ʿABD AL-KARĪM AL-JĪLĪ:
Tawḥīd, Transcendence and Immanence

by

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ABSTRACT

The present thesis is an attempt to understand ʿAbd Al-Karīm Al-Jīlī's thought and to illustrate his original contribution to the development of medieval Islamic mysticism. In particular, it maintains that far from being an obscure disciple of Ibn ʿArabī, Al-Jīlī was able to overcome the apparent contradiction between the doctrinal assumption of a transcendent God and the perception of divine immanence intrinsic in God's relational stance vis-à-vis the created world.

To achieve this, this thesis places Al-Jīlī historically and culturally within the Sufi context of eighth-ninth/fourteenth-fifteenth centuries Persia, describing the world in which he lived and the influence of theological and philosophical traditions on his writings, both from within and without the Islamic world.

A whole chapter is dedicated to the definition of the controversies that afflicted Islamic theology and philosophy over the issue of anthropomorphic representations of God and the relevance that this had on the subject of divine immanence and transcendence.

Al-Jīlī's original contribution to this discussion, summarised in the concept of the *Perfect Human Being*, is illustrated with the editing and translation of one of Al-Jīlī's works, *The Cave and the Inscription,* followed by annotations to the book.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There was Eru, the One, who in Arda is called Ilúvatar; and he made first the Ainur, the Holy Ones, that were the offspring of his thought, and they were with him before aught else was made. And he spoke to them, propounding to them themes of music; and they sang before him, and he was glad. But for a long while they sang only each alone, or but few together, while the rest hearkened, for each comprehended only that part of the mind of Ilúvatar from which he came, and in the understanding of their brethren they grew but slowly. Yet ever as they listened they came to deeper understanding, and increased in unison and harmony.

(J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion,* book I)

A doctoral thesis on 'Abd Al-Karīm Al-Jīlī is an exercise in the understanding of a paradox that has afflicted the Islamic world since its inception: how to reconcile God's indisputable transcendence and God's perceived immanence. The former is God's "otherness" that distinguishes the divine Being from the created universe, while the latter is assumed in the same act of creation and in the professed divine presence in the world, in history and in the life of every human being.

Al-Jīlī's in my opinion unique contribution to the debate is here analysed against the background of numerous attempts by others to overcome the impasse generated by the paradox. This paradox constitutes the axis around which the whole structure of this dissertation revolves. As an illustration of Al-Jīlī's thought on this subject, I have reproduced, edited, translated and explained one of the author's literary works, *Al-Kahf wa-al-raqīm.*

I hope that this work may contribute to the shedding of some light on a medieval Sufi theologian, philosopher, poet and mystic still largely ignored by much of the relevant scholarship in this field. I also hope that increased knowledge may obtain deeper understanding, and deeper understanding may contribute to an increase "in unison and harmony."

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SYSTEM OF REFERENCING AND TRANSLITERATION FROM ARABIC

Throughout the present work the Harvard System of Referencing has been adopted (with minor adaptations): author-date system in the body of the thesis, with full reference provided in the Bibliography. With respect to reprints, the date of the original publication is given in square brackets.

English quotations from the Qur'ān are my own translation.

For transliteration from Arabic - except when quoting authors using a different method - the Library of Congress system has been adopted (adapted), as illustrated below:

'(ء), a (initial ا), b (ب), t (ت), th (ث), j (ج), ḥ (ح), kh (خ), d (د), dh (ذ), r (ر), z (ز), s (س), sh (ش), ṣ (ص), ḍ (ض), ṭ (ط), ẓ (ظ), ' (ع), gh (غ), f (ف), q (ق), k (ك), l (ل), m (م), n (ن), h (ه), w (و), y (ي)

ة
a (at in *iḍāfa* and ah after *alif* have been ignored).

Article: al- ("sun" letters have been ignored).

Long vowels: ā (*alif* and *a.maqṣūra*) ī ū.

Short vowels: a i u.

Diphthongs: aw ay iyy (ī if final) uww (ū if final).

Initial *hamza*: omitted.

Some common Arabic names usually quoted in English dictionaries may not be transliterated (e.g., Sufi).

INTRODUCTION

In an age when the first casual encounter with an author often happens by typing the title of a book on an Internet search engine, it is not at all surprising that enquiring with curiosity on the evocative and intriguing phrase *The Perfect Man* one should make the acquaintance for the first time with the name of ‘Abd Al-Karīm Al-Jīlī. The reason why this is not surprising resides in the fact that Al-Jīlī – poet, philosopher and mystic - is well known by Muslims and Islamic scholars the world over, primarily for his seminal work *Al-Insān Al-Kāmil.* Arguably Al-Jīlī deserves more attention and study on the part of scholars than footnote quotations or partial references to his major work and to his self-confessed admiration for that titan of Muslim mysticism, *Muḥyī Al-Dīn* Ibn ‘Arabī, his spiritual and philosophical master, two hundred years his senior. On the other hand, his obvious devotion to the Andalusian mystic and insistence to refer to him in nearly everything he wrote is probably the reason why his own original contribution to an Islamic spirituality should be lost to many, and be overshadowed by such a gigantic figure as that of *Al-Shaykh Al-Akbar*. He is nevertheless considered by some to be “undoubtedly the most original thinker and the most remarkable and independent mystical writer … in the ‘school’ of Ibn ‘Arabi” (Knysh 1999, p. 232).

The present work consists of an attempt to familiarise the reader with the figure of Al-Jīlī, placing him historically and geographically in the world that shaped him as a mystic and a man of letters. A man of his time, one cannot overestimate the importance that an understanding of the historical circumstances that stand as backdrop to his life and work, have for a correct interpretation of his message. A man of culture, this work will also try to

define - if broadly - some of the main cultural influences that have played a role in his formation and in the development of his ideas, as well as the influences derived from his own Muslim faith in the context of the Sufi medieval mystical traditions. The main thrust of this dissertation, however, will reside in a description of what I consider his original contribution to a debate that has plagued the Muslim world for centuries on the apparent paradox to be found in faith in a transcendent God and in the pious Muslims' perception of a universe imbued with a divine presence not at all detached from, but interacting instead with the created order. Therefore, this dissertation proposes that the issue of the relation between God and the contingent order is central to his philosophy, extending to arguments on the significance of anthropomorphic representations of God in the Qur'ān and in tradition.

To this effect, this work contains an Arabic edition, an English translation and annotations on one of Al-Jīlī's earliest works, in my opinion representative and illustrative of the main elements of his doctrine.

Possibly dazzled by the brightness of Ibn ʿArabī, Islamic and non-Islamic scholarship has tended to overlook Al-Jīlī's contribution to medieval debates on mysticism and philosophy. This dissertation contends that his teaching deserves to acquire greater influence and authority in such debates, and that his originality has more to it than is usually stated. The significance of the present research, therefore, intends to reside in an attempt to further clarify some of the most obscure elements of Al-Jīlī's doctrine, and at least in part contribute to motivating relevant scholarship to ascribe to him greater

relevance in the evolution of Sufi Islamic mysticism and philosophy and their propagation over the centuries throughout the Islamic world.

This research on Al-Jīlī draws on available scholarship spanning several decades, from the classic studies of Nicholson and Burckhardt, to more recent publications from Lewisohn and especially from Zaydān Al-Massri and Al-Ḥakīm. More importantly, it is based on a number of texts in Arabic by Al-Jīlī himself. Because works specifically dedicated to Al-Jīlī are still quite limited in number, much of my work is also based on information on Al-Jīlī contained in works investigating primarily the teachings of Ibn ʿArabī, his literary production and the development of Sufism over the centuries.

From the point of view of methodology, I have attempted a historical analysis locating Al-Jīlī historically in the context of the cultural renaissance that under the Il-Khans and later Tamerlane saw Islamic Persia re-emerge from a long period of economic, social and cultural decadence precipitated by the Mongol invasions. More specifically, I have described the development of mysticism and of the Sufi orders in particular that represented the religious milieu originating in the mystical and philosophical tradition initiated by Ibn ʿArabī and of which Al-Jīlī is an eloquent and significant representative. Again, I do not believe that it is possible to fully comprehend Al-Jīlī as a man of his times, without an in-depth study of this historical background. However, I have also avoided what I would consider the temptation of reducing a study on Al-Jīlī to being yet another investigation into the already much explored doctrines of *Al-Shaykh Al-Akbar*.

Subsequently, I have examined the cultural environment within which Al-Jīlī finds his legitimate collocation, identified in the philosophical influences from within Islam and from outside of it (namely from the Greek and Hindu-Buddhist traditions) that directly or indirectly affected his development.

As an exemplification of our author's theories, I have then edited, translated and commented on one of his works that although deals with subjects tackled at length and in greater depth in *Al-Insān al-kāmil,* I have chosen because I consider it representative of Al-Jīlī's doctrine. It contains a justification of *tawḥīd* obtained by means of an analytical study of the letters of the alphabet, and of the *basmala* in particular, thus tackling in an intriguing manner the paradox of divine immanence and transcendence.

As explained at the beginning of chapter four, in order to achieve this I have obtained from the University of Cambridge Library an electronic copy of a manuscript in Arabic dated 1040/1631. I have compared it with another manuscript preserved at the Library of the India Office, London, and checked it against an Indian second edition of *The Cave and the Inscription* published in 1336/1917, and a third edition of 1340/1921 both also kept at the Library of the University of Cambridge. I have had the Arabic text typed by a professional typist in Cairo, and added notes to it, especially with reference to discrepancies with the other versions of the work available to me. I have then translated it into English, with occasional consultation of Arabic speaking friends, trying as much as possible to remain faithful to the original text, attempting however to render the translation fluid enough to be understood by a modern-day reader. In part three of chapter four I have then offered annotations to the text endeavouring to explain the tenets of Al-Jīlī's doctrine

and the terminology he adopted when rendering philosophical and mystical notions, drawing from it conclusions pertinent to the main objectives of this dissertation.

I have approached this research with great humility, first of all in the awareness that I would be treading sacred ground, dealing with themes that belong to the sphere of the spiritual; secondly, constantly conscious of the fact that I am not a Muslim, and therefore I have no right to express judgments on traditions that I have not embraced. However, I have also approached this research with great enthusiasm and love, in the growing conviction that much of what Al-Jīlī explored and endeavoured to describe is in fact part of a legacy that goes beyond the boundaries of religious denominations, and belongs instead to the whole of the human race, touching upon elements that I consider universally present in all human beings regardless of their religious affiliation or lack thereof. I am referring to those elements of the religious discourse that seem to be shared by mystics of all traditions, expressing a longing for the divine which is beyond the experience of our material world, and yet also deep within the soul of every person. For this reason this research has had a great impact on my own spiritual journey. However, I also hope that it will collate in one space most of what has ever been discovered and studied of an author not yet upsurged to the rank shared by the greatest among the medieval Islamic mystics and philosophers.

As explained earlier, with this research I intend to illustrate – albeit succinctly, given the fact that I am a rather concise writer and given the wide scope that a work of this type may have if one were given the opportunity to deal with all its constitutive elements, even dedicating entire volumes to each of them - Al-Jīlī's original contribution to the debate on the reconcilability or otherwise of divine immanence and transcendence. To this purpose, I

have divided my work into five chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter sets the background to Al-Jīlī's life and thought, and is divided into two parts. Part one contains biographical information on our author, and describes and analyses the main historical events that shaped his time and his world. Part two contains brief references to his written works, especially those that I was able to access in their original language. Some attention is given to his masterpiece that has made him famous the world over, *Al-Insān al-kāmil,* attempting a first description of some of his main concepts.

The second chapter is about interpreting Al-Jīlī in the light of the main influences on his doctrines. The chapter is divided into five parts. In the first part of the chapter, Al-Jīlī is seen against the background of the Islamic philosophical traditions that have shaped him, especially the doctrines of Avicenna, Al-Suhrawardī and Ibn ʿArabī. The second part intends to offer further elements to a more complete interpretation of Al-Jīlī's thought by offering a brief summary of the development of Sufism up to the time of our author. The third part contains a section dedicated to the mystical valence of the Arabic script in certain Islamic literature, and certainly in Al-Jīlī. As Al-Jīlī was rooted in the Persian environment of his time, part four of this chapter deals with Persian mysticism and its roots in the indigenous expressions of Zoroastrianism first and then Shīʿism. Other pre-Islamic philosophical influences, namely Hindu/Buddhist and Hellenistic, are also considered in part five.

The third chapter finally brings us to the core of the issues on which this work intends to focus, namely Al-Jīlī's contributions in the centuries-long controversies on divine immanence (*tashbīh*) and transcendence (*tanzīh*), and on the corollaries to this debate

offered by the questions of the divine attributes and of anthropomorphic descriptions of God in the Qur'ān. The first three sections of this chapter describe the milestones of the arguments and the main groups involved in the disputes. The fourth focuses on Al-Jīlī, his original contribution to the debate but also the influence that it had on his own philosophical formation.

Chapter four then follows, with its three parts dedicated respectively to the editing, translation and annotations on one of Al-Jīlī's works, *The Cave and the Inscription,* a brief early text, but in my opinion highly significant in providing an exemplification of Al-Jīlī's contributions to the debate to which the previous chapter referred.

The fifth chapter pursues further the case of Al-Jīlī's own original contribution to the development of medieval Islamic philosophy and mysticism. Having established in the previous two chapters his position with regard to the debates on divine anthropomorphism, this section disputes the apparently widespread assumption that Al-Jīlī is just a mouthpiece for Ibn ʿArabī's doctrines re-issued almost two centuries later, showing instead instances of originality even in the refutation of some of his master's own teachings.

Finally, the Conclusion to the present work has offered to me the opportunity to illustrate the repercussions that Al-Jīlī's doctrines have had in history on some expressions of the Islamic world. Cultural, mystical, philosophical and political reactions - both positive and negative ones - to the content of his writings can be detected throughout the centuries up to the present day. I have tried to capture some of them and to summarise them, thus bringing to a close a hopefully exciting journey through the very stimulating

and often inspiring teachings of a master from an age so different from ours that however is rendered close to us by the universal and ageless language of mystical experience.

Chapter 1

ʿABD AL-KARĪM AL-JĪLĪ

This chapter contains material aimed at facilitating the comprehension of Al-Jīlī and assessing the impact he had on late medieval Muslim Sufi mysticism and philosophy. To this purpose, the first part provides biographical information and an excursus of the main historical events that constitute the background to his life and teaching. It is not possible to appreciate in full the doctrine of an author such as Al-Jīlī outside of the very specific geographical and historical contours traceable back to the aftermath of the Mongol invasions and the subsequent alternating of periods of cultural and social *renaissance* and of economic, social and even environmental crisis. It is to this world that Al-Jīlī belongs, and an adequate analysis of his philosophy and mysticism cannot exclude an extensive treatment of the historical elements into which his thought originated and was nurtured.

Part two enumerates the titles of his works known to us, with an in-depth look at the concept of *Al-Insān al-kāmil* and Al-Jīlī's eponymous masterwork. This offers the opportunity for an initial reference to what I believe is this author's main contribution to the medieval debate on the divine attributes and God's transcendence and immanence.

1. HIS BACKGROUND

Admittedly not an impressively prolific author, Al-Jīlī offers to those who approach him the opportunity of a first hand exposure to elements typical of the cultural and religious universe of Middle-Eastern Islam between the eighth/fourteenth and the ninth/fifteenth centuries. Not that one conversed with the history of Sufism would necessarily marvel at the audacity of some of Al-Jīlī's mystical and intellectual tenets, but one would certainly be able to discover in the midst of well known expressions of esoteric Muslim Gnosticism, pearls of originality and uncommon intuition worth exploring in greater depth.

However, he also offers the opportunity to examine *prima facie* examples of a philosophical and mystical language typical of his time and of his geographical provenience. Like a door opening on an enchanted world of coded meanings and interpretations of Qur'ānic spirituality, we are aided by Al-Jīlī into making the acquaintance with a specific historical age and geographical area.

At a time when the star of Ottoman imperialism has already dawned and the last vestigial expressions of declining sultanates draw to an end, in Persia and parts of Iraq the Islamised Mongol state of the Il-Khans for a few more years into the ninth/fifteenth century will be home to an intriguingly parallel civilisation to that of Italian *Renaissance*, where artistic and philosophic expressions of excellence are still valued and encouraged. It is here that Al-Jīlī lives, and by all means it is only in understanding

his world and the forces that have shaped it that one can assume to possess the elements for a correct interpretation of his intellectual and religious significance.

We know from a long poem constituting one of his own works, *Al-Nādirāt al-'ayniyya,* vv. 333-334, that 'Abd Al-Karīm Quṭb Al-Dīn Ibn Ibrāhīm Al-Jīlī or Jīlānī was born in present day Iraq in the year 767/1365. Burckardt (1983 [1953], p. i) and Ignaz Goldziher, as cited by Nicholson (1994 [1921], p. 81) link the name Jīlī to the Baghdad district of Jil. Based on autobiographical notes contained in that book, and others scattered here and there in his other works, we may assume that he was a member of the *Qādirī*[1] and possibly related to its founder 'Abd Al-Qādir Jīlānī or Al-Jīlī (d. 561/1167, one year after the birth of Ibn 'Arabī). "In the *Insánu'l-kámil* he more than once refers to 'Abdu'l-Qádir as 'our Shaykh,' so that he must have been a member of the fraternity." (Nicholson. *Studies in Islamic Mysticism.* 81). [2] Authors such as Mayer (2008) would consider Al-Jīlānī an expression of a "form of Sufism in impeccable conformity with the consensual foundations of the tradition" that "might explore the tradition's agreed norms with eminently abnormal intensity, but it may never violate them in the name of esoterism" (p.268).

The name Al-Jīlī is therefore presumably due to his association to Al-Jīlānī's movement. Less plausibly his family may have been of Persian descent and background. In fact, Gilan is a northern province along the Caspian coast in modern day Iran, crossed by the Safīd-rūd River, with mountains and lowlands, and a very humid climate. In ancient times the populations of the coast were called Gil, Gel, Gelai

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[1] Qādirī - commonly known as Qadiriyya – is even today one of the major Sufi *ṭuruq* in the Muslim world, together with the Rifaiya and Al-Rūmī's Mawaliya.

[2] The same assumption is also made by Marijan Molé (1965, p. 116).

or Gilak, while the highlands were inhabited by the Daylamite tribe, valiant warriors in the Persian army, who fiercely resisted Arab attempts to invade the region. They gradually converted to *Shī'a* Islam between the third/ninth and the forth/tenth centuries. This detail is probably behind Corbin's (1990 [1977]) assertion that Al-Jīlī was Shī'ite. However, I have not encountered any other evidence proving Al-Jīlī's Shī'ite provenience.

The problem is that very little is known of Al-Jīlī, except for what he has included in his major work, *Kitāb Al-Insān Al-Kāmil.*

He was a disciple of Sheikh Sharaf Al-Dīn Ismā'īl Ibn Ibrāhīm Al-Jabartī (d. 806/1403-4), from Zabid, Yemen, whom we find included in a chain of transmission tracing the order of the Qadiriyya in Indonesia at a time when, according to Nicholson, "the *Insánu'l-Kámil* exerted a powerful influence upon Indonesian Ṣúfism…" (p. vii). Al-Jabartī was Al-Jīlī's true master, the object by him of much praise. Al-Jabartī, for his part, had been a follower of the doctrines of Ibn 'Arabī and a disciple of Abū Bakr Muḥammad Al-Ḥaqqaq, himself a member of the Qadiriyya. Van Bruinessen (2000) identifyies in Shaykh Yusuf Makassar (eleventh/seventeenth century) the first scholar from Indonesia to have been a member of the Qadiriyyah. Makassar claims to have been initiated in Acheh by Muḥammad Jilani Ibn ḥasan Ibn Muḥammad Al-Ḥamīd, paternal uncle of Nūr Al-Dīn Al_Ranīrī. Makassar's chain, matching one by Al-Ranīrī himself, contains a number of names of people clearly originated in Yemen (among these Al-Jīlī's master) and two from Gilan, including ʿAbd Al-Qādir Jīlānī himself, founder of the Qadiriyya.

Zaydān (1988, ch. 2) mentions some other contemporary Sufi masters who had an influence on Al-Jīlī, namely Jamāl Al-Dīn Ibn Muḥammad Al-Makdash, Ibn Jamīl, most importantly the aforementioned Al-Jabartī and Aḥmad Al Radād. This was one of the main disciples of Al-Jabartī, who, being also Yemen's Chief Justice (*qāḍī*) in 802/1399, when Al-Jabartī was still alive, took the leadership of the local Sufi *ṭarīqa* in Zabid, where Al-Jīlī was residing. In fact, Al-Jīlī considers him one of his masters, appreciating in him the introduction of philosophical categories into their particular branch of Sufism.

Al-Jīlī has been associated also with other Persian masters of Sufi Gnosticism such as " 'Aṭṭār, Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, 'Umar Suhrawardī, Rumi, Shabistarī, ḥāfiẓ, … 'Ala' al-Dawla Simnānī" (Lewisohn 1999, II, p. 25). But by his own admission he was particularly inspired by the mystical and philosophical teachings of Ibn 'Arabī, whose *Futūḥāt* became the subject of one of his works. Well travelled, he visited Kushi in India possibly in 789/1387; in Yemen Sanaa, and Zabid, where he studied and taught for some time (Nicholson 1994 [1921]) - presumably from 789/1387 - with Al-Jabartī and his companions and under the auspices of the reigning Rasulid who protected him and other Sufi masters from the hostilities of those opposed to his controversial doctrines (Knysh 1999, p. 232). We know for instance that the Yemeni author Ibn Al-Ahdal accused the Rasulid sovereigns of promoting the growth of heretics, among whom he specifically mentioned Al-Jīlī (Knysh 1999, p. 268).

In 803/1400-1 he travelled to Cairo (Zaydān 1988, p. 16 and Knysh 1999, p. 249), then to Gaza in Palestine and to Yemen again in 805/1402-3. There he gathered Al-Jabartī's disciples, founded a school and finished *Al-Insān al-kāmil.* He was then in Mecca and Medina in 812/1409 (Chodkiewicz, n.d.a), and finally back to Yemen, where he died.

Al-Jīlī died at Abyat Husayn between 826/1421 and 832/1428, and "was buried in the shrine of the local holy man named Ibrahim al_Jabali (or al-Bijli?), whose descendant hosted him during his frequent visits to Abyat Husayn" (Knysh 1999, p. 249). The date of his death is rather disputed. The author of *Kitāb kashf al-zunūn,* Ḥajī Khalīfa (1062/1652)[3] places it in the year 805/1402-3, which seems to be very unlikely given the evidence we have of further journeys by Al-Jīlī after that date. According to Saʿīd ʿAbd Al-Fattāḥ (1997, p. 13) and others, he died in the year 832/1428, but for Zaydān (1988, pp. 24-25) the most accurate dating is probably 826/1422, mentioned by a contemporary of Al-Jīlī opposed to the Sufi movement, Badr Al-Dīn Al-Ahdal (d. 855/1451) in a manuscript entitled *Tuḥfa al-zaman bi dhikr sādāt al-Yaman.*

There are unsubstantiated claims that Al-Jīlī may be the one who brought the Qadiriyyah order to India at the time of his stay (Gürer, n.d.). At any rate, we know from his writings that he had a number of followers and must have exercised therefore some role as a spiritual master. Ernst Bannerth (1956) saw in him the figurehead of pantheistic Sufism. Another quotation from Ibn Al-Ahdal also reported by Knysh (1999) is rather revealing of the impact he had on some of his contemporaries:

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[3] As cited by Zaydān (1988, p. 23).

Among those doomed to be lost in this sea more than anyone else is ʿAbd al-Karim al-Jili, the Persian. A reliable and honest scholar told me about him that he had accompanied him [i.e., al-Jili] in one of his travels, during which he heard him praising profusely Ibn ʿArabi's books and teachings. This person [i.e., the informant] also heard him overtly ascribing lordship (*rububiyya*) to every human being, bird, or tree which he happened to see on his way" (p. 249).

Occasionally, he has been acknowledged by Muslim scholars of later generations. A case in point is that of the eleventh/seventeenth century scholar Nūr Al-Dīn Al-Ranīrī from the Acheh Sultanate (modern Indonesia), with a very strong presence of *Qādirī* Sufism. Al-Ranīrī explicitly mentions Al-Jīlī's and Ibn 'Arabī's "moderation" - to which he adheres - in reference to the pantheistic tendencies of his contemporary adversaries. Seeking acceptable intermediaries between God and humanity, in *Asr al-insān fī maʿrifat al-rūḥ* he quotes *Al-Insān Al-Kāmil,* where he finds such intermediaries in the concepts of Light of Muḥammad, Reality of Muḥammad, Tablet and Spirit (Steenbrink, 1990).

Al-Jīlī was very much a son of his times, and his intellect was greatly influenced by philosophical, theological, mystical and political trends in the Muslim world of medieval Iraq and Iran. It is necessary, therefore, to outline the historical context that shaped Al-Jīlī's world.

Devastating and often violent influxes of nomadic tribes from the steppes of Central Asia that had become an all too frequent occurrence from the second half of the forth/tenth century, soon began to take their toll on the declining splendour of the Sunni ʿAbbāsid caliphate with its capital in Baghdad. By the fifth/eleventh century the

caliphate's hold on power had been eroded even further by the Turkish dynasty of the Saljūqs who had recently converted to Islam. Although maintaining at first a certain form of subordinate allegiance to the caliphate, they took control over most of the Persian territory, mainly through their vassal Salghurid lords, members of the Atābeg dynasty. These remained in nominal charge of Persia – through very confusing centuries of great political and military turmoil – up to the end of the sixth/twelfth century when the Mongols finalised their takeover.

Under the Saljūq regime and its characteristic administrative control exercised through the employment of an elite but enslaved military caste, almost as if in response to a collective perception of lack of direction and threat to the typically Muslim sense of community, people increasingly tended to congregate, to create community around a common cause or idea: Sunni law schools, *Shī'a* movements and Sufi *ṭuruq* thrived.

Although eventually assimilated into the host culture even to the extent of adopting its Muslim faith and Persian language, the warrior Mongol hordes that descended in waves from the steppes of Central Asia had a profound impact upon the whole region. Not a lawless people – Yasa, the Mongol law, was the object of quasi-religious veneration – they brought in their wake unspeakable destruction and violent death. Moreover, they tilted the fragile balance of the Persian eco- system with consequences that are felt to the present day.

Hodgson (1977) has conducted a very interesting analysis of the environmental disaster brought about by the Mongol invasions. He maintains that the drastic change in

the amount of fertile farmland in the area he calls the *Arid Zone* – extending, one would guess, from North Africa to China – is less the effect of "progressive change in the climate" than of human activity. Although rainfall seems to have been much more abundant in previous geological epochs, apparently no substantial change – Hodgson explains – has occurred for the last two thousand years, possibly because de-forestation of the region in view of more aggressive farming had already reached its peak. Scarcity of atmospheric precipitations however has not always been, in the past, synonymous with aridity. Persians under the Caliphs knew how to conserve water, how to irrigate gardens and farms, how to maintain that delicate and elegant balance between human development and natural habitat that is a sign of advanced and sophisticated societies. Arguably, cultivations in Iraq and Persia did suffer already the consequences of ever more diminishing power and control on the part of the central authority. Presumably the inexorable expansion of urban areas was already to the detriment of agriculture. Probably in the long run farming without forests would have impoverished the land so much that it would have succumbed eventually to some form or other of desertification. What is certain, however, is that a military aggression conducted with the violence and the destructive disposition that the Mongols exerted in Persia, precipitated things and accelerated this phenomenon to a degree that the environmental change brought about became virtually irreversible. War necessarily drove people out of their farms. This generated a crisis in crop management that in return triggered a chain of catastrophic events, with abandoned farms turning into grazing land and the introduction of cattle first, then sheep, then the omnivorous goats. Large flora and cultivated plants stood no chance. Especially if coupled with unreasonably excessive taxation and all too often with a systematic extermination of the population, in a pre-industrial society this could

signify only one thing: a general, widespread contraction of the economy. Lapidus (1997 [1988]) reckons that for "a century or more fine pottery and metalwares ceased to be produced. A period of urban autonomy and cultural vitality was thus brought to an end" (p. 278).

The Mongol Empire of course went well beyond the boundaries of Iraq and Persia. In the seventh/thirteenth century it extended from modern day Russia to the Pacific. Too much for only one man to rule. Thus in 624/1227, following the death of Jenghis Khan – who, in the Mongol understanding of things, technically *owned* all the territories of the Empire - it was first divided among his four sons, then became the object of violent disputes among their descendants. Soon, therefore, the Empire became a fractured entity, with independent and often hostile khanates. Among these was the Il-Khans khanate that included modern day Turkey, Iraq and Iran.

Thus, ethnic Turks entered Persia in great numbers (and have stayed ever since) while political administration and taxation was channelled – in traditional Turkish rather than Mongol fashion - through military chieftains and their clans (*uymaq*), in themselves deeply divided as sub-chieftains quarrelled with one another and with the main chief for supremacy and control.

Meanwhile, common people reacted to this great economic and socio-political instability increasingly seeking refuge in forms of spirituality on the fringes of Islam: occultism, esoteric interests, and miraculous cures. Sufi preachers began to preach about a mythical, quasi-messianic figure about to come, who would free people from

their miserable condition (Lapidus 1997 [1988], p. 284). Some went even further than that, setting up in rural areas popular movements intent on resisting and opposing the regime. They would appeal to Sunni and *Shī'a* Muslims alike, as well as Buddhists and pagan followers of traditional Mongol shamanism. A number of newly converted Mongol Nestorian Christians "became Sunnî or Shî'î Muslims also, though without abandoning the rites enjoined in the Yasa that were contrary to the Sharî'ah" (Hodgson, 1977, p. 412).

After the first one hundred years of Turko-Mongol rule, however, things began to turn around and by the end of the seventh/thirteenth century new trade routes to China were being opened, cities were being rebuilt, farming was being restored to acceptable levels of productivity thanks also to enlightened irrigation works and to the virtual division of the economy into two spheres, which also came to constitute two different cultural worlds: on one hand that of farmlands, villages and cities, on the other that of semi-nomadic pastoralists. Thus, even from an environmental point of view, a certain degree of equilibrium was restored.

By this time, Mongol military rulers in charge of running different districts of the khanate had put an end to the pillage and mass murder of civilians and – as Lapidus (1997 [1988], p. 278) explains - had incorporated local elite families of religious leaders, merchants and civil servants into the administrative structure of the state. Muslims, therefore, were gaining control of key elements of the state infrastructures. This caused a reaction in the Mongol leadership that saw its more important expression

in greater numbers of conversions to Islam, now perceived to be a higher, more sophisticated culture. Hodgson (1977) explains that

> those who had become Muslim tended to form a faction within their respective states. Since the ascendancy of the Muslim faction would mean that the state would be committed to a regionally-oriented policy in solidarity with the local Muslim populations more readily than to any policy that still looked to an all-Mongol sentiment, the point of religious allegiance had potentially major political consequences (p. 414).

The Il-Khans was the second khanate to turn Muslim after the Golden Horde, but did so not without creating some conflict with the Buddhist Mongol leadership – with torching of Buddhist temples (and churches) in the capital Tabrīz - eventually forcing them into exile.[4]

When eventually the Mongol rulers and their military officials converted to Islam, even assimilating Persian and Arabic languages, culture also returned to flourish, almost picking up from where it had been left dormant after the invasions had started.

Architecture, letters, philosophy and figurative arts brought back to Persia its original splendour, and the arrival of intellectuals and artists from other regions of the Muslim world, together with the exchange of diplomatic representations with foreign states, enriched the cosmopolitan flavour of local urban living. Even the Pope sent a bishop for the cure of souls of Latin Christians living in the capital.

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[4] *Ibid.*, p. 415.

Sadly however, in 736/1336 the khanate was divided again among rival factions and in 771/1370 the Turkish Tamerlane (Timur) took over control of the state and held it until 807/1405. Tamerlane was a military leader engaging in a military campaign of expansion and conquest under the pretext that neighbouring kingdoms had betrayed authentic Islam. He occupied modern day Turkey, Iran, Northern India and, in the West, Northern Syria. Samarqand became his capital.

Tamerlane's descendants (Timurids) although dividing the territory into two independent political entities, however continued to promote the cultural and economic development of Islamic Persia, particularly sponsoring urban regeneration plans in several cities, and the growth of Sufi *ṭuruq*.

It is in this climate of renewed cultural vitality and energy under the Il-Khans first and Tamerlane later that Al-Jīlī lives and conducts his audacious mystical investigations into the secrets of the Qur'an and of the great Sufi masters. His thought and spirituality are rather typical of cultural, philosophical and mystical tendencies developing in the region at this time, when culture was thriving once more, Sufism was on the ascent, but also influences from occultism and esoteric groups such as the Ḥurufiyya was still very strong.

By the seventh/thirteenth century Muslim doctrine throughout the Islamic world had somehow crystallised in terms of less fundamental tenets concerning depictions of the afterlife, for instance, or the application of legal requirements - in some instances even to non-Muslims - such as in the case of blasphemy against the Prophet or of

access to the sacred cities of Medina and Mecca now denied to them. The authority of sacred texts had been established with the collections of *Aḥādīth* by Sunni and *Shī'a* Islam.

Later, Sunni Islam also saw the crystallisation of four surviving *madhāhib al- Fiqh*: Hanafī, Mālikī, Shāfi'ī and Ḥanbalī, all enjoying a similar status of legitimacy and authority. Each legal position became binding over future generations once approved by a majority of scholars in a given school. At the same time schools made themselves acquainted with each other's positions. Thus, a certain legal uniformity was reached, with relatively minor divergences of opinion.

Islamic piety also had by now developed into recognisable streams, that Hodgson (1977) identifies with a majority of Sunni or *Shī'a* "*Sharî'ah*-mindedness" - totally exoteric in nature and possessing a certain aura of authoritarianism - and a popular and often popularised Sufi movement, with the emergence of the role of saints and mystics, instruments of divine mediation, almost comparable to prophets (p. 446). This movement, both in Sunni and in *Shī'a* circles, propagated the belief that the Mahdī will come to ransom the people of God and set them free, and that Muḥammad is a religious figure of cosmic relevance, notwithstanding Sunni and *Shī'a* divergence of opinion on the pre-eminence of the role of Abū Bakr among the Prophet's Companions.

Hodgson refers also to a certain "corruption" of Sufism, manifested for instance in the "depreciation" of some of its doctrines, whereby *fanā'*, for instance, loses its eschatological connotations and becomes a term of reference for relatively early levels

of mystical progress. Or in the emergence of the itinerant *Darwīsh*, a figure closer to a soothsayer and a fraudulent diviner, than to the original Sufi master. Or in the growing importance and relevance given to pseudo-mystical experiences of ecstasy or other expressions of altered consciousness, often induced by the assumption of drugs. Adepts in such a state would perform publicly in shows of pain endurance and other displays that enhanced the fame of a certain *ṭarīqa* and encouraged financial support (p. 457).

Finally, as the Mu'tazila school of thought and its rationalism died out at least within Sunni Islam, Muslim Philosophy developed into intellectual, rational branches of more mystical, usually Sufi, religious movements. Within this context a tendency to ever more audacious attempts to interpret scriptural revelation became widespread among philosophers, pursuing especially "unitive metaphysics". Marshall Hodgson again:

> Though ṭarîqahs did differ in their hospitality to it, unitive speculation … became a major formative force in Ṣûfî life, and the most universally debated issue among Ṣûfîs took the form of what sort of unitive cosmology was most consistent with the Islamic Unitarian doctrine, tawḥîd. Though the works of relatively unmetaphysical earlier men like Qushayrî and 'Abdulqâdir Gîlânî were still authoritative, Ṣûfîs came to look to the thinking of Ibn-al-'Arabî or occasionally Yaḥyà Suhravardî for further speculative clarification. 'Abdulkarîm Jîlî … of Gîlân at the foot of the Caspian, was the most effective popularizer of Ibn-al-'Arabî's solutions. He systematized the great man's visions and concentrated, for a guiding thread, on the notion of the 'perfect man' as ideal microcosm, realizable in mystical experience. But the catchword for Ibn-al-'Arabî's thinking came to be derived from his unitive metaphysic proper: Ibn-al-'Arabî was regarded as master of the *waḥdat al-wujûd*, the 'unity of being', and those who saw this unity in the total way he did were called 'Wujûdîs'.

Even those Ṣûfî thinkers that disavowed the more extreme unitive theories had by now to provide their own metaphysical solutions.[5]

The second part of this chapter will offer an overview of how Al-Jīlī did indeed popularise Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine and added his own contribution to it through a number of written works.

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[5] *Op. cit.*, p. 462.

2. HIS WRITINGS

The hermetic, almost coded language of the esoteric master writing for a distinguished audience of initiated fellow-mystics, remains a challenge to those not well versed in the synonymy characterising much of the philosophical terminology of late medieval Arabic. However, Al-Jīlī's logical, systematic thought and based on Ibn 'Arabī's doctrines, comes as a welcome contrast to the erratic mystical excurses of the latter.

Al-Jīlī is credited with having authored about 30 pieces of work, most of them still remaining in manuscript format, only a handful of them having already been published. In *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur*,[1] until quite recently the most complete list of titles attributed to Al-Jīlī, Brockelmann (1949) lists 27 of them.

A more recent list is given by Zaydān (1988, pp. 57-71) - with minor updates provided by Zaydān himself in another of his studies (1999, p.20) - which however does not include *Sharḥ asrār al-khulwa* found in Brockelmann. A second list is by Saʿīd ʿAbd Al-Fattāḥ (1997, pp. 14-17), which does include *Sharḥ asrār,* adding that it is preserved in manuscript format without specifying a location. Al-Fattāḥ's list contains a couple of repetitions, evidently editorial mistakes, and a title not seen either in Brockelmann or Zaydān: *Bidāya mabḥath fī maʿrifa Allah,* apparently kept somewhere in Berlin (the authenticity of this work by Al-Jīlī must be questioned). Finally, another extensive list is provided by the Professor of Sufism at the Lebanese University Suʿād Al-Ḥakīm (2004, pp. 18-32). Al-Ḥakīm's list is contained in the Introduction to an edition of Al-Jīlī's *Al-*

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[1] II. 264-265; SII. 283-284.

Nādirāt (or *Al-Nawādir*) *al-ʿayniyya.* The list is mostly based on Brockelmann and it fails to mention five of the titles contained in Zaydān's list (namely *Ummahāt al-maʿārif, Al-Kanz al-maktūm, Kitāb al-ghayāt, ʿAqīda al-akābir al-muqtabasa* and *ʿUyūn al-ḥaqāʾiq*) but contains some titles not found elsewhere: *Mirāt al-ḥadarāt, Risāla fī infiṣāl al-rūḥ wa al-nuṭfa* (both said to be lost), *Risāla ādāb al-siyāsa bi al-ʿadil* and *Kashf al-sutūr ʿan mukhaddarāt al-nūr* (also said to be lost). Further research would be required before these works can be reliably attributed to Al-Jīlī. Al-Ḥakīm also mentions a lost work in Persian entitled *Al-Insān al-kāmil,* without providing any explanation of the fact that further down her list this title appears again with reference to the major book in Arabic of Al-Jīlī which has acquired him much fame.

I have therefore based the present section on Zaydān's (1988) list, in my opinion the most comprehensive and the most reliable of the four, given the internal consistency of the arguments he applied to its compilation. The list of titles is given in the chronological order established by Zaydān. Whenever possible, I have added a brief description for each entry and a more extensive one for those texts that I have been able to access and read in the original Arabic. The content of these works offers to us a first glimpse into the doctrine of Al-Jīlī that I will examine in more details in the following four chapters and will show exemplified in his text *Al-Kahf wa al-raqīm* translated in chapter four. However, it is *Al-Insān al-kāmil,* Al-Jīlī's most famous text, universally associated with his name - of which I have read extracts in English - that contains a more comprehensive treatment of Al-Jīlī's doctrine. For this reason I have dedicated to it more space at the end of Zaydān's list.

List of Al-Jīlī's works

1. Janna al-ma'ārif wa ghāya al-murīd wa al-'ārif: Al-Jīlī himself makes reference to this treatise in his *Al-Kamālāt al-hilāhiyya.* Therefore, we know that it is his earliest known composition, originally written in Persian.

2. Al-Kahf wa al-raqīm: according to Zaydān "this is the first Sufi composition by Al-Jīlī" (p. 57). Unfortunately he does not justify this assertion. The text, a complete translation and annotations on this work constitute chapter four of this dissertation.

3. Al-Manāẓir al-ilāhiyya: a short book containing the description of 101 mystical states, with a particular emphasis given to the themes of God's oneness, Muḥammad's prophethood and the day of resurrection. Najāḥ Maḥmūd Ghunaymī, the unsympathetic editor of a 1987 edition published in Cairo by Dār Al-Manār, considers Al-Jīlī's interpretation of the Qur'ān in this work, "irresponsible" (pp. 57-59). Which is an understandable reaction to what amounts to a detailed description of Al-Jīlī's mystical experiences in 101 steps along his Sufi journey. For each step, the author also describes the "affliction" (*āfa*) that one meets. Once the affliction is overcome, one moves on to the next step. The first *manẓar* is "Worship God as if you (actually) saw Him." At number ten is *Al-fanā' al-dhātī,* or "personal dissolving," described as the losing of one's self-perception and the awareness of the Truth alone. The "affliction" experienced at this stage is given by the leftovers of feelings of awareness of one's *fanā'* (p. 112). The next one is *Al-Fanā' 'an al-fanā',* or "mystical dissolving of the act of dissolving," when the perception of void is

achieved. The obstacle here is given by the "veil" that may impede one's realisation of continuity in God. Follows *Al-Baqā',* or "continuity" in God in the awareness at this stage of a distinction between one's attributes and God's. The *āfa* of this *manẓar* is in the inability to consider God's attributes because one is too taken by the contemplation of God's essence. At number 44 (*Al-Taṣawwaf*) Al-Jīlī defines the Sufi as one that in God keeps pure (*ṣafā'*) from human faults. Therefore, since the Sufi is thus assuming divine morals – Al-Jīlī explains – "some say that the Sufi is God" (p. 171). *Manẓar* 47 deals with *Al-Kufr:* here the author states that *tawḥīd* is achieved in stages, and that one needs to cross the bridge of *kufr* in order to achieve *tawḥīd.* Implicit in this illustration is the idea that mystical progress may also involve concepts that may smack of *kufr* in the eyes of the non-initiated. The "affliction" of this *manẓar* is in the fact that one may be so blinded by God's light that one forgets to *believe* in God. Finally, the last *manẓar* is the "Inability to comprehend the comprehensible," which, Al-Jīlī explains, entails understanding what is truly in one's soul, and constitutes a return – almost in a circular movement of the mystical progression - to the beginnings.

4. Ghunya arbāb al-samā' wa kaṣhf al-qinā' 'an wujūh al-istimā': completed in Cairo after 803/1400 it deals with Sufi morals and with rhetoric. To be found as an autograph manuscript held in the Dār Al-Kutub Al-Miṣriyya library in Cairo (360/Sufism).

5. Al-Kamālāt al-ilāhiyya wa al-ṣifāt al-muḥammadiyya: written in Zabid, Yemen, in 805/1402-3, this book deals with the identification of the divine essence with all that exists in the created order, within the context of the doctrines of *Waḥda al-wujūd,* or unicity of being, and of the *Ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadiyya,* that Al-Jīlī identifies with divine

mercy (*Raḥma*). According to Saʿīd ʿAbd Al-Fattāḥ (1997) in it Al-Jīlī borrowed heavily from the Iberian scholar Al-Qāḍī ʿAyyāḍ Ibn Mūsā's (d. 543/1149) *Kitāb al-shifā',* and from its third chapter in particular (p. 10). In this work, which is mentioned in *Sharḥ al-futūḥāt al-makkiyya,* Al-Jīlī explains that the world is a place where the attributes of God are made manifest and in which Muḥammad is the manifestation of the divine Essence. Therefore, just as the divine attributes emerge out of the divine Essence, likewise the world emerges out of Muḥammad, for in him are all the divine perfections in all of their expressions and meanings. His spirit is the first fruit of creation (p. 41). He is the mirror that obtains the images of all that exists (p. 41), given that all of the created order is but an image of the Absolute Who, alone, truly exists. He is the ultimate reason for the creation of the universe (p. 46). Endowed with all the divine attributes (p. 228), the Prophet's knowledge of God is the same as God's knowledge of Himself (p. 235). Therefore, this books is about Al-Jīlī's (and Ibn ʿArabī's) doctrine of the Perfect Human Being, and its identification with Muḥammad.

6. Insān ʿayn al-jūd wa wujūd ʿayn al-insān al-mawjūd: mentioned in *Sharḥ al-futuḥāt al-makkiyya,* this work is lost.

7. Al-Qāmūs (or Al-Nāmūs) al-aʿẓam wa al-nāmus (or al-qāmūs) al-aqdam fī maʿrifa qadr al-nabī: this works consists of more than 40 volumes, mostly lost. Those that remain are in manuscript form, spread across several libraries, and are often listed as independent books, as in Brockelmann (1949) and ʿAbd Al-Fattāḥ (1997). Among them:

a. Lawāmiʿ al-barq: in the first chapter of this volume Al-Jīlī describes, often in verses, 41 forms of divine mystical presence (*ḥaḍra al-quds*) personally

experienced by him. Among these he mentions the peace that came to him having befriended God; the mystical light he saw; a sense of closeness to God; a sense of awe; God instructing him on the hidden nature of things; his dialogues with God; episodes of loss of consciousness; identification of his senses with God's seeing and hearing; direct orders received from God; divine discipline imparted to him through the experience of physical afflictions; enhanced feelings of compassion; being endowed with divine perfections, thus acquiring the perfections of the Prophet, who then appears to him and gives him a garment. In the second chapter he describes his experience of "oneness in essence" with God. Then he refers to the two brackets (*qāb qawsayn*)[2] containing the Great Totality.[3] When the servant is immersed in this divine totality, the servant acquires divine attributes, such as oneness, lordship, life, knowledge. The two brackets are the possible and the necessary existence. In the third chapter, with the help of the metaphor of the water in the cup that has the same colour of the cup, he explains that servants of God who have God in their heart acquire divinity. But, he adds, "within limits." One may assume that by this he means that just as the water never becomes the cup, thus the servant of God can never be identified with God. In the fourth chapter he describes the struggle between flesh and spirit, which invariably ends with one's victory or defeat. In the fifth chapter he makes a distinction between the divine but created attributes acquired by the servant, and the eternal and essential attributes in God. In the sixth chapter he affirms that all that exists proceeds from God's existence. Finally, in the seventh chapter, he writes, "It is necessary that the servant should

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[2] This constitutes the title of another volume in this work.

[3] *Qāb qawsayn* is a quotation from *Sūra* LIII.9 usually rendered with "two bow shots" to indicate the distance separating the angel Gabriel from the Prophet in the course of the Qur'ānic revelations. However, Sufi mysticism tends to interpret the image of the two bows as the two halves of a circle. Al-Jīlī sees this circle as encompassing the divine Totality.

know that there must be a Being Who is the Necessary Existent (*wājib al-wujūd*), Self-subsisting, Self-sufficient, endowed with divine perfections."

b. Rawuḍāt al-wā'ẓīn

c. Qāb qawsayn wa multaqā al-nāmūsayn: this volume is divided into seven chapters containing a list of the Prophet's moral perfections and describing the reasons why one should cling to him. This devotional work begins with a famous statement by Ibn 'Arabī (*Fut*. III.411.22), often quoted even to this day: "The ways to God are numerous as the breaths of the created beings; but there is only one way to His attributes" i.e., the Prophet, as Al-Jīlī proceeds to explain. The title itself is a reference to Muḥammad's closeness to God. As explained earlier in a footnote to *Lawāmi' al-barq, Qāb qawsayn* is a quotation from *Sūra* LIII.9 literally referring to "two bow shots" indicating the distance separating the angel Gabriel from the Prophet in the course of the Qur'ānic revelations. Quoting himself from *Al-Kamālāt al-ilāhiyya* Al-Jīlī firstly maintains that only in the Prophet morals reach their perfection. Then controversially he affirms that divine morals (*al-akhlāq al-ilāhiyya*) are realised (*mutaḥaqqiqa*) in Muḥammad. He further explains that by divine morals he means Qur'anic divine attributes and names applied to the Prophet. However, in the list he provides he only mentions the divine beautiful names, including *Allāh,* concluding that "Muḥammad possesses all the beautiful names and the noble attributes, thus having reached a rank of perfection that no one else in the created order can attain" (p. 251). He also maintains that the Qur'ān is uncreated and that "the word of God is His attribute because a word is attribute of the speaker," and he goes on to cite the Prophet's young wife 'Ā'isha who is quoted as saying, "(Muḥammad's) morals are the Qur'ān" (p. 252), thus illustrating the

thought process that induced him to conclude that the Qur'anic attributes of God are also the Prophet's.

d. Lisān al-qadr bi nasīm al-saḥar: this constitutes volume 12, and is itself divided into 12 chapters, each dealing with an aspect of the good morals of Muḥammad, interpreted symbolically. For example, explaining why the Prophet made much of his gains by the sword (lit.: by the arrow), he describes the bow of that arrow as a symbol of divine oneness.

e. Sirr al-nūr al-mutamakkin: a Turkish translation also exists.

f. Shams ẓaharat li badr

According to 'Abd Al-Fattāḥ (1997) manuscripts are to be found in Cairo for *Lawāmi' al-barq, Qab qawsayn* and *Sirr al-nūr al-mutamakkin,* and one in Alexandria for *Lisān al-qadr*. However, he does not provide further details of their exact collocations.

8. Al-Sifar al-qarīb natīja al-safar al-gharīb: a short treatise on the ethics of Sufi journeying and on the spiritual realities of the human soul searching for God. It consists mainly of a commentary on Ibn 'Arabī's *Mashahid al-asrār* or *Al-Isfār min natīja al-asfār.* Al-Jīlī explains that he came across this text – so difficult to comprehend as it employs much symbolic language - and decided to render it more accessible to the faithful Sufis. The journey it refers to is not geographical but spiritual, from the animal to the human nature, of the soul searching for knowledge of God, His throne and His footstool, having the Prophet as example and model. This work also contains a number of brief verses and instructions on the daily prayers of the faithful Muslim. In fact, it is in prayer that the spiritual journey ends: in the realization that nothing really exists except God. Zaydān

reports that a copy of this work is kept in the Cairo library of Dar Kutub Al-Miṣriyya, but again he does not provide further information on its exact collocation.

9. Kashf al-sutūr: another lost short treatise, referred to in *Sharḥ al-futūḥāt.*

10. Sharḥ al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya: again a commentary - and a rather disappointingly brief one - allegedly on one of Ibn 'Arabī's major titles of his opus, the voluminous *Al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, but in reality on a very limited section of it, namely chapter 559. Al-Jīlī, based on a statement by Ibn 'Arabī himself, explains that this chapter summarises the whole of the work by *Al-Shaikh al-akbar.* Zaydān (1988) adds that "sometimes he disagrees with Ibn 'Arabī over some Sufi topics and puts across his own ideas." (p. 64). Chodkiewicz (1999) suspects instead the existence of some sort of conspiracy among the initiated to the mysteries of Ibn 'Arabī, who deliberately abstain in their studies of the master from undergoing a thorough examination and explanation of his esoteric teachings, possibly in compliance with his own instructions and example (p. 231). Others, such as Lewisohn (1999), venture to suggest that they do not offer any explanation of the structure of the book possibly because there is nothing to explain…   At any rate, this work is to be found in a manuscript kept in the library Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ẓāhiriyya, in Damascus (9118), in a copy kept in Alexandria's Baladiyya library (6301D/Sufism) and in another copy at the Aḥmadī Institute in Tanta, Egypt (ح32, ع732) wrongly attributed to an "anonymous" author. An edited version by Zaydān was published in Cairo in 1992.[4]

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[4] Zaydān, Yūsuf (1992). *Šarh Muškilāt al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya*. Cairo: Dar Su'ad El-Sabah.

*11. **Kashf al-ghāyāt fī sharḥ al-tajalliyyāt:*** a commentary on Ibn ʿArabī's *Al-tajalliyyāt al-ilāhiyya.* Zaydān (p. 64) reports that a manuscript - again in his opinion wrongly attributed to an anonymous author - is kept in the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* in Paris, without specifying its precise collocation; my attempts to locate it have proved fruitless. However, Chodkiewicz (n.d.b) maintains that this work is not by Al-Jīlī, because of its apparently unusual vocabulary and lack of references by the author to other works of his, which instead is rather customary in Al-Jīlī.

*12. **Risāla al-sabaḥāt:*** another lost piece of work, mentioned by the author in *Al-Isfār.*

*13. **Al-Isfār ʿan risāla al-anwār:*** a commentary to Ibn ʿArabī's *Risāla al-anwār fī mā yumnaḥ ṣāḥib al-khalwah min al-asrār* or *Al-Isfār ʿan natāʾij al-asfār,* a written companion to Sufis undergoing a spiritual retreat, preserved in an undated manuscript at the German National Library in Leipzig (BVB-AK).

*14. **Al-Nādirāt (or, in Brockelmann 1949, *Al-Nawādir* and in ʿAbd Al-Fattāḥ 1997, *Al-Qaṣīda*) al-ʿayniyya fī al-bādirāt al-ghaybiyya:*** it is a long ode (540 lines) also quoted in *Al-Insān al-kāmil.* It is one of the longest Sufi poems ever written, second in length only to Ibn Al-Fāriḍ's *Nazm al-sulūk* with 667 verses (Zaydān 1999, p. 19). By the author's own admission it is rather incomprehensible to the non-initiated reader. It contains some detailed autobiographical information. Centred on the theme of love, it is considered by Zaydān (1988) a masterpiece and a hallmark of the genre (p. 84); even today it is recited in their communal sessions by Sufis in Egypt (Zaydān 1999, p. 23). It deals with the

subjects of love, worship, truth, the world, God, spirit and body. In it Al-Jīlī refers to divine beauty as a manifestation of God's truth in the universe (lines 136-138). In fact, he distinguishes here three spheres of divine manifestations: divine beauty (*jamāl*), majesty (*jalāl*) and perfection (*kamāl*), because "the universe in its totality is good."[5] On the other hand, ugliness is not an absolute, but a contingent contradiction of its absolute beauty and goodness that does not exist in essence (*dhāt*). Only what exists in essence really exists, and in its essence the universe is beauty and goodness. Beauty and goodness are the object of the mystic's work of contemplation. Burckhardt (1983 [1953]) offers a translation of the lines quoted by Al-Jīlī himself in his larger work, *Al-Insān al-kāmil*:

> In parable, the creation is like ice,
>
> And it is Thou who art the gushing water.
>
> The ice is not, if we realised it, other than its water,
>
> And is not in this condition other than by the contingent laws.
>
> But the ice will melt and its condition will dissolve,
>
> The liquid condition will establish itself, certainly.
>
> The contrasts are united in one single beauty.
>
> It is in that that they are annihilated and it is from them that it radiates. (pp. 28-29).

15. *Al-Qaṣīda al--waḥīda:* possibly a commentary on an early Sufi poem, according to Zaydān (1988) it is kept in Baghdad in manuscript form.[6]

16. *Musāmara al-ḥabīb wa musāyara al-ṣaḥīb:* on the ethics of friendship.

17. *Quṭb al-'ajā'ib wa falak al-gharā'ib:* lost. Mentioned in *Al-Insān al-kāmil,* in *Marātib al-wujūd* and in *Ḥaqīqa al-ḥaqā'iq.*

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[5] *Insān al-kāmil* 1, p. 53.

[6] He provides the collocation number 7074 but does not specify in which library the manuscript is kept.

18. Al-Khiḍam al-zākhir wa al-kanz al-fākhir: a Qur'anic commentary, according to 'Abd Al-Fattāḥ (1997) probably unfinished, mentioned in *Al-Insān al-kāmil* and in *Ḥaqīqa al-ḥaqā'iq.*

19. Ummahāt al-ma'ārif: a booklet only discovered in the 80s in the library of Al-Azhar (964/Sufi).

20. Arba'ūn mawṭanan **or** *Arba'īn mawāṭin* (Brockelmann, 1949): a text on the Sufi ways.

21. Manzil al-manāzil fī sirr al-taqarrubāt bi al-fawā'id al-nawāfil: again a text on Sufi ethics, preserved in a manuscripts kept in Hidarabat, India (No. 196).

22. Al-Durra al-waḥīda: a poem in 59 verses all rhyming in *'ayn,* mentioned in *Al-Insān al-kāmil.*

23. Al-Mamlaka al-rabbāniyya al-mūda'a fī al-nashā' al-insāniyya.

24. Al-Marqūm fī sirr al-tawḥīd al-majhūl wa al-ma'alūm: a study on numbers and on the oneness of God.

25. Al-Kanz al-maktūm al-ḥāwī 'alā sirr al-tawḥīd al-majhūl wa al-ma'alūm.

26. Al-wujūd al-muṭlaq al-maʿrūf bi al-wāḥid al-aḥad.

27. Baḥr al-ḥudūth wa al-ḥadath wa al-qidam wa mūjid al-wujūd wa al-ʿadam.

28. Kitāb al-ghayāt fī maʿrifa maʿānī al-ayāt wa al-aḥādīthal-mutashābihāt: it deals with the theme of divine Essence, and according to ʿAbd Al-Fattāḥ (1997) one copy of it is to be found in Berlin, but he does not provide further information.

29. ʿAqīda al-akābir al-muqtabasa min al-aḥzāb wa al-ṣalawāt.

30. ʿUyūn al-ḥaqāʾiq fī kull mā yaḥmil min ʿilm al-ṭarāʾiq: a book on magic.

31. Ḥaqīqa al-yaqīn wa zalafāt al-tamkīn: composed by Al-Jīlī in 815/1412, a manuscript of this work is found in Alexandria (Sufism ت/ح 3893) and another in Baghdad (6491), but Zaydān does not specify the names of the libraries in question. Also known as *Sabab al-asbāb li man ayqan wa istajāb,* the first title applies to the Alexandria document, the second to the one in Baghdad.

*32. Ḥaqīqa al-ḥaqāʾiq allatī hya li al-ḥaqq min wajh wa min wajh li al-khalāʾiq***:** a treatise on the knowledge of the Absolute Existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*) or Absolute Truth (*ḥaqīqa al-ḥaqāʾiq*) through a mystical study of the letters of the Arabic alphabet. Al-Jīlī himself reveals that the whole work consists of 30 books (or chapters), one for each letter, plus an Introduction, that deals instead with the mysteries of the diacritical point.[7]

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[7] In his introduction to *Ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqāʾi* Al-Jīlī reports that he had found inspiration for this piece of work during the morning prayer in a mosque in Zabid, Yemen, in the year 805/1403.

Elements of the same themes are contained also in *Al-Kahf wa al-raqīm*. The only published edition actually contains just the *Introduction*, *Kitāb al-nuqṭa,* of the original work. According to Zaydān (1988) the rest of the work is lost, but according to 'Abd Al-Fattāḥ (1997) a manuscript is kept in Cairo, at the Dār Al-Kutub library (no further information is provided). In *Kitāb al-nuqṭa* the author explains that his book is about the truths hidden in letters and words, revealed to him directly by God (Al-Jīlī 1982 [n.d.], pp. 3-4 and p. 76). He first runs an excursus on the doctrine of knowledge, referring to a classification of different types of knowledge (running in the hundreds of thousands!) but mercifully sparing us an actual list of these classifications. One of these types of knowledge is that of the letters, their numerical value and their relationship to the diacritical dot. In fact, letters carry meanings, and it is through them that the Absolute Existence can be known. He deals at length with the meanings he attributes to the diacritical dot. Among these, one finds not only the obvious meaning of "oneness," but also of duality (*tathniyya*), which is the distinction between the transcendent divine Absolute Essence, and the immanence of divine manifestations in creation (p. 51), just like the diacritical dot is one and absolute, and yet it imbues the body of each and every letter, without jeopardising however its perfection. "As an analogy – he explains – the *nuqṭa* is the spirit and the letter is the body. If you write the letter and add to it the dot, you blow into it the spirit, thus perfecting its reality" (p. 53). Having dealt with God's oneness and duality, finally Al-Jīlī mentions God's trinity (*tathlīth*) which refers to three divisions of the divine manifestations also found in Ibn 'Arabī's *Fuṣūs al-ḥikam,* namely "of the names," "of the attributes" and "of the actions" (p. 51). "And this – he concludes – is the mystery of the trinity" (p. 52), illustrated by the three spaces (or "white dots") found within the body of the two letters of the word "He" (هو) (p. 58). Finally, he offers some charts

where, to the letters of some of the divine names, he applies numerical values and astrological meanings.

33. *Marātib al-wujūd wa ḥaqīqa kull mawjūd*: a late composition. Like *Al-Insān al-kāmil*, this is a book containing ontological doctrines concerning the relationship between the essence of God and the created order. Immediately after a short preface by Al-Jīlī himself, the author declares that existence (*wujūd*) is classifiable in 40 levels (*marātib*), from *al-dhāt al-ilāhiyya* to *al-insān*. He does not say much about each of them, basically limiting himself to providing a list and occasionally referring to other books of his for more information on a given degree of existence. The 40 *marātib* are:

1. The Absolute Hidden (*Al-Ghayb Al-Muṭlaq*) or Divine Essence (*Al-Dhāt Al-Ilāhiyya*).

2. *Al-Wujūd Al-Muṭlaq:* it is the first divine manifestation (*tajallī*), linking what is hidden (*al-buṭūn*) to what is manifest (*al-ẓuhūr*). For more on this level of existence he refers to his other books *Al-Wujūd al-muṭlaq* and *Al-Kamālāt al-ilāhiyya.*

3. Oneness (*Waḥidiyya*).

4. Mere appearance.

5. Flowing (*sārī*) existence, or *Raḥmāniyya.*

6. Lordship (*Rubūbiyya*).

7. Kingship (*Mālikiyya*).

8. Names and attributes. This degree is divided into four sections: life, knowledge, will and power.

9. Majestic names of God, such as Magnificent, Mighty, etc. For more on this he refers to his text *Shams ẓaharat li badr,* constituting volume four of the 40 volume work *Al-Qāmūs al-a'ẓam.*

10. Beautiful names of God, such as *Raḥīm, Salām, Mu'min, etc.*

11. Action names of God, such as Vengeful, Who causes death, Who harms, etc.

12. The world of possibilities (*'ālam al-imkān*), which by definition is non-existent and is therefore contained, Al-Jīlī explains (p. 46), between Truth and Creation.

