

## Ibn al-'Arabi's 'Myth of the Names'

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Throughout history traditional teachings have held that the level of existence we experience in everyday life derives from a "higher" level and in some respects "gives news" of it; as long as men have ears to hear the gods are never silent. The Koran expresses these ideas succinctly in such verses as, "He originates creation, then brings it back again, and provides for you out of heaven and earth" (27:64). A tradition like Hinduism speaks of a multitude of gods who exist beyond the plane of this visible world, though schools like Advaita Vedanta "demythologize" the gods by describing them as personifications of the various attributes of the supreme Brahman. As Cornford has shown, in ancient Greece a polytheistic tradition had become so drained of spiritual vitality that the gods lost all plausibility. Then Plato and others, taking inspiration from the still-living mystery religions, translated mythological concepts into an intelligible abstract terminology.

The Islamic intellectual tradition provides many examples of close links between "mythology" and more philosophical and abstract modes of expression. For example, the central "myth" of the Koran can be said to be the doctrine of the Divine Names, which, in many ways, plays the same role as the gods in polytheistic traditions, e.g., by providing a means of understanding how Ultimate Reality shapes and controls the ontological levels of the cosmos. In tracing the degree to which the doctrine of the Names influenced the Muslim mentality, one can conclude that the "cult of the Names" as found in popular Islam and Sufism plays a function not unrelated to the cultic role of a multiplicity of divinities in certain other traditions. For Sufism in general and for the school of Ibn al-'Arabi in particular, the Divine Names are the gate not only to theoretical but also to operative knowledge of God. In other words, speculation about the Names, based upon the data provided by the Koran and the Hadith, provides a theoretical framework, while the methodical "remembrance" or "invocation" (*dhikr*) of these same Names brings about the actualization of a visionary knowledge within the being of the spiritual

traveler. In the words of the Sufi poet Sana'i,

He came from theory to actuality,  
from the ear to my embrace.<sup>1</sup>

The goal of theoretical and visionary knowledge of the Names is to actualize entirely in oneself the divine perfections that each Name denotes; it is not entirely by accident that many Sufi texts speak of "one hundred" stages of ascent on the spiritual path, while God's "Most Beautiful Names" are often said to be of the same number. The prophetic utterance "Assume the moral traits of Allah!" is taken to mean that the traveler must purify the mirror of his own being until the Divine Sun shines clearly within it.

Given the potency of the Names for bringing about spiritual transformation, we should not be too surprised to see them almost personified into a multiplicity of divinities, even in the context of abstract speculation about the nature of Absolute Being. Of course the Mu'tazilites had accused the Ash'arites of introducing plurality into the One through their doctrine of Divine Attributes, but in the case of Ibn al-'Arabi we see a conscious utilization of the device of personification to produce a "myth" with the aim of clarifying the nature of what in the last analysis are only "relations" (*nisab*) and "modes" (*'i'tibaraf*) with no independent ontological status.

The doctrine of the Divine Names provides the warp and weft of Ibn al-'Arabi's grand synthesis of the various currents of Islamic thought. Though many of his followers emphasize Peripatetic terminology when systematizing his ideas,<sup>2</sup> Ibn al-'Arabi's own preference lies much closer to the terminology provided by the Koran and the Hadith, and his voluminous writings are basically commentaries on these two fundamental sources of the Islamic tradition.

As Ibn al-'Arabi often explains, the "Names" are not identical with the actual words that we read in the texts: "Know that the Names we have in our hands are the 'Names of the Divine Names' (*asma' al-asma' al-ilahiyah*)."<sup>3</sup> He defines the Names as follows:

If you want to know the reality of a Name and that which distinguishes (*tamayyuz*) it from other Names, you need to understand that it has two denotations (*dalalah*): it denotes the Named (*al-musamma* [i.e., the Essence]), and it denotes that reality through which it becomes distinguished from every other Name.<sup>4</sup>

Every Name denotes both the Essence (*dhat* [i.e., *dhat al-*

*asma'*, "The Possessor of the Names": thus *al-dhat* = *al-musamma*) and the meaning for which it was put forth, and which it demands. . . . Thus the Name is the Named in respect of the Essence, but it is other than the Named in respect of the meaning for which it was put forth and which pertains specifically to it.<sup>5</sup>

