

27 The bezel of the wisdom of uniqueness¹ exists in the essence of Muḥammad

(214) His wisdom is unique, because he is the most perfect existent in mankind. For this reason, creation begins and ends with him.² He was a prophet when Ādam was between water and clay.³ Also in his essential structure he is the Seal of the Prophets (*khātam al-nabiyyīn*).

The first of the uneven numbers is three,⁴ and that which becomes greater than this first derives from it. He was the greatest proof of his Lord, for he was given all the words, that is, the things named by Ādam.⁵ In his triplicity, he resembled this proof, which was a proof of himself. Since his essence was in keeping with the first uneven number, because his structure was based on three parts, he said in the chapter of love, which is the root of existents: “Three things have been made beloved to me in your world.” (He said this) because of the triplicity in him, then he mentioned “women and perfume,” and “the delight he was given in the prayer.”⁶ First he mentioned women and then prayer, because, (215) in the root of the appearance of her entity, the woman is a part of the man.

The human being’s knowledge of himself (soul) precedes his knowledge of his Lord, because his knowledge of his Lord results from his knowledge of himself. For this reason, Muḥammad said: “Whoever knows himself (soul) knows his Lord.”⁷ If you wish, you may hold the impossibility of knowing (God) and the inability to reach this knowledge, and if you wish, you may hold the provability of this knowledge. According to the first (interpretation of the tradition) you cannot know yourself (soul), hence, you cannot know your Lord; and according

1 Muḥammad is unique because he was the first human being in which God’s Essence was reified and because all God’s self-manifestations exist in him. Chittick, “Chapter Headings,” p. 37; idem, “Summary,” p. 40.

2 No doubt Ibn al-‘Arabī here speaks of Muḥammad as possessing the *walāya* which, in our author’s view, will not end. Thus, Ibn al-‘Arabī contradicts himself. Affīfī (Vol. II, p. 322) tries to solve this self-contradiction by saying that Ibn al-‘Arabī intends to say that existence began with Muḥammad and the mission (*risāla*) ended with him.

3 Bukhārī, LXXVIII:119.

4 Affīfī, I, p. 115; SPK, p. 360. See p. 82, n. 3 above.

5 Qur’ān 2:31.

6 Nasā’ī, XXXVI:1 (3939).

7 See [ch. 3](#), n. 4.

to the second, you can know yourself (soul), hence, you can know your Lord. Muḥammad was the clearest proof of his Lord, for every part of the cosmos is a proof of its root, which is God, so understand!

Women were made beloved to Muḥammad and he yearned for them, because this (behavior) pertains to the yearning of the whole for its part. Through this (behavior) Muḥammad made clear what God had ingrained in him, as God said regarding the essential human structure: "I breathed my spirit into him" (Qur'ān 15:29, trans. AH, and 38:72). Then God described Himself as most longing to meet humans and He said to those who longed for Him: "O Dāwūd, I am most longing for them,"⁸ meaning for those who long for Him. This is a unique meeting, for He said in the tradition concerning the Antichrist (*al-Dajjāl*): "None of you will see his Lord, until he dies."⁹ One necessarily longs for someone whose description is such. The Real longs for those who are near to Him, although He sees them; however, he wishes them to see Him, but their state precludes this (possibility). His statement resembles ("We shall test you) until We know" (Qur'ān 47:31), even though He knew (them).

He (God) longs for this unique trait (to meet humans), which takes place only after death, and through this trait He causes them to be cured of their longing for Him.¹⁰ As God said in the tradition of hesitation, which is relevant to this issue: "I do not hesitate in whatever I do as much as I hesitate in causing the death of my believing servant, who hates death as much as I hate to injure him; however, he necessarily will meet Me."¹¹ He informed him of good tidings, and did not say to him that death is necessary, so that He would not grieve him by mentioning of death. (216) Since humans do not meet the Real until after they die, as the Prophet said: "None of you will see his Lord, until he dies," God said: "He necessarily will meet Me." The Real's longing for the existence of this relationship (is expressed in the following poem):

The beloved yearns to see me/and I yearn for him very much

Souls are impassioned (but) the human rejects the decree (of death)/I complain, moaning, and so does He

Since the Real has made it clear that He breathed His spirit into humans, He longs only for Himself. Do you not see that the Real created him in His image,¹² because he stems from His spirit? Since his structure is composed of the four elements in his body, which are called the humors, there comes into being out of His breath a

⁸ I do not know the source of this saying.

