The spiritual ascension: Ibn ‘Arabī and the Mi‘rāj

. Pt. 2

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THE SPIRITUAL ASCENSION: IBN 'ARABI AND THE MI'RAJ
PART II

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The scriptural accounts of the Ascension (mi'raj) of Muhammad provided a comprehensive symbolic representation of man's spiritual development for later traditions of Islamic thought. The creative adaptation of those materials by the famous mystical thinker Ibn 'Arabi (1165-1240), reflecting the full range of his metaphysical-theological insights and practical spiritual concerns, influenced many subsequent Islamic literary and philosophic movements. This study of his major Mi'raj narratives (focusing on a revealing autobiographical version of his own spiritual journey) should also interest students of comparative mysticism, philosophy and religion from other "Oriental" traditions.

Part I of this study appeared in JAOS 107.4. Part II concludes the article.

[IV-F. Aaron and the Fifth Heaven]117

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),"

117 III, p. 349.2-15. It is noteworthy that the topics discussed here are not mentioned at all in Ibn 'Arabi's parallel treatments of the Ascension. The brief corresponding sections of the Mi'raj narratives in both the K. al-Isri'i (pp. 23-24) and the R. al-Anwiir (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" (ruháníya) of this sphere. The account of this stage in chapter 167 of the Futuhat (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 greater detail in the chapters on Aaron and Moses in the Faṣūṣ (pp. 191-213).

118 al-wāritih 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"; this is still another allusion to Ibn 'Arabi's unique status as the "Seal of Muhammadan Sainthood." (See the similar on to explain how he became both a prophet (nabī) and also a lawgiving Messenger (rasūl) participating in the revelation (waḥy) 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, 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): '... do not cause (our) enemies to greeting by Idris at the beginning of section IV-E, n. III above.)

119 I.e., Ibn 'Arabi's question (and implicit criticism) concerns the relative evaluation of that spiritual state, not the reality of that experience of "annihilation in God" (fanā') itself. See his remarks in the following section (IV-G) on the necessity of fanā' at a certain point on the path, in regard to Moses' initiatic "death" (sā'qa) on Mt. Sinai, and his use of a similar Arabic term (afnā') to describe a decisive phase in his own spiritual development, in the passage from the K. al-Isrā' translated in the Appendix below (n. 207). More generally, the contrast between the lower, "immature" state of those "Knowers" (ārifūn) who deny the reality of this world, and the station of the wāritihun (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-Isrā'.
gloat over me!' (7:151). Thus you posited their having a certain power (over you in the 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 to 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 (external) 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 (tajalti) of the Truly Real, for whoever really knows the Truly Real. So where are you going? It is only a reminder to the worlds (81:26–27) of the way things are!"

Perfection is nothing but its (or 'His') existence, So whoever misses it is not the perfect one. . . .

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140 See the longer discussion of the inner meaning of this incident, from a very different standpoint, at the beginning of the chapter on Aaron in the Fuṣūṣ (pp. 191ff.; Beesly, pp. 243ff.).

141 kawnuhu: the term kawn usually refers to the engendered, created state of being (translated as "existence" here), so the most obvious meaning in this context is to the external "world" or whole manifest "universe" (al-ālam). But as so frequently in Ibn 'Arabī, the ambiguous pronouns in this verse could also be taken, without any real contradiction, to refer either to God (i.e., al-Haqq, the Truly Real) or even to the human "observer"—i.e., to man in his ultimate reality as the "Perfect Man," which may well be what is indicated by the "perfect one" (al-kāmil) at the end.

142 The concluding, untranslated lines (349.13–14) allude to the well-known dangers and illusions involved in taking the ecstatic experience of "extinction" (fanā') 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 is amplified and repeated in Ibn 'Arabī's following encounter with Moses (section IV-G) and in the passage translated in the Appendix. Although the subject of Aaron's remark is a constantly repeated theme in Ibn 'Arabī's writing, it should be added that those dangers and the ultimate superiority of the saints' subsequent "enlightened abiding" (baqā') in the

[IV-G. Moses and the Sixth Heaven]

[Ibn 'Arabī begins his discussion with Moses by thanking him for his having insisted that Muhammad—during the final, descending stage of his Miḥraj—return to ask God to reduce the number of daily prayers prescribed for his community. Moses replies

143 III, pp. 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 'Arabī uses the Koranic account of the transformations of Moses' staff (20:17–21) to illustrate some of the basic principles of his ontology, especially the relation between the unchanging noetic "realities" (haqā'iq) or permanent "individual entities" (a'yān) 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-İsrā (pp. 25–28), on the other hand, is devoted to entirely different subjects: Moses first stresses the differences between the ārif (the "mystic" who publicly speaks of his spiritual discoveries), and the wārith (the Prophetic "heir" or true "Muhammadan" [al-muhammadī]), 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 (irāḍ)—Ibn 'Arabī described in section III in Part I, that which is outwardly indistinguishable from the life of "ordinary people." In the K. al-İsrā, 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 outwardly normal life in this world, for the completion and perfection of that voyage.

