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The American University in Cairo

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Seeing the Unseen

A Thesis Submitted to:

The Department of Arab & Islamic Civilizations

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

by

Hebatallah Mohamed Youssef

Under the supervision of Dr. Steffen Stelzer

December/ 2008

The American University in Cairo

Seeing the Unseen

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has been approved by

Dr. Steffen Stelzer
Thesis Committee Chair/Advisor -----
Professor- Philosophy Department- The American University in Cairo

Dr. Robert Switzer
Thesis Committee Reader -----
Associate Professor- Philosophy Department- The American University in Cairo

Dr. Huda Lutfi
Thesis Committee Reader -----
Professor- Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations- The American University in
Cairo

Department Chair Date Dean Date

DEDICATION

To all those who violently shook me until I woke up from my peaceful

slumber

To: my husband, my parents, and my teachers

I thank you all!

ABSTRACT

Man as a being has always been concerned with seeing the unseen; each individual who ventures upon this search has a different trajectory. This research studies the path which seems to unite different travelers who seek the vision of the unseen, through analyzing Plato's allegory of the cave, which is an excerpt from *The Republic*, Heidegger's interpretation of the allegory which is from his book *The Essence of Truth*, and some of the works of Ibn 'Arabi which shed light on the Sufi path. It is my hope that the similarities that emerge from this analysis will help enunciate the fundamental and primordial experience of the human being coming to know him/herself. It is the epistemological/ontological journey which is necessitated by the yearning to see the hidden, the unseen which is within and without. This journey is undertaken by man regardless his/her religion, culture and all the numerous variables that human beings identify themselves with, a journey which is depicted by all three thinkers in spite of their differences.

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(لاتدرکه الأبصار و هو يدرك الأبصار و هو اللطيف الخبير)

سورة الأنعام الآية رقم (103)

"God sees me, he looks into me in secret, but I don't see him, I don't see him
looking at me"

Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*

Introduction:

Human beings have always struggled with the fact that they can never see themselves unless one uses another; that other could be a reflective surface like a mirror, or the eyes of another person; hostile or friendly. The reality that there are utensils of aid which may be used to present a picture that claims to be my own does not change the fact that I can never see myself by myself. Sight is a powerful sense because to see something is to capture, to captivate, and to conquer it. It is a display of power. What I see falls under my yoke. It is under the mercy of my gaze. I see it. Yet, my conquest is never complete, sight always fails me. What I see is the outside and the inside is always hidden. The thing is elevated in its hiddenness, its ungraspability. Hiddenness is an everlasting obstacle that sight aims to perpetually overcome and enslave. Sight is in an eternal war with the unseen. This war can never be won, since hiddenness is the precondition of manifestness. What is shown and given to sight is the armor, the carapace which veils the hidden. Sight can even break this carapace in hope to get a glimpse of the hidden, the inside, but all it sees is more outside. The inside is forever hidden from sight. This duality is a manifestation of the two divine names; The Manifest (*al-Zahir*) and The Hidden (*al-Batin*). One could assume that there is an innate need to see what is hidden, to bring things out of their hiddenness, to know and grasp what seems elusive. One could also gather that this need is derived from fear-the fear that there is something that one does not know, something that does not correspond to what I know of myself, something that is beyond me. Aristotle

declared that "all men by nature desire to know". Thus, the path for knowledge is fueled by desire and passion. The route drives one from ignorance to knowledge, from darkness to light, from what is concealed to absolute revelation. Hence, there are two main motivators for the search for knowledge, or sight: fear and desire. Those two motivators mark the method one is going to employ in the search for the hidden. On the one hand, the first motivator is the fear of the seeker from what is beyond him/her, the fear of the self to lose control and hegemony over the other, which leads to the violent shattering of the veil of the other and the dragging down of what is incomprehensible and unseen to the seen, the logical. This process of the pulling down of the unseen to the seen is a manifestation of the self devouring the other. The self might not be "really" compromising the otherness of the other, since it is elevated and beyond the self in the first place in its otherness, yet it puts boundaries on it, it dogmatizes it to understand it, grasp it, and capture it to become an object of the knowing subject. This self is on a relentless quest to objectify the other, to see the unseen and claim it as its own.

On the other hand, the search can be motivated by passion and desire. Therefore, the method applied by the seeker would correspond to the motivator. The seeker on this path would not resort to a violation of truth as unseen, rather the seeker would be willing to be violated by the truth on his/her path to the unseen, meaning that he/she will be open to experiencing the truth no matter how painful this experience might prove to be. The seeker transcends the human ground and ascends to the unseen with dazzled and almost blind eyes that would slowly adjust to the primordial light of the unseen/ the hidden. This ascension and search is not a mere epistemological quest, where one seeks the hidden, or knowledge of it. Rather, it is primarily an ontological search where one is unhidden from oneself – dis-covered- as

one is elevated from one level to the next, a comportment of oneself to being as it truly is, not as people know it to be. Plato once described this heavenly journey of the yearning souls;

These souls which we call immortal reach the summit of heaven, they go to the edge and stand on the rim; there the revolving motion carries them around as they stand and gaze on things outside the heavens [i.e., a vision of the Forms] (1)

The soul ascends the spiral of being in a circular motion that brings it to its origin to where it once was but not as it was, the state of the soul is completely altered due to the vision of reality. Plato has located this spiral outside the heavenly sphere, beyond even the gods and beyond the circular motion that the gods are subjected to. This is because the forms are eternal and unchanging while movement is change; thus they had to be beyond the influence of motion. Underneath the forms and within the heavenly dome the soul is allowed to witness Being as it is and in that witnessing she –soul- realizes her being. The soul becomes present to herself as she is clearing the pretense of her purity. She finds out that she contains the other within herself. Hence, the revelation of the unseen is not an exteriorized search only but one of dual nature; outside and inside, the coincidence and synchrony of the external with the internal unveiling is the actualization of the search. It is within the soul's gaze upon the Forms that she recognizes that they are within herself.

The awareness that the second path –the passion driven path- is the one that leads to the sight of the unseen, i.e. true knowledge and illumination, rather than the first one, has been exemplified by several doctrines, whether religious or philosophical. My research intends to concentrate on the Islamic-Sufi depiction of this path, the journey which is epitomized in the Prophet Muhammad's Nocturnal ascension which is the path that the mystic attempts to follow:

Plato, *Phaedrus*, 247C (?)¹

The mi'raj or ascension is the prototype of the spiritual journey of the Sufi who can however hope to accomplish it in this life only spiritually and not with his total being including the body. To journey from one stage of being to another, ascending the ladder of the universal hierarchy of being to the Divine Presence that is the goal of the Tariqah, and it is based on the example of the prophet.
(²)

Nasr, like Plato, enunciates that the goal is to discover Being as it is and in this discovery, in this vision one would find his/her own being. Nevertheless, he makes a crucial distinction between the Muhammadan ascension and the mystic's. Muhammad went on the journey with his body. This journey is the true goal of every conscious and aware soul, yet the privilege of bringing the material body which is dense to the subtle heavens leads one to conclude that Muhammad's body was given the element of subtlety like his soul, or this occurrence, which is a miracle, has been only given to God's beloved prophet and no one else. Thus in this research I chose to present the Sufi Path which is modeled upon that of the prophet's, rather than present the prophet's journey which was a singular occurrence. The imperative importance of this journey to every individual can also be clearly displayed by Ibn 'Arabi's invitation:

If you hear –Glory to [Him] who took his servant on the Nocturnal journey (*Subhan al-ladhi asra bi 'abdihi*)- stand on his way of ascent and coming to Us, perhaps you would see who sees Us, and win the witnessing of the one who saw nothing but Us (³).

²([?]) Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, P.133

³([?]) Ibn 'Arabi, *Shajarat al-Kawn*, P.23

Ibn 'Arabi's invitation begins with a condition: "if you hear". This means that only those who are aware and have the ears to hear this call are invited to go on the journey. This journey of being is designated only to those who are awake and not sleeping, for one has to be asleep not to hear the divine call. Thus, the initiation of the journey, of the search for one's real identity, begins with a spiritual awakening. Then when one is awake and hears the call, one must follow another –the prophet- to see. Hence for Ibn 'Arabi, being on the quest to see the unseen hearing is a necessary precondition for seeing. Ibn 'Arabi arrangement stands in stark contrast to Derrida's:

Since I don't see him [God] looking at me, I can, and must, only hear him. But most often I have to be led to hear or believe him, I hear tell what he says, through the voice of another, another other, a messenger, an angel, a prophet [...] an intermediary who speaks between God and myself. There is no face-to-face exchange of looks between God and myself, between the other and myself. (4)

Ibn 'Arabi claims that the call is from God, that one must hear to be eligible to go on this journey, while Derrida claims that one can never convene with God, that His complete and utter transcendence can only be overcome through the presence of intermediaries, people who don't allow you to see, listen or speak to Him but only transmit to you His divine messages. They lead you to hear not His voice but His word through their voices. This research aims to refute, or rather to balance the absolute transcendence that Derrida is portraying, which places man in exile from him/herself firstly and from God secondly, with the merciful eminence that allows for some who are able to hear the call to see the unseen.

^{4(?)} Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, P.91

This will be accomplished through demonstrating the Sufi path vis-à-vis the Platonic depiction of this journey, given in the allegory of the cave, and the Heideggerian illustration of it. I chose Plato's allegory because it demonstrates, like the nocturnal journey, an ontological/epistemological journey of man that brings about illumination. The Heideggerian interpretation of this allegory presents a modern philosophical analysis of the condition of man in his/her ontological search as portrayed by Plato. Thus, the comparison of the three depictions of this journey would fuse the religious, the ancient and the modern philosophical analysis. This I hope will bring out a harmonious amalgam that will shed light on the necessity of such a journey for man, a necessity that is proven by its prevalence in various traditions.

The research aims primarily to demonstrate that the human gaze towards the unseen has brought a vision that is similar in different cultural, religious and philosophical contexts.

Nevertheless, I hope I can avoid falling in the pitfalls of others for I do not aim to offer a mere juxtaposition of religion and philosophy, or a comparison that skids over the intrinsic differences which individualizes each entity. Rather, the comparison hopes to bring out the differences as well as the similarities through close, in-depth reading and analysis of each of the texts mentioned. One should give oneself completely to the text so as to see it. Or to put in Heidegger's word of advice to his students; "[the understanding of this interpretation depends] only on whether you have yourselves experienced or are ready to experience a necessity to be here now-whether, in this allegory [of the cave], something unavoidable speaks in and to you. Without this all science remains mere outward show and all philosophy a façade."⁽⁵⁾ Finally, the facets that will be covered through this work will be of two main genres; philosophical and literary.

