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Mysticism and Rational Inquiry in the School of Ibn ʿArabī

Ekberî Gelenekte Tasavvuf ve Aklî Tahkîk

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Despite the fact that some of the main followers of the famous Spanish Muslim mystic Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240)[2] were well-versed in the discipline of philosophy, the school of Ibn ʻArabī is often not regarded in Western scholarship as a philosophical school in the usual sense of the term.[3] This is because Ibn ʿArabī's followers tend to tackle the central problems of philosophy through the medium of mystical and religious symbolism (all here positively understood). In order to properly present the teachings of the school of Ibn ʿArabī as a unified philosophical perspective, therefore, I will argue that their emphasis upon symbolic formulations are largely a means by which they can present well-known rational concepts, but in accessible and concrete language.

This is not, of course, an endorsement of the simplistic view which says that religious symbolism or mysticism is merely philosophy clothed up and made accessible to non-philosophers. In fact, through an engagement with both mysticism and philosophy, Ibn ʿArabī and his followers would also like to suggest that philosophical language is itself in so many ways a symbolic representation of religious or mystical truths. Nevertheless,

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2 For Ibn ʿArabī's life and teachings respectively, see, inter alia, Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur: The Life of Ibn ʿArabī*, translated by Peter Kingsley (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993); William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-ʿArabī's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

3 For the school of Ibn ʿArabī, see Mukhtar A. Ali, *Philosophical Sufism: An Introduction to the School of Ibn al-ʿArabī* (New York: Routledge, 2021); Chittick, "The School of Ibn ʿArabī", in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, edited by S. H. Nasr and Oliver Leaman (New York: Routledge, 1996), 497-509; Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart: Explorations in Islamic Thought*, edited by Mohammed Rustom, Atif Khalil, and Kazuyo Murata (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), part 2; Caner Dagli, *Ibn ʿArabī and Islamic Intellectual Culture: From Mysticism to Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

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their perspective is usually characterized as being a kind of philosophical mysticism, as it forms a unique hybrid of both philosophy and mysticism in a particular technical language largely informed by the view that, from one perspective, rational inquiry and mysticism are two sides of the same coin.

ONTOLOGY

It is now well-known that many of the philosophical and theological expressions used by Ibn ʿArabī were stock phrases in his day. One term he often employs when speaking of God is the "Necessary Being" (*wājib al-wujūd*),[4] a technical term that became standard fare in texts of Islamic thought from the time of Avicenna (d. 428/1037) onwards.[5] Unlike God, whose being cannot not be, that which exists and whose existence depends upon Him is referred to as "contingent being" (*mumkin al-wujūd*), another well-known term bequeathed by Avicenna. Thus, all that we can inquire into is either Necessary Being, namely God, or contingent being, namely everything in existence apart from God. Since God is the source of all things that exist, His being is the most apparent and pervasive. This is because all other instantiations of being, all other existents, must necessarily be subsumed under the wider category of His being, which itself escapes all definition, since the moment we attempt to explain it, we can only do so with reference to one of its particular modes and instances.

Being, therefore, cannot be defined, nor can its "reality" be grasped in any fashion whatsoever. This explains why one of the principal members of the school of Ibn ʿArabī, Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī (d. 751/1350), speaks of being as the most general of things and the most apparent of them as well, as it is a self-evident reality, while at the same time remaining, as he says, "the most hidden of all things in its quiddity and reality"[6]—incidentally, this is a "description" echoed later by the famous Islamic philosopher Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1640) some three centuries later.[7] At the same time, Qayṣarī tells us, being "becomes absolute and delimited, universal and particular, general and specific, one and many without acquiring change in its essence and reality."[8]

Yet Ibn ʿArabī and his followers are not content to analyze the nature of being in purely philosophical terms. They want to explain the nature of things with reference to God as a concrete reality, which is why they normally take the usual philosophical categories of necessary and contingent being and graft them onto the plane of theology or religion proper. Thus, to call God the Necessary Being in philosophical terms is to speak of what is known in Islamic theology as the Divine Essence (*dhāt*). Another common name for the Divine Essence in the writings of the school of Ibn ʿArabī is the "Essence of Exclusive Oneness" (*al-dhāt al-aḥadiyya*).[9] ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (d. 730/1330), another key figure in the school of Ibn ʿArabī, puts it this way: "The Reality called the Essence of Exclusive

4 Ibn ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968), I: 291.

5 For the manner in which Islamic philosophy would take center stage in Muslim theological texts largely due to Avicenna's influence, one may profitably consult Robert Wisnovsky, "One Aspect of the Avicennian Turn in Sunnī Theology", *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 14 (2004): 64-100.