The Essence is often called Nondelimited Being (*al-wujud al-muttalq*), since it transcends every delimitation and determination and is the source of all existence. The Names then represent the modes in which Being manifests itself as It becomes defined and determined—or "entified" (*al-'ayyun*)—by the outwardly manifested forms that are called the "existents" (*al-manjudat*). The word "entification" is often employed by Ibn al-'Arabi with no special technical significance, but his systematizers—the most important of whom are his step-son Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi (d. 673/1274) and the latter's disciple Sa'id al-Din al-Farghani (d. ca. 700/1300)<sup>6</sup>—assign to the term a major importance, at least partly because of its close relationship with the term "entity" (*'ayn*). (The term "immutable entities" [*al-'ayan al-ihabiah*] is a key technical term in Ibn al-'Arabi's writings.)<sup>7</sup> Thus al-Farghani, having distinguished between "Name of the Name" and "Name," defines the latter as "the Essence, or, if you prefer, Being, not in respect of Its Nondelimitation, but in respect of a mode or an entification."<sup>8</sup>

The "Name of the Name" is a "form" (*surah*) that the Name assumes when it is written or pronounced. It is the outward aspect (*zahir*) of the Name and hence is contrasted with its inward reality (*batin*) or "meaning" (*ma'na*), i.e., the particular ontological possibility of Nondelimited Being that the Name represents. But the Name also assumes another form or forms: the creatures that "participate" (in the Platonic sense) in its reality and thus make it manifest in the cosmos. Hence Ibn al-'Arabi speaks of the two forms of the Name:

We only call upon God through the form of the Name. In fact, the Name has two forms: one of them is with us, in our breath and in the way we combine letters. These forms are the ones by which we call Him, and they are known as the "Names of the Divine Names." . . . Then the Divine Names have forms within the Breath of the All-Merciful (*rafas al-rahman*). . . . Beyond these forms are their meanings, which in relation to them play the same role that spirits [play in relation to bodies].<sup>9</sup>

The Breath of the All-Merciful, often referred to by Ibn al-'Arabi's followers as "deployed existence" (*al-wujud al-munbasit*), is the ontological substratum of the cosmos. Because of the complexity of the doctrine, the manner in which the Names bring the forms into existence within the Breath cannot be dealt with in the present context. But the point made here is fundamental: the outward forms of the Names are not only the words that we pronounce and write but also all the creatures of the cosmos.

Among the terms Ibn al-'Arabi employs to refer to the creatures are "possible existents" (*mu'mkinat*), "entities," "things" (*ashya'*), and "objects of God's knowledge" (*ma'lumat*). The last term refers to the fact that every single thing is known by God "before" its creation: "Not a leaf falls, but He knows it" (Koran 6:59). This knowledge of particulars is eternal, just as every other attribute of God is eternal; it is the concomitant (*lazimah*) of God's knowledge of Himself. The universal categories into which these particular objects of knowledge can be divided are then referred to as the Divine Names.

God's knowledge of Himself is the same as His knowledge of the cosmos (*al-'alam* [= *ma siwa Allah*, "everything other than God"]), since the cosmos is eternally contemplated by Him, even if it is qualified by nonexistence (*'adam*). But the cosmos is not contemplated by itself as long as it does not enter into existence. (And this is an ocean in which those observers who lack mystical unveiling [*kashf*] are destroyed.) Moreover, God's Self (*nafs*) exists eternally, so His knowledge is eternal; and His knowledge of Himself is His knowledge of the cosmos. So His knowledge of the cosmos exists eternally. Therefore He knows the cosmos in the state of its nonexistence, and He brings it into existence upon the form which it possesses in His knowledge.<sup>10</sup>

Ibn al-'Arabi clarifies the relationship between the Divine Names and the possible existents while commenting on the Koranic verse, "There is no thing (*shay'*) whose treasures are not with Him" (15:21):