13. First Intellect, or Quill or Muḥammadan spirit. For more on this he makes refrence to *Al-Insān al-kāmil.*

14. Great Spirit, or collective soul, or Tablet, or "Mother of the Book."

15. Throne that like a frame holds together the world (p. 48). For more on this he makes reference to *Baḥr al-ḥudūth* and again to *Al-Insān al-kāmil.*

16. Seat (*kursī*) which is the degree of action.

17. Active souls, or angels: beings of a heavenly nature created out of light. He refers for more on this to his *Al-Ālif*, volume two of the 30 volume work *Ḥaqīqa al-ḥaqā'iq.*

18. Abstract nature (*al-ṭabī'a al-mujarrada*): it is the underlying substance of everything that exists, expressed in the metaphor of the sound of pronounced letters. He makes a reference here to his *Quṭb al-'ajā'ib.*

19. Matter (*hyūlī:* this term is an Arabic transliteration of the Greek ὕλη).

20. Blowing (*al-habā'*): the level at which God has placed the world. He makes another reference here to his book *Al-Qāmūs al-a'ẓam.*

21. Substance (*jawhar*). This he defines as "the root of all bodies," comparable to the diacritical dot in relation to each letter. For more on this he makes reference to his *Kitāb al-nuqṭa,* that constitutes volume one of *Ḥaqīqa al-ḥaqā'iq.*

22. Divisions of the composites, these being the six divisions of Knowledge, of Substance (*'ayniyya*), of Hearing, of Body, of Spirit, of Light.

23. Orbit of the Atlas, the one immediately under the divine seat. It contains no stars or comets.

24-36. Levels of the celestial bodies: Gemini, Galaxy of galaxies, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon, Ether.

37. Minerals: more on this in the volume *Al-Ālif.*

38. Plants.

39. Animals.

40. Humanity (*insān*) which - in a few lines of intense lyricism that recapitulate some of the preceding levels of existence and trace a circle that almost links back what is last to what is first - he defines as "the Truth, the Essence (*dhāt*), the Attributes, the Throne, the Seat, the Tablet, the Quill, the King, the Jin, Heavens and Comets, Earth and everything in it, this world and the world to come, existence … Truth and Creation, eternal (*qadīm*), created" (p. 62). Thus he underlines the fact that humanity is the apex of creation.

At least one manuscript of this work is in existence, kept at the Dār Al-Kutub library in Cairo (19893).

34. Al-Insān al-kāmil: by far the best known among Al-Jīlī's works: 63 chapters available in several translations, including one in Urdu by Faḍl-i-Mīrān.[8] Most of his doctrine, philosophical insights, and mystical teaching is contained there. They have gained him the limited reputation he enjoys among Sufi connoisseurs, along with the condemnation of mainstream Islamic scholarship over the centuries. Its fundamental tenet is summarised in the metaphor of the *Perfect Human Being*, which gives the title to the book and that, following the example of other disciples of *Al-Shaykh al-Akbar*,[9] Al-Jīlī embraces whole-heartedly.

This archetypal creature in whom the fullness of God resides is for Ibn 'Arabī Muḥammad. He was created as Intellect together with *al-habā'*, a cloud of dust constituting matter in its primordial form: the Muḥammadan reality (*al-Ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadiyya*). This cloud is referred to by Zayn Al-Din Sayyid Ismā'īl Ibn Al-Ḥusayn Al-Jurjānī (1985 [n.d.]) – an Iranian contemporary of Ibn 'Arabī - as "the very substance in which God unfolded the bodies of the world." (p. 319). Thus, Muḥammad – the *Insān Kabīr* - is expression of the first manifestation of existence.

Al-Jīlī - expanding on his master's philosophical construct - describes the Prophet as pole and pivotal centre (*quṭb*) of all spheres of the created order, as Prime Intellect and as Sublime Quill,[10] created before all things and in whom all things subsist, including the angels. Muḥammad is therefore Father to all living creatures because in him all angels and all human beings were created. And it is in him, the Qur'anic *Khalīfa* par excellence, that all the other prophets and the saints - Al-Jīlī maintains - also reach their own level of

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[8] *Insān-i-kāmil*. Karachi, 1962.
[9] Such as Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 672/1274) and 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī (d. 898/1492).
[10] Chapter 53.

perfection. The reason for this, Al-Jīlī explains, is that creation happens via the Word of God pronouncing letters and names, and that the divine names and attributes were received by Muḥammad, who therefore acts like a mirror, producing in himself an image of God. As created beings, therefore, which came into being by the divine utterance of letters, we contain within us those same divine names and attributes entrusted to God's Quill. Those among us, who know where to look, will find them, and achieve therefore different degrees of perfection. Thus, Qur'anic Prophets can be described as *Perfect Men*, or manifestations of the *Perfect Human Being*. A case in point, for instance, is the Prophet Khiḍr in chapter two of Al-Jīlī's book. This is the name generally attributed by tradition to the Prophet encountered by Moses in *Sūrah* 18:65 ff,[11] a mysterious figure that Al-Jīlī places in authority over the first Earth in his cosmogony comprising seven earths and seven heavens. Khiḍr calls himself here *Quṭb* (Pole) and *Al-Insān al-kāmil*. His is a world inhabited by saintly figures; the place of the "midnight sun;" the only region of Earth that did not take the colour of dust as the rest of the world did after Adam was banished from Garden, but remained as white as milk and as soft as moss and is represented with "the symbols of the North." (Corbin, 1990 [1977], p. 151). Many elements here seem to refer to the Arctic region (North and Pole) full of snow (white and soft) where – in summer at least – the sun never sets (midnight sun). These details, however, go beyond the scope of the present research. Of relevance, instead, is the description of this religious figure in a language that makes him indistinguishable from Muḥammad: he is, for instance, the "first and the last diacritical point," – in Corbin's translation (p. 157) - a clear reference to the divine act of creation through the medium of the Word.

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[11] References to the connections between *Sūrah al-Kahf* (*The Cave*) and Al-Jīlī's book *Al-Kahf war-raqīm* can be found in chapter four of this work.

All this is the subject of the first three chapters of the first tome of Al-Jīlī's voluminous masterwork. The subsequent six chapters deal more in depth with God's essence and God's "obscurity." Two further chapters discuss God's transcendence (*Tanzīh*) and immanence (*Tashbīh*). Chapters 12-14 contain excursuses on the processes of human transfiguration (*Tajallī*) for the attainment of grades of perfection that finally find their complete realisation in the person of the *Perfect Human Being* in chapter 15. Subsequent chapters then analyse in detail the Person of God, and the complexities of divine revelation.

Cosmology is the subject of the second tome, where Al-Jīlī describes an array of divine symbolisms and a "geocentric system" of "planetary spheres." (Burckhardt, 1983 [1953], p. xxi).

Al-Insān al-kāmil is a piece of work that contains Al-Jīlī's philosophical and mystical teaching held together in an articulate, well structured book that is fundamental to the understanding of other writings, such as *The Cave and the Inscription* translated and then discussed in depth later in chapter four.

Al-Jīlī does not make for easy reading. Logical and orderly in his expositions, he is however almost too concise in the rendering of very complex subjects.

Al-Ḥakīm (2004, pp. 37-43) affirms that Al-Jīlī's philosophy of language is based on two poles: utterance and meaning, or signified and signifier, summarising his methodology in four underlying elements at the root of a hermeneutics of Al-Jīlī:

1. Status of the addressee and the understanding of meaning: every communication can have different meanings, and many addressees will have a different understanding of a given piece of communication according to their status. Therefore, it is the addressee that determines the meaning of the message. Of course, this theory is not original to Al-Ḥakīm. It is possibly borrowed from the "speech-acts" theory of modern philosophy of language found in authors such as John Austin (1962) or John Searle.

2. Plurality of understanding and degrees of meaning: given the fact that we have the possibility of many understandings of the same message – Al-Ḥakīm maintains – Al-Jīlī places these possible understandings on a scale made of four degrees. This signifies a classification of Sufi mystics by Al-Jīlī into four categories, based on the height that they have achieved in their spiritual journey: i) beginnings; ii) middle of the road; iii) love; iv) attraction.

3. Inspirational interpretation: according to Al-Ḥakīm, Al-Jīlī seems to be of the opinion that Sufi interpretation is in itself a type of inspirational knowledge and of divine revelation, thus ascribing to his own writings the aura of divine inspiration. However, he would maintain, interpretation has to be contained within well defined parameters dictated by linguistic, legal and doctrinal principles, which also means that the interpreter is not authorised to apply to the message of the author a meaning that would be in contrast to the teachings of Islam. This particular element is found for instance in Al-Jīlī's introduction to *The Cave and the Inscription.*

4. Al-Jīlī's writing: according to Al-Ḥakīm, Al-Jīlī's style is in itself expression of his theory of language and of his methodology, in the usage he makes, for instance, of symbols and signs that conceal or reveal a given message.

In a book that contains extracts of ʿAbd Al-Ghanī Al-Nābulsī's (d. 1143/1731, author of several commentaries, treatises and poems) commentary on Al-Jīlī's poem *Al-Nādirāt al-ʿayniyya*, Zaydān (1999) introduces a long list of words that in Al-Jīlī – or indeed in the works of other illustrious Muslim mystics – often acquire meanings that go beyond the ones they normally have. To give just a few examples, the word *rand* is the name of a desert tree with a nice smell that in Al-Jīlī becomes the breeze of Truth that comes with divine manifestations. *Raqmatayn* are two bodies of water in a valley, but in Al-Jīlī they represent a spiritual and a physical expression of divine manifestations. Shuʿabayy Jīād is a location in Mecca known for its narrow mountainous paths, but Al-Jīlī employs this name in conjunction with *al-barq al-lāmaʿ* (the shining light) to refer to the origin of the world and of the collective spirit emerging from the divine order without any medium. *Qadd* means "structure", but in Al-Jīlī it may refer to the beauty of the divine manifestation. Other terms found particularly in *The Cave and the Inscription* are explained in the annotations to that work, which constitute Chapter 4.3 of this dissertation.

Indeed in Al-Jīlī words often may have very different meanings in different contexts, which renders laborious the comprehension of the text and the interpretation of the innumerable metaphors of a mystical valence. He does however communicate his thought effectively, and in his own manner he is capable of leading the reader through the meanders of medieval Islamic mysticism even to the point of offering inspiring – if brief – morsels of truly profound meditations on the nature of God and of the human condition within the created order.

Chapter 2

INTERPRETING AL-JĪLĪ

The attempt to contextualise Al-Jīlī and his doctrine cannot be confined exclusively to the geographical and historical information provided in part one of the first chapter of this thesis. Al-Jīlī is to be read and understood in a much wider cultural and philosophical context that in my opinion comprises five elements, each uniquely essential to a correct interpretation of his thought.

Therefore, in part one of the present chapter I describe the influence of the Islamic mystical-philosophical tradition that from Avicenna to Al-Suhrawardī and Ibn ʿArabī I believe has more extensively shaped his doctrine. Al-Jīlī has undoubtedly placed himself as privileged depository of the legacy of this tradition and, as we will see below, was heavily indebted both to the contemporary intellectual milieu which by then had absorbed elements of the doctrines of Avicenna and Al-Suhrawardī, and to Ibn 'Arabī's teaching in an even more direct, immediate way.

Some of the most defining elements of Al-Jīlī's mystical philosophy originate from that Sufi world of which he was part, with its own traditions and spiritual outlook. Therefore, the second part of this chapter offers a brief description of the historical developments and main traits of the Sufi movement at the time of Al-Jīlī, in some of its more traditional expressions such as confraternities, as well as in its more esoteric manifestations characterised by Neo-Platonic motifs so dear to Ibn ʿArabī and to his followers, amongst whom Al-Jīlī stands out as one of the most original and worthy of consideration.

Part three situates *The Cave and the Inscription* in the context of a wider mystical approach to the Qurʾān and to the sacredness not only of its content, but also of its form as expressed in the letters of the Arabic alphabet. Al-Jīlī most probably had close associations with the teaching and possibly even with members of contemporary new esoteric movements engaging in mystical interpretations of the letters of the Arabic alphabet. Evidence of this is present in many of his works and in *The Cave and the Inscription* in particular. I think that it is therefore essential to analyse these associations and the orthographic foundations upon which the symbology of the Arabic script is based.

Part four of this chapter is dedicated to a cursory survey of Persian mysticism that evidently provided much of the cultural milieu to Al-Jīlī and the terrain that nurtured his philosophical and spiritual approaches to mysticism. Persia of course is the birthplace of important expressions of pre-Islamic religiosity, namely Zoroastrianism, and the "incubator" – as it were - of Shīʿite movements, both of which acquired some relevance, albeit in different measure, in the writings of Al-Jīlī.

Finally, part five tries to identify in other philosophical traditions, namely Hellenistic and Hindu/Buddhist, elements of influence on Al-Jīlī, that I contend may have been much less marginal than usually believed.

1. THE LEGACY OF IBN SĪNĀ, AL-SUHRAWARDĪ AND IBN ʿARABĪ

I believe it is paramount to acknowledge the rich heritage of Islamic mysticism that informed Al-Jīlī, especially the legacy of gigantic figures such as Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), Al-Suhrawardī and Ibn ʿArabī.

1.1 Ibn Sīnā

Abū ʿAlī al-Husayn Ibn ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Sīnā Al-Balkhī (Avicenna) is the man credited with having narrowed the gap between Muslim Scholastic Theology (*Kalām*) and Philosophy (*Falsafa*), virtually rescuing the latter from its original dependence on Hellenistic Aristotelism and Neo-Platonism (Wisnovsky 2005, p. 92), bringing it into the fold of mainstream Islamic Theology.

A Persian polymath who lived between the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries, he was also proficient in the disciplines, among others, of warfare, poetry, mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry and, above all, medicine. Son of a local governor of *Ismāʿīlī* extraction, himself a *vizier*, and a *ḥāfiẓ*[1] since the age of seven, he authored possibly about 450 texts, of which only about 240 may have survived,[2] mostly written in Arabic. He died of illness in 428/1037 at the age of 58, although Bannerth (1965) and others place the date of his death two years later (p. 149).

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[1] Honorific epithet that designates a person who has memorised the entire Qur'an.
[2] Anawati (1950) lists 276 works, including however some of dubious authenticity.

For his ontology, Avicenna found inspiration in the rigorous logic of Al-Fārābī (d. 339/950-1) (Black 2001 [1996], p.188) and his post-Aristotelian methodology. Furthermore, acccording to Wisnovsky (2003) it is "now clear that Avicenna saw himself as the heir to a long tradition of Aristotelianism" (p. 3) and, he adds, his work revolves, among other things, around the answer to the question "what is God and how is He related to the world as its cause?"[3] Netton (1989) would say that in Avicenna God is "a knower known to Itself. Indeed, it is knowledge (*'ilm*) Itself" (p. 155). Thus, he was able to resolve a dilemma that, according to authors such as Wisnovsky (2003), Neoplatonists were not able to solve, which is the apparently dualistic "combination of efficient causality and final causality" – the notion that the divine Person is at the same time the originator and the final destination of any process - in a God in Whom only unity should reside (pp. 5-6). Avicenna, who being a man of science and a medical practitioner would witness these processes on a daily basis, makes a distinction in God between essence or quiddity (*Māhiyya*) and existence (*Wujūd*). Not a completely new notion in *kalām*,[4] but employed by Avicenna to resolve the dilemma by arguing that insofar as God is essence God is the efficient cause, and insofar as God is existence God is the final cause.

Therefore, he saw in God a plausible repository of the necessary, uncaused Essence with which God comes to be identified, because indistinguishable from it. God, the origin of all natural processes of cause and effect, is the Necessary Being (*Wājib al-wujūd*). In the words of Wisnovsky (2003), "since God is impossible of non-existence, He is necessary of existence." According to Wisnovsky, Avicenna may have borrowed this notion from a number of theologians who lived across the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries, but

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[3] *Ibid.*
[4] Wisnovsky 2003, p. 197.

especially from the Persian Al-ʿĀmirī, who "was the first to predicate the entire expression *wājib al-wujūd bi-dhātihi* ('necessary of existence in itself') of God" (p. 239).

Prima facie, Avicenna's philosophical constructions would seem to fit with difficulty within the firm parameters of a scripture-based religion such as Qur'anic Islam. However, on the contrary this doctrine of *wājib al-wujūd* has become a principal tenet of Islam, upheld even in more recent times by scholarly authorities such as Muḥammad ʿAbdu (d. 1323/1905), former Grand Mufti of Egypt and modernist reformer of the University of Al-Azhar with the appellation of *Ustadh al-Īmān,* in some of his Beirut lectures published in 1897 with the title *Risāla al-tawḥīd.* God is the One that can only exist, Whose non-existence would be unthinkable, and that exists by no other external cause, in a deductive course of reasoning that runs parallel to Western philosophical *a priori* or ontological arguments for the existence of God found in Anselm, Descartes and Leibniz in the eleventh-twelfth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries respectively. The existence of anyone or anything else in the universe is conversely contingent (*mumkin al-wujūd*).

Furthermore, one may see in the affirmation of the necessity of God's existence vis-à-vis the contingent nature of the created order, the same "Qur'anic doctrine of the One in relation to the act of existence" (Nasr 1999b, p. 32). This, after all, is Avicenna's own attempt at dealing with the intricate subject of the relationship between the transcendent God of the Qur'anic revelation and God's creation. We will see from chapter 3.4 onwards how, just a few centuries later, borrowing quite heavily from Avicenna's intellectual

inheritance which by then had found its way into the general cultural mileu of the Islamic world, Al-Jīlī will provide his original contribution to this debate.

Given these premises, Avicenna then refers to emanation according to Neo-Platonic principles, although mistakenly Plotinus' *Enneads* had been attributed to Aristotle under the caption "Aristotle's Theology" since the first half of the third/ninth century (Copleston 1971). From God - Who is Light,[5] Truth (*Ḥaqq*), Pure Good (*Khayr Maḥḍ*) and Pure Intellect (*'Aql Maḥḍ*) - the First Intellect (*Al-'Aql al-Awwal*) and the other angelic beings that superintend ten celestial spheres and the material world proceed (Wisnovsky 2005, p. 108).

With Avicenna, for the first time in Muslim Philosophy, the existing realities of the created order included also mental objects, existing, that is, only in the mind. To each sphere an intellect or archangel, and a soul or angel are assigned. Gabriel is the tenth intellect assigned to the world of corruption, which is the Earth that has no single soul, but as many souls as are human beings.

As Netton (1989) rightly points out, these positively defining appellatives for God denote a momentary shift from the marked neo-platonic features - notably characterised by defining God by what God is not[6] - of Avicenna's philosophical tapestry (p. 158). By emanation, God has an apodictic claim over the existence of all beings. Emanation is like a flow from the Pure Intellect that generates other intellects, the celestial bodies of the ten spheres and finally our world. This model elegantly reconciles the recurring paradox - that

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[5] An epithet so very much reminiscent of Al-Suhrawardī.
[6] *Via negativa.*

surfaced in Islamic philosophical discourse in the previous century, at the time of the first diatribes involving Hanbalites, Mu'tazilites and later Ash'arite - of a transcendent yet creating God.

God's transcendence is safeguarded by the fact that albeit proceeding from God, none of the created beings share in the divine essence that remains distinguished from theirs due to insurmountable ontological differences. It is the same differentiation between Aristotle's appellation of God as ουσία (substance) and Plotinus' υπόστασις (inner reality).[7] Here Avicenna prefers Plotinus' understanding of the nature of God, but translates the two locutions with the same Arabic word for *substance* (*Jawhar*), thus creating a certain amount of confusion, and accusations by his critics of likening God to a substance. His doctrine of emanation and its Neo-Platonic character were soon to be challenged by Al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111).

Worth noting at this point is also a reverse flow from that of divine emanation, that could be described as a metaphysical - almost mystical - desire by the created order, through the celestial souls, for its Creator. This attraction towards the Pure Good is also experienced by the human rational and immortal soul. In his view, the prophets can perceive God only intellectually, via the rational faculty of the human soul engaged in the process - or journey, even, in his metaphorical explanations of these concepts - of intellectual interpretation (*Ta'wwīl*) of existing reality. In fact, God can only be contemplated through mental processes impelled by love. However, I agree with those who defend also a mystical, not exclusively intellectual, dimension of Avicenna's doctrine, on

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[7] The two terms assumed in Christianity different connotations, especially with Origen's distinction within the Trinitarian Godhead between the One Being and the Three Persons.

the argument that "at bottom he did perhaps apprehend God. It is in the simple expression of apprehension through the heart, in the secret of the heart (*sirr*), in flashes, however short and infrequent, that we are led to see in him a beginning of true mystic apprehension, in opposition to the gnosis and its symbols, for at this depth of the heart there is no longer any need for words. One doubt, however, still enters in: his general doctrine of apprehension, and some of the terms that he uses, in fact, in some texts *sirr* could be applied at least as well to a privileged connexion with the active Intellect, and not with God Himself. Again, on this question, the absence of his last great work, the 'Eastern Philosophy',[8] precludes a definite answer."[9]

As we said, Al-Jīlī, like some other Arab authors before him – most significantly Al-Suhrawardī and his school - will borrow heavily from Ibn Sīnā's philosophical constructions, interestingly seating, for example, a reflection of the First Intellect within the *Perfect Human Being* (*Al-Insān al-Kāmil*) who thus inherits the role of the First Intellect as junction between the transcendent and the created order.

However, the main philosophical concept derived from Avicenna to influence Al-Jīlī's texts such as *The Cave and the Inscription* and, substantially more so, *The Perfect Human Being,* will be that of the "necessary Being" (*al-wājib al-wujūd*), that Al-Jīlī will take up and carry a step forward: in the context of Al-Jīlī's theology this is intended as a building block in the construction of a mystical comprehension of God, way beyond, therefore, Avicenna's scope. The "necessary Being" in Al-Jīlī is God, Whose Essence and

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[8] In his *Manṭiq al-mashriqiyyīn* Avicenna admitted that the content of *Eastern Philosophy* was not designed for the general public.

[9] A.M. Goichon, 1969. "Ibn Sīnā, Abū ʿAlī al-ḥusayn b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Sīnā, known in the West as Avicenna." *EI²,* 3.

Being coinciding, is not only That by Which God is, but also what God is not, embracing *all* and its negation. Only in the contemplation and realisation of God's Essence one can achieve the obliteration of the self through the mystical *fanā',* when the mystic ceases to exist in the awareness that only God really exists.

1.2 Al-Suhrawardī

Another model that will greatly inform Al-Jīlī, is the revisited Platonic one. A case in point being the notion of *Imagination* (*khayāl*) and its similarity with the world of Platonic *forms*. Imagination is of course a concept that Avicenna had already develped and refined primarily in his *Kitāb al-Shifā'* as an exclusively human cognitive faculty controlled by the human intellect independent of the external senses. However, in Al-Jīlī this concept is incorporated into a re-interpreted Platonic model that appears to be filtered through the prism, as it were, of Al-Suhrawardī's Illuminationism.

Shihāb Al-Dīn Yaḥyā Ibn Ḥabash Ibn Amīrak Abu Al-Futūḥ Al-Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191, executed in Aleppo for political reasons at the young age of 36 by the Ayyubid Sultan Saladin) is the father of Illuminationism.[10] Walbridge (2005) suspects that Saladin saw in Al-Suhrawardī's reference to enlightened philosophers called to reign, the same sectarian tendencies he had crushed in Syria and Egypt. The Sultan may have intervened when he grew worried at the increasing influence these doctrines, reminiscent of outlawed Ismā'īlī political tenets, were having on his son the Governor of Aleppo. Al-Suhrawardī's violent death gained him, with his admirers, the epithet of *martyr* (*Shahīd*).

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[10] *Shaykh al-Ishrāq.*

Ishrāq is defined as an "analogical theory:"[11] a way, that is, to overcome the impasse faced by Al-Suhrawardī when attempting to define the concept of existence. The Persian philosopher, whose corpus consists of about 50 texts in Persian and Arabic, creating an evocative play of light and darkness, employed the suggestive analogy of the light that like God could not be defined and yet is universally perceivable. He probably adopted and modified some terminology originally found in Ibn Sīnā's *Theology of Aristotle* (Corbin 1966). By emanation, Al-Suhrawardī explains, the Light of Lights[12] is the origin of the angelic lights in two hierarchical orders: one descending from above comprising the celestial spheres as in Ibn Sīnā, and one based on the earthly plane containing the Platonic forms. In this manner, the divine Light is the source of all that exists, maintaining however an ontological distinction between the former and the latter. For this reason one may argue against the legitimacy of a hypothesis that identifies in Al-Suhrawardī the formulation of a doctrine of "Unity of Illumination" (*Waḥda al-ishrāq*) that would approach Ibn ʿArabī's model of "Unity of Being" (*Waḥda al-wujūd*).

Furthermore, his degrees of illumination go beyond a mere re-definition of Avicenna's emanationist model. Also because *Ishrāq* is conducive to intuitive knowledge and ultimately to unitive *experience* - through a process of ascent by the enlightened human soul - of the Light of Lights. Adopting Platonic and Zoroastrian categories and language, he carries therefore philosophy into the mystical realm of Sufism.

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[11] Arnaldez, 1973. Ishrāk. *EI²,* 4.
[12] *Nūr al-Anwār,* reminiscent of *Nūr ʿalā nūrin* (*Qur'an* XXIV.35), lit. *Light upon Light.*

1.3 Ibn ʿArabī

Here, as it were, the baton is taken by the one that in a more unequivocal manner was able to harmonise this line of Muslim Philosophy with audacious expressions of mystical Islam and of Sufism in particular: *al-Shaykh al-Akhbar Muḥyī Al-Dīn*[13] Abū ʿAbdallah Muḥammad Ibn ʿAlī Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Al-ʿArabī Al-Ḥātimī Al-Ṭā'ī (b. Murcia 560/1165; d. Damascus 638/1240).

A Sunni of the Ẓāhirī school and contemporary of Rūmī, Ibn ʿArabī lived at a time of great resurgence of mystical Islam (Nasr 1999a). Claiming for himself an almost prophetic authority derived from his Meccan visions related in the *Meccan Revelations* (*Al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*) - that Scattolin (1998) describes as "a Sufi commentary on the creed and practices of Islamic law (*sharî'a*)", "both in its theoretical foundation and literary structure" (p. 50) - he was the initiator of an esoteric strand of Sufism which encompassed Neo-Platonic and Ismā'īlī influences, and had a considerable impression on other Sufi masters of his time and ever since, of Arabic, Persian or other languages. He authored no fewer than 300 works,[14] of which only about a third have survived, and among which stand out, for volume and relevance respectively, the already mentioned *Meccan Revelations* and *The Settings of Wisdom.*

Most western scholars – with the notable exceptions of people such as Nicholson and Miguel Asín Y Palacios - up to the first half of the last century "ignored or dismissed"

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[13] *Religious Vivifier.*
[14] 412 according to Corbin (1990 [1977], p. 111).

Ibn 'Arabī, possibly discouraged by his overwhelmingly complicated doctrine. It was only in the 50s and 60s that Burckhardt, Corbin and Izutsu began to approach his works in a manner that acknowledged their relevance and tried to make sense of his teachings (Chittick 1994, p. 2).

Thus, Izutsu (1984 [1983]), to begin with provides us with an explanation of the concept of God in Ibn 'Arabī which I consider essential for a correct interpretation of Al-Jīlī's own theology:

> "In religious non-philosophical discourse the Absolute is normally indicated by the word God or *Allāh.* But in the technical terminology of Ibn 'Arabī, the word *Allāh* designates the Absolute not in its absoluteness but in a state of determination. The truly Absolute is Something which cannot be called even God. Since, however, one cannot talk about anything at all without linguistic designation, Ibn 'Arabī uses the word *ḥaqq* (which literally means Truth or Reality) in referring to the Absolute" (p.23).

Ibn 'Arabī defines the Absolute also as "Essence" (*dhāt*) or "Absolute Being" (*wujūd muṭlaq*) or, in a manner reminiscent of Avicenna, as "Necessary Existent" necessarily existing by itself (*wājib al-wujūd li-dhātihi*).

Izutsu also explains that when Ibn 'Arabī does identify *Allāh* - "the Living, Omniscient, Omnipotent God of the Qoran" - with the Absolute, he sees in *Allāh* one expression of the self-manifestation of the Absolute which remains "an absolutely unknowable Mystery that lies far beyond the reach of human cognition" (p. 27). A "hidden treasure" that "has no 'quiddity' (*māhīyah*)" (p.28). "The Absolute in such an absoluteness or, to use a peculiarly monotheistic expression, God *per se,* is absolutely inconceivable and

inapproachable. The Absolute in this sense is unknowable to us because it transcends all qualifications and relations that are humanly conceivable" (p. 23). He continues, "In this respect the Absolute at this stage is the One (*al-aḥad*) … not the … 'one' in opposition to 'many'. It means the essential, primordial and absolutely unconditional simplicity of Being where the concept of opposition is meaningless" (pp. 23-24). In other words, it is what others – not the *Shaykh,* since this phrase never appears in any of his surviving works - have defined as "Oneness of Being" (*waḥda al-wujūd*). This concept he expounded at length in *Kitāb al-alif*, where the letter *Alif* is a figure of God contained in all the other letters of the Arabic alphabet and containing them all: an image dear also to Al-Jīlī, especially in his book *Al-Kahf war-raqīm.* As Chittick (1999) explains,

> In using the term *wujūd*, Ibn ʿArabī usually keeps its etymological sense in view. For him *wujūd* means not only "to be" or "to exist," but also "to find" and "to be found." As applied to God, the word means both that God is and cannot not be, and that He finds Himself and all things and cannot not find them (p.504).

It is only in this understanding of God that much of the mystical doctrine of Ibn ʿArabī and consequently of Al-Jīlī, is to be read and understood. Thus, according to Ibn ʿArabī, in their relationship to the divine Being Who is at the same time totally transcendent as the Absolute and yet offering Himself to us through the medium of the Qur'anic revelation and the Prophet as the immanent *Allāh,* the mystics seek annihilation (*fanā'*) and subsistence (*baqā'*). "Inasmuch as human beings are Not He, they are annihilated, but inasmuch as they are He, they subsist" (Chittick 1994, p. 59). Of course that they are He only means that they share in the immanence of divine existence which is a manifestation of the wholly transcendent Absolute.

In this context – Izutsu (1984 [1983]) explains – for Ibn 'Arabī even idolatry becomes an innocuous exercise, as long as the idol object of worship is seen, albeit not always consciously, just as a manifestation of the Absolute One and not another subsistent God (p. 61). All the more this would apply to the worship of God in other religions. This is taken up also by al-Jīlī in the last chapter of *Al-Insān al-kāmil.* In all fairness, Al-Jīlī safeguarded there the concept of the superiority of Islam over other systems of belief – more than Ibn 'Arabī had ever done – adopting a rational assessment of ten basic religious tenets and demonstrating the higher religious merits of Islam with respect to them. However, his arguments were not always found convincing. For example, in the 11th/17th century a leading imam in Medina, Aḥmad Al-Qushashī (d. 1070/1660) in a commentary to *Al-Insān al-kāmil* dismissed them so unreservedly as to motivate the Damascus Sufi 'Abd Al-Ghānī Al-Nabulusī (d. 1143/1731) to refute Al-Qushashī's criticism in his treatise *The Disclosure and Clarification of the Secrets of Religions,* reaffirming the validity of "the transcendent unity of religions" (Akkach 2007, p. 108) and of "the ecumenical approach of Ibn 'Arabī and Al-Jīlī" (p. 116).

In *Fuṣūs al-ḥikam* Ibn 'Arabī compares the created universe in relation to the Absolute, to the shadow in relation to an object. The shadow is one with the object, an expression of the object, and yet not quite the object. The shadow does indeed exist, but only insofar as the object exists. Without the object it would not exist. Likewise colours really exist, but they cease to exist if light should cease to exist. Which is why we can say that the universe shares in the essence of the Absolute but only the Absolute really exists, because without the Absolute the universe will cease to exist. Ibn 'Arabī points out that "there can never be self-manifestation in the state of Unity" (Izutsu 1984 [1983], p. 24) of

the Absolute, given that human cognitive and even mystical functions are inadequate to perceive, comprehend and elaborate such hypothetical self-manifestation of the Absolute, because of the permanence in these human functions – even in the case of *mystical union* - of "the distinction between the one who sees (*nāẓir*) and the object seen (*manẓūr*)" (*Ibid.*).

As a consequence, clearly for Ibn 'Arabī all the divine names and attributes are also manifestations of the Absolute. In one sense names are the same as the Absolute, sharing in the Absolute's Essence, on the other hand like the shadow of an object they are not the Absolute. They are manifestations of the Absolute, each providing us with a limited view of the Absolute. The Absolute being infinite, there are an infinite number of divine names, although the *Shaykh* accepts the convention of the scriptural list of ninety-nine. When a name is taken not in relation to the Absolute, but in itself, it becomes an attribute. In this sense alone the attribute is other than the Absolute.

Names are ways for us to relate to God, but God *per se* does not need names. Names come in categories, and some are more important than others. One in particular, Ibn 'Arabī says, contains in itself all the others, and that is *Raḥmān,* understood not only in its current meaning of compassionate and merciful, but also ontologically as the One Who in His mercy brings things into existence. God creates through a divine exhalation of Word and breath (*nafas al-raḥmān*) speaking the universe into existence. But almost as important as Mercy is divine Love, the motivating factor behind the Absolute's stooping to us in a creating act of Self-manifestation (*tajallī*) or unveiling (*kashf*) or emanation (*fayḍ*), the ultimate reason why the universe is brought into existence. Emanation for its part is not to be understood in neo-Platonic terms of individual realities proceeding from the Absolute,

but rather in terms of Self-manifestation of the Absolute through a succession of six degrees (*marātib*). This manifestation, or emanation, or creation is ongoing, causing the universe never to be static, but rather immersed in a continuous flow of change. This concept, Izutsu (1984 [1983]) points out, is strikingly similar to the Ash'arite "thesis of the perpetual renewal (*tajdīd*) of accidents" (p.212). In fact, Ibn 'Arabī sees a parallel between their atomistic doctrine and his, although they fail to comprehend that the fact that everything is "accident" (because everything is continually changing, in a continuous act of creation) does not mean that God creates anew atomic accidents that did not previously exist, but that the Absolute engages in a continuous act of Self-manifestation and that therefore everything that exists is one with the Absolute.

Therefore, for Izutsu (1984 [1983]) divine transcendence (*tanzīh*) in Ibn 'Arabī "is only one of the two basic aspects of the Absolute. Its other half is immanence (*tashbīh*). All knowledge of God is necessarily one-sided if it does not unite transcendence and immanence, because God is transcendent and immanent at the same time" (p. 16). The Absolute is at the same time transcendent and Self-revealing. To state otherwise, Ibn 'Arabī would say, would mean to restrict God's definition to a being made incapable of interacting with the created universe (in case of exclusive *tanzīh*) or conversely constrained within spatial and other limitations (in case of exclusive *tashbīh*). "Under normal conditions, tanzīh is the product of Reason, and *tashbīh* is the product of Imagination (wahm)" (Izutsu 1984 [1983], p. 64). The coincidence of *tanzīh* and *tashbīh* in God determines, according to Ibn 'Arabī, a metaphysical "perplexity" (*ḥayra*) that will justify the mystic in seeing the One as Many and the Many as One (p. 68). This knowledge of

God, however, can only be intuitive, because the Absolute's transcendence by definition defies any attempt to fully comprehend it.

God's immanence in Ibn 'Arabī is also rendered in terms of the Absolute's Essence pervading all that exists, because all that exists does so only inasmuch as it shares in the Absolute's Essence. Essence, therefore, can be compared to a subtle (*laṭīf*) substance (*jawhar*) which renders the whole universe one with the Absolute: everything being different from everything else in relation to its form or accidents, but being one with everything else and with the Absolute in relation to the *jawhar*. In *Fuṣūs al-ḥikam* Ibn 'Arabī again compares this doctrine to the Ash'arites, stressing however one difference, in that for Ibn 'Arabī "(the Substance here in question) is nothing other than the 'Absolute,' while the (Ash'arite) theologians imagine that what is called Substance, although it *is* a 'reality,' is not the same absolute Reality" (Izutsu 1984 [1983], p. 142).

Finally, Izutsu explains how in Ibn 'Arabī, between the unknowable Absolute and its self-manifestation in *Allāh*'s names and attributes lies a third dimension, as it were: "the world of the permanent archetypes, which is totally inaccessible to the mind of an ordinary man but perfectly accessible to the ecstatic mind of a mystic" (p. 48). This is of course a concept intriguingly reminiscent of the Platonic world of *ideas.* This is the world of things that are conceivable, possible (*mumkināt*).

The "creative activity itself of the Absolute," "the Absolute in the first stage of its eternal self-manifestation, i.e., the Absolute as the universal Consciousness," similar to the neo-Platonic First Intellect (p. 236-237), Ibn 'Arabī calls "Muḥammadan Reality" (*al-*

ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadīyya) or "Reality of realities" (*ḥaqīqa al-ḥaqā'iq*) or "Light of Muḥammad" (*al-nūr al-muḥammadī*). This exists since the beginning of time (therefore eternally) and manifested itself in history through the prophets, all embodiments of the Perfect Human Being, culminating in the person of Muḥammad, the Perfect Man who is a privileged Self-manifestation of the Absolute, remaining of course a creature like everything else that exists in the universe. Since the Qur'an states that God taught Adam all the divine names[15] Ibn 'Arabī understands this to signify that every person contains and manifests every divine attribute to some extent. In fact, humanity is for Ibn 'Arabī a microcosm reproducing in itself all the characteristics of the macrocosm that is the universe as a whole. However, there is a difference between the two: "Human beings know the cosmos and can shape it to their own ends, but the cosmos does not know human beings and cannot shape them except to the extent that it is a passive instrument in the hand of God" (Chittick 1994, p. 34). Therefore, what a soul is to the body, humanity is to the universe.

Needless to say, not all human beings in their lifetime grow aware of their divine potentials. Those who do, become "saints" or "God's friends" (*awliyyā'*), a category that includes also prophets and apostles. *Walī* is also a divine name, which makes perfect sense in the light of what we have said in the previous paragraph. A *walī* is in possession of a spiritual power (*himma*) that manifests itself also in acts of spiritual creation (as opposed to divine creation) of objects that come into existence for as long as the saint remains in a state of spiritual concentration. However, the saint will refrain from exercising such power, finding solace instead in a state of passive spiritual quietness and peace.

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[15] II.30.

People can also become friends of the Prophet. Of all the people who endeavour to achieve closeness to Muḥammad, in whom alone the fullness of the divine attributes is made manifest in completeness, only Ibn 'Arabī himself has achieved - and Jesus will when He comes again at the end of time – the totality of Muḥammad's inheritance. This he affirms in his *Al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, when he explains the sense of the words of the title, of the revelations ("openings") bestowed upon him by God in an act of sovereign divine will.

Chodkiewicz (1999) has provided us with an interesting analysis of the apparently insurmountable complexity of the *Meccan Revelations*, which presumably represents the thought of the author in its final form and expression, considering that its second draft was completed only two years before his death. Where other commentators over the centuries have failed to see in this work much coherence and logic, possibly overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information contained in it, or puzzled by the secretive attitude of its author[16] and the mystery surrounding the allegedly inspired nature of its content,[17] Chodkiewicz's findings reveal that in the apparent chaos there is actually an order, or rather different logical sequences to the arrangement of the work, painstakingly designed to be hidden to the eye of the uninitiated or superficial reader. A case in point is the fourth section (chapters 270-383): 114 chapters containing esoteric interpretations of elements of each of the 114 Qur'anic chapters, but in inverse order. For example, chapter 272 (that is, the third one) is dedicated to the theme of *unity*, which is the theme of the third *sūrah* from last (*Ibid.*, p. 228). According to this hypothesis, even the fact that the book consists of 560

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[16] Chodkiewicz quotes from the *Futūḥāt*, "Here [that is, between consecutive verses which seem unrelated to each other] a relationship of affinity exists, but it is extremely secret" (p. 225).

[17] "I have not written one single letter of this book other than under the effect of divine dictation" (*Ibid*).

chapters is no coincidence, that number cunningly corresponding to the number of words of *sūrah* 48 and to the year when the author was born.[18]

Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam is a much more contained piece of work (only 27 chapters and an Introduction), but not less enigmatic in conveying its esoteric teachings allegedly passed on to the author *verbatim* by the Prophet himself during a mystical experience in Damascus. Each chapter is dedicated to a prophetic character from a strictly Qur'anic tradition.

Also because of a circularity intrinsic to Ibn ʿArabī's system, whereby what proceeds from God eventually returns to God, it adds to the intricacy of his construction and to the difficulty in comprehending it, the fact that Ibn ʿArabī should often employ a number of metaphors, images, synonyms and names to describe his concepts, with apparently wilful ambiguity, almost to stress the inadequacy of human language to express the mystery of God. Thus the first manifestation of God, or First Intellect, is also the Maker (*Al-Khāliq*), the Pen (*Al-Qalam*), the Spirit (*Al-Rūḥ*), the Throne (*Al-ʿArsh*) and "the attributes and names of God, the logos, the prototypes of creation, the *insan al-kamil*, or perfect man, and the *haqiqa muhammadiya*, or *Muhammadan Reality*"[19] (Chodkiewicz 1999, p. 230). Follows the Universal Soul (also referred to as the Tablet, depository of the divine decrees transmitted through the Quill). Further planes of existence in Ibn 'Arabī include the Universal Body, the Form, the planets, angels and spirits, and finally the human being, who alone occupies that privileged place at the bottom of the scale but also at the closing of the circle, capable of achieving mystical union with God. Given however Ibn

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[18] *Ibid*., p. 230.
[19] Here and elsewhere in the present thesis, I do not apply my rules of translitteration to words quoted from other authors who employed different rules.

ʿArabī's doctrine of unity of being, as Netton (1989) points out, we should be talking of the mystic's awareness, rather than achievement, of his/her union with God, and always read in the light of this, the expressions employed to describe it: "He praises me and I praise Him, He worships me and I worship Him" (p. 287).

For some,[20] bringing together so much richness and variety of familiar symbols and images, might have helped Ibn ʿArabī to contain his teaching within the maternal bosom of scriptural Islamic revelation, albeit stretching it and expanding it. For others it might have contributed to muddy the waters so much that his critics would no longer be able to distinguish between what was acceptable and what not from a Qur'anic point of view. This of course did not restrain critics of the calibre of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) from accusing him of Monism (*Ittiḥādiyya*). Massignon (1997 [1954]) considers his doctrines a regrettable step back on the part of Ibn 'Arabi and his school - including quite specifically Al-Jīlī - from a harmonic synergism between Muslim mysticism and society. After all Ḥallāj had refrerred to mystical union as "an *intermittent* identification of subject and Object. The identification is renewed only by a continual, amorous exchanging of roles between the two ... that is imposed in superhuman, transcendent fashion on the heart of a given human subject, without ever achieving permanence or a stable regularity during the subject's mortal life" (p. 213). According to the renowned French scholar (d. 1962), sadly with Ibn 'Arabi "mysticism became an esoteric science not to be divulged, the preserve of closed circles of initiates and intellectual fossil groups" characterised by "a subtle theoretical vocabulary aimed at unverifiable cosmogonies and 'ideogenies,' and gnostic hierarchies that are beyond experiment..." (p. 57). In fact – Massignon maintains – this

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[20] Eminently among these Utman Yahya, who died some years ago.

"syncretist monism" is described in a language dominated by regrettable Hellenistic influences already denounced by Al-Suhrawardī (p. 56), that brought about "a divorce ... between the monastic vocation's reserves of spiritual energy and the Islamic Community, which should have been revived by the daily intercession, prayers, example, and sacrifice of the ascetics" (p. 214).

On the side of the defenders of Ibn ʿArabī's position is Netton's (1989) view that being a mystic, Ibn ʿArabī's expressions should deserve some leeway (p. 273), considered like some sort of *poetic license* for mystics, and that far from being a monist actually he always maintained that God is at the same time truly transcendent and truly immanent. I tend to agree with Netton's view. In fact, my understanding is that the controversial unitive moment between God and humanity of which Ibn ʿArabī speaks and for which he is so often criticised takes place in the realm of the so-called *imagination* (*Mithāl* or *Khayāl*). This is an intermediate plane, between what can be perceived and described by senses, and what cannot and yet exists. It is the world of the soul. The motivating factor behind the human soul's search for God is love (*Ḥubb*). This love transcends everything, including religions, and puts the mystic on a plateau that elevates him/her over the confines of established religious traditions, including Islamic and Qurʾanic ones. This love goes to the core of all that exists, the absolute reality in which all is one. The universal breadth of this intuition is here magnificently expressed in one of his symbolic poems of the collection *The Interpreter of Desires*:

> My heart is now capable of every form:
>
> > it is a cloister of monks[21] and a temple of idols,[22]

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[21] Christianity.
[22] Hinduism and others.

A pasture of gazelles[23] and the pilgrim's Ka′ba,[24]

the tables of the Torah and the text of the Koran.

My religion is Love, wherever its camels turn:

Love is my religion and my faith. [25]

Ibn 'Arabī's mystical theology is at the core of the philosophy of Al-Jīlī, who proudly considered himself a disciple of his, further disseminated his thought, and adopted his language and his conceptual system as a springboard for the development of his own philosophical arguments.

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[23] Nature.
[24] Islam.
[25] Cited by Scattolin (1998, p. 37).

2. THE SUFI CONTEXT

Ibn 'Arabī is undoubtedly one of the most eminent figures of Islamic mysticism, especially in its most esoteric expressions. Therefore, being a follower of *al-Shaykh al-Akhbar,* Al-Jīlī is to be seen and understood in the context of the Sufi world that nurtured this mystical tradition.

It is well known that Sufism rapidly developed throughout the Islamic world also as a reaction to the excesses of some sectors of Islamic society already apparent in the first/seventh and second/eighth centuries. Devout Muslims felt drawn towards simpler lifestyles and a withdrawal from hedonistic tendencies perceived as being contrary to the teaching of the Qur'ān. Typically, the dress code of the first Sufis, that already from the second/eighth century famously gave the name to the whole movement, was a statement of rejection of contemporary cultural excesses. Self-discipline and ascetic practices, combined with mystical training, became tools for the spiritual betterment of the devotee, culminating in the search for one's annihilation in God. Scholars such as Trimingham give credit to Qāsim Al-Junaid (d. 298/910) for having held at bay some of the most excessive expressions of this mystical experience, guaranteeing to mainstream Sufism a sobriety in its members that added to its credibility.

Although Sufism had already found its legitimate collocation within mainstream Islam with works such as *Kitāb al-lumaʻ* by Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988), *Qūt al-qulūb* by Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996), *Al-Taʿarruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf* by Abū Bakr Al-Kalābādhī (d. 380/990), *Risāla* by Abū Al-Qāsim Al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1074), and

Adab al-mulūk by an anonymous author of the end of the 4th/10th century, arguably Sufism consolidated its position within Islam with the theologically sound mysticism of Al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) and his insistence on the need to purify one's soul by means of Sufi ascetic spirituality and good deeds. In a very concrete fashion, therefore, he integrated Sufism with Sharī'a, the inner laws of the soul and the outer laws of society under one God.

Hence, post-Al-Ghazālī Sufism - which since the third/ninth century had developed into a recognisable spiritual current within Islam - increasingly contributed to the traditional fundamentals of Muslim scholarship, jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) and tradition (*Ḥadīth*), with the introduction of "inner knowledge" (*'Ilm al-bāṭin*). As Lapidus (1997 [1988]) maintains, the "most striking socio-religious development of post-thirteenth century Islamic societies was the emergence of Sufism in innumerable variations as the principal expression of Islamic beliefs and communal identities. Sufism personified in scholar mystics, ardent reformers, ecstatic preachers, and miracle-working holy-men became the almost universal sign of the Muslim presence" (p. 254).

In a rather sweeping and incorrect generalisation Burckhardt (1990 [1976]) often divides medieval Sufism into two branches, esoteric or Gnostic Sufism, and Sufism of the religious confraternities (p. 21). The latter, thanks mainly to a mystical character appealing to heart and feelings without compromising the solidity of its dogmatic tenets, arguably represented for him the continuation of the great Sufi traditions that, originated in present-day Iraq, Egypt and Syria between the second/fourth and the fourth/tenth centuries, spread throughout the Muslim world with the spreading of Islam and possibly, as maintained by

scholars such as Massignon,[26] in the wave of the persecution of elements of the Sufi movement subsequent to Al-Ḥallāj's execution in 309/922. The former, at least throughout the Middle Ages, would have been more regionalised and is usually associated with dominant Persian influences. As it is often the case when trying to identify spiritual movements that span centuries, the boundaries between the two presumed currents are in reality quite blurred, also because, beyond the teaching of the spiritual masters, the practice of most Sufi adherents was indeed very similar across the spectrum. Even in more esoteric Sufi groups people were engaging in prayer sessions other than those prescribed by the *Sunna*, with practices of *dhikr* and music. At any rate, mystical experience offered by Sufism was rendering the intellectual investigations of the philosophers accessible to a much wider audience. The typically philosophical, but also Qur'ānic[27] tendency to categorise and list a number of classifications and stages of the mystical processes and progress was expressed in full. These represented landmarks along the *way (Ṭarīqa),* on a journey taking the mystic from God's manifestations in creation and in the Law, to a mystical encounter with God. Different classifications of these stations exist, and Sufi manuals provide a number of enumerations, rarely in agreement among themselves. However, "the main steps are always repentance, trust in God, and poverty, which may lead to contentment, to the different degrees of love, or to gnosis" (Schimmel 1975, p. 100).

Seen in their historical context, these Sufi confraternities emerged at a time when the Mongol invaders had brought to an end the monolithic character of the ʿAbbāsid caliphate and its established religious infrastructures. They offered an alternative world view less

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[26] As cited by Knysh (2000), p. 100.

[27] Ernst (1999) points out that the term *maqām* for *station* appears 14 times in the Qur'ān (p. 436).

reliant on the contingencies of the present historical circumstances and more universal in its scope. They offered mutual support to their adherents and the opportunity for renewed religious fervour. Therefore, their spreading inevitably assumed social connotations of historic proportions. As Trimingham (1971) points out, original Sufi rest houses providing shelter to wandering Sufi pilgrims, that in the fifth/eleventh century had "spread the new devotional life throughout the countryside and played a decisive role in the Islamization of borderland and non-Arab regions in central Asia and north Africa" by the following century "had become rich and flourishing establishments" (p. 9). These movements had evolved by now from being a series of loose gatherings of like-minded devotees into widespread organisations with networks that had a real impact in many regions of the Islamic world, for the simple reason that they were highly disciplined and cohesive. Soon this brought them to becoming instruments of considerable political pressure and relevance. They played a significant role, for instance, in the unification of Berber North African tribes in the seventh/thirteenth century (Lapidus 1997 [1988], p. 263).

Arguably, the spiritual theme closest to the heart of Sufis affiliated to any given *ṭarīqa* was mystical *love* (*'ishq*), described by Massignon (1997 [1954]) as "love of desire," in contrast with a more "static idea of love" defined by the Arabic word *maḥabba* (p. 30). Al-Ghazālī had qualified this as "the highest goal of the stations and the loftiest summit of the stages."[28] Credit for this pre-eminence of the love of God and for God is usually given to the influence of the meditations of Rābiʿa (d. 185/801) from Basra, Al-Ḥallāj (d.309/922) from Baghdad, and the Persian Rūzbihān Baqlī (d. 606/1209). One illustration of the love *of* God is found in the writings of Rūzbihān Baqlī who equated "God with love. Since

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[28] As cited by Ernst (1999), p. 435.

passionate love (*'ishq*) is a divine attribute, God loves himself; God is love, lover, and beloved."[29] In similar terms, in *Al-Insān al-kāmil* Al-Jīlī will say, "In Reality we are not two essences in a single being, / But the lover is himself the Beloved."[30] An elucidation of the believer's love *for* God is given by Al-Kalābādhī (n.d. [1935]), when he writes, "Abū ʿAbdillāh al-Nibājī said: 'Love is a pleasure if it be for a creature, and an annihilation if it be for the Creator.' By 'annihilation' he means, that no personal interest remains, that such love has no cause, and that the lover does not persist through any cause" (p. 102).

In some of its expressions Sufism also included elements such us emanationist and illuminist motifs, or dualistic distinctions between the tangible reality of the created order and the spiritual domain hidden from the masses. The main object of these tendencies within Sufism was the knowledge of the Divine Person. Contrary to the tenets of the Muʿtazilites, who defended the ability of the intellect to know God, more Gnostic elements within Sufism often maintained that in the human capacity to grasp divine concepts the initiative is God's alone. As Al-Junayd (d. 297/510) said, "Gnosis is of two sorts: gnosis of Self-revelation… and gnosis of instruction…"[31] The latter refers to knowledge of God through manifestations and effects of God's power in creation. This is "the gnosis of the main body of believers, while the former is the gnosis of the elect,"[32] the knowledge of God directly through God, with God taking the initiative and being the originator of a process of Self-disclosure to the initiated soul. So much so that the Sufi is in possession of a deep awareness of the impossibility of knowing God outside of God's own Self-

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[29] *Ibid.* p. 453.
[30] As cited by Burckhardt (1983 [1953]), p. 40.
[31] As cited by Al-Kalābādhy (n.d., [1935]), p. 47.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

disclosure. In Al-Junayd's words, "Gnosis is the realisation of thy ignorance when His knowledge comes."[33]

In line with the opinion of many other scholars, Schimmel (1999) argues that, especially after Ibn ʿArabī, Sufism underwent a profound metamorphosis. From the "voluntaristic attitude" of its earlier adherents, it acquired an inescapable "theosophical - intellectual bias" which sits almost at the antipodes of original Sufism, and that is even nowadays an inherent characteristic of this mystical tradition. Iqbāl (d. 1357/1938) defines it as "essentially a system of verification - a spiritual method by which the ego realizes as fact what intellect has understood as theory."[34] This constitutes a substantial evolution in a movement which originally was mostly intent to advertise, through the preaching and the example of its masters, ascetic detachment from the worldly riches in the presence of extravagant excesses at the time of Islam's triumphant expansion. Over the centuries, and as Sufism acquired increasingly mystical traits alongside its ascetical dimension, this has brought the movement to frequent clashes with the political or religious establishment understandably suspicious of apparent growing monistic tendencies that "might lead to the conviction that good and evil are basically the same and that Hell and Paradise are, in a certain way, equal" (Schimmel 1999, p. 328). One of the main exponents of such criticism was famously Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328).

These very serious allegations, as well as accusations of pantheism in the doctrine that ultimately sees God as the only reality, and mysticism as nothing other than a journey towards total annihilation in God, have often been cause of great embarrassment to certain

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[33] *Ibid.*, p. 50.
[34] As cited by Sirriyeh (1999), p. 126.

Sufi circles. Al-Jīlī himself is often portrayed in similar pantheistic terms. Nicholson (1994 [1921]), for instance, writes of him,

> Jílí must be called a pantheist in so far as he takes "There is no god but Allah" in the sense of "Nothing really exists but the Divine Essence with its creative and creaturely modes of being" (p.141).

These alleged tendencies in Al-Jīlī are exemplified in his words "I became It,[35] and It is myself…"[36] And again, in these poetic verses:

The creature has being only by contingent attribution,

In reality it is nothing.

…

God extinguished [the creatures], but in their essences, they have never existed,

And in their extinction they subsist…

…

However, when the Divine fulgurations appear,

The creature is invested from the Light of God and becomes one with Him.

He extinguishes him, then He substitutes Himself for him;

He lives in the place of the creatures, and yet they have never occupied anything.[37]

Al-Jīlī seems to have been already aware of this growing contradiction within the wider Sufi movement between the original voluntaristic approach and that of his master Ibn ʿArabī, whose doctrine he followed so closely. In *Al-Insān al-kāmil* he writes,

> Some see themselves as the object of Divine Action; their own action follows that of God. They consider themselves as obedient in an action conforming to Divine prescriptions, and they consider

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[35] I.e., the Divine Reality (*al-Ḥaqīqa*).
[36] As cited by Burckhardt (1983 [1953]), p. 43.
[37] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

themselves as disobedient when the action is contrary to these prescriptions, while still being, themselves, despoiled of all their own power, force and will.

What seems only to be the detached description of an attitude soon acquires however disparaging tones when he draws the comparison with what he evidently assumes to be a higher form of mysticism:

> Others are not conscious of their own action at all; they see only the action of God. Such a man does not at all consider himself as author of an action, he would not say he was obedient in the action conforming to the Sacred Law, nor would he say he was disobedient in a contrary action… There is there a point that only he who has himself tasted and really lived this contemplative state will understand … and this contemplation is superior to the first."[38]

Nevertheless, even in Al-Jīlī, as well as in others of similar intellectual persuasion, pages remain of strictly mystical content that occasionally add scintillating beauty to otherwise aridly cerebral pieces of work. "My friend, smell Me in the odours, - he says - eat Me in the food, imagine Me in the imaginable, know Me in the intellections, contemplate Me in the sensible, touch Me in the tangible, wear Me in the clothes!" (Burckhardt 1983 [1953], p. 43). Here his spirituality acquires a place among the great mystical traditions of the major world religions from which it may have seemed to distance itself by emphasising elements of an intellectual, strictly philosophical nature to the detriment of spiritual, emotional, and almost existentialist components: a prevalence of the mind over the heart. The "elect" is again one enamoured with God, seeking God and experiencing God. In this context, in pages of *Al-Insān al-kāmil* Al-Jīlī describes the mystics as being those who hear God speak to their hearts, who understand things hidden

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[38] *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

to the eye of the superficial observer; who may be blessed with extraordinary gifts, such as that of miracles or of foreknowledge.

This longing for God, this Sufi tension towards complete unity with God, is what Caspar (1985) calls "the drama of Islamic mysticism." He explains: "drawn to God at the call of the Qur'ân, it will tend to raise itself to meet him, only to have to stop short of union with God. Those who dare to go further will be banned, and in certain cases will, like Al-Ḥallâj, pay for it with their lives…" (p. 4).

In more recent times, possibly starting with the twelfth/eighteenth century, there have been registered attempts to counterbalance allegations of heresy levelled against some expressions of Sufism, in an attempt to distance elements of this movement from the excesses of the past, translating them into more universally acceptable expressions of mystical Islam.[39] After all, acknowledging in Sufism this mystical tension towards God means valuing something that no one can deny is at the very centre of Muslim spirituality: *tawḥīd,* and the means to obtain it, namely *fanā'* and *baqā',* annihilation of the self and the staying with, remaining in God,[40] with an eye on eternal immortality. *Fanā'* and *baqā'* signify therefore not the cessation of the mystic's ontological subsistence, but rather, in the words of Knysh (2000), "the development of a more ample and perfect selfhood that is adorned by divine presence." At any rate, certainly not "a fusion of divine and human essences" (p. 310). Mayer (2008), citing the Persian mystic Junayd (d. 297/910) describes these two categories from a purely subjective mystical point of view, *baqā'* being therefore the return of the mystics from their state of mystical intoxication which was their *fanā',* or

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[39] This subject has been dealt at length, among others, by Voll (1994) .

[40] Burckhardt (1990 [1976]) translates *baqā'* with *subsistence,* a spiritual state "beyond all form" (p. 15).

losing themselves in God (p.267). "The *Sharî'ah* itself - Nasr (1999a) explains - is a vast network of injunctions and regulations which relate the world of multiplicity inwardly to a single Centre which conversely is reflected in the multiplicity of the circumference…

"Sufism, being the marrow of the bone or the inner dimension of the Islamic revelation, is the means *par excellence* whereby *tawḥîd* is achieved" (p. 43).

Seen in this light Sufism appears therefore as the legitimate defender of a spiritual unity in God that is an antidote to the human temptations of multiplicity. This growing legitimacy has also been achieved by selecting less equivocal texts. The preceding quotations from Al-Jīlī, for instance, can be easily counterbalanced by citing a different passage in the same work in which he says:

> …as for the servant, God, wanting to reveal Himself to him by a Name or by a Quality, extinguishes him, annihilates his self and his existence; then, when the creatural[41] light is put out, and the individual spirit is effaced, God causes to reside in the creatural temple …without his having for that a Divine localization… [42]

However, Al-Jīlī will add, mystics are not in a perennial state of rapture. At times, when returning to their "exterior conscience", they may be tempted to seek there what they had experienced in contemplation, and not being able to find it they may be discouraged and tempted to doubt what they had seen, even the same existence of God.

Another element central to Sufism and relevant to a better understanding of the background to Al-Jīlī's doctrines, is the figure of the Master, or *saintly friend* (*Walī*), a "theophany of Divine Mercy" (Nasr, 1999a, p. 57) and a representative of the Prophet:

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[41] *Sic* (*creaturely*).
[42] As cited by Burckhardt (1983 [1953]), p. 45.

To become initiated into a Sufi order and to accept the discipleship of a master is to enter into a bond that is permanent, surviving even death. For the disciple the *shaykh* is always mysteriously present, especially during the rituals. The *shaykh* never dies for the disciple even if he has physically left this world. His spiritual guidance (*irshâd*) and assistance continue even after death. The spiritual master, whom Rûmî calls the heavenly rider, comes and goes, but the dust of his galloping remains. His effects upon his disciples is permanent and the seed he has sown in their hearts continues to be nurtured and cared for, even after the temple of his body has fallen into dust." (Nasr 1999a, p. 59).

