

# IBN ‘ARABĪ’S LETTER TO FAKHR AL-DĪN AL-RĀZĪ: A STUDY AND TRANSLATION\*

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## INTRODUCTION

A popular story tells us that one day the great theologian Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) decided to take the spiritual path. He thus went to the well-known Sufi master and founder of the Kubrawī order Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. 618/1221), and asked to be initiated into the Way. Kubrā received Rāzī and immediately put him into a *khalwa* or spiritual retreat with particular instructions on how to invoke the name of God. Rāzī went into the cell and undertook the rites assigned to him. After some time, the master entered the room and, with his powers of spiritual concentration, looked directly at Rāzī and began to extract all of his book learning from his soul. Since he could not accept that all of his knowledge be stripped away from him, Rāzī forced himself up and left the room.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of this incident and its relevant source materials, see Fritz Meier’s introduction in Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, *Die Fawā’iḥ al-ġamāl wa-fawātiḥ al-ġalāl* (ed. Fritz Meier; Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1957), 45–6. It is also retold in Michel Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean Without Shore: Ibn ‘Arabī, the Book, and the Law* (transl. David Streight; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 31.

It is highly likely that there was an actual encounter between Rāzī and Kubrā.<sup>2</sup> Yet there are so many legendary variations of the meeting that it becomes almost impossible to disentangle myth from reality. Despite this fact, these stories serve to indicate one thing most clearly: Rāzī, who left behind a number of highly influential works in rational theology (*kalām*), was a major critic of Avicenna (d. 428/1037),<sup>3</sup> and wrote a monumental and profound commentary upon the Qurʾān,<sup>4</sup> had a problem—he could

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of two early and different textual reports of the Rāzī-Kubrā meeting, and a convincing argument in favour of the historical veracity of one of them, see Ayman Shihadeh, ‘The Mystic and the Sceptic in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’ in Ayman Shihadeh (ed.), *Sufism and Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007): 101–22, at 103–6. Cf. Nasrallah Pourjavady, *Dū mujaddid: pizhūbish-hāʾi dar bāra-yi Muḥammad-i Ghazzālī va Fakhr-i Rāzī* (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Dānishgāhī, 2002), 499–514. Following Meier (*Die Fawāʾiḥ al-ḡamāl*, 39–40), Shihadeh concludes that the Rāzī-Kubrā meeting took place at an earlier period in Rāzī’s career (see ‘The Mystic and the Sceptic’, 106). For a survey of Rāzī’s life and work, see Frank Griffel, ‘On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s Life and the Patronage He Received’, *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 18/3 (2007): 313–44, at 315–31.

<sup>3</sup> Helpful studies on aspects of Rāzī’s commentary upon Avicenna’s important *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, along with Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī’s (d. 672/1274) rebuttals, are to be found in Peter Adamson, ‘Avicenna and His Commentators on Human and Divine Self-Intellection’ in Dag Nikolaus Hasse and Amos Bertolacci (eds.), *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception of Avicenna’s Metaphysics* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 97–122; Toby Mayer, ‘Avicenna against Time Beginning: The Debate between the Commentators on the *Ishārāt*’ in Peter Adamson (ed.), *Classical Arabic Philosophy: Sources and Reception* (London: Warburg Institute, 2007), 125–49; Mayer, ‘Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī’s Critique of Ibn Sinā’s Argument for the Unity of God in the *Ishārāt* and Naṣīr ad-Dīn aṭ-Ṭūsī’s Defence’ in David Reisman with the assistance of Ahmed al-Rahim (eds.), *Before and After Avicenna: Proceedings of the First Conference of the Avicenna Study Group* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 199–218. Select translations from Rāzī’s commentary upon the *Ishārāt* are now available. See Robert Wisnovsky (transl.), ‘Commentary on The Book of Directives and Remarks’ in Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mehdi Aminrazavi (eds.), *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia* (London: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2008–14), iii. 189–202.

<sup>4</sup> One of the more useful studies of Rāzī’s *tafsīr* is Michel Lagarde, *Les secrets de l’invisible: essai sur le Grand commentaire de Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (1149–1209)* (Beirut: Albouraq, 2008). See also Tariq Jaffer’s review article of this work in the *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies*, 15/2 (2013): forthcoming (I am grateful to the author for sending an unpublished version of this piece for my perusal). Copious translations from Rāzī’s *tafsīr* can be found in Feras Hamza, Sajjad Rizvi with Farhana Mayer (eds.), *An Anthology of Qurʾanic Commentaries (Volume 1: On the Nature of the Divine)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2008). It can also be noted that Rāzī may have

not give up his book learning in place of spiritual knowledge, to which he was, in some fashion, attracted (it is well-known that some of Rāzī's writings evince a pronounced presence of Sufi themes and ideas<sup>5</sup>). Indeed, in Central Asia and Anatolia during the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries, Rāzī had become a sort of representative of the excessively cerebral scholar who was blind to spiritual truths because he could not see past his bookishness.<sup>6</sup>

This negative Rāzī image features quite interestingly in a number of Sufi texts from this aforementioned period. In the *Ma'ārif* of Bahā'-i Valad (d. 628/1231), the father of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273) and a well-known Sufi and preacher in Balkh, Rāzī is referred to as someone who is given to religious innovation (*bid'a*).<sup>7</sup> As for Rūmī himself, he too is critical of Rāzī, as reflected in a couplet from his *Mathnavī*. Referring

left parts of his commentary upon the Qur'ān unfinished at the time of his death, only to be completed by his students. See Griffel, 'On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life', 325, and the references on pp. 325–6, n. 49.

<sup>5</sup> See the discussion in Shihadeh, 'The Mystic and the Sceptic', 113–18, as well as the earlier point in Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia* (ed. Mehdi Aminrazavi; Richmond: Curzon, 1996), 116. Cf. the entirely problematic observation in Paul Kraus, 'The "Controversies" of Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī' (transl. Khalide Edib), *Islamic Culture*, 12 (1938): 131–53, at 136, n. 5. It is highly probable that Rāzī first came into contact with Sufism by way of his father (also his teacher) Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Makkī, who was influenced by his own teacher, a student of the Sufi master Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072). See Shihadeh, 'Introduction' in Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Makkī, *Nihāyat al-marām fī dirāyat al-kalām: Facsimile of the Autograph Manuscript of Vol. II*, intro. and indices by Ayman Shihadeh (Tehran: Mīrāth-i Maktūb in association with Freie Universität Berlin, 2013), x. For a detailed presentation of Qushayrī's life and times, see Martin Nguyen, *Sufi Master and Qur'an Scholar: Abū'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī and the Latā'if al-Ishārāt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2012), chs. 1–2.

<sup>6</sup> This Rāzī polemic might also be connected in some way to a number of widespread myths about his political involvement in bringing about the demise of certain prominent Sufi figures in his day. For a preliminary discussion, see Pourjavady, *Dū mujaddid*, 477ff.

<sup>7</sup> Bahā'-i Valad, *Ma'ārif* (ed. Badī' al-Zamān Furūzānfar; Tehran: Vizārat-i Farhang, 1954–9), i. 82. See also Fritz Meier, *Bahā'-i Valad: Grundzüge seines Lebens und seiner Mystik* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 20–8; Pourjavady, *Dū mujaddid*, 461–4, 485–9. Rāzī's patron, Muḥammad Khwārazmshāh, is on the receiving end of Bahā'i Valad's criticisms here as well. For more on Rāzī's patrons, see Griffel, 'On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life', 332–40. Although outside the scope of the present study, it should be noted that this negative image of Rāzī in Sufi literature extends well beyond the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries. See, for example, a poem from the Safavid period (which also targets Aristotle

to the intellect's limitations in grasping the true nature of things, Rūmī says:

If in this inquiry the intellect could discern the way,  
then Fakhr-i Rāzī would be the mystery-knower of religion.<sup>8</sup>

We even find references to Rāzī in the discourses of Shams-i Tabrīzī, Rumi's beloved companion who mysteriously disappeared in 644/1247. In one passage of Shams's *Maqālāt*, Rāzī is portrayed in an extremely negative (and distorted) light: 'What gall Fakhr-i Razi had! He said, "Muhammad Tazi [the Arab] says this, and Muhammad Razi says that". Isn't he the apostate of the time? Isn't he an absolute unbeliever, unless he repents?'<sup>9</sup> And in another passage similar to Rūmī's poem, Rāzī the intellectual is juxtaposed with two of the greatest early Sufi figures, Abū Yazīd Basṭāmī (d. ca. 260/874) and Junayd (d. 298/910):

If it were fitting to perceive these meanings by study and debate, then it would be necessary for Abu Yazid and Junayd to rub their heads in the dirt out of regret before Fakhr-i Razi. They would need to become his students for a hundred years!<sup>10</sup>

In at least two noteworthy cases, letters were even sent to Rāzī, encouraging him to take the inner life seriously. One of these was written by Shihāb al-Dīn 'Umar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234), the celebrated author of the *'Awārif al-mā'ārif*.<sup>11</sup> The other one, which is far more direct than Suhrawardī's letter in calling Rāzī to Sufism, was written by none other than the influential Sufi figure Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240).

and Avicenna) translated in Nasr, *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia*, 245–6.

