

ILLUMINATED ARRIVAL IN THE *ḤIKAM AL-‘AṬĀ’ IYYAH* AND THREE MAJOR COMMENTARIES

by

YUNUS WESLEY SCHWEIN

(Under the Direction of Alan Godlas)

ABSTRACT

The *Kitāb al-ḥikam* of Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh (d. 720/1309) presents a spirituality whose goal is *wuṣūl ilā Allāh*, “arrival unto God.” As a collection of aphorisms, the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* has little internal structure: the attentive reader himself provides the structure from his religious background, mystical experience, and repeated re-readings. The commentators Ibn ‘Abbād (d. 792/1390), Zarrūq (d. 899/1494), and Ibn ‘Ajībāh (d. 1224/1809) reconstruct the author’s unique expression of core sources from its constituent threads, making the commented-upon work a microcosm of Islam wherein the whole is visible through each portion. Observations on the aphorisms and commentary dealing with *wuṣūl*, translated herein, will illustrate these hypotheses.

INDEX WORDS: Aphorisms, Commentary, Exegesis, Gnomologia, Hermeneutics, *Kitāb al-ḥikam*, Intertextuality, Ibn ‘Abbād, Ibn ‘Ajībāh, Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh, Moroccan literature, Mysticism, Non-narrative literature, Shurūḥ, Shādhiliyyah, Sufism, Wisdom literature, Zarrūq

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YUNUS WESLEY SCHWEIN

B.A., Montclair State University, 1998

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2007

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by

YUNUS WESLEY SCHWEIN

Major Professor: Alan Godlas

Committee: Kenneth Honerkamp
Carolyn Medine

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2007

DEDICATION

In the name of Allāh, the all-compassionate, all-merciful, who put you in the intermediate world between His earthly and angelic realms to teach you the greatness of your destiny among His creatures and that you are a jewel enfolding within yourself the shells of His creations; and blessings and peace be upon the first and last of His messengers, the manifest and hidden mercy to the worlds, our beloved prophet and guide Muḥammad. So hallowed is the one who made no sign unto His friends except as a sign unto Him, and who made none to join them except one He wishes to join Him!

Amin.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am profoundly grateful and indebted to the following lights of my life for all they have done in ways too numerous and unique to detail: to my wife Shams T. Deckter; to my major professors Alan Godlas and Kenneth Honerkamp, for support, guidance, connections and insight; to my teachers Carolyn Medine and Glenn Wallis of the University of Georgia, Philip Miller of Hebrew Union College, Jean Alvares of Montclair State University, and Christopher Gwin of Haddonfield Memorial High School; to my parents Richard and Constance Schwein; to my colleagues Bryan Gallant, Mohammad Hanafi, Matt Long, and Akram White; to the inspiration of Claude Addas, Arthur J. Arberry, Aisha Bewley, William Chittick, Michel Chodkiewicz, Victor Danner, Nooruddeen Durkee, Stephen Hirstenstein, Muhtar Holland, and Harald Motzki; to the brilliant Arabists Wheeler M. Thackston, Michael Carter, Hans Wehr, and J. Milton Cowan, without whom none of my work would be possible; and to my guide Shaykh Muḥammad Saʿīd al-Jamal al-Rifāʿī al-Shādhilī.

This thesis is typeset in the Gentium font, available at <http://scripts.sil.org/Gentium> .

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
The <i>Kitāb al-ḥikam al-‘aṭā’iyyah</i>	2
Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh (d. 720/1309).....	3
Ibn ‘Abbād al-Rundi (733/1333-792/1390)	4
Aḥmad Zarrūq (846/1442-899/1494)	6
Ibn ‘Ajībah (1160/1747-1224/1809).....	7
Qur’an and <i>Kitāb al-ḥikam</i> citations.....	9
2 THE GENRES OF ḤIKAM AND SHARḤ: WISDOM AND AMPLIFICATION	10
Models of Aphoristic Literature: Qur’an, Hadith, <i>Ṭabaqāt</i>	10
Commentary and the Scholar as Microcosm	12
Intertextuality and its Paucity as an Hermeneutic Tool	14
3 READING AS LITERARY STRUCTURE: WUṢŪL IN THE KITĀB AL-ḤIKAM	20
Circular Reading as the Hermeneutic Key to the <i>Kitāb al-ḥikam</i>	22
<i>Ḥikmah</i> 130/122: Inadequacy of Actions.....	27
<i>Ḥikmah</i> 95/88: When You Slip and Fall.....	29

	<i>Ḥikmah</i> 213/196: The Knowledge of Allāh, the All-Manifest	30
	<i>Kitāb al-ḥikam</i> 16/15B: A Song of Apparency	33
	<i>Kitāb al-ḥikam</i> 29-31/27-28: Arrivers and Travelers	34
	<i>Ḥikmah</i> 249/229: Ontological Degrees and the Two Classes	37
	<i>Ḥikmah</i> 156/148: God-friends and Spiritual Authority	39
4	ARRIVAL UNTO ALLĀH AND THE TWO CLASSES OF MYSTIC	42
	<i>Ḥikmah</i> 29/27: Inference by and unto Him	42
	Commentary: Ibn ‘Abbād	46
	Commentary: Zarrūq	48
	Commentary: Ibn ‘Ajībah	51
	<i>Ḥikmah</i> 30/28a: The Man of Plenty; He whose Provision is Stinted.....	55
	Commentary: Ibn ‘Abbād	56
	Commentary: Zarrūq	57
	Commentary: Ibn ‘Ajībah	58
	<i>Ḥikmah</i> 31/28b: Lights of Orientation; Lights of Audience.....	60
	Commentary: Ibn ‘Abbād	63
	Commentary: Zarrūq	64
	Commentary: Ibn ‘Ajībah	66
	Conclusions.....	69
5	ARRIVAL UNTO ALLĀH, MERCY, AND MYSTERY	71
	<i>Ḥikmah</i> 95/88: Sin may be a Means of the Arrival	72
	Commentary: Ibn ‘Abbād	74
	Commentary: Zarrūq	75

Commentary: Ibn ‘Ajībah	77
<i>Ḥikmah</i> 130/122: He Covers Your Quality with His to Cause Your Arrival.....	79
Commentary: Ibn ‘Abbād	80
Commentary: Zarrūq	81
Commentary: Ibn ‘Ajībah	82
<i>Ḥikmah</i> 213/196: The Arrival is by Knowledge of Him.....	86
Commentary: Ibn ‘Abbād	87
Commentary: Zarrūq	89
Commentary: Ibn ‘Ajībah	90
Conclusions.....	93
6 CONCLUSION	94
REFERENCES.....	96
APPENDIX.....	99
A CHART OF CONVERSION BETWEEN DANNER’S & NWYIA’S NUMBERING	99

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Intertextual and Intratextual Features of the <i>Kitāb al-ḥikam</i> and Commentaries.....	14
Table 2: Words with highest frequency in the <i>Kitāb al-ḥikam</i>	25

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: Hermeneutic Current.....	22
Figure 2: Hermeneutic Matrix.....	22

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I will argue three points. First, despite the lack of published works in contemporary Islamic studies that address Muslim commentary literature, the genre is important in the classical presentation of Islam as a unified, coherent, and robust worldview. To illustrate this role, I will translate and examine sections of the commentaries of Ibn ‘Abbād, Aḥmad Zarrūq, and Ibn ‘Ajībāh on the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* of Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh. Second, that the memory of the attentive reader supersedes explicit linking text as the primary organizing structure in the large portions of Muslim literature that rely heavily on quotation of earlier works. Third, by way of providing concrete examples of the first two topics, I argue that *wuṣūl ilā Allāh* or “arrival unto Allāh” in the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* and the commentators offers a teleological orientation for these works, allowing many themes to be coordinated within the image of traveling to Allāh and arrival in divine presence. This teleological function is implicit in the correlation of *wuṣūl* with all primary themes of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* but never directly stated: the engaged reader is a critical part of the structure of the work and its commentaries, binding together the numerous portions more thoroughly than explicit links in the text would permit.

The commentary (*sharḥ*, plural *shurūḥ*) abounds within Muslim literature. Examine a list of the works of any major classical author and you will find several if not many commentaries on whatever the author has specialized in. Every succeeding discipline of the roots and branches of Islamic sciences and literature has their *shurūḥ*: jurisprudence, hadith collections and criticism, poetry, grammar, oratory, and so forth. Despite the breadth and variety of *shurūḥ*

created over the centuries, the material is neglected in contemporary Islamic studies. *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, for example, has nothing to say about any commentaries, neither the genre itself nor specific works, except to express the degradation of al-Azhar in the 19th century by the prominence of commentary literature in the curriculum!¹ Yet entry after entry of scholars and litterateurs include the commentaries they wrote alongside what we designate original texts. “Originality” as we now conceive of it owes much to Enlightenment and Romantic notions of creativity, self-expression, and genius: how, then, to understand this vast body of secondary texts without dismissal?

While *wuṣūl* is not an extremely common term in the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* of Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh or its commentaries, the strength of its image and its use in relation to common themes allows the reader to gather the topics of the spiritual journey into the goal of *arrival*. Out of the range of glosses, “arrival,” “connecting” and “reaching” best express the motion of the Arabic words in the context of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* and its commentaries. “Union” is a possible but not an ideal translation, in the first place because the verb from which *wuṣūl* is derived, *waṣala*, has a separate verbal noun for the sense of union: *waṣl*. In the second place, the writers often use *wuṣūl* alongside *tawḥīd*, the act of epistemological “unification” that excludes phenomenal beings from being perceived or granted lasting significance alongside the one God. *Tawḥīd*, which in some contexts may be rendered “monotheism,” is semantically explicit in referring to oneness, while *wuṣūl* and its forms connote motion towards a point.

The *Kitāb al-ḥikam al-‘aṭā’iyyah*

The *Kitāb al-ḥikam al-‘aṭā’iyyah* is a famous and compact collection of wisdom sayings (singular *ḥikmah*) composed by Aḥmad ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh al-Iskandarī before the death of his

¹ *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edition, s.v. “al-Azhar.”

master, Abū al-‘Abbās al-Mursī, in 686/1288.² A short work of some six thousand words,³ the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* has a reputation as a succinct exposition of the principles and practices of mystical awakening. Countless commentaries exist; universities like al-Azhar and al-Qarawiyīn have used al the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* as a textbook of Sufism,⁴ and the discussion and contemplation of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* have remained staples of Sufis since its first appearance.⁵ Far from an abstruse work cared for only by elitists and literati, the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* is taught to the public in major mosques.⁶ Their appeal combines brevity, beautiful rhyming Arabic prose, energy of expression, and an expansiveness of meaning and levels of interpretation that leave each *ḥikmah* accessible to minimally educated Muslims as well as scholars.

The book is composed of three parts: the *ḥikam* proper, aphoristic wisdom statements written without linking structures; four short epistles (*rasā’il*) to Sufi brethren; and a concluding section of intimate prayers (*munājāt*) expressing humility and awe before divine mercy. Neither the letters nor the *munājāt* are included in all manuscripts.

Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh (d. 720/1309)

Aḥmad ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh al-Iskandarī was born in Alexandria in the Nile Delta, and there he spent most of his life. Following training as a jurist, he began associating with the famous Andalusian Sufi Abū al-‘Abbās al-Mursī, successor to the Moroccan-born Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī. Both Abū al-‘Abbās and Abū al-Ḥasan had fine training in the Islamic sciences but never made their living as scholars or jurists; Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh, on the other hand, maintained a public career as a scholar as well as leading a mystical brotherhood. He was the first leader of

² Paul Nwyia, *Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh (m. 709/1309) et la Naissance de la Confrérie Šāḍilīte* (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq Éditeurs, 1972), 44; Victor Danner, *Ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh’s Šūfī Aphorisms* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), 15.

³ By my own count.

⁴ Nwyia, 36.

⁵ Scott Kugle, *Rebel Between Spirit and Law: Ahmad Zarruq, Sainthood, and Authority in Islam* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 59 and 153.

the Shādhilī Sufi order to write extensively; his predecessors guided students by personal instruction, discussion, lecture, and in Sufi ceremonies of invocation and remembrance, but composed only letters and litanies. Few events of Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s life are known; his personality is quite effaced in his own writings. Of these, the most important for this paper are *Latā’if al-minan* (“the Subtle Blessings”), detailing the teachings and saintly qualities of Abū al-‘Abbās and Abū al-Ḥasan; and *Isqāṭ al-tadbīr* (“Annihilation of Self-Direction”), an introductory book that collapses all important virtues and facets of spiritual psychology into the elimination of selfish, willful behavior by means of a radical surrender to the divine will.

The growing Shādhilī order profited from the immediate popularity of Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s terse, elegant book. In Fez, for example, expansion of the order as a body of practitioners actually followed the literary fame of the book, particularly among jurists. As the reputation of the book grew, its partisans sought Shādhilī initiation from adepts in Egypt.⁷ Today the Shādhilī order is one of the foremost branches of Sufi fraternities throughout the world, and Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s works continue to be published, studied, and translated.⁸

Ibn ‘Abbād al-Rundī (733/1333-792/1390)

Muḥammad ibn ‘Abbād al-Rundī was a jurist and preacher active in Fez and Salé, Morocco, in the 14th century. He states in the introduction to his commentary that he writes straightforwardly of what he understands of some meanings from the text, using allusions clearer than the brief allusions employed by the author. Other meanings will only come to the

⁶ Muhammad ar-Rifa’i, *Conversations in the Zawiya* (Petaluma: Sidi Muhammad Press, 1999), 74.

⁷ Kugle, 62.

⁸ *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edition, s.v. “Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh.” See Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh al-Iskandarī, *The Key to Salvation: A Sufi Manual of Invocation*, translated and edited by Mary Ann Koury Danner (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1996) for a general discussion of the author and his work; see also Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh al-Iskandarī, *The Subtle Blessings in the Saintly Lies of Abū al-‘Abbās al-Mursī and His Master Abū al-Ḥasan: Kitāb latā’if al-minan fī manāqib Abī ‘l-‘Abbās al-Mursī wa shaykhihi Abī ‘l-Ḥasan*, translated and edited by Nancy Roberts (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2005) for matters concerning the author’s life and those of his predecessors in the Shādhilī order.

student with time and reflection.⁹ He wrote the commentary, *al-Tanbīh* (*The Note*) for his friends Yaḥyá al-Sarrāj and Abū al-Rabī Sulaymān al-Anfāsī, and refers to his commentary occasionally in his large collection of letters. He rued, for example, the spread of the text beyond his friends, believing that with increased exposure in the minds of men comes increased responsibility before the Almighty for its author: “About *al-Tanbīh*... I would love that every word coming from me were rubbed out because in fact none of it was intended for anyone except for you!”¹⁰ His was the first commentary on the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* to become well-known, and contributed to the spread of the Shādhiliyyah *ṭarīqah* in the Maghrib.¹¹

Interestingly, Ibn ‘Abbād’s use of quotations and references to the Shādhilī masters strongly suggest he was not formally connected with the order, despite the affiliation many of his hagiographers averred based on his important commentary. He never refers his own shaykh of instruction, the influential and unaffiliated Ibn ‘Āshir,¹² nor does he refer to any Shādhilī teachers as “our shaykh,” nor are the early teachers of the Shādhilī lineage unduly prominent among authorities he cites. In his 241 quotations in the first five chapters, only 19 (7.8%) are from Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh, Abū al-‘Abbās al-Mursī or Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī: a number comparable to the 18 quotations (7.4%) from Sufi classics by al-Ghazālī, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī and Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī.

The tone of the writing suggests the oral tradition: the shaykh, well read in all the classics, thoughtful and prone to reflect before speaking, offers what amounts to an informal lecture on each aphorism. Ibn ‘Abbād sees each *ḥikmah* as a window on a moment in the life of the

⁹ Ibn ‘Abbād al-Rundī, *Sharḥ al-ḥikam*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Al-Maṭba‘a al-khayrīya bi-ḥawsh ‘aṭā bi-jamāliya), AH 1303, 2-3.

¹⁰ Kenneth Honerkamp, *Lettres de Direction Spirituelle Collection Majeure: al-Rasā’il al-Kubrā* (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 2005), letter 23:5.

¹¹ John Renard, *Ibn ‘Abbād of Ronda: Letters on the Sūfī Path* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), XX.

¹² *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd Ed., s.v. “Ibn ‘Āshir.” Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. M. b. ‘Umar al-Anṣārī al-Andalusī (d. 765/1362).

reflective Muslim. Just as each person implies the existence of all human beings and all that is necessary to sustain life thereby, each *ḥikmah* does not stand on its own but requires all of Islam, a body of knowledge, experience and trust that cannot be reduced to a few axioms but must be approached in stages and degrees.

Aḥmad Zarrūq (846/1442-899/1494)

Zarrūq (“Blue-Eyes”) came of age and received a jurist’s education some three generations after Ibn ‘Abbād. In his time, the Shādhilī order had become established in several branches in Morocco. Ibn ‘Abbād’s model of sainthood –the ascetic, effaced, gentle jurist, loved by children, who is strict in his ethical behavior and uncompromising before rulers—had grown in popularity among scholars. Zarrūq embraced this balance of scholarly grounding that flowers with mystical contemplation and devotion. After his initiation into the Shādhilī order, he spent many years traveling, speaking and writing. Where Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh and Ibn ‘Abbād composed relatively few works, Zarrūq wrote endlessly, preparing commentaries on hadith collections and juristic text, commentaries on collections of mystical poetry, original poetry, treatises, and typologies of the Sufi way, and something approaching twenty commentaries on the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*! It appears that everywhere he went in his travels across North Africa, he left *shurūḥ* on this great emblem, which can be seen to combine mystical light with a scholarly erudition that makes no demands for doctrinal sources outside the Qur’an and Sunnah.¹³ The commentary I have examined for this paper, often called *al-Futūḥāt al-raḥmāniyyah*, does not stand apart from the commentaries of Ibn ‘Abbād or Ibn ‘Ajībah in its use of quotations from Qur’an and hadith. However, when the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* incorporate āyāt of Qur’an, Zarrūq does explicitly distinguish

¹³ *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd Ed., s.v. “Zarrūq;” Scott Kugle, *Rebel between Spirit and Law: Ahmad Zarruq, Sainthood and Authority in Islam*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Ali Fahmi Khushaim, *Zarrūq the Ṣūfī: A Guide in the Way and a Leader to the Truth: a Biographical and Critical Study of a Mystic from North Africa*. (Tripoli: General Company for Publication, 1976).

between exoteric, legal implications of the passages and the esoteric, allusory sense primary for the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*.

Zarrūq directed much of his energies as a popular Sufi leader to a reform of institutional Sufism, purifying it of mob politics, sloppy theology, and lax praxis. He was opposed to Sufi leaders who did not have a reasonable level of orthodox education in the core Muslim sources and juristic methods, relying instead on reputations of personal holiness and miraculous occurrences. Saintliness, a powerful signifier of authority in North African society, was for Zarrūq incomplete without the grounding force of the universally applicable juristic education. With this mission, Zarrūq came in for much criticism in his lifetime and afterward from Sufi leaders who did not emphasize formal knowledge before love and contemplation. One such critic would be a later commentator on our text, Ibn ‘Ajībāh.

Ibn ‘Ajībāh (1160/1747-1224/1809)

Aḥmad ibn ‘Ajībāh al-Ḥasanī was another jurist and Sufi, active in the Moroccan Darqawī revival of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, a renewal through one branch of the widespread Shādhilī group of orders. He writes in his autobiography that the opening he experienced at the beginning of his life as a mystic came from studying the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* along with Ibn ‘Abbād’s by then venerable commentary. “After this reading, I abandoned exoteric knowledge and dedicated myself to devotional practice, to the remembrance of Allāh, and to praying through Allāh’s messenger.”¹⁴ Before his Sufi vocation and at some point afterward, Ibn ‘Ajībāh composed a large number of works, including commentaries on Mālikī law, mystical poetry, and grammar, as well as a major *tafsīr* of the Qur’an, *al-Baḥr al-madīd*, original treatises, and a long commentary on the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*. In many instances, Ibn ‘Ajībāh engages

Zarrūq's legacy and calls his illumination and esoteric authority into question: Zarrūq, according to Ibn 'Ajībah, only became illuminated at the end of his life, and his works rely too heavily on juristic methodology and formal knowledge.¹⁵ For Ibn 'Ajībah, the selfhood-shattering effect of divine love irradiates formal knowledge with life-giving power, but knowledge and the institutionalized methodology it relies on itself must not constrain the saint's illuminated knowing.

The introduction to his commentary on the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* is a compact schema of Sufism as a discipline: its sources, goals, methods, teachers, and virtues; what follows is a highly structured and systematic exposition of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* in which each aphorism is tied sequentially to the preceding and subsequent aphorisms; each aphorism is glossed for technical or allusive language; and each chapter begins or ends with a summary of its contents. This is a sophisticated production built on at least three pillars. The first is the public's familiarity with the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* and their earlier commentaries, including that of Ibn 'Abbād; these works were numerous, widespread, and highly regarded. Second, Ibn 'Ajībah wrote in the midst of a revival of the Shādhilī order at the hands of Mawlāy al-'Arabī al-Darqawī, a Sufi master said to have trained 40,000 disciples,¹⁶ a massive movement by any standard and one not unlikely to spread a text showcasing the Shādhilī wisdom. The third was the general success of the institution of the Sufi *ṭarīqah*: for more than five centuries, the orders had supported the need for spiritual guidance, deep devotional practice, and fellowship outside out narrow professional, regional, and tribal ties.

¹⁴ Aḥmad ibn 'Ajībah, *The Autobiography of the Moroccan Sufi Ibn 'Ajība*, trans. Jean-Louis Michon; David Streight (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 1999), 69-70. See also *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd Edition, q.v. "Ibn 'Ajībah."

¹⁵ Kugle, 200-204.

¹⁶ Mawlay al-'Arabi ad-Darqawi, *The Darqawi Way: Letters from the Shaykh to the Fuqara*, trans. Aisha Bewley (Cambridge: Diwan Press, 1981), 26.

Ibn ‘Ajībah’s text is significantly longer than that of Ibn ‘Abbād or Zarrūq, and with about twice as many quotations as Ibn ‘Abbād: 523 in the first five chapters, excluding the introduction. Of these, 84 (16%) are from shaykhs of the Shādhilī lineage, of which nearly half are the statements of al-Darqawī, al-Darqawī’s master ‘Alī al-Jamal, and al-Darqawī’s deputy, al-Būzīdī (Ibn ‘Ajībah’s own master).

Qur’an and *Kitāb al-ḥikam* citations

Quotations from the Qur’an follow the translation of A. J. Arberry with adjustments to harmonize with other translations that I present in this paper. The *Kitāb al-ḥikam* references indicate both the numbering the English translation of Victor Danner, which approximates the textual divisions employed by the published commentators, and that of Nwyia in his critical edition, which groups successive, directly related *ḥikam* into single portions. This reflects his view that “l’auteur ne suit aucun plan... les thèmes se succèdent sans lien interne (the author does not follow any plan... topics follow one another without internal bond).”¹⁷ The translations of the aphorisms and the commentators’ works are my own.

