, 1931).

There are several important histories of the Ṣūfis, or rather accounts of the lives and sayings of the saints of Islam written by the Ṣūfis themselves, of which the most famous are *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyah* of al-Sulamī, *Ḥilyat al-awlīyā'* of Abū Nu'aim al-Iṣbahānī; *Tadhkirat al-*

awliyā' of Farīd al-Dīn al-'Aṭṭār; and *Nafahāt al-uns* of 'Abd al-Raḥ-mān Jāmī.

In Arabic and Persian there have been several studies devoted to the history of Sufism. Among those in Arabic are: A. al-Tibāwī, *al-Taṣawwuf al-islāmī al-'arabī* (Cairo, 1928); J. 'Abd al-Nūr, *al-Taṣawwuf 'ind al-'arab* (Beirut, 1938); Zakī Mubārak, *al-Taṣawwuf al-islāmī*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1954), and A. N. Nādir, *al-Taṣawwuf al-islāmī* (Beirut, 1960). Among the Persian studies are: Q. Ghānī, *Tārīkh-i taṣawwuf dar islām* (Tehran, 1952), and many by Badr al-Zamān Furūzānfar and Jalāl Homā'i on Rūmī, 'Aṭṭār, and other well-known Ṣūfis.

8. This period is amply treated by Massignon in his *Essai sur les origines* . . . , chap. IV.

9. This work, nearly unknown in the West, has always been considered in the Shī'ah world as one of the basic testaments of the esoteric teachings of Islam. Many Ṣūfis who followed the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī studied and wrote a commentary on this work.

10. Muḥāsibī is the author of some of the earliest works on Sufism, such as *Kitāb al-tawahhum* (*The Book of Apprehension*), ed. A. J. Arberry (Cairo, 1937), and *Kitāb al-rī'āyah* (*The Book of Consideration*), ed. M. Smith (London, 1940). He is also well known for his method of examining the conscience. See M. Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad; a Study of the Life and Teaching of Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī* (London, 1935).

11. The similarity between some of the locutions (*shaṭḥiyāt*) of Baṣṭāmī (his name is usually written as Bisṭāmī, but he comes from a town which in Persian is pronounced Baṣṭām) and certain Vedantic formulations have led R. C. Zaehner to posit a Hindu origin for the school of Sufism propagated by Baṣṭāmī. See his *Mysticism Sacred and Profane* (Oxford, 1957), pp. 166ff, and especially his *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (London, 1960), pp. 93ff. But such formulations as "that art thou" (*takūnu anta dhāka*) of Baṣṭāmī, or the Sanskrit *tat tvam asi*, are so universal and so deeply rooted in the texture of reality that they do not need to point to any historical borrowing whatsoever.

There are of course many other famous Ṣūfis of this age, like Rābi'ah, Ibn Karrām, Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, and Abū Sahl al-Tustarī, who are also worthy of special mention. They are treated by both Massignon in the *Essai* . . . , chap. V, and Anawati and Gardet in their *La Mystique musulmane*, pp. 26ff.

12. For a discussion of Islamic arts and sciences, see Chapter I above.

13. This important source book of early Sufism was edited by R. A. Nicholson (London, 1941).

14. Edited and translated by A. J. Arberry under this title (Cambridge, England, 1935).

15. The quatrains have been rendered into English by R. A. Nicholson in his *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*.

16. See Sardar Sir Jogendra Singh, *The Persian Mystics. The Invocations of Shaikh 'Abdullāh Ansāri of Herat* (London, 1939).

17. The study of Asin Palacios, *Abenmasarra y su escuela* (Madrid, 1914), reveals the basic cosmological ideas of Ibn Masarra which were influential in some of the formulations of Ibn 'Arabi.

18. See W. H. T. Gairdner's translation of the work (London, 1924).

19. This beautiful treatise of the *fedeli d'amore* in Islam has been edited by H. Ritter (Istanbul, 1942).

20. This work is one of the best-known treatments of the spiritual virtues considered from the Šūfī point of view. A translation of it has been made with commentaries by Asin Palacios (Paris, 1933).