Fundamental with the holy figures of Sufism is the role attributed to them of mediators between the faithful believers and God, of intercessors with God on behalf of the believers.

Sufi veneration for their founders and masters can be the object of criticism to the Sufi movement as a whole when some of its more well known thinkers, and Al-Jīlī among them, stretched this veneration to its limits, with the doctrine of the embodiment, on the part of some holy figures, of the Muḥammadan nature, and their identification with the *Perfect Human Being.*

Although Al-Jīlī is universally considered a follower of Ibn ʿArabī, the latter having never established or initiated a Sufi *ṭarīqa,* the author of *The Cave and the Inscription* does not make him the object of his devotional veneration. The so-called *Akbarian* spiritual current within the Sufi movement that over the centuries has infiltrated and heavily influenced Sufi orders such as the Shādhiliyya and the Naqshbandiyya (Nasr 1991, p. xvi), never became a fully-fledged *ṭarīqa* claiming the *Shaykh al-akbar* as its

founder. Nor does Al-Jīlī in his works exalt the virtues of the founder of the Qādiriyya,[43] ˓Abd Al-Qādir Al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1167) as he does instead of his own mentor Sheikh Sharaf Al-Dīn Ismā'īl Ibn Ibrāhīm Al-Jabartī from Zabid, in Yemen. The latter - as we saw already in chapter one - we find included in a chain of transmission tracing the order of the Qadiriyya in Indonesia. He had been a disciple of Abū Bakr Muḥammad Al-Ḥaqqaq, himself a member of the Qadiriyya. Incidentally, the same Al-Jabartī also appears in chains of transmission of the *ṭarīqa* Rifā˓iyya, probably explained by him holding teaching roles in both religious orders.

The fact that Al-Jīlī failed to assign to Al-Jīlānī the honours usually ascribed to Sufi saints is rather unusual if it is true, as many a scholar maintains,[44] that he had been indeed a member of that *ṭarīqa* and a descendant of its founder. Except that, as it was often the case, Al-Jīlī may have been initiated to Sufism through the Qadiriyya and proceeded to explore ways more consonant with his own personal inclinations. Interestingly, however, we find in ˓Abd Al-Qādir Al-Jīlānī elements of mystical theology held very dear by Al-Jīlī himself. In his work *The Secret of Secrets* Al-Jīlānī refers to the *Perfect Human Being* as one who has heart and soul purified of all worldly attachments and passions, and is in love with God. It is also interesting that it should be Al-Jīlī's own master and model, Ibn ˓Arabī, who pays tribute to Al-Jīlānī by referring to him as the *Quṭb* of his time. This is to be understood in light of the generally held belief in ancient Sufism that for each historical age there exist in the world a number of saintly figures upon whom the whole world order rests. As Al-Hujwīrī explains, "…of those who have power to loose and to bind and are the officers of the Divine Court there are three hundred, called *Akhyār,* and forty called *Abdāl,*

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[43] Also known as Jīlānism in North Africa.
[44] For instance Molé (1965), p. 116.

and seven called *Abrār,* and four called *Awtād,* and three called *Nuqabā,* and one called *Quṭb.*"[45]

Not only spiritually, however, but also politically the Qādiriyya could be described as a reformist movement at a time of great upheaval in the Muslim world. This was by now a decadent society beleaguered by conflict with the Western powers on its borders and internal turmoil characterised by rampant materialism and political unrest caused by the breakdown of the Sunnī ʿAbbāsid caliphate with its capital in Baghdad. By the fifth/eleventh century, as we saw in chapter one, the caliphate's hold on power had been eroded even further by the Turkish dynasty of the Saljūqs who had recently converted to Islam and maintained only a nominal allegiance to the caliphate, on the eve of the Mongol definitive takeover by the end of the sixth/twelfth century.

Al-Jīlānī, whose doctrine was mainly based on moral teaching rather than daring mystical experiences and practices, sanctioned truthfulness, prayerfulness, restraint in the pursuit of riches and status, faithfulness to the dictates of Islam. His movement is not to be confused with the myriad of sects that sprang all over the region, some of them of a pseudo-mystical nature, others with political aims and objectives heightened by strong religious overtones. Among these, for instance, the infamous Ḥashshāshūn, allegedly smokers of *Ḥashīsh* and political assassins. Nizami (1991) points out that Al-Jīlānī's affiliation with the Ḥanbalī school guaranteed to his movement - that only much later developed into a full-fledged Sufi order - the legitimacy that certainly played a crucial role in its survival up to the present time, and in its future expansion throughout many regions

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[45] As cited by Nizami (1991), p. 13.

of the Muslim world such as Iraq, Arabia, Morocco, Egypt, India and Indonesia. In the writings of some of its adherents, even today, one will easily find references to Al-Jīlī, proudly and maybe uncritically making of his association with the Qadiriyya an undisputed fact.

3. SYMBOLISM OF THE ARABIC SCRIPT

Al-Jīlī's *The Cave and the Inscription* is clearly defined by the author himself as a commentary on the *Basmala.* Al-Jīlī does not limit his analysis of that Islamic formula to an analysis of its meaning, but proceeds to explore the most minute significance of the letters of the Arabic alphabet that compose it. He can confidently do this because some expressions of Islamic mysticism nurtured a tradition of veneration of the Holy Book in all its constitutive elements, including the words of each of its verses and the letters of each of its words. Authors such as René Guénon (d. 1951) in *Le Cœur et la Caverne* (XXX)[46] and Clément-François (2002) define the symbolism of the Arabic script, particularly in Al-Jīlī, as a metaphor of divine realities inhabiting the world of the individual being. Having looked, therefore, in the first two parts of the present chapter, to the classic Islamic mysticism of Avicenna, Al-Suhrawardī and Ibn ʿArabī, and to Sufism as privileged influences on Al-Jīlī, this section is dedicated to the symbology of Arabic script, a third essential element for a comprehensive interpretation of the author of *The Cave and the Inscription*. The starting point for a study of symbolic valences attributed to the Arabic letters necessarily has to be a description of the origin of the Arabic Alphabet and the role that it has acquired within the Arabic culture and within Islam in particular. As I said earlier, I believe that it is important to analyse the orthographic foundations upon which the symbology of the Arabic script is based and the association that Al-Jīlī most probably had with the teaching and/or the members of contemporary new esoteric movements engaging in mystical interpretations of the letters of the Arabic alphabet.

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[46] As cited by Clément-François (2002), p. 14.

The twenty-eight basic letters of the Arabic alphabet constitute an *abjad,* whose graphemes therefore are exclusively consonants, to which the reader applies vowel sounds: vocalisation (*Tashkīl*) of the Qur'ān was introduced for the sake of clarity only at the time of ʿAbd Al-Malik (d. 86/705). At about the same time diacritical dots were also devised and introduced by the calligraphers Naṣr Ibn Qāsim (d. 88/707) and Yaḥyā Ibn Ya'mūr (d. 89/708).

The mention of these elements of the Arabic written language is not without a purpose in the context of this thesis. In *The Cave and the Inscription,* Al-Jīlī's text that I employ as an exemplification and typification of his doctrine and thought, the author will dedicate several pages to the relationship between letters of the Arabic alphabet and, within each letter, of its constitutive parts, such as stem and diacritical dot, the latter being the measuring unit for the size of a letter in a given calligraphic style.

In fact, since the times of Ibn Muqlah (d. 329/940) calligraphers have been measuring the dimensions of the letters of the Arabic alphabet in rhombic dots. *Alif,* the first letter of the alphabet, for instance, is measured as having a width of one dot and a height of at least three dots, depending on the type of script employed. In *The Cave and the Inscription* Al-Jīlī refers continually to this letter as to one endowed with a particular mystical valence. Together with the diacritical dot of the letter *Bā'* he employs it as a term of reference for all the other letters, said to contain it, and as a symbol of the *Muḥammadan Reality* that permeates the whole universe. One can easily comprehend why the diacritical dot should perform such a function in the context of an esoteric interpretation of the Qur'ānic text and its lettering, also given the fact that indeed, as Al-Jīlī points out, the dot marks the

beginning of the whole Qur'ān and even of each one of its 114 *suwar*. But why should the *Alif* be associated to it in this symbolism? In fact, Al-Jīlī's choice is not a gratuitous one. In calligraphy (*Khaṭṭ*), *Alif* is the standard measure of all the letters. On any given piece of writing, once its length in dots is established, like a calibre it measures the diameter of an imaginary circle that will contain each of the other letters of the alphabet employed by the calligrapher. As the measuring rod of all the other letters, it contains them all and is contained by them all, acquiring therefore an almost archetypal significance of oneness, further emphasised by its close resemblance with the number one.

The sacred text in Islam is the locus of the highest manifestations of divine *tawḥīd.* No wonder therefore that Al-Jīlī, so passionately involved in a perennial quest for expressions of the oneness of all things in God, should believe himself legitimised into making of the Qur'ān, in some of its specific scriptural components, the main subject of *The Cave and the Inscription.*

The esoteric interpretation of Arabic letters, evocative of a similar phenomenon within Judaism applied however to the Hebrew alphabet, gave way in medieval times to the birth of sects - at times crushed violently by the religious/political authorities - representing extreme fringes of Sufism cultivating magical doctrines and divination (*jafr*), and usually defined with the generic name of *'Ilm al-Ḥurūf* or *Ḥurūfism. Ḥurūf* in Arabic means of course *letters of the alphabet.* According to Fahd (1966), these are the inheritors of ancient, pre-Islamic Arab doctrines renewed and enriched upon coming into contact with Indo-Iranian expressions of divination, (especially rhabdomancy) eventually finding their way – once fused together - into the Islamic world (p.30). Under the Abbasid caliphate of

Al-Mā'mūn (d. 218/833) rhabdomancy lost its primitive simplicity and became a divinatory technique based on assigning oracular meanings to each letter of the alphabet. These meanings were loosely based on arbitrary exegetical explanations of Qur'anic verses in which arithmancy played a major role. "However, nothing is arbitrary in this science" (Fahd 1966, p. 238). In fact, to each one of the letters of the alphabet – grouped together according to one of the corresponding elements, air, fire, earth and water – properties were assigned, as well as astral meanings and numerical values, for the purpose of obtaining through their correct interpretation (gematria) an esoteric knowledge otherwise inaccessible by any other means, thus compensating for a perceived inadequacy of the traditional channels of divine revelation to provide true illumination of the hidden truths of the universe to the eyes of the initiated and knowledge of past, present and future events. Fahd (1966) provides us with some interesting insights on some of the procedures employed in the divinatory practices of rhabdomancy and arithmancy (pp. 217-230). He concludes:

> If therefore the principles and the conventions, which are the foundation of this science, can be random, putting them into practice and their logical and methodological use were carried out with a lot of precision and technical skill. It is in summary a good scaffolding on a basis of shifting sand (p. 238).

Grafted onto this ancient branch of Semitic and Persian mysticism, the eponym Gnostic sect of the Ḥurūfiyya was founded by a Persian former judge who had left his family and possessions to become an itinerant interpreter of dreams and mystical philosopher, Faḍl Allah Ashrābadī, a contemporary of Al-Jīlī executed in 796/1394. Before him very little of what had been written earlier than the sixth/twelfth century on these topics had been passed on to future generations. After the sixth/twelfth century the letters of the alphabet had increasingly acquired a privileged place in Muslim esoteric speculation, and had come to

be perceived as "a materialisation of the divine Word." (Fahd 1966, p. 234). In fact, as Al-Massri (1998) points out, "by the time of Faḍl there was already a long, diverse and developed tradition of interpretation of letters, from the mystic-theological (Ibn al-ʿArabī) to the Gnostic-speculative (Ismāʿilīya) and the magical (al-Būnī)" (p. 253).

The textbook of Ḥurūfism is *Hedāyat-nāme* (Ashrābadī wrote in Persian), that begins with an attempt to legitimise the practices of Ḥurūfism with the help of the Qurʾān. He would consider "the word the supreme manifestation of God" (Schimmel 1975, p. 412) and ascribe to each letter several mystical meanings, a number, and one of the four elements, air, water, earth or fire. Thus the name of each of the letters represents all that exists in creation, that will exist or that cannot possibly ever exist. A rather extensive treatment of this subject can be found in *Appendix I* of Schimmel's work. Another sect within the same movement was that of the Nuqṭawiyya, an offshoot of the Ḥurūfiyya, founded by a disowned follower of Ashrābadī, Maḥmūd Jīlānī.

As explained by Ritter (1954), members of Ḥurūfism interpreted dreams, and saw fate as the realisation of dreams. They stated that nothing is forbidden, and yet they were not libertines, but only considered themselves no longer accountable to the demands of the laws, acquiring a state of mind that gains one's entry into a spiritual earthly Paradise. Part and parcel of being inside this earthly Paradise is also the belief that all leads to the 32 letters that form all the words (28 letters of the Arabic alphabet, the language of Paradise, plus four so-called "magic" characters such as ء and لا). In fact, during its brief existence, before its demise in the ninth/fifteenth century when it was crushed in Persia, the Ḥurūfiyya had adopted the typically Muʿtazilī doctrine that maintained an identification

between noun and referent, signifier and signified (*Al-ism huwa al-musammā*). In contrast with the Ashʿarī doctrines, the Muʿtazilites intended to stress God's *Tawḥīd* affirming that divine names and attributes are not separate from God, otherwise by calling upon God's name one would call upon something other than God. The Ḥurūfiyya took this argument forward, bringing *Tawḥīd* to signify an identification of the Creator with the created order in the person of the Perfect Human Being, one that renders visible the invisible God. God created all that exists – their argument goes – through words. Therefore everything that exists has to have a name. Drawing their own conclusions out of the Muʿtazilī doctrine of *Al-ism huwa al-musammā*, they affirm therefore that the name is in effect the existence of everything that exists. This is true even with God: in fact, God created through the Word and the Word is God. By the medium of the Word – indistinct from God – every named creature shares in the existence of God because its name is such existence. This shared existence between the Creator and the creatures is taken to its limits in the Perfect Human Being who becomes a visible image of the divine *Persona* herself.

Al-Massri (1998) points out that *Ḥurūfism* developed when Al-Jīlī was a young man. However, although it is well known that some followers of the group lived in his own home town, we cannot establish for certain the extent of their influence on him (p. 252-253). Nevertheless, it is likely that Al-Jīlī would have had at least familiarity with esoteric applications of *Isopsephy* - the attribution of numeric values to the letters of the alphabet - if not connections with such a movement within Sufism. For instance, in section 13 of *The Cave and the Inscription* the author refers to the value of *six* assigned to the letter *Wāw* as *per* the *'Ilm al-Ḥurūf*. In section eight of that same work he makes reference to the Muʿtazilī doctrine of *Al-ism huwa al-musammā*. Another piece of evidence is provided by

Al-Jīlī's master and teacher Ibn ʿArabī, especially in his *Futūḥāt Makkiyya.* Chodkiewicz (1999) points out:

> [In chapter 273] Ibn ʿArabī explains how, guided by the First Intellect, he visited this *manzil*[47] which contains five chambers (*buyūt*). In each of these chambers chests (*khazā'in*) are shut away. Each chest has locks (*aqfāl*) each lock has keys (*mafātiḥ*) and each key has to be turned a specific number of times (*Ḥarakāt*). Then the Shaykh al-Akbar describes these chambers together with their contents, one by one: the first chest in the first chamber has three locks, the first of these locks has three keys, the first of these keys has to be turned four hundred times, and so on. I am sure that more often than not these strange details disarm the reader's curiosity. However, they are easy to interpret once one knows that this *manzil* is the one corresponding to the surah *Al-masad.* The five chambers are this Surah's five verses. The chests are the words in each verse, the number of locks is the number of letters in each of the words, the keys are the graphic signs of which the letters are composed (diacritical points and consonantal *ductus*), and the turnings of the key represent the numerical value of these letters according to the *abjād.* The first chest is therefore the word *tabbat:* it consists of three letters - or three locks. The first of these locks is the *T-ā'.* This is composed of three graphic signs - and therefore three keys - and has a numerical value of 400. Comparable explanations, in which the science of letters (*'ilm al-Ḥurūf*) plays a major role that is specifically announced in chapter 2 of the *Futūḥāt,* can be given every time one encounters expositions of this type - and regardless of where in the text they occur (pp. 228-229).

This sort of esoteric interpretation of the Qur'ān is referred to as *ta'wīl,* as opposed to exoteric *tafsīr* (exegesis) and *tafāsīr* (commentaries). In the light of this, therefore, the content of texts such as Al-Jīlī's *The Cave and the Inscription* could be considered as esoteric hermeneutics, or *ta'wīl.* What one needs to point out is that this mystical interpretation of the text is not limited to the sacredness of its content, but is applied also to its form, that is all the words contained in the text, and the letters composing each word, and the graphic signs that make up each letter. As Nasr (1987) makes rather clear, when

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[47] Abode.

dealing with the sacred book of Islam sacredness applies to all of its components (p. 4). No wonder, therefore, that Ibn ʿArabī, Al-Jīlī and others investigated at length the mystical significance of as minute an element of the holy book as the diacritical dot, or of a very specific formula in the context of the whole script such as the *Basmala.* In my annotations to *The Cave and the Inscription* I show how the author engages in the analysis of the composition of the *Basmala* explaining the meaning of the letters of which it consists. First and foremost among them is the letter *Bā',* whose diacritical point will come to assume great significance in the mystical interpretation of the formula, representing the very beginning of the holy book and indeed of each of its chapters. We will also see how Al-Jīlī borrows heavily here from *Al-futūḥāt al-makkiyya* where Ibn ʿArabī had already identified in the Qurʾān a movement, as it were, from the last *sūra* to the first, and then to the first letter of the holy book and its diacritical point, realising the oneness of all things in God in a sort of spiritual journey of ascent.

As Burckhardt (1990 [1976]) puts it, "[in the Qurʾān] each sound, since Arabic writing is phonetic - corresponds to a determination of primordial and undifferentiated sound, which is itself like the substance of the perpetual Divine enunciation" (p. 43).

From an epistemological point of view, Nuseibeh (1999) argues that the Qurʾānic text assumes a literal relevance as "revealed knowledge" for those who contend that God can be known only by a leap of faith of the human mind. It is however for those who maintain that a philosophical or mystical knowledge of God is attainable, such as is the case for authors of the Sufi tradition, that the Holy Book assumes a symbolic valence. This can only be rendered through a metaphorical interpretation of the text, hampered by the

linguistic mechanisms applied to the written words whose hermeneutic code needs therefore to be deciphered and reinterpreted with metaphysical categories (pp. 824 and 830). Against the latter approach, of course, some would object by quoting the Qur'ān itself where it says,

> He is the One Who sent you the book. In it, there are verses that are exact (in meaning) and they constitute the foundation of the book. Others are allegorical. Those who harbour perversity in their hearts follow what is allegorical in it, seek discord and look for its hidden meaning. However, no one knows its hidden meaning besides God. Those established in knowledge say, "We believe in it: all (of it) comes from the Lord"…[48]

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[48] III.7.

4. PERSIAN MYSTICISM

Among the elements that had a major influence on the thought of Al-Jīlī, undoubtedly the most relevant ones are to be found in the Persian milieu, in particular in its Sufi and Shīʿite expressions, which obviously nurtured much of his mystical and philosophical doctrine. This section is therefore intended as a cursory contextualisation of the most notable elements that inform Al-Jīlī's tenets, with a final brief reference to dualistic undercurrents that, possibly also quite relevant in Al-Jīlī, certainly could not be left out of a description of Persian mysticism.

4.1 Persian Sufism

A considerable number of Sufi orders either saw light in Persia or alternatively greatly influenced Islam in this region. Nasr (1999c), albeit possibly overstating the role that Persia played in the development of Sufism, even suggests that from "the early centuries practically all the important developments in Sufism's early history are geographically related to greater Persia" (p. 2). He also points out that in the third/ninth century, although the two main centres of Sufism were one in Persia (Khurāsān) and one in Arab Baghdad, most of the Arabic speaking Sufis - undoubtedly with notable exceptions - were Persian in origin (p. 3). Nasr is not the first scholar to overemphasize this Persian influence on Sufism. In the words of Corbin (1971), "L'Iran islamique a été par excellence la patrie des plus grands philosophes et mystiques de l'Islam…"[49] (1, p. 27). He had identified the reason for the inherent disposition of the Persian milieu to embrace the mystical discourse,

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[49] "Islamic Iran has been the homeland *par excellence* of Islam's greatest philosophers and mystics."

especially after the sixth/twelfth century, in "le génie iranien … la vocation imprescriptible de l'âme iranienne" (1, p. x).[50] Undoubtedly it is true that in a number of ways and not unlike other cultures since, that similarly have contributed and continue even today to contribute to the growth of this great spiritual movement, the Persian environment enriched Sufism with the treasures of Persian culture. Eminent among these is the Persian language that after the sixth/twelfth century became increasingly fashionable as the language of poetry and elegance even beyond the border, in Arabic speaking regions. It was "born in the third/ninth century in Khurāsān and Transoxiana and was based on Middle Persian and Dari but enriched by an Arabic vocabulary of a strong religious orientation, deeply influenced by the Koran" (Nasr 1999c, p. 10).

Conversely, much greater was the effect that Islam and Arab civilisation had on Persia. Massignon (1997 [1954]), with reference to Shi'ism in particular, would say that "Shiism, which is presented to us as a specifically Persian Islamic heresy, was propagated in Persia by pure Arab colonists, who had come from Kūfa to Qum… The lists of great Muslim thinkers said to be of 'Persian origin,' because their *nisba*[51] refers to a city in Persia, are misleading. Most of these men thought and wrote only in Arabic…" (p. 46). Interestingly, this statement could easily be applied to Al-Jīlī, universally described as being of Persian origin because of his name, and yet author of books written for the great majority in Arabic.

When considering the influence that Islam had on Persia one cannot ignore, as Knysh (2000) points out, that Sufism played a major "role in the shaping of Persian literature

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[50] "the Iranian distinctive nature... the imprescriptible vocation of the Iranian soul."
[51] Patronymic.

which is virtually permeated by its themes and motifs... Its impact on the formation of Persian *belles-lettres* is hard to overestimate" (p. 171). Ultimately, in the opinion of Lewisohn (1999) and others, Sufism acted as a defensive bulwark that guaranteed the survival of Islam in the region at the time of the Mongol invasions (II, p. 30). That event, accompanied by "genocide and a scorched earth policy" (p. 31) with the virtual collapse of the region's infrastructures, an increasingly violent and insecure environment, and the oppressive tax system that developed in time, could have easily wiped out all vestiges of a once flourishing Muslim civilisation. Instead, arguably Sufism maintained people rooted in their faith, according to Lewisohn, inspiring some sense of identity and instilling courage and feelings of consolation in people's hearts. Interestingly, Lewisohn also suggests that the innate Sufi predisposition to accommodate others allowed Persian people to adapt to the dramatic changes they were witnessing in their own land. Sufi tolerance was particularly evident in the acceptance, never syncretistic, of the faith of Hindu, Christian, Jewish and Buddhist elements of society. At least in the case of Buddhism, this may have been partially influenced by the Mongols' initial support for it. As we will see below, Al-Jīlī was heavily influenced by this widespread tolerant attitude towards adherents of other religions.

By the ninth/fifteenth century, Sufism had become a powerful influence in Persian society, now relatively stable again under Tamerlane's descendants, the Timurids who, as we saw in the first part of chapter one, promoted a cultural and economic renascence of Islamic Persia, financing ambitious urban regeneration plans and encouraging the development of Sufism. This is part of the world that informed Al-Jīlī and that created a favourable environment for a person of his intellectual capacity and mystical

predisposition, to pursue his philosophical and mystical investigations and develop his doctrines.

4.2 Shīʿism

Shīʿism also spread throughout Persia over the centuries until it became the predominant religion in the region under the Safavi dynasty that took power in the tenth/sixteenth century.

Its relevance in a study on Al-Jīlī such as the present work is based on the impact it had on the Persian culture that, at least in part, had informed Al-Jīlī. More specifically, it had been the source of the doctrine of the Hidden Imam – with features strikingly reminiscent of the concept of the *Perfect Human Being* dear to Al-Jīlī – and at least in part breeding ground for groups that cultivated anthropomorphic interpretations of God's immanence. The latter will be dealt with in greater detail in chapter 3.3 of this thesis as an aid to clarifying the wide spectrum of the controversy surrounding divine transcendence and immanence, in which I contend that Al-Jīlī played quite a substantial role.

Shīʿism had prospered at the Sunni ʿAbbāsid court in Baghdad, even when in 260/873-4 *Twelver* Shīʿism - the major branch of Shīʿism - was met with the critical death without heirs of the eleventh Imam, Al-Ḥasan Al-ʿAskarī, which of course signed the beginning of the doctrine of the Hidden Imam, the messianic figure of the Mahdī. The Mahdī has similar characteristics also in Ismāʿīlī Shīʿism, the second major branch of Shīʿism that had

separated from the main body at the time of the sixth Imam's death, Jaʿfar, in the second/eighth century, and in turn soon began to break up into several dissenting factions.

It is understood that the distinction between *Twelver* and Ismāʿīlī Shīʿism constitutes only the tip of the iceberg in a considerable fragmentation over the centuries of Shīʿism in a myriad of different sects. To mention but one such movement relevant to the subject of this thesis, in the seventh/thirteenth century the Karrāmiyya[52] was accused by authors such as Bayḍāwī (d. *c.* 685/1286) of anthropomorphism for conceiving God as having a body and residing in a defined celestial region above the Throne (Calverley and Pollock 2002, p. 756). It is also worth noticing here how Shīʿism was not exempt from the effort, common in Islamic theology, of exploring ways of dealing with the most controversial passages in the sacred scriptures containing anthropomorphic renditions of the divine *Persona* and actions. The fact that a whole movement should be accused of excesses in this field is revealing of the underlying tensions within Islam between the need to defend both God's immanence - that is to say, God's engagement with the created order - and God's transcendence.

Scholars such as Caspar (1986) and Michon (1960) suggest that while in Sunni Islam the esoteric dimension is almost exclusively confined to Sufism, by this period the whole edifice of Shīʿism is built upon it. This is an opinion already expressed by the North African historian Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) (Nasr 1999a, p. 105), and is most apparent, for instance, in the development of esoteric concepts such as that of the *Perfect Human Being* in the mystical philosophy of authors such as Al-Jīlī in the home of Shīʿite Islam. In

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[52] Sect founded by Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad Bin Karrām (d. 255/869).

fact, the idea of attributing to the *Perfect Human Being* functions such as that of cosmic *Pole* and universal spiritual leadership, resonate greatly with the role of the Mahdī within Shīʿism. In fact, some concepts related to the doctrine of the Perfect Human Being find echo in the Shīʿite doctrine of the Hidden Imam, whereby the Mahdi who is alive and hidden in the world, almost permeates the world in a fashion reminiscent of the *Muḥammadan Reality* permeating all that exists. Many followers of Ibn ʿArabī were indeed Shīʿites, even though he was a confessed Sunnī affiliated to the Ẓāhirī School (Nasr 1999a, p. 116). So were also subsequent authors writing in the Persian language. Nasr (1999a) goes as far as reporting the unsubstantiated allegation - contained in his footnote reference to Dr Kāmil Muṣṭafā Al-Shībī's *Al-Ṣila,* published in Baghdad in 1963 by Maṭbaʿa Al-Zahra - that Ibn ʿArabī himself made use of Shīʿite sources in formulating some of his doctrines (p. 111).

Lewisohn (1999) adds to this discussion a very interesting detail: "Paradoxically - he says - it is sometimes Persians who have been responsible for introducing him into certain areas of the Arab world: the contemporary Yemenite historian ʿAbdullāh al-Habshī has pointed out … that this was the case in the Yemen. He notes that at Zabīd under the Rasūlid dynasty the majority of members of the Akbarian circle which formed around Shaykh Al-Jabartī, the teacher of ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, had come from Persia" (p.219).

4.3 Pre-Islamic Persian philosophies

One cannot underestimate how the relevance that Shīʿism, Sufism and, in part, even Ibn ʿArabī had in the defining of the Persian cultural and religious milieu, should later

characterise the background against which Al-Jīlī's own intellectual and mystical system acquires its most significant contours. However, it is not possible to discuss the development of Islamic mysticism in Persia without contextualising it both geographically and historically with reference to its religious roots in the fertile soil of pre-Islamic ancient Zoroastrianism that emerged in the region from the earlier Vedic religion, and subsequent Zoroastrian mystical expressions. Prominent among these are that of the Magi (from the 6th century BCE) and of the cult of Mithra, an incarnation of the creator god Mazda.

In particular, Mazdaism offered to the emerging Qur'ānic faith the predispositions of a religious system centred on a similar understanding of the divinity as a transcendent entity well distinguished from a created order intrinsically good and contained within strict parameters of space and time. As Nasr (1996) rightly points out, other elements in Zoroastrianism such as the relevance of angelology also contributed to a smoother acceptance of the new creed (p. 6). In fact, one should not underestimate the influence that Zoroaster's belief had on the development of Jewish, Christian and Muslim theologies as it expanded towards the west, and for that matter, of Greek philosophy, of which Corbin (1971) explicitly traced its Persian/Zoroastrian origins (2, pp. 31-32).

A basic contrast between God's orderly creation and chaos is revealing of a dualism that will inform the rising of Manichaeism in the 3rd century CE. In a famous work that had been his doctoral thesis, Iqbal (1964) traces back this tendency in Persian philosophy to dualistic juxtaposition, to the original settlement of Iranian Aryans in the region. Here, he argues, they developed a rather conflictual relationship with other resident Aryans pre-dating their arrival, which "found its earliest expression in the denunciation of the deities

of each other - the Devas and the Ahuras" (p. 3). When Zoroaster began his ministry as a prophet of the creator god Mazda, he emerged therefore as "theologically a monotheist and philosophically a dualist" (p. 5). The contrast between light and darkness, for instance, will be one of the predominant features of Zarwanian Zoroastrianism. We encounter some form of dualism also in Al-Jīlī, when he contrasts the present human condition of existence dominated by senses, with the liberated, enlightened, higher status of the *Perfect Human Being.*

Another element of the religion of Zoroaster most relevant to some of the features of Al-Jīlī's teaching is presumably constituted by the backgrounds to the doctrine of the *Perfect Human Being* in medieval Persian Sufism. It is the creation myth found in the texts of the Rivayāt, based on priestly revised accounts of the Bundahisn narratives. According to this text, a primordial male human figure was instrumental in the divine act of creation. The sky came from his head, the earth from his feet, water from his tears, plants from his hair, the bull, prototype of the animal kingdom, from his right hand, fire from his mind, and the first human being from his seed planted into the goddess of the earth (Lewisohn 1999, II. pp. 6, 14, and Shaki n.d.).

This element is taken out of a much more complex cosmogony that opposed the creative, orderly activity of God to the primordial chaos and that is based on the myth of seven fiery, luminous sparks emanating from god, again reminiscent of the teaching of another champion of Persian philosophy, Abu Al-Futūḥ Al-Suhrawardī, the father of Islamic Illuminationism. Corbin (1971) made some direct links between Al-Suhrawardī and some expressions of the religion of the Magi (2, pp. 30-31), and maintained that

"Sohrawardî avait opéré en Islam la conjonction entre les noms et doctrines de Platon et de Zoroastre"[53] (p. 34). In fact, Corbin suggests that he represented a circle that returned this religious thread to its origin in Persia (*Ibid.*).

In my opinion, one could legitimately contend that Corbin's suggestion should apply also to the doctrine of Al-Jīlī, whose dualistic tendencies and relevance in his thought of the doctrine of the *Perfect Human Being* may justifiably be considered to have ancestral links to Persian pre-Islamic religious traditions.

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[53] "Suhrawardī had achieved within Islam the combination of nouns and doctrines from Plato and Zoroaster."

5. OTHER NON-ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHICAL INFLUENCES ON AL-JĪLĪ

5.1 Hellenistic influences

There are several elements worthy of further scrutiny discernable in Al-Jīlī's work that are derived from much more ancient intellectual and mystical traditions and acquired through the teaching of the great Muslim masters of *falsafa* and *kalām*. Al-Jīlī himself may or may not have had immediate contact with these pre-Islamic philosophical traditions. Nor should one underestimate the originality of thought of post-Al-Ghazālī Sufi scholarship based on the development of philosophical categories already inherent to the Muslim religious discourse. However, elements in Al-Jīlī's thought that could be associated with Hellenistic or Hindu/Buddhist influences are evident enough to justify mentioning them if only briefly. After all, it is a well known fact that Platonic, Neo-Platonic and Aristotelian philosophical concepts were accessible to Sufi masters and Muslim scholars in general "through translations or free renditions into Arabic since the beginning of the third/ninth century" (Knysh 2000, p. 169) while still maintaining independence of terminology. Apropos, Massignon (1997 [1954]) provides an example in the word *kawn,* which in Islamic mysticism came to refer to "instantaneous existentialization" as opposed to the Hellenistic original meaning of "genesis, natural growth" (p. 55). On the other hand, more recent authors such as Walker (2005) identify "the so-called *Theology* of Aristotle along with the other material derived from Plotinus' *Enneads*" (p. 76) as well as the Neo-Platonic *Pseudo-Ammonius,* as some of the privileged sources of some of the Islamic philosophy (namely Ismāʿīlī) from the third/ninth century. This goes to enforce the argument brought forward by authors such as Wisnovsky (2003)

that the translation of Hellenistic texts into Arabic did not happen without repercussions, generating instead a certain degree of continuity between Greek and Islamic philosophy (pp. 6-7).

Eminent among these sources is without any doubt the teaching of the Greek philosopher Plato, who lived between the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. Plato's philosophy is notoriously un-systematic, derived as it is from the philosopher's *dialogues* rather than from a logical structure conveniently arranged in an identifiable system. This of course brings about a certain lack of clarity in some of the concepts he expresses, and even contradictions, especially in the realm of epistemology. Out of his own personal involvement in the political controversies of his time, Plato came to refute the Sophists' argumentative method founded on the principle of *persuasion*. Opting instead for a Socratic, or *dialectic,* method that would have as its starting point the conviction that there is out there objective beauty, justice, goodness - a world of *ideas*[54] or *forms*- he maintained that only by continually referring to these paradigms (*archetypes*), a discourse could be firmly founded on scientific certainty. This is indeed no futile argument. The existence of an objectivity that transcends contingency of opinions is something that would have serious repercussions in a philosophical discourse and lay the foundation of a theological one. Its acceptance would represent a necessary vindication of the existence of a universe - or of a dimension of the universe - beyond the world of the senses. Even more importantly, it would offer a set of ethical points of reference against which individuals and entire societies would be called to conform.

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[54] From the Greek ιδέα.

It is not therefore by mere coincidence that these elements of Plato's thought should find an echo many centuries later in Christian theodicy and then in Muslim *falsafa* and *kalām*. Al-Suhrawardī, for instance, was certainly among those informed by Platonic categories. In particular, the notion of *forms* is an essential element of the cosmology inherent in *Ishrāq*, whereby with the celestial spheres, they make up the hierarchical order of existence.

A similar reference to a world more real than the present world, existing beyond the boundaries of everyday sensory experience, is also to be found in Al-Jīlī's *Al-Insān al-kāmil*[55] and in its insistence on the notion of *Imagination* (*khayāl*). To Al-Jīlī imagination is a human faculty held hostage by humanity's subservience to sensory perceptions of reality. Imagination is the *locus* of divine revelation, the world of Platonic forms, of which many are obliviously unaware, constantly focused as they are on a world that is not what it seems.

It is rather natural, at this stage, to pick up in Al-Jīlī echoes of a well-known Platonic analogy, that of the cave. In his *Republic*, Plato famously compares our pitiful human condition to that of men living chained inside a dark cave since birth. With their back to the entrance, they are unaware of the real world outside, of which they have a very limited experience in the contemplation of shadows projected onto the wall of the cave by people carrying objects in the sun outside. Typically, Plato applied this doctrine to the political arena, making political statements in favour of a reform of the πόλις based on the principle of entrusting governance to a Philosopher-King, one, that is, who has become

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[55] Ch. 7.

aware of the cave deception, and has been able to free himself from the chains of ignorance and illusion. Al-Jīlī uses different analogies and speaks of an *awakening* in the mystic who has come to realise the truth about what the senses perceive and what really is. A telling illustration of this can be found in *Al-Insān al-kāmil* in the dialogue between "a voice" and the spirit of a dead person:

> A voice asked him, "Who are you, the lover knocking on the gate?"
>
> He answered, "One faithful in love, separated from his own. I have been banished from your country. I have wandered far from those like you. I have been bound to the impediments of height and depth, of length and width. I have been imprisoned in the jail of Fire and Water, of Air and Earth. But now that I have severed my bonds, I start to seek an escape from the prison where I had remained…" (as cited by Corbin, 1990 [1977], p. 154).

Interestingly Al-Jīlī wrote a treatise entitled *The Cave and the Inscriptions.* His mentioning of the cave is presumably a reference to *Sūra* 18 of the Qur'an - a *sūra* particularly dear to Al-Jīlī, as seen in part two of the present chapter. However the similarity in meaning between the *awakening* of the young men asleep in the cave - in the tradition behind the Qur'anic story - and the unfettering of the philosopher in Plato, will not escape the careful reader.

In his dialogue *Meno* Plato describes the *forms,* the archetypal *ideas,* as being recovered by the human immortal soul in an act of reminiscence, as if the soul remembered paradigms learned in another sphere of existence. We understand what justice is, for instance, even if we are faced only with situations of injustice, because we *remember* its *idea* known to our immortal soul. This continuous contrast between the world of the senses and the truth beyond, may be compared to the form of dualism present in Al-Jīlī. It is found in his teaching on the division between sensory perceptions and mystical knowledge,

between the created order and the eternal truth. It cannot be denied even in the light of Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrine of *unity of being (waḥda al-wujūd)*. In fact, paradoxically it is exactly in Al-Jīlī’s insistence on an ontological identification of creation with its Creator that one encounters - almost as a by-product - the dichotomy between untruth and truth, ignorance and gnosis, darkness and light, created and uncreated, carnal and spiritual, exoteric and esoteric.

To explain the existence of a sensible, manifold, disjointed, reality as opposed to the intelligible world of *ideas* in his dialogue *Timaeus*, Plato resorts to the myth of the *Demiurge*. This is a sort of divine craftsman who, employing the four fundamental elements of air, earth, fire and water, forges the world, as it were, in the mould of the archetypal *forms*, giving it order and measure. The *Demiurge* is therefore like a bridge between the material world and the *ideal* world. Intriguingly, so is the *Perfect Human Being* in Al-Jīlī.

Another philosopher of great influence on many Christian and Muslim thinkers in the ancient world, was undoubtedly Plotinus (third century C.E.). Particularly relevant to Al-Jīlī is Plotinus’ concept of the inseparable nature of unity and multiplicity. The concept of multiplicity itself, the Greek thinker would say, is humanly inconceivable apart from an idea of unity. It is only because we understand unity that we can apprehend the concept of multiplicity, and vice versa. *One* in Plotinus is before *All*, and the first foundational element (υπόστασις) of the *All*. The movement from the *One* to the *All* and back is always the same process, because the *One* and the *All* are indeed the same. Clearly, the foundations have been laid here for the development of the doctrine of *waḥda al-wujūd* in

Ibn 'Arabī and Al-Jīlī, which will further expound on the concept of an ontological identification of the One God with the created order, notwithstanding the manifold expressions of its existence.

5.2 Hindu/Buddhist traditions

Further philosophical influences, if only marginal, may have come to Al-Jīlī by his contacts with Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Although translations into Persian of ancient religious texts from the Indian sub-continent started to appear only after the twelfth/sixteenth century at the time of the Moghul Empire, one could safely assume that Persian Sufis were often exposed to the religious experience of their Hindu and Buddhist neighbours. Exchange of scientific knowledge between Indian and Muslim cultures was a favourite channel of communication (Massignon 1997 [1954], p. 58). As mysticism often transcends strict religious observance, this also may have facilitated the encounter of sensitive souls and minds, especially in matters of practical good neighbourliness.

> …Sur le terrain pratique, l'attitude des mystiques envers les minorités religieuses, l'aide fraternelle qu'ils leur ont parfois apportée en des moments difficiles...” (Molé 1965, p. 103).[56]

The channel of communication opened by scientific exchange between Islam and India gradually closed down as the Islamic civilisation moved closer to the Hellenistic culture in its scientific acquisitions and methodologies. Politically, its egalitarian nature was soon at odds with the Indian caste system. As Nasr (1999a) rightly points out, also "the mythological language of the Indian traditions … is different from the 'abstract'

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[56] "At a practical level, the attitude of the mystics towards religious minorities, the fraternal assistance that they have occasionally provided to them at difficult times..."

language of Islam…" (p. 138) and this increasingly opened the door to fundamental misunderstandings and misconceptions between the two cultures.

Al-Jīlī is no exception. He wrote in *Al-Insān al-Kāmil*:

The people of the book are divided into many groups. As for the *barâhimah* they claim that they belong to the religion of Abraham and that they are of his progeny and possess special acts of worship … The *barâhimah* worship God absolutely without [recourse to] prophet or messenger. In fact, they say there is nothing in the world of existence except that it be the created of God. They testify to His Oneness in Being, but deny the prophets and messengers completely. Their worship of the Truth is like that of the prophets before their prophetic mission. They claim to be the children of Abraham - upon whom be peace - and say that they possess a book written for them by Abraham - upon whom be peace - himself, except that they say that it came from His Lord. In it the truth of things is mentioned and it has five parts. As for the four parts they permit their reading to everyone. But as for the fifth part they do not allow its reading except to a few among them, because of its depth and unfathomableness.[57] It is well known among them that whoever reads the fifth part of their book will of necessity come into the fold of Islam and enter into the religion of Muḥammad - upon whom be peace (as cited by Nasr 1999a, pp. 139-140).

As Stroumsa (1999) explains, "In addition to quite accurate descriptions of the people of India (*ahl al-hind*) and their culture, early Islamic heresiographical traditions repeatedly refer to a certain group called *Barāhima.* These traditions, recounted also by Jewish authors, attribute to the *Barāhima* the rejection of all prophets, on account of the supremacy and sufficiency of the human intellect" (p. 145). She also points out that contemporary scholarship is still unclear as to the precise identity of the *Barāhima,* and that authors such as Paul Kraus, with whom however she disagrees, have "argued that no

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[57] A reference to the Sanskrit esoteric texts of the *Upanishads* in Vedantic Hinduism.

source mentions the Brahmans as deniers of prophecy before Ibn al-Rāwandī,"[58] and therefore he may have "invented the *Barāhima* as a cover for his own views" (*Ibid.*).   It is then debatable whether the word *Barāhima* refers exclusively to the Hindu priests, to specific groups of them, to the Hindu faith as a whole, to people completely unrelated to India, or to a fictitious group. The Baghdad theologian Ibn ʿAqīl (d. 513/1119), of the Ḥanbalī school, "associates the ṣūfīs with the *Barāhima*" (*Ibid.,* p. 169). Nasr (1999a) contributes to this debate saying: "many Sufis in India called Hinduism the religion of Adam," and as "Abraham is, for Islam, the original patriarch identified with the primordial religion," therefore the "connection of the name of the *barâhimah* … with Abraham was precisely an assertion of the primordial nature of the Hindu tradition in the Muslim mind" (p. 139).

Calder (1994) maintains that this passage from Al-Jīlī is as confusing as other sources in establishing who the people defined with the collective term *Barāhima* really are. Besides, Calder suggests, the author having his own theological agenda does not assist in their identification. In fact, Calder painstakingly illustrates a number of sources that seem to prove that over the centuries the word *Barāhima* came to signify different groups of people. Indeed, while some late sources - e.g., Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) - do manifestly refer to religious traditions typical of the Hindu Brahmins, others evidently do not. Among the latter, he mentions in particular Muḥammad Ibn Al-Tayyib Al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) who identifies two different groups of *Barāhima,* those who believe in prophets, and those who do not, except for Adam or Abraham alone. Neither of the two groups, Calder concludes, shows any evidence of a Hindu background, but rather of a non better-identified

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[58] D. *c.* 245/860 or 298/912.

monotheistic Judaeo-Christian one, or even of "an Abrahamic movement in the pre-Islamic Near East, a movement based on rejection of the prophecy of Moses, Jesus, and, later, Muḥammad" (p. 48). Incidentally, both Stroumsa and Calder use either sarcasm or a rather explicitly captious tone in their respective pages, unpleasantly criticising each other's approaches and conclusions with reference to the *Barāhima* question.

We know that Al-Jīlī visited Kushi, in India, around the year 789/1387 and was presumably exposed to the local cultural and religious traditions (Zaydān 1988, p. 16). If he did indeed refer to Hinduism in the passage above, apart from his obviously patchy knowledge of that religious system, nonetheless he is able there to express a certain acknowledgement of the validity of a religious experience so alien to his. As in the background, he also re-affirms the universal valence of the doctrine of the unity of being, even encompassing what Al-Jīlī would have considered the most authentic dimension of the Hindu faith, its mystical tradition.

Massignon (1997 [1954]) is of the opinion that it was in the encounter of the two mystical traditions that Islam was offered the opportunity to spread into the Indian sub-continent, "not by war but by mysticism and the great orders of mystics..." (p. 61) along the paths of thousands of Muslim refugees that moved peacefully into India fleeing the Mongol invasion of Persia.

In this context, it is not surprising that we find even in Al-Jīlī traces of Indian influences. One may touch, as Nicholson (1994 [1921]) has done, on Vedanta tenets exhibiting some similarity with Al-Jīlī's distinction between God as endowed with

qualities and attributes (God in relation to the created order) and God as pure Essence. Furthermore, Hinduism and Buddhism contain in themselves elements of the same dualism that we encounter in Al-Jīlī, opposing the present human condition of existence dominated by senses, and the liberated, enlightened, higher status of the *Perfect Human Being*. We have already seen parallels with a certain dualism in Plato. The Greek master had referred to *metempsychosis* as a consequence of this state of things. Some sort of moral retribution in the context of an existence where evil actions of a past life bear a cost in terms of obligations, which need to be discharged. Alternatively, in other contexts, an explanation of the doctrine of *reminiscence*, the human soul's remembering of the paradigmatic *ideas*. Interestingly, this strikes a cord with one of Hinduism principal tenets, that of the inexorable law of the Karma, adopted of course also by Buddhism and others. It is an application of the natural law of cause and effect: every human action motivated by passions has consequences that will not just go away. On the contrary, they will cause the human soul to return to life on Earth, in a cycle that can only be broken by breaking free of the human subservience to passions, in a constant effort to detach oneself from the chains of fear and desire (Buddhism). Behind this teaching is a form of dualism, articulated especially by the Samkhya school of Hinduism, based on the belief in the opposition of two universal principles, *Purusha* and *Prakriti.* The former is Sanskrit for *Cosmic Man*, referring to the conscious soul, our real self. The latter means matter, the material world of senses. Again, the parallel between these principles and some of the elements of Al-Jīlī's own system is intriguing.

Al-Jīlī's tendentious openness to the validity of other religions is not surprising in light of Ibn 'Arabī's belief in the "universality of revelation," as exemplified in this passage from *Al-Futuhat al-makkiyya*:

> Know that when God, the Exalted, created the creatures He created them in kinds and in each kind He placed the best and chose from the best the élite. These are the faithful (*mu'minûn*). And He chose from the faithful the élite, who are the saints, and from these élite the quintessence. These are the prophets (*anbiyâ'*). And from this quintessence He chose the finest parts and they are the prophets who bring a Divine Law… (as cited by Nasr 1999a, p. 148).

This doctrine of universality rises both from Ibn 'Arabī's principle, later picked up by Al-Jīlī, of the universality of the *Perfect Human Being*, and by the typically Sufi belief that religions are responses to the multiplicity of expressions of God's attributes. In his *Al-Insān al-Kāmil* Al-Jīlī explains:

> There is nothing in existence except that it worships God the Most High in its state and speech and acts, nay in its essence and qualities. And everything in existence obeys God Most High. But acts of worship differ because of the difference of the exigencies of the Divine Names and Qualities (*Ibid.*).

As we saw earlier in this chapter in the section dedicated to Ibn 'Arabī, worshipping God in other religions, and even idolatry, no longer constitute a problem if the object of worship is understood to be – although adherents to other religions may not be consciously aware of this - a manifestation of the Absolute One and not another subsistent God.

Al-Jīlī, however, qualifies his openness when in *The Perfect Human Being* he sets out a table of the ten main forms of religious expression: Idolaters, Physicists (believers in the natural phenomena), Astrologists, Dualists (believers in light and darkness), Magi (fire

worshippers), Materialists (who do not worship anything), Brahmans, Jews, Christians and Muslims (Nicholson 1994 [1921], pp. 131-132). In this list he distinguishes those whose faith is based on the preaching of the prophets (Jews, Christians and Muslims), and those who are the originators of their own form of worship. Ultimately, however, both groups will be saved "since all worship God by Divine necessity…" (*Ibid.,* p. 133) and, Nicholson tendentiously adds, because "Pantheism cannot allow evil to be permanent" (p. 136). As for the Christians, Al-Jīlī specifically singles them out almost in the same breath accusing them of polytheism because of their Trinitarian doctrines, and affirming that out of all the others except for the Muslims they are the closest to God because they worship the same One God in Jesus the Son, Mary the Mother, and the Holy Spirit (*Ibid.,* p. 140). Elsewhere he describes the Christian Trinity as consisting of the Father, the Mother and the Son, which is a blunder not unique to Al-Jīlī and yet once more telling of his inadequate proficiency in comparative religion.

Chapter 3

CONTROVERSIES ABOUT GOD'S TRANSCENDENCE

Controversies on issues relating to the doctrine of the divine attributes and to anthropomorphic expressions contained in the sacred texts that seem to ascribe bodily traits to God, plagued the Islamic theological world for at least four centuries, starting with the second/eighth century. However, these controversies have also informed successive periods of Islamic history and they are certainly still relevant in the works of Al-Jīlī. In fact, this dissertation proposes that the issue of anthropomorphism and the relation between God and the contingent order is central to his philosophy. The edited text of *The Cave and the Inscription,* its translation and annotations contained in the next chapter are intended to offer an exemplification of Al-Jīlī's stand on this contentious issue and of his contribution to the resolution of the apparent paradox of divine immanence (*tashbīh*) and transcendence (*tanzīh*).

These two terms, so relevant within a medieval Islamic theological discourse, actually never appear in the Qur'ān and only one of them, *tanzīh,* is once mentioned in a *ḥadīth.* The first of the two terms has negative connotations, because it translates not only the technical category of immanence, but also the more controversial notion of divine anthropomorphism. Evidently, the Qur'ān often depicts God in anthropomorphic terms, referring to God's face, hands and eyes in several verses, and to God speaking, hearing and seeing. Divine feelings are also described, such as wrath, mercy, patience, forgetfulness, etc. Only "passive" anthropomorphism never features in the Holy Book: God is never "seen," for instance, or "heard" or "touched."

At the height of the medieval controversies on God's transcendence, the issue at stake was more than just striking the right balance between a literal and a metaphorical or figurative reading of Qur'anic anthropomorphic references. Indeed, it was rendered much more complicated than that by the development of the doctrine of divine attributes and their significance in the context of a correct interpretation of the divine revelation and of the nature of God.

Winter (2008), with reference to this tension in Islam between what he helpfully translates as "affirming difference" (*tanzīh*) and "affirming resemblance" (*tashbīh*) (p. 6) suggests that - albeit with a certain amount of generalisation – the former was often the object of exploration by theologians, while the latter by Sufis. It was only through the contribution of greater figures such as Ibn 'Arabī that a certain "symbiosis of the two disciplines" was obtained.[1]

Being a representative of the school of Ibn 'Arabī, Al-Jīlī was of course involved in this attempt to reconcile divine immanence and transcendence. Therefore, while the first three parts of this chapter intend to summarise origins and developments of the arguments offered by some of the major players in this dispute, especially the Mu˶tazilites and the Ash˶arites, the last section will attempt to illustrate the extent of the influence that these controversies have played in Al-Jīlī and the relevance they have in his thought. References will be made here to his major literary work, *Al-Insān al-kāmil,* but also to *Al-Kahf wa al-raqīm.* The latter has been chosen in this dissertation as a relevant exemplification of the

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[1] *Ibid.*

solution propounded by the author to the apparent dilemma facing Islamic theology, of having to reconcile divine immanence and transcendence, and to justify God's interaction with the created order in a manner consistent with the Qur'anic revelation.

1. THE MUʿTAZILITES

Self-professed "People of (God's) oneness and justice," nearly all their works from before the fourth/tenth century have survived only in quotations by other authors. Their approach is characterised by rationalist confrontational attitudes - that gained them the nickname of "People of the dispute" - towards opposed theological positions within Islam, and external perceived threats such as Persian dualistic tendencies and Trinitarian Christian theology.

The movement, whose original members led rather ascetic lives, rose at the time of the first schismatic conflict within Islam further to the assassination of ʿAlī that saw the ascent of Shīʿism in armed opposition to the newly established Umayyad Syrian Caliphate. The fragmentation of the Muslim community along doctrinal lines, "which often came hand in hand with political dissension and communal split" (Stroumsa 1999, p. 2), has always been one of its characteristics since its inception. At times, this would be considered a positive expression of pluralism, an asset to the richness of the Muslim heritage, as exemplified in the words of a non-canonical *ḥadīth:* "The disagreements of my community are a blessing."[2] Other times it would be perceived as a liability, as in the words of this other

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[2] Cited by Stroumsa (1999), p. 2.

ḥadīth: "Every community is tested by a predicament: the predicament of my community are the sects."[3]

Soon the movement grew into a school of thought, with headquarters in Baghdad and Baṣra, characterised by the introduction of a new concept: that of "Rational Law," alongside the already established "Revealed" and "Natural" laws (in the fields of sacred Scriptures and philosophy respectively). What Rational Law implies is that the message of the prophets only confirms what human reason is already capable of grasping about God, God's nature, and God's will for human kind. One should not forget, however, that in Islam privileged sources of the theological discourse are traditionally both "transmission" (*Naql*) (i.e., Qur'ān and Ḥadīth) and reason (*'Aql*). Martin & Woodward (1997)[4] point out for instance that to "regard Ibn Taymiya as a Ḥanbalī reformer is not to categorize him as a champion of irrationalism. Despite his sharp criticism of the Muʿtazili rationalists … Ibn Taymiya urged Muslims to utilize the faculty of rational knowledge in order to achieve intellectual certainty about the meaning of revelation … Our conclusion is that Ibn Taymiya was a more rational and independent-minded thinker than many of his later interpreters seem to have appreciated" (p. 398).

The Muʿtazilites may be considered the founders within Islam of a theological discourse (*Kalām*) established on the same intellectual, methodological basis as Neoplatonic and Aristotelian philosophy without necessarily espousing Greek philosophical doctrines or conducting philosophical investigations into matters pertaining to Islamic philosophical disciplines (*Falsafa*). However, their intellectual dependence on non-Islamic

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[3] *Ibid.*
[4] As cited by Khalil (2006).

philosophical approaches, rather than their advocacy of the use of reason in theological investigations, was one of the main criticisms of their positions. One case in point is the adoption of the Aristotelian argument that justifies the existence of God as a necessary perfect being, placed outside the universal dynamics of accidents, causes and effects.

Their atomistic theory, possibly derived from their study of the natural world, would conceive of all that exists as being constructed as an agglomeration of invisible and indivisible particles, or atoms.[5] These would constitute the building blocs not only of the physical world, but also of abstract concepts, such as time, and of so-called "non existent" items that are imaginary and therefore exist only in the human mind. Literally, all that exists is composed of atoms, and God sustains the universe and the world in which we exist in all its constituent dimensions, with continuous acts of creation of these atomic particles *ex nihilo*. The only exception to this universal rule is human free will that acts outside of God's direct intervention. Everything else, including the apparent principles of cause and effect, is determined in reality by individual divine acts of creation.

Therefore, their refusal to concede any form of anthropomorphic description of God[6] became an expression of extreme transcendentalism[7] that could not possibly offer a tenable resolution of the paradox inherent to the belief of a transcendent God at the same time engaging in continuous acts of creations within the contingent order.[8] Any reference in the Qur'ān to anthropomorphic descriptions of God they would explain away as merely

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[5] One should not assume, however, that this doctrine was universally espoused by all Muʿtazilites at every stage of their long history. For example, Al-Naẓẓām (d. 221/836) famously objected to the atomist doctrines of his master – and uncle - Abū Al-Hudhayl (d. *c.* 227/841).

[6] As for example in Al-Bāḳillānī 's *Tamhīd*.

[7] Cf. GIMARET, D. (1993). "Muʿtazila." In: *EI².* VII (783-793). E.J. Brill: Leiden-New York.

[8] Cf. Abū Al-Hudhayl (d. *c.* 227/841).

metaphorical. The Muʿtazilites made of *tanzīh* an absolute on which they could not compromise, presumably as a reaction to anthropomorphic tendencies of certain Sunnī theologians such as Dāwūd Al-Jawāribī (second/eighth century) or Shīʿīte ones such as Hishām Ibn Al-ḥakam (d. 279/892).

The evident weakness of Muʿtazilite ontology became an easy target of later Ashʿarite criticism that saw in the Muʿtazilites' difficulty to justify the concept of "non-existence" or "nothingness" alongside God, the need to clarify that "nothing meant *no thing:* nothing had no ontological value whatsoever" (Wisnovsky 2005, p. 107). By the same reckoning, imaginary concepts are also simply "non-existent," because they cannot be placed on the same plane as truly existing objects detectable by the human senses.

The rationalist approach of the Muʿtazilites extended to all major disciplines of learning and human activity, such as philology and politics, exerting its influence in affairs closely linked to the fall of the Umayyad dynasty and the rise of the house of ʿAbbās, especially under the rule of Al-Ma'mūn (d. 218/833). It was at that time that the Muʿtazilites began to be identified with the political and military establishment, exerting their power in a manner intolerant of ideological dissent.[9] The arrest of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 240/855) constitutes notable evidence of this. At some point, the ʿAbbāsīd ruler appointed the Muʿtazilite main leader of the day, Aḥmad Ibn Abū Du'ād (d. 240/854) chief justice (*Qāḍī*).[10]

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[9] Scholars such as Nyberg (*EI ^{1}. Muʿtazila* . III (787-8) maintain that the whole Muʿtazilite movement included from its early days at the time of Wāṣil Ibn ʿAṭāʾ (d. 131/748) very precise political objectives.

[10] However, on the previously widely held assumption that the Muʿtazilites' was the official doctrine of the ʿAbbāsīd regime, Gimaret (1993, *op. cit.*) has this to say, "This interpretation, as proved now, has no validity. Not only did the first Muʿtazila not support the ʿAbbāsid movement, but a large number of them participated in the insurrection of Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbd Allāh [*q.v.*] in 145/762 against Manṣūr (cf. J. van Ess, *Une*

The Muʿtazilites denied the possibility of the beatific vision for the soul of the elect after death or, for that matter, for the mystics,[11] since such experiences would imply that God possesses some form of corporality, given that only corporeal beings can be seen. Scriptural verses that seem to deny this, evidently describe figuratively some other form of awareness of the presence of God. It derives from all this, therefore, that the Qurʾān itself, being God's speech, must itself be created - because neither speech nor any other anthropomorphic attribute can be found in God - and should be subject to rational interpretation of the text. In the third/ninth century, Ibn Ḥanbal successfully opposed this position, arguing that God's speech, and the Qurʾān with it, is an eternal attribute of God, although scriptural words that people quote in their writing or in their recitation are not in themselves eternal.

The outcome of this specific controversy contributed substantially to a profound crisis within the Muʿtazilite school and its eventual demise two centuries later. This crisis was also precipitated by an almost universal surge of opposition from all fronts that led to mass demonstrations in the streets against this unpopular, intellectual movement, even with the burning of its books. Catalyst of this opposition is often considered the person of Al-Ashʿarī, founder of the Ashʿarites.

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lecture à rebours de l'histoire du muʿtazilisme, 120-1) … It was only on the accession of al-Maʾmūn that Muʿtazilism became, for a brief period, official doctrine."

[11] Cf. ʿAbd Al-Jabbār's *Al-Mughnī* and Juwaynī's *Al-Irshād*.

The theses that the Muʿtazilites propounded, however, survived their movement and are still upheld today among some Shīʿītes, Zaydīs and Imāmīs in particular, for example in the writings of Muḥammad ʿAbdu,[12] a modernist reformer and Grand Mufti of Egypt.

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[12] *Risāla al-tawḥīd,* 1897.

2. THE ASHʿARITES

That of the divine attributes is arguably one of the key issues in attempting to resolve the problem of God's relationship with the created order. This is probably why theological and philosophical controversies on the correct interpretation of the nature of these attributes constitute a dialectical constant that spans over centuries of Islamic thought and mysticism. Under the leadership of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d.241/855) and in opposition to the Muʿtazilite denial of the self-subsistence of the divine attributes, so-called *Traditionalists* maintained that human beings could not satisfactorily establish whether divine attributes are other than God. In the person of their founder, Al-Ashʿarī, the Ashʿarites reiterated this, announcing that attributes are neither God's essence nor something other than God: *lā ʿaynuhu wa lā ghayruhu.*

ʿAlī Ibn Ismaʿīl Al-Ashʿarī was originally a Muʿtazilite who in about 299/912, addressing the audience gathered in the Baṣra mosque, publicly announced his conversion to the Traditionalists' view on the attributes of God and later published a number of works in which he refuted his own Muʿtazilite positions prior to 299/912.