¹⁷ Nwyia, 44.

Chapter 2

THE GENRES OF *ḤIKAM* AND *SHARḤ*: WISDOM AND AMPLIFICATION

Collections of aphorisms, wise sayings, and apophthegma have a long history in the Near East and Mediterranean. All bronze- and iron-age literary cultures transmitted wisdom literature aimed at parents, rulers, and the young.¹⁸ This literature is explicit in its aim at educating the young, sharpening the wise, and counseling the ruler. Aphorisms and proverbs are short, transparent in their surface meaning and general enough in application to sustain repeated reflection. The Hebrew and Greek books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Wisdom, and Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) are notable survivals out of much Near Eastern literature that has been dropped from the human conversation. These Jewish books, incorporated into the Christian canon, have a range of discursive or logically transparent structures. Therefore, one might draw closer parallels with Islamic literature in the Q document, the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas, the Analects of Confucius and the Tao Te Ching. In these texts, anecdotes and statements form an aggregate, not a narrative; primary concerns, tone and flavor are apparent throughout the text such that each section fits into the complete work without a necessary relationship to its neighbors.

Models of Aphoristic Literature: Gnomologia, Qur'an, Hadith, *Ṭabaqāt*

A real influence on the *ḥikam* genre may lie in gnomologia, collections of Greek philosophers' anecdotes and sayings that have circulated since the 4th century BCE. Until after the Renaissance, first within the Greek and Roman world and then in the Islamic sphere,

¹⁸ *Encyclopedia of Religion*, sv. "Wisdom."

gnomologia were an enduring and popular source of exposure to Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Cynics and others.¹⁹ In addition to Arabic translations solely devoted to gnomologia, quotations from the Greek aphorisms can be found throughout *adab* literature²⁰ as well as works such as the *Rasā'il ikhwān al-ṣafā* and the *Risālah* of al-Qushayrī.²¹

Moving into specifically Arabic Islamic documents, aphoristic sources and models are found everywhere, beginning, as I have said, with the Qur'an. Portions of the Qur'an are quoted and referenced aphoristically not only in literature but ordinary conversation: We are from Allāh and to Him do we return; Allāh suffices me, and an excellent advocate is He; You have only been given a little knowledge. The collections of hadith, too, read as proverbs and anecdotes, a collection of precious stones continually strung and re-set throughout discourses, treatises, and conversation.

Next, one finds the collections of sayings attributed to the earliest Muslim generations, the ascetics, and the early Sufis. Figures such as al-Junayd and al-Shiblī composed no works that remained in open circulation.²² Instead, their legacy is in long selections of aphoristic statements recorded in collections like *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyyah* of al-Sulamī and Abū Nu'aym's *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*.²³ Therefore, we cannot be surprised to read Ibn 'Ajjabah and Ibn 'Abbād's inclusion of great numbers of pithy sayings of the first centuries of Islam in their texts.

¹⁹ Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Wisdom Literature in Arabic Translation* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1975), 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 446.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 342 and 465 respectively.

²² Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd: A Study of a Third/Ninth Century Mystic* (London: Luzac & Company, 1963), xvii. A number of al-Junayd's letters and treatises, unknown or at least unattested and unquoted in classical Sufi literature, surfaced in the twentieth century CE in a unique Istanbul manuscript, *Shahit Ali MS*. 1374.

²³ Nwyia, 47. The only complete study of Sufi *ṭabaqāt* literature in a European language is Jawid A. Mojaddedi, *The Biographical Tradition in Sufism: The Ṭabaqāt Genre from al-Sulamī to Jāmī* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001). See also Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (Leiden: Brill, 2000) 125-135 for the contributions of al-Sulamī and al-Iṣfahānī to the genre.

In the century prior to the composition of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*, the influential Sufis al-Rifāʿī and Abū Madyan (from the Islamic east and west, respectively) wrote collections of teachings that appear to consciously imitate the form of the sayings of the earlier generations.²⁴ Abū Madyan, or his disciples, has 164 aphorisms in his collection, for example: “Verily, [the exoteric scholars] were forbidden attainment [to Allāh] because of their abandonment of the example of [Divine] guidance and their adherence to [the way of] passion,”²⁵ and “One who seeks the Truth by way of virtue will attain it.”²⁶

In Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s own time, the more obscure ‘Alī al-Ḥarrālī and Raslān al-Dimashqī composed extant *ḥikam* collections. Ibn al-‘Arabī’s writings and other manuscripts attest to his composition of a book of aphorisms, but it has not survived.²⁷

Commentary and the Scholar as Microcosm

Two complementary models illuminate the purpose of these materials and the love of the ‘ulamā’ for them. The first is the **intertextual** view of literature wherein any text can be seen as the intersection of other texts. This is a well-known model popularly applied within post-modernism and cultural studies.²⁸ The second model is that of the author as a **microcosm** of his culture, i.e., the author reflects in his work all parts of his culture’s heritage and portion of the human experience.

Commentary literature (*sharḥ*) is an enormous component of Muslim religious and cultural writings. The primary field of commentary, Qur’anic exegesis (*tafsīr*), occupies a place of attention in Western language scholarship, but the body of other commentaries is neglected.

²⁴ Nwyia, 49-51 and 51-56 respectively.

²⁵ Vincent Cornell, *The Way of Abū Madyan* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1996), 126. *Ḥikmah* #45.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 138. *Ḥikmah* #116.

²⁷ Nwyia, 62-63.

²⁸ See Mary Orr, *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003) for a history of the term in the usage of major theorists.

These books are rich in quotations and allusions to the Qur'an, hadith, Sufi saints and poetry (see table 1). My examination of *sharḥ* literature and its explicitly intertextual features led me to consider the commentary as a vehicle for demonstrating spiritual wholeness and intellectual coherence within Muslim texts. That is, any text finding acceptance and broad approval within the sweep and expanse of international Muslim culture can become in the hands of a skilled commentator a locus for the entire sphere of spiritual, ethical, political, and artistic values.

The *Kitāb al-ḥikam* reflects of a background of Qur'an, prophetic sayings and pithy statements of the saints. This material would be familiar to the student of mysticism and the practicing mystic, rehearsed in lecture and discussion, and linked in memory by internal associations with related material. The commentators, whose words on several *ḥikam* I translate and discuss in chapters 4 and 5, explicate the resonances and associations of each *ḥikmah* with established Muslim and Sufi thought, often supported by quotation from the common sources. That is, the commentator places each aphorism in a field of relevant observations. He links the sometimes-enigmatic material with stories of the prophets, anecdotes of ascetics and Sufis known and less well known, and identifies distinctly Qur'anic strands in each *ḥikmah*'s composition.

Table 1 summarizes the types of quoted, referenced, and cited material used both in the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* and, with greater complexity, the commentaries. Ranging from straight quotations from sources directly relevant to the topic at hand to remarks tying one explanation to a fuller treatment in a book cited but not discussed, all of our authors participate in a conversation centuries deep and continents wide. Through these references,

the authors demonstrate their dependence on the divinely revealed message, the prophetic example, and the deliberations of previous generations.

Table 1: Intertextual and Intratextual Features of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* and Commentaries

Direct quotation in the <i>Kitāb al-ḥikam</i>:			
	Qur'an	Hadith	other quotations
<i>Kitāb al-ḥikam</i>	16	2 (one sound, one weak)	1 line of poetry
<i>Rasā'il</i>	7	3	
<i>Munājāt</i>	1		
Forms of explicit intertextual references in the <i>shurūḥ</i>:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qur'an quoted with formulae sanctifying it as revelation (e.g., "As the most high says") • Qur'anic passages integrated into narrative without quotative formulae. • Qur'an embedded in a quotation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hadith given with its transmitter • Hadith without transmitter (but the transmitter known in standard collections) • <i>khavar</i>: attribution to the Prophet Muhammad with-out a chain of transmitters • hadith embedded in a quotation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • words attributed to earlier prophets • anonymous quotations • attributed quotations • citations of books with quotations • references to books without quotations • Quotation and references to prior <i>shurūḥ</i>: Ibn 'Abbād for Zarrūq; Ibn 'Abbād and Zarrūq for Ibn 'Ajībah • attributed poetry • anonymous poetry • poetry embedded in a quotation 	
Intratextual features of the commentaries			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • segue to following <i>ḥikmah</i> • cross-reference to other <i>ḥikam</i> with quotation • cross-reference to other <i>ḥikam</i> without quotation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • definitions, glosses • summary of section • indication of new chapter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meta-commentary: statements of purpose and method • commentary on quoted material 	

Intertextuality as a Hermeneutic Tool

The literary theory of intertextuality appeared in French structuralism in the 1960's. The academic and indeed popular culture of that period challenged and questioned Enlightenment

concepts of selfhood, privilege and the very possibility of knowledge. Is there such a thing as a complete self, a self-same self? In this climate, Julia Kristeva experimented with the implications of “text” not as an entity possessing selfhood (i.e., that a text has boundaries between it and other than it, making it a real thing among a world of real things), but as an instance of the interaction of author, reader, and shared literary history. If a text has no selfhood, one may read it as the field of permutations between an author and his audience. The author shares a language with the potential audience, a means of expression deriving from shared experience, and this sharing is cemented particularly by previous texts and modes of discourse both author and audience share. Out of this sea of possibility, the author funnels a set of words into a particular text, perhaps moving through numerous drafts, re-writes and false starts along the way.²⁹

To illustrate these concerns, consider the following questions in the definition of the selfhood of a given text. Would the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* still be the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* if two pages are missing from a physical copy of the text –is it merely an imperfect instance of the pure text, or is it another entity entirely? What about a translation –is it a new entity, an extension of the selfhood of the original text, or some other creature? What about a collection such as a manuscript, palimpsest, or anthology, that places a given text alongside other material –would the collocation cause the reader to experience the text in collection as something distinct from the text alone? In each of these cases, the intertextual model sees that the text is a dynamic *event* of reading and understanding possible only because the reader is already familiar with the codes, conventions, and possible intentions of the text. Each text is intermediate with all other texts at some remove, grouped by similarity of material. At the shallow end of the pool,

²⁹ Orr, 21-32;

this familiarity means the reader recognizes the language composing the text. Going deeper into the codes of familiar, intermediate categories, we can recognize that one text is a poem, another is a legal contract, and a third is a litany. If I have never heard of a litany, much less recited one kneeling on the floor with incense and dim light, I might think it was a pious bit of poetry and miss much of its significance thereby; thus many features constituting the structure of a text may be implicit in the familiarity of the reader with the genre, not explicated in the text itself.

A common use of the term “intertextuality” designates the features of texts that deliberately accept or reject other texts. By “accept,” I mean that a given book is manifestly or implicitly referenced as as true, relevant, important, or useful for the interpretation of the text at hand; and by “reject,” I mean other material is clearly or obliquely referenced as untrue, irrelevant, trivial or detrimental to the task of interpretation. Whether a text accepts or rejects other texts, its interpretation is contingent upon familiarity with those other works, and this contingency is expressed in imitation, quotation, and citation. For the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* and its commentaries, the Qur’an will provide the strongest model for influence as a technique of encoding influential texts. The Qur’an becomes not just a frame for memory and perception but integral to the medium of perception as well, a phenomenon Paul Nwyia refers to as the *coranisation* of memory.³⁰ Imitation of the Qur’an becomes textually manifest in other books through such texts’ non-linear organization with surprising jumps of subject matter: the connection between one passage of poetry and another, or between one hadith and another, cannot be confined to logical operators scribbled on paper (phrases and words such as “and so,” “nevertheless,” “in spite of,” “because”) when connections of understanding actually

³⁰ Nwyia, 46.

reside in the integrating heart of the attentive reader. The reciter of Qur'an knows that a passage may swerve, diverge, and return to a number of central themes; in the meantime, each discrete event in the text, like each event in life, is not only embedded in an integrating discourse but reflects the totalizing discourse.

The commentary enterprise structures itself as a discourse between an authoritative or prominent text and creative interpretation, where any part of not only the main text but all of Islamic tradition is potentially useful and in fact used to interpret any other portion. Consider the following *ḥikmah*, which is the densest of the collection in explicit quotation of sources:

Do not set out from phenomenal being to phenomenal being. You would be like a donkey at a grindstone: where he moves from the same as where he arrives. Set out instead from phenomenal beings to the maker of being; "and that the final end is unto thy Lord."³¹ Regard the words of the Prophet, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace: "Whoever flees to Allāh and His messenger, his flight is to Allāh and His messenger. Whoever flees to something of this world or a woman to marry, his flight is to what he flees to."³² Understand his words, peace be upon him: "His flight is what he flees to." Consider this matter, if you have any understanding, and peace!³³

Just as each person implies the existence of all human beings and all that is necessary to sustain life thereby, each *ḥikmah* does not stand on its own but requires all of Islam, a body of knowledge, experience and trust that cannot be reduced to a few axioms but must be approached in stages and degrees. Notice how Ibn 'Abbād glosses Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh's words with those of the hadith in a portion of his commentary on the *ḥikmah* quoted above:

The Prophet's statement "his emigration is then for Allah and His Messenger" indicates the travel from created things to the Creator. This is what is desired of the servant as has been clarified. As for the Prophet's statement "his emigration was really towards what he emigrated for," it signifies remaining with created things and moving from one created thing to another.

Next, Ibn 'Abbād amplifies the counsel with the words of a prior sage.

³¹ Sūrat al-Najm (53:42).

³² In the collection of al-Bukhārī, this is the first hadith of the first book; likewise, al-Nawāwī places this hadith first in his collection of forty.

This is what the servant is commanded against in a subtle manner. So, let the disciple have high ambitions and intentions until he does not even turn to glance at anything other than Him.

A man requested Abū Yazīd (May Allāh be well pleased with him), “Enjoin me with something.” He replied, “If He gives something to you from what is between the throne and the ground, say to Him, ‘No. Rather, it is You that I want.’”³⁴

Yet the opinion of Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. ca. 261/875) does not seal the matter either. How is the requester to undertake travel to Allāh? How does he understand this allusive traveling? If he is a beginner, how is he to distinguish his sincerity from unstable enthusiasm? Countless questions arise; the conclusion is only in continuation, more striving and more prayer.

Ibn ‘Ajībāh begins a new point in his commentary on our *ḥikmah* with a three-fold schema for understanding the application of the Qur’anic āyah “the final end is to your Lord” (53:42). This he highlights with words from the eponymous founder of the Shādhilī order, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī.

So, murid, do not travel from a created being to another created being like you, but travel from phenomenal being to the Maker of Being, and “*the final end is to your Lord.*” Traveling to the Maker is achieved by three matters. The first is confining your himma [transformative intention] to Him rather than anything else until He rises on your heart and you find no lover other Him, The second is returning to Him to establish the rights while fleeing from portions. The third is constancy in seeking refuge in Him, seeking His help, reliance on Him and submission to whatever He brings.

Shaykh ash-Shādhilī says, “Four things which creatures are in need are: lack of need of anything, love for Allāh, and wealth by Allāh, sincerity and certainty. Sincerity is in slavery and certainty is about the judgements of lordship. ‘Who could be better at giving judgement than Allah for people with certainty?’”³⁵

Notice that Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī’s words are themselves pithy, schematic, open to expansion (*inshirāḥ*) by commentary (*sharḥ*), and embed a further Qur’anic quotation! The

³³ *Ḥikmah* 42/39.

³⁴ *Sharḥ al-hikam al-‘Atā’iyya*, trans. Abu Qani al-Sharif al-Hasani. 2004. The Guiding Helper Foundation. <http://www.guidinghelper.com/pdf/hikam4web.pdf> (accessed January 2006).

meaning has not been sealed up in a conclusion; it is another connection for the seeker of Allāh (*murīd*) to contemplate. In some portions of his *sharḥ*, Ibn ‘Ajībāh does in fact comment on the material he has quoted to amplify his thoughts on the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*. Even there, the style of the passage flows transparently through the watersheds, harbors, and oceans of interrelated layers of understanding.

In this light, a scholar cannot take a commentary, the commented-upon work, or the quoted material for bounded texts, “selves” that quote authoritative sources but themselves seamless, finished products; nor can the quotations remain at the level of proof texts for legal arguments.³⁶ Each text can be seen, then, as an intertext intersecting a broad swathe of material coming before it. The intertextual view emphasizes the energy and tension in a text that engages itself, questions itself, the part bringing out strands of the whole because the text is a part of a whole enterprise of life as well as the premier expression of a religious commitment to engage events within codes of value and meaning. The microcosmic view of the commentaries, on the other hand, emphasizes their authors’ participation in a communal, civilizational pursuit of knowledge, illumination and moral clarity stemming from common sources and articulated, generation after generation, by further scholars and sages.

³⁵ Aḥmad ibn ‘Ajībāh, “Wakening Aspiration (Iqādh al-himam): Commentary on the Hikam,” trans. Aisha Bewley, <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/ABewley/hikamcom4.html> (accessed April 11, 2007). The embedded Qur’anic quotation is from Sūrat al-Mā’idah (5:50).

³⁶ Ibid., 19.

Chapter 3

READING AS LITERARY STRUCTURE: *WUṢŪL* IN THE *KITĀB AL-ḤIKAM*

The *Kitāb al-ḥikam* is not organized by a progression of arguments and ramifying points. In fact, another of the commentators undertook a thematic reorganization of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* into chapters of directly related material.³⁷ Rather, its structure is like a body of water in motion, with currents and eddies bearing the reader past the same landmarks repeatedly, each approach offering a different face. The flow of the collection is circular, bearing the reader throughout, again and again. The last *ḥikmah* is not a conclusion, nor is the first an unambiguous point of departure for the whole venture. Nywia observes of Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s intentions,

[He does not] aim to create a didactic work. Had his intention been thus, the work would have had more unity and been more systematic. The *Kitāb al-ḥikam* appears to lack unity and its themes emerge without [internal] logical links, which causes consternation at first blush. One must transcend this demand for logic to discover the work’s unity laying beyond its form in the spirit of meditative prayer that simultaneously sustains it and brings it into existence.³⁸

The “internal logical links” occur in the memory of the attentive reader: the text lacks explicit links because the logical relationships of the constituent parts are too numerous and too complex for a linear structure. Even the ramifying structure much loved by classical Muslim and other medieval writers (e.g., “The gate of acceptance has three parts, the first of which concerns four matters...,” to cite a fictitious but plausible example) cannot convey the necessary relationships.

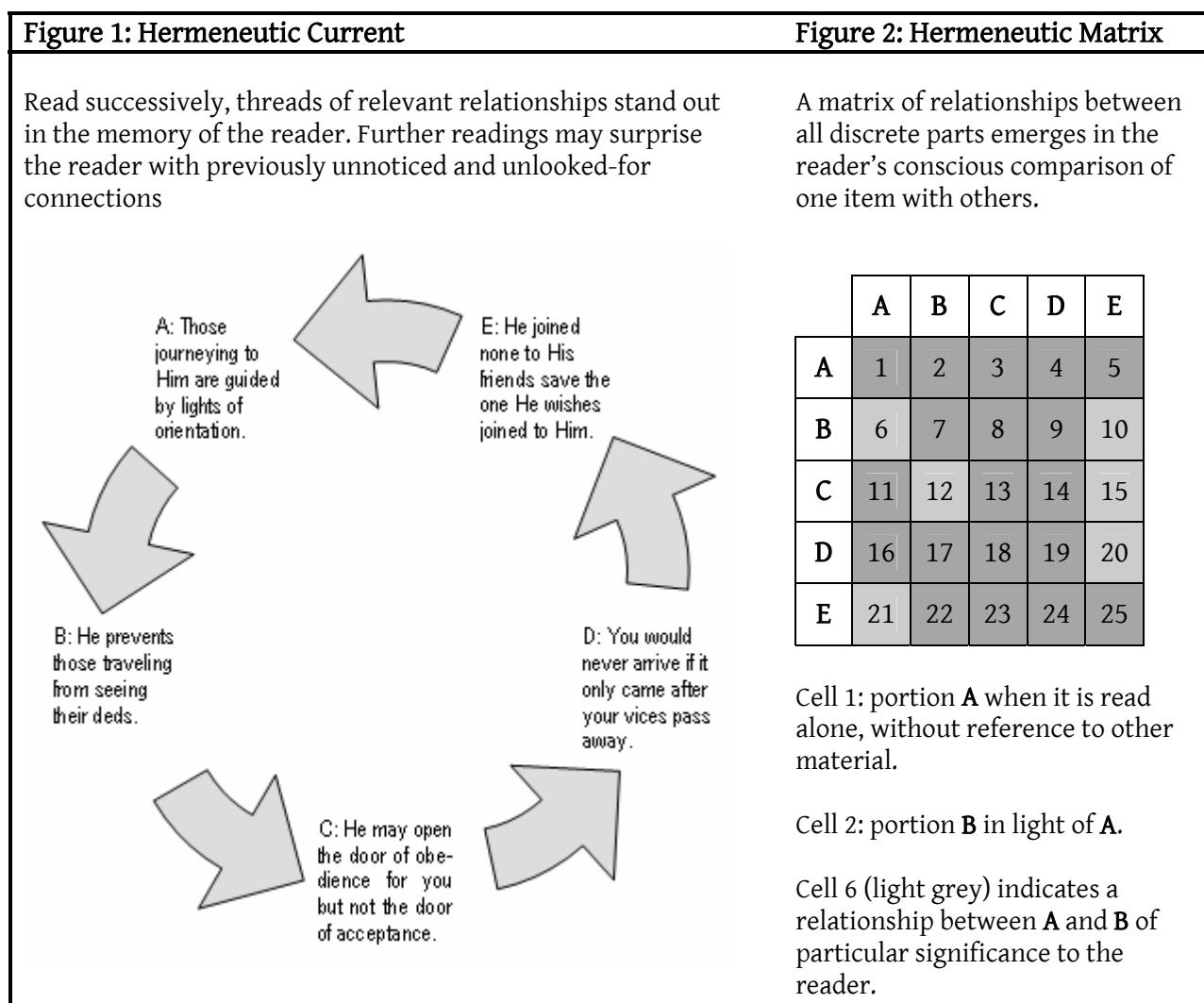
³⁷ ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, *Al-minhaj al-atamm fī tabwīb al-ḥikam*. Damascus: Dār al-Qādirī, 1998.