21. Najm al-Dīn, entitled "the maker of saints," had twelve major disciples all of whom became famous Šūfis themselves. He was the founder of the Central Asiatic school of Sufism with which the names of Simnānī, Sa'd al-Dīn al-Ḥammūyah, and Najm al-Dīn al-Dāyah are connected, and which is especially noted for the interest it showed in the symbolism of light which it used to express various inner experiences of the soul. See H. Corbin, "L'Intériorisation du sens en herméneutique soufie iranienne," *Eranos Jahrbuch*, 26:57-187 (1957).

One of the most widespread and best preserved Šūfī orders in Persia today, the *Dhahabīyah*, whose center is in Shīrāz, is a branch of the Kubrawīyah.

22. His function can be compared in many ways to that of Shankara in Hinduism.

23. Ibn 'Arabi's life has been described in nearly all the traditional histories and biographies of the later centuries, such as *Nafḥ al-tibb* of al-Maqqārī; *Bustān al-'arīfīn* of al-Nawawī; *Ta'rikh al-islām* of al-Dhahabī; *al-Wāfi bi'l-wafayāt* of al-Šafadī; *Mir'āt al-jinān* of al-Yāfī; *al-Bidāyah wa'l-nihāyah* of Ibn Kathīr; *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* of al-Sha'rānī; *Shadharāt al-dhahab* of Ibn al-Imād; and *Ṭarā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq* of Ma'šūm 'Alī Shāh. There have also been many biographies of Ibn 'Arabi written by disciples who have tried to defend their master from accusations made against him by some of the jurists. Of these one of the oldest is *Manāqib ibn 'Arabi* by Ibrāhīm al-Baghdādī, ed. S. Munajjid (Beirut, 1955) with a list of sources on Ibn 'Arabi given by the editor in his preface.

As for works in European languages on his life, there is the notable book by Asin Palacios, *El Islam cristianizado*, which is confined to a study of Muḥyī al-Dīn's life and spiritual method, in which the author has assembled the pertinent details from various traditional sources. See also H. Corbin, *L'Imagination créatrice dans le soufisme d'Ibn 'Arabi* pp. 32ff; and R. A. Nicholson, "The lives of Umar Ibnul-Farid and Ibnul Arabi," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1906), pp. 797-

824, which includes the original Arabic text of *Shadharāt al-dhahab* concerning these two Ṣūfī masters. Asin Palacios also translated Ibn 'Arabī's *Risālat al-quḍs* under the title *Vidas de Santones Andaluces* (Madrid, 1933), in which the spiritual life of the master is described in his own words, revealing an aspect of him which is often forgotten when one studies only his metaphysical writings.

There have also been some recent works in Arabic on Ibn 'Arabī, such as T. 'Abd al-Bāqī Surūr, *Ibn 'Arabī* (Cairo, 1955), and 'Umar Farrukh, *al-Taṣawwuf fī'l-islām* (Beirut, 1947), an important chapter of which is devoted to Muḥyi al-Dīn.

24. *Al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyah* (Cairo, 1329 A.H.), I, pp. 153-154. This passage has been translated into Spanish by Asin Palacios in *El Islam cristianizado*, pp. 39-40, and into French by Corbin in *L'Imagination créatrice . . .*, pp. 34-36.

25. This is in reference to the Quranic verse (20:12) in which Moses is ordered to take off his sandal. Ibn 'Arabī's interest in this work of definite Shī'ah origin is significant in the light of the immense influence that he was to have later in the Shī'ah world and the rapidity with which his doctrines were assimilated into Shī'ah gnosis.

26. There must have been a basic relation between Ibn 'Arabī and Ibn al-'Arif, and, through the latter, with Ibn Masarraḥ, although one cannot by any means "reduce" all of Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine to that of these predecessors. It is known in any case that he befriended 'Abdallāh ibn Ghazzāl, Ibn al-'Arif's disciple, and had a definite affinity with the various Ṣūfī schools connected with Almería.

27. See Asin Palacios, *El Islam cristianizado*, p. 41, n. 2, and H. Corbin, *L'Imagination créatrice*, p. 37, n. 15.

28. It was also here, in the city of his birth, before his departure, that Ibn 'Arabī composed what is most likely his first book, *Mawāqīf al-nujūm* (*The Setting Place of the Stars*) in which he expounded the various levels of meaning contained in religious rites.

