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# Love in the Writings of Ibn 'Arabī

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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Love in the Writings of Ibn ‘Arabī

by

Hany Talaat Ahmed Ibrahim

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
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## Abstract

This thesis aims to explore the theory of love in the writings of the Andalusian Sufi Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240 CE). It begins by examining Love, both the nature of Divine and human love, as has been passionately declared in the writings of many of the Sufi masters that preceded Ibn ‘Arabī before turning to the views of the Sufi master himself.

The doctrine of Divine love as outlined by many of the Sufis revolves mainly around two important Qur’anic verses, and three hadiths. The two Qur’anic verses indicate God’s initiating love, and how it is that humans can attain God’s love, while the three hadiths express different aspects of realizing the love of God, and the reasons for God’s creation of the world. The Sufis from the early centuries of Islam (9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>) sometimes defined love as their “religion,” by which they meant, their way to God. Ibn ‘Arabī not only expanded on these earlier Sufi theories, but also detailed his own original insights. He openly declared the primacy of love over all else and argued that love is the dynamic force behind creation.

To help understand the importance of Divine love in Akbarian thought (the school created by Ibn ‘Arabi), an in-depth reading and a close textual analysis of selected works on Divine love by Ibn ‘Arabī’s will be undertaken. The most important of these are *The Interpreter of Longings* (1214 CE) (*Turjumān al-Ashwāq*, 611 AH), *The Ringstones of Wisdom* (1232 CE) (*Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 630 AH), and *The Meccan Openings* (1238 CE) (*al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 636 AH).

The approach outlined above will help demonstrate love’s predominant position in Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings and assist those who study these volumes. In addition, it will provide certain interpretive codes that can help to unlock the meanings and emphasize, at the same time, the significance of Ibn ‘Arabī’s unique symbolic language.

In undertaking this task, my hope is that this research will help to inspire further inquiry into Ibn ‘Arabī’s multi-faceted teachings, with its rich and complex conceptualizations of love.

## Preface

Since my late teens, I was inspired by the writings of the Great Sheikh, Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 1074), and his renowned book *The Epistle on Sufism* (1045 CE) (*Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, 437 AH). The passion and insights that came from this reading were later channeled towards learning the profound knowledge found in the works of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī, who is claimed by many as the Greatest Sheikh. It was these early encounters with the topic of Divine love in the writings of Ibn ‘Arabī that were instrumental in motivating me ultimately to write this dissertation.

Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings are a testimony to the depths of his contemplation, analysis and engagement with the main sources of Islamic thought. The uniqueness of Ibn ‘Arabī’s works not only provided Islam with one of the most sophisticated forms for the profession of the “Oneness of God” (*tawḥīd*), but also with an entrance into the highest realms of Islamic spirituality.

This dissertation is my attempt to help communicate the love and wisdom of Ibn ‘Arabī to those who have the dedication to appreciate this kind of knowledge. I have further clarified what I have understood to be Ibn ‘Arabī’s unique mystical and metaphysical developments. This was achieved by explaining how Ibn ‘Arabī’s love of both God and human beings has changed the understanding of love.

Finally, my thesis is situated in the midst of a constantly expanding scholarship on Ibn ‘Arabī. I would like to acknowledge that I have been supported in my explorations of Ibn ‘Arabī by the works of such prominent scholars as Michel Chodkiewicz (1993), William Chittick (2013), Pablo Beneito (2002), James Morris (2005), Claude Addas (1993), among others.

\*This thesis is an original, unpublished, independent work by the author © Hany Talaat  
Ahmed Ibrahim.

## Acknowledgements

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

First of all, my thanks go to my supervisor Professor Morny Joy for the learning process of this project. I would also like to convey my appreciation to my supervisory committee members, Professors Pablo Beneito and Tinu Ruparell for their guidance and support. Professor Beneito is a renowned scholar who has a deep understanding of Islam, Sufism and Ibn ‘Arabī. Professor Ruparell is specialist in Indian philosophy, religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue. The continued support from Professors Mohammed Rustom and Atif Khalil, who are distinguished academics in the fields of Islamic mysticism and Islamic philosophy, was especially invaluable. Professors Rustom and Khalil have always found the time to provide me with valuable feedback and noteworthy suggestions throughout the various stages of my study.

My deepest thanks go to Dr. Marica Cassis, the Head of the Department of Classics and Religion, for her unwavering support and assistance. I also wish to thank the Department of Classics and Religion for giving me the opportunity to be part of the PhD program and for the opportunity to teach. I would also like to acknowledge the academic staff, employees, and colleagues at the University of Calgary, for facilitating my study and research.

Special thanks to Professors Michael Sells, William Chittick, James Morris and Dr. Eric Winkel, who are leading scholars of Ibn ‘Arabī, for their guidance, support and confidence in my research and scholarly potential. I would also like to thank Haseebullah Amirzada, Ilyas and Zohal for their assistance with the formatting of my thesis. I am very

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## **Dedication**

To my Father, my first friend and teacher.

Thank you for all your advice, guidance and wisdom.

You will always be remembered. You are always present.

To my wife Shaimaa, and my children Nooreldin and Ezzeldin.

I will forever love you.



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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

The topic of my thesis focuses on the work of the Andalusian Sufi mystic Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī<sup>1</sup> (1165-1240 CE), who is also known as Ibn ‘Arabī. Love plays a significant role in his overall religious and mystical vision. He composed numerous works on the subject, either lyrically as in *The Interpreter of Longings* (1214 CE)<sup>2</sup> (*Turjumān al-Ashwāq*, 611 AH),<sup>3</sup> and the *Collection of Gnostic Poems* (1201 CE) (*Dīwān al-Ma‘ārif*, 599AH),<sup>4</sup> or in discursive expositions such as *The Crown of Epistles* (1202 CE) (*Tāj al-Rasā’il*, 600AH)<sup>5</sup> and *The Meccan Openings* (1238 CE) (*al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 636 AH),<sup>6</sup> among other works.<sup>7</sup> His writings comprise a wide and diverse range of topics that reflect his profound knowledge. Ibn ‘Arabī draws his subject matter and understanding from a number of eclectic domains such as, language, poetry, jurisprudence, metaphysics and mysticism.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In my thesis I use the standard system of Roman transliteration of Arabic for academic writing, which is the IJMES (International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies) system of translation and transliteration.

<sup>2</sup> The dates of Ibn ‘Arabī’s books are from the *MIAS Archive Report: Catalogue of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Work* and Osman Yahia, *Mu‘alafāt Ibn ‘Arabī tāriḥahā wa taṣnīfahā*, trans. Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Ṭayib (Cairo: al-hay’ah al-miṣriyyah al-‘āmah lil-kitāb, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Yahia, *Mu‘alafāt Ibn ‘Arabī tāriḥahā wa taṣnīfahā*, 249.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 315.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.; See “Tāj al-Rasā’il wa Minhāj al-Wasā’il Tāj al-Rasā’il wa Minhāj al-Wasā’il fi Idāḥ al-Ma‘ānī al-Ilāhiyya al-Mūdā‘ah fi al-Maghānī al-Rūḥāniyya,” in *Rasā’il ibn al-‘Arabī*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Sultan al-Mansub and Abrar Ahmad Shahi (Cairo: Sharikat al-Quds lil-nashr wal-tawzī‘, 2017); See also Denis Gril, “Love Letters to the Ka‘ba: A Presentation of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Tāj al-Rasā’il,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society* 17 (1995): 40-54.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 434. Scholars in the field of Islamic studies have translated *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* as *The Meccan Revelations*, *The Meccan Illuminations*, and *The Meccan Openings*. All these translations are valid and acceptable among Ibn ‘Arabī scholars. See William Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabī: Heir to the Prophets* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005), 14; and James Morris, *The Reflective Heart: Discovering Spiritual Intelligence in Ibn ‘Arabī’s Meccan Illuminations* (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2005), 3-5, 317. I shall be using the title *The Meccan Openings (al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya)* in my thesis.

<sup>7</sup> Claude Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society* 32 (2002), 28.

<sup>8</sup> James Morris, “Rhetoric and Realization in Ibn ‘Arabī: How Can We Communicate His Meanings Today?” accessed December 11, 2019, [http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articlespdf/sp\\_rhetoric.pdf](http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articlespdf/sp_rhetoric.pdf), 2n1.

Many authors have declared that Ibn ‘Arabī depicted a mysticism of Divine love more comprehensively than any other Muslim scholar in the history of Islamic literature.<sup>9</sup> In this, he differed from the early 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century Sufis by expanding and elaborating on their ideas, and by introducing a framework that fused early Sufi modes of mysticism with his own insights. The Sufis, from the earlier centuries of Islam,<sup>10</sup> defined and classified different stations (*maqāmāt*) of love.<sup>11</sup> It is worth mentioning that the term “station” (*maqām*), plural (*maqāmāt*), is a Sufi term. This term refers to a permanent condition of spiritual consciousness on the path of realizing the “Oneness of God.” In each “station,” the Sufi has to experience and fulfill all the spiritual obligations and qualities of a particular “station” before progressing to another.<sup>12</sup>

Love for the Sufis was not simply considered as a personal experience.<sup>13</sup> Instead it constituted their “religion” in terms of a deep devotion to God, and their “being,” in the sense of their existence as belonging solely to God.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 145.

<sup>10</sup> See Gerhard Böwering, and Orfali Bilal, *The Comfort of the Mystics: A Manual and Anthology of Early Sufism* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 132.

<sup>12</sup> See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and the Promise of Sufism, Islam’s Mystical Tradition* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 243; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 99-100; Carl Ernst, *Sufism: An Introduction to the Mystical Tradition of Islam* (Boston & London: Shambhala, 2011), 102.

<sup>13</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 138.

<sup>14</sup> Leonard Lewisohn, “Divine Love in Islam,” *Encyclopaedia of Love in World Religions*, ed. Yudit Kornberg Greenberg (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 165.

### 1.1. The life of Ibn ‘Arabī

Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-‘Arabī al-Ṭā’ī al-Ḥātimī, known as Ibn al-‘Arabī or Ibn ‘Arabī,<sup>15</sup> was born in 1165 CE in Murcia, Spain.<sup>16</sup> He was later given the title “Muḥyī al-Dīn” which means “The Reviver of Religion.”<sup>17</sup> He is one of the most influential and controversial Muslim thinkers in the history of Islam. Sufis consider him to be “The Greatest Master” (*al-Shaykh al-Akbar*), seeing him as the foremost and principal expositor of its teachings and doctrines.<sup>18</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī was raised in the environs of the Andalusian court, and as a child he received a customary religious education which was given to most children of the time.<sup>19</sup> He spent the early years of his youth traveling to various cities in Spain and North Africa where he met scholars, philosophers and Sufis. In 1184 CE,<sup>20</sup> while in Almeria he was initiated into the Sufi path.<sup>21</sup> Once Ibn ‘Arabī underwent his initiation to Sufism, he devoted his life to God and to the spiritual path.<sup>22</sup> During these years he experienced theophanic visions in which he began to realize the transcendent unity of all Divine revelations.<sup>23</sup> In 1180 CE,<sup>24</sup> during his stay in Cordova, he met the renowned Andalusian philosopher Averroes (d. 1198 CE). A debate regarding the epistemic foundations of

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<sup>15</sup> Many scholars chose to name him Ibn ‘Arabī instead of Ibn al-‘Arabī in order to differentiate between Ibn al-‘Arabī the Sufi mystic and a contemporary *Mālikī* scholar and theologian with a similar name, Abū Bakr Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 1148 CE).

<sup>16</sup> Steven Hirtenstein, *The Unlimited Mercifier: The Spiritual Life and Thought of Ibn ‘Arabī* (Anqa Publishing: Oxford, 1999), 33-35.

<sup>17</sup> Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 4.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>20</sup> Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur: The Life of Ibn ‘Arabī* (The Islamic Texts Society: Cambridge, 1993), 49.

<sup>21</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 95.

<sup>22</sup> Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 5.

<sup>23</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 95.

<sup>24</sup> Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, 296.

knowledge took place between them.<sup>25</sup> In 1202 CE he visited Mecca for the first time,<sup>26</sup> and began the composition of two of his famous works, *The Meccan Openings*, and the love poems that appeared in *The Interpreter of Longings*.<sup>27</sup> From Mecca, he traveled throughout the regions of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Egypt,<sup>28</sup> and in 1204 CE, in the city of Mosul in Iraq, he received the mantle (*al-khirqah*) of al-Khidr.<sup>29</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī’s meeting with al-Khidr marked his initiation into the high spiritual stations of Divine realities and deep mystical knowledge of Sufism.<sup>30</sup> In 1205 CE,<sup>31</sup> he visited Anatolia, where in Konya he met Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 1274 CE), who subsequently became his leading disciple and most important interpreter, as well as a propagator of his works.<sup>32</sup> From Konya Ibn ‘Arabī traveled eastward toward Armenia and then south to Baghdad, where in 1211 CE he met the famous Sufi Shihāb al-Dīn ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī.<sup>33</sup> Finally, in 1223 CE he settled in Damascus, where he completed *The Meccan Openings* (*al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*).<sup>34</sup> In 1240

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<sup>25</sup> See Ibid., 37; Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, 41-42; and Ibn ‘Arabī, *Sufis of Andalusia: The Rūḥ al-quḍḍ and al-Durrat al-fākhīrah of Ibn ‘Arabī*, trans. with introduction and notes by R. W. J. Austin (Northleach, Cheltenham: Beshara Publications Ltd, 2014), 23-24. In addition, Ibn ‘Arabī and Averroes discussed the type knowledge gained through spiritual illuminations (*futūḥāt*), personal unveilings (*kashf*) and divine inspirations (*ilhāmāt*) experienced by Ibn ‘Arabī, and the speculative, rational and philosophical contemplations as rationalised by Averroes. Averroes asked Ibn ‘Arabī if the epistemological outcome of the spiritual experience was similar to that of the speculative and rational thoughts of philosophy. Ibn ‘Arabī implied that they are not similar, and this reply disturbed Averroes. See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, (Cairo: Būlāq, 1911), 1:153-154.

<sup>26</sup> Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, 302.

<sup>27</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 96.

<sup>28</sup> Chittick *Ibn ‘Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 6.

<sup>29</sup> The encounter of Ibn ‘Arabī with the transcendent being, al-Khidr, who adorned him with the Sufi mantle (*al-khirqah*), is not only considered by many Sufis to be a unique privilege and a sign of the elevated spiritual state of Ibn ‘Arabī, but also is an indication of the deep mystical knowledge that will be entrusted to Ibn ‘Arabī. For a comprehensive study on al-Khidr and Ibn ‘Arabī’s encounter with him see Stephen Hirtenstein, “The Mantle of Khidr” a paper presented at ARAM conference on *Iconography and Mythology of Prophet Elijah*, *St. George and al-Khodor in the Syrian Orient*, July 4-6, 2006, Oxford, U.K.; See also Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, 53-67.

<sup>30</sup> Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, 60.

<sup>31</sup> Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, 304.

<sup>32</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 96.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 97.



CE, Ibn ‘Arabī died and was buried at the foot of Mount Qāsiyūn North of Damascus, where Sultan Salīm I of the Ottomans built a mausoleum upon his resting place in 1517 CE.<sup>35</sup> Ibn Arabi’s mosque and mausoleum in Damascus remains to this day a popular visiting site for people from all over the world who seek the spiritual blessings of the sheikh.

## 1.2. The works of Ibn ‘Arabī

Othman Yahia mentions there are one-thousand five hundred and ninety (1590) works that are attributed to Ibn ‘Arabī, many of which appear under different titles.<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, the number of books listed by Ibn ‘Arabī himself, or reported by his students, come to a total of three-hundred and seventeen (317).<sup>37</sup> When Othman Yahia examined the works credited to Ibn ‘Arabī which have survived to the present day, he concluded that this number totaled to one-hundred and six (106).<sup>38</sup> However, Stephen Hirtenstein indicates in his most recent study, that the extant separate titles by Ibn ‘Arabī, up-to-date, come to a figure of ninety-four (94) authentic works, of which fifty-four (54) are now available in published critical editions.<sup>39</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī’s works range in size from short treatises that are a few pages long to large volumes of full-sized books with subjects varying from theology and metaphysics, to cosmology, psychology and poetry.<sup>40</sup> From Ibn ‘Arabī’s vast body of literature, books such

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Yahia, *Mu’alafāt Ibn ‘Arabī tārikhahā wa taṣnīfahā*, 6.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> For the most updated study on Ibn ‘Arabī’s works see Stephen Hirtenstein, “Views from the Home Front: manuscript preservation and the MIAS archiving project,” a paper presented at *Current Perspectives on Ibn ‘Arabī and ‘Akbarī’ Thought*, June 24-25, 2019, UCLouvain, Belgium. See also Jane Clark and Stephen Hirtenstein “Establishing Ibn ‘Arabī’s Heritage: First findings from the MIAS Archiving Project,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arābi Society* 52 (2012): 1-32.

<sup>40</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 98.

as *The Meccan Openings (al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya)*, *The Ringstones of Wisdom (Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam)*, and *The Interpreter of Longings (Turjumān al-Ashwāq)* have become the most popular and widely accepted of his works.<sup>41</sup> In my thesis I focus mainly on the works of Ibn ‘Arabī where Divine Love is mentioned in works such as *The Meccan Openings*, *The Ringstones of Wisdom*, and *The Interpreter of Longings*.

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

Ibn ‘Arabī’s books are regarded by many as the richest and most complex texts in the Sufi tradition.<sup>42</sup> The multi-faceted mature work, *The Meccan Openings (al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya)*, is considered by many scholars to be his magnum opus.<sup>43</sup> The book has two editions. Ibn ‘Arabī began composing the first edition, in Mecca in 1202 CE/598 AH, and completed writing it in Damascus in 1231 CE/629 AH.<sup>44</sup> The second edition, which is a revised recension, was written by Ibn ‘Arabī in Damascus between 1234 CE/632 AH and 1238 CE/636 AH.<sup>45</sup> *The Meccan Openings* consists of five hundred and sixty Chapters. As an encyclopedic work of great erudition, it discusses various principles of metaphysics, ontology, theology, cosmology, mysticism, psychology, and jurisprudence,<sup>46</sup> as well as Ibn ‘Arabī’s spiritual experiences and his hagiographies of the Sufi saints.<sup>47</sup> It has been described by Seyyed Hossein Nasr as, “a veritable compendium of the esoteric sciences in

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<sup>41</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 264.

<sup>42</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 95. See the selected Chapters in recent translations of *The Meccan Openings* in the following books by Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Meccan Revelations: Ibn al ‘Arabi*. ed. by Michel Chodkiewicz. trans. William Chittick and James Morris. Vol. 1. (New York: Pir Press, 2002); Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Meccan Revelations: Ibn al ‘Arabi*. ed. by Michel Chodkiewicz. trans. Cyrille Chodkiewicz and Denis Gril, Vol. 2. (New York: Pir Press, 2004); Ibn al-‘Arabi, *The Openings Revealed in Makkah*, trans. Eric Winkel, Vol. 2. (New York: Pir Press Ltd., 2020).

<sup>43</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 95.

<sup>44</sup> Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, 302; Yahia, *Mu’alafāt Ibn ‘Arabī tārikhahā wa taṣnīfahā*, 434.

<sup>45</sup> Yahia, *Mu’alafāt Ibn ‘Arabī tārikhahā wa taṣnīfahā*, 434.

<sup>46</sup> Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabi: Heir to the Prophets*, 7.

<sup>47</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 98.

Islam which surpasses in scope and depth anything of its kind that has been composed before or since.”<sup>48</sup> *The Meccan Openings* reprises many of Ibn ‘Arabī’s ideas which had been introduced in his earlier works, yet here, they are expressed in a more comprehensive, detailed, and mature form. This is evident in one of the Chapters of *The Meccan Openings* entitled, “On Knowing the Station of Love” (*fi ma‘rifat maqām al-maḥabba*),<sup>49</sup> which contains one of Ibn ‘Arabī’s most extensive and impressive writings on love. This position will be supported in my analysis of Chapter 178 of *The Meccan Openings* in Chapter Five of this dissertation.

### 1.2.2. *The Ringstones of Wisdom (Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam)*

The second of his influential books is *The Ringstones of Wisdom (Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam)*.<sup>50</sup> It was composed in 1232 CE/630 AH.<sup>51</sup> He was inspired by a Prophetic vision, where Ibn ‘Arabī saw the Prophet Muhammad handing to him the book of *The Ringstones of Wisdom*, and asking him to convey it to people so they can benefit from it.<sup>52</sup> The book comprises twenty-seven Chapters, and is based on the *Qur’ān*, *aḥādīth* and Ibn ‘Arabī’s personal interpretations.<sup>53</sup> Each Chapter represents a “bezel of wisdom” (*faṣ ḥikma*), symbolized by one of the twenty-seven Prophets mentioned in the *Qur’ān* and *aḥādīth*. It begins with Adam and ends with the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>54</sup> In my examination of *The*

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:320-362.

<sup>50</sup> See William Chittick, “Ibn ‘Arabī’s Own Summary of the *Fuṣūṣ*: The Imprint of the Bezels of Wisdom,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society* 1 (1984). See also Ibn ‘Arabī, *Le Livre Des Chatons Des Sagesses*, traduction de Charles-Andrè Gilis (Paris: AlBouraq, 1997).

<sup>51</sup> Yahia, *Mu‘alafāt Ibn ‘Arabī tārikhahā wa taṣnīfahā*, 478; Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, eds. ‘Abd el-Aziz Sultan al-Mansub and Abrar Ahmed Shahi (Cairo: Sharikat al-Quds lil-Nashr wal-tawzi’, 2016), 47.

<sup>52</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 99.

<sup>53</sup> Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 7.

<sup>54</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 98.

*Ringstones of Wisdom* in Chapter Three of my thesis I will focus on the section where Ibn ‘Arabī discusses the concept of Divine love with regards to the Prophet Muhammad.

### 1.2.3. *The Interpreter of Longings (Turjumān al-Ashwāq)*

The third of Ibn ‘Arabī’s famous books is *The Interpreter of Longings* (1214 CE) (*Turjumān al-Ashwāq*, 611 AH).<sup>55</sup> It is Ibn ‘Arabī’s first work to be translated into English.<sup>56</sup> The book is a collection of Sufi love odes, which were composed in Mecca when Ibn ‘Arabī was inspired by the meeting of a pious and beautiful woman called Niẓām.<sup>57</sup> He also wrote a commentary on the poems called, *The Provisions of Deep Attachments in the Explanation of the Interpreter of Longings* (1215 CE) (*Dhkhā’ir al-A’lāq: Sharḥ Turjumān al-Ashwāq*, 612 AH),<sup>58</sup> where Ibn ‘Arabī mentions that the poems of the *Turjumān* deal basically with Divine realities concealed behind the veil of profane love.<sup>59</sup> In Chapter Three I will analyze selected love poems from *The Interpreter of Longings*.

### 1.2.4. **Other works**

Besides these three major works, some of Ibn ‘Arabī’s other important treatises include *The Creation of the Spheres (Inshā’ al-Dawā’ir)*, *Binding the Lively Mind (‘Uqlat al-Mustawfīz)*, and *The Divine Guidelines (al-Tadbīrāt al-Ilāhiyya)* in cosmology. He also authored numerous expositions on the practical methods of Sufi spirituality, such as *The Treatise on the Spiritual Retreat (Risālat al-Khulwa)* and *The Spiritual Counsels (al-Waṣāya)*.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, his *Collection of Gnostic Poems (Dīwān al-Ma‘ārif)* is considered

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<sup>55</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Tarjumān al-Ashwāq: A Collection of Mystical Odes*, trans. Reynold Nicholson (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1911). See section 3.8 in Ch. Three of this thesis.

<sup>56</sup> Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 7.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Denis McAuley, *Ibn ‘Arabī’s Mystical Poetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 33; Nicholson, *The Tarjumān Al-Ashwāq*, 5n3; Yahia, *Mu’alafāt Ibn ‘Arabī tārikhahā wa taṣnīfahā*, 317.

<sup>59</sup> Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 7.

<sup>60</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 98.

by many Sufis and scholars to be equivalent to the poetry of his contemporary Sufi ‘Umar Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 1235 CE),<sup>61</sup> if not even richer in its metaphysical connotations.<sup>62</sup> While many of these works have been published, hundreds of his works are still in manuscript form that are dispersed in libraries worldwide.<sup>63</sup>

### 1.3. Love in Sufism & Islam

Love in Sufism and Islam, both the nature of Divine and human love, has been examined very thoroughly in the writings of those considered to be the representatives of both Islamic spirituality and of Sufism.<sup>64</sup> Sufis present a mystical dimension of Islam which stresses the importance of devotion and love for God. Ever since the beginning of the Sufi tradition (circ. 9<sup>th</sup> century) love has always been evident and central in their teachings. The metaphysical approach toward love in Sufi literature is somewhat indirect in its language, imagery and expression.<sup>65</sup> Generally, most Sufi authors believe that writing on love should be discreet because it conveys personal, spiritual and private experiences and feelings. These authors also agree that love is challenging to define, and that its reality can only be known by experiencing it.<sup>66</sup> Basically, Sufi literature on love examines three main issues: first, the origin of love; second, the life of love, and their experience of it in daily life, then ultimately, the final goal of love which is to be one in God.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>62</sup> McAuley, *Ibn ‘Arabī’s Mystical Poetics*, 23, 44.

<sup>63</sup> Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 1.

<sup>64</sup> William Chittick, *Divine Love: Islamic Literature and the Path to God* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2013), xi.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, xxiv.

Love has been acknowledged by many Muslims as holding a central position and playing a crucial role within the overall ethos of the religion of Islam.<sup>68</sup> Love is expressed in many important verses in the *Qur'ān*,<sup>69</sup> and the word *ḥubb* in the context of love is one of eight forms of the root *ḥ-b-b* that are mentioned ninety-five times in the *Qur'ān*.<sup>70</sup> The failure to accurately understand the aims, intentions, and interpretive traditions of Islamic scripture has caused many misunderstandings regarding the nature of Islam. One of these misconceptions relates to the understanding of love in Islam.

By invoking the allusive language of love, with the exception of rare cases, Sufis were able to express and convey mystical knowledge without coming into direct conflict with strict, uncompromising formulations of exoteric dogma.<sup>71</sup> Early Sufis such as al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsabī (857 CE), al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (869 CE), Abū Bakr al-Sarrāj (988 CE) and Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (996 CE) attempted to reconcile Islamic orthodoxy with Sufi mysticism.<sup>72</sup> Such attempts, came to fruition with the works of Ibn 'Arabī in the twelfth century.<sup>73</sup> Sufis considered the path of love to be the most suitable path to draw the general public (*al-'awāmm*) closer to God.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>68</sup> See William Chittick, "The Religion of Love Revisited." *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 54 (2013): 37-59. Ghazi bin Muhammad, *Love in the Holy Quran* (Chicago: Kazi Publications Inc, 2010); Maurice Gloton, "The Qur'anic Inspiration of Ibn 'Arabi's Vocabulary of Love – Etymological Links and Doctrinal development," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 27 (2000): 37-52; Pablo Benito, "The Servant of the Loving One: On the Adoption of the Character Traits of al-Wadūd," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 32 (2002): 1-24; Addas, "The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn 'Arabi," 25-44.

<sup>69</sup> Lewisohn, "Divine Love in Islam," 163.

<sup>70</sup> Elsaid M. Badawi & Muhammad Abdel Haleem, eds. *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 186.

<sup>71</sup> Titus Burckhardt, *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine* (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2008), 21.

<sup>72</sup> See Delfina Serrano Ruano, "Why Did the Scholars of al-Andalus Distrust al-Ghazālī? Ibn Rushd al-Jadd's *Fatwā* on Awliyā' Allah," *Der Islam: Journal of the History and Culture of the Middle East*, 83 (2006): 137-156. See also *The Book of Observance of the Rights of God (Kitāb al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh)* by al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsabī; *The Rare Principles in the Sayings of the Messenger (Nawādir al-Uṣūl fī Ma'rifat Aḥādīth al-Rasūl)* by al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī; *The Book of Flashes (Kitāb al-Luma')* by al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī; and *Nourishment of the Hearts (Qūt al-Qulūb)* by Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī.

<sup>73</sup> Ruano, "Why Did the Scholars of al-Andalus Distrust al-Ghazālī?" 152.

<sup>74</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 141.

The Sufi path of love is typically understood to reach its summit by attaining “Oneness in God.”<sup>75</sup> This is understood as the effacement or annihilation (*fanāʾ*) of the lover (*muḥibb*) in the Divine Beloved (*maḥbūb*). In other words, spiritual or mystical self-realization is achieved when all forms of love are perceived as the reflection of the one and only real love (*al-ʾishq al-ḥaqīqī*), which is understood to be the love of God.<sup>76</sup> In fact, in the Sufi metaphysical understanding of reality, God loves only Himself (*la yuḥibbu illā nafsahu*), since nothing exists but Him (*laysa fi-l wujūd illā huwa*). This topic will be explored in greater detail in the thesis.<sup>77</sup>

Furthermore, Persian Sufi literature is acknowledged as presenting a rich, melodious and sweet form of expression, while certain Arabic writings assert dogmatic and abstract technical arguments.<sup>78</sup> On the one hand, the Persian Sufi Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d.1273 CE) is widely acknowledged to be one of the leading representatives of the school of Divine love.<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, Ibn ʿArabī is renowned as the leading representative of the school of Divine knowledge.<sup>80</sup> Delfina Ruano confirms this when she writes, “The most complete and successful attempt to integrate the Muslim conception of knowledge, as it had been developed since the ninth century.....was undertaken by Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī.”<sup>81</sup> In my thesis I will attempt to clarify the development of Ibn ʿArabī’s inspiration, which

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<sup>75</sup> Some writers on Sufism understand the goal of Sufism is to become one with God. This understanding is incorrect because the term “one with” asserts duality and therefore contradicts with the concept of non-duality or *tawḥīd* in Sufism.

<sup>76</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Foreword to Chittick, *Divine Love*, vii.

<sup>77</sup> See section 2.5 in Ch. Two and sub-section 5.7.1 in Ch. Five of this thesis.

<sup>78</sup> Chittick, *Divine Love*, xxiv.

<sup>79</sup> See William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983).

<sup>80</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ʿArabī,” 25-26.

<sup>81</sup> Ruano, “Why Did the Scholars of al-Andalus Distrust al-Ghazālī?” 153.

includes symbolic language, metaphysics, mysticism, and his profound awareness as he moves from the exoteric to the esoteric realms.

#### 1.4. The importance of love in Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings

Love is at the heart of Ibn ‘Arabī’s life and work. He understands love to be the motivating force of creation itself.<sup>82</sup> According to a famous *ḥadīth qudsī*.<sup>83</sup> This is known as the *ḥadīth* of the “Hidden Treasure” (*al-kanz al-makhfī*) or the “Unknown Treasure” (*kanzan lam u’raf*), where God said, “I was a Hidden [Unknown] Treasure and I loved to be known; so I created the creatures and made Myself known to them; so they knew Me.”<sup>84</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī understands this *ḥadīth* to mean that God’s love is manifest in all creation. From this point of view, every creature is a theophany (*tajallī*) or an epiphany (*mazhar*) of God.<sup>85</sup> These points of view will be developed later in the thesis.

Another of Ibn ‘Arabī’s key concepts is the theory of “Oneness of Being” (*wahdat al-wujūd*)<sup>86</sup> or simply “Oneness” (*tawḥīd*). This concept is a recurring metaphysical theme in Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrine,<sup>87</sup> and it is the main underlying principle in his writings.<sup>88</sup> Ibn

<sup>82</sup> See section 3.7 in Ch. Three of this thesis.

<sup>83</sup> A sacred narration (*ḥadīth qudsī*) is a *ḥadīth* unlike a Prophetic narration (*ḥadīth nabawī*). A Prophetic narration is considered to be a direct narration of the Prophet Muhammad, but the *ḥadīth qudsī* which, from the perspective of its meaning, is from God, and from the perspective of its wording, is from the Prophet Muhammad. Also, the *ḥadīth qudsī* is unlike the *Qur’ān* which is believed by Muslims to be the literal word of God dictated word by word by the Prophet Muhammad.

<sup>84</sup> Gloton, “The Quranic Inspiration of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Vocabulary of Love,” 38. There are different variations of the *ḥadīth* in Arabic as well different translations of it. I have modified the translation a little in order to maintain consistency with the rest of the thesis.

<sup>85</sup> See sub-section 2.4.2 in Ch. Two of this thesis.

<sup>86</sup> For one of the most comprehensive surveys on the history of *wahdat al-wujūd*, see William Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart: Explorations in Islamic Thought*, eds. Mohammed Rustom, Atif Khalil and Kazuyo Murata (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012) Ch. 8, 71-88; Toshihiko Izutsu, “An Analysis of Wahdat al-Wujūd: Toward a Metaphilosophy of Oriental Philosophies,” in idem., *Creation and the Timeless Order of Things: Essays in Islamic Mystical Philosophy* (Oregon: White Cloud Press, 1994), 66-97.

<sup>87</sup> Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn ‘Arabī*, trans. Liadain Sherrard (Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 1993), 149.

<sup>88</sup> Claude Addas, *Ibn ‘Arabī: The Voyage of No Return*, trans. David Streight (Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 2000), 84.



‘Arabī developed the metaphysical notion of love in light of the doctrine of the “Oneness of Being.”<sup>89</sup> This concept means that nothing exists in reality except God, and creation is the manifestation of God. Ibn ‘Arabī also speaks of the intimate relation between love, beauty and light. For him, love is drawn to beauty and also to light.<sup>90</sup> There is a Prophetic saying according to which “God is Beautiful, and He loves beauty.”<sup>91</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī concludes from this *ḥadīth* that beauty gives rise to love. Accordingly, every entity in being (*wujūd*) is naturally drawn to the love of God, who is described as Beautiful.

Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrine of “Oneness of Being,” also brings to fruition several elements in Islamic thought from the time of Avicenna (d. 1037 CE) onward.<sup>92</sup> One aspect of this doctrine means that God alone has real existence (*wujūd al-ḥaqq*), and creation is only metaphorically existent (*wujūd majāzī*). Ibn ‘Arabī argues that because these entities can only see God’s beauty with God’s own light, their existence arises only through God’s existence.<sup>93</sup> The concept of “Oneness of Being” and its relationship to love and creation may seem problematic. The main concern is how can one associate self-love with God?<sup>94</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī will explain this when he proposes that God affirms His own love and beauty by manifesting “Himself” to “Himself.” God does this by revealing His own “Attributes” of His “Essence,” by means of manifesting, at different times, all the epiphanies of

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<sup>89</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 31.

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

<sup>91</sup> See sub-section 2.4.3 in Ch. Two of this thesis. The *ḥadīth* is narrated by Muslim, *ḥadīth* no. (91) in *al-Ṣaḥīh*.

<sup>92</sup> A discussion of the general intellectual background of the metaphysics associated with the school of Ibn ‘Arabī can be found in Mohammed Rustom, “Philosophical Sufism,” in *The Routledge Companion to Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Richard Taylor and Luis Xavier López-Farjeat (New York: Routledge, 2016) 399- 411.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Concepts such as “Oneness of Being” and “self-love” are believed to be misguided, destructive and heretic by many mainstream Muslim *Salafī* scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328 CE). This is because such concepts according to these scholars do not distinguish or differentiate between God the Creator and His creation are therefore believed to be un-Islamic; See Alexander Knysh, *Ibn ‘Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany: State University of New York, 1999).

creation.<sup>95</sup> It is through such acts of manifestation, according to Ibn ‘Arabī, that God’s self-love is appreciated as the main cause of creation.<sup>96</sup> This self-love exists, as Henry Corbin states, “eternally as an exchange between God and creation.”<sup>97</sup>

### 1.5. Ibn ‘Arabī’s writing style

Ibn ‘Arabī also uses symbolism and an allusive style to, in his own words, “conceal Divine knowledge from being refuted or criticized by anyone outside the Sufi path.”<sup>98</sup> This style and symbolism is extremely problematic for many people. According to Ibn ‘Arabī’s understanding, each word (*kalima*), verse (*āya*), and Chapter (*sūra*) in the *Qur’ān* has unlimited meanings that are included within a plurality of meanings of which the *Qur’ān* speaks. This plurality alludes to many such differences in human ideas, worldviews, and religions.<sup>99</sup> A very careful textual analysis, however, will be required to decipher the concealed deep inner meanings (*ma‘ānī bāṭiniyya*)<sup>100</sup> behind Ibn ‘Arabī’s symbols (*rumūz*).<sup>101</sup> Seyyed Hussein Nasr confirms this when he writes, “one has to learn to read “between the lines” in order to discover the treasures hidden beneath Ibn ‘Arabī’s elliptical and antinomian formulations and his dazzling, and at times complex, mystical language.”<sup>102</sup>

In my attempt to understand the meaning of Divine love (*al-ḥubb al-ilāhī*), as enshrined in the thought of Ibn ‘Arabī, I will first undertake a critical textual analysis (*naqd*

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<sup>95</sup> Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabi: Heir to the Prophets*, 41.

<sup>96</sup> Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, 147.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2: 280, 281, 654.

<sup>99</sup> See William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 244-250.

<sup>100</sup> This is a very difficult endeavor as there is much opposition to the idea of concealed inner (*bāṭinī*) meanings in Islamic scripture or acquired esoteric knowledge from mainstream *Salaḥī* Muslims.

<sup>101</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 103.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 100.

*tahlīlī lil naṣ*) of selected early works of Ibn ‘Arabī, and then of his most mature work, *The Meccan Openings*. In this endeavor, I cannot guarantee that I will arrive at the exact deeper meanings that Ibn ‘Arabī himself intended.<sup>103</sup> The traditional theory of critical Islamic textual analysis will nonetheless prove helpful in understanding and deciphering certain of Ibn ‘Arabī’s symbols.

### 1.6. The sources of Ibn ‘Arabī

For Ibn ‘Arabī’s sources, it should be noted that he studied under many Sufī masters and interacted with a wide range of scholars in the sciences of *ḥadīth*, of the *Qur’ān* and of jurisprudence (*fiqh*). This tutelage not only grounded him in the fundamentals of the traditional schools of Sunni Islamic theology,<sup>104</sup> but also established him as an experienced spiritual master in the mystical knowledge of Sufism. In addition, he also worked with authorities in the domain of non-religious sciences<sup>105</sup> such as poetry. In many of his books he referenced numerous Sufī masters such as al-Ḥallāj, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, Abū Yazīd al-Bastāmī, and Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī.<sup>106</sup> account

However, the “primary” sources of Ibn ‘Arabī’s metaphysics, according to his own account, is the result of the “bestowed Divine knowledge” (*‘ilm ladūnnī* or *‘ilm wahbī*), which was granted to him through an “opening” (*fath*) of his heart in states of invocation (*dhikr*), solitary contemplation (*khulwa*), and the grace (*baraka*) bestowed by his initiation into Sufism.<sup>107</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī also mentions this in many of his books, such as

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<sup>103</sup> By “intent” I do not mean the mind of the author, Ibn ‘Arabī, but rather the intent inherent in the texts themselves. Here I follow Ricoeur’s discussion in his *Interpretation Theory, Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, Texas: The Texas Christian University Press, 1976).

<sup>104</sup> For a full description of Ibn ‘Arabī’s self-testimony, creed and religious belief see Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 1:36-47.

<sup>105</sup> Ronald Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics and Qur’anic Prophets: Ibn ‘Arabī’s Thought and Method in the Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (The Islamic Texts Society: Cambridge, 2003), 5.

<sup>106</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 101.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

*The Meccan Openings*, and explains that his work is written under Divine guidance through the angel of inspiration (*ilhām*).<sup>108</sup> He states:

Know that the composition of the Chapters of the *Futūḥāt* is not the result of free choice on my part nor of deliberate reflection. Actually, God dictated to me everything that I have written through the angel of inspiration.<sup>109</sup>

Elizabeth Roberts mentions that Ibn ‘Arabī frequently refers to this point with such recurring expressions as, “and this is known by those who know.”<sup>110</sup> The purpose of his using such expressions is to demonstrate to his reader that rationality and scholastic learning are not the only means of acquiring knowledge.<sup>111</sup> On his own account, Ibn ‘Arabī’s writing was the result of an immediate and direct Divine inspiration. This included the organization of the paragraphs, topics and Chapters, especially those in *The Meccan Openings* which can appear to be at times erratic or unconnected.<sup>112</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī’s aim was: “not to give an explanation that is mentally satisfying and rationally acceptable, but a real *theoria* or vision of reality, the attainment of which depends upon the practice of the appropriate methods of realization.”<sup>113</sup>

### 1.7. The symbolism and language of Ibn ‘Arabī

Nonetheless, despite this problem, Ibn ‘Arabī is considered to be one of the most sophisticated and difficult writers in Islamic literature.<sup>114</sup> This sophistication is due mainly

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<sup>108</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 265.

<sup>109</sup> Cited in Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 98.

<sup>110</sup> Elizabeth Roberts, “Love and Knowledge,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabī Society*, 7 (1988): 65.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 98; Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, 74; and Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:163. See also Michel Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean Without Shore: Ibn Arabi, the Book, and the Law*, trans. David Straight (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

<sup>113</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 98.

<sup>114</sup> See Abul Ela Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid-din Ibnul Arabi* (London: AMS Press, 1964).

to his broad knowledge, varied styles of lexical expression, and symbolic language.<sup>115</sup>

Annemarie Schimmel writes:

The influences of gnosticism, Hermetism, and Neoplatonic thought make Ibn ‘Arabī’s works look very complicated and often seem to present insurmountable difficulties to the translator. That is why the interpretations of his work vary so greatly.<sup>116</sup>

The originality of Ibn ‘Arabī’s works is mainly due to his unique style, his use of symbolism, and the contextualization that he employed in his writing.<sup>117</sup> The symbolism is not only an integral part of Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrine, but also characteristic of Sufi literature. Ibn ‘Arabī employed this cryptic symbolism and allusive style to conceal Divine knowledge from anyone outside the Sufi path.<sup>118</sup> Textual interpretation is therefore required to decipher the inner concealed meanings and symbols.<sup>119</sup> This point is expressed by Nasr when he writes,

In fact, he [Ibn ‘Arabī] had a language of his own and brought into being a technical vocabulary, based partly on that of the earlier Ṣūfīs, a knowledge of which is indispensable to an understanding of his writings.<sup>120</sup>

### 1.8. The feminine aspect in Ibn ‘Arabī’s literature

Another feature of Ibn ‘Arabī’s work is the predominant role femininity plays in his writings.<sup>121</sup> For example, he uses female names such as Laylā, Lubnā and So‘ād<sup>122</sup> to describe the Essence (*dhāt*)<sup>123</sup> of God.<sup>124</sup> The *dhāt* for Ibn ‘Arabī not only symbolizes

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<sup>115</sup> Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 1.

<sup>116</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 265-266.

<sup>117</sup> Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 2.

<sup>118</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:280, 281, 654.

<sup>119</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 103.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>121</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 272.

<sup>122</sup> Laylā, Lubnā and So‘ād are archetypal beloved female characters in classical Arabic literature.

<sup>123</sup> The word *dhāt* is considered to be feminine in Arabic.

<sup>124</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:323, 324.

“creative Divinity” but also God’s mercy and compassion.<sup>125</sup> Annemarie Schimmel elucidates this point when she writes:

Woman reveals, for Ibn ‘Arabī, the secret of the compassionate God. The grammatical fact that the word *dhāt*, “essence,” is feminine offers Ibn ‘Arabī different methods to discover this feminine element in God. His viewpoint has been condensed by Reynold A. Nicholson in commenting upon a relevant passage by Rūmī, who attested that the creative activity of God reveals itself best in women and that one might even say that “she is not created but creator.”<sup>126</sup>

It is worth noting that this feature is not only evident specifically in the writings of Ibn ‘Arabī, but also in the literature of other Sufis. Ibn ‘Arabī’s contemporary, the Egyptian poet ‘Umar Ibn al-Fāriḍ,<sup>127</sup> writes Schimmel, also “used the feminine gender in his mystical odes when talking of the divine beloved. The names of his heroines—Layla, Salma, and many others—become, in his verses, symbols of divine beauty and perfection.”<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, Ibn ‘Arabī not only regarded the beloved female heroines as symbolizing Divine beauty and perfection, but he also considered them to be the self-disclosure of the beautiful Attributes (*al-ṣifāt al-jamāliyya*) of God in the world. This challenging viewpoint will be addressed in more detail in sub-section 3.9.1 in Chapter Three.

### 1.9. Ibn ‘Arabī’s rhetoric & methods of interpretation

Ibn ‘Arabī’s rhetoric involves two dimensions. First, the intellectual element (*naẓar*) or objectivity by which the mind (*‘aql*) tries to comprehend the various arguments. The second element is insight (*ru’yah*) or subjectivity and self-understanding of the reader.<sup>129</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī acknowledges that God can be known “intellectually” by the mind (*‘aql*) and

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<sup>125</sup> Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, 159.

<sup>126</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 431

<sup>127</sup> See Th. Emil Homerin, *Passion Before Me, My Fate Behind: Ibn al-Fāriḍ and the Poetry of Recollection* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011).

<sup>128</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 431

<sup>129</sup> Morris, “How to Study the Futūḥāt,” 2.

“seen” mystically by the heart (*qalb*) or insight. For Ibn ‘Arabī, this context requires both faculties of the mind and the heart to be mutually supportive in their operations in acquiring knowledge. However, Ibn ‘Arabī always indicates the confined limits of the intellect in reaching “real knowledge” which can only be revealed by God in the hearts of the mystics.<sup>130</sup> Because of this dimension, Ibn ‘Arabī’s writing is considered to be original and unique. In time, Ibn ‘Arabī will develop and move to more innovative and deeper insights as demonstrated by his profound arguments and complex rhetoric throughout *The Meccan Openings*.<sup>131</sup>

At this point of his work Ibn ‘Arabī’s writing style and method revolves around three distinct features: Firstly, the etymological deconstruction of the letters, words, symbols and language of the *Qur’ān* into their basic roots in order to extract new meanings. Secondly, the review of all relevant intellectual approaches (philosophic, theological, cosmological) to the meaning of words and verses of the *Qur’ān*, although, at the same time, they indicate the limits of such rational approaches.<sup>132</sup> Syafaatun Almirzanah writes, “Ibn ‘Arabī criticized speculative thinking and formulation when it acts to confine the infinite essence of God. He strengthened this argument by reflecting on the word roots of “creed” (*‘aqīdah*) and “belief” (*i’tiqād*). The root is ‘*QD*, which concerns “binding” and “tying” a knot.”<sup>133</sup> Thirdly, by referencing any spiritual unveiling or mystical experience

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<sup>130</sup> See Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, 41-42.