Chapter 1: Cosmos as Vision:

⁵(?) Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, P.13

The cosmos is the place of sight, vision. Whether it is the microcosm or the macrocosm, the cosmos is where one directs one's eyes to see, or to listen before seeing. The cosmos is the playground of sight. It is where the eyes can jump from one item to the next. It is the medium through which a person can comport him/herself to seeing, and what can be seen. But, cosmos is that which is maintained by the look of the Divine. Moreover, the cosmos is the exteriorization of the Divine names, or of Plato's eternal unchanging forms. Hence, it is what presents itself, what offers itself to sight as vision. The cosmological scheme is also of central importance in both the philosophic and the Sufi tradition, since it locates the seeker within a certain milieu. The cosmos is the place of knowledge of Him that He offered in order to be known. Man is set in the truth is a direct consequence of the correspondence of the various presences, because the visible world, the cosmos is a replica of the Divine Essence and because man contains within him/herself the various ontological levels.

Ibn 'Arabi explains the cosmos in relation to the two divine names Hidden/Nonmanifest and Manifest:

In respect of its parts and its differentiations, the cosmos is like the limbs of the name Manifest. In respect of its meanings and the differentiations of its level, it is like nonmanifest, spiritual faculties of the name Nonmanifest, faculties that are only known through their traces. Hence the configuration of the cosmos stands on the Manifest and Nonmanifest; and He is the Knower of each thing [57:3])⁶⁾

The cosmos is constructed upon the two pillars of manifestness and hiddenness. Ibn 'Arabi describes the cosmos as the "limbs of the name Manifest". The cosmos is the externalization of the name Manifest. It also displays the same functions as the limbs. Those functions include mobility and accessibility to others. A body relies on its limbs to connect it to the outside world and to gain access to itself. A

⁶⁾(Chittick, *The Self Disclosure of God*, P.207

limbless body is one that is incomplete. Without limbs, a body is impaired, paralyzed, and deformed. The body cannot function as it is meant to function. Therefore, if one accepts Ibn 'Arabi's metaphor one would come to conclude that the name Manifest would be impaired without the cosmos, that the name is completed and fulfilled through the cosmos. On the other hand Ibn 'Arabi explains that the cosmos partakes in the name Nonmanifest/Hidden through its intrinsic meanings and spiritual dimension which is known only through the traces which are felt in the manifest world. The trace is the signifier, the imprint of the hidden on the outside; it is what makes people aware of the existence of a subtle, a hidden, an inside. The trace is what is presented to sense-perception in order to know and admit that it –sense perception- already knows that there is a world hidden from it, to substantiate its existence. The trace of the unhidden has been largely overlooked by empiricism, or rather has been categorized as another aspect of manifestness –which according to this philosophy is all that is relevant. The subtleties of this world are a manifestation of the Nonmanifest, but a manifestation which carries the same quality of subtleness as the divine name. Therefore, this manifestation is a hidden one. The hidden meanings are always shielded by the manifest bodies. Hence, cosmological reality always, and necessarily, mirrors the two divine names Manifest and Hidden/Nonmanifest. Ibn 'Arabi further explains the interrelationship between these two divine names and their impact upon the cosmos, saying:

The cosmos is never empty of these two relations [Hidden and Manifest] in this world and the last world. When increase occurs in the cosmos to the cosmos, this derives from the hidden. Increase never ceases, for the cosmos is an increase, emerging from hiddenness to disclosure never-endingly. The Real hears the disclosed as king of the askers by way of the name Manifest, and He hears their hidden asking by way of the name Nonmanifest. When He bestows upon the asker what he asks for, the name Nonmanifest bestows it upon the Manifest, and the Manifest bestows it upon the asker. Hence the Manifest is the veil-keeper

of the Hidden, just as awareness is the veil-keeper of knowledge.)⁷(

The cosmos as it is, as it is presented to our eyes, is a continuous emanation from its primordial hiddenness to manifestness. This view is also affirmed by the ancient Greeks. Heraclitus said; "[Nature,] beings in their being, loves to conceal itself"⁸(. Thus the originary stance of existence is concealment and hiddenness. The constant creation, which is negation and affirmation, of the cosmos is the transferal of being from its original state of hiddenness to manifestness. This transferal doesn't consume the hidden/nonmanifest. Rather, for something to be manifest it necessarily has to contain within itself the hidden, since this is the nature of the manifest as offering itself to sight for the hidden. The manifest always sacrifices itself to protect the hiddenness of the hidden. Therefore, creation of the cosmos can be understood as a cycle through which the manifest is constantly renewed from the nonmanifest and the nonmanifest is renewed from the infinite subtleties of the Divine names. The divine theophany is beyond depletion. The constant existence of these two attributes is of imperative importance to the essential synchrony between the cosmos and the Lord. God hears the hidden plea of the soul of His servant through the name Hidden and He listens to what is asked vocally through the name Manifest. He is the one who knows your secret and what you pronounce. He knows them through these Names. God created the cosmos as having those two attributes, so that He can be with it in both states. This description of God stands in contradistinction to what Derrida presented as the aloof God who banished human beings on earth while emitting various canons through His messengers. The messengers only transmit those messages from the divine side to the human side but not vice versa. The God Ibn 'Arabi is describing is one who listens to His servants whichever way they choose to communicate with Him.

⁷)(Chittick, *The Self Disclosure of God*, P.206 & 207

⁸)(Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, P.9

Ibn 'Arabi also divulges the procedure through which a plea is answered through the names Manifest and Hidden. The process of fulfillment reflects, as well, the process of creation; "When He bestows upon the asker what he asks for, the name Nonmanifest bestows it upon the Manifest and the Manifest bestows it upon the asker". This statement reflects a hierarchy of the names, where the name Nonmanifest is closer to Him and the name Manifest is closer to creation. This is because creation, though it has hiddenness, is more connected to manifestness since it belongs to the world of forms –not Plato's forms, but the material world, the world of dense matter, while, He is the Subtlest. Hence, He bestows upon them what they asked for through the form which they are closer to, so that they may recognize His grace and know that He is with them wherever they are. Also, the process of fulfillment is an increase in the cosmos, since it is the externalization of the hidden to become manifest, so it is creation. But this creation does not deplete the hiddenness of the nonmanifest because it is forever renewed since God forever listens to His servants and gives them what they ask, and since the asking never stops so does the answering and hence creation. This externalization is, as well, the offering of the manifest as the "veil-keeper of the hidden". The manifest is the guard of hiddenness and it remains so, even if one were to witness the hidden through his/her own hidden.

When you are with the divine name Nonmanifest in the state of witnessing and vision, this divine name Nonmanifest –with which you are unified with at this moment and which you are witnessing- is a curtain over the divine name Manifest. Do not say that the property of manifestation has been transferred to the divine name Nonmanifest and that nonmanifestation has fallen to the lot of the name Manifest. On the contrary, the Manifest remains as it was in property, bestowing forms on the whole cosmos. As for the Nonmanifest, even if it is witnessed, it remains in its state as nonmanifest, bestowing meanings that are curtailed by the manifest forms. So, this is the highest curtains, and the highest and most hidden of curtailed things.)⁹(

⁹)(Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, P.214

The hidden/nonmanifest can also become the vigil of the manifest. This state presents a very unique station for the traveler. At this station the seeker would cease to belong to the world of forms, while still being in it he/she will not be of it. Their hidden bodies would veil their manifest ones. They would be in a constant state of amazement for even though their bodies remain stranded upon earth, inside the cave they see reality as it is not as it appears.

Those who see that the Real is the mirror of the cosmos and that the cosmos sees itself within Him will make the cosmos like the sun and the Real like the full moon. Both likenesses are correct and do occur. Know also that God has intended to strike likenesses for people. He says, *Even so does God strike likenesses for those who answer their Lord [13:18]. Hence the whole cosmos and everything within it is a striking of likenesses so that it may be known from it that He is He. He has made the cosmos as a signifier of Himself and has commanded us to consider it.*)¹⁰(

The cosmos is a signifier to the signified that is God. God offers human beings the world as a gift, as a means of introduction. He offered man the world, both big and small, to consider it and appreciate His manifestation in everything that presents itself to man. God said that He created man to worship Him. The body worships through actions such as prayer and fasting, while the soul worships through iterating His oneness, and this oneness proclaims that all is Him. The soul reaches this station by considering the likenesses that God has offered, by considering herself and the signifiers that attest to His absolute oneness.

As declared by the Brethren of Purity, and many more; man is the microcosm that mimics in every way the macrocosm. Both cosms have been brought into existence through the Divine Sigh (*nafas al-Rahman*), or the Breath of the All-Merciful:

One of the characteristics of the Lover, should He possess form, is to breathe, since in that breathing is found the enjoyment of

¹⁰)³(Chittick, *The self-Disclosure of God*, P.213

what is sought. The Breath emerges from a root, which is love for the creatures, to whom He desired to make Himself known, so that they might know Him. Hence the cloud comes to be; it is called the Real Through Whom Creation Takes Place. The cloud is the substance of the cosmos, so it receives all forms, spirits, and natures of the cosmos; it is a receptacle ad infinitum. This is the origin of His love for us.)¹¹(

In this passage Ibn 'Arabi is referring to a Divine saying that is known through unveiling (*Kashf*):

"His saying to some of His prophets when He was asked:

((Why did You create creation?

He said: I was a hidden treasure that wasn't known and I loved to be known, so I created creation and I got to know them so they knew Me))"¹²(

Therefore, the act of creation itself is an act of Divine desire that emanates from love. Ibn 'Arabi's rendering of the *Hadith* might seem odd because of its formulation. Yet the *Hadith* presents a new angle to the well known saying and that is the extra initiative God presented humanity with. God didn't create the cosmos and leave it in a state of ignorance, He got to know them, He presented Himself to them. Hence, the reciprocity of knowledge is granted on the basis of this primal and primordial knowledge of the Divine. In the same passage Ibn 'Arabi is referring to a Prophetic saying. The Prophet was asked where God resided before the creation of the universe, he answered that He was in a cloud (*'amaa*). Above it there was no air and below it there was no air. Thus in this tunnel, God and His names only existed. One should always bear in mind that the distinction between God and His names is one that mirrors a distinction between essence and attributes. Ibn 'Arabi warns anyone from assuming a multiplicity of essence.