<sup>8</sup> Rūmī, *Mathnavī-yi mā'navī*, in R. A. Nicholson (ed. and transl.), *The Mathnavī of Jalālu'ddīn Rūmī* (London: Luzac, 1925–40), bk. 5, l. 4144: *andar īn baḥṭh ar khirad rah bīn budī / Fakhr-i Rāzī rāz-dān-i dīn budī*. For an alternative translation, see Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun: A Study of the Works of Jalāloddīn Rumi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 14. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

<sup>9</sup> Cited, with slight modifications, from William Chittick, *Me and Rumi: The Autobiography of Shams-i Tabrizi* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2004), 48. See also Pourjavady, *Dū mujaddid*, 465–72.

<sup>10</sup> Cited, with a slight modification, from Chittick, *Me and Rumi*, 61. Yet in another passage (66), Shams appears to laud Rāzī's intellectual acumen, albeit in an indirect and humorous way.

<sup>11</sup> The text has been published in Pourjavady, *Dū mujaddid*, 515–17.

Over five decades ago, Michel Vâlsan produced a French translation of Ibn 'Arabī's letter to Rāzī.<sup>12</sup> Since then, it has been translated into Persian twice,<sup>13</sup> and parts of it have been translated and/or discussed in passing by a number of noteworthy scholars, including William Chittick,<sup>14</sup> Franz Rosenthal,<sup>15</sup> Nasrollah Pourjavady,<sup>16</sup> and Ayman Shihadeh.<sup>17</sup> However, we still lack a comprehensive examination and complete English translation of this text, which is as important for the wider discipline of Islamic intellectual history as it is for Ibn 'Arabī and Rāzī studies. I therefore offer here, for the first time in English, a study and translation of Ibn 'Arabī's letter to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.

## PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Shihadeh gives 598/1201–2 as the earliest date for Ibn 'Arabī's letter to Rāzī, citing the fact that this corresponds to the period in which Ibn 'Arabī travelled to the East and is likely to have encountered the negative Rāzī image and come into contact with his students.<sup>18</sup> Shihadeh's proposed *terminus post quem* for the letter also matches up well with another piece of evidence from Ibn 'Arabī's life. Towards the end of his letter Ibn 'Arabī complains of the 'scholars of evil' ('*ulamā' al-sū'*), blaming them for preventing him from outlining to Rāzī the details of the spiritual path. It would be hard to determine exactly when and where this would have been in the period dating from Ibn 'Arabī's arrival in the East (598/1201) to Rāzī's death, especially since 600/1204 to 617/1220 marks Ibn 'Arabī's period of rapid movement in which he continuously

<sup>12</sup> See Michel Vâlsan (transl.), 'Épître adressée à l'imâm Fakhru-d-Dīn ar-Rāzī', *Études Traditionnelles*, 366–7 (1961): 244–53.

<sup>13</sup> See Taqī Tafażżulī, 'Barrasī va taḥqīq dar bāra-yi nāma-yi Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī ba Imām Fakhr-i Rāzī', *Maqālāt va Barrasī-hā*, 19/2 (1975): 146–88; Mīrżā Faḍl Allāh Kurdistānī (transl.), 'Risāla ilā al-Imām al-Rāzī' in Ibn 'Arabī, *Rasā'il Ibn 'Arabī* (ed. Najīb Māyil Hiravī; Tehran: Intishārat-i Mawlā, 1997), 181–92. I am grateful to Sayyed Mohsen Mousawi for bringing these translations to my attention, and for providing me with copies of them.

<sup>14</sup> Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart: Explorations in Islamic Thought*, Mohammed Rustom, Atif Khalil, and Kazuyo Murata (eds.) (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 103; 348, n. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Franz Rosenthal, 'Ibn 'Arabī Between "Philosophy" and "Mysticism"', *Oriens*, 31 (1988): 1–35, at 21–2.

<sup>16</sup> Pourjavady, *Dū mujaddid*, 473–5.

<sup>17</sup> Shihadeh, 'The Mystic and the Sceptic', 102.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

travelled between Syria, Palestine, Anatolia, Egypt, Iraq, and the Hijāz.<sup>19</sup> But it would nevertheless be safe to assume that by the ‘scholars of evil’ Ibn ‘Arabī is referring to some moment and place during his time in the East, especially because we know that, unlike his experience in the East, in the Muslim West he had not encountered the hostilities of the ulema.

In his letter to Rāzī, Ibn ‘Arabī states that he had come across some of his writings, and then goes on to praise Rāzī’s intellectual prowess. But exactly how aware of Rāzī’s ideas was Ibn ‘Arabī? According to Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), the answer is clear. In his *Bughyat al-murtād* (also known as the *Sab’iyya*), in the context of his attempt to demonstrate Ibn ‘Arabī’s reliance upon rational theology, Ibn Taymiyya narrates a report in which Rāzī’s *Muḥaṣṣal* is seen in Ibn ‘Arabī’s own handwriting.<sup>20</sup> And, in modern scholarship, it has even been suggested that Rāzī may have influenced Ibn ‘Arabī’s understanding of God’s attributes.<sup>21</sup> In the absence of concrete textual evidence, however, it would indeed be very difficult to make any definitive judgments concerning Ibn ‘Arabī’s knowledge of Rāzī’s writings, let alone to postulate Rāzī’s influence on any aspect(s) of Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought. The little that we can state for certain is what Ibn ‘Arabī himself says. In his magnum opus *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, he mentions Rāzī in passing three times;<sup>22</sup> and, in another passage, with great approval.<sup>23</sup> Rāzī also

<sup>19</sup> Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur: The Life of Ibn ‘Arabī* (transl. Peter Kingsley; Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 219–20.

<sup>20</sup> See Ibn Taymiyya, *Bughyat al-murtād fī radd ‘alā l-mutafalsifa wa-l-qarāmiṭa wa-l-bāṭiniyya* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Kurdistān al-‘Ilmiyya, 1911), 106. My thanks to Karim Crow for alerting me to this passage.

<sup>21</sup> See Robert Wisnovsky, ‘One Aspect of the Akbarian Turn in Shī‘ī Theology’ in Shihadeh (ed.), *Sufism and Theology*, 49–62, at 61–2, n. 10. However, this suggestion is problematic because, for Ibn ‘Arabī (and *contra* Rāzī, as well as, so far as I can see, every other Muslim theologian before Ibn ‘Arabī), although the divine names (and hence the divine attributes) do possess a relative reality, they are fundamentally speaking, not ‘ontological entities’ (*al-umūr al-wujūdiyya*). Rather, they are relations (*nisab*) between the manifest face of God and the loci of His self-disclosures (*maẓāhir*), that is, the ‘fixed entities’ (*al-‘ayān al-thābita*) in their objectivized mode. For more on this point, see Mohammed Rustom, ‘Philosophical Sufism’ in Richard Taylor and Luis López-Farjeat (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, in press).

<sup>22</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968), i. 162 (Muḥammad b. ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭīb al-Rāzī); i. 253, ii. 692 (Ibn al-Khaṭīb). Rāzī was known as Ibn al-Khaṭīb because his father was a preacher (*khaṭīb*) at the main mosque in Rayy. See Shihadeh, ‘Introduction’, xi.

<sup>23</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, ii. 507 (Ibn Khaṭīb al-Rayy). Here, Ibn ‘Arabī relates a story from Rāzī (where he was thrown into prison and had no one to turn to but

appears in a chronologically later part of the *Futūḥāt*, where Ibn 'Arabī mentions a 'different' letter that he wrote to him.<sup>24</sup> In this passage Ibn 'Arabī also includes the formula 'God have mercy upon him' (*raḥimahu Allāh*) after Rāzī's name, which is a clear indication that he had already passed on.

Such is the extent of what Ibn 'Arabī has to say about Rāzī. Now what can be said about Ibn 'Arabī's influence upon him? Contrary to what has been suggested by Michel Lagarde,<sup>25</sup> there is nothing in Rāzī's writings which would unequivocally indicate that he was in fact influenced by Ibn 'Arabī.<sup>26</sup> To be sure, Ibn 'Arabī's two most influential and best-known works, the *Futūḥāt* and the *Fuṣūṣ al-bikam*, would see the light of day some two decades after Rāzī's death.<sup>27</sup> With respect to the letter that Ibn 'Arabī wrote to him, we have no record of Rāzī's even having received it

God), which Rāzī conveyed to one of his students who then retold it to Ibn 'Arabī.