144 This famous story is included in the long hadīth al-İsrā (from Muslim: see n. 38 above) given by Ibn 'Arabī at the beginning of this chapter (at III, 342.20–27, an untranslated part of section II). It also appears, with minor variations, in many of the other canonical hadīth concerning the Miḥraj. 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.
that "this is a benefit of knowledge (reached through) direct experience (dhawq)," 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." A Moses responds that "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." But you requested the vision (of 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 first to ten and then to 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).

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. (Cf. Joseph's similar insistence on the indispensable role of direct personal experience, as opposed to what can be gained by mental reflection or purely imaginative participation, at n. 108 in Part I.) "Immediate contact" (mubāshara: 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).

This interpretation of the Koranic verses (28:29ff.)—according to which Moses discovered the burning bush only "accidentally," while seeking fire to warm his family—is amplified in chapter 366 (III, p. 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)."

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

Repeating 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 while the Messenger of God said that 'not one of you will see His Lord until he dies'!" 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' (7:143). Then I saw Him in my 'state of being stunned'."

I said: "While (you were) dead?"
He replied: "While (I was) dead."
[...]
He said: "... So I did not see God until I had died. It was then that I 'awakened', so that

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.'"

A paraphrase of a famous hadith recorded by both Muslim (K. al-fitān, 95) and Tirmidhī (fitān, 56); several of the canonical hadith collections contain specific sections concerning the "vision of God" (ru'yat Allāh) in the next life. For Ibn `Arabi's broader understanding of this question, both in the eschatalogical context and as prefigured in the inspired spiritual visions of the prophets and saints—which follows from their initiatic "death" to this world and concomitant "resurrection"—see, among others, chapter 302 (III, 12-13); ch. 351 (III, 223); ch. 369 (III, 388-99); and ch. 73, questions 62, 67, 71 (II, 82, 84, 86).

Or "my (initiatic) 'death' (sa'āqīl)"—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 employing this term—which originally 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 (fanā)" in the Self-manifestation (iqālaTl) of the divine Lordship. This definition is from his K. Ḥiṣālī/l af-Sā'īfa (item no. 131; p. 45 in the translation by R. T. Harris, Journal of the Muḥyiddīn Ibn `Arabi Society 111, 1984); see also the more detailed discussion in Mu'jam, pp. 695-96.

In the untranslated lines here (III, 349.23-25), Ibn `Arabi alludes to a saying of the Prophet expressing uncertainty as to whether Moses' mystical "death" or "stunning" (sa'īqa: explained in preceding note) exempted him from the similar fate which is promised more generally at the "blowing of the Trumpet" on the Day of Resurrection: "... then those who are in the heavens and on the earth are thunderstruck [sa'īqa], except for whoever God wishes..." (39.68). "So leave them until they meet their Day, in which they will be thunderstruck [yas'u:aqīn]" (52.45). Moses replies that he was indeed rewarded with the anticipatory experience of that
I knew Who I saw. And it was because of that that I said 'I have returned to you' (7:143), since I did not return to anyone but Him."

Then I said to him: "You are among the group of those who know God," 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." 154

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' 155 was changed and I saw Him, then I knew the 'verse apparently alluded to here (83:15) is as follows:

"...who are veiled..."

...and therefore if they were returned (to this world, as I was,) they would say the same thing as we did."

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 "Knower of [or through] God" (al-'ulamā' bi-Allāh) mentioned at n. 153 and n. 161 below.

The verse apparently alluded to here (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 Mishkāt, such as no. 18 and no. 66 (Niche, pp. 41-43, 92-93). It is noteworthy that among the spiritual realizations flowing from Ibn 'Arabi's culminating revelation enumerated at the end of this chapter (section IV-I) is his seeing "that God is what is worshipped in every object of worship, from behind the veil of (each particular) form." (See also Mu'jam, pp. 313-18.)

al-Haqq, which could equally be translated as "the Truth" or simply "God." This phrase is close in form to the celebrated Sufi saying, attributed sometimes to Muhammad and sometimes to the Imam 'Ali: "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!"

See note 155 above on the meaning of mawā'in. Here Ibn 'Arabi is almost certainly referring to the "dwelling" in Paradise of the "Dune of Vision (of God)" (kaṭhīb al-ru'ya) mentioned in a famous hadith qudsi which he discusses at length in chapter 65 (II, 317-22) and elsewhere in the Futūḥāt.
I said: “Then if death were the ‘dwelling’ of the vision of God, every dead person would see him—but God has described him (at 83:15) as being ‘veiled’ from seeing Him?”

He said: “Yes, those are ‘the ones who are veiled’ from the knowledge that what (they see) is God.” 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 7:143) and mentioned about Himself that ‘He manifested Himself to the Mountain’ (7:143). [So how do these theophanies differ?]”

Then he replied: “Nothing resists His Self-manifestation; therefore the particular condition (ḥāl) necessarily changes [according to the ‘locus’ of each theophany].

Hence for the mountain, being ‘crushed flat’ was like Moses’ being ‘stunned’: God says ‘Moses’ (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.”