Initially opposed by the Ḥanbalī School, Al-Ashʿarī and his disciples, like the Muʿtazilites, constituted a recognisable movement whose members simultaneously held other allegiances, and for this reason were capable of influencing much of Islamic thought arguably up to the present day (Al-Fārūqī 1986, p. 291). Among the most prominent representatives of the Ashʿarites we find Al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015-16), Al-Isfarāʾinī (d. 418/1027-28), Al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037-38), Al-Juwaynī

(d. 478/1085-6), possibly Al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), Al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153), Fakhr Al-Dīn Al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), Al-Ījī (d. 756/1355) and Al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413). Some consider "their thought and method" as "the first crystallization of Sunnī theology" (Al-Fārūqī 1986, p. 286). Their main aim was to free theology from the shackles of rationalism gone too far. In their opinion, literal interpretation of the sacred scriptures and adherence to God by faith needed to be redeemed from overzealous tendencies to explain away all the major Islamic tenets with rational categories. Religion had to be reinstated as the legitimate custodian of revealed truths, and God had to be accepted and described, in Al-Ashʿarī's own words, "as (God) described Himself and as the Prophet described Him, without (asking) why": *kamā waṣafa nafsahu wa kamā waṣafahu rasūluhu, bilā kayfa.* One could legitimately argue here that confronted with the conflicting tensions within Islam between literal readings of anthropomorphic descriptions of God in the sacred texts, and allegorical interpretations of the same, and between God's perceived immanence and transcendence, the Ashʿarite movement, at least initially, opted for some sort of suspension of judgment, thus leaving the question unresolved. Later Ashʿarite teaching, especially with Al-Baghdādī and Al-Juwaynī, ascribed metaphorical significance to some of the anthropomorphic descriptions of God in the sacred Scriptures.

In keeping with traditionalist views, Ashʿarites reaffirmed the dogma of the uncreated nature of the divine Qur'ān - in its *maʿnā* if not in its contingent expressions such as words and letters - and therefore of all the attributes of God. Aware of the excesses of anthropomorphic predispositions inherent to this theological position and, again, apparently unable to tackle the complexity of the theological paradoxes contained in these

questions, they maintained that human reason is not capable of grasping the full extent of these truths, and yet the human heart knows them to be such.

Ashʿarites saw themselves as a middle way between Muʿtazilite rationalism and Ḥanbalite traditionalism, as well as, in the following two centuries, between philosophy and mysticism. Their inclination towards a philosophical investigation of theological matters was often met with hostility by the Traditionalists. It was eventually vindicated, however, by the rise of Al-Ghazālī's authoritative positions. He was sympathetic towards a greater role played by philosophy in the search for and formulation of revealed truths, and in the defence of these truths against ill-conceived threats, as perceived for instance in the complex structures of classic Aristotelian philosophy.

By the time of the Saljuq Persian caliphate in the 6th/12th century Ashʿarite doctrines enjoyed widespread consensus (Ernst 1996, p. 28) and continued to do so, despite some Hanbalī opposition, until the start of the 8th/14th century.

3. THE MUSHABBIHA

In this brief overview one cannot fail to mention, besides the most important contestants in the dispute concerning alleged anthropomorphic interpretations of the Qur'anic revelation, namely the Muʿtazilites and the Ashʿarites, some other minor groups that however do have a place in the overall picture depicting this page of the history of the Islamic thought. These are groups that would engage in perceived inadmissible approaches to sacred texts containing anthropomorphic references to the person of God. Trimingham (1971) cites ʿAlī Al-Hujwīrī (d. *c.* 467/1074) who mentions among the so-called "condemned" sects of Sufism that of the *Anthropomorphists* (p. 11). In fact, the term Mushabbiha emerges in medieval literature as a collective name (taken from the word *tashbīh* for *antrhopomorphism*) that came to describe, often rather disparagingly, indiscriminately and inaccurately, minor groups and movements allegedly associated with a theological position favourable to a rather literal interpretation of the figurative language of the Qur'ān. Outside of theology the term *tashbīh,* has been used to describe also the illegitimate use of images depicting saintly figures. It is however in the evolution of an exegetical approach to the Scriptures that anthropomorphic tendencies began to emerge especially as Islam continued to expand geographically. Interpreting the significance of expressions describing God in the use of divine attributes such as speech and vision necessarily involved the risk of stepping across very fine lines marking the distinction between legitimate figurative language and literal interpretations of it.

As we said earlier, anthropomorphic tendencies are to be found both in Qur'anic texts and in the *Aḥādīth,* and only became an issue when received no longer as metaphorical and

linguistic devices to describe God in relation to the world, but when taken in their literal sense.

Groups who have done this have often been contemptuously described with another collective appellative, that of *Ahl al-ḥashw* - also *ḥashawiyya* or *ḥashwiyya* - which means *people of the stuffing*, i.e., those who filled their arguments with inconsequential stuff. Among the most renowned and established of these were the *Aṣḥāb* (*followers of*) or *Ahl* (*people of*) *al-ḥadīth.* These "Traditionalists" *par excellence* were less of a splinter aggregation of extremists and more of a mainstream movement. They grew out of a widespread dissatisfaction with a perceived excessive stress placed on a rational approach to tradition by the emerging legal schools beginning with the second/eighth century. The followers of this movement therefore propounded a return to a more purist faithfulness to the prophetic *Aḥādīth* and embarked in a systematic search and gathering of texts, many of which by universal consent considered non-authentic, that however since the third/ninth century were included in the approved *ḥadīth* collections.

Apart from the excesses of those who considered authentic all sorts of handed down traditions, and notwithstanding exceptions in which legal affairs were after all the bone of contention, generally the aim of the promoters of *Ahl al-ḥadīth* – many of whom were themselves followers of a formal school of *fiqh* - was to subject the requirements of the law to more strictly religious terms of reference, especially in opposition to the advocates of "subjective opinion" (*ra'y*) with their tendency to distance themselves from scriptures-based tradition.

On the other side of the divide, as it were, separating mainstream and extreme sections of the supporters of the supremacy of *Aḥādīth* over legalistic approaches to Islam, were the followers of the Karrāmiyya. This movement developed especially in Persia and in Jerusalem over three centuries, beginning with the third/ninth century and was often accused of propagating false *Aḥādīth*. Its founder is Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Karrām (d. 255/869), author of *'Adhāb al-qabr,* or *Punishment of the Grave*, who suffered imprisonment for disturbing the peace especially in the countryside, preaching against Sunnīs and Shīʿīs. He gave rise to a sect charged with unacceptable expressions of anthropomorphism. In the seventh/thirteenth century, for instance, Al-Bayḍāwī strongly criticised their doctrines that went as far as conceiving God as having a body and residing in a well-defined celestial region above the Throne, as reported by Calverley and Pollock (2002, p. 756). Ibn Karrām reduced God to a substance, hence subject to limitations. However, he also preached moderation, self-mortification and a more merciful interpretation of the law, allowing for some relaxing of the legal requirements attached to prayer and to the handling of dead bodies, and preserving the status of believers for sinful or heretical Muslims. Three, or seven, or even twelve other sects - opinions on this vary - branched out from this movement over the years, as people, especially from the masses, were attracted to the simple and coherent lifestyle of its leaders. However, opposition to them by the establishment, degenerated at times in acts of violence, as reported for instance by the historian Ibn Funduq (d. 565/1169).

The Karrāmiyya was soon wiped out, probably caught up in the destructive wave of the Mongol conquest. However, what remained in their wake was the influence that anthropomorphic readings of the sacred scriptures still had on Ḥanbalī thinkers such as Ibn

Ḥāmid (b. *c.* 950) and Ibn Zāghūnī (d. 526/1132), whose writings remained in circulation for quite some time, and were still widely read when Ibn Al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) and others mounted a relentless attack against them from within the Ḥanbalī school in Baghdad. A Sufi with a certain "distrust of mysticism in its more radical and popular forms" (Swartz 2002, p. 15) in his *Kitāb akhbār al-ṣifāt* Al-Jawzī insisted that only revelation (*Naql*) and reason (*'Aql*) should be considered sources of knowledge. Observation made him conclude that the world is composite and "everything composite must by definition have a composer" (Swartz 2002, p.49). Or, in other words, everything is an accident and everything must have a cause. God is the first, uncreated "cause" in a succession of causes and accidents that characterizes the created order. God - Al-Jawzī argues – cannot be corporeal, because anything corporeal is composite, and God is the first composer and cause that therefore does not require another. Thus, basing his arguments on reason, Al-Jawzī demonstrates that God is not corporeal nor can we attribute to God bodily characteristics such as movement, change, space and even time. However, reason has its limits, in that it cannot tell us how God relates to the world, what God expects from us, and so on. It is the role of revelation that of revealing to humanity these dimensions of the relationship between God and the world, and of completing our understanding of the nature of a God Who – albeit incorporeal – yet is capable of communicating, of seeing and hearing. Al-Jawzī is aware of the fact that these realisations seem to contradict reason, assigning to God faculties that belong to a corporeal being. Therefore, Al-Jawzī explains that revelation, by divine will, is transmitted to humans by means of a human language, by definition incapable of expressing in full truths that are of a divine nature. This human language then is expressed in human categories, employing therefore metaphors that may describe these truths in ways comprehensible to human beings. Therefore, the language of

revelation must be subjected to the rational process of allegorical exegesis (*Ta'wīl*). However, Swartz (2002) rightly points out that this line of reasoning seems to diminish the divine valence of the language of the Qur'ān: "What happens to the doctrine of the Quran as the eternal, unchanging, unconditioned word of God when it is suggested that its language represents an attempt to accommodate the needs of ordinary, uneducated human beings?" (p. 55).

4. AL-JĪLĪ

The diatribe between Muʿtazilite rationalism on one hand and the Ashʿarites on the other (the positions of the latter almost a reformation of the former) could possibly be described as an illustration - the tip of the iceberg, as it were - of the attempt to address the two conflicting tensions within Islam that have continued to surface throughout the unfolding of Islamic history. Namely, the tension between the anthropomorphic tendencies - some would call them temptations - inherent to a literal reading of the sacred texts, and a more allegorical interpretation; and the tension between the seemingly irreconcilably contradictory truths concerning God's immanence and God's transcendence. We have seen earlier in this chapter the attempts by Muʿtazilites and Ashʿarites to resolve the intellectual impasse generated by the paradoxical ambiguity of the role that the divine Person maintains *vis-à-vis* the created order. We have also looked at examples of some theological movements embracing differing degrees of anthropomorphic tendencies inherent to a more literal approach to Qur'anic imagery, and their critique by figures such as Al-Jawzī. As a matter of fact, Swartz (2002) points out the Muʿtazilite influences identifiable in Al-Jawzī's teachings, namely the primacy of reason as a privileged channel for the acquisition of knowledge, his defence of allegorical interpretation in the reading of the sacred scriptures, and his rejection of anthropomorphic interpretations of the same (pp. 62-63). All these attempts to unpack the paradox of God's immanence and transcendence shed light on Al-Jīlī's own approach, partly in line with Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine, to the issues at stake.

At the core of the Muʿtazilite-Ashʿarite controversy over God's *tanzīh* and *tashbīh* is the whole question of God's attributes that often became the battleground, as it were, for conflicting views on these issues to be fought or at least passionately explored. Both the Muʿtazilites and the Ashʿarites endeavour really to reach the same conclusion, which is the justification of God's immanence epitomised in the doctrine of the divine attributes, without necessarily jeopardising God's transcendence - in opposition therefore to an anthropomorphic representation of God - but to reach this destination they moved along different paths. The Muʿtazilites would therefore define attributes as depictions of God's Essence. The Ashʿarites would interpret them as figurative representations of God defying human categorisations, placed as they are beyond human comprehension. Khalil (2006) compares this attitude, found also in Ibn Taymiyya, to the position of "Mālik ibn Anas (d.795 CE) regarding the obligatory nature of belief in God's mounting the Throne, the unknowability of the means by which this occurred, and the innovation involved in inquiring about this process. Thus, the idea was that it was necessary for one to accept the 'mounting' without asking how (*bila kayfa)...*" (p. 400).

With particular reference to anthropomorphism, Muʿtazilites and Ashʿarites fall within the four models - also referred to in the annotations to *Tha Cave and the Inscription* - which Netton (1989) enumerates, of theological positions dealing with anthropomorphic descriptions of God in the Qurʾān:

1. The Qurʾanic model (Ibn Ḥanbal and Al-Ashʿarī): unquestionable acceptance of anthropomorphic renditions of God.

2. The allegorical model (Muʿtazilites): divine features described in the sacred book have a figurative meaning.

3. The mystical model (Sufism): attributes as expressions of God.

4. The Neo-Platonic emanationist model (Ibn Sīnā) (pp. 4-6).

Al-Jīlī, clearly proceeding from a mystical, Sufi tradition opposed to anthropomorphism, argues in *The Cave and the Inscription* that this is a legitimate imposition on God only if by it one means to describe God by means of God's manifestations in God's attributes, rather than to assign human features to God:

> [God] regards it as permissible to impose anthropomorphism on Him, and that alone. Since His anthropomorphism is contained in His transcendence and vice versa - in virtue of the opinion provided by the phraseology of the [Sacred] Book and the Sunna[13] - the invisible world will appear to you in the visible world, and the visible world will conceal itself from you within the invisible world. [14]

He illustrates this concept by employing the analogy of the dot: although almost invisible to the naked eye, it is however made visible by the letters of the alphabet that are comprised of a succession of dots:

> …In the same way since the dot is indeed in all the letters, all the letters are *forced* into it. What I mean by *forced* is that the permanence of the letters in [the dot] is sensible but their presence cannot be perceived before they [are made to] emerge from it. [15]

He then clarifies this analogy by applying it in particular to the letter *Bā'* in the Arabic alphabet:

> The dot said to the *Bā',* "O letter, indeed I am your origin because out of me you have been composed. But then it is you who in your composition are my origin. Because every portion of you is a dot. So you are the whole and I am the portion, and the whole is the origin while the portion is the

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[13] A reference here to the anthropomorphic language of portions of the sacred texts.
[14] Section 2.

[15] *Ibid.*

derivative. However, I am truly the origin, because composing you is in my nature… As for ascertaining my unity with you, if not for you I would not be the dot of the *Bā'*, and if not for me you would not be the dotted *Bā'*.[16]

To better understand his analogical reasoning, we must first consider that Sufism found in some post-Al-Ghazālī Ashʿarite doctrinal constructions, reconciled with Sunni traditions, an increased freedom to explore ever more audacious ways to interpret the sacred texts, experimenting in particular with what we may call "unitive metaphysics" and the doctrine of "unity of being." This assumption could be illustrated for instance by one of the most typical Ashʿarite doctrines to influence considerably Al-Jīlī's mystical philosophy: the doctrine of the Essence (*Dhāt*) of God.

With regards to the subject of the divine Essence, we find already among some distinctive elements of Muʿtazilite doctrine which seem to resonate with Al-Jīlī, the concept of the "necessary Being." That of *al-wājib al-wujūd* is a doctrine derived from Avicenna dear to Al-Jīlī and present both in *Al-Insān al-kāmil* and in *The Cave and the Inscription.* God is for Al-Jīlī the necessary Being in whom *Wujūd* and Essence coincide. He employs this notion almost as a device for a mystical comprehension of God. Therefore, in God - the "necessary Being" - Essence and Being coincide to include all and its negation. In contemplation, the mystics are those equipppped to realise the mystical *fanā',* the realisation of God's all-encompassing Essence in which one's self is obliterated in the awareness that only God really exists. In *Sharḥ al-futūḥāt al-makkiyya* Al-Jīlī calls the mystics *'Ārifūn* (those who know, the initiated) who, as Al-Massri (1998) explains in

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[16] Sections 3.

her study of this work of Al-Jīlī, are the inheritors of the Prophet's spiritual qualities, "the successors of Muḥammad in the inner world" (p. 182).

However, contemplation by the mystics of the transcendence of God does not explain God's immanence. The ineffability of the divine Essence was partly circumvented by the Ashˁarites employing the category of "Substance." Al-Jīlī resorted instead to the divine attributes. He essentially denied divine immanence in its common meaning because, as Iqbal (1964) explains when describing Al-Jīlī's views on this matter, "God is not immanent because He is Himself existence. Eternal existence is the other self of God, it is the light through which He sees Himself. As the originator of an idea is existent in that idea, so God is present in nature. The difference between God and man, as one may say, is that His ideas materialise themselves, ours do not" (p. 126). To reverse the argument, therefore, in Al-Jīlī God is indeed immanent, but only inasmuch as God is the existence of creation itself. In his work *The Perfect Human Being* the author renders this with the analogy of ice and water, as we will see. For Al-Jīlī, as it had been for Ibn ‘Arabī before him, divine Essence is the Absolute pervading all that exists, because all that exists does so only inasmuch as it shares in the Absolute's Essence, like water is the essence of ice. Essence, therefore, can be compared to a subtle (*laṭīf*) substance (*jawhar*) which renders the whole universe one with the Absolute: everything being different from everything else in relation to its form or accidents, but being one with everything else and with the Absolute in relation to the *jawhar*.

However, on one hand a distinction needs to be made between the concept of Essence for Ibn ‘Arabī and Al-Jīlī for whom divine Essence is the Absolute transcendent

God, and for the Ashʿarites, for whom Essence signified a substance not clearly defined but certainly not identifiable with the divine Absolute. On the other hand, since the Absolute remains, by definition, ineffable and transcendent, to circumvent the ineffability of God Al-Jīlī employs the divine attributes as a springboard that enables the Sufi mystics to undertake a journey consisting of four stages towards the completeness of the *Perfect Human Being*: "Illumination of the Actions," "Illumination of the Names," "Illumination of the Attributes" and "Illumination of the Essence". In the first stage, the believers are so intimately connected with God that God acts through them. In the second stage, the mystics meditate on one of the names of God for as long as it takes for that name to shed light onto whatever separates the person from God until the mystics perceive themselves as being united with God within the parameters of that given divine attribute. In a third stage, mystics are so attuned with God that all the divine attributes are manifested in them so that they become complete, or *Perfect Human Beings,* even empowered to perform miracles. Finally, the mystics, now *Perfect Human Beings,* reach the point of complete union with the divine essence. The *Perfect Man par excellence* is of course the prophet Muḥammad:

…I lean onto the honourable and the greatest; secret of the divine secret, the one who joins together, the most obscure; dot that is the eye of the dotted letters: Muḥammad, lord of the Arabs and of the non-Arabs. Repository of the sanctuary of [all] truths and of [divine] oneness. Meeting place of the minutiae of transcendence and finitude. Revealer of the causal determinant of beauty old and new. Form of the perfect essence. The eternal and the everlasting in the gardens of the [divine] attributes. The eternal liberation in the field of divine affairs. May God bless and grant salvation to him and his leading people - those who adorn themselves with the pearls of those who [in their turn] annihilate themselves for his sake; those who with his teachings and his actions take stance on his behalf and in his place for him; and upon his family and his companions and his progeny and his offspring honour, respect, glory and exaltation.[17]

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[17] *The Cave and the Inscription,* Introduction.

The locus where this mystical identification takes place is the heart, where soul and mind coexist.

The controversy that ended with the demise of the rationalist position had not satisfactorily resolved the deep theological dilemma of the justification of God's immanence and transcendence: the perceived need to harmonise belief in the unquestionably transcendental nature of God and in the necessity of a relationship between God and creation, and in particular between humanity and a relational God. Not even the original contribution by Avicenna to the harmonisation, through Aristotelian categories, of the Neo-Platonic dilemma between an understanding of God as efficient cause and at the same time as final cause of all natural processes, obtained a satisfactory solution. As we saw earlier in chapter 2.1.1, Avicenna had reconciled the two apparent contradictions by distinguishing within God divine essence and existence.

In Al-Jīlī, but by no means exclusively in him, the metaphor of the *Perfect Human Being* is a response, typical of the mystical tradition of Islam, to this seemingly perennial paradox. It becomes a privileged way offered by the mystics to attempt the bridging of the separation between the concept of a God Who by definition transcends every definition, and a Universe supposedly proceeding from God and inhabited by God, and yet incapable of containing God. The *Perfect Human Being* in Ibn ʿArabī, Al-Jīlī and others is the *locus* of the harmonisation of the paradox. As made evident in the first three chapters of Al-Jīlī's masterpiece, divine nature would transcend any attempt to grasp it without some sort of intermediary. *Al-Insān al-kāmil,* acting as a catalyst, is such a medium, in which each

attribute of God and its corresponding Beautiful Name of God, are made perceivable by human senses. This concept in Al-Jīlī is extensively developed in his major literary work, *The Perfect Human Being,* and in other writings. Among these I have chosen *The Cave and the Inscription* as a privileged illustration of his doctrine, and in the next chapter I am going to present this early work by our author, edited, translated and explained in a series of annotations.

Chapter 4

AL-KAHF WA AL-RAQĪM

The present dissertation endeavors to identify in Al-Jīlī a credible contributor to the seemingly perennial debate within Islam on the dilemma of trying to harmonize God's transcendence and God's perceived immanence. That is to say, God's "otherness" that distinguishes the divine *Persona* from the contingent order, and at the same time God's relationship with a universe that has its origin in a divine act of creation and with which God evidently interacts, particularly in relation to humankind. Through the course of history, individual theologians and religious movements provided a number of solutions, often inadequate and inconsistent, in an attempt to grapple with this paradox. Al-Jīlī gave his own original contribution to the debate, mainly through the pages of his literary masterpiece, *Al-Insān al-kāmil,* but also, this dissertation would argue, through another work of his, *Al-Kahf wa al-raqīm.* Presumably on the basis of the evidence provided by Al-Jīlī in his other writings, Zaydān (1988) maintains that chronologically this is his first Sufi composition (p. 57). However, he does not provide evidence to justify this assertion. On the contrary, from Section 10.7, where Al-Jīlī seems to quote verses from an earlier longer poem of his, one may deduce that this is not after all the first of his Sufi compositions. Nevertheless, I concur with Zaydān in placing this near the top of the chronological list of Al-Jīlī's works in the light of the fact that elements of its content are often expanded in other, presumably subsequent books, as I have tried to illustrate in the description of Al-Jīlī's bibliography. *Al-Kahf wa al-raqīm* has been adopted here as an exemplification of the author's interest in the relationship between God and God's creatures. A treatise on the *basmala,* its main argument is that this Islamic formula illustrates and typifies this

relationship as one in which the universe appears united to its divine origin in a symbiosis mirrored by the nature of Arabic letters such as *Alif* and *Bā'*, and their relation to the diacritical dot. Admittedly not a completely original argument - it appears in several other authors, notably in Ibn 'Arabī himself - however, it addresses more exclusively the issue that, as we have just said, seems to be at the centre of Al-Jīlī's theological discourse on *tawḥīd*, namely the apparent paradox of God's immanence and transcendence.The present chapter offers an edited version of its Arabic text, a translation and annotations. Towards the completion of the translation, I have been able to access two main sources. One is preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge [Ff.6.38 3], running pages 389-425 of a manuscript that also contains Al-Jīlī's *Al-Insān al-kāmil* and that is "written in clear, good naskh,[1] with rubrications, in or about A.H. 1040,[2] by a Christian of Ḥama[3] called" Talja (Browne 1900, p. 15). For easy access, I was able to purchase an electronic copy of this manuscript - henceforth referred to as C. - from the University of Cambridge. A second manuscript - henceforth referred to as L. - preserved in the Library of the India Office, London [666.I fols 23v.-33] is missing several words and the last 3-5 pages.

I have checked the manuscripts against an Indian second edition - henceforth referred to as I.2 - published in 1336/1917 and kept at the Library of the University of Cambridge [Moh.130.b.30]. The frontispiece to the book explains that the volume is part of the legacy (*ex testamento*) of Edward Granville Browne (1862-1926), renowned Cambridge expert on Persian literature and history, to the library. A third edition - henceforth referred to as I.3 - published in 1340/1921 is also available there

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[1] *Neskhi,* ordinary cursive script, one of the earliest Arabic calligraphic styles.
[2] 1631 CE.
[3] In Syria.

[Adv.b.114.3(2)] in a volume containing in addition *Kitāb al-ittiḥāfāt* by Muḥammad Al-Madanī.

Save for a number of misspellings, marginal notations - duly highlighted when of some relevance – minor variations, and some verses in appendix - contained in C. but not in I.2 or taken in consideration by a French translation of this work by Clément-François (2002)[4] - there is good textual concordance between the manuscripts and the two printed editions that I have consulted. The two Indian editions - neither of them specifying on which manuscript they are based - often seem to contain the same alterations to the text of the manuscripts, apparently motivated by the intent of adding to its clarity, correcting grammatical errors or misspellings, and occasionally deleting redundancies. This would suggest a literary connection between I.2 and I.3 and between I.2/I.3 and each of the two manuscripts from Cambridge and London.

Both in the editing of the Arabic text and in my translation I have chosen to adopt the subtitles of the I.2 edition as they offered greater clarity in subdividing Al-Jīlī's work into its component parts, and because of the close relation between I.2 and I.3 I have used I.2 as the privileged term of reference for the Cambridge manuscript, except when variations in I.3 were of some relevance.

Other manuscripts of this text are listed on page 265 of volume II and on page 284 of "Supplementband II" No. 12 of Brockelmann's (1949) *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur*. The lists contain references to manuscripts preserved in libraries in Zabid

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[4] Clément-François does not specify the text from which his translation is derived, although some internal evidence would suggest that his version may be based on the Indian second edition published in 1336/1917 and kept at the Library of the University of Cambridge (I.2).

(Yemen), Berlin, Alexandria, Cairo, Patna (India), Tunis, Rampur (India/Pakistan), Haidarabad (Pakistan), Heidenau or Heidenheim (Germany), Damascus, Es Safa (Syria), among others. Of these manuscripts, only three Haidarabad copies are mentioned with reference to specific dates, namely 1312, 1331, 1336/1894, 1895, 1896, and one of Cairo, 1340/1922. My choice of C., L., I.2 and I.3 for my editing of Al-Jīlī's work and its translation, was motivated by practical reasons (these being the manuscripts and editions more easily accessible to me), by the relatively earlier dating of the Cambridge manuscript and by the fact that these four volumes are preserved in libraries of the standing of the University of Cambridge and the London India Office renowned for their collections of some of the best editions of any literary work. The fact that the editing and translation of this book represent part of only one chapter of the present dissertation and not its main thrust, in my opinion did not justify making the not insignificant effort of tracing the other manuscripts of the same work.

For the purpose of ease, numbers have been inserted at suitable points in the Arabic text and, correspondingly, in the translation and in the annotations.

1. THE TEXT IN ARABIC

الكهف والرقيم

في

شرح بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

INTRODUCTION

(1) الحمدلله الكامن في كنه ذاته، الكائن في عما غياباته، الكامل في اسمائه و صفاته، الجامع بألوهيته شمـــل
مضاداته، الأحد في سمائه، الواحد في تعداداته المتحيزة أوصافه في استيفاءاته، الأزلى في انداخرياته، الأبـــدي
في أزل أولياته، البارز في كل صورة ومعنى بسوره وآياته، البائن عن كل محسوس ومقول وموهوم ومعقول
بنا غير متباين في بنياته، المتخلق بكل خلق في كل خلق مخلوقاته، المتجلي بصورة العالم من انسانه وحيوانه
ونباتاته وجماداته، المتخلي في سرادق تنزيهه[5] عن الفصل والوصل والضد والند والكم والكيف والتجـــسيم
والتحديد والتقييد بتشبيه أو تنزيهاته، (2) سبوح سبحت أسماؤه في بحار كنهه فغرقت دون الوصـــول إلى
غاياته، متصف بكل وصف مؤتلف بكل ألف مجتمع بكل جمع ممتنع بكل منع مفترق بكل فـــرق[6] بكـــل
تحديد مقدس منزه في تشبيهاته (3) لا بحصره إلا أن ولا يخلو منه ولا تدركه العين ولا يـــستنزعنه خـــالق
معنى الخلق عرض على جوهر هو حقيقة ذلك الجوهر ولا عرض يعتريه، رازق معنى الرزق تنزله في رتبـــة
سماها خلقاً ليوفي بها حكم مربيته الأخرى على ما تطلبه الحكمة أو يقتضيه حكم تقديراته، (4) مجهول في
حقيقة غيب كنت كنزا لم اعرف بعد تعرفه إلى خلقه بما عرف من تعريفاته، جعل اسم الخلق محلاً لذاتـــه
ولا يتعداه، ورسم لاسم الحق حكماً من ذاته لا يفيدك سواه، وحكم لألوهيته جميعاً فلم بك مرضي لغيره
وراء الله، لألوهيته الحيطة بأحديته ولا حديثة السلطنة على ألوهيته في تربياته، تعـــرف إلى كـــل موجـــود
بحسب المرتبة التي أبرزه فيها من عينه وما عرفه إلا نفسه في جماله وزينه من جميع مكوناتـــه (5) (أحمـــده)
حمده لنفسه من خلف سرادق غيبة غيبة الآنهى، وأثنى عليه بلسان جماله الأكمل الأنهى، هو كما التي على نفسه
لديه، إذ كنت لا أحصي بناء عليه، واستمد من الجناب الأعظم، غيب غيب الجمع ألا بهم، نقطـــة عـــين
الحرف المعجم، محمد سيد العرب والعجم، مركز كنة الحقائق والتوحيد، مجمع دقائق التنزيـــة والتحديـــد،
مجلى معاني جمال القديم والجديد، صورة كمال الذات، الأزلي التخليد في جنات الصفات، الأبدي الإطلاق

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[5] A footnote to I.2 offers here an alternative reading: المتعال سرادقات مجده which corresponds to C., except for
the first word المتجلى.
[6] C. and L. add: منطلق بكل طلق مقيد بكل محدود.

في ميدان الألوهيات، صلى الله عليه وسلم وعلى آله القادة[7]، المتحلين بحلية المتحولين في أحواله، القــائمين عنه له في مقامه له بأقواله وأفعاله، وعلى آله وأصحابه وعترته وأنساله، وشرف وكرم، وبحد وعظم.

(6) (أما بعد) فأني استخرت الله تعالى في إملاء هذا الكتاب المسمى بالكهف والرقيم في شرح بـــسم الله الرحمن الرحيم وذلك بعد باعث رحماني، وإجابة لسؤال أخ عارف رباني، هو ذو الفهم الثاقب، والــذكاء الباهر الراسخ المناسب والتجريد والتفريد والقدم الصدق في المطالب، عماد الدين بن يحي بن أبي القاســم التونسي المغربي سبط الحسن[8] بن علي بعد مداقعتي أياه وناحري عن التقدم إلى ما هواه فلم يسمح بالإقالة و لم ينجح إلا إلى ما قاله، بعثني صدق رغبته إلى موافقته فاستخرت الله عن وجل[9] وألجأت إليــه، اســأله سبحانه وتعالى أن ينفع به مملِيه، والسامعين وقارئيه وهو الأولى بالإجابة، والأجدر لتــوفيقي بالإصــابة، (7)والملتمس من أهل الله ساداتنا الأخوان الناظرين في هذا الكتــاب ســلام الله علــيهم ورضــوانه أن يفحصوا[10] في معنى كل كلمة حتى ينحلهم بيانه من وجوه عباراقهـــا وإشــاراقها وتــصريحاقها وتلويحاقهــا وكناياقها، وتقديمها وتأخيرها مع المراعاة للمواعيد الشرعية والأصول الدينية فإن وقعوا[11] على معنى مـــن معاني التوحيد شهد لهم فيه به الكتاب والسنة فذلك مطلوبي الذي أمليت الكتاب لأخله وأن فهموا منـــه خلاف ذلك فانا برئ من ذلك الفهم فليرفضوه وليطلبوا ما أمليته مع الجمع بالكتـــاب والـــسنة فــإن الله سيوجدهم ذلك سنة جري بها كرمه في خلقه وهو على كل شيء قد ير. ثم المـــسئول منـــهم أن يمـــدونا بأنفاسهم الإلهية وتقبلونا على ما منا[12] وهذه جهد المقل قدمتها بين أيديهم راجياً دعوة تجني أو نظرة ولي. فإن تجد عيباً فسد الاخلال .جل من لا فيه عيب و علا.

(وها أنا أشرع) فيما ذكرته مستعيناً بالله،ناظرا إلى الله آخذا بالله، عن الله فما تم إلا الله والله يقول الحق[13] وما توفيقي إلا بالله.

SECTION 1

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

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[7] C. adds here الهدأة .

[8] An editorial note in I.2 suggests here الحسين .

[9] Missing in I.2.

[10] In I.2 ينصحوا, "provide advice on".

[11] وقفوا in I.2, with a footnote that gives the C. version.

[12] فينا in I.2.

[13] I.2 adds: وهو يهدي السبيل, "and He guides along the [right] path."

(8) (ورد في الخبر) عن النبي صلى الله عليه[14] وسلم إنه قال كل ما في الكتب المنزلة فهو في القرآن وكـل ما في القرآن فهو في الفاتحة وكل ما في الفاتحة فهو في بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم (9) (وورد) كل ما في بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم فهو في الباء وكل ما في الباء فهو في النقطة التي تحت الباء وقال بعض العارفين بــسم الله من العارف بمنزلة كن من الله (10) (واعلم) أن الكلام على بسم الله الرحمن الــرحيم مــن وجــه كثيرة كالنحووالصرف واللغة و الكلام وفيه على مادة المخروف وصيغتها وطبيعتــها وهيئتــها وتركيبــها واختصاصها على باقي الحروف الموجودة في فاتحة المكتاب وجمعها لها واختصاص الاحرف الموجودة في الباء والكلام عليها في منافعها وأسرارها ولسنا بصدد شيء من ذلك بل كلا منا عليها من وجه معـاني حقائقها فيما يليق بجناب الحق سبحانه وتعالى والكلام مندرج بعضه في بعض ان المقصود من جميع هــذه الوجوه معرفة الحق سبحانة وتعالى ونحن على بابه على بابه فكما يتجدد من فيضه على ألا تقاس، ينزل به الــروح الأمين على قلب القرطاس، (11) (واعلم)، أن النقطة التي تحت الباء اول كل سورة من كتاب الله تعـالى لأن الحرف مركب من النقطة ولابد لكل سورة من حرف هواولها و لكل حرف نقطة هي اوله فلزم من هذا ان النقطة اول كل سورة من كتاب الله تعالمى ولما كانت النقطة كما ذكرنا وكانت النسبة بينها وبين الباء تامة كاملة لما سيأتي بيانه كان كل الباء في أول كل سورة للزوم البسلمة في جميع السورة حتى سورة براءة فان الباء اول حرف فيها فلزم من هذا أن كل القرآن في كل سورة من كتاب الله تعالى لمـا ســبق مــن الحديث أن كل القرآن في الفاتحة وهي البسملة وهي في الباء وهي في النقطة, فكذلك الحق سبحانه وتعالى مع كل أحد بكماله لا يتجزى ولا يتبعض فالنقطة إشارة إلى ذات الله تعالى الغائب خلف سرادق كنزيتــه في ظهوره لخلقه (12) الأتراك ترى النقطة ولا تحسن تقرأها البتة لصموتها وتنزيهها عن المتقييد .مخرج دون مخرج اذهي نفس الحروف الخارجة من جميع المخارج فتنتبه لما تقابله من هوية غيب الأحدية وتقرأ النقطـة باعتبارالانزال[15] تقول في التاء المثناة ازدادت عليها نقطة ثاء مثلثة فما قرأت إلا النقطة لأن الباء والتاء المثناة و المثلثة لا تقرأ إذ صورتها واحدة ولا نقطها[16] فلو كانت تقرأ في نفسها لكانت هيئة كل واحدة غير هيئة الأخرى وبالنقطة تميزت فما قرئ في الأحرف إلا النقطة وكذلك ما عرف في الخلق إلا الله كما عرفته من الخلق إنما عرفته من الله ميدان النقطة في بعض الأحرف اشد ظهوراً منها في بعضها فتظهر في بعض زائــدة عليها يكون تكميل ذلك الحرف بها كالحروف المعجمة فإن تكميلها بها وتظهر في بعض عينــها كــالألف والحروف المهملة لأنه مركب من النقطة ولهذا كان الألف أشرف من الياء لظهور النقطة في عينــه ومــا ظهرت النقطة في البا إلى على حسب تكميله على وجه الاتحاد لأن نقطة الحرف من تمام الحرف هو متحد

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[14] I.2 always adds here to this formula of blessing the words وآله, "and his family".

[15] I.2 reads الاشتراك which helps to clarify the sense of this sentence.

[16] Again, I.2 assists us in our comprehension by replacing نقطها with يقرأ إلا نقطتها.

بالحرف والاتحاد يشعر بالغيرية وهو ذاك الفصل الذي يراه بين الحرف وبين النقطة والألف مقامة مقام الواحد نفسه ولهذا كان الألف ظاهراً بنفسه في كل حرف كما تقول أن الباء الف مبسوطة والجيم الف معوجة الطرفين. (13) والدال الف محني الوسط و الألف في مقام النقطة لتركيب كل حـرف منهـا وكل حرف مركب من النقطة فالنقطة لكل حرف كالجوهر البسيط والحرف كالجسم المركب فقام الألف بجسمه مقام النقطة لتركيب الأحرف منه كما ذكرناه في أن الباء ألف مبسوطة وكذلك الحقيقة المحمديـة خلق العالم بأسره منها لما ورد في حديث جابر أن الله تعالى خلق روح النبي صلي الله عليه   سلم من ذاتـه وخلق العالم بأسره من روح محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم من ذاته وقلق العلم باسره من روح محمد صـلي الله عليه وسلم فمحمد صلي الله عليه وسلم هو الظاهر في الخلق باسمه [17] بالمظاهر الإلهية (14) ألا تـرى أنه [18] صلى الله عليه وسلم   سرى بجسمه إلى فوق العرش وهو مستوى الرحمن فالألف ولو كانـت بقيـة الحروف المهملة مثله والنقطة ظاهرة فيها بذاتها لظهورهافى الألف فلهعليها الزيادة لانه مابعد عن النقطـة إلا بدرجة واحدة لأن النقطتين إذا تركبتا صارتا ألفا فحدث الألف بعد واحد وهو الطول إذاً لابعاد ثلاثة وهو طول وعرض وعمق أو سمك وبقية الأحرف تجتمع فيها أكثر بعد كالجيم فإن في رأسـه الطـول وفي تعريفته السمك وكالكاف فإن في رأسه الطول وفي الوسط بين رأسه وتعريفته الأولى العرض وفي الحائـل بين التعريفتين سمك فهذا فيه ثلاثة أبعاده ولابد في كل حرف غير الألف أن يكون فيه بعـدان أو ثلاثـة فالألف أقرب إلى النقطة لأن النقطة لا بعد لها فنسبة الألف بين الاحرف المهملة نسبة محمد صلي الله عليه وسلم بين الأنبياء والورثة الكمل فلماذا قدم الألف على سائر [19] الحروف- (15) فـافهم وتأمـل فمـن الحروف ما تكون نقطته فوقه ويكون هوتحتا وهو مقام ما رأيت شيئاً الاو رأيت الله قبله، ومن الحروف ما تكون النقطة تحته [20] وهومقام مارأيت شيئاً الاو رأيت الله بعده، ومن الحروف ما تكون النقطة في وسطه كالنقطة البيضاء في قلب الميم والواو مثالها فإنه يحل ما رأيت شيئاً الاورأيت الله فيه، ولهذا تجوف لأنه ظهر في جوفه شيء غيره فدائرة رأس الميم محل ما رأيت شيئاً ونقطته البيضاء [21] ألا ورأيت الله فيه، والألف محل أن الذين يبايعونك أنما يبايعون الله قبل في معنى انما انه [22] بمنزلة ما ألا ةتقديره أن الـذين يبايعونـك مـا يبايعون إلا الله ومن المعلوم أن محمداً صلى الله عليه وسلم بويع فشهد الله لنفسه أنما بويـع إلا الله فكأنـه يقول عندما [23] بويعت محمداً انما أنت الله بالغيب لأنهم مبايعون الله على الحقيقة وهذا معنى الخلافة

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[17] As in I.2; C. here has (mistakenly?) "his body".

[18] As in I.2; C. here has اليه

[19] As in I.2; C. here has the synonym بقية.

[20] I.2 adds here ويكون هو فوقها , "while [the letter] is on top".

[21] I.2 adds here محل.

[22] This word is missing in I.2.

[23] C. has عبد "slave" instead of "when", which does not make much sense and is therefore probably a misspelling.

الا ترى إلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم و رسول الملك كيف يصبح له أن يقول لمـــن يخالفه[24]   انمـــا

خالفت الملك وكذلك الملك يقول لمن أرسل إليهم عن رسوله لا تظنوه فلانا انما هو أنا تحريضاً لهم علــى

طاعته.

SECTION 2

(فصل)

(16) نقطة الباء واحدة في عالم غيبها التي لا تفرقة فيه على أها أظهرت في التاء المثناة اثـــنين وفي المثلثــة

ثلاثة ردعاً وشبيهاً لمن قال بالشريك أنه ثاني اثنين أو ثالث ثلاثة مشيرا إلى أن النقطة الواحدة ولو ظهرت

متعددة في ذواها واحدة (17) (لا ترى) إليه سبحانه وتعالى أنه واحد تخيل المشرك الشركة فيه فالشريك

الذى اعتقده المشرك في خياله مخلوق لله والحق في كل مخلوق بكماله فالمشرك مخلوق والـــشريك المعتقـــد

شركته مخلوق والشركة المعتقدة مخلوقة والاعتقاد مخلوق والحق سبحانه وتعالى في كل شـــيء مـــن ذلـــك

بكماله وذاته لا يتجزئ ولا يتعدد ولا يتكيف واحد لا ثاني له فحصل من هذا أن الـــشريك هـــو المحق

سبحانه وتعالى[25] والمشرك هو الحق والشركة هي الحق فإن شئت أشرك وأن شئت أفرد فماثم إلا عينك

(18)(ألا ترى) أن للنقطة من حيث هي نقطة لا من حيث هي جرم جزئي لا تتعد ولا تتجـــزئ بحيـــث

يأخذ كل شخص من إشخاصه جزءاً من أجزائه تعالى الله عن ذلك علوا كبيراً.

فوجدت النقطة في عين التعداد بقوة أحديتها الغير المنقسم[26].

(19) (واعلم) أن النقطة على الحقيقة لا تنضبط بالبصر لأن كل ما أبرزته في عالم التجسيم يمكنـــه التقسيم

فالنقطة المشهودة الآن عبارة عن حقيقتها وحد حقيقتها جوهر فرد لا يتجزئ فاما إذا أبرزته مـــن غيـــب

الوهم على لسان القلم إلى عالم شهادة لوح الأكوان ازداد حكماً في نفسه ذاتياً غير منسوب إليه في حـــدة

وهو التقسيم لأنه قل ما يوجد بل لا يوجد في عالم الأكوان مما يقع عليه أدراك الحواس جـــوهر فـــرد لا

ينقسم فلما برز هذا الجوهر تحت هذا الحرف انقسم على أنه غير مقسوم (20)   فهذا محل تشبيه الحق وما

ورد فيه بالنص من اليدين والرجلين[27] والوجه وفي حديث الرفرف[28] رأيت ربي في صورة شاب أمـــرد[29]

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[24] I.2 says خالفه ما خالفتي "You have not just taken my place".

[25] This formula is missing here in I.2.

[26] As in I.2 and I.3; C. has المتعدد which does not make sense in this context.

[27] I.2 makes no mention of God's legs.

[28] I.2 adds here كما قال عكرمة عن النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم .

[29] C. only begins the ḥadīth, while I.2 quotes the full verse and adds from the Qur'ān:

في رجليه نعلان من ذهب. الحديث بكماله تشبيه عين التنزيه أدمعني الحق أنما هو المنزه الذي ليس كمثله

شيء وهو السميع البصير فيستحيل عليه تقييد التشبيه وأنه ليس له ذلك فلما كان تـــشبيهه في تنزيهــــه

وتنزيهه في تشبيهه على الحكم الذي ورد به النص من الكتاب والسنة ظهر لك عالم الغيب في نفس عـــالم

الشهادة وبطن لك عالم في عين عالم الغيب، ولما كانت النقطة اماً لجميع الحروف كان جميع الحروف فيها

بالقوة ومعنى قولي بالقوة أن تعقل ثبات الأحرف فيها ولا يدرك كونها إلا بعد بروزها منها لتركيبك.[30]

SECTION 3

(فصل)

(21) (تقول النقطة للباء) أيها الحرف اني أصلك لتركيبك مني بل أنك في تركيبك أصلي لأن كل جـــزء

منك نقطة فأنت الكل وأنا الجزء والكل أصل والجزء فرع بل انا الأصل على الحقيقة إذ تركيبك عـــيني لا

تنظر إلى بروزي ورائك فتقول هذا البارز غيري إنما أراك الأهويتي وعيني[31] ولولا وجودي فيك لم يكن لي

بك هذه العلاقة إلى متى تصرف بشهادتك عني وتجعلني وراء ظهرك اجعل غيبك شهادتك وشهادتك غيبك

أما تحقق وحدتي بك لولك لما كنت أنت نقطة الباء ولولاني لما كنت أنا باء منقوطة كـــم أضـــرب لـــك

الأمثال[32] كي تفهم أحديتي بك وتعلم أن انبساطك   في عالم الشهادة واستناري في عالم الغيب حكمان في

لذاتنا الواحدة لا مشارك في لك ولا مشارك لك في ما أنت[33] أنت لأن اسمك حدث على اسمي (22) (ألا

ترى) أن أول جزء من أجزائك يسمى نقطة وثاني جزء من أجزائك[34] يسمى نقطة وثالــث جـــزء مـــن

أجزائك يسمى نقطة وكذلك جميع أجزائك نقطة في نقطة فأنت مالك فيك أنا بل هويتي هـــي أنيتك

التي أنت بها أنت لو كنت عند قولك في نفسك أنا تتخيل ذاتي لكنت أنا أيضاً عند قولي هو أتخيل وجهي

فكنت حينئذ تعلم أن أنا وهو عبارتان لذات واحدة.

(23) (قالت الباء) سيدي تحققت أنك أصلي وقد علمت أن الفرع الأصل و شيئان وهذه جثتي منبسطة

مركبة لا وجود لي إلا بها وانت جوهر لطيف يوجد في كل شيء وأنا جسم كثيف مقيد.بمكان دون غيره

فمن أين لي حقيقة مالك ومن أين أكون أنا وكيف يكون حكمك حكمي (24) (فأجابتها النقطـــة)

وعليه جلة من ذهب وعلى رأسه تاج من ذهب وفي رجليه نعلان من ذهب فهو الله تعالى يتجلى لنا بحقه في صورة الشاب

وغيره.(بيت مفرد) كتبه الجمال على جلالة وجهه، الله أحسن كل شيء خلقه.

[30] Word omitted by I.2.

[31] Word omitted in I.2 and I.3 main text, but added in a footnote.

[32] As in I.2: C. would not otherwise be as clear.

[33] For the sake of clarity I.2 inserts here إلا.

[34] Word omitted by I.2.

فقالت شهود جسمانتك وتخيل روحانيتي هيئة من هيئاتي ووصف من أوصافي وذلك أن جميع متفرقـات الأحرف والكلمات بجملتها صورتي الواحدة فمن اين التعداد إذلا تتحقق أن العشرة اسم لمجمـوع هــذه الخمستين فمن أين التغاير بين الخمسة والعشرة في حقيقة العشرية لا في الأسمية وإذا أنت كنت مــن كــل وجوهك وصفاً من أوصافي ونظرة من نظراتي فمن أين تكون الأثنائية بيني وبينك وكيف هذه المجادلة الــتي بيني وبينك أنا أصل فيما يراد منك وفيما يراد مني هذا .بمجموعه ذاتي ترتيب حكمة إلهية فإذا أردت تعقلني فخيل نفسك وجميع الحروف كلها والكلمات صغيرها وكبيرها ثم قل [35] نقطة فذلك .بمجموعه هــو عــين نفسي ونفسي عين ذلك المجموع بل نفسك بمجموع عين ذلك. بل بمجموع عيني عينك. بل لا أنت ولا هم الكل أنا بل لا أنا ولا أنت ولا هم ولا واحد ولا اثنين ولا ثلاثة ما تم إلا النقطة الواحدية لا تعقل لمثلـك فيها ولا نفهم فلو تحولت من ثوبك إلى ثوبي لعلمت كل ما اعلم وشهدت كل ما أشهد وسمعت كل مـا أسمع وبصرت كل ما ابصر. (25)(فأجابه الباء) فقال قد لاح ما قلت فمن لي بالوقوع في صبح هذا الفجر وقد قلت أن البعد والقرب والكم والكيف من ترتيب وجودك فكلما شهدت القول بالترتيب ومـا لابد منه سلمت وانصرفت بوجهي إلى عالم شهادتي ولزومي الأدب معك وكلما جلت في ملكوت معناي وجدتك نفسي فإذا طلبت من نفسي مالك من الحل والعقد في الحروف والسريان في كل حرف بكمالك لا أجد شيئاً فتنكسر زجاجة همتي وارجع حسيراً، (26)(فقالت النقطة) نعم ترجع لأنك طلبت من نفسك ونفسك عندك غير نفسي فلا تجد منها مالي فلو طلبت منها أنا الذي هو أنت من نفسي التي هي نفسـك دخلت الدار من بابه فحينئذ [36] طلبت للنقطة إلا من النقطة بل ولا طلبت إلا النقطة مالها منها فحل في هذا المعنى أن كنت معناه

أشعار

(27) هذي الخيام بدت على أطنابها   فانزل بها أن كنت من أحبابها

قف بين هاتيك المعاني الها   وقفت بها الأزمان في أترابها

ماهند الا من أقام على الغضى   وألبان والأثلاث في أجنابها

فاتح مطيك في الديار فإنها   دار مباركة على أصحابها

لله در في منازل قد شرفت   بالساكنين وشرفوا بترابها

لا تعرف الأغيار في غرفاتها   مجهولة سدت على أبوابها

النازلين بحيها هم أهلها   من بان عنها ليس من انسابها

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[35] I.2 adds لي.

[36] Better rendered by I.2 with ما طلبت.

(28) (الباء) هي النفس وهي حرف ظلماني وليس في البسلمة بأسرها من الحروف الظلمانية إلا هي وأعني بالحروف الظلمانية هذه (ب ج د ز ف ش ت ث ج ذ ص ظ غ) لأن النورانية التي هي في أوائل الــــسور مقطعة هي (ه ح ط ي ل م ن س ع ص ق ر) فجعل الحق حرف الباء أول القرآن في كل سورة لأن أول حجاب بينك وبين ذاته سبحانه وتعالى ظلمة وجودك فإذا فني و لم يبق إلا هو كانت أسماؤه وصفاته الــــتي هي منه حجاب عليه فتلك جميعها نورانية ما خلاالباء الذى معنى انه وجودك فهو ظلماني والباقي جميعه نوراني [37] ومن هذا كانت الباء ثوباً على النقطة لأها فوقها والثوب فوق الملابس فكانت الباء ظلمة نـــور النقطة محجوبة بوجودها الذي هو العالم البارز عن العالم الجمال النقطي وحكمة ظهور النقطة ورآءه إشارة إلى أن الأمر الحقيقي وراء ما ظهر لما التصقت النقطة بالباء كان الباء في الكلام مستعملاً للإلتصـــاق ولمــا كان نظر النقطة ممدوداً إلى الباء كان الباء في كلام العرب مستعملاً للاستعانة (29) لما لاح نار الــــسعادة للباء على شجرة نفسه سرى في ظلمة سرادق غيب ليلة عن أهله ليقنبس نارالطبيعة[38] أو يجــد هــدى في نفسه إلى نفسه من نفسه نودي من جانب قائم شجرة الألف الذي هو اسم الله أخلع نعليك أي وصـــفك وذاتك أنك بالوادي المقدس وأنت محل التشبيه والدنس ولا مقام لك في وادي تقديس النقطـــة إلا تخلــع تشبيه ودنس صفاتك[39] فانبسط تحت نور الألف انبساط الظل إذا ظل كل شيء مثله وبسط باء كل كتابة بقدر قائم ألفها قرأت نفسها ظلا لهذا القائم فعلمت أن قيامها به إذ لا وجود للظل إلا بالشخص بين الجرم المستوى بها[40] ونفت وهمية وجودها لأن الظل بنفسه ليس بشيء موجود تام انما هو حيلولة الشخص بين الجرم المستتر والأرض فوجود الظل لنفسه محال ولكن لابد من وجود فلما تحقق الباء بهذا القــدر مــن الفناء أخذه الألف إلى نفسه وانقاه في محله فاندرج الألف فيه ولهذا طولت باء بسم الله[41] لتكون دليلاً على الألف المندرج فيها فهي في المعنى خليفة[42] الألف في الصورة مطولة على صورة[43] الألف فحصل لها مــن الألف الهيئة والمعنى ووقعت في[44] الكلام محل الألف ولا يعرف في كلام العرب باء تقوم مقام الألف إلا باء بسم الله فانظر هذا الباء كيف أنشد حادي حاله لجمال جماله

(30) وغنى لي مني قلبي   وغنيت كما غنا

فكنا حيث ما كانوا   وكانوا حيث ما كنا

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[37] I.2 and I.3 have instead: ألا ترى أن بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم كلها حروف نورانية. In both editions, however, the text of C. is reported in a footnote.

[38] I.2 has instead النقطة.

[39] I.2 adds حتى لا يبقى في القدس إلا القدوس فأخذ بزمامه يد التوفيق.

[40] I.2 adds فتحقق لها متلوها.

[41] I.2 adds الرحمن الرحيم.

[42] I.2 adds عن.

[43] I.2 employs the synonym هيئة.

[44] I.2 has لي instead, which however does not alter the sense of the sentence.

(31) فالألف في نفسه مشتق من الألفة بل على الحقيقة الألفة مشتقة من الألف (ألا ترى) إلى اخــــتلاف الصرفيين في المصدر هل اشتق من الفعل أم الفعل اشتق منه فلمذا ائتلف الألف بالباء لان الباء لـــزم مقـــام نفسه من الأدب تحته تلاشى تلاشي الظل تحت الشخص فوفاه الألف من عين الجود مقام نفسه لأن مقام الألف التصور بصورة كل حرف. إذ الباء ألف مبسوطة والجيم ألف معوج الطرفين والدال والراء الـــف منحني الوسط والشين ٤٥ الفات كل سنة منها الف والتعريقة الف منحني مبسوطة وعلى هذا قياس الباقي هذا في الصورة وأما في المعنى فلابد من وجود الألف في كل حرف لفظاً إذا الاترى في الباء إذا هيجته يقال بالالف والجيم ٤٦ إذا هيجته تقول جيم ياء ميم فالياء المثناة التحتية موجودة فيها الألف فـــالألف في كـــل حرف صورة ومعنى لأنه تنزل إلى النقطة من عالم الغيب إلى عالم الشهادة. ٤٧

(32) ذاك هي هي ذاك يه يه   ذاك بعض ذاك بضع

ذاك جبريل ألمعا لي   قد حيى وتلفع

(33) يقول صلى الله عليه وسلم ما تدخل الشوكة في رجل أحدكم إلا وجدت المها، هذا التحقق أحديته بمجموع العالم أفراده وأجزائه حتى أنه يجد حال كل فرد في نفسه كما يجده ذلك الفرد في العالم، سؤال، ماالستر ٤٨ أن الألف حذف في بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم ٤٩ ولم يحذف في اقرأ باسم ربــك، الجـــواب، لأن إضافة الاسم هنا إلى الله الجامع الذي لا يقيد بصفة دون أخرى وإضافة الاسم هناك إلى الرب ولابد للرب من عبد مربوب فمحال أن يتحد الباء به في هذا ٥٠ لأنه إذا زالــت العبوديـــة زلمت اربوبية على المفوروالما الالموهية اذا زلمت العبودية فإلها لم تزل لألها اسم لمرتبة جميع المراتب كلها فزوال العبد كما لم يكن ويقــال الرب كما لم يزل مرتبة من جملة مراتب الالموهية فهي لا تزول بنوع ما فلما أثر اندراج الألـــف في ذلـــك المحل واتحد بالباء فأسقط لفظاً وحظا فبسم الله الرحمن الرحيم حقيقة محضة واقرأ باسم ربك شريعة محـــضة الإتراه يقلوا اقرأ وهو أمر والأمر مختص بالشرائع وبسم الله الرحمن الرحيم غير مقيد بأمر ولا بغيره فليتأمل.

SECTION 4

(فصل)

(34) الألف لما كانت الألفة مشتقة منه ألف بين الحروف فألف بين بعض بذاته كالألف بــين الببـــاءات فإلها ٥١ الفات مبسوطة فكل منها عين الآخري فالف بين بعض بصورة لفظة كقولك الحاء والمخاء ظهـــر ٥٢

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٤٥ I.2 adds لربع.

٤٦ I.2 has instead هجته يقال باء وألف والجيم.

٤٧ I.2 adds فله كل ما للنقطة في عالم الشهادة.

٤٨ I.2 employs the synonym سبب.

٤٩ I.2 has البسملة.

٥٠ I.2 adds المحل.

٥١ I.2 adds كلها.

آخرهما فهذه عين هذه كتابة وصورة وما بقى الفرق إلا في التلفظ بل⁵³ يبين الجميع بصورته وذاته لما سبق أن كل حرف ألف وأن الألف موجود في هجاء كل حرف كذلك الحق سبحانه وتعالى يقول لو انفقت ما في الأرض جميعاً ما ألفت بين قلوبهم ولكن الله الف بينهم ما كان يمكنك يا محمد و يجــوز أن يكــون الخطاب لكل مستمع أن تؤلف باتفاق ما في الأرض جميعاً بين قلوبهم ولكن الحق بكماله وقوته ألف بــين أجسامهم وذواتهم وصفاتهم ألف بين طائفة بذاته وألف بين طائفة بصفاته و ألف بين طائفة بافعاله وهيئاته بل ألف بين الجميع بذاته وجميع صفاته.

(شعر)

(35) هذا الوجود وأن تعدد ظاهراً
وحياتكم ما فيه إلا أنتم

SECTION 5

(فصل)

(36) تعلقت الأحرف بالألف ولا تعلق الألف بشيء من الحروف كذلك افتقر كل حرف مخلوق إلى الله سبحانه وتعالى وهو غني عن العالمين، يقول القائل أي حسنة سبقت للألف قبل وجوده حتى قــرب مــن النقطة هذا القرب العظيم وأي سيئة تصرفت من الحروف حتى بعدوا، قيل في جوابه، عدم بعد مرتبة الألف من محل حكم النقطة في ذاتها حسنة سبقت للألف جزاؤها اتصافه بأوصاف النقطة من وجد في رحلة فهو جزاؤه، نعم وعدم قرب بقية الحروف من محل حكم النقطة في ذاتها سيئة سبقت عليهم كــذلك كــدنا ليوسف ما كان ليأخذ أخاه في دين الملك.

(تنبيه)

(37) النكتة في اتحاد الألف بالباء إنما هو لوجود الألف فيه ولولا ما في الباء من وجود لألــف لفظــاً في الهجاء لما اتحد⁵⁴ لأن الوجه الموجود فيه الألف انما هو آخره الذي هو عينه فلا يمكن أن يتحد به من غــير ذلك الوجه فإذا ما اتحد بالألف إلا الألف فإذ الإتحاد لزوال الغيرية فكذلك كل حرف من الحروف إنمــا يتحد بالألف من آخره وهو الوجه الموجود فيه الألف منه اما ترى في كتابة كل حرف لا يلتصق بــالألف إلا إذا كان الحرف قبله والألف بعده لا يكون إلا ذلك لأن الهجاء في ذلك الحرف إنما تتقدمه مادية غــير مادية الألف ثم يتلوه مادة الألف أما في نفسه و أما في غيره في نحو هجاء الجيم والسين والنون على قــدر بعد الحرف وقربه من هيئة الألف وطبيعته ومكانته وعلى ذلك كلمه فالألف موجود في كل حرف وهــو

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⁵² I.2 adds في.

⁵³ I.2 adds ألف.

⁵⁴ I.2 adds بالباء ولهذا لو كان الألف أولاً والباء ثانياًلما اتحد.

ملتصق بأحرف مخصوصة من وجه مخصوص ولا يلتصق بأحرف أخرى من وجه من الوجوه نحــو الــدال والذال والراء والزاي والواو وما ثم إلا هذه الخمسة أحرف (38) وانظر كيف الألف موجود[55] في كتابة صورة كل حرف من هذه الاحرف بكماله كذلك الجمادات والانعام إذا رجع كل إلى ربه في يوم القيامـــة يصير فناء محضا لا باقي منها إلا ما هو في هويته ليس له فيهم نظر بخلاف الإنسان فإنه رجع إلى ربه سبحانه وتعالى لا يبقى إلا ما هو في هويته ولا بدمن نظرة إلى المرتبة المسماة بالإنسان منه لانتفاء الجهل ولحصول اللذة وتمام الكرامة له مع انعدام كل ما سوى الله تعالى عنه بخلاف الجمادات فــإن الله تعــالى يفنيهـــا ويعـــدم أجسادها وذواتها لأنه ما جعل لها وجوداً تاماً في العالم[56] هو الظاهر فيها و لم يجعل لها ملكية وجود كمــا ترى الألف في الخمسة أحرف كيف ظهر بنفسه منفرداً على صورته وهيئته[57] ملتصق بحرف من الحـــروف وهذا محل عدم الدعوى للجمادات بالوجود[58] لا تمام لوجود نفس الحرف إلا بإلتصاقه بالألف ولو بالهجاء إذ هو عين حياتها لأن حياة الألف هي السارية في أجساد الحروف ولولا ذلك لما كانت للحروف معـــاني فما التصقت به إلا في الهجاء ولا في الخط فهي برية من دعوى الوجود، وأما باقي الحروف فقــد ملكـــوا الوجود كما ملك الحق تعالى الإنسان وجوداً يتميز به في نفسه ويتحقق أن له وجود أو ذاتاً مغائرة لوجود غيره وذاتاً سواه بخلاف الحيوان فإنه ولو كان له روح فلا عقل له فلا حافظة تمسك له في خياله ما تعقلـــه فنهاية تعقل الحيوان لما هو بصدده مما تقتضيه الشهوات الطبيعية والعادات الحيوانية وتطلب الـــنفس في أول وهلة من الحفظ وغيره ولو كانت له حافظة تمسك له ما يعقل حتى يقيس بعض أجزاءه المعقولة على بعض فيحكم بعد ذلك على الأولى والأحسن منها لكان كاملاً في مرتبة الوجود وليس هذا إلا الملـــك وإنـــسان فقط ولأجل هذا لم يتجل الحق سبحانه وتعالى لشيء في نفسه أعني نفس الحق إلا للإنسان لجمعه بين العقل والشهوة وأما الملك لاختصاصه بالعقل فتجلى الحق له في نفسه لا في نفس الحق لنزوله عن درجة الكمـــال الجامعة بين التشبيه والتنزيه بخلاف الحيوان فإنه لا قدم له في ذلك[59] ليس له ملكية وجود كمال الإنسان فهذا محل دعوى الإنسان بالوجود وهو الحجاب الأعظم الذي لا ينكشف إلا بعد الموت الأكبر الذي هـــو زوال علمك بوجودك بعد التحقق بحقائق التوحيد وبعد ذلك فلابد من نظر لك تجليه على الله تعـــالى إلى

[55] I.2 adds بكماله.