Repeated readings leave the reader with memories of themes, images, key words, etc., that catch his attention at this moment or that, standing out with a prominence they have not assumed previously. The significance remains through successive readings, when other passages may present themselves to the reader as further reflections on the noted theme. Figure 1 illustrates a series of potentially related passages that occur throughout the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* without appearing in succession or even the same chapter. The text makes no internal cross-references, but links from one passage to another exist implicitly in shared language, common semantic fields and etymologies of words, parallel structure in argument and imagery, or by relationships yet more subtle. The reader notices a theme at one point in the encounter with the text, and notices its resonances elsewhere. Each *ḥikmah* quoted in Figure 1 has an implication for the others, an implication present in the memory of the reader when the succeeding passage occurs.

Figure 2 illustrates the matrix of relationships between individual *ḥikam*, whether one reads and reflects on a single passage in isolation or with another specific passage in mind. The cycle of re-reading and the fact of associations within the text will each illuminate particular relationships between passages. Since the act of reading is an experience amidst other experiences in the life of the reader, those other events and perceptions are further discrete points of reference for the reader's interpretation of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*. A series of aphorisms, experiences, and insights combine in the reader's awareness into a dynamic and rich structure that has many more dimensions than the single thread of a linear argument (such as this thesis), in which the author broaches a topic, ramifies each point, and reconnects the points in

³⁸ Nwyia, p. 37. Special thanks to Akram White for his French translation.

explicit conclusions. The aphoristic format offers a minimum of authorial direction and requires the reader to assimilate the material afresh.



Circular Reading as the Hermeneutic Key to the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*

The structure of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*, then, mirrors the experience of contemplative or esoteric devotions that occupied their author and his colleagues. The text follows a life of repeated actions, of ascent and descent, of beginnings possessing a secret identity with endings, and of moving in one's quest from witnessing outward manifestations of things to their inward meanings, which themselves end up more apparent than simple appearances. Yet those appearances are ultimately inseparable from the interior aspect, thus closing the circle

of aspiration, esoteric perception and the different ontological ranks referred to within the text. The text does not lead the reader to a single point, image, or conclusion; once the conclusion is reached, in book of linear or branching structure, what then? Life and worship continue the day the book is finished, and the next, but a book with no beginning, and no end, conforms to the cycles of life, and leaves open the door of new connections to be found in the relationships between its component parts.

In this circularity, the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* reflects not only the specific experience of Sufi piety but the literary precedence of the Qur'an and Muslim reading practices. The Qur'an is read to completion across a week, a month, or longer, then begun again. Concurrent readings are also common, such as practicing a daily recitation in which the Qur'an is finished in a week or a month alongside a reading for detailed understanding in which the text is completed over months or years. The Qur'an does not begin with a historical baseline or a first argument and move on from that point; it begins with a synthetic summary of itself to be recited two to four times in each mandatory prayer, then proceeds through a series of all manner of material. Almost every given portion of the Qur'an is self-similar to the Qur'an as a whole in terms of its content, tone and imagery. Throughout repeated exposure, the reading of each section brings the details and connections of the similar sections to mind. Repeated readings, from beginning to end and over again, is such a major factor in traditional Qur'anic hermeneutics as to become invisible. On the smaller and specialized scale of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*, repeated, circular reading connects individual aphorisms with material related but scattered throughout the book.

In my own circular reading, I repeatedly noticed the image of *wuṣūl ilā Allāh* —arrival unto Allāh— that occurs, in various cognates,³⁹ in proximity with all the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*'s presenting

³⁹ *Wuṣūl* is the verbal noun of *waṣala*, *yaṣilu* in its sense of “arrive” or “reach.” *Waṣl*, a form absent from the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*, is the verbal noun of the same verb in its sense of “connect” or “unite.” The root also occurs as a nominal

themes. Table 2 summarizes the apparent themes according to frequency of key word and groupings of semantically related terms. The term *wuṣūl* is ambivalent, connoting both union, as opposed to separation, and arrival, as after a journey. This ambivalence encompasses the condition of the saint who made no choice in the matter (he is connected to Allāh, *wāṣil*); and the saint who struggled with himself through years of devotions, reflection, and repentance (he has reached: *waṣala*). The teleological force of *wuṣūl ilā Allāh* allows the reader to connect any number of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*'s themes together into coherent threads.

The theme of *wuṣūl* and its cognates, though not common terms in the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*, can be found in connection with all of the collection's general themes, as seen with the simple hermeneutic act of listing the most common terms. The *Kitāb al-ḥikam* speak of witnessing (*shuhūd*, *shahada*), seeing or vision (*naẓara*, *baṣara* and *baṣīrah*), light and enlightenment (*nūr*, *anāra*, *ishrāq*), phenomenal being, and the "traces" of divine action (*kawn*, *khalq*, *āthār*); of realities, realization, and Allāh as the Real or Absolute (*ḥaqīqah*, *taḥaqquq*, *al-Ḥaqq*), Allāh as the active agent in experience or as the object of witnessing; of the heart (*qalb*), manifestation (*ẓuhūr*), apparency, and appearances (*ẓāhir*, *ẓawāhir*). Examining of the semantic fields surrounding each of these terms leads one throughout the entirety of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*. The synthesis of these key terms produces a landscape of visual perception, seeing and being seen, the light that makes vision possible, and the realities behind passing form. The *Kitāb al-ḥikam* asks over and over, the questions, "How do you see? What is seen? What do you find?" The collection answers, "Appearances and manifestations of the Absolute, ranked in ontological degrees." Phenomenal being and manifestations –what is witnessed– may mislead or guide, in accordance with the traits of the contemplator, but apparency is itself a divine quality, and

active participle, *wāṣil*, denoting "one who has arrival;" as a form IV verb, *āṣala*, "to bring about arrival;" as a form VIII verb, *ittaṣala*, "unite with, unify;" and as a noun not connected directly with the verb, *wuṣlah*, "juncture,

what is witnessed, with *wuṣūl*, is Allāh. Thus the most common themes of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* intersect with the metaphor of *wuṣūl* in terms of means of knowing Allāh and perceiving what is ultimately true.

Table 2: Highest-frequency words in the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* (verbal nouns included in count) ⁴⁰

Landscape of the text	Inhabitants of the landscape
“vision” grouping 41	‘amala (work, deed) 20
shahida, (witness, witnessing) 22	sirr, sarīrah (secret, secret heart) 18
baṣara, baṣīrah (seeing, inner vision) 8	wajada, wijdān (finding, existence) 17
naẓara (see, regard) 6	ṭā‘ah ((act of) obedience) 14
kashf (illusion-piercing insight) 5	‘abd (slave, human being per se) 14
“light” grouping 33	wird, wārid (devotional; inspiration) 14
nūr, anāra (light, enlighten) 23	waṣf (quality) 14
sharaqa, ashraqa (illumination) 8	“travel” grouping 14
shu‘āh (ray) 2	sā’irūn, sayr (travelers, travel) 6
“creatures” grouping 32	sālik (wayfarer) 5
kawn, akwān (phenomenal being, beings) 13	riḥlah, rāḥilūn (journeyers) 3
khalq (creation) 12	ṭalaba, muṭālib (seeking, claimant) 13
āthār (traces (of Divine action) 7	nafs (self, lower stages of selfhood) 13
“reality” grouping 31	After <i>nafs</i> , word counts for key terms drop below 10. Other groupings of linked imagery lie outside the scope of this paper.
al-Ḥaqq (the Real, the Absolute) 14	
ḥaqq (real, rights) 8	
taḥaqquq (realization, attainment) 5	
ḥaqīqah (reality, a truth) 4	
Allāh 26	
(pronouns and verbs referring back to Allāh not counted!)	
qalb (heart (“that which turns”)) 26	
ẓāhir, (manifestation, manifest) 24	

The next most frequently encountered words include deeds and their doing (‘amal, ‘amala), secrets and the secret, or the innermost heart (*sirr*, *sarīrah*), finding and existence (*wajada*,

connection."

⁴⁰ Nwyia, pp 311-320. Nwyia's index is not always reliable and I have adjusted the count. An accurate index of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*, organized by Arabic root, would be most valuable.

wujūd, wijdān); obedience (*tā'ah*), man as slave or worshipper (*'abd*), devotional exercise, and the inspirations that come of it (*wird, wāridāt*), qualities or attributes –of Allāh or humanity-- (*waṣf*), the spiritual journey, and the traveler who undertakes it (*sayr; sā'irūn, sālikūn, rāḥilūn*), seeking, and the one called to seek (*ṭalab, muṭālib*), and the self in its various stages of development (*nafs*). This second concentration of terms suggests the activities and inhabitants of the landscape of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*: while the text is most broadly concerned with the contemplative witnessing of realities, it is also concerned with the mystics who perform the contemplation, their actions, inner qualities, and struggles. The text seems to ask, “How do you go about this landscape? How do you get here, and what is required to stay here?” Systematic effort and obedience within the exoteric and communal bonds of Islam, the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* answer, coupled with recognition of human ontological poverty that goes beyond verbal knowledge and reduced the intemperate self to humility. These matters of praxis and psychology have teleological implications that the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* express in the image of union with or arrival in Allāh. *Ḥikam* 213/198 and 244/224 refute the idea of a union between two substances and thus the suggestion of equality between human being and the absolute..

I will now demonstrate the relationships between the *wuṣūl* aphorisms and other prominent themes of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*. Reading the complete collection in reference to each *wuṣūl* aphorism, I found 128 direct connections in key words and parallel structures, of which I present a representative sample beginning with those *Kitāb al-ḥikam* that address the action or effect of *wuṣūl*, followed by those dealing with the people who experience *wuṣūl*.

Ḥikmah 130/122: Inadequacy of Actions

لَوْ أَنَّكَ لَا تَصِلُ إِلَيْهِ إِلَّا بَعْدَ فَنَاءِ مَسَاوِيكَ
وَمَحْوِ دَعَاوِيكَ لَمْ تَصِلْ إِلَيْهِ أَبَدًا
وَلَكِنْ إِذَا أَرَادَ أَنْ يُوصِلَكَ إِلَيْهِ
غَطَّى وَصْفَكَ بِوَصْفِهِ وَنَعَتَكَ بِنَعْتِهِ
فَوَصَلَكَ إِلَيْهِ بِمَا مِنْهُ إِلَيْكَ لَا بِمَا مِنْكَ إِلَيْهِ

If you were not to arrive (*lā taṣil*) unto Him until after your vices pass away and your pretensions are effaced, you would never arrive unto Him, ever. But when He wants to cause your arrival (*an yūṣilaka*), He covers your quality with His quality and your attribute with His attribute. Thus he joins you to Him (*waṣalaka*) by what is from Him to you, not by what is from you to Him!

Experiencing divine presence cannot be accomplished by human causation: there is neither any esoteric shortcut nor anything mechanical about the relationship between creator and created. According to this understanding, a devotee who has not experienced the arrival but desires spiritual fulfillment naturally seeks to rid himself of gross transgressions, character flaws, showing off, and so on: but he must not remain under the illusion that vices passing away and the effacement of pretensions will result from his own efforts, and that the arrival is in this way realized. This occurs both because of the ongoing refinement of perception of pretension and vice, as our commentators will point out, and because of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*'s emphasis on divine agency over human agency; that is, that human actions manifest the divine will. This extends explicitly to knowledge of Allāh: "Do you not know that His making Himself known to you (*ta'arruf*) is something coming upon you from Him, while you! You are presenting deeds to Him. Where is what you present to Him amid what comes unto you from Him?"⁴¹ While the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* does not dwell on the specifics of ethical life, it does point out the intellectual tension between activism and quietism. One who desires to be good and to promote good may make an idol of their desire. On the other hand, those who know that their actions are incapable of true goodness may become slothful, complacent, and irresponsible.

⁴¹ *Ḥikmah* 8.

Regarding this tension, Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh writes, “He knew that servants would anticipate the emergence of the mystery of loving concern, so He said ‘Allāh singles out for His mercy whom He will.’ And He knew that had He left them at that they would have let drop all action by relying on the eternal, so He said, ‘Surely the mercy of Allāh is nigh to the good-doers.’”⁴²

The incommensurate relationship of human striving with the knowledge of Allāh and the divine qualities is a reflection in actions and time of the ontological distinction between Allāh and the human being. The creator is self-contained and complete. The creation is uncontained in his selfhood and incomplete by virtue of being in relationship with all the aspects of material and temporal life that make up and allow life to continue. This ontological incompleteness –always in need of food, air, companionship, the carbon cycle, the light of the sun, the cosmological constant-- is an aspect of poverty. Man can know his own poverty and incompleteness, and find himself vulnerable to divine illumination thereby. “Become realized (*taḥaqqaq*) in your qualities, lowliness, incapability, and weakness: He will support you with His qualities, glory, might, transformative power (*ḥawlihi*) and preventative power (*quwwatihi*).”⁴³ Here we have a practicable methodology, from the perspective of one who still sees himself without arrival, without divine self-disclosure. Self-knowledge, which is knowledge of incompleteness, opens man’s perception to the ontological underpinnings of needful human life, the sustaining force of divine qualities.

Furthermore, “Real humility (*al-tawāḍu‘ al-ḥaqīqī*) is what arises from the witness (*shuhūd*) of His sublimity and the self-disclosure (*tajallī*) of His traits.”⁴⁴ Knowledge of incompleteness, that is, ontological poverty, cannot only be seen as the lowly door to perception of Allāh; it is the witness of divine traits that encourages the attentive seeker to know himself.

⁴² *Ḥikmah* 170/159, embedding Suwar al-Baqarah (2:105) and al-A‘rāf (7:56), respectively.

⁴³ *Ḥikmah* 178/165.

Ḥikmah 95/88: When You Slip and Fall

رُبَّمَا فَتَحَ لَكَ بَابَ الطَّاعَةِ
وَمَا فَتَحَ لَكَ بَابَ الْقَبُولِ
وَقَضَىٰ عَلَيْكَ بِالذَّنْبِ فَكَانَ سَبَبًا فِي
الْوُصُولِ

He may open the door of obedience for you, but not the door of acceptance. Or He may judge a sin against you –and it is a means of arrival (*wuṣūl*)!

The *Kitāb al-ḥikam* upholds the importance, fundamental for Sunni Islam, of *niyyah*, intention, which is invisible to other human beings, and even to oneself. Intention manifests in sincere performance of the acts of obedience by which the Muslim shows his acceptance of the divine compact, but there are levels and levels of intention, obedience, and the acceptance of obedience. “Rebellion that bequeaths lowliness and need is better than obedience that bequeaths glory and arrogance”⁴⁴ because such rebellion followed by awareness of need brings awareness of that need and, thereby, awareness of the divine inflowing of support. As I discussed above, the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* supposes a direct movement from the state of witnessing lowliness –realization of the servant’s fundamental attributes—to self-effacing awareness of divine power, mercy and glory.

Awareness is always of some ontological object for Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh and his school: sensory objects, the self and its qualities, the divine irradiation of supernal qualities. Quite foreign to the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* is the image of human consciousness becoming conscious of itself and thereby merging with a universal consciousness, swallowing its own tail in the manner of some Vedanta exercises. Awareness may rest on objects of illusion and separation, such as the fact of a sin or an obsessive thought. The heart out of balance can magnify this perception into a powerful, abiding presence. The *Kitāb al-ḥikam* cautions particularly against seeing vice, fault and transgression in this way: “Magnify no sin of yours so greatly that it cuts you off from

⁴⁴ *Ḥikmah 240/221*.

good expectations of Allāh. Indeed, one who knows (*ʿarafa*) his Lord thinks his sin meager in relation to his Lord's generosity."⁴⁶ Attention and its distorting effects are not limited to self-regard but apply to relations between people as well: "Whoever sees the secrets of servants and does not compose himself by divine mercy, his seeing is tribulation upon him and a means for misfortune to befall him."⁴⁷

Beyond the ethical and legal implications of sin, rebellion, repentance and obedience lies another cosmological pairing, that of expansion and contraction. Openness and expansion (*bast*) connotes divine qualities of love, mercy and what people know they care for; psychologically, it corresponds to happiness and pleasure as well as spiritual experiences, lights, inspirations, supernatural fragrances and so on. Constriction and contraction (*qabḍ*) connote divine severity and justice; its personal implications are difficulty, pressure, and states of depression and weight. The contrast between these states, that is, between what people prefer for themselves and what they avoid, has a teleological dimension. It pulls awareness and inclinations away from manifestations into the heart of the matter. "He expanded you so as not to keep you in contraction, and contracted you so as not to keep you in expansion, and He extracted you from both so that you not may be for Him and naught else."⁴⁸

***Ḥikmah* 213/196: The Knowledge of Allāh, the All-Manifest**

وَصُؤْلُكَ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَصُؤْلُكَ إِلَى الْعِلْمِ بِهِ
وَالْأَفْجَلُ رَبُّنَا أَنْ يَتَّصِلَ بِهِ شَيْءٌ
أَوْ يَتَّصِلَ بِشَيْءٍ

Your arrival unto Allāh (*wuṣūluka ilā Allāh*) is arrival through knowledge of Him. Otherwise, high is our Lord beyond anything being united (*an yattaṣila*) to Him or His being united to anything.

⁴⁵ *Ḥikmah* 96/89.

⁴⁶ *Ḥikmah* 49/46.

⁴⁷ *Ḥikmah* 158/150.

⁴⁸ *Ḥikmah* 80/75.

This *ḥikmah* asserts the fact of *wuṣūl* and defines the phenomenon in a way that preserves Islamic orthodoxy by denying the possibility of *ittiṣāl*, unification, in the form of the union of two substances, human and divine. Asserting such a union amounts to an equality of substance between man and Allāh, which is to make man an ontological partner to Allāh, the preeminent sin of *shirk* or idolatrous suggestion of partnership in divinity. “Just as He does not love the partnering (*mushtarak*) deed, in the same way He does not love the partnering heart. The partnering deed He does not accept; the partnering heart He does not draw near.”⁴⁹ Now, knowing what *wuṣūl* is not, we may examine the semantic fields of knowledge within the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* to come closer to a positive understanding of the arrival. Two *ḥikam* stand out in their mention of *‘ilm*, knowledge.⁵⁰

The first connects us again to human ontological poverty. “Good knowledge is that which is accompanied by fear.”⁵¹ This is functional rather than descriptive: fear, and the knowledge of human inadequacy, should drive the attentive person to the all-merciful out of awareness of need. In the same section, “He knew you would not accept advice: He made you taste from the taste of the world so that separation from it would be easy for you.”⁵² The bitterness of sin, separation, illusion, hollow worldly goals and all manifestations of creation’s dependence on what supports it all are manifestations of divine mercy.

The second *ḥikmah* tying knowledge to the rest of the collection’s themes is also functional rather than substantive. “Beneficial knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-nāfi’*) is the kind whose ray expands

⁴⁹ *Ḥikmah* 203/188.

⁵⁰ Distinctions of knowledge of Allāh, including various differentiations between *‘ilm*, *ma’rifah* and other modalities of knowing, are discussed in John Renard, *Knowledge of God in Classical Sufism: Foundations of Islamic Mystical Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004). *‘ilm* the most general Arabic word for knowledge and one often contrasted with *ma’rifah*, yet the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* do not explicitly make this distinction.

⁵¹ *Ḥikmah* 232/214a.

⁵² *Ḥikmah* 230/212.

in your breast and pierces (*yankashifu*) the mask over your heart.”⁵³ This does not specify the content of this knowledge, but the attribute one can recognize it by. This is knowledge that opens the heart and penetrates the unseeing veil between the experience of selfhood and the witnessing of the creator. Interestingly, the particular word for veil or mask in this *ḥikmah* is *qināʿ*, which in an anatomical context denotes the pericardium. This beneficial knowledge fits with the aspect of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* that regards the progressive experience, spirituality as a journey from fracture to wholeness, rather than that aspect of the collection presented from the eternal aspect, where Allāh is not an unseen being but the most apparent of all beings. The experience of the journey begins with one experience or taste and proceeds to successive, further visions. “The ray of insight (*shuʿāʿ al-baṣīrah*) gives you witness of His closeness to you; insight itself (*ʿayn al-baṣīrah*) gives you witness of your inexistence in front of His existence; the true core of insight (*ḥaqq al-baṣīrah*) gives you witness of [only] His existence, not your inexistence or existence.”⁵⁴ Here we have a clear ontology of the self, which cannot exist in the same modality that Allāh is said to exist in, such sharing of existence implying an equality of essence or constitution of the same ontological substance, a position tantamount to polytheism for orthodox Islam. The self moves from witnessing itself as an existent entity but one that perceives the proximity of Allāh through subsequent degrees of refinement. The end is the witness of Allāh alone, without any awareness of self or other levels.

⁵³ *Ḥikmah* 231/213.

⁵⁴ *Ḥikmah* 36/33.

Hikmah 16/15b: A Song of Apparency

كَيْفَ يُتَصَوَّرُ أَنْ يُحْجَبَهُ شَيْءٌ
وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَظْهَرَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ
كَيْفَ يُتَصَوَّرُ أَنْ يُحْجَبَهُ شَيْءٌ
وَهُوَ الَّذِي ظَهَرَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ
كَيْفَ يُتَصَوَّرُ أَنْ يُحْجَبَهُ شَيْءٌ
وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَظْهَرَ فِي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
كَيْفَ يُتَصَوَّرُ أَنْ يُحْجَبَهُ شَيْءٌ
وَهُوَ الَّذِي ظَهَرَ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ
كَيْفَ يُتَصَوَّرُ أَنْ يُحْجَبَهُ شَيْءٌ
وَهُوَ الظَّاهِرُ قَبْلَ وُجُودِ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
كَيْفَ يُتَصَوَّرُ أَنْ يُحْجَبَهُ شَيْءٌ
وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَظْهَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
كَيْفَ يُتَصَوَّرُ أَنْ يُحْجَبَهُ شَيْءٌ
وَهُوَ الْوَاحِدُ الَّذِي لَيْسَ مَعَهُ شَيْءٌ
كَيْفَ يُتَصَوَّرُ أَنْ يُحْجَبَهُ شَيْءٌ
وَهُوَ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
كَيْفَ يُتَصَوَّرُ أَنْ يُحْجَبَهُ شَيْءٌ
وَلَوْلَاهُ لَمَا كَانَ وُجُودُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
يَا عَجَبًا كَيْفَ يَظْهَرُ الْوُجُودُ فِي الْعَدَمِ
أَمْ كَيْفَ يَتَبَيَّنُ الْحَادِثُ مَعَ مَنْ لَهُ وَصْفُ
الْقَدَمِ

How can it be imagined that something veils Him since He is the one who manifests everything?

How can it be imagined that something veils Him since He is the one who is manifest through everything?

How can it be imagined that something veils Him since He is the one who is manifest in everything?

How can it be imagined that something veils Him since He is the manifest to everything?

How can it be imagined that something veils Him since He was the manifest before the existence of anything?

How can it be imagined that something veils Him since He is more manifest than anything?

How can it be imagined that something veils Him since He is the one alongside of whom there is nothing?

How can it be imagined that something veils Him since He is nearer to you than anything else?

How can it be imagined that something veils Him since were it not for Him the existence of everything would not have been manifest?