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. And indeed you will never take (such knowledge) except to the extent of your predisposition (isti’dād). 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. 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!”

For He only sent us to call you all to Him, not to call you to us. (His Message) is a...
to questions about certain Koranic passages concerning him. Here, for example, Abraham explains that his apparently polytheistic remarks reported at 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 "paradisiac" realm of the highest spheres, as the Heart of the voyager. For the Heart—as he makes clear in the much longer discussions at this point in his K. al-Isrā' and in chapter 167 of the Futūḥāt—is ultimately the "site" of the whole journey.

168 In the corresponding part of chapter 167 (Alchimie, pp. 37-40), 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 (of the Perfect Man) 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 Ghazālī's Mizān al-'Amal, and most famous in the form of the tale of the "Greek and Chinese artists" at the beginning of Rāmāḍ's Masnavī—of the royal "contest" between a marvelous artist (whose painting is the world) and a sage whose polished "mirror" (the soul of the 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-Isrā' (pp. 28-34) is far too rich and complex even to summarize here. There, after evoking the highest stages of the nocturnal journey of Muhammad and the true Knowers (pp. 29-30), Ibn 'Arabi makes entry into this "House" dependent on attainment of the highest spiritual station, the "Station of Yathrib" (see 32:13 and Futūḥāt, 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). Since for Ibn 'Arabi this is precisely the "Muhammadan Station" (discussed in section IV-I below), the rest of this passage in the K. al-Isrā' (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 manifold superiority of those who have been granted that supreme attainment. These comparisons of other prophets or saints with Muhammad
. . . Then I saw the Inhabited House169 (52:4), and suddenly there was my Heart—and there were the angels who “enter It every day!”170 The Truly Real manifests Himself to (the Heart), which (alone) en-

(e.g., at p. 33) also highlight the essential contrast between the usual condition of those who must “work” their way gradually toward spiritual perfection, drawn by divine love (mahabbah) and the far rarer state of those who—like Ibn `Arabi himself—benefit from the unique grace of divine “preference” (ilhār), who are suddenly “pulled” (majdhub) by God into the highest stages of realization. 

169 al-Bayr al-Ma'mar: the “inhabitants” of this mysterious celestial site—often identified with the “Furthest Place of Worship” (al-masjid al-aqṣā) mentioned in the Koran as the culmination of the Prophet's nocturnal voyage (17:1)—are apparently the angels mentioned in various hadith describing it (see following note). Its location “with Abraham,” mentioned in several hadith outlining the Mi'raj (including the hadith al-isrā' cited earlier by Ibn `Arabi, at III, 341.29–34), seems connected with his role as first builder of the Kaaba, the earthly Temple (al-bayr). 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 Futūḥat (I, 120) and the further references in Mu'jam, pp. 222–28. The hadith on this subject (see Wensinck IV, pp. 353–54) are for the most part the same as those concerning the Mi'raj in general (see n. 38 above).

170 The hadith of Anas b. Mālik (Muslim, Imān, 259) = bāb al-isrā', I) followed by Ibn `Arabi in section II in Part I (III, 341.29–34) states that: “70,000 angels enter It each day, and they do not return there.” The corresponding hadith in Bukhārī (bad' al-khalq, 6, also from Anas, but with slightly different isnād), has Gabriel add that the 70,000 angels “pray there every day” and that “when they leave they do not return.”

Here—where the sense of this House as the “Heart” is his primary concern—Ibn `Arabi clearly implies an inner connection between these “70,000 angels” and the “70,000 veils” mentioned in another, even more famous hadith (see following notes), where both numbers are symbolic 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 same 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.”

[IV-I. The “Lotus of the Limit” and the Culminating Revelation]174 

171 (As usual, al-Haqq and the corresponding pronouns 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 concerning “the Heart of My servant” already mentioned at notes 7, 30, 37, etc. in Part I.

172 The rest of this paragraph partially cites a celebrated hadith [one of the main subjects of Ghazālī’s famous Maškāt al-Anwār; see the recent translation by R. Deladrière, Le Tabernacle des Lumières, Paris, 1981], usually given according to the version recorded in Ibn Māja, 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, Imān, 291 cites a similar hadith which however mentions only 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”; in ch. 73, question 115 (II, 110), on the meaning of “God’s Face”; and in his Kitāb al-Tajalliyat (ed. O. Yahya, Beirut, 1967), VI, 728. (Other discussions, usually mentioning the different versions of this hadith, can be found in the Futūḥat at II, 80, 460, 488, 542, 554; III, 212, 216, 289; and IV, 72.) Here, by choosing to mention the specific number 70,000—although the canonical hadith, as he himself mentions elsewhere, include several possible figures (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), such that both the 70,000 “veils” and “angels” are understood as symbolizing the infinite range of theophanies (tajalliyāt).

173 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 faqd al-aqdās and the “world of the Command,” ‘alam al-amr (which is the site of the final, purely noetic stages of the spiritual journey described in chapter 167).

