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The Mi'raj and Ibn 'Arabi's Own Spiritual Ascension: Chapter 367 of the *Futūhāt* and the *K. al-Isrā'*

Introduction

The initial indications in the Koran and hadith concerning the Prophet's Ascension (mi'raj) or nocturnal voyage (isra', at Kor. 17:1) and the revelatory vision in which it culminated (Kor. 53:1-18) subsequently gave rise to a vast body of interpretations among the many later traditions of Islamic thought and spirituality.<sup>1</sup> Ibn 'Arabi's personal adaptation of that material, in at least four separate longer narratives, reflects both the typical features of his distinctive approach to the Koran and hadith and the full range of his metaphysical-theological teachings and practical spiritual concerns. For him, the Prophet's "nocturnal journey"--an expression he prefers both because it is that of the Koran and because it is more appropriate to the complete, "circular" nature of the movement in question<sup>2</sup>--is above all an archetypal symbol of the highest,

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<sup>1</sup>In this Introduction we have usually employed the expression "Mi'raj" ("Ascension") most commonly used in Islamic languages, although Ibn 'Arabi himself prefers to follow the Koran (for reasons detailed in the following note) in referring instead to the isra' of the Prophet and the saints. In most of the hadith accounts of this Ascension the revelations alluded to in the Koranic verses 53:1-18 play an integral (even decisive) role, and they are understood in that context by Ibn 'Arabi in all of his Mi'raj narratives. Ibn 'Arabi's own distinctive use of the canonical hadith materials is outlined in n. 9 below and followed in detail in the notes to the translation.

For further references, see the general indications (from a historicist perspective) and bibliography in the articles "Isra'" (B. Schreike) and "Mi'raj" (J. Horovitz) in the SEI and EI<sup>1</sup>; the full range of hadith and legendary materials studied in the opening chapters of M. Asin Palacios' La Escatologia musulmana en la Divina Comedia (Madrid, 1919) (abridged English tr.--eliminating many references to the Arabic sources--as Islam and the Divine Comedy, London, 1926; repr. 1968); and G. Widengren, The Ascension of the Apostle and the Heavenly Book, Uppsala, 1950. See also the striking pictorial representations of many stages of the Mi'raj--incorporating, however, a wide range of legendary or popular materials not used by Ibn 'Arabi--by the 15th-century Timurid school of Herat in "The Miraculous Journey of Mahomet"/Miraj Nameh (London/Paris, 1977).

<sup>2</sup>There are a number of shades of meaning in the Koranic expression asra (at 17:1 and in the related hadith) that help explain Ibn 'Arabi's preference for that term: in addition to its being used to describe a complete spiritual journey involving both "ascent" and "return" (ruju')--a fundamental dimension he emphasizes especially in the R. al-Anwar--the term refers more specifically to a "nocturnal

culminating stages in the inner, spiritual journey that must be followed by each of the saints or mystical "knowers" who would participate fully in the heritage of Muhammad,<sup>3</sup> even if the subjective phases and experiences marking that route necessarily appear differently to each individual.<sup>4</sup>

Thus the theme of the Mi'raj provides Ibn 'Arabi with a single unifying symbolic framework for the full range of practical spiritual questions and theoretical issues (ontological, cosmological, theological, etc.) that are discussed in other contexts throughout the Futuhat and his other works.<sup>5</sup> If each of his treatments of the Mi'raj approaches those issues from its own particular standpoint and purpose--and with, in addition, very different literary styles and degrees of autobiographical openness--they all do share what is perhaps the most fundamental feature of all of his writing: the continually alternating contrast between the metaphysical (universal and eternal) "divine" point of view<sup>6</sup> and the "phenomenological" (personal and experiential)

voyage," with all the implications of a "hidden," profoundly inner spiritual transformation that are so decisive for the "journeys" of the saints described in all these narratives. Finally, the verbal form clearly insists on God as the (ultimate) Agent and Source of this movement, pointing to the key factors of divine grace and individual "predisposition" that are also central to Ibn 'Arabi's consideration of this journey (whether for the Prophet or the saints), especially in the autobiographical context of the K. al-Isra'. (None of this is implied by the much broader and less specific Koranic usage of mi'raj--in the plural--at 43:33 and 70:3).

<sup>3</sup>While acknowledging the uniquely "physical" nature of the Prophet's Mi'raj (in section II below), Ibn 'Arabi stresses the primary importance of the spiritual isra'at--even for Muhammad--in the proportions implied by the Prophet's "thirty-three" other, purely spiritual journeys mentioned at the end of that section (n. 46 below).

The crucial importance of the notion of the saints' participation in the prophetic "heritage" (wiratha) is assumed throughout all of these Mi'raj narratives: for Ibn 'Arabi, its ultimate verification (and perhaps even its source) is to be found in the revelation of the "Muhammadan Station" in section IV-I and in the corresponding passage from the K. al-Isra' (pp. 12-14: see our translation and commentary in our article on "The Spiritual Ascension: Ibn 'Arabi and the Mi'raj, cited at n. 13 below.) For further references to this key notion in Ibn 'Arabi's religious thought, see Chodkiewicz, Sceau, chapter 5; and Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 1191-1201.

<sup>4</sup>A fundamental point that is openly stressed here in the reminder of Yahya (= John the Baptist, at the beginning of IV-F, the sphere of Aaron) that "each person has a path (tariq) that no one else but he travels," which "...comes to be through the traveling itself." The more specifically personal, "autobiographical" dimensions of Ibn 'Arabi's Mi'raj accounts are most evident in the K. al-Isra' (see the important passage translated in our JAOS article cited at n. 13 below) and in the concluding section (IV-I) of this chapter from the Futuhat.

<sup>5</sup>This is brought out more fully in the cross-references in the notes to this translation. In particular, it is clear that the spiritual phenomena underlying this particular schema provided by the Mi'raj are not essentially different from the realities Ibn 'Arabi discusses elsewhere in terms of other traditional Sufi categories, such as the metaphor of the spiritual "journeys in God" (asfar) or the complex distinctions of "stations" (maqamat), "stages" (manazil), etc. employed throughout the Futuhat itself: see, for example, his revealing remarks concerning Ansari's classic Manazil al-Sa'irin and his own Manahij al-Irtiqa' near the end of the Ascension outlined in chapter 167 (II, 280; Alchimie, pp. 112-113).

<sup>6</sup>In addition to Ibn 'Arabi's own explicitly metaphysical language, that perspective is more dramatically represented in chapter 367 of the Futuhat (translated below) by the spirits of the different

perspective of each individual voyager. The aim of this sort of dialectic, as he pointedly reminds his readers at the very beginning of chapter 367 (= section I of the translation below), is quite clear: if the journey in question necessarily appears to move through time and distance, that is not so that we can eventually "reach" God--since "**He is with you wherever you are**"--but rather "**so that He can cause [us] to see His Signs**" (Kor. 31:31) that are always there, "**on the horizons**" and "**in the souls**." The heavens of this journey, the prophets and angels who populate them, the Temple or the Throne where the final "unveiling" takes place--all of these, he insists, are so many places of the Heart.<sup>7</sup>

Modern readers who want to understand these narratives on this ultimate and most intimate level, however, must first find their way through an extremely complex set of symbols and often only implicit references to what are now largely unfamiliar bodies of knowledge: the task of interpretation is therefore not unlike that facing students of Dante's Divine Comedy (and more particularly the Paradiso). Therefore our annotation to this translation of chapter 367 of the Futuhāt concentrates on providing that indispensable background in the following areas: (1) the actual Islamic source-materials in the Koran and hadith which provide the basic structure and key symbols for all of Ibn 'Arabi's Mi'raj narratives;<sup>8</sup> (2) the cosmological and astrological presuppositions which he generally shared with other traditions (more or less "scientific") of his time;<sup>9</sup> (3) his own personal metaphysical and cosmogonical theories or "doctrines," which are

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prophets, especially Adam, Idris and Aaron--all of whom tend to speak here, as is often the case with God in the Koran, from a transcendent divine or "supra-temporal" perspective.

<sup>7</sup>Hence the central importance of the celebrated divine saying (hadith qudsi) with which he concludes the opening section (at n. 37): "My earth does not encompass Me, nor does My heaven, but the heart of My servant, the man of true faith, does encompass Me." He returns to stress the fundamental position of the Heart, in a more autobiographical and experiential context, in section IV-H (notes 168-172) below. For further references to this fundamental concept in Ibn 'Arabi's thought, see Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 916-921, and the famous chapter on the "wisdom of the Heart" (Shu'ayb) in the Fusus al-Hikam, I, 119-126; Bezels, pp. 145-157).

<sup>8</sup>These works provide a perfect illustration of Ibn 'Arabi's typical (and highly complex) approach to hadith. (See our more general discussion of this topic in our article on "Ibn 'Arabi's 'Esotericism': The Problem of Spiritual Authority," in Studia Islamica, ...[COMPLETE REFERENCE].) He scrupulously and literally follows the sayings and deeds of the Prophet as recounted in the canonical collections--in this chapter (367), relying especially on the Sahih of Muslim (who devotes a special section [iman, 254-294] to the events connected with the Mi'raj) and, to a slightly lesser extent, on the Sahih of Bukhari--and most often develops his own spiritual interpretations from close attention to the slightest literal details of those narratives (thereby implicitly excluding the vast body of non-hadith legends that had become popularly associated with these events). Rather than focusing on the external differences or apparent contradictions among various hadith (which are quite apparent, for example, concerning the number or order of stages in the Ascension), Ibn 'Arabi typically--one might say "ecumenically"--concentrates on conveying the spiritual meaning and intentions implicit in each Prophetic saying, pointing to a level of understanding unifying what might otherwise be seen as differing or conflicting expressions. (This approach mirrors his more general attitude to the various Islamic sects and schools of law, and ultimately to the observable diversity of religions and beliefs.)

<sup>9</sup>Fortunately, these elements are much less important here than in chapter 167 (see below), which assumes a far more detailed acquaintance with alchemy, Ptolemaic-Aristotelean astronomy (as transmitted, among others, by the Islamic philosophers), a wide body of traditional astrological lore concerning the particular influences of the stars, and additional "esoteric sciences." In any case, it is

basically those found throughout his other writings; and (4) his conception of the particular spiritual "heritages" and distinctive qualities of each of the prophets encountered during the Mi'raj, as they are developed in the Fusus al-Hikam and throughout the Futuhat.<sup>10</sup> Finally, since Ibn 'Arabi's four major Mi'raj narratives do share certain common features--and since several are available (at least partially) in French and English translations--it may be helpful, for comparative purposes, to point out some of the more distinctive features of each.

The Other Mi'raj Narratives:<sup>11</sup> Kitab al-Isra', Risalat al-Anwar, Chapter 167 of the Futuhat

The Kitab al-Isra',<sup>12</sup> at once the earliest, the longest and the most personally revealing of the works discussed here, was composed in Fez in the year 594, apparently only a relatively short

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important to note that virtually all those matters--which Ibn 'Arabi treats there as inherently knowable by man's natural observation and "reasoning" (nazar)--primarily concern the symbolic framework for the Mi'raj narrative and not its universal spiritual "content," which is usually expressed in much more immediately accessible form in this chapter (367).

<sup>10</sup>Allusions in both of these areas are clarified in the footnotes as they are mentioned, usually by cross-references to related passages in the Futuhat, Fusus and other writings. We should add that other prophets not explicitly mentioned in the hadith and these narratives concerning the Mi'raj are elsewhere frequently associated by Ibn 'Arabi with particular heavenly spheres: see, for example, Noah's connection with the sphere of the sun, mentioned at the end of chapter 3 of the Fusus (in reference to a longer account in Ibn 'Arabi's K. al-Tanazzulat al-Mawsiliya).

<sup>11</sup>There are also a number of other, shorter or less complete treatments of the Mi'raj theme in Ibn 'Arabi's extant writings, some of which are cited in notes below. The longest (and most accessible) is the passage on the Ascension of the Prophet--understood as the cosmic "Muhammadan Reality" or "Perfect Man"--in the Shajarat al-Kawn (R.G., no. 666), now available in translations by A. Jeffery, "Ibn 'Arabi's Shajarat al-Kawn," in Studia Islamica, vol. X, pp. 43-78, and vol. XI, pp. 113-160 (Mi'raj section at pp. 145-160); and by M. Gloton, L'Arbre du Monde, Paris, 1982 (Mi'raj section pp. 93-106). Although the French translation does give more useful references to the Koran and hadith background of this passage, neither version provides sufficient annotation to make intelligible most of this treatise's extremely complex metaphysical, theological and cosmological allusions, whose density is comparable to that of the K. al-Isra'.

Unlike the treatments of the Mi'raj discussed below, the protagonist of this Ascension (in Shajarat al-Kawn) is the Prophet himself--although often described in metaphysical terms clearly applicable to the "Perfect Man" in general--, and Ibn 'Arabi does not bother to mention here the various intermediate stages of his celestial encounters with the earlier prophets which are so prominent in the other accounts (and in the original hadith). Instead he here assumes, as throughout the Shajarat al-Kawn, the universal presence of this cosmic "Muhammadan Reality," and takes a relatively few elements from the Mi'raj narratives (especially those of the divine Throne and the Prophet's different "steeds") as symbols for celebrating that central metaphysical theme.

<sup>12</sup>See R.G., no. 313; this entry mentions several alternative titles and an extant commentary by Ibn 'Arabi's close disciple Isma'il b. Sawdakin, which is extremely useful in deciphering this difficult work. References here are to the text given in the Rasa'il, I, no. 13, pp. 1-92. The date and place of composition are mentioned in the author's own colophon (p. 92).

The recent article by Joanna Wronecka, "Le kitab al-isra' ila maqam al-asra' d'Ibn 'Arabi," pp. 15-27 in Annales Islamologiques, tome XX, Cairo, 1984, contains only brief first impressions of this book and the translations of a number of section headings (plus several verses from the concluding munajat), while announcing the author's plans to begin a dissertation on this subject at the University of Warsaw.

time after certain decisive personal inspirations concerning the ultimate unity of the prophets in the spiritual "station of Muhammad" and the inner meaning of the Qur'an in its full eternal reality that were soon to coalesce in Ibn 'Arabi's conception of his own unique role as "Seal of the Muhammadan Saints."<sup>13</sup> In an emotionally fluid and highly expressive Arabic style, drawing on an incredibly dense and allusive symbolic vocabulary<sup>14</sup> and combining long poetic interludes with rapidly moving rhymed prose--and culminating in a series of remarkable "intimate conversations" (munajat) with God (pp. 50-82)--, he constantly returns to celebrate and elaborate on the twin themes of the eternal Muhammadan Reality (encompassing all the prophets and their teachings) and the metaphysical universality of the Qur'an as they were inwardly realized and verified in his own mystical experience. Here the passage of this autobiographical "voyager"<sup>15</sup> through the heavenly spheres and the higher revelatory stages of the Mi'raj (pp. 11-49) is not so much a means for describing the successive steps of the spiritual path and "progress" of the saints more generally--as it is, to some extent, in all the other Mi'raj narratives--but instead primarily a framework for evoking and clarifying various aspects of the author's own spiritual achievement, as they mirror the even loftier rank of the Prophet (pp. 83-92). What is perhaps most noteworthy about this composition, in a way that reinforces Ibn 'Arabi's repeated assertions that he first received all of this only by divine inspiration (and not through an individual effort of reasoning), is the way the complex systematic metaphysical and ontological framework

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<sup>13</sup>See especially our translation and commentary of a crucial autobiographical passage (pp. 13-14)--perfectly complementing the culminating stage of Ibn 'Arabi's spiritual ascension here (section IV-I below)--in "The Spiritual Ascension: Ibn 'Arabi and the Mi'raj," Journal of the American Oriental Society, vol. (198X), no. , pp. [COMPLETE REFERENCES]. The K. al-Isra' as a whole conveys a mood of excitement and immediacy that must reflect the relative proximity of some decisive (and perhaps not yet fully assimilated) personal spiritual inspiration. More specifically, the K. al-Isra' does not yet seem to distinguish with complete clarity between what Ibn 'Arabi later calls the "maqam muhammadi" (the spiritual "station of Muhammad")--or that supreme part of it uniquely reserved for himself as the "Seal of Muhammadan Saints"--and what he then calls the "station of Proximity (to God)" (maqam al-qurba) attained more generally by the highest rank of the saints, the afrad or malamiya. In the K. al-Isra' he frequently alludes to his own attainment of a lofty "Muhammadan station," but still employing terms--as continued to be the case with many later Sufis--that also suggest he is speaking of a spiritual rank ultimately accessible to other Muslim saints as well.

For a careful discussion and extensive references concerning the broader context of this important question for our understanding of Ibn 'Arabi's own spiritual autobiography, see Chodkiewicz, Sceau, chapter IX, as well as the famous opening passage of the Futuhat recounting Ibn 'Arabi's subsequent experience (or complete recognition) of his "investiture" as the "Seal of the Muhammadan Saints": this event is described in the Khutbat al-Kitab (I, pp. 2 ff.; O.Y. ed., I, 43-55), and is also accessible in a French translation by M. Valsan, Etudes traditionnelles, Paris, 1953, pp. 300-311.

<sup>14</sup>bayn al-marmuz wa-l-mafhum (Rasa'il I, no. 13, p. 3): most of this labyrinth of symbols and allusions to the Koran and hadith (usually through only a single word or brief phrase) could potentially be elucidated by extensive reference to the Futuhat and other works. However, such a commentary would often require page-long notes of explanation for virtually every other word--an approach which could not hope to convey the poetic, immediately expressive emotional quality that is the essential trait of this work.

<sup>15</sup>The autobiographical nature of the K. al-Isra' is not even thinly disguised. At p. 66, Ibn 'Arabi explains his continued reference to himself as a "salik" in terms of his desire to emphasize the fact that "even now (i.e., after reaching the highest spiritual station) I am still voyaging"--in other words, as evidence that he is not claiming "union" in the sense of some absolute mutual identity with God.

developed in the Futuhāt is already entirely present, but for the most part only implicitly--expressed instead through an incredibly profuse array of symbols and allusions drawn from the Koran and hadith (and whose full explanation is to be sought, for the most part, only in later, more analytical prose works such as the Futuhāt).

Compared to the literary and doctrinal complexities of the preceding work, the Risalat al-Anwar, a relatively brief prose treatise composed at Konya in 602 A.H. (near the beginning of Ibn 'Arabi's long stay in the Muslim East), is stylistically far more accessible and its contents are more readily understandable--features which (along with the existence of an excellent commentary by 'Abd al-Karim Jili) no doubt help account for its popularity with modern translators.<sup>16</sup> Written in response to a request by a Sufi friend and fellow master, this study, as its full title partly indicates,<sup>17</sup> is above all practical in intention and experiential (rather than primarily doctrinal or metaphysical) in its terms of reference and expression; it is aimed at the needs of a reader who, already necessarily possessing a considerable degree of personal accomplishment and experience, is intimately involved with the spiritual direction of disciples at earlier stages of the Path. While the allusions to the Mi'raj proper (pp. 9-13; = English tr., pp. 40-46) are very brief--mentioning for the most part only the cosmological powers or spiritual qualities traditionally associated with each of the heavenly spheres and the Koranic "cosmography" of the Gardens of Paradise, the divine "Throne," "Pen," etc.<sup>18</sup>--, it does provide an indispensable complement to the other Mi'raj narratives in two critical areas: (1) its relatively detailed discussion of the essential practical methods and preliminary stages preparing the way

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<sup>16</sup>For the date and place of composition, see R.G., no. 33; the long list of manuscripts there may likewise reflect the relatively accessible character of this short work. Page references are to the Arabic text in the Rasa'il I, no. 12, pp. 1-19. To facilitate reference by non-Arabists, citations of this text in the notes below also mention the relevant sections from both of the following French and English translations. The complete English translation by R. T. Harris, Journey to the Lord of Power (London/N.Y., 1981), although without any annotation, does have the advantage of being accompanied by long and useful selections from Jili's commentary, which itself consists largely of citations (mostly unidentified in the translation) from related sections of the Futuhāt. The concluding chapter of Chodkiewicz, Sceau, pp. 181-221, consists of a translation of most of the R. al-Anwar accompanied by an extensive set of explanations and complementary developments drawn from many of Ibn 'Arabi's writings, including more particularly selections from the two Mi'raj-narratives (chapters 167 and 367 of the Futuhāt) discussed below.

The first European translation of this text, by M. Asin Palacios, in El Islam Cristianizado (Madrid, 1931), was neither complete nor annotated. Asin's work is now also available in French translation, L'Islam christianise, (Paris, 1982), with the translation of R. al-Anwar on pp. 321-332.

<sup>17</sup>"The Treatise of Lights, Concerning the Secrets Bestowed on the Person in Spiritual Retreat (sahib khalwa)." (Other titles are mentioned in R.G., no. 33.) For the Sufi practice of spiritual retreat more generally, see the references in the article "khalwa" (by H. Landolt) in EI<sup>2</sup>. Chapters 78-79 of the Futuhāt (II, 150-152), on the stations of khalwa and tark al-khalwa, involve a more metaphysical approach to the subject; see also French tr. by M. Valsan, in Etudes traditionnelles, Paris, 1969, pp. 77-86.

<sup>18</sup>These cosmological features are all most elaborately developed in chapter 167 of the Futuhāt (described below). In particular, the R. al-Anwar does not contain any of those personal encounters with the prophets symbolically associated with each sphere (or with each planet's respective "spiritual entity" [ruhaniya], such as Mercury, Mars, Venus, etc.) that make up the major part of the Mi'raj-narrative in both chapters of the Futuhāt, as well as in the corresponding section of the K. al-Isra'.

for the inner realization of these more advanced spiritual insights; and (2) Ibn 'Arabi's repeated emphasis on the fundamental importance of the concluding phase of the saints'"return" to a transformed awareness of the physical and social world (in its immediate relation with God) and to the particular responsibilities and activities--whether teaching and spiritual guidance, or the less visible tasks of the representatives of the spiritual hierarchy--flowing from that realization.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, the long chapter 167 of the Futuhāt, "On the Inner Knowledge of the Alchemy of Happiness,"<sup>20</sup> uses the framework of the Mi'raj to retrace, in ascending order, the many levels of Ibn 'Arabi's complex cosmology or cosmogony.<sup>21</sup> Its primary focus (compared with the other works mentioned here) is on the "objective" metaphysical realities underlying the spiritual insights described in more experiential terms in the other narratives: in this respect it often resembles the Fusus al-Hikam, and the treatment of the various prophets encountered during this heavenly voyage (e.g., Jesus, Aaron or Moses) often closely parallels that found in the corresponding chapters of the Fusus. This feature is further underlined by Ibn 'Arabi's narrative technique of comparison, throughout this ascension, between the initiatic spiritual knowledge granted to the "follower of Muhammad" (representing the methods of the saints and Sufis more generally) and the limited cosmological and theological insights available to his companion, the archetypal "man of reason."<sup>22</sup> In general, the elucidation of many of those complex allusions

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<sup>19</sup>The extensive commentary by M. Chodkiewicz (Sceau, chapter X) provides important references to many other works of Ibn 'Arabi (especially sections of the Futuhāt) further illustrating both of these key themes. (The latter point, in particular, is also stressed in a number of important sections of chapter 367 translated below.)