A marvel: how existence has been manifested in inexistence and how the new is confirmed (*yathbutu*) alongside of Him who has the quality of eternity!

The *Kitāb al-ḥikam* is much occupied with the witness of Allāh; the paradox of contemplatives' assertion of divine apparency in the face of ordinary experience is presented as a goad or an incentive to pursue this level of awareness. One of two long *ḥikam* rings out this emphasis on the fundamental apparency of Allāh.

Besides demonstrating the inadequacy of "aphorism" as a gloss of *ḥikmah* (a word from whose root we find "wisdom," "insight," and "legal ruling"), this passage establishes that the

Kitāb al-ḥikam are oriented from the absolute to phenomena, not from inferential argumentation based on phenomena –signs and proofs of divine existence—that build up to an understanding of the absolute. This orientation comes not in a simple assertion but in a musical repetition of a theme of astonishment –“How can it be imagined that something veils Him?”—coming again and again in alternation upon distinctions in the form and manner of the apparency of the Real. This song-like *ḥikmah* concludes with the central ontological conundrum of the mystic: the manifestation of both true existence, Allāh, and metaphorical existence, phenomenal reality that, alongside true existence, can only be described as non-existence. The perception of these modalities, and how contemplatives develop across the course of their spiritual careers, occupies three successive *ḥikam*.

***Kitāb al-ḥikam* 29-31/27-28: Arrivers and Travelers**

شَتَّانَ بَيْنَ مَنْ يَسْتَدِلُّ بِهِ أَوْ يَسْتَدِلُّ عَلَيْهِ
 الْمُسْتَدِلُّ بِهِ عَرَفَ الْحَقَّ لِأَهْلِهِ
 وَأَثَبَتَ الْأَمْرَ مِنْ وُجُودِ أَصْلِهِ
 وَالْإِسْتِدْلَالُ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ عَدَمِ الْوُصُولِ إِلَيْهِ
 وَإِلَّا فَمَتَى غَابَ حَتَّى يُسْتَدِلُّ عَلَيْهِ
 وَمَتَى بَعْدَ حَتَّى تَكُونَ الْآثَارُ هِيَ الَّتِي
 تُوصِلُ إِلَيْهِ

What a difference between one who founds his proof on Him and one seeking proof to Him. The one founding his proof on Him knows (*arafa*) the Real for whom He is, and he confirms the affair from its root. But inference leading to Him comes of lack of arrival unto Him (*wuṣūl ilayhi*). Otherwise, when was He absent –that one sought proof to Him? And when was He distant so that traces (*āthār*) should establish arrival (*tūṣilu*) unto Him?

(لِيُنْفِقَ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِنْ سَعَتِهِ)
 الْوَاصِلُونَ إِلَيْهِ
 (وَمَنْ قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهُ) السَّائِرُونَ إِلَيْهِ

“Let the man of plenty expend out of his plenty:” those with arrival (*al-wāṣilūn*) unto Him. “He whose provision is stinted to him:”⁵⁵ those traveling (*al-sā'irūn*) to Him.

⁵⁵ Qur'an 65:7 (Sūrat al-Ṭalāq). The full *āyah* reads “Let the man of plenty expend out of his plenty. As for him whose provision is stinted to him, let him expend of what Allah has given him. Allah charges no soul save with what He has given him. Allah will assuredly appoint, after difficulty, easiness;” further allusion that, for Ibn ‘Ata’ Allah and his commentators, the people of arrival and the people of traveling as permeable categories; transformation is possible and, “after difficulty, easiness.”

إِهْتَدَى الرَّاحِلُونَ إِلَيْهِ بِأَنْوَارِ التَّوَجُّهِ
وَالْوَاصِلُونَ لَهُمْ أَنْوَارُ الْمُوَاجَهَةِ
فَالْأَوَّلُونَ لِلْأَنْوَارِ وَهَؤُلَاءِ الْأَنْوَارُ لَهُمْ
لَا تَهُمُ لِلَّهِ لَا لَشَيْءٍ دُونَهُ
(قُلِ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ ذَرْهُمْ فِي خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُونَ)

Those journeying (*rāḥilūn*) to Him are guided by lights of orientation (*tawajjuh*). Those arriving (*wāṣilūn*) have lights of audience (*muwājahah*). The former belong to the lights, while these own the lights, because they belong to Allāh, not to anything apart from Him. “Say ‘Allāh.’ Then leave them alone, playing their game of plunging.”⁵⁶

The *ḥikam* 29/27 through 31/28 are the earliest in the collection to mention *wuṣūl*, which they do through the lens of a typology of mystics. The *Kitāb al-ḥikam* assume people who concern themselves with their hearts and inner experiences have different qualities, motivations, and ways of expression: “Some of the folk⁵⁷ send the lights of their remembrances (*adhkārāhum*) before them while some of the folk send their remembrances before their lights. There is a rememberer who invokes to illuminate his heart, and there is a rememberer whose heart is illumined, so he invokes.”⁵⁸ The *Kitāb al-ḥikam* follow this broad bifurcation and describe the two parties variously as travelers (*sālikūn*) and the divinely attracted (*majdhūbūn*), or seekers of Allāh (*murīdūn*) and the besought of Allāh (*murādūn*). Travelers, also called by the nearly synonymous *rāḥilūn* and *sā'irūn*, are people for whom mystical life is a matter of effortful striving, building from one insight to another, and the experience of progressive illumination and change. The traveler may have arrival after his journey (*sayr*), or he may not, remaining trapped in insincerity, ostentatious display of pieties, subtle pride, forgetfulness, the desire for secrets without mercy, and so on.

While “traveling” corresponds to the general order of people concerned with spirituality and illumination, the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* establishes the alternative as the norm: the “divinely attracted one” (*majdhūb*) for whom there is an unsought awakening and an inescapable

⁵⁶ Sūrat al-An‘ām (6:91).

⁵⁷ “The folk” (*qawm*) and “the people of the Real” (*ahl al-Ḥaqq*) are names for the mystically realized.

⁵⁸ *Ḥikmah* 253/233.

witnessing of the realities. While the *majdhūb* is rare, his experience does leave him with any delusion that his awakening came from his own will, actions, or powers. Illumination, the witnessing of Allāh and thus *wuṣūl* in the sense of union or connection are all divine gifts incomparable with human agency. The *majdhūb* also corresponds to the Muslim belief about the beginning of prophethood in the lives of the prophets, which was always a surprise to the man called. When the traveler has arrival unto Allāh, it is just as much an act of grace as the *majdhūb*'s, and is not the product of deeds and devotions, as noted above in the discussion on *Ḥikmah* 130/122: "Do you not know that His making Himself known to you (*ta'arruf*) is something coming upon you from Him, while you! You are presenting deeds to Him. Where is what you present to Him amidst what comes unto you from Him?"⁵⁹ "What comes down" is primarily *ma'rifah*, familiarity with Allāh as a form of knowledge.⁶⁰ The recipient of divine familiarization (*ta'arruf*) distinguishes himself from his brother who has none by his argumentation, discussion, and descriptions of phenomena, as described here in 29/27: "The one founding his proof on Him knows (*'arafa*) the Real for whom He is, and he confirms the affair from its root." The other party's perception is not denigrated; rather, its place in the scheme of human beings and their different experiences is affirmed by allusion to Qur'an: "He has permitted you to reflect on what is in created beings but he has not allowed you to stop at the selfsame creatures. 'Say: behold what is in the heavens and in the earth.'"⁶¹ Witnessing Allāh can be seen as a prefigure of the events of the afterlife. This was the position of Sahl al-

⁵⁹ *Ḥikmah* 8.

⁶⁰ *Ma'rifah* is frequently glossed as "gnosis" in academic and European language treatments of Sufism, but the word is an ordinary one in Arabic that does not primarily denote special, secret knowledge, much less the radical dualism and esotericism of late antiquity. *Ma'rifah* ordinarily means familiarity, acquaintance and practical knowledge; the application of this word in mysticism comes from knowledge of and familiarity with Allāh and the divine traits and actions, an intimate familiarity separate from theological knowledge *that* such and such is the case. I will leave *ma'rifah* generally untranslated rather than set it aside with the oddness of the word "gnosis" or awkward circumlocutions like "mystical familiarity."

Tustari,⁶² whose work, like the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*, emphasized visual modes of perception in contemplative or mystical spirituality. Connecting the blissful experience of the hereafter, where “abides the face of thy Lord, majestic, splendid”⁶³ to living contemplative vision raises such vision to a redemptive level. The converse is also true: suffering and damnation are contiguous with coarse selfhood and the lack of vision, through both gross transgression as well as the subtler idolatries of the heart. “Bliss (*naʾīm*), while varied in its manifestations is only for the sake of witnessing and drawing near to Him; and suffering, while varied in its manifestations, is due only to the existence of His veil. Therefore the existence of the veil is the cause of the suffering, and the perception of felicity is through the vision of the face of Allāh, the generous.”⁶⁴

Ḥikmah 249/229: Ontological Degrees and the Two Classes

دَلَّ بِوُجُودِ آثَارِهِ عَلَى وُجُودِ أَسْمَائِهِ
وَبِوُجُودِ أَسْمَائِهِ عَلَى ثُبُوتِ أَوْصَافِهِ
وَبِوُجُودِ أَوْصَافِهِ عَلَى وُجُودِ ذَاتِهِ
إِذْ مُحَالٌ أَنْ يَقُومَ الْوُصْفُ بِنَفْسِهِ
فَأَرْبَابُ الْجَدْبِ يَكْشِفُ لَهُمْ عَنْ كَمَالِ
ذَاتِهِ

ثُمَّ يَرُدُّهُمْ إِلَى شُهُودِ صِفَاتِهِ
ثُمَّ يَرْجِعُهُمْ إِلَى التَّعَلُّقِ بِأَسْمَائِهِ
ثُمَّ يَرُدُّهُمْ إِلَى شُهُودِ آثَارِهِ

By the existence of His traces (*āthārih*) He points to the existence of His names (*asmāʾih*); by the existence of His names He points to the immutability of His qualities (*awṣāfihi*); by the existence of His qualities He points to the reality of His essence (*dhātihi*), since it is impossible for a quality to exit by itself.

He plunges (*yakshifu*) the adepts of attraction (*arbāb al-jadhb*) into the perfection of His essence to then He makes them return to the witnessing of His qualities; then He makes them return to dependence (*taʾalluq*) on His names; and then He makes them return to the witnessing of His traces.

⁶¹ *Ḥikmah* 140/132. The embedded Qurʾānic quotation is from Sūrat Yūnus (10:101). The full āyah reads, "Say: "Behold all that is in the heavens and the earth," but neither signs nor warners benefit those who believe not."

⁶² Gerhard Böwering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam: The Qurʾānic Hermeneutics of the Ṣūfī Sahl At-Tustarī* (d. 283/896), (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980).

⁶³ Sūrat al-Raḥmān (55:27).

⁶⁴ *Ḥikmah* 223/205.

وَالسَّالِكُونَ عَلَى عَكْسِ هَذَا
 فَنَهَايَةُ السَّالِكِينَ بَدَايَةُ الْمَجْدُوبِينَ
 وَبَدَايَةُ السَّالِكِينَ نَهَايَةُ الْمَجْدُوبِينَ
 لَكِنْ لَا بِمَعْنَى وَاحِدٍ
 فَرُبَّمَا التَّقِيَا فِي الطَّرِيقِ
 هَذَا فِي تَرْقِيهِ وَهَذَا فِي تَدْلِيهِ

The contrary is the case for the travelers: the end for travelers is the beginning for the attracted ones, and the beginning for travelers is the end for the attracted, but not in the same sense: both may meet on the path, one in his ascent (*taraqīhi*), the other in his descent (*tadallīhi*).

The division between travelers and arrivers, be they seekers who attain or the besought of Allāh, remains as a tension throughout most of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*. The divide is bridged in a second long *ḥikmah* that establishes both parties may “meet on the path.” “One in his ascent” proceeds from the awareness of phenomenal being, through inference of the absolute and reading the signs (*āyāt*) placed in creation, until his awareness encompasses the manifestation of Allāh as necessarily as ordinary sense perception. “One in his descent” moves from ecstatic, unlooked-for visionary experience, through an integration of lower ontological levels stemming from the absolute divinity, until he perceives phenomenal beings again with the Junaydian sobriety that allows the arriver to interact normally in human company while remaining enraptured secretly. Both types of contemplative progressively come to experience the distinct levels or emanations of being, in differing sequence.

Ḥikmah 156/148: God-friends⁶⁵ and Spiritual Authority

سُبْحَانَ مَنْ لَمْ يَجْعَلِ الدَّلِيلَ عَلَى أَوْلِيَائِهِ
إِلَّا مِنْ حَيْثُ الدَّلِيلُ عَلَيْهِ
وَلَمْ يُوصِلْ إِلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا مَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ
يُوصِلَهُ إِلَيْهِ

Glory be to One who made no sign leading to His friends (*awliyā'*) save as a sign leading to Him, and who caused none to be joined (*yūṣilu*) to them save one He wishes to be joined (*an yūṣila*) to Him.

Though the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* were written by a shaykh of institutionalized *ṭarīqah* Sufism, there is no mention of making a pledge of allegiance to a teacher, the necessity of having a teacher or being attached to one, of the practice of remembrance in a group, nor any other explicit reference to the personal and communal manifestations of Sufism. It does, however, treat briefly of the effects of keeping company, of saintly authority, of the spiritual elect, and of the relationship of election to the quality of humanity in general. The state of the contemplative's companions affects him directly: "The origin of every disobedience, indifference, and caprice is self-satisfaction... It is better for you to keep company with an ignorant man dissatisfied with himself than to keep company with a learned man satisfied with himself."⁶⁶ Likewise, "Do not accompany the one whose state does not lift you, nor does his speech lead you to Allāh."⁶⁷ Company that does not elevate or guide to the Real reinforces the delusion of the self that it exists independently; any reinforcing this delusion is a manifestation of the "veil" shutting out witness of the Real. "Light is the army of the heart, just as darkness is the army of the self. When Allāh wishes to help His servant, He supports him

⁶⁵ "God-friends" renders *awliyā'*, the plural of *walī*, sometimes translated "saint" but denoting at root friendship, support, delegation and legal authority. *Wilāyah* is the office of authority and divine intimacy in which the *walī* is established; it denotes his power by delegation of Allāh, not his sanctity, next-worldliness or heroic virtue. See Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn 'Arabī* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993) and Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998) for discussion of Islamic saints and sainthood.

⁶⁶ *Ḥikmah* 35.

⁶⁷ *Ḥikmah* 43.

with armies of light and cuts him off from the support of darkness and alterities.”⁶⁸ Alterities (*aghyār*, “nots” or “others”) are the perception that created events, the traces (*āthār* –see 29/27 above) of divine action, are “other,” independent and absent from Allāh.

The attentive person can distinguish divine help occurring through people: “Don't you stretch out your hand to support yourself from people unless you see the giver among them is your Master.”⁶⁹ Thus, the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* provides positive description of those whose company and speech does guide and elevate. “Who is permitted to instruct? His expression is understood in the hearing of people; his allusion is clear to them.”⁷⁰ *Light* accompanies the verbal discourse of those permitted to teach. Light is the divine presence or mediation that unites the disparate ontological levels (see *ḥikmah* 249/229) and which the contemplative experiences visually, not in verbal discourse. This light penetrates some hearts, illuminating them. This illumination makes expression clear, not any logical, rhetorical, or doctrinal structure of the expression: “the lights of sages travel faster than their speech, so where illumination falls, the expression arrives.”⁷¹ “The lights of sages:” we see again the condition of the people of arrival described in 31/28b, who “own the lights, because they belong to Allāh.” The sages do not acquire their esoteric lights and perceptions by efforts and devotions. “Rather, the image of election (*khuṣūṣiyyah*) is like the illumination of the sun of day: she appears on the horizon, but is not of it...”⁷² Nor does election mean that someone is safe from

⁶⁸ *Ḥikmah* 56/51.

⁶⁹ *Ḥikmah* 190/177.

⁷⁰ *Ḥikmah* 184/171.

⁷¹ *Ḥikmah* 182/169. “Sages” are *ḥukamāʾ*, people of *ḥikmah*; used in the formative period of Islamic mysticism by al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (“the Tirmidhian sage”), and by the dean of later Sufism, Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 298/910); for al-Junayd, see Abdel-Kader, particularly the letter to ‘Amr b. ‘Uthmān al-Makkī (127-147 (English), 7-26 (Arabic)); the *ḥukamāʾ* are also the *khuṣūṣ*, the “elect” or “special” since before the creation of the world for illuminated witnessing of God, by God, after annihilation from selfhood.

⁷² *Ḥikmah* 248/228.

error, mistakes, or sin: “Not everyone proven in his election completes his refining.”⁷³ “Specialness” in this sense, indicated in life by unitive witnessing, miracles and illuminating guidance, is a condition manifesting in the world and thereby no more to be taken for granted than other manifestations of spiritual life, nor any more to be seized on as an object of desire apart from the one witnessed.

The company the seeker keeps affects him, for good or ill; words and light that guide are those that arrive by permission, not haphazardly; and spiritual election is a manifestation of divine guidance. So the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* synthesizes this series with, “Glory be to one who made no sign leading to His friends (*awliyāʾ*) save as a sign leading to Him, and who caused none to be joined (*yūṣilu*) to them save one He wishes to be joined (*an yūṣila*) to Him.” Association with the friends of Allāh is inseparable from the arrival, and the condition of the God-friends is a manifestation of Allāh. “Had it not been for his manifestation in created beings, eyesight would not have perceived them. Had His qualities ever been manifested, His created beings would have disappeared.”⁷⁴

⁷³ *Ḥikmah* 111/103.

⁷⁴ *Ḥikmah* 138/130.

CHAPTER 4

ARRIVAL UNTO ALLĀH AND THE TWO CLASSES OF MYSTIC

Despite the apparent severity of the theoretical dichotomy between those who travel to Allāh and those who have arrival, the commentators show that *wuṣūl* refers both to the seeker whose struggle is succeeded by release as well as the God-friend elected in beginningless eternity to sainthood. In doing so, as in all their commentaries, selections from Qur'an, hadith, the words of the *salaf* and early Sufis quoted from *ṭabaqāt* works, and points made in earlier Sufi literature all punctuate the discussion. In the footnotes of this chapter and the next, I will draw attention to the roles played by quotation within these texts. The roles, in general, are as follows: arguments for an authoritative Qur'anic and prophetic basis for Sufi concerns; rooting Sufi concerns in the tradition stretching from the earliest generations to the present; maintaining continuity with the work of earlier authors; demonstrating relevance between one topic and an apparently dissimilar one; transitioning from one point to another by way of a succinct restatement; and summarizing arguments by restatement of the premises.

Hikmah 29/27: Inference by and unto Him

شَتَّانَ بَيْنَ مَنْ يَسْتَدِلُّ بِهِ أَوْ يَسْتَدِلُّ عَلَيْهِ
 الْمُسْتَدِلُّ بِهِ عَرَفَ الْحَقَّ لِأَهْلِهِ
 وَأَثَبَتَ الْأَمْرَ مِنْ وُجُودِ أَصْلِهِ
 وَالْإِسْتِدْلَالُ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ عَدَمِ الْوُصُولِ إِلَيْهِ
 وَإِلَّا فَمَتَى غَابَ حَتَّى يُسْتَدِلُّ عَلَيْهِ
 وَمَتَى بَعْدَ حَتَّى تَكُونَ الْآثَارُ هِيَ الَّتِي
 تُوصِلُ إِلَيْهِ

What a difference between one who founds his proof on Him and one seeking proof to Him. The one founding his proof on Him knows (*‘arafa*) the Real for whom He is, and he confirms the affair from its root. But inference leading to Him comes of lack of arrival unto Him (*wuṣūl ilayhi*). Otherwise, when was He absent –that one sought proof to Him? And when was He distant so that traces (*āthār*) should establish arrival (*tūṣīlu*) unto Him?

The first *ḥikmah* develops a pair of rational dichotomies: first, the two contrasting classes of people who pursue a mystical vocation, the “traveler” who, in the words of a parallel *ḥikmah*, “invokes to illuminate his heart,” and the “arriver” “whose heart is illumined, so he invokes.”⁷⁵ One distinguishes the two classes by the nature of their understanding of Allāh and phenomenal entities: travelers infer the reality of Allāh from proofs and indications, surely including the ordinary linguistic sense of the Qur’an; arrivers witness Allāh directly and only infer the reality of phenomena by what comes to them through continuous theophany. Second, phenomenal reality is contrasted with Allāh, qualified by the name “the Truth” or “the Real” (*al-ḥaqq*), indicating divine nature extending past the personal God of naturalistic piety, which sees the creator as an entity among entities. This pair of dichotomies persists in the two following *ḥikam* and indeed informs much of the collection.

Ibn ‘Abbād sets his discussion of this *ḥikmah* around two passages from the Qur’an, making the *ḥikmah* a condensed scriptural exegesis, one that draws a theme from the disparate parts of the Book. The first is: “It is Allāh who brought you forth from your mothers’ wombs knowing nothing, and He appointed for you hearing, and sight, and hearts, that haply so you will be thankful.”⁷⁶ The allusion is primarily to inference by signs leading to belief in and knowledge of Allāh, a development that moves forward from ordinary ignorance. Nevertheless, the existence of people of the arrival is also assured by the appointment of “hearing, and sight, and hearts.” Going further, Ibn ‘Abbād asserts that although some people do strive to witness Allāh and some are pulled along in an attraction beyond their control, both parties are fundamentally the same, sought by Allāh and attracted to Him. This Ibn ‘Abbād finds authority

⁷⁵ *Ḥikmah* 253/233.

⁷⁶ Sūrat al-Naḥl (16:78). Arberry’s translation says only, “And it is God who brought you forth from your mothers’ wombs, and He appointed for you hearing, and sight, and hearts, that haply so you will be thankful.” *Lā ta’lamūna shay’an* “not knowing a thing” is untranslated!

for in the *āyah* “Allāh chooses unto Himself whomsoever He will, and He guides to Himself whosoever turns, penitent (*yunību*).”⁷⁷ Whomsoever He will choose are the people of arrival; they have no say in the matter, and their states, actions and appearances are no indication of their standing. He guides whosoever turns, being penitent, assuring, in Ibn ‘Abbād’s view, the efficacy of spiritual striving. This efficacy is not, of course, by means of the seeker’s own causation due to ontological divide between creatures and created: the gap is bridged by the divine will. Ibn ‘Abbād closes with two quotations from another of Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s works, the hagiographical *Laṭā’if al-minan*; these elaborate on the astonishment of the arriver at the thought of using inferential reasoning to directly apprehend the knowledge of Allāh. There is no arrival by causes, as the person without arrival understands causation, because causation and temporality belong to a subordinate domain. Direct continuity between creator and creation means a sameness between them, a like material or substance, and this amounts to associating partners with Allāh, Whom none is like. The quotation appears at first to privilege contemplative witnessing unduly: without esoteric perception, how is the ordinary seeker to have a part in any of this? This discussion, after all, is framed on the essential union and likeness of travelers and arriver. The arrival is always a divine decree incommensurate with actions or preparedness, and so the matters travelers have been striving with –worship, devotion, ethical conduct, and so forth—are made instruments of witnessing by divine causation, not because ideas and actions in themselves can act as epistemological bridges. Allāh, Ibn ‘Abbād says, is wise, and the existence of matters leading to inference to His reality is part of the divine wisdom. Ibn ‘Ajībah will develop this notion thoroughly.