6 Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, *Maṭlaʿ khuṣūṣ al-kalim fī maʿānī Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam (Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam)*, (Qum: Anwār al-Hudā, 2002), I: 14. Hereafter, this work will simply be cited as *Sharḥ*.

7 See Mohammed Rustom, *The Triumph of Mercy: Philosophy and Scripture in Mullā Ṣadrā*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 19.

8 Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ*, I: 13.

9 See Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, edited by A. E. Afifi, (Cairo: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, 1946), 90-94.

Oneness in its true nature is nothing other than being, pure and simple, insofar as it is being."[10] Like the Necessary Being, the Divine Essence also does not have a quiddity (*māhiyya*),[11] and is completely indeterminate in every respect. Since it is completely simple, unqualified, and unqualifiable, it contains no multiplicity in its reality. This is why Maḥmūd Shabistarī (d. 740/1339) says the following in his famous Persian poem on Sufi metaphysics, the *Rosegarden of Mystery* (*Gulshan-i rāz*):

> *In God's Presence there is no duality—*
> *in that Presence there is no "I," "we," or "you."*
> *"I," "we," "you," and "it," are one thing,*
> *for in Oneness, there are no distinctions at all.*[12]

Now, if the Divine Essence is pure simplicity, how does multiplicity emerge from It without introducing change into Its nature? In other words, how do instantiations of being emerge from being without any alteration taking place in the fundamental reality of being itself? Ibn ʿArabī points out that "contingent being" is what stands between being as such and non-existence as such. For Ibn ʿArabī, contingent being is colored by non-being on account of its contingency. It does possess a type of existence, but an existence which is purely relational.[13] That is to say, contingent things stand in an intermediate position between being and non-being. With respect to being, they are nothing. But with respect to non-being, they are real. Their intermediate status thus guarantees that contingent things have existence, but only in a relative manner. In order to understand how contingent things take on a relative type of existence (but also remain relatively nonexistent), we must turn to a concept which lies at the heart of the metaphysics of the school of Ibn ʿArabī, namely that of the "immutable entities" (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*).

According to Ibn ʿArabī's own testimony, he borrows the term "immutable entities" from the Muʿtazilites,[14] an important early Islamic theological school which fell into obscurity by the sixth/twelfth century only to be resuscitated in the wake of the modernist movement in Egypt in the late thirteenth/nineteenth century. For Ibn ʿArabī and his school, the "immutable entities" are the latent possibilities which inhere in the very structure of being itself. Or, to use the language of the school of Ibn ʿArabī, they are nothing but the objects of knowledge forever fixed in God's "mind". Upon close inspection, the immutable entities turn out to be nothing more than the quiddities (*mahiyyāt*) of Islamic theology and philosophy, a point that is made explicit by a number of Ibn ʿArabī's followers.[15] A quiddity is defined as that by virtue of which a thing is what it is, or its "what-it-is-ness." In other words, the quiddity of horse is horseness, the quiddity of book bookness, etc. When we look at a particular horse shorn of its accidents, it is still characterized by the quiddity of horseness, but by virtue of being a particular horse,

10 Cited (with modifications) in Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 25.

11 See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 80-81.

12 Maḥmūd Shabistarī, *Gulshan-i rāz*, edited by Javād Nurbakhsh, (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Khānaqāh-i Niʿmat Allāhī, 1976), lines 116-117.

13 See Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, III: 193.

14 See A. E. Afifi, "al-Aʿyān al-thābita fī madhhab Ibn al-ʿArabī wa-l-maʿdūmāt fī madhhab al-Muʿtazila", in *al-Kitāb al-Tadhkārī: Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī*, edited by Ibrahim Madkur, (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1969), 209-220; Chittick, The *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 204.

