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# Ibn 'Arabi's metaphysics of love: a textual study of chapter 178 of al-Futuhat al-Makkiya

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IBN 'ARABĪ'S METAPHYSICS OF LOVE:  
A TEXTUAL STUDY OF CHAPTER 178 OF *AL-FUTŪḤĀT AL-MAKKIYYA*

By

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## **Dedication**

To my father and mother.

I am forever grateful for your love.

## Abstract

This study examines the concept of Divine love and its various metaphysical articulations as enshrined in the thought of the Andalusian Sufi Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240 CE). In order to understand the concept of Divine love from the so-called “Akbarian” perspective, a thorough textual analysis of chapter 178, “On Knowing the Station of Love,” from Ibn ‘Arabī’s magnum opus, *The Meccan Openings (al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya)*, will be carried out. This chapter, which is arguably the richest and most complex text on the topic of Divine love in the Sufi tradition, has not received detailed treatment in Western scholarship. The present study therefore aims to fill this lacunae, offering a complete reading and analysis of this work’s sophisticated cosmology, ontology, and psychology with reference to the development of love theory in the Sufi tradition which preceded Ibn ‘Arabī, and his own metaphysical worldview.

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I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude and appreciation to all those who have been instrumental in allowing me to successfully complete this study.

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*My heart has become capable of every form: it is a pasture for  
gazelles and a convent for Christian monks,*

*And a temple for idols and the pilgrim's Ka'ba and the tables of the  
Tora and the book of the Koran.*

*I follow the religion of Love: whatever way Love's camels take, that  
is my religion and my faith.<sup>1</sup>*

-- Ibn 'Arabī

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *The Tarjumān al-Ashwāq: A collection of Mystical Odes*, trans. Reynold Nicholson (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1911), 67.



## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
The Structure and Methodology of the Present Study .....	6
Chapter One: An Outline of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Metaphysical Worldview.....	10
1.1. Introduction.....	10
1.2. The Life of Ibn ‘Arabī.....	10
1.3. The Doctrine of Ibn ‘Arabī.....	12
1.3.1. The Meccan Openings ( <i>al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya</i> ).....	13
1.3.2. The Bezels of Wisdom ( <i>Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam</i> ) .....	13
1.3.3. The Interpreter of Desires ( <i>Tarjumān al-ashwāq</i> ) .....	14
1.3.4. Other Works.....	14
1.4. The Sources of Ibn ‘Arabī.....	15
1.5. The Symbolism and Language of Ibn ‘Arabī.....	16
1.6. The Feminine Aspect in Ibn ‘Arabī’s Literature.....	17
1.7. The Ontology of Ibn ‘Arabī .....	18
1.7.1. The Hidden Treasure.....	18
1.7.2. The Divine Essence ( <i>dhāt</i> ), Names ( <i>asmā’</i> ), and Attributes ( <i>ṣifāt</i> ) ..	19
1.7.3. Creation ( <i>khalq</i> ) and Cosmology .....	21
1.7.4. Being ( <i>wujūd</i> ).....	22
1.7.5. The Five Divine Presences ( <i>al-ḥadrāt al-ilāhiyya</i> ) of Being.....	23
1.7.6. Clarification on the Use of the Term “Union” ( <i>al-ittihād</i> ) .....	24
1.7.7. Oneness of Being ( <i>waḥdat al-wujūd</i> ) .....	25
1.7.8. The “Muhammadan Reality” ( <i>al-ḥaqīqat al-Muḥammadiyya</i> ) and the “Perfect Human” ( <i>al-insān al-kāmil</i> ).....	29
1.8. Love and Ibn ‘Arabī.....	30
1.9. The Influence of Ibn ‘Arabī .....	31
1.10. Conclusion.....	33
Chapter Two: Love in the Qur’ān, the Sunnah, and Early Sufism .....	34
2.1. Introduction .....	34
2.2. Names and Types of Love in Arabic.....	35
2.3. Love ( <i>al-ḥubb</i> ) in the Qur’ān .....	36
2.4. Affection ( <i>al-wudd</i> ) in the Qur’ān .....	38

2.5.	Desire ( <i>al-hawā</i> ) in the Qur'ān .....	38
2.6.	Intense Love ( <i>al-'ishq</i> ) .....	39
2.7.	Love in the Sunnah.....	40
2.8.	Love in Sufism Before Ibn 'Arabī.....	43
2.8.1.	Love, Knowledge and Beauty.....	46
2.8.2.	Love and the Path to God.....	47
2.9.	Conclusion.....	48
Chapter Three: A Hermeneutical Study of Chapter 178 of the <i>Futūḥāt</i> : Part I....		50
3.1.	Introductory Poems .....	50
3.2.	Love in the Qur'ān .....	52
3.3.	Reason for Creation and Human Actions.....	53
3.4.	Significance of Islamic Law ( <i>sharī'a</i> ) and Love .....	54
3.5.	Terminology of Love .....	55
3.6.	Importance of Polysemic Consideration .....	56
3.7.	Types of Desire ( <i>hawā</i> ).....	56
3.7.1.	Reasons for Desire ( <i>hawā</i> ).....	57
3.8.	Intense Love ( <i>'ishq</i> ) .....	58
3.9.	Affection ( <i>wudd</i> ).....	59
3.10.	The Love of Love ( <i>ḥubb al-ḥubb</i> ).....	59
3.11.	Reasons Behind Love ( <i>asbāb al-ḥubb</i> ).....	60
3.12.	Love of Beauty ( <i>ḥubb al-jamāl</i> ).....	61
3.13.	Categories of Love ( <i>aqsām al-ḥubb</i> ).....	62
3.13.1.	Divine Love ( <i>al-ḥubb al-ilāhī</i> ) .....	62
3.13.2.	Human Love ( <i>al-ḥubb al-insānī</i> ).....	63
3.13.3.	Spiritual Love ( <i>al-ḥubb al-rūḥānī</i> ).....	66
3.13.4.	Natural Love ( <i>al-ḥubb al-ṭabī'ī</i> ).....	67
3.13.5.	Elemental Love ( <i>al-ḥubb al-'unṣurī</i> ).....	67
3.14.	Characteristics of Divine Lovers ( <i>nu'ūt al-muḥibīn</i> ).....	69
3.14.1.	Emaciation ( <i>al-nihūl</i> ).....	69
3.14.2.	Withering ( <i>al-dhibūl</i> ).....	70
3.14.3.	Amorousness ( <i>al-gharām</i> ).....	70
3.14.4.	Longing ( <i>al-shawq</i> ) .....	71

3.14.5. Infatuation ( <i>al-huyām</i> ).....	72
3.14.6. Sighs ( <i>al-zafarāt</i> ).....	73
3.14.7. Anguish ( <i>al-kamad</i> ).....	73
3.14.8. Additional characteristics .....	74
Chapter Four: A Hermeneutical Study of Chapter 178 of the <i>Futūḥāt</i> : Part II ....	75
4.1. Qualities ( <i>ṣifāt</i> ) Loved by God.....	75
4.1.1. Following the Path of the Prophet .....	75
4.1.2. Those Who Repent ( <i>al-tawwābīn</i> ) .....	76
4.1.3. Those Who Cleanse Themselves ( <i>al-mutaṭahhirīn</i> ) .....	77
4.1.4. The Purifiers ( <i>al-muṭṭahharīn</i> ).....	77
4.1.5. The Patient ( <i>al-ṣābirīn</i> ).....	78
4.1.6. The Thankful ( <i>al-shākīrīn</i> ) .....	79
4.1.7. The Virtuous ( <i>al-muḥsinīn</i> ).....	79
4.1.8. Those Who Fight for God’s Cause in a Row as if they were a Solid Structure ( <i>yuqātilūna fī sabīlihi ṣaffan ka ’annahum bunyānun marṣūs</i> ).....	80
4.1.9. Important Observations.....	81
4.1.10. Essential Qualities of Divine Lovers ( <i>n ’ūt al-muḥibīn</i> ) .....	82
4.2. Further Remarks .....	88
4.2.1. What is the Beginning ( <i>bad’</i> ) of God’s Love for Creation, and the Beginning of Creation’s Love ( <i>bud’ūhu</i> ) for God? .....	89
4.2.2. What is the Goal ( <i>ghāya</i> ) of Human Love? .....	90
4.2.3. Why Does Love Desire the Non-Existent and Absent? And Why Does the Lover Have Opposing Characteristics in his/her Love ( <i>yajma’ al-muḥibb fī ḥubbihi bayn al-diddayn</i> )? .....	91
4.2.4. Can the Mind ( <i>al- ‘aql</i> ) Love? .....	93
4.2.5. How Does Love Consume the Lover? .....	93
4.2.6. Why Does God Test and Give Trial to His Beloved?.....	95
Conclusion .....	96
Bibliography .....	100

## Introduction

Early Western scholars had a tendency to see Islam as a religion of a ritual, law, works, and even fear, much like Judaism. Among 19<sup>th</sup> century scholars, it was often argued that because both of these religions were Semitic, and therefore inferior to the Aryan religions, they did not give much place to love or the “higher human emotions.” This subjective perception had more to do with the predominant views of the Semitic religions in Europe, and of the religious mentalities they supposedly produced, (or which produced them), than of the religions themselves -- at least if we are to judge these two religions by their own books and writings.<sup>1</sup> The idea of the absence of love in Islam was indicated by the Scottish scholar John Arnott MacCulloch (d. 1950) in his book *Religion, Its Origin and Forms* (1904) when he wrote:

Islam, the religion of submission, as it sprung up among a people who had preserved most faithfully their Semitic characteristics, has also remained faithful to Semitic religious conceptions. In nearly every case the gods of the Semites were lofty and terrible deities, before whom man crouched in fear, unlike those of the Aryan race. And Islam in its conception of Allah has made this the foundation–stone of their faith. *It is a religion of fear, not of love ...*<sup>2</sup>

From an Islamic point of view, however, love (*ḥubb*) is believed to hold a central position and play a crucial role within the overall ethos of the religion. As the Prophet of Islam said, “none of you truly believes until God and His Messenger are *more beloved* to

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<sup>1</sup> See Atif Khalil and Shiraz Sheikh, “Sufism in the World of Islam and Western Scholarship: A Brief Historiography,” *Philosophy East and West* (draft of forthcoming article); See also Carl Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide To Sufism* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1997), 8-18.

<sup>2</sup> Cited in Tomoko Masuzawa, “Islam, A Semitic Religion,” in idem., *The Invention of World Religion: or, How European Universalism was Preserved in a Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 197.

him than anything else.”<sup>3</sup> He thus stressed love above all else. We also have a *ḥadīth qudsī*, a tradition uttered by the Prophet in which God is said to state in first person, “My Mercy is greater than my Wrath.”<sup>4</sup> And as this thesis will demonstrate, there are numerous other such examples. However, even though love is central to Muslim piety, we still lack serious, comprehensive scholarly studies that demonstrate the centrality of love in Islam in general. Two major exceptions are William Chittick’s recent *Divine Love: Islamic Literature and the Path to God* (2013), and Prince Ghazi b. Muhammad’s *Love in the Holy Qur’an* (2010).<sup>5</sup> Among more specialized works focusing on Sufism, one may also note Binyamin Abrahamov’s *Divine Love in Islamic Mysticism: The Teachings of al-Ghazālī and al-Dabbāgh* (2011),<sup>6</sup> and Maurice Gloton’s *Traite de l’amour* (1986),<sup>7</sup> which is the French translation of Ibn ‘Arabī’s chapter 178 of the *Futūḥāt*.

The conception of love in Islam, both the nature of Divine and human love, has been examined most thoroughly in the writings of those considered to be the representatives of Islamic spirituality and Sufism.<sup>8</sup> The Sufī path of self-realization is typically understood to reach its summit in the annihilation (*fanā’*) of the lover (*muḥibb*) in the Divine Beloved (*maḥbūb*). In other words, spiritual or mystical realization is achieved when all forms of love are perceived as the reflection of the one and only real

<sup>3</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by al-Bukhārī, & Muslim in their *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

<sup>4</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by Muslim in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

<sup>5</sup> William Chittick, *Divine Love: Islamic Literature and the Path to God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); Ghazi bin Muhammad, *Love in the Holy Quran* (Chicago: Kazi Publications Inc, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Binyamin Abrahamov, *Divine Love in Islamic Mysticism: The Teachings of al-Ghazālī and al-Dabbāgh* (London: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Maurice Gloton, *Traite de l’amour* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1986).

<sup>8</sup> William Chittick, *Divine Love*, xi.

love (*al-‘ishq al-ḥaqīqī*), which is considered to be the love of God.<sup>9</sup> In fact, in the Sufi metaphysical understanding of reality, God loves only Himself (*la yuḥibbu illā nafsahu*) since nothing exists but Him (*laysa fi-l wujūd illā huwa*).<sup>10</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī developed this metaphysical concept of love in light of the doctrine of the “Oneness of Being” (*waḥdat al-wujūd*).<sup>11</sup> He says that, “Everything is molded according to self-love. And there is nothing manifest but Him in the self (*‘ayn*) of the possible. Thus it may be affirmed that none loves God other than God Himself.”<sup>12</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī also speaks of the intimate relation between love, beauty and light. For him, love is drawn to beauty and also to light.<sup>13</sup> There is a Prophetic saying according to which “God is Beautiful, and He loves beauty.”<sup>14</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī concludes from this *ḥadīth* that beauty gives rise to love and accordingly every entity in being (*wujūd*) is naturally drawn to the love of God, who is described as Beautiful. He states, “If to beauty, undoubtedly loved for itself, we further add the beauty of [adornment]<sup>15</sup> (*zīna*), then it becomes Beauty upon Beauty (*jamāl ‘ala jamāl*), just as [He is] “Light upon Light” (Q. 24:35), and likewise Love upon Love (*maḥabba*).”<sup>16</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, which

<sup>9</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Foreword to Chittick, *Divine Love*, vii.

<sup>10</sup> See section 2.8 in ch. two of this thesis.

<sup>11</sup> Claude Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī”, *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabī Society*, 32 (2002): 31. The best summary of the Sufi doctrine of the Oneness of Being is in Toshihiko Izutsu, “An Analysis of Waḥdat al-Wujūd: Toward a Metaphilosophy of Oriental Philosophies,” in idem., *Creation and the Timeless Order of Things: Essays in Islamic Mystical Philosophy* (Oregon: White Cloud Press, 1994), 66-97; Cf. William Chittick, “A History of the Term *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*,” in idem., *In Search of the Lost Heart: Explorations in Islamic Thought*, eds. Mohammed Rustom, Atif Khalil and Kazuyo Murata (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), ch. 8, 71-88.

<sup>12</sup> Cited in Pablo Benito, “On the Divine Love of Beauty,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabī Society* 18 (1995): 20.

<sup>13</sup> William Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabī: Heir to the Prophets* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005), 41.

<sup>14</sup> See section 2.7 in ch. two of this thesis.

<sup>15</sup> The original word cited from Benito’s article was “finery,” I have made a slight modification to his translation and used the word “adornment” instead.

<sup>16</sup> Cited in Benito, “On the Divine Love of Beauty,” 13.

brings to fruition several elements in Islamic thought from the time of Avicenna (d. 1037) onward,<sup>17</sup> means that God alone has real existence (*wujūd al-ḥaqq*), and creation is only metaphorically existent (*wujūd majāzī*). He argues that because these entities can only see God's beauty with God's own light, their existence arises only through God's existence.<sup>18</sup>

Love is so central to Ibn 'Arabī that he understands it to be the motivating force behind creation itself.<sup>19</sup> According to a famous tradition known as the *ḥadīth* of the "Hidden Treasure," God is said to state, "I was a Hidden Treasure and I loved to be known; so I created the creatures and made Myself known to them; so they knew Me."<sup>20</sup> Ibn 'Arabī understands this *ḥadīth* to mean that God's love has an intrinsic predisposition to manifest being or *wujūd*. From this point of view, every creature is a self-disclosure, a theophany (*tajallī*) of God, or an epiphany (*mazhar*).<sup>21</sup> At the same time, *wujūd* does not have real existence on its own, because real existence is attributed to God alone.<sup>22</sup> That is to say, God expresses Himself through Himself to Himself. And because God loves that part of Himself which is still unmanifest outwardly, this unmanifest aspect is the "Hidden Treasure" to which the *ḥadīth* is referring.<sup>23</sup> William Chittick captures the essence of this concept when he states:

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<sup>17</sup>A discussion of the general intellectual background of the metaphysics associated with the school of Ibn 'Arabī can be found in Mohammed Rustom, "Philosophical Sufism," in *The Routledge Companion to Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Richard Taylor and Luis Xavier López-Farjeat (New York: Routledge, forthcoming).

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> See sub-section 1.7.1 in ch. one of this thesis.

<sup>20</sup> Maurice Gloton, "The Quranic Inspiration of Ibn 'Arabī's Vocabulary of Love: Etymological Links and Doctrinal development," trans. Cecilia Twinch, *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabī Society* 27 (2000): 38. There are different variations of the *ḥadīth* in Arabic as well different translations of it. I have modified the translation a little in order to maintain consistency with the rest of the thesis.

<sup>21</sup> See sub-section 1.7.3 in ch. one of this thesis.

<sup>22</sup> Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 42.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 46.

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God is loving himself by means of the locus of manifestation that is the existent entity... Just as “There is no god but God,” so also “There is no lover but God” and “There is no beloved but God.”<sup>24</sup>

Because love plays a central role in Ibn ‘Arabī’s overall religious and mystical vision, Ibn ‘Arabī composed numerous works on the subject, either lyrically as in the *Interpreter of Desires* (*Tarjumān al-’Ashwāq*), and the *Collection of Gnostic Poems* (*Dīwān al-Ma’ārif*), or in discursive expositions such as the *Divine Theophanies* (*al-Tajalliyāt al-Ilāhiyya*), *Descents at Mosul* (*al-Tanazzulāt al-Mawsiliyya*), *The Crown of Epistles* (*Tāj al-rasā’il*), and of course, *The Meccan Revelations* or *Openings* (*al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*).<sup>25</sup> In chapter 178 of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, entitled *On Knowing the Station of Love* (*fi ma’rifat maqām al-maḥabba*), Ibn ‘Arabī not only analyzes the subject of Divine love extensively, but also refutes the common understanding that love’s object actually exists.<sup>26</sup>

The metaphysical approach in Sufi literature on love is generally vague and indirect in its language, imagery and expression.<sup>27</sup> Most Sufi authors believe that writing on love should be discreet and vague because it conveys personal, spiritual and private experiences and feelings. Generally, Sufi literature on love examines three main issues: first, the origin of love; second, the life of love, and how people live love in their daily life; finally, the goal of love, and where love will take them.<sup>28</sup> Most authors agree that love is challenging to define, and that its reality can only be known by experiencing it.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, Persian Sufi literature is acknowledged to present a rich, melodious and

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>25</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 28.

<sup>26</sup> Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 39.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Chittick, *Divine Love: Islamic Literature and the Path to God*, xxiv.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.



sweet form of expression, while Arabic writings express dogmatic and abstract technical arguments.<sup>30</sup> On the one hand, the Persian Sufi Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d.1273) is widely acknowledged to be one of the leading representatives of the school of Divine love,<sup>31</sup> while on the other hand, Ibn ‘Arabī is renowned as the leading representative of the school of Divine knowledge.<sup>32</sup>

Amongst the aspects of Akbarian thought that have not been examined by scholars thus far with respect to the topic of love, particular mention can be made of such issues as Divine love (*al-ḥubb al-ilāhī*), spiritual love (*al-ḥubb al-rūḥānī*), natural love (*al-ḥubb al-ṭabī‘ī*), and elemental love (*al-ḥubb al-‘unṣurī*). To this can be added such problematic questions as what is the beginning (*bad’*) and goal (*ghāya*) of human love for God? Why does God subject to His beloveds trials and tribulations? How is the Divine lover consumed (*mustaghraq*) in his/her love? These are some of the issues that I shall examine in this study in light of Ibn ‘Arabī’s complex explanation of the origin and reality of love.

### **The Structure and Methodology of the Present Study**

The thesis is divided into four main chapters. In the first chapter, I set the stage for later analyses by outlining Ibn ‘Arabī’s ontology and examining his main metaphysical teachings pertaining to creation (*khalq*), being (*wujūd*), the Divine Names (*asmā’*) and Attributes (*ṣifāt*) of God, and the hierarchy of the cosmological worlds (*‘awālim*) or “Divine Presences” (*ḥadrāt ilāhiyya*), which constitute or take in all of

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> See William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983).

<sup>32</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 25-26.

“reality.” I also explore important ontological notions such as the “Oneness of Being” or *waḥdat al-wujūd*, and examine metaphysical doctrines such as the “Perfect Human” (*al-insān al-kāmil*). Furthermore, I briefly reference Ibn ‘Arabī’s views on Divine love, epistemological sources, terminology, and symbolic language. Finally, I touch on Ibn ‘Arabī’s significance and influence on the many Sufis, theologians, and philosophers who came after him. The purpose of this chapter is to set out the primary guidelines by which my examination of chapter 178 of the *Futūḥāt* is assessed and analyzed in the subsequent discussions of my thesis.