⁷⁷ Sūrat al-Shūrā 42:13

Aḥmad Zarrūq takes a different approach while quoting precisely the same passage from *Laṭā'if al-minan*. He agrees with Ibn 'Abbād that the two parties are united: they are one in seeking the Real, which they do by different means. The Real, in this argument, is the necessarily existent one whose existence must be inferred by the existence of lesser things: these things, phenomena and entities, are signs, and Allāh manifests in them. The arriver perceives the cause of phenomena –the phenomenator, if you will—and necessarily infers the existence of phenomena, while the traveler moves from phenomenal being to the maker of being (*al-mukawwin*). While the two are one continuous affair and yet distinct in modality, Zarrūq emphasize inference by phenomena unto Allāh, this being the normal state of affairs. Zarrūq hallows the founding of proofs from phenomena pointing to the necessarily existent one on whom all depend by the example of Abraham. In the Qur'anic narrative, Abraham observes the rising and setting of a bright star, the moon and the sun and perceives that, since they set, they are not absolute but contingent. This is inference, evidence of the lack of arrival, but it occurs because Allāh discloses Himself to the prophet.

Ibn 'Ajībāh ties the two parties into a cosmogonic myth. In eternity without beginning (*azaliyyah*), Allāh creates the forces named power and wisdom. Power only exists in manifestation and form; wisdom is equated with hiddenness within form. Both power and wisdom are created from the light of the divine face; phenomenal beings arising from the interaction of wisdom and power are in fact composed of a substance distinct in kind but not separate in essence from Allāh. This substance is the light of wisdom, and it is itself the veil separating ordinary man from the arriver with witnessing of the Real. Despite the attribution of witnessing solely to the people of power, Ibn 'Ajībāh affirms that both parties have intimate knowledge of Allāh, the people of power with manifest divinity and the people of wisdom with

hidden divinity, an affirmation he will develop in his commentary on the following *ḥikmah*. Perhaps sensing some of these matters to be obscure, Ibn ‘Ajībāh insists that the proximity of Allāh cannot be doubted, the weight of the Qur’anic evidence being too great to deny.

Commentary: Ibn ‘Abbād

The children of Adam, in their first origination, in the beginning of their creation, in their coming out of the bellies of their mothers, are stamped with ignorance and lack of knowledge. Allāh most high “It is Allāh who brought you forth from your mothers’ wombs knowing nothing,”⁷⁸ then, verily, Allāh most high elects some for His special concern, and chooses from His own folk for His authority. That is only due to the attainment of knowledge which He guarantees in His words “He appointed for you hearing, and sight, and hearts,” by which knowledge He realizes for them the association (*nisbah*). He obligates them to both the approach to Him (*zulfā*) and pious deeds, as alluded to in His words “that haply so you will be thankful.”

And He made them two parties, the besought of Allāh (*murādīn*) and the seekers of Allāh (*murīdīn*), and if you wish you may say attracted ones and travelers, and they both are sought and attracted, in reality. Allāh most high says “Allāh chooses unto Himself whomsoever He will, and He guides to Himself whosoever turns, penitent (*yunību*).” So the seekers traveling unto Allāh most high in the state of their wayfaring are veiled from their Lord by vision of alterities; so the traces and phenomenal beings (*akwān*) are manifest to them and existents are present to them and the Real most high is hidden from them; for they do not see Him. So they found their proof with [beings leading] unto Him, from the state of their striving for protection.

⁷⁸ What is the fundamental Islamic view of human beings with regard to knowledge? Ignorance right from birth, says Ibn ‘Abbād through this āyah, but with the faculties to acquire knowledge sensorily and spiritually.

As for the sought of Allāh, the attracted ones, the Real most high turns to them the face of the noble, most generous, and He familiarizes Himself to them so they know Him, *through* Him. And since they know Him by this face, alterities are veiled from them and they do not behold them. They seek found their proof on Him upon [alterities] in their state of descent.

So: this is the state of the two divisions, and what a difference between the two. That is, the distance is great between them. And that [is because of] the one guided by Him unto other than Him knows the Real, who is the necessarily existent, for whom He is; and he is elected to the quality of eternity; and he affirms the matter alluded to (witnessing creatures by means of *ma'rifah*) from the existence of its root: the aforementioned, confirmed creator of the traces (*mu'aththir*), who is his being.

The one founding his proof unto Him by other than Him reverses what we have said, because he bases proof on the unknown to the known, and on non-existence to the existent, and by the hidden matter to the glorious manifest, and that is due to the existence of the veil and to his stopping with proximate causes and his failure to acquire from Him arrival and intimate approach (*iqtirāb*).

And otherwise, when was He absent so that He must be sought after with present things, and when was He distant so that nearby traces should establish a connection (*tuwaṣṣilu*) with Him? Or when was He missing so that existent traces should be pointing to Him? And they recited:

I was astonished at one who wanted sight of You

*When You are the one who makes him see each sight.*⁷⁹

⁷⁹ The poet's amazement emphasizes the author's amazement.

And he said in *Laṭā'if al-minan* : “Know that proofs indeed are appointed for one seeking the Real, not for one who witnesses Him, because the witness is rich in clarity of contemplation beyond being in need of evidence. With respect to attaining the means to it (*tawṣīl*), *ma'rifah* is an acquisition. Then he returns to its conclusion necessarily [he cannot do other than witness Him]. And since among phenomenal beings (*kā'ināt*) there is one who is independent from needing proofs by his clarity, then the maker of being is foremost in being rich beyond [need of evidence] to Himself.”⁸⁰

Then he said: “And among the very strangest things is that created things should be means of reaching unto Him. It is beyond my comprehension. Does it have its own being alongside Him that could lead to attaining (*ḥattā tūṣila*) Him? Or do they have clarity that He does not so that they should be the places of manifestation for Him? And even if created things were a means of arrival (*muwaṣṣila*) to Him, then that is not because of their essence but because He is the one who entrusts them (*wallāhā*) with the rank of arrival (*tawṣīl*) and so He establishes a connection (*waṣṣala*) to Himself. So one makes no connection with Him without His divinity, but He is the wise; He establishes the proximate causes (*asbāb*), and these are for one who stops with them and one whose power has not pierced the essence of the veil.”

Commentary: Zarrūq

Then with what has been established with the absence of the secret heart –that the vision of creation leads to [vision of] the Real for some people, and the vision of the Real leads to [vision of] creation for other people, and for all of the ranks of the rulings of both parties—for

⁸⁰ *Laṭā'if al-minan* is Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh's presentation of the early Shādhilī shaykhs' teaching and illuminative stories. In providing this quotation, Ibn 'Abbād shows the wider discussion of the questions raised in this *ḥikmah* among Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh and his teachers. Furthermore, it provides a more detailed explanation of the role of phenomenal beings in attaining the arrival.

all that, he says: “What a difference between one who founds his proof on Him and one seeking proof to Him.”

I say: it means great distance and separation is what is between them both, and, if they are joined in seeking the Real and knowledge of Him, then there is a great deal between one who sees by the light of phenomenal beings and one who sees by the light of the maker of being (*al-mukawwin*).⁸¹

“The one founding his proof on Him knows the Real.” I say, the Real is what, as the necessarily existent, is prior to conceivable existence.

“For whom He is.” He, one who is necessarily existent, by means of His essence, manifests in the conceivable by means of indications intelligible to him, as is absolutely mandated. Since, indeed, he has knowledge of existence, he thus links himself to the existents, without understanding anything in His existence except that He is absolutely without limitation, and that [*maʿrifah*] mandates his completion in every manner. Whoever persists in his completion necessitates being described by qualities of completions. Then, with the completion of qualities, there is the manifestation of the traces of them: he has knowledge of the existent in existence, and knowledge of qualities by that existent, then knowledge of acts by the qualities; thus, he sees the affair as it is.

“And he confirms the affair.” It is the existence of phenomenal being and what flows from it. “From its very root:” it is the existention (*ijād*) of creatures by the generosity of the Real and by His graciousness, and their manifestation from the trace of His quality and His deed,

⁸¹ *Kawn* is used in the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* and elsewhere to refer to “being,” and *kāʾināt* to “beings,” that is, people and creatures; these being ontologically distinct from the source, the “necessarily existent” (*al-wājib al-wujūd*), I have translated *kawn* as *phenomenal* being, the level of being which is perceived by other beings. This is a separate category from *wujūd*, “existence” in terms of philosophical terminology but in fact “finding,” that which the Sufi considers to be found in any meaningful sense being nothing but Allah.

and this is the way of the adepts of adduction (*al-tadallī*) by demonstration. Some of the folk have disputed this path, yet they do not offer any [other] explanation.

And some of the folk said, “There is no *maʿrifah* in the beginning except as an acquisition of effort, then it becomes necessarily perceived,”⁸² so this is from the perspective of adduction, and it is the way that most of the people understand it; he informs us about it in *Laṭāʾif al-minan*, as will come.

In reality, the Real discloses Himself to some of His servants; and by that they are in the very mines of vision; inasmuch as they do not understand by adducing proofs, and they do not comprehend His meaning in their ascent... like what happened to Abraham, upon him be peace, when he came to know a reality that does not set and does not become extinct, then he looked among the greatest existents [a bright star, the moon and the sun] sensorily. He said, “I love not the setters.”⁸³ So were he not to know a reality that does not set, that would not forbid any transitory thing, nay, for he said, “I have turned my face.”⁸⁴ So consider this as an indication that inference unto Him is a proof of distance, as he says:

“But seeking proof to Him is from the absence of arrival to Him.” I say: Because he does not found his proof except a hidden affair, or absent things, and there is nothing hidden and nothing absent in *wuṣūl*. He said in *Laṭāʾif al-minan*: “Know that proofs indeed are appointed for one seeking the Real, not for one who witnesses Him, because the witness is rich in clarity of contemplation beyond being in need of evidence. With respect to attaining the means to it (*tawṣīl*), *maʿrifah* is an acquisition. Then he returns to its conclusion necessarily [he cannot do

⁸² An anonymous quote often serves, as here, to express generally held opinions.

⁸³ *Sūrat al-Anʿām* (6:76). The question of inference by means of entities is therefore addressed in the Qurʾan through the experience of one of the great messengers. Reasoning by means of entities to the conclusion of Allāh’s eternity is therefore not to be despised as low, and yet Abraham’s inference is possible by divine illumination of his understanding, not by the heavenly bodies themselves, nor Abraham’s private faculties.

other than witness Him]. And since among phenomenal beings (*kā'ināt*) there is one who is independent from needing proofs by his clarity, then the maker of being is foremost in being rich beyond [need of evidence] to Himself.”

Then he mentions the manner of evidence, in that inference unto Him is from distance. He says, “Otherwise, when was He absent –that one sought proof to Him? And when was He distant so that traces should establish arrival unto Him?” I say: if there is no inference in lack of *wuṣūl*, then it is not but through distance and absence, and the Real most high is not absent nor distant; so he clarifies that inference unto Him is the proof of absence and distance.⁸⁵

He said in *Laṭā'if al-minan*: “And among the very strangest things is that created things should be means of reaching unto Him. It is beyond my comprehension. Does it have its own being alongside Him that could lead to attaining (*ḥattá tūṣila*) Him? Or do they have clarity that He does not so that they should be the places of manifestation for Him? And even if created things were a means of arrival (*muwaṣṣila*) to Him, then that is not because of their essence but because He is the one who entrusts them (*wallāhā*) with the rank of arrival (*tawṣīl*) and so He establishes a connection (*waṣṣala*) to Himself. So one makes no connection with Him without His divinity, but He is the Wise; He establishes the proximate causes (*asbāb*), and these are for one who stops with them, and for one whose power has not pierced the essence of the veil.”⁸⁶

Commentary: Ibn ‘Ajībah

The greatest of what He deposited in the unseen of the secrets is the *ma‘rifah* of Allāh, and it is of two portions: *ma‘rifah* of proof and *ma‘rifah* of contemplative vision. He alluded to this distinction between them and said: “What a difference.” “What a difference” (*shattāna*) is used

⁸⁴ Sūrat al-An‘ām (6:79); “I have turned my face to Him who originated the heavens and the earth, [as] a man of pure faith.”

⁸⁵ Proof, that is, that a person feels absent or distant from Allah.

⁸⁶ The same quotations from *Laṭā'if al-minan* as Ibn ‘Abbād used, and used in the same function.

with the meaning of “being far distant” and “separated,” and it is not used except in differentiating meanings, to the exclusion of sensory objects.⁸⁷

I say: know that the Real, glorified is He, when He wished to disclose of Himself the secrets of His essence, and the lights of His qualities, He manifested a handful of His beginningless light by His power. The power sought manifestation of her traces and witnessing of her lights; and wisdom necessitated the lowering of her veil and making plain her sheltering screens (*astār*). When the power discharged her light in the manifestation of the world of being, wisdom lowered upon it the cloak of protection, and phenomenal beings –all of them— became light in a concealing veil.

Then the Real, glorious is He, apportioned people (*khalq*) into two portions and divided them into two divisions. He elected a portion to His affectionate love (*maḥabbah*) and made them of the people of divine friendship and authority (*walāyah*). Thus opening the door for them, He parted the veil for them and gave the witness of the secrets of His essence, and did not veil them from Him by the traces of His power [i.e., creation]. He established a portion for his service (*khidmah*) and made them of the people of His wisdom. He lowered upon them the veil of illusion and hid from them the light of knowledge and understanding. So they stopped with manifestations of the rinds [externals] and they did not witness the residence of lights, in spite of the force of their manifestation; so glory be to the one who hides His secret in His wisdom, and who manifests His lights by His power.

As for the people of affection, they are people of divine friendship and intimate knowledge (*irfān*) among the people of witnessing and seeing, so they found their proof by the light unto the existence of the curtains [phenomenal beings], for they see nothing except the light; and

⁸⁷ That is, *shattāna* is not used to remark on the difference between physical objects, only between ideas.

by the Real unto the existence of creation, so they find nothing except the Real; and by His power unto His wisdom, so they find His power to be the source of His wisdom, and His wisdom to be the source of His power. So by witnessing the Real, they are lost from the vision of creation, since it is impossible to witness Him and to witness other than Him alongside Him.

And as for the people rendering service among the people of wisdom, they found their proof of the existence of light on the manifestation of the Real. They are shielded from Him in the state of His presence, and they are veiled from Him by the force of His manifestation. And someone among the knowers said: “Allāh most high affirmed created things for the generality, and they affirm the creator by it. He affirms Himself for the elect and so they affirm creatures by Him.”

“So what a difference,” or a great divide, exists between one founds his proof on Him unto the manifestations of His traces, and one who founds his proof by the manifestations of His traces unto His existence, because one who is founds his proof by Him actually knows the Real (has *maʿrifah*) and realizes Him, and knows Him for who He is, that He is the real existence of His folk. He is Allāh, the necessarily existent, the worshipped King, and He affirms the matter, which is the eternal, genuine existence from the very root, the fundamental, timeless world of majesty (*jabarūt*). This means that one has *maʿrifah* of Allāh until the point becomes necessary to him: he is familiar with existence in fact belonging to Allāh, and the existence of what is other than Him is negated. He affirms eternity in his first and his last.

Or you can say: He has *maʿrifah* of the Real, and it is the genuine existence belonging to Him, who is Allāh most high, and he confirms the matter of derivative existence from the existence of its root: that is, he connects it to its fundament. So when the branch is connected

to the root, the whole becomes fundamentally of the world of majesty.⁸⁸ It is possible that the meanings of both of them are one, or it could be that he has *ma'rifah* of real existence belonging to the One who deserves it, and he affirms that affair from its root, as in your words [in a legal setting], "I recognize (*'araftu*) this ruling, and you strike right at the root of it," and Allāh most high knows best.

Now, as for one who founds his proof [by other than Him leading] unto Him, it is on account of his distance from Him in the state of his proximity to Him, and because of absence from Him in the state of his presence with him, that is, the un-witnessed fact of proximity and presence. He is distanced by illusion, and his being absent is a lack of understanding. And otherwise, whenever has He been absent so that one needs to seek guidance leading to Him, since He is "closer to him than the jugular vein;"⁸⁹ and when was He distant so that illusory traces should bring you close (*tuwaṣṣilu*) to Him "while He is with You wherever you are?"⁹⁰ Since the *trace* of power is the thing itself, therefore the quality is not split from the thing qualified, so there is no means of its establishment, and has no manifestation besides it.

It will come later in the Intimate Discourses (*munājāt*):

O my Allāh, how can one seek guidance unto You
 By what is needy of You in its very existence?
 Is there aught owned by other than You that that is not itself owned by You,
 Until it is the locus of manifestation for You?
 When were you absent so that You were in need of evidence leading to You?
 And when were You distant so mere traces should make the connection to You?⁹¹

And Allāh knows best.

⁸⁸ In other words, temporal, material life is not illusory: the ontological stage where temporal entities come into existence directly from the divine attributes (the *jabarūt*) is present in the ordinary world, not an esoterically hidden infrastructure. The normal world is itself intimately connected to this "world of majesty."

⁸⁹ Sūrat Qāf (50:16). Ibn 'Ajībāh typically does not use quotations until the conclusion of each *ḥikmah*'s commentary. Here he argues Qur'anically for the proximity and accessibility of Allāh.

⁹⁰ Sūrat al-Ḥadīd (57:4).

⁹¹ *Munājāt* 16/19.

Ḥikmah 30/28a: The Man of Plenty; He Whose Provision is Stinted

(لِيُنْفِقْ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِّنْ سَعَتِهِ)
الْوَاصِلُونَ إِلَيْهِ
(وَمَنْ قَدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهُ) السَّائِرُونَ إِلَيْهِ

“Let the man of plenty expend out of his plenty:” those with arrival (*al-wāṣilūn*) unto Him. “He whose provision is stinted to him:”⁹² those traveling (*al-sā’irūn*) to Him.

The second *ḥikmah* ties the two factions in their separate epistemological and psychological states to a Qur’anic *āyah* referring literally to people working out a divorce. This is perhaps an allusion to the apparent absence of divinity within creation as seen by a veiled heart, though none of the commentators make this observation. Arrivers are those possessed of wealth; travelers have a stinted provision. This is somewhat cryptic; the commentators will use a variety of techniques to connect this *ḥikmah* to the previous and the next; and to explain the meaning of wealth and poverty here.

Ibn ‘Abbād comments on this very briefly; the allusion of wealth and provision he expands into the matter of freedom from constriction. Those who arrive unto Allāh are free: connected to the root, selfhood and its illusions do not imprison them. Those traveling to divine realization, that is, those with spiritual aspiration but for whom something yet is lacking, their state is that of constriction within reflections, self-references and self-awareness. As in the previous *ḥikmah*, Ibn ‘Ajībah will develop this image, while Zarrūq will not.

Zarrūq takes the entire *āyah* quoted within the *ḥikmah* and uses each to explain the other: the Qur’anic context of the quotation implies more about the situation, and Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s use of the *āyah* bases Sufi considerations of witnessing, ontological distinctions, and the like directly in Qur’anic concerns. Zarrūq also sees in the original Qur’anic context justification for

⁹² Qur’an 65:7 (Sūrat al-Ṭalāq). The full *āyah* reads “Let the man of plenty expend out of his plenty. As for him whose provision is stinted to him, let him expend of what Allah has given him. Allah charges no soul save with what He has given him. Allah will assuredly appoint, after difficulty, easiness;” further allusion that, for Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh and his commentators, the people of arrival and the people of traveling are permeable categories; transformation is possible and there is, “after difficulty, easiness.”

the change in station: travelers may achieve the arrival because “after difficulty comes easiness.” The *āyah* in fact comes in a discussion of divorce and settlements; Zarrūq the avid jurist points out that this allusion does not contradict the basic legal ruling (i.e., that alimony is not a fixed rate but depends on the means of the divorcing husband). In fact the emphasis on spiritual wealth being expansive or constricted enhances the basic ruling by pointing out the basic meaning of the *āyah* is more general than material wealth.

Ibn ‘Ajībah continues Ibn ‘Abbād’s image of wealth in the form of treasure, and stinted provision in the form of imprisonment. Wealth, he maintains, means knowledge, insights, spiritual tastings and the pleasures of fulfillment, and these are like jewels, precious stones and riches. Interestingly, this sort of treasure is famous for being bright, gleaming and shiny: treasure is therefore an image of the medium between creator and created, light that spans ontological divides with knowledge, warmth and plain assurance.

The travelers, poor creatures, are confined in the prison of selfhood, occupied with themselves and imagining their separation and anxiety to be fully existent entities. If, however, they remain on the path, they will achieve the arrival. Ibn ‘Ajībah offers direct instruction to travelers: they must not rely on books, mining the treasures of other people’s realization, but must instead live in a spiritual poverty that is sound, implying a distinction from illusory poverty, the trappings of the itinerant dervish life without its reality, and material poverty accompanied by anger and ugly character.

Commentary: Ibn ‘Abbād

This is an elegant allusion to the state of the two divisions. And as far as we are concerned, those arriving to Allāh most high come out from the prison of beholding alterities into the expanse of unification (*tawḥīd*) and perfection of inner vision (*istibṣār*); their breadth of vision

is widened and so they expend of their plenty and they roam without restriction in their worlds, just as they wish. Those traveling to Him are imprisoned in the confines of reflections and impressions. They expend from what Allāh has given of known, foreordained, straitened provision.

Commentary: Zarrūq

Then he clarifies both forms of inference –by Him or unto Him— used according to what is revealed to each; this he gives notice of with the *āyah* to which it is related. He says “‘Let the man of plenty expend out of his plenty:’ those with arrival unto Him. ‘He whose provision is stinted to him:’ those traveling to Him.

I say: he is saying the provisions of sciences and knowledges are vast for the knowers, so they spend according to their measure, that is, what reaches them when they found their proof on Him, and that is the ruling of their condition (*ḥukm waqtihi*). The provisions of sciences are restricted for the travelers, so they spend out of the measure due them, and because of that they argue inferentially to Him, and that is the ruling for them, since “Allāh charges no soul save with what He has given him,”⁹³ and the bounty of Allāh is hoped for by all. “Allāh will assuredly appoint, after difficulty, easiness;”⁹⁴ and in fact the *āyah* is soundly applied to the arriver and the traveler, due to the possibility of being more general; then that does not lift the basic ruling, the nature of which is settlements for wives. This does not dismiss that; nay, it emphasizes it, because its application in establishing settlements is already more general than wealth;⁹⁵ and Allāh knows best.