29. The figure of Khidr (Al-Khadir) is a very important one in the spiritual hierarchy of Islam and is closely tied to that of Elie, the prophet who was taken to heaven, and the whole complex of myths and tales associated with him. See L. Massignon, "Elie et son rôle transhistorique, Khadiriya, en Islam," *Etudes carmélitaines: Elie le prophète* (Paris, 1956), II, 269-290, and his numerous studies that have appeared in the *Revue des études islamiques* over the years; see also the articles, "al-Khadir" and "Ilyas," by A. J. Wensinck in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

For an iconographic study of Khidr, see A. K. Coomaraswamy, "Kha-wāja Khadir and the fountain of life, in the tradition of Persian and Mughal art," *Ars Islamica*, 1:173-182 (1934).

30. Ibn 'Arabī had contact with many of the well-known figures of his day, some of whom, like Suhrawardī and the Persian poet Awḥad

al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, he had encountered personally and others, like Ibn al-Fārīd, Sa'd al-Dīn al-Hammūyah, and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī with whom he corresponded. (Ibn 'Arabī's letter to Fakhr al-Dīn advising him to put aside formal learning and seek after gnosis has been recently translated into French by M. Vâlsan, in "Épître adressée à l'Imām Ar-rāzī," *Études Traditionnelles*, 62:242-253 (July-August and September-October 1961)).

31. The Syrian scholar Osman Yahya has been carrying on intensive research on the works of Ibn 'Arabī over the past few years and has made some remarkable discoveries in some of the libraries of Turkey. His forthcoming *L'Histoire et la classification des oeuvres d'Ibn 'Arabī* should be of great value in shedding light upon a subject that has remained obscure until now.

32. Al-Sha'rānī, *Kitāb al-yawāqīt* (Cairo, 1305), based on chaps. 89 and 348 of the *Futūḥāt*. See Corbin, *L'Imagination créatrice* . . . , p. 59, where this and other passages pertaining to how the work was inspired are translated from Ibn 'Arabī's own words.

33. In this connection, see T. Burckhardt, *Die Alchemie* (Olten, Switzerland, 1960) and his *Clé spirituelle de l'astrologie musulmane d'après Mohyiddin ibn Arabi* (Paris, 1950), which demonstrate how the Alexandrian cosmological sciences became integrated into the perspective of Islamic gnosis and how the Universe in which the Muslims lived also partook of the Revelation and became "Muslimized."

34. The *Fuṣūṣ* has been printed many times in the original Arabic, the most critical one (to which I shall henceforth refer) being that of Abu'l-'Alā 'Afifi (Cairo, 1946) in which the editor has assembled many valuable sections of the well-known commentaries on the work to elucidate the text. It has been translated with remarkable clarity by T. Burckhardt as *La Sagesse des prophètes* (Paris, 1955), with very helpful explanations. There is also a somewhat free translation of the work in English under the title *The Wisdom of the Prophets* (Madras, 1929), made by Khaja Khan.

Numerous commentaries have been written on the *Fuṣūṣ*, the most famous being those of Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qunawī, 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī, Dāwūd al-Qaiṣarī, 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nablusī, Bālī Afandī, and 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, all well-known Ṣūfis of later centuries. It continues to be studied in the Islamic world wherever Sufism flourishes and must be considered as the foremost authoritative text on gnosis ('*irfān*).

The *Lawḍ'ih* of Jāmī, trans. E. H. Whinfield and M. M. Ḳazvīnī (London, 1914), is also a commentary upon the *Fuṣūṣ* and a summary of its basic themes.

35. See *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 47.

36. The profound symbolism of the title of this work is fully de-

veloped by Burckhardt in his introduction to *La Sagesse des prophètes*, pp. 6ff.

37. These three works have been edited with an introduction and summary translation into German by H. S. Nyberg in his *Kleinere Schriften des Ibn al-'Arabi* (Leiden, 1919).

38. The Quranic commentary published in Cairo in his name, however, is by his disciple 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī.

39. Ibn 'Arabi has so many works on each subject that it is not possible to give even an intimation of the dimension of his writings without devoting a separate study to them.

40. This work was translated into English by R. A. Nicholson (London, 1911).

41. Ibn al-Fārid, the author of the famous *Khamriyah* (see E. Dermenghem, *L'Eloge du vin*, Paris, 1931), and the greatest of Sūfī poets in the Arabic language, was a contemporary and friend of Ibn 'Arabī. It is said that on one occasion Ibn 'Arabī wrote a letter to Ibn al-Fārid asking his permission to write a commentary upon his *Tā'īyah*. Ibn al-Fārid answered that the *Futūḥāt* was itself a commentary and that its author did not need to write another.