<sup>131</sup> James Morris, “Communication and Spiritual Pedagogy: Exploring the Methods of Investigation (*tahqīq*) in Classical Islamic thought, accessed May 27, 2019, [http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articlespdf/sp\\_communication.pdf](http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articlespdf/sp_communication.pdf), 6.

<sup>132</sup> Morris, “Communication and Spiritual Pedagogy,” 6-7. See also section 1.12 on methodology in this Chapter.

<sup>133</sup> Syafaatun Almirzanah, “Sufi Hermeneutics of Ibn ‘Arabī and its Application for Interfaith Dialogue,” accessed May 27, 2019, [http://www.iiit.org/uploads/4/9/9/6/49960591/sufi\\_hermeneutics\\_of\\_ibn.pdf](http://www.iiit.org/uploads/4/9/9/6/49960591/sufi_hermeneutics_of_ibn.pdf).

to the *Qur'ān* and the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad, in support of his ideas.<sup>134</sup> Therefore, attempting to understand Ibn 'Arabī's writing, independent from the previous themes, makes it "very hard to find relevant connections, because the speaker [Ibn 'Arabī] is giving the audience just enough information to make his point."<sup>135</sup> Eric Winkel, who is a contemporary interpreter and translator of Ibn 'Arabī's works, provides an example that explains this meaning when he references Ibn 'Arabī's introduction (*muqaddimah*) of *The Meccan Openings*.<sup>136</sup> Winkel writes:

[In] the first sentence of the Sermon (*khutbah*) at the start of the *Futūḥāt*. The phrase is 'an 'adamin wa- 'admi-hi.... [This means] They are 'from a void and [to a] void.'.... It turns out that the 'right' answer comes thousands of pages later, in the midst of a passage in which Ibn al-'Arabī refers to 'the first sentence of this book' to illustrate a point he is making.<sup>137</sup>

Furthermore, Ibn 'Arabī's constant reference and reliance on the *Qur'ān*, indicates the importance of such a source to him. He believes that the *Qur'ān* has an "infinite potential for meaning inherent in the nature of divine revelation,"<sup>138</sup> and that each letter and word can be interpreted according to each person's capacity and self-understanding.<sup>139</sup> Such a method of interpretation may "not restrict or exhaust in any way the potential meaning."<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Morris, "Communication and Spiritual Pedagogy," 6-7.

<sup>135</sup> Eric Winkel, "Understanding, and translating, the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*," accessed May 27, 2019, <http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/translating-futuhāt-al-makkiyya.html>, 1.

<sup>136</sup> See also the Introduction by Michel Chodkiewicz in *The Meccan Revelations: Ibn al 'Arabi*, edited by Michel Chodkiewicz, and translated by Cyrille Chodkiewicz and Denis Gril. Vol. 2. 2 vols. New York: Pir Press, 2004): 3-43.

<sup>137</sup> Winkel, "Understanding, and translating, the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*," 2.

<sup>138</sup> See Almirzanah, "Sufi Hermeneutics of Ibn 'Arabī."

<sup>139</sup> See Maḥmūd al-Ghurāb, *Raḥma min al-Raḥmān fī tafsīr wa ishārāt al-Qur'ān min kalām al-shaykh al-akbar ibn al-'Arabī*, 1:7-17.

<sup>140</sup> See Almirzanah, "Sufi Hermeneutics of Ibn 'Arabī."



### 1.10. Ibn ‘Arabī’s use of polysemy

Another method which distinguishes Ibn ‘Arabī’s interpretations, is his close examination and analysis of each word’s possible etymological and grammatical variations.<sup>141</sup> This approach allows Ibn ‘Arabī to extract all the possible meanings for any given word in the *Qur’ān*. Furthermore, he also considers all of these interpretations to be true and valid forms of understanding scripture.<sup>142</sup> This technique provides Ibn ‘Arabī with a wide range of possible interpretations which is uncommon and not limited to one or two interpretations. The importance of developing meaningful polysemic understanding as applied by Ibn ‘Arabī throughout his work, is established when the etymological analysis between these terms and their root is closely studied. This is indicated by Winkel when he writes, “[t]he tight semantic connections of the words Ibn al-‘Arabī uses reward a close and literal reading of his vision.”<sup>143</sup> Examples of Ibn ‘Arabī’s semantic analyses are demonstrated in the following Chapters of the thesis, where Ibn ‘Arabī examines the relations of the root of each word, and helps to further unveil the linguistically rich structure of Islamic scripture.

Interpreting Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings is considered to be very complex and demanding, as Ronald Nettler writes, “Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought resists any simple and straightforward understanding; it yields itself only to the most strenuous interpretative efforts and then only partially, often leaving unresolved problems and some degree of ambiguity.”<sup>144</sup> This is because Ibn ‘Arabī’s explanations and interpretations of the *Qur’ān*

<sup>141</sup> Kristin Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries on the Qur’ān in Classical Islam* (Routledge: London & New York, 2006), 41. See also footnote 98 on mystical epistemology.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Winkel, “Understanding, and translating, the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*,” 12.

<sup>144</sup> Nettler, *Sufī Metaphysics and Qur’anic Prophets*, 2.

are unorthodox and represent an approach that is different from the conventional interpretative traditions of Qur’anic hermeneutics.<sup>145</sup> At the same time, Ibn ‘Arabī relies mainly on the Divine knowledge granted directly to him by God (*‘ilm ladunī*) through his spiritual experiences.<sup>146</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī gives special importance and prominence to the knowledge gained through spiritual unveiling (*kashf*) which, according to him, surpasses rational (*‘aql*) interpretations.<sup>147</sup> He also belittles any philosophical and rational interpretations (*ta’wīl ‘aqlī*) when it comes to interpreting the *Qur’ān* and the *ḥadīth* of Prophet Muhammad.<sup>148</sup> Because Ibn ‘Arabī does not rely on the traditional methods of explaining and interpreting the *Qur’ān*, he does not use terms such as “striking similitudes” (*darb al-amthāl*), “interpretation” (*ta’wīl*), or rational interpretation (*ta’wīl ‘aqlī*) when interpreting scripture.<sup>149</sup> Instead he uses terms such as “allusion” (*ishāra*)<sup>150</sup> to point out and indicate to the intended meaning, according to Ibn ‘Arabī, of each letter, word or verse in the *Qur’ān*.

### 1.11. Other religions’ views on love in Islam

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries scholars from other religions had a tendency to see Islam as a religion of ritual, law, works, and even fear. These scholars often argued that because Islam and Judaism did not give much place to love or the “higher human emotions,” both religions were considered inferior to Aryan religions.<sup>151</sup> The notion of the absence of love

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., iv. See section 1.12 on methodology in this Chapter.

<sup>146</sup> Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries on the Qur’ān*, 3.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> See Atif Khalil and Shiraz Sheikh, “Sufism in Western Historiography,” *Philosophy East and West*, 66 (2016): 194-217; See also Carl Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide To Sufism* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1997), 8-18.

in Islam can be found in the work of the Scottish scholar John Arnott MacCulloch (d. 1950 CE). In his book *Religion, Its Origin and Forms* (1904), he wrote:

In nearly every case the gods of the Semites were lofty and terrible deities, before whom man crouched in fear, unlike those of the Aryan race. And Islam in its conception of Allah has made this the foundation–stone of their faith. *It is a religion of fear, not of love...*<sup>152</sup>

This subjective viewpoint was the result of certain biased opinions and deeply entrenched attitudes that saw Islam as an imaginatively barren and ritualistically minded Semitic religion<sup>153</sup> From an Islamic point of view, however, and certainly from the viewpoint of the Sufi tradition, it may be argued that love (*ḥubb*) is believed to hold a central position and plays a crucial role within the overall ethos of the religion.<sup>154</sup> As the Prophet Muhammad said, “none of you truly believes until God and His Messenger are more beloved to him than anything else.”<sup>155</sup> The Prophet thus stressed love above all else. There is also the *ḥadīth al-rahmah al-qudsī*, uttered by the Prophet, in where God is said to have stated in the first person, “My Mercy is greater than my Wrath.”<sup>156</sup> This *ḥadīth*, among others, indicates the relationship between Love and Mercy. It is evident that, in the context of the Divine Names, the Loving or Affectionate (*al-Wadūd*) and the Merciful (*al-Raḥīm*),

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<sup>152</sup> Cited in Tomoko Masuzawa, “Islam, A Semitic Religion,” in *The Invention of World Religion: Or, How European Universalism was Preserved in a Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 197.

<sup>153</sup> See Khalil and Sheikh, “Sufism in Western Historiography,” 194-217.

<sup>154</sup> There is no question that there is a great deal of interpretive diversity within Islam, leading some to argue that it is virtually impossible to identify an Islamic “essence.” See Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam: The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016). From the perspective of the Sufi tradition, however, love has generally occupied the summit of the religious experience of the Sufi mystics. This would explain why *maḥabba* (love) often stands as the final station in the ascent to God in Sufi writing. It is found, for example, that it is one of the last Chapters in Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī’s *Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah* and is the last and penultimate station in Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī’s *Qūt al-Qulūb*. To dismiss the Sufi emphasis on love in Islam as a foreign-influenced projection on to the faith is to follow the Orientalist misconceptions all the way from Graham to Goldziher. See Khalil and Sheikh, “Sufism in Western Historiography,” 194-217.

<sup>155</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by al-Bukhārī, *ḥadīth* no. (15), and Muslim, *ḥadīth* no. (44) in their *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

<sup>156</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by al-Bukhārī, *ḥadīth* no. (7553), and Muslim, *ḥadīth* no. (2751) in their *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

are always coupled in the *Qur'ān*. Furthermore, the Divine Name, the Beautiful (*al-Jamīl*), is stated in the Prophetic *ḥadīth nabawī*, “God is Beautiful, and He loves beauty.”<sup>157</sup> This *ḥadīth* affirms the connection between the Divine Names, the Beautiful (*al-Jamīl*) and the Loving (*al-Wadūd*), which suggests that Divine Beauty is one of the elements of Divine Love. The study of love in Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings still awaits a detailed and in-depth study by scholars of other religions.

In the following section I will lay out, in detail, the method that I have used in my examination of the mystical works of one of Islam’s most sophisticated writers, namely Ibn ‘Arabī.

### 1.12. Methodology

In the introduction to his seminal work *Venture of Islam*, Marshall Hodgson writes,

If one must consciously choose and face the implications of one’s approach to a civilization, so must one also choose and face the implications of one’s terms, selecting them relevant to the questions one is asking.<sup>158</sup>

It therefore makes sense to clarify what I mean by my use of the words “Sufi” and “Sufism” in the present study. There is a no question that the term is a highly contested one, with a great deal of debate about what precisely it signifies. As Lloyd Ridgeon put it, “Sufism is perhaps the most difficult of terms to define.”<sup>159</sup> And this so both among “insiders” (Muslims) and “outsiders” (non-Muslims), scholars and lay people alike. Among many pious Muslims, the term can be used both as one of reproach and praise, depending on the theological orientation of the one using it, and those among whom it is being used. In a

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<sup>157</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by Muslim, *ḥadīth* no. (91) in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*.

<sup>158</sup> Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 1:45.

<sup>159</sup> Cited in Alexander Knysh, *Sufism: A New History of Islamic Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 35.

modern, Western, non-Muslim context, the Sufis are often presented in popular discourse as the “good Muslims,” because they are supposedly peaceful, non-political and pro-Western.<sup>160</sup> This political use of the term (especially after 9-11) has perhaps more to do with Western imagination than it does with reality, since there have been many anti-Western political forms of Sufism (especially in the anti-colonial movements) as there have been non-political, non-Sufi forms of Islam still present to this day.

Among scholars working in the field of the academic study of religion (Religious Studies), who try to remain above the polemical uses of the word, “Sufism” is approached somewhat disinterestedly as a historical phenomenon. But even here there is a great deal of disagreement and debate among philosophers, sociologists, psychologists and historians of religion.<sup>161</sup> One dominant view, however, equates Sufism with “Islamic mysticism,” on the grounds that it embodies within Islam a phenomenon that is analogous, to the similar if not identical phenomenon in other religions, namely *mysticism*.

In his book, *Mysticism, a Study and Anthology*, Frank Happold states that “true mysticism ... begins in an awakening of the transcendental sense, that sense of something beyond material phenomenon which lies at the root of all religious feeling.”<sup>162</sup> He then identifies what he considers to be four underlying characteristics shared by mystics in

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<sup>160</sup> Gregory Lipton, “Secular Sufism: Neoliberalism, Ethnoracism, and the Reformation of the Muslim Other,” *Muslim World* 101, no. 3 (2011): 427-440.

<sup>161</sup> For an overview, see Sara Sviri, “Sufism: Reconsidering Terms, Definitions and the Processes in the Formative Period of Islamic Mysticism,” in *Les maîtres soufis et leurs disciples*, ed. Geneviève Gibillot and Jean-Jacques Thibon (Beirut: IFPO, 2012), 17-34. See also Knysh’s second chapter (“What’s in a Name?”) in *Sufism: A New History*, 35-61.

<sup>162</sup> Frank C. Happold, *Mysticism, a Study and an Anthology* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 52. For a thorough study on how to gain a comprehension and appreciation of medieval mystical literature in the 21<sup>st</sup> century see Albrecht Classen, “Mystical Literature for the Modern Reader: Responses to a Dilemma and Pragmatic Suggestions for the Teaching of Mysticism Today,” in *Studies on Spirituality*, vol. 28 (2018), 145-167.

<sup>162</sup> Happold, *Mysticism, a Study and an Anthology*, 20.

different religions, as far as their doctrines are concerned. First of all, there is a belief that the phenomenal world is only one part of reality, or expressed differently, a manifestation of a Divine ground. Secondly, a human being has the capacity to reach this ground in a way that transcends reason and the habitual workings of the mind. Thirdly, the human being has a dual nature, comprising an ego and a “transcendental self” or “a Divine Self.” Finally, the ultimate goal of the human being is to both discover and identify with this higher entity.<sup>163</sup> For Happold, Sufism contains these doctrines. This is why he states in a chapter entitled, “The Sufi Path of Love,” that “the mystical experiences described by the Sufi mystics follow the same general pattern as those described by the mystics of other religions.”<sup>164</sup>

There has, however, also been academic resistance to equating Sufism with Islamic mysticism.<sup>165</sup> One of the main arguments behind this rests on the claim that the category of mysticism emerges out of a Western Christian and post-Christian context different from an Islamic one. This argument thus renders the term, mysticism, inapplicable to Islam. While there is certainly a great deal of truth in recognizing the differing social and historical contexts out of which the so-called mystics of the world’s religions emerged, to the point that one might question whether such a cross-cultural phenomenon as mysticism even exists, “Islamic mysticism,” in my view, can be used as a synonym of Sufism provided one remains undogmatic and flexible about its precise meaning. Certainly, the four features of Happold’s definition of mystical doctrine do seem to be present in *most* expressions of Sufism, and this becomes even more so the case with respect to the doctrine

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 249

<sup>165</sup> Omid Safi, “Bargaining with *Baraka*: Persian Sufism, ‘Mysticism,’ and Pre-Modern Politics,” *The Muslim World*, vol. 90 (2000): 259-287.

of Ibn ‘Arabī, as this thesis will demonstrate. Besides, Islamic mysticism is the closest definition that is equivalent in English to *taṣawwuf*.

As far as definitions of “Sufism” go, once again it is unclear what is exactly meant by the term. Traditionally, there was a tendency to trace Sufism to a particular form of ascetic-mystical piety, the origins of which go back to the School of Baghdad led by Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 910 CE).<sup>166</sup> In the words of Nile Green, “the doctrine of the Baghdad Sufis of the ninth and 10<sup>th</sup> century would form the foundations of the subsequent Sufi tradition.”<sup>167</sup> This tradition would develop further through a synthesis with Khurāsānian Malāmātī “mysticism” in Nishapur in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The ideas and practices of this form of piety were articulated by scholar-mystics such as Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 1021) and Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī.<sup>168</sup> From there it spread across the Islamic world. Aiyub Palmer in his recent book on al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, describes Sufism as a “*meta-madhab*” that allowed adherents of different religious schools (*madhabs*) to find common ground among various theological and juridical factions.<sup>169</sup>

From within the Sufi tradition itself, Sufism (*taṣawwuf*) was identified more theologically and conceptually with benevolence (*iḥsān*), the third dimension of Islam as mentioned in the famous Prophetic “*Ḥadīth* of Gabriel.”<sup>170</sup> There is no reason to presume that the more scholarly and academic definition of Sufism and that of the Sufis themselves are mutually exclusive. One difference is that from the point of many Sufis, Sufism does

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<sup>166</sup> See Ahmet Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 1-37; Aiyub Palmer, *Sainthood and Authority in Early Islam: Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī’s Theory of wilāya and the Reenvisioning of the Sunnī Caliphate* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 186.

<sup>167</sup> Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 29.

<sup>168</sup> Palmer, *Sainthood and Authority in Early Islam*, 186.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 70, 188.

<sup>170</sup> Palmer, *Sainthood and Authority in Early Islam*, 175. The *ḥadīth* is narrated by Muslim, *ḥadīth* no. (8) in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*; Abū Dāwūd, *ḥadīth* no. (4695) in *al-Sunnan*; al-Tirmidhī, *ḥadīth* no. (2610) in *al-Jāmi’*; and Aḥmad, *ḥadīth* no. (367) in *al-Musnad*. See also section 2.3 in Chapter Two.

not deal with a particular historical expression. Sufism is rather concerned with the most interior dimensions of Muslim piety and spirituality, with a particular focus on inner-purification, transformation of character, and the realization of a direct encounter with the Divine Beloved. According to the Sufis, this realization can be achieved through self-effacement or annihilation (*fanā'*) and spiritual transcendence (*taraqqī*). I can therefore agree with Hodgson that the “Sufis” eventually formed a “reasonably homogenous group who kept in mutual contact despite being distributed throughout Islamdom.”<sup>171</sup>

At this stage, I would like to point out that my thesis is based on a philosophical analysis of the main Sufi mystical concepts. This is attained by framing much of my analysis through the lens of the tradition itself rather than through reductive, Western frames of reference. This is especially because of the nature of the research, which is mainly textual, as well as the highly complex nature of the text.

Questions of a historical, sociological, political and cultural nature, while important, will therefore not occupy the principal space of most of my inquiry. To be clear, this is not to privilege the tradition, or the vantage point of the tradition, in an unscientific fashion. Neither is it a way that flies in the face of the conventions of the academic study of religion. Instead, guided by the arguments initiated by Edward Said (d. 2003), a Christian Palestinian-American who is considered to be the founder of modern postcolonial studies, as he expressed them more than forty years ago. Said’s objection to Orientalism is that “Orientalism belonged therefore to European scholarship... [e]ach Orientalist re-created his own Orient according to the epistemological rules of loss and gain.”<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, 1:393.

<sup>172</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1978), 130. As a result of this methodology, many Western scholars failed to understand, the actual motives, intentions, and dynamics



Therefore, moving away from Orientalist methods will allow Ibn ‘Arabī’s text, as much as possible, to speak for itself rather *than for him to be spoken for* through the structures, premises and axioms of a Western worldview, epistemology and civilization. This after all was one of the major issues that Edward Said took issue in his critique of Orientalist domination. These implications are developed even further most recently by Wael Hallaq in *Restating Orientalism: A Critique of Modern Knowledge*.<sup>173</sup>

To appreciate the logic and coherence of Ibn ‘Arabī’s metaphysical arguments, descriptions and speculations, I will attempt to move away from older, Orientalist models of Western scholarship which often imposed their own theological views or read presuppositions into a text (such as, for example, the idea that Sufism is foreign to Islam).<sup>174</sup> This development is consistent with a significant number of contemporary Ibn ‘Arabī scholars such as Michel Chodkiewicz (d. 2020), William Chittick, James Morris, Claude Addas and Pablo Beneito among others. In time, this will mark a shift away from traditional Western approaches to the study of Islam. The work of Ibn ‘Arabī was not an exception to this misunderstanding.<sup>175</sup> My study will thus try to avoid such issues of imposition or projection.<sup>176</sup> By this I mean that my orientation will not reflect any dogmatic references.

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behind the religious traditions of Islam and Muslims. See also Atif Khalil and Shiraz Sheikh, “Editorial Introduction: Sufism in Western Scholarship, a Brief Overview,” *Studies in Religion*, volume 43 no. 3 (2014): 355-370.

<sup>173</sup> Wael B. Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism: A Critique of Modern Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

<sup>174</sup> See Khalil and Sheikh, “Sufism in Western Historiography,” 194-217. For examples of Western Orientalist writings see John Malcolm’s *History of Persia: From the Early Period to the Present* published in 1815; James William Graham’s 34-page article published in 1819 called *A Treatise on Sufism, or Mahomedan Mysticism*; Friedrich Tholuck’s *Ssufismus, sive Theosophia Persarum Pantheistica (Sufism, or the pantheistic theosophy of the Persians)* published in 1821. See also Western Orientalist such as Ernest Renan (d. 1892); Otto Pflieger (d. 1908); and Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921).

<sup>175</sup> See Miguel Asín Palacios, *Sufism is Christianized Islam: A Study of Sufism Through the Works of Ibn ‘Arabi of Murcia*, (Seattle: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017).

<sup>176</sup> See Frank Whaling, “Theological Approaches,” *Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Peter Connolly (London: Continuum, 2004), 226-256.

Instead, I will attempt to bracket (*epoche*) personal orientations, as much as possible, and so allow the internal coherence of Ibn ‘Arabī’s meditations on love to speak for themselves.

In my thesis, I am therefore not methodologically unconscious of my own perspective in “letting the text speak.” To be clear, I am working within the parameters of a discursive space opened up by Said and his successors that allows the traditions and texts to be spoken on their own terms. Methodologically, moreover, while I am aware of the long, ongoing, and detailed discussion within the field of Religious Studies concerning the definitions of such terms as “mysticism,” “Sufism,” and indeed “religion” itself, in what follows I will not devote much space to rehearsing these discussions, nor analyze their arguments. This is not because I do not believe they are important or germane, but rather their engagement would divert me from adequately considering Ibn ‘Arabī’s deeply complex writings and views on love to the depth they require. To develop detailed accounts of these terms and categories in this thesis would, additionally, risk reading into Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings certain modern, European-derived concerns, categories, and critical lenses. Such accounts would be wholly inappropriate to Ibn ‘Arabī’s mystical works, and thus potentially pull my thesis back into Orientalist modes.

Methodologically, this thesis is a philosophical conceptual textual analysis of Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings on love. It is not an exhaustive historical genealogical approach. As with any good hermeneutic practice, one must try to let the text to speak for itself. Ibn ‘Arabī constantly reminds his readers that in order to understand his mystical utterances one must follow the Sufi path.<sup>177</sup> This approach is achieved by conducting a very careful analysis on the basis of Ibn ‘Arabī’s directions, before any interpretation can be applied.

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<sup>177</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 1:16; 1:49; 1:192; 1:460; 1:628; 2:128; 2:524; 2:645; 3:51.

Moreover, while certain discussions arising from the discourse of the history of religions, particularly as this has been developed in Anglo-American contexts, are no doubt useful and interesting, to take such methods into consideration in this specific research would also veer my exposition away from its intended goal. Finally, none of these remarks should be understood as accepting uncritically any aspect of Ibn ‘Arabī’s work, nor as dismissing the considerable plurality of traditions and views concerning the writings of Ibn ‘Arabī. I will subsequently demonstrate in this thesis, that I acknowledge this plurality and tradition of scholarship. However, I will subject Ibn ‘Arabī’s text to my own sustained philosophical, conceptual analysis and understandings concerning the nature of love as demonstrated in Chapters Three and Five of this thesis.

To develop my methodological frame further, a few words about texts is in order. Texts shape the identities and worldviews of readers.<sup>178</sup> A text is a work of art which projects a world that is open to an indefinite number of interpretations, and the role of hermeneutics is to help unravel such a world.<sup>179</sup> Interpretation of a text is required not only because the author’s original intentions are beyond reach, but also, because of the autonomous state of the text, there is an ability to understand and interpret the work under its own aegis.<sup>180</sup> The interpreter then has to remain faithful to the original text and be innovative in his/her interpretation at the same time. Once the work becomes independent from the subjectivity of the author’s intentions, multiple acceptable interpretations become possible.<sup>181</sup> Interpreting a text is not achieved by understanding the psychic life of the

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<sup>178</sup> Morny Joy, “Hermeneutics and *mimēsis*,” *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, 19/1, Winter 1990, 73.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>180</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 162.

<sup>181</sup> See Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics: Writings and Lectures, Volume 2*, trans. by David Pellauer (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013).

author through the text, but rather it is the reader's responsibility to make an effort in understanding what is being said in light of the text itself.<sup>182</sup> The meanings within a text are no longer understood according to the author's worldview, but according to the dialectic between the text and the reader.<sup>183</sup> In other words, "[w]e neither try to understand the other's innermost experience nor to establish a single self-identical meaning, but rather to enter the world that the text displays and to explore the possibilities this world opens up for us."<sup>184</sup> It is thus the reader's responsibility to make an effort in understanding what is being said in light of the text itself.<sup>185</sup>

Whenever Ibn 'Arabī employs his cryptic style to conceal Divine knowledge from rebuttals and criticism, the task of understanding and interpreting his work becomes even more difficult. And when the topic of research is love, the task to understand the intended meanings becomes even more problematic. "Love" is, of course, notoriously difficult to pin down. Ibn 'Arabī's ideas about love will require the critical textual method I intend to employ in order to broaden its scope. *The Meccan Openings* and Ibn 'Arabī's vast literary *oeuvre* itself form a meta-text in which his chapters on love are situated.

Given my intended goal in this thesis to analyze Ibn 'Arabī's concept of love, in order to do this, I will rely on the method accepted by Ibn 'Arabī's scholarly tradition that I mentioned earlier in this section, while at the same time subjecting Ibn 'Arabī's views to my own critical analysis. As stated above, my acceptance of the tradition's methodological stance is specifically to avoid charges of orientalism, anachronistic readings and

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<sup>182</sup> Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 164.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>184</sup> Jens Zimmermann, *Hermeneutics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2015), 67.

<sup>185</sup> Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 164.

illegitimate impositions of extrinsic criteria on the meaning of the texts. Also, given that Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings are based on his personal mystical experiences, I also need to approach the text by accepting its meaning and goals *prima facie*, (i.e., concerning the status of claims derived from mystical experiences), as argued for by William James in the first lecture of his *Varieties of Religious Experience*.<sup>186</sup> This point is also developed further by Donald Davidson in his important discussion of interpretation across boundaries in the article, “Radical Interpretation.”<sup>187</sup>

Following Davidson's discussion concerning radical interpretation, one must be alert in accepting the plausibility and rationality of mystical claims *prima facie* or there would be no possibility of our even beginning to understand them.<sup>188</sup> A scholar needs to maintain a critical tension between, on the one hand, the mystic’s claims, and on the other, the scholar’s own critique. Since the approach taken in this thesis is based primarily on both textual and conceptual analyses, my own intention is to unearth Ibn ‘Arabī’s vision of love as he articulated it in his vast literary *oeuvre*. In this way, both James and Donaldson laid the groundwork for my own critical analyses of Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings.

One drawback of the present method is that it might appear to be overly “descriptive.” In response to such an objection, there are two factors that need to be noted. First of all, mystical texts are extremely difficult to decipher, and the task of providing a sound interpretation of what is actually being articulated by Ibn ‘Arabī is no simple task. This opinion is appreciated by almost all Ibn ‘Arabī scholars, who understand the immense

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<sup>186</sup> See William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, (New York & London: Longmans, Green, 1902).

<sup>187</sup> See Donald Davidson, “Radical Interpretation,” in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984): 125-140.

<sup>188</sup> See also Donald Davidson, “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme,” in *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 47 (1973-1974): 183-198.

challenges his writings present. Secondly, before Ibn ‘Arabī’s views of love can be the subject of historical, cultural, social, economic or psychological deconstruction, the perspective itself has to be laid out in a way that is faithful as possible to the original text. This is a necessary first step in the exposition of Ibn ‘Arabī’s views on love, which I will endeavour to maintain in my reading of Ibn ‘Arabī.

It is, of course, not entirely possible to set aside one’s own personal proclivities, orientations and presuppositions in any analysis in the humanities or social sciences. I accept that we are by nature subjective beings embedded in a vast network of social, cultural and intellectual contexts. Nevertheless, in order to understand Ibn ‘Arabī’s vast literary *oeuvre*, my research will be grounded in the traditional Islamic exegetical format of analysis and interpretation. This will entail a close reading of the text (such as Chapter 178, “On Knowing the Station of Love” in *The Meccan Openings*) and analyzing it for internal consistency. Fikret Karčić explains that this traditional form of analysis has become accepted as the standard method in examining Islamic texts across most Islamic traditions.<sup>189</sup> It employs a variety of analytical tools and essentially relies upon philology, the search for the source of citations, explanation of difficult words, and exegetical examination, in addition to providing a philosophical analysis of the most important concepts and symbols.<sup>190</sup> This method facilitates engagement of the “*multiplicity of perspectives*”<sup>191</sup> in Ibn ‘Arabī’s discourse, with the self-understanding of the readers’ “*careful attention to the unfolding particulars of their own spiritual life and*

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<sup>189</sup> See Karčić, Fikret, “Textual Analysis in Islamic Studies: A Short Historical and Comparative Survey,” *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (Summer 2006): 191-220.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 211, 212.

<sup>191</sup> Morris, “Rhetoric and Realization in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 2.

*experience.*<sup>192</sup> The researcher of Ibn ‘Arabī’s works, as James Morris explains, “is constantly engaged in perceiving and ‘deciphering’ the intended meanings of all the infinite, constantly unfolding ‘Signs’ that constitute every field of our actual individual human experience.”<sup>193</sup> Furthermore, Winkel states that, it is up to “the audience to experience and ‘verify for themselves’ (*tahqīq*) the insights that he [Ibn ‘Arabī] is conveying.”<sup>194</sup> This methodology is not only based on the personal experience (*khibra*), insight (*ru’ya*) and contemplation (*tadabbur*) of the reader, but also on observing the rational consequences (*natā’ij*) of a thorough examination.<sup>195</sup> According to Morris, the central and most recurring features of Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrine, which every researcher should address are:

His [Ibn ‘Arabī’s] constant phenomenological reliance on the ‘interactive’ fifth and sixth Arabic verbal forms;<sup>196</sup> his insistence on the carefully ‘etymological’ de-construction of... the actual revealed Arabic roots; and his intentional ‘scattering’ (*tabdīd*) of the key metaphysical teachings, insights, premises, and allusions which the qualified reader must bring in order to grasp the highest levels of intended meaning.<sup>197</sup>

From this unique method, a new world opens up to the reader in which there emerges, as Morris writes, an “extraordinarily individualized and *personal dialectic between the soul and the mind* (intellect) of each reader which is grounded in the constant, ever-changing interplay between one’s own intelligence and one’s own ongoing spiritual experience.”<sup>198</sup>

The goal, as Winkel explains, is to “know the complete work in Arabic, understand the

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Winkel, “Understanding, and translating, the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*,” 2.

<sup>195</sup> Morris, “Rhetoric and Realization in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 2.

<sup>196</sup> Most Arabic words are derived from a three-letter (trilateral) root. Each trilateral Arabic root can be transformed into one of fifteen possible verb forms (الأوزان, al-’awzān). Each form has a basic meaning associated with the general meaning of the root being used.

<sup>197</sup> Winkel, Understanding, and translating, the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*,” 2.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

multi-faceted methodology that Ibn al-‘Arabī uses, find the right words and appropriate sentence construction...for the reader to proceed with understanding.”<sup>199</sup>

In summary, as my thesis is grounded in the philosophy of religion, the appropriate method to use in explaining and interpreting Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings will assimilate two methodological tasks. The first, explains the meaning of the text using philosophical, conceptual and textual analysis. The other, interprets the evocative, imaginative, and symbolic aspects of Ibn ‘Arabī’s dialectical writing. Explanation in this sense will not be an alternative to my self-understanding of the text but will be a necessary step in achieving it. Furthermore, breaking down the text into its component parts of words, sentences and paragraphs, will offer greater insight and an explanation of the most important concepts in Ibn ‘Arabī’s work. This method will allow me to analyze and understand how and why Ibn ‘Arabī takes a certain standpoint on a specific issue regarding love in the context of his writing. Such a method will constitute the frame through which I will be able to interpret Ibn ‘Arabī’s writing and uncover some of the inner meanings or sub-texts of his work. Coherent and consistent use of this methodological structure will allow me to reveal new meanings and dynamics of Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings, while being faithful to the original text at the same time. As a result, my initial analysis will be grounded in the traditional Islamic exegetical format of interpretation, while achieving a more objective critical analysis. This will allow, as far as possible, within the parameters of the nature of my study, to appreciate the logic and coherency of Ibn ‘Arabī’s textual arguments and speculations.

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<sup>199</sup> Morris, “Communication and Spiritual Pedagogy,” 7.



### 1.13. Review of existing research

For many years, Western scholars shied away from studying the works of Ibn ‘Arabī because of the seemingly impenetrable nature of his writing.<sup>200</sup> The famous British scholar of Sufism, Reynold Nicholson (d. 1945 CE), for example, refrained from publishing his translations of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *The Ringstones of Wisdom* because of the uncertainties he had about his final version of the text.<sup>201</sup> However, the more recent works of scholars such as Toshihiko Izutsu,<sup>202</sup> Henry Corbin,<sup>203</sup> Michel Chodkiewicz,<sup>204</sup> William Chittick<sup>205</sup> and other contemporary scholars, have made Ibn ‘Arabī’s mystical philosophy more accessible to Western readers.<sup>206</sup> However, it needs to be admitted that certain of Ibn ‘Arabī’s works still contain many enigmatic allusions, which perhaps only those experientially steeped in the world of Islamic mysticism can decipher.<sup>207</sup> However, Ibn ‘Arabī’s literary output is sufficiently vast, compared to that of earlier Sufis, such as Ḥallāj (d. 922 CE), Baṣṭāmī (d.

<sup>200</sup> Morris, *The Reflective Heart*, 1.

<sup>201</sup> See Atif Khalil’s review of Peter Coates, “*Ibn ‘Arabi and Modern Thought: The History of Taking Metaphysics Seriously*,” *Journal of Religious and Society* 7 (2005): 1-3.

<sup>202</sup> See Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism & Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983).

<sup>203</sup> See Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabī*.

<sup>204</sup> See Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*.

<sup>205</sup> See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*.

<sup>206</sup> Coates, *Ibn ‘Arabi and Modern Thought*, 2. See also Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Secrets of Voyaging*, trans. Angela Jaffray (Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 2016); Ralph Austin, “On Knowing the Station of Love: Poems from the 178th Chapter of the Futuhat al-Makkiyyah of Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society* 8 (1989): 1-4; Titus Burckhardt, *Mystical Astrology According to Ibn ‘Arabi*, trans. Bulent Rauf (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2001); Robert Dobie, *Logos and Revelation: Ibn ‘Arabi, Meister Eckhart, and Mystical Hermeneutics* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010); Stephen Hirtenstein, *The Unlimited Mercifier: The Spiritual Life and Thought of Ibn ‘Arabi* (Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 1999); Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism & Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983); Leonard Lewisohn, “Sufism’s Religion of Love, from Rābī‘a to Ibn al-‘Arabī” *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015): 150-180; Denis McAuley, *Ibn ‘Arabī’s Mystical Poetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Michael Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Reza Shah-Kazemi, *Paths to Transcendence: According to Shankara, Ibn Arabi, and Meister Eckhart* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2006); Gregory A. Lipton, *Rethinking Ibn ‘Arabi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>207</sup> Morris, *The Reflective Heart*, 4.

874 CE), and Wāsiṭī (d. 932 CE), to allow for future researchers to contribute meaningful interpretations of his metaphysical ideas and mystical literature.

As previously mentioned, even though love is fundamental to Muslim piety, there is still a lack of serious scholarly study that demonstrates the importance of love in Islam. However, there are some fine exceptions such as Joseph Norment Bell's *Love Theory in Later Ḥanbalite Islam* (1979); and his translation of Abū al-Ḥassan al-Daylamī's *Treatise on Mystical Love* (2005); Binyamin Abrahamov's *Divine Love in Islamic Mysticism: The Teaching of Al-Ghazali and Al-Dabbagh* (2003); Ghazi ibn Muhammad's *Love in the Holy Qur'an* (2010); Emil Homerin's *Passion Before Me, My Fate Behind: Ibn al-Fāriḍ and the Poetry of Recollection* (2011); Cyrus Ali Zargar's *Sufi Aesthetics: Beauty, Love, and the Human Form in the Writings of Ibn 'Arabi and 'Iraqi* (2011); William Chittick's *Divine Love: Islamic Literature and the Path to God* (2013); Lenard Lewisohn's (ed.) *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry* (2015) and "Sufism's Religion of Love, from Rābi'a to Ibn al-'Arabī" in *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism* (2015); and finally Joseph Lumbard's *Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī: Remembrance, and the Metaphysics of Love* (2016).

William Chittick has also written two scholarly monographs devoted to Rūmī and Ibn 'Arabī. The first book is entitled *The Sufi Path of Love* (1983), and the second *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (1989). Chittick, however has not yet written a book on Sufi love from Ibn 'Arabī's perspective. The writing in Chittick's most recent book, *Divine Love: Islamic Literature and the Path to God*, is more focused on Persian notions of love which are different from Ibn 'Arabī's approach.

Other scholars, such as Claude Addas, have written books on the life, history and mysticism in the work of Ibn 'Arabī. There is also Maurice Gloton's *Traite de l'amour*

(1986), which is a French translation of Ibn ‘Arabī’s “Chapter 178” on Love, in *The Meccan Openings*. Pablo Benito has also written articles on Divine love with reference to Ibn ‘Arabī in his works, such as, *The Servant of the Loving One: On the Adoption of the Character Traits of al-Wadūd* (2002), and *On the Divine Love of Beauty* (1995).

Many of the works on Ibn ‘Arabī, however, might place more emphasis on the historically descriptive aspects of love, or the narrative structure and poetics of the texts rather than on the mystical and metaphysical aspects of Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings on Divine love. For example, from a theoretical perspective, many interpreters only examine one of the two paths that lead to God. The path they choose is that of knowledge, but not of love. Nonetheless, they still ask basic questions such as: Which path is preferable? Is it the love that drives the human will to reach God? Or is it the knowledge that motivates the human intellect to seek God?

It is intriguing that in Chittick’s most recent book (2013), *Divine Love: Islamic literature and the journey to God*, he has changed his former opinion. He now prefers the path of Sufi love over the path of knowledge. Chittick writes, “I used to think that knowledge deserved this honor... Now I think that love does a better job of conveying the quest for God that lies at the tradition’s heart.”<sup>208</sup>

#### **1.14. The outline of Chapters**

In the following paragraphs I will lay out the context of my thesis which will contain an introduction, four main Chapters and a conclusion.

In the second Chapter, I will examine the different themes of love as expressed in the *Qur’ān* and the *Sunnah*. I will also outline the scriptural elements of love which would

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<sup>208</sup> Chittick, *Divine Love*, xi.

later be expressed in a more advanced and refined manner in Ibn ‘Arabī’s metaphysical and mystical writings. The purpose of this Chapter is to define the scriptural origins of the themes which influenced the earliest Sufi mystical philosophies of love. Subsequently, Ibn ‘Arabī would then develop his own deep understanding of love. This Chapter is a prelude for the specific themes that are to be addressed in the remainder of the thesis.

In the third Chapter, I examine selected themes found in Ibn ‘Arabī’s earlier works regarding Divine love. These themes can be found in books such as, *The Interpreter of Longings* (1214 CE) (*Turjumān al-Ashwāq*, 611 AH) and *The Ringstones of Wisdom* (1232 CE) (*Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 630 AH), among others. This Chapter outlines and clarifies both the philosophical and theological ideas where Ibn ‘Arabī refined his early esoteric ideas in describing the mystical language of love. This Chapter also illustrates how Ibn ‘Arabī’s ontology and metaphysics were to have a lasting influence on the many Sufi mystics who followed him. These include ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. 1424 CE), and other Islamic philosophers such as Fakhr al-dīn al-Rāzī. (d. 1210 CE).<sup>209</sup>

In the fourth Chapter, I prepare for further analyses by outlining Ibn ‘Arabī’s ontological developments. Here I undertake a careful examination of his metaphysical concepts, especially the concept of “Oneness of Being” and his further use of symbolic language as a form of expression. The purpose of this Chapter is to define specific mystical elements that will be central to Ibn ‘Arabī’s later *oeuvre*. This will enable me to undertake my subsequent in-depth reflective explorations of Ibn ‘Arabī’s esoteric writings on love.

In the fifth Chapter, I will continue to investigate Ibn ‘Arabī’s various mystical depictions of Divine love by offering a careful reading of certain Chapters of his mature

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<sup>209</sup> See Mohammed Rustom, “Ibn ‘Arabī’s Letter to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī: A Study and Translation,” *Oxford Journal of Islamic Studies* 25, no. 2 (2014): 113-137.

work, *The Meccan Openings (al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya)*. In this reflective work Ibn ‘Arabī clarifies and expands on many of his ideas mentioned earlier such as the of “Oneness of Being” and its relationship with both Divine and human love. As an example, in Chapter 178, Ibn ‘Arabī differentiates between the people who have attained and realized the “Oneness of Being” in existence, and therefore identify themselves with the Divine attributes of God, and those who have not attained this realization, and are still struggling with distractions. Finally, I will present my reading of the mystical and esoteric evocations of love and describe how these features have become essential to Ibn ‘Arabī’s work. In this Chapter I will also introduce different modes of analysis, reflection, and evaluation of Ibn ‘Arabī’s distinctive mystical language and metaphysical perception concerning love. This will be followed by a concluding Chapter, where I will summarize my newfound readings, findings, and describe further work that needs to be undertaken in collaboration with other scholars.

### **1.15. Conclusion**

It is obvious in the above summary, both of my own work and of other scholars, that a significant amount of research remains to be undertaken of Ibn ‘Arabī’s understanding, interpretation and evocations of love. Many issues within the Akbarian<sup>210</sup> point of view still remain to be explored by interested scholars. Unfortunately, as yet there has not been a study of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *The Meccan Openings (al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya)* in its entirety.

By offering a close reading, employing both textual and symbolic analyses of Ibn ‘Arabī’s mystical writing, I hope that my research could encourage further inquiry into Ibn ‘Arabī’s mysticism and metaphysics. More specifically, I will undertake to explore further

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<sup>210</sup> The title given to Ibn ‘Arabī’s school of thought.

insights that will help others to understand Ibn ‘Arabī’s esoteric writings on Divine love. It could also help the appreciation of Ibn ‘Arabī’s unique multi-faceted teachings. In this way, I envisage that my reading of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *opus* helps to provides insight into the (yet insufficiently studied), rich and complex depictions of love in Ibn ‘Arabī’s illuminations, as it is revealed in both Sufism and Islam.

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

## 2.1. Introduction

In this Chapter, I trace the etymological, metaphysical and theological developments of different themes of love as expressed in the *Qur'ān* and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad. I will also examine their connotations and their significance as expressed in Sufi terminology, and especially their relationship to Islamic doctrine. This Chapter is the prelude for the themes that will be addressed in the remainder of the thesis. The purpose of this Chapter is to define the scriptural origins and intellectual notions of love themes which influenced the earliest Sufi metaphysical philosophies on love, and from which, more importantly, Ibn 'Arabī will develop his own understanding of love as conceptualized in Chapter 178 of *The Meccan Openings (al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya)*.

Islam has been often criticized for not placing sufficient emphasis on love.<sup>211</sup> A common orientalist trope was to characterize Islam as a religion of “law” as opposed to “love.”<sup>212</sup> The natural extension of this position was to argue that Islam lacked a sophisticated understanding or philosophy of love.<sup>213</sup> Traditional Muslim belief states that God loved and chose humans (*al-nās*) from creation (*al-khalq*), and from humans He loved and chose Prophets (*al-anbiyā'*), and from the Prophets whom He loved, He chose Messengers (*al-rusul*). Then, from the Messengers He loved and chose five “resolute” Messengers (*ulū al-'azm*),<sup>214</sup> finally, from these five “resolute” Messengers He chose the Prophet Muhammad, as His most beloved (*al-maḥbūb*).<sup>215</sup> In this way, God thus chose the

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<sup>211</sup> Lewisohn also notes this point in “Divine Love in Islam,” 163.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> William Chittick argues against such criticisms and indicates that Divine love is central and plays a crucial role in the ethos of Islam as it is to other traditions such as Christianity. He points out even though Divine love is key in both religions, the rhetorical emphasis on love is different in each tradition. See Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart*,” 57.

<sup>214</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Holy Quran*, 47.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 50-53.



Prophet Muhammad to convey and preach the message of “Oneness,” or the absolute unity of God, which later Islamic sciences such as theology, philosophy and mysticism were to develop.<sup>216</sup> Even though Islam’s unique understanding of love might not be the same as that of other religions, many Muslims believe that Islam is a “Religion of Love,” and Prophet Muhammad is the perfect representative of the station of love.<sup>217</sup> This claim has been historically challenged as previously mentioned.

In the following Chapters I will demonstrate that this criticism not only ignores the various notions of love conveyed in many verses of the *Qur'ān* and many Prophetic hadiths, but also overlooks the entire Muslim metaphysics of “Divine love” as expressed in Sufi literature, and, particularly in the work of Ibn ‘Arabī.

## 2.2. Names and types of love in Arabic

There have been many attempts to study and statistically analyze or count the various Arabic words used to define love.<sup>218</sup> The term *ḥubb* has many generic meanings.<sup>219</sup> Some scholars provide a range from sixty (60) to eighty (80) different names and types, while others present fifty-one (51) words referencing love.<sup>220</sup> Ghazi bin Muhammad in his comprehensive work on Love in the *Qur'ān*, indicates that there are at least thirty-eight (38) different types of love mentioned in the *Qur'ān*, and the main difference between them is essentially in their level of intensity.<sup>221</sup> He writes: “They are defined as ‘kinds of love’ according to their lexical semantic and etymological meanings as given in the most

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<sup>216</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 146.

<sup>217</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 254.

<sup>218</sup> Chittick, *Divine Love*, xxiv.

<sup>219</sup> Gloton, “The Quranic Inspiration of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Vocabulary of Love,” 41.