⁹³ Ibid. Cf. Sūrat al-Baqarah (2:286), “Allah charges no soul save to its capacity.”

⁹⁴ Ibid. By expanding the quotation from Qur’an embedded in the *ḥikmah*, Zarrūq makes his commentary a Qur’anic exegesis through the lens of this passage.

⁹⁵ Settlement more extensive in meaning than worldly goods implies continuing good relations between the divorced parties, lack of acrimony, upholding one another’s character, visitation rights and so on.

Commentary: Ibn ‘Ajībāh

And regarding those who are guided by Allāh, Allāh truly expands for them the circle of the sciences and opens the treasuries of understanding. [This is] in contrast to those seeking guidance unto Him. Allāh keeps them short in provisions in accordance with the existence of the veil of illusion, which the author alludes to.

“Plenty” (*sa‘ah*) is wealth [that makes one independent] (*ghinan*), and “decreed upon him” (*qudira ‘alayhi*) is “keeping him short.”

I say: as for those with arrival with Him, because their spirits have escaped the confinement of phenomenal beings into the expanse of witnessing and vision; or you could say, because their spirits have ascended from the world of apparitions to the world of spirits; or from the world of materiality (*mulk*) to the spiritual kingdom (*malakūt*)—the circle of provisions of sciences is made wide for [their spirits] and the treasuries of understanding open up for them, so they expend, from the riches of their wealth, the jewels of hidden knowledge, and, from the storehouses of their treasures, precious stones of the protected secret. Thus their field is expanded and they ride charging mounts of clear expression and eloquent words.

How swiftly does wealth come to one among them on whom providence (*‘ināyah*) turns its face, and how great is the opening for the one among them given a glance of concerned attention! Indeed, to Allāh belong those whom the mere sight of them makes one felicitous [as at the vision of Paradise], a felicity which never leaves them distressed (*yashqā*) [as at damnation], and they are people of the secret and the state [that they find themselves in, not coveting any other].

And as for those journeying to Allāh, it is because they remain in the confines of phenomenal being, and in the world of apparitions, prisoners in the prison of illusion. Nothing

from the treasuries of understanding is opened for them; they are occupied with the striving of their own souls and with the fatigue of purifying their own hearts. Constriction is upon them in the sciences and tightness is upon them in all understandings. If they remain on the journey, they arrive (*waṣlū*) and escape the confinement of phenomenal beings; they range freely and gambol and strut in the fields of the sciences. They are victorious in what they hoped for, and enriched after they were spent. If they return from the path, or try shortcuts, they fall short, ruined and desolate.

Note: If you wish that the knowledge of tasting be expanded upon you, then cut yourself off from the business of [seeking intimate knowledge in] pages. As long as you remain crowned with the treasure of others, you will never mine your own treasure, ever. So cut yourself off from support and make yourself needy for Allāh: gifts will flood over you from Allāh. “Free-will offerings are for the poor and the needy.”⁹⁶ If you wish the expansion of gifts upon you, have sound poverty and indigence.

The opening was delayed for Ibn Maymūnah. Shaykh al-Dabbās watched him and found him perusing the *Risālah* of al-Qushayrī. He said, “Discard your book and dig in the land of your self. Springs will burst out of you and pour forth. But otherwise, depart from me.” And success is by Allāh.

⁹⁶ Sūrat al-Tawbah (9:60). In providing this methodological follow-up to the prior theoretical discussion, Ibn ‘Ajībāh emphasizes the Qur’anic foundation for moderate asceticism.

Ḥikmah 31/28b: Lights of Orientation; Lights of Audience

إِهْتَدَى الرَّاحِلُونَ إِلَيْهِ بِأَنْوَارِ التَّوَجُّهِ
وَالْوَاصِلُونَ لَهُمْ أَنْوَارُ الْمُوَاجَهَةِ
فَالْأَوَّلُونَ لِلْأَنْوَارِ وَهَؤُلَاءِ الْأَنْوَارُ لَهُمْ
لَا تَهُمُ لِلَّهِ لَا لَشَيْءٍ دُونَهُ
(قُلِ اللَّهُ تَمَّ ذَرْهُمْ فِي خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُونَ)

Those journeying (*rāḥilūn*) to Him are guided by lights of orientation (*tawajjuh*). Those arriving (*wāṣilūn*) have lights of audience (*muwājahah*). The former belong to the lights, while these own the lights, because they belong to Allāh, not to anything apart from Him. “Say ‘Allāh.’ Then leave them alone, playing their game of plunging.”⁹⁷

The third and final *ḥikmah* of this sequence states the dichotomy between the two classes in terms of their facing: travelers need their “lights of orientation” (*anwār al-tawajjuh*), while arrivers possess but are independent of “lights of audience” (*anwār al-muwājahah*). Regarding *tawajjuh*, the form V medio-reflexive root indicates orienting oneself by something, or making it a means of orientation. The traveler belongs to his lights; he is not independent and he has not found what he is looking for. The arriver, on the other hand, abides in a different station and does not experience need. His lights are of *muwājahah*, a form III intensive or extensive root indicating here a significant form of personal orientation, even reciprocal. *Muwājahah* is also, by way of indicating the gravity of the term, the pilgrimage terminology for a visit to the mausoleum of the Prophet Muḥammad in Medina. The *ḥikmah* closes with an *āyah* emphasizing the arriver’s relationship with Allāh, in which there is complete separation from idle, meaningless pursuits. The commentators will direct their energy to taking the image of lights and turning it into specific examples: what does the traveler rely on, and what happens to the arriver that he has no need of, a superfluity? They will offer, in regard to the relationship between Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s words and the *āyah*, varying allusions to the nature of the arriver’s station.

⁹⁷ Sūrat al-An‘ām (6:91).

Lights of orientation, for Ibn ‘Abbād, are the matters of worship, ethical acts, and the qualities of the heart manifest in trial and difficulty. Lights of audience, however, are less concretely described; for Ibn ‘Abbād, the audience of effaced creation before the clear manifestation of the creator is perhaps a matter better left in allusion than enumerated and classified. The embedded portion of the Qur’an Ibn ‘Abbād explains as an affirmation of the goal of the quest and by way of disregarding the alterities. “Plunging, engrossed” and “playing” are somewhat obscure in this context, so the commentator cites two separate *āyāt* to demonstrate play and plunging indicate the absence of certitude among the damned and the people of doubt.

Zarrūq sets up a ramifying scheme, three parts to orientation and three to audience, to explain the difference between the lights. This scheme he ornaments with a etymological contemplative exercise. The lights of orientation, as per Ibn ‘Abbād, are actions and ethical transactions: these the traveler relies on unduly and in so doing strengthens his own limited selfhood. The signs of relying on orienting phenomena are all form V verbal nouns, words balancing verbal force with the gravity of nouns while connoting action done for the sake of oneself. The traveler takes inference as his means of establishing arrival for himself (*tawaṣṣul*), worship as a means of gaining access for himself (*tawassul*), and holding fast to the awareness of Allāh as a means of drawing himself into proximity (*taqarrub*).

The people of arrival do not despair at the absence of their lights because those appearances are secondary to the witness of Allāh, a weightier awareness by far. The appearances are form III feminine verbal nouns of the form *fi‘ālah* that emphasizes verbal force: accord with the divine plan is his guidance (*hidāyah*), inspiration is the medium of the nurturing care of providence (*ināyah*), and realization –true perception, acceptance and

resulting action—is the means of his spiritual authority (*wilāyah*). These are all derived from weak verbs with third radical y, which does not affect the meanings of the derived forms but maintains the euphony of the expression.

Zarrūq glosses a number of words in this passage, particularly in the *āyah*. “Playing” is diverting oneself from the mighty Real, Allāh, and “Say: ‘Allāh’” uses speech to indicate speech is inadequate in the face of spiritual reality.

Ibn ‘Ajībāh again asserts that travelers must continue and penetrate the light to achieve the arrival, the light being their own selfhood, a substance concealing divine power while itself deriving from the root of reality. The traveler must continue because it is Allāh’s desire: He wants the servant’s arrival, and this is the reason for the sweetness of worship and ethical behavior. These outer acts and experience with them draws people on into self-purification and the sweetness of good character and other inner acts of obedience. In each stage, the successful traveler is the one passing away: he does not see the actions and character traits as instruments but directly experiences the taste of the divine legislator of obediences. This pattern continues; audience is the later stage of orientation, not a separate matter.

In Ibn ‘Ajībāh’s handling of the terms “orientation” and “audience,” he turns the cosmogonic argument for the existence of people who witness Allāh easily, and those who do not, into the classical Muslim doctrine of three levels of religion, accessible to all believers: these being *islām*, outer submission of one’s acts and deeds; *īmān*, disciplining the heart into moral alignment with the will and being of Allāh as revealed in scripture and prophetic example; and *ihsān*, establishment of the heart in a deeply rooted certitude of Allāh’s reality. For the shaykh, “orientation” is something that obviously can turn and be directed at other than inelastic mental and emotional expectations of Allāh and the religious life: one can turn

one's orientation from the outward to the inward of actions, reversing the flow and accepting phenomena as the existence of light cloaking divine power; and from there deeper into an orientation to Allāh that He opens into a face to face audience.

Commentary: Ibn 'Abbād

The lights of orientation: they are what emanate from the journeyers to Allāh most high out of their acts of worship, [ethical] transactions, afflictions [borne with patience] and striving. The lights of audience: they are what emanate from Allāh to them by way of becoming familiar (*ta'arruf*), intimate, affectionate, and loving.

So the former are the bondsmen of the lights, due to the existence of their neediness for these in their arrival to their goal. As for those of the latter party, due to the existence of their wealth beyond need of these lights, the lights belong to them because of their Lord, for they belong to Allāh, not to any thing apart from Him. The author will give this meaning with his words: "You are with phenomenal beings as far as you have not witnessed Him, for when you witness Him, phenomenal beings belong to you."⁹⁸

Allāh most high said: "Say 'Allāh.' Then leave them alone, playing their game of plunging."⁹⁹ And so singling out the perception of oneness (*ifrād al-tawḥīd*), by way of disregarding alterities, is the truth of certitude. The vision of other than Allāh is vanity and play, and these are qualities of deniers and hypocrites. Allāh, mighty and glorious is He, has

⁹⁸ *Ḥikmah* 247/227. A cross-reference to a related *ḥikmah*; demonstrating the coherence of the work and that related material must be searched for other than in sequential *ḥikam* or in the chapters of some (but not all) manuscripts of the collection.

⁹⁹ *Sūrat al-An'ām* (6:91).

said by way of a note about them, “We plunged with the plungers.”¹⁰⁰ Allāh most high has also said, “Nay, but they are in doubt, playing.”¹⁰¹

Commentary: Zarrūq

Then he mentions the orientation of each, among the peoples of arrival and travel, and he says, “Those journeying to Him are guided by lights of orientation. Those arriving have lights of audience.” I say: the lights of orientation are [ritual] action and [ethical] transactions. The lights of audience are what comes from the realities of the state of the arrival (*muwāṣṣalah*).

The appearances of the former are three: inference as the means of establishing arrival (*tawaṣṣul*), action as the means of gaining access (*tawassul*), and cleaving [to Him] as the means of becoming close (*taqarrub*).

The appearances of the later are three: divine accord as the means of guidance (*hidāyah*), inspiration as the means of providential nurturing (*ināyah*), and realization as the means of spiritual authority (*wilāyah*). “And to whomsoever Allāh assigns no light, no light has he.”¹⁰²

The meaning of “travel” (*riḥlah*) is their transition from the sensory and reflective worlds through separation from delusion and misguidance. And “joining” (*wuṣlah*), where the other party is concerned, is the realization of knowledge and certainty, and confirmation in the resting-places of the knowers; then [becoming realized] state by state according to the reality and ruling and rank particular to him. He indicates that by saying:

“The former belong to the lights, while these own the lights.” I say: “The former belong to the lights” as bondsmen and property, since they make those lights the greatest of their

¹⁰⁰ Sūrat al-Muddaththir (74:45). This is the people of hell speaking in this *āyah*, not the “We” of the Qur’anic divine voice.

¹⁰¹ Sūrat al-Dukhān (44:9). Ibn ‘Abbād demonstrates with these two quotations, the contexts of which would be known to the classical Muslim reader, that his interpretation of “plunging” and “playing” is not a hermeneutic leap but part of a thorough understanding of the Qur’an’s terminology.

support and the mightiest of what they rely on, so they are not up to parting from them. If they do become separate from them, they grow sad and despair of their goal through separation from their support in achieving what is intended. And “these” arrivers “own the lights” as property, because, for them, the lights are something that comes after the fact (*tāb‘iatan*), even if other things are let loose.¹⁰³

On *Maḥāsin al-majālis*,¹⁰⁴ its commentator said: “The knowers are established in Allāh. He has taken custody over their affair. So when obedience appears among them, they do not hope for reward because they do not see themselves as doing the action. Likewise when a slip-up originates from them; ‘the bloodwite is upon the killer.’ They do not witness other than Him in strong times or in hope. Their existence is through Allāh, their regard is fixed on Him, their fear is reverence of Him, and their hope is veneration for Him...”

Then he mentions the cause of the state of the arrivers; he says: “Because they belong to Allāh, not to anything apart from Him.” I say: its meaning is by Allāh, not by any thing other than Him, and they make no glance at other than Him in losing, and none in finding, and none in obedience, and none in rebellion, since He is for them and they are for Him, with no cause from their lower selves coming to them, may Allāh be well-pleased with them!

¹⁰² Sūrat al-Nūr (24:40). Zarrūq makes no comment on this quotation; it punctuates his attribution of guidance, nurturing and spiritual authority to divine election alone without earthly causation.

¹⁰³ That is, spiritual lights, inspirations, etc., are quite secondary to the witnessing of Allah, and the arriver is not distressed by their absence because his witnessing is of other than the secondary phenomena.

¹⁰⁴ *Maḥāsin al-majālis* by Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. M. al-Šūfī al-Šanḥājī, known as Ibn al-‘Arīf, (d. 1088). See Miguel Asin Palacios, trans. and ed., *Maḥāsin al-Majālis: Texte Arabe, Traduction et Commentaire* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1933), 8. The commentator is Ibrāhīm b. Yūsuf b. M. b. Daḥḥāq al-Awsī Abū Ishāq, known as Ibn al-Mar’ah (“son of the woman”). The commentary itself is lost, known only by quotation (Ibn ‘Abbād uses this same quotation in his commentary on *ḥikmah* 1, whence Zarrūq may have it) and by mention in *al-Iḥāṭah fī ta’rīkh Gharnāṭah*, a history of Granada by the litterateur, minister and courtly intriguer Ibn al-Khaṭīb (*Encyclopedia of*

As it is said,

They are men;¹⁰⁵ only a fraud is one called

“a man” but not qualified in the meaning of their quality

Then he mentions the *āyah* that sums up the manner of their inference according to their station. “Say ‘Allāh.’ Then leave them alone, playing their game of plunging.” I say: this *āyah* is cited here because speech cannot complete it. Indeed, speech cannot not respond to what is before it, as in the words of Him, most high: “Who sent down the book that Moses brought?”¹⁰⁶ Then as to inference by phenomena, it is mere estimation (*taqdīr*); “Allāh is enough for me,”¹⁰⁷ that is, I am sufficed by Him beyond anything but Him, and it is distinct in the rest of the *āyah*. The meaning of “leave them alone” (*dharhum*) is “quit them” (*utruk’hum*). “Their plunging” (*khawḍihim*) means “their occupying themselves with anything other than the reality of Him,” because a game is diverting oneself by way of what isn’t real; and existence is all to be realized in regard to this matter.

Truly spoken are the words of the poet Labīd:

Is not everything but Allāh vanity?

This topic will come up later in the discourse of the author. Success is by Allāh.

Commentary: Ibn ‘Ajībāh

Then he mentioned the proximate cause (*sabab*) of the expansion of sciences for those who arrive (*wāṣilūn*), to the exclusion of travelers. It is that those who arrive have not stopped with

Islam, 2nd Ed., q.v. “Ibn al-Khaṭīb”), Ibn ‘Abbād’s contemporary and brother disciple of Ibn ‘Āshir (ibid., q.v. “Ibn ‘Āshir”).

¹⁰⁵ “Men” (*rijāl*) meaning accomplished mystics; people of spiritual realization.

¹⁰⁶ Sūrat al-An‘ām (6:91). “They measured not Allah with his true measure when they said, ‘Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal. Say: Who sent down the book that Moses brought as a light and a guidance to men? You put it into parchments, revealing much, and hiding much; and you were taught that you knew not, you and your fathers.’ Say: ‘Allah.’ Then leave them alone, playing their game of plunging.”

the witnessing of lights. Rather, they penetrated unto the light of lights, differing from travelers. Indeed, *they* stop with the lights, in need of them, and in their possession by their power.

I say: The lights of orientation (*tawajjuh*) are the lights of *islām* and *īmān*, and the lights of audience are the lights of *ihsān*. Or you could say the lights of orientation are the lights of obedience, outer and inner, and the lights of audience are the lights of meditation and reflection. Or you could say the lights of orientation are the lights of the shari‘ah and ṭarīqah, and the lights of audience are the lights of reality (*ḥaqīqah*). Or you could say that the lights of orientation are the lights of inner striving and endurance, and the lights of audience are the lights of contemplative witnessing (*mushāhadah*) and inspired discourse (*mukālamah*).

The clarification of that is that Allāh, glorious is He, wishes that He may connect (*yuwaṣṣilu*) His slave to Him by way of orientation to Him: first, with the light of the sweetness of outer actions, and this is the station of Islam. He is guided to action [worship and ethical conduct], passes away in it and tastes its very sweetness. Then he orients himself (*yatawajjahu*) to Him by the light of the sweetness of inner actions, and this is the station of faith with deep sincerity, veracity, peacefulness, and friendship with Allāh. And so, fleeing from what is other than Him, he is guided unto Him and passes away and tastes its very sweetness, and yet is firm in subtle perception (*murāqabah*); and this light is greater and more complete than the first.

Then he orients himself to Him with the light of the sweetness of contemplative witnessing and it is action on the level of the spirit, and it is the first light of audience. So wonder, helplessness and drunkenness seize him. When he awakens from his drunkenness, sobers up after his attraction, is steady in witnessing, has *ma‘rifah* of the worshipped king and returns to

¹⁰⁷ Sūrat al-Tawbah (9:129). “So if they turn their backs, say: ‘Allāh is enough for me. There is no god but He. In Him I have put my trust. He is the Lord of the Mighty Throne.’” An *āyah* common in litanies and devotions, as is

abiding (*baqā'*), then he is for Allāh and by Allāh. He is enriched beyond the light in witnessing the light of all lights because he has become the light itself; he has become a ruler over the lights, after they had been rulers over him in need for them, before he arrived (*waṣala*) at their root. And when he arrives, he becomes a bondsman for Allāh, free of anything other than Him. Slavehood (*'ubūdiyyah*) is his outward and freedom is his inward.

Summary: Indeed, as long as the seeker does not cease to travel, he is guided by the lights of orientation, and he is needy of them in his traveling by them. When he arrives the station of witnessing, the lights of audience come upon him and thus he is not needy of anything because he is Allāh's, not for any other than Him. The journeyers are the ones traveling by the lights because of their neediness for them: they repose in them. Those who have arrival own the lights because they are wealthy beyond need of them through Allāh; for they exist for Allāh, by Allāh, and not for aught but Him.

Then the shaykh intoned this *āyah* upon the path of the folk of allusion: “Say, ‘Allāh’ with your heart and your spirit; hide from other than Him. Then flee people, that is, ‘leave them to engrossed (*khawḍihim*) in their vain talk:’ in fact, they are plunging (*yukhūḍūna*) into otherness, and indulging in caprice.” One of the exegetes criticized the Sufis for their use of this *āyah*; and he did not comprehend what they intended; “All the people knew their drinking-place.”¹⁰⁸ Shaykh Ibn ‘Abbād used to say, “Do not make the people of the outer an argument against the people of the inner,” that is, because refined is the gaze of the people of the inner, and intricate their weaving. None comprehends their allusion other than them. May Allāh profit us by them and join us to their wayfaring. *Āmīn*.

the single phrase “Allāh is enough for me” (*ḥasbiya-llāh*).

¹⁰⁸ Sūrat al-Baqarah (2:60). “And when Moses sought water for his people, so We said, ‘Strike with thy staff the rock’; and there gushed forth from it twelve fountains; all the people knew now their drinking-place. ‘Eat and drink of Allāh's providing, and mischief not in the earth, doing corruption.’”

Conclusions

Ḥikmah 249/229 states that arrivers and travelers are fundamentally the same, differing only in the order of their experiences in “tasting” divine reality. This *ḥikmah* offers an underlying explanation for the differences seen in the variety of mystical seekers, a variety expressed by the numerous aphorisms that distinguish between the arrivers and travelers. All three commentators devote their attention to making more apparent this unity between the types.

Ibn ‘Abbād argues for the two parties in terms of Qur’anic authority, thereby offering a clear example of Sufi concerns explicated from or perhaps read into the Qur’an. “It is Allāh who brought you forth from your mothers’ wombs knowing nothing,” this being the original condition of all human beings; “and He appointed for you hearing, and sight, and hearts, that haply so you will be thankful.”¹⁰⁹ Despite the human starting point in ignorance of reality, the creator provides the means for coming into knowledge and thus gratitude. This being the foundation, Ibn ‘Abbād sees a difference arising in the following *āyah*: “Allāh chooses unto Himself whomsoever He will, and He guides to Himself whosoever turns, penitent.”¹¹⁰ The arriver is chosen for visionary experience, then learns to live and interact with phenomenal being through this new state. The traveler is guided to Allāh through repentance, turning away from the self, through selflessness and into witnessing reality.

Aḥmad Zarrūq turns away from the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*’s focus on the arriver and centers his discussion of the two parties on the more ordinary case, the traveler. Zarrūq’s prototypical traveler is none other than the prophet Abraham, who concluded that the divine was not among the entities that set, that is, change or disappear from view. Abraham’s inference from

¹⁰⁹ Sūrat al-Naḥl (16:78).

¹¹⁰ Sūrat al-Shūrā 42:13

phenomena is not possible because phenomena themselves are instruments leading to the realization of Allāh, but because causal power rests with the Real, who performed a self-disclosure to Abraham through a star, the sun, and the moon. So while the traveler appears to be the default position by virtue of its ordinariness, it is in fact a species of arrival.