It is obvious that God creates the things and that He brings them from nonexistence into existence. The relationship affirmed in this verse demands that He bring them out from the "treasuries" that are with Him. Thus He brings them from an existence that we do not perceive into an existence that we do perceive. Therefore the things are not totally nonexistent [before

their creation]. Clearly their nonexistence is relative (*idafif*), for in their state of nonexistence they are contemplated by Him; He distinguishes them by their own entities. . . . Thus the treasures of the things—or the "containers" (*aw'iyat*) in which they are stored—are only their possibilities (*imkanat*), nothing else, since the things have no existence in their own entities. Rather, they possess "immutability" (*thubut*). What they derive from God is certified existence (*al-wujud al-'ayni* [i.e., existence in the cosmos]), thereby becoming deployed before the viewers and among themselves through the existence of their entities. But they remain forever deployed with God in an immutable deployment (*tafsil thubuti*) . . .

[According to the Koran,] "He Is God; there is no god but He. He is the knower of the Unseen and the Visible. . . . He is the King, the All-Holy, the All-Peaceable, the All-Faithful, the All-Preserver, the All-Mighty, the All-Compeller, the All-Sublime. . . . He is God, the Creator, the Maker, the Shaper. To Him belong the Names Most Beautiful" (59:22-24). And you know, if you are among those given understanding by God, that even if each of these Names denotes a single Named in respect of His Essence, each also denotes a different meaning. "Say: 'Call upon Allah,' or 'call upon the All-Merciful': whichever you call upon, to Him belong the Names Most Beautiful" (Koran 17:110). So we only call upon a single God, who possesses these Names that are multiple in their own realities (*haqa'iq*) and denotations (*mafi'at*). And these Names are His eternally. So they are the "Divine Treasuries" within which are the treasures of the possibilities, and within the possibilities are the things.<sup>11</sup>

In the writings of al-Qunawi and especially al-Farghani, the Most Beautiful Names mentioned in the Koran are often referred to as the "universal Names" (*al-asma' al-kulliyah*), while the entities or things are called the "particular Names" (*al-asma' al-juz'iyah*). But, strictly speaking, only the former can properly be called Names, a fact which al-Farghani himself acknowledges,<sup>12</sup> for the "Names" are by theological definition conditional (*tawqifi*), i.e., applied to God only on condition that they be mentioned in the Revelation. In the words of Ibn al-'Arabi,

The Names are only applied to Him on condition (*ma'wquf*) of having reached us from Him (*wurudihā minhu*). So He is not

named except as He has named Himself, even if it be known that He is denoted by a Name. Thus conditionality (*tawqif*) in applying Names to Him is to be preferred (*awla*).<sup>13</sup>

Nonetheless, Ibn al-'Arabi is not afraid to point out that all things are, in the last analysis, "Names" of God: "In reality, there is nothing in existence but His Names."<sup>14</sup>

The Names of God are infinite in number, since they are known through that which is engendered from them—and that is infinite. However, it is true that the Names are reducible to a finite number of principles (*usul*).<sup>15</sup>

The interrelationship among the universal and particular Names, or the Most Beautiful Names and the entities, is summarized best by Ibn al-'Arabi's followers.<sup>16</sup> Note in the following explanation by al-Qunawi the several degrees of decreasing universality and increasing particularity:

God's contemplation in His own Essence of the immutable entities—which are the objects of His knowledge, or His creatures consists of His vision of that which is demanded by His Essence within the Presence (*hadrah* [= ontological level]) of His knowledge pertaining to the Essence and in respect of the fact that His knowledge is no different from Himself. [That which is demanded by His Essence] consists of the realities that are the concomitants (*tawazim*) of His Being, i.e., the "Names of the Essence," then the concomitants and corollaries of these Names, known as the "Names of the Attributes," and then the concomitants of the latter, known as the "Names of the Acts." [That which is demanded by His Essence also includes] the various kinds of qualities (*kayfiyyat*) and entifications actualized by ontological conjunction (*al-ig'itan al-wujudî*); the interpenetration (*tadakhul*) of the properties (*ahkam*) and attentivenesses (*tawajjuhât*) of the Names, which appear in the form of affinities and oppositions; everything that is actualized from the concomitants of these properties and relations, in keeping with the variety of their kinds; and everything within which the modalities of possibility double and redouble, as well as that which is touched by possibility in only one respect. . . . [God also contemplates] the total quantity of the kinds of combinations and interrelationships and the different respects in which they are limited and unlimited.