¹¹⁾ (Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, P.128

¹²⁾ (Ibn 'Arabi, *'Uqlat al-Mustawfiz*, P.78

You should know that "divine names" is an expression for a state that is bestowed by the realities. So pay attention and do not imagine manyness or ontological combination (*al-ijtima' al-wujudi*) [...] the Essence of the Real is One in respect of being the Essence.)¹³(

The names yearned to be manifest and to witness their outward perfection. Ibn 'Arabi explains:

Though the names find delight in their own essence and perfection, they find even greater delight through the manifestation of their effects within the entities of the loci of manifestation, since thereby their authority (*sultan*) becomes manifest. ((¹⁴

Hence the Divine Sigh/the Breath of the all Merciful appeased the names by exteriorizing their perfection and authority among the engendered things. That is what Ibn 'Arabi meant by saying "in that breathing is found the enjoyment of what is sought." The names seek outward manifestation in the form of the cosmos, because this manifestation reflects the presence of each name, and the Divine breath offers that. The manifestation of the Divine names produced five planes of being; each plane is a "typification" of the previous one. Hence the visible world represents a muddled picture of the Divine Essence. This picture, even though unclear, still carries the imprint and magnanimity of the Essence. It contains the original essence of unhiddenness/nonmanifestness

Henri Corbin, a French thinker, has analyzed Ibn 'Arabi's theory of imagination which is central to man's vision of the divine within the cosmological scene. For Corbin the imagination plays an integral role in the epistemological quest. He says:

This imagination is subject to two possibilities, since it can reveal the hidden by continuing to veil it. It is a veil; this veil can become so opaque as to imprison us and catch us in a trap of

¹³)(Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, P.53

¹⁴)(Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, P.53

idolatry. But it can also become increasingly transparent, for its sole purpose is to enable the mystic to gain knowledge of being as it is, because it is the gnosis of salvation.)¹⁵(

The imagination that Corbin is referring to is not a human faculty; rather it is an intermediate plane of being between the spiritual and corporeal worlds. On this plane, the Names descend in order to be known. Each vassal ascends to meet his/her Lord – this Lord is not a separate ontological entity, but the possessive name (¹⁶) of each individual-. The encounters are a way of knowing God; He gave us His names so we can call Him by them. Nevertheless, as Corbin insists, they have to be transparent, and as Heidegger put it "beings letting through of beings". The manifest which is the "veil-keeper" of the hidden has to offer itself for the hidden to remain hidden/nonmanifest. Yet, the veil can either show the hidden, or bar it off. If the veil became opaque one would be blind to the truth within it. Corbin ends the quote with describing this knowledge as the "gnosis of salvation". This statement would be interesting to juxtapose to the allegory of the cave. The prisoners within the cave, when they become aware of their situation as prisoner, and venture upon this journey to know being, would be saved not just from the shackles at the bottom of the cave but from shackles of their former knowledge of what being is. That is why it is the "gnosis of salvation", which is contrasted with those who free themselves from the captivity of the cave but bind themselves to their former passive acceptance of the shadows as truths in themselves, this can also be known as "naïve realism". Heidegger comments on the situation of a prisoner who is seduced by the appearance

¹⁵)(Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, P.187

¹⁶(?) Since the manifestation of the world is a fulfillment of the yearning of the names to exercise and reflect their authority upon engendered things, each human being is encompassed under a certain name, the possessive name, and this name reflects itself in this human being.

of the ideas and doesn't see them as they really are as occasions of unhiddenness, saying:

Whoever comes out of the cave only to loose himself in the 'appearing' [scheinen] of the ideas would not truly understand these, i.e. he would not perceive the ideas as letting-through, as setting beings free, as wrenching beings from hiddenness and overcoming their concealment. He would regard the ideas themselves as just beings of a higher order. Deconcealment would not occur at all.)¹⁷(

This person, described by Heidegger here would be as Corbin put it, caught in idolatry. He/she would view the ideas/names as "beings of a higher order" rather than occasions for existence through comportment. The names/ideas describe relationships. They do not acquire an ontological entity away from the good, or the Divine Essence. For them –names/ideas- to fulfill their role they have to be precisely vacated of any appearance. The veil has to be transparent to show being.

Furthermore, cosmological elements, such as light and dark play an important role for both Heidegger and Ibn 'Arabi. Heidegger primarily explains the distinct nature of those two elements.

Light (brightness) too is transparent, but in a stricter sense: as the genuinely originally transparent. We see two things: light first lets the object through *to be viewed* as something visible, and also lets-through the view *to the visible object*. Light is what *lets-through*. [...] Correspondingly with the dark. This is only a limit case of brightness and thus still has the character of a kind of brightness: a brightness that *no longer lets anything through*, that *takes away* visibility from things, that fails to make visible. It is what does not let-through.)¹⁸(

Light is transparency and dark is what bars the way. Light allows vision to occur. It is the medium and precondition of sight. Ibn 'Arabi on the other hand offers traditional associations with those cosmological elements, such as the attribution of light with

¹⁷)(Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, P.65 & 66

¹⁸)(Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, P.41

good and dark with evil.

The entire cosmos is made-up of two elements and they are; light and darkness. All that is good is from light, and all that is evil is from darkness. The angels' realm exists from the element of light, so good came from them –they do not disobey Allah whatever He commands-. And the devils' realm is from the element of darkness, so evil came from them. As for Adam and his children, their clay was made from darkness and light, and their element was formulated out of good and evil.)¹⁹(

Ibn 'Arabi presents a widely known and fairly accepted association of light and dark. Yet, when one tries to translate Ibn 'Arabi's words using the Heideggerian understanding of light and dark, one is faced with more than the usual association of light with good, and darkness with evil. Ibn 'Arabi asserted that angels are made from light and that is why they don't disobey their Lord. Light as explained by Heidegger is transparent; it is what lets-through and allows for sight to take place. If one were to apply this to angels, then angels would necessarily be transparent. This transparency is what enables them to always follow God's command, because they are transparent they show the genuinely unhidden, the good, which in its highest forms is God. While the devil is made from absolute darkness, even though ironically the devil –within the Islamic context- was made of fire, Ibn 'Arabi explains that he is made from the element of darkness. Perhaps we can understand this by remembering that according to Heidegger dark is the failure of comportment. It is what bars sight, since it doesn't allow the visible for view. This failure might be understood with regards to another Muslim tale, when God commanded the devil to prostrate to Adam and the devil refused. His refusal can be interpreted as a pertinent part of his dark nature. Since the devil was made from the element of darkness, he didn't allow for the comportment of being towards being. The devil's dark nature prevented him from seeing the originary being within himself. He has the natural disposition to look inside himself and not be

¹⁹)(Ibn 'Arabi, *Shajarat al-Kawn*, P.7

able to see. Thus, when he was ordered by God to prostrate to Adam, he looked within himself and saw nothing but himself and thus thought that he was the originally unhidden and refused to succumb to the divine command. Adam as the vehicle of God's mercy is a part of His being, and the devil so far as he was created by God is also a part of His being. And it was God's word that the devil would prostrate to Adam; the prostration is the occasion of sight, since listening is the precondition of seeing. It is the comportment of being within the devil to the being within Adam and the coinciding of both of their beings. However, since the nature of the devil is dark the letting-through didn't occur. As for man ⁽²⁰⁾ Ibn 'Arabi describes him/her as an amalgam of light and dark, good and evil. Man is that being who is given the choice, since it is within his/her make-up lies both elements, both paths. The devil's nature is what rendered him unable to obey God's command, likewise the angels' nature as light is what rendered them able to bring forth being and follow God's command, while man can go either way. Consequently, man is the most esteemed being to God, since it is conscious choice that leads him/her to God and not the natural aptitude and disposition.

The nature of light and dark has been discussed to account for their role within the cosmos.

Light whose epiphanic form (*mazhar*), to wit, sensuous light, the Sun, opens up the forms that corresponds to these Names in the world of visibility (*shahada*). Light is the agent of cosmogony, because it is the agent of revelation, that is to say, of knowledge.)²¹(

Heidegger also accounts for the nature and role of light in the process of illumination, which is freedom, in the following passage:

First we ask what light has to do with genuine freedom. Does the

Man is described here as part of the cosmological scheme ^(?)²⁰
²¹)(Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, P.191

connection with light perhaps make being-free more free? What *is it* about the light? The light illuminates, spreads itself out as brightness. More precisely the light *lights up*. 'The night is lit up as bright as day' (Schiller). The night is illuminated, brightened; what does that mean? The dark is lit up. We speak of a 'forest clearing' [*Waldlichtung*]; that means a place which is *free* from trees, which gives free access for going through and looking through. *Lighting up* therefore means making-free, giving-free. Light lights up, makes-free, provides a way through. The dark bars the way, does *not* allow things to show themselves, conceals them. That the dark becomes lit up means: it goes over into light, the dark is *made* to give-free.

The light lights up. Thus to see in light means to comport myself in advance to what gives-free. What gives-free is the freeing, free-making. To see in light means to become free for what makes-free, to which I comport myself. In this comportment I am able to be *authentically* free, i.e. I can acquire power by *binding* myself to what lets-through. Such binding is not a loss of power, but a taking into one's possession.)²²(

Corbin attributed to light the assignment of the carrier which transports knowledge. On the view we are developing here, this mission is fulfilled through light's ability to "open up", to give freedom, to allow the forms to be free to bind themselves to truth. Light is the opening up, the overcoming of darkness. It is what allows the visible to be visible, and what allows beings to comport themselves from becoming to being, i.e. light allows the Names to witness their outward manifestation. The transportation of knowledge can only happen within the light, i.e. light is the foundation and ground for this knowledge, for binding and recognizing this knowledge. This knowledge is the knowledge of the self; the knowledge of myself as a manifestation of one of the Names. Light allows for the self to be present to itself under the light. Knowledge is the clearing (like Heidegger's example of the forest clearing) of the darkness within the self. This clearing allows the voice of the other to be heard and prepares the eyes for the vision of the unseen. In addition, the subjugation of darkness by the light as depicted by Heidegger is one that mirrors the violence of this change from darkness

²²)(Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, P.43 &44

to light. Light opens-up, gives free and pushes itself through to expel darkness. It carries the same imprint of violence that compartment to being has, because it is an agent of compartment; a violence which is experienced by the prisoner as soon as he/she exits the cave and is overwhelmed by the light and is given over to knowledge of the hidden to the presence of him/herself. The prophet Muhammad summed up the cosmological situation with regards to light and darkness in the following saying;

Allah created His creation in darkness, then sprayed upon them from His light, the ones who are hit by this light are guided, and those whom the light missed are lost and tempted.)²³(

The cosmos is the reflection of the eternal realities that are entrenched in the world. Whether one labels these realities divine names or ideas/forms is beside the point. The existence of these realities marks the cosmological subsistence. Within these realities man is captivated and shackled, but he/she has the choice of being consumed in the apparitions which mimic these realities or see them as they are; mere images for something that his/her soul witnessed, to see that even these eternal realities are occasions for existence, for knowledge of the self. Man has to temporarily overcome his/her innate darkness and allow light which is transparent yet imbued with knowledge; this knowledge would allow this man who was violated by light to see what was once unseen.