<sup>24</sup> See Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, i. 241 (Fakhr Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. Khaṭīb al-Rayy). I say that this letter is 'different' because, in the passage in question, Ibn 'Arabī refers to the letter as *Risālat al-akhlāq*, and then tells us that he will mention in this chapter (which runs from pp. 241–4) some of the contents of the letter. Based on what he relates in this chapter, it is safe to say that he had another letter to Rāzī in mind. Maḥmūd Ghurāb also intimates this much in his introduction to Ibn 'Arabī, *Rasā'il* (ed. Maḥmūd Ghurāb; Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1997), 12; incidentally, none of the manuscripts of Ibn 'Arabī's letter to Rāzī carry the title *Risālat al-akhlāq*. It should also be noted that elsewhere in the *Futūḥāt* (iv. 459), Ibn 'Arabī speaks of a certain *Risālat al-akhlāq* that he had sent to one of his brethren (*ikhwān*). Based on the way Ibn 'Arabī describes this *Risālat al-akhlāq*, he either (1) has in mind his other letter to Rāzī mentioned in *Futūḥāt*, i. 241, or (2) is referring to a letter on the topic of *akhlāq* that was written for someone other than Rāzī, but which coincidentally bears the same title as this other letter that he had sent to him. I am inclined to accept the latter possibility, especially since Ibn 'Arabī dates this second *Risālat al-akhlāq* to 591/1195, which would correspond to the period when he was still in the Muslim West and was likely not familiar with Rāzī's writings or image. Another possible reason that this second *Risālat al-akhlāq* is different from the one sent to Rāzī is that, according to Osman Yahya (*Histoire et classification de l'oeuvre d'Ibn 'Arabī* [Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1964], ii. 493), it is under the main title *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*, with the alternative title *al-Ā'lāq fī makārim al-akhlāq*, both of which fit the description of this work given at *Futūḥāt*, iv. 459 better than what is revealed at *Futūḥāt*, i. 241–4 about the *Risālat al-akhlāq* sent to Rāzī.

<sup>25</sup> See, Lagarde, *Les secrets de l'invisible*, 15; 142, n. 87; 119.

<sup>26</sup> Concerning the lack of Ibn 'Arabī's presence in Rāzī's work in general, see the observation in Shihadeh, 'The Mystic and the Sceptic', 118.

<sup>27</sup> The *Fuṣūṣ* was composed in 627/1230, and the final version of the *Futūḥāt* was completed in 636/1238.

(although it was undoubtedly sent to him). Assuming that the letter did reach Rāzī, there would still be no way to verify that its contents in any way influenced his own spiritual inclinations.<sup>28</sup>

## ASPIRATION AND POVERTY

Ibn 'Arabī's letter to Rāzī deals with the nature of aspiration and what a life of lofty aspirations entails. Since Rāzī was notorious for his excessive rationalism in all matters religious, Ibn 'Arabī first attempts to pull him away from over-reliance upon reflection (*fikr*) in understanding the true nature of things. In order to demonstrate how other the reality of things is from what the intellect affords Rāzī, Ibn 'Arabī makes a key distinction between knowledge of God's existence and knowledge of God. The intellect can discern God's existence, and this only by way of negation and affirmation. But knowledge of God is something quite different.

Positively construed, the Arabic term *himma* or aspiration can entail devotion to something that is important, worthwhile, essential, fundamental and, in some cases, even all-consuming. The person who aspires to God is thus after the most important, worthwhile, essential, fundamental, and all-consuming 'thing' of all. Ibn 'Arabī does not at any point in the letter tell Rāzī that he does not have any aspiration. He is careful to let Rāzī know that he is aware of his search after certainty and ultimately knowledge of God. Yet Ibn 'Arabī wants to suggest to Rāzī that since he has the loftiest of all aspirations, he should not busy himself with those things that are not commensurate to his goal, namely that he should not occupy himself with ways of coming to know God and understanding Him which are not appropriate to Him except in a limited sense.

The intellect (*'aql*) is a case in point. It can only delimit God, confine Him, put Him in particular systems of thought, and ultimately trap Him and bind Him to its own limited perspective. Thus, if one has the loftiest of aspirations, God, then one cannot attempt to attain this Object of aspiration by way of something which, by definition, limits and confines. Since the intellect essentially entails limitations, Ibn 'Arabī suggests to

<sup>28</sup> See also the note in Shihadeh, 'The Mystic and the Sceptic in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī', 118, n. 3; Alexander Knys, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), 134. Even less reliable is the assertion that this letter caused a correspondence to ensue between Ibn 'Arabī and Rāzī. See Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, 103, who justifiably approaches this point with caution. Cf. Knys, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 134; 334, n. 120.



Rāzī that by virtue of it alone he will not be able to attain his goal of knowing God. What is required then is for one who aspires to know God to do so on God's 'terms'. In light of Q. 47. 38, which states that 'God is the Rich, and you are the poor,'<sup>29</sup> God's terms require that people aspire to the infinitely Rich with that which is the very opposite of Him, namely what they *are*—fundamentally poor and essentially nothing.<sup>30</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī is not simply calling Rāzī to give up his intellectual learning. As already mentioned, Rāzī's aspirations are legitimate, and the means by which he obtains most of them are also appropriate to these goals. Yet these aspirations, whether they are rational proofs for the existence of God or other, intricately-argued points in theology, are finite. Thus, one should only invest so much time and energy in them. Their finite nature entails that they be dealt with 'according to the measure of need' (*bi-qadr al-ḥāja*).<sup>31</sup> In other words, these forms of learning have importance and efficacy in this world, where rational proofs and intellectual arguments are meaningful and necessary. Yet the only kind of science that requires all of our aspiration, and which thus demands that we give all of ourselves to it (by realizing our nothingness), is that science which will remain valid when we die, namely knowledge of God.<sup>32</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī thus tells Rāzī that if he aspires to know God, he should attempt to do so in a manner that will actually take him to God such that he can witness Him, that is, through *kashf* or 'unveiling'.<sup>33</sup> Even if one can attain knowledge of God through the use of the intellect alone, which Rāzī had attained at an exceptionally sophisticated level, one is still liable to obfuscation or doubt. With this thought in mind, Ibn 'Arabī

<sup>29</sup> Translations of all Qur'ānic verses are taken from Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Caner Dagli, Maria Dakake, Joseph Lumbard, and Mohammed Rustom (eds.), *The HarperCollins Study Quran* (San Francisco: HarperOne, in press).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. the famous encounter that Baṣṭāmī has with God, where God tells him to approach Him through that which He does not have, namely lowliness (*dhilla*) and poverty (*iftiqār*). Ibn 'Arabī draws on this encounter frequently (see *Futūḥāt*, i. 690, 739; ii. 53, 263, 487, 561; iii. 207, 316, 364; iv. 231, 529). For Ibn 'Arabī's use of this saying in the context of his treatment of the key Sufi concepts of *qurb* and *bu'd*, see Rustom, 'Ibn 'Arabī on Proximity and Distance: Chapters 260 and 261 of the *Futūḥāt*', *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society*, 41 (2007): 93–107, at 104.

<sup>31</sup> For a discussion of this point with respect to Ibn 'Arabī's explication of beneficial knowledge, see Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart*, 102ff.

<sup>32</sup> Consider these lines from Rūmī (*Mathnavī*, bk. 1, l. 2834):

Of all the types of knowledge, on the day of death,

it is the science of poverty that will provide provisions and supplies for the way.

<sup>33</sup> For which, see n. 78.

cites an incident, transmitted to him by one of Rāzī's students who was also an acquaintance of Ibn 'Arabī, which has Rāzī weeping as a result of the doubt caused by his all-too-human intellectual knowledge. Thus, rather than trying to convince Rāzī that he should properly situate his aspirations in a way that is commensurate with his Object of pursuit, citing the intellect as an impediment along the way to his goal, Ibn 'Arabī provides a concrete example from Rāzī's own life that illustrates his point—we have here Rāzī weeping over an obvious state of confusion caused by his intellect, serving to indicate that he cannot entirely rely upon it for any certain kind of knowledge, let alone knowledge of God.

Interestingly, Rāzī's crisis of certitude recounted by Ibn 'Arabī is in keeping with what we know of Rāzī's life. Rāzī's philosophical know-how and ability to debate with any opponent and cause them to doubt their knowledge eventually began to affect him as well.<sup>34</sup> Along with his bouts of doubt concerning the bases for what he took to be certain knowledge in rational theology, as mentioned earlier, Rāzī's writings reveal an attempt on his part to engage mysticism on some level. It has even been argued that Rāzī eventually accepted the superiority of spiritual practice over discursive means of knowing, a view which was the direct result of his increased intellectual scepticism.<sup>35</sup> Yet Rāzī's view of Sufism's superiority did not entail a rejection of discursive knowledge on his part.<sup>36</sup> Rather, he seems to have viewed it as a complement to the kind of knowledge afforded by spiritual practice.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, we have no concrete evidence to suggest that Rāzī actually took the spiritual path.<sup>38</sup> Could Rāzī's knowledge of Sufism therefore have been limited solely to a personal form of piety, the possible encounters he had with Sufis during his lifetime, and the ideas and works of some of his Sufi predecessors and contemporaries? If so, then Rāzī's knowledge of Sufism was quite theoretical, which would explain the tone of, and indeed underlying argument in, Ibn 'Arabī's letter to him.