All of this is a Divine Contemplation within the knowledge of the Essence; it is comparable to the contemplation of that which is deployed (*al-mufasssal*) in that which is not deployed (*al-mujmal*), of the many in the one, and of the tree, its fruit, and its leaves in a single seed. Moreover, all these things are nonexistent in themselves; they do not demand any ontological plurality in the Essence of their Lord. For in their entirety they are the relations of His knowledge; their multiplicity is understood only in respect of the forms taken by the objects of knowledge within the Essence of their Knower. None of them possesses any existence outside their Knower's Essence.<sup>17</sup>

The above passage makes clear that the "Lord" (*rabb*) of all things is God, i.e., the Divine Essence as denoted by the Name "Allah." This Name is often referred to as the "Lord of the Lords," since it is the all-comprehensive Name (*al-ism al-jami*) that embraces all other Names, from the most universal to the most particular. But each thing, in addition to being a "vassal" (*marbub*) of the Name Allah, is also the vassal of another Name; the only exception is the Perfect Man, who is the locus of manifestation (*mazhar, majlis*) for the Name Allah itself.<sup>18</sup>

He who is named "Allah" is absolutely One through His Essence but also through His Names. In contrast, each existent has from Allah only its specific Lord; it cannot have everything. . . . No entity has any existence except through its own Lord. . . . And no entity has any activity, rather, the activity belongs to its Lord in it. . . . [Moreover, just as Ishmael was] "pleasing to his Lord" (Koran 19:55), so every existent is pleasing to its own Lord. But this does not mean that every existent who is pleasing to its own Lord is also pleasing to the Lord of another one of God's servants. . . . So what becomes entified [for each vassal in the Divine Knowledge] is what corresponds to him, and that is his Lord. No one takes from God in respect of His Absolute Unity (*ahadiyyat*).<sup>19</sup>

This discussion is presented more systematically from a slightly different point of view by al-Qunawi:

Existents are related to the One True Being only in respect of His entifications, which are His Names. Thus each existent is related to one of His Names in respect of the fact that the

ontological share (*al-hissat al-wujudyyah*) attributed to it—so that thereby it may come into existence—only becomes entified from the Presence of one of the Names; the replenishment (*ma'adad*) which reaches it in order that it may remain existent in the succeeding instant only reaches it by means of that Name; and its return [at the Resurrection] will only be to that Name. Indeed, its vision in the next world—providing that such is predestined for it will only be of that Name. So, in reality, that Name is its Lord. However, the Lord of those prophets of God who are known as "Possessors of Constancy" (*ulhu'-'azm*)<sup>20</sup> and of those saints who are Perfect Men is the outward (*zahir*) of the Name Allah, while the Lord of our Prophet, the most perfect of the Perfect Men, is the inward (*bahir*) of the Name Allah. Moreover, the Name Allah is the Lord of all existents since it comprehends all of them, but its Lordship is attributed to those existents that are not Perfect Men in respect and by means of its Names, and to the Perfect Men themselves in respect of the very Name Allah, not by means of any of the particular Names under its sway. Therefore, God's words, "Faces that day radiant, gazing upon their Lord" (Koran 75:22), allude to the fact that each person will see God in respect of a Name which is his Lord.<sup>21</sup>

Al-Farghani's words express the main point of this discussion succinctly: "The existence of every human being and of every other thing derives from (*mustanid ila*) a universal or a particular Divine Name."<sup>22</sup> In discussing the various levels of human beings, from the most perfect of the Perfect Men down to the most imperfect of ordinary men, al-Farghani points out that each person reflects two "Lords": in respect of being human he manifests the Name Allah, which is in fact the "Platonic Idea" of the human race,<sup>23</sup> but each person manifests this Name to a different degree, some more perfectly and some less perfectly. So the particular identity of each is determined by his "specific Lord" (*al-rabb al-khass*). Al-Farghani compares the degree to which each Lord is able to reveal the non delimited perfection of Sheer Being to the degree to which different "containers" are able to hold water. Thus (1) the Prophet Muhammad manifests the Name Allah as such, and to him belongs the "Supreme Watering Place." (2) The other Perfect Men manifest the Name Allah also, but in respect of the "Seven Principle Names",<sup>24</sup> to them belong the Oceans. (3) The prophets and saints near to the Perfect Men in receptivity and spiritual perception manifest each of these Seven Names as such, so they are the Seas. (4-

