Mediating Intimacy: Essential Ibn-Arabi for Education and Psychotherapy

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Argument

- Tradition as developmental psychology: the problem of borrowing
- Spiritual Heart - living body’s gateway to knowledge
- Lost in Translation: The Imperfect (Wo)Man
- Topological phenomenology of the Heart: Comparative Analysis
- Hermeneutic cycles of wisdom in therapy
Positioning the Enquiry

• Traditions as Developmental Psychologies
• Self in the mode of ego-transcendence (remediating postmodern loss of self)
• Onotogeny as individuation, learning as maturation of epistemology
Tensions

- Transformation: Praxis vs Love
- Wisdom: Body vs Mind
- Self: Essential or constructed
- Gender: Relative or Absolute
- Translation: Verbatim or interpretive
- Tradition: Oral or Textual
History of the Mirror: from Soul to Self

**Soul (Heart) of the Ancients**
- Inner, spiritual and psychological, frequently affective experiences, via body

**Self of the Modernity**
- from inner subjectivity to the outward disposition
- Mind-Body Split
- Individuality
- Agency
- Choice
- Will
“For if the properly prepared person persists in dhikr (remembering God) and spiritual retreat, emptying the place (of the heart) from thinking, and sitting like a poor beggar who has nothing at the doorstep of their Lord- then God will bestow upon them and give them some of that knowing of Him, of those divine secrets and supernal understandings, which he granted to His servant al-Khadir”…(Meccan Revelations, p. 14).

Commentary

Ibn-Arabi’s expression here apparently refers to characteristic understanding that each being’s inner strivings or petitions to God (i.e. “prayer” in the broadest possible sense, whether or not consciously or appropriately formulated) necessarily are directed towards one or another specific aspects of the overall Divine Reality, expressed in Qur’anic terms by many of the divine Names (“Lord”, “King” etc.), that constitute the ontological “lord” of the individual.
Historical changes in the bodily aspects of consciousness (Lind, 2001), i.e. current mind-body split, creates the interpretive frames which are likely to distort the picture of actual practice recommended by Ibn-Arabi.

or

The actual “inner doing” might’ve remained known only within the oral tradition.
History of Presencing the Heart: Dhikr, Prayer of the Heart, Somatic Self-Enquiry
Oral Tradition

Psychospiritual centers of somatic awareness in the chest
Studies of the Place of the Heart

focus groups and individuals, dialogical explication of the heart-self, participants n>300

a) Phenomenological analysis of perception
b) topological phenomenological analysis
c) transcendental and psychological phenomenological analysis
Topological Multidimensionality of the Heart
Entering the Egological Self in the Heart
Phenomenological Architecture of Self-Awareness
(heart-consciousness, intrasubjectivity)

Subjective Awareness, Witness

"Nothing"
"I Am" sense
"Talking Mind"

Senses
Emotions, Feelings, Energies
Body schema, sense of space

Subtle mental states, Meanings, Images

Unconscious

Subjective Awareness, Witness

"Nothing"
Dialogical Heart-Self: Intersubjectivity

- Corporeal Others
- Ego-Self
- God, Internal Other
Due to identification of the essential Self with the coverings, coverings become "us", and are experienced as our bodies.
Structures of the Self: Hyletic Intentionality

Hyletic
intentionality flow

Epoche
(witnessing)

“I Am”

sense

“Nothing”

Unconscious

Hyletic
reduction

Structures of the Self: Hyletic Intentionality

Subjective
Awareness, Witness

Senses

Emotions, and Felt
Sense,

Internal
Speech

Images

Meaning

Hyletic
intentionality flow
Life-World of the Heart

Knowledge by presence

Multiple times, spaces and bodily focuses

Soteriological affects

Hyletics

Images and Meaning

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Subjective Awareness, Witness

Unconscious

Ego-Transcendancies

Senses, Emotions, Feelings, Energies

"Talking Mind"

Subtle mental states, Meanings

"I Am" sense

Images

"Nothing"

Body schema, sense of space

Subjective Awareness, Witness
Zones of structural reorganization after transcendent experience

- Senses
- Emotions, Feelings, Energies
- “Talking Mind”
- Subtle mental states
- Meanings
- Images
- Body schema, sense of space
- “Nothing”
- “I Am sense”
- Witness
- Unconscious

Subjective Awareness
I am Individual

Origins of intentionality, sense of “Ultimate dependence”, sense of ontological primacy, or “principal autonomy…"

God, Reality. Ground of Being…
What psychological phenomenological analysis can help to decipher...

“Finally, and even more mysteriously, each chapter concludes with a long but highly enigmatic catalogue of spiritual gifts and insights that are given in connection with Divine encounter, often connected with the particular details of the corresponding Sura” (p.20, Futuhat, commentary on Spiritual Points of Descent)

“...influence on the twenty eight specific Divine Name on the world. Why it should have been included in Section 3, which is dedicated to the”states (ahwal), is not particularly clear” (p. 51, commentary on Breath of All Merciful)
Dialogical Heart-Self: Ontopoiesis

I am

Individual

Archetypes

Essential Relations

God, Reality. Ground of Being…
Reconstitution of the Self after Ego-Transcendence

Me-Other; Me-World; Me-God;
Real-Unreal;
Fear, Desire;
Living and Dying;
Spontaneous eпоche;
Transparency of inner space;
Direct intuition;
“Ontopoietic” intuition
Lost in Translation:
The Imperfect Man

“…Story of a personal acquaintance who frequented the same masters of hadith in the city of Ceuta, a highly respected and unusually modest religious judge (qadi) who was famous for his rare charismatic ability (baraka) to establish peace among feuding parties or tribe – an ability Ibn-Arabi attributes to his extreme conscientiousness and concern for maintaining only a disinterested, “divine point of view” in his inner relation to his legal duties. This leads him to take up a broader divine standards of judgement (ahkam) regarding all our actions, especially their inner spiritual aspect (Futuhat, p.77)
Hermeneutic cycles in education and psychotherapy

• At “Existential core” of every human being there is an intuitively individualized spiritual life.

• Soma-psyche-spirit-teachings cycle

• Interiority of consciousness
• Desire for self-knowledge
• Names as interventions
Conclusions

a) life-world of Ibn-Arabi is relevant for the depth work with the postmodern psyche

b) this psyche can be generally accessed via somatic awareness

c) insight of Ibn-Arabi Himself is connected with the use of somatic practice

d) in order to bear the fruit of Self-Realization, self-enquiry has to include introspection on the embodied sense of self.