[56] I.2 adds بل كان.

[57] I.2 adds غير.

[58] I.2 adds لأنه.

[59] I.2 adds إذ.

هذا الإنسان وهيكله لبقاء نشأته وصورته الظاهرة وهذا النظر [60] الأول الذي كنت تراه به [61] فافهم رزقنـــا الله وإياك تفهيم [62] ذلك كله أنه على كل شيء قدير.

SECTION 6

(فصل)

(39) تجرد الألف عن عوائق النقطة وخلاصه من العلايق [63] التبعية التي تكون بعده كتعلق الحروف بعضها ببعض من بعد فلم يكن له تعلق بشيء في عين نفسه فلا يتعلق الألف في الخط بشيء من الحروف لأجل ذلك كان سارياً في جميع الأحرف بجسده [64] سريان النقطة فثبت في أول كل اسم معروف في أسمـــاء الله تعالى فهو يظهر [65] الحق وهو المتحقق بالحق بل ليس الحق الا هو فكانت النقطة له ميزاناً قاس به نفسه واندرج في كل ما تندرج فيها النقطة فكأنه ما كانت النقطة إلا حكما له وهو محكومها بل هو على حقيقة نفس النقطة لتفي الاتينية إذ لا وجود لمسمى الألف إلا من حيث النقطة فهو النقطة المؤتلفة وهو الحـــرف الذي أبرزته النقطة على صورتها لأن ما صورتها إلا ما تقدم ذكره من الانبساط في كل حـــرف وتركيـــب كل كلمة وحرف من نفسها وبرزت فيه متعددة الجسد واحدة الروح (40) لأن الألف مركب من نقط كثيرة كل واحدة بجنب الأخرى وعلى الحقيقة النقطة من حيث هي كل لا ينقسم ولا يتعـــدد يوجـــد في جميع جزيئاته من غير تعدد في نفسه كما يوجد الحق سبحانه في سمع الإنسان المتقرب إليـــه بالتوافـــل وفي بصره وفي يده وفي لسانه فهو سبحانه بكينونة سمع هذا العبد ولا يتعدد في كينونية بصره وكما أنه موجود في كل شيء ما من أجناس العالم جميعه بكماله لا يتعدد بتعددات الأشياء كذلك الألف مـــع وجـــوده في الأحرف الثمانية والعشرين لا يتعدد بتعدداتها لأن الألف في جملتها واحد ومن هنا قال من قال أن الألـــف ليس من جملة الحروف لادعائه أن الإنسان الكامل ليس من جملة غيره من المخلوقات فافهم.

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[60] I.2 adds غير النظر.

[61] Missing in I.2.

[62] I.2 has instead تحقيق.

[63] I.2 has instead العوائق.

[64] I.2 has instead بكليته.

[65] Verb omitted by I.2.

SECTION 7

(فصل)

(41) عدد الألف واحد والواحد عدد لا من جملة الأعداد لأن العدد اسم لتكــرار الواحــد في مـــرتبتين فصاعداً أو فائدته تعقل تسمية المعدود في مرتبة التغاير تعقلاً كمياً وليس للواحد في نفسه مغــايرة لعــدم السوى فلا يدخل في حد العدد من هذا الوجه ودخل فيه من حيث تعقل عدم تغايره في نفسه فهو عدد لا كالأعداد كما قالت العقلاء أنه⁶⁶ شيء لا كالأشياء.

ومربروز الألف في عدد الواحد لبعده من النقطة بعد الواحد وهو الطول فقط لأن النقطة مالها طــول ولا عرض ولا عمق ولا سمك وهو له الطول فقط فهو الخط المستقيم، وبرزت الباء في عدد الاثنين لأنها بعدت بعدين الطول والعرض لأن رأسها عرض وجسدها طول، وظهر الجيم في عدد الثلاثة لأنه حــاز الطــول والعرض والعمق وإن شئت قلت⁶⁷ والسمك فهما شيئان وإنما يتغايران بتغاير النسبة إن ابتدأت من أســفل سميته سمكاً وإن نزلت من أعلى إلى أسفل قلت⁶⁸ عمقاً وهذا التعليل ليس في عدديتهم وهذا سر شـــريف أنا أول من عبر به   عنه ولعلنا أن بسط لنا ومكنا من القول أن نتكلم على بقية جملــة أعــداد الأحـــرف وأسرارها كل حرف من أين ما فيه ما حصل⁶⁹ من العدد وما سره وما سر كل عدد في نفسه بهـــذا اللـــسان الحقيقي أن شاء الله تعالى، (42) (الباء) هو العرش وهي النفس لناطقة المسماة من بعض وجوهها بالقلــب الذي وسع الله والنقطة هي غيب الهوية المسماة بالكنز المخفي التي لا تحول عن كنزيتها وخفائها ابداً، فالباء مستوى الأعداد لأنها أول العدد ولا عدد إلا والباء موجود فيه كما أن الرحمانية مستوى الأسماء النفسية التي هي الامهات⁷⁰ السبعة وكل اسم فداخل تحته كما قال الحق سبحانه⁷¹   (قل ادعو الله أو ادعوا الرحمن أياماً تدعوا فله الأسماء الحسنى)⁷²   ...⁷³ من ذلك فيما لا تقع الأسمية عليه عندنا كما يقول⁷⁴ غيبك.

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⁶⁶ I.2 has ‏أن الله‏.

⁶⁷ For the sake of clarity, I.2 adds ‏العمق‏.

⁶⁸ I.2 has instead ‏سميته‏.

⁶⁹ I.2 adds here ‏فيه‏.

⁷⁰ I.2 and I.3 have instead ‏الأسماء‏ and the C. version added as a footnote.

⁷¹ I.2 has ‏تعالى‏ instead.

⁷² I.2 adds an explanation of the verse: ‏راه فالرحمن مشارك الله في التسمي بجميع الأسماء الحسنى ويفارق الله بما وراءه يماد‏.

⁷³ Illegible word that does not appear in I.2 and I.3.

⁷⁴ I.2 adds ‏العالم بنفسه صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم لمواساثرت به في‏.

SECTION 8

(فصل)

(43) معنى اثنينة الباء بروز الحق لنفسه في ترتيب ذاته الخلقي وهو النظر الثاني لأن الحق سبحانه وتعالى له مشهد ان في نفسه، فمشهد احدى ذاتي لا ينظر الله فيه إلى ما يسميه خلقاً فلا وجود للخلق في ذلك المشهد (ومشهد ذاتي) ينظر الله فيه إلى مرتبة[75] سماها خلقاً مرتبة على ترتيب ذاته وسمى ذلك الترتيب بالصفات، (44) (فالباء)هو هذا المشهد الثاني الذي يظهر فيه آثار الحكم المسمى من ذات الله تعالى بالرحمن وهو المعبر عنه .بمستوى أسماء الحضرة الحقيقية والعالم هوالعرش الذي هو صورة الرحمن، وهوالمعبرعنها بمستوي أسماء الحضرة الخلقية ومن ثم قيل في آدم أنه على صورة الرحمن وقدتبين في اصطلاح الصوفية تسمية الإنسان بالعالم الصغير وتسمية العالم بالإنسان الكبير (45) (واعلم) أن الأصل في بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم باسم الله الرحمن الرحيم ولا بدله من فعل بعده يتعلق به الباء نحو ابتدى أو استعين أو تبارك أما مصرح ملفوظ أو مقدر تدل قرينة الفعل الحاصل بعد البسملة عليه كما يدل فعل الشرب بعد البسملة على أن المقدر بعده اشرب أو استعين على الشرب بسم الله[76] فإذا قال القائل بسم الله افعل كذا كان معناه بالله افعل كذا إذ ليس الاسم غير المسمى وقد قال تعالى (تبارك اسم ربك) (46) وما المعني في قولك بالله افعل إلا أنه[77] هو عين فاعل ذلك الفعل منك فيك فكأنك تقول .بما انطوى من الألوهية في ذاتي الظاهرة بخلاف ما هو عليه باطني الذي هو عين المسمى بالإله وبما انطوى من الألوهية في ذاتي الباطنة بخلاف ما هو عليه في ذاتي الظاهرة التي هو غير المسمى بالإله افعل كذا، (وفائدته) نفي الفعل من خلقك واثباته لحقك أن كان المشهد فعلياً، واظهار تلاشي المسمى بالمخلوق من ذاتك تحت سلطان عظمة المسمى بالخلق من عين ابنتك أن كان المشهد اسمائياً، وبروز أحدية وجودك في تعدد وجوهها الواحدية إن كان المشهد ذاتياُ فافهم. ولا بدلك من تعلق[78] هذا المقدار عند قولك بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم حتى تتميز به عن رتبة الحيوانات لأن التلفظ .بما لا تعقل معناه رتبة حيوانية نعوذ بالله من ذلك.

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[75] I.2 adds من ذاته.

[76] I.2 adds أو نحو ذلك.

[77] I.2 adds here سبحانه.

[78] I.2 has instead تنمقل.

SECTION 9

(فصل في إطالة الباء)

(47)طولت الباء بعد إسقاط الألف وبعد قيامها مقامه تنبيهاً على أنها النائبة مناب الألف من كل حـــرف كما سبق من أن الرحمن موصوف بكل وصف نائب مناب اسمه الله في التسمي بالأسماء الحسنى فلا يعقـــل الخلق من الله الأحد مستوى الرحمن وبعد ذلك فليس للمخلوق فيه مجال البتة وما تم إلا الحضرة الأحديـــة المحضة التي هي الوجه الذي لا يفنى من كل شيء في قوله[79] (كل شيء هالك إلا وجهه له الحكـــم وإليـــه ترجعون) فلا حكم إلا لهذه الأحدية في جميع هذه الحضرات الأكوانية والرحمانية وهي وجه كل شيء، وقد صرح بها (فأينما تولوافثم وجه الله) أي ببصركم من المحسوسات أو بافكاركم من المعقولات فثم وجه الله وفي هذا المعنى قلنا.

(48)ما ثم غير سعاد بالنقا أحد	هي الموارد حقا وهي من يرد
هي البقيع هي الوعساء قاعته	هي المحصب من خيف هي البلد
هي النبات هي الأجساد جامعة	هي النفوس هي الحيوان الجمد
هي الجواهر والأعراض قاطبة	هي النتاج هي الآباء والولد
قل الذين غدوا[80] عني لقصدقبا	أناقياً وفوادي ذلك السند
يا سلم ما كبدي لولاك فاتئدي	ولا الفريسة إلا ذلك الأسد
استغفر الله تنزيها لمرتبتي	ما بين خلق وبين الله متحد

SECTION 10

(نكتة)

(49) لصق الباء والسين في البسملة لسر شريف وهو أن السين محله من الأعداد المرتبة السادسة فهـــو جاو على ست مراتب[81] الواحد وهي الجهات التي ظهرت فيها الباء وهي المخلوقات المسمى جملتها بـــالعرش وكل جهة من هذه الجهات التي ظهرت فيها الباء وجه الله بكماله كما أن الواحد موجود في كل مرتبة من هذه الستة مراتب السين بكماله (50) (واعلم) أن السين عبارة عن سر الله تعالى وهو الإنـــسان قال بعض المفسرين ان ياسين الياء فيها حرف نداء والسين الإنسان الكلام عليه من باب الإشارة بقـــول الله

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[79] I.2 adds here تعالى.

[80] I.2 has instead سروا.

[81] I.2 adds من مراتب.

تعالى يا إنسان يخاطب وجهة محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم اي يا إنسان عين ذاتي (والقرآن الحكــــيم) (51) تعالى يا إنسان يخاطب وجهة محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم اي يا إنسان عين ذاتي

فالقرآن الحكيم عطف على عين ذاتي الذي أضيف إليه الإنسان فهو سر الذات وسر القرآن الحكيم (واعلم)

أن القرآن الحكيم هو صفة الله تعالى (52) معنى القرآنية تعقلك بما يستحقه الإله من أوصاف الألوهيــــات

فهذا التعقل هو كالقراءة وأما ذات الحق فلا تعقل لك فيها لصموت أحديته المنزهة عن الكــثرة الأسمائيــــة

وغيرها فكلما قرأت شيئاً من القرآن الحكيم الذي هو صفة الله في نفسك ظهرت صفات الله لــك بقــدر

تلك القراءة المرتبة (53) ولهذا قرن به الحكيم لتكون القراءة هذه مرتبة بترتيب حكمة إلهية فشيئاً لا

يتناهى ولا تبلغ لها غاية أبداً فالترتيب والله والحكمة عين الذات التي هي أنت وليس لشاهدتك إلا ما قــرأه

غيبك منك لغيبك لا لوجهك الشهادي وعين وجه شهادتك عين وجه غيبك فتحيرت تحير الله أعـــني

الاسم في ذاته لأنه لم يستوفها أي لم يظهر[82] معانى كمالاتها بل في الذات الكمالية[83] من وراء الاســـم الله

اعلم ما به ولكن مع هذا فإن هذا الاسم قد وقع عليها وهو شيء واحد فقولنا قد وقع اسم الله على الذات

وهو شيء واحد يناف قولنا لم يستوفها لاستحالة التجزية والتبعيض في جناب الحق لأن الذات إذا لم تتبعض

وقد وقع عليها فقد استوفاها وإذا لم يستوفها بشيء واحد فليست هذا الأمر يعطي الحيرة القبيحة للعقــلاء

والحيرة الحسنة لأهل الله فإذا كان الله أعنى الاسم متحيراً في ذاته فكيف لك بالعبد في هذا المحل من أولى به

من التحير

(54) تحيرت من حيرتي مم هي   فقد حار فهمي في وهمة

فلم أدر هذا التحير من   تجاهل فهمي ام علمه

فإن قلت جهلا[84] فكذوب   وان قلت علماً فمن أهله[85]

(55) وفي هذا المعنى قولي   في قصيدة طويلة ليس هذا موضعها:

احطت خبراً مجملاً ومفصلاً   بجميع ذاتك يا جميع صفاته

أم جل عينك[86] أن يحاط بكنهه   فاحطته أن لا يحاط بذاته

حاشاك من غاي وحاشا أن يكن   بك جاهلاً ويلاه من حيراته

(56) فمعنى (يس والقرآن الحكيم) ياسر الذات الغير المقروء في الله وعين القرآن المتلــو مـــن الله علـــى

ترتيب[87] ذات الأحدية (انك لمن المرسلين) من تلك الحضرة العالية القدسية الأحدية إلى هذا المشهد الخلقي

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[82] I.2 adds جميع.

[83] I.2 has instead الإلهية الكامنة.

[84] I.2 adds فأني.

[85] As in the clearer I.2 rendition.

[86] I.2 has instead وجهك.

[87] I.2 adds حكمة.

التشبيهي الإنساني العيدي (على صراط مستقيم) إلى سنن احدى قيومي يقوم بنفسه وبالعالم جميعه (تنزيــل العزيز الرحيم) اي وانك تنزيل العزيز وهو الله [88] لا ينال إلا في هذا الهيكل المحمدي (57) (الرحيم) لأنه لما رحم العالم أراد أن ينكى ينكيهم نفسه وهو عزيز فتنزل في جنسهم (لقد جاءكم رسول مــن أنفسكم) ليدلهم على نفسه ويجذبهم إليه عناية منه بهم ومنه من [89] خزائن جوده عليهم (عزيز عليهم ما عنــتم) لانــه الحامل لكم والفاعل فيكم بكم فلا وجود لكم بل الوجود المطلق لذاته بالمؤمنين [90] الذين آمنوا بأنه عينــهم (رؤف رحيم فإن تولوا) ولم يقبل عقولهم رؤية أحديتك في [91] أعدادهم (58) (فقل حسبي الله) إذ الألوهية جامعة لا ينماتوا لوا فثم وجه الله فاشهد لهم انهم فروا من يمينه إلى شماله وكلتا يدي ربي يمـــين مباركة [92] فكان صلى الله عليه وسلم رحمة للعالم جميعه مؤمنه وكافره مقره وجاحدة صلى الله عليه وسلم سبق بنــا جواداً اللسان في مضمار البيان إلى أن تحد ثنا عالم ينطق فإفشائه الجنان فلنرجع إلى ما كنا بــصدده مــن شرح بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم.

SECTION 11

(59) (اعلم) أنه لما كان الألف من غيب الأحدية والسين سرها الشهادي كان الميم عبارة عــن الموجــود وهو الحقيقة الجامعة للغيب والشهادة   (60) (ألا ترى) إلى تجويف رأس الميم كيف هو محل النقطة البيضاء وقد مضى لك أن النقطة هي الكنز المخفي فقل أن الدائرة من تجويف رأس الميم هي الحق الذي يظهر فيــه هذا الكنز المخفي (ألا ترى) إلى قوله كنت كنزاً مخفيا فاحببت أن أعرف فخلقت الخلق وتعرفــت إلــيهم فعرفوني فمن هنا كان الاسم ذو الجلال والإكرام في قوله تبارك اسم ربك ذو الجلال والإكرام لأنه لو كان وصفاً لربك لكان مجرورا فذو الجلال مرفوع تابع للإسم لا لربك فافهم.

(61) (واعلم) أن الميم روح محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم لأن المحل الذي ظهر فيه الكنز المخفي هو العــالم وقد ورد في حديث جابر أن الله تعالى أول ما خلق روح محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم ثم خلق جميع العــالم منه رتبة في الحديث والنقطة البيضاء التي في جوف راس الميم عين محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم الذي هو الكنز المخفي [93]   حقيقة جامعة للذات العظيم والقرآن الحكيم على الوجه   الذي قررناه وفي هذا المعـــنى قلت:

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[88] I.2 has instead وهو الذي.

[89] I.2 adds عين.

[90] I.2 adds أي.

[91] I.2 adds كثرة.

[92] Omitted by I.2.

[93] I.2 adds ومن هنا قلنا أنه صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم.

(62) رسول الله يا مجلي الألوهية   ويا من ذاته ذات نزيهة

ظهرت بمظهر في كل حسن   تستر عن عيان بالبديهة

با وصاف هي السبع المثاني   وقرآن هي الذات النبيهه

خصصت وكنت أنت بها حقيقاً   حقيقتك المقدسة الشبيهه

سكنت ديار هند وأن تعالت   وجلت وقد لبست ردا المويهه[94]

فالأوصاف كل شاف سعدي   وأنت بها نظرت إلى الألوهة

لأنك كنت قبل الكل حتما[95]   فذاتك للذوات هي الفقيه

(63) كان لإنشادي هذه الأبيات سبب وهو أنه اجتمعنا في بعض ليلي سنة تسع وتسعين وسبع مائة بمسجد شيخنا وسيدنا استاذ العالم القطب الأكبر والكبريت الأحمر شرف الدين اسمعيل بن إبراهيم الجبرتي على سماع عام[96] في جبانة المسجد[97] في حضرة[98] اخونا الفقيه أحمد الحباني[99] قوله تعالى "ولقد أيناك سبعاً من المثاني والقرآن العظيم فأشهدني الحق تعالى اتصاف نبيه محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم بالسبعة الأوصاف النفيسة التي هي الحياة- والعلم- والإرادة- والقدرة- والسمع- والبصر والكلام- وشهد ته صلى الله عليه وسلم بعد اتصافه بأوصافه عين الذات للغائب في هوية الغيبيات وهو المشار إليه في الآية بالقرآن العظيم إذ قرأته لا نهاية لها فكلما قرأته الورثه قرآن الحقيقة من ذات الله تعالى هو عين محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم وإليه الإشارة في الحديث في قوله أهل القرآن أهل الله وخاصته فليتأمل فهو غيب هوية الأحديـة والرسـل والأنبياء والورثة الكمل يقرأون[100] هوية محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم في الله وهذا معنى واسطة بـين العـالم وبين الله وإليه الإشارة بقوله أنا من الله والمؤمنون مني فافهم.

SECTION 12

(64) (واعلم) أن عدد الميم أربعون[101] هذا العدد موافق لمراتب الوجود التي ليس بعدها إلا ما كان أولها.

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[94] This verse is missing in C.

[95] I.2 has حكماً.

[96] I.2 adds كان.

[97] I.2 adds فقرأ.

[98] I.2 adds الشيخ أحد اخواننا السادة وهو.

[99] A note in I.2 explains قال الذهبي في المشتبه الحباني بموحدتين نسبة إلى الحد أحمد بن إبراهيم.

[100] I.2 repeats غيث.

[101] I.2 explains هذا العدد هو عين كمال الاعتدال في كل شيء وهو ميقات الرب سبحانه وتعالى ومعنى الميقات.

(65) (المرتبة الأولى) هي الذات الساذج (المرتبة الثانية) هي العما وهي عبارة عن كنة الذات عـــبر عنــها بالمعرفة (المرتبة الثالثة) هي الأحدية وهي عبارة عن الرحمة[102] الذاتية عبر عنها بالكنز المخفـــي (المرتبــة الرابعة) الواحدية وهي أول تنزلات الذات في الأسماء والصفات (المرتبة الخامسة) الألوهيـــة وهـــي المرتبــة الشاملة لمراتب الوجود أعلاها وأسفلها (المرتبة السادسة) الرحمانية وهي المرتبة المختصة [103] بأعلى مراتــب الوجود (المرتبة السابعى[104]) الربوبية وهي المرتبة المقتضية لوجود المربوب ومن هنا ظهر الخلـــق (المرتبـــة الثامنة) العرش وهو الجسم الكلبي (المرتبة التاسعة) القلم الأعلى وهو العقل الأول (المرتبة العاشـــرة) وهـــو اللوح المحفوظ وهو النفس الكلي (المرتبة الحادية عشر) لكرسي وهو العقل الكلي عبارة عن القلب (المرتبـــة الثانية عشر) الهيولي (المرتبة الثالث عشر) الهبا (المرتبة الرابعة عشر) فلك العناصر (المرتبة الخامـــسة عـــشر) الفلك الأطلس (المرتبة السادسة عشر)[105] البروج (المرتبة السابعة عشر) فلك زحل (المرتبة الثامنة عـــشر) فلك المشترى (المرتبة التاسعة عشر) فلك المريخ (المرتبة العشرون) فلك الشمس (المرتبة الحادية والعشرون) فلك الزهرة (المرتبة الثانية والعشرون) فلك عطارد (المرتبة الثالثة والعشرون) فلك القمر (المرتبـــة الرابعـــة والعشرون) فلك الأثير وهو فلك النار (المرتبة الخامسة والعشرون) فلك الهواء (المرتبة السادسة والعشرون) فلك الماء (المرتبة السابعة والعشرون) فلك التراب (المرتبة الثامنة والعشرون) فلك المولدات (المرتبة التاســـعة والعشرون) فلك الجوهر البسيط (المرتبة الثلاثون)[106] العرض اللازم (المرتبة الحادية والثلاثون) المركبـــات وهي المعدن (المرتبة الثانية والثلاثون) النباتات (المرتبة الثالثة والثلاثون) الجمادات (المرتبة الرابعة والثلاثون) الحيوانات (المرتبة والخامسة الثلاثون) الإنسان (المرتبة السادسة والثلاثون) عالم الصور منه يلحق بها الــدنيا (المرتبة السابعة والثلاثون) عالم المعاني منه يلحق بها البرزخ [107] (المرتبة الثامنـــة والثلاثـــون) عالم الحقاءق ويلحق بها القيامة (المرتبة التاسعة والثلاثون) الجنة والنار (المرتبة الأربعون) الكتيب الأبيض الذي يخرجون اليه أهل الجنة وهو عبارة عن تجلي الحق تعالى ودار الدور فما بعده إلا الذات . (66) فهذا العـــدد هـــو أصل الأشياء وبه كملت تخميرة طينة آدم وهو أول موجود من هذا العالم الإنساني ظهر في الرتبة الرابعـــة من العدد لأن العالم[108] بأجمعه ليس فيه ألا أربعة أنواع قديم وحديث وكثيف أو لطيف ومـــا ثم إلا هـــذه الأربعة فجمعها هو عين هذا الميم المحمدي الذي قلنا أنه جميع الوجود القديم والحديث والكلام على هـــذا العدد كثير جداً من حيث تفرعاته في الطبايع والعناصر والإنشاءات والفضول وغير ذلـــك وتكفـــي عـــن

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[102] I.2 has instead السذاجة.

[103] I.2 has instead المتصفة.

[104] Here ends abruptly L.

[105] I.2 adds فلك.

[106] I.2 adds فلك.

[107] This degree is missing in C.

[108] As in I.2. C. here repeats العدد.

الجميع إشارة أن كان في القلب بصارة، اسم الشيء وسمه الذي يتصوره يتعقل ذلك الشيء ويمتازيه عن غيره كما يمتازذو الوسم بالوسم ممن لا وسم له.

SECTION 13

(فصل)

(67) اسم الله أصله الإله ولكن اسقطت الألف الوسطى وأدغمت اللام في التي تليها فــصارت الكلمة الله ولكن أصله سبعة أحرف ستة رقمية والسابعة الواو للظاهرة في إشباع الهاء كما ترى (ا ل ا ل ه ا و) وهي عين السبع الصفات التي هي معنى الألوهة (68)   (فالألف الأولى) هو عين اسمه الحي (ألا ترى) إلى سريان حياة الله في جميع الوجود وقد أظهرنا لك سريان الألف في جميع الحروف (69) (والثاني اللام الأول) وهي الإرادة التي كانت أول توجه من الحق في بروز العالم لما أشار إليه الحديث بقول كنت كنــزا لا أعــرف فاحببت أن أعرف وليس الحب إلا الإرادة (70) (الثالث الألف الثاني) وهي القدرة الـــسارية في جميـــع الموجودات الكونية إذ الموجودات الكونية[109] تحت سلطان القدرة (71) (والرابع اللام الثاني) وهـــو العالم هو جمال الله تعالى المتعلق بذاته وبمخلوقاته فقائية اللام محل عمله بذاته وتعريقة اللام محل عمله .بمخلوقاتـــه ونفس الحرف عين العلم الجامع (72) (والخامس هو الألف الثالث) وهو السمع السامع كل منطـــوق وأن من شيء إلا يسبح بحمده (73) (السادس الهاء) وهو بصر الله دائرة الهاء[110] تدل على إنسان غيب المحـــيط الذي ينظر به إلى جميع العالم والعالم هو البياض الموجود في عين دائرة الهاء، وفي هذا تنبيه إلى أن العالم ليس له وجود إلا بنظر الله إليه فلو رفع نظره عن العالم لفنى بأجمعه كما أنه لو لم تدر دائرة الهاء علـــى النقطـــة البيضاء لم يكن لها وجود البتة ومع وجودها فهي باقية على ما كانت عليه من العدم إذا البياض الموجـــود قبل استدارة الهاء موجود بعده وكذلك العالم مع الله على حالته التي كانت عليها قبل أن يخلقه الله تعـــالى فافهم وتأمل في هذا السر الغريب وقس .بما ذكرته خارجاعنك على ما هو في ذاتك فليس المراد من ذلك إلا سعادتك ووقوعك على عينك (74) (والسابع الواو البارز) عدده في المرتبة السادسة وهو معنى مـــشير إلى كلام الله تعالى (ألا ترى) إلى الست الجهات التي غايتها نهايتها كمال العرش الرحماني المنسوب إلى كل جهة كيف دخلت تحت حضرة كن فكما ان كلام الله تعالى لا نهاية له كذلك المخلوق الداخل تحـــت حيطة العرش ممكن ولا نهاية للممكن فانظر عدم النهاية في الواجب الوجود كيف ظهر بعينه في الممكـــن الجـــائز الوجود و العدم فهذه السبعة الأسماء هي عين معنى الله وصورته اسماء وذاتاً ليست ســـواه وهـــي هـــي

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[109] I.2 adds داخلة.

[110] Added here in I.2.

(75)(واختلف الناس في هذا لاسم فمهم من قال أنه مشتق من اله يأله بمعنى عبد يعبد عبـــادة فجعل المصدر اسما للمعبود فقيل له وزيد فيه الف التعريف ولامه فقيل الله، ومنهم من قال اله بمعنى عشق فيكـــون اله مصدر العشق، ومنهم من قال انه اسم جامد غير مشتق ولم يكن أصله إله بل هو علــــى حالـــه علـــم الواجب الوجود المخترع للعالم وليس هو إلا هذه الخمسة الأحرف (ا ل ل ا ه) وهذا هو مذهبنا والـــدليل عليه تسمى الحق به قبل أن يخلق العالم لأن الله غني عن العالم بخلاف اسمه الرحمن فإنه ناظر إلى ظهـــور اثر الرحمانية في المرحوم لابد من ذلك للحق سبحانه وتعالى أما ظاهر في الوجود وأما باطن في علمه ملحوظ له فافهم وكذلك الرب والخالق وبقية الأسماء الرحمانية كالمعطى والواهب والمنتقم 111 وأعني الأسماء الرحمانية كلما يطلب مؤثرا يظهر فيه اثره كالعلم فإنه يطلب معلوما والسميع والبصير والقدير والمريـــد والمـــتكلم ككلمة كن فإنها تطلب مكوناً فهذه وأشباهها أسماء الرحمانية وقد سبق فيما تقدم معنى 112 أن الرحمن هـو الله بنظره إلى ما يستحقه العرش وما حواه يخلاف باسمه الله تعالى فانه علم للذات التي هي هوية كل هوية وانية كل أنية وأنانية كل أنانية 113 ولا يتقيد بنظره ولا ينعدم تقييده بنظره هو الجامع للشيء وضده ولهـذا قال من قال أن الله هو عين الوجود والعدم فلما قوله عين الوجود فظاهر وأما قوله عين العدم ففيه سر دقيق لا يطلع عليه إلا الكمل من أهل الله لمقامهم لو من فتح له رتق له هذا الباب قبل وصول هذا المحل.

ولابد من الكلام بعد ما شرعنا فيه وهذا وجه من الوجود التي يصح فيها إطلاق اسم العدم عليه لكمالـــه سبحانه وتعالى لوجوبه تعالى علواً كبيراً.

(76) (واعلم) أن الله علم يعطيك تعقله مسمى حوى مراتب الألوهية ويتصور عندك أنه أمر زائد عليـــك مغائر لذاتك فهذا المتصور عدم لا وجود له إذ عين المراد ذاتك فما تم مصور إلا الله وما تم إلا أنت بل مـــا تم إلا الله.

(77) (واعلم) أن قولنا الحق والخلق والرب والعبد إنما هو ترتيب حكمي نسبي لذات واحد كل ذلك 114 لا يستوفي معناها ووقوفك مع شيء من تعدد ذلك دور وتضييع وقت في عين الحقيقة إلا إذا كنت ممـــن يشم المسك وهو في فارغة قارورة فإن كل ذلك 115 فحينئذ اكلت الزفر بيد غيرك ووزنت نفسك في غيار مرتبتك وما يستحقه قانونك فلما وجدته من تلك فهو عين الحقيقة وما وجدته من الله إليك على ســـبيل الاتصال 116 والاتحاد فهو عين الضلال في الحق والإلحاد ولا تذوق هذا الكلام إلا عربي أعجمي لغته غـــير لغة الخلق ومحله غير محلهم فهو يستوفي ماله كما لم يزل ويرمي بسهم مراتبه في قوس مقتضياته على هدف

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111 As in I.2, where an editorial note here has والمنعم.

112 This word is missing in I.2.

113 As in I.2.

114 As in I.2.

115 I.2 adds حينئذ ترتيب لذاتك تستحقه بالأصالة.

116 As in I.2.

ذاته بيد قائم احديته فلا يخطى له مرمى ولا ينكس له سهماً فلا سهامه تزول، ولا عين الرمي تحول، تعالى الله ان تنصرم ألوهيته أو تنقسم أحديته.

SECTION 14

(فصل)

(78) (اعلم) أن الجلالة مركبة من ستة أحرف وهي (ا ل ف م ي ه) لأن الألف بسائطه ثلاثة وهي (ا ل ف) واللام الأول بسائطه ثلاثة (ل ا م) والألف الثاني– كالأول واللام المتأخر– كالمتقدم والهاء بـــسائطة حرفان الجملة[117] أربعة عشر حرفاً عدد الأحرف النورانية اسقطت منها المكرر فبقى هذه الأحـــرف (ا ل ف م ي ه) فالألف ثلاثة عوالم العالم الغيبي الذي لا يتصور شهادته وظهوره[118] والعالم الغيبي البرزخـي الذي يمكن شهادته وظهوره والعالم[119] الشهادي فهذه ثلاثة عوالم وليس للموجود والوجود بأسره إلا هذه الثلاثة العوالم[120] (79) (ألا ترى) الى مخرج الألف ابتدأوه الهمزة من غيب غيب الصدر الذي لا يـــتمكن شهادته ابداً، واوسطه اللام الذي هومن شق اللهاة والفم وهو غيب يمكن ظهوره وشهادته وآخـــر الفـــاء الشفوي الذي هو شهادة محضة فالألف بارز من غيب الغيب الى الشهادة واللام محله عالم الغيب وله الولوج في عالم غيب الغيب للألفية التي في وسطه فكما أن له الظهور في عالم الشهادة الميمة التي في آخـــره وهي شفوية شهادية والفاء شهلدي عالم ابتدائه غيب الغيبي عالم انتهائه والميم شهادي الابتداء غيي التوسط شهادي الانتهاء والياء أوله من عالم الغيب وآخره من عالم غيب الغيب ليس له عن محله مخــرج ولا وراءه مرمى فانظر إلى الله الجامع لما خرج من غيب الغيب إلى الغيب وظهر من الغيب إلى الشهادة كالألف ولمــا برز من الغيب البرزخي إلى عالم الشهادة كاللام ولما ولج من عالم الشهادة إلى الغيبة البرزخـي ورجـــع إلى مركزه في عالم الشهادة كالميم ولما نظر من عالم الغيب إلى غيب الغيب كألياء و لم يزل في عـــالم الغيـــب كالهاء فهذا كله هو عين ذات الله وهو حقيقة الألوهية إذ الالوهية مرتبة الحيطة فافهم وانظر مــا أعجـــب تداخل أمر هذا الاسم في العوالم بعضه ببعض وما أعجب[121] هيئته ولو وسعنا فيه الكلام لضاق عنه المجال وليس هذا المختصر محلا لذلك، واعلم، أن العالم الذي كنينا عنه بغيب الغيب وهو تفصيل كمال الـــذات

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[117] I.2 adds جميعها.

[118] I.2 adds أبداً.

[119] This reference to the "gap world" is added here by I.2 but is missing in C.

[120] This last sentence is also added here in I.2 but is missing in C.

[121] Again, this line is added here in I.2 but is missing in C.

الإلهية ودركه غير ممكن البتة والعالم الذي كنينا عنه بالغيب[122] هو عالم الغيب اللاهوتي المستحق رحمانه انه يسمى بالأسماء الحسنى والعالم الشهادي وهو عالم الملك وأعني بعالم الملك كلما حواه العـــرش مـــن روح وجسد ومعنى فافهم واعلم ما سر هذه الجمعية التي لاسم الله وكيف ظهر على صورة مسماه، واعلـــم، أن الذات المطلقة لها الإحاطة على الله ولكن الله من الذات له الافضلية عليها لأن كثيراً من وجوه الـــذات ما هي الله وليس لهاشي من الألوهية وكل وجه من الله هو الذات بكماله، هذا على تعقل عدم التقسيم بـــين الله وبين الذات واياك أن تتخيل أني عددت أو قسمت[123] أو عطلت أو شبهت أو جسمت انا بريئ مـــن هذا التخيل الباطل بل فهمك قصر عن درك ما قلته والعياذ بالله ان كنت فهما وليست لك قابلية الألوهية وعلمها نعوذ بالله من ذلك ونستعين به عليه أن يسلك بنا فيه طريقه المستقيم الذي يسلك هو منه إليه.

SECTION 15

(فصل)

(80) والعرش هو العالم الكبير وهو محل استواء الرحمن والإنسان هو العالم الصغير وهو محل استواء الله لأنه خلق آدم على صورته فانظر إلى هذا العالم الصغير اللطيف الإنساني كيف له الفضل والشرف علـــى هـــذا العالم الكبير وتأمل كيف صغر الكبير وكبر الصغير وكل في محله ومرتبته، فلو عرفت هذا الشر لعرفت معنى قوله ويسعني قلب عبدي المؤمن، وأما قوله لي مع الله وقت لايسعني فيه ملك مقرب ولا نبي مرسل، فظاهر أنه ما وسعه في ذلك الوقت إلا الله وكم من نبي مرسل وملك مقرب وعارف ولي قد وسع العرش الـــذي هو العالم الكبير بأجمعه وما أحس به ولا بالي فظهر عظم هذه اللطيفة الإنسانية وشرفها فضلها على العـــالم الكبير وبان أنه العالم الكبير كالنقطة للمحيط فان المحيط ولو كبرت هيئته مركب على نلك النقطة ومنـــها وللنقطة إلى كل جزء من الدائرة نسب مخصوص وتفضل على الدائرة بما يتخص بعد ذلك من عدم التعدد في نفسها وغير ذلك من الخصائص.

(81) فالنقطة هو الإسم الله والمحيط هو الإسم الرحمن قال الله تعالى (قل ادعوا الله أو ادعو الرحمن أيامـــاً ندعوا فله الأسماء الحسنى)[124] وقدتينا لك أن النقطة لها إلى كل جزء من أجزاء الدائرة تسب إضـــافات ولا شك أن تلك النسب والإضافات جميعاً للدائرة أيضاً فأيا ما منها نسب إليه هذه النسب والإضافات كـــان مستحقاً لها كما أن الأسماء الحسنى جميعها ان سميت ووصفت بها الإسم الرحمن إلا وجه من وجوه الله[125]

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[122] I.2 adds البرزخي.
[123] As with the additions contained in I.2.
[124] This is the complete quotation of the Qur'anic verse, as given in I.2.
[125] This line has been omitted in I.2.

ووصفت بها اسم الله كانت له وليس للرحمن إلا وجه من وجوه الله تعالى ظهر فيه كما تستحقه المرتبـــة الوحدانية[126] كما أن الدائرة ليست إلا عين النقطة لظهور النقطة في كل جزء منها فما ثم في الـــدائرة إلا النقطة.

(82) (واعلم) أن الرحمن فعلان وهذه الصفة متى كانت في اسم صفة كانت لعموم ذلك الوصف ولهـــذا كان اسمه الرحمن علماً ظاهراً في الدنيا والآخرة بخلاف اسمه الرحيم فإن الرحمة في الاخرة أشد ظهوراً مـــن الدنيا للحديث أن الله مائة رحمة فواحدة في الدنيا بين الخلق بها يتواصلون وبها يتراحمون وتسعة وتسعون في الآخرة مدخرة عند الله لا يخرجها إلا في يوم القيامة وسر اسمه الرحيم انتهاء العالم إلى الله تعالى ورجـــوع الخليقة إلى الحقيقة وأن إلى ربك المنتهى، إلا إلى الله تصير الأمور لمن الملك اليوم لله الواحد القهار. شعر[127]

(83) تعالوا بناحتي نعود كما كنا   فما عهدنا ختمتم ولا عهدكم خنا

ونترك وشيا والوشاة وطائراً   غراباً لوقع البين في ربعنا غنا

ونطوي بساط العتب والحب والجفا   ونرمي السوى والبين ليت السوى يفنى

عسى أن يعود الشمل بالحي مثل ما   عهدنا عود الوصل أثماره تجنى

وينشد حادي الحال عنا مترجماً   إلا لا أعاد الله بيتا نأى عنا

الحبابنا طيبوا فلم بك ما مضى   سوى حلم كاللفظ ليس له معنى

فلا طال هجران ولا ثم عادل   ولا سهر المشتاق ليلا وقدحنا

ولا كان ما قلتم ولا كان ما[128]   جرى ولا يتم عنا ولا عنكم بنا

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2. TRANSLATION

As I explained in the introduction to this chapter, the translation that follows is based on two manuscripts, one preserved at the London India Office, and the second one at the Library of the University of Cambridge dated 1040/1631. The text has been checked against two editions kept also in Cambridge, dated 1336/1917 and 1340/1921.

Words in square brackets [ ] are my own additions intended to clarify the English meaning of a sentence or of an expression. Annotations to this work constitute part three of this chapter.

This English rendition of the work by Al-Jīlī has been checked against Clément-François' (2002) French translation. Although the French translator does not give any indication of the original text on which his translation is based, evidence – established on an analysis of the choice of alternative readings available for some given sections and of the one evidently available to the translator – suggests that Clément-François' version may rely on the Indian second edition published in 1336/1917 and kept at the Library of the University of Cambridge (I.2). Unless of course he has used other sources not available to me from among those I have listed at the beginning of this fourth chapter. The 2002 French edition has been useful in re-examining my own translation of some difficult and ambiguous passages. What I have not found particularly helpful are the numerous chapters on "pseudo-Islamic" Metaphysics contained in the book which, by the author's own admission in his general introduction, tend to go off the point of the intended subject of Al-Jīlī's work. They deal with digressions on the significance of symbolism in esotericism and

with other such matters in my opinion rather unrelated to the mystic's doctrine and historical and cultural background, and often in pantheistic terms identifying the Supreme Being with the created order and the Qur'ān with *Allāh*.[1] The author frequently draws gratuitous parallelisms between Christianity and Islam, comparing for instance the words of the Christian consecration of the bread to the Basmala,[2] or pointing to the sign of the cross generated by the superimposition of the letters *Alif* and *Bā'*.[3]

The Cave and the Inscription

A Commentary to the [Formula] "In the Name of God the All Compassionate and Most Merciful"[4]

INTRODUCTION

(1) Praise be to God, Who conceals Himself under the cover of His essence. Who exists within the "heavy Clouds"[5] of His depths. Who is complete in His names and attributes. Who unites by His divinity the composition of His opposites. The One, in His loftiness. The numerical one Whose attributes encompass all that He fulfils.[6] The Eternal that has no end. The Eternal that has no beginning. Who manifests Himself in every form and meaning in His *suwar*[7] and verses. Who is evidently and undoubtedly beyond any empiricism and verbalisation and [faulty] imagination and rationalisation. Taking the

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[1] Pp. 63-64.

[2] P. 69.

[3] P. 80.

[4] The Cambridge manuscript adds here the words, "In Whom we seek assistance."

[5] *'Amā':* it signifies God's non-manifestation; in Al-Jīlī it is one of the degrees of existence.

[6] A reference to the *Mu'tazilī* doctrine that the attribute of "Creator" could not be applied to God before the action of creation took place.

[7] Plural of *sūra* (Qur'anic chapter).

forms of all the creatures He Himself has created.[8] Who is Himself the form of the world [found] among His human beings, His animals, His plants and His inanimate objects, abandoned under the canopy of His glory,[9] [clear of any concept] of continuity, discontinuity, opposite, equal partner, quantification, qualification, corporality, finitude, or limitation [imposed] by anthropomorphic [representations][10] of Him or [even] by their elimination.[11]

(2) [Like] a swimmer His names have swum immersing themselves in the oceans of His being without reaching His boundaries.[12] He is pictured in every picture. Intimate with every intimate friend; a participant in every gathering; inaccessible in every way; supremely distinctive, completely unrestrained and completely bound,[13] confined within every border, unlimitedly holy and clear of His anthropomorphizations.

(3) Space does not restrict Him but is not empty of Him. The eye does not see Him but cannot hide from Him. He is the original causal determinant (*Ma'nā*) of creation - [which is] an accident [derived] from an essence[14] - and He is the reality (*Ḥaqīqa*) of that essence and no accident can diminish Him. He is the provider and origin of sustenance, which He lowered to the rank of what is called creation, so that He may carry out the authority more adequate to His own rank, in addition to what wisdom requires, and the authority of His decrees demands.

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[8] A wink to the doctrine of *Waḥda al-Wujūd*.
[9] An alternative reading has transcendence (*tanzīh*).
[10] *Tashbīh*: anthropomorphization, or immanence.
[11] *Tanzīh*. In Al-Jīlī this term refers to the uniqueness of the Eternal in Its names, attributes and essence, and underscores the fact that nothing resembles the divine Absolute..
[12] His names cannot contain Him.
[13] Present in the Cambridge and London manuscripts, added in a note to the Indian edition.
[14] *Jawhar*: the first of the ten Aristotelian categories, it signifies essence, content, substance, as opposed to form. According to the *Ash'arī* school it is constituted of accidents, pretty much like an aggregation of atoms composes a body.

(4) Unknown, [belonging to] the reality of the transcendent: "I was an unknown treasure and I longed to be known";[15] thereupon He made himself known to His creation by what is known of His instructions (*Taʿrīfāt*). He made of creation a place for Himself to reside in, but it does not exceed Him. And He prescribed the name of Truth as a mode that has its origin in Him, that nothing would be beneficial for you without Him. And He prescribed that His divinity combine all the aspects of His reality. For He has established that His divinity should encompass His oneness and His oneness have jurisdiction over His divinity. One comes across every aspect of His essence according to the rank into which He has manifested it, but nothing of all that exists can know it in its great beauty except He Himself.

(5) I praise Him - Praise Him for Himself behind the canopy of his eternal divine mystery. Praise Him with the tongue of His perfect eternal beauty. [Praise] Him as He praises Himself in His [divine] state.

As I am unable to praise Him I lean onto the honourable and the greatest; secret of the divine secret, the one who joins together, the most obscure; dot that is the eye[16] of the dotted letters: Muḥammad, lord of the Arabs and of the non-Arabs. Repository of the sanctuary of [all] truths and of [divine] oneness. Meeting place of the minutiae of transcendence and finitude. Revealer of the causal determinant (*Maʿnā*) of beauty old and new. Form of the perfect essence. The eternal and the everlasting in the gardens of the [divine] attributes, eternally manifesting Himself in the sphere of divine affairs. May God

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[15] "So I created the world and through it I came to be known." From an often-quoted Sufi *ḥadīth* of doubtful origin, not included in any of the official collections.
[16] Or essence.

bless and grant salvation to him and to his leading people peace - those who adorn themselves with the pearls of those who [in their turn] annihilate themselves for his sake; those who with his teachings and his actions take stance on his behalf and in his place for him; and upon his family and his companions and his progeny and his offspring honour, respect, glory and exaltation.

(6) And after this [let us now continue] - Indeed I have consulted God - may He be exalted - about compiling this book entitled "The Cave and the Inscription" as a commentary to the [formula] "In the Name of God the All Compassionate and Most Merciful", induced by my merciful [God] and in answer to a question by a noble master (and) brother, a [man] that possessed a sharp mind and a brilliant, well versed, firmly established intelligence. Also [engaged in] asceticism and isolation and [endowed] with truthful intention in [his] pursuits. [Namely] ʿImād Al-Dīn Yaḥyā Bin Abī Al-Qāsim Al-Tūnisī Al-Maghribī, [great?] grandson of Al-Ḥasan[17] son of ʿAlī. I resisted and delayed progress towards what he desired. He did not tolerate hearsay and he did not lean towards anything but what he himself had propounded. The sincerity of his wish drove me to conform to it. And I have consulted God [and] in fear[18] I have sought refuge in Him. I ask Him - may He be praised and exalted - that by [this book] He may benefit its public, those who will hear it [being read] and its readers. May He grant my request.[19]

(7) And it is expected of the people of God[20] - who are our leaders, the brothers who will look into this book - may God's peace and His favour be upon them - that they

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[17] An editorial note in the second edition suggests Ḥusayn.
[18] Missing in I.2.
[19] Islamic devotional formula used after a prayer of petition addressed to God.
[20] The Sufis.

should scrutinise[21] the meaning of every word until its explanation pleases them, from the perspective of [each word's] interpretations, symbolic expressions, explicit, implicit and metaphorical meanings, "forwarding and delaying".[22] Observing the laws of poetry and the fundamentals of religion. And if they meet with one of the meanings of the oneness [of God] - to which both the [Sacred] Book and the Sunna bear witness - this is the reason why I have written the book. And if they understood from it the opposite of that, I am not responsible for such understanding. They should reject it and seek instead what I have written in conformity to the [Sacred] Book and the Sunna, and indeed God will confront them with that Sunna that among His creatures gave honour to Him Who has power over all things. Furthermore it is requested of them that they should strengthen us with their divine souls and accept us in spite of what is contained in this [book] of ours. And this is a minor strain that I have placed in their hands, hoping on the prayer of the saved or the watchful gaze of the Saint.

"If you find a fault, close the gap".

"Those who have no fault in themselves, are great and of a higher rank".

And here I begin - In all that I mentioned [earlier] I seek help in God, I fix my gaze on God, I take hold of God. Away from God what else is there if not God? And God speaks the truth.[23] And I have no [hope] to succeed [in this endeavour] except in God.

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[21] In I.2 "provide advice on".

[22] Technical terminology employed in Arabic grammar and poetry to refer to the arrangement of words in a sentence.

[23] I.2 adds: "and He guides along the [right] path."

SECTION 1

In the name of God the all Compassionate

and Most Merciful

(8) It has been reported [by Tradition] about the Prophet - may God bless and grant salvation to him[24] - that he said, "All that is contained in the revealed books is contained in the *Qur'ān*, and all that is contained in the *Qur'ān* is contained in the *Fātiḥa*, and all that is contained in the *Fātiḥa* is contained in [the formula] *In the Name of God the All Compassionate and Most Merciful"*. (9) It has also been reported that "all that is contained in [the formula] *In the Name of God the All Compassionate and Most Merciful* is contained in the [letter] *Bā'* (ﺏ)[25] and all that is contained in the *Bā'* is contained in the dot that is under the *Bā'*." Some of the masters (*ʿĀrifūn*) have said that [the formula] *In the Name of God* [pronounced] by a master is the equivalent of the [word] *Be!* (*Kun*) [pronounced] by God.

(10) [The reader] should know that the discussion on [the formula] *In the Name of God the All Compassionate and Most Merciful* presents many perspectives - such as syntax, morphology, language and the debate within it on the subject of the letters, their forms, their nature, their shape, their composition and their privileges over the rest of the letters found in the *Fātiḥa* of the [Sacred] Book, their combination within it and the peculiarities of the letters found in the *Bā'*; as well as the debate about them concerning

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[24] I.2 always adds here to this formula of blessing the words "and his family".

[25] The first letter of the Basmala, the Islamic formula In the Name of God the All Compassionate and Most Merciful.

their benefits and their secrets. We are not interested in that, but our discussion on this subject will be from the perspective of their true sense and meaning in all that befits the Source of all truth - may He be praised and exalted. The elements of this debate are interdependent because the purpose of these principles is the recognition of God - may He be praised and exalted. Therefore, every time that the flow of His permanent outpouring will be renewed [as] in [the exhaling] of breaths, the Trustworthy Soul[26] will descend onto the heart of the Tablet.

(11) You [should] know that the dot that is under the *Bā'* is the beginning of every *sūra* from the Book of God - may He be exalted. Because the letter is made of the dot it is inevitable for each *sūra* to begin with a letter and for each letter to begin with a dot. It follows from this that the dot is the beginning of every *sūra* from the Book of God - may He be exalted. Being the dot as we have indicated, then the relationship between [the dot] and the *Bā'* is complete and perfect for the explanation that follows: the *Bā'* is at the beginning of all *suwar* since the *Basmala* is required in every *sūra,* even the *sūra* [called] "Immunity".[27] Indeed the *Bā'* is the first letter in it. Therefore the whole *Qur'ān* is [contained] in every *sūra* of the Book of God - may He be exalted - for the reason previously mentioned that the whole *Qur'ān* is [contained] in the *Fātiḥa*, which is [contained] in the *Basmala,* which is [contained] in the *Bā',* which is [contained] in the dot. In the same way God - may He be praised and exalted - is totally present in everyone: He is irreplaceable and indivisible. Therefore the dot points to the essence of God - may He be exalted - unseen behind the canopy of His treasure, [being that the way] in which He appears to His creation.

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[26] The Archangel Gabriel.

[27] *Barāa (*IX), the only *sūrah* in the *Qur'ān* that does not begin with the *Basmala.*

(12) Don't you realize that you can see the dot but you can't read it at all because of its muteness and its freedom from the restrictions of phonetics? Purest soul of the letters that originate from all [possible vocal] articulations. Imagine dividing [the letter *Bā'* into its components] then the "curl" part [of the letter] warns you of what [may] be coming but you will be reading the dot, taking into consideration the joining [of the letter with other letters forming a given word]. Let's take now the case of the letter *Tā'* [ت], the one with two dots: if you add to it a dot, you will call it *Thā'* [ث] the one with three dots. Then you would have read nothing else but the dot, because the *Bā'*, the *Tā'* with two dots and [the *Thā'*] with three dots having the same shape cannot be read except in virtue of their dots. If they could be read independently [without the dots], then the shape of each one would differ from that of the other. Instead it is because of the dot that they are distinguishable and nothing else is being read in the letter but the dot. In the same way nothing can be distinguished in creation except God. And as I can distinguish God from creation, I can also distinguish it from God.

The dot however in some letters is more distinguishable than in others. In fact it appears in some as an addition: it appears to complete such letters, such in the case of the dotted letters - indeed it completes them. In some [however] it seems to be like their essence, as it is the case with the *Alif* [ا] and the un-dotted letters. Because the *Alif* is made up of the dot, and for this reason it is superior to the *Bā'*, given that the dot is manifested in its essence, while in the *Bā'* it appears as a completion expressed as the merger [of two elements]. Because the dot is like the banner of the letter, united to the letter. This unity however also reveals [their] difference, this being the separation that you see between the

letter and the dot. Whereas the *Alif* has a collocation of its own. Therefore the *Alif* is visible by itself in every letter. For example you can say that the *Bā'* is an outstretched *Alif*, and the *Jīm* [ج] is an *Alif* crooked at both ends, (13) and the *Dāl* [د] is an *Alif* bent in the middle. In the composition of each letter the *Alif* has the same role that the dot has, inasmuch as every letter is made of the dot. To each letter the dot is like a simple atom and the letter like a body made of [atoms]. And the role of the *Alif* with its shape is the same as that of the dot. Thus they make up the letters.

As we mentioned before, the *Bā'* is an outstretched *Alif*. Likewise, the world in its entirety was created out of the *Muḥammadan reality* (*Al-ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadiyya*). It can be inferred from this, according to what Jābir[28] reports in the *ḥadīth*, that God - may He be exalted - created the Prophet's soul - may God bless and grant salvation to him and his family - from His own being and created the world in its entirety from the soul of Muḥammad - may God bless and grant salvation to him.[29] Therefore Muḥammad - may God bless and grant salvation to him - is, among the things created in His name,[30] the outward expression of divine manifestations.

(14) Don't you see that he - may God bless and grant salvation to him - travelled by night with his body[31] up to the Throne - the abode of the All Compassionate?

For the *Alif* and the rest of the un-dotted letters that are just like it, the dot appears in them in its essence. As for [the dot's] outward manifestations in the *Alif,* they are

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[28] Jābir Bin ʿAbd Allāh, one of Muḥammad's companions, quoted in numerous Sunni and Shīʿite *aḥādīth.*
[29] This *ḥadīth* is generally considered to be a Shīʿite fabrication. Sunni tradition suggests that God first created water or His throne (e.g*., ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī* 6.60.206).
[30] As in I.2; C. here has (mistakenly?) body.
[31] According to the *Ashʿarī* school Muḥammad's ascension was physical as well as spiritual.

expressed in its sum: since the dot has no dimension except for one degree, therefore if two dots are joined together they form an *Alif,* and the *Alif* seeks one dimension, namely *length.* Because there are three dimensions: length, width and depth or thickness. The rest of the letters are made of more than one dimension. Such as in the case of the *Jīm,* for indeed in its head there is length and in its root thickness. Or in the case of the *Kāf* [ﻚ]for indeed in its head there is length and in the middle between the head and its first root there is width and in the partition between the two roots there is thickness. Therefore it has three dimensions. Every letter necessarily has two or three dimensions. Except for the *Alif.* The *Alif* therefore is closer to the dot because the dot has no dimension. The relation of the *Alif* to the [other] un-dotted letters is like the relation of Muḥammad - may God bless and grant salvation to him - to the [other] prophets and possessors of perfect kindness. For this reason the *Alif* has received priority over all other letters.

(15) Think and ponder. From among the letters some will have the dot on top while [the letter] is underneath. This is the condition by which you do not see anything without [having seen] God before.

From among the letters others will have the dot underneath.[32] This is the condition by which you can't see anything without [seeing] God beyond.

From among the letters still others will have the dot in the middle; such is the case with the white dot in the heart of the [letters] *Mīm* [ﻢ], *Wāw* [ﻭ] and similar [letters]. This is the place where you do not see anything except God within it. This is the reason why it is

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[32] I.2 adds here "while [the letter] is on top".

rendered hollow: because it is a spine in whose stomach there is something other than itself. Therefore, the circle of the head of the *Mīm* is the place where you cannot see anything, while its white dot is[33] where you can only see God. The *Alif* is instead the place where "those who pledge their allegiance to you indeed (*Innamā*) pledge their allegiance to God".[34]

It is said about the meaning of *innamā* that it has the same value of *mā illā*,[35] and its interpretation[36] is that those who pledge their allegiance to you, do not pledge their allegiance *except* to God. It is well known that Muḥammad - may God bless and grant salvation to him - received pledges of allegiance, and God bore witness to Himself that those pledges were actually made to no other than God. As if saying that you were not Muḥammad when you received pledges of allegiance, but indeed, you were God concealed, because truly they were making their pledges to God. And this is what vicariousness means. Don't you see how appropriate it is for the Messenger of God - may God bless and grant salvation to him - or the envoy of the king to say to whomever is taking his place, "Indeed you have taken the place of the king". [37] Likewise the king will tell those to whom he has dispatched his envoy, "Don't assume that he is just so and so; indeed he is me", thus emphasizing with them obedience to himself.

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[33] I.2 adds here "the place".
[34] *Qur'ān* XLVIII.10.
[35] "Except".
[36] *Ta'wīl*. This term is often used also to mean spiritual or esoteric hermeneutics. Its etymology is rooted in the word *awwal*, meaning first or beginning.
[37] I.2 for the sake of clarity adds here "You have not just taken my place".

SECTION 2

(16) The dot of the *Bā'* is alone in its transcendental world. It has no division in itself although it appears as two in the *Tā'* with two dots, and as three in the three-dotted letter. Indicating, as a deterrent and a warning against those who claim [that God has as His] partner one who is second of two, or third of three, that although it may seem to be multiple, in its essence the dot is one. (17) (Don't you see that) He is one - may He be praised and exalted. That [only] by the imagination of the polytheist He has a partner. That the partnership in which the polytheist in his imagination believes is indeed a creature of God. That the true [God] is in every creature in all His fullness. So the polytheist is created, and the partner in whose partnership he believes is also created. And the believed partnership is created and the belief itself is created. Because God - may He be exalted and praised - is present in His fullness in all these things. His Being cannot be divided nor multiplied nor qualified. He is one and there is no second other.

As a consequence if you wanted to associate [a partner with God] and if you wanted to separate Him, then the partner would be God - may He be exalted[38] - and the polytheist would be God, and the partnership would be God. He is everlasting, except in your individuality. (18) (Don't you see that) the dot because it is a dot and not part of a mass cannot be multiplied and cannot be divided? Likewise none from among God's people can take one of His parts. In this He is highly exalted. And you find that the dot, in virtue of its oneness, belongs in essence to the number of indivisible[39] [items].

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[38] This formula is missing here in I.2.

[39] As in I.2 and I.3; C. has "multiple", which does not make sense in this context.

(19) (Know) that the dot in reality cannot be captured by the eye, because everything that you bring out in the physical world can be divided. Instead the dot that we now see is expression of its reality and of the boundary of its reality: a single atom that cannot be divided. As for what is invisible [and belongs to the realm] of imagination, and with [your] writing you have made manifest to the visible world, you add to its essence a property that is not essentially intrinsic to it, that is to say "divisibility." Because in the realm of beings there is hardly any singular atom - in fact there is none at all - of all that fall under the perception of the senses that cannot be divided. So when this atom appeared under this letter [*Bā'*] it was distributed, even though it cannot be divided.

(20) This is the place of the anthropomorphization of God, as [for example] in the expressions "*[God's] two hands*" and "*two feet*"[40] and "*the face [of God]*".[41] And in the *ḥadīth* [called] *The Wings*,[42] "I saw my Lord in the form of a beardless youth wearing golden sandals".[43]

This reference to His perfection is [about] immanence (*Tashbīh*) contained within transcendence (*Tanzīh*). Indeed, by definition God is the Infallible One Who has no equal. The One Who hears and sees [everything]. He regards it as permissible to impose anthropomorphism on Him, and that alone. Since His immanence is contained in His

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[40] Lit. *legs*. I.2 makes no mention of God's feet.