<sup>220</sup> Chittick, *Divine Love*, xxv.

<sup>221</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Holy Quran*, xxvii, 147, 167, 404.

authoritative Classical Arabic dictionaries and lexicons.”<sup>222</sup> The large number of Arabic terms used in describing love can be attributed to the richness of the Arabic language and its vocabulary, which has no tautology, and uses different words to describe each unique and subtle phase of love.<sup>223</sup> Maurice Gloton explains:

In fact, if one excludes the richness of meaning of the roots, one will progressively descend into a vocabulary which only contains words which offer a precise meaning, without preserving the connection to the different connotations that their original root contains, and therefore into a significant lack of comprehension of the founding texts of Islam as well as of ancient Arabic literature.<sup>224</sup>

Hence, given the difficult and challenging task in translating the numerous Arabic words of love to English, translators and scholars find themselves “forced to resort to reusing the same word for different Arabic terms for *hubb*.”<sup>225</sup> However, from this vast compendium of terms, four Arabic words have been frequently used to designate love, three of which are mentioned in the *Qur'ān*. These are *ḥubb* (love), *wudd* (affection) and *hawā* (desire). The fourth type is an extra-Qur'anic word, namely *ishq* (intense love).<sup>226</sup> My analysis in the next sections will focus on these four terms not only because they are the most commonly used terms to designate love in Sufi literature,<sup>227</sup> but also because Ibn 'Arabī elaborates the meaning and significance of these four terms in Chapter 178 of *The Meccan Openings*.

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>224</sup> Gloton, “The Quranic Inspiration of Ibn 'Arabī's Vocabulary of Love,” 51.

<sup>225</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Holy Quran*, 167.

<sup>226</sup> Chittick, *Divine Love*, xxv.

<sup>227</sup> See Pablo Beneito, “The Servant of the Loving One: On the Adoption of the Character Traits of al-Wadūd,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabī Society* 32 (2002): 6; Gloton, “The Quranic Inspiration of Ibn 'Arabī's Vocabulary of Love,” 42.

### 2.3. Love (*ḥubb*) in the Qur'ān

Muslims believe the Qur'ān to be the literal word of God, and by conforming themselves to its teachings as a form of devotion. It is also “a way to express one’s love for God and to make oneself worthy of God’s love.”<sup>228</sup> Love (*ḥubb*) derives from the root word *ḥ-b-b* (ب/ب/ح), from which we get a range of meanings including, “grain,” “seed,” “love,” “to love,” “loved one,” “to prefer,” and “a friend.”<sup>229</sup> The word *ḥubb* in the context of love is one of eight (8) forms of the root *ḥ-b-b* that are mentioned ninety-five (95) times in the Qur'ān.<sup>230</sup> Furthermore, the Qur'ān mentions the word “God loves” (*yuhibbu*) eighteen times for the following ten classes of people whom God loves in particular: (1) the benevolent (*al-muḥsinūn*) (Q. 2:195, 3:134, 3:148, 5:13, 5:93), (2) the pious (*al-muttaqūn*) (Q. 3:76, 9:4, 9:7), (3) the equitable (*al-muqsiṭūn*) (Q. 5:42, 49:9, 60:8), (4) those who purify themselves (*al-mutaṭahhirūn*) (Q. 2:222), (5) the patient (*al-ṣābirūn*) (Q. 3:146), (6) those who put their trust in God (*al-mutawakkilūn*) (Q. 3:159), (7) those who follow the Prophet Muhammed (Q. 3:31), (8) those who repent (*al-tawwābūn*) (Q. 2:222), (9) the purifiers [those who purify themselves and purify others]<sup>231</sup> (*al-muṭṭahharūn*) (Q. 9:108), and finally, (10) those “who fight for God’s cause in a row as if they were a solid structure” (*al-ladhīna yuqātilūn fī sabīlihi ṣaffan ka’annahum bunyānun marṣūs*) (Q. 61:4). From these verses it can be concluded that from the perspective of the Qur'ān, God loves those who adorn themselves with these virtues.<sup>232</sup> Virtues are understood here in the sense of beautifying their souls with good character traits.<sup>233</sup> From the ten types of people whom

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<sup>228</sup> Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart*, 59.

<sup>229</sup> Badawi & Abdel Haleem, eds. *Arabic–English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, 186.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:342.

<sup>232</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Holy Quran*, 36, 400.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 42.

God particularly loves, three are specifically distinguished with a Divine Bestowment,<sup>234</sup> namely God's companionship<sup>235</sup> (*ma'iyat Allāh*).<sup>236</sup> The three types of people are, the benevolent (*al-muḥsinūn*)<sup>237</sup> (16:128, Q. 29:69), the pious (*al-muttaqūn*) (Q. 2:129, 9:36, 9:123, 16:128), and the patient (*al-ṣābirūn*) (Q. 2:153, 2:249, 8:46, 8:66). From the three distinguished virtuous people one virtue stands out as the most important of all, and that is benevolence (*iḥsān*).<sup>238</sup> The benevolent (*al-muḥsinūn*) who adorn themselves with the beautiful virtues and actions are distinguished from the other two in verse (Q. 29:69). This verse states that God "is indeed with the benevolent" (*la-ma'a al-muḥsinīn*), signifying further emphasis on God's companionship with the benevolent.<sup>239</sup>

It is worth noting that Sufis reference an important and well-known canonical *ḥadīth*, "Ḥadīth of Gabriel" (*ḥadīth Jibrīl*),<sup>240</sup> to indicate the high spiritual stature of *al-muḥsinūn*.<sup>241</sup> It is mentioned in *ḥadīth Jibrīl* that Prophet Muhammad is asked by the angel Gabriel to answer questions defining the three dimensions or levels of religion.<sup>242</sup> The first level is *Islām* (submission); the second level *Imān* (faith); and finally, the level of *Iḥsān* (benevolence). The Prophet described *Iḥsān* as: "you should worship God as if you see

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>235</sup> The literal interpretation of *ma'iyat* is companionship in the sense of support and protection. See Muhammad, *Love in the Holy Quran*, 38-42. However in many Sufi interpretations and specially that of Ibn 'Arabī, *ma'iyat* is interpreted as the witnessing of the unity and "Oneness of God" in creation.

<sup>236</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Holy Quran*, 38.

<sup>237</sup> The Arabic word *Iḥsān* derives from the root word *ḥusn* which means beauty. Hence *al-muḥsinūn* are those people who adorn and beautify themselves with ultimate virtues and perfect actions. I have chosen to translate *iḥsān* as "benevolence" in the general meaning of the term which combines all the different meanings. See Pablo Beneito "On the Divine Love of Beauty," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabī Society* 18 (1995): 1-22; Sachiko Murata and William Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, (USA: Paragon House, 1994), 272; and Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 242.

<sup>238</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Holy Quran*, 42.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by Muslim, *ḥadīth* no. (8) in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*; Abū Dāwūd, *ḥadīth* no. (4695) in *al-Sunnan*; al-Tirmidhī, *ḥadīth* no. (2610) in *al-Jāmi'*; and Aḥmad, *ḥadīth* no. (367) in *al-Musnad*.

<sup>241</sup> See Murata and Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, xxv-xxxix.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., xxxii.

Him, for even if you do not see Him [know that] He Sees you.”<sup>243</sup> Sufis interpreted the term “see Him” as the metaphysical state of witnessing the “Oneness of God,”<sup>244</sup> an interpretation which Ibn ‘Arabī later develops and formulates in his theory on the “Oneness of Being” (*waḥdat al-wujūd*).<sup>245</sup> Furthermore, the expressions “He loves them” (*yuhibbuhum*) and “they love Him” (*yuhibbūnahu*) are used once in the *Qur’ān* in the following verse, “God will bring people whom He loves and who love Him” (*faswfa yā’itī Allāhu biqawmin yuhibbuhum wa-yuhibbūnahu*) (Q. 5:54). This verse is quoted many times by Sufis to indicate that God’s love is pre-eternal,<sup>246</sup> and takes priority over human love and devotion to God. It also indicates that God’s love for creation is a consequence of His love for them,<sup>247</sup> since the verse begins with God’s love and then turns to human love.<sup>248</sup>

It can also be observed that the expression “God does not love” (*lā yuhibbu*) is mentioned in the *Qur’ān* twenty-three (23) times. The Qur’anic term, *lā yuhibbu*, indicates as Ghazi points out, that God does not hate anyone, but rather does not love the evil acts of people and not people themselves. Ghazi writes:

God never states--not even once--in the whole Qur’an that He *hates* anyone or any type of evildoer. He only says that He ‘does not love’ them: not loving is neutral; hatred is negative....<sup>249</sup> and in fact never says--that He does not love them as people, but rather that He does not love them *in so far as they are identified with... certain unlovable traits....*<sup>250</sup> God only says that He hates evil deeds, or the evil that they cause....<sup>251</sup> [S]ince God does not say that He hates the

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid., xxv.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 276-277.

<sup>245</sup> See sub-section 4.2.7 in Ch. Four of this thesis.

<sup>246</sup> Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 62.

<sup>247</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 31.

<sup>248</sup> Lewisohn, “Divine Love in Islam,” 164.

<sup>249</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Holy Quran*, xxii.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 56.

disbelievers, Muslims may not say so either....<sup>252</sup> This is an aspect of God's mercy, and perhaps there is herein a great lesson about mercy for humanity: namely that people should love good people, and hate certain evil deeds, but not hate people as such, even when they commit these evil deeds.<sup>253</sup>

The term *ḥubb* in the *Qur'ān* is used not only to describe the idea of Divine love but is also used to designate the notion of the growth and development of emotions. The root word of *ḥubb* conveys the idea of a “grain” or “seed,” implying the growth of love between God and His creation.<sup>254</sup> In the words of Maurice Gloton, “love produces the seed and the seed develops due to the effect of the seed of love which it contains.”<sup>255</sup> The correlation of love as a seed (derived from the etymological root of the word *ḥabb* “seed”) implies the growth and flowering of love in a similar manner to the growth and fruition of a seed into a beautiful plant.<sup>256</sup> The etymological analysis of Arabic words is a technique used extensively by Ibn ‘Arabī to examine and analyze Islamic scripture in order to illuminate meanings and produce new ideas from a single a word. This technique will be elaborated further in the following Chapters.

### 2.3.1. The term affection (*wudd*) in the *Qur'ān*

Affection (*wudd*) derives from the root *w-d-d* (ﻭ/ﺩ/ﺩ), which has various meanings, such as “love,” “affection,” “friendship,” “to desire, and “to wish for.”<sup>257</sup> The word *wudd* in the context of affection is one of six (6) forms of the root word *w-d-d* that are cited twenty-nine (29) times in the *Qur'ān*.<sup>258</sup> Also, the term *wudd* in the *Qur'ān* implies, as the root word of the word *wudd* suggests (= “to stake” or “nail”), a constant and faithful

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Holy Quran*, 14.

<sup>255</sup> Gloton, “The Quranic Inspiration of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Vocabulary of Love,” 42.

<sup>256</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Holy Quran*, 14.

<sup>257</sup> Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic–English Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage*, 1016.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

“attachment” or “fixation” of love for God’s beloved.<sup>259</sup> The *Qur'ān* mentions twice<sup>260</sup> that God is the Affectionate one (*al-Wadūd*). The *Qur'ān* also says, “my Lord is Merciful and Affectionate,” (*inna Rabbī Raḥīmūn Wadūd*) (Q. 11:90) and “He is the Forgiving, the Affectionate” (*wa huwa al-Ghaḥūr al-Wadūd*) (Q. 85:14). It is also cited once in the *Qur'ān*<sup>261</sup> that God will bestow and appoint affection (*wudd*) in the hearts of those who believe in Him and have done righteous deeds: “Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds the Most Merciful will appoint for them affection” (*inna al-ladhīn ‘āmanū wa ‘amilū a-ṣāliḥāti sayaj‘alu lahumu l-Raḥmānu wudda*) (Q. 19:96). This was one of the *Qur'ānic* statements the early Sufis took to heart, which meant that believing in God and performing righteous deeds, love and affection will be bestowed upon them by God, a theme which was later adopted and developed by early Sufis to signify the importance of faith, obedience and piety in the path to God.

### 2.3.2. The term inclination (*hawā*) in the *Qur'ān*

The term inclination (*hawā*) in the *Qur'ān* derives from the root *h-w-y* (ه/و/ي), which has various meanings, such as “atmosphere,” “air,” “to fall down,” “to cause to fall,” “desire,” “love,” and “to seduce.”<sup>262</sup> The word *hawā* in the context of inclination is one of eight (8) forms of the root word, *h-w-y*, that is used thirty-eight (38) times in the *Qur'ān*.<sup>263</sup> The *Qur'ān* speaks of *hawā* four (4) times<sup>264</sup> in the context of personal inclination or lust, and instructs its followers to restrain their desires in verses such as “so follow not desire, lest you not be just” (*fa-lā tattabi‘ū al-hawā an ta ‘dilū*) (Q. 4:135), “do not follow your

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<sup>259</sup> Gloton, “The Quranic Inspiration of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Vocabulary of Love,” 41; Beneito, “The Servant of the Loving One,” 5.

<sup>260</sup> Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic–English Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage*, 1017.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 996.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 997.

desire, as it will lead you astray from the way of God” (*walā tattabi‘ al-hawā fa-yuḍillak ‘an sabīl Allāh*) (Q. 38:26), “but as for him who feared to stand before his Lord and restrained himself from desire” (*wa ‘ammā man khāfa maqām rabbihī wa nahā al-nafsa ‘an al-hawā*) (Q. 79:40), and “nor does he speak out of desire” (*wa-mā yanṭiqu ‘an al-hawā*) (Q. 53:3). The previous verses not only imply that the term *hawā* is used in the context of undesirable inclinations, but it also implies that the root of the word *hawā* suggests (= “to fall down”) a descent from a high position, state or station to a lower one.<sup>265</sup> The expression “falling in love” is defined by Ghazi as, “*the systematic inclination of a person’s constituent parts and faculties towards beauty, after having being pleased by it*”.<sup>266</sup> The term *hawā* thus implies that a person’s love increases rapidly and has an inclination towards the beloved in a similar way as falling down from a high place or moving swiftly as air.

### 2.3.3. The term overwhelming intense love (*‘ishq*)

Overwhelming intense or passionate love (*‘ishq*)<sup>267</sup> is one of the most important extra-Qur’anic words.<sup>268</sup> The word derives from the root word ‘*a-sh-q* (ع-ش-ق), and has various meanings, such as “to bind,” “intense or captivating love,” and “binding passion.” It also refers to a convolvulus plant or bindweed.<sup>269</sup> Even though the word *‘ishq* is not used

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<sup>265</sup> Gloton, “The Quranic Inspiration of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Vocabulary of Love,” 42; Beneito, “The Servant of the Loving One,” 6.

<sup>266</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Holy Quran*, xxix, 205.

<sup>267</sup> The Arabic term *‘ishq* has been translated in *Al-Mawrid Trilingual Dictionary* as: to love passionately, adore, be passionately in love with, be enamored of, be deeply in love with, be crazy about, be mad about, fall in love with, be fond of, be fascinated with, and be infatuated with. See Rohi Baalbaki, *Al-Mawrid Trilingual Dictionary* (Beirut: Dar el-Ilm lilmalayin, 2008), 1171. I have chosen to translate *‘ishq* in my thesis as the “extreme overabundant feelings of intense passionate love.” See Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 137. See also Joseph E. B. Lombard, “From Hubb to ‘Ishq: The Development of Love in early Sufism,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 18 (2007): 345-385.

<sup>268</sup> Chittick, *Divine Love*, xxiv.

<sup>269</sup> Beneito, “The Servant of the Loving One,” 6.



in the *Qur'ān*, its meaning is inferred by Ibn 'Arabī from Qur'anic passages such as the story of Joseph and Zuleika [the governor's wife], when it describes Zuleika having been absolutely smitten with the love of Joseph: "smitten to the heart [of Zuleika] with [the] love [for Joseph]" (*qad shaghafahā ḥubban*) (Q. 12:30).<sup>270</sup> It appears also in the verse which states: "But those who believe are more ardent in their love of God" (*wa-lladhīna āmanū ashaddu ḥubban lil-llāh*) (Q. 2:165).<sup>271</sup> The term *'ishq* has been mentioned in Sufi literature to symbolize passionate, fiery and all-consuming love which the spiritual seeker experiences on the path to God.<sup>272</sup> The symbolic meaning between the convolvulus bindweed and *'ishq* (extreme overabundant feelings of intense passionate love) is comparable to the upright spiral movement of the convolvulus plant, which twists and wraps itself around its vertical support until the support can no longer be seen.<sup>273</sup> In this way, writes Pablo Beneito, "blinding love (*'ishq*) wraps around the heart of the lover, blinding him so that he can see no one other than his beloved."<sup>274</sup> Although *'ishq* is considered by many Sufis to be one of the highest levels of love, *'ishq* does not represent the high station of witnessing the "Oneness of God." This is because *'Ishq* still pertains to a sense of duality, an intense love between two, a lover and a beloved. The realization that God alone is the Lover and the Beloved, is considered to be the highest form of spiritual attainment, as specified by many Sufi masters including Ibn 'Arabī.

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<sup>270</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:323.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> Gloton, "The Quranic Inspiration of Ibn 'Arabī's Vocabulary of Love," 42.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Beneito, "The Servant of the Loving One," 6.

#### 2.4. Love in the *Sunnah*

In Islam the hadiths of Prophet Muhammad are considered to be the most important source of law and guidance after the *Qur'ān*. Many hadiths not only emphasise the important role of love in the life of Muslims, but also imply the significant role love plays as the main reason behind creation.<sup>275</sup> This point shall be explained further in the section on the *ḥadīth* of “The Hidden or Unknown Treasure.”

According to traditional Muslim doctrine, the Prophet of Islam is regarded as the most beloved of God’s creation and the supreme lover of God.<sup>276</sup> The Qur’anic verse, “if you love God, follow me, God will love you and forgive your sins,” (Q. 3:31) paves the way for Muslims who wish to attain God’s love to follow the path of the ultimate lover and beloved of God, namely Islam’s final Prophet. From this verse, Sufis such as Ibn ‘Arabī and Rūmī understood the Prophet Muhammad to be the greatest beloved and greatest lover of God,<sup>277</sup> and to be “the perfect embodiment of love for God, so all those who want to actualize their innate love for God need to follow his example.”<sup>278</sup> Thus, by following the Prophet and observing his “practice” (*sunnah*), the reward attained is God’s love.<sup>279</sup> Accordingly, a prayer (*du‘ā*) ascribed to the Prophet indicates the archetypal/prototypical role of the Prophet as God’s most beloved (*maḥbūb*): “O God, give me love of Thee, and love of those who love Thee, and love of what makes me approach Thy love, and make Thy love dearest to me than cold water.”<sup>280</sup> Furthermore, an important theme which is central in Ibn ‘Arabī doctrine is the “Muhammadan Reality” (*al-ḥaqīqah al-*

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<sup>275</sup> Gloton, “The Quranic Inspiration of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Vocabulary of Love,” 48.

<sup>276</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 26.

<sup>277</sup> Chittick, “The Religion of Love Revisited,” 43.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>279</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 27.

<sup>280</sup> Cited in Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 131.

*Muḥammadiyyah*) where Ibn 'Arabī defines the role of the Prophet Muhammad as God's first creation and *maḥbūb*, and emphasizes following the *Sunnah* as the means to attain God's love.<sup>281</sup> This theme will be explained further in the Fourth and Fifth Chapters of the thesis.

There are many Prophetic sayings (*aḥādīth nabawīyyah*) about the importance of love, usually with a focus on God, the Prophet, faith, family, brotherhood, and the household of the Prophet. In the *ḥadīth* literature we encounter such traditions as, "if anyone loves for God's sake, hates for God's sake,<sup>282</sup> gives for God's sake and withholds for God's sake, thus has perfected faith."<sup>283</sup> Other hadiths state, "You will be with those whom you love;"<sup>284</sup> "God is Beautiful, and He loves beauty,"<sup>285</sup> and "Love God for what He nourishes you with of His Blessings, love me for the love of God, and love my household for loving me."<sup>286</sup> This last *ḥadīth* indicates as Ghazi writes, "human beings' love for God begins as an emotion, and then - by following the Messenger of God through righteous deeds, virtuous character and remembrance of God - it becomes part of the believer's very being and soul."<sup>287</sup> Such hadiths not only demonstrate the central role love has in Islam, but also prescribe the means by which to elevate oneself spiritually by following the path of love.

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<sup>281</sup> Chittick, "The Religion of Love Revisited," 44.

<sup>282</sup> Hate here refers to hating the evil actions of wrong doers. See Muhammad, *Love in the Holy Quran*, xxii, 54, 56, 58.

<sup>283</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by Abū Dāwūd, *ḥadīth* no. (4681) in *al-Sunnan*.

<sup>284</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by al-Bukhārī, *ḥadīth* no. (6167, 6171); Muslim, *ḥadīth* no. (2639) in their *Ṣaḥīḥ*; and Abū Dāwūd, *ḥadīth* no. (5125) in *al-Sunnan*.

<sup>285</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by Muslim, *ḥadīth* no. (91) in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*.

<sup>286</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by al-Tirmidhī, *ḥadīth* no. (3789) in *al-Jāmi'*.

<sup>287</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Holy Quran*, 77.

### 2.4.1. The *ḥadīth* of the “supererogatory prayers” (*ḥadīth al-nawāfil*)<sup>288</sup>

From the entire collection of hadiths, two *qudsī* and one *nabawī* hadiths are considered to be the primary sources of inspiration for the entire Sufi literature on the metaphysics of Divine love.<sup>289</sup> The first is the canonical *ḥadīth qudsī* of the “proximity by supererogative prayers” (*qurb al-nawāfil*). This *ḥadīth* designates one of the many paths of the *Sunnah* that guide the Muslim on how to attain the love of God. In this case, it lies in observing the supererogatory acts of worship, which are considered to be part of the Prophetic tradition:

My servant draws near to Me through nothing I love more than that which I have made obligatory for him. My servant never ceases to draw near to Me through supererogatory acts until I love him. And when I love him, I am His hearing by which he hears, His sight by which he sees, His hand by which he grasps, and His foot by which he walks. And when he approaches a span, I approach a cubit and when he comes walking, I come running.<sup>290</sup>

This *ḥadīth* indicates that by observing the supererogatory or *nawāfil* prayers, a complementary relationship (*munāsaba*) is attained between God and His servants, so that whenever a person draws nearer to Him, God in return draws nearer [metaphorically] to the person, until the person attains His love.<sup>291</sup> When this level is reached, God bestows on the seeker a state of spiritual realization where he/she acknowledges that, God is, in reality his own hearing, sight, and total existence.<sup>292</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī explains that by choosing to

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<sup>288</sup> I am here primarily concerned with Ibn ‘Arabī’s interpretation, allowing that this is not necessarily shared by others in his own tradition as well as more broadly in Islam. Nevertheless, I will accept his interpretation *prima facie* for the purposes of analysis. My criticisms of these interpretations will be evident in later Chapters. See section 1.12 on methodology in Chapter One of this thesis.

<sup>289</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 32.

<sup>290</sup> Lewisohn, “Divine Love in Islam,” 164. The *ḥadīth* is narrated by al-Bukhārī, *ḥadīth* no. (6502) in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*.

<sup>291</sup> See Muhammad Rustom, “Ibn ‘Arabī on Proximity and Distance,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabī Society* 41 (2007).

<sup>292</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 38.

perform the non-obligatory acts of worship, the *nawāfil*, which he calls “choice of servitude” (*‘ubūdiyyat al-ikhtiyār*), the spiritual seeker experiences the metaphorical state of spiritual annihilation or effacement (*fanā’*), mentioned in *ḥadīth al-nawāfil* where God says: “I am His hearing by which he hears, His sight by which he sees, His hand by which he grasps, and His foot by which he walks.”<sup>293</sup> In other words, the lover realizes that the actions and attributes ascribed to him/her are nothing more but God’s actions and attributes performed through him/her. These states of spiritual realization are known in Sufi metaphysics as states of “annihilation in actions” (*fanā’ fi l-af‘āl*), “annihilation in attributes” (*fanā’ fi l-ṣifāt*), and “annihilation in essence” (*fanā’ fi l-dhāt*) of God.<sup>294</sup>

#### 2.4.2. The *ḥadīth* of the “Hidden Treasure” (*al-kanz al-makhfī*) or “Unknown Treasure” (*kanzan lam u‘raf*)

The second *ḥadīth* is the famous non-canonical *ḥadīth qudsī* of the “Hidden Treasure” (*al-kanz al-makhfī*)<sup>295</sup> where God is said to state, “I was a Hidden [Unknown] Treasure and I loved to be known; so I created the creatures and made Myself known to them; so they knew Me”<sup>296</sup> (*kuntu kanzan makhfiyyan [lam u‘raf] fa-aḥbabtu an u‘raf fa-khalaqtu al-khalq fa-bī ‘arafūnī*). William Chittick mentions that an early citation of this *ḥadīth* can be found in a work by the “Brethren of Purity” (*Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’*) in the 10<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>297</sup> who attribute the *ḥadīth* to Prophet David.<sup>298</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī was not only a master

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<sup>293</sup> Ibid., 38-39.

<sup>294</sup> See Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 142-148; and Andrew Wilcox, “The Dual Mystical Concepts of *Fanā’* and *Baqā’* in early Sūfism” *Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 38.1 (2011): 95-118.

<sup>295</sup> Even though the *ḥadīth* is non-canonical, it is considered to be the cornerstone of all of Ibn ‘Arabī’s metaphysical theories on love, creation, and existence. For a comprehensive study on this *ḥadīth* see Moeen Afnani, “Unraveling the Mystery of The Hidden Treasure: The Origin and Development of a Ḥadīth Qudsī and its Application in Sūfī Doctrine,” PhD diss., (University of California, 2011).

<sup>296</sup> Gloton, “The Quranic Inspiration of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Vocabulary of Love,” 38.

<sup>297</sup> Chittick, *Divine Love*, 439.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., 18.

in Sufism but was also a master in the science of *ḥadīth*. He did not verify the authenticity of the *ḥadīth* by the traditional methods of *ḥadīth* verification, but rather verified its authenticity by his personal spiritual unveiling (*kashf*) or revelation (*wahy*).<sup>299</sup> The *ḥadīth* has been cited frequently in many Sufi texts and referenced by Ibn 'Arabī<sup>300</sup> as an explanation for the reason and purpose behind creation.<sup>301</sup> Several scholarly works on Ibn 'Arabī, indicate that his theory of cosmogenesis stems mainly from this *ḥadīth*,<sup>302</sup> as specified in “I loved to be known.” This *ḥadīth* establishes the status of love as the foundation for knowledge and indicates that without love there could be no creation and no knowledge of God.

#### 2.4.3. The *ḥadīth* of “beauty” (*ḥadīth al-jamāl*)

The third *ḥadīth* is a canonical *ḥadīth nabawī* that states, “God is Beautiful, and He loves beauty” (*inna Allāha jamīlun yuḥibbu al-jamāl*).<sup>303</sup> This Prophetic saying has been frequently cited by Sufis<sup>304</sup> and by Ibn 'Arabī<sup>305</sup> to refer to one of the main reasons behind Divine love and that is beauty (*jamāl*). It also specifies that beauty and love are attached, attracted and related to each other,<sup>306</sup> and, because God is Beautiful, He loves His manifest Beauty in creation.<sup>307</sup> It thus implies in the metaphysical sense that the object of love is the love of God of Himself.<sup>308</sup> Ghazi writes, “God is the true intended Object of all love - *there is no refuge from God except in Him* - so there is no escape whatsoever from

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 439; See Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:399.

<sup>300</sup> Gloton, “The Quranic Inspiration of Ibn 'Arabī's Vocabulary of Love,” 39.

<sup>301</sup> Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 18.

<sup>302</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn 'Arabī,” 32.

<sup>303</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by Muslim, *ḥadīth* no. (91) in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*.

<sup>304</sup> See sub-section 2.5.1 in this Chapter.

<sup>305</sup> See section 5.6 in Ch. Five of this thesis.

<sup>306</sup> William Chittick, “The Divine Roots of Human Love,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabī Society* 17 (1995): 61.

<sup>307</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Qur'an*, 31.

<sup>308</sup> Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 44.

Him except to Him.”<sup>309</sup> This notion of Oneness and unanimity of God is identified in another *ḥadīth* known as the *ḥadīth* of the “night prayers” which the Prophet Muhammad is believed to have said: “I seek refuge (*a‘ūdhu*) in Your Pleasure (*riḍāk*) from Your Wrath (*sakhatik*), and I seek refuge in Your Pardon (*mu‘āfātik*) from Your Punishment (*‘uqūbatik*), and I seek refuge in You (*bika*) from You (*minka*).”<sup>310</sup> The last statement in the *ḥadīth*, “I seek refuge in You from You,” infers the idea that both the Lover and Beloved is God. Furthermore, the connection between “benevolence,” (*iḥsān*), and “beauty,” (*ḥusn*), is seen in the etymology of the root of the word, (*iḥsān*), which comes from the word (*ḥusn*).<sup>311</sup> This connection suggests that virtues beautify the soul, and when the soul is beautified it attracts love and becomes beloved.

### 2.5. Love in early Sufism before Ibn ‘Arabī

Scholars such as Michael Sells categorize Islamic spirituality into four distinct periods.<sup>312</sup> The first period, is the pre-Sufi era which begins from the time of the Prophet until the time of the followers of his companions (*al-tābi‘ūn*) in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Emphasis was placed during this period mainly on the teachings of the *Qur’an* and the *Sunnah*. The second period is the early period of Sufism which extends from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> century. Hence prominence was given to the sayings and writings of early Sufi masters such as al-Ḥassan al-Baṣrī (d. 728 CE), Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 859 CE), Rābi‘ah al-‘Adawiyyah (d. 801 CE), al-Ḥusayn ibn Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj, and Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd. The third period is the formative period of Sufi literature, which begins from the 10<sup>th</sup> century with Abū Bakr al-Sarrāj (d. 988 CE) and extends to Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 1074 CE). Sufi writings during this period

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<sup>309</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Qur’an*, 284.

<sup>310</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by Muslim, *ḥadīth* no. (486) in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*.

<sup>311</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Qur’an*, 37.

<sup>312</sup> See Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1996), 17-18.

displayed “a self-conscious mode of spirituality embracing all aspects of life and society.”<sup>313</sup> The fourth period is the highly developed and technically complex metaphysical period of Sufi writing, which begins from the 10<sup>th</sup> century with Sufi masters such as Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111 CE), Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 1126 CE), Ayn al-Qudāt (d. 1131 CE), and extends to Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240 CE) and Rūmī (d. 1273 CE).<sup>314</sup>

In Sufi literature emphasis was given to love.<sup>315</sup> However, as William Chittick indicates, “Western observers rarely associate love with Islam itself. This helps to explain the tendency to see Sufism as somehow tangential to the tradition.”<sup>316</sup> Sufis from the earlier centuries of Islam<sup>317</sup> defined and classified the different levels of love.<sup>318</sup> Through the allusive language of love, with the exception of rare cases as in the ecstatic utterances of al-Ḥallāj, Sufis were able to express and convey esoteric knowledge without coming into direct conflict with strict, uncompromising formulations of exoteric dogma.<sup>319</sup> They considered the path of love to be the most applicable path to draw the common or general public (*al-‘awāmm*) closer to God.<sup>320</sup> This idea is noted in Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī’s well-known book *The Epistle on Sufism (Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah)* where al-Qushayrī considers love to be, “an expression of God’s desire to draw His servant near to Him.”<sup>321</sup> One of the early attempts to formulate the notion of Divine love and define the relationship between the “Creator” and “creation” was introduced by al-Sarī al-Saqāṭī (d. 867 CE) in

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<sup>313</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>315</sup> Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart*, 57.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> See Böwering, and Bilal, *The Comfort of the Mystics*.

<sup>318</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 132.

<sup>319</sup> Burckhardt, *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, 21.

<sup>320</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 141.

<sup>321</sup> Joseph Lumbard, *Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī: Remembrance, and the Metaphysics of Love* (New York: SUNY, 2016), 133.



Baghdad.<sup>322</sup> According to Annemarie Schimmel, al-Saqāṭī conceptualized “the idea of mutual love between man and God.”<sup>323</sup> Abu Yazīd al-Bastāmī (d. 874 CE), another important early figure, described love as having four aspects: “it has four branches: one from Him, that is His grace, one from you, that is to obey Him, one for Him, and that is your recollecting Him, and one between both of you, and that is love.”<sup>324</sup> The notion that God alone is worthy of love is reiterated by many Sufīs such as Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 945 CE), who describes the love for God to be “a fire in the heart, consuming all save the will of the Beloved,”<sup>325</sup> Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd, also a famous scholar of both the law and the spiritual path, was one of the earliest Sufīs to refute all notions of duality between the lover and the Divine beloved. “Love between two is not right until... one addresses the other, ‘O Thou I.’”<sup>326</sup> Statements such as these intimated the doctrine of the “Oneness of Being” (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), a theme which Ibn ‘Arabī would subsequently develop and contextualize.<sup>327</sup>

The relationship between Divine love and religious piety in early Sufi doctrine was expressed in greater detail in the teachings and writings of such figures as Shaqīq al-Balkhī (d. 810 CE) and Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 966 CE).<sup>328</sup> Shaqīq al-Balkhī indicated that the highest station on the path of God is to love what God loves, and to hate what God hates, he writes, “the heart loves what God loves and hates what God hates, until nothing is more beloved to him than God and those who please Him.”<sup>329</sup> Shaqīq’s statement is

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<sup>322</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 131.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Cited in Ibid., 132.

<sup>325</sup> Cited in Lumbard, *Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī: Remembrance, and the Metaphysics of Love*, 113.

<sup>326</sup> Cited in Ibid., 131.

<sup>327</sup> See Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, 307.

<sup>328</sup> Lewisohn, “Divine Love in Islam,” 164.

<sup>329</sup> Lumbard, *Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī: Remembrance, and the Metaphysics of Love*, 118.

similar to the *ḥadīth* mentioned earlier, “if anyone loves for God’s sake, hates for God’s sake.... he has perfected faith.”<sup>330</sup> This indicates that early Sufis based their ideas on the *Qur'ān* and the *ḥadīth*. Abu Ṭālib al-Makkī on the other hand indicated that to Love God is to “obey” Him. He writes, “The Prophet of God made love a condition of faith by saying that God and His messenger should be more beloved to the faithful than anything else.”<sup>331</sup> This statement is not only another indication that Sufis based their ideas on Islamic scripture but also implied that by adhering to the teachings of *Sharī'ah* was considered a sign of devotion and love for God. Generally speaking, many of the early Sufis agreed that love in reality is a Divine grace initiated by God, and that such love cannot be acquired through one’s own will or rejected once one has been singled out for it.<sup>332</sup> However, the discussions and writings on love among early Sufis before the 10<sup>th</sup> century was on how to define and classify the different terms and levels in the love of God.<sup>333</sup> Annemarie Schimmel writes:

[W]hen the first attempts were made to introduce the word ‘*ishq*, “passionate love,” into relation between man and God, even most Sufi’s objected, for this root implies the concept of overflowing and passionate longing, a quality that God, the self-sufficient, could not possibly possess; nor was it permissible that man should approach the Lord with such feelings.<sup>334</sup>

Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 907 CE) was one of the first Sufis to use the term in the context of intense or passionate love for God, after defining himself as a “passionate lover” (‘*āshiq*) of Him.<sup>335</sup> As already noted, the word ‘*ishq* is not used in the *Qur'ān* or the *Sunnah*.

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<sup>330</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by Abū Dāwūd, *ḥadīth* no. (4681) in *al-Sunnan*.

<sup>331</sup> Cited in Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 131.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

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

<sup>335</sup> Lewisohn, “Divine Love in Islam,” 165.

Therefore the use of *'ishq*, *'āshiq* (passionate lover) or *ma'shūq* (passionately beloved) in the context of expressing love of God, was not only rejected by the mainstream Islamic orthodox schools of thought, but also by many reserved or more conservative Sufis.<sup>336</sup> From the early 10<sup>th</sup> century onward the term *'ishq* was used extensively in the writings of Sufis such as al-Ḥallāj and Aḥmad al-Ghazālī. While Sufis such as Aḥmad al-Ghazālī employed the terms *ḥubb* and *'ishq* interchangeably without distinction in their writings, other Sufis like Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī considered *'ishq* to be the higher form of love.<sup>337</sup> Al-Ḥallāj, on the other hand, openly expressed and professed his *'ishq* for God. His love for God did not mean obedience, as earlier Sufis understood,<sup>338</sup> but *'ishq* for him represented the Essence of God and the secret behind creation.<sup>339</sup> His ecstatic utterances for the *'ishq* of God, influenced later Sufis such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-'Irāqī (d. 1289 CE) to testify, "*lā ilāha illā 'l-'ishq*, "there is no deity save Love".<sup>340</sup> The Sufi ideas of this period not only emphasized the important and crucial role love plays in the Sufi path, but also considered love to be at the heart of Sufism.

Another important representative of the school of Divine love was Rābi'ah al-'Adawiyyah.<sup>341</sup> Rābi'ah presented a new school of Sufi thought, declaring that God alone is worthy of love.<sup>342</sup> She says, "I have not worshipped Him from fear of His fire, nor for love of His garden, so that I should be like a lowly hireling; rather, I have worshipped Him for love of Him and longing for Him."<sup>343</sup> She indicates in such passages that she loves God

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<sup>336</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 137.

<sup>337</sup> Lombard, *Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī: Remembrance, and the Metaphysics of Love*, 140.

<sup>338</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 71.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>341</sup> See Suleyman Derin, *Love in Sufism: From Rābia to Ibn al-Fārid* (Istanbul: Insan Publications, 2008).

<sup>342</sup> Lombard, *Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī: Remembrance, and the Metaphysics of Love*, 112.

<sup>343</sup> Cited in Ernst, *Sufism*, 102.

for both the desire of her soul which “longs for Him” (= *ḥubb al-hawā*), and because He deserves to be loved for Himself (*li-annaka 'ahlun li-dhāka*).<sup>344</sup> She therefore distinguishes between two types of love: the first being the love of God for His rewards and personal desires (*ahwā'*), which are considered to be selfish forms of love; while the second is a selfless love or *ḥubb*, which is the love of God only for Himself.<sup>345</sup> Rābi'ah is thus attributed with introducing the doctrine of selfless and pure love to Sufi literature.<sup>346</sup> Chittick notes that, “People frequently have the idea that if they love God, they will reap benefit, but this is self-interest, not love.”<sup>347</sup> Thus the goal of the spiritual seeker, according to this Sufi thought, should be to love God alone, regardless of any gift or reward. Rābi'ah concludes her message of Divine love by confirming that her love and praise for God in reality is not hers, but is God's own love and praise for Himself. She states:

Two loves I give Thee, love that yearns,  
And love because Thy due is love.  
My yearning my remembrance turns  
To Thee, nor lets it from Thee rove.  
Thou hast Thy due whene'er it please Thee  
To lift the veils for me to see Thee.  
Praise is not mine in this, nor yet  
In that, but Thine is this and that.<sup>348</sup>

Statements such as these, applied to the concept of “Oneness of Being” (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), which Ibn 'Arabī subsequently states, “creatures never love anything but God, whether they know it or not.”<sup>349</sup> Ibn 'Arabī also describes Rābi'ah as being, “the one who analyzes and classes the categories of love to the point of being the most famous interpreter of

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<sup>344</sup> See Carl Ernst, “The Stages of Love in Early Persian Sufism, from Rābi'a to Ruzbahan,” *The Heritage of Sufism*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), 435-455.

<sup>345</sup> Lewisohn, “Divine Love in Islam,” 164.

<sup>346</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 38.

<sup>347</sup> Chittick, “The Religion of Love Revisited,” 48.

<sup>348</sup> Cited in Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 172.

<sup>349</sup> Cited in Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn 'Arabī,” 31.

love.”<sup>350</sup> Joseph Lumbard notes that, although Rābi‘ah’s ideas date back to the early Sufi period of the 9<sup>th</sup> century they, “emphasize a human love for God that is absolute, not a love that is the Absolute Itself – and this is the crux of the matter.”<sup>351</sup> The idea that all love is only God’s love for Himself (*lā yuḥibbu illā nafsahu*), can be traced back to Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī.<sup>352</sup> He writes in *Revival of the Religious Sciences (Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn)*, “there is nothing in existence but Him (*laysa fi l-wujūd illā huwa*).”<sup>353</sup> Furthermore, in works such as *The Niche for Lights (Mishkāt al-Anwār)* al-Ghazālī presents a perspective that is seen as a concept similar to that of “Oneness of Being.”<sup>354</sup> In a key passage in the text, al-Ghazālī states:

They [the knowers of God (*al-‘arifīn bi-llah*)] see witnessing with their own eyes – that there is no existence save God and that ‘Everything is perishing except His face’ [Q. 28:88]. [It is] not that each thing is perishing at one time or at other times, but that it is perishing from eternity without [any] beginning.<sup>355</sup>

Al-Ghazālī explains that the “knowers of God,” become totally effaced or annihilated in the absolute singularity (*aḥadiyyah*) of God, and thus come to realize that nothing exists but Him.<sup>356</sup> Such ideas were significantly developed and contextualized later by Ibn ‘Arabī in his writings during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century.

### 2.5.1. Love, knowledge, beauty and mercy

Love and knowledge (*irfān*), or the “realized knowledge,” as mentioned previously in the non-canonical *ḥadīth* of the “Hidden [Unknown] Treasure,” are, from the

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<sup>350</sup> Lewisohn, “Divine Love in Islam,” 164.

<sup>351</sup> Lumbard, *Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī: Remembrance, and the Metaphysics of Love*, 112.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>353</sup> Cited in Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 31.

<sup>354</sup> See Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 96.

<sup>355</sup> Al-Ghazālī, *The Niche for Lights*, trans. David Buchman (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 16-17.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*

Sufi point of view, closely related and interconnected.<sup>357</sup> Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī indicates, “Love without gnosis is impossible, one can only love what one knows.”<sup>358</sup> He also mentions that the “first principle of love (*al-ḥubb*) is that it cannot occur without interior knowledge or gnosis (*ma'rifa*) and perception (*idrāk*).”<sup>359</sup> Without the predominance of one path over the other, the emphasis was either on the path of love, or the path of knowledge, as the means to achieve realization.<sup>360</sup> Titus Burckhardt states that, “knowledge of God always engenders love, while love presupposes knowledge of the object of love even though that knowledge may be only indirect and reflected.”<sup>361</sup> According to this epistemological view, the object of the indirect and reflected knowledge is Divine beauty. Since beauty is the object of Divine love as indicated in the *ḥadīth* “God is Beautiful, and He loves beauty,”<sup>362</sup> and because God loved to be known as mentioned in the *ḥadīth* of the “Unknown or Hidden Treasure,” it is from this Divine beauty that love, and knowledge originate.<sup>363</sup> However, al-Ghazālī understands Divine Beauty to be one of the many causes of love, but for Ibn ‘Arabī it is the main cause.<sup>364</sup> This will be discussed in greater detail in the following Chapters.

It is interesting to note that the Arabic words (*jamāl*) and (*ḥusn*) both mean the same thing, namely beauty. However, Muslim scholars differentiate between the two terms regarding their contextual use. The word *jamāl* is usually used to describe a single type of

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<sup>357</sup> See Ralph Austin, “The Lady Nizām - An Image of Love and Knowledge,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society* 7 (1988): 35-48.

<sup>358</sup> Cited in Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 130.

<sup>359</sup> Cited in Lewisohn, “Divine Love in Islam,” 165.

<sup>360</sup> Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 69.

<sup>361</sup> Burckhardt, *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, 23.

<sup>362</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by Muslim, *ḥadīth* no. (91) in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*.

<sup>363</sup> Burckhardt, *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, 23.

<sup>364</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 33.

beauty, while *ḥusn* is typically used to define a plurality of various types of beauty.<sup>365</sup> Beauty, according to Sufis, is considered to be an objective reality in terms of the manifestation of the Divine Beauty in creation. However, acknowledging such Beauty is considered to be subjective, because perceiving beauty is related to the individual's capacity and taste (*dhawq*) in witnessing it.<sup>366</sup> Hence the well-known statement, beauty is in the eyes of the beholder.

Furthermore, Sufis such as Dhū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī indicated that the theophanic manifestations (*al-tajalliyāt al-ilāhiyya*) of the Attributes of Divine Beauty (*al-ṣifāt al-jamāliyya*),<sup>367</sup> incur states (*aḥwāl*) for the seeker such as hope (*rajā'*), expansion (*baṣṭ*), and *jamāl*.<sup>368</sup> Others, such as al-Hujwīrī (d. 1077 CE), mention that these manifestations induce states (*aḥwāl*) of intimacy (*uns*) and expansion (*baṣṭ*).<sup>369</sup> 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, on the other hand, suggested that God's Attributes originate from His Mercy,<sup>370</sup> and thus Divine Mercy, according to al-Jīlī, is considered to be the prime cause of creation. Al-Jīlī refers to Qur'anic verses such as (Q. 55:1-4) to indicate that God created humans from His Mercy.<sup>371</sup> Ghazi points out to the connection between Love and Mercy in the *Qur'an*. He argues that the Divine Name, the Affectionate (*al-Wadūd*), is always coupled with two other Names, the Merciful (*al-Raḥīm*) and the Forgiving (*al-Ghafūr*), in an indication that God's Love is inseparable from His Mercy.<sup>372</sup> Ghazi writes, "God created human beings and the world *out of mercy and for mercy*; and since Divine Mercy is inseparable from

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<sup>365</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Qur'an*, 259.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>367</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 44.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>369</sup> Benito, "On the Divine Love of Beauty," 3.

<sup>370</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Qur'an*, 306, end note 19.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

Divine love...., this means that the world and human beings were created *out of love and for love* as well.”<sup>373</sup> William Chittick notes that Ibn ‘Arabī often mentions that God’s Mercy per se<sup>374</sup> is identical with God’s Real existence (*al-wujūd al-Ḥaqq*), hence God’s Mercy (*al-rahmat al-rahmāniyya*) is intrinsic to the metaphorical existence (*al-wujūd al-majāzī*) of creation.<sup>375</sup> The Sufi writings in the periods before Ibn ‘Arabī expressed various views on love, knowledge, beauty, and mercy, however Ibn ‘Arabī explicitly declared the primacy of love over all other.