15 See, for example, Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ*, I: 45, reproduced in ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ Naqsh al-fuṣūṣ*, edited by William Chittick, (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1977), 42. See also Mullā Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-Mashāʿir*, edited and translated by Henry Corbin, (Tehran: Département d'iranologie de l'Institut franco-iranien, 1964), 35.

it is not any other horse, and thus is unique in terms of its particular "what-it-is-ness." An immutable entity, likewise, when brought into existence, is a particular instantiated object of God's knowledge which is completely unique in its "what-it-is-ness" apart from anything else. Since "existentiation" (*ījād*) refers to the manner in which things come to "be" in concrete existence, I will henceforth refer to the instantiations of the immutable entities by this technical philosophical term.

What does not change in the "what-it-is-ness" of an immutable entity, whether or not God brings it into concrete "existence," is its status of "immutability" as a contingent, and, hence, relatively nonexistent thing, despite the fact that it has a relative reality when it is brought into actual existence.[16] Members of the school of Ibn ʿArabī were therefore concerned with the immutable entities because they provided them with a way of accounting for the relative non-reality of everything other than God on the one hand, and their relative reality on the other.

THEOLOGY

It has already been said that the immutable entities, as quiddities, are (1) objects of God's knowledge and (2) relatively "nonexistent" in their reality even if they have a relative reality when brought into concrete existence. But the immutable entities have another important function which is related to (2): they also act as particularized loci through which being can become manifest. Thus, when God existentiates an immutable entity, it acts as a receptacle for the "reception" of being. When infused with being, an immutable entity is only capable of receiving a particular mode of it, since its reception of being is conditioned by its own particular "what-it-is-ness."

A more concrete way of expressing this point is to say that the immutable entities are the means through which God contemplates the objects of His knowledge—which form a part of His self-knowledge—in a purely externalized manner. When an immutable entity is existentiated, it acts as a locus of God's manifestation (*maẓhar*). This is on account of the fact that externalized existence is only possible by virtue of God's manifestation in the forms of the immutable entities.[17] And, although all objects of God's knowledge, all quiddities, are "immutable entities", it is only those that are existentiated which can act as receptacles through which God contemplates Himself. Each immutable entity that is brought into existence is unique unto itself on account of its particular ability to receive God's manifestation, which the school of Ibn ʿArabī refers to as its "preparedness" (*istiʿdād*). Thus, because the immutable entities are specific objects of God's knowledge, His knowledge of them is His knowledge of Himself, but in a particular, delimited fashion.

The school of Ibn ʿArabī maintains that the immutable entities, in their state as existentialized loci of God's manifestation, can only provide them with a means to explain how the cosmos is nothing other than an unfolding of God's self-knowledge when the role of God's names are brought into the discussion, another key element in the thought of the school of Ibn ʿArabī. Strictly speaking, the divine names do not have a direct philosophical equivalent, rooted as they are in the discipline of Islamic theology.[18]

For medieval Jewish, Christian, and Islamic thought the nature of God's names is a common and vexing problem. How can we say, as scripture does, that God has names

16 See Rustom, "Is Ibn al-ʿArabī's Ontology Pantheistic?", *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* 2 (2006): 58-59.

17 See Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 81.

18 See Rustom, *The Triumph of Mercy*, chapter 3.

which assign a type of "personality" to Him, although He is entirely unlike anything we can know? One common way of speaking of the divine names in classical Islamic theology was to say that they inhered somehow in God's Essence (*qāʾima bi-dhātihi*), but not in a way that gave them independent ontological status such that they could be said to be superadded to It. For many medieval Muslim theologians, the objective ontological status of the divine names was therefore a given, even if their modality could not be easily understood or explained.

Ibn ʿArabī rejects this common type of picture of the divine names. He says that the divine names do not "inhere" in God's Essence in any fashion since they are not actually ontological entities. Rather, they are, technically speaking, relationships (*nisab*)[19] between what we can call the manifest face of the Essence of Exclusive Oneness and the loci of manifestation, that is, the existentiated immutable entities which "receive" particular modes of being or God's manifestation. In the writings of the school of Ibn ʿArabī, that face of the Essence of Exclusive Oneness that becomes manifest and thus reveals It is often referred to as the "Essence of Inclusive Oneness" (*al-dhāt al-wāḥidiyya*).