42. This is true to such an extent that several of the followers of the school of Ibn 'Arabī wrote dictionaries of his terminology, which also became the terminology of the later Sūfis. Of these the *Iṣtilāḥāt al-sūfiyah* of al-Kāshānī, his well-known commentator, and the *Ta'rifāt* of al-Jurjānī are particularly famous. See al-Jurjānī, *Definitiones: Accendunt Definitiones theosophi Mohji ed-din Mohammed Ben Ali vulgo Ibn Arabi dicti*, ed. G. Flügel (Leipzig, 1845). See also Burckhardt, *La Sagesse des prophètes*, pp. 207-223, where a glossary of technical Sūfī terms is given with an explanation of their meaning, as well as their translation into French.

43. The "sources" of Ibn 'Arabī are discussed in the second part ("Doctrina Espiritual de Abenarabi") of Asin Palacios' *El Islam cristianizado*; in Nyberg's introduction to his *Kleinere Schriften* . . . ; in the notes and appendices of Corbin's *L'Imagination créatrice* . . . and in the Appendix of A. E. Affi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Din-Ibnul 'Arabi* (Cambridge, 1939).

44. See T. Burckhardt, "Nature sait surmonter nature," *Etudes Traditionnelles*, 51:10-24 (January-February 1950).

45. There are very few studies in the European languages concerning Ibn 'Arabī's doctrines, considering his importance and influence. One may mention the well-known study of Affi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Din-Ibnul 'Arabi*, which has some good translations but which applies notions taken from modern European philosophy where they do not actually apply; R. Landau, *The Philosophy of Ibn 'Arabi* (London, 1959), which deals briefly with some of Ibn 'Arabī's doctrines and also has a few selections from his writings; and Corbin,

L'Imagination créatrice . . . , which is an important study devoted to the Shaikh's doctrine of creative imagination, the "sympathy" existing between man, the Universe, and God, and related questions. There are also the few works cited above and other studies which are enumerated in the Bibliography.

Of paramount importance for the study of the doctrines of Ibn 'Arabī is T. Burckhardt's *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, trans. D. M. Matheson (Lahore, 1959), which is in reality an introduction to the *Fuṣūṣ* as well as to Sufism in general; and also his introduction to and translation of *al-Insān al-kāmil* (*De l'homme universel*) of 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (Lyon, 1953), which is a more systematic treatment of the doctrines of Ibn 'Arabī by one of the greatest Ṣūfis of the later centuries. There are also several studies of Ibn 'Arabī with translations of his works by M. Vâlsan which have appeared in the *Etudes Traditionnelles* from 1948 onward.

46. Ibn 'Arabī writes of his *Futūḥāt*: "This work, as all of my other works, does not follow the method current in works of others . . . In reality, all authors write under the authority of their own free will, whatever they may say about their freedom being subordinated to the Divine Decree, or under the inspiration of science they possess as their specialty . . . On the other hand, the author who writes under the edict of Divine inspiration, often records things which are without (apparent) relation to the subject matter of the chapter that he is treating. They appear to the profane reader as an incoherent interpolation, whereas according to me they belong to the very heart of the chapter even if it is by virtue of a reason which others ignore." *Futūḥāt*, I, p. 24; Asin Palacios, *El Islam cristianizado*, p. 102, and H. Corbin, *L'Imagination créatrice* . . . , p. 59.

47. "Such a distinction [between metaphysics and philosophy] may appear unwarrantable to those who are accustomed to regard metaphysics as a branch of philosophy . . . In order to define clearly the difference between the two modes in question, it may be said that philosophy proceeds from reason (which is a purely individual faculty), whereas metaphysics proceeds exclusively from the Intellect." F. Schuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, p. 9.

"A metaphysical doctrine is the incarnation in the mind of a universal truth . . . A philosophical system is a rational attempt to resolve certain questions which are put to ourselves. A concept is a 'problem' only in relation to a particular ignorance." F. Schuon, *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*, trans. D. M. Matheson (London, 1954) p. 11.