<sup>20</sup>II, 270-284; also available in French translation by S. Ruspoli, l'alchimie du bonheur parfait, Paris, 1981. (The translator promises (p.26) a more complete commentary in the future.) An earlier partial French translation of this chapter, without notes or commentary, was also published by G. Anawati, in the Revue de l'Institut Dominicain d'Etudes orientales du Caire, Melanges 6 (1959-1961), pp. 353-386.

<sup>21</sup>The best general survey of this difficult subject (although by no means complete) probably still remains the introduction (pp. 29-159) of H.S. Nyberg's Kleinere Schriften des Ibn al-'Arabi, based largely on Ibn 'Arabi's K. Insha' al-Dawa'ir. Within the Futuhāt, one of the most comprehensive treatments can be found in chapt. 360, (III, 416-448), while the same themes are also developed in the earlier chapters 4-12 (I, 98-149). A much briefer and more accessible account can also be found in the translation and introduction, by D. Gril, of Ibn 'Arabi's short R. al-Ittiḥād al-Kawni (R.G., no. 317), entitled Le Livre de l'Arbre et des Quatre Oiseaux, Paris, 1984. See also the related cosmological chapters from the Futuhāt translated by Wm. Chittick in this anthology.

This cosmological perspective accounts, in particular, for the many additional "levels" or "sites" marking the final phases of this Ascension in chapter 167--especially the third, purely "noetic" (ma'nawī) stage (II, 282-284; Alchimie, pp. 130-141)--which are not explicitly mentioned in the hadith concerning the isra'. These distinctions correspond to the initial, most abstract stages of Ibn 'Arabi's cosmological system, and in fact he even stresses there that the "rationalist" thinker accompanying the saint also participates to a considerable extent in the awareness of the universal metaphysical-cosmological principles perceived at that stage. In terms of their spiritual content, therefore, these stages do not constitute a "higher" or more "advanced" station than the culminating revelation described in the final section of chapter 367 (= IV-I below).

<sup>22</sup>sahib nazar: the insights of this allegorical character (or psycho-spiritual "type") reflect features of several different "rational sciences" of Ibn 'Arabi's day, including kalam (especially for its "negative theology" or tanzih concerning the highest insights into the divine nature), the popular mixture of

would require extensive reference to some of the most obscure and unfamiliar aspects of the Shaykh's thought.

Ibn 'Arabi's Own Mi'raj: Chapter 367

Ibn 'Arabi's long treatment of the Mi'raj in chapter 367 of the Futuhāt is marked by some distinctive features that make it considerably more accessible (at least for most modern readers) than either chapter 167 or the Kitāb al-Isrā'. To begin with, it is written for the most part in relatively straightforward expository prose; the style does presuppose a profound acquaintance with Ibn 'Arabi's systematic terminology and symbolism (largely drawn from the Koran and hadith) as it is to be found throughout the Futuhāt, but the role of unfamiliar Arabic literary and artistic effects is relatively less important. Secondly, the focus of this chapter is almost exclusively on the universal spiritual dimensions of the Mi'raj, especially as expressed in the language of the Koran and hadith, in a way that should already be familiar to readers of the Fusus al-Hikām; unlike chapter 167, it does not presuppose such extensive acquaintance with the vocabulary and symbolism of other relatively esoteric medieval Islamic sciences (alchemy, astrology, etc.). Similarly, the encounters with the individual prophets associated with each heavenly sphere can often be readily illuminated by comparison with corresponding passages elsewhere in Ibn 'Arabi's writings.<sup>23</sup> And finally, as so often in the Futuhāt, the genuinely autobiographical passages,<sup>24</sup> especially at the conclusion of Ibn 'Arabi's own spiritual ascent (section IV-I below), add a powerful new dimension of clarity and persuasive force to what otherwise might appear to be simply a complex intellectual and symbolic "system."

The overall structure of this chapter is quite clear, consisting of four successively broader and more detailed elaborations of the central theme of the inner spiritual meaning of the "nocturnal journey," a theme whose ultimate premises and metaphysical-theological context are briefly evoked in the opening lines (section I), already summarized at the beginning of this introduction. In section II, Ibn 'Arabi takes up the hadith accounts of Muhammad's Mi'raj--which provide the formal framework for the rest of the narrative--and adds his own allusions to many of the key themes developed at greater length in the following sections. In section III, he provides a condensed, still highly abstract schematic outline of the "spiritual journeys of the saints" (awliya'), expressed in his own distinctive metaphysical-theological terminology (i.e., "in His Names in their names"). Finally, the greater part of the chapter (= section IV) is taken up

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astrology (concerning, e.g., the particular influences and qualities of various planets) and Aristotelean-Ptolemaic astronomy, and even more "esoteric" sciences of the time, such as alchemy. (However, it should be stressed that the alchemical vocabulary used in this particular chapter is not at all mysterious; it is used here in a clearly spiritual, symbolic sense whose meanings--corresponding to familiar Sufi technical terminology--are copiously illustrated and explained elsewhere in Ibn 'Arabi's work.)

<sup>23</sup>Such cross-references in the notes are concentrated on other chapters of the Futuhāt and corresponding sections of the Fusus al-Hikām, especially given the relatively greater accessibility of translations and commentaries of the latter.

<sup>24</sup>Although all of section IV, the greater part of this chapter, is narrated in the "first person," that is often clearly a literary device, in those cases where the prophets are explaining what readers can readily recognize as Ibn 'Arabi's own characteristic insights and perceptions. However, section IV-I clearly summarizes his own direct personal experiences of what were evidently--judging by his ensuing account of what was "seen" there--some of the most important stages on his own spiritual path.



with Ibn 'Arabi's account, narrated in the first person and closely following the path of the Prophet, of the climactic stages of his own personal spiritual journey.<sup>25</sup> If the autobiographical guise at first seems only a sort of didactic literary device, at the end (section IV-I) he does conclude with the description of a decisive personal "revelation," a compelling spiritual experience that seems to have contained--or at least confirmed--virtually all the most distinctive points of his later thought and conviction, the forms of divine knowledge which he goes on to elaborate in a long enumeration of "what he saw" in that culminating "Muhammadan Station."

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<sup>25</sup>Which, as he reminds us at the beginning of Section IV, closely parallels his earlier autobiographical descriptions of the same personal spiritual itinerary in the Kitab al-Isra'; see our translation and commentary of a key corresponding passage from that work in the article cited at n. 13 above.

**Chapter 367: Concerning the Inner Knowledge of the Stage (manzil) of the Fifth Tawakkul, Which None of the People of Realization (muhaqqiqin) Has Discovered, Because of the Rarity of Those Apt to Receive It and the Inadequacy of (Men's) Understandings to Grasp It<sup>26</sup>**

**I. Introduction: the Context and Purpose of the Spiritual Journey**

...God said "**There is nothing like His likeness [and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing]**" (Kor. 42:11),<sup>27</sup> so He described Himself with a description that necessarily belongs

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<sup>26</sup>III, pp. 340-354; sections omitted from our translation are clearly indicated in the accompanying notes or summarized (within brackets) in the body of the text.

The enigmatic title of this chapter is partially illuminated by a brief passage near the end (III, 351.21-22), where this mysterious "fifth tawakkul" is again briefly mentioned as one of the distinctive forms of spiritual knowledge Ibn 'Arabi saw in his culminating vision of the "Muhammadan Station": "...And I saw in it the knowledge of the person who acts deliberately and (at the same time) relies on God, and this is the fifth tawakkul, and it is (expressed in) God's saying in Sura 73: '[...**There is no god but Him,] so take Him as your Trustee (wakil)!**' (73:9)."

Elsewhere (chapter 198, II, p. 420, 36th tawhid), Ibn 'Arabi explains this same Koranic verse as a reference to man's inherent ontological status as a pure "servant," with no possessions of his own, a description resembling the inner state of "pure servanthood" Ibn 'Arabi also realized in his culminating revelation (IV-I below). Similarly, a key phrase in this description, "to act deliberately" (itta'ada), is applied in Ibn 'Arabi's cautionary advice earlier in chapter 367 (at n. 143 below; = III, 349.13) to those Sufis who would mistakenly take the ecstatic state of "annihilation in God" (fana', implying a heedlessness of the external world) to be the end and goal of the spiritual Path. All of these hints seem to point to this highest form of "trust in God" as reflecting an advanced inner state of spiritual insight in which the saint's absolute reliance on God--an attitude that in lower stages of tawakkul is usually conceived of as implying a sort of ascetic disdain and unconcern for the "secondary causes" (asbab) or things of this world--is now seen as simultaneously "affirming the secondary causes" (a phrase from opening poem of this chapter, at III, 340.15), which are finally perceived in their true metaphysical status, as necessary and intrinsic manifestations of the ever-present divine Reality. This form of tawakkul would thus closely correspond to Ibn 'Arabi's characteristic emphasis on the superiority of the state of "enlightened abiding" in the world (baqa') characterizing those saints who--like the Prophet--have "returned" (the raji'un) from the station of divine Proximity while retaining the ongoing realization of that insight in the world.

The term tawakkul, "trust" or "inner confidence" in God, occurs many times in the Koran and gradually became a key term in Sufi spiritual psychology; see, for example, chapter 118 of the Futuh (II, 199-201), on the maqam al-tawakkul, where Ibn 'Arabi mentions at the end that "the levels of tawakkul, for the true Knowers, are 487...." Near the beginning of the R. al-Anwar (Chodkiewicz, Sceau, p. 189; Journey, p. 30) he also discusses tawakkul as the last of the preparatory stages before the spiritual Mi'raj, marked by four distinctive "charismatic powers" (karamat).

<sup>27</sup>This famous Koranic verse, with its paradoxical "double negations" (corresponding to the shahada) of God's "resemblance" to created things, is usually treated by Ibn 'Arabi as a classic reference to the mystery of the simultaneous immanence (tashbih) and transcendence (tanzih) of the Divine Reality reflected in the Perfect Man which is the central intuition of all his work. Often he even interprets the expression "**His Likeness**" in this verse as a direct reference to the Perfect Man, alluding to Adam's

only to Him, which is His saying: "**And He is with you wherever you are**" (Kor. 57:4).<sup>28</sup> Thus He is with us wherever we are, in the state of His "descending to the heaven of this world during the last third of the night,"<sup>29</sup> in the state of His being mounted upon the Throne (Kor. 5:20; etc.),<sup>30</sup> in the state of His being in the "Cloud,"<sup>31</sup> in the state of His being upon the earth and in

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creation (according to a famous hadith) "in the image of the Merciful": see the famous discussions of this verse in the chapters on Noah (ch. 3) and Hud (ch. 10) in the Fusus al-Hikam, and further references in the Futuhāt I, 62, 97, 111, 220; II, 129, 510, 516-17, 541, 563; III, 109, 165, 266, 282, 340, 412, 492; IV, 135, 141, 306, 311, 431. In addition to the ambiguity of the expression kamithlihi (which can also be read simply as "like Him"--i.e., like God), Ibn 'Arabi likewise stresses the apparently paradoxical contrast between the absolute insistence on divine transcendence at the beginning of this verse and the apparent anthropomorphism of its conclusion.

Thus, according to either reading, the absolute universality of the divine Presence implied by this verse includes all the particular, "restricted" modalities of the divine "descent" (nuzul) and Self-manifestation indicated in the following verses and hadith--each of which is likewise the subject of numerous discussions throughout the Futuhāt.

<sup>28</sup>For Ibn 'Arabi, this verse is simply a direct implication of the broader truth implied in the opening verse: this inner correspondence between the different manifestations of God and the Perfect Man (al-Insan al-Kamil), at all the levels of being (or "worlds") is assumed throughout the rest of this chapter. More generally, the reality of the divine "compresence" (ma'iya, "with-ness") with all things expressed in this verse is discussed in many parts of the Futuhāt, including a number of the shorter metaphysical or cosmological excerpts included in this anthology.

<sup>29</sup>A reference to a famous "divine saying" (hadith qudsi) which Ibn 'Arabi included in his own collection of such hadith, the Mishkat al-Anwar (no. 56 [cited from the Sahih of Muslim]; Niche, pp. 86-87): "Our Lord descends every night to the heaven of this world when the last third of the night remains, and then He says: 'I am the King! Whoever calls on Me, I answer him. Whoever asks (something) of Me, I give to him. Whoever requests My forgiveness, I forgive him.'" (This hadith is recorded, with a number of minor variations, by Muslim, Malik, Bukhari, Tirmidhi, Ibn Maja, and Ahmad b. Hanbal: see detailed references and variants in Graham, Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam, Paris/the Hague, 1977, [subsequently abbreviated as "Graham, Word"], pp. 177-178.)

As Ibn 'Arabi explains in detail in the latter part of chapter 34 of the Futuhāt (O.Y. ed., III, 320-332), the "night," in this hadith, "is the place of the descent in time of God and His Attribute" (of Mercy), and this "last third of the night"--which, Ibn 'Arabi insists, lasts forever--is none other than the Perfect Man (the first two "thirds" being "the heavens and the earth," man's "two parents"). The following verses and hadith (at notes 30-32 here) are interpreted in chapter 34 as references to different ontological degrees or "moments" of that universal divine Self-manifestation.

<sup>30</sup>There are seven Koranic verses referring to God's being "mounted (istawa') on the Throne," often following "the creation of the heavens and the earth" (i.e., what lies "beneath" or constitutes the Throne in its cosmological sense). For Ibn 'Arabi's understanding of these verses, see the extensive references to the Futuhāt in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 791-803 (on the many meanings of the divine "Throne," 'arsh) and pp. 622-629 (on istiwa').

For Ibn 'Arabi, however, an even more fundamental meaning of the "Throne" is "the Heart of the man of true faith" (which is "the Throne of the Merciful," according to a famous hadith), i.e., the Perfect Man (see Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 916-921, on the qalb). The inner connection between these two senses is brought out explicitly in the famous hadith qudsi discussed at n. 7 above and quoted at n. 37 below, and is a basic assumption throughout sections III and IV below, since the "Heart" is precisely the "theater" of the entire journey: that point is made most forcefully in sections IV-G and IV-I below. Elsewhere, (e.g., in

heaven (Kor. 43:84; etc.),<sup>32</sup> in the state of His being closer to man than his jugular vein (Kor. 50:16)<sup>33</sup>--and all of these are qualifications with which only He can be described.

Hence God does not move a servant from place to place in order that (the servant) might see Him, but rather "so that He might cause him to see of His Signs" (Kor. 41:53; etc.)<sup>34</sup> those

chapter 34, O.Y. ed., III, 320 ff.), Ibn 'Arabi frequently stresses the particular importance of the Koranic specification (at 5:20) that it is "the Merciful" (al-Rahman), the Source of all being, Who is "mounted" or "seated" there.

<sup>31</sup>A reference to the following hadith, concerning the Prophet's response to the question "Where was our Lord before He created the creation?": "He was in a Cloud ('ama'), without air above it and without air below it, and He created His Throne upon the Water." (This famous hadith is found in the collections of Ibn Maja, Tirmidhi and Ahmad b. Hanbal.) Our translation here reflects Ibn 'Arabi's interpretation in chapter 34 of the Futuhāt (O.Y. ed., III, 323 ff.), where he also stresses the fact that this particular ontological reality concerns the divine Name "Lord" (rabb)--and not "the Merciful" (see n. 29).

For the broader meaning of the term 'ama' ("the Cloud") in Ibn 'Arabi, see the references in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 820-826 and in the Futuhāt II, 310, as well as its treatment in the penultimate stage of the cosmological mi'raj in chapter 167 (Alchimie, pp. 138-140).

<sup>32</sup>This phrase is contained (with minor variations) in a number of other Koranic verses (3:5; 10:61; 14:38; 22:70) all insisting on God's intimate acquaintance with all things: see, for example, "**Our Lord, surely You know what we say openly and what we hide: not a thing upon the earth and in heaven is hidden from God**" (Kor. 14:38); or even more appropriately, "**He is God in the heavens and upon the earth; he knows your secret [sirr] and what you proclaim, and He knows what you gain**" (Kor. 6:3).

<sup>33</sup>Ibn 'Arabi's understanding of the divine "nearness" (see the related notion of "with-ness," ma'iya, at n. 28 above) expressed in this Koranic phrase is intimately bound up with the reality of "perpetual creation" (khalq jadid) expressed in the rest of the verse and its immediate context: "...**yet they are in confusion about the (ever-) renewed creation; but surely We created man [al-insan] and We know what his soul insinuates to him and We are closer to man than his jugular vein**" (Kor. 50:15-16). As indicated in the Introduction, for Ibn 'Arabi the spiritual "station of Proximity" (maqam al-qurba), in which one actually realizes the full extent of this intimate relation with God, is the ultimate goal of the Ascension of the saints outlined in this chapter: that relation is outlined schematically, in the theological language of 'ilm al-kalam, in section III and discussed in more experiential terms in the final two parts of section IV. (See the extensive references in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 936-940 and Chodkiewicz, Sceau, index s.v. [maqam al-qurba].)

<sup>34</sup>While Ibn 'Arabi is alluding in particular to the "reason" for the Prophet's Ascension described at Kor. 17:1 (see following note), the same phrase (with only minor variations in the pronouns) is addressed to mankind more generally in a number of other Koranic verses (27:93; 31:31; etc.). Of these, certainly the most important and best known is the verse 41:53--to such an extent that it is clearly assumed whenever Ibn 'Arabi mentions the divine "Signs" (ayat): "**We shall cause them to see Our Signs on the horizons and in their souls, so that it becomes clear to them that He is the Truly Real [al-Haqq]--or is your Lord not enough, for surely He is witnessing every thing! What, are they in doubt about meeting their Lord? Does He not surely encompass all things?**" Especially important, for Ibn 'Arabi as for so many other Islamic thinkers, is the insistence in this verse on the coincidence of the Signs "on the horizons," i.e., in the external world (but note also Muhammad's decisive revelation at the "Loftiest Horizon," Kor. 53:7) and those "in the souls," in the totality of awareness of the "Perfect Man" (al-insan al-kamil).

that were unseen by him. He said: "**Glory to Him Who made His servant journey one night from the Sacred Place of Worship to the Furthest Place of Worship, whose surroundings We have blessed, so that We might cause him to see of Our Signs!**" (Kor. 17:1)<sup>35</sup> And similarly, when God moves (any) servant through his (inner spiritual) states in order also to cause him to see His Signs, He moves him through His states.<sup>36</sup> ... (I.e., God) says: "I only made him journey by night in order that he see the Signs, not (to bring him) to Me: because no place

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Secondly, Ibn 'Arabi always emphasizes the causative, active meaning of the verb form 'Ara as "to make someone see," not just "to show": for him, God's "Signs" are already there, in the totality of our experience, but usually "unseen" (ghaba)--i.e., not perceived as such. Thus the whole purpose of the spiritual journey is simply to open our (spiritual) eyes to the reality of "things" as Signs, or as Ibn 'Arabi goes on to explain immediately below (and in more detail in section III), to recognize the divine Names "in our states." All this is implicit in the famous prayer of the Prophet likewise assumed throughout this chapter: "O my God, cause us to see things as they really are!"

<sup>35</sup>The masjid al-haram ("Sacred Place of Worship") was a common name for the sanctuary of the Kaaba at Mecca, but there is some disagreement in the hadith surrounding the identification of the masjid al-aqsa: it was sometimes, especially in later traditions, identified with the site of the Temple at Jerusalem (al-bayt al-maqdis, "the sacred House") where Muhammad stops to pray before his heavenly ascension according to several hadith accounts (including that followed by Ibn 'Arabi below); but the earlier traditions agree that it refers to the "furthest point" (al-darah) or goal of the Mi'raj (i.e., where Muhammad received the culminating revelation described in Sura 53), and is therefore more or less identical with the "Inhabited House" or heavenly Temple of Abraham (al-bayt al-ma'mur), the symbol of the Heart discussed in section IV-H (notes 168-172) below. Ibn 'Arabi implicitly seems to follow the latter interpretation. See also the articles from the SEI/EI<sup>1</sup> cited in n. 1 above.

Throughout this chapter (and in the K. al-Isra', etc.) Ibn 'Arabi generally uses the Koranic expression isra' to refer to the Prophet's ascension and its spiritual analogues--possibly because the term mi'raj might appear limited only to the "ascending" portion, whereas Ibn 'Arabi always is at pains (as in sections III and IV-F below, and at the end of his R. al-Anwar) to emphasize the critical importance of the "descending" phase of return (ruju'), which distinguishes the highest rank of the saints (and of course the prophets). We have consistently translated isra' and its related verbal forms here as "journey," but it must be kept in mind that the Arabic term refers specifically to a nocturnal journey: for Ibn 'Arabi, especially, this nuance no doubt corresponds to the fact that the spiritual isra', at least, is an inner, "secret" process largely hidden from outward observation, especially in those saints (the afrad or malamiya) who have followed it through to the end.

In the K. al-Isfar 'an Nata'ij al-Asfar (Rasa'il, II, no. 24), pp. 17-21, Ibn 'Arabi offers an elaborate interpretation of this same Koranic verse (17:1) focusing--as is typically the case in his reading of the Koran--on the complex inner significance of the grammatical and lexical details of its particular Arabic expressions, such as the apparent duplication of "at night" (laylan) and asra (meaning "to cause to journey at night"), etc. Our translation cannot convey most of those nuances or alternative meanings.

<sup>36</sup>Here, as so often with Ibn 'Arabi (see especially section III below), the pronouns are rather ambiguous; in this case the intended meaning is clarified by the following untranslated lines (III, 340.25-30) which cite several other hadith and Koranic passages where God shows some of "His" creations to certain prophetic messengers in order to teach them a particular lesson. Here Ibn 'Arabi implicitly contrasts this spiritual journey of the saints (and ultimately of all men) through their inner "states"--i.e., the "Signs in your souls" of verse 41:53 (see notes 34 and 72)--with the physical (or possibly "imaginal") journey through places which, as he explains below (end of section II), was the exclusive privilege of the Prophet on this single occasion.

can hold Me and the relation of all places to Me is the same. For I am such that (only) 'the heart of My servant, the man of true faith, encompasses Me,'<sup>37</sup> so how could he be 'made to journey to Me' while I am 'with him wherever he is' (Kor. 57:4)?!"

## II. The Narrative Framework: the Mi'raj of Muhammad and His Many Spiritual Journeys

The long following section (III, 340.32-342.34) combines a virtually complete quotation of one long hadith account of the Prophet's Mi'raj<sup>38</sup>--whose sequence of events and heavenly encounters with the spirits of earlier prophets provides the narrative framework for all of Ibn 'Arabi's different versions of that voyage--with a number of the Shaykh's personal observations. These brief remarks either foreshadow themes developed at greater length in the rest of the chapter (and in his other treatments of the Mi'raj theme) or else allude to interpretations (e.g., of the drinks offered the Prophet at the beginning of his journey, or of the rivers of Paradise) that he discusses more fully in the other contexts and chapters of the Futuhāt. However, four of those asides are significant enough to deserve special mention here.