⁹ Muslim, LII:95 (169).

¹⁰ On the one hand, people wish to meet God, but on the other, they are afraid of meeting Him, because this involves death, and death causes their longing, which is like an illness, to be cured.

¹¹ Bukhārī, LXXXI:38 (6502).

¹² See *ch. 25*, n. 12.

burning, despite the moisture in his body,¹³ and as a result of which, the spirit of the human being became fire, because of his structure. For this reason, God only spoke to Moses only in the form of fire and placed his need in it.¹⁴ Had his structure not been natural,¹⁵ his spirit would have been of light. He called this act blowing, alluding to its derivation from the Merciful's breath, because by this breath, which is blowing, his essence appears, and because of the predisposition of the one blown into, the burning is fire, not light. The breath of the Merciful, through which human is human, is hidden in (the part of his structure).

From Ādam, God produced a figure in his image and called it woman, who appeared in his image, so that he yearned for her as a thing yearns for itself, and she yearned for him as a thing yearns for its source. Thus, women were made beloved to man, because God loved whomever He created in His image. Then He caused the angels that were made of light to prostrate themselves before Ādam, notwithstanding their great value and position and their high natural structure.¹⁶ Because (God and humans share the same form), an affinity (*munāsaba*) binds them together, for form causes the greatest, the most exalted and perfect affinity.¹⁷ Form (causes the creation of) pair; that is, it doubles the existence of the Real, just as through her existence, the woman doubles the man, thus producing a pair. Thus, a triad appears, (that is), the Real, the man, and the woman.

The man yearns for His Lord, who is his source, just as the woman yearns for him. His Lord made women beloved (217) to man, just as God loves whomever is made in His image. One feels love only for the entity which is the source of one's being, that is, the Real.¹⁸ For this reason, he (the Prophet) said: "Women have been made beloved to me" (*ḥubbiba*), and not "I loved" from himself, because his love was connected to his Lord, in whose image he was created, even in his love for his wife, for he loved her through God's love for him, assimilating the divine love. Since a man loves a woman, he seeks union with her, which is the most profound union possible. And in the form of the elemental structure (of humans), there is no stronger union than sexual intercourse. For this reason, passion permeates all parts of the human. This permeation explains the command to perform major ablution, which encompasses all the human parts, just as a man is absorbed in a woman when passion takes place. (Another reason for major ablution) is God's jealousy of His servant lest he be delighted in other than Him, so He

¹³ Notwithstanding the word *bi-mā* (through which or by which), this is the only correct translation of the phrase *bi-mā fī jasadihi min al-ruṭūba*, because fire cannot derive from humidity or through it. Possibly something is incorrect in the text.

¹⁴ See ch. 25.

¹⁵ Read *law-lā* (Affīfī, I, p. 216, n. 4), which seems logical.

¹⁶ Qur'ān 2:34.

¹⁷ In al-Ghazālī, affinity is one of the causes of love between the Divine and the human being. Both thinkers use in this context the same terms and tradition. Abrahamov, *Divine Love*, pp. 56–58.

¹⁸ The notion that God is beloved because He gives humans existence occurs in the *Futūḥāt* as one of the causes of love. Very probably Ibn al-ʿArabī follows parts of al-Ghazālī's theory of love. Abrahamov, "Ibn al-ʿArabī on Divine Love," pp. 14f.

purifies him with major ablution in order to cause him to turn to God in the entity (woman) in which he is absorbed, for the woman reflects God.

When man witnesses the Real in a woman, it is a witness of passivity, and if he witnesses Him in himself, from the point of view of the appearance of the woman from him, it is a witness of activity.¹⁹ However, when he witnesses the Real in himself without considering the form that comes from Him, his witness is of God's passivity without any mediator (such as a divine name). His witness of the Real in the woman is the most complete and perfect, because he witnesses the Real with respect to His being both passive and active,²⁰ and with respect to Himself, He is uniquely passive.

For this reason, the Prophet loved women, because of the perfect witness of God in them, for the Real is never witnessed without materials,²¹ because in His Essence, He does not need the creatures. If witness of God's Essence is impossible, and witness of Him occurs only through material, then the witness of the Real in women is the greatest and the most perfect witness. The strongest union is sexual intercourse, which resembles God's turning to the one whom He created in His image in order to make him his vicegerent, so that He might see Himself (218) in him.