174 III, 350.22–32 (translated in full). Although Ibn `Arabi’s earlier recounting of the Prophet’s Ascension (in section II,
So when I left (the Temple), I came to the Lotus-Tree of the Limit\textsuperscript{173} (53:14), and I halted amongst its lowest and its loftiest branches.\textsuperscript{174} Now “it was enveloped” (53:16) in the lights of (good) actions, and in the shelter of its branches were singing the birds of the spirits of those who perform (those) actions,\textsuperscript{175} since it is in the form of Man.\textsuperscript{176} As for the four rivers (flowing from its roots, as described in the hadith),\textsuperscript{177} they are the four kinds of divine knowledge “granted as a gift” (to man), which we mentioned in a

\textsuperscript{173} \textit{arwāh al-‘anīlūn}; 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 \textasciiacute;'Arabi’s synthesis of those materials in section II above; it may be connected with the mention in the same Koranic passage (53:15), that “\textit{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 (\textit{barzakh}, which is also a \textit{munīāh} or “limit” between the sensible and spiritual realms) more generally. In cosmological terms—e.g., in his discussion in chapter 167— Ibn \textasciiacute;'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).

\textsuperscript{174} \textit{alā nāsh‘at al-insān}; i.e., comprising all the same planes of being (\textit{nāsh‘a}) contained within the Perfect Man, both spiritual and bodily or material. The comprehensive metaphysical and spiritual equivalencies that this implies, especially the essential correspondence between the Perfect Man and the “Reality of Muhammad,” are elaborated in Ibn \textasciiacute;'Arabi’s own \textit{Shajarat al-Kawn} (“The Tree of Existence”; R.G., no. 666), also available in the translations mentioned at n. 11 above. See also the general cosmological references cited at n. 21.

\textsuperscript{175} Earlier in this chapter (Section II, at III, 341.35–342.5) Ibn \textasciiacute;'Arabi mentions the following hadith description (taken from Muslim, \textit{imān}, 264): “He saw four rivers flowing forth from its roots, two manifest rivers and two inner (spiritual) ones (\textit{bāţinān} . . . .”), and Gabriel points out that “the two inner ones are in the Garden (of Paradise), while the two manifest ones are the Nile and Euphrates.” Ibn \textasciiacute;'Arabi then goes on to explain that the two “external” (\textit{zāhir}i) 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 \textasciiacute;'Arabi’s usual interpretations of those and related symbols as different kinds or modalities of spiritual wisdom, see \textit{Mu\textasciiacute;jam}, pp. 1071–77.) In the corresponding section of chapter 167 (\textit{Alchimie}, pp. 109–11), however, he interprets these symbols more purely as referring to a single great River (understood as the Qur\textasciiacute;ān, in the universal sense of the noetic Reality of Muhammad and the \textit{Umm al-Ki\textasciiacute;āb})—i.e., the River of Life—and three smaller rivers (i.e., the Torah, Psalms and Gospels) emerging from it, along with the smaller streams of the other revealed Books (\textit{sūhāf}) mentioned in the Koran.
part (juz") we called "the levels of the forms of knowledge given freely (by God)." 180

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

180 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. According to O. 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, 157-72 (chapters 16-21), III, 501-5 (ch. 380), and IV, 37-38 (ch. 425).

181 mutakā'at tafṣīl al-ārīfīn: the obscure Koranic term rafraf, used at 55:77 to describe the "green couches" (or "meadows") of the dwellers of Paradise, is taken by Ibn 'Arabī (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" (53:13), stating that "he saw a green rafraf that had covered the horizon" (in Bukhārī, rafīrī rūḥat al-najm, from 'Abdallāh ibn 'Abbās).

The K. al-Isrā', which contains a long poetic section on "al-rafīrī al-ālāa" (pp. 45-49, immediately preceding the culminating "intimate dialogues" with God) gives a much clearer idea of the meaning of this symbol for Ibn 'Arabī. 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 (hadarārī)" (p. 53), until he reached the station "where 'bow' and 'where' disappear, and the secrets . . . [of the Union of God and the traveler] become clear." (p. 49).

182 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 'Arabī himself has become "Tree which is according to the state of Man" (n. 178). The "robe of honor" (khil'ā) here recalls the ceremony of Su'ūf "initiation" (the bestowal of the khirqa), except that here this royal garment symbolizes the spiritual station of the Prophet himself, the maqām muḥammadī Ibn 'Arabī attains below (at n. 186).

So I said: "O my God, the Signs (diyāt) are scattered!" But then 'He sent down upon me' 183 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!'" (3:84). Thus He gave me all the Signs in this Sign, 184 clarified the matter (i.e., of the eternal Reality of the "Qur'ān") for me, 185 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).

183 This is a Koranic term (anza/a 'alāa) usually referring to "descent" of divine Revelation to the prophetic Messengers (rusūl). For other passages where Ibn 'Arabī applies it more generally to divine inspirations received by the awliyyā', see Futuhāt II, 506; III, 94, 181; IV, 178. Judging from the context, the "scattering" 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 (i.e., God's "Signs in the souls and on the horizons." 41:53) that ordinarily distract us from a full awareness of the divine Unity. See the similar allusions to the "unity-in-multiplicity" of the prophets and their teachings at the beginning of the key passage from the K. al-Isrā' in the Appendix below.