The first of these is Ibn 'Arabi's understanding of the statement in this hadith that Muhammad "descended from Buraq (his celestial steed) and tied him up with the same halter the (other) prophets had used to tie him." For the Shaykh, "all of that was only so as to affirm (the importance and reality of) the secondary causes"<sup>39</sup>..., although he knew that Buraq was

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<sup>37</sup>An allusion to the celebrated hadith qudsi already mentioned at n. 7 above: "My earth does not encompass Me, nor does My heaven, but the heart of My servant, the man of true faith, does encompass Me." This famous divine saying (not found in the canonical collections, but favored by many Sufi authors) is cited repeatedly by Ibn 'Arabi, who takes it as a classical reference to the role of the "Heart" (of the "Perfect Man," as realized by the accomplished saints) as the complete mirror of the divine tajalliyat. See the references at notes 30 and 33 above, and all of section IV-H (notes 167-173) below.

<sup>38</sup>Although Ibn 'Arabi does not identify his hadith sources in this section or explicitly distinguish his "quotations" (or paraphrases) from his own more personal comments and explanations, the particular "hadith al-isra" (III, 340.30) which he follows for the basic order of events and encounters up to the "Lotus-Tree of the Limit"--both here and in the other Mi'raj narratives discussed in the introduction--is the first one given in the corresponding section of Muslim's Sahih (iman, 259, from Anas b. Malik). Here and in his other Mi'raj narratives he adds many additional details (e.g., the four mystical "rivers" flowing from the Tree of Life, the sound of the divine "Pens," the milk and other drinks offered the Prophet) which are taken for the most part from the following related traditions in Muslim (iman, 260-294)--although most of these hadith are also to be found in the other canonical collections with minor variations in the order and description of the events. Here, for example (at III, 341.12-14), Ibn 'Arabi explicitly mentions the fact (i.e., as an exception) when he refers to a particular hadith taken from Bukhari. Relevant details concerning these particular hadith and Ibn 'Arabi's interpretation of them underlying individual events or locations during the Mi'raj are discussed in the notes to the corresponding parts of section IV below.

<sup>39</sup>ithbat al-asbab: i.e., the affirmation of all the "realities" or phenomena other than God (the ultimate and Primary Cause). This assertion of the reality and importance of all phenomenal existence as perceived from the highest and most comprehensive spiritual perspective--a central leitmotif of Ibn 'Arabi's thought, and an attitude by no means shared by all Sufis--was already stressed in the title and opening line of the poem beginning this chapter, where he stresses that the true, ultimate state of

commanded (by God) and would have stayed there even if he had left him without tying the halter."

The second of these parenthetical remarks occurs in the lowest heaven (the one immediately surrounding this sublunar world), when Muhammad is brought face-to-face with all the blessed and the damned among the descendants of Adam.<sup>40</sup> "Then (Muhammad) saw himself among the different individuals belonging to the blessed, at Adam's right hand, and he gave thanks to God. And through that he came to know how it is that man can be in two places (at the same time) while remaining precisely himself and not anyone else: this was for him like the visible (physical) form and the (reflected) forms visible in the mirror and (other) reflected images."<sup>41</sup>

The third such passage is Ibn 'Arabi's statement, in connection with the Prophet's visit to Jesus in the second heaven, that "He was our first master, through whose assistance we returned (to God); and he has a tremendous solicitude ('inaya) for us, so that he does not forget us for a single hour."<sup>42</sup>

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"tawakkul (absolute trust and reliance on God) affirms the secondary causes." See the discussion of this point, in connection with the mysterious "fifth tawakkul" mentioned in the title of this chapter, at n. 27 above.

<sup>40</sup>The existence of those two groups on either side of Adam is mentioned in the second long Mi'raj hadith (from Abu Dharr) given by Muslim (iman, 264); however, that hadith does not mention Muhammad's seeing himself there, so that this aspect may possibly be Ibn 'Arabi's own addition.

<sup>41</sup>For the simultaneous presence of each soul--even if we are usually unaware of the fact--in its own Garden (or Hell) already during "this life," see the illustrative passages in this anthology (eschatology section) taken from chapter 302 (III, 12-13) and chapter 73, question 62 (II, 82).

More generally, this experience of the simultaneous presence of one's essential individual reality ('ayn: translated as "precisely himself" in this passage) in different planes of being is only one illustration of Ibn 'Arabi's universal perception of the reality of all manifest being as theophanies (tajalliyat, mazahir, etc.) of the "Realities" or Names within the divine Essence and of the "eternal individual entities" ('ayan thabita) in the divine Knowledge--a conception for which he frequently uses this image of mirrors and reflections. See the famous metaphysical development of this image in the first two chapters of the Fusus al-Hikam; in the Futuhāt I, 163 and IV, 2; and further references in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 499-505, as well as the striking set of diagrammatic representations of these "mirrors" of God and man provided by Haydar Amuli in the introduction to his vast commentary on the Fusus al-Hikam, Nass al-Nusus ("Le texte des textes"), ed. H. Corbin and O. Yahya, Tehran/Paris, 1975, plates 3-30.

<sup>42</sup>The special role of Jesus in the beginning of Ibn 'Arabi's own spiritual path is alluded to repeatedly in the Futuhāt: "He was looking after us when we entered upon this Path we are following today" (I, 15.26); "I returned (to God: tubtu) at the hands of Jesus" (IV, 77.30); "Our return to this path was through good tidings (mubashshira) at the hand of Jesus, Moses and Muhammad" (IV, 172.13); and "we found that station (of immediate spiritual 'feeding') within ourselves and had the immediate experience (dhawq) of it at the beginning of our journeying, with the spiritual reality (ruhaniya) of Jesus" (III, 43.20-21). This may be connected with Ibn 'Arabi's mention that his own first Sufi shaykh, Abu al-'Abbas 'Uraybi, was distinguished by his special spiritual relationship with Jesus (isawi): see references in the Futuhāt at I, 223; II, 365; and III, 539.

In addition to the chapters of the Futuhāt (ch. 20, 35-36, 195, etc.) and the Fusus (ch. 15) specifically devoted to Jesus, see more particularly the sections concerning Ibn 'Arabi's conception of Jesus' perennial spiritual function as the "Seal of Universal Sainthood," mirroring the Shaykh's own role

The final observation concerns the nature of the Prophet's vision (ru'ya) of God at the culminating stage of his Ascension, after God--in the words of the hadith--"had revealed to him what He revealed."<sup>43</sup> "Then He ordered (Muhammad) to enter; so he entered (the divine Presence), and there he saw exactly what he had known and nothing else: the form of his belief did not change."<sup>44</sup> This question of man's "divine vision" and knowledge is at the heart of Ibn 'Arabi's own long discussion with Moses later in this chapter (IV-F below) and underlies his accounts of his own personal vision at the all-encompassing "Muhammadan Station" (in IV-I below).

At the end of this section, after pointing out that it was only the Prophet's insistence on the actual bodily--rather than ecstatic or visionary--nature of this ascension that aroused the scepticism and hostility of his contemporaries,<sup>45</sup> Ibn 'Arabi concludes: "Now (Muhammad) had thirty-four times<sup>46</sup> in which (God) made him journey at night, and only one of them was a nocturnal journey in his (physical) body, while the others were with his spirit, through a vision which he saw."

### III. The Spiritual Journeys of the Saints<sup>47</sup>

As for the saints, they have spiritual journeys in the intermediate world<sup>48</sup> during which they directly witness spiritual realities (ma'ani) embodied in forms that have become sensible for

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as "the Seal of Muhammadan Sainthood." Those references are summarized in Chodkiewicz, Sceau, chapters V-IX.

<sup>43</sup>This succinct phrase, whose implications Ibn 'Arabi expands in thousands of words here and in his other treatments of the Mi'raj, is all that is actually stated by the various hadith in regard to this ultimate stage of the Ascension; here they clearly echo the Koranic verse 53:10 (awha...ma awha) concerning Muhammad's vision of one of "the Greatest Signs" at 53:18. "Revealed" here translates wahy, the highest form of divine "inspiration" distinguishing the prophetic messengers (rusul).

<sup>44</sup>For Ibn 'Arabi's complementary treatment of this decisive question of man's "vision" (ru'ya) or contemplation of God--as differing only "qualitatively," but not in its "form," from the contents of his innermost "beliefs"--in an eschatological perspective, see the illustrative passages in chapter 73, questions 67 and 71 (II, 85-86).

<sup>45</sup>It is not clear how Ibn 'Arabi means for the reader to reconcile this insistence (repeated at the beginning of section III below) on the "bodily" nature of this particular journey of the prophet with his earlier statement in this chapter (at III, 340.34) that "Buraq is a mount from the barzakh" (i.e., from the intermediate, imaginal world), as well his own frequent interpretation of the Prophet's visions as taking place on that plane of being. However, for Ibn 'Arabi, the events and perceptions taking place in the barzakh are also "bodily" and "sensible" in a certain respect. See also, in this regard, Ibn 'Arabi's pointed advice to his fellow spiritual voyagers (in section III below) not to mention the "way" in which one travels--which is likely to lead to controversy--but only what one has actually seen, which in itself remains beyond dispute.

<sup>46</sup>We have not been able to locate a hadith source for this assertion. In any case, the relative proportions this implies do suggest the primary importance of the spiritual journey of each soul, which is the essential subject of the rest of this chapter (and of Ibn 'Arabi's other major treatments of Mi'raj theme).

<sup>47</sup>III, 342.34-345.25; passages omitted from the translation are indicated and summarized as they occur.



the imagination; these (sensible images) convey knowledge of the spiritual realities contained within those forms. And so they have a (spiritual) journey on the earth and in the air, without their ever having set a sensible foot in the heavens. For what distinguished God's Messenger from all the others (among the saints) was that his body was made to journey, so that he passed through the heavens and spheres in a way perceptible by the senses and traversed real, sensible distances. But all of that from the heavens (also belongs) to his heirs,<sup>49</sup> (only) in its spiritual reality (ma'na), not its sensible form.

So as for what is above the heavens,<sup>50</sup> let us mention what God made me directly witness in particular of the journey of the People of God. For their journeys are different (in form) because they are embodied spiritual realities, unlike the sensible journey (of the Prophet). Thus the ascensions (ma'arij) of the saints are the ascensions of (their) spirits and the vision of (their) hearts, (the vision) of forms in the intermediate world and of embodied spiritual realities. And we have already mentioned what we directly witnessed of that in our book called "The Nocturnal Journey,"<sup>51</sup> along with the order of (the stages of) the voyage....

<sup>48</sup>isra'at ruhaniya barzakhia: in the rest of this chapter the forms of asra (isra', etc.) are translated simply as "journey," without the adjective "nocturnal," which would be misleading (if taken literally) in English. As already noted above, Ibn 'Arabi's own usage in this context refers to the inward, "invisible" nature of these spiritual voyages (i.e., from the perspective of an external observer), not to the time they may occur.

<sup>49</sup>i.e., the saints: for the central importance of Ibn 'Arabi's conception of the saints as "heirs" of the different prophets (and all of them ultimately as heirs of the "Muhammadan Reality," whose heritage encompasses all the earlier prophets), see Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 1191-1201, Chodkiewicz, Sceau, chapters III and V, and of course the massive illustration of this theme throughout the Fusus al-Hikam.

<sup>50</sup>This phrase has two possible meanings: if it refers to the purely spiritual or noetic (ma'nawi) phases of the mystical journey symbolically surpassing even the outermost celestial sphere, then this would roughly correspond to Ibn 'Arabi's enumeration of the forms of knowledge gained in his culminating vision, at the end of this chapter (IV-I), a stage which is described in more detail in Chapter 167 of the Futuhāt (Alchimie, pp. 131-141) and in the Kitab al-Isra' (Rasa'il I, no. 13, pp. 45 ff.). Or if--as appears more likely here--it refers to what is spiritually "above" the physical spheres and planets (and therefore the intellectual sciences that can be deduced from their observation, as outlined in chapter 167), then Ibn 'Arabi is pointing to the entire "autobiographical" spiritual narrative in the K. al-Isra' and the rest of this chapter (= section IV below).

<sup>51</sup>Kitab al-Isra': see the discussion of the autobiographical nature of this work in the introduction to this chapter (notes 12-15), the key passage describing Ibn 'Arabi's own culminating revelation translated in our JAOS article cited at n. 13 above, and further cross-references at each stage of section IV below. This paragraph is followed by a short poem (III, 343.6-17), not translated here, recapitulating the "order of the journey," i.e., the various symbolic stages (seven heavens, Lotus-tree of the Limit, divine Throne, etc.) found in virtually all of Ibn 'Arabi's versions of the Ascension.

Therefore whenever God wishes to journey with the spirits of whomever He wishes among the heirs of His messengers and His saints, **so that He might cause** them **to see His Signs** (Kor. 17:1)--for this is a journey to increase (their) knowledge and open the eye of (their) understanding--the modalities of their journey are different (for different individuals):<sup>52</sup> and among them are those whom He causes to journey in Him.

Now this journey (in God) involves the "dissolving" of their composite nature.<sup>53</sup> Through this journey God (first of all) acquaints them with what corresponds to them in each world (of being), by passing with them through the different sorts of worlds, both composite and simple.<sup>54</sup> Then (the spiritual traveler) leaves behind in each world that part of himself which corresponds to it: the form of his leaving it behind is that God sends a barrier between that person and that part of himself he left behind in that sort of world, so that he is not aware of it. But he still has the awareness of what remains with him, until eventually he remains (alone) with the divine Mystery which is the "specific aspect"<sup>55</sup> extending from God to him. So when he

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<sup>52</sup>"modalities of their journey" = masrahum, which could also refer to their "point of departure," the "place" or "time" of the journey, the particular "route," etc. See section IV-F below, where Yahya (John the Baptist) explains to Ibn 'Arabi that each journey is different and "each traveler creates his own path."

Elsewhere Ibn 'Arabi, often following earlier Sufi writers, offers a variety of typologies for the soul's spiritual voyage: e.g., the fivefold division of suluk in chapter 189 (II, 380-382); the classical "four journeys" (asfar); or the more elaborate division into dozens of "stations," "stages," "meeting-places," etc. underlying the chapter divisions of the Futuhat as a whole. The key distinctions in such cases differ according to the particular focus and intentions of each section, and such categories therefore do not necessarily overlap in a systematic fashion. (Thus, for example, the three essential aspects of the saints' voyage "in God" described in this section seem to be treated as separate journeys in other contexts.)

<sup>53</sup>hall tarkibihim: i.e., the process of "dissolution" or "disassembly" into its constituent elements (organic, mental, psychic and spiritual) of the original "composition" (tarkib) constituting the psycho-social "self" (dhat) in the broadest sense--as opposed to the sirr (n. 55), the "innermost reality" or "secret" that is the true essence of each individual. The terms "dissolving" (tahlil) and "reintegration" (tarkib) are drawn from a larger body of alchemical vocabulary which Ibn 'Arabi uses in this spiritual sense throughout the Futuhat, most notably in chapter 167 (see introduction above), on the "Alchemy of Happiness."

<sup>54</sup>The term "world" (alam) refers here to the different "levels of being" or ontological "planes" (nash'at, hadarat, etc.) of divine manifestation; the "simple" ones being the purely noetic (aqli) or spiritual Realities, while most phenomena are a "composite" (murakkab) involving some degree of materiality or manifest form in either the physical or intermediate, imaginal worlds.

<sup>55</sup>al-wajh al-khass: this key technical term of Ibn 'Arabi designates each creature's unique and unchanging inner "existentiating" relationship with God, prior to whatever knowledge or other transformations that may be acquired through its actions and "mediated" relationships in the course of life. (See the extensive references from the Futuhat in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 1139-1142.)

alone remains (without any of those other attachments to the world), then God removes from him the barrier of the veil<sup>56</sup> and he remains with God, just as everything else in him remained with (the world) corresponding to it.

Hence throughout this journey the servant remains God and not-God.<sup>57</sup> And since he remains God and not-God, He makes (the servant) travel--with respect to Him, not with respect to (what is) not-Him--in Him,<sup>58</sup> in a subtle spiritual (ma'nawi) journey....

Ibn 'Arabi goes on (III, 343.24-344.4) to recall the fundamental metaphysical underpinnings of these distinctions in the peculiar nature of the inner correspondence between man and the world (i.e., "not-God"), since both are created--in the words of a famous hadith--"according to the form" of God. Ordinarily, however, people think of themselves as simply "parts" of the world, as "things" within it, and it is only at the end of this purifying journey that the saints can realize man's true dignity and spiritual function as the "Perfect Man" (al-insan al-kamil) whose Heart fully mirrors the divine Reality (al-Haqq), thereby accomplishing that perfection for which the world itself was created.<sup>59</sup>

The paradoxical relationship (of simultaneous identity and non-identity) between this "divine Mystery" or "secret" (al-sirr al-ilahi) and the voyager's own innermost reality (sirr) is brought out more openly in the culminating stages of Ibn 'Arabi's own mi'raj recounted in section IV-I and in his description (from the K. al-Isra') of a similar culminating experience of "unveiling" translated in our article cited at n. 13 above.

<sup>56</sup>hijab al-sitr: the "veil" (sitr) in this case seems to refer not to a further particular obstacle, but rather to all the forms of attachment and implicit idolatry (shirk) "dissolved" in the course of the traveler's ascension, which together blocked him from the realizing his inner relation to God (the "divine Mystery," sirr, mentioned in the preceding note). For further discussion of these central concepts in Ibn 'Arabi's thought, see Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 561-662 ("sitr") and 313-318 ("hijab").

<sup>57</sup>huwa la huwa: literally, "He (and) not-He"--a formula whose meaning is clarified in the following lines (summarized here).

For Ibn 'Arabi, the term "servant" (abd) frequently has the special technical meaning--closely corresponding to its usage in certain Koranic passages--of those rare individuals among the saints (and prophets) who have fully realized their inner relation to their Creator, to the Reality encompassing all the divine Names, and who are therefore not unconsciously subject to the "lordship" of any other creatures. See especially the references to his decisive discovery of his own true nature as "pure servant" (abd mahd) at the culmination of his own spiritual ascension, in section IV-I (n. 198) below, and the detailed discussion and further references in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 765-778.

<sup>58</sup>or "in him" (i.e., in the servant). The ambiguity is again probably intentional: as Ibn 'Arabi goes on to explain, this voyage is "in God" (i.e., consciously, not simply "ontologically"), but it is also "in the servant" insofar as he can only know the divine Names in their manifestation within himself, in his own states and experience. The description of this second stage of the spiritual journey of the saints resumes at III, 344.4.

<sup>59</sup>The classic summary of this inner "correspondence" of man, God and creation in Ibn 'Arabi (and including many of the hadith and Koranic verses he commonly cites to illustrate it), is to be found in the opening chapter (on Adam) of the Fusus al-Hikam (I, 48-58; Bezels, pp. 50-59); for readers without

So when the servant has become aware of what we have just explained, so that he knows that he is not (created) according to the form of the world, but only according to the form of God (al-Haqq), then God makes him journey through His Names, in order to cause him to see His Signs (Kor. 17:1) within him.<sup>60</sup> Thus (the servant) comes to know that He is what is designated by every divine Name--whether or not that Name is one of those described as "beautiful."<sup>61</sup> It is through those Names that God appears in His servants, and it is through Them that the servant takes on the different "colorings" of his states: for They are Names in God, but "colorings" (of the soul) in us.<sup>62</sup> And they are precisely the "affairs" with which God is "occupied":<sup>63</sup> so it is in us and through us that He acts, just as we (only) appear in Him and through Him. [...<sup>64</sup>]

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Arabic the version of T. Burckhardt (La Sagesse des prophetes, Paris, 1955), because of its helpful annotation, is probably still the most understandable translation of this extremely complex section.

<sup>60</sup> or "within Him": the pronoun here--in an essential ambiguity to be found throughout Ibn 'Arabi's writings--could equally be read as referring to God (al-Haqq) as well as to the "servant," given the profound connection (although not simple identity) between the two that becomes apparent at this advanced stage of spiritual realization (see notes 55, 58-59). "God," throughout this paragraph, translates al-Haqq ("the Truth"), i.e., the ultimate or absolute divine Reality encompassing--and at the same time transcending--all the particular "Names" through which It becomes known and manifest.

The mention of man's being created "according to the form" ('ala sura) or "in the image" of God is an allusion to the well-known hadith (with evident Biblical parallels): "God created Adam in His image..." (The hadith is recorded by Bukhari, Muslim and Ahmad b. Hanbal; see also Graham, Word, pp. 151-152.)

<sup>61</sup> An allusion to the famous Koranic verse 7:180: "**For God's are the most beautiful Names, so call Him by them; and leave those who go astray with regard to His Names....**" Here Ibn 'Arabi evidently refers to the natural human tendency to become attached to the Names of divine Beauty (jamal) while failing to come to terms with the manifestations of what the Sufis traditionally called the Names of divine "Majesty" or "Severity" (jalal).

At the very end of this chapter (III, 354.15-16), Ibn 'Arabi mentions that this insight into the ultimate Unity of the divine Reality "named" (ahadiyat al-musamma) by each of the divine Names constitutes one of the many kinds of knowledge he realized in the culminating stage of his own spiritual ascension. There (as also, e.g., in the Fusus, chapters 4 and 21) he acknowledges the earlier development of this thesis in a work by the famous Andalusian Sufi Ibn Qasi (d. 546/1151), Khal' al-Na'layn. For Ibn 'Arabi's own long commentary on that work, see R.G. no. 681 (II, pp. 463-464). The inner spiritual "verification" of that reality is one of the key features of the culminating realization described in section IV-I and in the corresponding passage from the K. al-Isra' translated and commented in our JAOS article cited at n. 13 above.

<sup>62</sup> "Colorings" translates talwinat, a traditional Sufi expression for all the constantly changing psychic states and conditions of every individual, equivalent to the incessant inner "transformations" (taqallubat) of the soul discussed in the following paragraph (n. 65). As Ibn 'Arabi indicates here, the manifestations of the divine Names ultimately constitute all our experience and reality; hopefully this theological terminology, unfamiliar as it may be for most modern readers, will not obscure the universality of his metaphysical perspective.

Thus when God makes the saint (al-wali) travel through His most beautiful Names to the other Names and (ultimately) all the divine Names, he comes to know the transformations of his states and the states of the whole world.<sup>65</sup> And (he knows) that that transformation is what brings those very Names to be in us,<sup>66</sup> just as we know that the transformations of (our) states (manifest) the specific influences (ahkam) of those Names.... So there is no Name that God has applied to Himself that He has not also applied to us: through (His Names) we undergo the transformations in our states, and with them we are transformed (by God)....<sup>67</sup>

Now when (the spiritual traveler) has completed his share of the journey through the Names and has come to know the Signs which the Names of God gave him during that journey, then he returns and "reintegrates" his self with a composition different from that initial composite nature,<sup>68</sup> because of the knowledge he has gained which he did not have when he was

<sup>63</sup>An allusion to the famous Koranic verse 55:29: ".**Every Day He is (occupied) in an affair.**" Ibn 'Arabi typically takes the term sha'n ("affair," "concern," etc.) in this verse to refer to the infinite particular aspects of the divine "Activity" at each instant in time: see, e.g., Futuhat II, 77, 82, 218, 499; III, 198, 224; and the further references in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 639-642.