In the second chapter, I turn to focus more directly on love by briefly examining the etymological and theological development of different themes of love in the context of the Qur’ān, Sunnah, and early Sufism. The purpose of this chapter is to define the scriptural ideas which influenced the earliest Sufi metaphysical philosophies on love, and more importantly, Ibn ‘Arabī’s own concepts regarding love, which are the subjects of chapters three and four. This chapter will allow us to appreciate the Qur’ānic and *ḥadīth* origins of many of Ibn ‘Arabī’s own theories, a theme which has already been brilliantly explored by Michel Chodkiewicz in *An Ocean Without Shore: Ibn ‘Arabī, the Book and the Law* (1993).<sup>33</sup>

The second half of my study is divided into two parts. I bring the study’s concern with Ibn ‘Arabī’s hermeneutics to the forefront in the third and fourth chapters, as I focus my attention primarily on chapter 178 of the *Futūḥāt*. In the third chapter, I examine, through a close textual analysis, and drawing from the various themes of Divine love found in Ibn ‘Arabī’s chapter, topics such as the importance of the chapter’s introductory

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<sup>33</sup> Michel Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean Without Shore: Ibn ‘Arabī, The Book, and the Law*, trans. David Streight (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

poems, the role of law (*sharī'a*) in love, and the pertinence of his polysemic and etymological analysis of the terminology of love. I also delve into Ibn 'Arabī's analysis of four love terms: love (*al-ḥubb*), desire (*al-hawā*), intense love (*al-'ishq*), and affection (*al-wudd*). Likewise, I specify the three reasons which Ibn 'Arabī identifies as the causes of love (*asbāb al-ḥubb*), namely beauty (*ḥubb al-jamāl*), beneficence or virtuosity (*ihsān*), and performing the supererogatory (*nafl*) prayers. Similarly, I review Ibn 'Arabī's four categories of love: Divine love (*al-ḥubb al-ilāhī*), spiritual love (*al-ḥubb al-rūḥānī*), natural love (*al-ḥubb al-ṭabī'ī*) and elemental love (*al-ḥubb al-'unṣurī*). I also define the seven attributes of Divine lovers (*nu'ūt al-muḥibbīn*) which Ibn 'Arabī discusses in detail—that is, emaciation (*al-nihūl*), withering (*al-dhibūl*), amorousness (*al-gharām*), longing (*al-shawq*), infatuation (*al-huyām*), sighs (*al-zafarāt*), and anguish (*al-kamad*).

In the fourth and concluding chapter, I continue to investigate Ibn 'Arabī's various themes on Divine love covering such topics as: the human attributes that are beloved by God as mentioned in the Qur'ān, which are, following the Sunnah of the Prophet, repentance (*tawba*), purification (*tahāra*) (both reflexive and causative), patience (*ṣabr*), gratitude (*shukr*), beneficence or virtuosity (*ihsān*), and putting trust in God (*tawakkul*). Likewise, I will highlight “fifty eight” attributes of Divine lovers (*nu'ūt al-muḥibbīn*) which Ibn 'Arabī says are essential for the lover to experience in order to be called a “lover” of God. Lastly, I will go on to discuss Ibn 'Arabī's answers to such challenging questions such as: what is the beginning (*bad'*) and goal (*ghāya*) of human love for God? Why does love desire the non-existent? Why does God afflict His beloved?

How can the lover be consumed in his/her love? And, finally, can the mind (*'aql*) fall in love?

## Chapter One: An Outline of Ibn 'Arabī's Metaphysical Worldview

### 1.1. Introduction

In this opening chapter I will outline the life, doctrine, and metaphysical worldview of Ibn 'Arabī. I shall examine his concepts of creation (*khalq*), being (*wujūd*), the Divine Names (*asmā'*) and Attributes (*ṣifāt*) of God, and the cosmological worlds or *al-ḥadrāt al-ilāhiyya*. Furthermore, I will explore the underlying concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, which is considered to be the pivot around which all of Ibn 'Arabī's ideas can be understood. I will also discuss notions such as the "Perfect Human" (*al-insān al-kāmil*), known also as the *al-ḥaqīqat al-Muḥammadiyya*. Finally, I will comment on Ibn 'Arabī's opinions on topics such as "Divine love" (*al-ḥubb al-ilāhī*), his epistemological sources, terminology and symbolism, and briefly highlight his significance and influence on later Sufis.

### 1.2. The Life of Ibn 'Arabī

Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn al-'Arabī al-Ṭā'ī al-Ḥātīmī, known as Ibn al-'Arabī or Ibn 'Arabī, was born in 1165 in Murcia, Spain.<sup>1</sup> He was given the title "Muḥyī al-Dīn" which means "The Reviver of the Religion" in later tradition.<sup>2</sup> He is one of the most influential and controversial Muslim thinkers in the history of Islam. Sufis consider

<sup>1</sup> Stephen Hirtenstein, *The Unlimited Mercifier: The Spiritual Life and Thought of Ibn 'Arabī* (Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 1999), 33-35.

<sup>2</sup> Chittick, *Ibn Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 4.

him to be “The Greatest Master” (*al-Shaykh al-akbar*), seeing him as the foremost and principal expositor of its teachings and doctrines.<sup>3</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī was raised in the vicinities of the Andalusian court, and as a child he received a customary religious education which was given to most children of the time.<sup>4</sup> He spent the early years of his youth traveling to various cities in Spain and North Africa where he met scholars, philosophers and Sufis. In 1184<sup>5</sup> in Almeria he was initiated into the Sufi path.<sup>6</sup> Once Ibn ‘Arabī underwent his initiation to Sufism, he devoted his life to God and to the spiritual path.<sup>7</sup> During these years he experienced theophanic visions in which he began to realize the transcendent unity of all Divine revelations.<sup>8</sup> In 1180<sup>9</sup> during his stay in Cordova, he met the renowned Andalusian philosopher Averroes (d. 1198), where a debate regarding the epistemic foundations of knowledge took place between them.<sup>10</sup> In 1202 he visited Mecca for the first time, and began the composition of two of his famous works, the encyclopedic work of *The Meccan Openings*, and the love poems of *The Interpreter of Desires*.<sup>11</sup> From Mecca, he traveled throughout the regions of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Egypt,<sup>12</sup> and in 1204 in the city of Mosul in Iraq he received the mantle (*al-khirqah*) of al-Khidr,<sup>13</sup> which initiated and elevated him into the stations of the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>5</sup> Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur: The Life of Ibn ‘Arabī*, trans. Peter Kingsley (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 49.

<sup>6</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 95.

<sup>7</sup> Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 95.

<sup>9</sup> Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, 296.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>11</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 96.

<sup>12</sup> Chittick *Ibn ‘Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 55.

Divine realities of Sufism.<sup>14</sup> In 1205<sup>15</sup> he visited Anatolia, and in Konya he met Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 1274) who subsequently became his leading disciple and most important interpreter and propagator of his works.<sup>16</sup> From Konya Ibn 'Arabī traveled Eastward toward Armenia and then South to Baghdad, where in 1211 he met the famous Sufi Shihāb al-Dīn 'Umar al-Suhrawardī.<sup>17</sup> Finally, in 1223 he settled in Damascus, where he completed the *Futūḥāt*.<sup>18</sup> In 1240, Ibn 'Arabī died and was buried at the foot of Mount Qāsiyūn North of Damascus, where Sultan Salīm I of the Ottomans built in 1517 a mausoleum upon his resting place.<sup>19</sup>

### 1.3. The Doctrine of Ibn 'Arabī

Ibn 'Arabī is attributed with the authorship of eight-hundred and fifty works, of which seven-hundred are authentically accredited to him. Of these over four-hundred works have been lost.<sup>20</sup> His works range in size from short treatises that run a few pages to large volumes of full-sized books, and with subjects varying from theology and metaphysics, to cosmology, psychology and poetry.<sup>21</sup> From Ibn 'Arabī's vast body of literature, books such as *The Meccan Openings*, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, and *The Interpreter of Desires* have become the most popular and widely accepted of his works.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>15</sup> Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, 304.

<sup>16</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 96.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 7.

<sup>21</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 98.

<sup>22</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1970), 264.

### 1.3.1. The Meccan Openings (*al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*)

His monumental *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*<sup>23</sup> is considered by many to be his magnum opus.<sup>24</sup> It consists of five hundred and sixty chapters. As an encyclopedic work of great erudition, it discusses various principles of metaphysics, theology, cosmology, spiritual anthropology, psychology, jurisprudence,<sup>25</sup> as well as Ibn 'Arabī's personal experiences and hagiology of Sufis.<sup>26</sup> It has been described as “a veritable compendium of the esoteric sciences in Islam which surpasses in scope and depth anything of its kind that has been composed before or since.”<sup>27</sup>

### 1.3.2. The Bezels of Wisdom (*Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*)

The second of his famed books is *The Bezels of Wisdom*.<sup>28</sup> The *Fuṣūṣ* was composed in 1229, and was inspired by a Prophetic vision, where Ibn 'Arabī saw the Prophet Muhammad handing him the book of the *Fuṣūṣ*, and asking him to convey it to people so they can benefit from it.<sup>29</sup> The book comprises twenty-seven chapters, and is based on the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth* and Ibn 'Arabī's personal interpretations.<sup>30</sup> Each chapter represents a “bezel of wisdom” (*faṣṣ ḥikma*), symbolized by one of the twenty-seven

<sup>23</sup> See Ibn 'Arabī, *The Meccan Revelations: Ibn al 'Arabi*. ed. by Michel Chodkiewicz. trans. Cyrille Chodkiewicz and Denis Gril. Vol. 2. 2 vols. (New York: Pir Press, 2004); *The Meccan Revelations: Ibn al 'Arabi*. ed. by Michel Chodkiewicz. trans. William Chittick and James Morris. Vol. 1. 2 vols. (New York: Pir Press, 2002); James Morris, *The Reflective Heart: Discovering Spiritual Intelligence in Ibn 'Arabī's Meccan Illuminations* (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2005).

<sup>24</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 95.

<sup>25</sup> Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 7.

<sup>26</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 98.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> See William Chittick, “Ibn 'Arabi's Own Summary of the *Fuṣūṣ*: The Imprint of the Bezels of Wisdom,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 1 (1984).

<sup>29</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 99.

<sup>30</sup> Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 7.



Prophets mentioned in the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*. It begins with Adam and ends with the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>31</sup>

### 1.3.3. The Interpreter of Desires (*Tarjumān al-ashwāq*)

The third of Ibn 'Arabī's famous books is *The Interpreter of Desires*.<sup>32</sup> The *Tarjumān* is Ibn 'Arabī's first work to be translated into English.<sup>33</sup> The book is a collection of Sufi love odes, which was composed in Mecca<sup>34</sup> when Ibn 'Arabī was inspired by the meeting of a pious and beautiful woman called Nizām.<sup>35</sup> He also wrote a commentary on the poems called, *The Explanation of the Interpreter of Desires (Dhakhā'ir al-a'lāq: sharḥ tarjumān al-ashwāq)*,<sup>36</sup> where Ibn 'Arabī mentions that the poems of the *Tarjumān* deal basically with Divine realities concealed behind the veil of profane love.<sup>37</sup>

### 1.3.4. Other Works

Besides these three major works, some of Ibn 'Arabī's other important treatises include, *The Creation of the Spheres (Inshā' al-dawā'ir)*, *The Spell of the Obedient Servant*, or *Binding the Lively Mind ('uqlat al-mustawfīz)*, and *The Divine Guidelines*, known also as, *The Divine Overseeing of the Cosmos (al-Tadbīrāt al-ilāhiyya)* in cosmology. He also authored numerous expositions on the practical methods of Sufi

<sup>31</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 98.

<sup>32</sup> See Ibn 'Arabī, *The Tarjumān al-Ashwāq: A collection of Mystical Odes*, trans. Reynold Nicholson (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1911).

<sup>33</sup> Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 7.

<sup>34</sup> See also Denis Gril, "Love Letters to the Ka'ba: A Presentation of Ibn 'Arabi's Tāj al-Rasā'il," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 17 (1995): 40-54.

<sup>35</sup> Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 7.

<sup>36</sup> Denis McAuley, *Ibn 'Arabī's Mystical Poetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 33.

<sup>37</sup> Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 7.

spirituality such as, *The Treatise on the Spiritual Retreat (Risālat al-khulwa)* and *The Spiritual Counsels (al-Waṣāya)*.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, his *Collection of Gnostic Poems (Dīwān al-ma'ārif)* in Arabic is considered by many Sufis and scholars to be equivalent to the poetry of his contemporary Sufi Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 1235),<sup>39</sup> if not richer in metaphysical connotations.<sup>40</sup> While many of these works have been published, hundreds of his compositions are still in manuscript form dispersed in libraries worldwide.<sup>41</sup>

#### 1.4. The Sources of Ibn 'Arabī

As for Ibn 'Arabī's sources, it should be noted that he studied under many Sufi masters, and under a wide range of scholars in the fields of *ḥadīth*, Qur'ān and jurisprudence (*fiqh*), as well as authorities in the domain of non-religious sciences.<sup>42</sup> He also references in many of his books Sufis such as al-Ḥallāj (d. 922), al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 910), Abū Yazīd al-Baṣṭāmī (d. 878), and Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111).<sup>43</sup>

However, the “primary” sources of Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysics, lay according to his own account in the “bestowed Divine knowledge” (*ilm ladūnnī* or *ilm wahbī*), which was granted to him through the “opening” (*fath*) of his heart in states of invocation (*dhikr*), solitary contemplation (*khalwa*), and the grace (*baraka*) of his initiation into Sufism.<sup>44</sup> Ibn 'Arabī mentions this in many of his books such as the *Futūḥāt*, and

<sup>38</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 98.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>40</sup> McAuley, *Ibn 'Arabī's Mystical Poetics*, 23, 44.

<sup>41</sup> Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 1.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>43</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 101.

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

explains that his work is written under Divine guidance through the angel of inspiration (*ilhām*).<sup>45</sup> He states:

Know that the composition of the chapters of the *Futūḥāt* is not the result of free choice on my part nor of deliberate reflection. Actually, God dictated to me everything that I have written through the angel of inspiration.<sup>46</sup>

Elizabeth Roberts mentions that Ibn 'Arabī frequently refers to this point through such recurring expressions as, “and this is known by those who know.”<sup>47</sup> The purpose in using such expressions is to demonstrate to his reader that rationality and scholastic learning are not the only means of acquiring knowledge.<sup>48</sup> Since his writing, from his personal perspective, was the result of immediate and direct Divine inspiration, the organization of the paragraphs, topics and chapters such as in the *Futūḥāt* appear not to be coherent.<sup>49</sup> Ibn 'Arabī's aim was rather, “not to give an explanation that is mentally satisfying and rationally acceptable, but a real *theoria* or vision of reality, the attainment of which depends upon the practice of the appropriate methods of realization.”<sup>50</sup>

### 1.5. The Symbolism and Language of Ibn 'Arabī

Ibn 'Arabī is considered to be one of the most sophisticated and difficult writers in Islamic literature.<sup>51</sup> This sophistication is due mainly to his broad knowledge, varied styles of lexical expression, and symbolic language.<sup>52</sup> Annemarie Schimmel writes,

<sup>45</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 265.

<sup>46</sup> Cited in Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 98.

<sup>47</sup> Elizabeth Roberts, “Love and Knowledge,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabī Society*, 7 (1988): 65.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 98.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> See Abul Ela Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid-din Ibnul Arabi* (London: AMS Press, 1964).

<sup>52</sup> Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 1.

The influences of gnosticism, Hermetism, and Neoplatonic thought make Ibn 'Arabī's works look very complicated and often seem to present insurmountable difficulties to the translator. That is why the interpretations of his work vary so greatly.<sup>53</sup>

The originality of Ibn 'Arabī's works is mainly due to the unique style, symbolism, and expressive contextualization he employed in his writing.<sup>54</sup> The symbolism is not only an integral part of Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine, but characteristic of Sufi literature. Ibn 'Arabī used this cryptic symbolism and allusive style to, in his own words, "conceal Divine knowledge from being refuted or criticized from anyone outside the Sufi path."<sup>55</sup> Textual interpretation is therefore required to decipher the inner concealed meanings (*ma'āni*) behind his symbols (*rumūz*),<sup>56</sup> a point expressed by Nasr when he writes that Ibn 'Arabī,

Had a language of his own and brought into being a technical vocabulary, based partly on that of the earlier Ṣūfīs, a knowledge of which is indispensable to an understanding of his writings... one has to learn to read "between the lines" in order to discover the treasures hidden beneath his elliptical and antinomian formulations and his dazzling, and at times complex, symbolic language.<sup>57</sup>

### 1.6. The Feminine Aspect in Ibn 'Arabī's Literature

Another feature of Ibn 'Arabī's work is the predominant role femininity plays in his writings.<sup>58</sup> He uses, for example, female names to describe the Essence (*dhāt*)<sup>59</sup> of God.<sup>60</sup> Thus the *dhāt* for Ibn 'Arabī from this point of view, symbolizes "creative

<sup>53</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 265-266.

<sup>54</sup> Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 2.

<sup>55</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, (Cairo: Būlāq, 1911), 2: 280, 281, 654.

<sup>56</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 103.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>58</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 272.

<sup>59</sup> The word *dhāt* is considered to be feminine in Arabic.

<sup>60</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:323, 324.

Divinity” and the compassion of God.<sup>61</sup> Annemarie Schimmel indicates this point when she writes:

Woman reveals, for Ibn ‘Arabī, the secret of the compassionate God. The grammatical fact that the word *dhāt*, “essence,” is feminine offers Ibn ‘Arabī different methods to discover this feminine element in God. His viewpoint has been condensed by Reynold A. Nicholson in commenting upon a relevant passage by Rūmī, who attested that the creative activity of God reveals itself best in women and that one might even say that “she is not created but creator.”<sup>62</sup>

It is worth noting that this feature is not only evident specifically in the writings of Ibn ‘Arabī, but also in the literature of other Sufis. “Ibn ‘Arabī’s contemporary, the Egyptian poet Ibn al-Fāriḍ,<sup>63</sup> writes Schimmel, also “used the feminine gender in his mystical odes when talking of the divine beloved. The names of his heroines—Layla, Salma, and many others—become, in his verses, symbols of divine beauty and perfection.”<sup>64</sup>

## 1.7. The Ontology of Ibn ‘Arabī

### 1.7.1. The Hidden Treasure

Ibn ‘Arabī frequently mentions the *ḥadīth qudsī* of the “Hidden Treasure”<sup>65</sup> as the justification for creation.<sup>66</sup> The *ḥadīth* has God state in first person, “I was a Hidden Treasure and I loved to be known thus I created the creation and presented myself to

<sup>61</sup> Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, 159.

<sup>62</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 431

<sup>63</sup> See Th. Emil Homerin, *Passion Before Me, My Fate Behind: Ibn al-Fāriḍ and the Poetry of Recollection* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011).

<sup>64</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 431

<sup>65</sup> See Armin Eschraghi, “‘I Was a Hidden Treasure’: Some Notes on a Commentary scribed to Mulla Sadra Shirazi,” In *Islamic Thought in the Middle Ages: Studies in Text, Transmission and Translation, in Honour of Hans Daiber*, ed. Anna Akasoy and Wim Raven, (Leiden: Brill, 2008): 91-100.

<sup>66</sup> Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, 148.

them therefore they know Me.”<sup>67</sup> The *ḥadīth* is not mentioned in the mainstream canonical compendiums, but its authenticity was verified according to Ibn ‘Arabī’s on the basis of his own unveiling (*kashf*).<sup>68</sup> For Ibn ‘Arabī the *ḥadīth* makes clear that the origin of cosmogenesis lies in the desire (*raghbah*) and will (*irādah*) of God to disclose (*yazhar*) Himself.<sup>69</sup> This He does by causing the “possibilities” (*mumkināt*) to appear from “nothingness” (*‘adam*) into existence (*wujūd*).<sup>70</sup> Thus the archetype of all creation is God Himself, the “Hidden Treasure,” in whom the entities (*ashyā’*) were always existent in His knowledge.<sup>71</sup> Many scholarly works on Ibn ‘Arabī indicate that he deduces two ideas from this *ḥadīth*: the first is that Divine love is the cause of creation, as evident from the phrase, “I loved to be known” (*aḥbabtu an u’raf*); the second is that love (*ḥubb*) and knowledge (*ma’rifah*) are intimately related and interconnected, since cosmogenesis also had its origin in a Divine desire to be known and recognized.<sup>72</sup>

### 1.7.2. The Divine Essence (*dhāt*), Names (*asmā’*), and Attributes (*ṣifāt*)

The Divine Essence, Names, and Attributes from Ibn ‘Arabī’s point of view, “play a fundamental role in every aspect of his world view and provide the “language,” ...with which he expounds the doctrines of Sufism.”<sup>73</sup> The Divine Names are mentioned in the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, and in Islamic tradition form the ninety-nine

<sup>67</sup> William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 391.

<sup>68</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:322.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.

<sup>70</sup> Claude Addas, *Ibn ‘Arabī: The Voyage of No Return*, trans. David Streight (Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 2000), 91.

<sup>71</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and the Promise of Sufism, Islam’s Mystical Tradition* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 43.

<sup>72</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 32.

<sup>73</sup> Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 109.

“most beautiful Names” (*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*).<sup>74</sup> The Names are considered to be the archetypes by which God manifests Himself in the cosmos, and creation is understood to be the mirror that reflects the Divine Names and Attributes.<sup>75</sup> Henry Corbin writes, “God who in revealing Himself to Himself, produced the world as a mirror in which to contemplate His own image and beauty.”<sup>76</sup>

Although the Divine *asmā'* and *ṣifāt* of God are not His *dhāt*, yet they are nothing more than Him.<sup>77</sup> In other words, the Attributes do not exist independently from the Essence. Thus God is believed to be “the One” (*al-Wāḥid*) in terms of His Attributes, and “the Single” (*al-Aḥad*) in terms of His Essence. Hence, the Sufī saying, the “Divine Qualities are neither He nor other than He.”<sup>78</sup> In other words, when the Divine Essence is defined alone in-and-of-itself without reference to the Attributes, one speaks of God as *al-Aḥad* in His “Absolute Singularity” (*al-aḥadiyya*). And when the Attributes are defined with reference to the Essence, one speaks of God as *al-Wāḥid* in His “Absolute Oneness” (*al-waḥidiyya*). In other words, the *shahādat al-tawḥīd* or profession of Oneness in Islam, “there is no god” (*la ilāha*) affirms the *ṣifāt* of the *wāḥidiyya* when defined apart from the *dhāt*; and the second half, “but God” (*illā Allāh*), confirms the *dhāt* in its *aḥadiyya* without reference to the *ṣifāt*.

Ibn 'Arabī perceives God as being transcendent and immanent at the same time.<sup>79</sup> This duality is also implied in the *shahādat al-tawḥīd*: the first half of the *shahāda*, that “there is no god” (*lā ilāha*), refers to the affirmation of multiplicity (*al-kathra*) in

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 271.

<sup>76</sup> Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, 148.

<sup>77</sup> Addas, *The Voyage of No Return*, 93.

<sup>78</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 109.