184 Or verse, ḏiyya: since what was revealed to Ibn 'Arabī in this experience was no less than the inner meaning of the true eternal Qur'ān—which is also the "Reality of Muhammad"—encompassing all knowledge (including the sources/realities of all the revealed Books), this phrase could also be read as "all the verses in that one verse." Much of the latter part of the K. al-Isrā' (especially pp. 83-92) is particularly devoted to Ibn 'Arabī'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.

185 garraba 'alayya al-amr: this translation (taking amr in its most general sense) assumes Ibn 'Arabī is referring to his experience of the full eternal reality of the Qur'ān (the Umm al-Kiābā) which is detailed in much of the K. al-Isrā'. 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 'Arabī describes elsewhere in the Futuhāt as the "Station of Proximity" (maqām al-qurba)
characterizing the highest group of saints, the “solitary ones” (af"rād); see Mu’jam, pp. 936–38; Ibn ‘Arabi’s K. al-Qurba (Rasā’il I, no. 6); Futuḥāt, chapter 161 (II, 260–62); and further detailed references in Sceau (index s.v.).

188 Literally, that I was “Muhammad-like in (my spiritual) station” (Muḥammadī al-maqām), i.e., marked by Muhammad’s primordial spiritual condition of “all-comprehensiveness” (jamʿiyat), encompassing the eternal Realities of all the prophets (the majmūʾ or “totality”) mentioned in the preceding sentence. See the similar experiences of the unity of all the prophets (and their spiritual knowledge and revelations) in Muhammad (and in Ibn ‘Arabi himself) summarized in the passage from the K. al-īrād translated in the Appendix, and carefully elaborated throughout the Futuḥāt al-Ḥikam.

For details on Ibn ‘Arabi’s conception of the maqām muḥammadī, see Mu’jam, pp. 1191–1201 and especially Sceau, 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 Futuḥāt and other works concerning Ibn ‘Arabi’s self-conception as “Seal of Muhammadan Prophecy.”

189 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) limited to the line of lawgiving divine messengers (rasuul/mursalān). For Ibn ‘Arabi’s conception of the spiritual insight of the saints as “mediated” or “inherited” through one or more of the earlier prophetic messengers, see chapter 14 of the Futuḥāt (I, 149–51/O.Y. III, 357–62), plus detailed references in Mu’jam, pp. 1191–1201 and Sceau, ch. V and IX.

188 Jawaḥīr al-ḥikam: the famous hadith paraphrased in this sentence (see Bukhari, taʾbir, 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” (ḥikam) making up the “Muhammadan Reality.” That conception is illustrated at length in his treatment of the other prophets (in relation to Muhammad) in the Futuḥāt al-Ḥikam, and it is likewise assumed in his description of a similar revelatory experience in the Appendix below. The rest of the hadith (translated here from al-Bukhārī) is also important here in relation to the “treasuries” specially favored by six things with which the messenger of no (other) community189 was specially favored. Therefore (Muhammad’s) Mission is universal, because of the general nature of his six aspects:190 from whatever direction you come, you will find only the Light of Muhammad191 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.192

Now when that happened to me I exclaimed: “Enough, enough!”193 My (bodily) elements are filled up, and my place cannot contain me!,” and through that (inspiration) God removed from me my contingent dimension.194 Thus I attained in this nocturnal of divine knowledge enumerated at the end of this section: “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. . . .”

190 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).

191 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 four cardinal points, plus the vertical axis) implicitly contain all possible spatial orientations, and thereby again allude to the universality of the Prophet’s Reality and divine mission.

192 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).

193 We have taken the most literal and obvious meaning. However, this phrase (ḥaṣbi) is also contained in two Koranic verses (39:38; 9:129): “ . . . Say: ‘God is enough for me’ (ḥaṣbi Allāh). . . .” and both verses go on to stress the importance of “absolute trust” in God (taawakkul), the inessential subject of this chapter (n. 23 above).

194 ‘Imkān: i.e., everything (including the spatiality and corporeality explicitly mentioned in Ibn ‘Arabi’s exclamation here) which had previously “separated” him from God (the
journey the inner realities (ma'ānī) of all the Names, and I saw them all returning to One Subject195 and One Entity.196 that Subject was what I witnessed,197 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,"198 without a trace of lordship in me at all.

unique "Necessary," non-contingent Being) and thereby offered the possibility of 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). However, it was also this very "contingency" that made the spiritual journey possible in the first place: see Ibn 'Arabi's "Burāq of imkān" mentioned at IV-A, n. 84.

And "Object": Musammāt wāḥid— the same theological formula was already mentioned in the schematic discussion of the spiritual journey in section III (at n. 61). As indicated there, the "transcendent Unity of the Named (divine Reality)" (abādāyat al-musammā) is again mentioned at the end of this section (354.15–16), in the long list of the kinds of spiritual knowledge Ibn 'Arabi "saw" within this experience. There, as throughout his works, he mentions the association of this point (as an explicit thesis or "doctrine") with the famous Andalusian Sufi Ibn al-Qasī and his book Khāf al-Na'īsayn.