Ibn ‘Ajībah’s discussion is more of an initiatic disclosure than either of his predecessors. He seeks to provoke in his readers tastes of witnessing through the frequent use of poetry, striking images, and unusual illustrations such as the visionary creation myth orienting travelers and arrivers to Allāh’s disclosure of wisdom and power. In this form of instruction, he encourages the reader to seek his own tasting by going beyond written accounts of other people’s experience. The sweetness of experience in all levels of obedience and vision follow from the all-merciful’s will that humans return to their source.

Chapter 5

ARRIVAL UNTO ALLĀH, MERCY AND MYSTERY

As discussed in chapter 2, *wuṣūl* is a teleological matter: union with or arrival unto Allāh is a way of expressing the mystic's goal. This language is naturalistic and leaves implicit a metaphysical difficulty: what common bridge or means of access exists between human beings and Allāh? If, as these texts and the culture behind them suggest, there is no intermediate link between phenomenal, created beings and a creator described as possessing an entirely different mode of existence, then any language indicating such a link is fundamentally illusory. The *Kitāb al-ḥikam*, besides making use of existing Sufi terminology, is concerned with providing road signs, instructions, and descriptions of the mystical vocation, not with the definition of a logically faultless system. Therefore, one task the commentators attempted is to demonstrate the meaning of *wuṣūl* within the coherence of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*'s vision.

The *Kitāb al-ḥikam* addresses the gap between ontological levels to say that the arrival is knowledge of Allāh.¹¹¹ This definition does suggest a reciprocal relationship between man's knowledge of the absolute and the absolute's knowledge of human beings, but the naturalistic language of journey and arrival, glossed as ignorance and knowledge, leaves the same problem while pushing its resolution another degree. The commentators show that the knowledge spoken of here is of course not propositional in nature: the arriver does not know that Allāh is X and Y but not Z. The knowledge of the arrival is unmediated awareness of Allāh's existence, unmediated by sense or language and awareness as immediate and necessary as the ordinary

¹¹¹ *Ḥikmah* 213/196.

person is aware of his own existence. This is in fact described in *ḥikmah* 36/33: “The ray of insight (*shu‘ā‘ al-baṣīrah*) gives you witness of His closeness to you; insight itself (*‘ayn al-baṣīrah*) gives you witness of your inexistence in front of His existence; the true core of insight (*ḥaqq al-baṣīrah*) gives you witness of [only] His existence, not your inexistence or existence.”

***Ḥikmah* 95/88: Sin may be a Means of the Arrival**

رُبَّمَا فَتَّحَ لَكَ بَابَ الطَّاعَةِ
وَمَا فَتَّحَ لَكَ بَابَ الْقَبُولِ
وَقَضَىٰ عَلَيْكَ بِالدَّنْبِ فَكَانَ سَبَبًا فِي
الْوُصُولِ

He may open the door of obedience for you, but not the door of acceptance. Or He may judge a sin against you –and it is a means of arrival (*wuṣūl*)!

This first *ḥikmah* drawing outlines of the nature of the arrival unto Allāh emphasizes that this highest degree of spiritual attainment comes not by accumulation of pious actions but by means that may even surprise the recipient of the blessing. Ibn ‘Abbād will use the *ḥikmah* to distinguish forms from realities, and thus human understanding from divine insight into the heart. He quotes without attribution a saying commonly regarded as hadith indicating the possibility of entry into Paradise from extreme wariness and caution following distressing sin. Each commentator mentions another tradition, more soundly regarded in the literature, that deals with somewhat the same subject matter: should a people fail to sin, Allāh would remove them so that others who do sin and so ask for forgiveness would take their place. The important matter is human inability and the covering nature of Allāh’s forgiveness and generosity, a topic that will be taken up in the second *ḥikmah*. His quotation of Abū Ḥāzim, otherwise known as Salamah ibn Dīnār, ties the discussion in to the earliest generations of Muslim ascetics, for whom the tremendous fear of divine retribution for human oversight is a means of access to deep intimacy with Allāh. Within the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*, full awareness of human limitation and ontological poverty –being in need of all things for survival—directly

leads to the witness of divine perfection and ontological wholeness: by seeing that one is essentially nothing, the believer is miraculously opened to the only true and abiding existence, Allāh.

Zarrūq observes that obedience and its acceptance, and sin and its forgiveness, are matters of which the believer is aware of in increasingly subtle detail through concentric circles of virtue: *taqwá*, God-fearingness, is the most general virtue, and for Zarrūq, *ṣidq*, veracity, surmounts *ikhlāṣ*, sincerity, two terms variously ranked by Sufis. He will cite numerous core Muslim texts to demonstrate the closeness, concern and merciful support of Allāh for the one broken and in need, and will quote Abū al-‘Abbās al-Mursī in an allusive interpretation of a recurrent Qur’anic passage to indicate the difficulty in perceiving hidden intentions and unlooked-for blessings in the midst of obedience and sin. The schema Abū al-‘Abbās proposes is in fact used in telescoped form in Ibn ‘Abbād’s discussion, a parallel suggesting that Ibn ‘Abbād was paraphrasing the source. Despite the preponderance of quotation in our commentators, and in Islamic literature in general, citing the words of a prestigious figure of the past is clearly not always desired; an investigation of the literary functions and affect of paraphrasing versus quotation in Muslim authors would make a useful study.

Ibn ‘Ajībah discusses love as the primary ingredient in matters of obedience and acceptance of actions. Love shows itself in obedience, and through loving obedience its function is revealed: the obedient one is unveiled and brought into intimacy with the beloved and into fellowship with the people of love and its fruits. This expands on Ibn ‘Abbād’s centuries-earlier discussion of forms and realities.

As Ibn ‘Ajībah discussed in his commentary on 31/28b, people fall in love with obedience not out of simple desire to be told what to do and where to go but because of a divine plan:

there is a sweet reality to worship and ethical behavior that leads the worshipper on step by step into divine intimacy. At each step along the way, the traveler may begin to focus on the form and forget the goal and source, but here, too, is a backdoor into closeness with Allāh: sin and remorse at sin draws the traveler out of heedless, automatic behavior and forces him to look carefully at his situation. Ibn ‘Ajībāh will again reference the same weak and sound hadiths quoted by his predecessors, alerting his reader to the fundamental accord of this *ḥikmah* with the principal Muslim epistemological sources.

Commentary: Ibn ‘Abbād

It is appropriate that the servant not regard the forms (*ṣuwar*) of things: let him regard their realities. The forms of obediences, through what they may comprise within themselves of ugly rebukes to sincerity, do not necessitate the acceptance of obediences existing at all. That is an impediment to the very acceptance of them. The form of sin’s existence does not necessitate creating distance and eviction [from divine presence], nay, that may be a cause of arrival unto his Lord, and his attaining to the presence of closeness with Him, as it is said: “Many a sin enters its companion into the Garden.”

And it has come in a sound hadith, on the authority of Abū Hurayrah, may Allāh be pleased with him, from the Messenger of Allāh, may send blessings and peace upon him, that he said, “By Him in whose hand is my soul, were you not to sin, Allāh would remove you and bring forth a folk who do sin and seek forgiveness, so Allāh would forgive them.”¹¹² And that is because of what accompanies him in his act of obedience: that he marvels at it, relies upon it, and grows proud of his doing it. And taking shelter with Allāh most high accompanies him in

¹¹² “Many a sin enters its companion into the Garden” is commonly considered a hadith and will be so cited by Zarrūq and Ibn ‘Ajībāh; yet it is not found in the major collections. Here, Ibn ‘Abbād cites it anonymously as widely-held knowledge, but follows it up with a sound hadith and so eliminates the potential for hadith methodological quibbles with this understanding of sin.

his falling into sin, and pleading with Him on account of it, and he belittles himself, and magnifies whoever does not do it.

Abū Ḥāzim,¹¹³ may Allāh be pleased with him, said: “Indeed, the servant does good that gladdens him when he does it, and nothing Allāh creates for him of ill is more harmful for him than that. And the servant does ill that ails him when he does it, and nothing Allāh creates for him of good is more beneficial for him than that. That is because the servant, when he does the good that gladdens him, has high expectations through it, and he sees that he has abundance beyond others apart from him; and it may be that Allāh will pull it down, and pull down many actions along with it. And indeed, the servant does an act of ill that ails him when he does it, and Allāh may bring about in him a dread and shame (*wajal*) until he meets Allāh most high, all the while the fear of it is in his awe, down in his very guts.”

Commentary: Zarrūq

“He may open the door of obedience for you, but not the door of acceptance.” I say: obedience is a gift. The lack of acceptance is an impediment accompanying a gift. Nay, a gift accompanied by an impediment remains an impediment, since there is no point in action with no acceptance in it.

The gate of acceptance consists of three matters.¹¹⁴ The first of them is God-consciousness (*taqwā*). “Allāh accepts only of the God-conscious.”¹¹⁵ Every action with no God-consciousness alongside it is mere toil with nothing of benefit in it except whatever he hopes for of intimacy with the self, giving her ease amidst dubious God-consciousness.

¹¹³ *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd Edition, s.v. “Salama b. Dīnār.” Salamah b. Dīnār Abū Ḥāzim al-Makhzūmī, d. ca. 140/757 was a traditionalist and judge in Medina known for a few *ḥikam* and for instructing the Umayyid caliph Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd al-Malik. A *tābi‘ī*, that is, a successor to the companions of the Prophet, Abū Ḥāzim is a bridge between the Qur’anic generation and the nascent Sufi tradition.

Second: sincerity (*ikhlaṣ*), since he is not accepted except by the presence of it, as is wanted, because of a hadith. Allāh most high says [in a hadith qudsi], “I am free of partners in partnership (*shirk*). Whoever does an action, putting a partner in it alongside of Me, other than Me, I leave him *and* his partner.”

Third: diligence with the Sunnah and following the Real, since Allāh does not accept the action of anyone except through veracity (*ṣidq*) and by following the Real. Whoever finds this third matter delights in his action, because it is the sign of his acceptance; otherwise, he weeps for his weariness, for he is without attaining or achievement.

Then he said: “Or He may judge a sin against you –and it is a means of arrival.” I say: he says, “He may judge a sin against you, and it is a means of arrival” through what He opens upon him with it of the gates of guidance and goodness. The foundations of them are three: brokenness (*inkisār*), since Allāh most high said in the hadith, “I am with those whose hearts are broken on account of Me.” And repentance –“truly, Allāh loves those who repent”¹¹⁶– and commitment with wariness: those two oblige to seriousness and sincerity those who are sincere [breaking away] from their faults and sins. And it has come down in hadith: “Many a sin has caused its companion to enter the Garden.”

Shaykh Abū al-‘Abbās al-Mursī, may Allāh be pleased with him, said, “In an allusion to the words of Him, most high, “[Allāh] makes the night to enter the day and makes the day to enter the night:”¹¹⁷ He causes obedience to enter into rebellion and rebellion to enter into obedience. A servant performs an act of obedience and he marvels at it, relies upon it, belittles anyone

¹¹⁴ Zarruq’s three-part division seems to me to deal with increasing levels of refinement accompanying the increasingly refined sensitivities of the steadfast disciple. The shaykh draws concentric circles with the three virtues, placing *taqwā* as the outermost, most inclusive virtue.

¹¹⁵ Sūrat al-Mā’idah (5:28).

¹¹⁶ Sūrat al-Baqarah (2:222).

who does not do it, and he seeks recompense for it from Allāh: this is goodness engulfed in bad. And he commits a sin, then he falls back on Allāh, seeks to absent himself from it, belittles himself and magnifies anyone who does not do it. So this is bad engulfed in goodness; so which is obedience and which is rebellion?"

Commentary: Ibn ‘Ajībāh

I say: there is no meaning to obedience when it is unaccompanied by acceptance, just as there is no meaning to questioning when nothing is hoped for by way of an answer. Rather, obedience is a means of showing the love of the obedient one and his praise to the one obeyed. This is so as to be opened up in the manner of a door, and that the veil's existence be lifted from his heart, and he sits down upon the carpet of the beloveds. So should the door of actions be opened for you, and you should achieve the goal you hoped for without your finding fruit in it, and without tasting the sweetness of intimacy with Allāh, and with being alienated by what is other than Him... Do not be deceived by that, o aspirant, for He may open for you the gate of His obedience and rouse you to His service even when He has not opened for you the gate of acceptance! He prevented you from the arrival by those means when you relied on them, were dependent on them and intimate with them, and with their sweetness they preoccupied you from the ascent by means of them to the sweetness of witnessing the very source of blessing. In this way, as some of them have said, be wary of the sweetness of the acts of obedience. Truly, there is a deadly poison in them that traps their companion in the station of service and forbids him entry to the station of deep love (*maḥabbah*).

There is a great difference between one who busies himself with His service, and one whom He has anointed to Himself alone and chosen for His presence. So sin flowing upon the servant

¹¹⁷ A phrase repeated four times throughout the Qur'an, namely Sūrat al-Ḥajj (22:61), Luqmān (31:29), Fāṭir (35:13), and al-Ḥadīd (57:6).

is more excellent than the like of this obedience that is a proximate cause of veiling, as he informs us of with his words, “He may judge a sin against you –and it is a means of arrival.”

I say: that is because the servant traveling to his master, betaking himself straight to the arrival in the presence of his beloved and His good pleasure (*riḍā*) may become fatigued, or boredom strike him, or laziness mount him. Thus, the Real empowers sin against him; that is, his *nafs* may get the better of him and he stumbles. When he stands up from his tumble, he is earnest in his traveling, hoists himself out of his heedlessness, and rouses himself from his laziness –so he does not cease to strive in seeking his master. He is absent from what is other than Him until he enters His presence and witnesses His appearance, as it is the presence that the Real discloses of Himself, and the secrets of His essence.

And an image for that: a man journeying falls asleep in the path, or gets inattentive, and when stumbles, a stone strikes him! When he stands up, he leaves his inattention and is serious in his journey.

And in the hadith: “‘How many a sin enters its companion into the garden!’ And they said, ‘And how is that, o messenger of Allāh? He said, ‘He does not leave off turning to Him, fleeing from it and in awe of his Lord, until he dies; and thus he enters the garden.’”

Or as he said in another hadith, peace be upon him, from Abū Hurayrah, may Allāh be pleased with him. “The messenger of Allāh, may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him, said, ‘By Him in whose hand is my soul, were you not to sin, Allāh would take you away and bring about a people who do sin and so they ask for forgiveness, and He would forgive them.’”

And on the matter of obedience which is not accepted, he said, may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him, “How many a faster has nothing from his fast but hunger; and how many who stand up to pray [late at night] have nothing from it but sleeplessness.”

Ḥikmah 130/122: He Covers Your Quality with His to Cause Your Arrival

لَوْ أَنَّكَ لَا تَصِلُ إِلَيْهِ إِلَّا بَعْدَ فَنَاءِ
مَسَاوِيكَ
وَمَحُو دَعَاوِيكَ لَمْ تَصِلْ إِلَيْهِ أَبَدًا
وَلَكِنْ إِذَا أَرَادَ أَنْ يُوصِلَكَ إِلَيْهِ
غَطَّى وَصْفَكَ بِوَصْفِهِ وَنَعْتَكَ بِنَعْتِهِ
فَوَصَلَكَ إِلَيْهِ بِمَا مِنْهُ إِلَيْكَ لَا بِمَا مِنْكَ
إِلَيْهِ

If you were not to arrive (*lā taṣil*) unto Him until after your vices pass away and your pretensions are effaced, you would never arrive unto Him, ever. But when He wants to cause your arrival (*an yūṣilaka*), He covers your quality with His quality and your attribute with His attribute. Thus he joins you to Him (*waṣalaka*) by what is from Him to you, not by what is from you to Him!

Travelers, taken as the generic designation of those seeking abiding mystical experience, naturally desire the arrival as the sum of their hopes and as the vision of their goal. But to so hope is to view another reflection of the self within the heart to the exclusion of realities that may be reflected in the pure heart. The commentators will address the substance of selfish desires and vices as matters that cannot be done away with by human effort: just as there are no entities or lines of reasoning that, in and of themselves, lead mechanically to the arrival, selfish qualities are only dealt with by the extension of divine generosity to the believer.

While the commentators do not vary greatly in their understanding of this *ḥikmah* and its relations to the general themes of human incompleteness and neediness, they express themselves quite distinctly. Ibn ‘Abbād states that, among pretensions and selfish qualities needing to be effaced by Allāh’s blanketing mercy, even the desire to arrive must be effaced as a pretension to importance beyond the true state of the saint, necessarily become selfless in the divine irradiation. Both he and Ibn ‘Aṭībah will quote Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī that no *walī* arrives unto his Lord without loss of desire, self-direction and self-will. *Maḥabbah* –mutual love between lover and beloved, erasing the lover’s veil of separation—is the medium of effacement whereby Allāh’s will becomes manifest. Ibn ‘Aṭībah will tie the discussion directly to a Qur’anic announcement of the believers’ selflessness: “Allāh has bought from the believers their selves

and their possessions against the gift of Paradise;”¹¹⁸ Paradise in both the this-worldly beatific vision of the beloved, as well as the Paradise of the hereafter.

Zarrūq has little to say on this *ḥikmah*, its themes being so directly stated as well as expressed elsewhere throughout the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*. He states that vice and pretension are essential qualities of selfhood, always to be found in however fine and subtle a degree. His explication of the human qualities covered over by divine qualities –poverty with wealth, deficiency with capability, and inability with power—will be quoted by Ibn ‘Ajībāh.

Commentary: Ibn ‘Abbād

Arrival to Allāh most high does not occur except by effacement of the traits of the self and cutting off the attachments of seeking. And something of that is impossible for the servant as such, because that is his nature and disposition, and even if it were only his desiring and his deeds in the acquisition of this goal by himself, then those are still from the totality of vices and pretensions needing to be effaced.

Sidi Abū al-‘Abbās al-Mursī, may Allāh be pleased with him, said “The God-friend will never reach Allāh until the passion for arrival with Allāh is cut off from him,” meaning the cutting off in comportment, not cutting off by being fed up.

Sidi Abū al-Ḥasan, may Allāh be pleased with him, said “The God-friend will never reach Allāh while with him is passion from his passions, or self-direction (*tadbīr*) from his self-directions, or willful choice (*ikhtiyār*) from his choices.”¹¹⁹ So without Allāh most high’s releasing His servant, he would never reach Him, ever. But when Allāh most high wishes to cause His slave’s reaching Him, He grants him that authority because He makes his lofty

¹¹⁸ Sūrat al-Tawbah (9:111).

¹¹⁹ *Tadbīr* and *ikhtiyār* are nearly synonymous, both convey making personal decisions out of alignment with reality; with causal power belonging to Allāh, actions undertaken in the belief that they result from one’s own

qualities apparent in him, and His holy attributes, by which He hides from him the qualities and attributes of the servant. That is a mark upon him of His love, as He alludes to in His words in the hadith qudsi “And when I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks.”¹²⁰ And in this, there is nothing of his will or his choosing, except what his Master chooses for him, and wills, and he becomes at that time one who arrives with Allāh through what comes from Allāh upon him of beneficence and generosity, not through what comes from the slave unto Him of striving and actions. So glory be to the beneficently disposed, upon whomever He wills, through whatever He wills.

Commentary: Zarrūq

“If you were not to arrive unto Him until after your vices pass away and your pretensions are effaced, you would never arrive unto Him, ever.” I say: the grounds for this their great number, self-perpetuation, redundancy and successive arrival upon everything about you, be they obedience or the lack of it, until indeed, when you reflect, you find your actions to be pretension, all of them; and even if you were the most veracious of the veracious, you would find your states to be pretension, all of them; and even if you were the most sincere of the sincere, too. He, most high, has given notice about this in His words, “But for Allāh’s bounty to you and His mercy not one of you would have been pure, ever.”¹²¹

“But when He wants to cause your arrival, He covers your quality with His quality... thus he joins you to Him by what is from Him to you,” of excellence and shielding and conferring benefit. “Not by what is from you to Him” of states, knowledges, and acts. Note: the end of this

causation are illusory and an impediment to spiritual realization. Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh followed his predecessors in the Shādhilī order in identifying *isqāṭ al-tadbī*, elimination of self-direction, as the primary task facing the aspirant.

¹²⁰ This sound hadith qudsi has been cited since at least the time of al-Junayd as strong support for the doctrine of *fanā’* and *baqā’*, passing away from self and abiding in Allāh.

chapter comes with the following obvious connection: the grounds of it are that, since pretense and vice do not ever conclude, it only comes through the graciousness of His shielding as he says, “and He shields your attribute with His attribute.” So He plunges your poverty into His wealth, and your deficiency into His capability, and your inability into His power, and that is well within His might.

Commentary: Ibn ‘Ajībāh

So when you seek entry among the beloveds, halt, lowly and base by the door until the veil between you and them is lifted without any artifice from you and without any cause; in fact, it is grace from the generous one, the bestower, just as he alludes.

I say: arrival unto Allāh is knowledge of Him and comprehension of Him in such a way that the one who never existed passes away, and He who never began abides. This is not but after the death of the selves, the lowering of heads, the humbling of spirits, and the selling off of individualities, because of the words of Him, most high: “Allāh has bought from the believers their selves and their possessions against the gift of Paradise,”¹²² that is, the garden of intimate knowledges for the people of the greater struggle and the garden of ornaments for those of the lesser struggle; and, too, because of his words, peace be upon him, “Die before you die.” Al-Naqshbandī cited it as a hadith in the commentary on al-Hā’iyyah.¹²³

And he said in *Laṭā’if al-minan*, “One does not enter unto Allāh except by two doors. The first of them is the greater death, the sensory death; the second death is the one that concerns this party,” meaning the death of selves.

¹²¹ Sūrat al-Nūr (24:21).

¹²² Sūrat al-Tawbah (9:111).

¹²³ Ibn ‘Ajībāh gives only this name in his citation; therefore the identity of “al-Naqshbandī” is unclear. The core lands of the widespread Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah* are in central Asia and nations ruled by Turkish dynasties; it has had a negligible presence in North Africa. “Cited as a hadith” alludes to the persistent circulation of this aphorism as a hadith despite the lack of a sound chain of transmitters.

And al-Shushtarī¹²⁴ said, may Allāh be pleased with him:

*If you would attain our union, your death is the condition
Never does he obtain union who has in him aught of excess!*

And he also said:

*My union does not catch up to you
—not to anyone abiding in himself.*

Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan said, may Allāh be pleased with him, “The God-friend will never reach Allāh while with him is passion from his passions, or self-direction from his self-directions, or willful choice from his choosings.”¹²⁵

This purification is not of the deeds of the servant or his earnings, but rather it is by the precedence of the providence of his Lord; for were the slave not to arrive unto Allāh most high except after the passing away of his vices and the effacement of his pretensions, in himself, he would never have arrival, ever! But the Real, most high, out of His generosity and provision, when He wishes to fold up the distance from Him to the servant, He makes the lights of His holiness apparent to him, and the attributes of His quality that shields the slave from witness of himself. So at that time, vices pass away and pretensions are annihilated; and he achieves the arrival and fulfills what is hoped for, via what is from Allāh to the slave of providential concern and nurturing love (*widād*), not via what is from the slave to Allāh of hard work and striving.