<sup>34</sup> See Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 181–203.

<sup>35</sup> Shihadeh, 'The Mystic and the Sceptic', 114 (see also the discussion on pp. 115–17).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 116. To be sure, Rāzī's last will and testament (*waṣīyya*) reveals the importance he attaches to his works in rational theology even at the end of his life. See Tony Street, 'Concerning the Life and Works of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī' in Peter Riddell and Tony Street (eds.), *Islam: Essays on Scripture, Thought and Society: A Festschrift in Honour of Anthony H. Johns* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 135–46 (esp. 135–40).

<sup>37</sup> Shihadeh, 'The Mystic and the Sceptic', 116.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *ibid*, 117–18.

What we can know for certain is that the aforementioned report concerning Rāzī's doubt gives Ibn 'Arabī the perfect opportunity to drive home an important teaching: a life devoted to God but exclusively in terms of theoretical knowledge (even a deep theoretical knowledge of mysticism) will result in unrest, and will lead to serious shortcomings in attaining one's Object of aspiration. This calls to mind Q. 13. 28, which speaks of the attainment of tranquillity through the remembrance of God. That is to say, constant remembrance of God naturally engenders a state of repose and ease. It can thus be said that the realization of one's utter poverty before God is tantamount to the emptiness or nothingness of the heart (*qalb*),<sup>39</sup> which is the seat of human consciousness. This state of emptiness paradoxically acts as the catalyst for the heart's beholding the Object of its aspiration.<sup>40</sup> Beholding this Object and being in constant remembrance of It thus renders the one who comes to God through his poverty as, in fact, actually rich, since he is with the Source of all aspirations and the End towards which all people tend.

This type of state starkly contrasts with the confusion and uproar caused by the discursive faculty which, as Ibn 'Arabī insists to Rāzī, is in a constant state of agitation and unrest, and therefore can never be in a state of tranquillity. It is very likely that Ibn 'Arabī is also alluding here to Rāzī's aforementioned theoretical knowledge of Sufism, which gave him at least an abstract understanding of what the Sufis mean by such terms as *mushāhada* or 'witnessing'.<sup>41</sup> Yet this kind of knowledge evinces *passive* aspiration; it only becomes *active* aspiration when one does something about it, and here the advice given to Rāzī is that he divest himself of his psychological attachment to his discursive abilities as a step in the right direction.

Establishing that the intellect cannot yield the tranquillity and rest that human beings seek, and by extension cannot truly come to know God except in a limited sense, Ibn 'Arabī seizes the opportunity to call Rāzī to the spiritual path itself. He insists that it is only by entering the Sufi path

<sup>39</sup> For fundamental texts concerning the nature and function of the heart in Sufi psychology, see Sachiko Murata, *The Tao of Islam: A Sourcebook of Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), ch. 10. For the heart in Ibn 'Arabī's thought in general, see James Morris, *The Reflective Heart: Discovering Spiritual Intelligence in Ibn 'Arabī's Meccan Illuminations* (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2005), 131–40.

<sup>40</sup> For an explanation of this phenomenon, see Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Šūfism of Ibn 'Arabī* (transl. Ralph Manheim; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 216–62; Rustom, 'Rumi's Metaphysics of the Heart', *Mawlana Rumi Review*, 1 (2010): 69–79.

<sup>41</sup> See n. 90 for a pertinent passage from Rāzī's *tafsīr*.

that Rāzī will be able to free himself from his predicament of doubt, confusion, ignorance, and restlessness. Ibn ‘Arabī also seems to want to tell Rāzī that, without spiritual realization, he will only perpetuate his incorrect understanding of God and His self-disclosures, both in this life and the next life.

## TEXT AND TRANSLATION

Since 2001 the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society (MIAS) has been engaged in a massive archiving project wherein they intend to establish, on the basis of research into thousands of manuscripts from libraries all over the globe, a definitive database of works authentically by Ibn ‘Arabī. According to their recently-published preliminary results,<sup>42</sup> writings historically believed to have been by Ibn ‘Arabī fall into seven broad categories: (1) Verified A (71 works); (2) Verified B (13 works); (3) Probable (11 works); (4) Unverified (62 works); (5) Not by Ibn ‘Arabī (73 works); (6) Extracts (36 works); (7) Duplicates (20 works).

Our concern here is with works which fall into the first two categories. The first of these (Verified A) are reserved for works which are definitively by Ibn ‘Arabī on account of their fulfilling one of the following three criteria:<sup>43</sup>

- (a) Texts written entirely in Ibn ‘Arabī’s hand (holographs)
- (b) Manuscripts which include a statement of authentication by Ibn ‘Arabī (including his signature [autographs]), and/or manuscripts written by one of Ibn ‘Arabī’s close companions during his lifetime
- (c) Texts clearly traceable back to (a) or (b), that is, manuscripts that were copied from (a) or (b) and which explicitly state from which copy they are derived; or manuscripts which are copied from copies that were made directly from (a) or (b) and likewise explicitly state from which copy they are derived.

In the second category (Verified B) fall manuscripts whose ‘internal evidence’ (i.e., content, style, etc.) indicate that they are certainly by Ibn ‘Arabī, but which are not, technically speaking, on the same level of authenticity as those in the first category (Verified A).<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> See Jane Clark and Stephen Hirtenstein, ‘Establishing Ibn ‘Arabī’s Heritage: First Findings from the MIAS Archiving Project’, *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society*, 52 (2012): 1–32.

<sup>43</sup> I infer this based on close adherence to Clark and Hirtenstein, *ibid.*, 5–7, 11.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

With respect to Ibn 'Arabī's letter to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, it is classified under the second category (Verified B).<sup>45</sup> That is to say, manuscript copies of this text do not meet the criteria of (a) or (b). However, two of the three earliest manuscripts<sup>46</sup> do meet the criteria of (c), but still cannot be placed in the first category (Verified A). This is because, although they in some way tell us that they are copied from 'originals', they do not tell us which originals.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the fact that there are no critical editions of Ibn 'Arabī's letter to Rāzī, the Arabic text has been printed a number of times, the first of which was in 1925.<sup>48</sup> Another edition of the letter based on a late manuscript was then published in 1948.<sup>49</sup> When making his French translation of the letter, Vâlsan used the 1948 edition, but supplemented his reading with another manuscript.<sup>50</sup> Ibn 'Arabī's letter to Rāzī has been printed numerous times since 1948,<sup>51</sup> most notably by the well-known Ibn 'Arabī scholar Maḥmūd Ghurāb.<sup>52</sup> Ghurāb does not tell us upon which manuscript his text is based, but it seems to rely solely upon the 1948 text and/or a late manuscript dated to *ca.* 950/1543.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>46</sup> See numbers (2) and (3) in the list of manuscripts given in n. 54.

<sup>47</sup> This was communicated to me by Jane Clark in an email correspondence dated January 27, 2013.

<sup>48</sup> I have not seen this text, although Vâlsan says that it was published by 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Maymanī al-Rajkūtī in Ibn 'Arabī, *Thalāth rasā'il* (Cairo, 1925), #3. See Vâlsan's introduction in 'Épître adressée à l'imām Fakhru-d-Dīn ar-Rāzī', 245.

<sup>49</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Rasā'il Ibn 'Arabī* (Hyderabad-Deccan: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyya, 1948), #15; the manuscript in question being Asafiyya II, 1718/12/4.

<sup>50</sup> See Vâlsan's introduction in 'Épître adressée à l'imām Fakhru-d-Dīn ar-Rāzī', 245. The other manuscript employed by Vâlsan is identified as Paris 6614/6.

<sup>51</sup> The most recent of these seems to be the one published by an anonymous editor in 2000 (the text was based on a late, slightly problematic manuscript from the Al-Azhar Library, i.e., Taṣawwuf 6127 [974/1566]). It can be found in *Majmū'at rasā'il Ibn 'Arabī* (Beirut: Dār al-Maḥajja al-Bayḍā', 2000), i. 605–15. Earlier prints of the letter (in one form or another) include, inter alia, *Risālat al-Shaykh al-Akbar ilā l-Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ḥasan Maḥmūd; Cairo: 'Ālam al-Fikr, 1987) and *al-Risāla ilā al-Rāzī* (ed. 'Abd al-Raḥīm Mārdīnī; Damascus: Dār al-Maḥabba, 2003). The Arabic text of the letter also accompanies both Persian translations of the work (for which, see n. 13).