Or "One Eye" (ayn wāḥida): 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.

197 mashhādī: this phrase and the following one taken together carefully sum up the ineffable paradox of this experiential realization of divine Unicity—the very core insight 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 in purely conceptual terms as a logical "system"). The first phrase, taken in separation, states the thesis commonly known as wahdāt al-shuhūd ("unity of witnessing"), and the second the position of wahdāt al-wujūd ("unity of being")—while their combination alone expresses the experience and fundamental reality Ibn 'Arabi attempts to convey here (and in the passage translated in the Appendix below). Note the similar citation in the K. al-Isrā', pp. 65–66: "So beware and don't imagine that my conjunction (ittisāl) with [the highest divine Presence] was one of identity of essence (inmiyāt) . . . " etc.

198 'abd maḥfīq: this formulation (or the related one of 'abd khālīs), used fairly frequently by Ibn 'Arabi, refers to those rare Knowers who have become "wholly devoted" (mukhlīṣīn)

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

The list of some 69 kinds of knowledge associated with this particular spiritual stage differs from the similar listings in each of the other chapters on the manāzīl in that it contains a number of Ibn 'Arabi's most fundamental-metaphysical theses. The following items may be taken as representative.]

As Ibn 'Arabi explains in chapter 29 (O.Y. III, pp. 228–29): "Thus every servant of God pays attention to one [or more] of the creatures who has a right (baqa'ī, 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 (sülūk: like Satan at 15:42, etc.) over him, so that he cannot be a pure servant, wholly devoted to God." In a revealing autobiographical aside, he 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 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 (any) taste of LORDSHIP (rubūḥiya)." See also Mūfjam, pp. 775–68 (i 'abd, 'ubūdiya, and related concepts).

199 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 insights enumerated in this chapter (III, 351–54). (This procedure is apparently unique among the many otherwise similar listings that conclude each of the other chapters in the section on the spiritual stations, the "fasāl al-manāzīl.") The "opening of the treasuries" here is a direct allusion to the conclusion of the famous hadith concerning the special universality of the Prophet's revealed knowledge discussed in n. 188 above.

200 These "kinds of knowledge" are respectively numbers 12, 15, 22, 25, 28, 45 and 53 in this list. Ibn 'Arabi's
... 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-Ḥaqiq) can only be in (external) reality (fi al-fiʿl) through the form of the creature (al-khalqi), and that the creature can only be there (in reality) through the form of God. So this circularity... is what actually exists (al-wāqiʿ) 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 (risāla) 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 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 ('unwān) of the other world and a symbolization (darb mithāl) of it, and that the status (ḥukm) of what is in this world is more complete and more perfect in the other world.

[Appendix: A Corresponding Passage in the Kitāb al-Isrāʾ]

[As mentioned in the introduction, this relatively early work—composed in Fez in the year 594, according to Ibn ʿArabi's colophon (p. 92)—contains a fascinating summary of what is almost certainly the same experience of the culminating revelation of the "Muhammadan Station" described in the immediately preceding passage from chapter 367. The rest of the K. al-Isrāʾ is essentially a detailed poetic amplification and illustration of the comprehensive spiritual insight flowing from this decisive realization.

In fact, this succinct account near the beginning of that book emphasizes all the essential features of this "revelation," key themes which can subsequently be traced throughout Ibn ʿArabi's writings: (1) the inner realization of the fundamental unity of the prophetic messengers and their Message; (2) his initial experience of this inspiration as flowing from a providential divine "attraction" (jadhaba) involving the temporary "annihilation" (fanāʾ) of his own ego and his "submersion" in God; (3) the divine "gift" (wahi) of the totality of spiritual wisdom and "secrets" brought by the different prophets; (4) the realization of this wisdom in a unique state of "union" with God; (5) a subsequent, lasting stage of ontological and spiritual "discrimination" in which he is aware of the apparent "separation" between himself and God, but now perceived as a transformed recognition of the Whole within which those two, equally indispensable aspects of Being coexist; and (6) his "return" to the world, involving the obligation to teach and convey the transforming insight he has obtained to those rare individuals capable of assimilating it.

In this work the incident in question is recounted in the lowest heaven, at the very beginning of the heavenly ascension, after Ibn ʿArabi—or rather the spiritual "voyager" (ṣāliḥik) who is the autobiographical protagonist of this Ascension—has first encountered the "innermost being of the spiritual reality" (sīr rūḥānīya) of Adam. The voyager's "dearest friend" then introduces him to a masterly "Teacher" and "Shaykh"—a thinly disguised symbol of Muhammad—who greets him warmly and with great respect, "explaining to his companions" (i.e., the other

201 Pp. 12-14: the section translated here corresponds specifically to 13.14-14.10 (with omissions indicated below).
prophets and messengers) that "this man is from my people."²⁰³ As a result, "they accepted me among the group of their brothers and supporters." This sets the stage for the traveler's dialogue with this Master...]