We speak of the Divine Essence or the Essence of Exclusive Oneness as having a manifest face in juxtaposition to Its non-manifest face, which always remains utterly unknown and hidden to everything other than It. Thus, the manifest face of the Essence of Exclusive Oneness is that aspect of the Divinity that enters into the realm of relativity. This means that what we normally call "God" is not, for the school of Ibn ʿArabī, God qua God at the level of the Essence of Exclusive Oneness. Rather, the term "God" as commonly understood in religion and philosophy is that face of the Essence of Exclusive Oneness that is turned to the cosmos, namely the Essence of Inclusive Oneness.

When the Essence of Exclusive Oneness existentiates the immutable entities, It manifests Itself to them in accordance with their own natures, as has already been mentioned. What come about through the concretization of the immutable entities are the divine names, that is, the relationships that obtain on account of the Essence of Exclusive Oneness's manifestation to the immutable entities, thereby bringing them out of a state of non-externalized contingency into a state of externalized contingency, or, put differently, from a state of relative nonexistence into a state of relative existence. Indeed, if it were not for these relationships, God as apprehensible would not be "God".[20] Notice also how carefully the terms are cast, such that neither the names nor the immutable entities are given absolute ontological status. At the same time, their relative reality assumes that they do take on some mode of existence.

By virtue of the fact that the divine names come about as a result of the Essence of Exclusive Oneness's manifestation, they are singularly responsible for making Its relationship to the cosmos known. Since the entire cosmos is nothing other than a conglomeration of the divine names as displayed through the existentiated immutable entities, each thing in the cosmic order points to the divine names, and, by extension, the divine qualities to which the names refer. One way to frame the picture is to say that the Essence of Exclusive Oneness is made manifest in the garment of the divine names and qualities.[21] Thus, all things in the cosmos reveal an aspect of the Essence of Exclusive Oneness by

19 See Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, IV: 294.

20 See Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 81.

21 See Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ*, I: 17. See also Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 85.

"naming" or pointing to aspects of Its manifest face, that is, the Essence of Inclusive Oneness. At the same time, the multiplicity of the Essence of Exclusive Oneness's manifestations does not imply any plurality in Its nature.[22]

Because the names are nonexistent entities, we cannot speak of any kind of multiplicity. Thus, the Essence of Exclusive Oneness is made manifest by that which is paradoxically nonexistent on the one hand, but which has existence in a relative sense on the other. This explains why Fakhr al-Dīn ʿIrāqī (d. 688/1289), the major poet and follower of Ibn ʿArabī, says that the divine names do not compromise God's Unity (at the level of the Essence of Exclusive Oneness) in any fashion, just as the waves of the sea do not make the sea a multiplicity. Rather, the waves, insofar as they are waves, are real, but since they belong to the sea and will inevitably ebb back into it, they do not have their own independent and abiding ontological status: "Many and disparate waves do not make the sea a multiplicity; no more do the names make the Named more than one."[23]

COSMOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

The school of Ibn ʿArabī employs a number of terms when speaking about the manner in which God qua Divine Essence reveals Itself. In this context, I will focus on the word "self-disclosure (*tajallī*)" since the structurally mythic ideas associated with the cosmology and anthropology of the school of Ibn ʿArabī are best presented with reference to it. The term "self-disclosure" (*tajallī*, derived from Q 7/148) is etymologically related to the idea of "illumination". Since God is identified with light in the Qurʾān (Q 24/35) and in the sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad, it became commonplace to speak of Him as being light, a fundamental insight out of which the influential philosopher and founder of the school of Illumination Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191) develops his philosophy. Thus, "self-disclosure" is a reflexive verbal noun which conveys the sense of God (qua Essence of Exclusive Oneness) disclosing Himself to Himself by displaying the intensity of His being or light to the "dark" and "contingent" immutable entities, that is, the objects of His knowledge. This bears some striking resemblances to the treatment of God's theophany that we find in John Scotus Eriugena (d. 877),[24] who translated and was influenced by the Neoplatonist works of pseudo-Dionysius.