<sup>52</sup> See Ibn 'Arabī, 'Risāla ilā Imām al-Rāzī', in Ibn 'Arabī, *Rasā'il*, 239–43.

<sup>53</sup> Fatih 5332 (c. 950/1543), fols. 109b–10a, which is number (8) listed in the following note.

Thanks to the MIAS, a number of manuscript copies of Ibn ‘Arabī’s letter to Rāzī, dated from 690/1291 to 950/1543, are in my possession.<sup>54</sup> Upon close examination, one discovers that there are no substantial textual differences amongst these manuscripts and the various printed editions of the letter. On account of this fact, and since Ghurāb’s text is the most widely available, I have based my translation of the letter on his edition. I have nevertheless drawn attention to the few noteworthy (albeit minor) instances in which the three earliest (and most authentic) manuscripts of the letter<sup>55</sup> differ with Ghurāb’s reading.

## A LETTER TO IMĀM AL-RĀZĪ

*In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the Compassionate*

This is the letter by the master, the leader, the firmly rooted in knowledge, the unique, the verifier (*muḥaqqiq*), the unveiler of divine reality (*kāshif al-ḥaqīqa*),<sup>56</sup> the reviver of the community and the religion, Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. al-‘Arabī al-Ṭā’ī al-Andalusī al-Maghribī<sup>57</sup> (God sanctify his soul); to the leader, the learned, the adept, the erudite, the pride of the community and the religion,

<sup>54</sup> I list them in chronological order: (1) Şehit Ali 1351 (*ca.* 690/1291), fols. 240a–1a; (2) Ayasofiya 2063 (*ca.* 703/1303 or 708/1308), fols. 69a–73a; (3) Şehit Ali 1341 (724/1324), fols. 146b–8a; (4) Ayasofiya 4875 (*ca.* 753/1352), fols. 203b–5b; (5) Veliyuddin 1826 (*ca.* 824/1421), fols. 43b–5a; (6) Şehit Ali 1342 (*ca.* 837/1433), fols. 204b–5a; (7) Şehit Ali 1344 (*ca.* 949/1542), fols. 176a–7b; (8) Fatih 5332 (*ca.* 950/1543), fols. 109b–10a. The remaining fourteen mss. in the MIAS archives are all of late provenance, i.e., *ca.* 900/1494 to 1333/1914. I also have (9) a copy of a ms. of the letter (similar to the others in my possession, most notably Şehit Ali 1344) that was given to me by Atif Khalil in October 2010, who received it from the personal library of Shaykh Maḥmūd al-Hudā of Aleppo.

<sup>55</sup> That is, Şehit Ali 1351, Ayasofiya 2063, and Şehit Ali 1341, which respectively correspond to numbers (1), (2), and (3) in the previous note.

<sup>56</sup> The terms *muḥaqqiqūn* (pl. of *muḥaqqiq*) and *kāshif* (the noun from which the active participle *kāshif* derives) come up in the context of the letter. See n. 79 and n. 78 respectively.

<sup>57</sup> For the nature and provenance of the various titles, names, and *nisbas* associated with Ibn ‘Arabī, see Hirtenstein, ‘Manuscripts of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Works: Names and Titles of Ibn [al-]‘Arabī’, *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society*, 41 (2007): 109–29.

Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Khaṭīb al-Rāzī (God grant him peace<sup>58</sup> and make Paradise his abode).

Praise is for God and peace be upon His chosen servants, and upon my dear friend in God, Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad (God elevate his aspiration (*himma*) and shower His mercy and blessings upon him).

Now, to proceed: Before you I praise God, other than whom there is no God. The Messenger of God (God bless him and grant him peace) said, 'When one of you loves his brother, let him know about it'.<sup>59</sup> And I love you. God says, [those who] *exhort one another to truth* [Q. 103. 3].<sup>60</sup>

I have come across some of your writings, and [have witnessed] the imaginative faculty (*al-quwwa al-mutakhayyila*) with which God has assisted you and the sound thinking that it evinces. When a soul seeks nourishment through its own acquisition (*kasb*) it does not find the sweetness of generosity (*jūd*) and bestowal (*wahb*),<sup>61</sup> and is amongst those who eat from beneath themselves. But a spiritual man (*rajul*)<sup>62</sup> is

<sup>58</sup> Lit., 'The soil of his grave be watered'.

<sup>59</sup> al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, k. [32] *al-Zuhd*, b. [54] *mā jā'a fī ilām al-ḥubb*. (The *ḥadīths* cited and referred to in these notes were read in the *Jam' jawāmi' al-aḥādīth wa-l-asānīd wa-maknaz al-ṣiḥāḥ wa-l-sunan wa-l-masānīd* [Vaduz, Liechtenstein: Jam'iyyat al-Maknaz al-Islāmī, 2000]. Tirmidhī's *sunan* is in volume 6 of this compendium; Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, volume 2; and Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, volume 4.)

<sup>60</sup> This verse and the one preceding it read: 'Truly mankind is in loss, save those who believe, perform righteous deeds, exhort one another to truth, and exhort one another to patience'.

<sup>61</sup> Spiritual stations (*maqāmāt*) are earned through human effort (*makāsib*), while spiritual states (*aḥwāl*) are bestowed upon one directly by God (*mawāhib*). Here, Ibn 'Arabī is relating this distinction to a more general discussion concerning knowledge of God—one can either come to know God through his own intellectual efforts, or God can cause him to know Him directly from Himself (i.e., without any intermediary). In this sense, knowledge that is bestowed by God, which Ibn 'Arabī will advocate to Rāzī throughout the letter, is a synonym for 'unveiling' (*kashf*) and 'tasting' (*dhawq*), although that does not necessarily preclude the need for human effort. See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabī's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 222. For Rāzī's understanding of the same phenomenon, see n. 90.

<sup>62</sup> For Ibn 'Arabī as well as many other Sufis, the technical term *rajul* (pl. *rijāl*) is a synonym for a realized Sufi or one of the people of God (*ahl Allāh*), and can equally apply to men and women. See Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-'Arabī's Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 400, n. 24; Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 395, n. 16; Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, 266–8.

one who eats from above himself, as He says, *Had they observed the Torah and the Gospel and that which was sent down unto them from their Lord, they would surely have received nourishment from above them and from beneath their feet* [Q. 5. 66].

My friend (God grant him success) should know that the complete inheritance (*al-wirātha al-kāmila*) is that which is [complete] in every respect, not in some respects, for ‘The knowers are the heirs of the prophets’.<sup>63</sup> An intelligent person (*‘āqil*) should strive to be an heir in every respect and not be deficient in aspiration. My friend (God grant him success) already knows that the beauty of the human subtle reality (*al-laṭīfa al-insāniyya*)<sup>64</sup> can only be [attained] through the divine knowledge (*al-mā‘ārif al-ilāhiyya*) that it bears, while its ugliness is the opposite of this.

A person with lofty aspirations (*‘ālī al-himma*) should not waste his life with contingent things (*muḥdathāt*)<sup>65</sup> and their exposition, lest his share from his Lord escape him. He should also free himself from the authority of his reflection (*fikr*), for reflection can only know from its own point of reference; but the truth that is sought after is not that.

Knowledge of God is contrary to knowledge of God’s existence. For the intellect knows God insofar as He is existent and by way of negation (*salb*), not affirmation (*ithbāt*). This is contrary to the [view of the] majority of sound-minded people (*‘uqalā’*) and the theologians (*mutakallimīn*), except our master (*ustādh*) Abū Hāmid<sup>66</sup> (God sanctify his spirit), for he is with us on this issue.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>63</sup> al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, k. [37] *al-‘Ilm*, b. [19] *mā jā’ a fī faḍl al-ḥiqb ‘alā l-‘ibāda*. Interestingly, Shihāb al-Dīn ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī also refers to this *ḥadīth* in his letter to Rāzī. See the text in Pourjavady, *Dū mujaddid*, 516.

<sup>64</sup> This is a reference to the soul (*nafs*). I take the translation of this term from Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 159.

<sup>65</sup> In strictly-speaking theological and philosophical contexts, *muḥdathāt* (pl. of *muḥdath*) refers to ‘originated things’, and can alternatively be translated as ‘contingent things’ on the logic that all things that are originated are contingent. It can also be noted here that Şehit Ali 1351, Ayasofiya 2063, and Şehit Ali 1341 have *mārifā* before *muḥdathāt*, thus rendering the construction, ‘in knowing novelties’.

<sup>66</sup> That is, al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111). For Ibn ‘Arabī’s view of Ghazālī, see Binyamin Abrahamov, ‘Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Attitude toward al-Ghazālī’ in Y. Tzvi Langermann (ed.), *Avicenna and His Legacy: A Golden Age of Science and Philosophy* (Turnhout: Brespols, 2009), 101–15.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. the famous saying of Abū Sa‘īd al-Kharrāz (d. ca. 286/899) (which has many cognates in earlier Islamic thought), ‘None knows God but God’. Ibn ‘Arabī tells us elsewhere that Ghazālī was amongst those who adhered to this principle. See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 62.