<sup>79</sup> Roberts, “Love and Knowledge,” 65.

existence through which the Attributes of God are manifest, hence similarity or immanence (*tashbīh*). And the second half, “but God” (*illā Allāh*), annihilates any similarity in existence by confirming the absolute Unity of God’s Essence, thus transcendence (*tanzīh*) above creation.<sup>80</sup> Elizabeth Roberts appropriately clarifies this point when she states:

The Unity of Truth is indivisible and single. Transcendence and immanence are, as Ibn ‘Arabī tells us, two aspects of Reality, not two parts. Transcendence is truth conceived as remaining in Its pristine state of sheer being, prior to any manifestation; while immanence is that very same Truth, this time conceived as expressing Its possibilities in the detailed abundance of relativity. This distinction between the two aspects is conceptual, not real; that is, it exists in the intellect, not in the Being Itself.<sup>81</sup>

### 1.7.3. Creation (*khalq*) and Cosmology

Creation (*khalq*) according to Ibn ‘Arabī is the effusion (*burūz*) and appearance (*zuhūr*) of the archetypes of the pre-existing entities (*ashyā’*) into existence or *wujūd*.<sup>82</sup> In other words, it involves bringing the entities from the state of innerness (*buṭūn*) and non-being (*‘adam*), into *zuhūr* and *wujūd*. The cosmos is thus a theophany of the *asmā’* and *ṣifāt* of God. Ibn ‘Arabī compares the appearance of entities into existence, to the vocalization of sound from the human mouth which then become recognizable words.<sup>83</sup> The “breath” (*nafas*) from the “sigh” of the desire of the “all Compassionate” is the *nafas al-Rahmān*, the “breath of All-Merciful.”<sup>84</sup> This exhalation is considered by Ibn ‘Arabī to be an act of love by God, which desires to bring out the possible entities (*mumkināt*) or

<sup>80</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 109.

<sup>81</sup> Roberts, “*Love and Knowledge*,” 65.

<sup>82</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 112.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:331.



things (*ashyā'*) into *wujūd*.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, creation is in a state of constant renewal every instant and without repetition (*takrār*) similar to the inhaling and exhaling of breath. The Qur'ān states that, “every day He is bringing about a matter” (*kulla yawminn huwa fi sha'nn*) (Q. 55:29). This is one of the bases of the Sufi saying, “there is no repetition in theophany” (*lā takrār fi al-tajallī*).<sup>86</sup>

#### 1.7.4. Being (*wujūd*)

Ibn 'Arabī repetitively discusses *wujūd* in his doctrine.<sup>87</sup> The term *wujūd* derives from the root word *w-j-d* (و/ج/د), which means both “to find” and “to be found.”<sup>88</sup> *Wujūd* is translated as either “being” or “existence.” Entities or *ashyā'* come into being by “being found.”<sup>89</sup> For Ibn 'Arabī, *ashyā'* exist pre-eternally in the knowledge of God (*fi 'ilm Allāh*), and become manifest as “existent entities” (*a'yān mawjūda*) through the creative fiat, to “Be!” (*kun*).<sup>90</sup> This is obtained through the Divine Name “the Founder” (*al-Wājid*). For him, entities have no existence of their own, and only exist metaphorically (*al-wujūd al-majāzī*), because real existence (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqq*) only belongs to God.<sup>91</sup> Accordingly, as each entity exists in reality as *al-wujūd al-majāzī*, it is the self-disclosure of the *al-wujūd al-ḥaqq*.<sup>92</sup> In other words, it can be said that God is the

<sup>85</sup> Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, 185.

<sup>86</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 112.

<sup>87</sup> William Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn 'Arabī's Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 12.

<sup>88</sup> Addas, *The Voyage of No Return*, 80.

<sup>89</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 267.

<sup>90</sup> Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 41-42.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>92</sup> Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 52.

“One/Multiple” (*al-wahid al-kathir*),<sup>93</sup> or the One real *wujūd* appearing metaphorically Multiple.<sup>94</sup>

### 1.7.5. The Five Divine Presences (*al-ḥadrāt al-ilāhiyya*) of Being

Ibn ‘Arabī considers the cosmological worlds (*‘awālim*), which are also “Divine Presences” (*ḥadrāt ilāhiyya*) to comprise the main levels (*marātib*) of cosmic existence,<sup>95</sup> and although they are categorized as five, in reality they are only One.<sup>96</sup> The order of the cosmological worlds (*‘awālim*) proceeds in the following ascending order. The first world is called *al-mulk* or *al-nāsūt* and is the “world of physical corporeal creation” (*‘ālam al-maḥsūsāt*) or (*‘ālam al-kathā’if*), and includes humans and other corporeal creation. The second world is called *al-malakūt* and is the “world of subtleties” (*‘ālam al-laṭā’if*) such as the angelic world.<sup>97</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī visualizes in this realm another distinct world, which he calls the “world of imagination” (*‘ālam al-khayāl*) or “world of similitudes” (*‘ālam al-mithāl*).<sup>98</sup> The third world is called *al-jabarūt*, and is the “world of Divine orders and decrees” (*‘ālam al-‘amr*) where existentialization takes place. The fourth world is called *al-lāhūt* and is the “world of Divine nature” (*‘ālam al-ulūhiyya*) in its pure and complete manifestation of the Divine Attributes. The final world is called *al-hāhūt*, where the *dhāt* transcends all other denominations of the *asmā’* and *ṣifāt*.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>94</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:330, 332, 509.

<sup>95</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 112-113; Cf. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 270; Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 5

<sup>96</sup> Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 4.

<sup>97</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 113.

<sup>98</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 270.

<sup>99</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 113.

While Chittick may be correct in his argument that Qūnawī, the leading student of Ibn 'Arabī, was the first to write in detail about the “five Divine presences,”<sup>100</sup> it is worth noting that Ibn 'Arabī mentions the names of these *ḥadrāt* in his salutary prayers (*ṣalawāt*) on the Prophet Muhammad. These are the salutation of the essence (*al-Ṣalāt al-dhātiyya*), the middle salutation (*al-Ṣalāt al-wuṣṭā*), the salutation of the eternal opening (*Ṣalāt al-fath al-azalī*), and the salutation of the openings of truth (*Ṣalāt fawātiḥ al-ḥaqīqa*).<sup>101</sup>

#### 1.7.6. Clarification on the Use of the Term “Union” (*al-ittiḥād*)

Nasr states that the goal of the Sufi is “to attain the state of union with God.”<sup>102</sup> He writes, “in the state of union the individuality of man is illuminated and so becomes immersed in the Divine light.”<sup>103</sup> Such phrases might imply a state of physical “union” between the Creator and creation, a point that can lead to some misconceptions. Nasr is aware of this possibility himself, when he writes about union, “which in Sufism does not mean the union of the creature and the Creator.... Union means our becoming aware of our nothingness before God.”<sup>104</sup> This is because the goal of the Sufi and the Divine lover is to attain the realization that there is no real existence but the existence of God alone. It is to attain the certitude (*yaqīn*) of Oneness (*tawḥīd*) as professed in the *shahāda*, “there is no god but God” (*Lā ilāha illā Allāh*), also meaning that there is no *wujūd* but the

<sup>100</sup> Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 5.

<sup>101</sup> *Majmū' awrād wa ṣalawāt sayyidi muḥyī al-dīn Ibn 'Arabī*, ed. Gūda Muḥammad al-Mahdī (Cairo: al-Dār al-Gūdiyya, 2009).

<sup>102</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 114.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>104</sup> Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 128.

*wujūd* of God, and thus all else is non-existent (*'adam*).<sup>105</sup> Using terms such as “union with” or “immersed in” might imply a sense of duality, and thus contradict Ibn ‘Arabī’s arguments regarding *wujūd*. In this light, it is better to avoid the use of this kind of terminology. Ibn ‘Arabī criticizes the use of the term “union” because it implies dualism or a form of merging. In his own words, he states that, “those who go astray say union (*ittiḥād*)” (*mā qāla bil ittiḥād illā ahlul ilḥād*).<sup>106</sup> Although, whenever Ibn ‘Arabī uses the term “union” he uses it to indicate to the multiplicity of *wujūd* before the attainment and the realization of Oneness or *tawḥīd*, and describes union as “the station of ambiguity (*iltibās*) of the servant with the Qualities of the Lord” (*maqām al-ittiḥād huwa iltibās ‘abd bi ṣifāt Rabb*).<sup>107</sup> This means that before the opening (*fath*) of the realization of *tawḥīd*, the seeker feels ambiguous (*multabas ‘alayh*) because of the similarity and resemblance [metaphorically speaking] between his attributes and the Divine Attributes of God.

### 1.7.7. Oneness of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*)

The concept of “Oneness of Being” or *waḥdat al-wujūd*<sup>108</sup> is the most recurring metaphysical theme in Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrine,<sup>109</sup> and is the main underlying principle in his writings.<sup>110</sup> *Waḥdat al-wujūd* has been variously translated as “Unity of Being,”<sup>111</sup> “Unicity of Being,”<sup>112</sup> and “Unity of Existence.”<sup>113</sup> It is therefore important to understand

<sup>105</sup> Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 40.

<sup>106</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 4:372.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:690.

<sup>108</sup> For one of the most comprehensive surveys on the history of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, see Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart*, ch. 8, 71-88.

<sup>109</sup> Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn ‘Arabī*, trans. Liadain Sherrard (Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 1993), 149.

<sup>110</sup> Addas, *The Voyage of No Return*, 84.

<sup>111</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 267.

<sup>112</sup> Addas, *The Voyage of No Return*, 80.

<sup>113</sup> Chittick, *Divine Love*, 221.

what Ibn 'Arabī means by *waḥdat al-wujūd* in order to understand the relation between this concept and his other theories.<sup>114</sup>

### 1.7.7.1. Important Clarification on *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* as a Technical Term

The principle of *waḥdat al-wujūd* relates to both ontology as well as epistemology.<sup>115</sup> Ontologically, it refers to the idea that there is no *wujūd* but the *wujūd* of God, and that only God truly has *wujūd*. Epistemologically, it refers to the perceptual knowledge gained from witnessing (*shuhūd*) the Divine theophanies in the cosmos.<sup>116</sup>

As a technical term, *waḥdat al-wujūd* may have not been explicitly used before Ibn 'Arabī, but its meaning existed in many early Sufi doctrines, as in the accounts of al-Junayd and Rābi'a that will be discussed briefly in the following chapter,<sup>117</sup> and in the writings of Khawāja 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī (d. 1089).<sup>118</sup> When Chittick argues that "Ibn 'Arabī is known as the founder of the school of the Oneness of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*),"<sup>119</sup> he is referring to Ibn 'Arabī as the earliest major Sufi thinker to explain the doctrine in detail. According to many leading scholars, Ibn 'Arabī never used the term, "Oneness of Being." Among them are Claude Addas<sup>120</sup> and even Chittick himself.<sup>121</sup> Addas states that Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī was the first to use the expression of *waḥdat al-wujūd*,<sup>122</sup> and Chittick similarly asserts that the first person to use the expression as a technical term was Sa'īd al-Dīn al-Farghānī (d.1300) who was a student of Qūnawī.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 267.

<sup>115</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 108.

<sup>116</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 267.

<sup>117</sup> See section 2.8 in ch. two of this thesis.

<sup>118</sup> Addas, *The Voyage of No Return*, 79.

<sup>119</sup> Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 79.

<sup>120</sup> See Addas, *The Voyage of No Return*, 80; and *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, 208n87.

<sup>121</sup> See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 79.

<sup>122</sup> Addas, *The Voyage of No Return*, 80.

<sup>123</sup> Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 71.

However, it is worth noting that Ibn 'Arabī did use the term, “Oneness *in* Being” (*al-wiḥda fī al-wujūd*), once in the second volume of the *Futūḥāt* on page 502.<sup>124</sup> He says: “*fa-athbitu al-kathrata fī al-thubūt wa 'anfiḥā min al-wujūd wa athbitu al-wiḥda fī al-wujūd wa 'anfiḥā min al-thubūt*”<sup>125</sup> (I confirm multiplicity in confirmation [immutable entities of creation] and disaffirm it from Being [God], and confirm “Oneness in being” [*wiḥda fī al-wujūd*] and disaffirm it from confirmation). Ibn 'Arabī in this sentence indicates that he confirms and accepts “multiplicity” of creation in his confirmation of it as metaphorical existence or “Attributes of God”, and disaffirms, refutes and denies “creation” or the “Attributes” in being independent from “Being” or the “Essence” of God. And in the second phrase, he confirms and accepts the “Oneness” or the “Essence” of God in the “multiplicity” of His manifestations in the “being” of “creation” or the “Attributes,” and disaffirms and refutes “creation” or “Attributes” from his confirmation as “Being” or the “Essence” of God. In other words, he sees the multiplicity of creation, but does not see them as real *wujūd*, because the Attributes have no independent existence of their own apart from the *dhāt* of God.

### 1.7.7.2. Oneness of Being Compared to Pantheism, Panentheism, and Monism

The doctrine of the “Oneness of Being” has been depicted by some scholars as a form of “pantheism,”<sup>126</sup> “panentheism,”<sup>127</sup> or “monism”<sup>128</sup>.<sup>129</sup> These claims seem to be incorrect, because these terms were initially used to describe certain philosophical views,

<sup>124</sup> Maḥmūd al-Ghurāb, *Sharḥ Kalīmāt al-Ṣūfīyya* (Damascus: Naḍr Printing, 1981), 468.

<sup>125</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:502.

<sup>126</sup> Hillary Rodrigues and John S. Harding, *Introduction to the Study of Religion* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 162.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>129</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 104.

which, upon closer inspection, turn out to be quite distinct from Ibn 'Arabī's spiritual and metaphysical doctrine.<sup>130</sup> As discussed earlier, entities gain their *wujūd* by “being found,” and since God is transcendent from creation and immanent at the same time, creation is neither Him nor independent of Him. Pantheism on the other hand refers to the idea that the cosmos is God,<sup>131</sup> without differentiating between God and creation,<sup>132</sup> or in other words, not differentiating between the *ṣifāt* as theophanies (*tajalliyāt*) of *wujūd*, and the *dhāt*.<sup>133</sup> Panentheism, signifies that God permeates the entire universe, but is also at the same time is beyond it.<sup>134</sup> In other words, He is not one “with it.” It thus indicates a differentiation between two independent substances, namely the universe and God. Ibn 'Arabī's theory asserts that God is both transcendent and immanent, and that the entities of *wujūd* are His self-disclosure;<sup>135</sup> however entities do not “contain” Him, as panentheism indicates, hence implying duality.<sup>136</sup> As for monism, the philosophy expresses the existence of only one substance, essence, or a unifying principle,<sup>137</sup> thus signifying no distinction between God and the world,<sup>138</sup> or in other words, not distinguishing between the Essence and Attributes of God. Henry Corbin writes:

Indeed, our usual philosophical categories as well as our official theological categories fail us in the presence of a theosophy such as that of Ibn 'Arabī and his disciples. It is no more possible to perceive the

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>131</sup> Rodrigues and Harding, *Introduction to the Study of Religion*, 162.

<sup>132</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 105.

<sup>133</sup> See Mohammed Rustom, “Philosophical Sufism,” *The Routledge Companion to Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Richard Taylor and Luis Xavier López-Farjeat (New York: Routledge, forthcoming); and “Is Ibn al-'Arabī's Ontology Pantheistic?” *Journal of Islamic Philosophy*, 2 (2006): 53-67.

<sup>134</sup> Rodrigues and Harding, *Introduction to the Study of Religion*, 162.

<sup>135</sup> See section 2.7.2 of the thesis.

<sup>136</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 105.

<sup>137</sup> Rodrigues and Harding, *Introduction to the Study of Religion*, 160.

<sup>138</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 105.

specific dialogue that this theosophy establishes if we persist in reducing it to what is commonly called “monism” in the West.<sup>139</sup>

Thus terms like pantheism, panentheism and monism, used to designate the concept of *wahdat al-wujūd* should be reconsidered.<sup>140</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī’s concept of “Oneness of Being” ought to be addressed as a unique and distinct metaphysical notion independent of and distinct from other ontological philosophies.<sup>141</sup>

### 1.7.8. The “Muhammadan Reality” (*al-ḥaqīqat al-Muḥammadiyya*) and the “Perfect Human” (*al-insān al-kāmil*)

One of the main concepts of Ibn ‘Arabī’s metaphysical doctrine is the cosmic status of the Prophet Muhammad,<sup>142</sup> who exemplifies in his writings the complete or “Perfect Human” (*al-insān al-kāmil*),<sup>143</sup> or the “Universal Man.”<sup>144</sup> The doctrine of the “Muhammadan Reality” (*al-ḥaqīqat al-Muḥammadiyya*),<sup>145</sup> found its most sophisticated expression in the works of Ibn ‘Arabī.<sup>146</sup> In Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrine, *al-insān al-kāmil*<sup>147</sup> has three roles: (i) it is initiatic, in being the origin of all entities; (ii) it is cosmological, in encompassing all the archetypes of *wujūd*; (iii) and finally, it is Prophetic in representing the Divine word or Logos on earth.<sup>148</sup> The *ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya* is the total and

<sup>139</sup> Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, 152.

<sup>140</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 267.

<sup>141</sup> Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, 7.

<sup>142</sup> See Maḥmūd al-Ghurāb, *al-Insān al-kāmil* (Damascus: Naḍr Prinitng, 1990); Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

<sup>143</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 272.

<sup>144</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 110.

<sup>145</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 272.

<sup>146</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 110.

<sup>147</sup> See *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 3:390.

<sup>148</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 110.



perfect theophany of all Divine Names, manifest in the human form.<sup>149</sup> In other words, *al-insān al-kāmil* is the self-disclosure of the *ṣifāt* in their complete and perfect manifestation, as seen by the *dhāt* at any particular moment in time. The “Perfect Human” is also described among others as the “Muhammadan light” (*nūr Muḥammadi*), the “first creation” (*al-khalq al-awwal*), the “first manifestation” (*al-tajallī al-awwal*), the “first spirit” (*al-rūḥ al-awwal*), the “first intellect” (*al-‘aql al-awwal*), the “evident lead” (*al-imām al-mubīn*), the “pen” (*al-qalam*), and the “preserved tablet” (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*).<sup>150</sup> The *ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya* reveals itself in its particular epiphanies or *mazāhir* of appearance as different prophets and messengers beginning with Adam and ending with the Prophet Muhammad, after which it continues its manifestation in saints (*awliyā*), gnostics (*‘arifīn*) and spiritual poles (*aqṭāb*).<sup>151</sup> The *insān al-kāmil* is thus an essential concept in Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrine as the isthmus or interstice (*al-barzakh*) through which God is manifested and known.<sup>152</sup>

### 1.8. Love and Ibn ‘Arabī

Ibn ‘Arabī articulated a metaphysics of Divine love (*al-ḥubb al-ilāhī*)<sup>153</sup> more comprehensively than any other Muslim scholar in the history of Islamic literature.<sup>154</sup> He devotes an entire chapter to the topic, namely “On Knowing the Station of Love” (*fi ma‘rifat maqām al-maḥabba*) in the *Futūḥāt*, which will be the focus of my study in the following chapters of the thesis. In its bare essence, it can be said that according to Ibn

<sup>149</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 272.

<sup>150</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 110.

<sup>151</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 272.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> See Maḥmūd al-Ghurāb, *al-Ḥubb wa al-maḥabba al-ilāhiya min kalām al-shaykh al-Akbar Muḥyyī al-Dīn ibn ‘Arabī* (Damascus: Naḍr Printing, 1983).

<sup>154</sup> Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, 145.

'Arabī's doctrine of love, God affirms His own Being and beauty by revealing "Himself" in the Oneness of *al-wahidiyya* of the Divine Attributes of the "Hidden Treasure," to "Himself" in the Singleness of *al-aḥadiyya* of His Essence, by "Himself" as the *mazhar* or epiphany of every possibility (*mumkināt*) that comes to exist.<sup>155</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī argues that the "sigh" of desire (*shawq*) from the breath (*nafas*) of the "All Compassionate One" (*nafas al-Rahmān*) is an expression of love by God.<sup>156</sup> It is this act, which created and determined all forms of existentialization, and thus love is the cause of His appearance (*zuhūr*) as epiphanies or *mazāhir*.<sup>157</sup> Love, as Henry Corbin states, "exists eternally as an exchange between God and creation."<sup>158</sup> Ibn 'Arabī expresses that, because God loved to be known as the "Hidden Treasure,"<sup>159</sup> He made entities or *ashyā'* come into *wujūd* in the form of visible and apparent *mazāhir* through His name "the Apparent" (*al-Zāhir*).<sup>160</sup> Furthermore, he specifies three reasons that instigate Divine love: beauty (*al-jamāl*), beneficence (*iḥsān*), and performing the supererogatory (*nafl*) prayers.<sup>161</sup> These reasons are discussed in more detail in chapter three.

### 1.9. The Influence of Ibn 'Arabī

After the death of Ibn 'Arabī in 1240 his teachings spread in the East and West.<sup>162</sup> Among the reasons for this spread as William Chittick explains, "the soundness of his arguments and the breadth of his learning ... offered powerful proofs, drawn from the

<sup>155</sup> Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 41.

<sup>156</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:331.

<sup>157</sup> Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, 147.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 41.

<sup>160</sup> Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, 146.

<sup>161</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:326.

<sup>162</sup> Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 2.

whole repertoire of Islamic knowledge, to demonstrate the correctness of his views.”<sup>163</sup>

The spread of Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrines in the East was credited mainly to his leading disciple Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī.<sup>164</sup> Qūnawī came in contact with four important Sufis from the East who transmitted the doctrine of Ibn ‘Arabī to the Persian speaking world: Jalal al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273) the author of the famous Mathnawī of Sufi poetry, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shirāzī (d. 1311) a student of Qūnawī, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 1274) a Shi‘a scholar, and Fakhr al-Dīn al-‘Irāqī (d. 1289) a Sufi poet.<sup>165</sup>

Throughout the subsequent years many Sufis and scholars were influenced by Ibn ‘Arabī’s school of thought such as: ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha‘rānī (d. 1565), ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulī (d. 1731), ‘Abd al-Razāq al-Qāshānī (d. 1334), Dawūd al-Qayṣarī (d. 1350), Bālī Afandī (d. 1553), Jāmī (d. 1492), and ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. 1424). In addition to Shi‘a mystics such as: Ibn Turkah al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1432), Sayyid Ḥaidar Āmulī (d. 1385), Ibn Abī Jumhūr (d. 1473), and Mūlla Ṣadrā (d. 1640).<sup>166</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī’s influence on Western mysticism can be seen in the writings of Christian mystics<sup>167</sup> and esoterics such as Raymond Lull (d. 1315).<sup>168</sup> In the present day, interest in Ibn ‘Arabī and his writings has increased not only in the Islamic world but also in the West, and his doctrine is being studied in universities and academic circles worldwide.<sup>169</sup>

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 2-3.