The common imagery of the sun and its rays is particularly apt here, which is why it is often used to explain the relationship between God and the cosmos: although the sun is one, it has many rays which reveal aspects of the sun but which do not detract from its nature in any manner whatsoever, and which cannot be said to exist independent of it. Just as the rays of the sun illuminate the earth, so too do God's self-disclosures illuminate the cosmic order, revealing the presence of the divine Sun in each thing.

The significance of the term "self-disclosure" is made clear when we look to one of the Prophetic sayings which the school of Ibn ʿArabī commonly draws upon in order to explain why and how God brought about the cosmos, thus addressing the metaphysical problem, "why is there something rather than nothing?". This report, referred to as a sacred

22 See Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ*, I: 16.

23 Cited (with modifications) in Fakhr al-Dīn ʿIrāqī, *Divine Flashes*, translated by William Chittick and Peter Wilson, (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 78.

24 Useful treatments of Eriugena's thought can be found in Deirdre Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), chapter 4; Michael Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), chapter 2.

Muslim tradition, says that God was a Hidden Treasure who loved to be known, and, as a result of this desire to be known, He created the cosmos and all that is in it. We are told by Saʿīd al-Dīn Farghānī (d. 699/1300) that this desire on God's part to want to be known was a "fundamental inclination",[25] deeply rooted in His nature to gain a type of objectivised knowledge of Himself, since before creating the cosmos He only had a subjective knowledge of Himself. The cosmos thus becomes an objectivised reflection of God's self-knowledge in which God qua Essence of Exclusive Oneness can witness Himself qua Essence of Inclusive Oneness.[26] The jewels contained in this Hidden Treasure are nothing other than the immutable entities. The existentiation of these entities would thus present to God an externalized aspect of His total self-knowledge, which would not have been a possibility had He not existentiated them.

This desire for self-knowledge on the part of God is described as a type of "distress" on account of the immutable entities, though in other contexts Ibn ʿArabī also attributes this distress to the divine names. The immutable entities, as latent and non-existent objects of God's knowledge, "sought" their own existentation in the realm of relativity since they did not have existence in their state of fixity and nonexistentiation. It is important to note in this context that the Arabic word *wujūd* does not only mean "being," but also "finding". The account of the Hidden Treasure thus means that God qua being sought His own objectivised knowledge of Himself through the very objects of His own self-knowledge, and thus brought some of the objects of His knowledge into a relative state of "being" so that He could "find" Himself in them.

We now come upon one of the key cosmological themes which punctuates the thought of the school of Ibn ʿArabī and is a concept which also derives from a Prophetic saying, namely the Breath of the All-Merciful (*nafas al-raḥmān*).[27] In order to grant relief to the distress of the immutable entities, we are told, God "breathed out" or "exhaled",[28] thereby granting relief and hence mercy to the constriction within His self. This means that the underlying stuff of the cosmos is mercy, since it is the result of the Breath of the All-Merciful. From another perspective, the constriction within the divine self is, as we have seen, the result of a desire on the part of the Divine (qua Essence of Exclusive Oneness) to see Himself (qua Essence of Inclusive Oneness), which is tantamount to God objectivising His love for Himself. It is for this reason that Ibn ʿArabī describes the Breath of the All-Merciful as that which allows for God's self-love to come about: "The Breath of the All-Merciful made the cosmos manifest in order to release the property of love and relieve what the Lover found in Himself."[29] The love that motivated the All-Merciful to release His breath is, in the final analysis, the Hidden Treasure's desire to be "known", which is motivated by a fundamental self-love. We can speak of "desire" on the part of God qua Essence of Exclusive Oneness because of Its all-possibility, one mode of which is desire, and hence "self-negation".

In more philosophical terms, we can say that the breath is nothing other than the very externalization of the quiddities, which emerge

25 See Saʿīd al-Dīn Farghānī, *Muntahā al-madārik fī sharḥ Tāʾiyyat Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, edited by ʿĀ. I. al-Kayyālī, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2007), I: 18-19.