[41] The dot contained in the letters is just a finite image of an infinite reality. In the same way we apply to God our human, finite categories.

[42] I.2 adds here "'Ikrimah said, quoting the Prophet - may God bless and grant salvation to him and his family". 'Ikrimah Ibn Ābī Jahl was one of Muḥammad's companions, a freed slave who provided a chain of transmission of questionable soundness.

[43] C. only begins the *ḥadīth*, while I.2 quotes the full verse and adds from the Qur'ān: "I saw my Lord in the form of a beardless youth wearing a golden garment instead, and on His head He had a golden crown, and on His feet two golden sandals." He was God - may He be exalted - manifesting Himself to us in [all] His truth, but in the form of a youth and not as He really is. (The verse of a monotheist) It is beautifully written, about the majesty of His countenance: "*Everything He has created, God has [also] perfected*" (*Qur'ān* XXXII.7).

transcendence and vice versa - in virtue of the opinion provided by the phraseology of the [Sacred] Book and the Sunna - the invisible world will appear to you in the visible world, and the visible world will conceal itself from you within the invisible world. In the same way since the dot is indeed in all the letters, all the letters are *forced* into it. What I mean by *forced* is that the permanence of the letters in [the dot] is sensible but their presence cannot be perceived before they [are made to] emerge from it in your composition.[44]

SECTION 3

(21) The dot said to the *Bā'*, "O letter, indeed I am your origin because out of me you have been composed. But then it is you who in your composition are my origin. Because every portion of you is a dot. So you are the whole and I am the portion, and the whole is the origin while the portion is the derivative. However, I am truly the origin, because composing you is in my nature and essence.[45] Do not look at my projection outside you[46] and say, *This protruding is not [part of] me*. Indeed I only see you as having my own identity. And if not for my presence in you there would not be for me such a relation with you. Until when will you turn away from me in your exteriority and place me behind your shoulders? Make of your interior your exterior, and of your exterior your interior. Do you not realise my unity with you? If not for you I would not be the dot of the *Bā'*, and if not for me you would not be the dotted *Bā'*.

"How many times do I have to give you examples so that you understand my unity

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with you and you know that your extension into the visible realm and my concealment in the transcendental world are two principles of our single essence? There is no partner in me for you, no partner for you in me. What are you if not yourself? Because your name had its origin in my name, (22) don't you see that of the different parts [that make up your whole] the first part is called a dot, the second part is called a dot, and the third part is called a dot?[47] Likewise all your parts are dot by dot. Therefore I am you. What within you is your individuality but my own identity? This is your individuality by which you are who you are. If you said to yourself *I*, portraying my being, even I if I said *He*[48] I would portray my own image. Then you would therefore know that *I* and *He* are two modes of expression of the same essence."

(23) And the *Bā'* replied, "My master, it has been established that you are my origin. You know that the derivative and the origin are two [different] things. This body of mine is stretched and composite. I do not exist outside of [this body]. Instead you are a small atom found in everything. While I am a heavy body, confined to a single space. Where does it come from for me, therefore, this status of master, and from where [this idea] that I am you? How can your state be my state?"

(24) And the dot answered by saying, "The tangibility of your physicality and the abstractness of my spiritual [nature] constitute [respectively] one of my forms and one of my attributes. Because all of the different letters and the words in their entirety are only representations of me.

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[47] Even the "curl" part of the letter is in itself composed of a series of dots joined up together to form a line.
[48] Referred to the letter.

"Where does plurality therefore come from? Since we have not established [for example] that [the number] ten is the name [used to indicate] the sum of two given fives. Where then does the difference between five and ten come from? If not by name, from the concept of the decimal.

"If you, in all your expressions, are one of my depictions and one of my reflections, where does the duality between me and you come from? And why this debate between me and you? I am origin of all that is purposed in you and of all that is purposed in me. This in its totality is my essence, defined by divine will.

"If you wish to comprehend me, imagine yourself and all the letters, and the words small and big, and then say[49] *Dot*. That, in its totality, is the essence of my self, and my self is the essence of all that. But your self is the totality of that essence. The totality of my essence and yours.[50] However there is no *you* and no *they*. *I* am the whole. Yet there is no *I* and no *you* and no *they* and no *one* and no *two* and no *three*. There is nothing else but the one dot. In it there is no comprehension and no understanding for those like you. [Only] if you were to change from your clothes into my clothes you would know all that I know, and witness all that I witness, and hear all that I hear, and see all that I see."

(25) And the *Bā'* replied by saying, "What you have just said is intensely shining! It is given to me to fulfil it at the dawning of this new day. You have said that remoteness and proximity, quantity and quality, [they all derive] from the command of your being. [With] all that I have attended to of the discourse on [this] ordering, and all the other

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[49] I.2 says "call me".
[50] I.2 has "is the essence of the totality of my nature and your nature."

necessary things, I am at peace, and I depart with my face turned to the domain of my manifestation and the fulfilling of my necessarily harmonious relationship with you.

"Whenever I roam the realm of my significance I find you as my [true] self. And if I seek in myself what pertains to you as regards the untying and joining together of the letters, and as regards the manifestations of your perfection in each letter, I cannot find anything; the glass of my endeavour breaks, and I return crestfallen."

(26) And the dot said, "Yes, [crestfallen] you will return because you sought by yourself, and, according to you, your self is not my self. Therefore, you will not find in it what is mine. If you searched in it for the *I* who is the *you* in myself - that is, your self, you would have entered the house from its door, and at that time you would not have looked for what pertains to the dot, except in the dot [itself]. But you did not look for the dot except in the wrong place."[51] Find then the meaning of this if you are with us!

POETRY[52]

(27) These tents have appeared[53] [held up] on the [tent] ropes.

Dismount here if you are among their friends.

Stop among these features.

At it, ages have stopped in their heydays.

Hind is no other than she who dwelled unwillingly.

With willow trees and bushes beside.

Untie your mount in the dwellings,

For indeed this is a blessed home for those who live in it.

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[51] Lit. "through that which did not belong to it."
[52] Apparently an ode to the "people of God", those initiated to Sufi Gnosticism.
[53] As in a distance to an approaching rider.

How excellent are[54] the homes that were honoured

By their dwellers and [the dwellers] were honoured by the soil [on which the homes stand].

You cannot differentiate between its chambers.

Obscure, locked behind their doors.

Those who live in this neighbourhood are their people;

those who deserted them are not from their lineage.

(28) (The *Bā'*) is the soul, and it is a *dark letter*. In addition, in the entire *Basmala* there are no *dark letters* besides it. By *dark letters,* I mean ظ ض ذ خ ث ت ش ف ز د ج ب غ. The *bright ones* that are abbreviated at the beginning of the *suwar*[55] are ا ى ط ح ه ص ع س ن ق ر ل م.

God made of the letter *Bā'* the beginning of the *Qur'ān* in every *sūra* because the first veil between you and His [divine] Being - praise to Him - is darkness. But when your being ceases to exist and nothing will remain except Him, His names and attributes that originate in Him, that will be a veil upon Him; but that is brightness.

Except for the *Bā'* that represents your existence and is dark.[56] For this reason the *Bā'* is a cloak over the dot because it is over it, [like] the cloak is over the garments. The *Bā'* is darkness to the light of the dot, veiled [as it is] by the presence which is the visible world [that originated] from the beautiful world of the dot. In fact, a rational consideration of the appearance of the dot behind [the *Bā'*] points to the fact that the realm of what is [truly] real is [hidden] behind what is visible.

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[54] Lit.: *their achievement is due to God.*

[55] A reference to the abbreviated letters found at the beginning of certain *suwar* in various combinations.

[56] I.2 and I.3 have instead, "Don't you see that [the formula] *In the Name of God the All Compassionate and Most Merciful* is all made of *bright letters*?" There the text of C. is contained in a footnote.

Since the dot is attached to the *Bā'*, the *Bā'* is used in speech for joining. And since the shape of the dot is stretched to [form] the *Bā'*, the *Bā'* in the speech of the Arabs is used to indicate instrumentality.[57]

(29) When the blissful fire shone[58] for the *Bā'* on the tree of its soul, it penetrated the darkness of the invisible canopy of its night, away from its own world, so as to acquire fire for its constitution,[59] or to find within itself direction [in its journey] from itself to itself. It was carved out of an upright portion of the tree of the *Alif* that is the name of God.

Remove your shoes[60] - that is, your character and your being - for indeed, you are at the Blessed Valley, and you are occasion of doubt and defilement. There is no place for you in the Blessed Valley of the dot unless you rid your being and your character of doubt and defilement.[61]

Stretch out under the light of the *Alif*,[62] like the shadow that stretches out, for the shadow of something is that thing. So the length of the *Bā'* in every writing is the same length as the line of the *Alif* of which it is a projection. It saw itself as a shadow of this erection, aware that its existence depended on it. Because a shadow cannot exist, except as a figure between the bodily mass and the level [ground]. Its own existence was dismissed as delusion. Because the shadow by itself is not completely in existence. It is rather the

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[57] The prefixed preposition *Bi*.
[58] Here begins a long reference to the Qur'anic story of Moses and the burning bush (XX.9).
[59] I.2 has instead "for the dot".
[60] XX.12.
[61] I.2 adds, "until nothing is left in this sacred place except the Most Holy [God]. Under His direction [the *Bā'*] grasped the hand [offered as a sign] of concord."
[62] Moses' rod (XX.17, 18).

separation of the figure between the concealed mass and the ground. Thus, the existence of the shadow on its own is impossible. However it is a necessary existence.

Having verified such degree of non-existence in the *Bā'*, the *Alif* took it to itself and set it in its place. Then the *Alif* was incorporated into it. For this reason in the [formula] "In the Name of God (the All Compassionate and Most Merciful)" it grew in length and became evidence of the assimilation of the *Alif*. *Conceptually,* [the *Bā'*] is delegate of the *Alif*. *Formally*, it is an elongated version of the *Alif*.[63] Thus, it obtained the *form* and the *conceptual significance*[64] of the *Alif*.

It occurred[65] to discuss the position of the *Alif*. In the idiom of the Arabs it is not known of any *Bā'* that stands in place of the *Alif* except for the *Bā'* of *Bism*[66] *Allah*. Look now at this *Bā'*, how my sharpness has increased the condition of its great beauty.

> (30) He sang to me from my heart
>
> And I sang as he did.
>
> We were where they were
>
> And they were where we were.

(31) The *Alif* itself derives from *al-Ulfa*[67] - actually it is *al-Ulfa* that derives from the *Alif*. (You have seen) the noisy controversy and the disagreement over whether the verbal noun derives from the verb or vice-versa.[68]

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[63] Orizontally.

[64] Or *accidents*.

[65] I.2 adds, "to me".

[66] In *Bism* the *Bā'* is attached to the *Alif* of *Ism* to form one letter: an elongated *Bā'* or a curved *Alif* (ﺑ).

[67] Verbal noun, meaning *union*.

[68] This controversy flared up in linguistic circles after the second century AH.

For this reason the *Alif* was joined to the *Bā'*, because the *Bā'* had the decency of keeping its place under [the *Alif*]. So it was reduced to nothing, [as] nothing is the shadow under the figure. Thus the *Alif*, out of its own natural generosity, provided it with its own place, because the state of the *Alif* is to take the form of every letter. In fact the *Bā'* is a stretched *Alif*, the *Jīm* [ج] is an *Alif* with the two ends bent, the *Dāl* and the *Rā'* are *Alif* bent in the middle, the *Shīn* is indeed made of four *Alif*: each one of its teeth is an *Alif* and the stem is an *Alif* bent and stretched. This [can] be applied by analogy to the remaining [letters].

This is as far as the *form* is concerned. As for the *conceptual significance*, it is necessary to find the *Alif* in every letter as it is pronounced when you do its spelling. Don't you see in the *Bā'* if you spell it you will have to mention the *Alif*? And with the *Jīm*,[69] if you spell it you say *Jīm*, *Yā'* [ي] and *Mīm*. But in the *Yā'* with two dots underneath, the *Alif* is present.[70] Thus, the *Alif* is in every letter both *formally* and *conceptually*. Because it descends into the dot, from the invisible world into the visible world.[71]

> (32) That one is this one and this one is that one:[72] there it is!
>
> That is a part of that that is part.
>
> That is the noble Gabriel.[73]
>
> He spread out[74] and conceals.[75]

(33) Says [the Prophet] - may God bless him and grant him salvation: "No thorn

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[69] I.2 has instead, "[each letter] is called *Bā'*, *Alif* or *Jīm*."
[70] *Alif maqṣūra* is a *Yā'* without the dots (ي).
[71] I.2 adds here, "Therefore, it has in the visible world all that the dot has."
[72] The *Alif* is in each letter and each letter is an *Alif*.
[73] Lit.: the Gabriel of loftiness.
[74] Lit.: he welcomed.
[75] Lit.: wore a cloak. The dynamics taking place among the letters of the Arabic alphabet signify the relationship between celestial realities and the visible world.

will enter the leg of any of you without me feeling its pain".[76] This is confirmation of his unity with the whole world, its individuals and its parts, so much so that he feels in himself the condition of each individual, and conversely that individual finds him in the world.

Question: what is the reason why the *Alif* was deleted in the *Basmala* and was not deleted in *Read in the Name of Your Lord?*[77] Answer: because the *Iḍāfa*[78] of the name in the former refers to God the All-encompassing Who cannot be restricted to a single attribute. While in the latter the *Iḍāfa* of the name refers to the Lord, and it is necessary that the Lord should have a servant to lord upon. So it is preposterous that the *Bā'* should be united to [the Lord] in this context, because if servitude is lost, also the lordship is immediately lost. But where divinity is concerned, if servitude is lost, [divinity] will not be lost, because it is a name of a rank [encompassing] all ranks. The disappearance of the servant is tantamount to his non-existence, but it is understood that the Lord does not disappear, [remaining] a degree among all the degrees of divinity. So it does not disappear in any way. And when the inclusion of the *Alif* in this context took place and it was united to the *Bā'*, it was dropped in pronunciation and writing. Thus, [the formula] *In the Name of God the All Compassionate and Most Merciful* is pure reality, while [the verse] *Read in the Name of Your Lord* is pure law. Don't you see that it recites *Read!* which is a command, and the command is devoted exclusively to laws? [The formula] *In the Name of God the All Compassionate and Most Merciful*, instead, is not confined to a command or to anything else. Let [the reader] ponder.

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[76] Possible reference to a *ḥadīth* from the *ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* collection (32.6237) and several other similar ones.
[77] *Qur'ān* XCVI.1. By convention the *Alif* of the word *Ism* in the *Basmala* is dropped after the prefix *Bā'*; in all other cases, such as in the first verse of the 96th *sūrah* quoted here, it is not.
[78] *Joining*: an element of Arabic syntax.

SECTION 4

The *Alif*

(34) As the [term] *union* (*Ulfa*) derives from the *Alif*, [the *Alif*] joins the letters together. Indeed it joins some in their essence - such as for the *Alif* found between the *Bā'*, [like] a stretched *Alif* and each in it is the same as the others. And it joins some according to their phonetic expression, such as when you say [the letters] *Ḥā'* [ح] and *Khā'* [خ] [the *Alif*] appearing at the end of both,[79] thus being their essence in writing and in form. And no difference remains other than in their pronunciation. It joins all [the letters] by virtue of its form and its essence for the reasons discussed [above] that all letters are linked and that [the letter *Ālif*] is present in the spelling of each letter. In the same way the Truth - Glorified and Most High - says, "If you laid out all the things that are on Earth you could not possibly join together their hearts, but God did."

It would not have been possible even for you, O Muḥammad, and possibly [this] message is [addressed] to anyone listening intending to join together the hearts of all the things that are on Earth, by laying them out. But the Truth by His perfection and by His word has united them in their bodies, in their essence and in their attributes. He has joined together a number of them by His essence. He has joined a number of them by His attributes. He has joined a number of them by His actions and His forms. Indeed He has joined them all by His essence and all His attributes.

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[79] The ا is at the end of the phonetic spelling of these two letters.

POETRY

(35) Although this existence may appear multiple

By your lives![80] Nothing is in it except you.[81]

SECTION 5

(36) The letters have been attached to the *Alif*, but the *Alif* has not been attached to anything pertaining to the letters. In the same way every creature is in need of the Glorified God, while He has no need of the worlds. One may say, "What merit preceded the existence of the *Alif* so that it came to be so sublimely close to the dot? And what misdeed did the [other] letters commit so as to be bypassed?" The answer is: the lack of distance between the rank of the *Alif* and the domain of the dot is in essence a merit that preceded the *Alif*, and its ransom is the characterisation [of the *Alif*] with the properties of the dot. "The one in whose saddle-bag [a (stolen) property] is found, will be its ransom."[82] Yes, while the lack of closeness to the domain of the dot in the rest of the letters is in essence a misdeed that preceded them. "Thus did We plan for Joseph: he could not take his brother by the law of the King".[83]

NOTE

(37) The jot in the union of the *Alif* with the *Bā'*[84] is indeed there only in virtue of the presence of the *Alif*. If what is in the *Bā'* were not due to the presence of the *Alif*

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[80] Swearing.
[81] Alternative translation: your lives have nothing in them but you.
[82] *Qur'ān* XII.75.
[83] *Qur'ān* XII.76. A reference to the Qur'anic story of Joseph, who could make his brother accountable to the King's law only because God, in God's Wisdom, allowed him to plant stolen property in his brother's baggage.
[84] با ء

phonetically, in the spelling the *Alif* would not be united[85] because the *Alif* has to be located at the extremity. This is its nature, and it is not possible to join it at the other end.[86] Therefore, if indeed union is about cessation of otherness, only the *Alif* can be united to an *Alif*. In the same way, however, every letter is united to the *Alif* from the extremity where the *Alif* is located.[87] Don't you see that when writing it, each letter would not be attached to the *Alif* except if the letter preceded and the *Alif* followed? There is no other way because the body of that letter has indeed precedence in the spelling. [However], not the body of the *Alif*, which therefore follows.

The body of the *Alif* is [manifested] either in itself or in something else, such as for the [letters] *Jīm*, *Sīn* and *Nūn*, according to the distance of the letter from, or its proximity to the shape of the *Alif*, [and according] to [the letter's] nature and position. On this depends its cutting.[88] The *Alif* is found in all the letters and is attached to specific letters with a specific appearance, and it is not attached to other letters such as[89] [the letters] *Dāl, Dhāl, Rā', Zā,*[90] *Wāu* - but none besides these five letters.[91]

(38) See how the *Alif* is present[92] in the written shape of each of these letters. The same with the inanimate bodies and the livestock: when they all return to their Lord on the day of the Resurrection the [final] annihilation (*Fanā'*) will take place. He alone will remain in His essence. None among them is similar to Him, apart from the human beings. When they [also] return to their Lord - Glorified and Most High - He alone will remain in

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[85] I.2 adds, "to the *Bā'*. For this reason if the *Alif* came first and the *Bā'* second they would not be united".
[86] In Arabic the letter *Alif* can be joined with other letters only if they precede it.
[87] I.e., on the left-hand of the other letter.
[88] In Arabic joined letters are usually sections of the same letters in their whole original isolated version.
[89] Lit.: similar in their appearance to.
[90] *Sic*, the correct spelling of this letter being *Zā'*.
[91] These five letters cannot be joined to the *Alif* on either side.
[92] I.2 adds, "in fullness".

His essence.

It is necessary for human beings to look at the level above themselves, in their [search] for lack of ignorance, attainment of bliss and perfection of nobility - with the exclusion of that which pertains to God the Most High. Not for the inanimate bodies: God the Most High will indeed destroy them and annihilate their bodies and their [very] being because He did not grant them full existence in the world but He was manifest in them. Neither did He grant them ownership of [their own] existence. Just as one can see the *Alif* in the five letters [above] manifesting itself separately in its own shape and form when[93] joined to any of [those] letters. This stands for the non-claim to [their] existence by the inanimate objects: there is no complete existence even for a letter except when joined to the *Alif*. Even in spelling, given that [the *Alif*] is the essence of their life. Because the life of the *Alif* is all-pervading in the bodies of the letters, and if not for the [*Alif*] the letters would have no meaning. So they have been joined to it only in the spelling but not in composition, and they are devoid of [any] claim to existence.

As for the remaining letters they are in existence just as human beings are in existence - praise God. [That same existence] is their distinctive [mark]. In fact it proves to be true that [human beings] are in existence (*Wujūd*) and to them pertains a nature (*Dhāt*), however [they are] different from the existence and nature of anything else. Unlike the animals [for instance, that] if they had a soul they still would have no intellect and no retentive memory that would preserve in their imagination whatever they intellectualised. The limit to the understanding of the animal is given by the fact that it depends on natural appetites and animal instincts and before all else it requires a soul for memorisation and so forth. If indeed it had a memory [the animal] would preserve all that it intellectualised so

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[93] I.2 adds "not".

much as to [be able to] analyse some rational elements above the others and then determine after that the most important and the best of them. Indeed [the animal] would then be appropriate to the [same] level of existence as that which is only of an angel or a human being, and this is not the case. For this reason the Truth did not manifest Himself to any [creature] in His Essence - I mean the essence of the Truth, [Who is] worthy of praise and exalted - except to the human beings, on account of their integration of intellect and appetite. As for the angels, because they are endowed with intellect,[94] the Truth manifests Himself in them in their own essence, not in the essence of the Truth, on account of their decline from that extensive degree of perfection [located] between immanence and transcendence. Unlike the animals that indeed have no part in this because they don't have the *complete* existence of the human beings. This is the reason for the human claim to *existence*, the supreme veil that cannot be removed except after the *great death* - i.e. the cessation of [the relationship between] one's cognition and one's existence - after the realisation of the "mergence in the universal unity (*Tawḥīd*)". Following that, it is necessary that one like you should consider what the theophanic unveiling of God is in relation to the human beings and see how their own nature and exterior form subsist. But this [divine] manifestation is not the first manifestation that you have witnessed.

May you understand [this] and may God - Who has power over all things - grant us and [grant] you comprehension[95] of all this.

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[94] Angels have no appetites.
[95] I.2 has instead "fulfilment".

SECTION 6

(39) The *Alif* has been freed from[96] the limits of the dot and cleared of the bindings[97] of subordination that could follow it in the same way as the joining of some letters with others after them. So it has no connection of its own essence (*'Ayn*) with anything [else]. Because of this, in writing, the *Alif* is not attached to any of the letters. It is effectively physically[98] in all the letters like the dot. It has been established at the beginning of every determined noun[99] among God's names - may He be exalted Who manifests Himself as the Truth, is confirmed in the Truth, and yet no other is the Truth. And the dot is its measure by which it measures itself. [The *Alif*] is included in all the things in which the dot is included, as if the dot were nothing else but its principle, regulated [- as it were -] by [the dot]. Instead [the *Alif*] is truly identical to the dot - thus one dispenses with [the risk of] dualism. Then there is no existence for what is called "*Alif*" except from the perspective of the dot. Indeed [the *Alif*] is a composite[100] dot and it is the letter that is made manifest by the dot according to its appearance; for it has no other appearance except for what we mentioned earlier about the stretching of all the letters and the fact that every word and letter is made of it. What emerge in [the *Alif*] then are multiplicity of the body and unity of the soul.

(40) [This is] because the *Alif* is made of many dots one next to the other. Actually the dot - being whole - cannot be divided or multiplied. It is found in all its parts without plurality in itself. Likewise the Truth - may He be exalted - is found in the hearing of the person who approaches it by supererogatory works, and in his/her sight and in his/her hand

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[96] *'An:* the India Office manuscript has *Min*.
[97] I.2 has "limits".
[98] I.2 has instead "in its entirety".
[99] I.e., every noun with article: the article of course begins with the letter *Alif.*
[100] *Mu'talifa*: having the same root as *Alif* the word is a pun and can also be translated "*turned into an Alif*".

and on his/her tongue. However, He - praise Him - by being the hearing of this servant is not multiplied in his/her sight. Thus, He exists in His fullness in all things that make up the whole of the world but He is not multiplied by the plurality of things. Likewise the *Alif*, present in all of the 28 letters, is not multiplied by their plurality because in their totality the *Alif* is one. About this someone said that the *Alif* is not one of the letters, claiming that "The Perfect Human Being" is not one of the [other] creatures. May you understand [this].

SECTION 7

(41) The number of the *Alif* is one, but *one* is not a number like the others. Because the term *number* refers to a progressive sequence of the *one* at two levels and beyond and its function is to give sense to the naming of [things] counted: at the level of variations in meaning and quantity. But the *one* in itself does not present any variation because it has no equals. It does not fall into the category of numbers from this perspective. However it does fall into [that category] insofar as one realises the lack of variation in itself. But it is a number unlike [any other] numbers. Likewise a rational [mind] would say that God is someone unlike anything else.

The protrusion of the *Alif* by its one dimension determines the passage from the dot to the number *one*. And this dimension is only *length.* Because the dot has no length, nor width, nor depth, nor height. While [the *Alif*] has only length in a straight line.

As for the *Bā'* it manifests itself instead in the number *two*, having two dimensions,

length and width - its head being the width and its body the length.

The *Jīm* is made evident in the number *three* because it comes through length, width and depth - or if you wish you may say depth and height, for both are indeed equal, and change by changing the perspective: if you started from the bottom you would call it height, while if you came down from the top to the bottom you would call it depth.

This argumentation is not about numbers; it is instead a sublime mystery. I am the first one to reveal it. And indeed we have manifested that it was unfolded to us and we are able to say that we are talking [now] about the remainder of the whole of the numbers of the letters and their secrets. Each letter according to its location, to what the number has determined in it, its secret and the secret of each number in itself, and [all this expressed] in this truthful language, if God so wishes - may He be exalted.

(42) (The *Bā'*) is the throne and the dot is the essence that speaks - called, because of some of its expressions, "the heart" that contains God. [The dot] is the hidden essence (*Huwiyya*), called the secret treasure that remains a treasure in its secrecy forever. The *Bā'* [sets] the standard of the numbers because [the dot] is the first number and there is no number without the *Bā'* in it. In the same way the [divine names] pertaining to [God's] mercy - [setting] the standard for the [other] personal names [of God] - are called "seven names" (or "the major seven").[101] In fact, the same applies to every [divine] name. As the Truth says - may He be exalted, "Say: call upon God or call upon the All Compassionate;

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[101] *Al-Raḥmān* (All Compassionate), *Al-Raḥīm* (Most Merciful), *Al-Barr* (Kind), *Al-Karīm* (Munificent), *Al-Jawād* (Magnanimous), *Al-Ra'ūf* (Benevolent), *Al-Wahāb* (Bestower).

either way you call upon [the same One] to Whom [these] beautiful names"[102] belong.[103] And from those (names) that are not mentioned we have, he[104] says, "Your transcendent [reality]."

SECTION 8

(43) The dual meaning of the *Bā'* is in the manifestation of the Truth to Himself, [and this] in the natural context of His essence (*Dhāt*), which is the second facet. Because the Truth - may He be praised and exalted - offers two perspectives of Himself: the perspective of essential unity, in which God does not look at what one calls *creation*, because in this perspective there is no creation [as yet]; the perspective of essence, in which God looks at a level[105] called *creation* (*Khulq*), a level which is a differentiation of His Essence, and this differentiation is named *attributes*.

(44) (The *Bā'*) is this second perspective as it shows in itself the signs of the [divine] arbitrator that we define, given the Essence of God - may He be exalted - [with the attribute] "All Compassionate". Thus, He is defined by [the attribute] that sets the standards for the [other] names of the [divine] noble Truth and the world is throne, the image, that is, of the All Compassionate,[106] that sets the standards for the [other] names of the [divine] noble Presence. Therefore, it is said concerning Adam that he was in the image of the All Compassionate. In fact, it has become established in Sufi terminology that the

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[102] *Qur'ān* XVII.110a.
[103] To explain the verse, I.2 adds, "So [the attribute] *All Compassionate* together with [the name] *God* designate all of the *beautiful names*, but [the name] *God* is different from those [other names] that follow it".
[104] I.2 clarifies, "the Knowledgeable One", i.e., the Prophet.
[105] I.2 adds, "of His Essence".
[106] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 32.6325.

human being should be called "the little world"[107]and the world be called "the great human being".

(45) Be aware that the origin of "*Bism Allah al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*"[108] is "*B-Ism Allah al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*".[109] For[110] it is necessary for an action to follow the *Bā'* to which it is connected. For example "I begin" or "I seek help" or "May I be blessed", explicitly, verbally, or implicitly indicate the connection with the action occurring after the *Basmala*. For instance the action of drinking after the *Basmala* indicates that what follows is an implicit "I drink" or "I seek help in drinking" in the name of God.[111] Should the speaker say, "In the name of God I do this", it would mean, "By God I do this". Because the name coincides with the "named".[112] The Exalted One said, "Blessed be the Name of thy Lord".[113] (46) And what is the meaning of you saying "By God I will do [it]" if not that He[114] is the real agent of that action from you and in you?[115] It is like you saying, "I do this in [the name] of whatever extrinsically divine I harbour within my being - as opposed to the Essence (*Dhāt*) - the true reality (*'Ayn*), that is, that we call God; and in [the name] of whatever intrinsically divine I harbour within my being - as opposed to my manifest being - which we do not call God". (The purpose of this is) to deny that the action - if its object is to act - is originated from you, and to ascribe it to your Truth. But if the object [of the action] is naming, [the purpose of doing it in the name of God is] to express the elimination from your being of what we call "created", by the sublime power of what we call "creating

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[107] Or *microcosm.*
[108] Written in the conventional way without the letter *Alif.*
[109] Written with the letter *Alif.*
[110] *Wāu.* I.2 instead has here an *Alif*: clearly a misprint.
[111] I.2 adds, "or something to that extent."
[112] Concept expressed with a double negation.
[113] *Qur'ān* LV.78: the concluding verse of the *sūrah The All Compassionate.*
[114] I.2 adds, "may He be Glorified".
[115] A *Mu'tazilite* concept: God is the true agent of every action.

act" belonging to your true existence.[116] And if the object [of the action] is of a subjective [nature], the prominence of the oneness of your existence (*Wujūd*) is in the plurality of its expressions of individuality. May you understand [this]. In fact it is necessary for you to realize this much when you say "In the Name of God the All Compassionate and Most Merciful" so as to distinguish yourself from the rank of the animals: because to utter what you do not understand means to be at the level of animals. God forbid!

SECTION 9

Chapter on the lengthening of the *Bā'*

(47) The *Bā'* was lengthened after dropping the *Alif* and after replacing it with the warning that it [would only be], from all the letters, the alternative substitute to the *Alif*. Before that, in the same way, the All Compassionate has been described by attributes that are [nothing more than] alternative substitutes of His name "God" - in the context of the beautiful names [employed] to give a name to Him. Creation by the One God therefore is not intelligible except in the context [of the attribute] "All Compassionate". Furthermore the created order does not possess in itself any scope at all; again, nothing except the unique pure presence that is [the divine] countenance that transcends all things. The Most High says, "All things will perish except His countenance. To Him pertains the authority and to Him you will [all] return".[117] There is no authority except in this Oneness [present] in all these manifestations of existence and mercy, and He is the countenance of all things. He has clearly stated, "Wherever you turn, there is the countenance of God".[118] With your

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[116] *Anniyya*. In other words, sharing in God's creating capacity.
[117] *Qur'ān* XXVIII.88.
[118] *Qur'ān* II.115.

eyes, that is - as far as the things perceptible through the senses are concerned - or with your minds, as far as intelligible things are concerned. There God's countenance is, and of its meaning we have already spoken.

(48) There is no one in Naqā[119] like Su'ād[120]

Indeed, she is the water springs and she is the one who drinks [from them].

She is the Ba'qī,[121] she is the soft ground.

She is Maḥṣab[122] from Khayf,[123] she is the Country.[124]

She is the plants and all the bodies.

She is the souls, the animals, the inanimate bodies.

She is the substances and the accidents all together.

She is the offspring, the fathers and the son.

Say to those who have gone purposely from me to Ka'aba:

I am the way and my heart is that hill.

O Salm![125] Was it not for you my agony would not exist; so be kind

And there is no other prey but that lion.

I seek God's forgiveness as purification for my [lowly] rank

Which is what is united between a creature and God.

SECTION 10

Comment

(49) In the *Basmala* the *Bā'* and the *Sīn* adhere to each other because of a sublime

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[119] The name of three possible localities in modern day Saudi Arabia.

[120] Clément-François (2002) explains: "Female character symbolising the beloved and made famous by a poem by *Ka'ᵇb ibn Zuhayr*, contemporary with the Prophet, that begins with *'Bânat Su`âd...'* (p. 224).

[121] *Jannat al-Ba'qī*: site of a mausoleum east of al-Madīnah, demolished by king Ibn Sa'ūd in 1925.

[122] Pilgrimage site near Mīnā Sa'ūd, on the Gulf coast.

[123] Hilltop outside Mīnā.

[124] Mekka.

[125] Unknown name, unless it refers to the son and murederer of king Fereydun, from the Persian epic Shahnameh, by the Persian poet Ferdowsi (d. 411/1020).

secret: that the place of the *Sīn* among the letters is at the sixth position,[126] which comprises six times the "One."[127] These are the places in which the *Bā'* appears, created and jointly referred to as "throne". And in every part in which the *Bā'* appears, is the countenance of God in its fullness. As also the [number] one is present in its fullness in each of the six positions of the *Sīn*. (50) You [should] know that the *Sīn* is an expression of the secret of God - may He be exalted - the human being, that is.

Some interpreters [of the *Qur'ān*] said [concerning] "*Yā-Sīn*"[128] that the *Yā'* in it is the letter of the vocative and the *Sīn* [represents] the human being.[129] This discussion pertains to the field of symbolic expression, [as if] God - may He be exalted - were saying, "O human being!" while addressing Muḥammad - may God bless him and grant him salvation. That is, "O human being, essence (*'Ayn*) of My being (*Dhāt*)! By the sapient *Qur'ān*!" (51) [The words] "By the sapient *Qur'ān*!"[130] are an attachment to "essence of My being" ascribed to the human being who is the mystery of the being and the mystery of the sapient *Qur'ān*. You [should] know that the sapient *Qur'ān* is an attribute of God - may He be exalted.

(52) The conceptual significance of the *Qur'ān* is the comprehension of which of the divine attributes are befitting only to [God]. This comprehension is like a recitation. However there is no [chance] of you comprehending the divine being [Himself] because of the ineffability of His oneness, free of the plurality of the names and the like. So "each

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[126] If counting also the *hamza* and twice the *kasra,* or short *i.*
[127] Lit.: *the positions of the One.*
[128] Title and first verse of *sūrah* XXXVI, often considered the "heart" of the *Qur'ān* (Ali, 1983, p.1169) as it deals with the figure of the Prophet and his message. *Yā* is considered an abbreviated form of the letter *Yā',* and it corresponds to the vocative particle.
[129] Probably because of the assonance *Sīn* and *Insān.*
[130] Verse two of *sūra* XXXVI.

time you recite something from the sapient *Qur'ān* - which is the attribute of God within yourself - the attributes of God will become manifest to you" according to the capacity of this level of recitation.

(53) For this reason [the appellative] *sapient* has been attached to it, because the recitation at this level belongs to an order of divine sapience. In no way it comes to an end or reaches its climax or ever strays. Thus the order, God and sapience [constitute] the essence of being (*'Ayn al-Dhāt*) that is you. The only thing that [appears] to your manifested consciousness (*Shahāda*) is what your transcendent (*Ghayb*) [self] has recited from [within] you. As for what your transcendent [self] has not recited from [within] you, that is (intended) for your transcendent [self], not intended for your manifested consciousness. In fact, in essence the function of your manifested consciousness is the function of your transcendent [self].

You have been greatly confused by [the name] *God*. I refer [here] to the name which is given to the Essence (*Dhāt*). Because it does not contain (*Istifā*)[131] [His nature] in full. It does not reflect - that is -[132] the conceptual significance of His [nature], even within the fullness[133] that is behind the name. God knows best [all that has to do] with Him. But in spite of this, this name is the one thing that does indeed represent (*Waqa' 'alā*) [God's nature].

If what we have said seems to contradict what we said earlier, this is because of the divisibility of our individual condition, which prevents us from grasping reality such as it

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[131] Tenth form of *wafā*.
[132] I.2 adds, "all".
[133] I.2 has instead "concealed divine nature".

is in itself: indivisible Essence. Therefore, the name *Allah* is suitable for the Essence. And if it is not suitable, [yet it still] is insofar as the Essence is not an object.

This matter causes shameful confusion to the intelligent, but agreeable confusion to the people of God.[134] Indeed if *God* - I mean the name - is confusing in itself, how much more confusing in this matter [will it be] for you [humble] servant!

(54) I have become confused: where does my confusion come from?

My intellect is indeed confused in its delusive imagination.

I do not know whether this confusion is

Due to the ignorance of my intellect or to its knowledge.

In fact if I said it is due to ignorance I would be a liar.

But if I said it is due to knowledge, than I belong to it.[135]

(55) With this [same] meaning are my own words from a long poem for which there is no place here:

Does my conscience embrace the totality of Your Essence summarily and in detail

O, You Who are the sum of all the attributes!

Or is Your appearance too majestic for its hidden essence (*Kunh*) to be grasped?

What I grasp cannot be grasped in its nature (*Dhāt*).

Alas You should be grasped! Alas people should be

Ignorant of You outside of their confusions!

(56) The meaning of "*Yā-Sīn.* By the sapient *Qur'ān!*"[136] is the divine unintelligible Essence (*Dhāt*) and the source ('*Ayn*) of the *Qur'ān* as it is recited on behalf of God, laid

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[134] The Sufis.
[135] Lit.: I belong to its people.
[136] Here begins a running commentary of the first five verses of *sūra* XXXVI, followed by the last two verses of *sūra* IX.

down by the wisdom of pure unity.

"Indeed you[137] are one of [God's] emissaries":[138] from that exalted presence, holiness and unity, to this natural conditioned human place.

"On the straight path"[139] to the customary practice of the Eternal *One* Who stands on His own and with the whole world.

"Revelation of the Mighty Merciful One":[140] the revelation of the Mighty One who is not accessible except within this Muḥammadan framework.

(57) "The Most Merciful":[141] because when He showed mercy on the world He wished that He should weaken Himself, Who is the Mighty One and humbled Himself in their bodies.[142]

"Indeed has come unto you an apostle from among yourselves"[143] to direct them to Himself and entice them to Himself, out of His consideration for them and out of benevolence from the treasuries of His liberality towards them.

"He[144] cares for your condition":[145] because he is the bearer for you, the agent in

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[137] The Prophet.
[138] Verse 3.
[139] Verse 4.
[140] Verse 5a.
[141] Verse 5b.
[142] This view, shared by other Sufi philosophers, at least in its language shows parallelisms with Christian categories.
[143] *Sūra* IX.128a.
[144] The Prophet.

you and with you, and you have no existence, but absolute existence is in his being (*Dhāt*).

"With the believers":[146] those, that is, who have believed that he is their essence (*'Ayn*).

"Benevolent and most merciful.[147] And if they turn away":[148] not accepting their understanding of the vision of Your unity in their plurality.[149]

(58) "Say: God is sufficient for me":[150] because Divinity is the sum of everything: wherever you turn, the countenance of God is there. This is witness to them who flee from his right to his left, since both hands of God are right and blessed.[151] [The Prophet] - may God bless him and grant him salvation - has meant mercy for the whole world, the one believing in him and the one not believing in him, the one acknowledging him and the one disowning him - may God bless him and grant him salvation.

We have been previously carried away by the enthusiasm of our discussion on the field of the *Qur'ān*[152] and we have conversed on secret heavenly matters.[153] So let us return to what we were concerned [before] with respect to an explanation of [the formula] "In the Name of God the All Compassionate and Most Merciful."

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[145] Verse 128b.
[146] Verse 128c.
[147] Verse 128d.
[148] Verse 129a.
[149] As suggested by I.2.
[150] Verse 129b.
[151] Omitted in I.2.
[152] *Al-Bayān.*
[153] Lit.: on what paradise does not utter its disclosure.

SECTION 11

(59) You [should] know that since the *Alif* [denotes] transcendent unity and the *Sīn* is its visible mystery, the *Mīm* is expression of what exists, which is the universal reality of [things] invisible and visible.

(60) Don't you see the hollow in the head of the *Mīm*, how it is the abode of the white dot? [The concept] has been dealt in depth for you of the dot being the hidden treasure. So [let us] say that the circle of the hollow in the head of the *Mīm* is the Truth Who in Himself manifests this hidden treasure. Don't you see His words "I was a hidden treasure and I desired to be known. I created the creatures and I introduced Myself to them so they recognised Me"?[154] This is where the [divine] name *Full of Majesty and Nobility*[155] [comes] from, in the words [of God], "Blessed be the name of your Lord full of majesty and nobility."[156] Because if [the word *Name*] had been an adjective of *Your Lord* it would have been in genitive case and *Full of Majesty* in nominative case, agreeing with the [word] *Name*, not with *Your Lord*.[157]

May you understand [this].

(61) You [should] know that the *Mīm* is the soul of Muḥammad - may God bless him and grant him salvation - because the place where the hidden treasure appeared is the world, and Jābir mentioned in the *ḥadīth* that the first thing that God created was the soul of Muḥammad - may God bless him and grant him salvation. He [then] created the whole

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[154] See Introduction (4).
[155] A Qur'anic attribute of God, one of the traditional *Most Beautiful Names* of God.
[156] *Sūrah* LV.78.
[157] The author, therefore, is denying that this is a divine attribute.

world from it in the order [described] in the *ḥadīth.*[158]

The white dot in the hollow of the head of the *Mīm* is the essence[159] of Muḥammad - may God bless him and grant him salvation - the hidden treasure,[160] the universal reality of the sublime Being and the sapient *Qur'ān* in the fashion that we have explained.

Regarding this conceptual significance [of the Prophet] I have composed a poem:

("The Face of Creation" of the year 799)[161]

(62) Messenger of God, O manifestation of the Divinity

O the one whose being is the pure being

You have manifested yourself in every sublime way

By intuition you conceal yourself from the eye

Through the attributes, "seven [oft-] repeated [verses]

And the *Qur'ān*"[162] - [that] noble being.

You were exclusively gifted with it; you deserved it;

Your reality similar to the sacred one [of God].

You inhabited Hind's dwellings even though they were exalted[163]

And sublime and they wore the dress of concealment

The [divine] attributes are ever healing happiness

And through them you have glanced at the Divinity

Because you were there in principle before all

And your being is the intelligible [essence] of beings.

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[158] See section 1(6).

[159] *'Ayn*: it also means eye.

[160] I.2 adds here, "this is why we have said that he - may God bless and grant salvation to him and his family - is…"

[161] 1397 CE. I.2 has, mistakenly, 899 instead of 799.

[162] *Sūra* XV.87. The oft-repeated seven verses are those of the opening *sūrah Al-Fātiḥah.*

[163] This verse and the next are missing in C.

(63) There was a reason why I recited these verses. Namely, that one night in the year 799 we gathered in the mosque of our sheikh, our lord and world teacher, the greatest authority, the "red sulphur,"[164] Sharif Al-Dīn Ismaʿīl Bin Ibrāhīm Al-Jibratī,[165] to listen to a blind person. This was in the mosque cemetery, at the presence of the sheikh our brother the jurist Aḥmad Al-Ḥabbānī.[166] He read the Word of the Exalted One, "We have given you the seven [oft-] repeated [verses] and the sublime *Qur'ān.*"[167]

Then the Truth - may He be exalted - called me to contemplate the appropriation by His prophet Muḥammad - may God bless him and grant him salvation - of the seven precious attributes which are life, knowledge, will, power, hearing, sight and speech (to the pertinent degree).[168] Beyond this appropriation of the attributes I saw that he - may God bless him and grant him salvation - is the essence (*ʿAyn*) of being (*Dhāt*) concealed in the nature (*Huwīyya*) of the invisible [realities]. This is what I referred to in verse [by saying], "The sublime *Qur'ān,*" since there is no end to its recitation, and each time the heirs, the true people of the *Qur'ān* read [in it] of the essence (*Dhāt*) of God - may He be exalted – they read of Muḥammad - may God bless and grant salvation to him and his family. To this refers the *ḥadīth* in the words, "The people of the *Qur'ān* are the people of God, His [own] property."[169] Let one ponder.

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[164] In authors such as Al-Ghazālī and others this metaphor is employed to refer to mystical masters who, as Schimmel (1975) explains, by virtue of their gnosis "can transform the base material of the novice's soul into pure gold," red sulphur being "the mysteriously working substance in the alchemistic process."

[165] Al-Jīlī's mentor.

[166] A note in I.2 explains, "Spelled «Al-Ḥabābī» with two letters having a diacritical point, by Al-Dhahabī in *Al-Mushtabah*, referring to [his?] grandfather Aḥmad Bin Ibrāhīm Ibn ḥabbāb Al-ḥabābī Al-Khawārizmī, sheikh of al-Barqānī [here the number 12 is inserted and another name follows] Al-Qāḍī Muḥammad Sharīf Al-Dīn Al-Bālamī - God was with him."

[167] *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī* 60.227.

[168] These are fundamental attributes recognized also by clerics of the Ashʿariyya *kalām.*

[169] Not a direct quotation from one of the major collections of *Aḥādīth*, however the general meaning of this sentence pervades the *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī* collection.

He is the transcendent nature (*Huwīyya*) of the oneness and of all the messengers and the prophets and the heirs who recite the[170] nature of Muḥammad - may God bless him and grant him salvation - in God. This is the meaning of him being mediator between the world and God, and to him refer his own words, "I am from God and the believers are from me." May you understand [this].

SECTION 12

(64) You [should] know that the number of the [letter] *Mīm* is 40.[171] The conceptual significance of communion[172] is that this number corresponds to the degrees of existence after which nothing exists except what was before them.

(65) The first degree is simply the Being (*Dhāt*). The second degree is the "heavy Clouds" (*ʿAmāʾ*), i.e. the expression of the essence of the Being called gnosis. The third degree is the Unity, i.e. the expression of the mercifulness[173] of the Being in terms of hidden treasure. The fourth degree is Oneness, the first descent of the Being into names and attributes. The fifth degree is Divinity, the degree that comprises the [other] degrees of existence, from the highest to the lowest. The sixth degree is the [attribute] "All Compassionate" described as[174] the highest degree of existence. The seventh degree[175] is Lordship, the degree requiring the existence of those lorded upon: this is where creation

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[170] I.2 repeats, "transcendent".

[171] I.2 explains here that the degrees of existence are unified in the number 40 - which represents them - and in God, "This number is the real perfect proportion in everything, the meeting point of the Lord - may He be praised and exalted".

[172] *Miqāt.* "Communion with his Lord was completed in forty nights." *Sūra* VII.142.

[173] "Purity" in I.2.

[174] Editor's note: "relative to".

[175] Here ends abruptly the manuscript preserved in the Library of the India Office, London.

comes in. The eighth degree is the Throne (*'Arsh*), which is the corporeal totality.[176] The ninth degree is the highest Pen, which is the First Intellect.[177] The tenth degree is the preserved Tablet, which is the soul of the whole. The eleventh degree is the Pedestal (*Kursī*), which is the Intellect of the whole denoting the heart. The twelfth degree is the primordial Matter (*Hayūlī*). The thirteenth degree is the Atoms. The fourteenth degree is the celestial sphere of the Elements. The fifteenth degree is the celestial sphere of the Atlas. The sixteenth degree is the celestial sphere of the Zodiac. The seventeenth degree is the celestial sphere of Saturn. The eighteenth degree is the celestial sphere of Jupiter. The nineteenth degree is the celestial sphere of Mars. The twentieth degree is the celestial sphere of the Sun. The twenty-first degree is the celestial sphere of Venus. The twenty-second degree is the celestial sphere of Mercury. The twenty-third degree is the celestial sphere of the Moon. The twenty-fourth degree is the celestial sphere of Ether, which is the celestial sphere of Fire. The twenty-fifth degree is the celestial sphere of Air. The twenty-sixth degree is the celestial sphere of Water. The twenty-seventh degree is the celestial sphere of Earth.[178] The twenty-eighth degree is the celestial sphere of the generated things (*Muwalladāt*).[179] The twenty-ninth degree is the celestial sphere of the simple Substance (*Jawhar*). The thirtieth degree is the celestial sphere of the *necessary accident* (*'Araḍ*).[180] The thirty-first degree is the Elements, that is, the Minerals. The thirty-second degree is the Plants. The thirty-third degree is the inanimate Objects. The thirty-fourth degree is the Animals. The thirty-fifth degree is the Human Being. The thirty-sixth degree is the realm of Forms (*Ṣuwar*) to which the world is attached. The thirty-seventh degree is the realm of

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[176] This degree is missing in C.
[177] I.e., the first divine emanation.
[178] Soil.
[179] Philosophical and theological term indicating a movement or a secondary action brought about by a primary action.
[180] A philosophical notion referring to the qualities of an object such as texture, shape and size.

Concepts (*Al-ma'ānī*) to which the ideas (*Barzakh*)[181] are attached. The thirty-eighth degree is the realm of Realities to which judgement day is attached. The thirty-ninth degree is Paradise and Hell. The fortieth degree is the white Dune approached by the people of Paradise. It represents the manifestations of God - may He be exalted - and the mother of all abodes. After which there is nothing except the Being (*Dhāt*).

(66) Thus this number is the origin of [all] things and by it the leavening of the clay of Adam was completed, who is the first one of the human realm to come to existence. In light of the fourth numerical degree [of existence] it emerges that the universe in its totality has in itself only four qualities: permanent or propagating and dense or subtle, and nothing else besides these four. And together they make up the eye of this Muḥammadan *Mīm* of which we said that it is the totality of existence, permanent and temporal. Much can be said on this number concerning its ramifications in physics, ethnicities, compositions, classifications and the like. This[182] would be enough for everyone who has perception in [one's] heart. The name of an object is its illustration that is represented and that makes that object intelligible. Through [its name, the object] is distinguished from other [objects], just as something that has a hue [is distinguished] from what does not have a hue.

SECTION 13

(67) The origin of the name *Allāh* is *al-Ilāh*. But the middle *Alif* was dropped and the *Lām* was joined to the one that follows. Thus the word became *Allāh*. However originally it had seven letters: six countable and the seventh is the presumed *Wāw*

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[181] The world of ideas situated between the spiritual/divine and the material worlds.
[182] Lit.: "A hint."

following the *Hā',*[183] as one can see: و ا ه ل ا ل . They are the essence (*'Ayn*) of the seven

attributes representing the conceptual significance of "divinity."

(68) So the first *Alif* is the essence of the name of the living [God]. Don't you see
the diffusion of God's life in all that exists? And we have indeed explained to you the
diffusion of the *Alif* in all the letters.

(69) The second [letter] is the first *Lām*: it represents "will", which was the first
consideration that the Truth had for the appearance of the world, as indicated in the *ḥadīth*
with the words, "I was an unknown treasure and I longed[184] to be known." And the [word]
"love" is only [another word for] "will".

(70) The third [letter] is the second *Alif*. It represents "power" at work in every
existing thing; indeed in all existing things[185] under the dominion of power.

(71) The fourth [letter] is the second *Lām*, representing "knowledge", the beauty of
God - may He be exalted - pertaining to His being and to His creation. In fact the pillar of
the *Lām* is the seat of His knowledge of His [own] being, while the root of the *Lām* is the
seat of His knowledge of His creation. Thus the same letter is the essence of the universal
knowledge.

(72) The fifth [letter] is the third *Alif*, representing the hearing of [the One Who]

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[183] Namely the short *Wāw*, or *Ḍamma*, of the nominative case.
[184] Lit.: "loved."
[185] I.2 adds, "hidden".

hears: "there is not a thing that will not celebrate his praise."[186]

(73) The sixth [letter] is the *Hā'*, representing the sight of God. The circle of the *Hā'* reminds a person of the pupil through which [God] looks at the whole world. And the world is the white found in the eye of the circle of the *Hā'*. All this points to the notion that the universe has no existence outside God's view of it. Indeed if He lifted His sight from the world all would come to an end. Just like if the circle of the *Hā'* did not surround the white dot, this would not exist at all. But in spite of its existence [the white dot] remains, in relation to [the *Hā'*], in a state of non-existence. Because the whiteness that was present before the encircling of the *Hā'* is present after it. Just like the world in relation to God is in the condition it was before God created it - praise Him! May you understand [this], ponder this remarkable mystery and compare what I mentioned from outside of you with what is inside yourself. And the goal here is nothing more than your happiness and the discovery of your being.

(74) The seventh [letter] is the raised *Wāw*[187] - whose number is part of the sixth degree [of existence] - representing the concept (*Maʿnā*) indicative of God's speech - may He be exalted. Don't you see, about [this number] six, how the parts whose ultimate limit is the perfection of the Throne of the All Compassionate - Who is in relation to all the parts - come in attendance of "Be!"? And just as the word of God - may He be exalted - has no limit, in the same way creation, which comes under the provident care of the Throne, is *possible*. And there is no limit to what is *possible*. Observe the lack of limit in the "Necessary Being" (*Al-wājib al-wujūd*), how in the "possible conceivable being" (*Al-*

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[186] *Sūra* XVII.44.
[187] Or *Ḍamma.*

mumkin al-jā'iz al-wujūd)[188] - as well as in its absence - He has manifested Himself in His essence (*'Ayn*).

Therefore these seven letters express the real concept of God (*Allāh*) and His image nominally and in essence. Nothing is what it is except Him.

(75) People differ [in opinion] on this name. Some say it derives from [the verb] *alaha - ya'lahu - ilhān*,[189] meaning *to worship*, therefore treating the verbal noun as a noun [indicating] the object of worship.[190] Thus saying *ilah* but adding to it the determinative *Alif* and its *Lām* to say *Allāh*. Others say [it derives from] *alih*, understood as *passionate love*, thus making of the deity the source of love. Still others say it is a defective underived noun, whose origin is not [in the root word] *alh* but as it is it designates the "Necessary Being" Who originates the world, and that is nothing else but these five letters: ه ا ل ل ا. And this is [also] our opinion, and proof for it is that God called Himself with this name before He created the universe. Because [the name] *God* does not need the universe, unlike [the other name] *All Compassionate* which points to the manifestation, in the one who receives mercy, of an act of mercy. From this it derives that God – may He be praised and exalted – is either manifest in [all] that exists or hidden in the knowledge of what is visible [only] to Him. May you understand [this]. The same [applies] to *Lord, Creator* and the rest of the relational (*Raḥmāniyya*) names [of God] such as *Provider, Giver, Avenger,*[191] *Benefactor.*[192] By relational names I mean words that require a causal agent

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[188] Philosophical terminology referring either to what does not exist but whose existence is conceivable, or to what exists by virtue of the existence of another being (like our world in relation to God).
[189] First form: unused. This verb usually appears in its second and fifth forms.
[190] Lit: *deity.*
[191] As in I.2. .
[192] Not found in I.2.

(*Mu'aththir*) whose effect (*Athar*) is shown in them. Such as *Omniscient* - which indeed requires a *known* [object] – and the *One Who Hears* and the *One Who Sees (All*[193]*)*, the *All-Powerful,* the [*Well-*] *Wisher*, the *Speaker.* Likewise the word *Be!* requires a creator. So this and others are relational names.

As by the aforementioned notion, the *All Compassionate* is God on the basis of what the [divine] throne deserves and contains.[194] Unlike His [other] name *Allāh* – may He be exalted – which indeed is perception on the part of the being, and is essence (*Huwiyya*) of all essence, existence (*Anniyya*)[195] of all that exists[196] and supreme individuality.[197] His sight is not limited [but] He is not limited by sight. He is the container of [every]thing and its opposite. That is why some say that He is the source of existence and of non-existence. This expression "source of existence" is a clear [concept]. But "source of non-existence" is a deep mystery. Of the people of God only those who are perfect can grasp it, according to their [spiritual] status. Or the one to whom a crack in the door has been opened before reaching this state. It is necessary to say on this subject [already] begun that this is an aspect of existence that is right here to call "non-existence" because of its perfection – may He be praised and exalted because He is worthy of great exaltation.

(76) You [should] know that *Allāh* is a noun that if you understand it will give you a name that contains [all] the degrees of divinity. You can envisage that this concept is more than you can understand and of a different nature (*Dhāt*) from yours. This conceptual

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[193] Added here in I.2 by an editorial note.
[194] I.e., God in relation to the created world.
[195] As Zaydān (1999) explains, in Al-Jīlī this concept actually refers to the limitations of the Truth in its manifestations: thus, for instance, he would say that a servant of the Truth is *anniyya* (p. 102).
[196] Only in God essence and existence coincide.
[197] *Anāniyya,* as in I.2.

"non-existence" does not exist. Indeed what is intended [here] is your being. Hence, there is no creator except God. Hence none except you ? [No], rather none except God.

(77) You [should] know that when we say "Truth", "Creation", "Lord" and "Slave" this is a gnomic sequence appropriate to one nature. The meaning of it all does not suffice, and if you stop there [at this level of meaning] with this periodic sequence, it is in fact a waste of time. Unless you are one who [can] smell musk when it is still in the gland [of the animal]. Therefore all of this is[198] [as if] you have eaten meat with the hand of someone else and have given yourself the value appropriate to your condition and what is appropriate to your state. Whatever you found in this is the essence (*'Ayn*) of truth and whatever you found [given] by God to you as a form of contact and unity is the essence of straying from the truth and is heresy.

What we are saying is only appreciated by a Persian Arab whose language is different from the language of the people [of the Arab nation] and whose place [of origin] is different from theirs.[199] [Or by one] who is giving away money which does not diminish. [Or by one] who is [directing] his abilities as if throwing a javelin towards the target - [representing] his goals – with a particular aim [and] with a strong straight arm, so that he won't miss his goal, nor have a broken javelin, nor lose his javelin, and his aiming eye will remain focused.[200] God's divinity is beyond fading and His unity is undivided.

SECTION 14

(78) You [should] know that the name for God consists of six letters, and they are:

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[198] I.2 adds, "a sequence appropriate to your nature".
[199] Being a foreigner, this hypothetical Persian is making an effort in trying to grasp meanings beyond words.
[200] Lit: will not be deviated.

ا ل ف م ى ه.[201] Because *Alif* is composed of three parts, and they are ف ل ا . The first [letter] *Lām* is composed of three parts (م ا ل); the second *Alif*[202] is like the first one – the first and the last *Lām.* The *Hā'* is composed of two parts. The whole phrase is [then] made of 14 letters. Of these luminous letters the repeated ones have been dropped, so the remaining ones are ا ل ف م ى ه .

The *Alif* has three worlds: the hidden world that cannot be perceived or seen at all; the gap world that may and may not be witnessed and seen;[203] the perceivable world. These are three worlds and, as far as what is present and what exists as a whole is concerned, there is nothing but these three worlds.[204]

(79) Don't you see that at the beginning [of the word *Allāh*] there is the *Alif*, which starts with *Hamza* [pronounced] from the very depth of the chest that is never visible? And in the middle [of the *Alif*] is the *Lām*, [pronounced] from the centre of the palate and the mouth, hidden but that can be seen and perceived. And it ends with the labial *Fā'*, which is totally visible. So it is evident that the *Alif* proceeds from the very hidden to the visible. The *Lām* belongs to the hidden world[205] and descends into the world of the very hidden because in the middle it contains the *Alif,* but becomes manifest at the end in the visible world because of the visible labial *Fā'* which is like the *Mīm*[206] at the beginning and very hidden at the end.[207] The *Mīm*[208] has a visible start, a hidden middle

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[201] These – taken only once - make up the spelling of each letter of the word *Allāh*. Here, and in subsequent strings of letters, I have chosen to give each letter in reverse order to that given by the author, so that they may be read from left to right.

[202] In I.2 an editorial note corrects: *Second* Lām.

[203] This line is added here in I.2 but is missing in C.

[204] This last sentence is also added here in I.2 but is missing in C.

[205] As opposed to the "very hidden".

[206] I.e., visible labial.

[207] Because of the *Hamza.*

and a visible end. The *Yā'*[209] originates from the hidden world and ends in the very hidden world. It has no way out of where it is and has no horizon behind it. Then look to God the Collector[210] when He emerged from the very hidden into the hidden and then manifested Himself from the hidden into the visible like the *Alif* [does]; and when He emerged from the hidden that can be perceived into the visible world like the *Lām* [does]; and when He disappeared from the visible world into the hidden but perceivable and returned to His place in the visible world like the *Mīm* does; and when He descended from the hidden world into the very hidden like the *Yā'* [does] even though still in the hidden world like the *Hā'*. All this is the essence of the nature of God and the divine truth according to the provident care of the divine order.

Understand and see how wonderful is the complexity of the structure of this Name in its various worlds [that constitute it].[211] And how wonderful its form. And if we want to say more about it we would not have enough space. And this limited [work] is not the place for it.

You [should] know that the world that we referred to as "the very hidden" is a detail of the perfection of divine nature and to comprehend it is not at all possible. And the world that we referred to as "hidden"[212] is the hidden divine world by which the All Compassionate is worthy to be called by [His] fair names.[213] And the visible world is the world of the kingdom – and by "kingdom" I mean all that is included in the throne in spirit,

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[208] Of *Lām*.
[209] Of *Mīm*.
[210] *Sūrah* IV.140.
[211] This line is added here in I.2 but is missing in C.
[212] I.2 adds, "but perceivable".
[213] The traditional attributes of God.

corporality and conceptual significance (*Ma'nā*).

You [should] know and understand how the secret of all this is about the Name of God and how He manifests Himself according to His Name. You [should] know that the absolute Being is contained in God but God is greater than the being outside [Himself]. Because the many manifestations of being are not God and have nothing divine in them. But every manifestation of God is the perfect Being. This provided that you understand not to separate between God and Being. Never imagine that I numbered [them], separated [them], prevented [them], compared [them], or made [them] corporeal. I am innocent of this wrong impression; it is rather your understanding that cannot contain what I said. And I seek refuge in God if you understand but you don't have acceptance and knowledge of the divinity. We seek refuge in God from this and we ask for His help to lead us on His straight way which He Himself travels.