<sup>164</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 119.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>167</sup> See Robert Dobie, *Logos and Revelation: Ibn 'Arabi, Meister Eckhart, and Mystical Hermeneutics* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010).

<sup>168</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 120.

<sup>169</sup> Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabi: Heir to the Prophets*, 3.

### 1.10. Conclusion

Compared to Ibn 'Arabī, preceding Sufi literature exhibited very little detailed metaphysical writing.<sup>170</sup> The profound originality introduced in Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine compared to earlier Sufis such as those of al-Ghazālī,<sup>171</sup> presented a fundamental break and a turning point in the legacy of Sufism.<sup>172</sup> The originality of Ibn 'Arabī's articulation, not only provided Islam with one of the most sophisticated and elaborate conceptualizations of the profession of "Oneness of God" or *tawhīd*,<sup>173</sup> but also introduced metaphysical frameworks of monumental proportion.<sup>174</sup> Mystics found in his doctrine a complete and comprehensive interpretation of earlier concepts found in the Sufi tradition.<sup>175</sup> Formulations such as *wujūd*, *waḥdat al-wujūd*, and *al-ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya* were contextualized for the first time in his doctrine.<sup>176</sup>

<sup>170</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 90.

<sup>171</sup> See al-Ghazālī, *Love, Longing, Intimacy, and Contentment: Kitāb al-maḥabba wa'l-shawq wa'l-uns wa'l-riḍā: Book 36 of The Revival of the Religious Sciences (iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn)*, trans. Eric Ormsby (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2011).

<sup>172</sup> Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 2.

<sup>173</sup> Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 79.

<sup>174</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 90.

<sup>175</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 263.

<sup>176</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 91.

## Chapter Two: Love in the Qur'ān, the Sunnah, and Early Sufism

### 2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I will examine love in the Qur'ān, the Sunnah and in the Sufi tradition before Ibn 'Arabī. This is the prelude for the themes that will be addressed in the remainder of the thesis. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the scriptural and intellectual notions of love which would later find greater expression in Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysical conceptualization as found in chapter 178 of the *Futūḥāt*.

As noted in the introduction, Islam has been often criticized for not placing sufficient emphasis on love.<sup>1</sup> A common orientalist trope was to characterize Islam as a religion of “law” as opposed to “love.”<sup>2</sup> The natural extension of this position was to argue that Islam lacked a sophisticated understanding or philosophy of love. However, this criticism not only ignores the various notions of love conveyed in many verses of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīths*, it also overlooks the entire Muslim metaphysics of “Divine love” or *al-ḥubb al-ilāhī*.<sup>3</sup> Traditional Muslim belief stipulates that God loved and chose humans (*al-nās*) from creation (*al-khalq*), and from humans He loved and chose Prophets (*al-anbiyā'*), and from the Prophets He loved and chose Messengers (*al-rusul*). And from the Messengers He loved and chose five “resolute” Messengers (*ulū al-'azm*), and finally, from the five “resolute” Messengers He loved and chose the Prophet Muhammad, as His

<sup>1</sup> Leonard Lewisohn also notes this point in “Divine Love in Islam,” *Encyclopaedia of Love in World Religions*, ed. Yudit Kornberg Greenberg (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 163. See also the introduction of this thesis.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

most beloved (*al-maḥbūb*).<sup>4</sup> God thus chose the Prophet Muhammad to convey and preach the message of “Oneness” (*tawḥīd*), or “the absolute unity of God around which theology, philosophy and mystical thought were to develop.”<sup>5</sup> Even though Islam’s unique understanding of love might not be the same as that of other religions, Muslims believe that Islam is indeed a “Religion of Love,” and its Prophet to be the perfect representative of the station of love.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.2. Names and Types of Love in Arabic

There have always been continuous attempts to study and statistically analyze or count the various Arabic words used to define love.<sup>7</sup> The term *ḥubb* has many generic meanings.<sup>8</sup> Some scholars provide a range from sixty to eighty different names and types, while others present fifty-one words referencing love.<sup>9</sup> Ghazi bin Muhammad in his comprehensive work on Love in the Qur’ān, indicates that there are more than thirty-seven different names and types of love mentioned in the Qur’ān.<sup>10</sup> However, from this vast compendium of terms, four Arabic words have commonly been used to designate love, three of which are mentioned in the Qur’ān. These are *ḥubb* (love), *wudd* (affection) and *hawā* (desire). The fourth type is an extra-Qur’ānic word, namely *‘ishq* (intense love).<sup>11</sup> My analysis in the next sections will focus on these four terms not only because

<sup>4</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Holy Quran*, 400.

<sup>5</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 254.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

<sup>7</sup> Chittick, *Divine Love*, xxiv.

<sup>8</sup> Gloton, “The Quranic Inspiration of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Vocabulary of Love,” 41.

<sup>9</sup> Chittick, *Divine Love*, xxv.

<sup>10</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Holy Quran*, 404.

<sup>11</sup> Chittick, *Divine Love*, xxv.

they are the most commonly used terms to designate love in Sufi literature,<sup>12</sup> but also because Ibn 'Arabī elaborates the meaning and significance of these four terms in chapter 178 of the *Futūḥāt*.

### 2.3. Love (*al-ḥubb*) in the Qur'ān

Love (*ḥubb*) derives from the root word *ḥ-b-b* (ح/ب/ب), from which we get a range of meanings including, “grain,” “seed,” “love,” “to love,” “loved one,” “to prefer,” and “a friend.”<sup>13</sup> The word *ḥubb* in the context of love is one of eight forms of the root *ḥ-b-b* that are mentioned ninety-five times in the Qur'ān.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the Qur'ān mentions the word “God loves” (*yuḥibbu*) eighteen times for the following classes of people: the virtuous (*al-muḥsinīn*) (Q. 2:195, 3:134, 3:148, 5:13, 5:93), the pious (*al-muttaqīn*) (Q. 3:76, 9:4, 9:7), the equitable (*al-muqsiṭīn*) (Q. 5:42, 49:9, 60:8), those who purify themselves (*al-mutaṭahhirīn*) (Q. 2:222), the patient (*al-ṣābirīn*) (Q. 3:146), those who put their trust in God (*al-mutawakkilīn*) (Q. 3:159), those who follow the Prophet Mohammed (Q. 3:31), those who repent (*al-tawwābīn*) (Q. 2:222), the purifiers (*al-muṭṭahharīn*) (Q. 9:108), and finally those “who fight for God’s cause in a row as if they were a solid structure” (*yuqātilūn fī sabīlihi ṣaffan ka’annahum bunyānun marṣūṣ*) (Q. 61:4). From these verses it can be concluded that from the perspective of the Qur'ān, God loves those who adorn themselves with virtues.<sup>15</sup> In another case, the expressions “whom He loves” (*yuḥibbuhum*) and “who love Him” (*yuḥibbūnahu*) are used once in the Qur'ān

<sup>12</sup> See Pablo Benito, “The Servant of the Loving One: On the Adoption of the Character Traits of al-Wadūd,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabī Society* 32 (2002): 6; Gloton, “The Quranic Inspiration of Ibn 'Arabī’s Vocabulary of Love,” 42.

<sup>13</sup> Elsaid M. Badawi & Muhammad Abdel Haleem, eds. *Arabic–English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 186.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Holy Quran*, 400.

in the following verse, “God will bring people whom He loves and who love Him” (*faswfa yā'tī Allāhu biqawmin yuḥibbuhum wa yuḥibbūnahu*) (Q. 5:54). This verse, is quoted many times by Sufis to indicate that God’s love is pre-eternal,<sup>16</sup> and takes priority over human love and devotion to God, since the verse begins with God’s love and then turns to human love.<sup>17</sup> It is also to be observed that the expression “God does not love” (*lā yuḥibbu*) is mentioned in the Qur’ān twenty-three times for the following fourteen categories of qualities or people: the transgressors (*al-mu'tadīn*) (Q. 2:190, 5:87, 7:55), the unjust (*al-zālimīn*) (Q. 3:57, 3:140, 42:40), the arrogant boaster (*mukhtālin fakhūr*) (Q. 4:36, 31:18, 57:23), the corrupters (*al-mufsidīn*) (Q. 5:64, 28:77), the prodigals who waste by extravagance (*al-musrifīn*) (Q. 6:141, 7:31), the disbelievers or “concealers” (*al-kāfirīn*) (Q. 3:32, 30:45), corruption (*al-fasād*) (Q. 2: 205), the sinful disbeliever (*kaffār athīm*) (Q. 2:276), the sinful deceiver (*khawwān athīm*) (Q. 4:107), bad utterance except from those who are unjustly wronged (*al-jahra bil-sū' min al-qawl illā man zulim*) (Q. 4:148), the treacherous (*al-khā'nīn*) (Q. 8:58), the arrogant (*al-mustakbirīn*) (Q. 16:23), the disbelieving deceiver (*khawwān kafūr*) (Q. 22:38), and those who are exultant in riches (*al-fariḥīn*) (Q. 28:76). The term *ḥubb* in the Qur’ān is used not only to describe the idea of Divine love, but is also used to designate the notion of the growth and development of emotions. The root word of *ḥubb* conveys the idea of a “grain” or “seed,” implying the growth of love between God and His creation. In the words of Maurice Gloton, “love produces the seed and the seed develops due to the effect of the seed of love which it contains.”<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 62.

<sup>17</sup> Lewisohn, “Divine Love in Islam,” 164.

<sup>18</sup> Gloton, “The Quranic Inspiration of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Vocabulary of Love,” 42.



#### 2.4. Affection (*al-wudd*) in the Qur'ān

Affection (*wudd*) derives from the root *w-d-d* (و/د/د), which has various meanings, such as “love,” “affection,” “friendship,” “to desire, and “to wish for.”<sup>19</sup> The word *wudd* in the context of affection is one of six forms of the root word *w-d-d* that are cited twenty-nine times in the Qur'ān.<sup>20</sup> The Qur'ān mentions two times<sup>21</sup> that God is the Affectionate (*al-Wadūd*). We read also that “my Lord is Merciful and Affectionate.” (*inna Rabbī Raḥīmūn Wadūd*) (Q. 11:90) and “He is the Forgiving, the Affectionate” (*wa huwa al-Ghaḥūr al-Wadūd*) (Q. 85:14). It is also cited once<sup>22</sup> in the Qur'ān that God will bestow and appoint affection (*wudd*) in the hearts of those who believe in Him and have done righteous deeds: “Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds the Most Merciful will appoint for them affection” (*inna al-ladhīn 'āmanū wa 'amilū a-ṣāliḥāti sayaj'alu lahumu l-Raḥmānu wudda*) (Q. 19:96). The term *wudd* in the Qur'ān implies, as the root word of the word *wudd* suggests (= “to stake” or “nail”), a constant and faithful “attachment” or “fixation” of love for God's beloved.<sup>23</sup>

#### 2.5. Desire (*al-hawā*) in the Qur'ān

Desire (*hawā*) derives from the root *h-w-y* (ه/و/ي), which has various meanings such as “atmosphere,” “air,” “to fall down,” “to cause to fall,” “desire,” “love,” and “to seduce.”<sup>24</sup> The word *hawā* in the context of desire is one of eight forms of the root word

<sup>19</sup> Badawi & Haleem, *Arabic–English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, 1016.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 1017.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Gloton, “The Quranic Inspiration of Ibn 'Arabī's Vocabulary of Love,” 41; Benito, “The Servant of the Loving One,” 5.

<sup>24</sup> Badawi & Haleem, *Arabic–English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, 996.

*h-w-y* that is used thirty-eight times in the Qur'ān.<sup>25</sup> The Qur'ān speaks of *hawā* four times<sup>26</sup> in the context of personal inclination or lust, and instructs its followers to restrain their desires in verses such as “so follow not desire, lest you not be just” (*fa-lā tattabi 'ū al-hawā an ta'dilū*) (Q. 4:135), “do not follow your desire, as it will lead you astray from the way of God” (*walā tattabi ' al-hawā fa-yuḍillak 'an sabīl Allāh*) (Q. 38:26), “but as for him who feared to stand before his Lord and restrained himself from desire” (*wa 'ammā man khāfa maqām rabbihī wa nahā al-naḥsa 'an al-hawā*) (Q. 79:40), and “nor does he speak out of desire” (*wa-mā yanṭiqu 'an al-hawā*) (Q. 53:3). The previous verses not only imply that the term *hawā* is used in the context of undesirable inclinations, but also implies as the root of the word *hawā* suggests (= “to fall down”) a descent from a high position, state or station to a lower one.<sup>27</sup>

## 2.6. Intense Love (*al-'ishq*)

Intense or passionate love (*'ishq*)<sup>28</sup> derives from the root word *'a-sh-q* (ع-ش-ق), which has various meanings, such as “to bind,” “intense or captivating love,” and “binding passion.” It also refers to a climbing convolvulus plant or bindweed.<sup>29</sup> Even though the word *'ishq* or intense love is not used in the Qur'ān, its meaning is inferred for Ibn 'Arabī through Qur'ānic passages, as when for example it describes Joseph having “smitten her [the governor's wife] to the heart with love” (*qad shaghafahā ḥubban*) (Q.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 997.

<sup>27</sup> Gloton, “The Quranic Inspiration of Ibn 'Arabī's Vocabulary of Love,” 42; Benito, “The Servant of the Loving One,” 6.

<sup>28</sup> See also Joseph E. B. Lombard, “From Hubb to 'Ishq: The Development of Love in early Sufism,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 18 (2007): 345-385.

<sup>29</sup> Benito, “The Servant of the Loving One,” 6.

12:30),<sup>30</sup> or when it states that “those who believe are stronger in love for God” (*wal-ladhīna āmanū ashaddu ḥubban lil-llāh*) (Q. 2:165).<sup>31</sup>

The term *‘ishq* has been mentioned in Sufi literature to symbolize passionate, fiery and all consuming love which the spiritual seeker experiences on the path to God.<sup>32</sup> The symbolic meaning between the convolvulus bindweed and *‘ishq* (superfluous feelings of intense love) is comparable to the upright spiral movement of the convolvulus plant, which twists and wraps itself around its vertical support until the support can no longer be seen.<sup>33</sup> “In this way,” writes Pablo Benito, “blinding love (*‘ishq*) wraps around the heart of the lover, blinding him so that he can see no one other than his beloved.”<sup>34</sup>

## 2.7. Love in the Sunnah

According to standard Muslim doctrine, the Prophet of Islam is regarded as the most beloved of God’s creation and the supreme lover of God.<sup>35</sup> The Qur’ānic verse, “Say, If you love God, follow me, God will love you and forgive your sins,” (Q. 3:31) paves the way for Muslims who wish to attain God’s love to follow the path of the ultimate lover and beloved of God, namely Islam’s final Prophet. This verse indicates that by following the Prophet and observing his “practice” (*sunnah*), the reward attained is God’s love.<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, a prayer (*du‘ā*) ascribed to the Prophet indicates the archetypal role of the Prophet as God’s most *maḥbūb* or beloved: “O God, give me love of Thee, and love of those who love Thee, and love of what makes me approach Thy

<sup>30</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:323.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Gloton, “The Quranic Inspiration of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Vocabulary of Love,” 42.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Benito, “The Servant of the Loving One,” 6.

<sup>35</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 26.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

love, and make Thy love dearer to me than cool water.”<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, an important theme which is central in Ibn ‘Arabī doctrine is the “Muhammadan Reality,” where Ibn ‘Arabī defines the role of the Prophet Muhammad as God’s first creation and *mahbūb*, and emphasizes following the Sunnah as the means to attain God’s love.<sup>38</sup>

There are many Prophetic sayings (*ḥadīth nabawī*) about the importance of love, usually with a focus on God, the Prophet, faith, family, brotherhood, and the household of the Prophet. In the *ḥadīth* literature we encounter such traditions as, “if anyone loves for God's sake, hates for God's sake, gives for God's sake and withholds for God's sake, he has perfected faith;”<sup>39</sup> “Three qualities whoever has them, will taste the sweetness of faith: To love God and His Messenger more than anything else; to love your brother for the sake of God; and to abhor returning to disbelief after God has saved him from it as he would abhor to be thrown into the fire of Hell,”<sup>40</sup> “You will be with those whom you love;”<sup>41</sup> “No one of you becomes a true believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself;”<sup>42</sup> “God is Beautiful, and He loves beauty,”<sup>43</sup> and “Love God for what He nourishes you with of His Blessings, love me for the love of God, and love my household for loving me.”<sup>44</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Cited in Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 131.

<sup>38</sup> William Chittick, “The Religion of Love Revisited,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabī Society* 54 (2013): 44.

<sup>39</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by abū Dawūd in the *Sunnan*.

<sup>40</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by al-Bukhārī, & Muslim in their *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

<sup>41</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by abū Dawūd in the *Sunnan*.

<sup>42</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by al-Bukhārī, & Muslim in their *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

<sup>43</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by Muslim in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

<sup>44</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by al-Tirmidhī in the *Jāmi‘*.

From the entire collection of *ḥadīths*, two *ḥadīth qudsī*<sup>45</sup> and one *ḥadīth nabawī* are considered to be the primary sources of inspiration for the entire Sufi literature on the metaphysics of Divine love.<sup>46</sup> The first is the canonical *ḥadīth qudsī* of the “proximity by supererogative prayers” or (*qurb al-nawāfil*). This *ḥadīth* designates one of the many paths of the Sunnah that guide the Muslim on how to attain the love of God. In this case, it lies in observing the supererogatory acts of worship, which are considered to be part of the Prophetic tradition:

My servant draws near to Me through nothing I love more than that which I have made obligatory for him. My servant never ceases to draw near to Me through supererogatory acts until I love him. And when I love him, I am His hearing by which he hears, His sight by which he sees, His hand by which he grasps, and His foot by which he walks. And when he approaches a span, I approach a cubit and when he comes walking I come running.<sup>47</sup>

This *ḥadīth* indicates that by observing the supererogatory or *nawāfil* prayers, a complementary relationship (*munāsaba*) is attained between God and His servants, so that whenever a person draws nearer to Him, God in return draws nearer [metaphorically] to the person, until the person attains His love. When this level is reached, God bestows on the seeker a state of spiritual realization in which he acknowledges that He is in reality his own hearing, sight, and total existence.<sup>48</sup>

The second *ḥadīth qudsī* is a famous non-canonical *ḥadīth* of the “Hidden Treasure,” which has been cited frequently in many Sufi texts as an explanation for the reason and purpose behind creation.<sup>49</sup> Several scholarly works on Ibn ‘Arabī, indicate

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<sup>45</sup> *Ḥadīth qudsī* is an extra-Qur’ānic saying attributed to God and narrated by Prophet Muhammad.

<sup>46</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 32.

<sup>47</sup> Lewisohn, “Divine Love in Islam,” 164.

<sup>48</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 38.

<sup>49</sup> Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 18.

that his theory of cosmogenesis stems mainly from this *ḥadīth*.<sup>50</sup> The third *ḥadīth* is a canonical *ḥadīth nabawī* that states, “God is Beautiful, and He loves beauty” (*inna Allāha jamīlun yuḥibbu al-jamāl*). This Prophetic saying indicates one of the main reasons behind Divine love. It implies in the metaphysical sense that the object of love *is the love of God of Himself*.<sup>51</sup> It is to enter into the relationship that God has with Himself.

### 2.8. Love in Sufism Before Ibn ‘Arabī

Sufis from the earlier centuries of Islam<sup>52</sup> defined and classified the different stages of love.<sup>53</sup> Love for them was not only considered to be a personal experience,<sup>54</sup> but also their “religion” in terms of devotion to God, and “being” in the sense of their existence and belonging to God.<sup>55</sup> Through the allusive language of love, with the exception of rare cases, Sufis were able to express and convey esoteric knowledge without coming into direct conflict with strict, uncompromising formulations of exoteric dogma.<sup>56</sup> They considered the path of love to be the most applicable path to draw the general public (*al-‘awāmm*) closer to God.<sup>57</sup> One of the early attempts to formulate the notion of Divine love and define the relationship between the “Creator” and “creation” was introduced by al-Sarī al-Saqāṭī (d. 867) in Baghdad.<sup>58</sup> According to Schimmel, he conceptualized “the idea of mutual love between man and God.”<sup>59</sup> Abu Yazīd al-Baṣṭāmī

<sup>50</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 32.

<sup>51</sup> Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 44.

<sup>52</sup> See Gerhard Bowering, and Orfali Bilal, *The Comfort of the Mystics: A Manual and Anthology of Early Sufism* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

<sup>53</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 132.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>55</sup> Lewisohn, “Divine Love in Islam,” 165.

<sup>56</sup> Titus Burckhardt, *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine* (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2008), 21.

<sup>57</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 141.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

(d. 874), another important early figure, described love as has having four aspects: “it has four branches: one from Him, that is His grace, one from you, that is to obey Him, one for Him, and that is your recollecting Him, and one between both of you, and that is love.”<sup>60</sup> Junayd (d. 910), a famous scholar of both the law and the spiritual path, was one of the earliest Sufis to refute all notions of duality between the lover and the Divine beloved. “Love between two is not right,” he said, “until the one addresses the other, ‘O Thou I.’”<sup>61</sup> Statements such as these intimated the doctrine of the “Oneness of Being” or *wujūd*, a theme which Ibn ‘Arabī would subsequently develop.

The relationship between Divine love and religious piety in early Sufi doctrine was expressed in greater detail in the teachings and writings of such figures as Shaqīq al-Balkhī (d. 810)<sup>62</sup> and Abu Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 966), the latter of whom indicated that to Love God is to “obey” Him.<sup>63</sup> Generally speaking, he and others agreed that love in reality is a Divine grace initiated by God and mirrored in the Sufis love for God. Such love cannot be acquired through one’s own will or rejected once one has been singled out for it.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, terms such as *‘ishq* were introduced during this early period. Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 907) was one of the first Sufis to use the term in the context of intense or passionate love for God, after defining himself as a “passionate lover” (*‘āshiq*) of Him.<sup>65</sup> As already noted, the word *‘ishq* is not used in the Qur’ān or the Sunnah. Therefore the use of *‘ishq*, *‘āshiq* (passionate lover) or *ma‘shūq* (passionately beloved) in

<sup>60</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>61</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>62</sup> Lewisohn, “Divine Love in Islam,” 164.