<sup>64</sup>The translation here omits a brief poem (III, 344.8-11) illustrating this central theme of Ibn 'Arabi's thought and foreshadowing his own inner realization of this truth in the culminating vision described in section IV-I below.

<sup>65</sup>"Transformations" = taqallubat--a meaning which, for Ibn 'Arabi, underlies the Arabic term for the Heart (qalb), since these constantly renewed transformations of being ultimately constitute all our experience: see his classic exposition of this realization in the Fusus, chapt. 12 (on Shu'ayb and "the Wisdom of the Heart"), and further references in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 916-921. His mention here of the "states of the world" is an important reminder that these "transformations" and the divine activity of "ever-renewed creation" encompass all the forms of experience and perception--not just what we ordinarily consider "inner" or "spiritual" phenomena--and all the forms of manifest being. For the multiple meanings of the complex term wali (translated as "saint" here), see n. 79 below.

<sup>66</sup>This opening phrase could likewise be translated so as to "invert" this relationship (although that meaning is also implied, in any case, in the second half of the sentence): "And that transformation is what is brought about in us by the essence of those Names." In either case, this sentence aptly summarizes the relation of inherent "reciprocity" between God and the creatures (or the Names and their manifestations) which underlies Ibn 'Arabi's frequent and apparently paradoxical statements that God (and the Names) "need man" (in order to be manifest and known), or that the caused thing "causes its Cause."

<sup>67</sup>The translation is uncertain. We have again omitted some further illustrations (III, 344.20-24) of this metaphysical relationship between certain divine Names and their manifestations in our experience.

<sup>68</sup>See n. 53 and the accompanying text above for the meaning of the "self" (dhat) in question here and the preliminary process of its "dissolving" (tahlil) into the various components of its "composite nature" (tarkib) in each level ("world") of being.

"dissolved" (in the ascending phase of that journey).<sup>69</sup> Thus he continues to pass through the different sorts of worlds, taking from each world that (aspect of himself) which he had left there and reintegrating it in his self, and he continues to appear in each successive stage (of being) until he arrives back on earth.

So "he awakens among his people" (like the Prophet), and no one knows what happened to occur to him in his innermost being (sirr) until he speaks (of his journey). But then they hear him speaking a language different from the one they are used to recognizing as his; and if one of them says to him "What is this?," he replies that "God made me journey by night and then caused me to see whatever Signs of His He wanted (me to see)." So those who are listening say to him: "You were not gone from us, so you were lying in what you claimed about that."<sup>70</sup>

And the jurist (faqih) among them says: "This fellow is laying claim to prophethood (nubuwwa), or his intellect has become deranged: so either he is a heretic--in which case he ought to be executed--or else he is insane, in which case we have no business talking with him." Thus "a group of people make fun of him" (Kor. 49:11), others "draw a lesson from him" (Kor. 59:2),<sup>71</sup> while others have faith in what he says, and thus it becomes a subject of dispute in the

For further details on Ibn 'Arabi's understanding of this key category of al-raji'un--"those who have returned" to complete the full process of enlightenment by reintegrating all the descending levels of being in their true, divine context and reality--see chapter 45 of the Futuhat (I, 250-253) [also available in the French translation by M. Valsan, Etudes traditionnelles, no.307 (1953), pp. 120-139] and the detailed references in Chodkiewicz, Sceau, chapter VII.

<sup>69</sup>That is, he is now fully aware of the divine Ground and the Names underlying each of those "things" in the world (or in his "self") which he had originally seen as a reality independent of God, and which had been temporarily "veiled" from his attention during the spiritual ascension; or in other words, he has become profoundly aware of all things as God's "Signs" (as indicated in Ibn 'Arabi's allusions to the famous Koranic verse 41:53, at notes 34 and 72).

<sup>70</sup>This paragraph, opening with a phrase from the hadith al-isra' (section II above), alludes to Ibn 'Arabi's reminder earlier in this chapter (III, 342.27-33) of the sceptical, even hostile reaction of many Meccans to the Prophet's insistence on the physical, bodily nature of his nocturnal journey. (Those events are vividly recounted in Ibn Ishaq's Sira: see pp. 182-184 in The Life of Muhammad, tr. A. Guillaume, Oxford, 1955.) It is also another allusion to Ibn 'Arabi's understanding (see notes 2 and 35 above) of the "hidden," spiritual character of this voyage of realization for the saints. In the R. al-Anwar (Rasa'il, p. 17; Journey, p. 59), Ibn 'Arabi explains that the fact that Muhammad--unlike, for example, Moses after his return from Mt. Sinai--showed no outward signs of his Ascension and revelatory encounter with God is an indication of his superior spiritual state of "perfect realization," corresponding to the equivalent "invisibility" of the afrad and malamiya among the saints "who return," the raji'un.

<sup>71</sup>The first phrase is clearly an allusion to the following verse (Kor. 49:11): "**O you who have true faith, do not (let) a group make fun of a group who may well be better than them....**"; the second probably refers to the well-known words (from verse 59:2): "**..so draw a lesson, you who have**

world. But the faqih was unaware of (the true meaning of) His saying: "**We shall show them Our Signs on the horizons and in their souls...**" (Kor. 41:53),<sup>72</sup> since (God) does not specify one group rather than (any) other.

Therefore whoever God may cause to see something of these Signs in the way we have just mentioned should mention (only) what he has seen, but he should not mention the way. For then people will have credence in him and will look into what he says, since they will only deny what he says if he makes a claim about the way (he acquired that knowledge).

Now you should know that (in reality) there is no difference with regard to this journey between ordinary people<sup>73</sup> and the person (distinguished by) this way and this characteristic. That is because (this spiritual journey) is in order to see the (divine) Signs, and the transformations of the states of ordinary people are (likewise) all Signs: they are in those Signs, but "they do not notice" (Kor. 23:56; etc.).<sup>74</sup> Hence this sort (of traveler) is only distinguished from the rest of (his fellow) creatures, those who are veiled (Kor. 83:15), by what God has inspired in his innermost being<sup>75</sup> either through his thinking and inquiry with his intellect, or through his preparation, by polishing the mirror of his soul, for the unveiling of these Signs to

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**(true) vision**--the latter group (ulu' al-absar), for Ibn 'Arabi, clearly being the saints or people of true spiritual vision.

<sup>72</sup>The continuation of this famous verse--underlining its universal metaphysical (or eschatological) dimension--is also assumed here: ". . . **until it becomes clear to them that He is the Truly Real (al-Haqq)--or is your Lord not enough, that He is Witness of every thing? Are they still in doubt about meeting their Lord? Is He not surrounding every thing?**" (See also the earlier allusions to this verse in section I above, at notes 34 and 36.)

<sup>73</sup>al-'alam: literally, "(the people of) the world"; "(spiritual) journey" here, as throughout this section, translates isra', the term applied in the Koran to the Prophet's "nocturnal journey" (see n. 35 above).

<sup>74</sup>The Koran applies the same formula to man's usual lack of spiritual awareness in a number of different contexts (especially with regard to the eschatological realities), but this particular verse (Kor. 23:56) seems to be most relevant here: "**We hurry to them with the good things, but no, they do not notice!**"

<sup>75</sup>"innermost being" = sirr (see n. 55 above). "Inspired" here translates the verb al-hama, a term that is much broader in meaning than the special divine "revelation" (wahy) characterizing the prophetic messengers, since here it evidently extends to the results of thinking (fikr) and "rational inquiry" (nazar bi-l-'aql), as well as the fruits of spiritual practice and mystical experience (the "polishing of the soul") which are Ibn 'Arabi's primary focus here (see following note).

him by way of inner unveiling and immediate witnessing, direct experience and ecstatic "finding."<sup>76</sup>

Thus ordinary people (when they object to those who speak of this spiritual voyage) are denying precisely That within Which they are and through Which they subsist. So if (the traveler) did not mention the way in which he obtained the inner knowledge of these things, no one would deny or dispute him. For all of the (ordinary) people--and I do not exclude a single one of them--are "making up likenesses for God";<sup>77</sup> they have always agreed and cooperated in that, so not one of them criticizes another for doing it. God says: "**Do not make up likenesses for God**..." (Kor. 16:74)--yet they remain blind to that Sign.<sup>78</sup>

But as for the friends of God (Kor. 10:64-66),<sup>79</sup> they do not make up likenesses for God. For God is the One Who makes up likenesses for the people (Kor. 14:25; 24:35), because of His knowledge of the underlying intentions (of those symbols), since God knows, but we do not know<sup>80</sup> (see Kor. 16:74; 3:66; 2:216). Thus the saint (the one truly "close to God") observes the

<sup>76</sup>kashfan shuhudan dhawqan wujudan: see the extensive references to Ibn 'Arabi's usage of each of these key terms in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 971-972 (kashf), 654-667 (shuhud and related forms), and 492-495 (dhawq), as well as his discussions concerning the necessary role of this "direct experience" (dhawq) in his encounters with Joseph and Moses in section IV (notes 108 and 145) below.

<sup>77</sup>I.e., instead of grasping the inner reality of God's symbols, those that already exist (and which ultimately constitute all reality). "(Ordinary) people" here translates al-nass, a Koranic expression with much the same meaning here as al-'alam (n. 73) in the preceding sentences--i.e., everyone but the accomplished saints, the "Friends of God" discussed in the following paragraph.

The phrase in quotation marks here (and in the various Koranic verses discussed below) could also be translated as "making up likenesses (or symbols) of God"--and that activity certainly accounts for an important part of Ibn 'Arabi's criticism. However, it gradually emerges from the subsequent discussion that the main focus of his critique here is man's natural (and more universal) tendency not to grasp and assimilate the "likenesses" (or "symbols," amthal) contained in the divine revelation (in all its infinite forms and "Signs"), but rather to impose his own limiting conceptions and standards on God and the world.

<sup>78</sup>Or "to (the meaning of) that verse": the individual verses of the Koran are traditionally referred to as the divine "Signs" (ayat) par excellence.

<sup>79</sup>or "those close to God," awliya' Allah: the term wali (pl. awliya) has usually been translated here as "saint," but in this case Ibn 'Arabi is more clearly stressing the root sense of their special closeness or proximity to God--a meaning which is also brought out in the Koranic verses concerning these rare individuals "**who have no fear and are not sad**," who have reached "**the ultimate Achievement**" (al-fawz al-'azim). (See also the more comprehensive discussion in Chodkiewicz, Sceau, chapters I and III.)

<sup>80</sup>Although the phrase **"..God knows, but you do not know"** completes the Koranic verse (16:74) already quoted in the preceding paragraph, its more illuminating use in the other two verses evidently forms the background for this particular allusion: in Kor. 3:66 it is applied to those who



likenesses God has made, and in that immediate witnessing he actually sees precisely what connects the likeness and That Which it symbolizes: for the likeness is precisely what is symbolized, with respect to that which connects them, but it is different insofar as it is a likeness. So the saint "does not make up likenesses for God"; instead, he truly knows what God symbolized with those likenesses....<sup>81</sup>

#### IV. IBN 'ARABI'S PERSONAL MI'RAJ

[IV-A. The Departure From the Elemental World]<sup>82</sup>

So when God wished to "journey with me to cause me to see (some) of His Signs" in His Names among my names<sup>83</sup>--and that was the portion of our inheritance from the (Prophet's) nocturnal journey--He removed me from my place and ascended with me on the Buraq of my contingency.<sup>84</sup> Then He penetrated with me into my (natural) elements....

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**"dispute concerning that of which they have no knowledge,"** and in verse 2:216 it follows the reminder that **"Perhaps you abhor something although it is good for you, and perhaps you love something and it is bad for you."**

<sup>81</sup>In the remainder of this section (III, 340.6-25), Ibn 'Arabi first insists on the decisive importance of considering every single detail of expression in the revealed divine "likenesses" or symbols (which he illustrates here with reference to the famous Light-verse of the Koran, 24:35). This point, in his opinion, was rarely respected by those interpreters (mutakallimun, philosophers, etc.) who relied on their own reasoning (nazar) to decipher the meaning of those symbols. He then goes on to stress the decisive differences between such "rationalist" approaches and the methods of the saints, who rely solely on inspired "unveiling" (kasht) and direct "witnessing" (shuhud) of the divine intentions in those cases (see n. 76 above).

<sup>82</sup>III, 435.26-35.

<sup>83</sup>fi asma'ihī min asma'i: a dense formula that summarizes Ibn 'Arabi's complex metaphysical understanding of the divine Names in their relation to each individual's experience, as outlined in the immediately preceding section. This relatively abstract formulation is made more explicit in his discussion of the Heart--of the Knower, but ultimately of each individual--as the true Temple or "House of God," in section IV-H (notes 168-172) below, and finds its ultimate confirmation in the revelatory personal experiences described in section IV-I.

<sup>84</sup>imkani, referring to each creature's inner dependency on God (and the particular "lords" constituted by certain divine Names) for its very being and manifestation. In Ibn 'Arabi's description of the culminating revelation of his own universal, "Muhammadan Station" (III, 350 = section IV-I below), he says that God "took away (his) contingency," so that he could "realize the inner realities of all the divine Names."

"Buraq" is the name of the Prophet's mysterious steed described in the hadith accounts of the Mi'raj and Isra': see the translation at n. 39 above and Ibn 'Arabi's longer discussion of the "Buraq" of

At this point Ibn 'Arabi allegorically encounters each of the elements constituting the physical, sublunar world, according to the accepted physical theories of his time--i.e., earth, water, air and fire--and leaves behind with each of them the corresponding part of his bodily nature.<sup>85</sup>

So I passed through into the first heaven:<sup>86</sup> nothing remained with me of my bodily nature<sup>87</sup> that I (needed to) depend on or to which I (had to) pay attention.

each of the prophetic Messengers in section II at III, 341.2-4 (passage not translated here), as well as the article "Burak" (by R. Paret) in EI<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>85</sup>This brief passage (III, 345.27-35) therefore symbolizes all the relevant dimensions both of the individual's natural "predisposition" (isti'dad) and of his voluntary spiritual "work" that are actually necessary to overcome and escape the animal tendencies and attachments ordinarily flowing from his bodily/psychic nature.

The experiential dimensions and practical presuppositions of this task of "purification" or "dissolution" of those attachments (tahlil: see above at notes 52 and 67) are brought out much more explicitly in the longer opening passages of the R. al-Anwar (see introduction above, notes 16-19). In particular, Ibn 'Arabi describes there (Chodkiewicz, Sceau, pp. 193-194; Journey, pp. 36-39) the voyager's necessary passage through the mineral, vegetal and animal realms before he can begin the properly "human" (insani) stage of this spiritual journey. The indispensable role of these "lower" dimensions of being in man's complete perfection--through which he surpasses even the angels (who lack this experience of the full range of existence)--is underlined in the vivid and partially autobiographical descriptions at the end of the chapter on Elias (no. 22) in the Fusus al-Hikam (I, 186-187; Bezels, p. 185).

<sup>86</sup>"Heaven," throughout these sections, translates sama', a term referring both to the various concentric heavenly spheres universally assumed by the astronomical theories of the time (as well as the Koran and the hadith accounts of the Ascension) and--more importantly, for Ibn 'Arabi--to the spiritual or noetic realities (i.e., the ruhaniyat or asrar of the various prophets named in the hadith) symbolically associated with each of those spheres. This meaning is therefore quite different from the "gardens" (jannat) and other abodes of "Paradise" (al-janna) that together constitute what we ordinarily call "heaven" (as opposed to "hell").

<sup>87</sup>nash'ati al-badaniya: nash'a, literally "arising" or "appearing (in existence)," is one of Ibn 'Arabi's most common expressions (following the Koran 56:62, etc.) for the different "planes" or realms of being. As already mentioned in the Introduction, the purely spiritual (and non-physical) nature of these "passages" (at least for the saints, unlike the special case of the Prophet; see text at notes 46 and 49 above)--which depend only symbolically on the astronomical theories of Ibn 'Arabi's time--is brought out quite explicitly in the other Mi'raj narrative in chapter 167 of the Futuhāt. There (Alchimie, pp. 57-58), for example, this "departure" from the physical world is explicitly explained as the inner liberation from "domination by the carnal desires" (hukm al-shahawat).

[IV-B. Adam and the First Heaven]<sup>88</sup>

As Ibn 'Arabi explains in this section, it was during this encounter with his "father" that he was first given the immediate spiritual awareness of two key themes of his thought: the universality of the divine Mercy which, like the Being that is inseparable from it, "encompasses all things"; and, flowing from this first principle, the temporal, limited nature of the punishments of "Hell" (and the sufferings of the world as a whole), which manifest certain of those Names.<sup>89</sup> The discovery and awareness of these principles presupposes man's ultimate reality as the "Perfect Man" (*insan kamil*), the (potentially) complete reflection of the divine Reality at all Its levels of manifestation--i.e., the very foundation of the Shaykh's metaphysical vision which is developed at much greater length in the famous opening chapter on Adam in the *Fusus*.

At the beginning of this encounter Ibn 'Arabi--like Muhammad before him<sup>90</sup>--suddenly sees his "essential reality" (*'ayn*) among the souls of the blessed on Adam's right, while at the same time he himself remains standing in front of Adam. Then Adam goes on to inform him that the Koranic expressions "**the people of the left hand**" and "**the people of the right**" (Kor. 56:27, 38, 41, 90; etc.) refer in reality to Adam's hands, since all of mankind are in God's "Right Hand"--"the one which destines (them) to happiness"--"because both of my Lord's Hands are Right and blessed."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>III, 345.1-20; the sections translated in full here correspond to lines 9-20 (omitting part of lines 14-15). While the *R. al-Anwar* does not refer at all to Adam and his sphere, chapter 167 of the *Futuhāt* (= *Alchimie*, pp. 57-63) primarily deals with the cosmological functions of this sphere in the sub-lunar realm, matters which are also partially accessible to the "rationalist" thinker who accompanies the Prophet's "heir" in that voyage. However Ibn 'Arabi does allude there to fundamental spiritual points which are greatly elaborated in the *K. al-Isra'* and later on in this chapter (367): (1) the fact that "Adam" teaches each person only those divine Names (and the spiritual knowledge flowing from them) that can be accepted by that individual's particular constitution or predisposition; and (2) the fundamental importance of the "particular divine aspect" (*al-wajh al-khass*; see n. 55 above), the divine "mystery" (*sirr*) uniting each creature directly to God, which Ibn 'Arabi calls the "Elixir of the true Knowers" (*Iksir al-'Arifin*), the secret of their inner knowledge of God (and of its particular limits for each individual).

Ibn 'Arabi's important account of his revelatory experience at this stage in the *K. al-Isra'* (*Rasa'il*, pp. 12-14)--which closely corresponds to the culminating section (IV-I) of this chapter 367 in the *Futuhāt*--is translated and commented in our article cited at n. 13 above.

<sup>89</sup>Both of these points are listed among the different kinds of knowledge which Ibn 'Arabi "saw" during the culminating "revelation" described at the end of this chapter; see the translation of those particular points at the end of section IV-I below. (See also the related discussions of these issues and further references in our translated selections from chapters 73, 302, 351 and 369 in the eschatological section of this anthology.)

<sup>90</sup>See the corresponding passage of the *hadith al-isra'* in section II (at notes 39-40) above; according to the original hadith (only partially translated here), Muhammad first sees all the descendants of Adam divided among the blessed (literally, "the happy": *su'ada'*) at his right hand and the "wretched" or "suffering ones" (*ashqiya'*) on his left.

<sup>91</sup>This phrase is quoted from a longer "divine saying", presupposed throughout this section, which Ibn 'Arabi included in his personal collection of *hadith qudsi*, the *Mishkat al-Anwar* (no. 24, where it is attributed to Tirmidhi; *Niche*, pp. 50-53). There God--having created Adam and sent him to greet the angels--shows Adam His two closed Hands, saying: "Choose whichever one of them you want," and

..Therefore I and my children are (all) in the Right Hand of the Truly Real (al-Haqq), while everything in the world other than us is in the other divine Hand."

I said: "Then we shall not be made to suffer (in Hell)?"

And (Adam) replied: "If (God's) Anger were to continue (forever), then the suffering (of the damned) would continue. But it is felicity that continues forever, although the dwellings are different, because God places in each abode (of Paradise and Gehenna) that which comprises the enjoyment of the people of that abode, which is why both abodes must necessarily be 'filled up' (see Kor. 11:119; etc.).<sup>92</sup> For the (divine) Anger has already come to an end with the 'Greater Reviewing':<sup>93</sup> (God) ordered that (His) limits be established;<sup>94</sup> so they were established, and

Adam replies: "I choose the Right Hand of My Lord, although both Hands of my Lord are right and blessed." "Then He opened (His Hand), and in It were Adam and his descendants...."

<sup>92</sup>Ibn 'Arabi alludes here to his controversial conception, developed at length in the Fusus (e.g., at the end of ch. 7 on Ismail) and in the eschatological sections of the Futuhāt, that it is precisely the exclusive choice of certain limited "enjoyments" (whether bodily or imaginal), varying according to each person's predispositions and inner tendencies, that--by veiling him from the full awareness of God--ultimately constitutes each particular "dwelling" (maskan) among the many levels of Hell. Thus it is only with the lifting of that veil of (spiritual) ignorance that the person becomes fully aware that what he considered "happiness" at the same time is both his suffering and his (potentially purifying) punishment. But Ibn 'Arabi also suggests (Fusus I, 94; Bezels, p. 110) that even for the "people of Gehenna who remain there eternally" (i.e., who are not ultimately redeemed through the intercession of their prophets), their "torment" (adhab) will ultimately be made "sweet" ('idhab). For the development of similar conceptions in the Futuhāt, see, e.g., I, 656; III, 673; IV, 248, 408; and further references in the eschatological section of this anthology.

<sup>93</sup>al-'ard al-akbar: the "Reviewing" or "Presentation" ('ard) of souls and their actions mentioned in the Koran (11:18; 18:48; etc.) and elaborated in certain hadith was popularly understood as one of the "events" occurring when all souls are gathered together on the "Day" of Resurrection; see Ibn 'Arabi's brief summary of this particular stage of the Resurrection--formulated in relatively exoteric, popular terms--in chapter 64 of the Futuhāt (I, 307-317), on the "stages of the Resurrection" (= O.Y. ed. IV, p. 466).

Here--following Ibn 'Arabi's usual distinction between the "greater" (universal) and "lesser" (individual) Resurrection [see, e.g., ch. 369 (III, 388-390) and Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 945-946]--the "Greater Reviewing" evidently refers to the total, comprehensive process of all human actions and spiritual destinies (or at least those within one cosmic cycle) as viewed from the all-encompassing, metahistorical divine standpoint. That is why it can be perceived here, by the universal "Adam" who stands beyond time, as "already finished." The "lesser Reviewing" would then apparently be the same reality as perceived from the standpoint of an individual soul. The same distinction between the "lesser" (i.e., microcosmic) and "greater" (macrocosmic) "Hour," "Visit," "Gathering," etc. is developed in many of the eschatological readings (from chapters 73, 302, 351, etc.) in this anthology; see especially our general Introduction to those selections.