²³)(Ibn 'Arabi, *Shajarat al-Kawn*, P.4

Chapter 2: Man as the Carrier of Vision:

Man is that being whose liberation and illumination is the subject of Plato's allegory of the cave, of the Prophet's journey of ascension, of the Sufi path and of Heidegger's *Essence of Truth*. Man is the being for whom the cosmos was created, according to the doctrine of Islam. The nature of man's soul, his/her disposition, and original position with regards to truth is clearly outlined by Heidegger. He wrote;

In image there is contained the Eidos, the visible; actually a look, i.e., what we have already encountered as shadows, reflections and so forth. The individual things as image are only images of Eidos, or put the other way around, the Eidos is the what-being, the genuine being of the image. It is now asked quite generally: what is such an image? [...] An image (look) of something is

what resembles the genuinely unhidden, which latter we call the original.)²⁴(

Heidegger then introduces the imminence of being which he refers to as the genuinely unhidden in every image. This content of originality within the replicas doesn't undermine the original or discount it in any way. The images are likenesses given to the people in the cave to be considered further, like the likenesses that God strikes to His creation, for them to see the trace of being which unite and underlie each individual image. That is how the prisoners at the bottom of Plato's cave can comport themselves to a faint image of truth/being. But, only the prisoners can listen to the guide, renounce their slumber, and comport themselves to the truth that is beyond the shadows or merely accept the shadows as truth.

However strange this situation [that of the people in the cave] remains, and however peculiar these people, in this situation too man already has the unhidden. Plato does not say *an* unhidden but *the* unhidden. This means that man, from childhood on and already in his nature is set before the unhidden. What this is in each case, what in particular cases, presents itself as unhidden, is another question. Even in this strange situation in the cave, the human being is not sealed off from everything else as a simple I, but is directed to what is *before* him: the unhidden. It belongs to being human – this is already indicated at the beginning of the allegory – to stand in the unhidden, or as we say, in the true, in the truth. Being human means, and may the situation be ever so peculiar, not only, but among other things: *to comport oneself to the unhidden.*)²⁵(

Thus, the essential stance of man, in Plato's allegory, in Heidegger's *Essence of Truth* and in Ibn 'Arabi, is in the truth. Even though, man exists within the visible world he/she is present to him/herself within the unhidden. Heidegger was keen on describing the epistemological path of man to knowledge as from within. Man isn't set against the truth, against being. He/she doesn't treat being as an object, as Man is

²⁴)³(Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, P.50

²⁵)³(Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, P.20

set out in his/her originary stance within being, within the truth. Truth, the originally unhidden, being are all prior to man, prior to his/her existence⁽²⁶⁾.

Furthermore, the Divine Names which are responsible for the manifestation of the cosmos are congruent with the Platonic ideas/forms in their eternal unchangeability, also in the fact that both the Names and the Platonic ideas have authority over all existent things. Heidegger expounds on the nature of ideas, saying:

At the origin of the unhiddenness of beings, i.e. at beings letting through of beings, the perceiving is no less involved than what is perceived in the perceiving – the ideas. Together these constitute unhiddenness, meaning they are nothing 'in themselves', they are never objects. The ideas as what is sighted, are (if we can speak in this way at all) only in this perceiving seeing; they have an essential connection with perceiving. The ideas therefore, are not present but somehow hidden objects which one could lure out through a kind of hocus-pocus. Just as little do they carry around subjects, i.e. are they something subjective in the sense of being constituted and thought –up by subjects (humans, as we know them). They are neither things, objective, nor are they thought-up, subjective.)²⁷(

Heidegger introduces a conception of the ideas which seems, at first glance, quite foreign to the spirit of Islam and even more to the originary Platonic ideas because Heidegger put the precondition of the existence of the ideas, which according to the Platonic understanding are eternal and unchanging, into the interaction with the perceiver. As Heidegger understands the nature of the ideas, if one can still use the word nature since they are nothing in themselves. The interaction is essential for both the ideas and the perceiver, the interaction is the occurrence of existence. This brings together both parties from nothingness to being. Hence their yoking together under perception is the moment of their existence par excellence. On closer examination one might recognize some similarities between Heidegger's understanding of the

²⁶(?) Prior is not meant in the temporal sense rather in the categorical sense

²⁷)(Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, P.52

ideas and the Divine Names. Firstly, Heidegger asserts that the ideas depend on the perception of the perceiver. This was alluded to by Ibn 'Arabi's quote of an anonymous poet;

Though we [Divine Names] sit in the seat of joy,

none but you [cosmos; micro and macro] can complete our joy.)²⁸(

The Names were in a state of anguish, when they were hidden. Heidegger's hesitancy in fixating the ideas among one of the most important philosophical dichotomies; subject-object, signifies the peculiar nature of the ideas. The ideas, according to Heidegger, are not static emblems that are decorating the heavens. Rather their existence subsists in their interactivity with the perceiver. On this point, the divine names differ from the ideas. The divine names are independent in entity from the cosmos, meaning their entity belongs primarily to the essence, while the ideas only exist in their intercourse with the perceiver, if there was no perceiver the ideas would remain in the abyss of nonexistence. Moreover, at the beginning of the quote, Heidegger affirms the "origin of the unhiddenness of beings, i.e. at beings letting through of beings". Consequently, the ideas are the medium through which unhiddenness can occur. This medium has to be transparent to "let through being". Hence, man is also a medium that needs to be transparent to bring about the original constitution of truth that is within. The cosmological formulation of man from light and dark has been briefly discussed in the previous chapter. Yet, the necessity for this mixed constitution was not discussed. Regarding this matter Ibn 'Arabi says:

Know that the human soul has two faces; one directed towards sheer light, and the other to sheer darkness, and this is its nature, also its essence is between light and darkness, and the reason for that is he was created with a natural elemental constitution like the all-encompassing spirit (*al-nafs al-kulliyya*) which is between the cloud dust (*al-habaa*) and the mind. The cloud dust is utter darkness, and the mind is utter light. When the human subtlety

²⁸)(Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, P.53

isn't overcome by both attributes, it becomes moderate and gives each person his/her exact right [...] and I say: as for the person who is ruled by his excessive whiteness; he is consumed in gazing in the world of light, which leaves nothing in him to manage his natural world, so he is quickly corrupted before the occurrence of perfection: thus it was undesirable. Likewise the other side which is the excessive blackness which prevents him from looking within his nature for the world of light, and that is also undesirable.)²⁹(

Ibn 'Arabi sheds light on the need for both elements of light and darkness in human life. Darkness is a necessary ingredient because the soul is within the body. The body protects the fragile soul from perishing. The body is supposed to be cared for, since it is a gift.

This stands in difference with some of the doctrines of Christianity where the body is associated with sin and darkness and is meant to be overcome by light)³⁰(. Plato also believes in the necessity of the light and dark elements for the actualization of the soul. In the *Phaedrus* he likens the soul to a chariot:

Let us liken the soul to the innate power of a winged team of horses and a charioteer. All of the gods' horses and charioteers are themselves good and from good stock, but the situation of other horses and charioteers is mixed. For us men, first of all, a charioteer rules over and guides a pair of horses, and secondly, one of these horses is noble and good and from like stock, but the other is the opposite and from opposite stock. So, for us chariot-driving must be difficult and irksome.)³¹(

The function of the charioteer is to ascend to the heavens so it can join the procession of the gods and gaze upon being. This function can't be fulfilled unless the charioteer can manage both horses; the white and the black, and harmoniously join them for the heavenly journey. This job is as Plato said "difficult and irksome", since the white

²⁹)(Ibn 'Arabi, *Kitab al-Tadbirat al-Ilahiyya*, P.353

³⁰)?(An example is in marriage; sexual intercourse' sole purpose is to produce children. Those who wish to stop having children must exercise abstinence as the only permissible means for birth control.

³¹)(Plato, *Phaedrus*, 246b

horse pulls towards the heavens and the black one with its density pulls towards the ground. The moderate soul is the one that does not liberate itself from the black horse but tames its rebellious nature through succumbing to its needs sometimes while forbidding it at other times. If the charioteer would get rid of the black horse, the white horse would not be able to pull the chariot to the heavens because the chariot needs two horses to move, and this is what Ibn 'Arabi meant when he said that the white soul would be consumed in looking at the world of light and it will quickly become corrupt. The chariot that is missing a horse would be a weak chariot that would be overpowered by other chariots and would not fulfill its final destiny of joining the heavenly journey. Consequently, that person would not be able to see the unseen.

The question concerning the role of man in this universe has been asked by every single individual who starts on his/her own journey of self knowledge. Plato articulates the character traits of the seeker of knowledge as follows:

He is the kind of person who in his very essence is eager for beings as such and will not rest content with the various particulars which opinion takes for beings, who instead goes forward without allowing himself to be blinded and does not weaken in his desire, his innermost drive, till he has grasped the what being of everything as it is, within the whole, and does this with the faculty of the soul fitted to do so, that is with the faculty having the same source as the idea. Seeing with this faculty of the soul, he who truly strives for knowledge approaches and unites with beingful beings. In so far as he brings about genuine perceiving, comprehending and unhiddenness, he will truly know and truly exist and find nourishment, and so free himself from travail [i.e. suffering in general].⁽³²⁾

The seeker is one who inquires about the nature of beings in their Being. This person is not deceived by the opinions people offer him/her concerning the true nature of Being, rather he/she ventures upon the quest of seeing being qua Being. He/she is not satisfied with exterior knowledge of the beingful beings. He/she rather seeks their intimacy, or what Heidegger called their union: "he who truly strives for knowledge

³²⁾(Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, P. 49&50

approaches and unites with beingful beings".