<sup>63</sup> Cited in Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 131.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>65</sup> Lewisohn, “Divine Love in Islam,” 165.

the context of expressing love of God, was not only rejected by the mainstream Islamic schools of thought, but also by many reserved or more conservative Sufis.<sup>66</sup>

Another important representative of the school of Divine love was Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya (d. 792).<sup>67</sup> Rābi'a presented a new school of thought declaring that "I have not worshipped Him from fear of His fire, nor for love of His garden, so that I should be like a lowly hireling; rather, I have worshipped Him for love of Him and longing for Him."<sup>68</sup> She indicates in such passages that she loves God for both the desire of her soul which "longs for Him" (= *ḥubb al-hawā*), and because He deserves to be loved for Himself (*lī-annaka ahlun lī-dhāka*).<sup>69</sup> She therefore distinguishes between two types of love: the first being the love of God for His rewards and personal desires (*ahwā'*), which are considered to be selfish forms of love; and the second is a selfless love or *ḥubb*, which is the love of God only for Himself.<sup>70</sup> Rābi'a is thus attributed with introducing the doctrine of selfless and pure love to Sufi literature.<sup>71</sup> Chittick notes that, "People frequently have the idea that if they love God, they will reap benefit, but this is self-interest, not love."<sup>72</sup> Rābi'a furthermore concludes her message of Divine love by confirming that her love and praise for God in reality is not hers, but is God's own love and praise for Himself. She says:

<sup>66</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 137.

<sup>67</sup> See Suleyman Derin, *Love in Sufism: From Rābia to Ibn al-Fārid* (Istanbul: Insan Publications, 2008).

<sup>68</sup> Cited in Ernst, *Sufism*, 102.

<sup>69</sup> See Carl Ernst, "The Stages of Love in Early Persian Sufism, from Rābi'a to Ruzbahan," *The Heritage of Sufism*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), 435-455.

<sup>70</sup> Lewisohn, "Divine Love in Islam," 164.

<sup>71</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 38.

<sup>72</sup> Chittick, "The Religion of Love Revisited," 48.



Two loves I give Thee, love that yearns, And love because Thy due is love. My yearning my remembrance turns To Thee, nor lets it from Thee rove. Thou hast Thy due whene'er it please Thee To lift the veils for me to see Thee. Praise is not mine in this, nor yet In that, but Thine is this and that.<sup>73</sup>

Statements such as these, implied to the concept of *wahdat al-wujūd*, a concept which Ibn 'Arabī subsequently develops and contextualizes, and inspired him to describe Rābi'a as being, "the one who analyzes and classes the categories of love to the point of being the most famous interpreter of love."<sup>74</sup>

### 2.8.1. Love, Knowledge and Beauty

Love and knowledge (*'irfān*), or the "realized knowledge," as mentioned in the *ḥadīth* of the "Hidden Treasure," are from the Sufī point of view closely related and interconnected.<sup>75</sup> Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) indicates, "Love without gnosis is impossible, one can only love what one knows."<sup>76</sup> He also mentions that the "first principle of love (*al-ḥubb*) is that it cannot occur without interior knowledge or gnosis (*ma'rifa*) and perception (*idrāk*)."<sup>77</sup> Without the predominance of one path over the other, the emphasis was either on the path of love or the path of knowledge as the means to achieve realization.<sup>78</sup> Titus Burckhardt states that, "knowledge of God always engenders love, while love presupposes knowledge of the object of love even though that knowledge may be only indirect and reflected."<sup>79</sup> According to this epistemological view, the object of the indirect and reflected knowledge is Divine beauty. Since beauty (*al-*

<sup>73</sup> Cited in Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 172.

<sup>74</sup> Lewisohn, "Divine Love in Islam," 164.

<sup>75</sup> See Ralph Austin, "The Lady Nizām - An Image of Love and Knowledge," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 7 (1988): 35-48.

<sup>76</sup> Cited in Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 130.

<sup>77</sup> Cited in Lewisohn, "Divine Love in Islam," 165.

<sup>78</sup> Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 69.

<sup>79</sup> Burckhardt, *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, 23.

*jamāl*) is the object of Divine love as indicated in the *ḥadīth* “God is Beautiful and He loves beauty,” and because God loved to be known as mentioned in the *ḥadīth* of “Hidden Treasure”, it is from this Divine beauty that love and knowledge originate.<sup>80</sup> Accordingly, we find Sufis such as Dhū al-Nūn (d. 859) indicated that these theophanic manifestations (*al-tajalliyāt al-ilāhiyya*) of the Attributes of Divine Beauty (*al-ṣifāt al-jamāliyya*),<sup>81</sup> incur states (*aḥwāl*) for the seeker such as hope (*rajā'*), expansion (*bast*), and *jamāl*,<sup>82</sup> while others such as al-Hujwārī (d. 1077) mention that these manifestations induce *aḥwāl* of intimacy (*uns*) and expansion (*bast*).<sup>83</sup>

### 2.8.2. Love and the Path to God

Many Sufis from the early formative period advocated the path of love, among them was Sumnūn al-Muḥib (d. 900). Sumnūn indicated that all *aḥwāl* and stations (*maqāmāt*) are insignificant when compared to the path of love.<sup>84</sup> Abu Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and his brother Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 1126)<sup>85</sup> not only propagated the path of love in their works such as the *Iḥyā'* and the *Sawāniḥ* respectively, but also introduced a structured doctrine which systematized and integrated Sufi esoteric teachings in the frame-work of exoteric doctrine.<sup>86</sup> A student of Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, ‘Ayn al-Qudāt al-Hamadānī (d. 1131) correspondingly championed the path of love and stated in his famous book the *Tamhīdāt* that,

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 44.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Benito, “On the Divine Love of Beauty,” 3.

<sup>84</sup> Lewisohn, “Divine Love in Islam,” 164.

<sup>85</sup> For a comprehensive study on love according to Aḥmad al-Ghazālī see Joseph E. B. Lombard, *Aḥmad al-Ghazali and the Metaphysics of Love*, Phd. Diss., (Yale University, 2003).

<sup>86</sup> Lewisohn, “Divine Love in Islam,” 165.

The lovers follow the religion and the community of God. They do not follow the religion and creed of Shāfi'ī or Abū Ḥanīfa or anyone else. They follow the Creed of Love and the Creed of God (*madhhabī 'ishq wa madhhabī khuda*).<sup>87</sup>

The Sufi path of love to God can be considered as having three main points: The first is the “belief” that there is no existence in reality but the existence of God, or in other words that there is no lover or beloved but God. The second is “submission” and following the path of the Prophet as the means to attain God’s love. The third is the attainment or “realization” of the Oneness of existence, or in other words, the return to the first point of origin.<sup>88</sup>

## 2.9. Conclusion

In summary, the metaphysical phenomenon regarding Sufi Divine love is portrayed mainly in two verses of the Qur'ān and three *ḥadīths*. The first half of the Qur'ānic verse, “God will bring people whom He loves and who love Him,” (Q. 5:54) signifies that the love of God in humans has its origin in God’s love for them. The second part, “and who love Him,” implies a response on the part of the human being to God’s love. The Qur'ān also stipulates how this love on the part of the human being is to be embodied when it states, “Say, If you love God, follow me, God will love you and forgive your sins” (Q. 3:31). The verse signifies the Divine condition of how to fully gain God’s love, and that is to follow the path of the Prophet.

As for the *ḥadīths*, the first is the *ḥadīth qudsī* of the *nawāfil* or the “supererogatory prayers,” in which we find the expression, “until I love him.” The

<sup>87</sup> Cited in Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Chittick, “The Religion of Love Revisited,” 45.

condition it sets out to receive God's love is of observing the supererogatory acts of devotion, the *nawāfil*. The tradition continues by stating, "when I love him," clarifying that the reward of such *nawāfil* is God's love. The second *ḥadīth* of the "Hidden Treasure" specifies the reason behind creation. In the first part, "I loved to be known; so I created the creatures," we see that love is the cause of existence. And in the second half, "and made Myself known to them; so they knew Me," the tradition draws attention to the close relationship between Divine love and revealed knowledge. The third *ḥadīth*, "God is Beautiful, and He loves beauty," reveals the main reason behind love, which is beauty.

Historically, many Sufis formulated their metaphysical theories regarding Divine love from Qur'ānic verses and *ḥadīths* such as these. Ibn 'Arabī was no exception. He not only contextualized and clarified earlier Sufi theories, but also formulated his personal views on the basis of unique spiritual experiences and interpretations of religious scripture. To this I shall now turn for the remainder of the thesis.

**Chapter Three: A Hermeneutical Study of Chapter 178 of the *Futūḥāt*: Part I**

In part one of my textual study of Ibn ‘Arabī’s chapter, I examine and outline the ideas and metaphysical notions contained in his chapter, such as the significance of the chapter’s introductory poems, the emphasis on the exoteric rulings of Islamic law (*sharī‘a*), and the polysemic and etymological analysis of the Arabic terminology of love. I also explore Ibn ‘Arabī’s analysis of the four love terms, namely *ḥubb*, *hawā*, *‘ishq*, and *wudd*. I specify the three reasons which Ibn ‘Arabī identifies as the cause behind love or *asbāb al-ḥubb*, namely, beauty, beneficence, and the *nafl* prayers. Furthermore, I examine Ibn ‘Arabī’s categorization of love which include Divine love, spiritual love, natural love, and elemental love. Finally, I examine the seven attributes of Divine lovers which Ibn ‘Arabī discusses, such as *niḥūl*, *dhibūl*, *gharām*, *shawq*, *huyām*, *ẓafarāt*, and *kamad*.

**3.1. Introductory Poems**

Ibn ‘Arabī begins his long chapter on knowing the station of love in the same manner as the rest of the chapters of the *Futūḥāt*. He summarizes and presents the ideas to be discussed in poetic form at the beginning of the chapter.<sup>1</sup> The introductory poems are therefore essential in understanding Ibn ‘Arabī’s idea and arguments. For example, he presents his main ontological ideas such as the concepts of *wujūd* and *waḥdat al-wujūd*<sup>2</sup> in a number of verses of the introductory poems. He indicates that nothing exists in reality except God, in verses such as, “there is nothing except Him, but only Him” (*wa*

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<sup>1</sup> See Ralph Austin, “On Knowing the Station of Love: Poems from the 178th Chapter of the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah* of Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society* 8 (1989): 1-4.

<sup>2</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 267.

*laysa shay'un siwāh bal huwa iyāh*),<sup>3</sup> or “it is correct [to say] that the perceived existence is God” (*fa-ṣaḥa anna al-wujūd al-mudrak Allāh*),<sup>4</sup> and “nothing sees God except God, so apprehend” (*fa-lā yarā Allāh illā Allāh fa-i'tabirū*)<sup>5</sup>. In other verses he signifies that creation has only “Metaphorical existence” or *jā'iz al-wujūd*,<sup>6</sup> and that real existence only belongs to God who is the “Real Existence” or *al-wujūd al-ḥaqq*.<sup>7</sup> We find this when he writes, “I appeared to my creation in the image of Adam” (*ẓahartu ilā khalqī bi-ṣūrat Ādam*),<sup>8</sup> or “if I say I am one, it is His existence, and if they substantiate my essence, hence duality” (*fā'in qultu anna wāḥidun fa-wujūduhu, wā'in athbatū 'aynī fa-muzdawajānī*),<sup>9</sup> and “Oh who appeared in Himself to His precious one, with no multiplicity, for my [very] being is annihilated” (*ayā man badā fī nafsihī li-nafsihī, walā 'adadun fa-l'aynu minniya fānī*).<sup>10</sup>

On the description of Divine Love, Ibn 'Arabī signifies that it is only God who loves Himself, and in reality the lover and the beloved are only His epiphanies. He says, “I loved my essence [self] a love of one to another” (*aḥbabbtu dhātīya ḥubba al-wāḥid al-thānī*),<sup>11</sup> “Love is attributed relatively to humans and God, in a relationship not known to our knowledge” (*al-ḥubbu yunsabu lil-insāni wa Allāhi, bi-nisbatin laysa yadrī 'ilmunā mā-hī*);<sup>12</sup> “Love is tasted and its reality is not known” (*al-ḥubb dhawqun wa-lā tudrā*

<sup>3</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:321.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> See Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 12-14.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:321.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 322.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 320.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

*ḥaqīqatuhu*),<sup>13</sup> “There is nothing in the cloak except what al-Ḥallāj one day said, so be fortunate [pleased]” (*laysa fīl-jubbati shay’un ghayru mā, qālahu al-Ḥallāju yawman fān-‘amū*).<sup>14</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī is referring in this last verse to the mystical utterance (*Shaḥḥ*)<sup>15</sup> of al-Ḥallāj (d. 922),<sup>16</sup> where it is attributed to him that he said: “there is nothing in my cloak but God” (*Mā fī jubbatī illā Allāh*).<sup>17</sup> It is noteworthy to indicate that chapter 178 of the *Futūḥāt* is not only unique in being one of the lengthiest chapters, but also because it contains the most poetry.<sup>18</sup>

### 3.2. Love in the Qur’ān

After the introduction in the poetry, Ibn ‘Arabī indicates that love is a Divine Attribute (*maqām ilāhī*), because God describes Himself as the “Lover” (*al-Muḥib*) in the Qur’ān and in the *ḥadīth qudsī*,<sup>19</sup> and that one of His Divine Names is the “Loving” (*al-Wadūd*). Ibn ‘Arabī mentions briefly some of various human attributes that God loves, such as those who repent (*al-tawwābīn*) (Q. 2:222), those who cleanse themselves (*al-mutaṭahhirīn*) (Q. 2:222), the purifiers (*al-muṭṭahharīn*) (Q. 9:108), those who put their trust in Him (*al-mutawakillīn*) (Q. 3:159), the patient (*al-ṣābirīn*) (Q. 3:146), the thankful (*al-shākirīn*), the charitable (*al-mutaṣaddiqīn*), the virtuous (*al-muḥsinīn*) (Q. 2:195, 3:134, 3:148, 5:13, 5:93), and those “who fight for God’s cause in a row as if they were a solid structure” (*yuqātilūna fī sabīlihi ṣaffan ka’annahum bunyānun marṣūṣ*) (Q. 61:4).<sup>20</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> For a concise description of *shaḥḥ* see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 145; Carl Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985).

<sup>16</sup> See Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallaj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, trans. Herbert Mason (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

<sup>17</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:320.

<sup>18</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 29.

<sup>19</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:322.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

These attributes will be examined in more detail in the next chapter. He also mentions several human attributes that God “does not love” (*lā yuhib*) such as, the corrupters (*al-mufsidīn*) (Q. 5:64, 28:77), the exultant in riches (*al-fariḥīn*) (Q. 28:76), the arrogant boasters (*kulla mukhtālin fakhūr*) (Q. 4:36, 31:18, 57:23), the unjust (*al-zālimīn*) (Q. 3:57, 3:140, 42:40), the prodigals who waste by extravagance (*al-musrifīn*) (Q. 6:141, 7:31), the disbelievers (*al-kāfirīn*) (Q. 3:32, 30:45), those who speak out in bad utterance (*al-jahra bi 'l sū'*) (Q. 4:148), and the transgressors (*al-mu'tadīn*) (Q. 2:190, 5:87, 7:55). Additionally, he indicates that God endeared (*ḥabbaba*) specific beloved things (*ashyā'*) to people, such as faith (*al-īmān*) (Q. 49:7), beautification or adornment (*al-zīna*) (Q. 3:14), and covets or passions (*al-shahawāt*) (Q. 3:14).<sup>21</sup>

### 3.3. Reason for Creation and Human Actions

Ibn 'Arabī subsequently mentions in this section the *ḥadīth qudsī* of the “Hidden Treasure” as the justification for creation.<sup>22</sup> This *ḥadīth* as previously noted in chapter one, is not mentioned in the mainstream canonical compendiums, but Ibn 'Arabī endorses its authenticity on the basis of personal revelation (*kashf*)<sup>23, 24</sup> He explains that God created humans for Himself and related His rewards with human action and their obedience to Him. He writes:

The apparent actions (*fa'l-a'māl al-zāhira*) of created beings (*al-makhlūqīn*) are [in reality] His creation (*khalqun lahu*), for He is the performer (*fā'il*), and out of respect (*adaban*) [with Him] good actions are ascribed (*yudāf*) to Him, even though all actions [good and bad] are from Him. Because He said, “Say: All is from God,” (Q. 4:78) and said,

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 391.

<sup>23</sup> For a detailed explanation on the meaning of *kashf* see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 267.

<sup>24</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn 'Arabī,” 32.



“He inspired it [the soul] its wickedness and its righteousness,” (Q. 91: 8) and said, “He is the Creator of all things,” (Q. 6:102) thus the actions of people were incorporated (*fa-dakhalat*) in them [His actions].<sup>25</sup>

Accordingly, Ibn ‘Arabī explains that human actions are attributed to them and not to Him, and their serventhood is intended for Him and not for them. This means that human actions are attributed to humans only in appearance, whereas in reality these actions (good or bad) are only God’s acts, because as Ibn ‘Arabī indicates, God is the Doer and His actions are metaphorically assigned to humans.<sup>26</sup>

### 3.4. Significance of Islamic Law (*sharī‘a*) and Love

Ibn ‘Arabī affirms the importance of Islamic law when he states, “if it were not for God’s Divine commandments and laws (*sharā‘i*), no one would have known Him and subsequently loved Him.”<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, he considers that God could only be known from what He has expressed about Himself through His revelations. Thus from these Divine revelations, humans imagine and discern Him and His love in their hearts and imagined and depicted Him in front of their eyes as if they witness Him in themselves and in creation. In reality Ibn ‘Arabī adds, God does not love anything in existence but Himself.<sup>28</sup> This is because He is the “Apparent” (*al-Zāhir*) whose theophany is manifested as the beloved (*al-maḥbūb*) in the eyes of every lover (*al-muḥib*). Accordingly, from this idea no one in reality has thus loved anything else in creation but the Creator. Furthermore, he explains that God not only hid and veiled himself in the appearances of famed beloved females, such as *Zaynab*, *Sū‘ād*, *Hind* and *Layla*,<sup>29</sup> who

<sup>25</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:322.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 326.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

are mentioned in historical Arabic literature, but also in the *mazāhir* of wealth, status, and every other beloved entity in the world. He also signifies that the gnostics never hear poetry, praise or admiration attributed to humans or other creation, except that they perceive them as praises for God alone behind the veils of creation.<sup>30</sup>

### **3.5. Terminology of Love**

Ibn ‘Arabī classifies love into four categories and indicates that even if love has four terms, every term has a state different than the other. The first term is love (*al-ḥubb*), which he considers to be the purest form of the condition of love. He explains that this purity penetrates the heart of the lover and is not subject to change. Therefore this form of love obliterates any purpose or will beside that of the beloved’s purpose or will. The second term is affection (*al-wudd*). Ibn ‘Arabī describes this form of love as a constant faithful fixation (*thābāt*) of love similar in character to the Divine Attribute of God, who is the “Loving” (*al-Wadūd*). The third term is intense love (*al-‘ishq*), which is the extreme overwhelming love. This term as noted in chapter one, derives from the same root as *‘ashaqa* which means convolvulus and is attributed to the convolvulus bindweed that coils itself around its vertical support, causing the support to eventually become unseen and figuratively disappear. This is comparable to the coming together of the lover and the beloved, and both the lover and the beloved are united as one entity. This term unlike the previous three is not mentioned in the Qur’ān. The fourth term is desire (*al-hawā*), which is the sudden inclination of love or unexpected passion of love. It is also the annihilation (*fanā*) of the lover’s will in that of his beloved. Ibn ‘Arabī explains that *hawā* is the first inclination and attachment that happens to the heart, and is caused either

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

by a gaze (*naẓra*), a dictum (*khabar*) or an act of gratitude or virtuosity (*iḥsān*).<sup>31</sup>

### 3.6. Importance of Polysemic Consideration

The importance of developing meaningful polysemic understandings can be established when the etymological analysis between these terms and their root is closely studied, as indicated here and in chapter one. Ibn ‘Arabī therefore explains that the first term, love (*ḥubb*), is associated with the word *ḥabba*, meaning a grain or a seed.<sup>32</sup> The two meanings *ḥubb* and *ḥabba* have similar associations. The small seed steadily grows and flourishes due to frequent nourishment, and correspondingly love begins small and develops greatly.<sup>33</sup> The second term is intense love (*‘ishq*). Ibn ‘Arabī explains that *‘ishq* represents love’s “ascending” spiral movement similar to the vertical spiral motion of the convolvulus plant.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, the third term affection (*wudd*) has other meanings such as a stake, a nail or a peg. Therefore the meaning of *wudd* is love that is deeply rooted in the heart of the lover as the stake, nail or peg are affixed to their fixations.<sup>35</sup> Finally, he indicates that the fourth term desire (*hawā*) is related to the word (*yahwā*), meaning to descend. It signifies “falling from above,” which implies a contrary meaning of the term *‘ishq*, which expresses ascending movement.<sup>36</sup>

### 3.7. Types of Desire (*hawā*)

Ibn ‘Arabī explains that desire or *hawā* has two types. The first type of *hawā* means that love descends on the heart of the lover, or in other words appears (*zuhūruh*)

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 323.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

from the realm of the unseen non-existent (*ghā'ib*) to the realm of the seen existence (*shahāda*) of the lover's heart.<sup>37</sup> The second type of desire is found in the observation of Divine rulings (*ḥukm al-sharī'a*), where the believer inclines and conforms objectively to these Divine rulings even if these rulings contradict with his/her personal and subjective desires.<sup>38</sup> He clarifies this by stating:

And the second type of desire occurs when there is a Divine ruling (*ḥukm al-sharī'a*), as God said to David, "David We have set thee as a viceroy over the land. Judge fairly between people and follow not desire lest it divert you from God's path," (Q. 38:26) which means do not follow what you love (*maḥābak*) but follow Mine (*maḥābī*), and to judge (*al-ḥukm*) according to what I have set for you (*rasamtahu lak*).<sup>39</sup>