<sup>94</sup>or "that (His) sanctions be applied" (iqamat al-hudud): the Koranic conception of the divine hudud has two related senses--both equally important here--that cannot be adequately conveyed by a single English expression: they are both the divine "laws" or "limits" and the "sanctions" or "penalties"

when they were established (His) Anger disappeared. (This is) because the sending down of the (divine) Message (tanzil al-risala) actually is precisely the establishment (and application) of (God's) limits for those with whom He is angry (Kor. 1:7), and nothing remains (after that) but (His) Good Will and Mercy which encompasses every thing (Kor. 7:156). So when these 'limits' (and the punishments flowing from them) have come to an end, then the (divine) authority<sup>95</sup> comes back to the universal Mercy with regard to everything."<sup>96</sup>

Thus my father Adam granted me the benefit of this knowledge when I was unaware of it, and that was divine good tidings for me in the life of this world, in anticipation (of its full realization in the hereafter). Therefore the Resurrection comes to an end with time,<sup>97</sup> as God said: "**[The angels and the Spirit ascend to Him in a Day whose extent is] of fifty thousand years**"<sup>98</sup> (Kor. 70:4), and this is the period of the establishment (and application) of the (divine) limits.

Ibn 'Arabi goes on to explain that "after this period"--however it is to be understood--only the divine Names "the Merciful" (which encompasses all the "Most Beautiful Names") and "the

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(primarily corporeal in this world, but in another form in the next) prescribed for their infringement. Although the two senses are apparently separated--for us--by the passage of time and other contingencies, they are in reality inseparable and indeed "simultaneous" from the comprehensive, divine perspective represented by Adam here.

<sup>95</sup>hukm: with regard to the divine Names, this term usually refers to their power or authority to become manifest in the various realms of being, and thus, by extension, to all their specific "influences" or "manifestations." (It is therefore translated as "influence" in the rest of this section.)

<sup>96</sup>We have left this entire paragraph in quotes--even though much of it is clearly Ibn 'Arabi's own paraphrase, using his typical technical vocabulary--because the Arabic text does not clearly indicate where the direct quotation of Adam's words might end.

<sup>97</sup>Or simply "in time" (bi-l-zaman): Zaman--in its ordinary, popular usage (see the following note for references to Ibn 'Arabi's more complex personal understanding)--usually refers specifically to the "physical time" marked out by the motions of the cosmos and the heavenly spheres. Judging from the context here--which apparently refers to the "Greater Resurrection" (al-qiyamat al-kubra) encompassing all the souls of the universe--he may be alluding to a sort of cyclical reversion of the whole universe to its Source, thereby marking a cosmic "end of time."

However, if the reference here is understood as applying to the "Lesser Resurrection" of each individual soul (see references at n. 93), then the final phrase could be translated as "in time," with the period of fifty thousand years being that allotted for the perfection and purification (including punishment) of each particular soul. See the further discussion of these problems in our Introduction and notes to the eschatological selections in this anthology.

<sup>98</sup>For some representative aspects of Ibn 'Arabi's complex understanding of "time" (zaman), see ch. 12 on the cycles of esoteric and exoteric time, I, 143-147 (O.Y. ed., II, 342-345); ch. 59 on the time of the cosmos, I, 290-292 (O.Y. ed., IV, 330-340); ch. 390 on the inner meaning of time, III, 546-550; and the further references in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 1253-1254 (entry for "Day," yawm).

Compassionate" will have authority and influence (hukm) in the world, although the intrinsic, logically necessary "opposition" of the other Names necessarily will remain:

...Hence the creatures are entirely submerged in (God's) Mercy, and the authority of the (other divine) Names (only) continues in their intrinsic opposition, but not in us. So you should know that, for it is a rare and subtle knowledge that (most people) do not realize. Instead, ordinary people are blind to it: there is no one among them who, if you were to ask him "Are you content to have applied to yourself (the influence) of those Names that give you pain?," would not reply "No!" and have the influence of that painful Name applied to someone else in his stead.<sup>99</sup> But such a person is among the most ignorant of people concerning the creatures--and he is even more ignorant of the Truly Real!

So this (experience of) immediate witnessing informed (us) concerning the continuation of the authority (hukm) of the Names (i.e., other than those of Mercy) with regard to those Names (in themselves), but not in us. For those Names are relations whose realities are intrinsically opposed, so that they (can) never become united (in a way that would erase their inherent relational distinctions).<sup>100</sup> But God extends His Mercy to (all) His servants wherever they are, since Being in its entirety is Mercy.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>The "ignorance" involved in this almost universal attitude--an "ignorance" which, Ibn 'Arabi repeatedly stresses, is profoundly rooted in us and can only be overcome by an inner transformation involving both divine Grace and the spiritual efforts of the individual--is grounded in the implicit assumption that God (or the divine "Mercy," Being, etc.) is manifest only in certain specific phenomena or forms of experience.

<sup>100</sup>For a brief but clear explanation of Ibn 'Arabi's central metaphysical conception of the divine Names as "relations" (nisab) whose reality only becomes manifest through the being of the created "individual entities" (a'yan), see ch. 222 (II, 516-518). See also the many further references in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 591-618 (on the divine "Names") and 506-513 (on the related concepts of each Name as "lord," rabb and marbub).

<sup>101</sup>This theme of the universality of the divine "Mercy" as the source and ground of all Being--and therefore on a very different level from the other divine Names--is developed in more detail (along with most of the other topics of this section) in chapter 21 of the Fusus (concerning Zachariah), and throughout the Futuhāt: see the extensive references in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 521-528.

[IV-C. Jesus and Yahya (John the Baptist) in the Second Heaven]<sup>102</sup>

Ibn 'Arabi next encounters Jesus and his cousin Yahya (= John the Baptist) in the third heaven--the two figures being linked here by their association in the Koran with "Life," both "animal" and spiritual. The Shaykh first asks Jesus about his life-giving powers, and is told that they ultimately come from Gabriel (as the Universal Spirit, al-ruh al-kull):

"No one who revives the dead revives them except to the extent of what he has inherited from me;<sup>103</sup> so such a person does not occupy my station in regard to that (life-giving power), just as I do not have the station of the one (i.e., Gabriel) who granted me (the power of) reviving the dead."

Ibn 'Arabi then turns to Yahya/John, who clarifies a long series of questions involving the references to him (and his relations with Jesus) in the Koran and hadith.<sup>104</sup> Finally, after a brief

<sup>102</sup>III, 346.20-347.20 (summarized here). See also the references to discussions of Jesus in the Futuhat (including his key role in Ibn 'Arabi's own entry into the spiritual path) at n. 42 above.

In the hadith concerning the Mi'raj (section II above), Muhammad encounters Yahya only in the fifth heaven, along with Aaron; that is where he also reappears later in this chapter (at the beginning of section IV-F). (He explains his special ability to travel through the intervening spheres in an untranslated passage at the end of this section.) Jesus and John are likewise mentioned together in this second heaven in chapter 167 of the Futuhat. However, there is no further discussion of John in that section (= Alchimie, pp. 63-72), which focuses instead on the miracles of Jesus and the life-giving powers of the divine Spirit more generally.

The corresponding section of the K. al-Isra' (pp. 15-18) does not mention Yahya/John at all, but focuses instead on Jesus' role as the "Seal of (universal) Sainthood" and his descent with the Mahdi at the end of time (see explanations in Chodkiewicz, Sceau, chapter VII and index s.v.), as those are explained to the "voyager" by Mercury (al-Katib). That section also evokes (at p. 18) Ibn 'Arabi's own exceptional preparedness for the "Station of Perfection" (maqam al-kamal).

<sup>103</sup>An allusion to Ibn 'Arabi's typical conception of the knowledge and powers of the saints as being "inherited" from the spiritual reality of one or more of the prophets (who are all encompassed by the "Muhammadan Reality"): see the extensive references in Chodkiewicz, Sceau, chapters IV and V, and Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 1191-1202. The association between Jesus (and the second heaven) and the power of Life--in the sense both of spiritual knowledge and of physical or "animal" (hayawani) animation--is equally fundamental in the corresponding passages of chapter 167 and, in extremely allusive form, in the K. al-Isra' and the R. al-Anwar. A more complete discussion of these questions, bringing out more clearly the primary importance, for Ibn 'Arabi, of the revivifying spiritual knowledge brought by the prophets, is to be found in the long chapter on Jesus (no. 15) in the Fusus (I, pp. 138-150; Bezels, pp. 174-186) together with chapter 20, on Yahya/John the Baptist.

<sup>104</sup>The first of these is a famous hadith qudsi (found in Bukhari, Muslim, Ibn Maja, Darimi, and Ahmad b. Hanbal; see the analysis and translation in Graham, Word, pp. 202-203) concerning the "sacrifice of death," in the form of a spotted ram, on the Day of Resurrection. The Koranic verses explained here include 19:7, referring to the inner significance of Yahya's name (= "he lives," in Arabic), **"..We did not give the name to anyone before him"**; 19:12-15, on the special divine blessings granted him; and 3:39, concerning his spiritual purity or "chastity" (hasur: the subject of an excursus on the unique condition of Mary) and the special condition of "righteousness" (salah) he shares with Jesus and other prophets.

excursus on the nature of spiritual procreation and marriage in Paradise,<sup>105</sup> Yahya explains why it is that he moves back and forth between the heaven of Jesus and the sphere of Aaron (where Muhammad met him, and where Ibn 'Arabi will encounter him later [section IV-F]) and sometimes dwells with Joseph and Idris as well.

Most of the themes (such as the interrelations of life, spiritual knowledge, and the divine inspiration of the prophets) mentioned only allusively in this section are treated in greater detail in the chapters of the Fusus on Jesus<sup>106</sup> and Yahya.

[IV-D. Joseph and the Third Heaven]<sup>107</sup>

This encounter takes the form of a monologue in which Joseph explains to Ibn 'Arabi the true intentions of one of the Prophet's references to him, as well as the meaning of certain verses in the Sura of Joseph (ch. 12) in the Koran. These discussions are the occasion for the following spiritual advice:

This is a lesson for you that your soul does not follow the same course in something where it has no direct experience (dhawq) as the person who undergoes that experience.<sup>108</sup> So do not say "If I were in the place of that person when such-and-such was said to him and he said such-and-such, I would not have said that." No, by God, if what happened to him happened to you, you would say what he said, because the stronger state (of direct experience) controls the weaker one (i.e., of whatever you might imagine).<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup>A subject to which Ibn 'Arabi alludes on a number of other occasions (e.g., in ch. 390, III, 548, where he remarks that "God showed us a likeness of this" in the cases of Mary and Jesus, or Adam and Eve).

<sup>106</sup>Chapter 15 (I, pp. 138-150; Bezels, pp. 174-186): this chapter is almost exactly the same length as the concluding one on Muhammad, and the two are considerably longer than any other chapters of the Fusus. See also the related chapters of the Futuhat cited at n. 42 above.

<sup>107</sup>III, 347.20-348.11 (only lines 347.29-31 are fully translated here).

<sup>108</sup>This insistence on the indispensable role of personal "direct experience" (dhawq) in a fully adequate appreciation of spiritual matters is also one of leitmotifs of Ibn 'Arabi's encounter with Moses (IV-G below).

<sup>109</sup>This particular section lacks the references to the metaphysical principles of beauty, harmony and artistic inspiration (traditionally associated with both Joseph and Venus, the planet of this sphere) found in chapter 167 of the Futuhat (= Alchimie, pp. 72-76), and it does not deal at all with the profound questions of the nature of "Imagination" (both cosmic and human) and the Joseph's special powers of spiritual interpretation (ta'wil) that are the focus of the famous chapter 9 of the Fusus. The corresponding section of the K. al-Isra' (pp. 18-21) also includes a brief dialogue with the allegorical figure of Venus (al-zahra').



[IV-E. Idris and the Fourth Heaven]<sup>110</sup>

Upon his arrival in the fourth and central, pivotal heaven, that of the Sun (and the symbolic "Heart" of the cosmos), Ibn 'Arabi is immediately greeted by Idris, who calls him "the Muhammadan inheritor" (al-warith al-Muhammadi)--an allusion to the Shaykh's conception of his own unique role as the "Seal of Muhammadan Sainthood."<sup>111</sup> Ibn 'Arabi then asks him a series of brief questions which relate to the traditional accounts concerning Idris (in one or another of his manifestations) or to his special spiritual function as the perennial "Pole" (qutb) and summit of the spiritual hierarchy:<sup>112</sup>

...I said to him: "It has reached me concerning you that you are a proponent of miracles."<sup>113</sup>

Then he said: "Were it not for miracles, I would not have been 'raised up to a lofty place' (Kor. 19:57)."<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>110</sup>III, 348.11-349.2; the sections translated below correspond to 348.14-21 and 24-35, with minor omissions.

In Islamic tradition, especially in the popular "tales of the prophets" (qisas al-anbiya'), the figure of the prophet Idris, who is mentioned only briefly in the Koran (19:57-58 and 21:85-86), is closely associated (and often simply identified) with a number of prophetic or quasi-prophetic figures who are generally distinguished by the traits of supernatural longevity (or at least frequent historical "reappearances" in different forms). These different "facets" of Idris include: Enoch and Elias (the Koranic Ilyas), each of whom is the subject of a chapter in the Fusus (see notes 114-115 below); the threefold persona of "Hermes," father of many esoteric arts and sciences according to Hellenistic traditions that were widely integrated in Islamic culture; and even the mysterious initiatic figure of al-Khadir. (For the historical background and sources concerning each of these personages, see the respective articles in EI<sup>2</sup>, vol. III and IV.)

<sup>111</sup>In the corresponding encounter with Idris in the Kitab al-Isra' (Rasa'il, p. 21), Ibn 'Arabi is likewise greeted as "Master of the Saints" (sayyid al-awliya').

<sup>112</sup>For Ibn 'Arabi's understanding of Idris' position as the heavenly "Pole" (qutb) and summit of the perennial spiritual hierarchy--whose two "Imams" at that eternal level are Jesus and Ilyas--see the references to the Futuh and other works and the explanations (including the relation of these figures to their successive terrestrial "deputies") in Chodkiewicz, Sceau, chapter VI, and in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 909-915 and 101-114. The R. al-Anwar, at this point in the mystical ascension (see Chodkiewicz, Sceau, pp. 201-213; Journey, p. 43 at bottom), adds that all the preceding spheres belonged to the realm of the "Imam of the Left Hand," while "this is the place of the Heart," where "you will discover the degrees of the Pole."

<sup>113</sup>al-kharq: i.e., more strictly speaking, of any phenomena that appear to "break" the "accustomed order" ('ada) of events in the world. The term is more general than the probative miracles (mu'jizat) performed for the prophetic messengers, and likewise distinct from the "wonders" or "blessings" (karamat) that are among the charismatic powers attributable to the spiritual force or himma of certain saints. (See the additional references to these distinctions in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 961-971.)

<sup>114</sup>Alluding to the Koranic description of Idris' miraculous preservation from death (and its traditional elaborations, mentioned in the preceding notes): "**And mention Idris in the Book: he was a man of truth [siddiq], a prophet [nabi], and We raised him up to a lofty place**" (Kor. 19:56-57). See

So I said to him: "Where is your (spiritual) rank in relation to your place (at the center of the universe)?"

And he said: "The outer is a sign of the inner."<sup>115</sup>

I said: "I have heard it said that you only asked tawhid<sup>116</sup> of your people, and nothing else (i.e., no separate revealed Law)."

He said: "And they did not (even) do (that). Now I was a prophet (nabi: see Kor. 19:56) calling them to the word (i.e., the outward profession) of tawhid, not to tawhid (itself)--for no one has ever denied tawhid!"<sup>117</sup>

also Ibn 'Arabi's considerably more detailed discussions of these verses in chapters 4 and 22 of the Fusus (I, 75-80 and 181-187; Bezels, pp. 82-89 and 230-234).

<sup>115</sup>The meaning of this exchange, and of the outward, cosmic symbolism of Idris' supreme spiritual rank and function, is brought out in much greater detail in the long chapter 4 of the Fusus al-Hikam concerning "Enoch" (who is there explicitly identified with Idris). Chapter 22 of the Fusus likewise concerns "Elias who is Idris..." (opening sentence). There Ibn 'Arabi explains that Idris "who was a prophet before Noah," was first **raised to a lofty place** (Kor. 19:57), but was then sent down again to earth--in the form of the prophet Elias--to experience fully the divine "intimacy" with even the lowest (animal, mineral and vegetal) degrees of creation. The contrast between these two chapters of the Fusus suggests that "Enoch" is associated in particular with the divine transcendence (tanzih) and "Elias" with the equally essential aspect of divine immanence (tashbih)--symbolizing the two indispensable aspects of Idris' comprehensive perfection in his spiritual function as Pole and his reality as "Heart" of the Perfect Man.

<sup>116</sup>This term is ordinarily understood to refer to the outward "profession of divine Unity" ("there is no god but God...") contained in the shahada (= the "word of tawhid" in the following sentence), but Idris understands it here in the far more profound sense of the reality of divine Unity--at once both transcendent and immanent--which is at the heart of Ibn 'Arabi's conception of the "Unity of Being" (see additional references in the following note).

In the larger body of Islamic tradition the prophet Idris (like the figure of "Hermes" with whom he was often identified: see note 109 above) was known not for bringing a particular revealed divine Law (shari'a), but rather for his institution of the whole range of rational or "philosophic" arts and sciences (by no means simply the "hermetic" ones). Thus Ibn 'Arabi goes on to address him (in a sentence not translated here) as "founder of the (arts and sciences) of wisdom" (wadi' al-hikam).

<sup>117</sup>i.e., the reality of tawhid which--since it constitutes the very nature of Being and the primordial core of man's nature--is necessarily expressed in all the planes of manifestation and the corresponding degrees of spiritual realization. Ibn 'Arabi often refers (e.g., at I, 405) to the Koranic statement "**Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but him...**" (Kor. 17:23), taken as an expression of this universal metaphysical reality (as well as a command). See likewise his discussion of the underlying meaning of the traditional formula of tawhid in the profession of faith (= the "word" or "saying," kalima, of tawhid in this sentence), in chapter 67 of the Futuhat (I, 325-329), and especially his subtle treatment of the 36 different Koranic expressions of tawhid--in both their ontological and "subjective" spiritual dimensions--in chapter 198, fasl 9 (II, 405-420; French tr. by C.-A. Gilis, Le Coran et la fonction d'Hermes, Paris, 1984). Further references can be found in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 1172-1180.

I said: "This is strange!"

...(Then) I said: "But the differences (of opinion) concerning the Truly Real and the things said concerning Him<sup>118</sup> have become quite numerous."

He said: "It (can) only be like that, since the matter is (perceived differently) according to the constitution (of each individual).<sup>119</sup>

I said: "But I thought<sup>120</sup> that all of you prophets, the whole group of you, did not differ concerning Him?"

So he replied: "That is because we did not say (what we taught concerning God) on the basis of reasoning (nazar); we only said it on the basis of a common direct relationship (with God).<sup>121</sup> So whoever knows the realities knows that (the fact that) all of the prophets agree in saying the same thing about God is equivalent to those who follow reasoning (all) saying the same thing.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>118</sup>or "It": "Truly Real" = al-Haqq, which could also be translated here simply as "the Truth" or "God"--since in this context the "ontological" and "theological" perspectives are virtually inseparable for Ibn 'Arabi. Similarly, "things said" (maqalat) could also be translated here as (theological) "schools" or (religious) "denominations."

<sup>119</sup>"Constitution" (mizaj: strictly speaking, the mixture of physical "temperaments" distinguishing each person) must be understood very broadly here to include all the factors--spiritual, social, psychic, etc. as well as physical--ultimately helping determine the distinctive outlook and understanding of each individual with regard to every aspect of reality (not just "theological" matters). Idris returns to elaborate this point in the latter half of this section.

<sup>120</sup>Or "I saw" (ra'aytu), if this is taken as an allusion to Ibn 'Arabi's visionary revelation of the unity of the prophets and their teachings within the "Reality of Muhammad" or the "Qur'an," which he describes in section IV-I below (and in the key passage from the K. al-Isra' translated in our article cited at n. 13 above.)

<sup>121</sup>"direct relationship" translates 'ill, a term that can refer either to a blood-relationship or to a pact or covenant (as in the Koran 9:8-10). In either case, the term here refers to the relation of immediate divine inspiration--in itself implying both "kinship" and covenant--that, for Ibn 'Arabi, distinguishes the spiritual state of the prophets and saints, as opposed to the fallible and often quite divergent results of man's ordinary "reasoning" or "inquiry" (nazar).

<sup>122</sup>I.e., such unanimous agreement--unlike the usual and expected state of disagreement among the "people of nazar" or individual reasoning (see preceding note)--points to the truth of their conclusion on that particular point. See the excellent summary discussion of the various kinds of inspired knowledge attained by the prophets and saints "beyond the stage of the intellect" (wara' tawr al-'aql) in ch. 73, question 118 (II, 114.14-28). There Ibn 'Arabi distinguishes between those realities that are rationally "impossible" (see following paragraph here)--but whose truth is nonetheless revealed by a "visionary

I said: "And is the matter (i.e., the reality of things) in itself really as it was said to you (by God)?" For the signs (followed by) the intellects (of those who rely exclusively on their reasoning) indicate the impossibility of (certain) things you (prophets) brought concerning that."

Then he said: "The matter is as we (prophets) were told--and (at the same time) it is as whatever is said by whoever says (his own inner belief) concerning Him, since 'God is in accordance with the saying of everyone who speaks (of Him).'<sup>123</sup> So that is why we only called the common people to the word (i.e., the verbal profession) of tawhid, not to (the reality of) tawhid."

...I said: "Once, in a visionary experience (waqi'a) I had, I saw an individual circumambulating (the Kaaba), who told me that he was among my ancestors and gave me his name.<sup>124</sup> Then I asked him about the time of his death, and he told me it was 40,000 years (earlier). So I proceeded to ask him about Adam, because of what had been established in our chronology concerning his period (namely, that it was much more recent). Then he said to me: 'Which Adam are you asking about? About the most recent Adam?'"

(Idris) said: "He told the truth. I am a prophet of God (cf. Kor. 19:56), and I do not know any period at the close of which the universe as a whole stops. However, (I do know) that He never ceases creating (the universe) in its entirety; that (the whole of reality) never ceases to be

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incident" (waqi'a)--and the far more extensive domain of knowledge "which cannot be (verbally) expressed" or spoken about, which is the realm of the "sciences of direct experience" ('ulum al-adhwaq).

<sup>123</sup>This last phrase is a paraphrase of a well-known hadith qudsi (cited a number of times, with minor variations, by Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Ibn Maja, Ahmad b. Hanbal, etc.; see Graham, Word, pp. 127-130), of which Ibn 'Arabi quotes two versions in his Mishkat al-Anwar (no. 13 and 27; Niche, pp. 36-37, 56-57): "I am in accordance with what My servant supposes concerning Me, and I am present with him when He remembers (root dh-k-r) Me...." For the broader metaphysical underpinnings of this saying in Ibn 'Arabi's thought, see the references scattered throughout the Fusus al-Hikam, including his discussion of this hadith in the closing lines of that work (I, 226; Bezels, pp. 283-284) and his development of the key notion of the "god created in beliefs," in the chapters on Shu'ayb (I, 119-124; Bezels, pp. 148-153), on Elias/Idris (I, 182-186; Bezels, pp. 230-234), on Zachariah (I, 178; Bezels, pp. 224-225), and Aaron (I, 194-196; Bezels, pp. 246-248).