48. For the study of this question in a quite different traditional background, that of Tibetan Buddhism, see M. Pallis, "The Marriage of Wisdom and Method," *France-Aste*, 17:1601-1620 (January-February 1961).

49. "To live in thoughts is continually to replace one set of concepts by another. In ratiocination concepts are worn threadbare without any possibility of their being replaced, on this level by something better. Nothing is more harmful than this wearing out of truth by the mind; it is as though true ideas took their revenge on anyone who limits himself to a thinking of them. . .

"Mental virtuosity, which endlessly plays with concepts without having either the ability or the desire to reach a definite result, has nothing whatsoever in common with speculative genius; moreover, the formulae of speculative genius [such as that of Ibn 'Arabī] will appear 'naïve' to such virtuosity, which is indeed opposed to intellectual intuition even as Lucifer is opposed to God." F. Schuon, *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*, pp. 11-12.

"The Divine Reality is at the same time Knowledge and Being. He who seeks to approach that Reality must overcome not only ignorance and lack of consciousness but also the grip which purely theoretical learning and other 'unreal' things of the same kind exert on him. It is for this reason that many Ṣūfis, including the most outstanding representatives of gnosis such as Muḥyi-d-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī and 'Omar al-Khayyām, affirmed the primacy of virtue and concentration over doctrinal learning. It is the truly intellectual who have been the first to recognize the relative nature of all theoretical expressions. The intellectual aspects of the Way include both the study of the doctrine and getting beyond this by intuition. If error is always strictly excluded, the mind, which is both a vehicle for truth and at the same time in a certain sense limits it, must itself also be eliminated in unitive contemplation." T. Burckhardt, in *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, p. 103.

50. It is only with the realization of the significance of the science of symbols that so much of traditional art and science that seems outmoded to the modern mind can be revived and made to convey the meaning contained in traditional forms.

51. The profound study of various symbols of the traditions of the East, of the medieval West, as well as of prehistoric people, by such scholars as A. K. Coomaraswamy and, in more recent years, M. Eliade, have shown the indisputable truth of this assertion.

52. As H. A. Wolfson has demonstrated so clearly in his works, especially in *Philosophy of Spinoza, Unfolding the Latent Processes of His Reasoning* (Cambridge, Mass., 1948), vol. I, chaps. 3 and 4, the medieval philosophers were unanimous in placing God, or Pure Being, above substance. How, then, could the Ṣūfis, who consider the Divine Essence (*dhāt*) to transcend even Being, believe in God having a substance which he shares with the Universe? See T. Burckhardt, *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, chap. 3. See also A. K. Coomaraswamy, "Pantheism,' Indian and Neo-Platonic," *Journal of Indian History*, 16:249-

252 (1937), in which the arguments advanced by the author would apply to Sufism as well.

53. The idea of natural mysticism has been discussed by J. Maritain in "L'Expérience mystique naturelle et le vide," in *Quatre essais sur l'esprit dans sa condition charnelle* (Paris, 1956), chap. 3; and by O. Lacombe in several studies devoted to Hinduism such as, "La Mystique naturelle dans l'Inde," in *Revue Thomiste*, 51:134-153 (1951). It has been applied specifically to Sufism by R. C. Zaehner, and by L. Gardet, especially in *La Mystique musulmane*, pp. 90ff.

54. For a profound discussion of this question, see F. Schuon, "Is There a Natural Mysticism?" in *Gnosis, Divine Wisdom*, trans. G. E. H. Palmer (London, 1957), chap. 3.

55. We generally avoid using the term *mysticism* because of the ambiguous meaning of this term in English. If used in its original sense as "understanding of the mysteries" and distinguished from its other connotations (as in German one distinguishes between *Mystik* and *Mysticismus*), then it would be appropriate to call Sufism Islamic mysticism.

56. This very important Şūfī treatise, also called *Kitāb al-ajwibah* and *Kitāb al-alif*, has occasionally been attributed to other Şūfis, among them al-Balbānī and al-Suyūṭī; but it is in any case a synopsis of Ibn 'Arabī's views and belongs definitely to his school. Although the original Arabic text of the work has not yet been published, there is an excellent translation of it into French by Abdul Hadi in *Le Voile d'Isis*, 34:15-17 (January 1933) and 34:55-72 (February 1933) and a translation into English by T. H. Weir, "Translation of an Arabic Manuscript in the Hunterian Collection, Glasgow University," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 809-825 (1901).