SECTION 15

(80) The Throne is the macrocosm[214] and it is there that the All Compassionate sits. While the human being is the microcosm[215] where God [also] resides. Because He created Adam in His image.[216] And look at this small nice human world, how it is greater and more honourable than the great world. And contemplate how the great is small and the small is great, although each has its [proper] place and status. If you knew this mystery you would know the meaning of His saying, "The heart of My faithful servant contains Me." But regarding his saying, "There is a time for me with God when no favourite being or sent prophet contains me", it is clear that nobody at this time contains him except for God. How

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[214] Lit.: the great world.
[215] Lit.: the small world.
[216] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 32.6325.

many sent prophets, favourite kings and knowledgeable authorities have contained the Throne – which is the whole great world – and did not realise it or care about it? For the greatness of this fine humanity, and its honour and its superiority over the great world has become manifest. It appeared that the great world is like a drop in the ocean, but the ocean – although large – is [founded] on this drop and made of it. A dot on each part of the circle has its own special portion [of the whole circle] and it contributes to the [composition of] the circle. Also, it cannot be counted and therefore cannot be divided.

(81) So the dot is the Name "God" and the ocean is the Name "All Compassionate." God - may He be exalted – says, "Say! Call upon God or call upon the All Compassionate: by whatever name you call upon Him [it is well], for to Him belong the fair Names".[217]

We have explained to you that the dot with every part of the circle has a relation and a contribution. And there is no doubt that these relations and contributions are also to the circle as a whole. So each [dot], when to it we refer these relations and contributions, is worthy. As with all the fair Names, if by them you call upon or describe the Name of God, they refer to Him.[218] As for [the name] "All Compassionate" [it refers] only to one of God's - may He be exalted - manifestations in which He appears [in a manner] appropriate to the classification of oneness.[219] As for the circle it has the essence (*'Ayn*) of the dot because the dot appears in each of its parts. Therefore the circle is made of nothing [else] but the dot.

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[217] *Sūra* XVII.110.
[218] This translates the shorter but clearer version of the sentence found in I.2.
[219] *Waḥdaniyya.* I.2 has instead *raḥmāniyya* (relational).

(82) You [should] know that [the name] "All Compassionate" is a verbal noun[220] and whenever this quality is present in an adjective it is because of the prevalence of this characterisation in the described object. Which refers to the strength of the conspicuousness of this characterisation in the described [object]. Which is why His Name "All Compassionate" is a noun that appears in [this] life and the next.[221] This is different from His Name "Most Merciful" as mercy in the next [life] is more conspicuous than in [this] life. As [reported] in the *ḥadīth*, "*God created Mercy and made it into one hundred parts. He withheld with Him ninety-nine parts* – in the next [life] not to be made manifest until the day of resurrection - *and sent its one part to all His creatures* - in [this] life, who by [these mercies] communicate and exchange mercy."[222] The mystery of His Name "Most Merciful" is the end of the world in God - may He be exalted - and the return of creation to the Truth; for indeed all ends in God. Is not everything moving towards God? For whom is the kingdom of today? For God the one, the victorious.

POETRY[223]

(83) Let us come back to how we were –

For neither you betrayed our covenant nor did we betray yours -

And leave behind slandering and slanderers, and a bird,

A crow that cawed in our house to cause separation between us.

We wrap up the rug of blame, attachment and estrangement

And we throw away evil and difference: may evil perish,

May unity return to our neighborhood as

We used to have, the fruits of reunification cultivated.

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[220] Of the intensive *Faʿlān* form.
[221] Lit.: *last* [times].
[222] *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, 76.476; only the parts in Italic are an actual quotation.
[223] Verses not included in I.2 and not included in Clément-François' (2002) translation.

The groom in [this] situation sings about us, saying:

May God not return to a house which deserted us.

Our beloved be relieved, for what happened was nothing

But a dream, like a meaningless word.

No desertion was prolonged; there was no one reproaching

And the one yearning has not kept watch at night as he yearned

And what you said has not been, and what happened has not been,

And you have not left us, and we have not left you.

3. ANNOTATIONS

A brief outline of this work may help identify the author's intentions and the topics covered in its chapters. These annotations endeavour also to identify some of the most relevant technical terminology and phraseology typical of Al-Jīlī. They have to be understood, of course, in the wider context of the language of Islamic mysticism, whose roots, as Massignon (1997 [1954]) points out, are four-fold (pp.36-38). The primary source is undoubtedly the Qur'ān, where even terms such as annihilation (*fanā'*) and abiding (*baqā'*) apparently exclusive to the mystical jargon, are to be found, namely in *sūra* LX:26-27.

Second, Massignon continues, is early Arabic grammar or syntax (*naḥw*) that provided some of the vocabulary of the mystics with specialized meanings and nuances. This is the case, for instance, of terms such as gnosis (*maʿrifa*); manifestation (*tajallī*) and incarnation (*ḥulūl*) with gradations of meaning adapted to the demands of the mystical discourse; essence or reality (*ḥaqīqa*) derived from the root of the word for truth (*ḥaqq*).

Third in Massignon's list of the sources of the technical language of Islamic mysticism, is early Islamic theology (*kalām*), which enriched mystical terminology with the introduction of new nuances for words such as essence (*dhāt*), justice (*ʿadl*), intellect (*ʿaql*), concept (*maʿnā*) acquiring the sense of cause and philosophical accident, existence (*wujūd*), unity (*tawḥīd*) now referring to the mystical mergence into the universal divine unity, divine transcendence (*tanzīh*).

Finally, the fourth source is a blend of Hellenistic, Persian and Christian philosophical and scientific influences, and Gnostic disciplines such as alchemy, astrology and metaphysics. Massignon lists here among others, terms of foreign origin such as *jawhar* (substance); or neologisms such as *huwiyya* (identity, essence, nature); or concepts such as that of classification (*dā'ira*), of opposites, of causality and of secret knowledge.

Al-Jīlī employs his own particular armory of "coded" words, such as *shay'* (lit.: thing) for the process of collecting something; *unmūdhaj* (lit.: small example) for majesty; *raqīm* (lit.: inscription) for humiliation; *mā'* (lit.: water) for truth; *thalj* (lit.: ice) for creature. These terms, and many others, are in Al-Jīlī like icons signifying a reality beyond the picture given by the word. In the opinion of many of his commentators, such as Zaydān (1988, p. 56), this symbolic language makes some of his texts virtually impossible to understand in their true meaning.

This text of Al-Jīlī begins by immediately addressing its main subject, the *Basmala*, in relation to the doctrine of *waḥda al-wujūd.* The role of Muḥammad in creation is only mentioned rather succinctly, with reference to his identification with the *Perfect Human Being.* It is the ontological oneness of God and creation however, that remains the recurrent theme throughout.

The author distinguishes *oneness* (*waḥidiyya*) and *unity* (*aḥadiyya*), the latter being a subjective realization by the mystic, in a process of self-annihilation, of God's transcendence. He is affirming, therefore, that this unity between God and the created order is a subjective realization by the mystics, of the universal participation in God's own

existence and Essence. Therefore, unity seems to translate in Al-Jīlī the immanence of God, finally despoiled of every paradoxical contraposition to the transcendence of God, as it constitutes a subjective experience in the mystics. This moment of subjective realization is the beginning of a spiritual re-awakening leading through four stages to self-annihilation in God. The Holy Book and the name of God are identified as privileged doorways through which the mystics are led by means of meditation to lose themselves in God.

Therefore, the following pages give a set of annotations on this work by Al-Jīlī that bears features of post-Ibn ʿArabī terminology and conceptuality, dealing largely with topics tackled at length and in greater depth in his much more voluminous masterwork *Al-Insān al-kāmil.*

One of the main topics contained here, is the rendition of the justification of *tawḥīd* by means of an analytical and at the same time symbolic study of the letters of the Arabic alphabet, with particular attention given to the *basmala.* The familiar arguments of the symbiotic relationship between the diacritical dot and the body of certain letters, especially of the letters *Alif* and *Bā',* are employed by Al-Jīlī in a manner that goes beyond a mere justification of the doctrine of *tawḥīd* already found in Ibn ʿArabī and others. Soon they become the pretext for an attempt to tackle the paradox of divine immanence and transcendence, i.e., the arguments that for centuries had nourished in the Islamic world vehement controversies on issues of Qur'anic allegedly anthropomorphic descriptions of the divine *Persona.*

In the course of the present section, each entry is introduced by a brief quotation

from the Arabic text offered as a mere exemplification – not necessarily exhaustive – of the subjects being described. Entries link together not necessarily on the basis of the themes of their content, but rather because they are representative of the most important arguments proposed by Al-Jīlī as they unfold in the author's own organization of this work.

THE TITLE

الكهف والرقيم

The title of this work is presumably a reference to *sūra* XVIII.9 - The first part of *sūra* XVIII narrates the story of the *People of the cave (aṣḥāb al-kahf)*, or the *Seven sleepers*, a group of young Christians who remained asleep in a cave for generations and when awake again found that the world around them had changed. Their story appears in several documents in Greek and in Syriac, - the Greek rendition of the legend presumably being the most ancient. In the early 20th Century, Louis Massignon discovered a Christian cult based in Brittany, France, of the "seven sleepers of Ephesus" probably based on an ancient account in Syriac going back to the 6th century, which reported the seven youths having gone asleep at the time of the violent Christian persecutions by Emperor Decius (249-251) and waking up at the time of Emperor Theodosius II (408-450). This meant that the young sleepers awoke to find that Christianity, from being persecuted, had become predominant everywhere. The Qur'anic version of the story does not specify the number of the sleepers, referring to possibly three, five or seven of them, and introduces a dog in verse 18.

Over the centuries, a number of caves were presumed to be the one where the extraordinary event took place, often located very far from Ephesus, even as far as Spain. One may assume that written markings were placed at the entrance of these caves to identify them as privileged places of worship. The *Inscription* to which verse 9 refers, included in the title of Al-Jīlī's work, might have been one of them. Some of the earlier commentators think that the word might be instead the name of the youths' dog, or of a geographical location. Others have suggested it might be a misspelling of the name Decius in Hebrew or of the Arabic *al-ruqūd, sleepers.*

Qur'anic stories have often come to assume, in the collective Sufi audience, symbolisms of meaning that served "well as points of departure for the mythic imagination" (Hodgson 1977, p. 460). Therefore, it is not surprising that Al-Jīlī should adopt a reference to this particular story to whet the reader's appetite, as it were. The relevance of the title grows on the reader as s/he enters this mythical cave, a realm of mystical revelation and enlightenment opening up through a number of gates consistently marked by the sacred refrain of the Qur'anic *Basmala,* the arcane *inscription* that Al-Jīlī will successfully manage to expound in all its constitutive elements. Authors such as René Guénon[1] and Clément-François (2002) define the symbolism of the cave as a metaphor for the human heart seen as the privileged receptacle of spiritual realities.

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[1] In his 1937 article *Le Cœur et la Caverne,* in: Michel Vâlsan (1962*)* ed. *Introduction aux Symboles fondamentaux de la Science sacrée*. Gallimard (XXX); as cited by Clément-François (2002), p. 14.

INTRODUCTION

(1)

الكائن في عماء غياباته، الكامل في اسمائه و صفاته، الجامع بألوهيته شمل مضاداته، الأحد في

سمائه، الواحد في تعداداته المتحيزة أوصافه في استيفاءاته

The introduction to the book is more than just an extended praise of God. The author makes rather explicit references to some of the main subjects of his mystical theology, and of this work in particular, namely the doctrines of *waḥda al-wujūd* and of the *Perfect Human Being*.

It is not by accident that Al-Jīlī should already make such an open reference to his support for the doctrine of *waḥda al-wujūd* dear to Ibn ʿArabī, so early on in the development of the book. As we saw previously in chapter one of this dissertation, this phrase never appears in any of the surviving works of *al-Shaykh al-akbar*, nor does it appear in this work of Al-Jīlī. However, these first passages, expressed with a lyricism that seems to be motivated by an intent to praise God, do refer rather openly to this doctrine. Here Al-Jīlī typically stretches the idea of God's unity with an ontological identification of the creaturely world with its Creator. God's presence, Al-Jīlī is saying, is in the endless forms in which creatures appear.

This is better understood in the context of Ibn ʿArabī's thought on the Supreme Being in relation to the created order. As we saw previously in the section on Ibn ʿArabī in chapter one of this thesis, in the *Shaykh*'s understanding of God one should make a distinction between God-in-relation (*Allāh*) and Absolute as Someone Who is beyond any

designation, the Reality (*ḥaqq*), the Essence (*dhāt*). *Allāh* is but one expression of the self-manifestation of the Absolute which remains "an absolutely unknowable Mystery that lies far beyond the reach of human cognition."[2] This Being is inapproachable, utterly transcendent, "inconceivable… unknowable to us because it transcends all qualifications and relations that are humanly conceivable."[3] The created order is then like a shadow in relation to an object: one with the object, an expression of the object, and yet not quite the object; endowed with existence, but only insofar as the object exists. Therefore, the universe shares in the essence of the Absolute but only the Absolute really exists, because without the Absolute the universe would cease to exist.

Chittick (1994) has placed *waḥda al-wujūd* in its historical context:

In attempting to trace the history of this expression, I found that Qūnawī[4] uses it on at least two occasions in his works, while his disciple Sa'īd al-Dīn Farghānī (d. 1296) employs it many times. But neither uses the term in the technical sense that it gained in later centuries. At the same time, certain relatively peripheral members of Ibn al-'Arabī's school, such as Ibn Sab'īn (d. 1270), writing in Arabic, and 'Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī (d. before 1300), writing in Persian, were employing the term *waḥda al-wujūd* to allude to the worldview of the sages and Sufis. Then the Hanbalite jurist Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), well-known for his attacks on all schools of Islamic intellectuality, seized upon the term as a synonym for the well-known heresies of *ittiḥād* ("unificationism") and *ḥulūl* ("incarnationism"). From Ibn Taymiyya's time onward, the term *waḥda al-wujūd* was used more and more commonly to refer to the overall perspective of Ibn al-'Arabī and his followers. For jurists like Ibn Taymiyya it was a term of blame, synonymous with "unbelief" and "heresy," but many Muslim intellectuals accepted *waḥda al-wujūd* as a synonym for *tawḥīd* in philosophical and Sufi language (pp. 178-179).

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[2] Izutsu (1984), p. 27.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 23.
[4] Ṣadr Al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 672/1274).

(2)

متصف بكل وصف مؤتلف بكل ألف مجتمع بكل جمع ممتنع بكل منع مفترق بكل فرق بكل تحديد

The influence of Ibn 'Arabī is quite evident in this introduction: "It is He who is revealed in every face, sought in every sign, gazed upon by every eye, worshipped in every object of worship, and pursued in the unseen and the visible. Not a single one of His creatures can fail to find Him in its primordial and original nature" (from *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*).

(3)

معنى الخلق

One of the appellatives employed by the author to define God is *Ma'nā*. As Frank (1967) points out about this Arabic word that in *Kalām* has been translated in a number of different ways, the "fact is that in many instances the term *ma'ná* is indeed used where we might well expect the word accident…" (p. 249). Montgomery (2006) argues that it may be rendered just as "'something' - a distinct entity that qualifies the substrate in which it resides…" (p. 8). This last definition is indeed reminiscent of a similar one by the Persian prolific writer and famous author of the *Ta'arīfāt* 'Alī Ibn Muḥammad Jurjānī (d. 816/1413), who simply describes this term as "what is meant by something" (Jurjānī 1909 [n.d.], p. 149). Mystics oppose *ma'nā* to "form" (*ṣūra*) and therefore to *ḥiss. Ḥiss* signifies sensory perception of bodily objects that have a form and a shape. It has been defined by Jurjānī as "the power in which the images of the tangible atoms are drawn and the five external senses are like its spies. The soul goes against it and takes hold of it. Its place is in the front of the first dent of the brain. It looks like a spring out of which (flow) five rivers" (p.59). Apart from the medieval information on the physiology of the brain contained in

this definition, *ḥiss* appears here as the perception of reality through the senses. By contrast, *ma'nā* is instead for the mystics the perception of reality in its essence, of its true being, the *meaning* behind and beyond what senses can detect. It refers to the extrasensory reality of meaning that allows for a comprehension of the inner reality of the object beyond what the senses can detect and interpret. Because it refers to the inner, truer reality of an object, *ma'nā* becomes of the object its "immutable entity, the thing as known by God" (Chittick 1994, p. 74). *Ma'nā* has been translated here with *causal determinant* - an expression also borrowed from Frank - and elsewhere in this work with *conceptual significance*.

(4)

كنت كنزا لم اعرف

Here is a quotation from a *ḥadīth* dear to Sufism but not included in any of the official collections. Al-Jīlī exploits a typical quality of many a Sufi *ḥadīth*, that of simplifying and through simile and metaphor rendering more accessible extremely complex mystical concepts. This particular *ḥadīth* had been already the object of a lengthy commentary by Ibn ʿArabī in *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam.* It is the most famous of the so-called *Ḥadīth Qudsī,* whose *isnād*[5] therefore goes back not to the Prophet but to God. Some of the *Ḥadīth Qudsī* were included in the earliest canonical collections, but most of the other *ḥadīth* adopted by Sufism are not. Scholars like Awn (2000) argue that they are often later compositions employed by Sufi authors to substantiate their claims in the sphere of spirituality, asceticism and mysticism like canonical collections were often used "to argue particular theological and legal positions" (p. 145).

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[5] Islamic chain of authorities ascribed to a *ḥadīth*.

(5)

محمد سيد العرب والعجم

The author places here another building bloc in his theological construction with an extended praise of the Prophet. Muḥammad is central in Al-Jīlī's mysticism because he is the *Perfect Man* of the eponymous masterpiece, the one who, in his words, is the "repository of truth and oneness; the meeting place of transcendence and finitude." These two lines brilliantly summarize all the intricacies of the doctrine of the *Perfect Human Being:* the meeting point between God and creation, the link between God's transcendence and God's immanence, the bridge between oneness and multiplicity, the *locus* of the harmonisation of a paradox. In Al-Qāshāni's Glossary the Perfect Man is "The mediator of grace and assistance … the link between Truth and Creation by virtue of his affinity to both" (Qāshānī, 1991 [n.d.], p. 19). He is the image of God, having "verified the realities of the Divine Names" (*Ibid.,* p. 94). He is the shadow of God, having "verified the reality of the Presence of the One" (*Ibid.,* p. 117).

The concept of the *Perfect Human Being* is not, of course, original to Al-Jīlī, but is part of a legacy rooted in non-Qur'anic, and even non-Islamic sources. For example in the myth of the πρωτος ἀνθρωπος described in Gnostic first-second century literature[6] and before that in the primeval figure of Keyumars. According to Zoroastrian creation stories the latter was created by Ahura Mazda and from its body grew the tree that bore the first man and the first woman, thus representing human life complete and undivided. The two myths later converged in third century Manichaean cosmogony and its myth of the *Ancient*

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[6] Namely the *Hermetica*, and in particular the tract dedicated to Pimander, contained in the collection *Corpus Hermeticum.* In Islam, Hermeticism came to be identified with the ancient Sabians and their cults.

(or *Original*) *Human Being* fighting its battles in the dualistic struggle between Good and Evil.

However, Massignon (1997 [1954]) considered these parallels "fortuitous coincidences," terms "without any real kinship among their respective processes of formation," (p. 41) while Nicholson (1994 [1921]) maintains that the concept of the *Perfect Human Being* arrived to Sufism via *Shiʿah* Islam influenced by Hellenistic notions of the semi-divine figure of the θειος άνθρωπος (p. vi).

The collection of letters by the Brethren of Purity (*Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ*), a fourth/tenth century Islamic esoteric sect from Basra, describes the *Perfect Human Being* as one of East Persian origin, Arabian faith, Babylonian culture, Jewish acumen, Christian behaviour, with the piety of a Syrian monk, conversant with natural sciences as a Greek, initiated to mysteries like an Indian, a mystic in spiritual outlook.

ʿAfīf Al-Dīn Al-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291), a disciple of Ibn ʿArabī, in his commentary on Ibn ʿAbd Al-Jabbār Al-Niffarī, a third/ninth century mystic, puts the imagery of the *Perfect Human Being* in the context of four mystical journeys. The first journey takes the mystic from gnosis to personal extinction of the self (*fanāʾ*). In the second journey *fanāʾ* is succeeded by *baqāʾ* (abiding). The third journey takes the mystic to the station of the *Quṭb* (pole), which is the station of the *Perfect Personhood.* There the mystic is at the centre of the spiritual universe, acquiring the right to lead others in their own spiritual journeys, and even deserving the title of *apostle,* except that the gate of apostleship is now closed. It is during this third journey that the *Perfect Human Being* turns

her/his attention to God's creatures and reveals her/himself to other seekers. The fourth journey is for the *Perfect Human Being* the one that leads to bodily death, turning in some sort of mirror reflecting God's attributes.[7]

One need not point out the fact that both in Al-Jīlī and in Ibn 'Arabī before him, Muḥammad remains a distinguished receptacle of the divine Names and attributes, but does not lose his created nature that differentiates him from his creator. Nor is he to be easily compared to – let alone identified with – the Platonic and later Gnostic *Demiurge* – a personal deity in its own right - or the conceptual *Logos* of post-Aristotelian Hellenistic Philosophy, understood as divine creative principle.[8] In chapter 2.5.1. alleged neo-Platonic influences on Al-Jīlī have been already examined, especially in relation to Plotinus' philosophy. However, in Al-Jīlī the concept of the *Perfect Human Being* is originally appropriated and employed, given a unique relevance in the context of his doctrine. As Burckhardt (1983 [1953]) unequivocally explains,

> …Universal Man[9] is the all; it is by a transposition of the individual to the universal that one calls him 'man'; essentially, he is the eternal prototype, Divine and unlimited, of all beings.
>
> Universal Man is not really distinct from God; he is like the face of God in his creatures. By union with him, the spirit unites with God. Now, God is all and at the same time above all (p. ii).
>
> …It is in this sense that one says that nobody will meet God before meeting the Prophet (p. iv).

This metaphor of the *Perfect Human Being* is vaguely reminiscent of the teachings of Ḥallāj (d 309/922). As Mayer (2008) explains, for Ḥallāj saintly persons were

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[7] As explained by Nicholson (1914), pp. 164-166.
[8] Philo of Alexandria (20 B.C.E.- 50 C.E.).
[9] *Al-Insān al-kāmil.*

"persuasive evidence of God in the midst of creation, drawing mankind to Him" (p. 267).

Thus describing a mystical union while rejecting any reference to actual *ḥulūl,* the saints

remaining simple manifestations of God, privileged witnesses who have been granted –

through *fanā'* – a glimpse through the veil[10] separating the world from God, without any

claims of divine incarnation.[11]

Almost in continuity with this teaching, the figure of the *Perfect Human Being*

arises in Islamic mysticism out of the perceived need to harmonise belief in the

unquestionably transcendental nature of God and belief in the necessity of a rapport

between the created order and its Creator, and in particular between humanity and a

relational God. This is after all the seemingly perennial paradox that Muslim theology has

been grappling with since the second/eighth century, when the first doctrinal diatribes

between thinkers from different schools laid the foundations for continuous clashes

between so-called Traditionalists and Rationalists. The main bone of contention between

the two rested of course with this issue of reconciling God's transcendence and

immanence. In the tension between the two fronts, the apparent eventual demise of the

latter did little, however, towards obtaining a satisfactory resolution of the deep theological

dilemmas at stake. Islamic mysticism in some of its most audacious expressions is in a way

a further attempt to bridge the chasm that separates the concept of a God Who by definition

transcends every definition, and a Universe supposedly proceeding from God and inhabited

by God, and yet incapable of containing God. The doctrines of Ibn 'Arabī expounded by

Al-Jīlī, and the figure of the *Perfect Human Being* in the eponymous book, reiterate the

need for such a bridge. *Al-Insān al-kāmil* in fact is the *locus* of the harmonisation of a

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[10] Al-Jīlī calls it *ḥijāb al-'ayn.*
[11] *Ibid.*

paradox, made quite clear and relevant by Al-Jīlī: it is true that God's nature (*Dhāt*) can be mystically contemplated by reaching out towards and contemplating the essence of each of God's attributes (*Ṣifāt*); the opposite is also true, that the divine nature would transcend any attempt to grasp it without the medium of analogies, the manifestations of God's attributes in the created beings, and the contemplation of the Qur'anic "Most Beautiful Names." With an analogy dear to Burckhardt (1983 [1953]) one may compare the *Perfect Human Being* to the iris, containing in itself all the colours of God, as it were, and yet allowing the possibility of identifying some of these colours. Remaining with this metaphor for just a little longer, one may say that the iris as a whole is visible and yet not perceivable in the *infinite* display of all its colours. At the same time, individual colours are perceivable and the sum of them gives us a perception of the complete iris. To each attribute of God, Al-Jīlī would say, corresponds one of the Beautiful Names of God. They are made visible in the person of the *Perfect Human Being*. Nevertheless, the true essence of God transcends those Names and attributes. *Al-Insān al-kāmil* acts therefore as a catalyst that makes possible what is achievable by no other means within the created order. The created Universe, in all its manifestations, only allows for the perception, the contemplation, of some of the divine attributes, never of those that remain hidden to God's creatures and are not perceptible through the observation of the created order. Al-Jīlī calls them God's "obscurity." However, while each of the attributes is an expression of the nature of God, it is only in the whole that the true essence of God is found.

(6)

عماد الدين بن يحي بن أبي القاسم التونسي المغربي سبط الحسن بن علي

ʿImād Al-Dīn Yaḥyā could be the brother (d. 187/803) of Ibrahīm (d. 146/763), Idrīs, and Muḥammad Al-Nafs Al-Zakiya (d. 145/762); son of ʿAbdallah (d. *c.* 141/758); son of Ḥasan; son of Ḥasan (d. 49/669); son of ʿAli and Fatima, Idrīs being the founder of the Idrīsids Moroccan dynasty, which would justify the north-African references in the name. Or the [great?] grandson (d. 125/743) of Ḥusayn son of ʿAli, as suggested by an editorial note in I.2. He may also be a non-better identified member of the Al-Maghribī family, "of Persian origin who performed in the course of two succeeding centuries (the 4th/10th and 5th/11th centuries) the influential functions of *wazīr, kātib* or intendant (*mudabbir*) at several princely courts throughout the Middle East, in Baghdād , Aleppo , Cairo , Mawṣil , and Mayyāfāriḳīn."[12] Zaydān (1988, p. 46) identifies him with a member of a Sufi *ṭarīqa* in Zabid, Yemen, contemporary of Al-Jīlī, explaining that Sufis in Zabid would call themselves brothers, sharing in the same spiritual journey. Al-Jīlī then would have written *Al-Kahf wa al-raqīm* in response to a question by one of his "brothers," ʿImād Al-Dīn Yaḥyā.

(7)

أمليته مع الجمع بالكتاب والسنة

Here as in part 1 of *Al-Insān al-kāmil* Al-Jīlī insists that any argument or discovery that he himself or others may make, which is not in agreement with the Qur'ān and with the Sunna is heretical, and should be rejected. Quite explicitly, therefore, he repeatedly affirms that what he writes is indeed supported by the Sacred Scriptures.

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[12] P. Smoor (1984). Al-Maghribī, Banū. *E.I.² 5*, pp. 1210-1212.

SECTION 1

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

This first chapter sets the agenda, as it were, for the rest of the book. Al-Jīlī discusses the mystical significance of the *Basmala* and its components, and immediately points to Muḥammad as the one who is the object of the symbolism of the letters of the alphabet, that serve as an illustration of the role of the Prophet in creation.

As the title to this chapter clearly predicts, Al-Jīlī plunges immediately into the main subject of this work, namely the analysis of the composition of the *Basmala* and the explanation of the meaning of the letters of which it consists. First and foremost among them is the letter *Bā',* whose diacritical point will come to assume great significance in the mystical interpretation of the formula, and that of course represents the very beginning of the holy book and indeed of each of its chapters. The author's considerations on this are not of course altogether original to him. In *Al-futūḥāt al-makkiyya* Ibn ʿArabī had already identified in the Qur'ān a movement, as it were, from the last *sūra* to the first, and indeed to the first letter of the holy book and its diacritical point, in a sort of spiritual journey of ascent culminating in the mystic's realization of the oneness of all things in God. In Al-Jīlī the *basmala* on the mouth of the mystic is compared here to the Qur'anic divine command "Be!" (*kun*), the creative utterance that, in the words of Massignon (1997 [1954]), "realizes directly, that creates without a middle term, 'without anything else' (*bi-laysa…*)" (p. 31). Implicit in this comparison, Al-Jīlī seems to imply, is the belief in some of the mystics that the recitation of the *basmala* before an action is tantamount to surrendering the initiative for that action into God's hands. Thus, God acts through the medium of the mystic. This is achieved in the first of Al-Jīlī's four stages of illumination (*tajallī*) leading to self-

annihilation in God.

(8)

ورد في الخبر عن النبي إنه قال كل ما في الكتب المنزلة فهو في القرآن وكل ما في القرآن فهو في

الفاتحة وكل ما في الفاتحة فهو في بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم و كل ما في بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم فهو في الباء

وكل ما في الباء فهو في النقطة التي تحت الباء

Al-Jīlī is not revealing the source of this quotation. However, with reference to it Burckhardt (1990 [1976]) mentions an old tradition going back to the Caliph 'Alī. Zaydān (1988) provides us with further details confirming this to be a saying attributed to Muḥammad, also found later in Alī Ibn Ḥusam Al-Dīn Al-Muttaqī Al-Hindī's (d. 975/1567) *Kanz al-'ummāl fī sunan al-aqwāl wa al-af'āl* (4, 307).

(12)

لأنه الألف مركب من النقطة ولهذا كان الألف أشرف من الياء

New letters are now introduced to the reader, and among these the letter *Alif* stands out because, the author will explain at length in the following chapters, like the diacritical dot of the letter *Bā'* it is contained in each of the other letters of the alphabet. Therefore it also assumes a great mystical and symbolic valence. Specifically, it is an image for the Prophet or the *Muḥammadan Reality* that pervades all that exists, although it remains distinct from the Absolute, like the letter *Alif* is contained in all the letters of the alphabet but not in the way that the dot is. The dot is the Absolute, the Essence of all that exists, contained in every letter, including the *Alif*.

(13)

الحقيقة المحمدية خلق العالم بأسره

The concept of *Muḥammadan Reality* (*Al-ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadiyya*) is one that Al-Jīlī borrows from Ibn ʿArabī. It exists eternally since the beginning of time manifesting itself in history through the prophets, embodiments of the *Perfect Human Being*. In *Al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, *Al-Shaykh al-Akbar* identifies the archetypal creature in which the fullness of God resides, with Muḥammad, the culmination of the prophetic manifestations of the "Reality of realities" (*ḥaqīqa al-ḥaqāʾiq*). In his *Kitāb al-nuqṭa,* which is the Introduction to *Ḥaqīqa al-ḥaqāʾiq,* Al-Jīlī (1982 [n.d.]) will refer to the diacritical point as the symbol of the "Reality of realities." He affirms that "the *nuqṭa* is the *Ḥaqīqa al-ḥaqāʾiq* of the letters, just as the Essence (*dhāt*) is the Truth of the existence" (p. 31), because "the letters are combinations of diacritical points (*majmūʿ nuqaṭ*)" (p. 32). "If not for the *nuqṭa* the letter would not appear, if not for the Essence, the attributes would not appear" (p. 32). The attributes are manifestations of God when engaging with the created world. This is God Immanent, as opposed to God Transcendent Who is the Absolute Essence, the "Reality of realities." The Absolute is not known in Itself, just as the diacritical point cannot be pronounced on its own because it does not assume vowels (pp. 32-33). However, it is manifested in the letters without suffering corruption, preserving its perfection (p. 34). Then Al-Jīlī identifies in the Prophet the privileged embodiment of the manifestation of the Absolute. The *nuqṭa* is *Al-Ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadiyya,* and Muḥammad is *Al-Ḥaqīqa al-nuqṭiyya* (p. 36), describing as a "white *nuqṭa*" the small space in the letter *Mīm* of the Prophet's name (p. 45). Elsewhere, especially in *The Cave and the Inscription,* he had made a figurative comparison between the Prophet as *Perfect Human Being,* and the letter *Alif*, which is the first letter of the Arabic word for "human being," reserving to the dot the

role of symbolizing the Absolute.

In *Al-Kamālāt al-Ilāhiyya* Al-Jīlī (1997 [1402-3]) says of Muḥammad: "And he is endowed with the whole of God's attributes" (*Fa huwa muttaṣif bi awṣāf Allāh jamī'aha*) (p. 228), and supports this statement with a long quotation from Ibn Wahb's *Ḥadīth* containing in part the following pronouncement by God to Muḥammad: "I have given you more (than to Abraham, Moses, Noah and Salomon) … I have made your name and My name called upon in Heaven and I have made Earth for you and for your nation. I have forgiven you your sins … so you walk on Earth blamelessly. I have not given this to any prophet except you."[13] He also adds: "Muḥammad's knowledge of God is the same as God's knowledge of Himself" (p. 235), and then provides the reader with a list of 17 divine attributes that in the Qur'ān are applied also to the Prophet, providing for each of them its Qur'anic reference.

Muḥammad is then the Perfect Man who is a privileged Self-manifestation of the Absolute, however remaining a creature like everything else that exists in the universe. In fact, he was created as Intellect together with *al-habā'*, the cloud of dust constituting in Sufism matter in its primordial form or the collective divine energy: the *Muḥammadan reality*. Jurjānī (1909 [n.d.]) defines it as "the essence (*Dhāt*) in its first specification (*Ta'yyīn*) and it is the great name" (p. 62), (a definition found also in Al-Qāshāni, 1991 [n.d.], p. 27). This is the soul of the Prophet that imbues all that exists, thus constituting a sort of bridge between the Creator and the creatures.

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[13] As cited by 'Abd Al-Fattāḥ (1997, pp. 228-229).

In the light of this, Al-Jīlī is not afraid to make bold statements about the figure of the Prophet even to the point of placing Muḥammad on the Throne of God. The apparent blasphemous nature of this assertion should be read however in the context of the author's cosmology. In Al-Jīlī's classification of the degrees of existence - cosmic manifestations of reality that describe all that exists - with Qur'anic names for each of the stations, the eighth place is assigned to the Throne. This is not the divine seat in an anthropomorphic representation of God, but traditionally in Sufism is an appellation of the corporeal totality, the undivided whole. Other times it refers to the manifestation of divine majesty. In Al-Jīlī it follows immediately after the station of Lordship. Lordship, Al-Jīlī will explain, makes no sense without an object on which lordship is exerted, which he calls the Throne.

(14)

بذاتها فيها ظاهرة فالألف ولو كانت بقية الحروف المهملة مثله والنقطة

The function of the diacritical dot and the letter *Alif* is once again brought to the fore, and this time associated with the role of Muḥammad whose *reality* pervades all other prophets, and indeed, as we have seen already, all that exists.

(15)

فمن الحروف ما تكون نقطته فوقه ويكون هوتحتا وهو مقام ما رأيت شيئاً الاو رأيت الله قبله

Here the author seems to take some of the letters of the alphabet as a pretext to describe, in a rather superficial manner, stages of the spiritual journey of the mystic, to arrive eventually to the person of Muḥammad again, seen in his role as mediator between God and the mystic.

SECTION 2

(16)

نقطة الباء واحدة في عالم غيبها التي لا تفرقة فيه على أنها أظهرت في التاء المثناة اثنين وفي المثلثة ثلاثة ردعاً

وشبيهاً لمن قال بالشريك أنه تأتي اثنين أو ثالث ثلاثة

Arabic script is the pretext for further visual exemplifications of deep theological doctrines on the oneness of God and God's relationship with the created order.

The diacritical dot is mentioned again this time with reference to the oneness of God. The author takes also the opportunity to express his unreserved criticism of Trinitarian theology.

(19)

النقطة على الحقيقة لا تنضبط بالبصر

As the diacritical dot is not visible if taken out of the letter, likewise God can only be perceived in creation through God's creatures. They are in fact God's manifestation in the universe.

(20)

فهذا محل تشبيه الحق

The author extends the role of the created order in relation to God, to that of the divine attributes. As the universe is a visible manifestation of God, similarly the divine attributes constitute evidence of God's nature and activity that is perceivable or at least conceivable by the human soul and mind.

For Ibn 'Arabī in God there is at the same time transcendence (*tanzīh*) and immanence (*tashbīh*). God is at the same time transcendent (the Absolute) and Self-revealing. To state otherwise would make of God a being incapable of interacting with the created universe (in case of exclusive *tanzīh*) or lessened and diminished within the constraints of quasi-physical characteristics (in case of exclusive *tashbīh*). When Al-Jīlī argues here that anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*) is a legitimate imposition on God, this is to be understood not in its current meaning of assigning human features to God, but rather of describing God by means of God's manifestations in God's attributes, and always with the understanding that *tashbīh* exists in God together with the *tanzīh* of the Absolute. He employs the analogy of the dot, an indivisible atom that, however, is distributed along the surface, as it were, of the letters. We cannot distinguish the dot on the outline of a letter, and yet we see the letter that is made up of a continuum of dots. Therefore, the letter renders visible what is invisible. Likewise with the attributes of God: they describe the invisible God through the medium of God's visible manifestations, albeit with the limitations due to the employment of human imagination to which after all they pertain.

This discourse on the acceptability or otherwise of the employment of attributes to describe God is to be seen in the context of a theological diatribe that somehow plagued medieval Islam for some centuries. As we saw already in chapter three, Netton (1989) identified four models emerging from this debate:

1. The Qur'anic model (Ibn Ḥanbal and Al-Ashʿarī): face-value acceptance of anthropomorphic descriptions of God in the sacred book.

2. The allegorical model (Muʿtazilites) of interpreting[14] the Qurʾanic figurative language by assigning to the divine features non-literal meanings.

3. The mystical model (Sufism) concentrating on attributes as expressions of a merciful and loving God longing, as it were, to be known.

4. The Neo-Platonic model (Ibn Sīnā) and its emanationist language (pp. 4-6).

In chapter 2.1.3 of this thesis, in the section dedicated to Ibn ʿArabī, we saw that for him every person contains and manifests every divine attribute to some extent. For this reason the Qurʾān states that God taught Adam all the divine names.[15] The divine names and attributes are also manifestations of the Absolute, providing us with a limited view of the Absolute. However, as the shadow of an object is not the object, they are not the Absolute. When a name is taken not in relation to the Absolute, but in itself, it becomes an attribute.

SECTION 3

(21)

تقول النقطة للبا أيها الحرف اني أصلك

The dialogue between the diacritical dot (this time an image of God) and the letter *Bāʾ* offers an elegant and effective further clarification of the doctrine of *waḥda al-wujūd.*

The diacritical dot and the letter *Bāʾ* engage in a lively discussion, which is of course a literary device for a reflection on the nature of the relationship between God (the

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[14] With the adoption of rationalist, Aristotelian categories and lines of reasoning.
[15] II.30.

dot) and creation (the letter *Bā'*). By employing this imagery, the author returns to the theme of *waḥda al-wujūd* in a further attempt to describe the ontological immanent identification of the divine *Persona* with Her creatures, at the same time preserving Her transcendence. With the diacritical dot and the dotted letters of the Arabic alphabet, the dot is distinguishable from the body of the letter and is not the body of the letter. At the same time, the letter is what it is only if the dot and the body are together. Furthermore, the body of the letter is composed of a series of invisible dots that are visible only in the shape they give to the letter. Likewise, God is not the universe, nor is the universe God. However, the universe exists only because it shares in the divine essence that alone really exists.

POETRY

(27)

هذي الخيام بدت على أطنابها

Following a brief poetic interlude, the author returns to the main subject of this work, the *Basmala.* By means of an excursus on the relationship between the letters *Bā'* and *Alif* in the *Basmala*, Al-Jīlī introduces the theme of the mystical *fanā',* the obliteration of the self.

Here and elsewhere in Al-Jīlī's work, the author chooses to adopt the medium of poetic verses to express his thought. Typically, these poems do little to shed light on very complex and profound mystical concepts. Rather on the contrary, their hermetic and elliptic nature allows the writer to set forth in words the most daring notions, almost seeking refuge behind the safe screen of poetic license marked by deliberate obscurity of expression and style. As Chittick (1994) puts it, "The positive role that poetry can play is

to awaken the imaginal perception of God's self-disclosures" (p. 77).

Apart from the content, the form provided by verses, that in Al-Jīlī's times and in his part of the world represent the highest means of literary expression, also allows him to improve on the quality of the delivery of his writing. As Hodgson (1977) points out, through poetry "virtuosity could be most spectacularly displayed within its tight formal requirements" (p. 487). Having said that, his poetic style is not particularly attractive, and has been judged rather "ungraceful" by commentators such as Nicholson (1994 [1921], p. 143). Moreover, typically for the region in which he lives and for the period between the seventh/thirteenth and the tenth/sixteenth centuries, he chooses to tackle the intricacies of Sufi mysticism in Arabic rather than in Persian.

(28)

فجعل الحق حرف الباء أول القرآن في كل سورة لأن أول حجاب بينك وبين ذاته سبحانه وتعالى

ظلمة

Returning to the *Basmala*, again the author employs very evocative imagery to describe the universe; a space where what is visible is actually darkness hiding the truth. God and God's essence are the only true reality. Everything else is only appearance.

(29)

أخلع نعليك

The Qur'anic story of Moses and the burning bush (XX.9) sets the background for

a return to the letter *Alif* of the Arabic alphabet, charged with evocative associative significance.

(33)

<div dir="rtl">سؤال، ماالسترأن الألف حذف في بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم</div>

"Question: what is the reason why the Alif was deleted in the Basmala...?" Tradition ascribes the introduction of this calligraphic convention to ʿUmar who allegedly instructed his scribe to "lengthen the *bāʾ*, make the teeth of the *sīn* prominent and round off the *mīm.*"[16] Al-Jīlī's esoteric explanation, of course, is somehow more complex. He notices how in the construction of a similar phrase found at the beginning of the *sūra* XCVI the *Alif* is not assimilated by the *Bāʾ*. The reason he identifies for this discrepancy in Arabic syntax is in the words that follow the article: in the *Basmala* the word is *God* (*Allāh*) while in the *sūra* XCVI the word is *Lord.* Later he will specify that *Lordship* pertains to the seventh *degree of Existence.* It is an attribute of God that makes sense only in the context of God's relationship with a servant. If the servant is no longer there, what would the point be of calling God with the appellative *Lord?* Therefore where the word *Lord* is employed, such as in the *sūra* XCVI*,* the servile role of the *Alif* is preserved. *Allāh,* however, is the Name of God *par excellence*, because it defines God's Essence, which subsists even if the servant - here represented by the letter *Alif-* or indeed anything else should cease to exist.

The relationship between the Lord and the servant is treated extensively in *Al-Insān al-kāmil,* where Al-Jīlī touches upon the assimilation into the "Lord" of the "servant" who has reached such a level of enlightenment as to be aware that her/his essence and God's Essence are one. Which means that the Lord and the servant are one, because at the level

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[16] B. Carra De Vaux (1960). Basmala. *E.I.²* 1, pp. 1084-1085.

of God's Essence attributes such as Lord no longer apply. Which means also that the servant no longer exists, as nothing else exists outside of *Allāh,* the only true and necessary Existent. This is the mystical *fanā',* the obliteration of the self, that Burckhardt (1983 [1953]) likens to the Sanskrit *Nirvāna* (p. 19).

SECTION 4

(34)

لما كانت الألفة مشتقة منه ألف بين الحروف

A short chapter on the relationship of the letter *Alif* with all the other letters of the alphabet, and its esoteric significance. This letter, Al-Jīlī explains, joins together all the other letters and is present in all the letters, because they all are rotated or curved expressions of the *Alif.* In the same way the *Muḥammadan Reality* is present in everything that exists and joins all that exists ontologically.

POETRY

(35)

هذا الوجود وأن تعدد ظاهراً   وحياتكم ما فيه إلا أنتم

In the light of Al-Jīlī's previous excursus on the significance of the dot and the *Alif*, pervading all that exists, this verse, presumably addressed to humankind, assumes existentialist or sapiential overtones in stating the vacuity of all that surrounds us, reduced to mere appearance. What really exists is the Essence of the Absolute: the former, illustrated by the role that the letter *Alif* plays in the formation of each letter of the

alphabet, is catalysed in the person of Prophet as *Muḥammadan Reality;* the latter is like the dot that is hidden in each letter of the alphabet, because the letters are made of the a sequence of dots and they would cease to exist if the dots were removed from them.

SECTION 5

(36)

تعلقت الأحرف بالألف ولا تعلق الألف بشيء من الحروف كذلك... الله... غني عن العالمين

The diacritical dot and the letter *Alif* share the same characteristics in relation to the other letters, because they are metaphorical images of the same thing: God and the divine attributes and essence.

NOTE

(37)

لا يبقى إلا هو في هويته

On the theme of existence, describing in detail some of the characteristics of the letter *Alif* in relation to other letters of the alphabet, the author explains how all that exists is joined with God but will eventually cease to exist and God alone will remain.

(38)

لأن حياة الألف هي السارية في أجساد الحروف ولولا ذلك لما كانت للحروف معاني فما التصقت به إلا

في الهجاء ولا في الخط فهي برية من دعوى الوجود

From a mystic's point of view Jurjānī (1909 [n.d.]) defines *wujūd* thus:

> the loss by the servant of his human attributes and the finding of the truth, because not in any way does human nature remain when the authority of truth is manifested. This is what Abī Al-Ḥushayn Al-Nūrī means when he said, "It has been twenty years for me alternating between *wajd* and *faqd*.[17] If I find my Lord I lose my heart." And this is the meaning also in Al-Junayd, "The science[18] of unity[19] contradicts its existence and the existence of unity contradicts its science. And unity is the beginning, and existence[20] is the end, and *wajd* is the middle state" (p. 169).

For the sake of clarity, one should add here what Jurjānī means by *wajd*. He defines it as "that which meets the heart and answers it without formality … and it has been said that it is lightning that shines and quickly disappears" (*Ibid.*). *Wujūd* would seem to be therefore like the final act of a process of mystical union with God of which *wajd* is a transitory stage. This understanding by the mystics of the concept of *wujūd* acquires further breadth if associated to the meaning it carries in *falsafa* and *kalām*. There, as Morewedge (1973) explains, *wujūd* is neither *being* nor *essence,* but *existence*, i.e., the fact that something is, and it pertains to individual beings and substances and to their accidents. The concepts of *existent* and existence coincide in the use of the term *wujūd.* In God alone, the *Necessary Existent*, *Wujūd* and Essence are the same (p. 325). Which brings us to the notion of *Necessary Existent: wājib al-wujūd.* As we saw in chapter 2.1.1, this is arguably

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[17] Loss.
[18] *'Ilm.*
[19] *Tawḥīd.*
[20] *Wujūd.*

the most significant item in the metaphysics of Avicenna. This philosophical phrase refers to the divine *Persona* as the One Who can only exist, or Who exists by Herself alone and by no other external cause, Whose non-existence would be unthinkable. It is clearly a deductive course of reasoning that runs parallel to Western philosophical *a priori* or ontological arguments for the existence of God as found in Anselm, Descartes and Leibniz in the eleventh/twelfth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries respectively. The existence of anyone or anything else in the universe is conversely contingent (*mumkin al-wujūd*).

SECTION 6

(39)

متعددة الجسد واحدة الروح

Comparing the dot and the letter *Alif*, a marginal reflection is offered on the subject of plurality of creation and oneness of God. The author reiterates that both the diacritical dot and the letter *Alif* share the same characteristics, in that they both make up the body of each of the letters and both preserve their oneness, because they are not multiplied by the totality of the letters that they compose. The *Alif,* however, is obtained by a sequence of dots all strung together to form the stem of the *Alif.* This letter, therefore, combines in itself both plurality and oneness.

(40)

يوجد الحق سبحانه في سمع الإنسان المتقرب إليه بالتوافل وفي بصره وفي يده وفي لسانه

"Truth … is found in the hearing of the person who approaches it by supererogatory works, and in his/her sight and in his/her hand and on his/her tongue." If one finds God with one's hearing, it is not only one's hearing that finds God, but the whole

of the person. This is possibly a loose reference to some *aḥādīth* often quoted in *Muʿtazilī* circles in defense of their theological tenets on the attributes of God. Thus, in the *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* collection (41, 4886) we find:

> Narrated Anas ibn Malik: Sahl ibn Abu Umamah said that he and his father (AbuUmamah) visited Anas ibn Malik at Medina during the time (rule) of Umar ibn Abdul Aziz when he (Anas ibn Malik) was the governor of Medina. He was praying a very short prayer as if it were the prayer of a traveller or near it.
>
> When he gave a greeting, my father said: May Allah have mercy on you! Tell me about this prayer: Is it obligatory or supererogatory? He said: It is obligatory; it is the prayer performed by the Apostle of Allah (peace_be_upon_him). I did not make a mistake except in one thing that I forgot. He said: The Apostle of Allah (peace_be_upon_him) used to say: Do not impose austerities on yourselves so that austerities will be imposed on you, for people have imposed austerities on themselves and Allah imposed austerities on them. Their survivors are to be found in cells and monasteries. (Then he quoted:) "Monasticism, they invented it; we did not prescribe it for them."
>
> Next day he went out in the morning and said: will you not go out for a ride, so that you may see something and take a lesson from it?
>
> He said: Yes. Then all of them rode away and reached a land whose inhabitants had perished, passed away and died. The roofs of the town had fallen in.
>
> He asked: Do you know this land? I said: Who acquainted me with it and its inhabitants? (Anas said:) This is the land of the people whom oppression and envy destroyed. Envy extinguishes the light of good deeds, and oppression confirms or falsifies

it. The eye commits fornication, and the palm of the hand, the foot, body, tongue and private part of the body confirm it or deny it. [21]

This argument Al-Jīlī applies also to the relationship between God and the created order. Using the imagery provided by the letters of the Arabic alphabet, he explains: *"However, He - praise Him - by being the hearing of this servant is not multiplied by being his sight. In the same way, He exists in His fullness in all things that make up the whole of the world. He is not multiplied by the plurality of things."*

The author concludes his argument justifying names and attributes of God. By calling God by one of God's names or attributes, he explains, one calls on the same God and the whole of God, not just parts of God to which the name or attribute may refer. He also makes mention of partial classifications of the names of God, among the many to be found in different authors at different times.[22] Essentially Al-Jīlī is laying the foundations of what follows in the next section dedicated to the theme of *aḥadiyya*, fundamental to his doctrine of *waḥda al-wujūd* or, adopting instead Ibn ʿArabī's terminology,[23] *ʿalam al-aḥadiyya,* the realm where God's Essence, Attributes and Action coincide. Because, Al-Jīlī explains in *Al-Insān al-kāmil,* there is a multiplicity of divine attributes, but each of them can only be fully grasped if brought back to the Essence from which it emanated.

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[21] In the translation of the *University of Southern California Compendium of Muslim Texts.* *http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/hadith/abudawud/041.sat.html* (Accessed 4/09/2010).
[22] Al-Jīlī's own favourite classification, of the divine attributes rather than of *the most beautiful Names*, however, is to be found not here but in *Al-Insān al-kāmil,* where they are divided into attributes pertaining to God's Essence, Beauty, Majesty and Perfection.
[23] Ibn ʿArabī is considered the one who more consistently propounded the theological and mystical tenets of *waḥda al-wujūd,* but he never used that expression in his surviving works.

SECTION 8

(43)

<div dir="rtl">لأن الحق له مشهدان في نفسه</div>

Al-Jīlī offers here some considerations on the distinction between oneness and unity and on the exact extent of the identification between divine Essence and that of the created universe. He distinguishes *oneness* (*waḥidiyya*) and *unity* (*aḥadiyya* or *ittiḥād*). The former, that in Al-Qāshāni's (1991 [n.d.]) Glossary means "considering the Essence from the viewpoint that the Names originate from it, and its oneness remains with it despite its manifold attributes" (p. 19) is an objective divine quality deriving from God's immanence, i.e., from God's interaction with the universe: there is only One God and God created the universe. Unity, on the other hand, is a subjective realization by the mystic, in a process of self-annihilation, of God's transcendence. Al-Qāshāni defines it as "witnessing the existence of the unique and absolute Truth, in which all things in reality exist. Thus everything is united with it, seeing that everything that exists has its being in truth. By itself it is nothing. Nor does this mean that anything has a prior existence of its own which subsequently becomes united, for this would be an absurdity" (p.3). "As a spiritual state – Burckhardt (1983 [1953]) explains – Unity contains the extinction of all traces of the created" (p. 59). Titus Burckhardt (d. 1984) was a German Swiss born in Florence in 1908 and a convert to Islam. His affiliation with the Perennialist or Traditionalist philosophical movement of the French René Guénon and the Swiss Frithjof Schuon has gained him some scepticism by the academic world that his movement opposed and criticised so openly. The movement was esoteric in nature and hostile to modernism and secularism, which they saw as vehicles that increasingly led humanity to lose touch with the "perennial" sacred.

Burckhardt's familiarity with esoteric disciplines across the religious traditions and their language and doctrines, makes him nevertheless a privileged source for a deeper understanding of esoteric Sufism and of Al-Jīlī in particular. Thus, in an attempt to shed more light on the arguments propounded by the author of *The Cave and the Inscription,* the quotation on his understanding of the concept of unity constitutes a rather clarifying remark. The controversial concept of *waḥda al-wujūd* of course informs this statement. But one may be justified in thinking that Burckhardt's words hit the nail on the head, as it were, divesting this concept precisely of the elements that have made it so controversial through the centuries, since the times of Ibn ʿArabī. In Al-Jīlī's teachings, *prima facie* it may appear that with *waḥda al-wujūd* his brand of Sufi mysticism is propagating some form of pantheism or a modified version of dualism or panentheism[24] irreconcilable with the teachings of the sacred book. To say that the essence of the created universe and of all human beings within it are one with the Essence of God – hence with no ontological distinction between the Creator and the created – undoubtedly goes beyond the Qur'anic tenets of the Muslim faith. To say however that this unity subsists subjectively "as a spiritual state" in the mystic, changes somewhat the parameters of evaluation.[25] This would not be just a matter of benevolently going beyond hyperbolic mystical language, one that usually causes to the most articulate saintly figures of all the great religions, considerable trouble with their religious authorities regardless of the geographical area or the historical age in which they live. It is rather the logical realization that there is no contradiction between the dogma of God's oneness and the person in prayer reaching mystical union with God in the awareness that one's existence and essence, and that of the whole universe,

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[24] God is *in* everything that exists but God *is* not everything that exists.

[25] According to Tonaga (2004) Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of the *oneness of being* is reinterpreted by Al-Jīlī as "oneness of witness and contemplation." It would not have escaped Tonaga the fact that this is evocative of the doctrines of Sirhindī. For a full discussion on this subject see the opening pages to the Conclusion of the present thesis.

is only participation in God's own existence and Essence. In the beyond-suspicion words of ʿAbdu (1966 [1897]), the universe is *contingent existent*, as opposed to the *necessary Existent*. A characteristic of the *contingent* is that it only exists by accident, for it exists by prior cause, and there is nothing prior to the *contingent* except for the *necessary* (p. 41-44). Al-Jīlī somehow inverts this process of thought, and starting from the *contingent* traces back the origin of its existence, realizes its fortuitous and therefore defective nature, and concludes that only God is true Existence and nothing else truly exists except God. This moment signs for the Muslim mystic the beginning of a journey out of her/himself towards annihilation in God. As Nicholson (1914) effectively puts it, "The most distinctive feature of Oriental as opposed to European mysticism is its profound consciousness of an omnipresent, all-pervading unity in which every vestige of individuality is swallowed up. Not to become *like* God or *personally* to participate in the divine nature is the Sūfī's aim, but to escape from the bondage of his unreal selfhood and thereby to be reunited with the One infinite Being" (pp. 82-83).

The doctrine of *waḥda al-wujūd* and the implications inherent to Tonaga's "oneness of witness and contemplation" were the object of the strong criticism by one considered to be the father of "oneness of witness" (*waḥda al-shuhūd),* Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1033/1624). As explained more extensively in the Conclusion to this dissertation, for the Indian *ḥāfiẓ* the mystical subjective experience of unitive annihilation in God that this doctrine presupposes, constitutes but the stage in that journey that precedes a return, as it were, of the mystic to the awareness of the utter transcendence of God.

(44)

<div dir="rtl">

ثم قيل في آدم أنه على صورة الرحمن

</div>

Al-Jīlī perpetuates here the blurring of the borders between the Muslim unquestioned transcendence of God and the Sufi allusion to an incarnation model that would provide helpful vocabulary and imagery to the challenging attempt to describe the mystical union of the spiritual person with God. To that end he also employs the Jewish-Christian doctrine, absent in the Qur'ān but salvaged by the ḥadīth,[26] of Adam created in God's image.

(45)

<div dir="rtl">

إذ ليس الاسم غير المسمى

</div>

Here the author identifies with a Muʿtazilī position opposed to a controversial Ashʿarī doctrine. In this case, the former maintained identification between noun and referent, signifier and signified (*Al-ism huwa al-musammā*); the latter denied this (*Al-ism ghayr al-musammā*). The Muʿtazilites were thus stressing God's *Tawḥīd* by insisting that God's attributes are none other than God, otherwise by calling upon the name of God – in Al-Jīlī's example – one would call upon something other than God. At the time of Al-Jīlī this doctrinal position was taken up by the Ḥurūfiyya, as we saw already in chapter 2.3. Not surprisingly their teachings resemble rather closely those of Al-Jīlī, who probably was exposed to them and may even have shared in their beliefs more intimately. In fact, as we said earlier the Ḥurūfī sect took the Muʿtazilī position to more extreme conclusions,

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[26] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 32.6325.

reaching an identification – in the person of the Perfect Human Being – of the created order with God, because God created all that exists through God's Word, and this Word is no other than God: it is God. Because there is no distinction between the name and the object that is named, therefore there is no distinction between the creatures and the Word that brought them into existence by giving them a name. Since the Word of God is God, therefore there is no distinction between the creatures and God.

(46)

هو عين المسمى بالإله

By the term *Essence* (*ʿayn* or *dhāt*) the author means the *Essence of God*, i.e., "God", or more precisely, "That by Which God is," as we learn from *Al-Insān al-kāmil* where he explains the term. When in relation to the created order, God is defined by God's attributes. These are not illusions of the imagination, but rather real manifestations of God made perceptible in creation. In other words, the attributes of God *are* God: God in relation to God's creation. Nicholson (1994 [1921]) clarifies this concept when describing the content of Al-Jīlī's *Al-Insān al-kāmil*: "What is called in theology the creation of the world is just this manifestation, accompanied by division and plurality, of the Essence as the attributes …; and in reality the Essence *is* the attributes (*al-Dhát ʿaynu 'l-ṣifát*)" (p. 90).

Essence is the Absolute, God conceived beyond the limits of existence itself. As Burckardt (1983 [1953]) effectively puts it, "One must understand well that the Essence 'possesses' the universal Qualities, but that it cannot be 'described' by them" (p. 5). In fact, in his *Al-Kamālāt al-ilāhiyya* Al-Jīlī states, in part: "Know that in our opinion *Al-Dhāt*

does not have a name or an adjective or an attribute because it is the actualisation of plurality and oneness (*ḥaḍira al-jam'a wa al-waḥda*). It is the plurality of the actualisations. This is why it does not have a specific name or a specific attribute" (p. 48).

Al-Jīlī uses the analogy of water and ice: God's Essence is like *water* crystallised in *ice* (God's attributes manifested in creation) "that seeks to return to its pure and simple self" ((Nicholson 1994 [1921], p. 84). It is only the human soul that can achieve this return of "ice into water." Therefore, Al-Jīlī will instruct the mystic to enter some specific doorways - such as the *Qur'ān* and the name *Allāh* - conducive to a degree of contemplation of God as God truly is, beyond the veil of the senses. The human soul begins then a journey of *tajallī*[27] in four stages: "Illumination of the Actions," "Illumination of the Names," "Illumination of the Attributes" and "Illumination of the Essence." In the first stage the mystic is so attuned with God, that all s/he does, God is truly doing it through her/him. The second stage indicates identification by the mystic with each of the Names of God: the mystic assumes them as if they were hers/his. The same happens in the third stage with regard to the divine Attributes: the mystic becomes each of the Attributes of God, assuming therefore a universal dimension of quasi-identification with God. The last stage is that of the Essence: it is here, when one is finally purified of the deception of imagery, definition and qualification, that the boundaries between one's self and the Self of God begin to blur, because the Essence of God is not only That by Which God is, but also what God is not.[28] In fact, Essence goes beyond the definitions of existence and non-existence, and embraces *all* and its negation.[29]

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[27] Unveiling, illumination, revelation.
[28] "Being and not-Being are the same" (Hegel, d. 1831).
[29] Nicholson (1994 [1921]) sees in this process a definite monistic character.

As we saw earlier the blurring of the distinction between one's essence and God's Essence takes place in the obliteration of the self through the mystical *fanā'*, when the mystic ceases to exist and returns to God.

SECTION 10

(50)

يا إنسان عين ذاتي

In Islamic Philosophy the term *'Ayn* is often used to denote the concrete reality of an object, as opposed to its abstract concept in the subject's mind. Sufi theology however applies the term also to the universal ideas of things in God's mind, that therefore are "really real" and of which the existing world is just a shadow.