And, if you like, you can say the passing away of vice is the purification (*taṭhīr*) from qualities of coarse humanity, that is, contemptible behavior as such; and effacement of

¹²⁴ *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd Ed., s.v. “al-Shushtarī.” Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh (d. 668/1269) was an Andalusian poet much loved in North Africa. His poetry is still recited and sung as part of dhikr ceremonies; both Zarrūq and Ibn ‘Ajībāh commented on his work.

¹²⁵ The same quotation of the founding Shādhilī master as was used by Ibn ‘Ajībāh. Here, immediately following two passages of poetry and a passage from Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s *Laṭā’if al-minan*, the quotation shows one of several modalities by which the spiritual death may be understood.

pretension is being freed of any claim to power and strength insofar as he does not see his own self in acting, nor refraining, nor failing, nor completing. Rather, it is the target of the arrows of destiny, with the rulings of the solitary one, the overpowering, flowing over it.

The actualization (*taḥaqquq*) of these two affairs unto their completion, given the existence of the self, would be nearly impossible –but the Real, most high, through His generosity and goodness, when He sees veracity from you in your seeking, and wishes that He cause your arrival unto Him, unites you to a God-friend among His God-friends and elevates you to His election and anointing. So long as you cling to noble comportment with him, he never ceases journeying with you, unto he says to you: “Here are you and your Lord!” So at that point the Real, most high is He, conceals your quality, which is one of slavehood, with His quality, which is one of freedom, so the qualities of coarse humanity (*bashariyyah*) become beautified by the manifestation of the qualities of spiritual nature (*rūḥāniyyah*); and He also covers up your attribute, which is one of newness,¹²⁶ by His attribute, which is one of eternity...

Shaykh Zarrūq said: “He conceals your poverty with His independence, your lowliness with His exaltedness, your inability with His ability, your weakness with His power, and He averts you from the witness of that which goes from you unto Him, by the witness of what comes from Him unto you.”¹²⁷

I say: cleaving [to the saint] is what clarifies him of the quality of slavehood and the attribute of freedom, and He joins you at that time, upon His grace, what is upon you of excellence and subtle-kindness and grateful obligation, not by what is from you to Him of striving and obedience and compliance.

¹²⁶ *ḥādīth*, “newly arrived,” existing in time as opposed to eternal.

¹²⁷ Note the somewhat different wording from Zarruq’s commentary above on the same passage; this is likely a quotation from one of Zarruq’s numerous other commentaries on the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*.

The likeness of the self is as a lump of coal: however much you wash it with soap, it only increases its blackness. When you burn it with fire and blow breath on it, the fire burns prettily and not a trace remains of the color of the coal. Thus are the qualities of lower humanity when the light of spiritual nature garbs it: the darkness of coarse humanity is covered up and no trace of it remains. So qualities of humanity are transformed into the trait of the spiritual, and of that, al-Shushtarī says in some of his popular verses:

*So when He becomes evident to me
 Away flies my humanity
 She departs without me
 In the pure spirituality*

And “fire” that burns up lower humanity: it is what is incompatible with selfish caprice, and what bears down heavily upon the self, such as lowliness and poverty. The way of both of them is with continuous remembrance of the singular name. In like wise, he passes away in Him, his humanity melts, and his spirituality strengthens until it gives him authority over his humanity. And so at that point the judgment upon [the humanity] causes it to disappear in the light of the remembered one, and it drowns in the witnessing of the majesty of the beloved. That is when he achieves the arrival (wiṣāl) and realizes the passing away in the Lord of majesty and glory.

And al-Shushtarī also said, may Allāh be pleased with him,

*I became attentive to the speech
 And I heard from me.
 All of me from all of me is unseen
 And I am free from me.
 And lifted for me is the veil,
 And I witness that I—
 Nothing remains of me but ashes.
 From myself, unseen am I.
 Of presence have I found naught,
 In truth, other than Me.*

And success is through Allāh.

***Hikmah* 213/196: The Arrival is by Knowledge of Him**

وَصُؤْلُكَ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَصُؤْلُكَ إِلَى الْعِلْمِ بِهِ
وَالْأَفْجَلُ رَبُّنَا أَنْ يَتَّصِلَ بِهِ شَيْءٌ
أَوْ يَتَّصِلَ بِشَيْءٍ

Your arrival unto Allāh (*wuṣūluka ilá Allāh*) is arrival through knowledge of Him. Otherwise, high is our Lord beyond anything being united (*an yattaṣila*) to Him or His being united to anything.

In this *hikmah* we have the most direct definition of the terms of the image of travel and attainment. The commentators are all intensely aware of the inadequacy of language with regard to matters of vision and inner experience; the possibility of misapprehension of meanings by applying to technical vocabulary their usual physical or social meanings; and the human ability to idolize concepts such that receipt of the intended goal is forestalled. Following this awareness, each commentator will qualify the apparent definition of the arrival in this *hikmah* with considerations of the necessarily slippery referents of mystical terminology, much of which will refer to differing matters according to the spiritual rank and degree of the person concerned. That is to say that, for the Sufi theorist, there are different arrivals for different people, their inner experiences and outer paths reflecting differing circumstance and methodology, all the while conforming to the truth of the Qur'anic revelation.

Ibn 'Abbād, followed by exactly by Zarrūq, quotes from the eastern Sufi authority Abū Ḥaṣṣ 'Umar al-Suhrawardī. The fairly long passage distinguishes five applications of the term *wuṣūl* in a list that suggests the cycle of progressive annihilation to degrees of selfhood followed by abiding in more and more refined spiritual stations. Realization –spiritual knowledge becoming phenomenologically real to the believer as opposed to theoretical—is the heart of *wuṣūl*, and so the shaykh dismisses the possibility of a union of two entities, human and divine. There is, Zarrūq points out, a direct contact of the human heart with the knowledge of Allāh's grandeur, and here again we see divine agency transcending the ontological divide between

creator and creature: Allāh causes the arriver's sense of his own existence to pass away, and thereby he witnesses only the Real.

Ibn 'Ajībah classifies four families of technical terms relating to mystical teleology: traveling and stations of the journey; struggle with the self; establishment and repose; and intimate relations. The arrival coheres with each of these images, and, in so cohering, encompasses them. He also equates the arrival with that preeminent mode of Sufi epistemology, *ma'rifah*, through a poem that neatly includes the annihilation of selfhood within the complete trope. Finally, Ibn 'Ajībah cites the Qur'anic injunction to Solomon, "Be thankful to Me, and to thy parents,"¹²⁸ by way of asserting that the arriver is aware of and present to phenomenal beings through his witnessing of Allāh, and thus the arrival is realized by people who remain socially active and fulfill their duties.

Commentary: Ibn 'Abbād

The arrival unto Allāh most high that the folk of this path allude to is arrival unto authentic knowledge through Allāh most high, and this is the goal of the travelers and the end of the journey of the wayfarers. And as for the arrival that is understood, [union or joining] between discrete entities, He is exalted high beyond it.

And al-Junayd, may Allāh be pleased with him, said, "When does He, who has none similar to Him and no equal to Him, have union with one for whom there is similar and equal? Preposterous! This is astonishing speculation, except by what the subtly and kind one graces [someone with], in a manner with no attaining, no delusion and no understanding except as an allusion of certitude and as a realization of faith."

¹²⁸ Sūrat Luqmān (31:14).

Shaykh Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Suhrawardī,¹²⁹ author of *‘Awārif al-ma‘ārif*, may Allāh be pleased with him, said, “Know well that the shaykhs allude to both union (*ittiṣāl*) and continuity (*muwāṣalah*), and so does everyone who arrives at the sobriety of certitude by the path of tasting and finding. So, that is a rank within arrival.

“Then there are distinctions among them, and among them there is one who finds Allāh through the path of actions, and that is a rank of [Allāh’s] self-disclosure (*tajallī*), so his actions and the actions of other than he pass away into establishment within the actions of Allāh most high, and he departs through this state from self-direction and choice; and this [too] is a rank of arrival.

“And among them is one who is established in the station of awe and intimacy, through what his heart unveils to him of the emergence of the divine severity and beauty, and this is self-disclosure through the path of the qualities; and this is a rank within arrival.

“And among them is one who ascends to the station of passing away from his existence, encompassing within his hidden portion the lights of certitude and witnessing the riddle (*mu‘ammá*) within his witnessing, and this is a kind of self-disclosure of the essence accorded to the elect drawn nigh. And this is a rank within arrival.

“And above this is the rank of the truth of certitude, and of that there is a gleam even in the world, and it is the diffusion of the light of the servant’s bearing witness in his totality, until he enjoys its graces in his spirit, his heart and his *nafs*, and this is the height of the ranks of arrival.”

¹²⁹ *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd Edition, s.v. “Suhrawardī, Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ.” See also Knysh, 195–203. (539/1145–632/1234), the renowned founder of the Suhrawardī *ṭarīqah*. His position as minister and advisor to the ‘Abbāsīd caliph al-Nāṣir connected the prestige of the caliphate and the *futuwwah* brotherhoods to institutional Sufism. Not to be confused with his contemporary Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyá al-Suhrawardī, called al-Maqtūl, “the executed” for the wordly fruits of his systematizing Greek, Persian and Muslim illuminationist spirituality.

Therefore when, in the knowledge of the servant, the realities are realized along with these noble states, that he is in the very utmost station, so where is “union?” Preposterous! Oh, how far from the mark! The stations of the path of arrival are not cut off forever and ever in the duration of the everlasting final world, so how could they be in the duration of this-worldly brevity?!

Commentary: Zarrūq

I say: according to what is current in the discourse of the folk, the arrival and its reality are arrival of the heart to knowledge of the majesty of Allāh and His grandeur by direct contact with the reality of the heart. The meaning of it flows into the limbs until they flow upon His very ruling with no stopping and no [selfish] choice.

People are dissimilar, in clear disagreement, even if they agree about the root of the reality. He said in *‘Awārif al-ma‘ārif*, “Know well that the shaykhs allude to both union (*ittiṣāl*) and continuity (*muwāṣalah*), and so does everyone who arrives at the sobriety of certitude by the path of tasting and finding. So, that is a rank within arrival.

“Then there are distinctions among them, and among them there is one who finds Allāh through the path of actions, and that is a rank of [Allāh’s] self-disclosure (*tajallī*), so his actions and the actions of other than he pass away into establishment within the actions of Allāh most high, and he departs through this state from self-direction and choice; and this [too] is a rank of arrival.

“And among them is one who is established in the station of awe and intimacy, through what his heart unveils to him of the emergence of the divine severity and beauty, and this is self-disclosure through the path of the qualities; and that is a rank within arrival.

“And among them is one who ascends to the station of passing away from his existence, encompassing within his hidden portion the lights of certitude and witnessing the riddle (*mu‘ammá*) within his witnessing, and this is a kind of self-disclosure of the essence accorded to the elect drawn nigh. And this is a rank within arrival.

“And above this is the rank of the truth of certitude, and of that there is a gleam even in the world, and it is the diffusion of the light of the servant’s bearing witness in his totality, until he enjoys its graces in his spirit, his heart and his *naḥs*, and this is the height of the ranks of arrival.”

And all that is no means of arrival unto Allāh except through Allāh Himself. That is the arrival, and nothing but. Then what he mentions is what is current upon the school of the people of the Real, and none else is sound, as he informs us when he says, “Otherwise, high is our Lord beyond anything being united to Him or His being united to anything.”

I say: it means that if what is mentioned is not the [real] arrival, it is not other than ascription, distance, causation and connection, and these are qualities of creation that are not sound measure of the Real, most high. He is dissimilar to the features of the temporal, as is likewise said by al-Junayd, may Allāh have mercy on him: “When does He, who has none similar to Him and no equal to Him, have union with one for whom there is similar and equal? Preposterous! This is astonishing speculation, except by what the subtle and kind one graces [someone with], in a manner with no attaining, no delusion and no understanding except as an allusion of certitude and as a realization of faith.”

Commentary: Ibn ‘Ajībāh

The meaning of the arrival of the servant unto his master is knowledge of Him through the light of the grandeur of his Lord and His brilliance, as he clarifies in the beginning of the

twenty-third chapter. I say: the specialists have, in this regard, used technical terms and expressions they circulate among themselves, approaching an understanding of this meaning. And among them: journeying, traveling, and mention of places of settling down, watering-places and stations of rest.

And among them: continuation and stopping, and all that exists from the struggle with the lower selves and waging war on them; of overcoming obstacles and snags from them, or reposing in whatever comes along from them. The author will say later: “Without the battlefields of the [lower] selves, the travail of the travelers could not be realized since there is no distance between you and Him for your journey to traverse, nor is there any parcel between you and Him that could be effaced by your reaching (*wuṣlah*) Him.”¹³⁰

And among them: the arrival, fixity (*tamkīn*), tranquility (*sukūn*) and deep ease (*ṭuma'nīnah*).

And among them: contemplative witnessing (*mushāhadah*), intimate speech (*mukālamah*), sitting privily (*mujālasah*), and yet more than these; and all that exists from their spirits understand of it and what their secrets taste of it from the grandeur of the Real and His greatness. Explanation of that will come in its place, if Allāh so wills.

The meaning of the arrival, according to them, is the realization of the knowledge of His reality alone, and your arrival unto Him is your comprehension (*shu'ūraka*) of your nonexistence; this, until your nonexistence becomes necessarily apparent to you. Your knowledge of His existing likewise, and this matter may happen to you in the same affair without your comprehending it. Some of them spoke in this regard, among them al-Shushtarī:

*Between summit and descent,
Courtship drives you mad.
Pass away, one who never existed!
Abide, one who never ceases!*

¹³⁰ *Ḥikmah* 244/224.

*Journey that you may vanish,
Or walk in yearning, a paragon.*¹³¹

“Vanishing” is ma‘rifah: this means the arrival, and the proximate cause of this is the voyage of reflection. The shaykh of our shaykh, Sīdī ‘Alī,¹³² said, “Humanity –all of them—are witnessing, but they do not know it (lā ya‘rafūn).” And I heard our shaykh say: “Humanity –all of them—are in the ocean, that is, in the ocean of oneness; but they do not comprehend it.” So the servant’s arrival unto Allāh is the realization of His existence, the absence from himself and from all that is other than Him! Know well that this knowledge of Allāh is an acquisition. Thereafter he does not cease to be absent from himself and his senses, drunkenness upon drunkenness and perplexity upon perplexity, until his is cleaned and purified of the fog of sense-perception, the cloud of ignorance and the darkness of selfhood. So the sun of day dawns on him and purifies him from the darkness of alterities. And regarding that it is said:

*My night by Your face is dawn
And his darkness has overcome man.
Man in the shell of darkness,
And we in the brilliance of day*

That is, the night of my existence becomes bright dawn by means of the witness of Your essence, and the night of estrangement follows all men: man is in the belly of the darkness of phenomenal beings, while we are in the brightness of the suns of ‘irfān.¹³³

Then the shaykh who is in this rank does not cease to nurture him until the umbrous claimant surrenders to him, and the luminous claimant is singled out; and he sees that within himself. At that moment, he says with the tongue of his state: “I concede the claim and lift the point from disputation.” So when the luminous opponent is singled out, he draws on

¹³¹ Al-Shushtarī’s poetry changes the tone of the discussion: from a classification of terminology, Ibn ‘Ajībāh proceeds into the deeper waters.

¹³²

¹³³ ‘Irfān is synonymous with ma‘rifah.

everything, drinks from everything, takes a share from everything, and abides in his arrival with gratitude and excellent treatment to the intermediary –”Be thankful to Me, and to thy parents”–¹³⁴ and he pleads at that time with the tongue of his state and his station:

*Praise be to Allāh –His praise never passes away
And praise be to Allāh in the eve and in the morn.
Whom Allāh guides, He brightens as a banner for the acute.
Through Allāh in what He brings to light of forms
O seeker of union, confront your soul in all gravity
From her to the resting place of things by fate decreed.
And if you triumph, you are the solitary,¹³⁵ a banner
Marked by your beauty and most beautiful to behold.*

Conclusions

Reflective Muslims see Islam as a dynamic, inclusive relationship between creator and created that embraces all circumstances and all situations. Creator and created are exist on different ontological levels, to the extent that Allāh is said to exist and humans, by comparison, have existence only as a sign of the real existence. If people possess existence, then the meaning of “existence” cannot include the creator’s reality, for, in the view of our commentators and orthodox Muslim belief that would raise the human to the divine level or lower Allāh to the level of phenomenal being. In themselves, human beings are incomplete, needy, and finally non-existent in respect to the Real. This ontological poverty and need forms the background for the arrival unto Allāh.

¹³⁴ Sūrat Luqmān (31:14).

¹³⁵ “The solitary” renders *al-fard*, the highest rank or ranks of the God-friends in the hierarchy of spiritual authority. The *quṭb* or spiritual pole is among them but they are independent of his authority. In Ibn al-‘Arabī’s influential typology of God-friends, the solitaires are the highest degree within the type of sainthood called *malāmiyyah*, “the blameworthy” who “when they are present, no one pays them any attention; when they withdraw, their absence goes unnoticed... The ‘blame’ is both what they inflict on themselves in a ceaseless effort to detect their own imperfections, and that to which they are subjected by the élite: the fuqahā’ (jurists) and the Ṣūfīs (in this case Ṣūfīs who are still far from the end of the way),” Chodkiewicz, 109.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

In his composition of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*, Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh drew on the unique experience of his own illumination, his mystical instruction at the hands of Abū al-‘Abbās al-Mursī, the prior tradition of Sufism, the Qur’anic revelation and its expression in the Sunnah. His legal, literary and contemplative training offered him compositional and hermeneutical tools to express the fundamentals of Sufism with great economy, trusting to the intuition and Qur’anic sensibilities of his audience to profit from the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*. His commentators Ibn ‘Abbād, Zarrūq and Ibn ‘Ajībah found in Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s work a compelling interpretation of the highest aspirations of Islam: the vision of Allāh in this life, intimate knowledge of the creator, and the joy of existence beyond the confines of creaturely selfhood.

Their *shurūḥ* --expansions, amplifications--of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* are each an attempt to connect the work with the broad sweep of core Islamic texts and the earlier masters. While all three commentators overlapped in their concerns, insights, and styles of quotation, I observe the following distinctions. Ibn ‘Abbād wrote for the sake of two friends on a book whose popularity was spreading but whose terse style left them bemused. His commentary points out the direct relationship between the topics of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*, these topics’ longer expressions in famous Sufi works, and in the awareness for mystical key notes that the sensitive student of the Qur’an builds through his circular readings.

Unlike Ibn ‘Abbād, both Zarrūq and Ibn ‘Ajībah exert significant effort to detailing the flow of meaning from one *ḥikmah* to its succeeding passage. Each of the later commentators has a

public project that they support through the richness and prestige of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*. Zarrūq bridges the gap between popular devotionism and juridical authority. The law needs love; love needs the law. Both love and law are expressions of divine mercy, an all-encompassing reality that humans must encounter in its wholeness if they are to be whole human beings.

Ibn ‘Ajībah, himself a jurist by training just like Zarrūq, does not address the relationship of legal foundations and contemplative life. True life is a visionary, rapturous, loving existence like the vigorous revival of the Shādhiliyyah order that Ibn ‘Ajībah supported. The arrival cannot be realized through books as mechanical means of acquiring propositional knowledge; instead, the Real makes self-disclosure through phenomenal means, and so the role of Sufi writing is to inspire the reader to pursue his own mystical experience with zeal and sincerity.

These interpretive efforts came in the desire to propagate the *Kitāb al-ḥikam* not for its own sake but because of their deep faith in its truth and its brilliance in reflecting the nature of the authentic human being: luminous, unbound by man and beloved by God.

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Appendix A: TABLE OF CONVERSION BETWEEN DANNER'S & NWYIA'S NUMBERING

Nwyia's critical edition groups sequential, directly related passages into single aphorisms.

Danner	Nwyia	Danner	Nwyia	Danner	Nwyia
1-14	1-14	44	41	74	69
15	15 includes	45	42	75	70
16	Danner's 15 & 16	46	43	76	71
17	16	47	44	77	72
18	17	48	45	78	73
19	18	49	46	79	74
20	19	50	47	80	75
21	20	51	48	81	76
22	21	52	49	82	
23	22	53		83	77
24	23	54		84	
25	24	55	50	85	78
26	25	56	51	86	79
27		57	52	87	80
28	26	58	53	88	81
29	27	59	54	89	82
30	28	60	55	90	83
31		61	56	91	84
32	29	62	57	92	85
33	30	63	58	93	86
34	31	64	59	94	87
35	32	65	60	95	88
36	33	66	61	96	89
37	34	67	62	97	90
38	35	68	63	98	90
39	36	69	64	99	91
40	37	70	65	100	92
41	38	71	66	101	93
42	39	72	67	102	94
43	40	73	68	103	95

Danner	Nwyia	Danner	Nwyia	Danner	Nwyia
104	96	140	132	176	163
105	97	141	133	177	164
106	98	142	134	178	165
107	99	143	135	179	166
108	100	144	136	180	167
109	101	145	137	181	168
100	102	146	138	182	169
111	103	147	139	183	170
112	104	148	140	184	171
113	105	149	141	185	172
114	106	150	142	186	173
115	107	151	143	187	174
116	108	152	144	188	175
117	109	153	145	189	176
118	100	154	146	190	177
119	111	155	147	191	178
120	112	156	148	192	179
121	113	157	149	193	180
122	114	158	150	194	181
123	115	159	151	195	182
124	116	160	152	196	183
125	117	161	153	197	184
126	118	162		198	185
127	119	163	154	199	
128	120	164	155	200	186
129	121	165		201	187
130	122	166	156	202	
131	123	167	157	203	188
132	124	168		204	189
133	125	169	158	205	
134	126	170	159	206	
135	127	171	160	207	190
136	128	172	161	208	191
137	129	173		209	192
138	130	174	162	210	193
139	131	175	163	211	194

Danner	Nwyia	Danner	Nwyia	Danner	Nwyia
212	195	229	211	246	226
213	196	230	212	247	227
214	197	231	213	248	228
215	198	232	214	249	229
216	199	233		250	230
217		234	215	251	231
218	200	235	216	252	232
219	201	236	217	253	233
220	202	237	218	254	234
221	203	238	219	255	235
222	204	239	220	256	236
223	205	240	221	257	237
224	206	241		258	
225	207	242	222	259	238
226	208	243	223	260	239
227	209	244	224	261	
228	210	245	225	262	240