### 3.7.1. Reasons for Desire (*hawā*)

The reasons for *hawā* as Ibn 'Arabī indicates are caused by three sources that act on the heart either individually or collectively. The first reason is a gaze (*naẓra*), the second is a hearing (*samā'*), and the third is a virtuous act (*iḥsān*).<sup>40</sup> He considers the greatest cause of desire among the three to be the *naẓra*. This is because as he describes it, the desire caused by gazing can be consistent and unchangeable, and its desirability cannot change by meeting (*liqā'*) because there has been physical contact by looking.<sup>41</sup> The desire caused by *samā'* on the other hand is influenced by the listener's imagination and this form of desire can change by physical meeting.<sup>42</sup> Ibn 'Arabī furthermore indicates:

For desire [in this case] are [connected to] the beloved [objects]

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 335.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 336.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

(*maḥāb*) of man [human being]. Thus God ordered him to relinquish (*tark*) his beloveds if they favor other than the legitimate [*sharī‘a*] path [chosen] for him. If it is said, how He command him to forsake (*nahāh*) what he cannot abandon, because “love” (*ḥubb*) in this case, “desire” (*hawā*), has a strong influence (*sulṭānuhu qawī*) that leaves no existence for rational thinking with it? We say - He did not pre-scribe (*kallaḥahu*) for him to remove desire, because it cannot be removed. Although as previously said, [desire] differs in its [forms of] attachments because it exists in many [objects], and we have clarified that “desire” which is [in this case] “love”, has a reality (*ḥaqīqatuhu*) to love [desire] to be attached in [to] a being or more.<sup>43</sup>

He clarifies that *hawā* has a powerful influence over whoever is affected by it to the extent that it can deprive him/her from rational thinking.<sup>44</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī states that the reality of *hawā* is in the lover’s selfish desire to fulfill his longings by being close to one or more objects attributed to his beloved.<sup>45</sup> He similarly affirms, whenever the seeker negates and refutes all selfish attachments, associations, and dregs (*kudūrāt*) and adheres only to the path of God (*sabīl Allāh*), *hawā* becomes pure from any attachments and can then be called love (*ḥubb*).<sup>46</sup>

### 3.8. Intense Love (*‘ishq*)

Moving to *‘ishq*, Ibn ‘Arabī indicates that *‘ishq* is the excess or the superfluous flow (*ifrāt*) of *ḥubb*. He explains that *ḥubb* can completely overwhelm the individual to the extent that it leaves no room for any other than the beloved in the heart, spirit, soul and body of the lover.<sup>47</sup> And when this occurs, *ḥubb* blinds the lover from seeing anything else but his beloved in existence, and *ḥubb* can then be called *‘ishq*.<sup>48</sup> He quotes a verse from the Qur’ān to explain his point of view. This verse says: “And [yet], among

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 337.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

the people are those who take other than God as equals [to Him]. They love them as they [should] love God. But those who believe are stronger in love for God” (Q. 2:165). He points out that the term “stronger in love” (*ashaddu ḥubban*) in this sentence implies to *‘ishq*.<sup>49</sup>

### 3.9. Affection (*wudd*)

Ibn ‘Arabī then describes *wudd* as the constant fixation of either *ḥubb*, *‘ishq*, or *hawā* in the state (*ḥāl*) or condition of love in the individual, to the extent that nothing can change or affect this persistent situation under any condition.<sup>50</sup> He quotes the Qur’ānic verse, “Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds - the Most Merciful will appoint for them affection,” (Q. 19:96) to clarify his argument that God will appoint a *wudd* of either *ḥubb*, *‘ishq*, or *hawā* in the hearts of His servants who believe in Him and do righteous deeds.<sup>51</sup>

### 3.10. The Love of Love (*ḥubb al-ḥubb*)

Ibn ‘Arabī similarly mentions another form of love, which he considers to be a lesser form of love than the other three. This is the love of love (*ḥubb al-ḥubb*).<sup>52</sup> He explains that this type of love means that the lover falls in love with the condition of love itself, or in other words, he becomes preoccupied and infatuated with the feelings and states of love rather than the beloved object itself.<sup>53</sup> He also points out that his love for God through the power of his imagination reached a state where this love manifested in bodily form in front of him in a similar manner as the angel Gabriel manifested in bodily

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 325.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

form to the Prophet Muhammad. And he thus states:

I reached [through] the power of imagination [a level] until my love [for God] manifested in bodily form (*yujassada*) in front of my eyes [in a similar manner] as Gabriel manifested in bodily form to the Messenger of God... He spoke to me and I listened and understood him. I could not taste food for days. Each time food was ready, he stood close to the tabletop looking at me and speaking with a [heard] voice: “you eat even when you witness me,” so I stopped eating and didn’t feel hungry and felt full from [just watching] him until I became overweight (*‘abilt*) and obese (*saminnt*).<sup>54</sup>

### 3.11. Reasons Behind Love (*asbāb al-ḥubb*)

Ibn ‘Arabī signifies that there are three causes of love. The first is beauty (*al-jamāl*). He narrates the *ḥadīth*, “God is beautiful and He loves beauty,”<sup>55</sup> and explains that God loves beauty because it is one of his self-quintessential Attributes (*ṣifāt dhātiyya*) and one of the “Most Beautiful Names” (*al-asmā’ al-ḥusna*), which is the “Beautiful” (*al-Jamāl*).<sup>56</sup> Accordingly, God loved only Himself because of His own beauty. He indicates that whoever falls in love because of beauty, only fell in love with God in reality, and explains in detail how this could be understood later on in the chapter. The second reason that Ibn ‘Arabī mentions is beneficence (*iḥsān*). He says that there is no beneficent in reality except God, because He is the “Beneficent” (*al-Muḥsin*) and *iḥsān* is the result of His Attribute and Divine Name *al-Muḥsin*.<sup>57</sup> Therefore if anyone fell in love because of beneficence they fell in love in reality only with God. The third cause that Ibn ‘Arabī mentions is performing the supererogatory (*nafl*) prayers. He references the *ḥadīth qudsī* of the supererogatory prayers (*nawāfil*),<sup>58</sup> which is mentioned in chapter

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by *Muslim* in the *ṣaḥīḥ*.

<sup>56</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:326.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

one. He adds, that these *nawāfil* are additions (*ziyādāt*) upon the mandatory prayers (*farā'id*), which are comparable to the existence of *wujūd*. In other words, he relates the *nawāfil* prayers similarly to the “added existence” (*ziyāda fī al-wujūd*) on the “primary existence” of the “Absolute Reality” (*wujūd al-ḥaqq*), which is God.<sup>59</sup> He adds that God similarly loves the world as a supererogatory (*nāfila*) addition (*ziyāda*) to His own necessary (*farḍ*) existence.<sup>60</sup>

### 3.12. Love of Beauty (*ḥubb al-jamāl*)

Ibn ‘Arabī describes the “love of beauty” (*ḥubb al-jamāl*) in more detail in this section.<sup>61</sup> He states that *ḥubb al-jamāl* is a Divine Attribute as narrated in the *ḥadīth*, “God is Beautiful, and loves beauty.” He explains that because God is the “Beautiful” (*al-Jamāl*) and nothing exists in reality but Him, God only loves His own beauty (*jamaluhu*).<sup>62</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī adds that those who love God are divided into two groups. The first group saw His perfection of beauty (*kamāl al-jamāl*) in the world, or in other words, the beauty of the perfection of wisdom (*jamāl al-ḥikma*) behind creation. Thus they only witnessed Him in everything, and loved Him in everything that exists.<sup>63</sup> The other group did not reach the level of the previous group and tasted the beauty of God through the veils of His conditioned beauty (*al-jamāl al-muqayyad*) as theophanic manifestations of creation.<sup>64</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī then explains God’s love for beauty and indicates that God created the world in thoroughness (*iḥkām*) and total perfection (*itqān*), and His knowledge of the

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> See also Rabia Terri Harris, “On Majesty and Beauty,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society* 8 (1989): 5-32.

<sup>62</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:345.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.



world is nothing more than His knowledge of Himself.<sup>65</sup> He adds that as the world was created in His image (*ṣūratihī*) and God ordered it to appear, He saw only His own beauty reflected in it.<sup>66</sup> Thus, in reality God only loved His own Beauty. Accordingly, Ibn ‘Arabī notes that whoever loves the world from the previously mentioned point of view, loves it similarly as God loves Himself through His own Beauty.<sup>67</sup>

### 3.13. Categories of Love (*aqṣām al-ḥubb*)

Ibn ‘Arabī categorizes love into three divisions (*aqṣām*). The first is Divine love (*al-ḥubb al-ilāhī*), the second is spiritual love (*al-ḥubb al-rūḥānī*), and the third is natural love (*al-ḥubb al-ṭabī‘ī*).<sup>68</sup> He states:

In love, there is Divine, spiritual and natural.... Divine love is the love of God for us, and also our love for Him can be called Divine. Spiritual love [the lover] seeks to satisfy the beloved leaving no requirement (*gharaḍ*) or wanting (*irāda*) besides that ... Natural love [the lover] pursues to obtain all [personal] requirements regardless of pleasing the beloved or not, and this is the case [of love] for many people today.<sup>69</sup>

He attributes two of these divisions to human love. The first type is the natural love, in which humans share certain similarities with animal emotions, and basic instincts. The second type is the spiritual love, where humans distinguish and differ from other creatures.<sup>70</sup>

#### 3.13.1. Divine Love (*al-ḥubb al-ilāhī*)

Ibn ‘Arabī defines Divine love as both God’s “love for us” (*ḥubuhu lanā*) and

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 327.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 329.

“our love for Him” (*hubbinā lahū*), he states:

For God says, “He loves them and they love Him” (Q. 5:54) and love attributed to us [human beings] is different than love attributed to Him. Love attributed to us according to our realities [as humans] is divided into two categories. A category called spiritual love (*ḥubb rūḥānī*) and the other is natural love (*ḥubb ṭabī‘ī*), and our love for God is with both types of love together.<sup>71</sup>

Thus from his point of view, God’s “love for us” has two aspects, the first aspect is “His love for us for ourself” (*hubuhu lanā lī anfusinā*), and the second aspect is “His love for us for Himself” (*hubih lanā li nafsih*). He explains that “His love for us for Himself” is mentioned in both the *ḥadīth*, “I was a Hidden Treasure, and I loved to be known”, and the Qur’ānic verse, “I created the Jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me” (Q. 51:1), and clarifies that God created them only for Himself so that they worship and know Him alone. As for “His love for us for ourself,” Ibn ‘Arabī indicates that God through Divine revelations, taught people ethics and explained to them how to invoke and mention Him (*yusabbiḥūh*), and act in goodness (*a‘māl*), and He guaranteed humans rewards of eternal happiness if they obey His commands.<sup>72</sup> As for “our love for Him,” Ibn ‘Arabī specifies that humans love God with both types of love *rūḥānī* and *ṭabī‘ī*.<sup>73</sup>

### 3.13.2. Human Love (*al-ḥubb al-insānī*)

Ibn ‘Arabī further subdivides Human love for God into four types and indicates:

There is only left for us after the categorization of “our love for Him” except four divisions and they are: either we love Him for Himself, or we love Him for ourselves, or we love Him for both [types], or we love

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 327.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 329.

for neither one. Here, another issue is raised, which is why do we love Him if it is proven (*thabta*) that we love Him, but not for Himself and not for ourselves and not for both [types of love], so what is this fourth case?...This is a sub-division. Therefore, there is another categorization, which is: if we love Him, do we love Him with ourselves (*nuḥibuhu binā*), or with Himself (*nuḥibuhu bih*), or with both (*nuḥibuhu bil-majmū'*), or with nothing (*walā bi shay'*) as we previously mentioned?<sup>74</sup>

He clarifies that the first type is to love Him for “Himself” (*nuḥibuhu lahu*), the second is to love Him for “ourselves” (*nuḥibuhu li-anfusinā*), the third is to love Him for “Himself and ourselves” (*nuḥibuhu lil majmū'*), and the fourth type is to love Him for “none of the previous” (*nuḥibuhu walā li wāḥid*) cases. Accordingly Ibn ‘Arabī raises the question of how and why can we love God if we neither love him for Himself and ourselves?<sup>75</sup> He answers that the first type, which is to love God for “Himself,” is that when the devotee loves and hates for the sake of God, he/she become a lover who loves God the One (*al-Wāḥid*) who appears from His name the “Apparent” (*al-Zāhir*) in the multiplicity (*kathra*) of creation. He therefore states:

For this is ‘one’ [human] who loved ‘One’ [God] (*fa-hādhā waḥid aḥabba Wāḥid*), and that Beloved One (*al-Wāḥid al-maḥbūb*) exists (*mawjūd*) in many (*kathīrīn*), therefore [he] loved multiplicity (*al-kathīr*) [creation] for this reason.<sup>76</sup>

When this is realized, Ibn ‘Arabī affirms that the lover praises and worships God for the sake of praise and worship alone regardless of any earthly or heavenly reward.<sup>77</sup> Here Ibn ‘Arabī is referring to the *ḥadīth* mentioned in chapter one which says, “If anyone loves for God’s sake, hates for God’s sake, gives for God’s sake and withholds

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 330.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

for God’s sake, he has perfected faith.”<sup>78</sup> The second type that is to love God for “ourselves” is when people recognize God in His blessings and provisions (*al-ni‘am*), hence love Him for His generosity and providence.<sup>79</sup> Here he is referring to the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet that says, “Love God for what He nourishes you with of His Blessings, love me due to the love of God, and love the people of my house due to love of me.”<sup>80</sup> This type of love Ibn ‘Arabī considers it to be a lesser form of love, because it places the selfish desires of the soul before the love of God.<sup>81</sup> The third type that is to love God for “Himself and ourself”, is when the lover combines worshiping God for the sake of “Himself” and for desiring (*raghba*) Divine rewards from his/her spiritual love (*al-ḥubb al-rūḥānī*), and fearing (*rahba*) His wrath from the his/her natural love (*al-ḥubb al-ṭabī‘ī*).<sup>82</sup> Therefore, Ibn ‘Arabī states that loving God for both “Himself and ourself” is the highest form of love,<sup>83</sup> because it emphasizes both types of existence (real and metaphoric) namely, God and creation. The fourth type that is to love God for none of the previous, is when God manifests Himself on the natural and spiritual essence of the soul (*‘ayn dhātiha al-ṭabī‘iyya wa al-rawḥāniyya*), the soul then acknowledges that it did not see and love God by itself (*binafsihā*) but rather by God (*bihi*).<sup>84</sup> It thus realizes that God was the lover and the beloved, the seeker (*tālib*) and the sought (*maṭlūb*), and it was only Him who loved Himself (*aḥabb nafsahu*) in reality.

<sup>78</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by abū Dawūd in the *Sunnan*, and by al-Tirmidhī in the *Jāmi‘*.

<sup>79</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:330.

<sup>80</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by al-Tirmidhī in the *jāmi‘*.

<sup>81</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:330.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 330.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.

### 3.13.3. Spiritual Love (*al-ḥubb al-rūḥānī*)

Ibn ‘Arabī defines spiritual love (*al-ḥubb al-rūḥānī*) as the love in which the lover seeks to gratify (*marḍāt*) the beloved in such a way that leaves no will or requirement (*gharaḍ*) sought from the lover other than the gratification (*marḍāt*) of the beloved.<sup>85</sup> He states, “spiritual love is the collective love (*al-ḥubb al-jāmi‘*) in [that drives] the lover to love the beloved for the [sake of the] beloved and himself (*li-nafsih*).”<sup>86</sup>

He explains that spiritual love has a collective driving force (*al-jāmi‘*) that motivates the lover to love and gratify both his beloved and himself, unlike natural love where the lover seeks to gratify only him/her self.<sup>87</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī concludes that in spiritual love, no lover loves the beloved for the sake of the beloved alone, but rather loves the beloved for both the beloved and him/her self,<sup>88</sup> and the goal of the lover is to be united with his beloved.<sup>89</sup> He identifies this and states,

Its goal (*ghāya*) is union (*al-ittiḥād*), where the essence (*dhāt*) of the beloved becomes the self-essence (*‘ayn dhāt*) of the lover, and the essence of the lover becomes the self-essence of the beloved. This is what the indwellers (*al-ḥulūliyya*) point [refer] to (*tushīr ilayh*), but they are unaware of the representation [reality] of things (*sūrat al-‘amr*).<sup>90</sup>

Even though Ibn ‘Arabī mentions the term “union” or *al-ittiḥād*, he explains that this is not meant by a physical union or indwelling (*ḥulūliyya*) between two entities, as previously mentioned in chapter two. He clarifies this understanding, and states that anyone who refers to any type of union or indwelling does not grasp the reality of things

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 327.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 332.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 334.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

and the “Oneness” of Existence or Being.

### 3.13.4. Natural Love (*al-ḥubb al-ṭabī‘ī*)

Ibn ‘Arabī outlines the first type of natural love (*al-ḥubb al-ṭabī‘ī*) as the common (*al-‘ām*) type of love in which the lover demands the fulfillment of his requirements (*aghrāḍ*) and needs from the beloved regardless if these needs please or displease the beloved.<sup>91</sup> He indicates:

If natural love arises in the lover, it [drives] the lover to only love the beloved for the [lover’s] pleasure (*al-na‘īm*) and enjoyment (*al-ladha*) [received] from the beloved. Thus [the lover] loves the beloved for himself (*linafsihi*) and not for the beloved’s self (*‘ayn*)...As for the beginning of natural love, it is not [initially] for the [acts of] sanctification (*lil-in‘ām*) and benevolence (*iḥsān*)... but [the lover] loves objects (*ashyā’*) [in themselves] for himself specially and wants to be in contact (*ittiṣāl*) and close (*dunū*) [to them]; this [type of love] is prevalent (*sārin*) in all animals and humans.”<sup>92</sup>

He explains that this type of love is based on the fulfillment and gratification of the lover’s longings and desires only. The lover in this type of love desires the beloved object not for its self, but rather for the gratification and pleasure of himself (*linafsihi*). Thus, the instigative aspiration of love in this type of love necessitates for the lover to become close (*al-dunū*) and attached (*al-ittiṣāl*) to his beloved object or entity.<sup>93</sup>

### 3.13.5. Elemental Love (*al-ḥubb al-‘unṣurī*)

Ibn ‘Arabī signifies the second type of natural love which is elemental love and states:

The second type is elemental love (*al-ḥubb al-‘unṣurī*), and even if it is a type of natural [love] there is a difference between the two, namely that natural [love] is not confined (*muqayyad*) to a natural form (*ṣūra*

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 327.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 334.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 334, 335.

*ṭabī'yya*) and excluding another [natural form]. It [natural love] in love is with every form (*ṣūra*) the same as with the other, similarly to electricity (*al-kahrabā'*) and what relates to it (*ma-yata'allaq bihā*)... As for elemental [love] is confined to a single [specific] natural form like Qays [and] Layla, Qays [and] Lubnā, Kuthayr [and] 'Azza, and Jamīl [and] Buthayna. This is because of the relative commonality (*'mūm al-munāsaba*) between them, like the Iron [and the] magnet (*ka-maghnāṭīs al-ḥadīd*). And similar to [elemental love] in spiritual love [as in the verse], "There is not one of us but hath his known station," (Q. 37:164) and similar to [elemental love] in Divine love is to be confined (*muqayyad*) to one creed (*'aqīda*) exclusively (*dūna ghayrihā*), and also spiritual [love] is similar to natural [love] in purification (*al-ṭahāra*), and Divine [love] is similar to natural [love] in whoever sees Him in all creeds as one essence (*fi-ladhī yarahū fi jāmi' al-'aqā'id 'aynan wāhida*).<sup>94</sup>

He clarifies that this type of love even though it is considered a type of natural love, is different from it. He says that elemental love is limited and confined (*yataqayyad*) to only a single genus, element or form. Ibn 'Arabī then clarifies his point by providing examples of famous Arab lovers such as *Qays* and *Layla*, *Kuthayr* and *'Azza*, and *Jamīl* and *Buthayna*.<sup>95</sup> He adds that this type of love is similar to the spiritual love which is indicated in the Qur'ānic verse, "There is not one of us but he hath his known station" (Q. 37:164). Here Ibn 'Arabī is referring here to the angels who have singular appointed spiritual stations, and each one is striving to fulfill the obligations of his known spiritual station. Ibn 'Arabī says that this type of love is similar to Divine love where it limits and confines believers of a particular religious group to love and adhere to only one single creed and disregard the rest. He adds that this type of love is also similar to the spiritual natural love as found in the love of purity and purification. He is referring here to the love of the primordial disposition of purity (*fiṭra*), where it is believed that there is a natural inclination to the love of purification (*al-ṭahāra*) in humans. He also

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 335.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

adds, that this type of love is similar to the Divine natural love where the lover sees God as one single “Being” who is worshiped in all creeds without distinction.<sup>96</sup>

### 3.14. Characteristics of Divine Lovers (*nu‘ūt al-muḥibīn*)

Ibn ‘Arabī mentions seven characteristics of Divine lovers (*nu‘ūt al-muḥibīn*) and then describes them in detail. The attributes that he mentions in detail in this section are emaciation (*al-niḥūl*), withering (*al-dhibūl*), amorousness (*al-gharām*), longing (*al-shawq*), infatuation (*al-huyām*), sighs (*al-zafarāt*) and anguish (*al-kamad*).<sup>97</sup>

#### 3.14.1. Emaciation (*al-niḥūl*)

Ibn ‘Arabī begins by describing the first attribute, which is emaciation (*al-niḥūl*). He states that this attribute is associated with both the lover’s dense (*kathā’if*) and subtle (*laṭā’if*) matter, or in other words their bodies and spirit. The emaciation of the *laṭā’if* is attained when the veils of creation are lifted, and their subtlety realizes that nothing upholds God’s entitlements in creation but Himself.<sup>98</sup> The subtlety then recognized that the essence of God (*dhāt*) was nothing more than what it imagined to be its own, and it was self-annihilated (*fanā’*) from witnessing God by subsisting (*baqā’*) in Him. Only then God witnessed Himself (*al-ḥaqq*) by Himself (*bil-ḥaqq*), as the water of the mirage is annihilated from the mirage and the mirage recognizes itself that it is not real water.<sup>99</sup> Thus the subtlety (*laṭīfa*) identifies itself as the lover and the beloved and that it has only loved itself. As for the *niḥūl* of the *kathā’if*, this is attained when changes occur in the sensations such as, change in the skin color, extreme weight loss and thinness due to