God made him, shaped his form, and blew His spirit into him, which is His breath, thus, externally his form attests to creation and internally to the truth (reality). For this reason, God describes the spirit as directing this (human) structure, because through it He "directs everything from the heaven" (Qur'ān 32:5), which is the height "to the earth" (ibid.), which is the lowest level, because it (the earth) is the lowest of all the elements.

He called them (the women) *nisā'*, a plural form which has no singular form deriving from the plural. Because of this Muḥammad said: "Three things have been made beloved to me in your world, women . . ." He did not say "woman," taking into account the fact that they were brought into existence after Ādam, for the word *nus'a*²² means postponement, (as) God said: "The month postponed (*al-nasī'*) is only an increase of unbelief" (Qur'ān 9:37). Selling by postponement (*nasī'*) means delay of payment. For this reason, he mentioned "women." He loved them only because of their being the (lowest) degree and of their being a substrate of passivity. Muḥammad was related to women as the Real is to nature. The Real reveals in nature the forms of the world through His will, which turns to

19 According to Ibn al-ʿArabī's logic, one can also see in man the two aspects of passivity and activity. Because God created man, he symbolizes the active aspect, and because man is a servant, he represents passivity.

20 That is because from one point of view the woman is passive, as she was created from the man, but from another she is active, because God created her. Alternatively, in the course of sexual relations, man is considered active and woman passive.

21 One can learn of God only through His connections to the world, because in Himself He is ineffable.

22 Ibn al-ʿArabī derives the word *nisā'* (women) from the root *n.s.ʿ*; however, the origin of *nisā'* is *n.s.w*. As we know, such changes do not bother our author.

the things (*al-tawajjuh al-irādī*),²³ and divine command, which amounts to sexual intercourse in the world of the elemental forms, to aspiration (*himma*) in the world of the luminous spirits and to the arrangement of premises (*muqaddimāt*) in the world of ideas in order to arrive at conclusions.²⁴ Each of these aspects (is symbolized) by the first and singular sexual union.

Whoever loves women by this definition, (his) love is divine. And whoever loves them in particular because of natural desire lacks the knowledge of this desire. Thus, (his love) is form without spirit, and even though that form essentially possesses spirit, it is not attested (as existent) for one who approaches his wife, or any other woman, only for the sake of pleasure, while he himself does not know to whom he approaches.²⁵ Thus, he does not know from himself (to whom he approaches), just as another person does not know this, unless he names with his own tongue (his aim), so that one can know it. Someone said:

“People rightly said of me that I am a lover/however, they do not know whom I love.”

(219) Likewise, this person loved pleasure and loved the substrate in which it resides, that is, the woman; however, he missed the spirit of the issue. If he knew this, he would know the object of his delight and whoever delights in him, and (as a result) he would be the perfect individual.

Just as the rank of the woman is lower than the man’s, as God said, “The rank of men is higher than that of women” (Qur’ān 2:228), so the rank of the human who was created in God’s image is lower than that of He who produced him in His image, notwithstanding his being in His image. Because of His rank which distinguishes God from the human, He does not need the cosmos and He is the true Agent, while the human is a second-rank agent. The human does not have the priority of the Real. The (fixed) entities (*ʿyān*) are distinguished by a hierarchy, and God gives each that which it deserves and each gnostic his due.²⁶ For this reason, Muḥammad’s love for women derived from divine love, (because) God “gave everything its (form of) creation (*khalqahu*)” (Qur’ān 20:50), which is the same as what everything deserves (*ḥaqq*). God gave him only what he deserved in keeping with the essence to which he was entitled. The Prophet gave precedence to women (in this tradition), because they are the substrate of passivity, just as nature precedes that which derives its existence from it through a form. Actually, nature is the Breath of the Merciful, for the forms of the higher and lower world are revealed in nature, because the blowing (of God’s Breath) permeates the hylic substance (*al-jawhar al-hayūlānī*), particularly in the world of bodies. As for the permeation of God’s Breath through the existence of the luminous spirits, this is another kind of permeation.

Also, in this tradition, Muḥammad advanced the feminine form above the masculine one, because he was concerned for women’s well-being. Hence, he said

²³ The text has *al-idārī*, which is clearly a misprint.