The seeker is the lover of knowledge, lover of being, and love's ultimate fulfillment in the physical universe occurs in sexual intercourse, but sexual intercourse is not here to be understood only on this level of meaning; it also describes the metaphysical union of souls which creates the medium for the exchange of joy and ecstasy. It is the giving of the self to the other, the reciprocity of exchange of the self in union. The soul is constituted in its orgiastic union with being. This union is the very foundation of existence not only in the biological sense of reproduction, but also in the Heideggerian sense of a yoking together that allows presence. That is why sexual intercourse is a crucial metaphor in Sufi poetry. The sexual encounter is what the seeker means to attain vivid knowledge and truth. Ibn 'Arabi displays the seeker's pride in his/her knowledge which is a product of the orgiastic union in saying;

He said, that is the perfect one: My Lord talked to me. And to him alludes the Gnostic saying: you took your science from drawings, dead from dead, and we took our science from the Alive who doesn't die.)³³(

The drawings are the shadows displayed on the walls of the cave, and they come from the dead objects that the puppeteers are moving. These drawings represent being for those who are sitting at the bottom of the cave, while the aware soul is able to distinguish between being and shadows. The Gnostics described knowledge as from the Alive, which is one of the names of God; consequently His science would have the same characteristic. It would be alive with this life and would be, thus, eternal; it would transcend time and space, meaning it would belong to the suprasensible world.

To be able to acquire this knowledge, one needs the appropriate tool. That is why Plato said that the seeker sees with the "faculty of the soul having the same source as the idea". This person sees, understands and dwells in being through his/her own being. The genuinely unhidden, which is the most beingful being, is within the seeker in some form. It is what drives the seeker to seek in the first place, to understand the mystery that is within. Hence, the search and journey of the seeker is natural insofar as it is within his/her nature to unite with that which is like him/her, to

³³)² (Ibn 'Arabi, *Risala ila al-Fakhr al-Razi*, P.210

be with that being which he/she was a part of at some moment in time, if one can use spatial-temporal language. This individuated being is a derivative of the original being which is within the Eidos, the look, the image. I have to reiterate; what I am aiming towards is not a pantheistic understanding of the world. Rather it is an understanding of man as a natural being who is integrated with the cosmos, and who is a part of it because they both share a relationship towards the divine. They were both part of the divine, yet the divine is ultimately independent of them. The need of both cosmos and man of the divine, or the good, is a product of the presence of some part of the divine within them which creates this yearning to unite and return to the origin, the source. The divine is always within the heart of His creation, or to put it in other words, the most beingful being is within all beings and it is only through and within this discovery that man truly exists. Ibn 'Arabi describes two situations that man –as a being which contains a part of the divine- finds him/herself in;

The hearts of the heedless are the burying grounds of the Real, just as their manifest sides are the loci of His self-disclosure. He is in the very hearts of His servants in respect of the fact that their hearts are the locus of knowledge of Him. However, they fail to observe His inviolability and halt not at His limits, so He is within them like the corpse that has no ruling property in its grave. Rather, the ruling property belongs to the grave, since it has covered the corpse and curtained it from the eyes of the viewers. So, also is the ruling property of nature when it becomes manifest in opposition of the *shariah*, for such a person, the *shariah* is a corpse during this time.)³⁴(

Man as a being was given the choice. The choice is to acknowledge one's own nature and listen to the divine which is within oneself through applying the rules of *Shari'ah* (Islamic Law) and through pursuing the search that unearths the truth within, or to disregard this nature and live as a severed part of the cosmos, to give a deaf ear to the voice of the divine within and continue to cover-up one's true self and give the ruling power to clay. The Quran has called out to this person in sura 74; *Al-Muddathir* (The covered one); "Oh covered one, stand-up warn, and praise your God" [74:1-3]. God

³⁴)(Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure*, P.212

called out to the one who veiled oneself from truth, because He has given man the choice.³⁵ That is why Ibn 'Arabi addresses man saying: "The inanimate objects are better servants [of God] than yourself, because its servitude is within itself"³⁶(, meaning, because they do not have the choice to disregard their own nature they are better servants. Man was only given the choice, because he/she is closer to Him than any other being. Man is God's vicegerent on earth, he/she rule in place of Him on earth. Furthermore, the process of reestablishing the link between man and God, who is in his/her heart, isn't an eradication of the self; rather it is the eradication of the false pretence of purity of the self. It is the resurrection of the originary self, the self which includes the other, the ultimate other who is always at work in the self's constitution. It is the turning of the soul from its state of desperate solipsism to commune and communicate with being qua being. It is the primordial occasion of self consciousness; when the self recognizes the imminence of the transcendental subject which it has searched for, to know that being has always been within.

Returning to Plato, he asserts that the seeker of knowledge will "truly exist and find nourishment" through this knowledge, through this look; the look of something that is inside myself but does not belong to it, to something that corresponds to it on the outside. This vision is the union of what is within with what is without, since both are essentially and necessarily the same. The person who beholds this knowledge is freed "from travail [i.e. suffering in general]", he/she understands that suffering is only a

I have checked two references for the interpretation of this verse. The first is Ibn Kathir's (?)³⁵ interpretation which mentions the, fairly known, occasion of descent; after the prophet has met with Gabriel in Mount Hira', He went home to his wife and asked her to cover him, and thus it was directed to the prophet at this moment in time. The second reference which is closer to my interpretation is Ibn 'Arabi's. He understands the covered one as the one who is captivated in the flesh of the body and can't .see beyond it

³⁶)(Ibn 'Arabi, *Kitab al-Shahid*, P.20

phase that is meant to pass, an appearance and a veil that has to be transparent to see through and beyond it, while the knowledge that he/she is beheld in, the knowledge that holds him/her in its sway is the lasting and eternal truth. That is why in Islam one hears of the folk of God, of those who fulfill the Platonic criteria of the seeker of knowledge that "no fear is upon them, nor are they sad". The seeker of knowledge is the one who is able to bear the vision of "everything as it is". The condition for this vision is that the eyes be transparent so that the light of being can shine through. The ultimate transparency of sight that is given to human beings was described by Ibn 'Arabi:

For the Reality [i.e. Al-Haqq], he [i.e. Adam] is as the pupil is for the eye through which the act of seeing takes place. Thus he is called *insan* [meaning both man and pupil] for it is by him that the Reality looks on His creation and bestows the Mercy [of existence] on them.)³⁷(

Adam is the vehicle of Divine mercy and is the pupil of the eye of God. Since Adam is the father of humanity, all human beings can be qualified in such a way. God sees through man and things are brought into existence through man, because man –the one who is held within and by the truth- is a transparent medium through which being can be brought forth. This being which shines through man is what maintains the cosmos through a continued creation. The Real looks through man and grants existence. Yet for him/her to be able to fulfill this role he/she has to be of a certain nature:

And since the perfect man is of a perfect image it was fitting that he be God's vicegerent in the world. In this state let us illustrate the constitution of this vicegerent, his status, and his image as it truly is. By "human" we do not only refer to the "animal", but rather the components of humanity and vicegerency which allowed for the perfection of his image. Moreover, not every man is a vicegerent, because the human animal isn't a vicegerent for us. And [vicegerency] is not assigned solely to masculinity. We speak of both men and women, because humanity combines

³⁷) (Ibn 'Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, P.51

masculinity and femininity. Also because masculinity and femininity are only accidents and aren't part of the human essence.)³⁸(

The humanity of the human being resides for Ibn 'Arabi in the mutual inclusiveness of the sexes. That is why he was quick to stipulate that even though he was using masculine terms, perfection doesn't just belong to males but it is attributed equally to females. One also has to point out that in the Arabic language the masculine is used to signify both male and female. Thus, Ibn 'Arabi's constant use of masculine terms in indicating the theory of the perfect man is meant to be representative of both sexes. Furthermore, He enunciates that humanity surmounts sexual difference and that the foundation of human essence doesn't stand on the pillars of male and female (³⁹).

Thus the perfect man is the man or woman who has achieved the premise of humanity, of the human being as the microcosm.

Heidegger presents his readers with a similar type of enlightened person -not in the sense of enlightenment in European history, but as one who has seen the light- and his/her role towards humanity. He calls this person the liberator:

Now we see that the liberator is someone who has become freeing that he looks into the light, has the illuminating view, and thus has a surer footing in the ground of human-historical Dasein. Only then does he gain power to the violence he must employ in liberation. This violence is no blind caprice, but is the dragging of the others out into the light which already fills and binds his

³⁸)(Ibn 'Arabi, *'Uqlat al-Mustawfiz*, P.74 & 75

This might be due to the fact that each sex contains the other within itself. A fact that can easily be (³⁹) vouched for through scientific discovery, in biology to be exact for the skeptics who believe in the purity of the self, the male body has to contain estrogen and progesterone hormones (female hormones) to balance the body and prevent the occurrence of cancer. Nevertheless, the cancer which was prevented by divine mercy from the physiological structure has festered within the selves of human beings through their incessant exclusion of the other from the self. The cancer is ignorance of man and .his/her failure in becoming human

own view. This violence is also not some kind crudity, but is tact of the highest rigour, that rigour of the spirit to which he, the liberator, has already obligated himself.)⁴⁰(

Heidegger understands the liberator to be the one who holds him/herself within the truth. After having left the cave that person returns to it to drag others to the light of truth. Thus, in a way this liberator would be as Ibn 'Arabi put it, the one who "bestows the mercy [of existence] upon them". However Ibn 'Arabi portrayed two types of returnees rather than one:

As for the returnees, they are two men. One of them returned to himself, and he is the descendent that we mentioned. That is the Gnostic for us, and he returned to perfect and complete himself through a way different from the one he once trod. The other returns to creation with the gift of guidance and he is the heir.)⁴¹(

Thus, the mercy is imparted in two ways; first upon the self and secondly upon the other. Perhaps the first kind, which is the perfection of the self, is only a station that precedes the station of the heir. And, maybe, it is a separate station where that person is still concerned with the perfection of the self; but this concern does not emanate from egotism but rather from the inner preparedness, which accounts for the difference. This is a role that Plato himself doomed to a tragic death at the hands of the people this liberator was supposed to help. Here lies a crucial difference between Plato and Ibn 'Arabi. Plato believed that all philosophers should return to the cave to guide others and try to make them see the light of truth, while Ibn 'Arabi understood that perhaps not every traveler would be fit for that role.