### 2.5.2. Love and the path to God

Many Sufis from the early period of Sufism which extends from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> century, advocated the path of love, among whom was Sumnūn al-Muḥibb (d. 900 CE). Sumnūn, indicated that all states (*aḥwāl*)<sup>376</sup> and stations (*maqāmāt*) are insignificant when compared to the path of love.<sup>377</sup> Abu Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and his younger brother Aḥmad al-Ghazālī in the 12<sup>th</sup> century not only propagated the path of love in their works such as the *Revival of the Religious Sciences (Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn)* of Abū Ḥāmid and Aḥmad al-Ghazālī’s book the *Inspirations (Sawāniḥ)*, but also introduced a structured doctrine.<sup>378</sup> This structure helped to systematize and integrate Sufi esoteric teachings in the frame-work of exoteric doctrine.<sup>379</sup> Aḥmad al-Ghazālī’s *Sawāniḥ*, is considered to be one of the earliest

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<sup>373</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>374</sup> The issue of “per se” did not become prominent in Sufi thought until Ibn ‘Arabī. See Chittick, *Divine Love*, 150.

<sup>375</sup> Chittick, *Divine Love*, 30.

<sup>376</sup> The Sufi term “state” (*ḥāl*), plural (*aḥwāl*), refers to a temporary spiritual condition on the path of realizing the “Oneness of God,” were the seeker experiences certain spiritual states that are not permanent. The temporary spiritual “state” (*ḥāl*) of consciousness is considered to be a lesser spiritual condition than the lasting spiritual “station” (*maqām*); see Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 241.

<sup>377</sup> Lewisohn, “Divine Love in Islam,” 164.

<sup>378</sup> For a comprehensive study on love according to Aḥmad al-Ghazālī see Joseph E. B. Lumbard, “Ahmad al-Ghazali and the Metaphysics of Love,” Phd. diss., (Yale University, 2003).

<sup>379</sup> Lewisohn, “Divine Love in Islam,” 165.



treatises written in Sufism on love in the Persian language.<sup>380</sup> In the *Sawāniḥ* Aḥmad al-Ghazālī emphasizes the central role of “intense love” (*Ishq*) in terms of the Divine Essence of God, the basis of creation, and the core of the spiritual wayfaring of the Sufi.<sup>381</sup> He understands *Ishq* to be the Essence of God and the Ultimate Reality which all else derives, and which is different and beyond God’s Names and Attributes.<sup>382</sup> This understanding differs from Ibn ‘Arabī’s own view. Ibn ‘Arabī considers the Divine Essence to be unknowable, and the Divine Names and Attributes to be the archetypes by which God manifests Himself in creation. This ontological view will be examined in greater detail in Chapter Four of this thesis.

## 2.6. Conclusion

Historically, the religion of Islam has been criticized for lacking a philosophy of love. This criticism not only ignores the numerous verses in the *Qur'ān* and the many narrations of the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet Muhammad, but also the entire metaphysics of “Divine love” expressed in Sufi writings.

Sufis from the earlier centuries of Islam defined and classified the different phases of love. The metaphysical phenomenon regarding Sufi Divine love has been portrayed mainly in two verses of the *Qur'ān* and three hadiths. The beginning of the Qur’anic verse, the statement: “God will bring people whom He loves and who love Him,” (Q. 5:54) signifies that the love of God in humans has its origin in God’s love for them. The ending of the verse, the statement: “and who love Him,” implies a response on the part of the human being to God’s love. The *Qur'ān* also stipulates how this love on the part of the

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<sup>380</sup> Chittick, *Divine Love*, 311.

<sup>381</sup> Lumbard, *Aḥmad Al-Ghazālī: Remembrance, and the Metaphysics of Love*, 113.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

human being is to be embodied in the statement: “if you love God, follow me, God will love you and forgive your sins” (Q. 3:31). This verse signifies the Divine condition of the way to fully gain God’s love, and that is to follow the path of the Prophet. A theme which Ibn ‘Arabī subsequently develops.

As for the hadiths, the first is the *ḥadīth qudsī* of the “supererogatory prayers” (*nawāfil*), in which we find the expression, “until I love him.” Defines the condition of observing the supererogatory acts of devotion, the *nawāfil* in order to receive God’s love. The tradition continues by stating: “when I love him,” thus clarifying that the reward of such *nawāfil* is God’s love. The second is the famous non-canonical *ḥadīth qudsī* of the “Hidden or Unknown Treasure.” This *ḥadīth* implies to the reason behind creation. In the first part of the *ḥadīth*: “I loved to be known; so, I created the creatures,” it is seen that love is the sole cause of existence. And in the second half, “and made Myself known to them; so, they knew Me,” the tradition draws attention to the close relationship between Divine love and revealed knowledge. The *ḥadīth* has been cited frequently in many Sufi texts and referenced by Ibn ‘Arabī as an explanation for the reason and purpose behind creation. The third *ḥadīth*, “God is Beautiful, and He loves beauty,”<sup>383</sup> reveals the main reason behind love, which is beauty. Furthermore, the etymological connection between “benevolence,” *iḥsān*, and “beauty,” *ḥusn*, suggests that virtue beautifies the soul, and subsequently attracts love. Similarly, the connection between Love and Mercy is indicated by the Divine Name, the Affectionate (*al-Wadūd*), which is always combined in the *Qur'an* with the Divine Names, the Merciful (*al-Raḥīm*) and the Forgiving (*al-Ghafūr*). This is an indication that Divine Mercy is inseparable from Divine love. Also, since beauty is the object of Divine

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<sup>383</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by Muslim, *ḥadīth* no. (91) in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*.

love, as indicated in the *ḥadīth* “God is Beautiful, and He loves beauty,”<sup>384</sup> it is from this Divine beauty that Divine love, and knowledge originated.

Historically, many Sufis in the periods before Ibn ‘Arabī, expressed various views on love, and formulated their metaphysical theories regarding Divine love from Qur’anic verses and hadiths such as these. Ibn ‘Arabī was no exception. He not only contextualized and clarified these earlier Sufi theories, but also surpassed all the previous Sufi masters by expanding on their ideas and formulating his own personal understandings on the basis of his unique spiritual experiences. He introduced his own original interpretations of religious scripture and acknowledged the primacy of love. I will now build on what has been described in this Chapter by examining Ibn ‘Arabī’s intermediate works of mysticism such as, *The Interpreter of Longings (Turjumān al-Ashwāq)* and *The Ringstones of Wisdom (Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam)*.

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<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

### **Chapter Three: Divine love in selected works by Ibn ‘Arabī**

### 3.1. Introduction

Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysics is considered to be a development of the earlier Sufi mystical concepts.<sup>385</sup> His ideas are comprehensive, extremely complex, and sometimes cryptic. Attempting to explain and convey his ideas to the general audience is often very difficult.<sup>386</sup> In the following sections I will attempt to highlight some of Ibn 'Arabī's ideas on love in books such as *The Interpreter of Longings (Turjumān al-Ashwāq)*, *The Ringstones of Wisdom (Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam)*, *The Crown of Epistles (Tāj al-rasā'il)*, and Ibn 'Arabī's commentary on *The Interpreter of Longings (Dhakhā'ir al-A'lāq: Sharḥ Turjumān al-Ashwāq)*. The purpose of this Chapter is to outline and clarify the philosophical ideas that express Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysical understanding of love prior to his mature writings on love in *The Meccan Openings*. It is not, therefore, meant to be a historical or genealogical account of his interpretations or traditions.<sup>387</sup>

### 3.2. Love themes in Ibn 'Arabī's writings

Ibn 'Arabī articulated a metaphysics of Divine love (*al-ḥubb al-ilāhī*)<sup>388</sup> more comprehensively than any other Muslim scholar in the history of Islamic literature.<sup>389</sup> He devotes an entire Chapter to the topic, namely "On Knowing the Station of Love" (*fī ma'rifat maqām al-maḥabba*) in *The Meccan Openings*, which will be the focus of my study in the Chapter Five of the thesis. In general terms, Ibn 'Arabī defines love, "a knowledge of tasting."<sup>390</sup> This can imply that a person is ignorant if he/she has not

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<sup>385</sup> Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics and Qur'anic Prophets*, 4.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>387</sup> See section 1.12 on methodology in Chapter One of this thesis.

<sup>388</sup> For a comprehensive compilation of Ibn 'Arabī's quotes on Divine love see Maḥmūd al-Ghurāb, *al-Ḥubb wa al-maḥabba al-ilāhiya min kalām al-shaykh al-Akbar Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn 'Arabī* (Damascus: Naḍr Printing, 1983).

<sup>389</sup> Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, 145.

<sup>390</sup> Cited in Chittick, "The Divine Roots of Human Love," 57.

experienced love in themselves. Tasting (*dhawq*) denotes in this sense any experience gained through heart-felt knowledge, “as opposed to mind-knowledge.”<sup>391</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī believes the cosmos to be the self-disclosure of God, and through the process of creation entities become detached from God. This detachment causes the entities to seek and desire to return and reunite with their Origin, namely God. Love in this case is regarded by Ibn ‘Arabī to be the greatest and most perfect passion or yearning (*shahwah*).<sup>392</sup> This is because love motivates human beings to love, desire and seek God. In the following sections I examine certain love themes in Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings. These express his metaphysics of love prior to *The Meccan Openings*.

In its essence, it can be said that, according to Ibn ‘Arabī’s mystical doctrine of love, that love is a Divine Attribute<sup>393</sup> where God affirms His own Being, love and beauty by revealing “Himself,” to “Himself,” through “Himself.”<sup>394</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī writes, “[e]verything is molded according to self-love. And there is nothing manifest but Him in the self (‘*ayn*) of the possible. Thus, it may be affirmed that none loves God other than God Himself.”<sup>395</sup> In other words, love is manifested by means of the Divine Attributes, and revealed for the Divine Essence to witness and contemplate. This Divine manifestation appears as creation or epiphanies (*maẓhar*) of every possibility (*mumkināt*) that comes to exist. Furthermore, Ibn ‘Arabī references the Qur’anic verse, “There is nothing like Him” (Q. 42: 11) to affirm that the object of love is unique and incomparable. He also mentions

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<sup>391</sup> Martin Lings, *What is Sufism?* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 52.

<sup>392</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 4:259; and Ibn ‘Arabī, *Dhkhā’ir al-A’lāq: Sharḥ Turjumān al-Ashwāq* (Dār Ṣādir: Beirut, 1966), 22.

<sup>393</sup> Chittick, “The Divine Roots of Human Love,” 55.

<sup>394</sup> See Beneito, “The Servant of the Loving One,” 17; Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 41.

<sup>395</sup> Cited in Benito “On the Divine Love of Beauty,” 20.

the *ḥadīth*, “Your love for a thing blinds and deafens [you],”<sup>396</sup> to demonstrate that being in love causes the lover to see and hear nothing but the Beloved in existence.<sup>397</sup> Such love is described by Pablo Beneito, “[b]ut to whom God has granted to love Him with the same kind of love which God has towards him, he has granted testimonial vision (*shuhūd*) and has blessed him with the capacity to contemplate God in the images of things (*bi-shuhūdihi fi ṣuwar al-ashyā*).”<sup>398</sup> Hence the “testimonial vision” which is the witnessing of the “Oneness of God” in creation, is considered by many Sufis to be the ultimate bestowal of Divine love upon the beloved person.

Ibn 'Arabī argues that the “sigh” of desire (*shawq*) issuing from the breath (*nafas*) of the “All Compassionate One” (*nafas al-Raḥmān*) is an expression of love by God.<sup>399</sup> It is this action which creates and determines all forms of existence. In this way, love is the cause of God’s appearances (*zuhūr*) as epiphanies (*maẓāhir*).<sup>400</sup> This action indicates that, creation, which is considered to be the self-manifestation of God, is not only beloved by God, but is also a lover of God. Creation’s love in this case is understood to be the self-disclosure of God’s love for Himself in whatever form creation may appear.<sup>401</sup> Hence a lover may fall in love with a physical form without realizing that such a form is in reality, God. Beneito writes:

The eyes of the cosmos are, therefore, its lovers, whatever the apparent object of their love (*maḥbūb*) may be, given that all of the created beings are places of manifestation (*majālī*) or “seats of honor” [or “the wedding beds”] (*manaṣṣāt*) of the revelation of the Truth (*tajallī al-Ḥaqq*).... When the beloved is absent, the lover has knowledge of him through his name and his relationships, and asks

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<sup>396</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by Abū Dāwūd, *ḥadīth* no. (5130) in *al-Sunnan*; and Aḥmad, *ḥadīth* no. (21740) in *al-Musnad*.

<sup>397</sup> See Hirtenstein, *The Unlimited Mercifier: The Spiritual Life and Thought of Ibn 'Arabī*, 196.

<sup>398</sup> Beneito, “The Servant of the Loving One,” 10.

<sup>399</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:331.

<sup>400</sup> Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, 147.

<sup>401</sup> Chittick, “The Divine Roots of Human Love,” 76.

for him when he cannot see him. Thus is our love of Allāh.... We love Him in His epiphanies (*majālī*) and is this particular name (*ism khāṣṣ*) which is “Laylā” or “Lubnā” or whoever it may be, without having consciousness that it is the same divine Reality (*‘ayn al-Ḥaqq*) [that we love].<sup>402</sup>

Thus, according to Ibn ‘Arabī, any beloved corporeal form such as Laylā or Lubnā, are nothing more than an unidentified self-disclosures of God, and only witnessed as the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*) [God] by people whom recognize God in all.<sup>403</sup>

Love, as Henry Corbin states, “exists eternally as an exchange between God and creation.”<sup>404</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī expresses that because God loved to be known as the “Hidden Treasure,”<sup>405</sup> He made entities or *ashyā’* come into *wujūd* in the form of visible appearances or epiphanies (*mazāhir*) [creation] through His name “the Apparent” (*al-Zāhir*).<sup>406</sup> Furthermore, he specifies three reasons that instigate Divine love: beauty (*al-jamāl*), beneficence or benevolence (*ihsān*), and performing the supererogatory (*nafl*) prayers.<sup>407</sup> These reasons are discussed in more detail in Chapter Five of the thesis.

### 3.2.1. Love and imagination (*khayāl*)

In *The Crown of Epistles (Tāj al-Rasā’il)* Ibn ‘Arabī writes, “know that witnessing the Beloved is the essential goal.”<sup>408</sup> The desire to love, visualise, and witness the Beloved implies that human imagination (*khayāl*) plays a very important role in the mystical love experience of Ibn ‘Arabī.<sup>409</sup> Human imagination, according to Ibn ‘Arabī, is not to be misunderstood as a fantasy or speculation regarding the existence of God, but should rather

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<sup>402</sup> Beneito, “The Servant of the Loving One,” 11- 13.

<sup>403</sup> See Chittick, “The Divine Roots of Human Love, 76; Beneito, “The Servant of the Loving One,” 10, 11.

<sup>404</sup> Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, 147.

<sup>405</sup> Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 41.

<sup>406</sup> Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, 146.

<sup>407</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:326.

<sup>408</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, “Tāj al-Rasā’il wa Minhāj al-Wasā’il,” 2:279.

<sup>409</sup> Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, 155; See also Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:325.



be understood as a fundamental reality of existence.<sup>410</sup> Imagination for Ibn ‘Arabī is considered to be a faculty by which human beings draw their knowledge from a spiritual realm known as the “world of imagination” (*‘ālam al-khayāl*). This lies between the “world of subtleties” (*‘ālam al-laṭā’if*), and the “world of the physical corporeal creation” (*‘ālam al-mahsūsāt*) or (*‘ālam al-kathā’if*).<sup>411</sup> Ibn Arabī emphasizes this idea further when he explains that love desires the non-existent,<sup>412</sup> and when the absent beloved becomes present to the lover. This love experienced from the beloved’s presence, becomes real knowledge to the lover. Similarly, when love is attributed to the love of God, the knowledge gained from the presence and witnessing of God produces Divine knowledge.<sup>413</sup> According to Ibn Arabī, the process of witnessing God in creation, produces both a spiritual state (*ḥāl*), and Divine knowledge (*‘ilm ilāhī*) for the benevolent lovers of God.<sup>414</sup> Furthermore, Ibn Arabī articulates another important point regarding natural love<sup>415</sup> in relation to imagination. He provides a clarification that, when human beings desire or love something, they seek to be in close contact with this being or object, and as long as they have not achieved closeness, their beloved object is still non-existent in relation to them.<sup>416</sup> In other words, the lover desires a non-existent beloved which he/she has not attained or has not possessed.<sup>417</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī writes:

Know that whatever may be the physical form in which the Spirit manifests itself in a sensible body or in an apparitional body.... the following will always be true: the beloved being, who is in every instance something that does not yet exist, is typified in the Imagination, although it has not objective reality; consequently it

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<sup>410</sup> Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries on the Qur’ān*, 2.

<sup>411</sup> See sub-section 4.2.5 in Ch. Four of this thesis.

<sup>412</sup> See sub-section 5.12.3 in Ch. Five of this thesis.

<sup>413</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 44.

<sup>414</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *Dhkhā’ir al-‘Alāq*, 54-55.

<sup>415</sup> See sub-section 5.7.3 in Ch. Five of this thesis.

<sup>416</sup> Chittick, “The Divine Roots of Human Love,” 58.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid.

has, in every case, a certain mode of existence perceptible to imaginative vision, through the “imaginative” power or presence (*ḥadrat khayālīya*), thanks to that special eye which is specific to this faculty.<sup>418</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī is referring here to the “*Ḥadīth* of Gabriel” (*ḥadīth Jibrīl*) where the Prophet described benevolence or *Ihsān*, “to worship God as if you see Him.”<sup>419</sup> This term is used to refer to the human imagination (*khayāl*) in witnessing God according to the Sufi tradition. It is referenced in the term, “as if you see Him,” mentioned in the “*Ḥadīth* of Gabriel.” Therefore, the benevolent (*al-muḥsinūn*) believers initiate a process of witnessing God by resorting to their imaginative powers.<sup>420</sup>

### 3.2.2. Sobriety (*ṣaḥū*) & drunkenness (*sukr*) in love

The preferability of the spiritual states of sobriety (*ṣaḥū*) and drunkenness (*sukr*), with regards to the love of God, has been widely debated amongst many Sufi masters. The majority of them, including Ibn ‘Arabī, have favored a stable and balanced (*i’tidāl*)<sup>421</sup> state of the two.<sup>422</sup> In the special case of al-Ḥallāj, according to many Sufis, the fact that al-Ḥallāj revealed the “secret of Lordship” (*sirr al-rubūbiyya*) by saying “I am the Real” (*Anā l-Ḥaqq*), caused many of them to declare that al-Ḥallāj did not become sober (*ṣāḥī*) but existed in a state (*ḥāl*) of Divine drunkenness (*sukr*), bestowed by the love of God.<sup>423</sup> Al-Ḥallāj himself revealed his spiritual state in his love of God in one of his poems, “My host [God], who can never be accused of even the slightest wrong, made me share His drink, as

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<sup>418</sup> Cited in Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, 334, n.34.

<sup>419</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by Muslim, *ḥadīth* no. (8) in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*; Abū Dāwūd, *ḥadīth* no. (4695) in *al-Sunnan*; al-Tirmidhī, *ḥadīth* no. (2610) in *al-Jāmi’*; and Ahmad, *ḥadīth* no. (367) in *al-Musnad*. See section 1.3 in Ch. One of this thesis.

<sup>420</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 34.

<sup>421</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:359.

<sup>422</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 27.

<sup>423</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:546; 3:117; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 73; Binyamin Abrahamov, *Ibn al-‘Arabī and the Sufis* (Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 2014), 96.

a perfect host should do. But when signs of my drunkenness became clear, He suddenly called His headman to bring the sword and the mat.”<sup>424</sup>

Benyamin Abrahamov writes that Ibn ‘Arabī mentioned al-Ḥallāj fifteen (15) times in *The Meccan Openings*.<sup>425</sup> However, Ibn ‘Arabī did mention al-Ḥallāj more than nineteen (19) times in *The Meccan Openings*<sup>426</sup> and indicated to al-Ḥallāj’s lesser spiritual state of intoxication.<sup>427</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī also did not regard al-Ḥallāj to be among the “people of authority” (*ahl al-iḥtijāj*) in Sufism.<sup>428</sup> Such views might have been the reasons as to why Ibn ‘Arabī was not impressed or influenced by many of al-Ḥallāj’s ideas. Abrahamov writes, “al-Ḥallāj’s doctrine left no important traces in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s writings in comparison to other of his predecessors. It also seems that the Greatest Master [Ibn ‘Arabī] did not hold him in high esteem.”<sup>429</sup> Claude Addas explains why Ibn ‘Arabī did not approve of what al-Ḥallāj said when she writes:

Ibn ‘Arabī is not questioning the content of what al-Ḥallāj said but the fact that he said it while under the sway of drunkenness....<sup>430</sup> The Prophet of Islam was more sober than anyone else. At least, that is the belief of Ibn ‘Arabī who emphasizes time and time again....<sup>431</sup> This axiom provides the basis and structure for Ibn ‘Arabī’s hagiological doctrine; it also governs his spiritual journey.<sup>432</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> M. M. Badawi, “Seven Poems by al-Ḥallāj (c. 858-922),” *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 14 (1983) 46-47: 46; See also section 2.7 on Sufi Manners (*adab*) & Love in this Chapter.

<sup>425</sup> Abrahamov, *Ibn al-‘Arabī and the Sufis*, 91.

<sup>426</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 1:169; 2:12; 2:121; 2:126; 2:320; 2:337; 2:362; 2:370; 2:546; 2:656; 3:17; 3:40; 3:117; 4:84; 4:143; 4:156; 4:194; 4:241; 4:328. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Sultan al-Mansub indicated in the “General Index” of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* that Ibn ‘Arabī mentioned al-Ḥallāj twenty-four (24) times. See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. by ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Sultan al-Mansub, “General Index,” (Yemen: Ministry of Culture, 2010), 598.

<sup>427</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:546.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, 4:328.

<sup>429</sup> Abrahamov, *Ibn al-‘Arabī and the Sufis*, 96.

<sup>430</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 43.

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

For Ibn ‘Arabī, the true Gnostic or “Knower of God” (*al-‘arīf bi-llāh*)<sup>433</sup> who has attained the highest spiritual levels of Divine knowledge, follows the example of the Prophet Muhammad and therefore does not need to hide or disguise his spiritual state.<sup>434</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī thus questioned the state of al-Ḥallāj on the grounds that he should have had a balanced state, comparable to the perfect state of stability (*i’tidāl*) of the Prophet Muhammad who is considered to be the greatest lover and knower of God.<sup>435</sup> The issue of spiritual stability, or, as Claude Addas calls it, the “golden mean” of perfect balance and harmony as articulated by the Prophet Muhammad,<sup>436</sup> is considered by Ibn ‘Arabī to be a crucial aspect. He considers it not only important for attaining the highest levels of Divine love, but also in witnessing (*shuhūd*) the “Oneness of God.”<sup>437</sup>

### 3.2.3. Love & death in God (*al-mawt fī Llāh*)

It is mentioned in the hadiths that, “a person is tried according to [the strength of] his religion [faith]; if he is strong in religion [faith], then his trials are more severe.”<sup>438</sup> A further statement is, “the greatest reward comes with the greatest trial. When God loves people [or someone], He tests them.”<sup>439</sup> According to the Islamic tradition, lovers who claim the love of God, not only incur Divine rewards upon themselves, but also experience Divine trials and tribulations.<sup>440</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī writes in *The Crown of Epistles (Tāj al-Rasā’il)*:

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<sup>433</sup> The definition “Knower of God” (*‘arīf bil-llāh*) is sometimes interpreted as “Gnostic.” The *‘arīf bil-llāh* is a mystic with spiritual insight and who knows God by God. See Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 43; and Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 240.

<sup>434</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 42.

<sup>435</sup> See Ibid., 27; Chittick, “The Religion of Love Revisited,” 43.

<sup>436</sup> Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 41.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>438</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by al-Tirmidhī, *ḥadīth* no. (2398) in *al-Jāmi’*; Aḥmad, *ḥadīth* no. (1555) in *al-Musnad*; and Ibn Mājah, *ḥadīth* no. (4031) in *al-Sunnan*.

<sup>439</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by al-Tirmidhī, *ḥadīth* no. (2396) in *al-Jāmi’*.

<sup>440</sup> See sub-section 5.12.5, Q.5 in Ch. Five of this thesis.

I am astonished by a lover who complains about love more than the pain [of trials]. This is because the lover should be occupied by the enjoyment of love [for the Beloved], and hence there should be no feeling of pain whatsoever. [This is because] pain only comes from the sensation of feeling, and the lovers’ [feelings and sensations] are numb [from sensing anything else other than the Beloved].<sup>441</sup>

These trials ultimately lead the Divine lover to “die in God” (*al-mawt fī Llāh*).<sup>442</sup> The etymological correlation of the Arabic word “*sakra*” (Q. 50:19) implies the meaning of this idea. The word “*sakra*” not only means “intoxication” but also means “throes/confusion of death.”<sup>443</sup> This death is not a physical death, but rather a psychological death where the soul of the lover loses all of its egotism, arrogance, and other inappropriate qualities in exchange for the love of God, or rather God Himself.<sup>444</sup> True lovers not only experience the Beloved’s trials and tribulations with content, but also have no desire for any reward.<sup>445</sup> This is because these sincere lovers desire only the Beloved. Ibn ‘Arabī writes:

The basis and foundation in love is that you [the lover] become [the essence of] the Beloved. And [the lover] disappears (*taghīb fīhī ‘anka*) completely in Him until there is no “you” except “Him.”<sup>446</sup>

The guardianship of God (*wilāyah*) is a form of Divine love that is bestowed upon God’s friends/saints (*awliyyā’*).<sup>447</sup> These lovers who have experienced a psychological death in God, subsequently long for a final return to God in the form of physical death.<sup>448</sup> The mutual longing and desire of the lover and the Beloved to meet is expressed in a *ḥadīth*. Here, the Prophet Muhammad says, “whomever loves [longs] to meet God, God will love

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<sup>441</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, “Tāj al-Rasā’il wa Minhāj al-Wasā’il,” 2:259.

<sup>442</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Quran*, xxxi.

<sup>443</sup> See Abdel Halim, *Arabic Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage*, 444; and Muhammad, *Love in the Quran*, xxxi.

<sup>444</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Quran*, 270.

<sup>445</sup> Chittick, “The Religion of Love Revisited,” 47.

<sup>446</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Dhkhā’ir al-A’lāq*, 41.

<sup>447</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Quran*, 273.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid.

to meet him. Whomever hates meeting God, God will hate meeting him” (*man ‘aḥaba liqā’ Allāh ‘aḥaba Allāh liqā’ahu wa man kariha liqā’ Allāh kariha liqā’ahu*).<sup>449</sup>

In this section I have discussed some of the themes of love in Ibn ‘Arabī’s books such as, *The Crown of Epistles* and *The Provisions of Deep Attachments in the Explanation of the Interpreter of Longings*. I will now turn in the following sections to focus and examine other love themes in, *The Interpreter of Longings* (*Turjumān al-Ashwāq*), and *The Ringstones of Wisdom* (*Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam*).

### 3.3. *The Interpreter of Longings* (*Turjumān al-Ashwāq*)

Ibn ‘Arabī began composing his famous collection of sixty-one *nasīb*<sup>450</sup> poems or love-talk, known as, *The Interpreter of Longings*<sup>451</sup> (*Turjumān al-Ashwāq*) in Mecca during the months of Rajab, Sha‘bān, and Ramaḍān in 1214 CE/611 AH.<sup>452</sup> These amatory odes were composed in the form of the pre-Islamic poetic mode (*qasida*) which comprises, as Michael Sells describes, “of three, relatively independent sections: the remembrance of the beloved (*nasīb*), the journey or quest, and the final boast.”<sup>453</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī was inspired to write these love odes after meetings he had with a young woman named Niẓām,<sup>454</sup> whom he had met

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<sup>449</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by al-Bukhārī, *ḥadīth* no. (6507), and Muslim, *ḥadīth* no. (2785) in their *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

<sup>450</sup> *Nasīb* poems are, “The amatory first section of the classical Arabic ode or *qasida*. It is commonly introduced through the meditation over the ruins of the beloved’s campsite. Those meditations lead in turn to the remembrance of separation from her, and reveries concerning the beloved and the symbolic analogue of the beloved, the lost garden.” See Michael Sells, *Stations of Desire: Love Elegies from Ibn ‘Arabi and New Poems* (Ibis Editions: Jerusalem, 2008), 60, 147. These poems, “as it were to echo, by way of form, the pre-Islamic odes of lamentation for the departure of loved ones.” See also Martin Lings, *Sufi Poems: A Mediaeval Anthology* (The Islamic Texts Society: Cambridge, 2004), 60.

<sup>451</sup> Reynold Nicholson, *The Tarjumān Al-Ashwāq: A Collection of Mystical Odes*, (Royal Asiatic Society: London, 1911), 2; Sells, *Stations of Desire*, 4; Lings, *Sufi Poems*, 60. See also Ibn ‘Arabī, *L’Interprète des Désirs: Turjumān al-Ashwāq*, traduction de Maurice Gloton (Paris: Albin Michel Littérature, 1996).

<sup>452</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Dhkhā’ir al-A’lāq*, 10; Michael Sells, “Return to the Flash Rock Plain of Thahmad: Two *Nasīb*s by Ibn al-‘Arabī,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 39 (2008) 3-13: 4; Yehya, *Mū’alafāt ibn ‘Arabī: Tārīkhahā wa Taṣnīfahā*, 249; Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, 210; Nicholson, *The Tarjumān Al-Ashwāq*, 6.

<sup>453</sup> Sells, *Stations of Desire*, 29.

<sup>454</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Dhkhā’ir al-A’lāq*, 8; Sells, *Stations of Desire*, 9.

earlier in Mecca in 1202 CE/598 AH.<sup>455</sup> Stephen Hirtenstein notes that this was the first time in Ibn ‘Arabī’s life that he experienced love emotions towards women, and this was a “natural consequence of Divine Love, not... due to an erotic awakening of sensual love.”<sup>456</sup> For Ibn ‘Arabī, Nizām was not only seen as a human figure for poetic inspiration, but was rather perceived as a theophany and a perfect embodiment of Divine beauty, love, knowledge and perfect manners.<sup>457</sup> After composing *The Interpreter of Longings*, Ibn ‘Arabī was criticized by some local jurists in Aleppo who disapproved of his erotic amatory poems which, according to them, was unbecoming of a Sufi sheikh.<sup>458</sup> It is also noteworthy to observe that a young woman from Anatolia (*al-Rūm*) named, Qurrat al-‘ayn, heard Ibn ‘Arabī recite the opening verses of *The Interpreter of Longings* while circumambulating the *Ka‘bah*, and criticized him for his poetry.<sup>459</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī implies that her criticism was another reason that led him to write the commentary on the poems.<sup>460</sup> A few months later Ibn ‘Arabī began to write his commentary on the *The Interpreter of Longings* in 1214 CE/611 AH.<sup>461</sup> He called this commentary, *The Provisions of Deep Attachments in the Explanation of the Interpreter of Longings (Dhkhā’ir al-A‘lāq: Sharḥ Turjumān al-Ashwāq)*. Ibn ‘Arabī finished writing this commentary in 1215 CE/612 AH.<sup>462</sup> The commentary on the *The Interpreter of Longings* was a concise explanation of the deep

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<sup>455</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Dhkhā’ir al-A‘lāq*, 7-9; Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, 209-210, 302.

<sup>456</sup> Hirtenstein, *The Unlimited Mercifier*, 149.

<sup>457</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Dhkhā’ir al-A‘lāq*, 8; Nicholson, *The Tarjumān Al-Ashwāq*, 8; Sells, *Stations of Desire*, 10, 32.

<sup>458</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Dhkhā’ir al-A‘lāq*, 8, 199; Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, 209.

<sup>459</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Dhkhā’ir al-A‘lāq*, 11-12; Sells, “Return to the Flash Rock Plain of Thahmad,” 9.

<sup>460</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Dhkhā’ir al-A‘lāq*, 11; Sells, *Stations of Desire*, 33.

<sup>461</sup> Nicholson, *The Tarjumān Al-Ashwāq*, 6; Yehya, *Mū‘alafāt ibn ‘Arabī: Tārīkhahā wa Taṣnīfahā*, 317; Hirtenstein, *The Unlimited Mercifier*, 149.

<sup>462</sup> Nicholson, *The Tarjumān Al-Ashwāq*, 5n3.

mystical esoteric meanings concealed by his apparent erotic love poetry.<sup>463</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī indicates this in the preface of his commentary.<sup>464</sup> In *The Provisions of Deep Attachments* (*Dhkhā’ir al-A’lāq*), Ibn ‘Arabī writes:

“For every name I mention in this section [poems], it is her [Nizām] that I mean (*aknī*). And every dwelling (*dār*) I describe, it is her dwelling I define (*a’nī*). I continue to compose the verses in this section to allude (*īmā’*) throughout to Divine inspirations (*wāridāt ilāhiyya*), spiritual revelations (*tanazulāt rūḥiyya*), and elevated spiritual occasions (*munāsabāt ‘ulwiyya*), in accordance with our ideal method [of expression].”<sup>465</sup>

The literary structure of the poems is composed around four main themes. The first theme is where the poet reminisces about the beloved and recollects her leaving him. The second, is where the poet experiences states (*aḥwāl*) of spiritual annihilation or effacement (*fanā’*) and subsistence (*baqā’*) with the beloved. The third phase is where the poet mentions the various stations (*maqāmāt*) of his pilgrimage or journey towards the *Ka’bah*, or the dwelling of his beloved. Finally, there is the theme where the poet professes that the lover’s *Ka’bah* is actually the heart of the Divine lover when he/she witness and realize the Divine’s Oneness in being.<sup>466</sup> It is well worth mentioning in this section that asking the Divine lover to identify the Beloved, is considered a form of violating the right spiritual manners (*adab*).<sup>467</sup> Michael Sells writes:

When it turns to the erotic mode and the identity of the beloved, Sufi discourse offers a distinctive apophatic perspective. To ask who she is, human or deity, would violate [manners] *adab*. It would be an indelicate question. The beloved, immanent within the heart-secret (*sirr*) of the poet and the Sufi, is also transcendent, beyond all

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<sup>463</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Dhkhā’ir al-A’lāq*, 9-11; Sells, *Stations of Desire*, 37; Michael Sells, Ibn ‘Arabī’s “Gentle Now, Doves of the Thornberry and Moringa Thicket” (*ālā yā hamāmāti l-arākati wa l-bāni*), accessed October 6, 2019, <http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/poemtarjuman11.html>; Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, 209-210, 302.

<sup>464</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *Dhkhā’ir al-A’lāq*, 10 & Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 3:562.

<sup>465</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Dhkhā’ir al-A’lāq*, 9; See Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, 209 & Lings, *Sufi Poems*, 60.

<sup>466</sup> See Sells, “Gentle Now, Doves of the Thornberry and Moringa Thicket,” in *Stations of Desire*, 70-73.

<sup>467</sup> See section 3.10 in this Chapter.



delimitation, beyond any single static image.<sup>468</sup>

I will now turn to focus in the following section on the concluding verses of poem number eleven in *The Interpreter of Longings*. In these verses Ibn ‘Arabī testifies that the heart of the Divine lover is capable of witnessing and accepting the various Divine manifestations in every form.

### 3.3.1. Analysis of Poem No. 11 “Gentle Now, Doves” in *The Interpreter of Longings*

The following verses from poem number eleven in *The Interpreter of Longings*, are not only considered to be central to the poem in question,<sup>469</sup> but they are also the most quoted verses of Ibn ‘Arabī.<sup>470</sup> In the following verses Ibn ‘Arabī professes his faith in the religion of love when he says:

13. My heart has become capable of accommodating all forms,  
(*laqad šār qalbī qābilan kulla šūratin*)  
for gazelles a meadow, for monks a monastery (*fa mar ‘ā li ghizlānin wa dayrin li ruhbānin*).

14. For idols a [sacred] house, a *Ka‘bah* for the circumambulating pilgrim, (*wa baytun li awthānin wa ka‘batu ṭā’ifin*)  
the tables of the Torah, and the scrolls [scripture] of the *Qur’ān* (*wa alwāḥu tawrātin wa muṣḥafu qur’āni*).

15. I profess [follow] the religion of love, wherever its caravans turn,  
(*adīnu bi dīn il-ḥubb annā tawajahat rkā’bahu*)  
this religion [love]<sup>471</sup> is my religion, the faith I keep (*fal-dīnu [fal-ḥubb] dīnī wa imānī*).

16. We have an example [pattern set] in Bishr [lover of] Hind and her

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<sup>468</sup> Michael Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings* (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 1994), 111.

<sup>469</sup> Lings, *Sufi Poems*, 60.

<sup>470</sup> Sells, Ibn ‘Arabī’s “Gentle Now, Doves of the Thornberry and Moringa Thicket.”

<sup>471</sup> The original manuscript versions written by Ibn ‘Arabī of this verse was, “for religion is my religion and faith” (*fal-dīnu dīnī wa imānī*) with other variations and not the popular published version of the verse, “for love is my religion and faith” (*fal-ḥubb dīnī wa imānī*), which substituted the word “religion” for “love”; see Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Dīwān al-Kabīr*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ilāh bin ‘Arafa (Beirut: Dār al-Adāb, 2018), 443; Lings, *Sufi Poems*, 62-63.

akin, (*lanā uswatun fī Bishr Hindin wa ukhtihā*)<sup>472</sup>  
and in Qays [lover of] Layla, and likewise, Mayya and [her lover]  
Ghaylan (*wa Qaysin wa Laylā thuma Mayin wa Ghaylānī*).<sup>473</sup>

In these famous verses, Ibn ‘Arabī professes that the heart (*qalb*) of the Divine lover can reach a spiritual level where it can identify, accept and receive the various theophanic appearances (*mazāhir*) in their different forms (*ṣuwar*). Ibn ‘Arabī explains that the Arabic word for heart is *qalb*, and *qalb* in Arabic also means “to turn,” “alter,” “transform,” and “invert.”<sup>474</sup> As the heart (*qalb*), in this case, is affected by the various Divine forms that appear to it, such forms cause the heart to transform (*yataqallab*) and change to the different emotional feelings and various spiritual states (*ahwāl*).<sup>475</sup> Michael Sells describes this type of spiritual adaptability of the heart as, the “mysticism of perpetual transformation.”<sup>476</sup> William Chittick defines it as “fluctuation,” pertaining to the constantly changing Divine matters (*shu’ūn*) and manifestations that are mirrored and imprinted on the lover’s heart.<sup>477</sup> It needs to be mentioned that Ibn Arabī considers the Prophetic wisdom of Prophet Muhammad to be a wisdom of perpetual transformation as mentioned in *The Ringstones of Wisdom (Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam)*.<sup>478</sup> This is because he believes that the spiritual station (*maqām*) of “stability in variegation” (*al-tamkīn fīl-talwīn*), to be a higher spiritual level of consciousness in knowing God, than the station of spiritual stability or *tamkīn*.<sup>479</sup> Furthermore, Ibn ‘Arabī references the Qur’anic verse, “Everyone in heaven and earth

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<sup>472</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī’s commentary clarifies the meaning of Hind’s “sister” (*ukhtihā*) in this verse which means a “similar model” and not her “sibling” as found in many translations of this verse.

<sup>473</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Dhkhā’ir al-A’lāq*, 43-44; Sells, *Stations of Desire*, 72-73; Lings, *Sufi Poems*, 62; Nicholson, *The Tarjumān Al-Ashwāq*, 67.

<sup>474</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Dhkhā’ir al-A’lāq*, 43; Baalbaki, *Al-Mawrid*, 1345.

<sup>475</sup> Nicholson, *The Tarjumān Al-Ashwāq*, 69.

<sup>476</sup> Sells, Ibn ‘Arabī’s “Gentle Now, Doves of the Thornberry and Moringa Thicket.”

<sup>477</sup> Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 108.

<sup>478</sup> Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 113.

<sup>479</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, “Tāj al-Rasā’il wa Minhāj al-Wasā’il,” 2:256; See also Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 108.

entreats Him; every day He is working upon a task,” (Q. 55:29)<sup>480</sup> to explain the idea of the constantly changing Divine matters, or self-transmutations.<sup>481</sup> He also elaborates on the way that the “knowers of God” adapt and behave accordingly to these constantly changing Divine matters,<sup>482</sup> and are thus considered to be wise and well-mannered.<sup>483</sup>

The heart of the lover according to Ibn 'Arabī, adapts and fluctuates to the different Divine manifestations as articulated in the verses of Ibn Arabī's poem. These Divine symbols are the gazelles, the monks, the idols, the pilgrims, the tables and the scripture. The heart is accordingly transformed into a meadow for the gazelles to wander, a monastery to house the monks, a temple for the idols, a *Ka'bah* for the pilgrims to circumambulate, tables for writing the Torah, and finally scrolls for collecting the *Qur'ān*.<sup>484</sup> For Ibn 'Arabī, the gazelles symbolize “beloveds for the lovers” (*aḥibah lil-muḥibīn*); the monks symbolize “devotion for God” (*ruhbānan min al-rahbāniyya*); the idols symbolize the “necessities which human beings ask from God” (*al-ḥaqāiq al-mṭlūbah lil-bashar*); the pilgrims symbolize “higher spirits” (*al-arwāḥ al-'ulwiyyah*); the tables symbolize “Mosaic Hebrew knowledge” (*al-'ulūm al-mūsawiyah al-'ibrāniyyah*); and finally the scrolls symbolize “perfect Muhammadian knowledge” (*al-ma'ārif al-muḥamadiyyah al-kamāliyyah*).<sup>485</sup> All these symbols are merely but a reflection of the One God.<sup>486</sup> Furthermore, since the heart fluctuates and adapts in order to accommodate every possible manifestation, it must then at the same time, be able to give-up and detach itself

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<sup>480</sup> See Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:77.

<sup>481</sup> Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 108.

<sup>482</sup> Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 110; See *The Ringstones of Wisdom* and on the wisdom of the Prophets Noah and Shu'yb where Ibn 'Arabī expands further on this theme.

<sup>483</sup> See section 3.10 on Sufi Manners (*adab*) & Love in this Chapter.

<sup>484</sup> See Ibn 'Arabī, *Dhkhā'ir al-'Alāq*, 43.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid., 43-44.

<sup>486</sup> Sells, *Stations of Desire*, 40.

from being attached to all previous manifestations. This accommodation is required so that the heart is able to receive the forthcoming of Divine forms. The heart's detachment from the previous forms thus causes it to mourn over the departure of the Beloved's prior appearances.<sup>487</sup> In the verse, "I follow the religion of love, wherever its caravans turn, this religion is my religion, the faith I keep," Ibn 'Arabī expresses that the only religion he follows is the religion of love. This is because the Divine lover receives the religious obligations, tasks and rituals mandated by his Beloved, with love and contentment. That is why Ibn 'Arabī says, "wherever its caravans turn," which means "to follow" (*annā tawajahat*), even if these commandments and obligations might be against his personal desires. However, for him, all these obligations are received in a pleasant and acceptable manner. Here Ibn 'Arabī is referencing the Qur'anic verse, "Say, if you love God, follow me, God will love you and forgive your sins," (Q. 3:31), that is why Ibn 'Arabī defines his religion as the religion of love. Furthermore, the meaning of, "this religion is my religion, the faith I keep," Ibn 'Arabī explains that there is no other form of religion that higher than a religion that is based on love, longing and devotion. He further specifies that, the religion of love is a special spiritual condition bestowed by God upon the Prophet Muhammad, and those who follow him on the path of Divine love.<sup>488</sup> For Ibn 'Arabī, love is the most perfect and highly elevated station on the spiritual path of witnessing and realizing the "Oneness of God."

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<sup>487</sup> Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 115.

<sup>488</sup> See Ibn 'Arabī, *Dhkhā'ir al-A'lāq*, 44; Nicholson, *The Tarjumān Al-Ashwāq*, 69.

**3.3.1.1. The Divine manifestations in the forms of belief (*ṣuwar al-i‘tiqādāt*)**

The concept of adaptability of the heart to the various Divine appearances and transformations is defined in Sufi literature as colouration (*al-talwīn*) or variegation.<sup>489</sup> The Divine manifestations according to Ibn ‘Arabī appear also in the different forms of religious beliefs.<sup>490</sup> The Divine transformations in the forms of religious beliefs manifest an important creedal belief in the religious tradition of Islam.<sup>491</sup> This is mentioned in a long canonical *ḥadīth* where the Prophet Muhammad says,

God will gather people on the day of resurrection (*yوم al-qiyāmah*) and will say to them: Whomever worshiped something (*shay’an*), let him follow it. Those who worshipped the sun would follow the sun, and those who worshipped the moon would follow the moon, and those who worshipped idols would follow the idols. The ummah (of Islam) would be left to the end and there would be hypocrites (*munāfiqūhā*) amongst them. God would then come to them in a Form (*ṣūrah*) other than His Form (*ghayr ṣūratihī*) which they recognize [know] (*ya‘rifūnaha*), and says: I am [the] your Lord. They would say: we take refuge in God from Thee. We will stay here till our Lord comes to us, and when our Lord would come, we would recognize Him. God would then come to them in the Form recognizable to them and say: I am your Lord. They would say: Thou art our Lord, and they would follow Him.<sup>492</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī comments on this *ḥadīth* in various sections of *The Meccan Openings*. He explains that the Divine is manifested in all the various forms and symbols of each religious tradition.<sup>493</sup> And on the day of resurrection, God will manifest Himself to people in a rare and uncommon (*adnā*) appearance or form unrecognizable to them.<sup>494</sup> In this instance, people will deny and reject God in the uncommon form unknown to them, because they

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<sup>489</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:499-500; Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 108.

<sup>490</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:311.

<sup>491</sup> Nicholson, *The Tarjumān Al-Ashwāq*, 69.

<sup>492</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by al-Bukhārī, *ḥadīth* no. (7437), and Muslim, *ḥadīth* no. (182) in their *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

<sup>493</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:683; 3:562.

