

Chittick, William C.: *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-'Arabi's Cosmology*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998. xi + 483 S., USD 24.95.

This is a sequel to the author's previous work on Ibn al-'Arabi, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (hereafter *SPK*). While the previous book treats Ibn al-'Arabi's theology, ontology, epistemology, hermeneutics, and soteriology, the new book treats his cosmology, anthropology, and psychology. The present book also includes a very interesting and informative appendix on Ibn al-'Arabi's views on certain Sufis, namely Abū l-'Abbās as-Sabtī, ar-Rabī'a, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī and his circle. Also very useful as a reference are the indexes of sources, Koranic verses, hadiths and sayings, proper names, Arabic terms, and technical terms.

*SPK* and the present book are very similar in structure. Under each heading, the author makes brief introductory remarks, then quotes Ibn al-'Arabi's text extensively, mainly from his magnum opus, the *Futūḥāt al-makkiya*. Therefore the book is more a selected translation of the *Futūḥāt al-makkiya* than an analysis of Ibn al-'Arabi's thought. Compared to the previous book, however, quotations are longer and more complete; very often entire chapters are quoted with no omissions. Since Ibn al-'Arabi is not a systematic thinker and jumps from one topic to another within one chapter, a quotation usually deals with many topics outside the heading under which it has been placed. The author is aware of this fact very well. In the introduction, he writes: "At least one reviewer of *SPK* complained that he found 'several passages [translated there] from the *Futūḥāt* unduly long for the presentation of the point under consideration.' Those who are looking for quick explanations of 'the point under consideration' will find this book much more disappointing than *SPK* ... My point is not to make the point, but to let Ibn al-'Arabi say what he wants to say in the way he wants to say it" (p. xi). Many quotations contain some enigmatic remarks and Ibn al-'Arabi's arguments are usually confusing. It would be more helpful to the reader if the author provided more exegeses and interpretations for each quotation. But this is precisely the style of Ibn al-'Arabi, and the author is commended for resisting the temptation to abstract the ideas out of the context, and to systematize them. To provide a good and reliable translation is the first step to the interpretation, and this book together with the previous book will serve as the basis for future study on Ibn al-'Arabi. Another desideratum for Ibn al-'Arabi studies is a critical, reliable text of the *Futūḥāt al-makkiya*. The author had to use the old Būlāq edition in most parts. If a critical edition had been available, the author's work would have been made much easier.

The translation is so faithful to the original Arabic that it almost corresponds with the original word for word. The author changed the English equivalents used in *SPK* for several technical terms. The list of the major changes in terminology is given in the appendix. In this book the author opted for the use of the more concrete, less abstract terms for rendering technical

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terms. For instance, *athar*, *hudūth*, *'ulamā' al-rusūm*, which were translated in *SPK* as "effect", "temporal origination", and "exoteric scholars" are now in this book "trace", "new arrival", and "the ulama of the tracings" respectively. It is difficult to say whether the new translations of these terms are better than the old ones, because they are technical terms used before Ibn al-'Arabī by theologians and philosophers. It is true that Ibn al-'Arabī gives different meanings to these words, but he is still conscious of their technical meanings in theology and philosophy, and readers are also expected to know them, but the author's new translations obscure the historical background of these terms.

According to the "Introduction", the author is planning a third book, *The Breath of the All-Merciful: Ibn al-'Arabī's Articulation of the Cosmos*. When that book appears, the three books will cover considerable parts of the *Futūḥāt*, and our knowledge of Ibn al-'Arabī will be greatly advanced.

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