²⁴ Cf. above, pp. 116f of the Arabic text.

²⁵ He does not know the real aim of his love.

²⁶ For this notion, see ch. 10 above.

thalāth (three in the feminine gender) and not *thalātha* in the masculine, although he mentioned perfume, which is masculine. The Arabs used the masculine gender over the feminine and said (for example), “the Fāṭimas and Zayd went out” (*kharajū* – third-person masculine plural) and not *kharajna* (third-person feminine plural). Thus, they made the masculine gender, though Zayd was only one person (Zayd), overcome the feminine, though the Fāṭimas were a group (Fāṭimas). Muḥammad was an Arab (and so he adopted the linguistic norms of the Arabs). However, he took into consideration (220) the notion of God’s intention to make women beloved to him, (although) he did not choose this love. God taught him what he did not know and bestowed on him abundant grace (*faḍl aẓīm*).²⁷ He made the feminine gender overcome the masculine by saying *thalāth* (three in feminine gender) without the addition of *hā’* (which makes the word masculine).²⁸ How cognizant was the Messenger of the realities (*ḥaqā’iq*) and how great his attention to what each thing deserves.

Also, the Prophet placed the third and final beloved thing in the feminine gender (*ṣalāt*, prayer), just like the first beloved thing, and inserted between them a masculine word (*ṭīb*, perfume). He began with women and ended with prayer, both being feminine, while the word between them, perfume, is identical to man’s status in existence, for man is placed between God’s Essence (*dhāt* – feminine), from which he stemmed, and woman, who stemmed from him. Also, he is between two feminine forms, the *dhāt* whose gender is feminine in language and woman which is feminine in its real (natural) meaning. In like manner, women are in reality (nature) feminine, while prayer is not really a feminine entity (except in language). Perfume, masculine in gender, is inserted between them as Ādam was between God’s Essence, from which he was brought into existence, and Ḥawā’, whose existence stemmed from him. If you wish, you can say (regarding God) that both His attribute (*sifa*) (of creation) and (the attribute) of ability (*qudra*) (to create) are also feminine in gender. Whichever system of thought you wish (to follow), you will find the prevalence of the feminine gender even among the sages who adhered to the theory of causality (*aṣḥāb al-‘illa*) and made the Real the cause (*‘illa*) of the existence of the world. *‘Illa* itself is feminine. The reason for placing perfume after women is because of the smells of generation in women, for the best perfume is embracing the beloved, as they said in the famous proverb.²⁹

Since Muḥammad was originally created as a servant, he never aspired to leadership, but was always prostrating and standing before God in a passive way, until God produced from him what He produced. He gave him the rank of action in the domain of breaths and good perfumes. Thus, He made perfume beloved to him, and for this reason placed perfume after women. He took into account the Real’s degrees in His saying: “He is Elevated in degrees, Possessor of the Throne” (Qur’ān

²⁷ That God possesses great or infinite grace is frequently mentioned in the Qur’ān, for example 2:105, 3:74, 174, 57:21, 29, 62:4.

²⁸ This is an example of the many redundant sentences and phrases which fill the *Fuṣūṣ* and give the impression that originally the book began as a series of lectures.

²⁹ I have not found this proverb.

40:15), because He is established on the Throne through His name, the Merciful. Thus, Divine Mercy reaches everything encompassed by the Throne, as attested in His saying, “My Mercy encompasses everything” (Qur’ān 7:156). (221) The Throne embraces all things and the One established on it is the Merciful. Through His Reality Mercy permeates the world, as we have frequently explained in this book and in the Meccan Revelation (*sic!* *Al-Futūḥ al-makkī*).³⁰ God placed the perfume in the conjugal union referring to ‘Ā’isha’s innocence and said: “Corrupt women are for corrupt men, and corrupt men are for corrupt women; good women are for good men, and good men are for good women. The good are innocent of what has been said against them” (Qur’ān 24:26).³¹ God made their odors good (sweet-smelling), because speech derives from breath, which is the essence of the odor. Thus, breath proceeds from (the mouth) as good or bad (sweet or disgusting), according to the way it is expressed in speech. With respect to its being originally divine, breath is all sweet-smelling and good; however, with respect to praise and condemnation, it is good and evil. On the badness of garlic, Muḥammad said: “It is a bush whose odor I detest,”³² and he did not say, “I detest it,” because one does not detest the substance (*‘ayn*) of a thing, but rather that which stems from it. Abhorrence of odors is based on custom, natural antipathy (*‘adam mulā’amat ṭab’*),³³ an aim (to be achieved), law, and lack of the perfection of (the human body) which one seeks. There are no other causes of disgust but those we have mentioned.