57. T. H. Weir, "Translation of an Arabic Manuscript . . .," pp. 809-810. Regarding the independent existence of creatures, Ibn 'Arabī writes: "And the existence of the created things and their non-existence are the same thing. And, if it were not so, there would of necessity be an origination of something fresh which was not (before) in His oneness, and that would be a defect, and His Oneness is too sublime for that!" (*ibid.*, pp. 817-818).

58. This is the main theme of the *Fuṣūṣ*, as can be seen in the first two chapters which summarize the doctrines of Ibn 'Arabī.

59. Burckhardt has explained this concept fully in his introduction to *La Sagesse des prophètes*, pp. 9-11. The use of antinomian formulations and discontinuous expositions, which is closely related to the nomadic spirit of the Arabs, in its emphasis on the discontinuous aspects of things, recurs over and over again in Ibn 'Arabī's writings.

60. In the Quran (57:3) Allah is called the Exterior and the Interior, the First and the Last.

61. The terms *aḥadiyah*, *wāḥidiyah*, and others used by Ibn 'Arabī

are systematized and expanded to describe all the degrees of the "descent" or "determination" of the Principle from the Transcendent Essence to the world of corporeal forms by such later Šūfis of this school as al-Jīlī and Jāmī.

62. See T. Burckhardt, *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, p. 62.

63. The *Shahādah* in this second aspect has the function of transforming all positive qualities *in divinis*; thus "there is no beauty but The Beauty"; "there is no goodness but The Goodness"; and so on. See F. Schuon, "Shadādah et Fātiḥah" in *Le Voile d'Isis*, 34:486-498 (December 1933).

64. "As for the Divine Names, they are necessarily limited in number, being nothing other than the Qualities summarized in certain fundamental types and 'promulgated' by Sacred Scriptures as 'means of grace' which can be invoked." T. Burckhardt, *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, p. 63.

65. Anawati and Gardet, *La Mystique musulmane*, p. 54.

66. The various aspects of the Universal Man are discussed in nearly every work of Ibn 'Arabī, and the *Fuṣūṣ* is essentially based on this concept. Also, his *Shajarat al-kawn*, or *The Tree of Being*, trans. with notes by A. Jeffrey in *Studia Islamica* (Leiden), 10:43-77 and 11:113-160 (1959), is specifically concerned with the idea of the Universal Man and is a basic source for the study of Ibn 'Arabī's "logos doctrine."

67. The sacred *ḥadīth*, "I was a hidden treasure; I wanted to be known, so I created the world," summarizes the Šūfī conception of creation and its purpose. By sacred saying (*ḥadīth qudsī*) in Islam is meant that body of utterances of the Prophet which are of direct Divine inspiration and in which God speaks in the first person through the mouth of the Prophet. This kind of tradition, or *ḥadīth*, is thus somewhat similar to the Quran although not a part of the Sacred Book.

68. The symbol of mirrors combined with that of the Universal Man is synthesized by Maḥmūd Shabistari in his *Gulshan-i rāz*, that inspired poem which summarizes in the following verses these doctrines in the most explicit and clear formulation of them that can be found in Šūfī writings:

Non-being is the mirror, the world the image [of the Universal Man],
and man

As the eye of the image in which the Person is hidden.

Thou art the eye of the image and He the light of the eye,

Who has ever been able to see with the eye that by which things are
seen [namely, the eye itself].

The world has become man and man a world.

There is no clearer explanation than this.

A somewhat different translation is given by E. H. Whinfield in his

translation called the *Gulshan-i Rāz*, the *Mystic Rose Garden* (London, 1880), verses 140–142.

69. For Ibn 'Arabī and other Ṣūfis the letters of the Arabic alphabet, that is, the letters of the sacred language of the Quran, symbolize the celestial essences, or possibilities, which are manifested in the Universe as well as in the Quran. See M. A. Aini, "Du mystère des lettres," in *La Quintessence de la philosophie de Ibn-i Arabī* (Paris, 1926), chap. II.

70. *Lā takrār fil-tajallī*.