26 Ibid. I: 21.

27 For a discussion of this term, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 127-134; Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Ṣūfism of Ibn ʿArabī*, translated by Ralph Manheim, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 115-116 et passim.

28 See Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 112.

29 Cited in Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 131.

within and by virtue of being. This explains why the school of Ibn ʿArabī explicitly identifies the Breath of the All-Merciful with what is known as "expansive being" (*al-wujūd al-munbasiṭ*).[30] And since the Breath of the All-Merciful is to religious language what being is to philosophical language, the root of existence is nothing but mercy. Thus, since all things have come about through mercy, are engulfed in mercy, and are themselves instantiations of mercy, they experience nothing but mercy. Just as the breath marks the beginning in which the cosmos and its contents came about, so too is the end marked by the All-Merciful "inhaling" the objects of His self-knowledge, that is, when the quiddities return from their mode of relative existence to their original state of relative nonexistence. One of the implications of this position is that in their posthumous state, all people will eventually end up in mercy. Ibn ʿArabī defends this soteriological position on these grounds, as does Mullā Ṣadrā, who in many ways is very much a member of the school of Ibn ʿArabī.[31]

The question of God's originating the cosmos as a result of His seeking self-knowledge finds its perfect analogue in the human quest to seek self-knowledge. The school of Ibn ʿArabī's treatment of the idea of self-knowledge is informed by a well-known Prophetic saying, "He who knows himself, knows his Lord." Since human existence is nothing other than a delimited mode of God's being, that is, since the very substance of the human state is nothing but the self-disclosure of God, the act of gaining self-knowledge on the part of the human subject results in coming to know God in a more concrete and real way. From another perspective, it is God who comes to know Himself through the knowing human self. Mullā Ṣadrā thus identifies the human need to gain self-knowledge as being configured in the very nature of being. The key to gaining access to self-knowledge, which lies at the heart of Sufi praxis, is the remembrance of God (*dhikr*). By remembering God, one comes to know one's true self, since one returns to what one has always been:

> Since forgetfulness of God is the cause of forgetfulness of self, remembering the self will necessitate God's remembering the self, and God's remembering the self will itself necessitate the self's remembering itself: Remember Me and I will remember you (Q 2/152). God's remembering the self is identical with the self's existence, since God's knowledge is presential (ḥuḍūrī) with all things. Thus, he who does not have knowledge of self, his self does not have existence, since the self's existence is identical with light, presence, and perception.[32]

By virtue of the fact that one becomes more real and characterized by being, presence, and light the more one remembers God, and thus increases in self-knowledge, he who knows his self most will also come to know God most, since it is through him that God will come to know His objectivized self. This type of self-knowledge is actualized by the "Perfect Human" (*al-insān al-kāmil*), a term Ibn ʿArabī and others use to refer to anyone who has achieved self-realization.

In the school of Ibn ʿArabī there is an important cosmological doctrine that seems to have first been introduced by Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), Ibn ʿArabī's foremost disciple and step-son. This doctrine is referred to as the "Five Divine Presences"

30 Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī, *al-Tafsīr al-ṣūfī li-l-qurʾān (Iʿjāz al-bayān fī tàwīl umm al-qurʾān)*, edited by ʿA. A. ʿAṭāʾ, (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1969), 193. Hereafter, this work will simply be cited as *Iʿjāz*.

31 See Rustom, *The Triumph of Mercy*, chapters 6-7.

32 Ṣadrā, *Risāla-yi sih aṣl*, edited by S. H. Nasr, (Tehran: University of Tehran Press, 1961), 14.