<sup>494</sup> See *Ibid.*, 1:314; 3:45.

cannot recognize Him in any other form than the form they know as God. This is because people only worship the form (*ṣūrah*) or symbol which they believe to be God (*fahum li-‘alāmatihim ‘ābidūn*). God then transforms (*yataḥaūal*) into another form, sign (*āya*)<sup>495</sup> or symbol (*‘alāmah*) which they recognize, and only then they will recognize and accept Him.<sup>496</sup> The binding to a specific dogma, form, symbol or tradition is considered by Ibn Arabī to be idolatry. This is because each individual is worshiping a god confined or limited to a specific form, image or creed which he/she believe to be God. Ibn Arabī calls this type of subjective belief “the god/s of belief” (*ilāh al mu‘taqad*).<sup>497</sup> The different religious traditions formulate their “gods of belief” into doctrines and creeds, and create religious exclusivity and social intolerance within each tradition.<sup>498</sup> Michael Sells writes:

The critique of binding is based finally on a redefinition of idolatry and infidelity. The individual image that one has of the real is the God of one’s belief, a delimited God that one mistakenly worships as the transcendent and infinite. Idolatry is redefined as the worship of such an image...<sup>499</sup> The constant giving up of binding to each form must be given up in turn if it is not to become a “God of belief.”<sup>500</sup>

This type of belief is also mentioned in the Qur’anic verse, “And most of them will believe in God while ascribing others unto Him” (Q. 12:106).<sup>501</sup> The “other” in this verse are the things that one idolizes and ascribes as partners with God such as desire, passion, caprice, power, or idea. Caprice or desire is ascribed as being idols or gods that are worshiped by

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<sup>495</sup> See Ibid., 3:44-45.

<sup>496</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 1:314; 2:311, 610; 3:45, 562. See also Martin Lings, *Symbol & Archetype: A Study of the Meaning of Existence* (Fons Vitae: Louisville, 2005), 10-11.

<sup>497</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 231; Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:490-492; 4:391; Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 97-100.

<sup>498</sup> Sells, *Stations of Desire*, 40.

<sup>499</sup> Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 99.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>501</sup> See Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al., *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: HarperCollins, 2015), 613.

as individual who prefers his/her passion instead over God’s commandments. Examples of such verses are, “Hast thou considered the one who takes his caprice as his god. Wouldst thou be a guardian over him” (Q. 25:43)<sup>502</sup> and, “Hast thou considered one who takes his caprice as his god, God having led him astray knowingly” (Q. 45:23).<sup>503</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī then informs his readers, that the “knowers of God” (*al-‘arīfūn*), can reach a spiritual station where they recognize God in every form. This is because God for them is never veiled (*absārihim*) or bound from them in any form or existence (*al-maūjūdāt*).<sup>504</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī defines this station as the “station of no-station,” (*maqām al-lā maqām*).<sup>505</sup> In other words, the heart of the “knower of God” is not limited to a specific spiritual station, because it has become capable of constantly adapting to the various Divine theophanies and transformations in all forms. Furthermore, this does not mean that the lover of God, in any religious tradition, believes in all religions. Rather, it means that he/she is able to witness and recognize their Beloved in all of His various forms, while observing at the same time the beliefs, rituals of their religious tradition. This is evident in Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings, where he professes that his heart accepts and witnesses God in all forms and religions while adhering faithfully to the religious tradition of Islam.<sup>506</sup>

From the previous arguments, the Islamic testimony of faith, “there is no god but God,” could be understood in a way that implies, there is no god worshiped in existence, but the one supreme Being and only transcendent Reality in existence, namely God. God in this case, is not an idol which is delimited to a specific form or notion, but is rather

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<sup>502</sup> See *Ibid.*, 897.

<sup>503</sup> See *Ibid.*, 1221; and Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 1:415; 2:592.

<sup>504</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 1:49.

<sup>505</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 4:28-29; Sells, *Stations of Desire*, 39.

<sup>506</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 3:132.

represented in all forms, ideas and traditions. Beliefs such as these can be recognized as a call for innovative ideas, understanding, and a life of openness, acceptance and tolerance towards others.

In the following section, I examine Ibn ‘Arabī writings in *The Ringstones of Wisdom* (*Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*) where he explores the various forms and manifestations of the Divine in the form of Prophets and the wisdom each form represents.

### 3.4. *The Ringstones of Wisdom (Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam)*

*The Meccan Openings* and *The Ringstones of Wisdom* (*Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*) are considered by many scholars to be the most popular works written by Ibn ‘Arabī.<sup>507</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī began writing *The Ringstones of Wisdom* in Damascus in 1229 CE/627 AH,<sup>508</sup> after he saw the Prophet Muhammad in a vision handing him the book, and asking him to deliver it to all people so they can benefit from it.<sup>509</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī mentions this story in the preface of the book in order to convey the message to his readers that *The Ringstones of Wisdom* is not an book written or compiled by him, but is rather a book that is composed by the Prophet Muhamad’s himself.<sup>510</sup> He completed writing *The Ringstones of Wisdom* in 1332 CE/630 AH.<sup>511</sup> The book deals mainly with Ibn ‘Arabī’s most recurring metaphysical themes such as the “Oneness of Being” and the “perfect Human.” The “perfect Human,” according to Ibn ‘Arabī, is the most complete, unique and ideal manifestation of the Divine logos<sup>512</sup> in

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<sup>507</sup> Sa’diyya Shaikh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy: Ibn ‘Arabī, Gender, and Sexuality* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 15. Sa’diyya Shaikh is a female religious studies scholar who examines the work of Ibn ‘Arabī through a critical feminist lens.

<sup>508</sup> See Ibn Al-‘Arabī, *The Ringstones of Wisdom (Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam)*, trans. by Caner K. Dagli (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 2004), 1; Yehya, *Mū‘alafāt ibn ‘Arabī: Tārīkhahā wa Taṣnīfahā*, 478.

<sup>509</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 49.

<sup>510</sup> Ibid.; Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics and Qur’anic Prophets*, 5.

<sup>511</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 47.

<sup>512</sup> According to Ibn ‘Arabī all creation is God’s Divine logos or word (*kalima*). See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, 1:108; 1:192; 2:331; 2:367; 2:391; 3:4; 3:230; 4:280. The Divine word or command, “Be!”



existence. This is represented by the Prophets and Messengers of their time.<sup>513</sup> *The Ringstones of Wisdom* is a work that is divided into twenty-seven Chapters, each Chapter discusses a particular Divine perfection represented by a Prophet.<sup>514</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī associates each Divine perfection or Prophet to a bezel (*faṣ*) of a ring, and each Prophet represents a unique form of Divine wisdom.<sup>515</sup> The heart of the Divine lover or “Knower of God,” whose heart is capable of recognizing the various facets (*awjuh*)<sup>516</sup> of the Divine, is represented by the ring that holds [accepts/recognizes] each bezel, as discussed earlier in this Chapter.

Ibn ‘Arabī’s *The Ringstones of Wisdom* is a supreme literary work of Sufī esoteric interpretation (*t’wīl*) of the Prophets mentioned in the *Qur’ān*.<sup>517</sup> The book should not be considered a traditional commentary (*sharḥ*) or explanation (*tafsīr*) of the *Qur’ān*, because it does not follow the customary norms of traditional Qur’anic exegesis.<sup>518</sup> *The Ringstones of Wisdom* from this point of view, is regarded as a perfect example of Ibn ‘Arabī’s genius and originality. Ibn ‘Arabī integrates and synthesizes the complex metaphysical concepts and Sufī notions with his personal mystical interpretation of the *Qur’ān*.<sup>519</sup> Furthermore, Ibn ‘Arabī asserts that all human beings are inclusively equal.<sup>520</sup> He bases this idea on Qur’anic verses such as (Q. 15:29 and 38:72) which mention the primordial inspiring of

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(*kun*), mentioned in the verse, “when God wills a thing, He says “Be!” and it is” (Q 36:82) brought creation into existence. See also sub-section 4.2.10 in Ch. Four and sub-section 5.12.1 in Ch. Five of this thesis.

<sup>513</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 3:152, 315, 331, 398, 409; 4:21, 132, 230, 231, 409.

<sup>514</sup> Nettler, *Sufī Metaphysics and Qur’anic Prophets*, x; The exception is Khālid ibn Sinān (Chapter twenty-six) who is a Prophet mentioned in a *ḥadīth* and not in the *Qur’ān*.

<sup>515</sup> Shaikh, *Sufī Narratives of Intimacy*, 15.

<sup>516</sup> The term facet (*wajh*) of God is mentioned in Qur’anic verses such as (Q. 6:51).

<sup>517</sup> Nettler, *Sufī Metaphysics and Qur’anic Prophets*, 15.

<sup>518</sup> Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries on the Qur’ān*, 67.

<sup>519</sup> Nettler, *Sufī Metaphysics and Qur’anic Prophets*, iv; 6; 13.

<sup>520</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 3:87.

humanity (*insāniyyah*), when God blew His breath unto Adam at the time of creation.<sup>521</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī interprets such verses to indicate his understanding of gender equality when he writes, “men do not possess superiority over women in respect of humanity [*insāniyyah*].”<sup>522</sup> He adds, women are even higher and above men as the most perfect manifestation to contemplate and witness God.<sup>523</sup> This is because “Perfect Human” is capable of witnessing God as both the active doer, and passive receiver at the same time. From this understanding “Perfect Human” can recognize and witness God through the veils of God’s manifestations.<sup>524</sup> From statements such as these, Sa‘diyya Shaikh proclaimed that, “[t]his inclusive sage opens a discussion on gender with a clear assertion of gender equality at the most foundational level of human existence.”<sup>525</sup>

In the following sections I now turn to examine how Ibn ‘Arabī articulates his ideas on Divine love in *The Ringstones of Wisdom*, with a special focus on Chapter twenty-seven concerning the perfect wisdom of Prophet Muhammad.

### 3.4.1. Prophet Muhammad in *The Ringstones of Wisdom*

In Chapter twenty-seven of *The Ringstones of Wisdom*, which is the final Chapter in the book, Ibn ‘Arabī mentions the Divine wisdom of Prophet Mohammed. In this Chapter, Ibn ‘Arabī addresses important ideas on Divine love, gender, and love relations through the example of Prophet Muhammad. Ibn ‘Arabī defines the Divine manifestation of the perfect wisdom of Prophet Muhammad as a, “bezel of singular wisdom in the word

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<sup>521</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 221.

<sup>522</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 3:87.

<sup>523</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 224; Shaikh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy*, 177; Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, trans. by Ralph Austin (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1980), 275; Sachiko Murata, *The Tao of Islam: A Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought* (New York: State University of New York, 1992), 192.

<sup>524</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 224.

<sup>525</sup> Shaikh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy*, 155.

of Muḥammad” (*faṣḥ ḥikmah fardiyyah fī kalima muḥamadiyyah*).<sup>526</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī believes that Prophet Muhammad is the most perfect manifestation of God on earth, therefore his wisdom is singular (*ḥikmah fardiyyah*).<sup>527</sup> The Prophet Muhammad’s wisdom is thus incomparable, unique and distinct from any other manifestations. This understanding indicates why Ibn ‘Arabī considers the Prophet Muhammad to be the perfect exemplar of spiritual realization,<sup>528</sup> and signifies at the same time, the importance of the ideas found in Chapter twenty-seven of *The Ringstones of Wisdom*.<sup>529</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī also mentions a famous *ḥadīth* in which Prophet Muhammad himself says, “[Three] things have been made beloved (*ḥubiba*) to me in this world of yours [creation], women, perfume, and solace (*qurat ‘aynī*) that is given to me in prayer.”<sup>530</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī comments on this *ḥadīth* by indicating that the Prophet was beloved by God because he used the word *ḥubiba*, which means that these three things were chosen and “made beloved” by God as a gift to the Prophet. Obviously, these gifts were not chosen by Prophet Muhammad.<sup>531</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī further explains, because God created Adam in His own image, God loved Adam for this reason. Similarly, Eve was created from Adam in the image of Adam. Adam then loved Eve because she was also created in Adam’s image. That is why women were beloved by Prophet Muhammad, because he believes God loves that which is created in accordance with His own image.<sup>532</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī writes:

Love arises only for that from which one has one’s being, so that man loves that from which he has his being, which is the Reality [God]. This is why he says, “made beloved to me,” and not “I love,”

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<sup>526</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 221.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid.; See also Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Wisdom of the Prophets (Fusus al-Hikam)*, trans. by Titus Burkhardt (Aldsworth: Beshara Publications, 1975), 116.

<sup>528</sup> Shaikh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy*, 164.

<sup>529</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>530</sup> This *ḥadīth* is narrated by al-Nisā’ī, *ḥadīth* no. (3939, 3940) in *al-Sunnan*.

<sup>531</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 221; Ibn ‘Arabī, “Tāj al-Rasā’il wa Minhāj al-Wasā’il,” 2:256.

<sup>532</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 223; Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 274.

directly from himself. His love is for his Lord in Whose image he is, this being so even as regards his love for his wife, since he loves her through God’s love for him, after the divine manner.<sup>533</sup>

From such statements, it can be understood why God loves creation. Because creation came from God, therefore creation has something of God, and God loves that part of Himself in creation. This type of love is similar to the love of parents who see their children, resembling them in appearance and in character, and love them as part of themselves and extensions of their own being.

Ibn ‘Arabī then moves to address an important issue concerning the intimate sensual relationship between men and women. He believes that love between men and women is a reflection of God’s love and mercy for human beings, “this love and mercy between men and women culminates in sexual intimacy,” as Sa‘diyya Shaikh points out.<sup>534</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī writes, “when a man loves a woman, he seeks union with her, that is to say the most complete union possible in love.”<sup>535</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī considers sexual union to be the most complete form possible of witnessing Divine love in creation. This is because, when a man witnesses God (*al-ḥaqq*) in women (in sexual union), he witnesses God in the passive woman (*munfa‘il*) receiving end. At the same time, when a man witnesses God in himself (in sexual union), he witnesses God in the active (*fā‘il*) man giving end. However, if God is witnessed at the same time, in both the passive and active aspects (woman and man), during sexual intimacy. This act is considered by Ibn ‘Arabī to be the highest and most complete form of witnessing God in creation.<sup>536</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī adds, whoever loves women

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<sup>533</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 274.

<sup>534</sup> Shaikh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy*, 181.

<sup>535</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 223; Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 274; See also *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>536</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 224; Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 275; and Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, 192.

and witnesses them as complete forms of Divine manifestations or disclosures (*mujalla*), loves them through Divine love.<sup>537</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī further explains, that Prophet Mohammad was not created to love anything other than God, as a result he loved women because they represented the most complete form of Divine manifestation.<sup>538</sup> However, Ibn ‘Arabī says, he who objectifies women and loves them for his own sensual pleasure, without acknowledging this Divine love, lacks knowledge and true understanding.<sup>539</sup> As Eve was created from Adam’s rib, according to the Islamic tradition, women have a sense of yearning for their origin which they were created from, in this case Adam. Men on the other hand, have a longing for the part which has been taken from them to make them feel complete, namely Eve.

A few scholars have mentioned that Ibn ‘Arabī discusses two different forms of Adam in his writings.<sup>540</sup> The first Adam is the gender-inclusive androgynous primordial being who was created in the image of God before the creation of Eve. This primordial Adam encapsulated both male and female aspects.<sup>541</sup> When Eve was created from this androgynous Adam, a second gendered male Adam appeared in creation.<sup>542</sup> Furthermore, Ibn ‘Arabī explains why men and women are attracted to each other. He writes, “the yearning of man for his wife is the yearning of the whole for its part because with it he can be truly called complete [perfection].”<sup>543</sup> Statements such as these evoke, “a notion of gendered reciprocity, where man and woman turn each other into a pair of equal halves.”<sup>544</sup>

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<sup>537</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 4:454.

<sup>538</sup> Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, 192.

<sup>539</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 224 and Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 276.

<sup>540</sup> I have searched in Ibn Arabī’s books for a direct statement regarding the primordial being or first adam but could not find any reference in any of his books.

<sup>541</sup> Shaikh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy*, 168.

<sup>542</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>543</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 3:88.

<sup>544</sup> Shaikh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy*, 181.

Sa‘diyya Shaikh eloquently describes Ibn ‘Arabī’s “radically egalitarian gender narratives challenge more traditional hegemonic Islamic discourse on gender.”<sup>545</sup> In this manner, “Ibn ‘Arabī tears apart the cocoon of female inferiority and Otherness.”<sup>546</sup>

In short, it is clear from Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings that he is presenting important ideas on the role of the “feminine” as having Divine aspects of Reality. By doing so, he challenged the dominant position of male superiority in many religions.

### 3.5. Sufi manners (*adab*) & love

After presenting Ibn Arabī’s ideas on love and how this necessitates the Divine lovers to behave with manners (*adab*) in the presence of God and of His creation. Ibn Arabī mentions the famous *ḥadīth*, “you do not thank God, when you do not thank people” (*lā yashkur Allah man lā yashkur al-nās*).<sup>547</sup> He mentions this *ḥadīth* in order to explain that to behave with manners towards people, is the same as acting with manners towards God. For if the servants of God do not behave in appropriate Divine conduct, in the different circumstances and situations, they will be expelled from [the spiritual state of] witnessing God (*shuhūd Allāh*). However, the “Knowers of God” (*al-‘arīfūn bi-llāh*) are capable of recognizing God in every form. The manners of the “Knowers of God” is that God grants them success (*wafaqahum*) to deny (*inkār*) [God in the uncommon Form] without saying aloud, [we take refuge in God from You]. This is because God is recognizable to them in every form.<sup>548</sup>

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<sup>545</sup> Ibid., 28. For examples on Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings on the egalitarian gender narratives see Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 1:705; 2:35; 3:87, 89.

<sup>546</sup> Shaikh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy*, 165.

<sup>547</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by Abū Dāwūd, *ḥadīth* no. (4811) in *al-Sunnan*; al-Tirmidhī, *ḥadīth* no. (1954) in *al-Jāmi‘*; and Aḥmad, *ḥadīth* no. (9034, 18449, 18450) in *al-Musnad*.. See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:204.

<sup>548</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:609.

Ibn Arabī addresses the issue of manners in Chapter 168 of *The Meccan Openings*.<sup>549</sup> The Chapter is entitled “On knowing the station of manners and its secrets” (*fī ma‘arifat maqām al-adab wa asrāruhu*). Ibn Arabī writes that a well-mannered person (*al-adīb*)<sup>550</sup> is a wise person (*al-ḥakīm*) who adapts and behaves with the appropriate manners towards each Divine fluctuation and self-transmutation of God. He then divides manners into four sections. The first section is concerned with “manners of *Sharī‘ah*” (*adab al-sharī‘ah*).<sup>551</sup> Ibn Arabī explains that this type of mannerism is a form of Divine manners (*adab ilāhī*), which is taught by God to the Prophets through inspiration and revelation, and the Prophets teach these manners to human beings. This type of manners, Ibn Arabī explains, relates to both God and human beings and how to behave and interact with both of them. The second type is “manners of servitude” (*adab al-khidmah*), and is concerned with the service and mannerism towards God.<sup>552</sup> Ibn Arabī explains that this type of rectitude is more personal than the general form of the “manners of *Sharī‘ah*,” because “manners of servitude” is concerned with the servitude of God alone.<sup>553</sup> The third form of manners relates to the “manners with God [the Real]” (*adab al-Ḥaqq*), where God’s true lovers recognize and follow His Theophanies wherever they may appear in existence.<sup>554</sup> This is because these lovers or “knowers of God,” believe God to be the only Real Being in existence. They therefore, behave with justice and wisdom according to “manners with the Real,” as they witness God in people who might be younger in age, lower in social status, or even absent minded.<sup>555</sup> The final and fourth type of manners which

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<sup>549</sup> Ibid., 2284.

<sup>550</sup> Ibid.; See Al-Baalbaki, *Al-Mawrid*, 74.

<sup>551</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:284.

<sup>552</sup> Ibid.

<sup>553</sup> Ibid., 2:285.

<sup>554</sup> Ibid.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid.

Ibn Arabī mentions is the “manners of reality” (*adab al-ḥaqīqah*). Ibn Arabī explains that this form of manners is the highest form of demeanor with God, because the “Knowers of God” at this level can leave manners all together. He defines this lofty spiritual level as “the station of leaving manners and it’s secrets” (*fī ma ‘rifat tark al-adab wa asrāruhu*).<sup>556</sup> Ibn Arabī mentions that the proper mannerism in this highest spiritual rank, is to leave or drop manners altogether. He writes, “for he who leaves manners [in this station], is the well-mannered person (*adīb*), without knowing it,” (*fal tārik lil adab. adīb min ḥaythu lā ya ‘lam*).<sup>557</sup> Ibn Arabī references the Prophet Abraham<sup>558</sup> and the good servant of God, known as al-Khiḍr,<sup>559</sup> in support of this idea.<sup>560</sup> This is because, as Ibn Arabī explains, that the right manners in this lofty spiritual station, is to become the dynamic performer of the hand of God, regardless of how these actions might seem. For Ibn Arabī, such people are the well-mannered people (*al-adīb*) mentioned at the beginning of this section.<sup>561</sup> The very few people who are at this high spiritual level are totally annihilated or effaced, and subsist in God, and therefore attribute everything back to God’s knowledge and wisdom.

### 3.6. Conclusion

The early writings of Ibn Arabī lay the ground work for his mature ideas on love in *The Meccan Openings*. His ideas in these early writings have presented an original approach that is different from the main traditions of Qur’anic hermeneutics in his time. Ibn ‘Arabī not only considers all such interpretations to be valid, but also relies mainly on this

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<sup>556</sup> Ibid., 2:286.

<sup>557</sup> Ibid.

<sup>558</sup> The statement of the Prophet Abraham is mentioned in (Q.26:80) where Abraham accuses himself of becoming ill and attributes getting cured to God alone.

<sup>559</sup> The story of al-Khiḍr is mentioned in (Q.17:60-82).

<sup>560</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:286.

<sup>561</sup> Ibid.



knowledge gained through spiritual unveiling (*kashf*). Such an interpretive method provides a wider spectrum of possible meanings of scripture.

As for love, Ibn ‘Arabī believes love to be the greatest human yearning (*shahwah*), because it drives and motivates human beings to seek God. He considers the heart (*qalb*) of the lover and “Knower of God” (*al-‘arīf bi-llāh*), to be capable of reaching a lofty spiritual level. Here the heart can recognize the various theophanies (*mazāhir*) of God in different forms (*ṣuwar*) of creation. Ibn ‘Arabī describes this spiritual station to be a station of “stability in variegation” (*al-tamkīn fil-talwīn*), and considers variegation to be a higher spiritual station than stability. He also expresses that the purpose of love is for the lover to disappear (*yaghīb*) completely in the Beloved and realize the “Oneness of Being” in creation. This realization necessitates the “realized person” to be spiritually adapt and in perfect harmony with himself/herself and with others in life. Furthermore, Ibn ‘Arabī defines this station as the “station of no-station,” (*maqām al-lā maqām*) in this spiritual station, the “knower of God” does not limit himself/herself to a specific station, form or dogma. Confining God to a specific symbol, creed or tradition is considered by Ibn Arabī to be a form of idolatry. He calls this type of belief, “the god/s of belief” (*ilāh al mu‘taqad*). This kind of belief creates religious exclusivity and social intolerance.

Furthermore, Ibn ‘Arabī contests a dominant male-centered theology in many religions when he defines the role of the “feminine,” and her Divine aspects of reality. Also, Ibn ‘Arabī regards sexual union to be the most complete form of witnessing the Divine. This is because, “Perfect Human” is capable of witnessing God through the veils of creation. In this case women are witnessed as the passive (*munfa‘il*) receiver, and at the same time, men are witnessed as the active (*fā‘il*) doer. This level of realization is regarded

by Ibn 'Arabī to be the most perfect and complete form of witnessing God. Finally, Ibn Arabī explains that the realized person must have the appropriate manners towards the various Divine fluctuations in creation and should attribute every act to God.

## **Chapter Four: Ibn ‘Arabī’s metaphysical worldview**

#### 4.1. Introduction

In this Chapter I will outline the metaphysical worldview of Ibn ‘Arabī. I shall examine his concepts of creation (*khalq*), being (*wujūd*), the Divine Names (*asmā’*) and Attributes (*ṣifāt*) of God, and the cosmological worlds or *al-ḥadarāt al-ilāhiyya*. Furthermore, I will explore the underlying concept of “Oneness of Being” (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), which is considered to be the pivot around which all of Ibn ‘Arabī’s ideas revolve. I will also discuss notions such as the “Perfect Human” (*al-insān al-kāmil*), known also as the “Muhammadan reality” (*al-ḥaqīqat al-Muḥammadiyya*). Finally, I will comment on Ibn ‘Arabī’s opinions on topics such as “Divine love” (*al-ḥubb al-ilāhī*), his epistemological sources, terminology and symbolism, and briefly highlight his significance and influence on later Sufis. The purpose of this Chapter is to define the specific terms and ideas that are central to Ibn ‘Arabī’s *oeuvre*. These terms are existence (*wujūd*); Absolute Singularity (*al-aḥadiyya*); Absolute Oneness (*al-waḥidiyya*); effusion (*burūz*); breath (*nafas*); Divine Presences (*al-ḥadarāt al-ilāhiyya*). I will introduce these terms in their proper context which set the path for a more detailed analysis in the following Chapters. They will also be used in my analysis and assessment of the main Chapter on love that appears in *The Meccan Openings* which appears in Chapter Five of this thesis.

## 4.2. The ontology of Ibn 'Arabī

### 4.2.1. The Hidden or Unknown Treasure

Ibn 'Arabī frequently mentions the sacred narration (*ḥadīth qudsī*) of the “Hidden [Unknown] Treasure”<sup>562</sup> as the justification for creation.<sup>563</sup> The *ḥadīth* has God state in first person: “I was a Hidden [Unknown] Treasure and I loved to be known thus I created the creation and presented myself to them therefore they know Me.”<sup>564</sup> This *ḥadīth* is not mentioned in the mainstream canonical compendiums, but its authenticity was verified, according to Ibn 'Arabī, on the basis of his own mystical unveiling (*kashf*).<sup>565</sup> In this *ḥadīth*, Ibn 'Arabī makes clear that the origin of cosmogenesis lies in the desire (*raghbah*) and will (*irādah*) of God to disclose (*yazhar*) Himself.<sup>566</sup> This He does by causing the “possibilities” (*mumkināt*) to appear from “nothingness” (*'adam*) into existence (*wujūd*).<sup>567</sup> As a result, for Ibn 'Arabī the archetype of all creation is God Himself, the “Hidden or Unknown Treasure,” in whom the entities (*ashyā'*) were always existent in His knowledge.<sup>568</sup> Many scholarly works on Ibn 'Arabī indicate that he took two ideas from this *ḥadīth*. The first is that Divine love is the cause of creation, as evident from the phrase, “I loved to be known” (*aḥbabtu an u'raf*). As Ibn 'Arabī notes, “If it had not been for love... nothing would have

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<sup>562</sup> See Armin Eschraghi, “‘I Was a Hidden Treasure’: Some Notes on a Commentary scribed to Mulla Sadra Shirazi,” In *Islamic Thought in the Middle Ages: Studies in Text, Transmission and Translation, in Honour of Hans Daiber*, ed. Anna Akasoy and Wim Raven, (Leiden: Brill, 2008): 91-100. It is noteworthy to point out that Ibn 'Arabī in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* never uses the word “Hidden” (*makhfī*) when he cites this *ḥadīth*, but rather writes “Unknown” (*lam u'raf*), when he states the *ḥadīth*, “I was an Unknown Treasure, and I loved to be known, so I created creation and made My Self known to them, hence they knew me” (*kuntu kanzan lam u'raf fā-khalaqtu al-khalq wa ta'raftu ilayhim fa-'arafūnī*). See Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:112, 232, 310, 322, 331, 399; 3:267; 4:428.

<sup>563</sup> Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, 148.

<sup>564</sup> Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 391.

<sup>565</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:322.

<sup>566</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:327.

<sup>567</sup> Addas, *Ibn 'Arabī: The Voyage of No Return*, 91.

<sup>568</sup> Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 43.

been desired and [consequently] nothing would exist.”<sup>569</sup> The second is that love (*ḥubb*) and knowledge (*ma'rifa*) are intimately related and interconnected, since cosmogenesis also had its origin in a Divine desire to be known and recognized.<sup>570</sup>

#### 4.2.2. The Divine Essence (*dhāt*) and Attributes (*ṣifāt*)<sup>571</sup>

In Islam, God is understood to have Ninety-Nine (99) Names known as the “most beautiful Names” (*al-'Asmā' al-Ḥusna*).<sup>572</sup> These Names are either Names of God's Essence (*dhāt*) such as *Allāh*,<sup>573</sup> or Names of His Attributes (*ṣifāt*).<sup>574</sup> The Names of God's Attributes are divided into two categories. The first are Names describing the Divine Attributes of Majesty (*Ṣifāt al-Jalāl*), such as the Divine Name *al-Qaḥḥār* (The Vanquishing). The second are Names describing the Divine Attributes of Beauty (*Ṣifāt al-Jamāl*) such as the Divine Name *al-Raḥīm* (The Merciful).<sup>575</sup> In Islam, God is understood and known by the ways He identifies, manifests and expresses Himself in the *Qur'ān* by His “most beautiful Names,” or in the hadiths of Prophet Muhammad which describe Him.<sup>576</sup> From Ibn 'Arabī's perspective, the Divine Essence and Attributes “play a fundamental role in every aspect of his world view and provide the “language,”...with which he expounds the doctrines of Sufism.”<sup>577</sup> These Names are considered to be the archetypes by which God manifests Himself in the cosmos. Creation is then understood to

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<sup>569</sup> Cited in Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn 'Arabī,” 34.

<sup>570</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>571</sup> In Islamic thought a thing's essence (*dhāt*) is the thing in-itself, and its attributes (*ṣifat*) are its qualities and descriptions. See Chittick, *Divine Love*, 313.

<sup>572</sup> Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 109.

<sup>573</sup> The Arabic term “*Hu*” meaning “Him” is believed by many and especially Sufis to be a Divine Name which refers to the Essence of God.

<sup>574</sup> As a useful reference on the Divine Names according to Ibn 'Arabī see Pablo Beneito, “Los Nombres De Dios En La Obra De Muḥyī-l-Dīn Ibn Al-'Arabī,” PhD diss., (Universidad Complutense De Madrid, 1996).

<sup>575</sup> Muhammad, *Love in the Holy Quran*, xxxii.

<sup>576</sup> Chittick, “The Divine Roots of Human Love,” 57.

<sup>577</sup> Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 109.

be the mirror that reflects these Divine Names and Attributes.<sup>578</sup> Henry Corbin writes, “God who in revealing Himself to Himself, produced the world as a mirror in which to contemplate His own image and beauty.”<sup>579</sup>

The Divine Names (*asmā'*) and Attributes (*ṣifāt*) of God are understood by Ibn 'Arabī to be the veils (*ḥujub*) by which God manifests Himself in creation. They are neither the Essence (*dhāt*) of God, which is unknowable, nor they are independent of it.<sup>580</sup> In other words, the Attributes remain intrinsic to God because they do not exist separately from His Essence. Thus, God is believed to be “the One” (*al-Wāḥid*) in terms of His Attributes, and “the Single” (*al-Aḥad*) in terms of His Essence. Hence, the Sufi saying, the “Divine Qualities are neither He nor other than He.”<sup>581</sup> In other words, when the Divine Essence (*dhāt*) is defined alone in-and-of-itself without reference to the Divine Qualities or Attributes (*ṣifāt*), one speaks of God as *al-Aḥad* in His “Absolute Singularity” (*al-aḥadiyya*). And when the Attributes are defined with reference to the Essence, one speaks of God as *al-Wāḥid* in His “Absolute Oneness” (*al-wāḥidiyya*). As an example, in the first pillar of Islam which is the profession of Oneness (*shahādat al-tawḥīd*), the statement, “there is no god (*la ilāha*) but God (*illā Allāh*)” applies to and informs to this Sufi understanding. The first part of the statement, “there is no god,” refers to the multiplicity (*al-kathra*) of the Divine Attributes of God in creation with reference to the Divine Essence through which the Attributes are manifest, hence immanence (*tashbīh*). The second

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<sup>578</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 271.

<sup>579</sup> Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, 148.

<sup>580</sup> Addas, *The Voyage of No Return*, 93. Different theological schools of Islamic thought (e.g., the *Mu'tazila*, the *Ashā'ira*, the *Hanābila* and the *Imāmiyya*) have opposing interpretations and views on the Divine Names (*asmā'*) and Attributes (*ṣifāt*) of God. For some schools of thought consider the Divine Attributes to be independent from God's Essence, others consider the Divine Attributes are neither the Essence (*dhāt*) of God, which is unknowable, nor they are independent of it etc.

<sup>581</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 109.

statement “but God,” signifies the Divine Essence of God in its transcendent singularity, as defined alone in-and-of-itself, without reference to the manifestation of the Divine Attributes in creation. Thus, it eliminates all immanent existence by affirming the absolute Single Unity or Oneness of God’s Essence, while at the same time affirming and placing God’s absolute transcendence (*tanzīh*) above creation.<sup>582</sup> Furthermore, Ibn ‘Arabī perceives God as being transcendent and immanent at the same time.<sup>583</sup> Elizabeth Roberts appropriately clarifies this point when she states:

The Unity of Truth is indivisible and single. Transcendence and immanence are, as Ibn ‘Arabī tells us, two aspects of Reality, not two parts. Transcendence is truth conceived as remaining in Its pristine state of sheer being, prior to any manifestation; while immanence is that very same Truth, this time conceived as expressing Its possibilities in the detailed abundance of relativity. This distinction between the two aspects is conceptual, not real; that is, it exists in the intellect, not in the Being Itself.<sup>584</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī’s belief that God is both transcendent and immanent at the same time differs from the mainstream interpretive *Ash‘arī* belief, as well as from the literalist *Hanbalī* and *Wahābī* schools of thought.<sup>585</sup> This is because Ibn ‘Arabī believes in the Unity or “Oneness of God.”<sup>586</sup> This belief points to the metaphysical notion of the “Oneness of Being,” according to Ibn ‘Arabī, and will be explained in further detail in the following sections.

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<sup>582</sup> Ibid.

<sup>583</sup> Roberts, “Love and Knowledge,” 65.

<sup>584</sup> Ibid.

<sup>585</sup> The Ash‘arite theological school of Islamic thought interprets all anthropomorphic terms or attributes (*ta’wīl al-ṣifāt*) describing God’s nature (such as face, hands, feet, movement...etc.) to have different connotations other than their literal meaning. In opposition, the literalist *Hanbalī* and *Wahābī* schools confirm and assert all anthropomorphic features (*ithbāt al-ṣifāt*) to God, and believe that such corporeal features are different than the human counterparts.

<sup>586</sup> The “Oneness of God” (*tawhīd*) is a belief that is shared by all Muslim groups including the *Hanbalī* and *Wahābī* schools. However, the “Oneness of God” according to Ibn ‘Arabī means the “Oneness of Being,” i.e., that nothing exists in reality except God, and creation is His manifestation. See sub-section 4.2.7 in this Chapter.



### 4.2.3. Creation (*khalq*) and cosmology

Creation (*khalq*), according to Ibn 'Arabī, is the effusion (*burūz*) and appearance (*ẓuhūr*) of the archetypes of the pre-existing entities (*ashyā'*) into existence (*wujūd*).<sup>587</sup> In other words, it involves bringing the entities from the state of innerness (*buṭūn*) and non-being (*'adam*), into appearance (*ẓuhūr*) and existence (*wujūd*). The cosmos is thus a theophany of the Names (*asmā'*) and Attributes (*ṣifāt*) of God. Ibn 'Arabī compares the appearance of entities coming into existence, to the vocalization of a sigh from the human mouth, which then become recognizable words.<sup>588</sup> The “breath” (*nafas*) from the “sigh” of the desire of the “all Compassionate” is the *nafas al-Raḥmān*, the “breath of the All-Merciful.”<sup>589</sup> This exhalation is considered by Ibn 'Arabī to be an act of love by God, who desires to bring the possible entities (*mumkināt*) or things (*ashyā'*) into *wujūd*.<sup>590</sup> Moreover, creation is in a state of constant renewal every instant and without repetition (*takrār*), similar to the mechanism of inhaling and exhaling of a breath. The *Qur'ān* states that, “every day He is bringing about a matter” (*kulla yawminn huwa fī sha'nn*) (Q. 55:29). This is one of the bases of the Sufi saying, “there is no repetition in theophany” (*lā takrār fī al-tajallī*).<sup>591</sup> Here Ibn 'Arabī is implying that the notion of the “Oneness of Being” is uniquely manifested in existence with no repetition whatsoever in creation.

### 4.2.4. Being (*wujūd*)

Ibn 'Arabī repetitively discusses existence or being (*wujūd*) in his writings.<sup>592</sup> The term *wujūd* derives from the root word *w-j-d* (و-ج-د), which means both “to find” and “to

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<sup>587</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 112.

<sup>588</sup> Ibid.

<sup>589</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:331.

<sup>590</sup> Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, 185.

<sup>591</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 112.

<sup>592</sup> William Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn 'Arabī's Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 12.

be found.”<sup>593</sup> *Wujūd* is translated as either “being” or “existence.” Entities or *ashyā'* come into being by “being found.”<sup>594</sup> For Ibn 'Arabī, entities or things (*ashyā'*) exist pre-eternally in the knowledge of God (*fī 'ilm Allāh*), and become manifest as “existent entities” (*a 'yān mawjūda*) through the creative fiat, to “Be!” (*kun*).<sup>595</sup> Things come into being through the Divine Name of God “the Founder” (*al-Wājid*). For God, entities have no existence of their own, and only exist as metaphorical existence (*al-wujūd al-majāzī*), because Real existence (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqq*) only belongs to God.<sup>596</sup> Accordingly, as each entity exists in reality as metaphorical existence (*al-wujūd al-majāzī*), it is, at the same time, the self-disclosure of the Real existence.<sup>597</sup> Because entities cannot exist independently without the existence of God, thus creation has both a metaphorical and a Real existence. In other words, it can be said that God is the “One/Multiple” (*al-wahid al-kathir*),<sup>598</sup> or the One-Real existence Who also appears as metaphorically multiple.<sup>599</sup> Furthermore, many Sufis reference the Qur'anic verse “Multiplying [multiplicity] diverts you” (*alḥākum al-takāthur*) (Q. 102:1), to explain the idea that the metaphorical multiplicity in creation distracts people from witnessing (*shuhūd*) the One-Real existence of creation. Therefore, Sufis prescribe the Sufi spiritual path to those who wish to attain witnessing the “Oneness of God.” This witnessing is achieved by means of a spiritual opening (*fath*) and reaching (*wṣūl*) the station of witnessing God.

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<sup>593</sup> Addas, *The Voyage of No Return*, 80.

<sup>594</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 267.

<sup>595</sup> Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 41-42.

<sup>596</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>597</sup> Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 52.

<sup>598</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>599</sup> See Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:330, 332, 509.

#### 4.2.5. The five Divine Presences (*al-ḥadarāt al-ilāhiyya*) of Being

Ibn 'Arabī considers the cosmological worlds (*'awālim*),<sup>600</sup> which are also known as the “Divine Presences” (*ḥadrāt ilāhiyya*), or the Divine Theophanies, that together constitute the main levels (*marātib*) of cosmic existence.<sup>601</sup> Although they are categorized as five levels in reality, they constitute the One-Real existence.<sup>602</sup> The levels of these cosmological worlds (*'awālim*) proceed in the following ascending order. The first world is called *al-mulk* or *al-nāsūt*, and it is the “world of physical corporeal creation” (*'ālam al-maḥsūsāt*) or (*'ālam al-kathā'if*) and includes humans and other corporeal creation. The second world is called *al-malakūt*, and it is the “world of subtleties” (*'ālam al-laṭā'if*) of the angelic world and spirits.<sup>603</sup> Ibn 'Arabī defines another distinct world in this level, which he calls the “world of imagination” (*'ālam al-khayāl*) or “world of similitudes” (*'ālam al-mithāl*).<sup>604</sup> The third world is called *al-jabarūt*. It is the “world of Divine orders and decrees” (*'ālam al-'amr*), omnipotence or immensity<sup>605</sup> where the archetypes of the pre-existing entities (*ashyā'*) that are beyond form<sup>606</sup> are brought [ordered] into existence. The fourth world is called *al-lāhūt*, it is the “world of Divine nature” (*'ālam al-ulūhiyya*) in its pure and complete manifestation of the Divine Attributes. The final world is called

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<sup>600</sup> For a comprehensive study on the five Divine Presences see William Chittick, “The Five Divine Presences: From al-Qonawi to al-Qaysari” *The Muslim World*, 72 (1982): 107-128; and “Presence with God” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society*, 20 (1996).

<sup>601</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 112-113; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 270; Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 5

<sup>602</sup> Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 4.

<sup>603</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 113.

<sup>604</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 270.

<sup>605</sup> See Burckhardt, *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, 103.

<sup>606</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

*al-hāhūt*. This is the Essential Nature of God<sup>607</sup> where the Essence transcends all other denominations of the Names and Attributes.<sup>608</sup>

While Chittick may be correct in his argument that Qūnawī, the leading student of Ibn 'Arabī, was the first to write in detail about the “five Divine presences,”<sup>609</sup> it is worth noting that Ibn 'Arabī mentions the names of these Divine Presences (*ḥadrāt ilāhiyya*) in his salutary prayers (*ṣalawāt*) for Prophet Muhammad. These are the salutations of the Essence (*al-Ṣalāt al-dhātiyya*); the middle salutation (*al-Ṣalāt al-wuṣṭā*); the salutation of the eternal opening (*Ṣalāt al-faṭḥ al-azalī*); and the salutation of the openings of truth (*Ṣalāt fawātiḥ al-ḥaqīqa*).<sup>610</sup> These four salutations in honor of the Prophet Muhammad, attributed to Ibn 'Arabī, are not only considered songs of praise or blessings in honor of the Prophet, but also signifying the spiritual stature of the Prophet and indicating the mystical knowledge that a spiritual seeker can experience in these realms.

#### 4.2.6. Clarification on the use of the term “union” (*ittiḥād*)

One of the oldest Islamic treatises written during the late 10<sup>th</sup> and early 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, entitled “What love really is,” is found among *The Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* (*Rasā'il Ikhwān aṣṣafā*). In this treatise, it is mentioned that the highest form of love is achieving a mystical “union” (*ittiḥād*), or *unio mystica* with the beloved.<sup>611</sup> Furthermore, Seyyed Hossein Nasr states that the goal of the Sufi is “to attain the state of union with

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<sup>607</sup> Ibid.

<sup>608</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 113.

<sup>609</sup> Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 5.

<sup>610</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Majmū' awrād wa ṣalawāt sayyidi muḥyi al-dīn Ibn 'Arabī*, ed. Gūda Muḥammad al-Mahdī (Cairo: al-Dār al-Gūdiyya, 2009). Many of the salutary prayers for the Prophet are unverified as being composed by Ibn 'Arabī, maybe with the exception of *al-Ṣalāt al-Fayḍiyya* which has numerous commentaries by Sufis, e.g., 'Abd al-Ghanī Nābulṣī (d. 1731), Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī (d. 1749) and others. Also see the *MIAS Archive Report: Catalogue of Ibn 'Arabī's Work* and Yahia, *Mu'alafāt Ibn 'Arabī tārikḥahā wa taṣnīfahā*, 401-404.

<sup>611</sup> See Frithiof Rundgren, “Love and Knowledge according to Some Islamic Philosophers,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabī Society*, 7 (1988): 23.

God.”<sup>612</sup> He writes, “in the state of union the individuality of man is illuminated and so becomes immersed in the Divine light.”<sup>613</sup> Such ideas and phrases might imply a state of physical “union” between the Creator and creation, a point that could lead to some misconceptions. Nasr is aware of this possibility himself, when he writes about union, “which in Sufism does not mean the union of the creature and the Creator. . . . Union means our becoming aware of our nothingness before God.”<sup>614</sup> This indicates that the goal of the Sufi and the Divine lover is to attain the realization that there is no real existence except that of God alone. The goal of the Sufi mystics is to attain the certitude (*yaqīn*) of “Oneness of God” (*tawḥīd Allāh*) as professed in the *shahāda*, “there is no god but God” (*Lā ilāha illā Allāh*). This also can mean that there is no existence but the Existence of God, and thus all else is non-existent (‘*adam*).<sup>615</sup> Using terms such as “union with” (*ittiḥād m ‘a*) God or “immersed in” (*ḥalla fī*) God might imply a sense of duality, and thus contradict Ibn ‘Arabī’s arguments regarding being or existence. In this light, it is better to avoid the use of this kind of terminology.

Ibn ‘Arabī criticizes the use of the term “union” because it implies dualism or a form of merging. In his own words, he states that, “those who go astray say union (*ittiḥād*),” (*mā qāla bil ittiḥād illā ahlul ilḥād*).<sup>616</sup> However, whenever Ibn ‘Arabī uses the term “union,” he uses it to indicate to the multiplicity of existence before the attainment and the realization of “Oneness” or *tawḥīd*. He describes union as “the station of ambiguity (*iltibās*) of the servant with the Qualities of the Lord” (*maqām al-ittiḥād huwa iltibās ‘abd bi ṣifāt*

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<sup>612</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 114.

<sup>613</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>614</sup> Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 128.

<sup>615</sup> Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 40.

<sup>616</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 4:372.

*Rabb*).<sup>617</sup> This means that before the opening (*fath*) of the realization of “Oneness,” the seeker feels ambiguous (*multabas ‘alayh*) because of the similarity and resemblance [metaphorically speaking] between his own attributes and the Divine Attributes of God.

#### 4.2.7. Oneness of Being (*wahdat al-wujūd*)

The concept of “Oneness of Being” (*wahdat al-wujūd*) is the most recurring metaphysical theme in Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings.<sup>618</sup> It is the main underlying principle in his writings.<sup>619</sup> *Wahdat al-wujūd* has been variously translated as “Unity of Being,”<sup>620</sup> “Unicity of Being,”<sup>621</sup> and “Unity of Existence.”<sup>622</sup> It is therefore important to understand what Ibn ‘Arabī means by *wahdat al-wujūd* in order to understand the relation between this concept and his other theories.<sup>623</sup>

#### 4.2.8. Important clarification on *wahdat al-wujūd* as a technical term

The meaning of *wahdat al-wujūd* relates to both ontology as well as epistemology.<sup>624</sup> Ontologically, it refers to the idea that there is no existence but the Existence of God, and that only God truly has Real Existence (*wujūd ḥaqq*). Epistemologically, it refers to the perceptual knowledge gained from witnessing (*shuhūd*) the Divine theophanies of the cosmos.<sup>625</sup>

As a technical term, *wahdat al-wujūd* may have not been explicitly mentioned before Ibn ‘Arabī, but its meaning existed in many early Sufi doctrines, as in the accounts of Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd and of Rābi‘ah al-‘Adawiyyah, as well as in the writings of

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<sup>617</sup> Ibid., 1:690.

<sup>618</sup> Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, 149.