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 338.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 338.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.



extreme asceticism, practiced to fulfill the obligation of Divine servanthood.<sup>100</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī hence quotes verses from the Qur’ān to articulate his point such as, “O you who believe! Fulfill the [your] obligations,” (Q. 5:1) and “fulfill the covenant of God when you have taken it, and do not break oaths after their confirmation while you have made God, over you, a witness” (Q. 16:91).<sup>101</sup>

### 3.14.2. Withering (*al-dhibūl*)

Ibn ‘Arabī proceeds to explain the second quality that is withering (*al-dhibūl*).<sup>102</sup> He indicates that this quality is associated with both the body and spirit of Divine lovers. As for their bodies, he explains that when God commissioned them to perform their night prayers, they departed from all appealing nourishments that cause drowsiness (*al-nu‘ās*) and they only consumed what was necessary to sustain them and therefore their bodies withered.<sup>103</sup> As for the *dhibūl* of their spirits, He indicates that when God called upon them to, “Ask assistance from God and be patient” (Q. 7:128), they departed from the companionship of their own kind (*jins*), to be in the company of their beloved who said, “There is nothing like unto Him” (Q. 42:11), therefore their spirits withered from the majesty (*jalāl*) of this incomprehensible and unmatched relationship.<sup>104</sup>

### 3.14.3. Amorousness (*al-gharām*)

Ibn ‘Arabī clarifies on the third quality which is amorousness (*al-gharām*).<sup>105</sup> He specifies that *gharām* is when the lover is humbled, ruined and consumed by the

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 339

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

prolonged concealment of grief (*kamad*) in his heart, due to the continual witnessing of His beloved.<sup>106</sup> He then describes that the Arabic word (*gharām*) holds similar lexical connotations in Arabic such as the word (*ghārim*) which means someone who is ruined and burdened by the continuity of debt, or (*righām*) which means to be attached or bonded to dust.<sup>107</sup> Therefore the collective etymological meanings of these terms signify that the amorous (*al-mughramīn*) are ruined due to their continuous feelings of love, longing and sleeplessness in their hearts and souls for their beloved.<sup>108</sup>

#### 3.14.4. Longing (*al-shawq*)

Ibn ‘Arabī describes the fourth characteristic that is longing (*al-shawq*),<sup>109</sup> as the quality that generates both an internal and external movement (*ḥaraka*) in the lover to meet (*liqā’*) with the beloved.<sup>110</sup> He defines the internal movement as the spiritual urge, and the external movement as the natural, physical and sensational bodily movement. He points out that when the lover meets the beloved he/she finds stillness within movement (*sukūn fī ḥaraka*), and the lover is bewildered (*tahayyar*) and asks, why is there movement and fear when meeting the beloved. Ibn ‘Arabī answers that this is because fear is concerned with being departed from the beloved, and the movement is generated by the desire for the continuation of the meeting. He also adds:

This is the reward (*jazā’*) for whoever loved other than his self [entity] (*‘ayn*) and made [perceives] the existence (*wujūd*) of His beloved’s self [entity] outside [other than] him. If he [the lover] loved God this would not be his [the lover’s] situation, because the lover of God does not fear departure [from God], for how can something depart from what is always

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 340.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

with him (*lāzimahu*)... where is parting if there is nothing in the cosmos but Him (*ayna al-furāqu wa mā fī-l kawni illā hū*).<sup>111</sup>

He clarifies that these sensations are rewarded only for those who love other than their self-essence (*‘ayn*), and believe that the existence of their beloved is different from their own essence. Ibn ‘Arabī then questions how could a thing depart from something that it is always with? He answers, where is the parting then if nothing exists in the universe but Him. He quotes a verse from the Qur’ān to clarify his idea, “And you threw not, when you threw, but it was God who threw.” (Q. 8:17)<sup>112</sup> He explains that if the Divine lover loved God in reality this would not be the case, because the lover of God does not fear to be departed from His beloved. Here Ibn ‘Arabī is referring to the theory of *waḥdat al-wujūd* and correspondingly the metaphorical unity between the lover and the beloved, who in this case is God, the “Real Being” or *al-wujūd al-ḥaqq*.

### 3.14.5. Infatuation (*al-huyām*)

He then moves to articulate the quality of infatuation (*al-huyām*).<sup>113</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī clarifies that the lover who is infatuated (*muhayyam*), is anxious and desperate to sustain and preserve the relationship with the beloved. Because of this feeling, the infatuated lover walks astray (*hāma ‘alā wajhihi*), inadvertently and unintentionally to any specific location or direction. He also clarifies that this is not the case for the Divine lover.<sup>114</sup> This is because the lover of God is certain that this relationship exists anywhere or anyplace he/she head to. He quotes this verse from the Qur’ān to specify his point, “To God belong the East and the West: Whithersoever ye turn, there is the presence of God. For God is

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

all-Pervading, all-Knowing” (Q. 2:115). Thus, Ibn ‘Arabī indicates that Divine lovers do not seek Him in any place because He is witnessed by every eye, cited on every tongue, and heard from every speaker.<sup>115</sup>

### 3.14.6. Sighs (*al-ẓafarāt*)

Ibn ‘Arabī states that the sighs (*al-ẓafarāt*) are one of the characteristics of Divine lovers.<sup>116</sup> He describes *al-ẓafarāt* as being a form of fire from light that burns inside the heart of the lover that is generated from the anguish experienced by the lover in his/her heart, and is exhaled because it cannot be contained inside them.<sup>117</sup> He explains that when these sighs are exhaled a sound similar to the crackle of fire with high temperature is heard and felt. This sound is hence called a sigh (*ẓafra*) and is specifically experienced by the natural (physical) body.<sup>118</sup>

### 3.14.7. Anguish (*al-kamad*)

Ibn ‘Arabī describes the seventh and last quality of Divine lovers, which is anguish (*al-kamad*).<sup>119</sup> He states that *kamad* is the strongest feeling of sadness in the heart, and tears do not accompany it. It is accompanied by lots of groaning (*ta’awwuh*) and sighing (*tanahhud*).<sup>120</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī clarifies that the reason for this sadness is unknown, because it is neither caused by any shortcomings (*taqṣīr*) nor missed opportunities (*fāyit*), and the only cause for it is love alone.<sup>121</sup> He specifies that there is no

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 341.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

cure for anguish except to be joined (*wiṣāl*) and attached to the beloved.<sup>122</sup>

### **3.14.8. Additional characteristics**

Ibn ‘Arabī concludes the previous section on the characteristics of Divine lovers by stating that there are many more than what has been described.<sup>123</sup> Among them are apology (*al-asaf*), sorrow (*al-walah*), fading (*al-buht*), stunning (*al-dahsh*), perplexity or bewilderment (*al-ḥayrah*), jealousy (*al-ghayrah*), muteness (*al-kharas*), sickness (*al-siqām*), anxiety (*al-qalaq*), lethargy (*al-khumūd*), insomnia (*al-suhād*), turmoil (*al-wajd*), agony (*al-tabrīḥ*) and weeping (*al-bukā’*).<sup>124</sup> He justifies his reason for not exploring these characteristics in detail on the grounds that his intention in writing the chapter was only to describe the love of God for His servants, and the love of the servants for God, nothing more.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter Four: A Hermeneutical Study of Chapter 178 of the *Futūḥāt*: Part II

In this final chapter, I now turn to outline Ibn ‘Arabī’s ideas and notions regarding God’s beloved human qualities mentioned in the Qur’ān, such as repentance (*tawba*), cleanliness and purity (=ṭahāra, *taṭahur*), patience (*ṣabr*), gratitude or thankfulness (*shukr*), and finally virtue and goodness (*iḥsān*). I will also list the fifty-eight fundamental attributes of Divine lovers. Finally, I review Ibn ‘Arabī’s response to some challenging metaphysical questions which center around the beginning and goal of human love for God, the special condition of love to desire the non-existent, the reason why God tests His beloveds, the source behind the lover’s consumption or preoccupation in love, and finally, the relationship between the mind and love.

### 4.1. Qualities (*ṣifāt*) Loved by God

#### 4.1.1. Following the Path of the Prophet

Ibn ‘Arabī begins with the first quality or *ṣifa*, which is following the Sunnah of the Prophet.<sup>1</sup> He starts this section by mentioning the verse in the Qur’ān that says, “Say, If you love God, follow me, God will love you and forgive your sins. God is Forgiving and Merciful” (Q. 3:31). Ibn ‘Arabī explains that from the initiatory Divine love mentioned in the *ḥadīth* of the Hidden Treasure, “I loved to be known,” there arose two paths. About these, God promised that whoever follows them will attain His Divine love.<sup>2</sup> The first path is observing the obligatory practices (*farā’id*). The second is practicing voluntarily supererogatory acts (*nawāfil*).<sup>3</sup> He mentions the *ḥadīth* of the supererogatory

<sup>1</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:341.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

prayers specifying that the rewards offered by God could only be achieved by following the Prophet, and quotes the verse, “Say if you should love God, follow me,” (Q. 3:31) to support his arguments.<sup>4</sup>

#### 4.1.2. Those Who Repent (*al-tawwābīn*)

Ibn ‘Arabī then moves to the second beloved quality, which is “those who repent” (*al-tawwābīn*) or “return” to God.<sup>5</sup> He states that the “Absolver” (*al-Tawwāb*) is one of the many Names of God,<sup>6</sup> and specifies that God only loved His Names and Attributes and loves whoever characterizes himself with the Divine Attributes.<sup>7</sup> He also adds:

If the servant is set in a situation where he is mistreated (*asā’ ilayh*) from his own kind (*amthālih wa ashkālih*) and he responds back (*fa-raja’ a ilayh*) with beneficence (*ihsān*) upon him [them] and pardons (*tajāwaz*) his [their] mistreatment, he is the absolver (*al-tawwāb*), and not who returns to God. Because it is not true (*ṣaḥīh*) to return to God except from whoever is ignorant (*jahal*) that God is with him in every state (*kull ḥāl*)... therefore whoever returns (*raja’*) to God, returns from disagreement (*mukhālafā*) to agreement (*muwāfaqa*) and from disobedience (*ma’ṣiya*) to obedience (*tā’a*). This is the meaning of loving those who repent. If you are from those who absolve (*al-tawwābīn*) who mistreat them, God will be the “Absolver” (*al-Tawwāb*) upon you.<sup>8</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī explains that this Attribute has two sides. The first is from the servants who repent and return to God from their disobedience, and the second is from individuals who personify themselves with the Divine Attribute of (*al-Tawwāb*) and accept the repentance of others who transgress against them and ask for absolving. He then quotes a verse from the Qur’ān to articulate this point: “For God loves those who turn to Him in

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> In relation to God, *tawba* refers either to Divine absolving and forgiveness of sins, or the initial “turn” which causes the person to repent. See Atif Khalil, “Ibn al-‘Arabī on the Three Conditions of *Tawba*,” *Journal of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 17, no. 4 (2006), 403-416.

<sup>7</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:341.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 342.

repentance.” (Q. 2:222)<sup>9</sup>

#### 4.1.3. Those Who Cleanse Themselves (*al-mutaṭahhirīn*)

He then moves to describe the third *ṣifa*, which is “those who cleanse themselves” (*al-mutaṭahhirīn*).<sup>10</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī adds that cleanliness is a Divine Attribute that has two sides of serventhood (*‘ubūdiyya*), one apparent (*ẓāhir*) and the other hidden (*bāṭin*). The apparent or *ẓāhir* side involves cleansing the body and the living surroundings and environment. The second side is *bāṭin* and entails internal cleansing. It involves cleansing oneself of all negative qualities such as, arrogance (*al-kibriyyā’*), self-pride (*al-tafākḥur*), self-glorification (*al-khuyalā’*) and egoism or conceit (*al-‘ujbb*).<sup>11</sup> He then mentions the appropriate Qur’ānic verse that supports his view: “He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean.” (Q. 2:222)<sup>12</sup>

#### 4.1.4. The Purifiers (*al-muṭṭahharīn*)

Ibn ‘Arabī states the fourth quality, which is that of “the purifiers” (*al-muṭṭahharīn*) or in other words, “those who purify others.”<sup>13</sup> He explains that this quality is ascribed to individuals who after cleansing themselves from their bad qualities, progress to provide cleansing for others from their bad attributes or behaviors.<sup>14</sup> He adds, that in reality people who are attributed by this quality, are considered to be God’s instruments for cleansing others. Such would be the prophets, the saints and teachers singled out for this role to act as Divine instruments on earth. Ibn ‘Arabī asserts here the

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



idea that God is the only performer (*al-fā'il*), and that no acts proceeds in the world except that He is the ultimate actor behind its performance.<sup>15</sup> He also quotes a Qur'ānic verse to support the eminence of purifying in the eyes of God, “God loves the purifiers” (Q. 9: 108).<sup>16</sup>

#### 4.1.5. The Patient (*al-ṣābirīn*)

The fifth *ṣifa* Ibn 'Arabī mentions is that of “the patient” (*al-ṣābirīn*).<sup>17</sup> He describes those who are attributed with this quality when he writes:

God loves the patient ones, whom He afflicted (*ibtalāhum*) and withheld (*ḥabasū*) themselves from complaining (*al-shakwā*) except to God who brought down this affliction upon them... the patient complains only to God and not to anyone else, and he must (*yajib 'alayh*) [complain] to God, because in patience if he [the afflicted] does no complain to God, he is opposing (*muqāwamat*) the Divine subjection (*al-qahr al-ilāhī*), and this is bad manners (*sū' adab*) with God.... hence you know that your patience was only by [from] God and not from yourself... He afflicted His servants so that they only seek [turn to] Him (*li-yalja'ū ilayh*) in lifting these afflictions and not seeking anyone else but Him... if they do this they are from the patient.<sup>18</sup>

He begins by indicating from the Qur'ān that, “God loves the patient (who are firm and steadfast)” (Q. 3:146). He then indicates that these people, when tested by God with trials and tribulation, do not complain to anyone else but Him.<sup>19</sup> Here Ibn 'Arabī raises an important issue and that is, the patient must (*yajib 'alayh*) complain to God alone and submit to the Divine subjection (*al-qahr al-ilāhī*). Ibn 'Arabī considers not complaining to God to be a display of non-conformity to serventhood (*'ubūdiyya*) and an

<sup>15</sup> Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 17; Khalil, “Ibn al-'Arabī on the Three Conditions of *Tawba*,” 406.

<sup>16</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:342.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 343.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

objection against Divine subjection which is the cause of serventhood itself. He regards this to be a lack of courtesy or bad manners (*sū' adab*) with God.<sup>20</sup> He also adds that *al-Ṣabūr* is one of the Divine Attributes of God, in relation to whom it might be translated as the “Steadfast,” and God loves whoever is characterized with this quality.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4.1.6. The Thankful (*al-shākirīn*)

The sixth quality that Ibn ‘Arabī notes is that of “the thankful” or “the grateful” (*al-shākirīn*).<sup>22</sup> Even though he states that God “describes Himself in His book with loving the thankful,” this quality is actually is not cited in it.<sup>23</sup> However, what is mentioned is that, “God will reward those who serve Him with gratitude” (Q. 3:41). Nevertheless, Ibn ‘Arabī indicates that the quality of “gratitude” (*shukr*) is a Divine Attribute and God loves those who are assimilate themselves with it. He specifies that *shukr* is always given in the context of blessings and not for tribulation (*al-balā*).<sup>24</sup>

#### 4.1.7. The Virtuous (*al-muḥsinīn*)

The seventh quality that Ibn ‘Arabī states is that of “the virtuous” or “the beneficent” (*al-muḥsinīn*).<sup>25</sup> This attribute is the most cited of all the beloved human qualities in the Qur’ān, being cited five times.<sup>26</sup> He indicates that the “Beneficent” (*al-Muḥsin*) in reality is God, because *al-Muḥsin* is a Divine Attribute. He clarifies that whoever worships God as if they see or witness Him is considered to be a *muḥsin*.<sup>27</sup> Ibn

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> See ch. one, section 1.3 of this thesis.

<sup>24</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:343.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 344.

<sup>26</sup> See ch. one, section 1.3 of this thesis.

<sup>27</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:344.

‘Arabī is referring to the *ḥadīth* when the Prophet Muhammad was asked on the meaning of *ihsān* and replied, “*Ihsān* is to worship God as if you see Him, and if you cannot see Him, know that He sees you.”<sup>28</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī adds that the beneficence (*ihsān*) of God toward all of His creation is when He sees their actions and behaviors and protects and preserves them from falling into harm or evil.<sup>29</sup> He indicates that God expresses this Divine witnessing in the verse, “For God is witness over all things.” (Q. 22:17) Furthermore, he indicates that God’s witnessing is through His knowledge, preservation and protection over creation.<sup>30</sup> As for humans, Ibn ‘Arabī specifies that if a person’s knowledge is derived from a continuous state of witnessing (*mushāhada*) God, such a person is a *muḥsin*.<sup>31</sup> Accordingly he adds, in any case even if humans do not act in accordance to *ihsān*, or in other words, do not see or witnesses God, the real *Muḥsin* in any case is God, who is continuously witnessing creation and Himself.<sup>32</sup>

#### 4.1.8. Those Who Fight for God’s Cause in a Row as if they were a Solid Structure (*yuqātilūna fī sabīlihi ṣaffan ka’annahum bunyānun marṣūṣ*)

The final *ṣifa* that Ibn ‘Arabī mentions is that of “those who fight for God’s cause in a row as if they were a solid structure” (*yuqātilūna fī sabīlihi ṣaffan ka’annahum bunyānun marṣūṣ*).<sup>33</sup> He clarifies that the line constitutes of single points (*nuqaṭ*) and when these *nuqaṭ* are connected closely to each other in a way that leaves no gaps (*khalal*) between them, they form a single straight line (*khaṭ*).<sup>34</sup> He adds if there were to be gaps between these points, the line would no longer be called a line, and the line will

<sup>28</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by al-Bukhārī, & Muslim in their *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

<sup>29</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:344.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

seize to exist.<sup>35</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī explains the metaphorical meaning of the point, gap and line, and indicates that the gaps are the pathways through which evil (= *shaytān* or the Devil) breaks through; and the line is the straight path (*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*) of God.<sup>36</sup> The points have different metaphorical meanings, such as individuals who fight for a single cause, people praying in rows as in Islamic congregational prayer, or Divine Names and Attributes of God that are connected next to each other to create and manifest creation.<sup>37</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī says that if humans stand next to each other leaving no gaps between them and unite in a similar manner in which the Divine Names are solidly connected, evil will not be able to break their lines and they will be victorious.<sup>38</sup>

#### 4.1.9. Important Observations

It is important to indicate here that Ibn ‘Arabī did not mention two qualities that are stated in the Qur’ān, namely “the pious” (*al-muttaqīn*) and “the equitable” (*al-muqsiṭīn*), Even though *al-muttaqīn* is cited in the Qur’ān three times in verses (Q. 3:76, 9:4, 9:7), and *al-muqsiṭīn* is cited also three times in verses (Q. 5:42, 49:9, 60:8).<sup>39</sup> The reason for not mentioning these qualities is unknown. Ibn ‘Arabī mentions instead another quality in their place, which as we saw above, is “the thankful” (*al-shākīrīn*).<sup>40</sup> Although, as we also saw, *al-shākīrīn* is not cited in the Qur’ān (as a cause of Divine love), it still appears in a prophetic *ḥadīth*.<sup>41</sup> He also did not discuss another two qualities. These are having trust in God, since the Qur’ān speaks of “those who put their trust in

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> See ch. one, section 1.3 of this thesis.

<sup>40</sup> See sub-section 4.1.6 of this thesis.

<sup>41</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Mu‘jam al-‘awsaṭ*.

God” (*al-mutawakillīn*), and “the charitable” (*al-mutaṣaddiqīn*). He does however mention them at the beginning of his chapter.<sup>42</sup>

#### **4.1.10. Essential Qualities of Divine Lovers (*n‘ūt al-muḥibīn*)**

Ibn ‘Arabī concludes his long chapter by mentioning fifty-eight essential traits a Divine lover should experience in order to be called a lover of God.<sup>43</sup> Among the qualities or attributes of which he speaks are the following forty-four qualities:

- (1) Slayed (*maqtūl*) or killed, figuratively speaking, by one’s love of God.
- (2) Wayfaring to God through His names (*sā’ir ‘ilayh bi ‘asmā’ih*).
- (3) In flight (*ṭayyār*), or being in a spiritual or emotional flight to God.
- (4) Constantly remaining awake at night (*dā’im al-sahar*), as in prayer or in an intimate conversation with the Beloved.
- (5) Concealing grief (*kamin al-ghamm*).
- (6) Desiring a departure from the world in order to meet the Beloved (*raghib fī al-khurūj min al-dunya ilā liqā’ maḥbūbih*).
- (7) Complaining of companionship that distracts from the Beloved (*mutabarrim bi ṣuḥbat mā yaḥūl baynahu wa bayna liqā’ maḥbūbih*).

<sup>42</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:322.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 345-346

- (8) Sighing frequently (*kathīr al-ta'awwuh*).
- (9) Finding comfort and repose in the words of the Beloved and remembering Him by reciting His words (i.e., the Qur'ān) (*yastarīhu ilā kalām maḥbūbih wa dhikruhu bi tilāwat dhikruhu*).
- (10) Being successful in fulfilling what the Beloved loves (*muwāfiq li maḥāb maḥbūbih*).
- (11) Being fearful of infringing, or falling short, in fulfilling the services of the Beloved (*khā'if min tark al-ḥurma fī iqāmat al-khidma*).
- (12) Belittling oneself or feeling deficient in fulfilling the rights of the lord (*yastaqil al-kathīr min nafsih fī ḥaqq Rabbih*).
- (13) Abounding scarce provisions (*yastakthir al-qalīl min ḥabībih*), or considering whatever little bestowals received from the Beloved to be copious and plentiful.
- (14) Wholeheartedly embracing the obedience of the Beloved, and turning away from what is disagreeable to Him (*yu'āniq ṭā't maḥbūbih wa yujānib mukhālafatih*).
- (15) Complete and totally self-negated or self-transcendent for the Beloved, literally “leaving oneself entirely” (*khārij 'an nafsih bil kulliyya*).