... He said: "What was it made you consider us as many?²²⁴

I said: "Precisely (the different scriptures and teachings) we took (from you)."

[Then the voyager asks the Shaykh for some further wisdom or benefit... ]

He replied: "Take for yourself 'May God open your breast,'²²⁵ illumine your soul and increase your charity and your right action!²²⁶

opening chapter of the Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam), who for Ibn 'Arabī is ultimately none other than the all-encompassing "Reality of Muhammad."

²⁰³ min ahlī: the statement can be understood on several levels at once, as a reference to Ibn 'Arabī's name (which is partially identical with the Prophet's); to his belonging to the historical Muslim community; to his status as "Seal of Muhammadan Sainthood" (although this self-conception may not have been fully developed at this time); and to his being among the "people of the (Prophet's) House" (ahl al-bayt), who are the Prophet's true spiritual heirs. For his distinctive understanding of the inner meaning of "ahl al-bayt" (as alluded to in the Koran 33:33, and in several important hadith, see chapter 29 of the Futūḥāt (O.Y. III, 227–42), entirely devoted to this subject and the related spiritual "secrets" of Salmān.

²⁰⁴ i.e., what caused you to divide the prophets and consider them as separate (and potentially conflicting) realities?

²⁰⁵ An allusion to several Koranic verses—including the following: "So whoever God wishes to guide rightly, He opens his breast to surrender [islām]..." (6:125), and "Now is he whose breast God has opened to surrender, so that he is (following) a Light from His Lord..." (39:22)—which Ibn 'Arabī consistently understands as references to the mysterious elements of divine grace and natural "predisposition" underlying each individual's inner capacity and degree of spiritual realization. The classic instance of this preferential divine "election" (ithār) or "compelling attraction" (jadhb), as Abraham points out later in this book (pp. 32–33), is of course Muhammad—alluding to the verses "Did We not open for you your breast...?" (94:1ff.).

²⁰⁶ i.e., your ḥażān—defined in the famous hadith "... to worship God as though you see Him; and even if you do not see Him, He sees you." (See Bukhārī, sawm 20, 49, 50, ḥudūd 42, ḥizām 5, tāmānā 9; additional references in Wensinck III, 347.)

(So) God (al-Ḥaqq) seized me and He annihilated my (awareness) of myself.²²⁷ Then after that He bestowed everything upon me, in order to make me bear everything.²²⁸ So when he had entrusted me with (all) His Wisdom²²⁹ and made me aware of every inner secret and (particular) wisdom, He returned me to myself. And (thus) He made what had been (imposed) upon me (to be) from me²³⁰ and right there with me: He took me to be His intimate friend

²²⁷ The verb translated here as "seized," jadhaba, is a technical Sufi term referring to those rare ecstatic natures which are naturally "captivated" or "attracted" by God with relatively little (outwardly apparent) effort or need to pass through the many stages of the Path.

²²⁸ As a Sufi technical term, the notion of fansū (translated here as "annihilation") refers in fact to an inner shift in awareness away from something (in this case, the ego) caused by a concomitant "absorption" or "immersion" in something else (in this case, God). (See Ibn 'Arabī's own more detailed technical explanation of this transformation throughout section III above, and the clarification of some common illusions and misunderstandings concerning it in his conversations with Aaron and Moses, in section IV-F and IV-G.)

²²⁹ "Everything" here translates al-kull—i.e., the "Whole," all of reality, and not a great many "things."

Our translation of the last half of this sentence assumes that it is an allusion to the famous verse concerning the divine "Trust" (amānā)—which for Ibn 'Arabī (and many earlier Sufis) is a reference to man's true inner nature as the "Perfect Man" potentially mirroring and realizing all the realms of being and divine Names (i.e., "everything"), a situation which is not shared by any of the other creatures, whether higher or lower. "Verily we offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, yet they declined to bear it and were afraid of it—but man (al-insān) bore it..." (33:72). (The verb "entrusted" (awda'a) in the following sentences conveys the same idea of something handed over for stewardship and safekeeping.)

²³⁰ Literally, His "Wisdoms" (ḥikam), the divine "Words" which for Ibn 'Arabī are embodied above all in the "inner secrets" or "inmost being" (ṣirr) of each of the prophets: cf. the elaborate illustration of this insight in the titles and schematic conception underlying his Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam.

²³¹ The complex metaphysical conception underlying this formulation is elaborated in much greater detail in the introductory part of chapter 367 (III, p. 344; = section III above) schematically outlining (in ontological terms) the "nocturnal (spiritual) voyages" of the saints. Ordinarily we tend to view our experience (and its sources, to use Ibn...
and chose me specially to be His nocturnal companion." He made His Throne to be a couch for me, the Kingdom a servant for me, and the King to be a prince (subordinate) to me.

"Arabi's language, in the divine Names) as something "outside" and separate, imposed "upon" ("alqāb) us rather than flowing "from" within (min) us. It is only at this moment of enlightenment that the voyager can actually realize that his names are the "divine Names" and their "shadows" (at the same time).