<sup>619</sup> Addas, *The Voyage of No Return*, 84.

<sup>620</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 267.

<sup>621</sup> Addas, *The Voyage of No Return*, 80.

<sup>622</sup> Chittick, *Divine Love*, 221.

<sup>623</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 267.

<sup>624</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 108.

<sup>625</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 267.

Khawāja 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī (d. 1089 CE).<sup>626</sup> When Chittick argues that “Ibn 'Arabī is known as the founder of the school of the Oneness of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*),”<sup>627</sup> he is referring to Ibn 'Arabī as the earliest major Sufi thinker to explain the doctrine in detail. According to many leading scholars, Ibn 'Arabī never used the term, “Oneness of Being.” Among them are Claude Addas<sup>628</sup> and even William Chittick himself.<sup>629</sup> Addas states that Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 1274 CE) was the first to use the expression of *waḥdat al-wujūd*.<sup>630</sup> Chittick similarly claims that the first person to use the expression as a technical term was Sa'īd al-Dīn al-Farghānī (d.1300 CE) who was a student of Qūnawī.<sup>631</sup> However, it is worth noting that Ibn 'Arabī did use a similar term, “Oneness *in* Being” (*al-wiḥda fī al-wujūd*), once in the second volume of *The Meccan Openings* on page 502.<sup>632</sup> He says: “I confirm multiplicity in confirmation [of the immutable entities of creation] and disaffirm it from Being [God], and confirm Oneness in being [*wiḥda fī al-wujūd*] and disaffirm it from confirmation [as real existence]” (*fa-athbitu al-kathrata fī al-thubūt wa 'anfihā min al-wujūd wa athbitu al-wiḥda fī al-wujūd wa 'anfihā min al-thubūt*).<sup>633</sup> In this sentence Ibn 'Arabī indicates that he confirms and accepts “multiplicity” of creation as a metaphorical existence in his affirmation of it as the “Attributes of God.” At the same time, he disaffirms and refutes “creation” or the “Attributes of God” as being independent from “Being” or the “Essence” of God. In the second phrase, he confirms and accepts the “Oneness” or the “Essence” of God in the “multiplicity” of His manifestations in the “being” of “creation”

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<sup>626</sup> Addas, *The Voyage of No Return*, 79.

<sup>627</sup> Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 79.

<sup>628</sup> See Addas, *The Voyage of No Return*, 80; and *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, 208n87.

<sup>629</sup> See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 79; Addas, *The Voyage of No Return*, 80.

<sup>630</sup> Addas, *The Voyage of No Return*, 81.

<sup>631</sup> Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 71.

<sup>632</sup> Maḥmūd al-Ghurāb, *Sharḥ Kalīmāt al-Ṣūfīyya* (Damascus: Naḍr Printing, 1981), 468.

<sup>633</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:502.

or the “Attributes.” But he also disaffirms and refutes “creation” or “Attributes” from his confirmation as “Being” or the “Essence” of God. In other words, he sees the multiplicity of creation, but does not see them as real *wujūd*, because the Attributes have no independent existence of their own apart from the *dhāt* of God.

#### 4.2.9. Oneness of Being compared to pantheism, panentheism, and monism

The doctrine of the “Oneness of Being” has been depicted by some scholars as a form of “pantheism,”<sup>634</sup> “panentheism,”<sup>635</sup> or “monism.”<sup>636</sup> These claims seem to be incorrect, because these terms were initially used to describe certain philosophical views, which, upon closer inspection, turn out to be quite distinct from Ibn 'Arabī's spiritual and metaphysical doctrine.<sup>637</sup> As discussed earlier, entities gain their existence by “being found” (*wujīdat*), and since God is transcendent, beyond creation and immanent at the same time, creation is neither God nor independent from God. Pantheism, on the other hand, refers to the idea that the cosmos is God,<sup>638</sup> without differentiating between God and creation.<sup>639</sup> In other words, it does not differentiate between the “Attributes” (*ṣifāt*) as theophanies (*tajalliyyāt*) of “existence” (*wujūd*), and the “Essence” (*dhāt*).<sup>640</sup> Panentheism signifies that God permeates the entire universe, but He is also at the same time is beyond it.<sup>641</sup> In other words, He is not one “with it.” It thus indicates a differentiation between two independent substances, namely God and the universe.

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<sup>634</sup> Hillary Rodrigues and John S. Harding, *Introduction to the Study of Religion* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 162. Pantheism comes from the Greek word *pan* “all” is *theos* “god.”

<sup>635</sup> Ibid. Panentheism comes from the Greek word *pan* “all” *en* “in” *theos* “god.”

<sup>636</sup> Ibid., 160; See also Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 104. Monism attributes oneness or singleness which can only be divided into many things.

<sup>637</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 105.

<sup>638</sup> Rodrigues and Harding, *Introduction to the Study of Religion*, 162.

<sup>639</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 105.

<sup>640</sup> See Rustom, “Philosophical Sufism,” 399- 411; and “Is Ibn al-‘Arabī's Ontology Pantheistic?” *Journal of Islamic Philosophy*, 2 (2006): 53-67.

<sup>641</sup> Rodrigues and Harding, *Introduction to the Study of Religion*, 162.



Ibn 'Arabī's theory asserts that God is both transcendent and immanent, and that the entities of *wujūd* are His self-disclosure or theophanies.<sup>642</sup> However the entities do not “contain” Him, as with panentheism which indicates a duality.<sup>643</sup> As for monism, the philosophy expresses the existence of only one substance, essence, or a unifying principle,<sup>644</sup> and so is opposed to dualism.<sup>645</sup> In other words, monism does not distinguish between the Essence and Attributes of God. Henry Corbin writes:

Indeed, our usual philosophical categories as well as our official theological categories fail us in the presence of a theosophy such as that of Ibn 'Arabī and his disciples. It is no more possible to perceive the specific dialogue that this theosophy establishes if we persist in reducing it to what is commonly called “monism” in the West.<sup>646</sup>

Thus, terms like pantheism, panentheism and monism, as they have been applied to designate the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd* need to be reconsidered.<sup>647</sup> Ibn 'Arabī's concept of “Oneness of Being” ought to be addressed as a unique and distinct metaphysical notion independent of and distinct from other ontological philosophies.<sup>648</sup>

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

One of the main concepts in Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysical doctrine is the cosmic status and spiritual reality of the Prophet Muhammad,<sup>649</sup> who exemplifies in his writings the “Perfect Human” (*al-insān al-kāmil*).<sup>650</sup> The spiritual reality of the Prophet Muhammad

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<sup>642</sup> See sub-section 4.2.4 of this Chapter.

<sup>643</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 105.

<sup>644</sup> Rodrigues and Harding, *Introduction to the Study of Religion*, 160.

<sup>645</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 105.

<sup>646</sup> Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, 152.

<sup>647</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 267.

<sup>648</sup> Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, 7.

<sup>649</sup> See Maḥmūd al-Ghurāb, *al-Insān al-kāmil* (Damascus: Naḍr Prinitng, 1990); Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

<sup>650</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 272; Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 110.

in Sufism is known as the “Muhammadan Reality” (*al-ḥaqīqat al-Muḥammadiyya*). This concept of the “Muhammadan Reality,”<sup>651</sup> found its most sophisticated expression in the works of Ibn 'Arabī.<sup>652</sup> The “Muhammadan Reality” reveals itself in particular epiphanies (*mazāhir*), as with the different prophets and messengers, beginning with Adam and ending with the Prophet Muhammad. It then continues its manifestations in saints (*awliyā'*), gnostics or the “knowers of God” (*ārifūn bil-llāh*) and other highly accomplished spiritual beings called “poles” (*aqṭāb*).<sup>653</sup> The “Perfect Human” who is the embodiment of the “Muhammadan Reality” is an essential concept in Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine. In Ibn 'Arabī's writings, the “Perfect Human”<sup>654</sup> has three roles: (i) that of initiating, as it is the origin of all entities; (ii) that of encompassing all the archetypes of *wujūd* in the cosmos; (iii) and finally, that of Prophecy, in representing the Divine word or Logos as the perfect theophany on earth.<sup>655</sup> In other words, “Perfect Human” is understood to be the perfect theophany or total self-disclosure of all Divine Names (*al-'asmā' al-ilāhiyyah*) and Attributes of God, manifest in human form.<sup>656</sup> The idea of the “Perfect Human” in Sufism is also described variously as the “Muhammadan light” (*nūr Muḥammadi*); the “first creation” (*al-khalq al-awwal*); the “first manifestation” (*al-tajallī al-awwal*); the “first spirit” (*al-rūḥ al-awwal*); the “first intellect” (*al-'aql al-awwal*); the “evident lead” (*al-imām al-mubīn*); the “pen” (*al-qalam*); and the “preserved tablet” (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūz*).<sup>657</sup> The “Perfect Human” acts as a interstice (*al-barzakh*)<sup>658</sup> by which God manifests Himself in order to communicate

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<sup>651</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 272.

<sup>652</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 110.

<sup>653</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 272.

<sup>654</sup> See Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 3:390.

<sup>655</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 110.

<sup>656</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 272.

<sup>657</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 110.

<sup>658</sup> The term *barzakh* connotes a barrier or an isthmus between two things whether they are physical or spiritual. See Nasr, *The Study Quran*, 861.

with creation.<sup>659</sup> Chittick writes that Ibn ‘Arabī understands the station of love (*maqām al-ḥubb*) to be a privileged station that is special to the “Perfect Human,” and the above-mentioned saints, gnostics and poles, whose object of love is God Himself.<sup>660</sup> This is possible because such humans, according to Ibn ‘Arabī, have transcended the stations on the spiritual path and reached the station of Oneness (*maqām al-tawḥīd*) in God.<sup>661</sup> They realize the “Muhammadan Reality” in themselves,<sup>662</sup> and like God, love all things in an absolute, non-delimited (*muṭlaq*) manner.<sup>663</sup>

#### 4.2.11. Ibn ‘Arabī and religious pluralism

Having described the ontological and epistemological nature of the reality of existence according to Ibn ‘Arabī, it is appropriate for me to now explain how a transcendent unity in religions could be possible.<sup>664</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī writes, “all [revealed] religious laws (*shrā’i’*) are lights (*anwār*)” (*wa al-shrā’i’ kuluhā anwār*),<sup>665</sup> and, “all [revealed] religious laws (*shrā’i’*) are real (*ḥaqq*)” (*fal-shrā’i’ kuluhā ḥaqq*).<sup>666</sup> As Ibn ‘Arabī declares, there is no one but God Himself. This is particularly relevant for the significance of the world’s religions, as according to Ibn ‘Arabī’s view, they are the Divinely ordained systems that have been given to each integral traditional civilization.<sup>667</sup> This view allows different religions and cultures to have different definitions and

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<sup>659</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 272.

<sup>660</sup> Chittick, “The Divine Roots of Human Love,” 74.

<sup>661</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>662</sup> Chittick, “The Religion of Love Revisited,” 54.

<sup>663</sup> Chittick, “The Divine Roots of Human Love,” 74, 75.

<sup>664</sup> For a comprehensive study on the plurality of religion in the thought of Ibn ‘Arabī see William Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-‘Arabī and the Problem of Religious Diversity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); Gregory A. Lipton, *Rethinking Ibn ‘Arabi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); and “Making Islam Fit: Ibn ‘Arabi and the Idea of Sufism in the West,” PhD diss., (The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2013).

<sup>665</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 3:153.

<sup>666</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:752.

<sup>667</sup> See Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 126-129; See also Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 1:135, 265, 266, 324; 3:153.

understandings of what a god is or is not. Ibn 'Arabī thus expresses that not only each religion has a different understanding of god, but also each individual has a specific belief in god. The faith and belief in this personal god is known, according to Ibn 'Arabī, as “the god of belief” (*al-ilāh al-mu'taqad*).<sup>668</sup> Chittick writes:

Ibn al-'Arabī would later talk.... of the god of belief (*al-ilāh al-mu'taqad*), meaning not God in Himself, who is unknowable and beyond any form or formulation, but the specific object or objects of devotion that each human individual, even an atheist, takes as his point of orientation.<sup>669</sup>

Ibn Arabī writes that the doctrines of the world's religions express the various ways of viewing Reality (*al-ḥaqīqah*). Commenting on the diversity of these views or expressions, Ibn 'Arabī provides the following analogy:

Beliefs present Him in various guises. They take Him apart and put Him together, they give Him form and they fabricate Him. But in Himself, He does not change, and in Himself, He does not undergo transmutation. However, the organ of sight sees Him so. Hence location constricts Him, and fluctuation from entity to entity limits Him. Hence, none becomes bewildered by Him except him who combines the assertion of similarity with the declaration of incomparability.<sup>670</sup>

Syafaatun Almirzanah points out that “Ibn 'Arabī's discussion of religious pluralism begins with the assertion that God Himself is the source of all diversity in the cosmos. Thus, divergence of beliefs among human beings ultimately stems from God.”<sup>671</sup> Furthermore, because Absolute Reality of the revealed doctrines ultimately cannot be confined to a single doctrine, as mentioned in the Qur'anic verse, “We have assigned a law and a path to each of you” (Q. 4: 48). Similarly, as the Essence of the Real can be manifested, but cannot be

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<sup>668</sup> Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart*, 59.

<sup>669</sup> Chittick, *Divine Love*, 397.

<sup>670</sup> Cited in Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 163.

<sup>671</sup> Almirzanah, “Sufi Hermeneutics of Ibn 'Arabī.”

enclosed, the only method of describing it is by the language of symbols. Reality's infinitude transcends cognitive categorization, hence symbols become a necessity. Just as human beings cannot know light without colors, similarly, humans in general cannot know the Absolute without its religious expressions in its various forms. However for the Gnostics or knowers of God (*al-ʿārifūn bil-llāh*) Ibn 'Arabī indicates that, "it is not the heart that gives its "color" to the Form [*al-hay'ah*] it receives, but on the contrary, the gnostics's [*al-ʿārifīn*] heart "is colored" in every instant by the color, that is, the modality of the Form in which the Divine Being is epiphanized to him."<sup>672</sup> Ibn 'Arabī is signifying that the heart of the knower of God has transcended all forms of theophanies and is witnessing God's Unity or Oneness in the different forms of creation. Ibn 'Arabī who is considered by many Sufis to be a "Knower of God" (*ʿarif bil-llāh*) writes, "I follow the religion of Love: whatever way Love's camels take, that is my religion and my faith."<sup>673</sup>

Each religion then is like a color, which emanates from the supra-formal light, which is the Absolute Reality (*al-ḥaqq al-mṭlaq*). Just as it is absurd to say that in a refraction of light, green is superior to red, or yellow to purple, similarly, it would be absurd to say that one religion is superior to another. If there is superiority of one religion over the other, it is only of a relative nature. Red, for example, can be superior to blue in that reveals a modality of light which blue doesn't, and vice-versa. It should be added here that, from Ibn 'Arabī's perspective, religions are diverse not only because God reveals Himself in a multiplicity of doctrinal modes, but that He can still be true to Himself. This is possible because the receptivity of God to Himself exists in an infinite multiplicity of modes. Ibn

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<sup>672</sup> Cited in Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, 196.

<sup>673</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *The Tarjumān al-Ashwāq: A collection of Mystical Odes*, 67. See also sub-section 3.8.1 in Ch. Three of this thesis.

'Arabī refers to this idea in the Qur'anic verse, "If your Lord had willed [it], He would have fashioned humanity into one community, but they will not cease to differ" (Q. 11: 118-119). Such a statement confirms that although humans vary in race, language, ethnicity, and psychological temperaments across civilizations, God discloses Himself to each group in a manner that they can apprehend. The diversity within humanity, which is nothing else than a reflection of the possible diversity of the different Attributes within the singleness of the Essence of God, is manifested and revealed through the diversity of the religions. The most plausible interpretation of this metaphysical axiom, according to Ibn 'Arabī, is that religious plurality can exist.

A question may now be raised: if religions are symbolic descriptions of the Absolute, are they just as relative as the metaphysical doctrine from which Ibn 'Arabī derives his own views? Or, to put it another way, what is the relationship between the metaphysical and religious points of views? To answer this question, it must be remembered that, as pointed out earlier, there is a hierarchy regarding the Divine realms or presences, which are embedded in the structure of Existence or Being (*wujud*). The Qur'anic verse Ibn 'Arabī quotes most frequently in support of this argument states, "Wheresoever you turn, there is the face of God" (Q. 2: 115). The "face of God" in this verse corresponds to the highest spiritual realm, that of the Essence of God, the (*Hāhūt*). Just as there are different levels of beauty, there are different levels of truth. Within religions there is a hierarchy as well, which exists because within humans there is also a hierarchy. Not everyone knows God to the same degree. Each individual has a personal and a relative understanding of what God is.

Religions, address people according to their intellectual capability and different understandings. Since these levels differ in humans, so do the levels within religions themselves. In Ibn 'Arabī's own words, "There are as many paths to God as there are human souls,"<sup>674</sup> and that, "the Real does not manifest Itself twice in one form, nor in a single form to two individuals."<sup>675</sup> However, each believer will form a different idea or conception of God, as Mehmet Reçber states, "the diversity of religious beliefs is not something simply grounded in the epistemic imperfection of the believers; that is, it is not something merely stemming from the epistemic subjects' being fallible in their attempt to recognize the Real."<sup>676</sup> This is where the exoteric-esoteric divide begins. Exotericism (*dhāhir*) is the outward expression of a religion. People who are confined to this level assume that their point of view is the only correct one. They take the dogmas literally, failing to realize their symbolic value. As a consequence, they relegate the dogmas of all other religions to be false, in so far as they appear to contradict their own beliefs. Ibn 'Arabī writes:

You worship only what you set up in yourself. This is why doctrines and states differed concerning God. Thus, one group says that He is like this and another group says that He is not like this, but like that. Another group says concerning knowledge (of Him) that the color of water is determined by the color of the cup... So consider the bewilderment that permeates (*sāriyya*) every belief."<sup>677</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī states that no human can ever know what God truly is, except God Himself, and writes that "the god of belief" is an idol (*wathan*) worshiped inside the heart of each

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<sup>674</sup> Cited in Almirzahan, "Sufi Hermeneutics of Ibn 'Arabī."

<sup>675</sup> Ibid.

<sup>676</sup> Mehmet Sait Reçber, "Ibn al 'Arabī, Hick and Religious Pluralism" in *Asian and African Area Studies*, 7/2 (2008), 150.

<sup>677</sup> Salman Bashir, *Ibn 'Arabī's Barzakh: The Concept of the Limit and the Relationship between God and the World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 123.

individual.<sup>678</sup> He emphasizes this point when he says, “every believer has a Lord in his heart that he has brought into existence, so he believes in Him. Such are the People of the Mark on the day of resurrection. They worship nothing but what they themselves have carved.”<sup>679</sup> Ibn 'Arabī is referring to a canonical *ḥadīth* which supports his idea. The *ḥadīth* says, “God will gather people [on the day of resurrection] ... and will come to them in a form [*ṣurah*] other than they know and will say, ‘I am your Lord.’ They will say, ‘We seek refuge in God from you. This is our place (we stand our ground) till our Lord comes to us, and when He comes to us, we will recognize Him. God then comes to them in a form they know [recognize] and will say, ‘I am your Lord.’ They will say, [indeed] You are our Lord,’ and they will follow Him.”<sup>680</sup> Ibn 'Arabī is implying that if a person is truly worshiping God, such as the Gnostics, he/she will not only recognize and accept God in all the different and various forms and manifestations in this world, but also in the hereafter.<sup>681</sup> Hence acknowledging the Divine in His various manifestations in all religions, is considered by Ibn 'Arabī to be a high spiritual state of knowing God.

### 4.3. Critique of Ibn 'Arabī

Ibn 'Arabī has been criticized to the extent of being described as a heretic. In addition, his doctrine has been described as being misleading and destructive by many purportedly “orthodox” Muslim scholars. Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328 CE) argued against Ibn 'Arabī's concept of “Oneness of Being” as he believed that, by treating every empirical thing as a manifestation of the Divine Essence, he dissociated God from His role as the Creator of the universe. He accused Ibn 'Arabī of propagating a doctrine of unification and

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<sup>678</sup> Chittick, “The Religion of Love Revisited,” 58.

<sup>679</sup> Bashir, *Ibn 'Arabī's Barzakh*, 185.

<sup>680</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by al-Bukhārī, *ḥadīth* no. (7437), and Muslim, *ḥadīth* no. (182) in their *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

<sup>681</sup> See Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 1:49.



incarnation, an accusation which is considered a severe heretical act in the eyes of like-minded theologians.<sup>682</sup> Ibn Taymiyya's rejection of all heterodox or deviating interpretations, according to his view of Islamic dogma, provided, as Alexander Knysh indicates, "an ideological foundation for violent and devastating revolution launched by the Wahhabis of Central Arabia in the second half of the 18th century."<sup>683</sup> To this day Ibn 'Arabī is still considered a controversial figure in Islam. Muslim scholars are divided on their opinion on him. Some consider him to be the greatest spiritual master, while others believe him to be an innovator and an enemy of Islam.

#### 4.4. Conclusion

Compared to Ibn 'Arabī, preceding Sufi literature had exhibited very little detailed metaphysical descriptions.<sup>684</sup> The profound originality introduced in Ibn 'Arabī's writings compared to that of earlier Sufis, such as Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī,<sup>685</sup> presented a fundamental break and a turning point in the legacy of Sufism.<sup>686</sup> The originality of Ibn 'Arabī's work not only provided Islam with one of the most sophisticated and elaborate forms of conceptualizations for the profession of the "Oneness of God,"<sup>687</sup> but also introduced significant metaphysical frameworks of great importance.<sup>688</sup> Later mystics, such as 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, discovered in Ibn 'Arabī's body of work a complete and comprehensive interpretation of concepts belonging to the early Sufi tradition.<sup>689</sup>

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<sup>682</sup> Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 107.

<sup>683</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>684</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 90.

<sup>685</sup> See al-Ghazālī, *Love, Longing, Intimacy, and Contentment: Kitāb al-maḥabba wa 'l-shawq wa 'l-uns wa 'l-riḍā: Book 36 of The Revival of the Religious Sciences (ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn)*, trans. Eric Ormsby (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2011).

<sup>686</sup> Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, 2.

<sup>687</sup> Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 79.

<sup>688</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 90.

<sup>689</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 263.

Formulations such as Being or Existence (*wujūd*), “Oneness of Being” (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), and the “Muhammadan Reality” (*al-ḥaqīqat al-Muḥammadiyya*), were contextualized for the first time in his works.<sup>690</sup>

In this Chapter, by undertaking a careful examination of Ibn 'Arabī's ideas which are considered to be at the heart of his mystical writing, I have set the stage for later analyses in the following Chapter.

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<sup>690</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 91.

**Chapter Five: A hermeneutical study of Chapter 178 of *The Meccan*  
*Openings (al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya)***

### 5.1. Introduction

Ibn ‘Arabī is considered by many to be at the pinnacle of Sufism. His writing is mystical, poetic and uplifting, and because he is dealing with the highest levels of mysticism, this form of knowledge is hard to translate into everyday language. Since Ibn ‘Arabī is addressing a specific group of people, his descriptions are difficult to understand. His writing can easily become distorted, misplaced or confused by the general audience. Hence, I am endeavoring to convey the envisioned meanings in Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings, in an attempt to help the reader, understand the path that Ibn ‘Arabī asks of those whom he has planted the seed of love.

In this Chapter I will be looking at different elements of Ibn ‘Arabī’s ideas. The complexity in presenting Ibn ‘Arabī’s ideas in this context is due not only to his methodology in writing, but also on the way he draws on and combines ideas from various disciplines.<sup>691</sup> In *The Meccan Openings (al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya)*, Ibn ‘Arabī’s most mature work, he refines the complex ideas and intricate observations from his earlier writings. At times his observations and comments are very difficult to follow, therefore I will not be exploring these topics in great detail, but I will attempt to give a coherent version of what Ibn ‘Arabī is attempting to convey to a non-specialist audience as much as I possibly can. The purpose of this Chapter is to introduce new materials, comprised of both reflections and an evaluation of Ibn ‘Arabī’s distinctive yet complex language on the topic of love. In this context what I offer is both a philosophical analysis as well as a potential hermeneutic strategy to elaborate Ibn ‘Arabī’s ideas. These metaphysical notions and

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<sup>691</sup> See section 1.12 on methodology in Chapter One of this thesis.

themes on Divine love that are contained in Chapter 178<sup>692</sup> of his mature work *The Meccan Openings*, were finalized in 1238 CE, two years before his death.

I will also point out the significance of Ibn ‘Arabī’s introductory poems, his emphasis on the exoteric rulings of Islamic law (*sharī‘ah*),<sup>693</sup> and his etymological and polysemic analysis of the Arabic terminology of love. I also closely examine in more detail Ibn ‘Arabī’s analyses of the four names of love which are at the core of his philosophy on love. The four names or terms that distinguish love and their degree are, love (*al-ḥubb*), inclination (*al-hawā*), intense overwhelming love (*al-‘ishq*), and affection (*al-wudd*).<sup>694</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī also provides three reasons which he claims to be the cause of love in its purist form. Again, in his depiction of such causes, he designates specific reasons of love that vary in their attribution. He describes these causes as the “reasons of love” (*asbāb al-ḥubb*), namely, beauty which he finds in creation itself; as beneficence or generous actions of fellow human beings, and thirdly as the voluntary supererogatory (*nafl*) prayers which are performed by the faithful to attain the love of God. In addition, Ibn ‘Arabī also presents what I consider to be the most important analysis of the highest levels of love. The list begins with Divine love, then spiritual love, followed by natural love, and finally elemental love. Ibn ‘Arabī additionally clarifies some challenging metaphysical issues which center around the beginning and the goal of human love for God. At the same time, he also posits

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<sup>692</sup> The Chapter on love in *The Meccan Openings* entitled “On Knowing the Station of Love” (*fī ma‘rifat maqām al-maḥabba*), 636 AH. See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:320-362.

<sup>693</sup> The love relationship between God and His servants in Islam, is established through observing and following the sacred law (*Sharī‘ah*). See Muhammad, *Love in the Holy Qur’an*, 241. Thus, this love relationship can be summarized in two main points. The first point is following the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad as mentioned in the *Qur’ān*, “Say, If you love God, follow me, God will love you and forgive your sins” (Q. 2:31). The second point is in observing the obligatory acts of worship as mentioned in the canonical *ḥadīth* of the supererogatory prayers (*ḥadīth al-nawāfil*). See sub-section 2.4.1 in Ch. Two of this thesis.

<sup>694</sup> These terms are explained in Section 2.3 in Ch. Two of this thesis from a linguistic perspective, however I attempt to explain them here from Ibn ‘Arabī’s perspective.

a special condition of love in an attempt to explain and communicate to human beings this special condition. This is the desire in human beings for the non-existent. At the deepest level, this very special condition of love is considered by Ibn ‘Arabī to be the source of lovers’ preoccupation with the love of God, but at the same time, it is for Ibn ‘Arabī the reason why God will test His beloved. This new test appears to be somewhat problematic as why would God want to challenge those who love Him. Ibn ‘Arabī also explores the various sources that motivate the lover’s obsession and preoccupation in love.

Finally, Ibn ‘Arabī assesses the inexplicable love relationship between passion and rational intellectual love. I believe that it is very important for the readers to be aware of Ibn ‘Arabī’s positions and explanations regarding such enigmatic matters. Ibn ‘Arabī is endeavoring to help humans understand the different facets of these Divine mysteries. It is also very important for the reader to learn to appreciate Ibn ‘Arabī’s idiosyncratic expressions, ideas and formulations. For some people it might seem that Ibn ‘Arabī’s ideas are repetitive or unorganized, but actually they are unique and original, even if they are difficult at times to decipher.<sup>695</sup> I am emphasizing this point because some of the above ideas may seem similar to depictions mentioned in the earlier Chapters of this thesis. However, I want to acknowledge that Ibn ‘Arabī’s ideas in *The Meccan Openings* are extremely refined improvements on his earlier writings. This is why *The Meccan Openings* is considered to be the compendium of his mature and most eloquent ideas. It is therefore not only important to study Ibn ‘Arabī’s work, though at times obscure, but also to draw attention and deepen the awareness to his *oeuvre*.

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<sup>695</sup> Translations of Chapter 178 from *The Meccan Openings* are my own.

## 5.2. The significance of the introductory poems

Ibn ‘Arabī begins the longest of his Chapters in *The Meccan Openings* on love with a description of all the intricacies of the station (*maqām*) of love.<sup>696</sup> He first summarizes and then presents his ideas to be discussed in poetic form in the same manner as the rest of the Chapters of *The Meccan Openings*.<sup>697</sup> These introductory poems are the key to deciphering and understanding Ibn ‘Arabī’s ideas and arguments. For example, Ibn ‘Arabī presents his main ontological ideas of “being” or “existence” (*wujūd*) and “Oneness of Being” (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) in this introductory section.<sup>698</sup> Here Ibn ‘Arabī indicates that nothing exists in reality except God, in verses such as, “there is nothing except Him, but only Him” (*wa laysa shay’un siwāh bal huwa iyāh*),<sup>699</sup> or “it is correct [to say] that the perceived existence is God” (*fa-ṣaḥa anna al-wujūd al-mudrak Allāh*),<sup>700</sup> and “nothing sees God except God, so apprehend” (*fa-lā yarā Allāh illā Allāh fa-i’tabirū*).<sup>701</sup>

In another verse Ibn ‘Arabī writes, that creation has only “metaphorical existence” or *jā’iz al-wujūd*,<sup>702</sup> and existence only belongs to God who is the “Real Existence” or *wujūd al-ḥaqq*.<sup>703</sup> What is of most significance in these descriptions is when Ibn ‘Arabī speaks on God’s behalf<sup>704</sup> to elaborate such ideas as when he writes, “I appeared to my

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<sup>696</sup> It is noteworthy to indicate that Chapter 178 of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* is not only unique in being one of the lengthiest Chapters in this work, but also because it contains the most poetry. See Addas, “The Experience and Doctrine of Love in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 29.

<sup>697</sup> See Ralph Austin, “On Knowing the Station of Love: Poems from the 178th Chapter of the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah* of Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabī,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society* 8 (1989): 1-4.

<sup>698</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 267.

<sup>699</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:321.

<sup>700</sup> Ibid.

<sup>701</sup> Ibid.

<sup>702</sup> See Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 12-14.

<sup>703</sup> Ibid.

<sup>704</sup> Speaking on God’s behalf is a central idea based in Sufism before Ibn ‘Arabī. Sufis have referenced hadīths mentioned in canonical books such as Bukhārī, Muslim and others in support of this extraordinary phenomenon. Hadīths such as, “There were *Muḥaddathūn* (the recipients of Divine inspiration) among the nations before you. If there is any of such *Muḥaddathūn* among my followers, it is Omar [ibn al-Khaṭāb].” This *ḥadīth* is narrated by al-Bukhārī, *ḥadīth* no. (3689), and Muslim *ḥadīth* no. (2398) in their *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

creation in the image of Adam” (*zāhartu ilā khalqī bi-ṣūrat Ādam*).<sup>705</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī then expresses his understanding of this statement when he proclaims, “if I say I am one, it is His existence, and if [human beings] substantiate [affirm] my essence [being or existence], then there is a duality [that consists of God and Ibn ‘Arabī’s existence]” (*fā’in qultu anna wāḥidun fa-wujūduhu, wā’in athbatū ‘aynī fa-muzdawajānī*).<sup>706</sup> Another such declaration, which is of utmost importance, is when Ibn ‘Arabī says, “Oh who [God] appeared in Himself to Himself, with no multiplicity [any existence besides God], my being [in reality] is annihilated [Ibn ‘Arabī’s existence]” (*ayā man badā fī nafsihī li-nafsihī, wa-lā ‘adadun fa-l’aynu minniya fānī*).<sup>707</sup>

In describing this mode of love, Ibn ‘Arabī signifies that it is God alone who loves Himself, and in Reality, the human lover and their beloved are nothing more than aspects of God’s own epiphanies. Ibn ‘Arabī emphasizes this point further when he writes in the following verse, “Love is attributed relatively to humans and God in a relationship not known by our human knowledge” (*al-ḥubbu yunsabu lil-insāni wa Allāhi, bi-nisbatin laysa yadrī ‘ilmunā mā-hī*).<sup>708</sup> For God, in Ibn ‘Arabī’s explanation, “Real existence” belongs only to God. He further clarifies this point when he says in the following verses, “Love is tasted and its reality is not known” (*al-ḥubb dhawqun wa-lā tudrā ḥaqīqatuhu*);<sup>709</sup> and “There is nothing in the cloak<sup>710</sup> except what al-Ḥallāj one day said, so be fortunate [pleased]” (*laysa fīl-jubbati shay’un ghayru mā, qālahu al-Ḥallāju yawman fān-‘amū*).<sup>711</sup>

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<sup>705</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:321.

<sup>706</sup> Ibid., 2:322.

<sup>707</sup> Ibid.

<sup>708</sup> Ibid., 2:320.

<sup>709</sup> Ibid.

<sup>710</sup> The term cloak (*jubbah*) in this sense denotes the physical, corporeal body of the mystic which contains the Divine mysteries of God.

<sup>711</sup> Ibid.



In the last verse, Ibn ‘Arabī is referring to the mystical utterance (*Shaṭḥ*)<sup>712</sup> of al-Ḥallāj,<sup>713</sup> and indicating the station of annihilation (*fanā*) and Oneness in God which al-Ḥallāj experienced, when he wrote, “there is nothing in my cloak but God” (*Mā fī jubbatī illā Allāh*).<sup>714</sup>

After the introductory poems Ibn ‘Arabī begins by explaining that love is a Divine Attribute (*maqām ilāhī*), because God describes Himself as the “Lover” (*al-Muḥibb*),<sup>715</sup> in both the *Qur’ān* and in a non-canonical *ḥadīth qudsī* in which God says, “O son of Adam, I love you, so by My right over you, love Me” (*yā ibn Ādam ennī wa ḥaqqī laka muḥibb fa bi ḥaqqī ‘alayka kun lī muḥibban*).<sup>716</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī also indicates that God made human beings love (*ḥabbaba*) specific things (*ashyā’*), such as faith (*al-īmān*) (Q. 49:7), beautification or adornment (*al-zīna*) (Q. 3:14), and their opposites such as covets or passions (*al-shahawāt*) (Q. 3:14).<sup>717</sup>

### 5.3. The importance of Islamic law (*Sharī‘ah*) in relation to love

Ibn ‘Arabī addresses the importance of Islamic law when he writes, “if it were not for God’s Divine commandments and laws (*sharā‘i’*), no one would have known Him and subsequently loved Him.”<sup>718</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī’s argumentations in *The Meccan Openings* are related in one way or another to the *Qur’ān*, *ḥadīth*, spiritual unveilings or to one of his

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<sup>712</sup> For a concise description of *shaṭḥ* see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 145; Carl Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985).

<sup>713</sup> See Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallaj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, trans. Herbert Mason (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

<sup>714</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:320.

<sup>715</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:322.

<sup>716</sup> See the full *ḥadīth qudsī* in *Ibid.*, 4:527.

<sup>717</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:322.

<sup>718</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:326.

distinctive metaphysical concepts<sup>719</sup> such as (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), theology (*kalām*), and poetry.<sup>720</sup> James Morris writes:

On any given single page of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Futūḥāt* for example, we are likely to find him employing the distinctive technical languages of classical Arabic poetry, Arabic lexicography and etymology, the Qur’an, hadith, a wide spectrum of earlier Sufi authors, and several of the multitude of both the ‘religious’ and ‘rational’ Arabic ‘sciences’ (*‘ulūm*) – almost always, in each case, with specific nuances and shifts of meaning.... distinctively reflecting his own very particular uses of that language in the particular context in question.<sup>721</sup>

Accordingly, Ibn ‘Arabī considers that God could only be known from what He has expressed about Himself through His revelations. It is from these Divine revelations, that humans can imagine and discern Him and His love in their hearts. They can imagine and depict Him in front of their eyes as if they witness Him in themselves and in creation. In reality, however Ibn ‘Arabī surprisingly adds, God does not love anything in existence but Himself.<sup>722</sup> This may seem a contradiction because God is the “Apparent” (*al-Zāhir*) one, whose theophany is manifested as the beloved (*al-maḥbūb*) in the eyes of every lover (*al-muḥib*).

Ibn ‘Arabī resolves this issue by explaining that God not only hid and veiled himself in the appearances of beloved females, such as Zaynab, Sū‘ād, Hind and Laylā.<sup>723</sup> Here Ibn ‘Arabī signifies that the “knowers of God” (*al-‘ārifūn bi-llah*), whenever they hear love poems, praise or admiration attributed to humans or any other creation, they understand such praises are dedicated to God alone.<sup>724</sup> This is because the “knowers of

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<sup>719</sup> Morris, “Communication and Spiritual Pedagogy,” 3.

<sup>720</sup> Winkel, “Understanding, and translating, the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*,” 1.

<sup>721</sup> Morris, “Rhetoric and Realization in Ibn ‘Arabī,” 2n1.

<sup>722</sup> Ibid.

<sup>723</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:326. These women are mentioned in classical Arabic literature.

<sup>724</sup> Ibid.

God” claim to see, hear and sense the existence of God by witnessing Him behind the veils of His creation. Accordingly, from this idea no one in reality has thus loved anything else in creation but the Creator.

#### 5.4. Ibn ‘Arabī’s overview of the four phases, titles or terms (*alqāb*) of love

In Chapter Two, section 2.3, I explained the various terms designating love in the *Qur’ān* from the linguistic analysis of the root of the word (*Jidhr al-kalima*). In this section, I examine how Ibn ‘Arabī explains his original and unique meanings of love itself and related words.

Love is at the heart of the mystical philosophy of Ibn ‘Arabī and in his writings on love his intention is to help others appreciate his philosophy of love. He writes that the station of love (*maqām al-ḥubb*) has four terms or titles (*alqāb*) ascribed to it, namely love (*ḥubb*), affection (*wudd*), intense overwhelming love (*ishq*), and inclination (*hawā*). Ibn ‘Arabī develops meaningful polysemic understandings and discloses various hidden meanings in each term. He develops this by employing an etymological analysis of the different Arabic terms and closely analyzing each one’s root. Furthermore, he defines these four terms of love, and indicating that they are descriptions of different unique states, conditions and forms of love.<sup>725</sup> However, Ibn ‘Arabī explains in his commentary on *The Interpreter of Longings (Dhakhā’ir al-A’lāq: Sharḥ Turjumān al-Ashwāq)* the sequence, development and the name of each type of love. He writes, the initial and beginning level, is when love alone [enters] falls in the heart of the lover (*sūqūṭ al-ḥubb fī al-qalb*), this is named inclination (*hawā*).<sup>726</sup> The second phase of love, is when inclination (*hawā*) is pure towards the beloved alone, and is not associated with any other motives or desires, this type

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<sup>725</sup> Ibid., 2:323 & 2:335.

<sup>726</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Dhakhā’ir al-A’lāq*, 14.

of love is then called love (*ḥubb*).<sup>727</sup> The third type of love, is when the purest form of love (*ḥubb*), becomes fixated in the heart of the lover, love is then described as affection (*wudd*).<sup>728</sup> Finally, if affection (*wudd*) consumes the lover's heart (*qalb*), internal organs (*al-'aḥshā'*), and thoughts (*khawāṭir*) in a similar way as the *convolvulus* plant wraps itself around its vertical support, love is then entitled intense overwhelming love (*'ishq*).<sup>729</sup> However, in his Chapter on love in *The Meccan Openings* Ibn 'Arabī does not explain why he arranges the four types of love in such an order.

#### 5.4.1. Love (*ḥubb*)

Ibn 'Arabī begins with explaining the purest form of love (*ḥubb*) and indicates that the first term, love (*ḥubb*), is associated with the word *ḥabba*, meaning a grain or a seed.<sup>730</sup> The small seed (*al-ḥabba*) steadily grows and flourishes due to frequent nourishment. Correspondingly love (*ḥubb*) begins as a small seed and grows steadily.<sup>731</sup> Ibn 'Arabī considers this type of love to be the most elevated and purist form of love. He adds that the purity of love penetrates the heart of the lover and is not subject to change. Therefore, this form of love obliterates any purpose or will that is different from that of God's purpose or will.

#### 5.4.2. Affection (*wudd*)

The second term is affection (*wudd*). Ibn 'Arabī describes this form of love as a constant faithful fixation (*thābāt*) of love, similar in character to the Divine Attribute of God, as the All "Loving" (*al-Wadūd*). Ibn 'Arabī then describes *wudd* as the constant

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<sup>727</sup> Ibid.

<sup>728</sup> Ibid.

<sup>729</sup> Ibid.

<sup>730</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:335.

<sup>731</sup> Ibid.

fixation of either *ḥubb*, *‘ishq*, or *hawā* to the extent that nothing can change or affect this persistent situation under any condition.<sup>732</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī quotes the Qur’anic verse, “Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds the Most Merciful will grant them affection” (Q. 19:96). To clarify this argument that God will bestow affection of *ḥubb*, *‘ishq*, or *hawā* on the hearts of His servants who believe in Him and do righteous deeds.<sup>733</sup> It is also interesting to note that the Divine Name as a form of love, the “Loving” (*al-Wadūd*), is the only term used in the *Qur’ān* to describe God as the “loving” or “lover.”

### 5.4.3. Intense overwhelming love (*‘ishq*)

The third term is intense overwhelming love (*‘ishq*). This term as noted in Chapter Two, as deriving from the same root as (*‘ashshaqa*), which also means “to connect, to couple or join,”<sup>734</sup> and it is metaphorically associated with the term *convolvulus* which is a circling bindweed that coils itself around its vertical support, causing the support to eventually become unseen and figuratively to disappear. This term, unlike the previous three, is not mentioned in the *Qur’ān*.<sup>735</sup> According to Ibn ‘Arabī, *‘ishq* is the excess or the superfluous flow (*ifrāt*) of *ḥubb*, the first state of love. In this way *ḥubb* can completely overwhelm the individual to the extent that it leaves no room for any other than the beloved.<sup>736</sup> This occurs when *ḥubb* blinds the lover from seeing anything else but his beloved in existence, and *ḥubb* can then be called *‘ishq*.<sup>737</sup> This experience is comparable to the coming together of the lover and the beloved, and both the lover and the beloved

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<sup>732</sup> Ibid.

<sup>733</sup> Ibid.

<sup>734</sup> See sub-section 2.3.4. in Ch. Two of this thesis

<sup>735</sup> According to the Islamic law (*sharā‘ah*), it is not acceptable to use the term passionate or intense overwhelming love (*‘ishq*) to describe the love relationship between God and humans, as it is considered to be a derogatory term not mentioned in the *Qur’ān* or the *Sunnah*.

<sup>736</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:337.

<sup>737</sup> Ibid.

become united as one entity. Ibn ‘Arabī quotes a verse from the *Qur’ān* to explain his point of view. This verse says: “And [yet], among the people are those who take other than God as equals [to Him]. They love them as they [should] love God. But those who believe are stronger in their love for God” (Q. 2:165). Ibn ‘Arabī explains that the term “stronger in love” (*ashaddu ḥubban*) in this sentence implies to *‘ishq*.<sup>738</sup> It needs to be noted that *ḥubb* in this instance can be defined as *‘ishq*.

#### 5.4.4. Inclination (*hawā*)

Ibn ‘Arabī explains that the fourth term, inclination (*hawā*),<sup>739</sup> is related to the word (*yahwā*), meaning to descend. It signifies “falling from above,” which implies a contrary meaning of the term *‘ishq*, which expresses an ascending movement.<sup>740</sup> This term according to Ibn ‘Arabī has two forms of love, one being positive, and the other negative. The first form of *hawā* means that love descends on the heart of the lover, or in other words, a person “falls” in love and his/her love then appears (*zuhūruh*) from the realm of the unseen (*ghā’ib*) to the realm of the seen existence (*shahāda*) of the lover’s heart.<sup>741</sup> This is regarded as negative because one is following one’s own inclinations. The second type of inclination is found in the observation of Divine rulings (*ḥukm al-sharī’ah*), where the believer inclines and conforms to the Divine rulings even if they contradict with personal inclinations and desires.<sup>742</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī clarifies this by stating:

The second form of inclination occurs when there is a Divine ruling (*ḥukm al-sharī’ah*), as God said to David, “David, we have set thee as a viceroy over the land. Judge fairly between people and follow not [your] inclination lest it divert you from God’s path” (Q. 38:26). This means do not follow what you love (*maḥābak*), but follow what

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<sup>738</sup> Ibid.

<sup>739</sup> See Baalbaki, *Al-Mawrid*, 1885.

<sup>740</sup> Ibid.

<sup>741</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:335.

<sup>742</sup> Ibid., 2:336.

I love (*maḥābī*), and judge (*al-ḥukm*) according to what I have chosen for you (*rasamtahu lak*).<sup>743</sup>

The three sources of *hawā*, as Ibn ‘Arabī indicates, are the result of actions that affect the heart either individually or collectively. The first source is a gaze (*naẓra*), the second is hearing (*samā’*), and third is benevolence (*iḥsān*).<sup>744</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī considers the greatest source of inclination among the three to be the *naẓra*. This is, as he describes it, an inclination is stimulated by a consistent and unchanging gaze. Its desirability does not change with a meeting (*liqā’*).<sup>745</sup> In contrast, the second inclination caused by *samā’*, is influenced by the listener’s imagination. This form of inclination, however, can change as a result of physical meeting.<sup>746</sup> In these descriptions Ibn ‘Arabī is introducing new dimensions on the various inclinations and on how God can be loved by His creatures. He writes:

Inclination [in this case] is [connected to] the forms of the beloved (*maḥāb*) [human beings]. At the same time God ordered [human beings] to relinquish (*tark*) beloveds if they favor other than the legitimate [*sharī‘ah*] path [that God had chosen] for him/her.<sup>747</sup>

Furthermore, Ibn ‘Arabī also introduces another innovative way of understanding love. In this instance, he describes *hawā* as having a powerful influence over whomever is affected by it to the extent that it can deprive a person of their rationality.<sup>748</sup> He further explains that the reality of *hawā* is found in the lover’s selfish inclination to fulfill his/her longings by being in close contact to the beloved.<sup>749</sup> The overwhelming love in this example can have negative implications on the person affected by it. It can increase the lover’s selfish

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<sup>743</sup> Ibid.

<sup>744</sup> Ibid.

<sup>745</sup> Ibid.

<sup>746</sup> Ibid.