God (great and glorious) is too exalted to be known by the intellect's [powers of] reflection and rational consideration (*naẓar*).<sup>68</sup> An intelligent person should empty his heart of reflection when he wants to know God by way of witnessing (*mushābada*).<sup>69</sup> The one with high aspiration should not learn this [kind of knowledge] from the world of imagination (*ālam al-khayāl*),<sup>70</sup> which contains embodied lights (*al-anwār al-mutajassada*) that point to meanings beyond them. For imagination causes intellectual meanings (*al-mā'ānī al-aqliyya*) to descend into sensory forms (*al-qawālib al-ḥissiyya*),<sup>71</sup> just as knowledge [appears] in the form of milk,<sup>72</sup> the Qur'ān in the form of a rope,<sup>73</sup> and religion in the form of a shackle.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Lit, 'by the intellect with its [powers of] reflection and rational consideration (*naẓar*)'. For Ibn 'Arabī's understanding of these terms and their limitations in knowing God, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 159–66, as well as the discussion throughout Rosenthal, 'Ibn 'Arabī between "Philosophy" and "Mysticism"'.  
<sup>69</sup> For Ibn 'Arabī, *mushābada* is a near synonym for *kashf* or 'unveiling' (for which, see n. 78). For one of his definitions of *mushābada*, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 227.

<sup>70</sup> Despite the exalted status of imagination, for the one who aspires to know God, imaginal forms can be a distraction. This seems to be the basis of Ibn 'Arabī's caution to Rāzī. Also consider this passage from *Futūḥāt*, iii. 361: 'Yet in spite of this tremendous wideness by which it exercises its properties over all things, imagination is incapable of receiving meanings disengaged from substrata as they are in themselves. . . . Hence imagination is the wide/narrow, while God is the "Wide" absolutely' (cited, with slight modifications, from Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 122). For Ibn 'Arabī's treatment of imagination, see, *inter alia*, Chittick (transl.), 'The World of Imagination' in Ibn 'Arabī, *The Meccan Revelations* (ed. Michel Chodkiewicz; New York: Pir Press, 2002–4), i. 170–80; Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, ch. 7; Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Ṣūfism of Ibn 'Arabī*, part 2; Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (ed. A. E. Affi; Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya, 1946), 99–106; Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1984), 7–22.

<sup>71</sup> One of the properties of imagination is that it causes spiritual meanings to become corporealized. By the same token, it also allows corporeal forms to become spiritualized.  
<sup>72</sup> A reference to a *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet interprets the milk given to him in a dream (which he drinks and also gives to 'Umar to drink) as symbolizing knowledge: al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. [92] *al-Ta'bīr*, b. [15] *al-laban*.  
<sup>73</sup> Cf. Q. 3. 103, where the 'rope of God' is understood to be a reference to the Qur'ān. See the commentary upon this verse in Nasr *et al.* (eds.), *The HarperCollins Study Quran*.  
<sup>74</sup> In al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. [92] *al-Ta'bīr*, b. [26] *al-qayd fī l-manām*, a shackle seen in a dream is said to symbolize firm-footedness (*thabāt*) in religion. It can

A person with lofty aspirations should not have, as his teacher and witness,<sup>75</sup> a female (*mu'annath*) who is given to taking from the Universal Soul (*al-nafs al-kulliyya*),<sup>76</sup> just as he should not be given to taking [something] from one who is, fundamentally, poor (*faqīr*). Whatever does not have perfection except through what is other than itself is poor. Such is the condition of everything other than God (exalted is He).<sup>77</sup> Thus, elevate your aspiration so that you only take knowledge from God by way of unveiling (*kashf*)!<sup>78</sup>

According to the verifiers (*muḥaqqiqīn*),<sup>79</sup> there is no agent (*fā'il*) but God, and for this reason they only take [knowledge] from God—however,

also be noted that at *Futūḥāt*, iii. 361 (translated in Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 122), Ibn 'Arabī makes a point similar to what is found in this paragraph.

<sup>75</sup> 'Witness' (*shāhid*) is absent from Şehit Ali 1351, Ayasofiya 2063, and Şehit Ali 1341.

<sup>76</sup> Ibn 'Arabī is alluding here to his earlier point concerning what is meant by being a man or *rajul* (see n. 62). In Islamic cosmology, the Universal Soul is feminine, as it is purely passive, whereas the Intellect (*aql*) is masculine, as it is purely active. These terms are synonymous with two other symbols met with in theoretical Sufism and later Islamic philosophy, namely the Tablet (derived from Q. 85. 22) and the Pen (derived from Q. 68. 1) respectively (i.e., the Pen 'acts' on the Tablet by 'writing' upon it). See Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, 153–8. The point Ibn 'Arabī is thus making is that the person seeking God should take his knowledge and testimony from someone who is spiritually 'virile' (i.e., who is active and can give), not someone who is spiritually 'non-virile' (i.e., who is passive and can only receive).

<sup>77</sup> For Ibn 'Arabī, all attributes at root belong to God (see, for example, *Futūḥāt*, iii. 147). Unlike God, who is Absolute Being, we possess a relative type of being, but one which is fundamentally characterized by non-existence ('*adam*'). For an explanation of this point, see Rustom, 'Philosophical Sufism'. See also Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, iv. 263, as well as the pertinent discussion in Denis Gril, 'Ibn 'Arabī et les catégories' in Dominik Perler and Ulrich Rudolph (eds.), *Logik und Theologie: Das Organon im arabischen und im lateinischen Mittelalter* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 147–66.

<sup>78</sup> The literal rendering of this sentence slightly obscures the point at hand: 'Thus, elevate your aspiration so that you do not take knowledge except from God by way of unveiling (*kashf*)'. By *kashf* or 'unveiling', Ibn 'Arabī is referring to knowledge taught directly by God, without the need of human, intellectual effort (see also the note on '*ilm ladunī*' in n. 90). Since Ibn 'Arabī insists that it is only *kashf* that can bring about true knowledge of God, he is famously known for having said, 'He who has no unveiling has no knowledge' (*Futūḥāt*, i. 218; cited in Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 170).

<sup>79</sup> Normally, Ibn 'Arabī reserves the term *muḥaqqiq* for a Sufi who is thoroughly realized in his knowledge of God. Here, however, he is using the term

by way of 'knotting' (*ʿaqd*),<sup>80</sup> not unveiling. But the people of God (*ahl Allāh*),<sup>81</sup> disdaining to subsist in *the knowledge of certainty* [Q. 102. 5], do not attain their goal except through arrival (*wuṣūl*) at *the eye of certainty* [Q. 102. 7].<sup>82</sup>

Know that when the people of reflection attain the furthestmost goal, their reflection takes them to the state of being deaf imitators. But the matter is too exalted for it to halt at reflection! So long as there is reflection, it will be impossible for one to repose and be at rest.<sup>83</sup> The intellect has a limit at which it halts with respect to its reflective powers, for it has the quality of receiving [only] what God bestows upon it. Therefore, an intelligent person should expose himself to the divine breaths of generosity (*nafahāt al-jūd*)<sup>84</sup> and not remain enslaved by the

in the sense of one who is realized in the intellectual sciences such that he is able to (at least theoretically) relate all things back to God.

<sup>80</sup> Ibn 'Arabī seems to be implying that although the verifiers in question understand God as the sole agent or efficient cause (*fā'il*) and can thus relate all manner of secondary causation back to Him, their understanding of the actual situation remains merely theoretical. Since the '–q–l root connotes the idea of shackling a camel, Ibn 'Arabī likes to relate this point to the finite nature of the intellect (*ʿaql*)—the intellect can only tie down and 'knot' (from the '–q–d root) that which can come under its purview, and is therefore ultimately confined in what it can know. That is to say that the intellect can come to know that there is no agent but God, but can only do so by virtue of a knowledge which is ultimately fettered by its own limitations.

<sup>81</sup> For the identity of the 'people of God', see n. 62. It should be noted that Şehit Ali 1351 and Ayasofiya 2063 read 'people of aspiration' (*ahl al-himma*), while Şehit Ali 1341 gives it as an alternative to *ahl Allāh*.

<sup>82</sup> The Qur'ān also speaks of 'the truth of certainty' (56. 95). Generally, these three terms are taken to refer to the different levels of realization of certainty in God. Thus, 'the knowledge of certainty' is tantamount to hearing of a fire, 'the eye of certainty' to seeing the fire, and 'the truth of certainty' to being consumed by the fire (see the commentary upon Q. 56. 95 in Nasr *et al.* [eds.], *The HarperCollins Study Quran*). In this passage, Ibn 'Arabī treats 'the knowledge of certainty' as a synonym for knowledge afforded to one by means of reflection and rational consideration, and 'the eye of certainty' as a synonym for knowledge acquired by way of unveiling. See also *Futūḥāt*, ii. 628.