"Chose me specially" translates the verb ʿīṣāfā, which is applied in a number of verses of the Koran primarily to the various prophets (and also Mary), and in popular usage especially to the Prophet (al-ʿMustafā).

The word samīr ("nocturnal companion") has several important nuances that cannot be conveyed in a single English expression: it specifically implies a companion in conversation or dialogue—as movingly portrayed in Ibn ʿArabi's "intimate dialogues with God" (munājāt) later in the K. al-ʿIrāq (pp. 50-82)—and the specification of this companionship "at night" (like the nocturnal journey, ʿarsh, itself) suggests both its particular intimacy and the fact that it is "hidden" from the perception of the outside world.

The allusions here are exceptionally complex, even for Ibn ʿArabi. That the divine "Throne" (ʿarsīh) can become the Knower's "couch" (sārīṭ) reflects the verses and hadith connecting it with the Heart (qalb) which is the inner reality of Man: see notes 7, 30, 37 in Part I and 168-72 above, as well as the extensive references in Mu'jam, pp. 791-803 and 916-21. Here the intimacy of the nuptial sārīṭ—which is mentioned (in the plural) in several descriptions of Paradise in the Koran—most likely refers specifically to 56:10-16; where it characterizes the highest state of spiritual perfection realized by "those drawn close to God" (al-μuqarrabūn) and "those who arrive in advance" (al-sāhīqūn). "And those who arrive first, those who arrive first, they are the ones drawn near, in the Gardens of bliss: a group of the first ones and a few of the later ones, on couches . . ." (Ibn ʿArabi also uses sārīṭ itself as a synonym for the Throne: see Mu'jam, pp. 579-80.)

The concluding phrases do not refer to the acquisition of any new, "godlike" powers; rather—following the rhetorical example of much earlier Sufi literature—they are simply an expression here of the inner identity of the Knower with the totality of the divine Names (i.e., "God," ʿAllāh) in this state of mystical union: that comprehensive dimension of the Divinity necessarily remains superior both to the "Kingdom" (mulk, the manifest world) and to the limited divine aspects represented by the Name "the King" (al-Mālik).

Thus I remained in that (state) for a period of time, unaware of anything comparable to myself among the (eternal individual) entities. Then next He divided me into two halves, and He made the (whole) thing into two things (i.e., "Lord" and "servant," or "Name" and "named"). And then He brought me (back) to Life and made me see, (so that) nothing veiled me from Him or distracted me (from Him). So I said: "This is I and not other-than-me!"

Thus the half was filled with love and longing for the (other) half, so I said: "O my God, why this shadow?"

211 al-ʿa'yān: here—since the voyager is speaking, as it were, from within the Divine nature—the particular realities or essences of each individual 'thing' (person, etc.) that are timelessly present within the divine Knowledge; see the discussion of this problematic technical term and further references in Mu'jam, pp. 831-39.

212 "Thing" here translates the expression "al-amr," which in this context refers to the complex reality subjectively experienced in this state first as "one" and then as "two-in-One" (and not as the absolute duality at the beginning of the journey). The paradoxical "non-dualistic" (and equally "non-monistic") inner nature of Man and divine Reality evoked here is perhaps the single most recurrent theme in all of Ibn ʿArabi's writings. (See, e.g., his longer explanations in section III of chapter 367 above.)
[His answer briefly evokes the mystery of the divine "Pen" and the particular conditions that finally gave (external) being—at the level of a temporal, material "shadow" of the Truly Real—to Ibn 'Arabi's eternal "individual entity" (Cayn).]

the divine-human unity. The same reality is expressed, from a cosmic, ontological perspective, in his famous conception of the "Breath of the Compassionate" (nafas al-Ra'uman: see Mu'jam, pp. 1063-67) and his equally frequent image, based on a celebrated hadith qudsi, of God as the "hidden Treasure" that "loves to be known" (see Mu'jam, pp. 983-87).

So now I am teaching what I learned and transmitting to these (disciples and readers) what I came to know... 218

218 An allusion to Ibn 'Arabi's nascent conception of his particular personal mission—since he stresses elsewhere that by no means all "those who return" from this journey are called to teach openly—with regard to this legacy, even if that awareness was not yet fully expressed in terms of his role as "Seal of the Muhammadan saints." (See detailed references at n. 13 in Part I.)

ABBREVIATIONS


Fusûs. Ibn 'Arabi. Fusûs al-İ̇ıkam, ed. A. Affifi. Cairo, 1346/1946. (All references to Part I) [See also English tr., Bezels.]

Futu'ah. Ibn 'Arabi. al-Futu'ah al-Makklya. Cairo (Bulaq), 1329 a.h., 4 volumes. (References are to volume number [1-IV], page and line number.) The ongoing critical edition by Osman Yahya is listed as "O.Y." below. [See also French tr. of chapter 167, Alchimie.]


Mishkât. Ibn 'Arabi. Kitâb Mishkât al-Anwâr fi mâ Ruwiyat an Allâh min al-Akhhâr. Aleppo, 1349/1927. (Hadith are indicated by numerical order.) [See also French tr., Niche.]


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