<sup>124</sup>This encounter is described in greater detail in chapter 390 of the Futuhat (devoted to the inner meaning of "time," al-zaman), in a passage (III, 549.8-14) which clearly brings out the "visionary," dreamlike character of this particular experience: "Now God caused me to see, in the way that the sleeper sees (in his dreams)--while I was going around the Kaaba...." There this mysterious "ancestor" also reminds Ibn 'Arabi of a hadith of the Prophet stating that "God created 100,000 Adams."

'nearer' and 'further';<sup>125</sup> and that the 'appointed times'<sup>126</sup> apply to the (particular) created things--through the completion of (their) periods (of existence)--and not to the (process of) creation (as a whole), since creation is continually renewed 'with the breaths' (at every instant).<sup>127</sup> Thus we know (only) what He has caused us to know--**And they do not comprehend anything of His Knowledge except for what He wishes** (Kor. 2:255)."

So I said to him: "Then what remains until the appearance of the 'Hour'?"<sup>128</sup>

And he replied: "**Their reckoning has drawn near to people, but they are in (a state of) heedlessness, turning away**" (Kor. 21:1)<sup>129</sup>.

I said: "Then inform me about one of the conditions of Its 'drawing near'."

And he replied: "The existence of Adam is among the conditions for the Hour."

I said: "Then was there another abode before this world (al-dunya), other than it?"

<sup>125</sup>i.e., dunya ("this world") and akhira (the "next world"): their etymology alludes both to the full ontological range of levels of Self-manifestation and to the reality--as Idris mentions explicitly later in this discussion--that their "closeness" (or the contrary) is relative to the perspective of each observer, since all are equally present with God.

<sup>126</sup>ajal: this term is used many times in the Koran--often in close association with "the Hour" (see note 128 below)--to refer to the ultimate fate of men in general (e.g., in verses 6:2, 60; etc.), of "every community" (umma, a term which for Ibn 'Arabi encompasses every type of created being: at Kor. 7:34; 10:49; etc.), or the motion of the sun and the moon (at Kor. 31:29; etc.), etc.

<sup>127</sup>ma'a al-anfas: this is one of Ibn 'Arabi's most common expressions for the ever-renewed creation of the whole universe at every instant (khalq jadid/tajaddud al-khalq), a metaphysical reality which is only directly visible to the true Knowers and accomplished saints, as he explains in a famous section of the chapter on Shu'ayb in the Fusus al-Hikam (I, 124-126; Bezels, pp. 153-155). For some representative discussions of this recurrent theme in the Futuhat, see II, 46, 208, 372, 384, 432, 471, 500, 554, 639, 653; III, 127; and further references in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 429-433.

<sup>128</sup>There are some 48 Koranic references to the "Hour" (al-sa'a) and the many questions surrounding it (e.g., at 33:63; 79:42), as well as a vast body of hadith, especially concerning Its "conditions" or "signs" (shurut, a term mentioned in Ibn 'Arabi's following question here). Ibn 'Arabi frequently discusses these matters along lines already followed by many earlier Sufis, so the apparent naivete of his questioning here is almost certainly a literary device. See especially our translation of his discussion in response to Tirmidhi's question (72) concerning the "Hour" in chapter 73 (II, 82), in the eschatological part of this anthology.

<sup>129</sup>"People" here translates al-nass, a Koranic term which Ibn 'Arabi generally understands (e.g., at n. 77 in section III above) as referring more particularly to the condition of "most people" or "ordinary people" (i.e., al-'amma) as opposed to the enlightened state of the saints ("people of God," "true men," "true servants," etc.). On this specific point, see the translation of his remarks concerning the saints'

He replied: "The abode of Being is one: the abode does not become 'nearer' (dunya) except through you,<sup>130</sup> and the 'other world' (al-akhira) is not distinguished from it except through you! But with regard to bodies (i.e., as opposed to the man's inherent spiritual finality and progressive movement of 'return' to his Source), the matter<sup>131</sup> is only engendered states (akwan), transformations and coming and going (of endless material forms); it has not ceased, and it never will."

I said: "What is there?"<sup>132</sup>

He replied: "What we know, and what we do not know."

I said: "Then where is error in relation to what is right?"<sup>133</sup>

He said: "Error is a relative matter, while what is right is the (unchanging) principle. So whoever truly knows God and the world knows that what is right is the ever-present Principle, which never ceases (to be), and he knows that error (occurs) through the opposition of the two points of view.<sup>134</sup> But since the opposition (of the two perspectives) is inevitable, then error is

visionary awareness of the contemporary presence of the "Hour," in chapter 73 (I, 81-82) in the eschatological part of this anthology.

<sup>130</sup>(Cf. the related treatment of dunya and akhira at n. 125 above.) "You" throughout this sentence is given in the plural, since Idris is referring to all of mankind (see "Adam" in Idris' previous explanation), and ultimately to the "Perfect Man": see the famous opening chapter on Adam (and the Perfect Man) in the Fusus al-Hikam, as well as the extensive references to "Adam" (in this broader metaphysical sense) in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 53-60.

Idris' essential message in this phrase, that man "carries this world (al-dunya) with him into the next," is among the many kinds of knowledge Ibn 'Arabi says he "saw" in his culminating revelation; that reference is translated at the end of section IV-I below.

<sup>131</sup>or possibly the (divine) "Command" (al-amr)--in which case Ibn 'Arabi (through Idris) would be referring to the universal "existentiating Command" manifested in the ever-renewed creation of all beings: see the discussion of the technical meanings of this Koranic term in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 93-101.

<sup>132</sup>ma thamma: i.e., in the manifest world or the world of bodies subject to these perpetual transformations? (The exact reference is unclear.)

<sup>133</sup>The two Koranic expressions translated here as "what is right" (sawab) and "error" (khat'a) originally refer respectively to hitting one's target or "getting it right" and to "missing" it: thus the usage of both terms here implies a focus on the subject, the person who is judging rightly or wrongly--not simply on an abstract logical question of the relations of truth and falsehood. In addition, khat'a (in its Koranic context) has strong overtones of moral error--i.e., "sin" or "trespass" (against the divine limits: see n. 94)--so that the "ethical" (or religious) and "ontological" dimensions of Ibn 'Arabi's argument here are, as so often, intentionally intermingled.

<sup>134</sup>i.e., of God (or the Truth and True Reality, al-Haqq) and of each individual creature. As Idris goes on to remind us, in reality there can only be what really is (al-wujud), the True Reality (al-Haqq): in

also inevitable. So whoever maintains (the real existence of) error (also) maintains (the prior existence and reality of) what is right; and whoever maintains the (ultimate) non-existence of error speaks what is right (Kor. 78:38)<sup>135</sup> and posits error (as deriving) from what is right."  
[...<sup>136</sup>]

[IV-F. Aaron and the Fifth Heaven]<sup>137</sup>

Next I alighted to stay with Aaron, and (there) I found Yahya, who had already reached him before me. So I said to (Yahya): "I didn't see you on my path: is there some other path there?"

And he replied: "Each person has a path, that no one else but he travels."

I said: "Then where are they, these (different) paths?"

Then he answered: "They come to be through the traveling itself."

After Aaron then greets Ibn 'Arabi as "the perfectly accomplished heir (of the Prophet),"<sup>138</sup> he goes on to explain how he became both a prophet (nabi) and also a lawgiving

relation to that ontological Principle (asl), "error" is necessarily "relative" and "accidental" (idafi)--i.e., a necessarily subjective and partial perspective which is therefore close to "non-existence" (adam).

<sup>135</sup>The larger context of this verse, however, suggests the extreme rarity of this awareness, as well as the "divine perspective" it assumes: "**On the Day when the Spirit and the angels stand in rows, they do not speak, except for whoever the Merciful permits, and he speaks what is right--that is the True Day (al-yawm al-haqq)....**"

<sup>136</sup>In the final lines of this section, Idris reiterates some of the more familiar principles of Ibn 'Arabi's thought: that the world is created from the divine attribute of "Bounty" (jud); that the world and man all "return" to that divine Mercy which "encompasses all things" and gives them being; and that the knower (i.e., the Perfect Man) is even "more prodigious" (a'zam) than whatever in the world may be known--a point that was already stressed in section III above (at n. 59).

<sup>137</sup>III, 349.2-15 (the few minor omissions in this translation are indicated in the accompanying notes).

It is noteworthy that the topics discussed here are not mentioned at all in Ibn 'Arabi's parallel versions of the mystical Ascension. The brief corresponding sections of the Mi'raj narratives in both the K. al-Isra' (pp. 23-24) and the R. al-Anwar (see Chodkiewicz, Sceau, p. 205; Journey, p. 44) allude mainly to the "martial" qualities of anger, discord, etc. traditionally associated with Mars, the planet and "spiritual entity" (ruhaniya) of this sphere.

The account of this stage in chapter 167 of the Futuhāt (= Alchimie, pp. 78-79) is mainly devoted to Ibn 'Arabi's controversial interpretation of the "faith of Pharaoh" and the universality of the divine Mercy, topics which are discussed in even more detail in the chapters on Aaron and Moses in the Fusus al-Hikam (I, 191-213; Bezels, pp. 241-266).

<sup>138</sup>al-warith al-mukammal--i.e., the saint who has fully combined the prophetic "inheritances" of all the Messengers, which are integrally contained in the "Muhammadan Reality"--still another allusion to

Messenger (rasul) participating in the revelation (wahy) appropriate to that rank, at the request of his brother Moses.

...I said: "O Aaron, some people among the true Knowers have claimed that the existence (of the external world) disappeared with regard to them, so that they see nothing but God, and so that nothing of the world remains with them that might distract them, in comparison with God. Nor is there any doubt that they (really) are in that (spiritual) rank,<sup>139</sup> as opposed to those like you. Now God has informed us that you said to your brother (Moses) when he was angry (with you for having allowed the Israelites to worship the golden calf): '...so do not cause (our) enemies to gloat over me!' (Kor. 7:151).<sup>140</sup> Thus you posited their having a certain power (over you in the external world), and this condition is different from the condition of those true Knowers (who experience the 'disappearance' of the external world)."

Then he replied: "They spoke sincerely (about their experience). However, they did not have any more than what was given them by their immediate experience (dhawq). But look and see--did what disappeared from them (in that state actually) disappear from the world?"

"No," I answered.

He said: "Then they were lacking in the knowledge of the way things are, to the extent of what they missed, since the world was non-existent for them. So they were lacking the True Reality (al-Haqq) to the extent of that (aspect) of the world which was veiled from them. Because the whole world is precisely the Self-manifestation (tajalli) of the Truly Real, for

Ibn 'Arabi's unique status as the "Seal of Muhammadan Sainthood." (See the similar greeting by Idris at the beginning of section IV-E, n. 111 above). For the central notion of the saints as "heirs" of the different prophets (and all ultimately as heirs of the "Muhammadan Reality"), see the references given in n. 49 above.

<sup>139</sup>I.e., Ibn 'Arabi's question (and implicit criticism) concerns the relative evaluation of that spiritual state, not the reality and importance of the experience itself. See his remarks in the following section (IV-G) on the necessity of fana' at a certain point on the path, in regard to Moses' initiatic "death" (sa'aga) on Mt. Sinai, and his use of a similar Arabic term (afna) in describing a decisive phase in his own spiritual development in the key passage from the K. al-Isra' (pp. 13-14) translated in our article cited at n. 13 above. More generally, the contrast between the lower, "immature" state of those "Knowers" (arifun) who deny the reality of this world, and the station of the warithun (the true "heirs" of the prophets) who are always aware of God's theophanic Presence throughout this world, is a recurrent subject in the K. al-Isra'.

<sup>140</sup>See the longer discussion of the inner meaning of this incident, from a very different standpoint (i.e., Moses' and Aaron's differing awareness of the divine Mercy) at the beginning of the chapter on Aaron (no. 24) in the Fusus (I, 191 ff.; Bezels, pp. 243 ff.).



whoever really knows the Truly Real. **So where are you going? It is only a reminder to the worlds** (Kor. 81:26-27) of the way things are!"

Perfection is nothing but its (or 'His')<sup>141</sup> existence,

So whoever misses it is not the perfect one....<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup>kawnuhu: the term kawn usually refers to the engendered, manifest state of being (translated as "existence" here), so the most obvious reference, given the preceding context, is to the external "world" or whole manifest "universe" (al-'alam). But as so frequently in Ibn 'Arabi, the pronouns in this verse could also be taken, without any ultimate contradiction, to refer either to God (al-haqq, the Truly Real) or even to the human "observer"--i.e., man in his ultimate reality as the "Perfect Man," which may well be what is indicated by "the perfect one" (al-kamil) at the end.

<sup>142</sup>The concluding, untranslated lines allude to the well-known dangers and illusions involved in taking the ecstatic experience of "extinction" (fana') of the self in contemplation of God as the ultimate goal and highest stage of the spiritual path, at least in this world. This caution, which is probably connected with the title of this chapter (see notes 27 and 39 above), is amplified and repeated in the following encounter with Moses (section IV-G), and it is also an important theme in the passage from the K. al-Isra' translated in our article cited at n. 13 above. Although the subject of Aaron's remark is a constantly repeated theme in Ibn 'Arabi's writing, it should be stressed that those dangers and the ultimate superiority of the saints' subsequent "enlightened abiding" (baqa') in the world, as exemplified above all in the life of Muhammad, were likewise stressed almost unanimously in earlier Sufi literature and practice.

The intensity and centrality of Ibn 'Arabi's insistence on the realization of the nature and importance of this "world" as an essential aspect of human perfection (kamal)--and indeed as the essential grounds of man's superiority to the angels and purely spiritual beings--can best be measured by comparing his writings to the familiar currents of "monistic" mysticism, such as the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi's Andalusian contemporary, Ibn Sab'in. See, among others, the careful comparison of these two perspectives--which have their parallels in many other mystical traditions--in the translation and study of the Epitre sur l'Unicite Absolue (R. al-Ahadiya) of Awhad al-Din Balyani (a 13th-century Persian Sufi in the school of Ibn Sab'in) by M. Chodkiewicz, Paris, 1982.

[IV-G. Moses and the Sixth Heaven]<sup>143</sup>

Ibn 'Arabi begins his discussion with Moses by thanking him for his having insisted that Muhammad--during the final, descending stage of his Mi'raj--return to ask God to reduce the number of daily prayers prescribed for his community.<sup>144</sup> Moses replies that "this is a benefit of knowledge (reached through) direct experience (dhawq),<sup>145</sup> for there is a (spiritual) condition that can only be perceived through immediate contact."

Ibn 'Arabi then mentions that it was Moses' "striving for the sake of others"--which first led him to the burning bush--that eventually brought him "all the Good."<sup>146</sup> Moses responds that

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<sup>143</sup>III, 349.16-350.5 (translated in full with exception of summarized passages at lines 16-20 and 23-25). The corresponding section in chapter 167 (Alchimie, pp. 89-97) also deals with "theophanic" nature of the world, but from a very different standpoint. In keeping with the more abstract, cosmological focus of that chapter, Ibn 'Arabi uses the Koranic account of the transformations of Moses' staff (Kor. 20:17-21) to illustrate some of the basic principles of his ontology, especially the relation between the unchanging noetic "realities" (haqa'iq) or "individual entities" (a'yan) and the constant transformations of the phenomenal world. In other words, it points to the objective "knowledge" underlying the focus on Moses' immediate experience of theophany in this chapter.

The traveler's encounter with Moses in the K. al-Isra' (Rasa'il, pp. 25-28), on the other hand, is devoted to entirely different subjects: Moses first stresses the differences between the 'arif (the "mystic" who publicly parades his spiritual discoveries, and the warith (the Prophetic "heir" or true "Muhammadan," al-muhammadi), who "conceals his secrets" and who "sees (God's) Essence in his essence, His Attributes in his (own) attributes, and His Names in his (own) acts"--i.e., whose inner Ascension corresponds to the particular type of "nocturnal" spiritual voyage (isra') Ibn 'Arabi described in section III above, that which is outwardly indistinguishable from the life of "ordinary people." In the K. al-Isra', Moses goes on to summarize for the "voyager" the remaining stages to be encountered in his journey, with particular emphasis on the importance of the "descent," the "return" to life in this world, for the completion and perfection of that journey.

<sup>144</sup>This story is included in the long hadith al-isra' (from Muslim: see n. 38 above) given by Ibn 'Arabi at the beginning of this chapter (III, 342.20-27, an untranslated part of section II); it also appears, with minor variations, in many of the other canonical hadith concerning the Mi'raj. According to this particular version, the prescription of "fifty prayers in each day and night" was "part of all that was divinely revealed" (by wahy) to the Prophet at the very summit of his Ascension, in his direct encounter with God. During Muhammad's descent back to earth, Moses--relying on his own immediate experience (dhawq) with his Community in this same matter--twice persuades the Prophet to return to God and plead for a lessening of this burden, so that the required number is reduced to ten and then five. On the second occasion the Lord says to Muhammad: "They are five and they are fifty: **with Me, the Word is not changed!**" (alluding to the Koran at 50:69).

<sup>145</sup>Moses goes on to conclude this section by again stressing the decisive role of dhawq, the inner "tasting" of spiritual states, in the realizations of the prophets and saints. See Joseph's similar insistence on the indispensable, irreducible character of direct personal experience (as opposed to what can be gained by mental reflection or purely imaginative participation), at n. 108 above. "Immediate contact" (mubashara: literally "hands-on" experience) at the end of this sentence has essentially the same meaning as dhawq, since both refer to insights realizable only through a unique "spiritual state" (hal).

<sup>146</sup>This interpretation of the Koranic verses (Kor. 28:29 ff.)--according to which Moses discovered the burning bush (and his theophany there) only "accidentally," while seeking fire to warm his family--is amplified in chapter 366 (III, 336.16-25), where Ibn 'Arabi takes this incident as a symbol of the rare virtue of disinterested service which characterizes "all the just leaders (Imams)." There he also

"Man's striving for the sake of others is only a striving for his self, in the truth of things"--i.e., when he discovers who he really is--and that the thankfulness which flows from this (on the part of all concerned) is one of the highest forms of "remembering" and praising God.

...After that I said to him: "Surely God has chosen you over the people with His Message and His Word."<sup>147</sup> But you requested the vision (of God),<sup>148</sup> while the Messenger of God said that 'not one of you will see His Lord until he dies?'"<sup>149</sup>

So he said: "And it was just like that: when I asked Him for the vision (of God), He answered me, so that 'I fell down stunned' (Kor. 7:143). Then I saw Him in my '(state of) being stunned'."<sup>150</sup>

I said: "While (you were) dead?"

He replied: "While (I was) dead."

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explains that this was exactly how Khadir first discovered the Source of eternal Life, while seeking water for his fellow soldiers.

<sup>147</sup>Paraphrasing the following Koranic verse: "**God said: 'O Moses, surely I have chosen you over the people with My Message and My Word...'**" (Kor. 7:144).

<sup>148</sup>Referring to the Koranic verse 7:143, parts of which are quoted or paraphrased throughout the rest of this section: "**And when Moses came to Our appointed time and His Lord spoke to him, he said: 'My Lord, make me see, that I may look at You.' He said: 'You will not see Me, but look at the mountain: if it stays firmly in its place, then you will see Me.' So when His Lord manifested Himself to the mountain, He made it crushed flat, and Moses fell down stunned. Then when he awakened he said: 'I have returned to you, and I am the first of the men of true faith.'**"

<sup>149</sup>A paraphrase of a well-known hadith recorded by both Muslim (K. al-fitan, no. 95) and Tirmidhi (fitan, no. 56); several of the canonical hadith collections contain specific sections concerning the "vision of God" (ru'yat Allah) in the next life. For Ibn 'Arabi's broader understanding of this question, both in the eschatological context and as prefigured in the divine vision of the prophets and saints--which follows from their initiatic "death" to this world and concomitant "resurrection" in the awareness of their eternal spiritual self--see, among others, the selections from chapter 302 (III, 12-13), ch. 351 (III, 223), ch. 369 (III, 388-399), and ch. 73, questions 62, 67, 71 (II, 82, 84, 86) translated in the eschatological section of this anthology.

<sup>150</sup>Or "my (initiatic) 'death' (sa'aqati)": in other Koranic verses referring to the Resurrection (see following note), the same root is used virtually as an equivalent of "death." Here, however, Ibn 'Arabi is evidently using this term--which in its root sense means literally being "thunderstruck," "struck dead by lightning" or "rendered senseless" by a loud noise--in a more technical sense, referring to the spiritual state of "extinction of the ego (fana') in the Self-manifestation (tajalli) of the divine Lordship." This definition is from his K. Istilahat al-Sufiya (item no. 131; p. 45 in the English translation by R. T. Harris, Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society, III, 1984); see also the more detailed discussion of his technical usage of this term in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 695-696.

[...<sup>151</sup>] He said: "...So I did not see God until I had died. It was then that I 'awakened', so that I knew Who I saw. And it was because of that that I said 'I have returned to you' (Kor. 7:143), since I did not return<sup>152</sup> to anyone but Him."

Then I said to him: "You are among the group of 'those who know God,'<sup>153</sup> so what did you consider the vision of God (to be) when you asked Him for it?"

And he said: "(I considered it to be) necessary because of rational necessity."<sup>154</sup>

I said: "But then what was it that distinguished you from others?"

He said: "I was seeing Him (all along), and yet I didn't used to know that it was Him! But when my 'dwelling'<sup>155</sup> was changed and I saw Him, then I knew Who I saw. Therefore when

<sup>151</sup>In the untranslated lines (III, 349.23-25), Ibn 'Arabi alludes to a saying of the Prophet expressing uncertainty as to whether Moses' mystical "death" or "stunning" (sa'aga: explained in preceding note) exempted him from the similar fate which is promised more generally at the "blowing of the Trumpet" on the the Day of Resurrection: "...**then those who are in the heavens and on the earth are thunderstruck** [sa'iqā], **except for whoever God wishes...**" (Kor. 39:68); "**So leave them until they meet their Day, in which they will be thunderstruck** [yus'aqun]" (Kor. 52:45). Moses replies that he was indeed rewarded with the anticipatory experience of that "death" (and the concomitant "resurrection") on Mt. Sinai. That event, for Ibn 'Arabi, clearly represents a more general stage and type of theophanic experience: Moses is cited as a symbol of this sort of spiritual realization throughout the Shaykh's many works.

<sup>152</sup>The verb here (raja'a) is different from that in the immediately preceding Koranic verse (taba: usually translated as "to repent," but with the root sense of "turning back" [to God]); the equation of these two terms--with its implicit stress on the metaphysical ground of all "repentance"--is to be found throughout Ibn 'Arabi's writings. See, for example, the similar equivalence of these two expressions in Ibn 'Arabi's accounts of the beginnings of his own "conversion" to the spiritual path ("at the hand of Jesus") at n. 42 above.