Concerning the renewal of creation at every instant, which is closely connected to the process of realization and the "themes of meditation" accompanying the incantatory rites of the Ṣūfis, see Burckhardt, "The 'renewing of creation at each instant,'" in *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, chap. IV; and Corbin, *L'Imagination créatrice* . . . , pp. 149ff.

71. A graphic design synthesizing the cosmological scheme described in the *Futūḥāt* is given by Burckhardt in his *La Sagesse des prophètes*, p. 108. The Quranic cosmological scheme of Ibn 'Arabī and other Ṣūfis is based essentially on the "Throne Verse" (*āyat al-kursī*), 2:254.

72. Many Ṣūfis have expounded cosmology in terms of the symbolism of the letters of the Arabic alphabet as well as in terms of the Divine Names whose inner meaning is closely tied to their very shape when written in the Arabic script. For example, in the *Futūḥāt*, Ibn 'Arabī combines astrological symbolism with the science of names and letters by making each of the 28 stations of the moon correspond to one of the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet, each planet to one of the prophets, and each sign of the Zodiac to one of the Divine Qualities, so that the Universe is thus "Muslimized," and the revolution of the heavens appears as a process by which the light of Being is disseminated throughout the Universe by the various Qualities which "polarize" its light. This marriage of Islamic and Hermetic cosmologies by Ibn 'Arabī is studied in an illuminating fashion by Burckhardt in his *Clé spirituelle de l'astrologie musulmane d'après Mohiddin Ibn Arabi*.

73. See Anawati and Gardet, *La Mystique musulmane*, pp. 232–233, where these determinations are connected to states of contemplation gained through the practice of invocation as outlined by Ibn 'Aṭā'allāh al-Iskandarī; see also Burckhardt, *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, p. 96.

74. T. H. Weir, "Translation of an Arabic Manuscript . . .," p. 811.

75. This famous saying is one of forty sacred *ḥadīths* upon which much of the theory and practice of Sufism is based and which contain the epitome of the esoteric teachings of the Prophet.

Concerning Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine of union, see Burckhardt, *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, chap. VII, especially p. 94, where this *ḥadīth* is quoted and discussed.

76. *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 104, and *La Sagesse des prophètes*, pp. 103–104.

77. The gradual interiorization of prayer until it becomes the prayer of the heart, and in its realized state a prayer possessing creative power, is essential to Sufism. The “theophanic prayer” of the Ṣūfis and the creative power of the heart, as well as that of the imaginative faculty, is discussed in detail by Corbin, in *L’Imagination créatrice* . . . , chaps. II and III. In this short study we have had to omit a discussion of the meaning of imagination and other elements of Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrines concerned with psychology. This aspect of his teaching, besides being discussed in the works of Burckhardt and Corbin, has been studied by Asin Palacios in his “La Psicología según Mohidin Abenarabi,” *Actes du XIV Congrès Inter. des Orient.* (Alger, 1905), vol. III (Paris, 1907), and in several of his other studies devoted to Ibn ‘Arabī.

78. The significance of prayer in all of its modes and in its theophanic function should make it clear that whatever Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrine of the “transcendent unity of Being” may mean it has nothing to do with the philosophical monism with which it is often identified.

79. *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 62, and *La Sagesse des prophètes*, pp. 45–46. Ibn ‘Arabī also writes in this chapter on the “word of Seth” — that in looking at a physical mirror one realizes that one can either look at the surface of the mirror and not see his own image or look at his image and not see the surface. This also is true of contemplating God: either the gnostic contemplates God, in which case he does not “see” his own essence, or he contemplates his own essence *in divinis* but does not “see” God separately. He also adds that the mirror is the most perfect symbol of the relation between the world and God, as well as of man’s contemplation of God, and that God created the mirror specifically in order to enable man to have the means of envisaging these otherwise inexpressible relationships.

80. Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī also refers often to the unity of religions and has many stories in the *Fihī mā fihī* (*The Discourses*), as well as in the *Mathnawī*, which demonstrate the unity of the inner content of all revelations above the formal plane.

81. Since at that time Islam, like other religions, lived in a separate world which for it was *the* world, there was no need, as there is today, to apply the principle of the universality of revelation to specific comparisons and the study of details. See F. Schuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, where this question has been studied in all its aspects.

82. *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*, trans. R. A. Nicholson, p. 67.