<sup>747</sup> Ibid.

<sup>748</sup> Ibid.

<sup>749</sup> Ibid.

inclination to fulfill his/her longings. To counteract this reaction, Ibn ‘Arabī affirms, whenever the seeker negates or refutes all selfish attachments, adhering only to the path of God (*sabīl Allāh*), *hawā* then becomes free from any personal attachments or inclinations. It is only then deemed worthy of being termed love (*ḥubb*).<sup>750</sup> Unfortunately because of the above arrant attachments, Ibn ‘Arabī considers *hawā* to be a lower form of love than the pure state of *ḥubb*.

#### 5.4.5. The love of love (*ḥubb al-ḥubb*)

Ibn ‘Arabī also describes another form of love, which he considers to be a lesser form than the previous four. This is the love of love (*ḥubb al-ḥubb*).<sup>751</sup> In other words, it is the state where the lover falls in love with the feelings, enjoyment and happiness of love itself. Ibn ‘Arabī explains that this type of love means that the lover is in love with the state of love itself. In other words, the lover becomes preoccupied and infatuated with the feelings and states of love, enjoyment and happiness, i.e., rather than the beloved.<sup>752</sup> Finally, however, Ibn ‘Arabī describes how his love for God became manifest in front of him. He compared this to the way that the Angel Gabriel was manifested in bodily form to the Prophet Muhammad at the time of revelations. He writes:

I reached [through] the power of imagination [a level] until my love [for God] manifested in bodily form (*yujassada*) in front of my eyes [in a similar manner] as Gabriel manifested in bodily form to the Messenger of God... He spoke to me and I listened and understood him. I could not taste food for days. Each time food was ready, he stood close to the tabletop looking at me and speaking with a [heard] voice: “you eat even when you witness me,” so I stopped eating and didn’t feel hungry and felt full of [just watching] him until I became overweight (*‘abilt*) and obese (*saminnt*).<sup>753</sup>

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<sup>750</sup> Ibid.

<sup>751</sup> Ibid., 2:325.

<sup>752</sup> Ibid.

<sup>753</sup> Ibid.



With these descriptions of love Ibn ‘Arabī has possibly described his highest and most sublime forms of Divine love. In the next section, Ibn ‘Arabī returns to describe the reasons behind love, in its purist form (*asbāb al-ḥubb*) and provides comments on why he considers these reasons to be important.

### 5.5. Reasons behind love (*asbāb al-ḥubb*)

In helping his readers to comprehend his depictions of the forms of love, Ibn ‘Arabī presents three reasons (*asbāb al-ḥubb*) that cause a person to experience love (*ḥubb*).<sup>754</sup>

The first reason Ibn ‘Arabī mentions is beauty (*al-jamāl*). He states the *ḥadīth*, “God is Beautiful, and He loves beauty,”<sup>755</sup> and then explains that God loves beauty because it is one of His self-quintessential Attributes (*ṣifāt dhātiyya*) as well as one of His “Most Beautiful Names” (*al-asmā’ al-ḥusna*).<sup>756</sup> In other words, God only loved Himself because of His own beauty. What Ibn ‘Arabī is attempting to convey here, is that whoever falls in love because of beauty, that person only falls in love with the beauty of God in reality. This idea will be discussed in further detail in the following sections.

The second reason that Ibn ‘Arabī mentions is benevolence (*iḥsān*). He declares that there is no benevolent in reality except God, because God is the “Beneficent” (*al-Muḥsin*), and benevolence (*iḥsān*) and acts of benevolence are only manifestations of His Divine Name, *al-Muḥsin* in creation.<sup>757</sup> As a result, if anyone falls in love because of acts of beneficence they fell in love in reality only with God.

The third reason that Ibn ‘Arabī mentions is the performing the supererogatory

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<sup>754</sup> Ibid., 2:326.

<sup>755</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by Muslim, *ḥadīth* no. (91) in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*. The *ḥadīth* mentions one of the Ninety-Nine Names of the Most Beautiful Names of God which is the “Beautiful” (*al-Jamīl*).

<sup>756</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:326.

<sup>757</sup> Ibid.

(*nafl*) prayers. Here Ibn ‘Arabī is referencing the *ḥadīth qudsī* of the supererogatory prayers (*nawāfil*),<sup>758</sup> which is mentioned in detail in Chapter Two of the thesis. Ibn ‘Arabī adds that these *nawāfil* are additions (*ziyādāt*) to the mandatory prayers (*farā’id*), which are comparable to the Real [God] and metaphorical [creation] existence. In other words, he relates the supererogatory prayers as similar to the “added existence” (*ziyāda fī al-wujūd*), which is creation, on the “primary existence” of the “Absolute Reality” (*wujūd al-ḥaqq*), which is God.<sup>759</sup> By linking the two previously mentioned contexts of *nāfila*, Ibn ‘Arabī provides an amazing and unique explanation on how and why God loves the world as a supererogatory (*nāfila*) addition (*ziyāda*) to His own obligatory (*farḍ*) Real existence.<sup>760</sup> This type of love, according to the *ḥadīth* of the supererogatory prayers, results in God being the sight by which creatures see the world, and the hearing by which they hear, to indicate that God loves only Himself.

### 5.6. The importance of the love of beauty (*ḥubb al-jamāl*)

After explaining the “reasons behind love,” Ibn ‘Arabī turns to emphasize on the idea of the “love of beauty” (*ḥubb al-jamāl*) in greater detail.<sup>761</sup> He states that *ḥubb al-jamāl* is a Divine Attribute as narrated in the Prophetic *ḥadīth*, “God is Beautiful, and loves beauty.”<sup>762</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī further explains, because God is the “Beautiful” (*al-Jamīl*) and nothing exists in reality but Him, God not only loves His own existence but also loves His own beauty (*jamaluhu*).<sup>763</sup> He also writes, “If to beauty, undoubtedly loved for itself, we

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<sup>758</sup> Ibid.

<sup>759</sup> Ibid.

<sup>760</sup> Ibid.

<sup>761</sup> See Rabia Terri Harris, “On Majesty and Beauty,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society* 8 (1989): 5-32.

<sup>762</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by Muslim, *ḥadīth* no. (91) in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*.

<sup>763</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:345.

further add the beauty of [adornment]<sup>764</sup> (*zīna*), then it becomes Beauty upon Beauty (*jamāl ‘ala jamāl*), just as [He is] “Light upon Light” (Q. 24:35), and likewise Love upon Love (*maḥabba*).”<sup>765</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī additionally explains, that those who love God are divided into two groups. The first group, who are the “knowers of God” (*al-‘arīfīn bi-llah*), see God’s “perfection of beauty” (*kamāl al-jamāl*) in the world, or in other words, the beauty of the “perfection of wisdom” (*jamāl al-ḥikma*) behind creation. Consequentially, such people witness God in everything, and hence love God in everything that exists.<sup>766</sup> The second group, those who did not reach the high spiritual level of *al-‘arīfīn bi-llah*, only tasted the beauty of God through the veils of His conditioned beauty (*al-jamāl al-muqayyad*) in the forms of the theophanic manifestations of creation.<sup>767</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī then continues to explain why God Himself loves beauty. Ibn ‘Arabī’s explanation is that, because God created the world with a thoroughness (*iḥkām*) so that it is in total perfection (*itqān*), and also created in His image (*ṣūratihī*), therefore, God’s knowledge of the world is nothing more than His knowledge of Himself.<sup>768</sup> As a result, when God ordered the world to appear and come to existence, God only saw His own beauty reflected in it.<sup>769</sup> In conclusion, from these observations Ibn ‘Arabī states that whomever loves the world from the previously mentioned points of view, loves the world in a similar way to God.<sup>770</sup>

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<sup>764</sup> The original word cited from Benito’s article was “finery,” I have made a slight modification to his translation and used the word “adornment” instead.

<sup>765</sup> Cited in Benito, “On the Divine Love of Beauty,” 13.

<sup>766</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:345.

<sup>767</sup> Ibid.

<sup>768</sup> Ibid.

<sup>769</sup> Ibid.

<sup>770</sup> Ibid.

### 5.7. The types or divisions of love (*aqsām al-ḥubb*)

After defining the different four terms of love, and stating the three reasons which cause love, Ibn ‘Arabī begins to explain in more detail the different types or divisions of love. He writes, “In love, there is Divine, spiritual and natural and there is no other love than these.”<sup>771</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī then categorizes love (*al-ḥubb*) into three divisions (*aqsām*), namely: (1) Divine love (*al-ḥubb al-ilāhī*); (2) spiritual love (*al-ḥubb al-rūḥānī*); and (3) natural love (*al-ḥubb al-ṭabī‘ī*).<sup>772</sup> He attributes the last two divisions, namely, spiritual and natural love to human beings, while explaining that the third division, natural love,<sup>773</sup> humans share certain qualities with animals. Qualities such as seeking self-fulfillment from the beloved.<sup>774</sup> He writes:

In spiritual love [the lover] seeks to satisfy the beloved leaving no requirement (*gharaḍ*) or wanting (*irāda*) besides that ... Natural love [the lover] pursues to obtain all [personal] requirements regardless of pleasing the beloved or not, and this is the case [of love] for many people today.<sup>775</sup>

From this statement, Ibn ‘Arabī is indicating that natural love is negative and lesser than Divine and spiritual love.

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

Ibn ‘Arabī continues his descriptions by also adding that Divine love has two sides, God’s “love for us [human beings]” (*ḥubuhu lanā*), and our “love [human beings] for Him” (*ḥubbinā lahū*). He says, “also our love for Him can be called Divine.”<sup>776</sup> However, Ibn ‘Arabī explains that “our love for Him,” which in a sense is a form of Divine

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<sup>771</sup> Ibid. 2:327.

<sup>772</sup> Ibid.

<sup>773</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī believes that natural love is the love which animals have.

<sup>774</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:327.

<sup>775</sup> Ibid.

<sup>776</sup> Ibid.

love, human beings love God with only the two types that have been attributed to them, namely, spiritual and natural love.<sup>777</sup> He states:

For God says, “He loves them, and they love Him” (Q. 5:54) and love attributed to us [human beings] is different than love attributed to Him. Love attributed to us according to our realities [as humans] is divided into two divisions. A division called spiritual love (*ḥubb rūḥānī*) and the other is natural love (*ḥubb ṭabī‘ī*), and our love for God is with both types of love together.<sup>778</sup>

Thus, from Ibn ‘Arabī’s point of view, Divine love which is God’s “love for us,” has two facets. The first facet is “His love for us for ourselves” (*ḥubuhu lanā lī anfusinā*), and the second is “His love for us for Himself” (*ḥubih lanā li nafsih*). As for the first facet, *ḥubuhu lanā lī anfusinā*, Ibn ‘Arabī indicates that God, through His Divine revelations, has taught people ethics and how to act in goodness (*a ‘māl*), and also explained to them how to invoke and mention Him (*yusabbiḥūh*). In this manner, God guaranteed human beings rewards of eternal happiness if they obey His commands.<sup>779</sup> As for the second facet, *ḥubih lanā li nafsih*, Ibn ‘Arabī explains that this love is mentioned in the *ḥadīth qudsī*, “I was an Unknown Treasure, and I loved to be known,” and in the Qur’anic verse, “I created the Jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me” (Q. 51:1). Here, Ibn ‘Arabī is clarifying that such verses and hadiths are a validation and proof that God created human beings only for Himself so that they love, worship and know Him alone.

Yet, continuing further in his explanations, Ibn ‘Arabī subdivides human love for God, *ḥubbinā laḥū*, into four subdivisions and indicates that the first subdivision is to love Him for “Himself” (*nuḥibuhu lahu*); the second is to love Him for “ourselves” (*nuḥibuhu li-anfusinā*); the third is to love Him for “Himself and ourselves” (*nuḥibuhu lil majmū‘*),

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<sup>777</sup> Ibid., 2:329.

<sup>778</sup> Ibid., 2:327.

<sup>779</sup> Ibid.

and the fourth is to love Him for “none of the previous” cases (*nuḥibuhu walā li wāḥid*). Accordingly, Ibn ‘Arabī raises the question of how and why we can love God if we neither love him for Himself and ourselves?<sup>780</sup> He answers that the first form of love, which is to love God for “Himself,” is when the faithful love and hate for the sake of God, he/she become a lover who loves God, the One (*al-Wāḥid*) who appears from His name the “Apparent” (*al-Zāhir*) in the multiplicity (*kathra*) of creation. He therefore states:

For this is “one” [human] who loved “One” [God] (*fa-hādhā waḥid aḥabba Wāḥid*), and that Beloved One (*al-Wāḥid al-maḥbūb*) exists (*mawjūd*) in many (*kathīrīn*), therefore [he] loved multiplicity (*al-kathīr*) [creation] for this reason.<sup>781</sup>

When such a spiritual level is realized, Ibn ‘Arabī affirms that the human lover praises and worships God for the sake of praise and worship alone, regardless of any earthly or heavenly reward.<sup>782</sup> Here Ibn ‘Arabī is referring to the Prophetic *ḥadīth*, already mentioned in Chapter Two of the thesis which says, “If anyone loves for God’s sake, hates for God’s sake, gives for God’s sake and withholds for God’s sake, he has perfected faith.”<sup>783</sup>

The second subdivision that is to love God for “ourselves,” is when people recognize God in His blessings and provisions (*al-ni‘am*). Hence people only love Him for His generosity and providence.<sup>784</sup> Here Ibn ‘Arabī is referring to the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet that says, “Love God for what He nourishes you with of His Blessings, love me for the love of God, and love my household for loving me.”<sup>785</sup> As this type of love places the selfish inclinations of the soul before the love of God, Ibn ‘Arabī considers it to be natural

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<sup>780</sup> Ibid., 2:330.

<sup>781</sup> Ibid.

<sup>782</sup> Ibid.

<sup>783</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by Abū Dāwūd, *ḥadīth* no. (4681) in *al-Sunnan*.

<sup>784</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:330.

<sup>785</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by al-Tirmidhī, *ḥadīth* no. (3789) in *al-Jāmi‘*.

love and thus a negative form.<sup>786</sup>

The third subdivision that is to love God for “Himself and ourselves”, is when the lover combines worshiping God for the sake of “Himself” and for desiring (*raghba*) Divine rewards from his/her spiritual love (*al-ḥubb al-rūḥānī*), and fearing (*rahba*) His wrath from the his/her natural love (*al-ḥubb al-ṭabī’ī*).<sup>787</sup> Therefore, Ibn ‘Arabī states that loving God for both “Himself and ourselves” is the highest form of love,<sup>788</sup> because it emphasizes both types of existence (real and metaphoric) namely, God and creation. The fourth type that is to love God for none of the previous, is when God manifests Himself on the natural and spiritual essence of the soul (*‘ayn dhātīha al-ṭabī’iyya wa al-rawḥāniyya*), the soul then acknowledges that it did not see and love God by itself (*binafsihā*) but rather by God (*bihi*).<sup>789</sup> The soul thus realizes that God was the lover and the beloved, the seeker (*tālib*) and the sought (*maṭlūb*), and it was only Him who loved Himself (*aḥabb nafsahu*) in reality. In the following sections Ibn ‘Arabī explains the two types of love which he attributes to humans, namely spiritual and natural love.

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

Ibn ‘Arabī defines spiritual love (*al-ḥubb al-rūḥānī*) as the love which the lover seeks to gratify (*marḍāt*) the beloved in such a way that leaves no will or requirement (*gharaḍ*) sought from the lover other than the gratification (*marḍāt*) of the beloved.<sup>790</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī writes, “spiritual love is the collective love (*al-ḥubb al-jāmi’*) [that drives] the lover to love the beloved for the [sake of the] beloved and him/herself (*li-nafsih*) [the lover].”<sup>791</sup>

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<sup>786</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:330.

<sup>787</sup> Ibid., 2:331.

<sup>788</sup> Ibid., 2:330.

<sup>789</sup> Ibid., 2:331.

<sup>790</sup> Ibid., 2:327.

<sup>791</sup> Ibid., 2:332.

Ibn ‘Arabī concludes that spiritual love has a collective driving force (*al-jāmi‘*) that motivates the lover to love and gratify both the beloved and him/herself.<sup>792</sup> He writes that the goal of the lover in this type of love is to merge with the beloved.<sup>793</sup>

The goal (*ghāya*) [of spiritual love] is a union (*al-itihād*) [merging], where the essence (*dhāt*) of the beloved becomes the self-essence (*‘ayn dhāt*) of the lover, and the essence of the lover becomes the self-essence of the beloved. This is what the indwellers (*al-ḥulūliyya*) point [refer] to (*tushīr ilayh*), but they are unaware of the representation [reality] of things (*sūrat al-‘amr*).<sup>794</sup>

Even though Ibn ‘Arabī mentions the term “union” or *al-ittihād*, he explains that this is not meant to be a physical union or indwelling (*ḥulūliyya*) between two entities. Instead, Ibn ‘Arabī considers anyone who refers to a type of union or indwelling does not grasp the splendor that is the reality of the “Oneness of Being.”<sup>795</sup>

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

Ibn ‘Arabī then outlines the second type of human love which is natural love (*al-ḥubb al-ṭabī‘ī*). He mentions that natural love has two forms, the first is nature-based love and the second is element-based love.<sup>796</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī then further explains that in the nature-based love, the lover is obsessed and is simply attracted to all possible forms of the beloved object for his/her own benefit. He explains that natural love is “not confined” (*muqayyad*) to a specific natural form (*ṣūra ṭabī‘iyya*). This is because the lover is attracted in the same way to all and every form (*ṣūra*). In natural love, the lover demands self-gratification and the fulfillment of personal requirements (*aghrāḍ*), even if these needs please or displease his/her object of attraction.<sup>797</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī writes:

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<sup>792</sup> Ibid.

<sup>793</sup> Ibid., 2:334.

<sup>794</sup> Ibid.

<sup>795</sup> See sub-section 4.7.6 in Ch. Four of this thesis.

<sup>796</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:334.

<sup>797</sup> Ibid., 2:327.



If natural love arises in the lover, it [drives] the lover to love only the beloved [object of desire] for [his/her] own pleasure (*al-na'īm*). Thus [the lover] would seem to love the beloved [object of desire] solely for his/her own self-interest (*līnafsihi*), but not because of [pure love] of a beloved 's self ('*ayn*).<sup>798</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī describes this type of love to be obsessive as it is based on the fulfillment and gratification of a lover's longings and inclinations only. Ibn 'Arabī adds that this type of love can be compared to a craving which can drive the lover to become very possessive of the beloved object.<sup>799</sup> He also compares this unconfined craving of natural love to the power of attraction found in static electricity (*al-kahrabā'*),<sup>800</sup> and explains why this form of love is not pure love (*ḥubb*):

As for the beginning of natural love, it is not [initially] an [act of] benevolence (*iḥsān*)... Instead [the lover] loves objects (*ashyā'*) selfishly. [As a result] he inclines to be in close contact (*itiṣāl*) [to the beloved object]. Such [love] is prevalent (*sārin*) in animals and [can also be found] in human beings.<sup>801</sup>

#### 5.7.4. Elemental Love (*al-ḥubb al-'unṣurī*)

Ibn 'Arabī then describes the second form of natural love, which is elemental love (*al-ḥubb al-'unṣurī*). This love is a special type of natural love and yet, is quite distinct from it. In elemental love the lover is unselfish, generous and not exploitative of the beloved as is the obsessive nature-based love. He writes:

The second type of love is elemental love (*al-ḥubb al-'unṣurī*). Even though it is a form of natural [love], there is a distinct difference between the two types of [elemental & nature-based] loves.... [By comparison], elemental [love] is confined to a specific form like [the famous unselfish lovers] Qays [and] Layla; Qays [and] Lubnā; Kuthayr [and] 'Azza; and Jamīl [and] Buthayna. This [attraction] occurs because of the similarity ('*mūm al-munāsaba*) between the two [lover and beloved], comparably to the [magnetic attraction

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<sup>798</sup> Ibid., 2:334.

<sup>799</sup> Ibid., 2:334, 2:2335.

<sup>800</sup> Ibid.

<sup>801</sup> Ibid.

between] iron [and the] magnet (*ka-maghnāṭīs al-ḥadīd*).<sup>802</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī further clarifies his understanding of such love in elemental love. He explains that the lover is “restricted” (*yataqayyad*) to a single specific form of the beloved object. It is similar to the specific and single attraction, such as that of the magnetic power of the magnet attracting the iron particles. Ibn ‘Arabī then refines his idea of attraction in elemental love by providing examples of famous Arab lovers such as *Qays* and *Layla*, *Kuthayr* and *‘Azza*, and *Jamīl* and *Buthayna*.<sup>803</sup> Here Ibn ‘Arabī is emphasizing the specific attractive spiritual power that is inherent in elemental love. In this form of love, the lovers are not simply fulfilling selfish cravings and desires but are solely attracted to each other. This can explain how a lover can fall in love with a beloved person or object without truly knowing how this has happened. This is because, such a lover can fall in love with an illusionary image of the beloved which is only present in the lover’s mind.<sup>804</sup> This kind of love, however, would never exploit the beloved.

#### 5.7.5. Comparison of both natural and elemental love to Divine love

Ibn ‘Arabī takes an interesting turn in that he associates with the seemingly negative limited or restricted attraction of natural love to a praiseworthy positive belief of limitlessness in Divine love.<sup>805</sup> He writes, “Divine [love in this case] can be similar to natural [love] in those who see God in all religious creeds as one Being (*fi-ladhī yarahū fi jāmi‘ al-‘aqā’id ‘aynan wāḥida*).<sup>806</sup> In this statement, Ibn ‘Arabī is reiterating the idea of Divine manifestations in the forms of belief (*ṣuwar al-i‘tiqādāt*) as mentioned in the

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<sup>802</sup> Ibid., 2:335.

<sup>803</sup> Ibid.

<sup>804</sup> See Muhammad, *Love in the Holy Qur’an*, 222.

<sup>805</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:335.

<sup>806</sup> Ibid.

previous Chapter. This would also seem to mean that such elemental lovers are creating god/s in their own image. Ibn ‘Arabī further explains, that while there are people who adhere to a specific religion, there are, at the same time, other people who are able to witness and recognize the Divine in the various religious traditions without distinction. Here Ibn ‘Arabī is comparing the delimited intense and singular craving of natural love to the general power of attraction in static electricity (*al-kahrabā*).<sup>807</sup> Additionally, he relates the positive attraction of elemental love to the religious beliefs in Divine love and explains that this type of love restricts people from acknowledging God in “other” religious traditions.<sup>808</sup>

After Ibn ‘Arabī had categorized and clarified these four different types or divisions of love (*aqsām al-ḥubb*), he then begins to focus further on Divine love and to describe the ways how human beings express their love for God. The following examples are some of the most elevated descriptions of love.

### 5.8. Characteristics of the lovers of God (*nu‘ūt al-muḥibīn*)

Ibn ‘Arabī mentions that there are many epithets or characteristics of Divine lovers (*nu‘ūt al-muḥibīn*). However, he lists only seven characteristics because in this section he is concerned specifically “with the love God has for His servants, and the love His servants have for Him, and nothing more.”<sup>809</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī then begins to describe these characteristics in detail. The attributes mentioned in this section are emaciation (*al-niḥūl*); withering (*al-dhibūl*); amorousness (*al-gharām*); longing (*al-shawq*); infatuation (*al-huyām*); sighs (*al-zafarāt*) and anguish (*al-kamad*).<sup>810</sup>

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<sup>807</sup> Ibid.

<sup>808</sup> Ibid.

<sup>809</sup> Ibid., 2:341.

<sup>810</sup> Ibid., 2:338.

**5.8.1. Emaciation (*al-nihūl*)**

The first epithet is that of emaciation (*al-nihūl*). Ibn ‘Arabī states that this attribute is associated with both the lover’s body [dense matter] (*kathā’if*), and spirit [subtle matter] (*laṭā’if*). He explains that the emaciation of the spirit can happen when the veils of creation are lifted, and the spirit realizes that nothing upholds God’s own entity in creation but Himself.<sup>811</sup> This realization is a result of the spirit becoming annihilated (*fanā’*) from witnessing God and subsisting (*baqā’*) in Him. According to Ibn ‘Arabi, only at this instance can it be said that God has loved Himself (*al-ḥaqq*), through Himself (*bil-ḥaqq*).<sup>812</sup>

As for the emaciation of the body, this happens when changes occur in skin color and extreme weight loss as a result of witnessing God.<sup>813</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī quotes verses from the *Qur’ān* to articulate his point such as, “O you who believe! Fulfill the [your] obligations,” (Q. 5:1) and “fulfill the covenant of God when you have accepted it. Do not break oaths after confirming it, this is in keeping with the fact that you have made God your witness” (Q. 16:91).<sup>814</sup> The obligations in this verse, are interpreted by Ibn ‘Arabī as the obligations of “servanthood” in believing, worshiping and loving God in accordance with each person’s capacity.<sup>815</sup>

In many Sufi traditions, it is customary for the beginner on the spiritual path, to practice extreme asceticism as a means to suppress and quell his desires. This practice results in many of the physical changes described by Ibn ‘Arabī in this section. However, Ibn ‘Arabī is not only describing common characteristics of Divine lovers, but he is

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<sup>811</sup> Ibid.

<sup>812</sup> Ibid.

<sup>813</sup> Ibid., 2:339

<sup>814</sup> Ibid.

<sup>815</sup> Ibid.

describing higher spiritual states of the “knowers of God,” who are in constant states of annihilation in observing and witnessing God. These states result in similar physical changes as the beginners on the spiritual path, but due to a different reason. This reason is in the constant preoccupation in witnessing God. Nevertheless, the highest spiritual station for the Divine lovers and “knowers of God” is the state of “annihilation of annihilation” (*fanā’ al-fanā’*),<sup>816</sup> which is also known as “subsistence” (*baqā’*).<sup>817</sup> In subsistence, the lover and “knower of God” have thus realized the “Oneness of God” in existence, and have transcended from the state of “annihilation,” where the physical changes can occur, to the supreme state of “subsistence” where such changes are much less common.

### 5.8.2. Withering (*al-dhibūl*)

The second epithet of divine lovers is that of withering (*al-dhibūl*).<sup>818</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī explains that this characteristic is associated with both the body and spirit of Divine lovers. In regard to their bodies, Ibn ‘Arabī expounds that when God commissioned them to perform their night prayers, they departed from all nourishments that cause drowsiness (*al-nu‘ās*). They only consumed what is necessary to sustain them, and, as a result, their bodies withered.<sup>819</sup> As for the withering of their spirits, Ibn ‘Arabī indicates that when God called upon them, “to ask assistance from God and be patient” (Q. 7:128), they departed from the companionship of their own kind (*jins*). Instead, they wanted to be in the company of their beloved One, who said, “There is nothing like unto Him” (Q. 42:11). Consequently, their spirits withered from witnessing the majesty (*jalāl*) of this incomprehensible and

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<sup>816</sup> Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 135.

<sup>817</sup> Angha, Nahid, *Stations of the Sufi Path: The One Hundred Fields (Sad Madyan) of Abdullah Ansari of Herat* (Bartlow: Archetype, 2010), 139-140.

<sup>818</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:339.

<sup>819</sup> Ibid.

unmatched love relationship between the immortal Divine Creator and His creation.<sup>820</sup>

### 5.8.3. Amorousness (*al-gharām*)

Ibn ‘Arabī then clarifies the third epithet, which is amorousness (*al-gharām*).<sup>821</sup> He specifies that amorousness is when the lover is humbled and consumed by a prolonged concealment of grief (*kamad*) in his heart, due to the continual witnessing of God.<sup>822</sup> Again, Ibn ‘Arabī is describing the lover who is still at the lesser state of “annihilation,” and can easily become physically frail from this spiritual experience.

Ibn ‘Arabī then describes that the Arabic word (*gharām*) holds similar lexical connotations in Arabic such as the word (*ghārim*) which means someone who is distressed, suffering and burdened by the continuity of debt, or (*righām*) which means in Arabic to be attached or bonded to dust.<sup>823</sup> Therefore the collective etymological meanings of these terms signify that amorous people (*al-mughramīn*), are suffering due to their continuous feelings of love, longing and sleeplessness in their hearts and souls for their beloved.<sup>824</sup>

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

The fourth epithet is that of longing (*al-shawq*).<sup>825</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī explains that this characteristic generates both an internal and external movement (*ḥaraka*) in a lover to meet (*liqā’*) with their beloved.<sup>826</sup> He defines the internal movement as a spiritual urge, and the external movement as the natural bodily movement. Ibn ‘Arabī then points out that the internal movement occurs when a lover meets the beloved, he/she finds stillness within movement (*sukūn fī ḥaraka*). Yet, the Divine lovers and “knowers of God,” who have

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<sup>820</sup> Ibid.

<sup>821</sup> Ibid.

<sup>822</sup> Ibid.

<sup>823</sup> Ibid., 2:340.

<sup>824</sup> Ibid.

<sup>825</sup> Ibid.

<sup>826</sup> Ibid.

attained the station of “subsistence,” are stable, composed and spiritually grounded in the witnessing of the “Oneness of God,” and they typically do not endure such emotions at their elevated spiritual level.

A lover can however experience bewilderment (*tahayyur*) and ask, why he feels movement and also experience fear whenever there is a meeting with the beloved? Ibn ‘Arabī answers, that this fear is concerned with being separated and losing the beloved. The internal and external movements occur because of the desire in the lover to be in a continuous meeting with the beloved. Ibn ‘Arabī explains:

This is the reward (*jazā’*) for whoever has loved other than his own self [entity] (*‘ayn*) and senses [perceives] the existence (*wujūd*) of His [God] beloved’s self [entity] outside [other than] him. If he [the lover] loved God this would not be his [the lover’s] situation, because the lover of God does not fear departure [from God], for how can something depart from what is always with him (*lāzimahu*)... Where is parting if there is nothing in the cosmos but Him (*ayna al-furāqu wa mā fī-l kawni illā hū*).<sup>827</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī then asks, how could something depart from a being that it is always present? He further asks, where is the parting then, if nothing exists in the universe but Him. He, subsequently quotes a verse from the *Qur’ān* to clarify his idea, “And you threw not, when you threw, but it was God who threw.” (Q. 8:17)<sup>828</sup> He interprets this by stating if the Divine lover loved God in reality this would not be the case, because the lover of God does not fear to be separated from His beloved. Here Ibn ‘Arabī is referring again to the theory of “Oneness of Being” (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) and correspondingly to the metaphorical unity and Oneness between the lover and the beloved, which in all cases is God, the “Real Being” (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqq*) that suffuses in existence.<sup>829</sup> If the lover has not yet attained the

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<sup>827</sup> Ibid.

<sup>828</sup> Ibid.

<sup>829</sup> See sub-section 3.7.7. in Ch. Three of this thesis.

realization of the “Oneness of Being,” his/her love can be described as a “natural” love. This is because the unattained veiled lover still acknowledges duality and has a sense of duality and separation from God. But, if the lover is realized, his/her love can then be described as “spiritual” love.

#### 5.8.5. Infatuation (*al-huyām*)

Ibn ‘Arabī then moves to articulate the fifth epithet of infatuation (*al-huyām*).<sup>830</sup> He clarifies that A lover who is infatuated (*muhayyam*), is anxious and desperate to sustain and preserve the relationship with the beloved. Because of this feeling, the infatuated lover walks astray (*hāma ‘alā wajhihi*), inadvertently to any location or direction. Ibn ‘Arabī further clarifies that this is not the case for the Divine lover.<sup>831</sup> This is because a lover of God is certain that this relationship exists anywhere and anytime. Ibn ‘Arabī quotes this verse from the *Qur’ān* to specify his point, “To God belong the East and the West: Whithersoever ye turn, there is the presence of God. For God is all-Pervading, all-Knowing” (Q. 2:115). Thus, Ibn ‘Arabī is indicating that the realized Divine lovers do not seek God in any specific place because God for them, is witnessed by every eye, cited on every tongue, and heard by every speaker.<sup>832</sup>

#### 5.8.6. Sighs (*al-ẓafarāt*)

The sixth epithet is that of sighing or sighs (*al-ẓafarāt*).<sup>833</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī describes sighing as being a form of fire from light that burns inside the heart of a lover. It is generated from the anguish experienced by the lover in his/her heart and is exhaled because

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<sup>830</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:340.

<sup>831</sup> Ibid.

<sup>832</sup> Ibid.

<sup>833</sup> Ibid.



it cannot be contained inside the ordinary lover.<sup>834</sup> He explains that when these sighs are exhaled a sound similar to the crackle of fire with high temperature is heard and felt. This sound is hence called a sigh (*ẓafra*) and is specifically experienced by the natural (physical) body.<sup>835</sup> Here, Ibn ‘Arabī is defining two types of lovers. The first, is the lover who has not yet attained, and therefore experiences such feelings, and the second, is the realized lover who has surpassed such sensations.

#### 5.8.7. Anguish or torment (*al-kamad*)

Finally, Ibn ‘Arabī describes the seventh and last epithet of Divine lovers, which is anguish or torment (*al-kamad*).<sup>836</sup> He states that torment is the strongest feeling of sadness in the heart, but tears do not accompany it. It is accompanied by much groaning (*ta’awwuh*) and sighing (*tanahhud*).<sup>837</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī clarifies that the reason for this sadness is unknown, because it is neither caused by any shortcomings (*taqṣīr*) nor missed opportunities (*fāyit*), and the only cause for it is love alone.<sup>838</sup> He specifies that there is no cure for anguish except to be joined (*wiṣāl*) and attached to the beloved.<sup>839</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī adds, torment is the only epithet among the epithets of love which can be treated if the lover preoccupies him/herself with servanthood and acts of worship.<sup>840</sup>

#### 5.9. Additional characteristics

In the conclusion of this section, Ibn ‘Arabī states that there are many more characteristics than those that have been previously mentioned. He lists other epithets not mentioned in detail in this section of the *Futūḥāt*. These are: apology (*al-asaf*), sorrow (*al-walah*),

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<sup>834</sup> Ibid.

<sup>835</sup> Ibid.

<sup>836</sup> Ibid., 2:341.

<sup>837</sup> Ibid.

<sup>838</sup> Ibid.

<sup>839</sup> Ibid.

<sup>840</sup> Ibid.

fading (*al-buht*), amazement (*al-dahsh*), perplexity or bewilderment (*al-ḥayrah*), jealousy (*al-ghayrah*), muteness (*al-kharas*), sickness (*al-siqām*), anxiety (*al-qalaq*), lethargy (*al-khumūd*), insomnia (*al-suhād*), turmoil (*al-wajd*), agony (*al-tabrīḥ*) and weeping (*al-bukā'*).<sup>841</sup> However, as indicated at the beginning of this section, Ibn 'Arabī did not explore these characteristics in detail, because his main intention was to describe the love of God for His servants, and the love of the servants for God. Again, these characteristics are considered to be negative epithets for the realized and attained Divine lover and “knower of God,” who has transcended such feelings and emotions.

#### 5.10. The attributes (*ṣifāt*) and actions (*af'āl*) that are loved by God

In this section Ibn 'Arabī then turns to cite specific conditional actions and qualities that are loved by God. For those who practice these actions sincerely, God has promised to bestow His love upon them. Ibn 'Arabī remarks that these particular actions and qualities are mentioned in the *Qur'ān* and the *sunnah*. An important point to mention is that Ibn 'Arabī often mentions two groups of people. He describes the first group of people as those who are veiled from realizing the “Oneness of God” in themselves and in creation and are therefore still struggling with the worldly temptations and desires of their self. These people are regarded by Ibn 'Arabī to be in a lower spiritual state. The second group of people are those who have attained, realized and witnessed the “Oneness of God” in existence, and subsequently personify themselves with the Divine attributes of God. These people are considered by Ibn 'Arabī to be at a much higher spiritual state than the rest.

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<sup>841</sup> Ibid.

### 5.10.1. Following the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad

Ibn ‘Arabī begins by mentioning the first action, which is following the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>842</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī references the verse in the *Qur’ān* that orders, “if you love God, follow me, and God will love you and forgive your sins. God is the all-Forgiving and all-Merciful” (Q. 3:31). Ibn ‘Arabī stresses that for God to bestow His love on the faithful, the required condition is to follow the *sunnah* or lifestyle of Prophet Muhammad.<sup>843</sup> He further explains that from the primary Divine love mentioned in the *ḥadīth* of the “Unknown Treasure,” that there are two paths prescribed in the Islamic scripture on how to attain the love of God.<sup>844</sup> The first path, is in observing the obligatory practices (*farā’id*). The second path, is in performing the voluntarily supererogatory rituals and acts (*nawāfil*).<sup>845</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī also cites the previously mentioned *ḥadīth* of the “supererogatory prayers”<sup>846</sup> which specifies in detail the rewards offered by God.<sup>847</sup>

### 5.10.2. Repentance, and those who repent (*al-tawwābūn*)

The second conditional action and beloved attribute is where Ibn ‘Arabī mentions “repentance” (*tawbah*), the act of repentance, and “those who repent” (*al-tawwābūn*).<sup>848</sup> He states that the “Absolver” or “Repenter” (*al-Tawwāb*) is one of the many Names of God.<sup>849</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī also specifies that God alone loves Himself, His Names and Attributes, and loves whoever personifies and distinguishes himself/herself with His Divine

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<sup>842</sup> Ibid.

<sup>843</sup> Ibid.

<sup>844</sup> Ibid.

<sup>845</sup> Ibid.

<sup>846</sup> See sub-section 2.4.1 in Ch. Two of this thesis.

<sup>847</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:341.

<sup>848</sup> Ibid.

<sup>849</sup> In relation to God, *tawba* refers either to Divine absolving and forgiveness of sins, or the initial “turn” which causes the person to repent. See Atif Khalil, “Ibn al-‘Arabī on the Three Conditions of *Tawba*,” *Journal of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 17, no. 4 (2006), 403-416.

Attributes.<sup>850</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī clarifies this type of attribute by saying:

It is not true (*ṣahīh*) that to return to God is possible, except from whoever is ignorant (*jahal*) that God is with him in every state (*kull ḥāl*)... therefore whoever actually does return (*raja’*) to God, from sinning (*mukhālafā*) to being virtuous (*muwāfaqa*), and from disobedience (*ma’siya*) to being obedient (*tā’a*). This is the true meaning of loving those who repent. If you are from those who absolve (*al-tawwābīn*) those who mistreat them, similarly God will be the “Absolver” (*al-Tawwāb*) upon them.<sup>851</sup>

In this statement, Ibn ‘Arabī explains that the act of repentance has two sides. The first side delineates the group of people who are non-realized. However, they are the servants who repent and return to God from their state of disobedience to being obedient to God’s commands. The second side, defines those individuals who personify themselves with the Divine Attribute of (*al-Tawwāb*), and forgive those who have transgressed against them and embody the attribute of the Absolver.<sup>852</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī further articulates this point when he writes:

If a person is in a situation where he is mistreated (*asā’ ilayh*) by his own kind (*amthālih wa ashkālih*), and responds (*fa-raja’a ilayh*) with beneficence (*ihsān*) upon him [those who mistreat] and pardons (*tajāwaz*) his [their] mistreatment, he [the person] is the [true] absolver (*al-tawwāb*), and not [the one] who [solely] returns to God [from disobedience to obedience].<sup>853</sup>

From this quote, Ibn ‘Arabī is trying to convey the difference between someone who is simply performing the action of returning to God in repentance, and someone who embodies and personifies the Divine attribute of repentance. Ibn ‘Arabī then quotes a verse from the *Qur’ān* to confirm that both acts of repentance are beloved by God: “For God

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<sup>850</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:341.

<sup>851</sup> Ibid.

<sup>852</sup> Ibid.

<sup>853</sup> Ibid., 2:342.

loves those who turn to Him in repentance.” (Q. 2:222)<sup>854</sup>

### 5.10.3. Cleanliness, and those who cleanse themselves (*al-muṭaṭahhirūn*)

The third attribute which Ibn ‘Arabī addresses is “cleanliness” (*tahārah*) and “those who cleanse themselves” (*al-muṭaṭahhirūn*).<sup>855</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī remarks that cleanliness is a Divine Attribute that also has two sides of servanthood (*‘ubūdiyya*), where one is apparent (*ẓāhir*) and the other is hidden (*bāṭin*). The apparent side involves cleansing the eternal body and the living surroundings and environment, and this defines the non-realized and veiled people. The second side is the hidden, where it entails internal cleansing. This involves cleansing oneself of sins and all negative qualities such as, arrogance (*al-kibriyyā’*), self-pride (*al-tafākḥur*), self-glorification (*al-khuyalā’*) and egoism or conceit (*al-‘ujbb*).<sup>856</sup> This side describes the higher realized people and “knowers of God” who embody this Divine attribute.

Ibn ‘Arabī then mentions the appropriate Qur’anic verse that supports his view: “He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean” (Q. 2:222),<sup>857</sup> which implies that all aspects of cleanliness, whether they are external or internal, are beloved by God.

### 5.10.4. Purification, and those who purify themselves and others (*al-muṭṭahharūn*)

Ibn ‘Arabī then states the fourth quality, which is that of “purification” (*ṭaṭahur*) and “the purifiers” (*al-muṭṭahhirūn*) or as Ibn ‘Arabī clarifies, “those who purify others.”<sup>858</sup> This attribute characterizes the realized people. This is because, as Ibn ‘Arabī explains, the

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<sup>854</sup> Ibid.

<sup>855</sup> Ibid.

<sup>856</sup> Ibid.

<sup>857</sup> Ibid.

<sup>858</sup> Ibid.

quality is ascribed to individuals who after cleansing and purifying themselves from bad qualities, progress to provide cleansing for others, as well as freeing them from bad attributes and behaviors.<sup>859</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī adds that, in reality, people who are attributed with this quality, are considered to be God’s instruments for cleansing others. These people consist of the prophets, the saints and teachers who are singled out for this role of action as Divine instruments on earth.<sup>860</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī affirms again the idea that God is the only actor or performer (*al-fā’il*), and that He is the ultimate actor behind all the actions of creation.<sup>861</sup> To specify, Ibn ‘Arabī also quotes the Qur’anic verse in support of the importance of purification in the eyes of God, “God loves the purifiers” (Q. 9: 108).<sup>862</sup>

#### 5.10.5. Patience, and those who are patient (*al-ṣābirūn*)

The fifth attribute which Ibn ‘Arabī mentions is that of “patience” (*ṣabr*) and “those who are patient” (*al-ṣābirūn*).<sup>863</sup> He describes those who are identified with this quality when he writes:

God loves the patient, whom He afflicted [tested] (*ibtalāhum*) and [in response, they] prevented (*habasū*) themselves from complaining (*al-shakwā*), except to God who brought down this affliction upon them... the [true] patient complains to God alone, and not to anyone else. He must (*yajib ‘alayh*) [complain] only to God, because if he [the afflicted] does not complain to God, then he is opposing (*muqāwamat*) the Divine subjection of fate (*al-qahr al-ilāhī*). This is considered bad manners (*sū’ adab*) by God... hence this type of patience emanates only [from] God and not from the self (*al-nafs*).<sup>864</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī indicates in the *Qur’ān* that, “God loves the patient (i.e., those who are firm and steadfast)” (Q. 3:146), and whenever people are tested by God with trials and tribulation,

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<sup>859</sup> Ibid.

<sup>860</sup> Ibid.

<sup>861</sup> Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 17; Khalil, “Ibn al-‘Arabī on the Three Conditions of *Tawba*,” 406.

<sup>862</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:342-343.

<sup>863</sup> Ibid.

<sup>864</sup> Ibid.

they do not complain to anyone else but to God, hence they are affiliated with the Divine attribute of patience.<sup>865</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī clarifies,

God afflicted His servants so that they only seek [turn to] Him (*li-yalja ’ū ilayh*) in lifting these afflictions and not seeking anyone else but Him... if they do this they are from the patient.<sup>866</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī adds that the “Patient” (*al-Ṣabūr*) is one of the Divine Attributes of God, in relation to whom it might be translated also as the “Steadfast,” and God loves whoever is characterized by this attribute.<sup>867</sup> Here Ibn ‘Arabī raises an important issue which is that, the patient must (*yajib ’alayh*) ask and complain only to God and have to submit to the Divine subjection (*al-qahr al-ilāhī*) and will of God. Ibn ‘Arabī considers the act of not complaining to God to be a form of non-conformity to servanthood (*‘ubūdiyya*), and an objection against Divine subjection. He regards this type of action to be a lack of courtesy or bad manners (*sū’ adab*) with God.

Again, Ibn ‘Arabī is distinguishing between two types of people. Those people who are realized and those who are not. Those who are realized and witness the “Oneness of God” in creation, even though if they appear to be complaining to people, they are in reality patient and complaining to God alone. The other type of people, those who have not reached such a degree, must have patience and complain only to God and not to anyone else. This is because they still witness creation and people besides God.

#### 5.10.6. Thankfulness, and those who are thankful (*al-shākirūn*)

The sixth attribute that Ibn ‘Arabī notes is that of “thankfulness” or “gratefulness” (*al-shukr*) and “those who are thankful” (*al-shākirūn*).<sup>868</sup> Even though Ibn ‘Arabī states

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<sup>865</sup> Ibid.

<sup>866</sup> Ibid.

<sup>867</sup> Ibid.

<sup>868</sup> Ibid.

that God “describes Himself in His book as loving those who are thankful,”<sup>869</sup> I have noted that this quality is actually not cited in the *Qur’an*. However, there are two verses mentioned in the *Qur’an* that state, “God will reward those who are thankful” (Q. 3:144), and “We will reward those who are thankful” (Q. 3:145). What Ibn ‘Arabī might be referring to here, is a Prophetic *ḥadīth* which says, “whomever provides you with an act of goodness, then reward them, but if you cannot reward them, then pray for them until you know you have thanked them, for God is Thankful and He loves those who are thankful.”<sup>870</sup>

Furthermore, Ibn ‘Arabī indicates that the attribute of “thankfulness” is a Divine Attribute and God loves those who conform themselves with it. He specifies that “thankfulness” is always given in the context of thankfulness and blessings and not in the sense of thanking God for His affliction of tribulations (*al-balā’*).<sup>871</sup>

#### 5.10.7. Benevolence, and those who are benevolent (*al-muḥsinūn*)

The most important attribute that Ibn ‘Arabī mentions is that of “benevolence” (*iḥsān*), and “those who are benevolent” (*al-muḥsinūn*), referring to those who perform beautiful actions.<sup>872</sup> The importance of this attribute is evident because it is the most cited of all the beloved actions and qualities in the *Qur’ān*, being cited five times.<sup>873</sup> This emphasis indicates the prominence of “benevolence” over all other beloved qualities mentioned in the *Qur’ān*. Furthermore, as benevolence is the third and highest religious dimension in Islam, as indicated by Prophet Muhammad in the famous canonical “*Ḥadīth of Gabriel*” (*ḥadīth Jibrīl*).<sup>874</sup> It is a unique and demanding level to reach or attain. Another

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<sup>869</sup> Ibid., 2:343.