Now, since the matter is divided into evil and good, as we have said, God caused Muḥammad to love good, not evil. He described the angels as those who suffer bad odors, because rottenness resides in the elemental structure (of humans), for the human is created of “dried clay formed from dark mud” (Qur’ān 15:26, AH); that is, his odors (always) change.³⁴ Thus, the angels are disgusted by humans, because of their nature. Similarly, the dung beetle is harmed by the odor of the rose. Whereas (for us) its smell is good, for the dung beetle it is not so. Whoever possesses such a temperament (characterized metaphorically by bad odor) in essence and form, when he hears the truth it hurts him, (however) he rejoices in falsehood, as God said: “Those who believe in falsehood and disbelieve in God” (Qur’ān 29:52). He described them through loss (*khusrān*) and said: “Those are losers” (*khāsirūn*, *ibid.*), those who “lost their souls” (themselves, Qur’ān 6:12 and *passim*), for whoever does not perceive the difference between good (222) and evil has no perception.

God made His Messenger love only the good in everything, and everything is good. Can one imagine or not that there exists in the world a temperament (of an entity) which finds only good and not evil in everything? We said that no such

³⁰ *Futūḥāt*, Vol. IV, pp. 29f (ch. 198).

³¹ Here, as in other places, the author plays with the double meaning of *khabīth* (corrupt and malodorous) and *ṭayyib* (good and sweet-smelling), in order to interweave this verse into the context of the discussion on perfume.

³² Muslim, V:76 (565).

³³ This is al-Qaysarī’s reading.

³⁴ In reality this means that humans vacillate between good and evil deeds.

entity exists, for we do not find such a phenomenon (seeing only good) in the source from which the world stemmed, that is, the Real; we find Him abhorring and loving, and the evil is that which is abhorred and the good is that which is loved. The world was created in God's image, and the human was created in two images (the Real and the world), hence, no human temperament perceives only one of the two aspects (good and evil). Thus, any human temperament can perceive the difference between the good and the evil, and to know by experience that a thing is evil and without experience (that is, by reason) that it is good, so that his (rational) perception of the good in a thing diverts him from (seeing) its evilness. This is conceivable. However, the removal of evilness from the world, that is, from being, is inconceivable. God's Mercy applies to both the good and the evil. With respect to itself, the evil is good and vice versa. Regarding a certain human temperament, a good thing may be evil from a certain standpoint and vice versa.

As for the third (part of the tradition) through which unevenness (the odd number) was completed, it is prayer. He (Muḥammad) said: "I was given delight in prayer," for prayer bears witness, because it is a secret conversation between God and his servant, as God said: "If you remember Me, I will remember you" (Qur'ān 2:152). Prayer is worship which is divided between God and His servant; half belongs to God and half to His servant, as it is related in the sound tradition about God, who said: "I have divided the prayer into two parts; half belongs to Me and half to My servant, and My servant will receive what he asks for."³⁵ The servant says: "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful" (Qur'ān 1:1), and God says: "My servant remembers Me." The servant says: "Praise be to God, the Lord of the created beings" (ibid., 2). God says: "My servant praises Me." The servant says: "The Compassionate, the Merciful" (ibid., 3). God says: "My servant extols Me." The servant says: "The King on the Day of Judgment" (ibid., 4). God says: "My servant exalts Me (and) entrusts Me with (his affairs)." Thus, the whole of this half (of *sūrat al-fātiḥa*) belongs exclusively to God.³⁶

Then the servant says: "It is You we worship; it is you (223) we ask for help" (ibid., 5). God says: "This is between Me and My servant, and My servant will receive what he asks for." Thus, God produces participation (between Him and His servant) in this verse. The servant says: "Guide us to the straight way (ibid., 6), the way of those on whom You bestow favors, those who bring upon themselves no anger and who do not deviate from the right way" (ibid., 7). God says: "These (last three verses)³⁷ belong to My servant, and he will receive what he asks for." These (last three verses) are particularized to God's servant, just as the first (three verses) are particularized to Him. From this (division of the verses), we know the obligation to recite: "Praise be to God, the Lord of the creatures" (ibid., 1 or 2). Whoever does not recite it does not perform the prayer which is divided between God and His servant.