<sup>83</sup> Şehit Ali 1351, Ayasofiya 2063, and Şehit Ali 1341 have the subject here as *ʿaql*, thus rendering the sentence as, 'So long as there is reflection, it will be impossible for the intellect to repose and be at rest'.

<sup>84</sup> Ibn 'Arabī is alluding to a *ḥadīth*, 'Verily your Lord has breaths of His mercy in the days of your time—so expose yourselves to them' (cited in Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart*, 349, n. 12). Ibn 'Arabī also cites a version of this *ḥadīth* in his *Risālat rūḥ al-quds* (ed. Maḥmūd Ghurāb; Damascus: Dār al-Imān, 1994), 60.

shackle of his rational consideration and learning (*kasb*), for he is liable to doubt (*shubha*) because of these.

It has been reported to me from one of your brothers—whom I trust, and who is amongst those sincerely disposed towards you<sup>85</sup>—that he saw you weeping one day, and so he and those present asked you why you were weeping.<sup>86</sup> You replied, ‘A position to which I have adhered for the past thirty years has become clear to me thanks to a proof which has just dawned upon me. [It turns out that] the [truth of the] matter is contrary to my previous position. So I cried and said to myself, “perhaps that which has occurred to me is also like the first position!”’ This, then, is what you said.<sup>87</sup>

It is impossible for the one who knows through the scope (*martaba*) of the intellect and reflection to be at rest or tranquil, especially when it comes to knowing God; and it is impossible for him to know His quiddity (*māhiyya*) by way of rational consideration. So, my brother, what ails you that you remain in this predicament and do not enter upon the path (*ṭariq*) of self-discipline (*riyāḍa*), inner-struggle (*mujāhada*), and spiritual retreat (*khalwa*)<sup>88</sup>—which have been instituted by the Messenger of God (God bless him and grant him peace)—so that you can attain what was attained by the one<sup>89</sup> about whom God said, [*a servant*] *from among Our servants whom We had granted a mercy from Us and whom We had taught knowledge from Our Presence* [Q. 18. 65]?<sup>90</sup> It is

<sup>85</sup> Lit., ‘is amongst those who have a beautiful intention towards you’.

<sup>86</sup> More literally, this passage would mean that Rāzī was found in a state of grief, having just cried: ‘he saw you one day and you had just wept (*wa-qaḍ bakayta*). So he and those present asked you why you had been weeping’.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Fathalla Kholeif, *A Study of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and His Controversies in Transoxiana* (Beirut: Dar El-Machreq, 1966), 18. For an alternative translation of this paragraph, see Shihadeh, ‘The Mystic and the Sceptic’, 102.

<sup>88</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī dedicated an entire treatise to the *khalwa*, as well as to two chapters from the *Futūḥāt* (i.e., chs. 78 and 79). See the insightful discussion in Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn ‘Arabī* (transl. Liadain Sherrard; Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 151–3.

<sup>89</sup> A reference to Khidr, the mysterious figure who is taught directly by God and appears as Moses’ teacher in Q. 18. 66–82 (although he is not named in the Qur’ān). For this narrative in Sufi Qur’ānic exegesis, see H. Talat Halman, *Where the Two Seas Meet: The Qur’ānic Story of al-Khidr and Moses in Sufi Commentaries as a Model for Spiritual Guidance* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2013).

<sup>90</sup> The special kind of knowledge ‘from Our Presence’ is referred to as *‘ilm ladunī* in Sufi texts. In his *tafsīr* upon Q. 18. 65, Rāzī explains that, for the Sufis, it refers to ‘the sciences obtained by way of unveilings’ (*al-‘ulūm al-ḥāṣila bi-ṭariq*

indeed the likes of you who [should] take up this noble function and majestic and lofty rank.<sup>91</sup>

My friend (God grant him success) should know that every existent (*mawjūd*) exists by virtue of a cause (*sabab*). That cause is originated (*muhḍath*) like the existent thing, which has two aspects: an aspect that looks towards its cause, and an aspect that looks towards its Existentiator (*mūjid*), namely God. All of the [common] people, philosophers, and others look towards the causes of existent things. But not those who are realized amongst the folk of God (*ahl Allāh*), such as the prophets (*anbiyā'*), the friends of God (*awliyā'*), and the angels (*malā'ika*) (upon whom be peace). Despite their knowledge of the causes [of existent things], they look towards the other aspect, to their Existentiator.<sup>92</sup>

Amongst them is one who looks to his Lord from the perspective of His cause but not from His perspective. Thus he says, 'My heart narrated

*al-mukāshafāt*), and also mentions a well-known treatise on the topic attributed to Ghazālī (for a translation of which, see Margaret Smith, 'Al-Risālat al-Laduniyya by Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (450/1059–505/1111)', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 2 (April 1938): 177–200; 3 (July 1938): 353–74; partially reprinted in Nasr and Aminrazavi (eds.), *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia*, iv. 336–48). Rāzī then divides knowledge into two types: self-evident knowledge and acquired knowledge on the one hand, and *ladunī* knowledge on the other (cf. his other, similar divisions of knowledge outlined in Shihadeh, 'The Mystic and the Sceptic', 113–15). Rāzī then gives his own definition of what *'ilm ladunī* is. It entails that 'man strive by way of self-discipline and inner struggle (*riyādāt wa-l-mujāhadāt*) in order for the sensory and imaginative faculties to become weakened. When they become weakened, the intellectual faculty (*al-quwwa al-'aqliyya*) will become stronger and the divine lights (*al-anwār al-ilāhiyya*) will illuminate the substance (*jawhar*) of the intellect. [Divine] knowledge (*mā'arif*) will then be obtained and the forms of knowledge perfected, without the need for effort (*sa'y wa-ṭalab*) through reflecting (*tafakkur*) and pondering (*ta'ammul*)' (Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* [Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Bahiyya al-Miṣriyya, 1934–8], xxi. 149–50). Cf. this passage with what Rāzī says about the practice of the remembrance of God (*dhikr*) in his *Lawāmi' al-bayyināt*, translated in Fariduddin Attar Rifai, 'Metaphysics of Goodness according to St. Anselm of Canterbury and Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī' in Torrance Kirby, Rahim Acar, and Bilal Baṣ (eds.), *Philosophy and the Abrahamic Religions: Scriptural Hermeneutics and Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 157–74, at 170–1 and n. 45. See also Rāzī's comments on *dhikr* in his *al-Maṭālib al-'āliya*, translated in Shihadeh, 'The Mystic and the Sceptic', 114.

<sup>91</sup> For an alternative translation of most of this paragraph, see *ibid*, 102.

<sup>92</sup> For an alternative translation of this paragraph, see Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 124.

to me from my Lord'.<sup>93</sup> But the other one, who is perfect (*kāmil*), says, 'My Lord narrated to me'.<sup>94</sup> It is this to which our gnostic (*ʿārif*) companion alluded when he said, 'You take your knowledge as traces, dead from the dead. But we take our knowledge from the Living One who does not die'.<sup>95</sup> According to us, he whose existence is derived from other than himself is nothing.<sup>96</sup> So for the gnostic, there is absolutely none to rely upon except God.<sup>97</sup>

Moreover, my friend should know that even though God is one, He has many different faces (*wujūh*) turned towards to us. Thus, be wary of the places of divine arrival (*al-mawārid al-ilāhiyya*)<sup>98</sup> and the self-disclosures (*tajalliyāt*) of the faces in the sense discussed here! God's ruling property (*ḥukm*) insofar as He is a Lord for you is not like His ruling property insofar as He is Guardian, nor is His ruling property insofar as He is Merciful like His ruling property insofar as He is Vengeful. Such is the case with all of the divine names (*asmāʾ*).<sup>99</sup>

Know that the divine face, namely 'Allāh', is a name for all of the names, such as Lord, the Powerful, and the Grateful.<sup>100</sup> The sum total of the names are like the Essence (*dhāt*) which brings together all of the

<sup>93</sup> The speaker here is Baṣṭāmī (see Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, iv. 412). I follow Chittick's translation here in *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 106.

<sup>94</sup> Ibn 'Arabī is likely referring here to the Prophet, and perhaps to the phenomenon of the *ḥadīth qudsī*, that is, extra-Qur'anic reports narrated by the Prophet from God (concerning which, see William Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam* [The Hague: Mouton, 1977]). For Ibn 'Arabī's collection of *ḥadīth qudsī*, see his *Mishkāt al-anwār*, transl. as *Divine Sayings* by Stephen Hirtenstein and Martin Notcutt (Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 2008).

<sup>95</sup> A famous statement by Baṣṭāmī, which Ibn 'Arabī cites quite often. See *Futūḥāt*, i. 31; ii. 253; iii. 140, 413.

<sup>96</sup> Lit., 'his ruling, according to us, is the ruling of nothing'.