<sup>870</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by al-Ṭabarānī, *ḥadīth* no. (1:13) in *al-Mu’jam al-’awsaṭ*.

<sup>871</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:343.

<sup>872</sup> Ibid., 2:344.

<sup>873</sup> See section 2.3 in Ch. Two of this thesis

<sup>874</sup> The *ḥadīth* is narrated by Muslim, *ḥadīth* no. (8) in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*; Abū Dāwūd, *ḥadīth* no. (4695) in *al-Sunnan*; al-Tirmidhī, *ḥadīth* no. (2610) in *al-Jāmi’*; and Aḥmad, *ḥadīth* no. (367) in *al-Musnad*.



important point to mention is that the etymology of the Arabic word “*ihsān*” derives from the root word “*ḥusn*” which means beauty or goodness.<sup>875</sup> Hence the significance of “benevolence” is that it not only refers to beautiful actions and sayings that are performed in a manner that is loved by God, but also that this attribute contains all of the other actions and attributes that are mentioned in this section.

In his explanation, Ibn ‘Arabī indicates that the “Benevolent” (*al-Muḥsin*) in reality is God, because the “Benevolent” is one of the most beautiful Names of God and a Divine Attribute. He clarifies that whoever worships God as if he/she see or witness Him, is considered to be a person who is benevolent.<sup>876</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī explains that the benevolence of God toward His creation is when God knows that human beings are sinning and disobeying Him, God still protects and preserves them from falling into harm or evil.<sup>877</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī indicates that God expresses this Divine witnessing in the verse, “For God is witness over all things.” (Q. 22:17) Furthermore, Ibn ‘Arabī indicates that the attribute of God’s witnessing (*al-shahīd*) is through God’s knowledge, sustenance and protection over creation.<sup>878</sup> In the case of human beings, Ibn ‘Arabī specifies that if a person’s knowledge derives from a continuous state of witnessing (*mushāhada*) God, such a person is considered to be a benevolent human being.<sup>879</sup> Accordingly he adds, even if humans do not act in accordance to benevolence, or do not witness God, the real “Benevolent” Being is indeed God.<sup>880</sup>

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<sup>875</sup> See Murata and Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, 268; Baalbaki, *Al-Mawrid*, 698.

<sup>876</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:344.

<sup>877</sup> Ibid.

<sup>878</sup> Ibid.

<sup>879</sup> Ibid.

<sup>880</sup> Ibid.

**5.10.8. Those who fight for God’s cause in a row as if they were a solid structure (*yuqātilūna fī sabīlihi ṣaffan ka’annahum bunyānun marṣūṣ*)**

The final attribute that Ibn ‘Arabī mentions is that of the Qur’anic verse, “those who fight for God’s cause in a row as if they were a solid structure” (Q. 61:4) (*yuqātilūna fī sabīlihi ṣaffan ka’annahum bunyānun marṣūṣ*).<sup>881</sup> He clarifies that any line constitutes of a single row of points (*nuqaṭ*). These points are connected closely and attached to each other in a way that leaves no gaps (*khalal*) between them, as they form a single, solid, straight line (*khaṭ*).<sup>882</sup> The importance of this idea, is that if there were to be gaps between these points, the line will cease to exist, and similarly the solidarity, cohesion and unity would also stop or cease to exist. Ibn ‘Arabī explains that the metaphorical meaning of the single line corresponds to the straight path (*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*) leading to God.<sup>883</sup> The gaps, however, are considered to be the pathways through which evil (*sharr*=*shaytān* or the devil) breaks through the solidarity of people.

The points might have different metaphorical meanings and representations, such as individuals who fight for a single cause, people praying in rows, or the Divine Attributes of God that are firmly connected and associated with each other. Ibn ‘Arabī points out that if human beings are close to each other, by supporting and helping the needy, and uniting in a similar manner in which the Divine Attributes, evil will not be able to break their lines and they will be victorious.<sup>884</sup>

**5.11. Important observation concerning two attributes**

It is important to indicate here that Ibn ‘Arabī did not mention two attributes that are stated

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<sup>881</sup> Ibid.

<sup>882</sup> Ibid.

<sup>883</sup> Ibid.

<sup>884</sup> Ibid.

in the *Qur'ān*, namely “the pious” (*al-muttaqūn*) and “the equitable” (*al-muqsiṭūn*), even though “the pious” is cited in the *Qur'ān* three (3) times,<sup>885</sup> and “the equitable” is also cited three (3) other times,<sup>886</sup> the reason for not mentioning these attributes by Ibn ‘Arabī is unknown. However, Ibn ‘Arabī mentions “the thankful” (*al-shākirūn*) in place of these two above mentioned attributes.<sup>887</sup> Also, Ibn ‘Arabī did not discuss in detail two other beloved qualities that are mentioned in the *Qur'ān*. These are “those who put their trust in God” (*al-mutawakillūn*), and “the charitable” (*al-mutaṣaddiqūn*). However, Ibn ‘Arabī does mention these two attributes briefly at the beginning of his Chapter on love in *The Meccan Openings*.<sup>888</sup>

#### 5.11.1. Essential traits of lovers (*n‘ūt al-muḥibīn*)

After citing the specific conditional actions and qualities that are loved by God, Ibn ‘Arabī then lists fifty-eight (58) traits which he says a lover ought (*yanbaghī*) to experience love.<sup>889</sup> He writes, “let us mention some of the essential traits that a lover ought (*yanbaghī*) to experience in order to be called a lover, for they are like the boundaries (*ḥudūd*) for love.”<sup>890</sup> It is interesting to note that Ibn ‘Arabī uses the theological term *ḥudūd*,<sup>891</sup> in this context, as it typically refers to the boundaries or limits of *Sharī‘ah* law, in an attempt to describe the traits of Divine lovers.

#### 5.12. Additional remarks on the nature of love

In this final section of this Chapter, I will address a selected number of important questions from Ibn ‘Arabī’s Chapter on love in *The Meccan Openings*, which I believe will clarify

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<sup>885</sup> See (Q. 3:76); (Q. 9:4); (Q. 9:7).

<sup>886</sup> See (Q. 5:42); (Q. 49:9); (Q. 60:8).

<sup>887</sup> See sub-section 5.10.6 in this Chapter.

<sup>888</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:322.

<sup>889</sup> See Addendum 1.

<sup>890</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:345-346.

<sup>891</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:345.

certain complex and intricate issues on the different states and conditions of love and of lovers. I will explore questions such as: what is the beginning (*bad'*) of our love for God? Is there a goal (*ghāya*) in this love or not? Is love an inherent, intrinsic quality (*ṣifa nafsīyya*) of the lover, or is it an acquired one? And, finally, is love simply a relationship (*nisba*) between the lover and the Beloved, yet non-existence in itself?

I will now endeavor to portray how Ibn 'Arabī discloses his appreciation of human love for God. I will pose the question and answer it in Ibn 'Arabī's own words.

**5.12.1. (Q.1) What marks the beginning (*bad'*) of God's love for creation, and the beginning of creation's love (*bud'ūhu*) for God?**

In response to this question, Ibn 'Arabī answers as follows:

In the beginning, our love for God, arose from hearing (*samā'*) and not from sight (*rū'yā*). It happened when God spoke to humans in the Cloud (*'amā'*) which arises from God's Breath. This Breath marked the beginning of creation of the cosmos, as a result of God saying, 'Be,' (*kun*)! We are all part of His eternal Words.<sup>892</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī then explains that the beginning of God's love for creation began when He wanted to be known. As a result, and accordingly, Ibn 'Arabī makes reference again to the *ḥadīth* of the "Hidden or Unknown Treasure."<sup>893</sup> As for the beginning of creation's love for God, Ibn 'Arabī states that it occurred when God called upon the entities or *ashyā'* to come into being or existence by uttering the Divine Word, "Be!" (*kun*)! Ibn 'Arabī bases his assumptions in this regard on the Qur'anic verse, "And Our word to a thing, We will it

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<sup>892</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:331. Ibn 'Arabī is referencing a canonical *ḥadīth* in which the "Cloud" (*'amā'*) is mentioned. The *ḥadīth* is narrated by al-Tirmidhī, *ḥadīth* no. (3109) in *al-Jāmi'*; Ibn Mājah, *ḥadīth* no. (182) in *al-Sunnan*; and Aḥmad, *ḥadīth* no. (16200) in *al-Musnad*. The *ḥadīth* says, "The Prophet Muhammad was asked, where did our Lord come to be before He created the creatures? He replied, He was [came to be] in a Cloud (*'amā'*), neither above which nor below which was any air." The "Cloud" as Ibn 'Arabī explains arose from the breath of God, and within the "Cloud" every existent thing becomes manifest. Hence the "Cloud" is known as God's "Manifest" in Words. See also Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 125.

<sup>893</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:331.

to “Be!” We say unto it: ‘Be!’ and it is” (Q. 16:40).<sup>894</sup> This verse clarifies that the beginning of creation’s love for God was based on hearing (*al-samā’*) and not sight (*al-rū’yā*). This is because upon hearing the Divine word “Be!” (*kun*) creation came to exist. Therefore, creation is considered by Ibn ‘Arabī to be the result of the endless pouring out of God’s words.<sup>895</sup> As everything came out of a Divine *creative fiat*, a Divine engendering speech, our love for God arose from hearing the Divine decree “Be!” This can also be understood from Qur’anic verses such as, “verily, the hearing, and the sight, and the heart, of each of those you will be questioned” (Q. 17:36).<sup>896</sup> From such a verse it is noted that human hearing always comes before human sight. Also many Qur’anic verses with the Divine Name of God, the “All Hearing” (*al-Samī’*), is noted that this name is always mentioned first and before other Divine Names in verses such as, “Verily, You are the All-Hearer, the All-Knower” (Q. 2:127).<sup>897</sup>

### 5.12.2. (Q.2) What is the goal (*ghāya*) of human love for God?

Ibn ‘Arabī explains that the goal of human love for God is attained when humans realize that their love for God is a quality of the soul (*ṣifa nafsiyya*) which exists only because of God’s real existence.<sup>898</sup> Love, as Ibn ‘Arabī asserts, originates from the soul (*nafs*) and essence (*‘ayn*) of the lover.<sup>899</sup> Thus the relative relationship between the lover, the beloved and love, is nothing more than the essence (*‘ayn*) of the lover, which is God Himself.<sup>900</sup> Thus God for him is the condition of love, the essence of the lover and also of

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<sup>894</sup> Cf. “When God wills a thing, He says “Be!” and it is” (Q 36:82). The Divine Word “Be!” (*kun*) is the command by which God brought the cosmos into existence from the “Cloud.” See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 41.

<sup>895</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:331.

<sup>896</sup> See also (Q. 23:78); (Q. 32:9); (Q. 67:23).

<sup>897</sup> See also (Q. 40:20); (Q. 41:36).

<sup>898</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:332.

<sup>899</sup> Ibid.

<sup>900</sup> Ibid.

the beloved. In other words, there is nothing but God in the relation of love, since He is the lover, the beloved, and also love itself. The triangle is comprised entirely of God, as I have explained in Chapter Four, section 4.2.7 regarding the concept of “Oneness of Being.”

Ibn ‘Arabī indicates that it is necessary for humans to love, but they do not know initially who or what to love; hence they imagine that their beloved exists as an entity, object or being.<sup>901</sup> In other words Ibn ‘Arabī is articulating that it is through the human imagination that people can envision and visualize what they love in the form of a being, entity or object. From Ibn ‘Arabī’s own words it can be understood that he is endeavoring to convey to people how imagination can help them understand this esoteric knowledge.

**5.12.3. (Q.3) Why does love desire the non-existent and absent? And why does the lover have opposing characteristics in his/her love (*yajma‘ al-muḥibb fī ḥubbihi bayn al-ḍiddayn*)?**

Ibn ‘Arabī indicates that love has a special condition to link itself to and desire the absent or non-existent.<sup>902</sup> He says:

Love is a special affiliation (*ta‘alluq khāṣ*) of the many affiliations (*ta‘alluqāt*) arising from willpower (*irāda*). Loving (*al-maḥabba*) relates to what is only non-existent (*ma‘dūm*) and absent (*ghayr mawjūd*), whereas the affiliation (*al-ta‘aluq*) wants [or desires<sup>903</sup>] the existence and occurrence (*wiqū‘uhu*) of the beloved... In the *Qur’ān* God addresses those, “Whom He loves and who love Him.” (Q. 5:54) By using the absent pronoun and future tense (*damīr al-ghā’ib wa al-fī’l al-mustaqbal*) in this way, God attributes the affiliation of love only to the absent and non-existent.<sup>904</sup>

In this quotation, Ibn ‘Arabī explains that the imaginative power in humans causes them to fall in love with a non-existing object or entity. It acts in response to the desire of the soul

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<sup>901</sup> Ibid., 2:334.

<sup>902</sup> Ibid., 2:327.

<sup>903</sup> Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 389n8.

<sup>904</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:327.

to bring the beloved object or entity into physical existence.<sup>905</sup> He then references the Qur'anic verse, "God will bring [create] a people whom He loves and who love Him" (Q. 5:54), to support his argument.<sup>906</sup> Ibn 'Arabī explains that the verse uses the non-present future tense so that God will create people whom He "will love" and they "will love Him." This demonstrates that love has a special condition of attachment and pursues what is absent or non-existent. He also adds,

Every absent thing is non-existent, and from the attributes (*awṣāf*) of love, the lover conjoins (*yajma'u*) opposing [attributes] in his love. This is the difference between natural and spiritual love, and humans alone can conjoin them ... because [humans] are [created] in God's image (*'alā ṣūratihī*), and God also described Himself with such opposing Attributes as, "the First and the Last, the Apparent and the Hidden." (Q. 75:3)<sup>907</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī clarifies the statement "every absent is non-existent" (*wa kulla ghā'ib fa-huwa ma'dūm*),<sup>908</sup> by explaining that what is absent (*ghā'ib*) is somehow non-existent (*ma'dūm*), one-way or another. In this way it can be assumed that while every absent entity has no existence by not being present, or not coming at a particular moment, can be metaphorically defined as being non-existent. Ibn 'Arabī explains that this affiliation is a distinctive character of love, where the lover has two opposing qualities, which are, first, the presence of the beloved in physical form or existence, and second, the longing and desiring of the imaginative non-existence or absent beloved.

Ibn 'Arabī further explains the reason why human beings can hold opposing characteristics in their love (*yajma'u bayna al-ḍiddayn*).<sup>909</sup> This is because they are created

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<sup>905</sup> Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 389n8.

<sup>906</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:327.

<sup>907</sup> Ibid.

<sup>908</sup> Ibid.

<sup>909</sup> Ibid.

in the image of God who Himself has opposing Attributes. Ibn ‘Arabī quotes the Qur’anic verse that says, “He is the First and the Last, and the Apparent and the Hidden; and He is the Knower of all things” (Q. 57:1),<sup>910</sup> to articulate and support this notion.

Additionally, Ibn ‘Arabī explains this seeming religious dilemma by clarifying that the contradiction of conjoining opposing attributes is similar to someone who is content (*rādīy*) with a predetermined or destined fate (*qadā’*), even if that person might not be content (*lā yadā’*) with the nature (*maqḍīy bih*) of what is predetermined.<sup>911</sup> He further explains that this contradiction is similar to someone being accurately named “content with fate” (*al-riḍā bil-qadā’*), even though “he may not be content with what is fated ... for fate is the decree (*ḥukm*) of God with what is destined (*bil-maqḍīy*) to be, but not the nature or type of fate itself.”<sup>912</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī thus creates a distinction between being content with what is predetermined, with the fate that one is destined to encounter, at the same time as not being content with the nature and type of the predetermined fate itself.

#### 5.12.4. (Q.4) Can the intellect or mind (*al-‘aql*) love?

Ibn ‘Arabī clarifies the intellect or mind (*al-‘aql*) that binds humans and drives them to rationalize all perceptions in order to justify their actions.<sup>913</sup> He bases this assumption on one of the etymological meanings of the Arabic word (*‘aql*), which means to “tie” or to “bind.”<sup>914</sup> He explains that as one of the characteristics of love is bewilderment (*ḥayrah*) and disorientation. In such a state of bewilderment and perplexity, the mind is not able to direct the course of the lover through reason and intelligence.<sup>915</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī quotes

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<sup>910</sup> Ibid.

<sup>911</sup> Ibid.

<sup>912</sup> Ibid.

<sup>913</sup> Ibid., 2:338.

<sup>914</sup> Ibid.

<sup>915</sup> Ibid.



a Qur'anic verse from the story of Jacob and his son Joseph to explain the nature of this bewilderment. He clarifies that when the caravan containing the shirt of his long-lost son Joseph approached, Jacob was so bewildered by his love for Joseph, that he said, "Indeed, I find the scent of Joseph [which would mean that Joseph was still alive] and you may think that I am weak in mind" (Q. 12:94). To this his sons replied, "By God, you are committing the same old error<sup>916</sup> (*dalālika al-qadīm*)" (Q. 12:95).<sup>917</sup> Ibn 'Arabī explains that the aberration mentioned in the verse, regarding Jacob's bewilderment, was due to the intensity of love which Jacob had for Joseph.<sup>918</sup>

#### 5.12.5. (Q.5) Why does God test and give trial to His beloveds?

In concluding, Ibn 'Arabī raises a very important and critical question. He says that since a lover should not harm his beloved, and if God does truly love His friends (*awliyā'*), why did the Prophets, Messengers and their followers experience such great distress and harm? What are the reasons and justifications behind their trials and tribulations?<sup>919</sup> Ibn 'Arabī answers that often God tests His lovers by testing their truth claims of love which for Him are commonly associated with claims of capability. Ibn 'Arabī explains that whoever does not make a claim will not have to substantiate it.<sup>920</sup> Consequently, if there were no truth claims of love from those who claimed to be lovers of God, they would not have been subjected to tests to substantiate their truth in loving God. Ibn 'Arabī indicates that God initially chose beloved individuals from creation, and these chosen individuals loved Him without knowing how and why they came to love Him.

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<sup>916</sup> The old error is mentioned in verse (Q. 12:8) where Jacob's sons accused Jacob of loving and preferring Joseph over the rest of them.

<sup>917</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:338.

<sup>918</sup> Ibid.

<sup>919</sup> Ibid., 2:345

<sup>920</sup> Ibid.

Therefore, it was inevitable for them that they came to claim to love Him.<sup>921</sup>

God, according to the Islamic tradition, is All Merciful (*al-Raḥīm*) and All Loving (*al-Wadūd*). Ibn ‘Arabī explains, when God decided to test those who claimed to love Him, He was merciful and loving to them even during the times of their tribulations and tests.<sup>922</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī addresses this issue when he writes, “the final destination for all is to faith (*Imān*), and we [Ibn ‘Arabī] have confirmed this [in accordance to a canonical *ḥadīth*] by the primacy of God’s mercy over His anger.”<sup>923</sup> God blessed His friends because they were beloved (*maḥbūbūn*) and chosen by Him even before their truth claims of loving Him. Thus, His blessings upon them are His proof of His love of them, and His trials for them are a consequence of their claims of loving Him.<sup>924</sup> In his statements Ibn ‘Arabī declares that he himself was given a special gift, this gift was an intense, and a very high level of love for God. At the same time, however, God also gave him the assistance that helped him to handle the intensity of its power and the power of its tests and trials.<sup>925</sup>

### 5.13. Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have offered a close, textual reading of Chapter 178 of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *The Meccan Openings*, in which he offers his metaphysical explication of the theory of love. It is evident that Ibn ‘Arabī situates love at the heart of Islamic piety. His writing is a testimony to the depths of his insight contemplation, analysis and engagement with the main sources of Islamic thought and into the higher levels of Islamic mysticism. Ibn ‘Arabī uses his intellectual and spiritual gifts to explain, interpret and refine the exoteric dogma.

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<sup>921</sup> Ibid.

<sup>922</sup> See sub-section 3.7.3 in Ch. Three of this thesis.

<sup>923</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:336.

<sup>924</sup> Ibid., 2:345.

<sup>925</sup> Ibid., 2:346.

He is attempting to enlighten and provide profound insights to help his readers transcend the complex esoteric levels of Islamic spirituality.

The recondite and allusive poems which mark the beginning of Chapter 178 are key to understanding Ibn ‘Arabī’s explanations on the metaphysical doctrine of love. He stresses on the importance of a polysemic understanding of Arabic words in order to discover hidden meanings in them. This was clearly demonstrated in his analysis of the four titles (*alqāb*) or terms that are affiliated with love. In addition, Ibn ‘Arabī introduced new elements and dimensions of love that had never been expressed before in Sufism. Elements such as his categorization of love into four divisions (*aqsām*) namely, Divine love (*al-ḥubb al-ilāhī*), spiritual love (*al-ḥubb al-rūḥānī*), natural love (*al-ḥubb al-ṭabī‘ī*) and elemental love (*al-ḥubb al-‘unṣurī*). Similarly, Ibn ‘Arabī adds another refinement and a new topic to this mixture, where he stipulates three primary orientations that define the different ways of experiencing love (*ḥubb*), namely beauty, beneficence, and performing the supererogatory (*nafl*) prayers. Also, in his quest to help people, Ibn ‘Arabī introduces another dimension where he suggests that love has a unique desire for the non-existent. As a form of aid to help his readers understand this, he calls upon the human imaginative power to bring the non-existent beloved entity into existence.

Occasionally, Ibn ‘Arabī’s writing is very abrupt in its directions for these conditions of love, as he is introducing many original ideas. It is therefore not only very difficult to try to explain his language and the various conditions and orientations when he is using to describe love, but it is also very difficult to convey much of what he is trying to convey.

Another element of Ibn ‘Arabī’s uniqueness in this section of *The Meccan Openings* is his explanation of why God subjects His beloveds to trials. This is when Ibn ‘Arabī explains that Divine tribulations are usually associated with truth claims, and when people claim to love God, they are tested to substantiate their declarations. In part, Ibn ‘Arabī is not only clarifying the necessity of such trials but is also issuing a warning as well as advice to people. He is highlighting that God is the task master, and only the sincere and truthful will pass these tests and the false or claimers will fail. Similarly, Ibn ‘Arabī addresses the nature and relation between the lover and the beloved. This topic might appear to be an extremely graphic depiction of the intensity of a love relationship. However, Ibn ‘Arabī explains it when the lover is consumed in his/her love, he/she are able to experience the intensity of this state due to the similarity of form he/she shares with the beloved, whether it is God or another human being. This is why Ibn ‘Arabī says that one can only experience love for another human being or God with the fullness of one’s own being. This issue might appear to be surprising, that a relationship of love between human beings, is in his understanding, at the same level with the love of God. Ibn ‘Arabī is attempting to convey to human beings such meanings to help them in attaining these high levels in a love relationship. This idea appears to be a development upon his earlier writings when he was both learning and trying to understand. However, here this concept marks the culmination of his knowledge.

Another problematic issue and a big obstacle that Ibn ‘Arabī clarifies, is that the mind or the intellect cannot love. He acknowledges the brilliance of the intellect, but over this he posits love as the ultimate, and that love is triumphant over the mind. Ibn ‘Arabī justifies this because the intellect binds humans and motivates them to rationalize and

justify their actions to themselves. And because the rationalizations of the mind may contradict or oppose the states of love, giving such bewilderment and perplexity, the mind cannot love.

In conclusion, I have attempted to convey the supreme levels to which Ibn ‘Arabī has aspired and has attempted to communicate to those who have the will to appreciate this knowledge. As for Ibn ‘Arabī himself, the main goal of human love for God is attained when humans realize that nothing exists in reality except God. Within this schema or ideal framework, the relative love relationship between a lover and his/her beloved, is nothing more than a relationship which occurs within the very Essence of God. For Ibn ‘Arabī, God is Love, the Lover and the Beloved.

## **Chapter Six: Conclusion**

In this thesis I have followed the journey of the life and work of the great Sufi master, Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī. It ranges from his early works and his encounters with the Sufi saints beginning in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century and continued until his advanced writings on metaphysics and mysticism in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. Both of these latter elements were intimately related to his understanding of both human and Divine love. Historically, many Sufis in the years before Ibn ‘Arabī, had expressed various views on love, and depicted the results of their own metaphysical findings that embraced Divine love. In their explorations, they adapted sayings of the Prophet, Qur’anic verses, and the *Qudsī* hadiths. Ibn ‘Arabī himself was no exception to this endeavor, not only did he transcend the previous Sufi masters by clarifying and expanding on their insights, but also by delineating his personal views as a result of his own original spiritual illuminations. Furthermore, Ibn ‘Arabī’s extensive use of the *Qur’ān* and *ḥadīth* demonstrates that his views on love were not extraneous to the mainstream Islamic discourse. Instead, they are the result of his visionary mystical experiences resulting from both his meditation and engagement with the principal sources of Islamic thought.

In Chapter Two, I began my study by examining love as it is presented in the *Qur’ān* and the *Sunna*. I then further developed my study of love by exploring the Sufi literature which had preceded Ibn ‘Arabī. I also described how Ibn ‘Arabī elaborated on the earlier Sufi theories, and then refined these theories by introducing his own original interpretations of religious scripture. In all of these interpretations, Ibn ‘Arabī acknowledged the primacy of love that lay at the heart of his mystical experiences.

Ibn ‘Arabī’s eloquent renderings of Divine love have been professed in many verses of the *Qur’ān* and the hadiths. Both of these Qur’anic verses and hadiths exemplify

how love is at the centre of Ibn ‘Arabī’s spirituality which enlightens human beings’ awareness of God’s love.

In this Chapter, I have focused on two verses of the *Qur’ān* and three hadiths which have been extensively cited by Sufis in their intimate literature on love. At the beginning of the Qur’anic verse, it is pronounced that, “God will summon people whom He loves” (Q. 5:54). With this statement it becomes evident that the love of God in human beings has its origin in God’s own love for them. In contrast, the verse ends with the phrase, “and who love Him.” This further statement implies a response on the part of human beings of their own love of God.

The *Qur’ān* also states how this love, on the part of human beings, is embodied in the verse, “if you love God, follow me, God will love you and forgive your sins” (Q. 3:31). This verse indicates that the Divine intention is to bestow God’s own love on human beings, which is actually secured by following the path of the Prophet. Ibn ‘Arabī develops his perception of such a thematic ideal of love that was often expressed by the earlier Sufi saints, which he will subsequently extend and enrich.

These verses are complemented by a number of hadiths which I regard as very expressive in revealing further emphasis on the gift of God’s love for human beings. The first is that of the *ḥadīth qudsī*, namely that concerning the “supererogatory prayers” (*nawāfil*), which include a revelation from God, saying, “until I love him” (*ḥatā uḥibahu*). These words evoke acts of devotion that go beyond the requirements of duty, that is the *nawāfil*, in order to further highlight the gift of God’s love to human beings. This *ḥadīth* continues by then stating, “when I love him” (*fa idhā aḥbabtuhu*). It then becomes obvious that those who act in this way receive the reward of God’s love.



The second *ḥadīth* is the famous non-canonical *ḥadīth qudsī* of the “Unknown Treasure” (*kanzan lam u‘raf*), which expresses God’s love as the reason that inspires creation. The first part says, “I loved to be known, so, I created creatures” (*fa-aḥbabtu an u‘raf fa-khalaqtu al-khalq*). Such a declaration affirms that love is the sole cause of existence. This *ḥadīth* of the “Unknown Treasure,” has been cited frequently in many Sufi texts, and Ibn ‘Arabī also invokes this *ḥadīth* which expresses that love is both the reason and purpose of creation.

Finally, the third *ḥadīth* affirms that, “God is Beautiful, and He loves beauty” (*inna Allāha jamīlun yuḥibbu al-jamāl*). This *ḥadīth* describes the inseparable connection between love and beauty. Since beauty is also regarded as an aspect of Divine love, the etymological connection between “benevolence” (*iḥsān*), and “beauty” (*ḥusn*), suggests that virtue beautifies the soul and, accordingly, attracts love. It is from this extant Divine beauty, in Ibn ‘Arabī’s words, that Divine love and knowledge together come into existence. The Second Chapter defines the main scriptural origins of the above themes that had influenced the earliest Sufi mystical philosophies of love. However, Ibn ‘Arabī would later develop and refine his own deep understanding of the different aspects of Divine love.

In the Third Chapter, I undertook a close reading of selected themes found in Ibn ‘Arabī’s own earlier works regarding Divine love, such as, *The Interpreter of Longings* (1214 CE) (*Turjumān al-Ashwāq*, 611 AH) and *The Ringstones of Wisdom* (1232 CE) (*Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 630 AH). In such works, Ibn ‘Arabī again situates love at the heart of Sufism and Islam. This is evident when he writes that love is the greatest human yearning (*shahwah*). This indispensable task for human beings means that they need to follow the

spiritual path that God, both as Lover and Beloved, has infused in them to assist them in realizing Oneness in Him.

Ibn ‘Arabī also acknowledges that the heart of the lover, and the “Knower of God” (*al-‘arīf bi-llāh*), who has attained the realization of the “Oneness in God,” is capable of recognizing the various theophanies of God in creation. This capability requires that the human lover will always act with manners (*adab*) towards the countless Divine variations of God’s manifestations.

However, Ibn ‘Arabī also pronounces that the human lover should not reduce God to only one mode of self-disclosure, as he declares that God can be recognized in every religious tradition. This is in keeping with Ibn ‘Arabī’s acknowledgment of pluralism in Islam, which is stated in the *Qur’an*, “For each of you we have made a Law and a way of life. If God had willed, He would have made you into a single community” (Q 5:48).

I consider that with these sacred words, Ibn ‘Arabī introduces a type of dialectical process from which new interpretations can emerge. Another result is possibly that new pluralistic theologies could later arise. This Third Chapter demonstrated how Ibn ‘Arabī began to distinguish himself from his earlier interpretations of God’s loving relationship to human beings. The growing awareness of Ibn ‘Arabī’s mystical thoughts would, in time, have a lasting influence both on his own disciples as well as on the later Sufi mystics who acknowledged his teachings.

In Chapter Four, I outlined the ontological developments that helped to define Ibn ‘Arabī’s use of symbolic language and metaphysics as a form of expression. In this Chapter, I undertook a demanding examination of his metaphysical concepts, as well as of the cosmological theory in which the ontological entity of “Oneness of Being” is grounded.

I regard such writings of Ibn ‘Arabī as having resulted from his own spiritual visions of the “Oneness of Being.” The originality of this bequest provided Islam with one of its most sophisticated expressions that profess the “Oneness of God.”

This Chapter also defined key mystical dimensions that would become central to Ibn ‘Arabī’s later works, such as the Divine Essence (*dhāt*), Attributes (*ṣifāt*), Being (*wujūd*), the five Divine presences (*al-ḥadarāt al-ilāhiyya*) of Being, and the “Perfect Human” (*al-insān al-kāmil*). These elements provided the foundations of knowledge that helped me to understand and respect Ibn ‘Arabī’s deep reflective mystical writings as they related to love.

Ibn ‘Arabī further introduced various modes of intuition, reflection, and evaluation of his distinct mystical language, and of his metaphysical perceptions that are evocative of love. However, this movement marked a major step in the development of esoteric knowledge as different from exoteric. Such approaches were of primary significance in enabling me to discern the profound insights of the depths in mystical love as articulated by Ibn ‘Arabī.<sup>926</sup>

In Chapter Five, I explored further the mystical elements which Ibn Arabi chose to define. These would inform my subsequent in-depth explorations of Ibn ‘Arabī’s esoteric writings on love. It was such elements that enabled me to understand the way that Ibn ‘Arabī envisioned his further discussions on love and his later major *opus*.

This involved my engagement with the readings of certain Chapters of *The Meccan Openings (al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya)*, most especially of Chapter 178. In this mature

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<sup>926</sup> See footnote 98 on mystical epistemology.

work, Ibn ‘Arabī clarifies many of his mystical intuitions, and their connection with both Divine and human love. Ibn ‘Arabī also affirms that love has a distinctive desire for the non-existent (*ma‘dūm*). This involves the agency of the imaginative and spiritual latent powers bestowed by God on human beings. For Ibn ‘Arabī, this involves a quest by the human lover to generate the non-existent beloved entity of God Himself into the loving “Oneness of Being.” This confirms that the goal of human beings love for God is attained when they realize that nothing exists in reality except God, and that the relative love relationship between the lover and the beloved constitutes a relationship which occurs within the very Essence of God.

In this way, Ibn ‘Arabī has introduced the distinct dimensions of Divine love that had not been expressed previously in Islam. These mystical elements of love include a division of love into four entities, namely, Divine love, spiritual love, natural and elemental love, which comprise the various aspects of love relationships. I believe these divisions, as outlined by Ibn ‘Arabī, to disclose one of the most important appraisals of the relationships of human and Divine love.

From my readings of Ibn ‘Arabī I have come to understand that his writings present an unconventional approach that differs from the main interpretative traditions of his time. This is because he relied mainly on the knowledge he had gained from his own spiritual unveilings (*kashf*) as the form of interpreting scripture. Such an approach has helped me to decipher a wider spectrum of possible meanings that could be found in Ibn ‘Arabī’s later interpretation of scriptures.<sup>927</sup>

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<sup>927</sup> See section 1.12 on methodology in Chapter One of this thesis.

My thesis has followed the maturing of what I consider to be Ibn ‘Arabī’s original insights on the way to his distinctive esoteric illuminations of Divine love. I have attempted to clarify what I have understood to be Ibn Arabi’s unique mystical and spiritual intuitions. This approach has helped me to foresee the manner in which Ibn Arabi’s love of both God and human beings has enriched the multiple understandings of love both human and Divine. I envisage that this movement could introduce a new dynamic of understanding for Ibn ‘Arabī’s visionary enrichments of mystical scriptures.

Finally, I have offered further insights that could help other scholars appreciate the vast knowledge of Ibn ‘Arabī’s mystical legacy, and of his original expositions on Divine love as it is articulated in both Sufism and Islam.

## Addendum 1

In *The Meccan Openings*, Ibn ‘Arabī describes the essential traits of lovers, in detailed description, of which there are fifty-eight (58) traits. These traits are poetic in nature and are difficult to discern in English. Many of these qualities, as I have described in Chapter Five, provide a thorough list of the physical, emotional and spiritual traits and experiences of the mystic lover and the relationship with God.

Ibn ‘Arabī has presented an analogy between human and Divine love. The modern reader may in fact be struck by the similarities of some of the qualities shared by the lover of God and the lover of another human. However, for Ibn ‘Arabī, this likeness is because he understands human love as simply a reflection of Divine love. The following is a list of the essential traits of lovers as described by Ibn ‘Arabī.<sup>928</sup>

### List of the essential traits of lovers (*n‘ūt al-muḥibūn*):

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

<sup>928</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:346.

- (*mutabarrim bi ṣuḥbat mā yaḥūl baynahu wa bayna liqā' maḥbūbih*).
- (8) Sighing frequently (*kathīr al-ta'awwuh*).
- (9) Finding comfort and repose in the words of the Beloved and remembering Him by reciting His words (i.e., the *Qur'ān*) (*yastariḥu ilā kalām maḥbūbih wa dhikruhu bi tilāwat dhikruhu*).
- (10) Being successful in fulfilling what the Beloved loves (*muwāfiq li maḥāb maḥbūbih*).
- (11) Being fearful of infringing, or falling short, in fulfilling the services of the Beloved (*khā'if min tark al-ḥurma fī iqāmat al-khidma*).
- (12) Belittling oneself or feeling deficient in fulfilling the rights of the lord (*yastaqil al-kathīr min nafsih fī haqq Rabbih*).
- (13) Abounding scarce provisions (*yastakthir al-qalīl min ḥabībih*) or considering whatever little bestowals received from the Beloved to be copious and plentiful.
- (14) Wholeheartedly embracing the obedience of the Beloved, and turning away from what is disagreeable to Him (*yu'āniq tā't maḥbūbih wa yujānib mukhālafatih*).
- (15) Complete and totally self-negated or self-transcendent for the Beloved, literally “leaving oneself entirely” (*khārij 'an nafsih bil kulliyya*).
- (16) Not seeking blood-money for being slayed (metaphorically) by the love of God (*lā yaṭlub al-diyya fī qatlih*).
- (17) Remaining patient before any harm which comes from observing the Beloved's commandments, even when they oppose one's natural

- disposition (*yaşbir 'alā al-darrā' 'allatī yanfīr minhā al-ṭab' limā kalafahu maḥbūbih min tadbīr*).
- (18) Having an infatuated heart (*hā'im al-qalb*).
- (19) Preferring the Beloved to every other companionship (*mu'thir maḥbūbih 'alā kull maḥbūb*).
- (20) Being effaced in one's affirmation (= being annihilated in one's love) (*maḥū fī ithbāt*).
- (21) Adapting one's soul to the requirements of the Beloved (*qad waṭa'a nafsahu limā yurīdahu bih maḥbūbih*).
- (22) Having one's qualities intertwined with the Beloved's Attributes (see etymology of *'ishq* in Chapter Two) (*mutadākhil al-ṣifāt*).
- (23) Having a soul that has no desire beside the Beloved (*mā lahu nafs ma'a maḥbūbih*).
- (24) Belonging entirely to the Beloved (*kulluhu li maḥbūbih*).
- (25) Blaming oneself for falling short in fulfilling the rights of the Beloved (*ya'tib nafsahu bi nafsih fī ḥaqq maḥbūbih*).
- (26) Experiencing enjoyment in astonishment (*multadh fī dahash*), or sweetness from one's astonishment or awe over the Beloved.
- (27) Intruding (i.e., religious) boundaries after having guarded and preserved them (*jāwaza al-ḥudūd ba'd ḥifzihā*).
- (28) Being extremely jealous in one's love of the Beloved (*ghayyūr 'alā maḥbūbih minhu*).
- (29) Being governed by one's love according to personal intellect (*yaḥkum*



*ḥubbih fīh 'alā qadr 'aqlih).*

(30) Quickly healed from injuries caused by the Beloved (*jurḥihi jabbār*).

(31) Feeling that love is neither increased by the beneficence nor decreased by the aversion of the Beloved (*lā yaqbal ḥubbih al-ziyāda bi iḥsān al-maḥbūb wa lā yanquṣ bi jifā'ih*).

(32) Forgetting one self's share and the Beloved's share (*nasī ḥazzahu wa ḥazz maḥbūbih*).

(33) Mannerism is not being required (*ghayr maṭlūb bil 'adab*).

(34) Being uncharacterized without qualities or attributes (*makhlū' al-nu'ūt*).

(35) Being nameless (*majhūl al-'asmā'*).

(36) As if asking but without asking (*ka'annahū sā'il wa lays bi sā'il*).

(37) Not differentiating between reunion or desertion (*lā yufarriq bayn al-waṣl wal hajr*).

(38) Infatuated and enchanted indulgently (*haymān mutayyam fī idlāl*) or being infatuated and enchanted to a great degree.

(39) Being confused and unbalanced (*dhū tashwīsh khārij 'an al-wazn*).

(40) Declaring that one's essence or self is the Beloved (*yaqūl 'an nafsih 'annahū 'ayn maḥbūbih*).

(41) Being captivated relentlessly, and submitting to the orders and sayings of the Beloved (*muṣṭalim majhūd lā yaqūl li-maḥbūbih limā fa'alta kadhā aw qulta kadhā*).

(42) Being exposed, and not holding back any secret (*mahtūk al-sitr sirruhu 'alāniyya faḍīhahu al-dahrr lā ya'lam al-kitmān*).

(43) Does not know that he/she is a lover (*lā ya ‘lam annahu muḥibb*).

(44) Desiring without knowing for whom (*kathīr al-shawq lā yadrī liman*).

- Ibn ‘Arabī address further fourteen (14) additional qualities, but without detailed description.<sup>929</sup>

(1) Feeling intense emotion, but without knowing towards whom (*‘aẓīm al-wajd wa lā yadrī fī man*).

(2) Not being able to identify the Beloved (*lā yatamayyazu lahu maḥbūbuh*).

(3) Being happy and sad (at the same time) and being characterized by opposing or contradictory emotions (*masrūr maḥzūn mawṣūf bi al-diddayn*).

(4) Remaining silent so that one’s condition speaks for itself (*maqāmuhu al-kharas ḥāluhu yutarjim ‘anhu*).

(5) Does not love for a reward (*lā yuḥibb li-‘iwaḍ*).

(6) Being drunk and never sober (*sakrān lā yaṣḥū*).

(7) Being attentive in seeking the Beloved’s contentment or wish (*murāqib mutaḥarrī li marādīh*).

(8) Prefers being merciful and compassionate towards his/her Beloved whenever required (*mu’thir fī al-maḥbūb al-raḥma bihi wa al-shafaqa li mā yu’tih shāhid ḥālihi*);

(9) Having high emotions (*dhū ashjān*).

(10) Being tireless and whenever free attempts to strive again (*kullamā*

<sup>929</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:346

*faragha naṣab lā ya ‘rif al-ta ‘ab).*

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

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

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

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

## Addendum 2

Prints of available editions of *The Meccan Openings (al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya)*<sup>930</sup> in Arabic:

1. The first printed edition of the *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* is the Būlāq edition that was completed in 4 volumes in 1857 CE/1274 AH. It was followed by a second Būlāq edition in 1876 CE/1293 AH. This latter edition is a reprint of the 1857 CE edition. Both of these prints are based on the first recension of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, and not Ibn ‘Arabī’s own revised second recension which is preserved in his handwriting in Istanbul and with his autograph dated 1238CE/636AH. These two printed editions were published by dār al-ṭibā‘ah al-bāhirah in Būlāq, Egypt.

2. The 1911CE/1328 AH edition is the famous third Būlāq edition of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (and its 1968 Dār Ṣādir reprint [Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968] which is an exact photocopy). Its 4 volumes are based on Ibn ‘Arabī’s own second recension of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, and corresponds with the major scholarly studies of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* available in Arabic,<sup>931</sup> English and French.<sup>932</sup> I will be using this Būlāq edition along with the critical editions of Osman Yahia and the two recent editions of ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Sultan al-Mansub as my primary sources.

<sup>930</sup> See also Julian Cook and Claude Addas, “Six Printed Editions of al-Futūḥāt al-Makkāyah,” accessed May 24, 2020, <https://ibnarabisociety.org/futuh-at-makkiyya-printed-editions-claude-addas/>

<sup>931</sup> See books by Maḥmūd al-Ghurāb, such as *al-Insān al-kāmil* (Damascus: Naḍrr Printing, 1990) and *Sharḥ Kalīmāt al-Ṣūfiyya* (Damascus: Naḍrr Printing, 1981).

<sup>932</sup> See Maurice Gloton, *Traite de l'amour* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1986).

3. The incomplete 14-volume critical edition was published from 1972-1992. It was carried out by the late Osman Yahia, and is based on Ibn ‘Arabī’s revised recension of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*. Many contemporary scholarly translations and studies use this edition insofar as it makes available the passages from *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* with which they are dealing. The Yahia edition runs to the end of Chapter 161 of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* which has 560 Chapters. It corresponds to the entire first volume and up to the end of page 262 of the second volume of the 1911 Būlāq edition. This edition was published by al-hay‘ah al-miṣriyyah al-‘āmah lil-kitāb in Cairo Egypt.

4. The 1999 Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya (Lebanon) printing of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (9 volumes) is also based on the third 1911 Būlāq edition but is not an exact reprint of it. It is often difficult to use alongside existing scholarship on Ibn ‘Arabi and *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* since the page numbers in this 9-volume edition does not match the 4 volumes of the 1911 and 1968 editions.

5. The 2010 critical edition of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* is printed in 12 volumes and is published by the Ministry of Culture in Yemen. This edition was carried out by ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Sultan al-Mansub, and is based on Ibn ‘Arabī’s revised second recension of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*. Since there were a number of errors in the first edition of al-Mansub’s Yemeni print, he published a second revised edition in 2017 (13 volumes). This last edition is published by al-Majlis al-a‘lā li’l-thaqāfa in Cairo, Egypt. According to Eric Winkel, al-Mansub’s two editions are now the definitive editions of *al-Futūḥāt al-*

*Makkiyya* (see Eric Winkel's review of the work in the *Oxford Journal of Islamic Studies* 24.1 (2013): 80-83).

### Addendum 3

#### Additional terms and definitions which describe Love by Ibn ‘Arabī:

*Al-jawā*: Is the intense emotion (*al-Jawā*) that marks the expansion (*infisāh*) or broadening of the lover’s experience of the various stations of love. In reality, the word (*jaū/jaww*) literally means air or atmosphere.<sup>933</sup>

*Al-walah*: Is the infatuation or enamoured (*al-walah*) feeling which occurs to the lover when he/she is distracted and occupied by the feelings of love for the Beloved, rather than the Beloved Himself.<sup>934</sup>

*Al-huyām*: Is the adoration (*al-huyām*) of the lover when falling passionately (*‘ishq al jamāl*) in love with God’s beauty in all of its various forms in creation. The is understood from the Qur’anic verse which states, “wherever you turn there is the face of God” (Q. 2:115), and the verse, “He is with you wherever you are” (Q. 57:4). From such verses, the lover of God expresses the adoration of God in every beautiful form.<sup>935</sup>

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<sup>933</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Dhkhā’ir al-A’lāq*, 55.

<sup>934</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya*, 3:177.

<sup>935</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:354, 240, 255.

***Al-mudallah***: Is the captivation or feeling lost in love (*al-mudallah*). This is felt when the lover is spiritually intoxicated, and his/her mind is perplexed and has no mental control over him/herself.<sup>936</sup>

***Al-bath***: Is the grief or sorrow (*al-bath*) that happens when the lover experiences multiple grieving while still seeking God and is feels overwhelmed by the multiplicity of the Beloved's various manifestations in creation.<sup>937</sup>

***Al-ṣabābah***: Is the tender or delicate desire (*al-ṣabb*) that occurs when the lover begins to seek and meet the Beloved. This is understood as the desire to witness God.<sup>938</sup>

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<sup>936</sup> Ibid., 2:359.

<sup>937</sup> Ibid., 2:338.

<sup>938</sup> Ibid., 4:259.



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