11) Other human beings manifest the other Divine Names, from the most universal down to the most particular. They can be compared to tributaries, rivers, streams, brooks, pools, tankards, jugs, and an infinite number of drops.<sup>25</sup>

It should be apparent from our discussion up to this point that one of the primary concerns of Ibn al-'Arabi's school was to classify the universal and particular Names of God in order to distinguish the degrees of ontological perfection manifested by the creatures in the cosmos. At the highest level this involves discerning the nature of the relationship of the Universal Names to the Divine Essence. As Ibn al-'Arabi explains, this is essentially the function of his "myth." But the ontological status of the Names needs to be reiterated, even though Ibn al-'Arabi begins his myth by referring to it. The question is, as Ibn al-'Arabi explains:

Do the Names possess ontological entities or not? On this point the speculative theologians are in dispute, but for us there is no dispute. They are relations and names given to intelligible (*ma'qul*), not ontological (*wujud*), realities. For the Essence is not multiple because of them, since a thing can only become multiple through ontological entities, not through properties, attributions, and relations.<sup>26</sup>

Here, then, is Ibn al-'Arabi's "Myth of the Names":

The Divine Names are a manner of expression (*isan haf*) required by the realities. What we want to explain in this connection is only the order of the intelligible realities, which are multiple in respect of relations, but not in respect of entified existence. For the Essence of God is One in respect of the fact that It is the Essence. However, since our existence, our utter need (*iftiqar*), and our possibility demonstrate that we must derive from a "Preponderator" (*murajjih*),<sup>27</sup> and since our existence from Him demands various relations, God in revealing the Koran named Himself by them in respect of the fact that He is the Speaker at the level of the Necessity of His Divine Being, which cannot be associated with any other, for He is One God, and there is no other God.

After this introduction concerning the origin of this matter and God's effectivity within and giving preponderance to the possible cosmos, I say as follows:

The Names gathered together at the Presence of the Named and, gazing upon their own realities and meanings, sought the outward manifestation of their own properties. They desired that their own entities might become mutually distinct through the effects that they make manifest. The Creator, who makes ordainments, the Knower, the Governor, the Deployer, the Producer, the Form-giver, the Nourisher, the Life-giver, the Slayer, the Inheritor, the Grateful, and all the rest of the Divine Names gazed upon their own essences but found nothing created, nothing governed, nothing deployed, nothing nourished. They said, "What can be done so that these entities might become outwardly manifest? For through them our properties and authority are deployed." So the Divine Names, which are demanded by some of the cosmos's realities after the manifestation of its entity, had recourse to the Name the Producer. They said, "Perhaps you can give existence to our entities so that our properties may appear and our authority be established. For at the moment we reside in a presence that cannot act as a receptacle for effectivity." The Producer replied, "That depends upon the Powerful, for I am under his sway (*tiyah*)."

The root of all this is that in their state of nonexistence the possible existents, in abasement and utter need, said to the Divine Names: "Nonexistence has blinded us from perceiving one another and from knowing what God requires you to do with us. So if you were to make manifest our entities and clothe us in the robe of existence, you would do us a great favor and we would display the appropriate respect and glorification. Moreover, your authority can only be truly realized by our becoming actually manifest; but today you possess authority only through potentiality and worthiness. So what we desire from you is what you should desire to an even greater degree from us." The Names replied, "What the possible existents are saying is true." Thus they fell to seeking the same thing.