The use of love in this and similar contexts must be understood as the realized aspect of gnosis. Islamic spirituality is essentially gnostic, but it is a gnosis which is always combined with love and filled with its fragrance. When the Ṣūfis oppose love to knowledge, they mean

by the first realized wisdom and by the second only theoretical knowledge which has not become operative.

83. For example, the school of *waḥdat al-shuhūd* (The Unity of witness) was opposed to Ibn 'Arabī's *waḥdat al-wujūd*, but even the members of this school were influenced by the Andalusian sage. See Mir Valiuddin, "Reconciliation between Ibn Arabī's *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* and the Mujaddid's *Waḥdat al-Shuhūd*," *Islamic Culture*, 25:43-51 (1951).

84. The influence of Ibn 'Arabī in the East and the significance of such figures as Ṣadr al-Dīn have been discussed by Corbin in his "Notes et Appendices" to *L'Imagination créatrice* . . . See also S. H. Nasr, Introduction to the *Se Aṣl* of Mullā Ṣadrā.

85. This correspondence will be published shortly for the first time by Sidi Sulaimān Boukhsheem in the series of the Institut Franco-Iranien in Tehran.

86. These little-known figures, who are of some significance in the later intellectual and spiritual life of Persia, have been studied for the first time in the West by Corbin in such works as "L'Intériorisation du sens en herméneutique soufie iranienne," and in several other studies of his on Shī'ism that have appeared over the years in the *Eranos Jahrbuch*, as well as in his works cited in Chapter II above and in his latest essay on Ḥaidar Āmulī to be published soon in the *Mélanges Massé*.

87. The rapid integration of Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine into Twelve-Imām Shī'ism poses the interesting question of his possible relation with Shī'ism, one on which many Shī'ah figures have pondered over the centuries. Muḥyī al-Dīn is known to have been a Sunnī from the Sharī'ite point of view; yet he wrote a treatise on the Twelve Imāms that is highly valued by Shī'ah gnostics, and in the *Futūḥāt* (Chap. 366) speaks of the Mahdī and the conditions of his return in terms which coincide with those of traditional Shī'ah sources. Sufism stands essentially above the Shī'ah-Sunnī division in Islam but with Ibn 'Arabī there are, in addition to these universal principles accepted by both Shī'ah and Sunnī esotericists, doctrines of a specifically Shī'ah character regarding the imamate and other related matters which make the question of his possible relations with Shī'ism a difficult one to solve.

88. The influence of Islam, and particularly Ibn 'Arabī, on Dante was studied by Asin Palacios, *Islam and the Divine Comedy*, trans. H. Sunderland (London, 1926); and later E. Cerrulli, *Il 'Libro della Scala' e la questione delle fonti arabo-spagnole della Divina Commedia* (Vatican City, 1949) which affirms for the most part Asin's theses.

89. For example, glosses upon the *Fuṣūṣ* were published several years ago by one of the well-known *hakims* of present-day Persia,

Fāḍil Tūnī, under the title of *Ta'liqah bar sharḥ-i fuṣūṣ* (Tehran, 1316).

90. Regarding Shaikh al-Tādili, see Muḥammed at-Tādilī, "Lā ilāha illā Allāh," trans. Abd al-Rahīm at-Tādilī and R. Maridort, in *Etudes Traditionnelles*, 53:344-350 (December 1952); and "La Vie traditionnelle c'est la sincérité," trans. with notes by A. Broudier, *Etudes Traditionnelles*, 59:212-227 (August-October 1958); 59:263-271 (November-December 1958); 60:84-89 (March-April 1959).

91. Shaikh Aḥmad al-'Alawī, known to his disciples as Shaikh Bin 'Alīwā, was one of the great saints of this century. His influence, even in his own lifetime, spread far beyond the borders of his native Algeria and has today reached the whole of the Muslim world and even the Occident, where several studies have been made of his life and doctrines. See A. Berque, "Un mystique moderniste," *Revue Africaine*, 79:691-776 (1936); and the excellent study of M. Lings, *A Moslem Saint of the Twentieth Century* (London, 1961). Particularly worthy of mention is Shaikh al-'Alawī's interest in the study of other religions and desire for a *rapprochement* between Islam and other traditions against materialism and modernism which he considered as their common foe.

THREE MUSLIM SAGES

Avicenna - Suhrawardī - Ibn 'Arabi

Seyyed Hossein Nasr



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