<sup>97</sup> For an alternative translation of this paragraph, see Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 124.

<sup>98</sup> Reading *ilāhiyya* instead of *ilāhiyyāt* (*sic*).

<sup>99</sup> For an alternative translation of this paragraph, see Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 124 (in the second sentence of this paragraph I closely follow Chittick's rendering). The point that Ibn 'Arabī is trying to make here relates to his teaching that God's self-disclosures continuously present Him in a new mode to the servant, and hence demand from the servant an appropriate response depending on which aspect or face of God is revealed to him at that moment (see also n. 105, and Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 124). This teaching of Ibn 'Arabī's is intimately tied to the famous Sufi dictum, *lā takrār fī l-tajallī* ('There is no repetition in self-disclosure'). For more on this point, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 103–5.

<sup>100</sup> That is, since the divine name Allāh is an all-gathering name (*ism jāmiʿ*), it brings together all of the divine names. The cosmos being the theatre for the

attributes (*ṣifāt*) contained in It.<sup>101</sup> But the name Allāh takes in all of the names, while they guard It from ever being witnessed. Thus, you cannot witness the name Allāh in any way whatsoever.<sup>102</sup> Since He addresses you through the name Allāh—as it is all-comprehensive (*jāmi'a*)—consider in what manner He speaks to you,<sup>103</sup> and the station (*maqām*) that this intimate discourse (*munājāt*) or witnessing demands.<sup>104</sup> So consider which divine name is looked upon, for that is the name which addresses you or is witnessed by you.<sup>105</sup> That name is what is expressed by the transmutation in forms (*al-taḥawwul fī l-ṣūra*),<sup>106</sup> as is the case with a drowning man. When he says 'O Allāh!', it means, 'O Helper!', 'O Rescuer!', and 'O Deliverer!' And when a man who is in pain says 'O Allāh!', it means, 'O Healer!', 'O Curer!', and the like.

That which I said to you about the 'transmutation in forms' [refers to] what Muslim [d. 261/875] has mentioned in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, namely that the Creator (*bārī*) will disclose Himself [to His servants on the day of Resurrection] but will be denied, and refuge will be sought from Him. So He will transmute Himself for them into a form in which they will recognize Him. Then they will acknowledge Him after having

display of God's names, each name therefore connotes a different aspect of the reality of the name Allāh.

<sup>101</sup> For an alternative translation of the first two lines of this paragraph, see Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 124.

<sup>102</sup> In other words, although all of the names are witnessed in the cosmos, the name Allāh as such is never displayed or witnessed. Cf. the saying of Kharrāz cited in n. 67.

<sup>103</sup> Lit., 'what it is through which He speaks to you'.

<sup>104</sup> The well-known Sufi term *maqām* (lit., 'standing place'), translated as 'station', here refers to the manner in which one should 'stand', that is, how one should be positioned vis-à-vis the divine self-disclosure at the particular moment in which God is addressing him, or when he is witnessing Him.

<sup>105</sup> Ibn 'Arabī's admonishment here is not simply a theoretical point. Rather, it is intimately related to the fundamental Sufi notion of *adab* or correct comportment/etiquette. For Ibn 'Arabī, being able to discern God's self-disclosures is of utmost importance, since by virtue of this one can observe the correct *adab* that is demanded by each self-disclosure (recall here the famous early Sufi maxim, 'All of Sufism is *adab*'). For Ibn 'Arabī's concept of *adab*, see Grill, 'Adab and Revelation or One of the Foundations of the Hermeneutics of Ibn 'Arabi' in Stephen Hirtenstein and Michael Tiernan (eds.), *Muhyyidin Ibn 'Arabi: A Commemorative Volume* (Shaftesbury: Element, 1993), 228–63.

<sup>106</sup> For Ibn 'Arabī's teaching on the manner in which God takes on different forms in accordance with the receptivity of the individual to whom He is disclosing Himself (both in this world and the next), see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 99–103.

denied Him.<sup>107</sup> This is what is meant by ‘witnessing’ in this context, as well as ‘intimate discourse’ and ‘divine addressing’ (*al-mukhāṭabāt al-rabbāniyya*).

An intelligent person should only seek to know that through which his essence is perfected and which will depart with him when he departs. And this is nothing but knowledge of God by way of bestowal (*wahb*) and witnessing. Your knowledge of medicine, for example—you only need it in a world where there is illness and sickness. When you depart to a world in which there is neither sickness nor illness, whom will you cure with that knowledge? An intelligent person does not strive [to know medicine] insofar as there is no wellbeing [in it] for him. And if he acquires [knowledge of medicine] by way of bestowal, as was the medical knowledge (*ṭibb*) of the prophets (upon whom be peace), he should not stop there. Rather, he should seek knowledge of God. Likewise is the case with geometry—you only need it in a world where there are surfaces (*misāḥa*). When you depart, you will leave it in the world appropriate to it, for the soul will leave empty-handed (*sādhija*), accompanied by nothing. In this way will the soul leave behind preoccupation with every science at the time of its departing to the next world (*ālam al-ākḥira*).<sup>108</sup>

Thus, an intelligent person should only acquire knowledge that is absolutely necessary (*al-ḥāja al-ḍarūriyya*) for him.<sup>109</sup> Let him, then, strive to acquire that with which he will depart when he is made to depart. This is nothing other than two types of knowledge, specifically speaking: knowledge of God, and knowledge of the homesteads of the next life (*mawāṭin al-ākḥira*)<sup>110</sup> and what is demanded by its stations (*maqāmāt*)<sup>111</sup> so that he may walk therein as though he would walk in his own home, thus denying absolutely nothing. For he should be one of the people of gnosis (*irfān*), not one of the people of denial (*nukrān*)! These homesteads [of the next life] are homesteads of distinguishing

<sup>107</sup> For the *ḥadīth* in question, see Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. [2] *al-Īmān*, b. [83] *maʿrifat tariq al-ruʿya*. For Ibn ʿArabī’s use of this *ḥadīth*, see *Futūḥāt*, i. 305; ii. 81, 311, 610; iii. 48, 485, etc. See also Ibn ʿArabī, *Divine Sayings*, 27.

<sup>108</sup> Alternative translations of this paragraph can be found in Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart*, 103; Rosenthal, ‘Ibn ʿArabī between “Philosophy” and “Mysticism”’, 21–2.

<sup>109</sup> Lit., ‘Thus, an intelligent person should not acquire knowledge except [in terms] of what is occasioned by way of absolute necessity for him’.

<sup>110</sup> In Ibn ʿArabī’s writings (and in the works of his followers), *mawāṭin* (pl. *mawāṭin*) stands as a synonym for *maḥzar* or ‘locus of manifestation’.

<sup>111</sup> That is, the correct *adab* that is to be observed in accordance with what is demanded by each of God’s self-disclosures. See also n. 99 and n. 105 respectively.



(*tamyīz*), not homesteads of admixing (*imtizāj*), which bestow error. When he attains this station [of the homesteads of the next life], he will be free from being distinguished by that group [in the aforementioned *ḥadīth*] who, when their Lord discloses Himself to them, will say, 'We seek refuge in God from you! You are not our Lord. We will wait until our Lord comes to us'. And when He comes to them in the form in which they recognize Him, they will acknowledge Him.<sup>112</sup> There is no state of perplexity (*ḥayra*) greater than that!<sup>113</sup>

An intelligent person should discover these two [aforementioned] types of knowledge by way of self-discipline, inner struggle (*mujāhada*), and spiritual retreat under specific conditions (*ṭarīqa mashrūṭa*). I wanted to discuss, step-by-step, the spiritual retreat, its conditions, and what is disclosed in it, but the present moment (*waqt*) prevents me. I mean by 'present moment' the scholars of evil ('*ulamā' al-sū'*) who deny that of which they are ignorant, and who are shackled by bigotry (*ta'aṣṣub*) as well as love of publicity and leadership on account of their obedience and submissiveness to God, even though they do not have faith (*īmān*)!<sup>114</sup>

This is the last part of the letter. God suffices, and praise is His—firstly and lastly, inwardly and outwardly. Prayers upon His Prophet, in gratitude and remembrance.

<sup>112</sup> Although literally *aqarrū* here should be rendered 'they will acknowledge', I add 'Him' since this is clearly demanded by the context. Şehit Ali 1351, Ayasofiya 2063, and Şehit Ali 1341 all have the more natural *aqarrū bi-hi*.

<sup>113</sup> For an alternative translation of this paragraph, see Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart*, 103; 348, n. 13. See also Rosenthal, 'Ibn 'Arabī between "Philosophy" and "Mysticism"', 22, for a part of this paragraph in translation.

<sup>114</sup> Şehit Ali 1351, Ayasofiya 2063, and Şehit Ali 1341 all have *īmān bi-hi*, thus rendering the last clause, 'even though they do not have faith in Him!'