When the Names had recourse to the Name the Powerful, he said, "I am under the sway of the Willing. I cannot bring into existence a single one of your entities without his designation. The possible existent in itself is not sufficient for me; first the command of the Commander must come from its Lord. Once He commands that a possible existent enter into engendered existence—once He says to it 'Be!'<sup>28</sup>—then He will give me power in myself, and I will undertake to bring it into existence. So have recourse to the Name the Willing. Perhaps he will give preponderance to and

designate the side of existence over the side of nonexistence. Then I will join the Commander and the Speaker and give you existence."

So they had recourse to the Name the Willing and they said to him, "We asked the Name the Powerful to bring our entities into existence, but he deferred the command to you. So what is your decree?" The Willing said, "The Powerful has spoken the truth. But I have no news concerning the decision of the Name the Willing concerning you. I do not know whether or not his knowledge foreordains that you will be given existence, so that we can designate you for it. For I am under the sway of the Knowing, so go to him and mention your situation to him."

So they went to the Name the Knowing and told him what the Name the Willing had said. The Knowing replied, "The Willing has spoken the truth. Indeed my knowledge has foreordained that you be given existence, but first courtesy (*al-adab*) must be observed. For we have a Presence who guards over us all, and that is the Name Allah. Thus we must attend upon Him, for He is the Presence of All-Comprehensiveness."

So all the Names came together in the Presence of the Name Allah. He said, "What concerns you?" So they told Him about their state. He said, "I am the Name that comprehends all your realities and I denote the Named, who is an All-Holy Essence, described by perfection and transcendence. Stay here while I enter unto Him whom I denote. So the Name Allah entered that Presence and repeated the words of the possible existents and the Names. He was told, "Go out, and tell all the Names to undertake among the possible existents what their realities require...."

So the Name Allah went out, next to him the Name the Speaking, acting as His spokesman to the possible existents and the Names. He related to them what the Named had said. So the Knowing, the Willing, the Speaking, and the Powerful undertook their tasks, and the first possible existent became outwardly manifest."<sup>29</sup>

## NOTES

1. *Diwan*, ed. Mudarris Radawi (Tehran, n.d.), p. 335.
2. That this school came to be called that of the "Oneness of Being" is not unconnected with this fact; in Ibn al-'Arabi's own



writings, the word "being" does not play the central role that it does in those of his followers.

3. *Al-Futuhat al-makkiyyah* (Beirut, n.d.), vol. 2, p. 56.33. Cf. Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi, *Ijaz al-bayan fi ta'wil umm al-ur'an* (Hyderabad-Deccan, 1949), p. 107 (also published as *al-Tafsir al-sufi li'l-qur'an*, ed. A. A. 'Ala [Cairo, 1969], p. 215); Sa'id al-Din al-Farghani, *Muntaha'l-madarik* (Cairo, 1293/1876), vol. 1, p. 25.

4. *Futuhat*, vol. 1, p. 210.12.

5. *Fusus al-hikam*, ed. A. 'Afifi (Beirut, 1946), pp. 79-80; cf. *Ibn Al-'Arabi: Bezels of Wisdom*, tr. R. W. J. Austin (Ramsey, N.J., 1980), p. 88; Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany, N.Y., 1989), pp. 34-38.

6. There is no question about al-Qunawi; I add al-Farghani because of his *Muntaha'l-madarik*, the introduction to which is the most systematic presentation of Ibn al-'Arabi's teachings that I know of.

7. Abu'l-'Ala' 'Afifi has discussed the importance of this term, first used by Ibn al-'Arabi, and its relationship with similar ideas found among the theologians (especially the Mu'tazilites) and the Peripatetic philosophers in "al-A'yan al-thabitah fi madhhab Ibn 'Arabi wa'l-madmat fi madhhab al-Mu'tazila" (*al-Kitab al-tihikari: Muhyi al-Din ibn 'Arabi* [Cairo: al-Hay'at al-Misriyyat al-'Ammah li'l-Ta'lif wa'l-Nashr, 1969], pp. 209-20).

8. *Muntaha'l-madarik*, vol. 1, p. 26.

9. *Futuhat*, vol. 2, pp. 396-97.

10. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 90.23; and vol. 2, ed. 'U. Yahya (Cairo: al-Hay'at al-Misriyyat al-'Ammah li'l-Kitab, 1972-), p. 78.