³⁵ Muslim IV:38 (395). The citations below are taken from this tradition.

³⁶ The first *sūra* of the Qur'ān has six verses without accounting the "In the name . . .," which is usually considered the first verse.

³⁷ The text has *hā'ulā'i* (sic!) instead of *hādhihi*.

Since prayer is a secret conversation, it is remembrance, and whoever remembers the Real sits with (*jālasa*) Him, and the Real sits with him, for in the divine tradition God truly said: “I am the companion (*jalīs* – I sit with) of him who remembers Me.”³⁸ Now, whoever has the ability to see and sits with the one whom he remembers sees his companion. This is witness and seeing. If he is incapable of seeing, he does not see his companion. As a result, one who prays knows his rank (in prayer), whether he sees the Real with this seeing or not. If he does not see Him, he should worship Him through belief as if he sees Him, imagines Him in his *qibla*³⁹ and performs his secret conversation with him, listening to God’s response.

If he is an *imām* (a prayer leader) for his own people and for the angels who pray with him – for everyone who prays is no doubt an *imām* – for the angels pray behind one who prays alone, as stated in a tradition,⁴⁰ he attains the level of the messengers in their prayer, that is, to be (one of) God’s vicegerents. When he says: “God hears the one who praises Him,” he is informing himself and those behind him that God has heard him, and then the angels and those who are present say: “Our Lord, praise belongs to You.” That is because God says through the tongue of His servant: “God hears the one who praises Him.”

Thus, consider the lofty rank of the prayer and the place to which it brings its performer. Whoever does not attain the degree of seeing in prayer will not reach its aim and will find no delight in it, for he does not see the One with whom he converses secretly. If he does not hear what the Real transmits to him in prayer, he does not belong to those who listen (to God). And whoever is not present in prayer with God, (224) neither hearing and nor seeing Him, is not praying at all and is not one of those who listen and witness. So long as prayer continues, there is no other kind of worship which can prevent one from carrying out other obligations.

The invocation of God is the strongest part in prayer, because prayer includes both words and acts – we have mentioned the description of the perfect human in performing the prayer in the Meccan Revelations (*al-futūḥāt al-makkiyya*) – for God says: “The prayer prevents from carrying out outrageous and evil deeds” (Qur’ān 29:45). This is because the Law forbids one who performs the prayer to engage in any other acts so long as the prayer lasts. “The remembrance of God is greater” (ibid.), that is, in prayer, viz., God’s remembrance of His servant when He responds to his request. The servant’s praise of God is greater than his remembrance of Him, because majesty belongs to God.⁴¹ For this reason, God said: “God knows what you do” (ibid.), and He said: “or whoever listens and is a witness” (Qur’ān 50:37). He listens to God’s remembrance of him in prayer.

Moreover, since existence derives from rational movement which transforms the cosmos from nonexistence into existence, prayer comprises the three kinds of movement: vertical movement, which corresponds to standing in prayer; horizontal movement, which corresponds to bowing in prayer; and downward movement,

³⁸ Muslim, XVIII:2.

³⁹ This is the direction to the Ka’ba in Mecca toward which the Muslim prays.

⁴⁰ Bukhārī, IX:16 (659).

⁴¹ Qur’ān 45:37.

which corresponds to prostration. The movement of the human is vertical, that of the animal is horizontal, and that of plants is downward, while the inanimate thing has no essential movement, for when a stone moves, another thing causes it to move.

As for his saying, “my delight was made to be in prayer,” he does not ascribe this making to himself, for God’s self-manifestation to the one who prays derives from God and not from the one who performs the prayer. That is because had he not mentioned this description of himself (as being delighted), God would have ordered him to pray without His being manifested to him. Since he received this delight as a favor, the vision of God was also a favor. He said: “my delight (*qurraṭ ‘aynī*) was made to be in prayer,” and (this delight) is only the vision of the beloved (225), through which the eye of the lover becomes settled (*taqarru bihā ‘ayn al-muḥibb*), from the word *istiqrār* (come to rest), for the eye comes to rest when it sees the beloved and does not look at some other thing, whether sensual or not.⁴² For this reason, when praying one is forbidden to turn around in prayer, because this turning around is something the Devil steals from the servant’s prayer, thus preventing him from seeing his beloved. Moreover, if (God) had been indeed the Beloved of the one who turns around, he would have turned in his prayer only toward the *qibla*. Every human knows himself, (that is), whether he is in this state or another in this specific worship, for “truly, man is a clear witness against himself, despite all the excuses he may put forward” (Qur’ān 75:14–15). One knows to distinguish between falsehood and truth in himself, because he knows his state, for it derives from his feeling (*dhawq*) of himself.