Concerning the liberation process itself, Heidegger admits that it is extremely violent. Still, he insists that it "is tact of the highest rigour", an act of mercy, motivated by love. Therefore, one can understand that Heidegger and Ibn 'Arabi are describing the

⁴⁰)³(Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, P.59

⁴¹)³(Ibn 'Arabi, *Risalat al-Anwar*, P.159

same person, the person who has witnessed the Good. This vision "transfigures man through its irradiation, transforms him through its illumination, and brings his life of ultimate destiny and final glory to fulfillment.")⁴²(Yet, how is this search initiated?

Heidegger offers an answer:

What man is cannot be established within the cave. It can only be experienced through participation in the whole history of liberation. We saw that violence belongs to this liberation: man must use a kind of violence to be able to ask about himself. Knowledge of what man is does not fall into anybody's lap, but man must first place himself into question, must *comport* himself to himself as that being *who is asked about*, and who, in this asking, becomes uneasy. The question of man's essence can be put only by man coming to a decision on himself, i.e. on the powers that carry and define him and on his relation to these; in brief, by man *becoming* what he *can be*.)⁴³(

The necessity for questioning yourself about yourself is a pillar for various religious and ethical systems. However, Heidegger placed this necessity as the foundation of liberation. Man must become uneasy through this interrogation; it is not a mere series of questions that asks about one's deeds during the day, but one that exhausts my pretence of existence, that awakens me from my ease and comfort at the bottom of the cave. A questioning that leaves me in a state of constant vacillation and confusion, sitting next to the wall empty handed knowing that I can do nothing. It is the withdrawal of everything familiar. It is my acceptance of my own impotence which is coupled with a deeply rooted discontent about my present state. This is what leads the liberator to choose me, to want me. This questioning struggles against the shackles and the dim light in the cave and liberation must occur, in a way, outside the cave under the light of truth. It is under this light that man as a being can truly decide his/her relationship to other beings. Ibn 'Arabi uses cosmological elements to portray the relationship between the liberated person and God –using the sun, like Plato, as a metaphor for the divine.

⁴²)(Bowering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence*, P.166

⁴³)(Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, P.55

We say: as for the "shining of the full moon" that God set up as an image of the cosmos for His self-disclosure through His ruling property within it, that is the divine vicegerent, who becomes manifest within the cosmos through the names and properties of God – mercy and subjugation, vengeance and pardon. In the same way the sun becomes manifest in the essence of the moon and gives light to the whole of it. Then it is called "full moon". Hence the sun sees itself in the mirror of the full moon's essence, for it drapes it in light through which it is called a "full moon". So also, the Real is seen in the essence of him who He has taken as vicegerent, for he rules through God's ruling property in the cosmos. The Real witnesses him with the witnessing of him who has bestowed the light of knowledge upon him. He says, *I am placing in the earth a vicegerent* [2:30]. He taught him all the names, and He had the angels prostrate themselves to him, because He knew that they were prostrating themselves to Him. It is obvious that the vicegerent becomes manifest only in the attribute of the one who appointed him vicegerent, so the ruling property belongs to the one who appointed him.[...] This is the mystery of "the shining of the full moon". God appointed the form of the full moon along with the sun as a likeness of the divine vicegerency and the fact that the Real sees Himself in the essence of the one whom He appoints as His vicegerent in the perfection of created nature, for he becomes manifest to Him only in His form and His measure.)⁴⁴(

God placed man on earth as His vicegerent, that is, as His main representative. Being a representative does not mean that man assumed the role of divinity, on the contrary man assumes the role of the vicegerent humility.

For man to be a vicegerent, God endowed him/her with the means to communicate with and meet his/her Lord. This means is what Corbin calls "theophanic imagination". As Corbin puts it:

The theophanic conception (by no means limited to a few speculative scholars, but shared by all the circles in which the Apocrypha made their appearance) is that of an apparition which is a shining of the Godhead through the mirror of humanity, after the manner of the light which becomes visible only as it takes form and shines through the figure of a stained-glass window. This union is perceived not on the plane of sensory data, but on the plane of the light which transfigures them, that is to say in "imaginative presence". The Godhead is in mankind as an image is in a mirror. The place of this Presence

⁴⁴) (Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, P.213

[Imaginative] is the consciousness of the individual believer, or more exactly, the theophanic imagination invested in him.)⁴⁵(

Hence, imagination is that gift which God has given man to see Him. This imagination is light: "its light penetrates into sheer nonexistence and gives it the form of an existence [...] and through it self-disclosures are perceived"⁴⁶(. Therefore, the role of man, as invested with imagination, is to be a medium for the Real's witnessing Himself. Man is the vehicle through which He is revealed to Himself in the mirror. The mirror has the honor of carrying the image of the Real, of being an occurrence of unhiddenness. The transcending God is reflected upon the polished mirror of the heart; it is through this reflection that self consciousness occurs.

Heidegger has also introduced *man* as an occurrence of unhiddenness:

When we say that the essence of unhiddenness as deconcealment is a human occurrence, that truth is in essence something human, and when one so naturally struggles against the 'humanization' of the essence of truth, everything depends on what 'human' means here [...] This allegory [Plato's cave] gives precisely the history in which man comes to himself as a being in the midst of beings. And in the history of man's essence it is precisely the occurrence of unhiddenness, i.e. of deconcealment, that is decisive. We first get to know what man is from the essence of unhiddenness; the essence of truth is what first allows the essence of man to be grasped. When we said that precisely this essence of truth is an occurrence which happens to man, this means that the man whose liberation is depicted in the allegory is *set out into the truth* [in die Wahrheit ver-setzt]. That is the mode of his *existence* [Existenz], the fundamental occurrence of his Dasein. Primordial unhiddenness is projective de-concealing as an occurrence happening 'in man', i.e. in his history. Truth is neither *over* man (as validity in itself), nor is it in man as a physical subject, but man is '*in*' the truth. Truth is something greater than man. The latter is in the truth only if, and only in so far as, he masters his nature, holds himself within the unhiddenness of beings and comports himself to this unhiddenness.)⁴⁷(

⁴⁵)²(Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, P.275

⁴⁶)²(Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, P.123

⁴⁷)²(Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, P.54 & 55

Truth is prior to the existence of man. Man exists only by allowing the truth to overwhelm him/her. Truth only exists in its interaction with man. Man is the occurrence of unhiddenness which comports itself to unhiddenness. Human beings can only acquire a vision of truth, if they become a transparent medium in themselves. Thus, it is man's role to be a medium of comportment, for he/she is "in the truth" as a pupil of God's eye. Moreover, as alluded to previously, man as the microcosm has within him/herself the divine essence. This initiation is what enables Heidegger to insist that man is set out within the truth. The same insistence reverberates with Ibn 'Arabi. Chittick firstly explains that:

The Arabic word for "bellies" is *butun* (plural of *batn*), which happens to be the same form taken by the Arabic word for "nonmanifestation". Thus the term nonmanifest can be understood to mean "that which is within the belly"⁴⁸(.

Ibn 'Arabi writes:

Since the "bellies" are the loci of engendering and birth, and since from them become manifest the entities of progeny, the Real is described as the "Nonmanifest". He is saying that in respect of the fact that He is nonmanifest, the cosmos becomes manifest from Him. Thus, we were within Him as nonmanifest things. Take this rationally not imagistically for if you take it rationally, sound knowledge will accept it. But if you take it as images and imagination, you will be refuted through His words, *He does not give birth [112:3]"*)⁴⁹(

One might be tempted to think that Ibn 'Arabi explains here the process of creation in anthropomorphic terms. However, this misunderstanding is what Ibn 'Arabi is warning against. God does not give birth. He does not beget nor is He begotten. Nevertheless, the cosmos is from Him. The unhidden/nonmanifest, as well as the manifest, always originates from Him, for He is the Subtlest and all that is subtle

⁴⁸)(Chittick, *The Self Disclosure of God*, P.210

⁴⁹)(Chittick, *The Self Disclosure of God*, P.211

comes from Him. Therefore, creation as always unfolding; the unhidden emanates from His subtleness, from His *batin* (hiddenness), His *batn* (belly).

The perfect man who is the liberator for Heidegger and Plato is one who is constantly needed in the cave. If this role would cease with the death of this liberator –a possibility which has been seriously entertained by Plato and which is a natural concomitant of the role of the liberator- humanity would be condemned to living in the cave forever. Posterity would have no access to any epistemological or ontological achievement. Therefore, al-Shaykh al-Akbar appeased this concern saying;

When perfection became numerous, the Real assigned them vicegerents after being a vicegerent, for every perfect is a vicegerent. And there never is a time where there is no vicegerent, so that earth would never be without a divine image [...] and also know that every new born is born with the natural disposition (*al-Fitra*); which Allah has taken upon human beings when they admitted to His lordship.)⁵⁰(

Human beings, those who are truly human according to the particulars discussed previously, are destined to inherit the role of the vicegerent from the father of humanity, Adam. This is because people in the cave need them as a reminder of true being. They need the vicegerents to instruct them along the dark rugged path to reach the original light of being. With the absence of light on the way, even the absence of the artificial light of the fire, the seeker's soul might get tempted and lost. The darkness which dwells within will unite with the outer darkness to blind this soul from following the liberator. Saints and mystics from various traditions have named it the dark night of the soul. However, the seemingly never ending night is shattered with the first beam of light. Some souls gaze into the dark for so long that they become part of it. These souls become suspended in the tunnel unable to go to the

⁵⁰)³(Ibn 'Arabi, *'Uqlat al-Mustawfiz*, P.127

light or return to the cave. They become darkness. The role of the liberator is to prevent that from happening by guiding and motivating the traveler. The tunnel is the test of being, the test of worth, and the test of a lover. If the soul can endure this arduous journey and complete it, without really knowing the state of the destination it is meant to arrive at, if it persists in its struggle, then it is fit to witness the vision and see the unseen.