11. *Futuhat*, vol. 3, p. 193.

12. *Muntaha'l-madarik*, vol. 1, p. 27.23.

13. *Futuhat*, vol. 2, p. 232.27.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 303.13.

15. *Fusus*, p. 65; cf. *Ibn Al-'Arabi*, p. 68.

16. Although 'Afifi alludes to the relationship between the immutable entities and the Names ("al-A'yan al-thabitah," p. 214), he does not seem to recognize that the Names correspond to the Platonic Ideas (cf. *ibid.*, p. 219). Harry Wolfson writes that "[the Muslim Attributes [i.e., what Ibn al-'Arabi refers to as the Names; cf. *Futuhat*, vol. 4, p. 294.12] are not ideas. They lack the essential characteristic of the Platonic Ideas, that of being preexistent patterns of things that come into existence" ("Extraneous and Intraneous Interpretation of Platonic Ideas," in his *Religious Philosophy* [Cambridge, Mass., 1961], p. 51). This may be true for the

theologians that Wolfson is discussing, but—if I interpret correctly what Wolfson means by "preexistent patterns"—certainly not for Ibn al-'Arabi, as passages already quoted have demonstrated.

17. *Miftah al-ghayb*, on the margin of al-Fanari's *Misbah al-ins* (Tehran, 1323/1905-6), pp. 117-18.

18. See W. Chittick, "The Perfect Man as the Prototype of the Self in the Sufism of Jami," *Studia Islamica* 49 (1979): 135-57, esp. pp. 143ff; also *idem*, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, chap. 18.

19. *Fusus*, pp. 90-91.

20. Referred to in the Koran, these are said to be the highest rank of prophets, above both the messengers (*rusul*) and the "prophets" (*anbiya'*) proper.

21. *Maratib al-taqwa*, 2d introduction. I have edited the text on the basis of the following Istanbul manuscripts: Şehid Ali Paşa 1340/3, Carullah 1001/3, Halet Efendi ilavesi 66/7, Feyzullah 2163.

22. *Muntaha'l-madarik*, vol. 1, p. 86.

23. See W. Chittick, "The Perfect Man as the Prototype of the Self in the Sufism of Jami," and *idem*, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, pp. 274 ff.

24. Called the "Seven Leaders," they are normally enumerated in the following order (in accordance with a decreasing universality): the Living, the Knowing, the Willing, the Powerful, the Speaking, the Generous (*al-jawad*), the Just (*al-muqit*). Cf. *Muntaha'l-madarik*, vol. 1, p. 20; *Futuhat*, vol. 1, p. 100; *ibid.*, vol. 2, ed. Yahya, p. 136.

Other, slightly different, lists are also given. *Futuhat*, vol. 2, p. 438; Jami, *Naqd al-nusus*, ed. W. Chittick (Tehran, 1977), pp. 40-42.

25. *Muntaha'l-madarik*, vol. 1, pp. 43-44.

26. *Futuhat*, vol. 4, p. 294.17.

27. The fact that we are "possible existents" means that we stand in an equal relationship both to existence and nonexistence; we may exist, or we may not; there is nothing in ourselves that demands we have existence, since in fact we have nothing that may properly be called "our own." But the fact that we do in fact exist proves that something has "given preponderance" to our existence over our nonexistence. For Ibn 'Arabi's views on this point, see Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, pp. 81-83 and *passim*.

28. Koran 36:82: "His only command, when He desires a thing, is to say to it, 'Be!' and it is."

29. *Futuhat*, vol. 1, pp. 322-23; vol. 5, ed. Yahya, pp. 91-95; cf. vol. 1, p. 101; vol. 2, ed. Yahya, p. 131. See also *Insha' al-dawa'ir*, ed. H. S. Nyberg, in *Kleinere Schriften des Ibn al-'Arabi* (Leiden, 1919), pp. 36-38; *Anqa mughrrib* (Cairo, n.d.), pp. 33ff.

# Philosophies of Being and Mind

Ancient and Medieval

Edited by James T. H. Martin

Published under the auspices of

**EIDOS**

**Studies in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy**

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CARAVAN BOOKS  
DELMAR, NEW YORK  
1992