In addition, prayer has another part, for God commanded us to pray to Him and informed us that He prays for us. Thus, prayer is from us and from Him. If it is God who prays, He prays only through His name the Last (*al-Ākhir*), because He comes after the creation of the servant. It is the Real which the servant creates in his heart, whether through rational consideration or through following others (*taqlīd*). This is a god of belief (*al-ilāh al-mu’taqad*). This god takes different forms in keeping with the predisposition which resides in a certain substrate (that is, place, society, etc.), as al-Junayd, when asked about gnosis and the gnostic, said: “the color of the water is like the color of the vessel in which it resides.”⁴³ This is an answer which hits the target, speaking of the matter as it really is. Thus, this is God who prays for us. When we pray, we bear the name the Last, for in this station we, as we have mentioned, are in the position of those who have this name, thus, in His eyes we are in keeping with our position, and He looks at us only in the form which we have brought, because the one who prays falls behind the one who arrives first in the race.⁴⁴

God’s saying, “Each knows his prayer and exaltation” (Qur’ān 24:41) means his degree of being late in worshipping his Lord and his exaltation of God’s

⁴² Affifi, I, p. 225, n. 1.

⁴³ Abrahamov, *Ibn al-‘Arabī and the Sufis*, pp. 76f.

⁴⁴ Since prayer is also one of God’s self-manifestations, it is this self-manifestation which comes first from the divine perspective and the one who prays falls behind; that is, he performs what God has already established. One of the meanings of the verb *ṣallā* is “to be the second in the race.”

transcendence which derives from his predisposition. Everything without exception exalts the praise of its Lord, the most forbearing (226), the most forgiving.⁴⁵ For this reason, one cannot understand⁴⁶ in detail, one by one, the exaltation of the world. Another understanding of the verse “everything without exception exalts the praise of its Lord” (*biḥamdihi*, Qur’ān 17:44) is possible; the pronoun *hi* in *biḥamdihi* may refer to the praise spoken of each thing, just as we say concerning the human’s belief, one praises the god of his belief and connects himself to him. (In like manner), the act one performs returns to oneself, thus one praises only oneself, for whoever praises the act undoubtedly praises only the agent of the act, because the perfection or imperfection of the act returns to its agent. Similarly, the god of belief is the product (*maṣnūʿ*) of one’s thought; it is one’s production (*ṣanʿ*). One’s praise of that which one believes amounts to one’s praise of oneself. For this reason, one dispraises the beliefs of others, and if one were just, one would not be able to do this. However, this believer, who worships his specific object, is no doubt ignorant of this (the truth), because he opposes the beliefs of others in their gods. That is because had he known al-Junayd’s saying, “the color of the water is the color of its vessel,” he would have approved of the belief of everyone and known God in every form and every belief. Such a person supposes (*ẓānn*), but does not know (*ʿālim*). For this reason, God said (in a tradition): “I am as my servant supposes Me to be” (*anā ʿinda ẓann ʿabdī bī*);⁴⁷ that is, I manifest myself to him only in the form of his belief; if he wishes, he will make (my self-manifestation) unlimited, and if he wishes, he will make it limited, for the God of beliefs is limited, and (hence) He is the God whom His servant holds in his heart, because the unlimited God cannot be comprised by anything, for He is the essence of things and of Himself. One cannot say that either God comprises Himself, or not, so understand! “God speaks the truth and guides to the right way” (Qur’ān 33:4).

⁴⁵ This is a paraphrase of Qur’ān 17:44.

⁴⁶ *lā yufqahu* occurs on the basis of the preceding Qur’ānic verse, which reads “you do not understand their praise” (*lā tafqahūna tasbiḥahum*).

⁴⁷ Bukhārī, 97:15 (7405); Affīfī, I, p. 33.

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