As for the second part of the quote, Ibn 'Arabi is referring to an incident mentioned in the Qur'an named "The Day of the Covenant". On this day God extracted Adam's offspring from his back and asked them "Am I not your Lord? And they said yes". Ibn 'Arabi then says that because all humanity took this pledge, then within every individual there is the knowledge that He is our Lord. Moreover, the word for covenant in Arabic is *mithaq*, which comes from the root *wathaq*, which means tie and trust. This indicates an intrinsic relation between tying and trusting. The divine being trusted man to be His image on earth and to guide others while tying the knot of knowledge within him/her through a pledge that preceded man's existence. The tie can never be broken. It can be buried so deep within oneself that it gives one the illusion of its nonexistence. Yet, man can never be severed from his/her being, from truth, from the Real, for "He is closer to you than your jugular vein".

Man in his/her esteemed state must fulfill his/her destiny of being all he/she can be, by listening to the call and going upon the journey to discover being as it is, to discover the truth. Returning to Heidegger's saying "man is that being which understands being and exists on the basis of this understanding", we can say that man is the assigned vicegerent and the pupil of God's eye. Man is the vision of God and His image in this world. The perfection of man and his/her ultimate mission is to be who he/she is, to truly be a human being. This will enable him/her, as it is put in the

Qur'an, to see the unseen on the horizon and within the self.

Chapter 3: Desire to see and lack of Sight:

The Qur'an, the Sufi tradition and even the Prophet himself deny the possibility of seeing God. The verse that is quoted at the very beginning of my thesis states that sight cannot grasp/understand Him. There can be two reasons: Firstly, God's nature cannot be known, since knowledge demands boundaries, and if boundaries do not exist, sight takes upon itself the responsibility of establishing boundaries. The impossibility of knowing the Real has been emphasized by Ibn 'Arabi in the following quote:

Understand therefore.... He is not a thing nor a thing in Him, whether entering in or proceeding forth. It is necessary that thou know Him after this fashion, not by knowledge, nor by intellect, nor by understanding, nor by imagination, nor by sense, nor by perception. There does not see Him, save Himself; nor perceive Him, save Himself. By Himself He sees Himself, and by Himself He knows Himself. None sees Him other than He. His veil is [only a "consequence" and effect of] His oneness; nothing veils other than He. . His veil is [only] the concealment of His existence in His oneness, without any quality. None sees Him other than He – no sent prophet, nor saint made perfect, nor angel bought nigh know Him. His prophet is He, and His sending is He, and His word is He. He sent Himself with Himself to Himself.)⁵¹(

In the first part of the quote Ibn 'Arabi is employing what is described in medieval scholasticism as knowledge of God by via negativa. It states that one can only know Him by what He is not. This knowledge refers to the absolute transcendence of God

⁵¹)? (Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, P.107

and is expressed by Ibn 'Arabi as "none knows the unlike any other, except the unlike any other")⁵²(. In the second part of the quote Ibn 'Arabi's stress on the divine transcendence is softened by the attribute of imminence which states that He is (with) everything. The prophet, the people, and the angels do not have an independent existence. Real existence is only of the Real. The impossibility of seeing God is described in the Qur'an in the story of Moses when he asked his Lord to see Him. Ibn 'Arabi comments on this story:

Show me, that I may look upon Thee! He replied, Thou shalt not see Me [7:143]. He said concerning Himself, Does he not know that God sees? [96:14]. His report is true, and He knew that some in the cosmos know that God sees. Then He said with a particle of emendation [i.e. but], joining this to that, "But behold the mountain. If it stays fast in its place, then thou shalt see Me." Then He disclosed Himself to the mountain and the mountain crumbled to dust. I do not know if this was because of vision, or because of a precursor of vision. No, rather it was a precursor of vision. And Moses fell down thunderstruck [7:143] because of that precursor. When he [Moses] recovered, he said [...] I repent, or I return to the state in which I was not asking vision from Thee, and I am the first of those who have faith [7:143], that is those who acknowledge the truthfulness of Thy statement, Thou shalt not see Me, for this time descending for the first time only on me, so I am the first to have faith in it, and everyone who hears it until the day of resurrection will follow me in having faith in it.

God became manifest neither to the seeker nor to the mountain, because had the mountain or Moses seen Him, it would have stayed firm and would not have crumbled to dust and he wouldn't have become thunderstruck. After all, He is *wujud*, so He bestows nothing but *wujud*, for the good, all of it, is in His hands, and *wujud*, all of it, is good. Since He is not seen, He leaves the trace of thunderstruckness and crumbling to dust. These are states of annihilation. And annihilation is similar to non existence. But the Real does not makes the entities of things nonexistent.

Nevertheless, relative nonexistence comes from Him. This is "taking away" and "transferral". Thus He transfers you or takes you away from one state to another state, even though your entity exists in both states.)⁵³(

Moses' request from his Lord can be explained as lacking courtesy in addressing his

⁵²)(Ibn 'Arabi, *Kitab al-Tarajim*, P52

⁵³)(Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, P.209

Lord. Nevertheless, his request is that of every being wanting to see the originary being. "Moses, called by his Lord, is not satisfied with hearing Him and demands to see Him."⁵⁴ (But as discussed earlier hearing is the precondition of seeing and perhaps Moses knew that since he can hear the call that he might be able to see. The Real did not conceal Himself from Moses. He informed Moses, that he will not be able to see Him because sight as a human faculty is unable to bear the vision of God. Therefore, when God became manifest to the mountain the mountain and Moses could not carry the vision, both of them were devastated. Various scenarios can be furnished to interpret what actually occurred. One of them is concerned with God's jealousy. He does not let anyone perceive Him, except Himself, and Moses' demand might be interpreted as an effort to construct the "I" to stand against Him. But as Ibn 'Arabi said, all is He, and so this "I" had to be destroyed and Moses was punished. Another explanation would be that God wanted to polish Moses' mirror, to be able to view Him. Thus, He killed his ego that allowed him to ask for such a request. After the death of the ego, Moses returned, or more precisely was brought back to life. This resurrection made him see things clearly because his sight was no longer controlled by constriction nor blinded by his egotistic self. He identified himself only as a servant of God. The servants are not on the same level as their Lord, and that is why they cannot see Him.

Yet Moses himself can (must) be seen as a kind of trace. He was the first to ask for vision, but not the last. Therefore, God gave Moses the vision but struck him down, for the vision is like writing. When one writes on a piece of paper, even if the words were erased there remains a trace that lingers and helps other see what was once written. The trace is the product of inscription which allows for the recurrence of inscription. When someone is lost people look for his/her trace. God destroyed the

⁵⁴)³(Chodkiewicz, "The Vision of God", P.5

mountain and struck down Moses as a trace, to allow others who would demand this vision to see what Moses found, and to find Moses as the first who returned after this vision to himself as a complete being who witnessed being. The trace is what eternalizes the vision, since the vision is finite while the trace is infinite. The presence of the divine is only known through the trace. In the story of Moses it is the trace of destruction that indicates the manifestation of God to the Mountain. This devastation effects a mere transferal from one plane of being to another. And since man is the microcosm, then he/she already contains within him/herself all planes of being. This understanding is what enables Sufis to say, for example "I died as a mineral, and then lived as a plant". Death, as understood by the Sufis, is that which allows ascension through the ontological hierarchy.

The insistence of Ibn 'Arabi that God can never be seen is sometimes replaced by perplexity and indecision:

Our entities are not perceived by vision, the Entity of the Real is not perceived by vision, and the entities of His names are not perceived by vision. But we do not doubt that we perceived something by vision, and that is what our eyesights witness. It is nothing but the properties that belong to our entities so they become manifest to us in the *wujud* [existence] of the Real. Hence He is a locus of manifestation for our entities, so they become manifest just as forms become manifest in mirrors. The forms are not identical with the viewer, because they have something of the property of the locus of disclosure. Nor are they identical with the locus of disclosure, because they have something that opposes its property. There is no third outside the affair upon which perception falls. Yet perception has occurred. So, what is this thing that is perceived, and who is the perceiver? Who is the cosmos? Who is the Manifest? Who is the locus of manifestation? Who makes the locus manifest?)⁵⁵(

The intertwined situation Ibn 'Arabi is describing here serves as an indicator for the complexity of relationship between man and the divine or the good. In a sense everything is He/not He. This hesitancy and lack of distinction causes one to be

⁵⁵)? (Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, P.207

perplexed (⁵⁶). To stand between the knowledge that God is with everything and is unlike anything at the same time is to be perplexed. Perplexity is not necessarily a bad thing; it is that which leads to knowledge of Him who is the unifier of opposites. "To find God is to fall in *hayra* [perplexity]"⁵⁷(.

The second factor which marks sight incapable of seeing God belongs to the constrictive nature of sight itself. As cited in the verse above; sight captures and captivates. Hence, it cannot catch the evanescent. Heidegger describes this feature of vision well when he says:

But what kind of looking (perceiving) is this? It is not staring at something present, not a simple finding of something and receiving of something into our vision, but a looking in the sense of per-ceiving [Er-blickens]. This means first forming what is looked at through the looking and in the looking, i.e. the forming in advance, modeling. This pre-modeling perceiving of being, of essence, is already bound to what is projected in such a projection.)⁵⁸(

Thus, sight as a mechanism operates in the look. The onlooker projects a model which is fitted upon reality. Hence, sight binds what is perceived in the look through the constructed model. Since God is unlike anything that one already knows, He can not be bound or seen. Therefore, so long as sight falls under the totalizing hegemony of projective-premodeling, it will remain deficient and restricted as regards seeing the Truth. Ibn 'Arabi presents this in a beautiful example:

Sight wants to grasp the color of water and overwhelming transparency of purity, so he (sight) doesn't grasp her (transparency). For, if he did grasp her, he would tie her.)⁵⁹(

⁵⁶(?) Heidegger's masterpiece *Being and Time* begins with a motto taken from Plato: "for manifestly you have long been aware of what you mean when you use the expression 'being'. We however, who used to think we understand it, have now become perplexed"

⁵⁷)(Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, P.3

⁵⁸)(Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, P.52

Ibn 'Arabi, also interprets the verse quoted at the beginning. He says:

As for His words, *Eyesights perceive Him not, but He perceives the eyesights* [6:103] - eyesight has come only to perceive, not to be perceived. Moreover, in the words *Perceive Him not* He is indicated by the pronoun of the absent one [i.e. the third person]. The absent is not perceived by eyesight and witnessing. It is the Nonmanifest. After all, if it were perceived, it would not be absent or nonmanifest. Nevertheless, *He perceives eyesights*, for absence is not necessary from both sides. If someone is absent from you, it is not necessary that you be absent from him. It maybe so, and it may not be.