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- (16) Not seeking blood-money for being slayed (metaphorically) by the love of God (*lā yaṭlub al-dīyya fī qatlih*).
- (17) Remaining patient before any harm which comes from observing the Beloved's commandments, even when they oppose one's natural disposition (*yaṣbir 'alā al-darrā' 'allatī yanfirr minhā al-ṭab' limā kalafahu maḥbūbih min tadbīr*).
- (18) Having an infatuated heart (*hā'im al-qalb*).
- (19) Preferring the Beloved to every other companionship (*mu'thir maḥbūbih 'alā kull maṣḥūb*).
- (20) Being obliterated in one's affirmation (= being annihilated in one's love) (*maḥū fī ithbāt*).
- (21) Adapting one's soul to the requirements of the Beloved (*qad waṭa'a nafsahu limā yurīdahu bih maḥbūbih*).
- (22) Having one's qualities intertwined with the Beloved's Attributes (see etymology of 'ishq in chapter two) (*mutadākhil al-ṣifāt*).
- (23) Having a soul that has no desire beside the Beloved (*mā lahu nafs ma'a maḥbūbih*).
- (24) Belonging entirely to the Beloved (*kulluhu li maḥbūbih*).
- (25) Blaming oneself for falling short in fulfilling the rights of the Beloved (*ya'tib nafsahu bi nafsih fī ḥaqq maḥbūbih*).

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- (26) Experiencing enjoyment in astonishment (*multadh fī dahash*), or sweetness from one's astonishment or awe over the Beloved.
- (27) Intruding (i.e. religious) boundaries after having guarded and preserved them (*jāwaza al-ḥudūd ba'd ḥifzihā*).
- (28) Being extremely jealous in one's love of the Beloved (*ghayyūr 'alā maḥbūbih minhu*).
- (29) Being governed by one's love according to personal intellect (*yaḥkum ḥubbih fih 'alā qadr 'aqlih*).
- (30) Quickly healed from injuries caused by the Beloved (*jurḥihi jabbār*).
- (31) Feeling that love is neither increased by the beneficence nor decreased by the aversion of the Beloved (*lā yaqbal ḥubbih al-ziyāda bi iḥsān al-maḥbūb wa lā yanquṣ bi jifā'ih*).
- (32) Forgetting one self's share and the Beloved's share (*nasī ḥazzahu wa ḥazz maḥbūbih*).
- (33) Mannerism is not being required (*ghayr maṭlūb bil 'adab*).
- (34) Being uncharacterized without qualities or attributes (*makhlū' al-nu'ūt*).
- (35) Being nameless (*majhūl al-'asmā'*).



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- (36) As if asking but without asking (*ka'annahu sā'il wa lays bi sā'il*).
- (37) Not differentiating between reunion or desertion (*lā yufarriq bayn al waṣl wal hajr*).
- (38) Infatuated and enchanted indulgently (*haymān mutayyam fī idlāl*), or being infatuated and enchanted to a great degree.
- (39) Being confused and unbalanced (*dhū tashwīsh khārij 'an al-wazn*).
- (40) Declaring that one's essence or self is the Beloved (*yaqūl 'an nafsih 'annahu 'ayn maḥbūbih*).
- (41) Being captivated relentlessly, and submitting to the orders and sayings of the Beloved (*muṣṭalim majhūd lā yaqūl li-maḥbūbih limā fa'alta kadhā aw qulta kadhā*).
- (42) Being exposed, and not holding back any secret (*mahtūk al-sitr sirruhu 'alāniyya faḍīḥahu al-dahrr lā ya'lam al-kitmān*).
- (43) Does not know that he/she is a lover (*lā ya'lam annahu muḥibb*).
- (44) Desiring without knowing for whom (*kathīr al-shawq lā yadrī liman*).

Ibn 'Arabī then goes on to address fourteen additional qualities, but without

detailed description:<sup>44</sup>

- (1) Feeling intense emotion, but without knowing towards whom  
(*'aẓīm al-wajd wa lā yadrī fī man*).
- (2) Not being able to identify the Beloved (*lā yatamayyazu lahu maḥbūbuh*).
- (3) Being happy and sad (at the same time) and being characterized by opposing or contradictory emotions (*masrūr maḥzūn mawṣūf bi al-ḍiddayn*).
- (4) Remaining silent so that one's condition speaks for itself  
(*maqāmuḥu al-kharas ḥāluḥu yutarjim 'anhu*).
- (5) Does not love for a reward (*lā yuḥibb li- 'iwaḍ*).
- (6) Being drunk and never sober (*sakrān lā yaṣḥū*).
- (7) Being attentive in seeking the Beloved's contentment or wish  
(*murāqib mutaḥarrī li marāḍih*).
- (8) Prefers being merciful and compassionate towards his/her Beloved whenever required (*mu'thir fī al-maḥbūb al-raḥma bihi wa al-shafaqa li mā yu'tih shāhid ḥālihi*);
- (9) Having high emotions (*dhū ashjān*).

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 346

(10) Being tireless and whenever free attempts to strive again  
(*kullamā faragha naṣab lā ya ‘rif al-ta ‘ab*).

(11) Being spiritually generous and open-handed (*rūḥuhū ‘aṭiyya wa badanuhu maṭiyya*).

(12) Not knowing anything except what is in the Beloved’s self (*lā ya ‘lam shay’ siwā mā fī nafs maḥbūbuh*).

(13) Finding “coolness of eyes” (*qarīr al- ‘ayn*) (i.e. content in seeing the Beloved).

(14) Utters only the words of the Beloved (*lā yatakalamu illā bi kalāmuhu*).

Ibn ‘Arabī’s descriptions provide us with a thorough list of the physical, emotional and spiritual traits and experiences of the lover in his love of God. Many of these qualities, interestingly, may also very closely describe what one may experience in romantic love towards another human being. A modern reader may in fact be struck by the similarities of some of the qualities shared by the lover of God and the lover of another human. For Ibn ‘Arabī, this likeness is because human love is simply a reflection of Divine love. Accordingly, because Divine love is more real, it is even more consuming and powerful than the love one may feel towards a romantic, human beloved.

#### **4.2. Further Remarks**

In this final section I now turn to address some important questions surrounding love, some of which revolve around the states and condition of love and the lovers.

Among the questions raised and answered by Ibn ‘Arabī are, what is the beginning (*bad’*) of our love for God? Is there a goal (*ghāya*) in this love or not? If there is a goal and end, what is it? Is love an inherent, intrinsic quality (*ṣifa nafsiyya*) of the lover, or is it instead an acquired one, additional to the lover (*ma’nā zā’id*)? And finally, is love simply a relationship (*nisba*) between the lover and the Beloved, non-existence in itself?

#### 4.2.1. What is the Beginning (*bad’*) of God’s Love for Creation, and the Beginning of Creation’s Love (*bud’ūhu*) for God?

In response to the question, what is the beginning (*bad’*) of God’s love?<sup>45</sup> He answers as follows:

As for the beginning of our love for Him (*bud’ūhu*), was due to hearing (*samā’*) and not sight (*rū’yā*), and this was upon His saying unto us when we were in the substance of the cloud (*ft̄ jawhar al-‘amā’*), “Be” (*kun*). The cloud (*al-‘amā’*) is from His breath<sup>46</sup> and the forms (*ṣuwar*) that are depicted (*mu‘abbar*) as the cosmos are from the word “Be.” Thus we are His endless words.<sup>47</sup>

Thus he explains that the beginning of God’s love for creation was when He wanted to be known, and he accordingly references the *ḥadīth* of the “Hidden Treasure.”<sup>48</sup> As for the beginning of creation’s love for God, he clarifies that it was when He called upon the entities or *ashyā’* to come into being by uttering the Divine word, “Be!” or *kun!* to cause them to come to existence. He bases his assumptions in this regard on the Qur’ānic verse, “And Our word unto a thing, when We will it, is only that We say unto it: ‘Be,’ and it is,” (Q. 16:40)<sup>49</sup> and clarifies that the beginning of creation’s love for

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 329.

<sup>46</sup> This is the “Breath of the All Merciful” (*Nafas al-Raḥmān*) which, for Ibn ‘Arabī, brings existence into being.

<sup>47</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:331.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. “When God desires a thing, He says “Be!” and it is” (Q 36:82).

God was based on hearing (*al-samāʿ*) and not sight (*al-rūʿyā*), because upon hearing the Divine word “*kun!*” creation came to exist. Therefore creation is considered by Ibn ʿArabī to be the result of the endless pouring out of God’s words.<sup>50</sup> Everything comes out of a Divine *creative fiat*, a Divine engendering speech

#### 4.2.2. What is the Goal (*ghāya*) of Human Love?

Ibn ʿArabī explains that the goal of human love for God is attained when they realize that their love for God is only a quality of the soul (*ṣifa nafsiyya*) which exists only because of God’s real existence.<sup>51</sup> Love, as Ibn ʿArabī asserts, originates from the soul (*nafs*) and essence (*ʿayn*) of the lover. Thus the relative relationship between the lover, the beloved and love, is nothing more than the essence or *ʿayn* of the lover, which is God Himself.<sup>52</sup> Thus God for him is the condition of love, the essence of the lover and also the beloved. In other words, there is nothing but God in the relation of love, since He is the lover, the beloved, and also love itself. The triangle is comprised entirely of God, and so we return again to his metaphysical doctrine of the “Oneness of Being.”

Ibn ʿArabī indicates that it is necessary for humans to love, but they do not know who or what to love; they imagine that their beloved exists as an entity, object or being.<sup>53</sup> He says that it is through the human imagination that they envision and visualize what they love in the form of being, entity or object.

<sup>50</sup> Ibn ʿArabī, *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:331.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 332.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 334.

### 4.2.3. Why Does Love Desire the Non-Existent and Absent? And Why Does the Lover Have Opposing Characteristics in his/her Love (*yajma' al-muḥibb fī ḥubbihi bayn al-diddayn*)?

Ibn ‘Arabī indicates that love has a special condition to affiliate and desire the absent or non-existent.<sup>54</sup> He says:

Love is a special affiliation (*ta‘alluq khāṣ*) of the affiliations (*ta‘alluqāt*) of willpower (*irāda*). Loving (*al-maḥabba*) relates to what is only non-existent (*ma‘dūm*) and absent (*ghayr mawjūd*), whereas the affiliation (*al-ta‘aluq*) wants [or desires<sup>55</sup>] the existence and occurrence (*wiqū‘uhu*) of the beloved... God says in the Qur’ān, “Whom He loves and who love Him,” (Q. 5:54) by using the absent pronoun and future tense (*ḍamīr al-ghā‘ib wa al-fī‘l al-mustaqbal*), He attributed the affiliation of love only to the absent and non-existent. Furthermore, every absent is non-existent, and from the attributes (*awṣāf*) of love, the lover conjoins (*yajma‘u*) opposing [attributes] in his love... and this is the difference between natural and spiritual love, and humans alone conjoin them ... because he [humans] is [created] in His image (*‘alā ṣūratihī*), and He described Himself with opposing Attributes as, “the First and the Last, the Apparent and the Hidden.” (Q. 75:3)<sup>56</sup>

This means that the imaginative power in humans causes them to fall in love with a non-existing object or entity. It acts in response to the desire of the soul to bring the beloved object or entity into physical existence.<sup>57</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī then references the Qur’ānic verse, “God will bring a people whom He loves and who love Him,” (Q. 5:54) to support his argument.<sup>58</sup> He explains that the verse uses the non-present future tense in that God will create people whom He “will love them” and they “will love Him,” to demonstrate that love has a special condition to desire and pursue what is absent or non-existent. From Ibn ‘Arabī’s statement “every absent is non-existent” (*wa kulla ghā‘ib fa-huwa*

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 327.

<sup>55</sup> Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 389n8.

<sup>56</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:327.

<sup>57</sup> Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 389n8.

<sup>58</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:327.

*ma'dūm*),<sup>59</sup> he clarifies that what is absent (*ghā'ib*) is somehow non-existent (*ma'dūm*) one-way or another. Thus it can be assumed that while every absent entity has no existence by being non-present or not occurring at a particular moment, it can be metaphorically defined as being non-existent. He thus defines this affiliation as a distinctive character of love, where the lover has two opposing qualities, which are, his presence in physical existence, longing and desiring the imaginative non-existence or absence of the beloved.

Ibn 'Arabī explains that humans hold opposing characteristics (*yajma'u bayna al-diddayn*) in their love,<sup>60</sup> because they are created in the image of God who Himself has opposing Attributes. He cites the Qur'ānic verse that says, "He is the First and the Last, and the Apparent and the Hidden; and He is the Knower of all things" (Q. 57:1) to articulate his idea.<sup>61</sup> Ibn 'Arabī explains this idea further by implying that the conjoining of opposing attributes are similar to someone who is content (*rāḍīy*) with the predetermined or destined fate (*qaḍā'*), though he might not be content (*lā yardā*) with the nature or type (*maqḍīy bih*) of what is predetermined or destined fate.<sup>62</sup> He implies that this contradiction is similar to someone who is content with fate, and being accurately named "contented with fate" (*al-riḍā bil-qaḍā'*) even though "he may not be content with what is fated ... for fate is the decree (*ḥukm*) of God with what is being fated (*bil-maqḍīy*) and not the nature or type of fate itself."<sup>63</sup> Ibn 'Arabī thus creates a distinction between being content with what is predetermined, with the fate that one is

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

destined to encounter, while not being content with the nature and type of the predetermined fate itself.

#### **4.2.4. Can the Mind (*al-‘aql*) Love?**

Ibn ‘Arabī clarifies that the mind (*al-‘aql*) binds humans and drives them to rationalize all perceptions in order to justify their actions.<sup>64</sup> He bases this assumption on one of the etymological meanings of the Arabic word (*‘aql*), which means to “tie” or to “bind.”<sup>65</sup> He explains that one of the characteristics of love is bewilderment (*ḥayrah*) and disorientation. In such a state of bewilderment and perplexity, the mind is not able to direct the course of the lover through reason and intelligence.<sup>66</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī quotes a verse from the story of Jacob and his son Joseph to explain the nature of this bewilderment. He explains that when the caravan containing the shirt of his long lost son Joseph approached, Jacob was so bewildered by his love for Joseph, that he said, “Indeed, I find the scent of Joseph [and would say that he was alive] if you did not think me weakened in mind” (Q. 12:94). To this his sons then replied, “By God, lo! you are in your same old error” (Q. 12:95).<sup>67</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī explains that this aberration mentioned in the verse was Jacob’s bewilderment due to the intensity of his love for Joseph.<sup>68</sup>

#### **4.2.5. How Does Love Consume the Lover?**

Ibn then asks the questions, does love consume the lover?<sup>69</sup> He provides the following answer:

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 338.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 325.



Know that love does not consume (*yastaghriq*) the lover completely except if the beloved is God or someone from his kind (*jinsihi*)... humans do not completely conform (*yuqābil bi-dhātihi*) when in love except to whoever is [similar] in form (*ṣūratih*), because there is similitude (*yumāthiluh*) in form in both of them [i.e., the lover and beloved].<sup>70</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī thus clarifies that the lover can be completely consumed in his love only when the beloved is either God or someone of his own kind; in any other case, the lover will not be consumed entirely by his love. This is because as he explains, humans tend to incline and conform to whoever is similar to them in disposition, kind or form. Hence the “lover and beloved” become consumed in their love due to the similar traits and qualities that are found in both of them. Therefore, in reality the lover and beloved are consumed in the love of their own essence and attributes that they see in each other. In other words, the lover witnesses himself in his beloved as someone who can only see his own face when gazing in a mirror.<sup>71</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī explains how humans can be consumed in the love of God. He states that because God created humans in His image, they become attached to and tend to fall in love with their own qualities. These qualities are in reality a manifestation and reflection of God’s own Names and Attributes.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, when this love is associated with the Essence of God, the lover is consumed and annihilated in the Essence rather than His Attributes.<sup>73</sup> He indicates that when love requires the approval of the lover’s mind, when it is mediated through the lover’s reason, then it is not a pure form of love or *ḥubb* but rather a soul’s desire or murmur (*ḥadīth nafs*).<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 326.

#### 4.2.6. Why Does God Test and Give Trial to His Beloved?

To close, Ibn ‘Arabī raises a very important and critical question. He says that since the lover does not harm his beloved, if God truly loves His friends (*awliyā’*), why then did the Prophets, Messengers and their followers experience such great distress and harm? What are the reasons and justifications behind their trials and tribulations?<sup>75</sup> He answers that tests are commonly associated with claims of capability. Whoever does not make a claim will not be asked for a proof; and the higher the claim, the harder will the test be.<sup>76</sup> Consequently, if there were no claims of love from those who claimed to be lovers of God, there would not have been subjected to tests to substantiate their claims. He adds that initially God choose from creation beloved individuals, and they loved Him without knowing how and why they came to love Him; therefore they claimed to love Him.<sup>77</sup> Subsequently, God tested them for their claims as lovers (*muḥibbīn*) of Him, and then blessed them because they were beloved (*maḥbūbīn*) by Him. Thus, His blessings upon them are His proof of His love of them, and His trials for them are a consequence of their claims of loving Him.<sup>78</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī concludes by declaring that he was given the gift of an intense, high level of love for God. At the same time, God also gave him assistance to handle the intensity of its power.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 345

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 346.

## Conclusion

It was noted in the introduction of this thesis that previous generations of Western scholars often felt that as a religion, Islam lacks a sophisticated philosophy or theory of love, and that this is because it is primarily a religion of law and works. In the words of the Scottish scholar John MacCulloch, which I cited earlier, Islam, a “religion of submission,” is “a religion of fear, not of love.”<sup>1</sup> From this thesis we can see how mistaken such a view is. From the works of Ibn ‘Arabī, one of Islam’s greatest thinkers, it is clear that “submission” and “love” are indeed not contradictory, and that love is situated at the heart of Islamic piety, even though this love may not be conceived of in the same way as it might be in other religions or traditions. Ibn ‘Arabī’s extensive use of the Qur’ān and the *ḥadīth* also demonstrates that his views of love are not extraneous to Islamic revelation, but the result of extensive meditation, analysis and engagement with the main sources of Islamic thought.

In this study, I have offered a close, textual reading of chapter 178 of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Futūḥāt*, in which he offers his metaphysical explication of his theory of love. After discussing the life and works of Ibn ‘Arabī, and presenting the basic picture of his metaphysics and cosmology, both of which are intimately related to his understanding of love, I moved to analyse love in the Qur’ān and the development of love theory in the Sufī literature which preceded Ibn ‘Arabī. The remaining two chapters then sought to plunge into chapter 178 of the *Futūḥāt* itself. There it was argued that the recondite and allusive poems which mark the beginning of this chapter are key to understanding Ibn ‘Arabī’s metaphysical doctrine of love.

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Masuzawa, “Islam, A Semitic Religion,” 197.

It was shown that Ibn ‘Arabī’s treatment of love in chapter 178 reveals his emphasis upon observing the exoteric rulings of Islamic doctrine, basing his esoteric arguments on verses from the Qur’ān and quotations from *ḥadīth*. He also stresses the importance of the polysemic understanding and the etymological analysis of terms in order to extract additional meanings behind them, as was shown in the case of his analysis of the four terms affiliated with love, namely *ḥubb*, *hawā*, *‘ishq*, and *wudd*. Furthermore, it was shown that he categorized love into four different types and described each one of them in detail. These four categories are Divine love, spiritual love, natural love and elemental love. He specified three reasons that cause one to experience love, namely beauty, beneficence, and performing the supererogatory *nafl* prayers. Similarly, he described seven characteristics of Divine lovers in detail, such as emaciation (*al-niḥūl*), withering (*al-dhibūl*), amorousness (*al-gharām*), longing (*al-shawq*), infatuation (*al-huyām*), sighing (*al-ẓafarāt*), and anguish (*al-kamad*). He examined a number of human qualities that are beloved to God, such as following the Sunnah of the Prophet, repentance (*tawba*), purification (*ṭahāra*), purifying (*ṭataḥahur*), patience (*ṣabr*), thankfulness or gratitude (*shukr*), beneficence or virtuosity (*iḥsān*), and fighting for God’s cause in a row as if one were part of a solid structure. Furthermore, I noted that Ibn ‘Arabī has not included within his categorizations two human qualities that are beloved to God according to Qur’ān. These qualities are piety (*taqwā*) and equity or being equitable (*qist*). Ibn ‘Arabi instead substituted them with the quality of gratitude (*shukr*), which is not cited in the Qur’ān but rather mentioned in the *ḥadīth*. Another two qualities that were stated in the chapter but were not described in detail are putting trust in God (*tawakkul*) and charity (*taṣadduq*).

In the thesis I also showed that Ibn ‘Arabī argues that love has a unique desire for the non-existent, and that the imaginative power in humans seeks to bring this non-existent beloved object or entity into physical existence. Additionally, I also noted how Ibn ‘Arabī tries to resolve difficult questions surrounding love, such as why God subjects His beloveds to trials. Ibn ‘Arabi states that because tests are usually associated with claims, when lovers claim to love God, they are tried to substantiate their assertions, even if their claims are not made public. As for the nature of the relationship between the lover and the beloved, Ibn ‘Arabī indicates that when the lover is consumed in his/her love, he/she are able to experience the intensity of this state due to the similarity of form he/she shares with the beloved, whether it is God or another human being. This similarity of forms extends to the attributes and essence of the beloved. This is why Ibn ‘Arabī says that one can only experience love for another human being or God with the fullness of one’s own being. On the question of whether the mind or intellect can experience love, Ibn ‘Arabī clarifies that it cannot, because it binds humans and motivates them to rationalize and justify their actions to themselves. And because the rationalizations of the mind may contradict or oppose the states of love, such as bewilderment and perplexity, the mind cannot love.

Finally, it was shown that for Ibn ‘Arabī the goal of human love for God is attained when humans realize that nothing exists in reality except God, and that the relative love relationship between the lover and the beloved is nothing more than a relationship which occurs within the very Essence of God. Hence God is Love, the Lover

and the Beloved. In the words of the medieval German mystic Meister Eckhart, “We love God with his own love; awareness of it deifies us.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Cited in Whittall Perry (ed.), *The Spiritual Ascent: A Compendium of the World's Wisdom* (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2007), 614.

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