(52)

فكلما قرأت شيئاً من القرآن الحكيم الذي هو صفة الله في نفسك ظهرت صفات الله لك

The *Qur'ān* is introduced as one of the two privileged doorways into a state of contemplation of the Truth at the beginning of the mystical journey through the four stages of illumination, the other one being the name of God. Having ascribed to the *Qur'ān* the qualities of a divine attribute, Al-Jīlī explains how consequently the mystical recitation of the same – which, he clarifies, is not comparable to a standard recitation but is of a different order altogether – is conducive to a sort of mystical union with the Divine Essence (*'Ayn al-Dhāt*). This is achieved by one's transcendent self (*Ghayb*), not by one's manifested consciousness, therefore it cannot be objectively verified.

(53)

وليس لشاهدتك إلا ما قرأه غيبك منك

This *manifested consciousness*, that Burckhardt (1983 [1953]) calls *"objective" consciousness* (p. 47), is rendered by Al-Jīlī with the term *al-shahāda*, and is used – here and in *Al-Insān al-kāmil* – as counterpoint to *al-ghayb*. However, *shahāda* is also the explicit Islamic testimony of faith, and Al-Jīlī stresses in it the apparent paradox of the denial of the existence of God – *there is no God* – and its affirmation – *but God.* The paradox acquires meaning if seen as an explanatory pleonasm that, as Burckhardt (1990 [1976]) eloquently puts it, "on the one hand … distinguishes between other-than-God and God Himself and, on the other hand, it brings the former back to the latter. Thus it expresses at the same time the most fundamental distinction and the identity of essence and is thus a resumé[30] of the whole of metaphysics" (p. 54).

(56)

يس والقرآن الحكيم

The author suspends here the explanation of the *Basmala* by inserting a running commentary of the first five verses of *sūra* XXXVI, followed by the last two verses of *sūra* IX.

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[30] *Sic.*

SECTION 11

(62)

سكنت ديار هند

In a poem dedicated to the Prophet the author mentions the home of Hind. This is possibly a reference to Umm Salāma Hind Bint Abī ʿUmayyah, one of the Prophet's wives after her first husband's death in battle, ʿAbd Allāh Ibn ʿAbd al-Asad. However, Clément-François (2002) translates *Hind* with India, and explains: "About *'Hind,'* which represents India geographically and typologically see *Tarjumân el ashwâq* by Ibn ʿArabî, poems 20 and 22, commentaries: *'Hind'* represents 'the place of Adam's fall, the place of primordial wisdom from which all sources of Wisdom flow'" (p. 237).

(63)

فأشهدني الحق تعالى اتصاف نبيه محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم بالسبعة الأوصاف النفيسة

Paving the way towards introducing the second privileged doorway to mystical contemplation, the name of God, the author describes here the Divine *Persona* through the medium of some of the divine attributes. The author enumerates the seven attributes – that in *Al-Insān al-kāmil* he defines as "of the (Divine) Person" (*Al-Nafs*) – fundamental to an Islamic Theology, even recognized by clerics of the Ashʿariyya *kalām*: Life, Knowledge, Will, Power, Hearing, Sight and Speech. He derives each of the attributes from the letters spelling the Arabic word for *God*. Interestingly enough, in a similar exercise, in his voluminous masterwork he derives the same seven attributes from the letters spelling the Arabic word for *The All Compassionate*.

SECTION 12

(64)

هذا العدد موافق لمراتب الوجود التي ليس بعدها إلا ما كان أولها

This section of Al-Jīlī's work contains only a quick overview of his metaphysical cosmology, as Burckhardt (1983 [1953], p. xvii) calls it. It actually consists of a mere listing of the degrees of existence - the cosmic manifestations of reality that include all that exists - with Qur'anic names for each of the stations. It is a section on metaphysics, enumerating Al-Jīlī's 40 degrees of existence. A classification of the created order according to an ascending /descending order is of course not at all original to Al-Jīlī or, for that matter, to Islamic mysticism. In a helpful excursus of Islamic mystical traditions, Bannerth (1965) provides us with a cursory examination of some of the degrees of existence placed between the created order and its very transcendent God, typical of fourth/tenth century Islamic mysticism, containing concepts such as First Intellect, celestial spheres and matter, borrowed of course from Greek philosophy but translated into Muslim categories (pp. 147-148). Subsequently, Bannerth reminds us of the degrees of beings dear to the doctrine of Al-Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191) (pp. 154-155).

Al-Jīlī crafted himself onto this philosophical tradition by offering his own rendition of a vision of the universe where everything has its place and is connected to everything else in a ladder consisting of 40 ranked levels. Here in this book he offers us only a rapid overview of this structure. However, he will deal with it in greater detail in one of his last works, revealingly entitled *Marātib al-wujūd*, which I have already described at some length in chapter 1.2 of this thesis, dedicated to Al-Jīlī's writings.

A parallel list, but with some of the names replaced by others or located at different stations, is contained in *Al-Insān al-kāmil,* where each of the degrees of existence is explained. There we learn that the preserved Tablet - traditionally said to contain the set destiny of each individual human being, inscribed by God by means of the Sublime Quill - is actually, in Burckhardt's words, "the immutable prototype of the becoming" containing "the Divine science of the universe" (*Ibid.*). Jurjānī (1909 [n.d.]) distinguishes this Tablet of the First Intellect from other three tablets: "The Tablet of Fate, which is the Tablet of the comprehensive speaking soul in which the comprehensiveness of the first Tablet is separated and related to its reasons. This is called the Protected Tablet." Follows the "tablet of the heavenly partial soul on which everything in this world with its shape, form and volume, is engraved. And this is called the Lower Heavens. It is like the imagination of the world, just as the first (Tablet) is the Spirit of the world and the second is the Heart of the world." Finally we have the "Tablet of the Origin" that – almost like a modern-day computer hard disk - receives and preserves images of the "exterior world" (p. 130). In other words, change that seems to plague the created order is not haphazard and random, but divinely predetermined by the divine Intellect, the Sublime Quill, which in Al-Jīlī is personified in the Archangel Gabriel, identified with the appellative Trustworthy Soul. Before that, however, at the second station, we find the "heavy Clouds" (*'Amā'*) that signify God's non-manifestation, which makes God impenetrable to the non-initiated (hence the reference to *ma'rifah,* "gnosis").

Al-Raḥmān is the name of the sixth station, the pre-Qur'anic appellative for God. In Islam, this is about God in relation to God's creatures, creating (as *Al-Raḥmān*) and

sustaining (as *Al-Raḥīm)* them by virtue of God's own mercy. At the eighth and eleventh stations respectively, we find the Throne and the Pedestal. The former is the corporeal totality, the undivided whole. As we saw earlier, it follows immediately after the station of Lordship. Lordship, Al-Jīlī explains, makes no sense without an object on which lordship is exerted, videlicet the Throne. This corporeal totality placed under God's Lordship, however, is not an undivided *unicum*, but rather a manifestation of plurality. This plurality within the whole is what Al-Jīlī here calls Pedestal, the image of the two feet of God resting on it expressing precisely this plurality. Primordial Matter (*Hayūlī*), at the twelfth station, together with Forms (*Ṣuwar*) (thirty-sixth station), constitutes each particular existing object, and represents its potentiality.

Jawhar is the twenty-ninth degree of existence: in Aristotelian Philosophy it refers to all that exists and its parts, but in Ashʿarī and Muʿtazilī categories it only refers to the bearer of accidents in the make up of a body. Derived from the Persian *gawhar* for gem, it describes the core *substance*, the immutable essence of a given being. Burckhardt (1983 [1953]) defines it as Intellect, and associates it to the Buddhist *mani padmē*, a concept commonly translated as "jewel in the lotus" (p. 6). In *Kalām* it came to signify a material entity, or substance. In Ibn ʿArabī it refers to the Essence of the Absolute pervading all that exists, because all that exists does so only inasmuch as it shares in the Absolute's Essence. Which is why it is compared to a subtle (*laṭīf*) substance (*jawhar*) which renders the whole universe one with the Absolute. All that exists is differentiated by forms and accidents, but is one, even with the Absolute, in relation to the *jawhar*. The substance (*jawhar*) of all that exists remains always the same; only its accidents (*aʿrād,* at the thirtieth station) change. In *Al-Insān al-kāmil* Al-Jīlī calls this subtle matter "Holy Spirit" which replaces the servant

when the servant has lost her/himself in the experience of *fanā'*.

SECTION 13

(69)

<div dir="rtl">وليس الحب إلا الإرادة</div>

Here and in the Qur'ān the word *ḥubb* for love refers to a quality of the personal relationship of the individual with God, as opposed to the universal valence of the term *raḥma*, God's all-encompassing and all-sustaining love for the created order. A derivative word is *maḥabba,* described by Massignon (1997 [1954]) as "static idea of love" in contrast to *'ishq,* passionate love, or "love of desire," typical of the terminology of Ḥallāj (p. 30).

(75)

<div dir="rtl">الله غني عن العالم بخلاف اسمه الرحمن فإنه ناظر إلى ظهور اثر الرحمانية في المرحوم</div>

We have seen previously that the sixth degree of existence is expressed by the divine attribute "All Compassionate." God's compassion – which *per se* means "God in relation to" - is made manifest by God's creating activity. Through God's speech uttering the word: "Be!" God renders creation possible. God's word has no limit, so there is no limit to the possibilities inherent to God's creating activity.

Worth noticing here also, is the way the author came to link the *ḍamma,* or "raised *Wāw,*" to the subject of God's compassion manifested in God's creating activity. The link is given by the number *six* that the sixth degree of existence has in common with the raised *Wāw*. Applied to the Arabic *abjad* - which technicalyl defines an alphabet that does not

contain vowels or where vowels are not essential - *Isopsephy* attributes to the letter *Wāw* the value of six. *Isopsephy* is the assigning of numeric values to the letters of an alphabet with the purpose of introducing numeric script or mystical significance to the letters. The Arabic alphabet is considered an "impure *abjād*" because it contains a number of long vowels. Al-Jīlī, like Ibn ʿArabī before him,[31] dwells on the fact that the "raised *Wāw*," although inconspicuous, is part of the spelling of the word "Be!" This peculiar number which is equal to the product and the sum of the numbers it can be divided into – 1,2,3 – (Clément-François 2002, p. 123) and already imbued with a certain spiritual significance as it is the number of the days God took to carry out the creative act in the Qur'anic account, is endowed with further considerable mystical valence in the works of Ibn ʿArabī, who employs it as a symbol of the *Perfect Human Being*. The master from Murcia equates it, Lewisohn (1999) explains, "with the 'Reality of Muḥammad' (*ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya*) which is the 'isthmus' (*barzākh*) between the *ḥaqq* and the *khalq*, between the Divine Principle and Its Manifestation. This identification is also based on the grammatical function of the *Wāw,* which in Arabic performs the role of copula and consequently unites what is separated" (II, p. 230). Six are also the faculties that in *Al-Insān al-kāmil* Al-Jīlī ascribes to the *Perfect Human Being,* and to which six celestial spheres correspond, namely:

1. The Heart (Sun) - this is where our humanity encounters the Divine when *unveiling* takes place.

2. The First Intellect (Saturn) - or at least a reflection of it, therefore sharing somehow in the role of this angelic *persona*, the Trustworthy Soul or the Sublime Quill that mediates between the transcendent and the created order.

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[31] In *Futūḥāt.*

3. Cognition (*Waḥm*) (Mars) - the capacity to actively apprehend meanings.

4. High-minded eagerness (*Himmah*) (Jupiter) - the capacity to comprehend transcendence and to transcend.

5. Thought (Mercury) - the capacity to meditate in order to achieve unveiling, enlightenment.

6. Imagination (*Khayāl*) (Venus) - the capacity to passively process mental data.

(76)

الله علم يعطيك تعقله مسمى حوى مراتب الألوهية

Finally Al-Jīlī introduces the second privileged doorway to mystical contemplation, the name of God. Having already discussed earlier on in this work some of his favorite and most original points on this subject – a subject that he subsequently dealt with more extensively in *Al-Insān al-kāmil* – in these other sections he offers to the reader an exhaustive etymology of the word. The Name *Allāh* contains, in Al-Jīlī, all the qualities of the divine attributes through which God is knowable to us. Knowable, that is, in God's divine manifestations that allow for an analogical comprehension of God, not in God's true nature: human intuitive and cognitive intellects are not capable of such a feat. This is where Al-Jīlī's originality of thought emerges: he affirms that through the medium of the divine Name we are granted access to God's true nature (*Dhāt*). The difficulty, as he explains, is in reconciling the apparent contradiction between two axioms: that divine nature is indivisible and that nothing – including God's attributes – can contain it in full. He says that the Name *Allāh*, embracing all of the divine attributes and not defining, as the attributes do, one of the manifestations of God, does define instead God's true nature.

Now, if it did so only in part, then divine nature would be divisible, no longer characterised by *oneness*, which is instead one of its main facets. It derives from this therefore that the Name *Allāh* does indeed define God's true nature and essence.

SECTION 14

(78)

الجلالة مركبة من ستة أحرف

More on the name of God, that is now examined and analysed in minute details from the perspective of the component letters of the name.

SECTION 15

(81)

فالنقطة هو الإسم الله والمحيط هو الإسم الرحمن

The final chapter is a continuation of the previous one on the name of God but also makes the distinction between "All Compassionate" and "Most Merciful." The book then ends with a poem, some sort of disclaimer presumably alluding to the critics and "slanderers" of its author, and calling for unity in God.

Chapter 5

AL-JĪLĪ'S ORIGINALITY

Al-Jīlī's assiduous reference in his writings to the thought of Ibn ʿArabī, and his unquestionable devotion to the Andalusian mystic, may cause his originality to go unnoticed in scholarly works, overshadowed by the gigantic personality of his master. Undoubtedly, he is considered a privileged repository of the legacy of *Al-Shaykh Al-Akbar.* However, scholarly references to Al-Jīlī's works, with notable exceptions, often seem to imply that he has nothing original to say, nothing to justify a more profound analysis of his writings with the expectation of finding something other than a mere repetition of concepts already encountered in Ibn ʿArabī. Following the previous chapter, where an exemplification of his doctrine is offered in the pages of *The Cave and the Inscription,* the present chapter puts the case against this assumption, with the intention of demonstrating and illustrating Al-Jīlī's original contribution to the development of late medieval Islamic philosophy and mysticism.

Admittedly, to approach the works of ʿAbd Al-Karīm Al-Jīlī necessarily means having to familiarise oneself with the teachings of Ibn ʿArabī. In fact, while the former is often considered the most influential and original of the latter's disciples, there is no denying that the core of the Persian/Yemenite mystic and philosopher's thought is heavily indebted to that of his great Andalusian master.

The book that has gained Al-Jīlī the limited reputation he enjoys among scholars, the voluminous *Al-Insān al-kāmil,* is based on the discussion of the eponymous figure of the

Perfect Human Being, which of course is not original to Al-Jīlī, nor to Ibn ʿArabī himself, but goes back to pre-Islamic times and cultures, as we have seen in the commentary to paragraph (5) of the Introduction to *The Cave and the Inscription* (in chapter 4.3 of this dissertation) and has been dealt with at length by previous disciples of *Al-Shaykh Al-Akbar,* especially ʿAfīf Al-Dīn Al-Tilimsānī.

Ibn ʿArabī had treated the concept of *Perfect Human Being* in his major works, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* and *Al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya.* In the former he had identified this mythical figure with the Qurʾanic first human being, Adam, in the latter with Muḥammad himself. However, it is in the rendition of the significance attached to the *Perfect Human Being* as the repository of the mystical circumstances conducive to a perfect actualisation of the principles of *waḥda al-wujūd,* that Al-Jīlī reaches notable levels of autonomy and originality.

In fact, the main tenet of Al-Jīlī's thought is probably his own original interpretation of Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of *waḥda al-wujūd,* famously never defined as such in any of the surviving works of the Andalusian master. However, the phrase does appear, possibly for the first time, in the writings of Ṣadr Al-Dīn Al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), who lived in Konya, modern day Turkey, stepson of Ibn ʿArabī, who had married the widow of Al-Qūnawī's father, Al-Rūmī. Al-Qūnawī became a close disciple of Ibn ʿArabī and considered himself a faithful interpreter of his master's teaching after his death. His style, however, differs considerably from that of Ibn ʿArabī. The latter had based most of his teaching on scriptural sources (Qurʾān and Ḥadīth) while Al-Qūnawī used more abstract, philosophical categories, and treated only a limited number of subjects, although he also

drew on the intuitions of his own personal mystical experiences. The main object of his investigation was indeed *waḥda al-wujūd*. He explained that only the *Perfect Human Being* is able to grasp this concept and live it out in a complete and balanced manner. Anyone else would always be affected by the influence of one or the other of the divine names and/or attributes, thus failing to live it out in its fullness.

Many agree that within this intellectual legacy Al-Jīlī "was undoubtedly both the most original thinker and the most remarkable and independent mystical writer among the figures … in the 'school' of Ibn 'Arabî (or of Qûnawî)" (Morris n.d., p. 14).

Waḥda al-wujūd was the object of heated criticism by scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1390), the Ashʿarite Al-Taftāzānī (d. 793/1390) and the Sufi Al-Simnānī (d. 736/1336) (Ansari 1998, p. 281). Al-Simnānī's objections to this important aspect of Ibn ʿArabī's teaching give us a flavour of the way Muslim scholars of the time received and understood this doctrine, and their reactions to the audaciousness of its tenets. As Ansari explains, Al-Simnānī pointed out that to identify everything that exists with the essence of God means that everything in the universe that is foul, base, degrading and indecent is one with God. He also challenged its justification in the context of a mystical journey in which the awareness of *waḥda al-wujūd* is but a stage, and certainly not the ultimate one. Citing his own experience as a Sufī mystic, he confessed of having reached that stage, but also of having moved forward, leaving it behind, in the newly acquired awareness of the total, unconditional transcendence of God:

> … Sometimes in the beginning I had that experience too, and enjoyed it very much. But I passed that stage. When I went beyond the initial and the middle stages of enlightenment (*mukāshafah*) and reached the final stage of enlightenment, the erroneous nature of the earlier enlightenment became

as clear to me as the light of the sun. At this stage I got the true certitude that was beyond all doubts (p. 282).

To illustrate his own experience of *mystical union,* Al-Simnānī quotes some verses he had written when stationed at that particular stage of the mystical journey and that later he disowned:

This is not me; if it is I You are it.

Whatever cloth is on me is You.

In Your love neither body is left to me nor soul,

For the body or the soul that is mine is You. (*Ibid.,* p. 283).

And again:

I am the One I love, and the One I love is me.

There is nothing in the mirror other than us.

The composer missed the truth when he said:

We are two spirits that reside in one body.

He does affirm the existence of another

Who makes a distinction between us,

I do not call Him, nor do I remember Him.

My call and my remembrance is: O I!

And so on to the end. After that when I reached the end of the unitive experience I realized that it was pure illusion. I said to myself: Return to the truth is better than persistence in untruth. (*Ibid.).*

Having disowned this doctrine - thankfully, however, he decided not to destroy verses of such lyrical stature - Al-Simnānī placed the stage of mystical awareness of *waḥda al-wujūd,* i.e. of the identification of all that exists with the essence of God - at the eightieth

station in a cycle of one hundred, culminating in a circular return to the awareness of one's servile place before God.

Several years after Al-Simnānī, Al-Jīlī acquired from the school of Ibn ʿArabī the doctrine of *waḥda al-wujūd* but expanded it with original contributions of his own. He made a distinction, as we saw in section 8.(1) of *The Cave and the Inscription,* between *oneness* (*waḥidiyya*) and *unity* (*aḥadiyya*). Oneness underlines God's immanence by emphasising the truth of the existence of only one God, creator of all that exists. Unity instead is the spiritual state that the mystics obtain through a process of self-annihilation, or *fanā'*. Therefore, far from propounding un-Islamic forms of pantheistic, dualistic or panentheistic doctrines, the author says that unity is not absence of an ontological distinction between the Creator and the created order but a subjective, spiritual state of the mystic. This unity, Al-Jīlī maintains, is acquired and realised in the mystic through a process of *tajallī,* or enlightened manifestation, in its constituent elements of divine Self-revelation and mystical contemplation. Nicholson (1994 [1921]) defines these as "the ontological descent from the Absolute and the mystical ascent or return to the Absolute" (p. 125) respectively, and rightly considers them two opposite sides of the same coin, quoting as an illustration the first chapter of *Al-Insān al-kāmil* where it says:

> The Wise Koran (*al-Qur'ánu 'l-ḥakím*) is the descent (*tanazzul*) of the Divine Individualisations (*ḥaqá'iq*) by means of the gradual ascent of man towards perfect knowledge of them in the Essence, according to the requirement of Divine Wisdom....He that is moulded after the Divine nature ascends in it and gains, step by step, such knowledge thereof as is revealed to him in a Divinely determined order (p. 126).

Staying with Nicholson a little longer, we are assisted in the comprehension of the four different stages - already mentioned in chapter 3.4 and in the annotations to *The Cave*

and the Inscription - that constitute divine revelation in Al-Jīlī. These stages of revelation must be considered in the light of Al-Jīlī's belief that faith is the knowledge by means of the heart of things that cannot be comprehended by the mind. Therefore faith is more powerful than reason, because through faith spiritual truths are revealed to the mind without the need for reasonable evidence, but only on account of faith:[1] "The bird of the mind flies with the wings of wisdom, whereas the bird of faith flies with the wings of power."[2]

In the first stage of revelation, the mystic is led to fathom the extent of God's sovereign will, even to the extent that the human will of the mystic ceases to exist as a separate reality and becomes completely identified with the divine will.

In a second stage the mystic calls upon any of the divine names until the person obtains *fanā'*, or annihilation, thus becoming a reflection of God and God a reflection of the mystic. As we saw already in the annotations to *The Cave and the Inscription,* among the names of God the one that particularly stands out in Al-Jīlī is the Name *Allāh*. In Al-Jīlī this is said to contain all the qualities of the divine attributes that allow for an analogical comprehension of God. Therefore, through this particular divine Name the mystic is granted access to God's true nature. At this stage there is such an identification between God and the mystic, that those who invoke the mystic obtain a reply from God. Again a quotation from *Al-Insān al-kāmil:* "...in that moment he and the Name are like two opposite mirrors, each of which exists in the other. And in this vision it is God Himself that answers those who invoke him (the mystic); his anger is the cause of God's anger, and his

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[1] Zaydān 1988, p. 178.
[2] *Al-Insān al-kāmil,* 2, p. 90.

satisfaction is the cause of God's satisfaction" (p. 127). This is the case, for instance, of one calling upon the name of the Prophet. In fact, given the plenitude of God's Self-revelation in Muḥammad and the fullness of his annihilation in God, to invoke his name obtains God's response.

This reciprocal identification of God and the mystic is acquired, Al-Jīlī explains in his masterpiece, by God planting within the person, "without incarnation (*ḥulúl*), a spiritual substance, which is of God's essence and is neither separate from God nor joined to the man, in exchange for what He deprived him of; which substance is named the Holy Spirit (*rúḥu 'l-quds*)" (p. 128). This is the third stage, where the divine attributes become linked to the person of the mystic, so that the person operates in the modes of the divine attributes, seeing with God's eyes, hearing with God's hearing, knowing with God's knowledge, and so on.

The fourth stage brings divine revelation in the mystic to its climax, moving from a spiritual contemplation of the attributes (*ṣifātī*) to that of the essence of God (*dhātī*). While each individual attribute is an expression of God's essence, it is only in the whole that the true essence of God can be found. This culmination of God's revelation and human ascent is realised in the *Perfect Human Being,* a state of being achieved by the person of the Prophet.

The teaching on the realisation in the person of Muḥammad of all the divine names and attributes is evocative of the writings of Al-Qūnawī whose influence on Al-Jīlī is in line with the impact he seems to have had on most of the followers of Ibn ʿArabī after him.

It is contained not only in the pages of *Al-Insān al-kāmil,* but also in another of Al-Jīlī's works, unsurprisingly entitled *Al-Kamālāt al-ilāhiyya wa al-ṣifāt al-muḥammadiyya,* or *Divine Perfections and Muḥammadan Attributes*, where he says: "Know that Muhammad is qualified by all the Divine Names and attributes and has realised them" (Chodkiewicz, n.d. a). He substantiates this claim with an explanation of the 99 names of God showing how each of them makes direct reference to the Prophet of God; with a direct quotation from the scriptures and finally with references to his own mystical experiences, "a vision which he had in Medina during the month of Dhû l-hijja 812 … in which the Prophet appeared to him as the perfect manifestation of the Divine plenitude (*mutahaqqiqan bi ulûha kâmila jâmiʻa*). …Moreover, other similar visions preceded that one" (*Ibid.*). The Qurʾanic quotation was taken instead from *Sūrat al-fatḥ* (XLVIII:10): "Verily, those who ally themselves to you (the Prophet) indeed ally themselves to God…" As Chodkiewicz puts it, "…without calling into question [an] exoteric interpretation, which is true at its level, Jîlî leads his reader towards a horizon where the distinction between God and His Envoy seems to disappear" (*Ibid.*).

However, such distinction does not disappear if we consider two important categories within Al-Jīlī's doctrinal construct: the relevance of the Name *Allāh* and of the figure of the *Perfect Human Being*.

As we saw in chapter 4.3.13.(10) of this dissertation, both in *Al-Insān al-kāmil* and in *The Cave and the Inscription* Al-Jīlī offers to the reader an exhaustive etymology of the word *Allāh*. This Name, the author explains, contains all the qualities of the divine attributes through which God is knowable to us. Knowable, that is, in God's divine

manifestations that allow for an analogical comprehension of God, not in God's true nature which is beyond the grasp of human intellectual faculties. With originality of thought he affirms that through the medium of the divine Name we are granted access to God's true nature, because the Name *Allāh*, embracing all of the divine attributes and not defining, as the attributes do, one of the manifestations of God, does define instead God's true nature. Now, if it did so only in part, then divine nature would be divisible, no longer characterised by *oneness*, which is instead one of its main facets. It derives from this therefore that the Name *Allāh* does indeed define God's true nature and essence.

As for the category of Muḥammad the *Perfect Man,* in him the plenitude of the divine names and attributes are realised, but only as manifestations of the Absolute, ways for us human beings of relating to God. With audacity of language, like Ibn ʿArabī before him, Al-Jīlī is maintaining that in the person of the *Perfect Human Being* creation shares in the immanence of the divine Existence which is a manifestation of the transcendent Absolute, as we saw for instance in entry (5) of the annotations to the Introduction of *The Cave and the Inscription.*

Al-Jīlī's originality and intellectual autonomy, of course, do not reside with the novelty of his audacious statements, expressions of mystical sentiments that occasionally had been verbalised or at least hinted at, on numerous occasions before Ibn ʿArabī, since the first century of Islam. It resides instead with the innovativeness of the philosophical edifice on which they stand. Al-Jīlī, possibly alone among the ancient commentators of Ibn ʿArabī, is not afraid to move away from a strict adherence to the *Shaykh*'s theoretical constructions, adherence that in other previous commentators and disciples was often

motivated by "apologetic concerns" (Morris, n.d., p. 17), and to open new highways towards a deeper comprehension of the mysteries at stake. This was often the object of criticism on the part of other followers of Ibn ʿArabī over the centuries. His independence of thought from Ibn ʿArabī, for instance, gained him the refutation, "respectueuse mais sévère"[3] (Chodkiewicz 1982, p. 31), of the Algerian Emir ʿAbd Al-Qadir Al-Jazā'irī (d. 1300/1883), himself a Sufi and a faithful disciple of *Al-Shaykh Al-Akbar*, as well as one of the major leaders of the Algerian armed struggle against the colonial French power, until his surrender in 1264/1847. He accused him of having distanced himself, in his *Al-Insān al-kāmil,* from Ibn ʿArabī's assertions contained in *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* that God is conditioned by the essence of the created objects. God - ʿAbd Al-Qadir illustrates - can make a fruit come out of a stone, but not before turning the stone into a tree (Kader 1982 [n.d.], p. 122). In Al-Jīlī, instead, the accent is on the subordination of all that exists to the relevant divine attributes. In *Al-Kahf wa al-raqīm* and, later, in *Al-Safar al-qarīb,* he will stress the fact that a servant of God, for instance, only exists inasmuch as God possesses the attribute of lordship. The essence of the servant is therefore subordinate to the essence of the Lord. It derives from this that Lord (God) and servant (Muḥammad the *Perfect Man*) are one, because one would not exist without the other, as lordship (one of the divine attributes) does not make sense without a subject upon whom the authority of the Lord is exerted. This he explains - we saw in the previous chapter - in *The Cave and the Inscription*.

Al-Jīlī therefore is bold enough to revisit Ibn ʿArabī, to re-interpret him, to deconstruct him and reconstruct him within new parameters, for example re-inventing "ontological distinctions concerning the 'intermediate' conditions and states of being"

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[3] Respectful but stern.

(Morris, n.d., p. 14). According to Weismann (n.d.) Al-Jīlī "disagrees with the Shaykh al-Akbar on three principal points regarding divine knowledge, will and power" (p.67). Al-Jīlī maintains that things exist inasmuch as God knows them, while Ibn ʿArabī described divine knowledge as relying on the object of that knowledge. Al-Jīlī says that divine will is totally free, independent of any cause, while his master had affirmed that God's will is determined by God's nature, and that therefore God cannot but will according to the divine nature. Finally, Al-Jīlī declared that all that exists came into being by a direct creating act of God, not, as Ibn ʿArabī thought, through en intermediate stage of existence as objects of divine knowledge. Weismann speaks of "mutuality between God and the world" in Ibn ʿArabī. He explains that for Ibn 'Arabī in God there is a distinction between inner knowledge (*baṭin al-'ilm*) - which is God's Self-knowing and "a general and undifferentiated knowledge of all the names and all perceptible, rational, and imaginary objects" (p.67) – and external knowledge (*ẓāhir al-'ilm*). The latter is God's "particularized knowledge" of all that exists in its multiplicity, in contrast with the former, which is knowledge of all that exists in its essential unity with the divine Absolute. In the context of all this, Al-Jīlī's audacious statements surpass however the ambiguities of previous attempts to formulate them, and acquire a legitimacy that exonerates them from valid allegations of blasphemy. In fact, Weismann suspects that his "endeavor to safeguard the notions of the omniscience, free will, and omnipotence of God may have been intended to ward off the adversarial condemnation of orthodox theologians." We may assume that by "orthodox theologians" Weismann intends those expert theologians and legists that Zaydān (1988) calls more appropriately *Fuqahā'* (p. 39). Thus, in Al-Jīlī *waḥda al-wujūd,* towards which every mystic and indeed every person should aspire, is realized effectively and fully only in the person of the Prophet Muḥammad, which already places the argument within

strict guidelines that safeguard from a loose and dangerous interpretation of this doctrine. Furthermore, the apparent blasphemous nature of some of his assertions should be interpreted in the context of his cosmology. There we find the concept of *Al-ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadiyya,* or *Muḥammadan Reality,* one that in *Al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* Ibn ʿArabī had already identified with the archetypal creature in which the fullness of God resides, Muḥammad, created as Intellect together with *al-habāʾ*, the cloud of dust constituting matter in its primordial form. The *Muḥammadan Reality* is the soul of the Prophet that imbues all that exists, a bridge between the creatures and their Creator, a mirror, or image, of God. The Prophet, the *Perfect Human Being* in whom the *Muḥammadan Reality* resides in its fulness, becomes therefore the *locus* of the harmonisation of a paradox: the essence of God that seemingly could not be perceived except in the contemplation of the divine attributes, in reality cannot be grasped, given God's insurmountable transcendence, without the assistance of analogies, such as that of the mirror that reflects in itself the essence of God and yet, not being God, is accessible to human comprehension. This mirror, Al-Jīlī says, is the Prophet/*Perfect Human Being*. An alternative analogy is provided by the letters of the alphabet, at length the object of detailed analysis especially in *The Cave and the Inscription.* As we saw in that work, the letter *Bāʾ,* for instance, is employed as an effective device to represent the relationship between God (the *dot*) and the created order (the body of the letter). The diacritical dot, Al-Jīlī explains, is not *in* the body of the letter and is not *the* body of the letter. At the same time, the dot *is* in the body of the letter because each letter of the Arabic alphabet, as we saw in the third section of chapter two dedicated to Arabic script, is made of consecutive dots. Also, the letter *Bāʾ* subsists only inasmuch as the dot and the body of the letter remain together, since without either of them the letter would cease to exist.

In Chapter 2 of *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya,* and in *Al-Mabādi' wa al-ghāyāt,* Ibn 'Arabī deals with a classification of the letters of the alphabet distributing them among the celestial spheres of Minerals, Plants, Animals, Genies, Angels, Humanity and God. In Chapter 5 of *Al-Futūḥāt* he discusses the *Basmala,* delving into the value of the concept of "name" (*Ism*), defined as the substance of the named. He will further explore the significance of some letters in some other of his works such as *Kitāb al-Alif* (where he explains that this letter represents divine oneness), *Kitāb al-Bā'* (where this letter stands for the first manifestation of being, the first to proceed from the *Ālif*), *Kitāb al-Mīm, Kitāb al-Nūn* and *Kitāb al-Yā',* also dealing with the Absolute's oneness. Al-Jīlī differs from his master in his dealing with the significance of the letters of the alphabet, not only in the details – maybe not that relevant because of the contradictions that different classifications contain both in Ibn 'Arabī and in Al-Jīlī – but especially in the fundamental interpretation of the significance of the letters, as Al-Massri (1998) points out. Ibn 'Arabī finds a place for the letters within the celestial spheres and therefore well inside the construct of his own overall cosmology. "Whereas al-Ǧīlī sees the letters as symbols of singular cosmological stages" (Al-Massri 1998, p. 246). Thus in *Sharḥ al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* he divides them into eight categories: true letters, sublime, spiritual, shaped, abstract, sensed, spoken and imaginary. Each letter in Al-Jīlī corresponds in its perfection to a name of God, while in Ibn 'Arabī they are placed in their spheres or planes of existence that go from minerals to God, as we have seen above. Evidence for this differentiation from Ibn 'Arabī is to be found not only at a germinal state in the early work *Al-Kahf wa al-raqīm,* but also in *Sharḥ al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* where, explaining Chapter 2 of Ibn 'Arabī's text, he says that letters are images of the *Perfect Human Being* since they correspond to names and qualities

of God of which *Al-Insān Al-Kāmil* is the catalyst. Which begs the obvious question: is Al-Jīlī in this work truly commenting on Ibn 'Arabī's line of reasoning, or is he pursuing his own agenda, somehow betraying his master's true intentions and ideas? I agree with Al-Massri (1998, p. 251) that the latter is the case. Further evidence for this is given by another detail carefully picked up by Al-Massri, that while Ibn 'Arabī refers to a plane of existence dedicated to humanity, Al-Jīlī writes instead in terms of *Perfect Human Beings,* a category certainly central in his master's doctrine, but that never once is mentioned in Chapter 2 of *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya.*[4]

Al-Jīlī is also the deviser of the concept of "borrowed existence" (*al-'ariyya al-wujūdiyya*) that re-expresses with originality of formulation, the idea that God alone really exists, and the created order borrows its existence from the essence of God. Should this be withdrawn from it, everything will cease to exist. *Al-'ariyya al-wujūdiyya* is not found in Ibn 'Arabī. However, it does appear in the poem *Al-tā'iyya al-kubrā* (lines 241-242), also known as *Naẓm al-sulūk,* by the Egyptian Amr Ibn Al-Fariḍ (d. 632/1234). But, as Zaydān (1988) also points out, in Al-Fariḍ only divine beauty is manifested, whereas Al-Jīlī speaks of the manifestation in the created order, through divine attributes, of divine beauty and goodness (*jamāl*), but also of divine majesty (*jalāl*) and perfection (*kamāl*), distributed along several degrees of existence (pp.163-164). In Al-Jīlī's cosmology the classification of the degrees of existence, or cosmic manifestations of reality that describe all that exists, assigns Qur'anic names to each of the stations. As we saw in chapter 4.3.1.(6), the seventh place is assigned to the divine Lordship and the eighth to the Throne: not the divine seat in an anthropomorphic representation of God, but the universal corporeal totality upon which

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[4] *Ibid.*

divine lordship is exerted. It is on that Throne that boldly Al-Jīlī places *Al-ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadiyya,* because as we just saw it is in Muḥammad the *Perfect Human Being* that as in a mirror the image of divine lordship, like all the other names and attributes of God, is reflected. This insistence on employing Ibn ʿArabī's metaphorical language of mirrors and reflected images is key to the understanding of Al-Jīlī's distinction between God and the created order, even in the summit of its expressions, the *Perfect Human Being.*

Al-Jīlī's originality is also to be found in his own spiritual experience. He does not just report the findings of his predecessors. Instead, like Ibn 'Arabī also did before him, it is out of his own original, first hand mystical journey and philosophical insight that he draws the constitutive elements of his teaching. This is all the more evident in pages of his works where he recounts mystical experiences and then utilises their metaphorical significance to articulate profound and complex concepts, or to expand on concepts already expressed by Ibn ʿArabī and his followers. Morris (n.d.) had pointed this out especially with reference to Al-Jīlī's *Al-Isfār 'an risāla al-anwār,* a commentary to Ibn ʿArabī's *Risāla al-anwār fī mā yumnaḥ ṣāḥib al-khalwah min al-asrār,* a written companion to Sufis undergoing a spiritual retreat (p. 16).

In conclusion, if this chapter has convincingly ascertained the originality of Al-Jīlī's thought, it must have born relevance and influence over the development of Islamic mysticism in the period after Al-Jīlī's death. This will now be summarised in the concluding part of the present dissertation.

CONCLUSION

Why Al-Jīlī? Why is he so important? What repercussions have his doctrines had in the development of mystical Islam over the centuries? These are some of the questions that this final element of the present work will try to answer.

The contribution of Al-Jīlī to the development of Islamic mystical philosophy is such that some scholarship maintains that "After Jili there has been no further development in [Neo-Platonic Sufism] which may merit attention" (Sharda 1974, p. 21). Authors such as Morris (n.d.) have noted what "great esteem Jîlî long enjoyed in Ottoman (by no means exclusively 'Turkish') Sufi circles, a phenomenon also indicated by the many manuscripts of his works found in libraries in that region." However, Al-Jīlī, and even more so his master Ibn ʿArabī, have remained controversial figures, which might partially explain "the limited availability of his writings in any Western language." As Chodkiewicz (n.d. a) points out, "One should not therefore be surprised to learn that the publication, some years ago, of a work containing extensive extracts from the works of Jîlî provoked violent controversy in Egypt, the major accusation against these texts being that of 'divinifying the prophet'."[1] Ironically, however, Al-Jīlī and Ibn ʿArabī may have stimulated the theological debate especially in its expressions most critical of their doctrines.

One of the main critiques to the concept of *waḥda al-wujūd,* for instance, comes from authors such as the Indian *ḥāfiẓ* Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1033/1624). In a fashion strongly

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[1] Chodkiewicz is presumably referring to the controversy raised by the University of Al-Azhar in 1976 over and against the publication in Khartoum two years earlier of the esoteric book *Tabriʾa al-dhimma* by the Sudanese Muḥammad ʿUthmān Al-Burhānī of the Burhāniyya Sufi order.

evocative of the statements of the Sufi scholar Al-Simnānī (d. 736/1336) introduced in chapter five of this dissertation, he contested the finality of the mystical experience that this doctrine presupposes, arguing that the unitive annihilation in God does not constitute the end of the mystical journey. As briefly mentioned already in the annotations to *The Cave and the Inscription,* chapter 4.8.(1) of this dissertation, in his view it constitutes but the stage in that journey that precedes a return, as it were, of the mystic to the awareness of the otherness of God and a renewed realisation of her/his own creatural state. As it is often the case with Sufi authors, he underscores his opinions with the weight of his own mystical experiences that the readers are asked to accept at face value. Ansari (1998) quotes Sirhindī describing one of these occurrences:

> …I was shown that *tawḥīd wujūdī* was a lower stage, and I was asked to move to the stage of *ẓilliyyat* (i.e. the vision that things are shadows - *ẓill* - of God and different from Him). But I did not like to move from that stage as many great sufis were stationed there. But I had no choice. I was brought to the stage of *ẓilliyyat* where I realized that I and the world were shadows.
>
> I wished I had not moved again from that stage of *ẓilliyyat* because it had an affinity with *waḥdat al-wujūd*, which was still a symbol of perfection for me. But it happened that God by a pure act of grace and love carried me beyond that stage and brought me to the stage of *'abdiyyat* [the vision that man is nothing more than an *'abd*, servant of God, that things are merely His creations, and that He is absolutely other and different from the world]. I realized the greatness of that stage and scaled its lofty heights. I regretted my earlier experiences, returned to God and begged for His mercy (pp. 287-288).

Sirhindī's belief system - Ansari goes on to explain - "is variously called *tawḥīd shuhūdī, waḥda al-shuhūd* or *ẓilliyyat.* The first two terms refer to the negative, whereas the last term refers to the positive aspect of his doctrine. In essence, the doctrine means that the identity of the existence of God and the world which a mystic perceives in his experience is true as a fact of his vision (*shuhūd*) but it is not true as a proposition about reality" (p. 288). The subjectivity of the mystic's experience, then, cannot constitute the

final stage of the journey. Eventually the mystics that carry on their journey to the end will acknowledge that their identification with the divine was in itself an illusion. Eventually they realise they are just a shadow (*ẓill*) or, better yet, Sirhindī will say - since a shadow is still integral part of the person that projects it - just a servant (*ʿabd*). Sirhindī's criticism is addressed mainly to Ibn ʿArabī and his followers, and constitutes a reaffirmation and a vindication of divine transcendence *vis-à-vis* God's immanence. To Al-Jīlī's attempts to reconcile the two doctrines Sirhindī opposes the intransigent view that the "call of the prophets is to pure transcendence, and the message of heavenly books is to believe in otherness... Prophets have never preached Unity of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), and have never said that the believers in the duality of being are polytheists. They have preached the oneness of Godhead … and condemned the worship of other beings as polytheism" (*Ibid.,* p. 293-294). In him, therefore, there is absolute affirmation of the total, unconditional otherness of God from the created order. Ansari rightly points out that this, of course, would be the view of traditionalists such as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1327), except that Sirhindī denies the existence of anything but God: no other beings exist outside of God. Which ironically, and of course from a different perspective, is what Ibn ʿArabī and Al-Jīlī also said. To clarify his statements, Sirhindī therefore adopts the image of the reflecting mirror. The reflected image of an object in the mirror exists in itself and is not the same as the object, nor one of its emanations, nor just an illusion. However, the object in the reflection does not really exist in the same way as the object outside of the mirror exists: God and creation remain ontologically different.

Sirhindī's insistence on God's transcendence may have been motivated by the awareness of contemporary tendencies in certain sections of Indian Sufism to lessen the perception of clear boundaries between Islam and Hinduism. Under the influence of Ibn

ʿArabī and his school, notably Al-Jīlī, Sufis of Hindu provenience would tend to "identify Mohammad of history with the Reality of Mohammad or Nur-i-Mohammadi which is the active principle in all divine and esoteric knowledge and adore him as the Hindu Vaishnava Bhaktas adore Lord Krishna" (Sharda 1974, p. 183).

Also from the eleventh/seventeenth century is another critic of Al-Jīlī, Nūr Al-Dīn Al-Rānīrī (d.1068 /1658). This Indian scholar established himself in Acheh, modern day Malaysia and Indonesia, where a particular branch of Sufism, called *Wujūdiyya,* inspired by the teachings of Ibn ʿArabī on *waḥda al-wujūd* and Al-Jīlī on *Al-Insān al-kāmil*, was flourishing under the leadership of Ḥamza Al-Fanṣūrī and Shams Al-Dīn Al-Sumātrānī.

What is probably significant in this example is the growing influence that Al-Jīlī's legacy seemed to have over the years and the centuries on regions ever more distant from the traditional Muslim heartlands, such as India and South-East Asia. As far as the latter is concerned, in *Sufism in the Malay-Indonesian World,* Osman Bin Bakar[2] maintains that Islam spread in the region at the very beginning of its history through commerce, and that it was especially Sufism that favoured the spread of Islam here, and has had a powerful impact on the civilisation of this region. As for Al-Jili's influence on this region, the author refers an anecdote going back to the reign of Sultan Manṣūr Shāh (863/1459-882/1477) of the Muslim kingdom of Malacca in the Malay Peninsula. The story goes that the Sultan "sent Tun Bija Wangsa to Pasai to seek a satisfactory answer to the problem of whether those in heaven and hell remain there for all eternity. At first, his messenger received the exoteric answer that this is the case. On his complaining, however, that the people of Malacca already knew this, he was given the esoteric answer that the suffering of the damned would in the end be turned to pleasure. Some scholars have commented that this

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[2] As cited by Nasr (1991), pp. 259-289.

answer reflects a teaching of the famous Sufi master, ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī,[3] in his *al-Insān al-kāmil (The Universal Man)*, which suggests that perhaps this work was known, at least in Pasai, within a few decades of its author's death, about 832/1428" (*Ibid.,* pp. 265-266).

Among the greatest Malay Sufis, the author mentions Ḥamza Al-Fanṣūrī: "This Ibn ʿArabī of the Malay world was the first to set down in Malay all the fundamental aspects of Sufi doctrine" (p. 283). Al-Fanṣūrī finds inspiration in Ibn ʿArabī, but his writings also reveal familiarity with the works of Al-Jīlī, with particular reference to his teaching on the *Perfect Human Being* (pp. 283-285).

In Chapter five we have looked at some of the theoretical objections that another opponent of Al-Jīlī's legacy, the Algerian Emir ʿAbd Al-Qadir Al-Jazāʾirī (d. 1300/1883) raised against Al-Jīlī's philosophical positions. Al-Qadir opposed our author, however, also on more practical grounds, underlying the influence that Al-Jīlī's teaching was exerting on nineteenth century Muslims. According to Weismann (n.d.), Al-Qadir - himself a follower of Ibn ʿArabī and therefore well versed in the Andalusian's teachings on the principle of the *Perfect Human Being* - maintained that Al-Jīlī's teachings on that specific subject "intensified among the common people a fatalistic attitude toward the Almighty and the cult of saints functioning as intermediaries to Him." Both elements constituted for Al-Qadir an obstacle to his attempts to keep alive the spirit of militant resistance against the colonial occupying powers. He identified in the Tunisian ʿAlī Nūr Al-Dīn Al-Yashruṭī, his contemporary and founder of a Sufi movement in Syria, a typical example of the dangers inherent in Al-Jīlī's teachings. Al-Yashruṭī, who had shared with Al-Qadir his affection to Ibn ʿArabī and his criticism of elements of Al-Jīlī's philosophy, had been

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[3] However, this doctrine is not original to Al-Jīlī and is also hinted at by Ibn ʿArabī, especially in chapter 63 of his *Al-Futūḥāt*.

however too keen, in Al-Qadir's opinion, to divulge Al-Jīlī's interpretations of the teachings on *waḥda al-wujūd* and on *Al-Insān al-kāmil,* among the illiterate masses in Syria. Ultimately, this had led to a subservient and uncritical attitude towards the rulers. Weismann maintains that this eventually motivated Al-Qadir to abandon altogether every connection to Ibn ʿArabī and seek instead inspiration in Ibn Taymiyya's "politically activist model".

Undoubtedly, Al-Jīlī's insistence on mystical unitive experiences of God could be interpreted as an instrument that will ultimately contribute to Islam remaining meekly oblivious of its historical, social and political opportunities and responsibilities, distracted and lulled into a false sense of detached *intimism*. For instance, one may perceive in the nineteenth century tension between a politicised Islam and the appeal of the mystical models traces of this conflict between mysticism and political activism. Echoes of more recent strains can be detected with the revivalism that Sufi orders have been experiencing throughout the world since the 1970s, with a concurrent political resurgence and some more militant fringes in Islam frequently sceptical of Sufism in its "demands for an Islamic order with its basis in exoteric legalism" (Sirriyeh 1999, p. 145). As an example, Sirriyeh (1999) cites the *ṭarīqa* Burhāniyya in Egypt and Sudan that under the leadership of the Sudanese Shaykh Muḥammad ʿUthmān ʿAbduh Al-Burhānī (d. 1403/1983) grew into a movement with millions of adherents (three million in Egypt alone) (p. 147). She explains:

> In the mid-1970s the Burhāniyya attracted unwelcome attention from the [Egyptian] Ministry of Awqāf, when one of its publications was denounced as containing unorthodox doctrines concerning the Prophet and ahl al-bayt and a media campaign was initiated against the order's alleged extremist and Shīʿī-inspired views. Effectively this was an attack on major figures of the medieval Sufi tradition, since the book was largely a compilation of extracts from their writings long

absorbed in the teachings of Egyptian ṭarīqas and by no means exclusive to the Burhāniyya. These would include Ibn al-ʿArab,[4] and ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī" (p. 153).

On more intellectual and less politically charged grounds, Muḥammad Iqbāl (d. 1357/1938), renowned political figure, poet and philosopher from modern day Pakistan, credited Al-Jīlī with "having anticipated many doctrines of modern German philosophy" (Sirriyeh 1999, p. 126) especially Hegel's (d. 1831) interest in opposing concepts, such as immanence and transcendence.[5] As we saw in his works, and specifically in *The Cave and the Inscription, waḥda al-wujūd* in Al-Jīlī does not advocate heretical pantheism or a modified version of dualism or panentheism obviously irreconcilable with the fundamental tenets of Islam. In him, unity (*aḥadiyya*) with God - the most intimate expression of divine immanence - is only the subjective realization by the mystic, in a process of self-annihilation, of God's transcendence. He is not saying that the essence of every person and of the whole created order is one with the divine Essence, without ontological distinction. He affirms instead that this unity subsists subjectively - as a spiritual state - in the mystic. Furthermore, the highest expression of this mystical experience is embodied in the figure of the *Perfect Human Being.* As I said already in part three of chapter four, *Al-Insān al-kāmil* is the meeting point between God and creation, the link between God's transcendence and God's immanence, the bridge between oneness and multiplicity, the *locus* of the harmonisation of a paradox. This figure is personified historically in the prophet Muḥammad, and mystically translated as *Muḥammadan reality* - Al-Jīlī's version of the philosophers' Prime Intellect - the soul of the Prophet that imbues all that exists, once more the bridge between Creator and creatures.

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[4] *Sic.*

[5] Cf. HEGEL, G.W.F. (1959). *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* [1816]. F. Nicolin and O. Pöggler, eds. Hamburg: Felix Meiner; and HEGEL, G.W.F. (1969-71). *Wissenschaft der Logik* 1 [1812], 2 [1816]. G. Lasson, ed. Hamburg:Felix Meiner.

Finally, we saw how Al-Jīlī's originality transpires in his dealing - in the course of this same discourse on God's transcendence versus God's immanence - with the issue of the divine attributes. They describe the transcendent God through the medium of God's manifestations, within the limits dictated by human imagination of which they are after all a by-product. Nothing new in this, which is familiar material found elsewhere in the Sufī tradition. What is new and original is the relevance given to the Name *Allāh* said to contain in itself all the qualities of the divine attributes. Through the medium of the divine Name one is granted access to God's true nature because *Allāh* does not define only one of the divine manifestations, as the other attributes do, but includes them all.

Undoubtedly, the doctrines of Al-Jīlī have been an inspiration to scores of Sufi devout men and women over many centuries. Philosophers and religious intellectuals have taken his teachings very seriously, whether or not they have agreed with them. However, one has the impression that scholars, especially in the West have not adequately appreciated the weight that this figure of medieval mystical Islam may have had in the context of this important chapter of Islamic history. I hope that this dissertation has clarified elements of Al-Jīlī's doctrine that at least in part would help motivate scholars to rectify this. After all, Al-Jīlī's model of the *Perfect Human Being* could be seen as a future ontological evolution to which the whole of the human race could aspire.

GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS

Ālif/Hamza

A-TH-R *athar (āthār)* effect; *mu'aththir (-āt)* causal agent.

A-Ḥ-D *aḥadiyya* (divine) unity.

A-L-H *Allāh* God; *ilāhī* divine.

A-M-R *amr* command, order; divine commandment (mystic.).

A-N *anniyya* objective existence (as opposed to quiddity); in Al-Jīlī it refers to the limitations of the Truth in its manifestations.

A-N-Ā *anāniyya* individuality.

A-H-L *ahl (ahlūn)* people, family.

A-W-L *awwal* first, beginning; *ta'wīl* interpretation, explanation.

Bā'

B-R *Al-Barr* God the Kind One.

B-R-Z-KH *barzakh* gap; world of ideas (philos.).

B-Ṭ-N *baṭn* inner part; *bāṭin* inner, secret.

B-Q-Y *baqā'* abiding; continuation, subsistence; immortality.

B-Y-N *bayna* between, among.

Jīm

J-D *tajdīd* renewal.

J-F-R *jafr* divination.

J-L *jalāla* majesty.

J-L-Y *tajallī* manifestation, revelation, transfiguration.

J-M-' *jam'* union.

J-W-D *Al-Jawwād* God the Magnanimous.

J-W-H-R *jawhar (jawāhir)* essence, content, substance (as opposed to *form*); gem.

Ḥā'

Ḥ-B *ḥubb* and *maḥabba* love, affection.

Ḥ-D-TH *ḥadīth* ephemeral; *(aḥādīth)* collection of narratives of prophetic traditions.

Ḥ-R-F *ḥarf (ḥurūf)* letter of the alphabet.

Ḥ-S *ḥiss* feeling, sensory perception.

Ḥ-S-B *muḥāsaba (-āt)* accounting; self-examination (Sufism).

Ḥ-SH-W *ḥashw* stuffing, filling.

Ḥ-F-Ẓ *ḥāfiẓ (ḥuffāẓ, ḥafaẓa)* formerly honorific epithet that designates a person who has memorised the entire Qur'ān.

Ḥ-Q *ḥaqq* truth; *ḥaqīqa (ḥaqā'iq)* essence, reality.

Ḥ-L *ḥulūl* incarnation.

Ḥ-Y-R *ḥayra* perplexity.

Khā'

KH-Ṭ *khaṭṭ* calligraphy, script.

KH-L-F *khalīfa (khulafā', khalā'if)* Caliph, vicar, steward.

KH-L-Q *khalq* creation, creatures; *khulq* (one's) nature.

KH-L-W *khalwa (khalawāt)* seclusion, spiritual retreat.

KH-Y-R *khayr* good.

KH-Y-L *khayāl (akhīla)* imagination, fantasy, ghost, vision, dim reflection.

Dāl

D-ʿ-W *duʿā' (adʿiyya)* prayer of supplication.

D-W-R *dā'ira (dawā'ir)* classification.

Dhāl

DH-K-R *dhikr* remembrance; repetition of names of God or other words in Sufi prayer.

DH-W *dhāt (dhawāt)* absolute being, essence.

Rā'

R-'-F *Al-Ra'ūf* God the Benevolent.

R-T-B *martaba (marātib)* rank, degree, grade, step.

R-Ḥ-M *raḥma* mercy, compassion; *raḥīm* merciful, *Al-Raḥīm* God the Most Merciful; *Al-Raḥmān* God the All Compassionate.

R-Q-B *murāqaba* observation; contemplative vigilance (Sufism).

R-Q-M *raqīm* message, inscription.

R-K-B *murakkibāt* elements (philos.).

Sīn

S-Ḥ-R *siḥr* magic.

S-L-S-L *silsila (salāsil)* chain, series.

S-L-M *al-Islām* religion and civilisation of Islam; *Muslim (-ūn)* Muslim.

S-M-ʿ *samāʿ* listening.

S-N *sunna* doings and sayings of the Prophet; *ahl al-Sunna* Orthodox Muslims or Sunnites (*Sunni [-ūn]*).

S-N-D *isnād (asānīd)* Islamic chain of authorities ascribed to a *ḥadīth*.

S-W-' *say'a* sin, offence, misdeed.

S-W-R *sūra (suwar)* Qur'anic chapter

Shīn

SH-B-H *tashbīh* anthropomorphization; immanence (lit.: affirming similarity); allegory.

SH-R-Q *Ishrāq* emanation, radiance, Illuminationism.

SH-K-L *tashkīl* vocalization.

SH-H-D *shahīd (shuhadā')* martyr, witness; *shahāda (-āt)* testimony; manifested consciousness (philos.).

Ṣād

Ṣ-Ḥ-B *ṣāḥib (aṣḥāb)* friend, companion, comrade; follower, adherent, "those of."

Ṣ-F-W *ṣafā'* purity.

Ṣ-L-W *ṣalāh (ṣalawāt)* ritual prayer.

Ṣ-W-R *ṣūra (ṣuwar)* image; form; idea.

Ṭā'

Ṭ-R-Q *ṭarīqa (-āt, ṭuruq)* Sufi religious confraternity; manner, mode, way.

Ṭ-L-Q *muṭlaq* absolute.

Ẓā'

Ẓ-L *ẓill* shadow.

ʿAyn

ʿ-B-D *ʿabd (ʿibād)* servant, slave.

ʿ-D-L *ʿadl* justice.

ʿ-Q-L *ʿaql* reason, intelligence, intellect.

ʿ-R-Ḍ *ʿaraḍ (aʿrāḍ)* accident (philos.).

ʿ-R-SH *ʿarsh (ʿurūsh)* throne.

ʿ-R-F *ʿirfān* and *maʿrifa* knowledge, gnosis; *taʿarif (-āt)* specification; definition; instruction.

ʿ-SH-Q *ʿishq* passionate love; *maʿshūq* beloved, lover.

ʿ-Z-L *Al-Muʿtazila* Sunni school of Theology and Jurisprudence founded in the second/eighth century.

ʿ-Q-D *muʿtaqad (-āt)* article of faith, dogma, doctrine, creed, faith, belief.

ʿ-Q-L *ʿaql* intellect, rationality.

ʿ-L-M *ʿilm* knowledge; (*ʿulūm*) science.

ʿ-M-Y *ʿamāʾ* heavy dark clouds.

ʿ-N-Y *maʿnā* meaning; notion, concept, conceptual significance; cause, causal determinant; accidents (philos.).

ʿ-Y-N *ʿayn (ʿuyūn)* individuality; essence, nature; real (n.); eye.

Ghayn

GH-L-W *ghulūw* extremism, excess.

GH-Y-B *ghayb (ghuyūb)* mystery; transcendent (n.).

Fāʾ

F-S-R *tafsīr (tafāsīr)* exegesis, commentary, explanation.

F-S-Q *fāsiq (fussāq)* trespasser, transgressor.

F-Q-H *fiqh* Islamic jurisprudence; *faqīh (fuqqahāʾ)* expert theologian and legist.

F-K-R *fikr* meditation; *tafakkur* contemplation.

F-L-S-F *falsafa* Islamic Philosophy.

F-L-K *falak (aflāk)* celestial sphere.

F-N-Y *fanāʾ* annihilation, termination, extinction (final, eschatological); obliteration of the self (in mysticism).

F-H-M *fahm* intellect.

F-Y-Ḍ *fayḍ (fuyūḍ)* emanation.

Qāf

Q-R-ʿ *Al-Qurʾān* Muslim holy book.

Q-Ṭ-B *quṭb (aqṭāb)* axis, pole, pivot.

Q-L-D *taqlīd* imitation, adoption of a legal decision, adhesion to a School of Law.

Q-Y-S *qiyās* analogy, analogical deduction, comparison.

Kāf

K-R-S-Y *kursī (karāsīy, karās)* pedestal.

K-R-M *Al-Karīm* God the Munificent.

K-S-B *kasb* acquisition.

K-SH-F *kashf* unveiling, revealing.

K-L-M *kalām* Scholastic Theology.

K-N-H *kunh* essence.

K-H-F *kahf (kuhūf)* cave.

K-W-N *kāna* to be; *kun* be! (the imperative mood).

Lām

L-Ṭ-F *laṭīf* fine, subtle, delicate; gracious; *laṭāfa* subtlety; *luṭf* graciousness.

L-W-Ḥ *lawḥ* tablet.

Mīm

M-TH-L *mithāl (amthila, muthul)* simile, parable, allegory, example, image.

M-K-N *mumkin* conceivable, possible.

Nūn

N-Ḥ-W *naḥw* syntax, grammar.

N-Z-H *tanzīh* de-anthropomorphism (lack of anthropomorphic imagery in the concept of God); (divine) transcendence.

N-Z-L *manzila* station, degree.

N-S-KH *naskh* abrogation, transcription; *naskhī* ordinary cursive script, one of the earliest Arabic calligraphic styles (*Neskhi*).

N-F-S *nafs (nufūs) e*ssence, life, mind, nature, psyche, soul, spirit.

N-Q-L *naql* tradition, (scriptural) transmission.

Hā'

H-B-' *habā' (ahbā')* (primordial) dust.

H-M *himma* high-minded eagerness; spiritual power (myst.).

H-W *huwiyya* identity, essence, nature.

H-Y-' *hay'a (-āt)* form.

H-Y-L *hayūlī* material; primordial matter.

Wāw

W-J-B *wujūb* necessary.

W-J-D *wajada* to find; to feel; to experience; *wujūd* presence; existence; *wajd* passional love, ardour, total absorption in God (mystic.).

W-J-H *wajh* face; purpose; approach, point of view.

W-Ḥ-D *ittiḥād* union; *tawḥīd* unity (of God); mergence into the universal unity (in mysticism); *waḥidiya* (divine) unicity or essence.

W-Ḥ-M *waḥm* cognitive faculty (philos.).

W-R-D *wird (awrād)* litaneutical recitation of the Qur'ān.

W-Ṣ-F *waṣafa* to characterise; *ṣifah (-āt)* attribute; *waṣf (awṣāf)*: characteristic, property, quality; *ittiṣāf* characterisation.

W-Ṣ-L *waṣl* union, connecting.

W-ʿ-D *waʿd (wuʿūd)* promise; *waʿīd* threats.

W-F-Ā *istafā* to contain in full.

W-Q-ʿ *waqaʿ ʿalā* to meet.

W-L-D *muwallada (-āt)* generated act (philos.).

W-L-Y *walī (awliyā')* holy man, saint (lit.: friend of, close to God).

W-H-B *Al-Wahhāb* God the Bestower.

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