(*al-ḥaḍrāt al-ilāhiyya al-khams*). According to this teaching, God's Presence, which accounts for all that there "is," is "there" in five different modes. The first of these is uncreated (the divine Presence); the next three are created (the spiritual, imaginal, and the sensory); and the last (the human) takes in the previous four Presences.[33] Earlier members of the school of Ibn ʿArabī do not usually associate the first Presence with God qua Essence of Exclusive Oneness.[34] Thus, above and beyond the first Presence we have God as He is to Himself, which corresponds to the Essence of Exclusive Oneness or what Muʾayyid al-Dīn Jandī (d. ca. 700/1300), the student of Qūnawī, calls the "Non-Entified Essence".[35] The first Presence corresponds to the level of the first delimitation of God, namely the Essence of Inclusive Oneness or what is known as the "First Entification", which corresponds to what we normally refer to as "God," i.e., the divinity that can be known. In general, other names for the second Presence (that is, the spiritual world), can be the "Muḥammadan Reality",[36] "Muḥammadan Spirit," "Highest Pen," "First Intellect," and "Divine Spirit".[37] The third Presence corresponds to a plane of existence that stands between the spiritual and the corporeal worlds, what is technically known as the "world of imagination" (*ʿālam al-khayāl*).[38] The fourth Presence is the corporeal world, or the world of matter. And the fifth Presence is the Perfect Human. The Perfect Human takes in all the other Presences because his Presence brings together all of the divine names in which God reveals Himself.

In the first Presence, God qua Essence of Inclusive Oneness contains all of the other Presences below it but in undifferentiated fashion (*mujmal*). As being becomes individuated within each Presence, it begins to become more differentiated (*mufaṣṣal*) and hence the relationships that begin to emerge between the Essence of Exclusive Oneness and the loci of God's self-disclosure begin to multiply. The multiplicity of relationships therefore means that the divine names become more widespread within each Presence. By the time we reach the fifth Presence, namely the Perfect Human, we have what was there in all of the Presences before it, but in completely differentiated form. This is why the Perfect Human is said to be a transcript of the cosmos[39] and the locus for the disclosure of the divine name "Allāh".[40] Unlike all of the other divine names which denote specific aspects of the Essence of Inclusive Oneness, the name Allāh is technically known as an all-gathering name (*ism jāmiʿ*), since it brings together all of the other divine names present in the cosmos. Since the Perfect Human embodies the all-gathering name "Allāh," his Presence is the most all-gathering Presence. The Perfect Human is therefore the mirror image of God (qua Essence of Inclusive Oneness), and is described as being a Presence unto himself since he manifests, in being's deployed and differentiated state, the fullness of being, and, hence, the fullness of God's objectivised self-knowledge.

If being in its undifferentiated state contains every perfection, goodness, and beauty in potentiality, then the same holds true for

33 Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences: From al-Qūnawī to al-Qayṣarī", *Muslim World* 72 (1982): 124.

34 Ibid. 122. Cf. Shabistarī's poem cited earlier in the present article.

35 Muʾayyid al-Dīn Jandī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, edited by S. J. Āshtiyānī, (Mashhad: Dānishgāh-i Mashhad, 1982), 707.

36 Rustom, "The Cosmology of the Muhammadan Reality," *Ishraq: Islamic Philosophy Yearbook* 4 (2013): 540-545.

37 ʿAbd al-Karīm Jīlī, *al-Insān al-kāmil*, (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Tārīkh al-ʿArabī, 2000), 153.

38 For the world of imagination, see, inter alia, Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 115-118.

39 See Qūnawī, *Iʿjāz*, 106.

40 Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart*, 144-147.

its differentiated state, the Perfect Human, who contains every perfection, goodness, and beauty in actuality. It is for this reason that the Chinese Sufi figure Liu Zhi (b. ca. 1081/1670) describes the Perfect Human, who in Chinese is called "The Human Ultimate," as "the great completion equipped with every beauty".[41] In accordance with the well-known Prophetic saying, "God is beautiful, and He loves beauty," the school of Ibn ʿArabī, much like Plotinus (d. 270), maintains that the full actualization of the human state is nothing other than to live a life of virtue and beauty. Since the Perfect Human best embodies the differentiated nature of being, thus acting as a mirror in which God qua Essence of Exclusive Oneness can witness Himself qua Essence of Inclusive Oneness, He looks upon the Perfect Human and sees a crystalline reflection of the objects of His own love: the beautiful jewels contained within the Hidden Treasure.

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41 Cited in Sachiko Murata, William Chittick, and Tu Weiming, *The Sage Learning of Liu Zhi: Islamic Thought in Confucian Terms*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), 135.

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