<sup>153</sup>Or "those who know through God" (al-'ulama' bi-llah), i.e., on the basis of what God teaches them (and not by their own reflection, nazar), as Moses goes on to explain below. For Ibn 'Arabi, this expression usually refers to the very highest group of true spiritual "knowers"--i.e., the prophets and the saints, who alone are knowers of "God" (i.e., of "Allah," the comprehensive divine reality), and not simply of the "Lord" (rabb) manifested by one or more of the particular divine Names.

<sup>154</sup>wujub 'aqli: i.e., "necessary" according to his own knowledge and the conclusions of the intellect ('aql) concerning the nature of the world--because, as he goes on to explain below, all "vision" is really vision of God--, but without the crucial additional element of direct, first-hand experience (dhawq) essential to this realization. This whole exchange therefore clarifies Ibn 'Arabi's earlier assertion (section II, at n. 44 above) that Muhammad, at the culminating stage of his Ascension, "saw what he had known and nothing else; the form of his belief did not change."

<sup>155</sup>Mawtin, a term that could be translated more literally as "home," "homeland" or even, in its Koranic context (Kor. 9:25) as "(spiritual) battlefield": in Ibn 'Arabi's technical usage, it refers to the various "planes of being" in which man dwells and makes his home, all of which are present for the

I 'awoke' I was no longer veiled, and my vision (of God) went on accompanying me throughout all eternity. So this is the difference between us<sup>156</sup> and those who are veiled (Kor. 83:15) from their knowledge (of God) by what they see.<sup>157</sup> Yet when they die they see the Truly Real,<sup>158</sup> since the 'dwelling' (of divine Vision)<sup>159</sup> distinguishes Him for them. Therefore if they were returned (to this world as I was), they would say the same thing as we did."

I said: "Then if death were the 'dwelling' of the vision of God, every dead person would see him--but God has described them (at Kor. 83:15) as being 'veiled' from seeing Him!?"

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Perfect Man. In an important passage of the R. al-Anwar (Journey, pp. 27 and 72-77 [= commentary of 'Abd al-Karim Jili, mainly quoting the Futuhāt]; Chodkiewicz, Sceau, pp. 185-186), the Shaykh explains that although these mawatin are virtually infinite, "they are all derived from six": (1) the primordial state of man's covenant (mithaq) with God (Kor. 7:172); (2) "the (physical) world we are now in"; (3) the barzakh or "intermediate" spiritual world "through which we travel after the lesser and greater deaths"; (4) "the Resurrection on the earth of Awakening" (Kor. 79:14); (5) "the Garden and the Fire (of Hell)"; (6) and the "Dune of Vision (of God)," which is evidently the "dwelling" that became present for Moses on Sinai. See our translation of many passages from the Futuhāt dealing with the divine "Vision" in the eschatological section of this anthology.

<sup>156</sup>Moses' exceptional use of the first person plural here and in some of the following sentences--since he otherwise uses the singular in discussing his own personal experiences--seems to refer to all the "Knowers of (or through) God" (al-'ulama' bi-Allah) mentioned at n. 153 above and the text at n. 161 below.

<sup>157</sup>The full Koranic verse apparently alluded to here (Kor. 83:15) is as follows: "**But no, surely they are veiled from their Lord on that Day!**" The allusion could also extend to the numerous hadith concerning the "raising of veils" and "vision of God," including, among others, certain hadith qudsi recorded in Ibn 'Arabi's Mishkat al-Anwar, such as no. 18 (from the Sahih of Muslim) and no. 66 (Niche, pp. 41-43, 92-93).

The metaphysical concept of "veil," for Ibn 'Arabi, almost always reflects an inherent ambiguity between the two simultaneous aspects of "concealment" and "revelation" (since the "veil" is in reality a theophany or manifestation of the divine): for him, the difference between the two aspects ultimately resides in the viewer, not in the "phenomenon" or form itself. In this regard it is noteworthy that among the spiritual realizations flowing from Ibn 'Arabi's culminating revelation enumerated at the end of this chapter is his seeing "that God is what is worshipped in every object of worship, from behind the veil of (each particular) form" (III, 303.7-7; translated at the end of section IV-I below). See also at n. 123 above the references (from the Fusus al-Hikam) to the related question of "the god created in beliefs," and further passages cited in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 313-318 ("hijab").

<sup>158</sup>al-haqq, which could equally be translated as "the Truth" or simply "God." This phrase is close in form to the celebrated Sufi saying, sometimes considered a hadith of the Prophet and sometimes attributed to the Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib: "People are sleeping; when they die, they wake up." Like the rest of this section, it also clearly recalls the famous Prophetic injunction to "Die before you die!"

<sup>159</sup>See note 155 above on the meaning of mawtin. Here Ibn 'Arabi is almost certainly referring to the "dwelling" in Paradise of the "Dune of Vision (of God)" (kathib al-ru'ya) mentioned in a famous hadith qudsi, which he discusses at length in chapter 65 (II, 317-322) and elsewhere in the Futuhāt. (See our translations of many of those passages concerning the "Day of the Visit" in the eschatological section of this anthology.)

He said: "Yes, those are **'the ones who are veiled'** from the knowledge that what (they see) is God.<sup>160</sup> But what if you yourself had to meet a person with whom you were not personally acquainted, whom you were looking for (simply) by name and because you needed him? You could meet him and exchange greetings with him, along with the whole group of those you encountered, without discovering his identity: then you would have seen him and yet not have seen him, so you would continue looking for him while he was right where you could see him! Hence one cannot rely on anything but knowledge. That is why we (Knowers of God) have said that Knowledge is His very Essence, since if Knowledge were not His very Essence, what was relied on (i.e., our knowledge) would be other than God--for nothing can be relied on but knowledge."

I said: "Now God indicated the mountain to you (at Kor. 7:143) and mentioned about Himself that **'He manifested Himself to the Mountain'** (Kor. 7:143). [So how do these theophanies differ?]"

Then he replied: "Nothing resists His Self-manifestation; therefore the particular condition (hal) necessarily changes [according to the 'locus' of each theophany]. Hence for the mountain being 'crushed flat' was like Moses' being 'stunned': God says **'Moses'** (Kor. 7:144), and (He) Who crushed it stunned me."

I said to him: "God has taken charge of teaching me, so I (only) know about Him to the extent of what He bestows on me."

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<sup>160</sup>Ibn 'Arabi's favorite scriptural reference to this reality--which for him is also clearly applicable to man's capacity (or incapacity) for "theophanic vision" already in this world--is a famous hadith concerning the testing of mankind with regard to their forms of belief (ma'budat) on the Day of the Gathering, often known as the "hadith of the transformations." According to this account, God will present Himself to this (Muslim) community "in a form other than what they know, and will say to them: 'I am your Lord'; but the "hypocrites" among them will fail to recognize Him until He appears in the form they already knew (according to their beliefs in this world).

The most pertinent section of this hadith is recorded in the Mishkat al-Anwar (no. 26; Niche, pp. 55-57), where Ibn 'Arabi gives the isnad from the Sahih of Muslim. The full hadith, which deals with the Prophet's answers to several questions concerning the "vision of God," is also recorded twice by Bukhari; see further references in Graham, Word, pp. 133-134. For some of Ibn 'Arabi's representative discussions of this hadith in the Futuhat, see I, 112, 305, 328, 331, 353, 377; II, 40, 81, 277, 298, 311, 333, 495, 508, 590, 610; III, 25, 44, 48, 73, 101, 289, 301, 315, 485, 536; and IV, 245. (It is also presupposed in most of the sections of the Fusus al-Hikam concerning the "god created in beliefs" cited in n. 123 above.)

Then he replied: "That is just how He acts with the Knowers of God, so take (your spiritual knowledge) from Him, not from the world.<sup>161</sup> And indeed you will never take (such knowledge) except to the extent of your predisposition (isti'dad).<sup>162</sup> So do not let yourself be veiled from Him by the likes of us (prophets)! For you will never come to know about Him by means of us anything but what we know about Him through His Self-manifestation.<sup>163</sup> Thus we too only give you (knowledge) about Him to the extent of your predisposition. Hence there is no difference [between learning from us and directly from God], so attach yourself to Him!<sup>164</sup> For He only sent us to call you all to Him, not to call you to us. (His Message) is **a Word (that is) the same between us and you: that we should worship none but God, and that we should not associate anything with Him, and that some of us should not take others as lords instead of God** (Kor. 3:64)."

I said: "That is how it came in the Qur'an!"

He said: "And that is how He is."

I said: "With what did you hear 'God's Speech?'"<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>161</sup>al-kawn: the term can also refer by extension to "the people of this world" (which appears to be the main reference here), although Ibn 'Arabi may also be referring more broadly to his familiar critiques of exclusive reliance on limited human "reasoning" (nazar) about the manifest world. For the "Knowers of (or 'through') God," see notes 153 and 156 above.

<sup>162</sup>I.e., what Ibn 'Arabi has just claimed (concerning the "divine control" over his own spiritual progress) is ultimately true for everyone--without in any way removing the need for each individual's best efforts. What Moses goes on to explain about the different capacities of each person for understanding and assimilating the teachings of the prophets and Messengers is only one illustration of this crucial insight.

<sup>163</sup>The phrase "by means of us" in this sentence is an allusion to Ibn 'Arabi's assumption that the greatest part of the knowledge of the saints is gained "indirectly," through their spiritual participation in the manifold "heritages" of divine Knowledge received directly by each of the prophets and Messengers. See his careful explanation of this mediating relationship of the prophets and saints in chapter 14 of the Futuhat (I, 149-152; O.Y. ed., II, 357-362) and the many additional references in Chodkiewicz, Sceau, chapters IV and V.

<sup>164</sup>Here Ibn 'Arabi intentionally uses a verb (intasaba) usually employed to describe someone's "joining" or "belonging to" a particular religious (or legal, political, etc.) school, party or sect. The root sense of the verb--also quite appropriate here--refers to a person's kinship relation of ancestral allegiance and descent, his nasab. Thus the final phrase could also be translated as "join Him" or "take your lineage (directly) from Him."

<sup>165</sup>Alluding to Kor. 4:164--".**and God spoke to Moses with Speech.**" For Ibn 'Arabi's understanding of the possible apprehension of the divine revelation (wahy) through "hearing" and any of

He said: "With my hearing."

I said: "And what is your 'hearing'?"

He said: "He (is)."<sup>166</sup>

I said: "Then by what were you distinguished (from other men)?"

He said: "By an immediate personal experience (dhawq) in that regard, which can only be known by the person who actually experiences it."

I said: "So those who possess such immediate experiences are like that?"

"Yes," he said, "and (their) experiences are according to (their spiritual) ranks."

[IV-H. The Seventh Heaven: Abraham and the Temple of the Heart]<sup>167</sup>

Most of Ibn 'Arabi's encounter with Abraham--as earlier with Joseph and John the Baptist--is devoted to questions about certain Koranic passages concerning him. Here, for example, Abraham explains that his apparently polytheistic remarks reported at Kor. 6:74-80 were actually only meant to test the faith of his people, given their limited understanding.

What is of more universal importance for the spiritual journey, however, is Ibn 'Arabi's identification of the celestial Kaaba, the "House" of Abraham that marks the cosmological transition between the material world and the "paradisic" realm of the highest spheres, as none other than the Heart of the voyager. For the Heart--as he makes clear in the much longer

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the other senses, see the beginning of chapter 14 (I, 149 ff.; O.Y. ed., III, pp. 357 ff.), as well as the discussion of the various modalities of prophetic inspiration in chapter 366, III, 332. (See also the related hadith discussed in the following note.)

<sup>166</sup>This whole passage is an allusion to the famous hadith al-nawafil (the "supererogatory acts" of devotion), which is perhaps the "divine saying" most frequently cited both by Ibn 'Arabi and by Sufi writers more generally: it is recorded in the canonical collection of Bukhari (Riqaq, 38) and included in Ibn 'Arabi's own collection of hadith qudsi, the Mishkat al-Anwar (no. 91; Niche, pp. 118-121). (See also the full text and translation and further references in Graham, Word, pp. 173-174.)

The relevant section (and that most often alluded to by Sufi authors) is as follows: "...And My servant continues to draw near to Me through the supererogatory works (of devotion) until I love him. Then when I love him I am his hearing with which he hears, and his sight with which he sees, and his hand with which he grasps, and his foot with which he walks. And if he asks Me (for something), I surely give (it) to him; and if he seeks My aid, surely I help him...." For some of Ibn 'Arabi's discussions of this hadith in the Futuhat, which usually bring out his understanding of it as alluding to the individual realization of an underlying universal condition, see I, 203, 406; II, 65, 124, 126, 298, 326, 381, 487, 502, 513, 559, 563, 614; III, 63, 67, 143, 189, 298; and IV, 20, 24, 30, 312, 321, 449.

<sup>167</sup>III, 350.5-20 (only lines 18-20 are translated in full here).



discussions at this point in his K. al-Isra' and in chapter 167 of the Futuhāt<sup>168</sup>--is ultimately the "site" of the whole journey:

...Then I saw the Inhabited House (Kor. 52:4),<sup>169</sup> and suddenly there was my Heart--and there were the angels who "enter It every day!"<sup>170</sup> The Truly Real manifests Himself to (the

<sup>168</sup>In the corresponding part of chapter 167 (Alchimie, pp. 97-107), Abraham advises the "follower" (of Muhammad) to "make your heart like this House, by being present with God (al-Haqq) at every moment." Ibn 'Arabi's understanding of the nature of the Heart as a mirror of the Truly Real in all of its states is emphasized in that chapter by his use of the famous Sufi parable--almost certainly borrowed here (but without acknowledgement) from Ghazali's Mizan al-'Amal, and most famous in the form of the tale of the "Greek and Chinese artists" at the beginning of Rumi's Masnavi--of the royal "contest" between a marvelous artist (whose painting is the world) and a sage whose polished "mirror" (the soul of true Knower) reflects both that painting and the "artists" and "king" (i.e., the metaphysical world and each individual's "particular relation" to God) as well.

The lengthy corresponding section of the K. al-Isra' (pp. 28-34) is far too rich and complex to be summarized here. There, after evoking the highest stages of the nocturnal journey of Muhammad and the true Knowers (pp. 29-30), Ibn 'Arabi makes the entry into this celestial "House" dependent on attainment of the highest spiritual station, the "Station of Yathrib" (see Kor. 32:13 and Futuhāt, III, 177, 216, 500, etc.) or the "Station of no Station," in which the Heart is perfectly open to every form of theophany, in a state of selfless "bewilderment" (hayra). [See chapter 50 on the "men of hayra" (I, 270-272) and the further extensive references in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 1245 ("Yathribi") and 357-363 (hayra).]

Since for Ibn 'Arabi this is precisely the "Muhammadan Station" (discussed here in section IV-I below), the rest of this passage in the K. al-Isra' (pp. 30-31) alternates between the voyager's own moving poetic descriptions of that decisive spiritual realization--whose attainment is assumed throughout that work--and Abraham's praises of Muhammad and reminders of the many forms of superiority of those who have been granted that supreme attainment. These comparisons of other prophets or saints with Muhammad (for example at p. 33) could also highlight the essential contrast between the conditions of those who must "work" their way gradually toward spiritual perfection, drawn by divine love (mahabba) and the much rarer state of those who--like Ibn 'Arabi himself--benefit from the unique grace of divine "preference" (ithar), who are suddenly "pulled" (majdhub) by God into the highest stages of realization.

<sup>169</sup>al-Bayt al-Ma'mur: the "inhabitants" of this mysterious celestial site--often identified with the "Furthest Place of Worship" (al-masjid al-aqsa) mentioned in the Koran as the culmination of the Prophet's nocturnal voyage (Kor. 17:1), although the indications in the hadith themselves are very limited--are apparently the angels mentioned in the various hadith (see following note). Its location "with Abraham," mentioned in several hadith outlining the Mi'raj (including the hadith al-isra' from Muslim cited here by Ibn 'Arabi, at III, 341.29-34), seems connected with his role as builder of the Kaaba, the earthly Temple (al-bayt). For Ibn 'Arabi's identification--following earlier Sufis--of this heavenly "House" (and several others mentioned in the Koran) with the Heart (of the Knower, and ultimately of the Perfect Man), see ch. 6 of Futuhāt (I, 120) and the further references in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 222-228. The hadith on this subject (see Wensinck, Concordance, IV, pp. 353-354) are for the most part the same ones concerning the Mi'raj in general discussed at n. 38 above.

<sup>170</sup>The hadith of Anas b. Malik (Muslim, Iman, 259/= bab al-isra', 1) followed by Ibn 'Arabi in section II (n. 38) at the beginning of this chapter (III, 341.29-34) states that: "70,000 angels enter It each day, and they do not return there"; the other hadith concerning this subject in Muslim (Iman, 264) differs only slightly, while the corresponding hadith in Bukhari (bad' al-khalq, 6, also from Anas, with slightly different isnad), has Gabriel add that the 70,000 angels "pray there every day" and that "when they leave they do not return."

Heart), which (alone) encompasses Him,<sup>171</sup> in "seventy thousand veils of light and darkness."<sup>172</sup> Thus He manifests Himself to the Heart of His servant through those (veils)--for "if He were" to manifest Himself without them, "the radiant splendors of His Face would burn up" the creaturely part<sup>173</sup> of that servant.

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Here--where the meaning of this House as the "Heart" is his primary concern--Ibn 'Arabi clearly implies a connection between these "70,000 angels" and the "70,000 veils" mentioned in another famous hadith (see following notes), where both numbers can be seen as symbols of the infinite, never-repeated divine theophanies, whether they are considered in the world or in their "reflections" in the Heart of the Perfect Man. In his earlier discussion of the Mi'raj hadith (III, 341; an untranslated part of section II), however, he interprets the saying cosmologically: the angels' "entry is through the door of the rising of the stars, and (their) departure is through the door of the setting of the stars." (This latter interpretation is also apparently assumed in his remarks at this point in chapter 167 of the Futuhāt.)

<sup>171</sup>(As usual, al-Haqq could also be translated as "the Truth," "It," etc.) This translation assumes the inner connection between God and the Heart (qalb) that is expressed for Ibn 'Arabi in the famous hadith qudsi--in this case, one not recorded in the canonical collections--to which he alludes throughout his writings: "My earth and My heaven do not encompass Me, but the heart of My servant, the man of true faith, does encompass Me"; see his citation of this saying in a key opening passage of this chapter, at n. 37 above. Concerning Ibn 'Arabi's conception of the "Heart" more generally, see the key chapter on the "Wisdom of the Heart" (Shu'ayb) in the Fusus al-Hikam (I, 119-126; Bezels, pp. 147-155) and the extensive references in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp.916-921.

For the Shaykh, following a number of Koranic indications, the phrase "My servant"--i.e., the "servant" (abd) of the divine "I"--is understood as a reference to the very highest spiritual state, in which the saint perfectly mirrors the divine Will: see n. 198 below on Ibn 'Arabi's own self-realization as a "pure servant" and Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 773-776.

<sup>172</sup>The rest of this paragraph partially cites a celebrated hadith (one of the main subjects of Ghazali's famous Mishkat al-Anwar; see the excellent translation by R. Deladriere, Le Tabernacle des Lumieres, Paris, 1981), usually given according to the version recorded in Ibn Maja, I, 44: "God has seventy [or 700, or 70,000] veils of light and darkness: if He were to remove them, the radiant splendors of His Face would burn up whoever was reached by His Gaze." (Muslim, iman, 291 cites a similar hadith which mentions simply a "veil of Light," without any specific number.) Ibn 'Arabi interprets this hadith in greater detail in chapter 426 (IV, 38-39), focusing on the question of how "light" can be a "veil"; ch. 73, question 115 (II,110), on the meaning of "God's Face"; and in his K. al-Tajalliyat (ed. O. Yahya, Beirut, 1967), VI, 728. Other discussions, usually mentioning the different versions of this hadith, can be found in the Futuhāt at II, 80, 460, 488, 542, 554; III, 212, 216, 289; and IV, 72.

Here, by choosing to mention the number 70,000--although the canonical hadith, as just noted, include several possible numbers (or none at all)--, Ibn 'Arabi clearly implies an intimate connection with the "angels" of the "Inhabited House" mentioned at the beginning of this section (see preceding notes), so that both the 70,000 "veils" and "angels" are understood as symbolizing the infinite range of theophanies (tajalliyat). For Ibn 'Arabi's typical understanding of the divine "veils" as an expression for those theophanies (in this and many other contexts), see the references in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 313-318.

<sup>173</sup>literally, "the world of creation" (alam al-khalq): i.e., the realm of existence constituted by those "veils" or the divine Self-manifestation in all created being--as opposed to the primordial, "internal" Self-Manifestation or noetic differentiation of the Names and Realities within the divine Essence, the fayd al-aqdas and the "world of the Command," alam al-amr (which is the site of the final, purely noetic stages of the Ascension described in chapter 167).

[IV-I. The "Lotus of the Limit" and the Culminating Revelation]<sup>174</sup>

So when I had left (the Temple), I came to the Lotus-Tree of the Limit (Kor. 53:14),<sup>175</sup> and I halted amongst its lowest and its loftiest branches.<sup>176</sup> Now "it was enveloped" (Kor. 53:16) in the lights of (good) actions, and in the shelter of its branches were singing the birds of the

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<sup>174</sup>III, 350.20-32 (translated in full). As explained in the Introduction, this brief section summarizes an experience (or series of realizations) that is elaborated at much greater length in the other Mi'raj narratives. (See especially the key passage from the K. al-Isra', pp. 13-14, translated in our article cited at n. 13 above.)

Although Ibn 'Arabi's recounting of the Prophet's Ascension early in the chapter (section II, at III, 341.3-342.20) goes on at this point to mention a number of additional details and "stages" drawn from a variety of hadith, his association here in the autobiographical portion of this chapter between the "Lotus of the Limit" (see following note) and the final, culminating revelation--expressed in several hadith by the formula: "God inspired [awha] in me what He inspired" (alluding to the Koranic verse 53:10)--exactly corresponds to the first hadith on the isra' given by Muslim (Iman, 259) and coincides with the other hadith elaborating on the symbolic allusions to Muhammad's vision in that sura (al-Najm, whose opening verses are usually considered to recount the culminating stages of the Prophet's Ascension). (The further details given in other hadith and not utilized here are, however, integrated and greatly elaborated in Ibn 'Arabi's other treatments of the Mi'raj theme.)

<sup>175</sup>This sidrat al-muntaha (where Muhammad "saw Him in another descent") is part of a longer Koranic description (53:2-18) of two extraordinary occasions of revelation (wahy)--in the form of direct vision (Kor. 53:10-13 and 17-18) by the "heart" (fu'ad: Kor. 53:11) which are integrated into the hadith of the mi'raj/isra' quoted earlier (in section II, see notes 8 and 38), but whose details are also the subject of many separate hadith. (See for example, the separate section on the sidra in Muslim, iman, 280 ff.) While some of these hadith attempt to explain this vision as being of Gabriel's true angelic form (as opposed to his usual manifestation in human guise), Ibn 'Arabi's understanding here and in the K. al-Isra' clearly relies on those hadith which stress that (1) this vision was in the Prophet's Heart (qalb or fu'ad [see Kor. 53:11], as in the hadith of Ibn 'Abbas at Muslim, iman, 285-286) and (2) that it was of the "Lord," (3) in a form of "Light" (or "veils of Light": see the famous hadith just cited at n. 172), as at Muslim, iman, 292-295. This latter hadith, in which Muhammad is asked how he saw his Lord (at verse 53) and responds that he saw God "as Light," is discussed in more detail in chapter 426 (IV, 38-39).

In his earlier elaboration of the hadith descriptions of the "sidra" at this point (341.33-343.8) Ibn 'Arabi, in addition to stressing the ineffable Light surrounding it ("no one among God's creatures would be able to describe its beauty," says one hadith [Muslim, iman, 259]) and discussing the particular points described here (see following notes), also adds a cosmological explanation of the word "limit," paraphrasing a hadith (Muslim, iman, 280): "It is the end of what descends to it from above and the end of what ascends to it from below." (In chapter 167, the Lotus-tree is therefore presented as the threshold of the lowest gardens of Paradise.)

<sup>176</sup>The branches and fruit of this cosmic tree are described in several of the hadith of the mi'raj drawn on in Ibn 'Arabi's earlier account (section II: see preceding note). Given that he interprets this tree below as the "form of Man" (i.e., the Perfect Man)--and therefore a symbolic "Tree of the World"--its "lowest (dunya) and highest branches" would refer to the totality of existence, encompassing every realm of being. (See n. 178 below and the translations of Ibn 'Arabi's own cosmological treatise, the "Tree of Existence" [Shajarat al-Kawn] mentioned in n. 11 above; the same cosmological symbolism is developed in more detail in his R. al-Ittihad al-Kawni, tr. by D. Gril as Le Livre de l'Arbre et des Quatre Oiseaux, Paris, 1984.)

spirits of those who perform (those) actions,<sup>177</sup> since it is in the form of Man.<sup>178</sup> As for the four rivers (flowing from its roots, as described in the hadith),<sup>179</sup> they are the four kinds of divine knowledge "granted as a gift" (to man), which we mentioned in a part (juz') we called "the levels of the forms of knowledge given freely (by God)."<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup>arwah al-'amilun: this feature (referring to all men's actions, not just to their good deeds or to the souls in Paradise) is also implied in certain hadith and mentioned explicitly in Ibn 'Arabi's synthesis of those materials in section II above (see references in preceding notes); it may be connected with the mention in the same Koranic passage (53:15), that "**with It is the Garden of Refuge**" (i.e., one of the Gardens of Paradise), or it could be interpreted as referring to the intermediate world (barzakh, which is also a muntaha or "limit" between the sensible and spiritual realms) more generally. In cosmological terms--e.g., in his discussion in chapter 167 of the Futuhāt--Ibn 'Arabi takes this "limit" to constitute the boundary between Paradise (located in the sphere above it) and Gehenna (constituted by all the lower spheres of the material world).

<sup>178</sup>ala nash'at al-insan: i.e., comprising all the same planes of being (nash'a) contained within the Perfect Man, both spiritual and bodily or material. The metaphysical and spiritual equivalencies that this implies, especially the essential correspondence between the Perfect Man and the Reality of Muhammad, are elaborated in Ibn 'Arabi's own Shajarat al-Kawn ("The Tree of Existence"; Yahya, R.G., no. 666), also available in the English and French translations by A. Jeffery and M. Gloton discussed at n. 11 above; see also the additional cosmological references cited at n. 21.

<sup>179</sup>Earlier in this chapter (Section II; III, 341.35-342.5) Ibn 'Arabi mentions the following hadith description (taken from Muslim, iman, 264, where these rivers precede the "Inhabited House"; there is a parallel version, in same order as here, in Bukhari, bad' al-khalq, 6): "He saw four rivers flowing forth from its roots, two outward rivers and two inner (spiritual) ones (batinan)..." and Gabriel points out that "the two inner ones are in the Garden (of Paradise), while the two external ones are the Nile and Euphrates." Ibn 'Arabi then goes on to explain that the two "outer" ones also become rivers of Paradise after the Resurrection, thereby constituting the four rivers (of milk, honey, water and wine) promised to the blessed in parts of the Koran and hadith. (For Ibn 'Arabi's interpretations of those and related symbols, primarily as different kinds or modalities of spiritual wisdom, see Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 1071-1077).

In the corresponding section of chapter 167 (Alchimie, pp. 109-111), however, he interprets these symbols more freely as referring to a single great River (understood as the Qur'an, in the universal sense of the Reality of Muhammad and the Umm al-Kitab)--i.e., the River of Life--and three smaller rivers (= the Torah, Psalms and Gospels) emerging from It, along with the smaller streams of the other revealed Books (suhuf) mentioned in the Koran.

<sup>180</sup>maratib 'ulum al-wahb: this is the title of a separate extant treatise (also known under many other names) described in the R.G., no. 423 (II, pp. 366-367). According to Osman Yahya (in the same entry), the end of this treatise mentions that it is also included in the Futuhāt, and its contents correspond to the following sections: I, 157-172 (chapters 16-21), III, 501-505 (ch. 380), and IV, 37-38 (ch. 425).

Next I saw before me the "cushions of the Litters" (Kor. 55:77) of the (true) Knowers.<sup>181</sup> Then I "was enveloped by the (divine) lights" until all of me became Light, and a robe of honor was bestowed upon me<sup>182</sup> the likes of which I had never seen.

So I said: "O my God, the Signs (ayat) are scattered!" But then 'He sent down upon me'<sup>183</sup> at this moment (His) Saying: "**Say: 'we have faith in God and in what He sent down upon Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes (of Israel), and in what was brought to Moses and Jesus and the prophets from their Lord; we do not separate any one among them, and we are surrendered to Him!'**" (Kor. 3:84). Thus He gave me all the Signs in

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<sup>181</sup>muttaka'at rafarif al-'arifin: the obscure Koranic term rafrac, used at Kor. 55:77 to describe the "green couches" (or "meadows") of the dwellers of Paradise, was used by Ibn 'Arabi (in his summary of the Prophet's Mi'raj in section II, at III, 432.7) to symbolize the angelic "vehicle" employed by Muhammad for the highest stages of his Ascension, after--as described in several other hadith--he was forced to leave Gabriel and Buraq at the "Lotus-Tree of the Limit." There he also adds that "it is like a litter or sedan-chair among us." Its use in reference to the Mi'raj no doubt comes from a hadith explaining Muhammad's vision of "one of the greatest Signs of his Lord" (Kor. 53:13), stating that "he saw a green rafrac that had covered the horizon" (Bukhari, tafsir surat al-najm, from 'Abdallah ibn 'Abbas).

The K. al-Isra', which contains a long poetic section on "al-rafarif al-'ula" (Rasa'il, pp. 45-49, immediately preceding the culminating "intimate dialogues" with God) gives a much clearer idea of the meaning of this symbol for Ibn 'Arabi. There their role in the passage beyond the "Lotus of the Limit" is connected with the voyager's realization of "the secret of divine theophany in his heart" (p. 48): on them "he passed through 300 divine Presences (hadarat)" (p. 53), until he reached the station "where 'how' and 'where' disappear, and the secrets...(of the Union of God and the traveler) become clear" (p. 49).

In the Shajarat al-Kawn (n. 11 above), the rafrac--which is treated there as the fifth in a series of seven mounts used by the Prophet--is more clearly described as a sort of flying carpet "of green light, blocking up everything from East to West" (a description reflecting the above-mentioned hadith), and Ibn 'Arabi associates it with the divine Compassion (raf'a). (See Jeffery tr., pp. 152-153; Gloton tr., pp. 100 and 173 [citing another, more detailed hadith also attributed to Ibn 'Abbas].)

<sup>182</sup>The beginning of this sentence echoes the description of the Prophet's revelation and vision of God as "Light" at the Lotus-tree of the Limit, in the Koranic verses 53:16-18 and in the hadith discussed just above (n. 175)--except that here Ibn 'Arabi himself has become that Tree "which is according to the state of Man" (n. 178). The "robe of honor" (khil'a) here recalls the ceremony of Sufi "initiation" (the bestowal of the khirqa), except that here this royal garment symbolizes the spiritual station of the Prophet himself, the maqam muhammadi Ibn 'Arabi attains below (at n. 186).

<sup>183</sup>This is a Koranic expression (anzala 'ala) usually referring to the "descent" of divine Revelation to the prophetic Messengers (rusul). For other passages where Ibn 'Arabi applies it to divine inspirations received by the awliya', see the Futuhat II, 506; III, 94, 181; IV, 178. Judging from the context, the "dispersion" or "diversity" of the divine "Signs" mentioned here seems to refer in particular to their division among the various prophets and messengers (and their revealed Books, etc.)--or even to the very multiplicity of the theophanies (God's "Signs in the souls and on the horizons," at Kor. 41:53) that ordinarily distract us from a full awareness of the divine Unity. See also the similar allusions to the (ultimately illusory) "multiplicity" of the prophets and their teachings at the beginning of the key passage from the K. al-Isra' translated in our article cited at n. 13 above.

this Sign,<sup>184</sup> clarified the matter (i.e., of the eternal Reality of the "Qur'an") for me,<sup>185</sup> and made this Sign for me the key to all knowledge. Henceforth I knew that I am the totality of those (prophets) who were mentioned to me (in this verse).

Through this (inspiration) I received the good tidings that I had (been granted) the "Muhammadan station,"<sup>186</sup> that I was among the heirs of Muhammad's comprehensiveness. For he was the last (prophet) to be sent as a messenger, the last to have (the direct Revelation) descend upon him (Kor. 97:4):<sup>187</sup> God "gave him the all-comprehensive Words,"<sup>188</sup> and he was

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<sup>184</sup>Or 'verse', 'aya: since what was revealed to Ibn 'Arabi in this experience was no less than the inner meaning of the true eternal Qur'an--which is also the "Reality of Muhammad"--encompassing all knowledge (including the spiritual sources/realities of all the revealed Books), the phrase could also be read as "all the verses in that one verse." Much of the latter part of the K. al-Isra' (especially pp. 83-92) is particularly devoted to Ibn 'Arabi's detailed explanations of his new, perfect understanding of the spiritual meaning of many different Koranic verses, as that revealed insight is "tested" and verified by Muhammad and several other major prophets.

<sup>185</sup>qarraba 'alayya al-amr: this translation (taking amr in its most general sense) assumes Ibn 'Arabi is referring to his experience of the full eternal reality of the Qur'an (the umm al-Kitab) which is detailed in much of the K. al-Isra' (see our Introduction and the article cited at n. 13). However the phrase could also be construed as referring to his special "proximity" to the (divine) "Command" (al-'amr) or simply to God--since this experience has many of the features of what Ibn 'Arabi describes elsewhere in the Futuhat as the "Station of Proximity" (maqam al-qurba) characterizing the highest group of saints, the "solitary ones" (afrad): see Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 936-938, Ibn 'Arabi's K. al-Qurba (Rasa'il, I, no. 6), Futuhat, chapter 161 (II, 260-262) and further detailed references in Chodkiewicz, Sceau (index s.v.).

<sup>186</sup>literally, that I was "Muhammad-like in (my spiritual) station" (Muhammadi al-maqam), i.e., marked by Muhammad's primordial spiritual condition of "all-comprehensiveness" (jam'iya), encompassing the eternal Realities of all the prophets (the majmu', "totality") mentioned in the preceding sentence. The similar experience of the unity of all the prophets (and their spiritual knowledge and revelations) in Muhammad (and in Ibn 'Arabi himself) is summarized in the passage from the K. al-Isra', pp. 12-14, translated in our article cited at n. 13, and is of course carefully elaborated throughout the Fusus al-Hikam.

For details on Ibn 'Arabi's conception of the maqam muhammadi, see Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 1191-1201 and especially Chodkiewicz, Sceau, chapters IV (on the "Muhammadan Reality"), V (on the concept of the saints as "heirs" of certain prophets) and IX, discussing the many passages of the Futuhat and other works concerning Ibn 'Arabi's self-conception as the "Seal of Muhammadan Prophecy." See also the references on the "Station of Proximity" in the previous note: as indicated in the Introduction, n. 13, the two stations are certainly very close, and the explicit distinction between them--which depends on Ibn 'Arabi's own role as "Seal"--seems to have developed only gradually in the Shaykh's thought.

<sup>187</sup>The verb form here alludes to the celebrated verses (at sura 97) describing the descent of "**the angels and the Spirit**" that marked the beginning of Muhammad's revelation; it is thus an apparent reference to the type of direct divine inspiration (wahy) uniquely limited to the line of divine lawgiving messengers (rusul/mursalun). For Ibn 'Arabi's conception of the spiritual insight of the saints as "mediated" or "inherited" through one or more of the earlier messengers, see chapter 14 of the Futuhat (I,

specially favored by six things with which the messenger of no (other) community<sup>189</sup> was specially favored. Therefore (Muhammad's) Mission is universal, because of the general nature of his six aspects:<sup>190</sup> from whatever direction you come, you will find only the Light of Muhammad<sup>191</sup> overflowing upon you; no one takes (spiritual knowledge) except from It, and no (divine) messenger has informed (man) except for (what he has taken) from It.<sup>192</sup>

Now when that happened to me I exclaimed: "Enough, enough!"<sup>193</sup> My (bodily) elements are filled up, and my place cannot contain me!," and through that (inspiration) God removed

149-152/O.Y. ed., III, 357-362), plus detailed references in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 1191-1201 and Chodkiewicz, Sceau, ch. V and IX.

<sup>188</sup>Jawami' al-kilam: the famous hadith paraphrased in this sentence (see Bukhari, ta'bir, 11; Muslim, masajid, 5-8; Tirmidhi, siyar, 5; etc.) is cited repeatedly by Ibn 'Arabi to summarize the totality of spiritual knowledge or divine "forms of wisdom" (hikam) making up the "Muhammadan Reality": that conception is illustrated at length in his treatment of the other prophets (in relation to Muhammad) in the Fusus al-Hikam, and is likewise assumed in his description of a similar revelatory experience in the K. al-Isra', translated in our article cited at n. 13 above. (See the related discussions at II, 72, 88; III, 142; and further references in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 269-276, entry on "jam'." ) The rest of the hadith (translating here from al-Bukhari) is also important in this context (i.e., regarding the "treasuries" of knowledge enumerated below): "I was sent with the all-comprehensive Words...and while I was sleeping, I was brought the keys of the treasuries... and they were placed in my hand...."

<sup>189</sup>The text here reads literally "of no community (umma) among the communities"--a formulation apparently reflecting Ibn 'Arabi's focus here on the universality of Muhammad's spiritual reality (i.e., as ultimately sent to all the religious communities). It is not clear in this context whether this last phrase refers to six attributes which were not combined in one earlier messenger--in which case it might refer back to the revelations of the six prophets who were mentioned by name in the verse 3:84 quoted in the preceding paragraph--or rather to six characteristics which were each completely unique to Muhammad. The concluding pages of the K. al-Isra' (pp.91-92), for example, discuss several unique qualities of Muhammad that were not shared by Moses, Noah, Zachariah and Yahya (John), etc.

<sup>190</sup>Or "directions": this sentence involves a play on the word jiha, which can mean both "aspect" (in the sense of trait or characteristic) and "direction"--in which sense the traditional "six directions" (i.e., the 4 cardinal points, plus the vertical axis) implicitly contain all the possible spatial orientations, and thereby again alluding to the universality of the Prophet's Reality and divine mission.

<sup>191</sup>Nur Muhammad: for the historical background of this term (including early references in hadith and the Sira literature), see Chodkiewicz, Sceau, pp. 80-87. For Ibn 'Arabi, the term is often roughly equivalent--from other points of view--to the "Muhammadan Reality," universal "Intellect," divine "Pen" or "Spirit," "Mother of the Book," etc.: see the references in Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 347-352, and the long list of his synonyms for the "Perfect Man" at p. 158.

<sup>192</sup>or "Him": the pronouns at the end of this sentence, translated here as "It," could also refer simply to "Muhammad" (although in any case the two terms would be essentially identical in this context).

<sup>193</sup>We have taken the most literal and obvious meaning. However, this phrase (hasbi) is also contained in two Koranic verses (39:38; 9:129): "...Say: 'God is enough for me' (hasbi Allah)...", and

from me my contingent dimension.<sup>194</sup> Thus I attained in this nocturnal journey the inner realities (ma'ani) of all the Names, and I saw them all returning to One Subject<sup>195</sup> and One Entity.<sup>196</sup> that Subject was what I witnessed,<sup>197</sup> and that Entity was my Being. For my voyage was only in myself and only pointed to myself, and through this I came to know that I was a pure "servant,"<sup>198</sup> without a trace of lordship in me at all.

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both verses go on to stress the importance of "absolute trust" in God (tawakkul), the ostensible subject of this chapter (see notes 27 and 39 on the meaning of the title).

<sup>194</sup>imkani: i.e., everything (including the spatiality and corporality mentioned in Ibn 'Arabi's exclamation here) which had "separated" him from God (the unique "Necessary," non-contingent Being) and thereby offered the possibility of (relative) sin, opposition or conflict with the divine Commands; or in other words, everything that had been an impediment to his new state (or realization) of "pure servanthood," as an unimpeded expression of the divine Will (n. 198 below). We may also recall that it was this very "possibility" that made the spiritual journey possible in the first place: see Ibn 'Arabi's mention of his "Buraq of imkan" at IV-A, n. 84 above.

<sup>195</sup>and "Object": Musamma wahid--the same formula was already mentioned in the schematic discussion of the spiritual journey in section III (at n. 61) above. As indicated there, the "transcendent Unity of the Named (divine Reality)" (ahadiyat al-musamma) is mentioned at the end of this section(III, 354.15-16) in the long list of the kinds of knowledge Ibn 'Arabi "saw" within this experience. There, as throughout his works, he mentions the association of this point (i.e., as an explicit thesis or "doctrine") with the famous Andalusian Sufi Ibn al-Qasi and his book Khal' al-Na'layn.

<sup>196</sup>or "One Eye" (ayn wahida): the pun (involving the subject/object of this "vision" or "witnessing": see following note) is certainly intentional here, and is further enriched by some of the other dimensions of meaning of ayn, which is also Source, Essence, etc.

<sup>197</sup>Mashhudi: this phrase and the following one together carefully sum up the ineffable paradox of this experiential realization of divine Unicity--the very core of Ibn 'Arabi's work--which led to so much subsequent theological and philosophical controversy in the Islamic world (and wherever attempts have been made to treat this realization conceptually as a logical "system"). The first phrase, taken in separation, states the thesis of wahdat al-shuhud, and the second the position of wahdat al-wujud--while the combination alone expresses the experience and fundamental reality the Shaykh attempts to convey here (and in the above-mentioned key passage from the K. al-Isra' translated in our article cited at n. 13). Note the similar caution in the K. al-Isra', p. 65-66: "So beware and don't imagine that my conjunction (ittisal) with (the highest divine Presence) was one of identity of essence (inniya)..." etc.

<sup>198</sup>abd mahd: this formulation (or the related one of abd khalis), used fairly frequently by Ibn 'Arabi, refers to those rare Knowers who have become wholly devoted (mukhlisin) to the divine "I"--i.e., who are among "My servants," 'ibadi (alluding especially to Kor. 15:42 and 17:65)--and not to the totality of creatures, who are all "servants of God" in a metaphysical (but still unrealized) sense.

As Ibn 'Arabi explains in chapter 29 (O.Y. ed. III, pp. 228-229): "Thus every servant of God pays attention to one [or more] of the creatures who has a right (haqq, i.e., a claim) against him, and his servanthood (to God) is deficient to the extent of that right, because that creature seeks the (fulfillment) of that right from him and thereby has a power (sultan: like Satan at Kor. 15:42, etc.) over him, so that he cannot be a pure servant, wholly devoted to God." In a revealing autobiographical aside, Ibn 'Arabi adds that "I encountered a great many of this group (i.e., of those "seeking freedom from all engendered things") in the days of my wandering," and that "from the day I attained this station I have not possessed



Then the treasures of this station were opened up (for me), and among the kinds of knowledge I saw there were:....<sup>199</sup>

The list of some 69 kinds of knowledge associated with this particular station differs from the similar listings in each of the other chapters on the manazil in that it contains a number of Ibn 'Arabi's most fundamental metaphysical theses. The following items may be taken as representative:<sup>200</sup>

...I saw in it the knowledge of the Return...and that (man) carries this world with him when he is transferred (to the next world)...

I saw in it the knowledge of the interpenetration and (indissoluble) "circularity" (dawr: of God and Man), which is that God (al-Haqq) can only be in (external) reality (fi al-fi'l) through the form of the creature (al-khalq), and that the creature can only be there (in reality) through the form of God. So this circularity...is what actually exists (al-waqi') and is the way things are...

...each community (umma) has a messenger...and there is nothing among what exists that is not (part of) a certain community.... So the divine message (risala) extends to absolutely all communities, both great and small!...

I saw in it the universality of the divine Gift (of Mercy and Pardon)...., (as) He said concerning the prodigal sinners: ".**do not despair of God's Mercy; surely God forgives the**

any living thing, indeed not even the clothing I wear.... And the moment I come into possession of something I dispose of it at that very instant, either by giving it away or setting it free, if that is possible."

At the beginning of chapter 311 (III, 26-27), Ibn 'Arabi even more openly "boasts" (to use his expression) of this unique realization: "Today I do not know of anyone who has realized the station of servanthood to a greater extent than I--and if there is someone (else), then he is like me. For I have attained the ultimate limit of servanthood, so that I am the pure, absolute servant who does not know (even the slightest) taste of Lordship (rububiya)."<sup>199</sup> See also Hakim, Mu'jam, pp. 765-778 ('abd, 'ubudiya, and related concepts).

<sup>199</sup>Ibn 'Arabi strongly emphasizes the direct experiential "vision" of the forms of knowledge he realized in this particular revelation by repeating "I saw in it..." before each of the 69 kinds of understanding enumerated in this chapter (III, 351-354). (This procedure is apparently unique among the many otherwise similar listings that conclude each of the remaining chapters on the spiritual stations, the "fasl al-manazil.")

The "opening of the treasures" here is an allusion to the famous hadith concerning the special universality of the Prophet's revealed knowledge discussed in n. 188 above.

<sup>200</sup>These "kinds of knowledge" are respectively numbers 12, 15, 22, 25, 28, 45 and 53 in this list. Ibn 'Arabi's descriptions are given here without further annotation, since these principles should be familiar to readers of any of his works and most of them have been discussed in earlier passages of this chapter.

**sins altogether, surely He is the All-Forgiving, the All-Merciful.**" So nothing could be clearer than this explicit divine declaration concerning the return of (all) the servants to (His) Mercy!...

I saw in it the knowledge that it is God who is worshipped in every object of worship, behind the veil of (the particular) form.

I saw in it the knowledge of the conditions of mankind in the intermediate world (barzakh)....

I saw in it the knowledge that this world is a token ('unwan) of the other world and a symbolization (darb mithal) of it, and that the status (hukm) of what is in this world is more complete and more perfect in the other world.