In what is signified by this verse there is another affair. It is that He perceives Himself through Himself because He is the eyesight of the servant through His He-ness, visual perception occurs only through eyesight, and He is identical with the eyesight ascribed to the servant. He says, *He perceives eyesights*, while He is identical with eyesights. Hence, He has perceived Himself. This is why we say that He is manifest to Himself, but He is not nonmanifest to Himself.)⁶⁰(

In the first paragraph of the quote Ibn 'Arabi uses a grammatical tool to prove the inadequacy of sight. He says that God, in this verse, referred to Himself in the third person. This "person", being the referent of absence, indicates God's station of absolute mystery (*al-ghayb al-mutlaq*). In it God is completely veiled from His creation. He is utterly Nonmanifest and that is why eyesights⁽⁶¹⁾ cannot see Him. Yet, God necessarily sees Himself, for if He didn't then He wouldn't be all-encompassing, but constricted. He sees Himself in the moment, if one can use temporal terms, when He is the eyesights. He is the eyesight of His faithful servant, and Adam is the pupil of God's eye. Hence, He perceives Himself as the eyesights of His faithful servants.

Ibn 'Arabi continues with the interpretation of the verse:

⁵⁹)(Ibn 'Arabi, *Risalat al-Shaykh ila al-imam al-Razi*, P.8

⁶⁰)(Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, P.211

⁶¹(?) The use of the word eyesights which is not a word in English is necessitated by the lack of equivalence in the English language to the word *absar* in Arabic. That is why Chittick coined the word eyesights to reflect multiplicity that isn't necessarily imbued by the word eyesight.

Then He completed the verse by saying, *And He is the Subtle* [6:103] in respect of the fact that *eyesights perceive Him not*. The meaning of the Subtle in respect to the fact that *He perceives the eyesights* is that His perception of the eyesights is His perception of Himself, because He is identical with them. This is the furthest limit of subtlety and fineness.

[Then He says] *the Experienced* [6:103]. Here He alludes to knowledge of tasting. In other words, this is not known except through tasting. In this there is no benefit in setting up proofs, unless the proof of it be within the self of the prover and is none other than his tasting. Then this servant whose eyesight is the Real sees himself through the Real, and he sees the Real through his eyesight, since He is identical with his eyesight. Thus he perceives both affairs.⁶²

Ibn 'Arabi here adds another reason for the deficiency of sight. The verse he analyses ends with the use of two divine names, and the names represent relations and not ontological entities. Ibn 'Arabi understands the use of the name "Subtle" as an indicator of a relationship between God and His creatures. God in this relationship is "Subtle", and eyesight is subtle in itself. Since eyesight can't grasp itself because it is within itself, it needs detachment from itself to be able to contemplate this subtleness which is identical to God's according to Ibn 'Arabi, to see itself in God. The name "Experienced" is used in relation to those who do not try to see the subtle using the dense but are invested with the subtlety that enables them to see the Subtle. Put in other words, those people, through tasting, have become fine and subtle, i.e. transparent. The Real therefore, sees Himself through their eyesights.

One could understand the verse in yet another way, with relation to multiplicity and unity or oneness. The verse says "Eyesights perceive Him not, and He perceives eyesights" [6:103]. Eyesights are plural meaning, that they are divided and distinct from one another. Each eyesight has a distinct outlook because it stands on a different position. The view of single eyesight is only a portion of the total view. Thus, the integrity and the totality of the vision of God can never be grasped by the divided and

⁶²) (Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, P.211

multiple eyesights. The various cannot contain the one because each will be lacking, and because each will want to claim exclusivity, each view will want to overrule the others and be the only one and thus will refuse to coexist in harmony with the others. However, "He perceives eyesights" because He is one. The one is inclusive of the various because He has the power to harness all the views of eyesights under His perception. His unity is that of diversity. He unites the opposites. And this is how He perceives the multiplicity of eyesights, while the multiplicity will never perceive Him.

Nevertheless, Ibn 'Arabi announces that "you see the Real with intuitive insight (*basira*) in this world and with sight in the hereafter, and the hereafter is higher so sight is higher"⁶³(.So, seeing God is possible. "Qurtubi, who obviously tends towards an admission of the possibility of vision, sets out the arguments of those who defend this point of view: the ordinary look cannot reach God but God creates in certain beings - and such is certainly the case of the Prophet Muhammad - a look by which He can be seen.")⁶⁴(Furthermore, it is higher in ranking than seeing with the heart as the organ of intuitive insight. "The eye of the heart, even if it was given knowledge, is still behind a veil until it [the eye of the heart] is aided by sight.")⁶⁵(The pleasantness of this vision is portrayed by Tustari as the reward for being righteous. He says; "On the day of resurrection; the one who is found "righteous" will be admitted to dwell in a perpetual vision of the Real.")⁶⁶(Tustari likens this "theophany of Divine Essence" to

The splendor of the sun when it emerges from the horizon, or the beauty of the bride when she unveils and the effects brought on the looker is a transformation to become a "theophany of Divine attributes)⁶⁷(

⁶³)? (Ibn 'Arabi *Kitab al-Shahid*, P.13

⁶⁴)? (Chodkiewicz, "The Vision of God", P.3

⁶⁵)? (Ibn 'Arabi, *Kitab al-Tarajim*, P.53

⁶⁶)? (Bowering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence*, P.165

Still, sight is associated in this saying with the hereafter. However, "hereafter" in this context should not be understood according to the usual definition of orthodox religion. Rather, this hereafter is already contained within this world, since beings exist on various planes and they are transferred from one plane to the other by God as Moses was, thus as one person ceases to be on one plain he/she subsist on another. Subsistence takes effect through clothing a person in Divine attributes. This is exemplified by the Sufi saying "die before you die". And if there is a death before death, then there necessarily has to be a hereafter before the hereafter. Human beings always want to see what is hidden, what is inside. One can observe this tendency from early on in children. They always want to know what is inside. A child would break his/her favorite toy, when no one is looking of course, to see what is veiled from him/her by the exterior. What the child finds is always, or rather almost always, disappointing; for what is revealed is another exterior, even worse an exterior that does not match up to the appeal of the toy's former exterior⁽⁶⁸⁾. This curiosity is present in relation to being or God. Maybe, this is because this vision is the highest level one can hope to reach, as depicted in the allegory of the cave. And, maybe, because we have already witnessed the beauty and sublimity of this vision before we

⁶⁷)(Bowering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence*, P.175

⁶⁸(?) Even though we claim to have overcome the child's curiosity it by proving that we do not go around vandalizing objects just to see what is inside it, is never done away with but is channeled into different directions. One of these channels is science, and especially the science of anatomy. We kill a frog, or better yet we get an already dead person to open up and see what is inside. Of course, we do not do that just to quench our curiosity, but this is done to understand the internal activity of the human being, i.e. to understand his/her life in the occurrence of death. There has been a mushrooming in the number of television series that are about opening up the dead, and one has to confess that they are pretty entertaining because they feed the curiosity to see what is inside. Nonetheless, people keep overlooking the fact that what is revealed to us is not the hidden, the nonmanifest, rather it is the outside, the manifest. It is the offering of the manifest to conceal the hidden, which always remains hidden.

were born. According to Islam all beings confessed that God is their Lord on the Day of the Covenant when human beings were in the world of atoms, and according to Greek mythology all the souls saw the good and then before their coming into this world they drank from the river of forgetfulness. Either way, in both contexts man has a primordial access to the vision of being, whether it is God or the good. There is a tie which cannot be broken between man and the truth. That is why we yearn for this vision. Ibn 'Arabi says that Hell is the place of veiling, and not seeing is the great loss.)⁶⁹(Thus sight or vision is the bounty of the faithful and not seeing is the punishment of the unfaithful. Ibn 'Arabi explains that:

The folk of God, those who are His folk never cease and will never cease, in this world and the last world, witnessing perpetually with the eyes. Although this witnessing is diverse in forms, this detracts nothing from them.)⁷⁰(

Even though sight is inadequate to see Him, it is the primary vehicle of knowledge. The vision of the divine or of the good is the highest vision one can attain because it is the completion of the circle, it is the return to the primordial vision which the soul contains. It is the retracing of Moses' footsteps as he climbs Mount Sinai and after listening to his Lord, asks to see Him. It is the re-inscription in the trace that was left from the vision of the unseen.

⁶⁹(?) Ibn 'Arabi, *Kitab al-Tarajim*, P.17

⁷⁰(?) Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, P.215

Chapter 4: The corresponding movement of Lord and Servant which brings about vision:

As previously mentioned; Lord and vassal seek each other because they complement each other. Desire is the origin of the creation of the cosmos; the desire of the names to be outwardly manifested and the desire of the seeker to know him/herself as an integral and natural part of the cosmological scheme, to know him/herself as a being in relation to beings. "The movement of ardent desire on the part of him who is in love; the ardent desire is appeased by the Divine sigh."⁽⁷¹⁾ This desire is only met by an equivalent desire. As quoted earlier, Aristotle declared that "All men by nature desire to know". Hence there is a synchronous relation that can be qualified as yearning between the seeker and the divine, or the good which is the source of everything.

To perceive all forms as epiphanic forms, that is, to perceive through the figures which are the external hexeities, that they are other than the creator and nevertheless they are He, is precisely to effect the encounter, the coincidence, between God's Descent toward the creature and the creature's ascent toward the creator.⁽⁷²⁾

The movement is not originating from a single party. Rather there is an upward ontological spiral that the servant climbs and a downward spiral that the Lord descends on. This descent produces several planes of existence (*Hadrat*) or presences. Each presence is a weaker mirror of the primary, absolute presence that is the presence of the Divine Essence.

There are five of these presences, namely the five Descents (*tanazzulat*); these are determinations or conditions of the divine Ipseity in the forms of His Names; they act on the receptacles which undergo their influx and manifest them. The first *Hadra* is the theophany of the Essence in the eternal latent hexeities which

⁷¹(?) Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, P.184

⁷²(?) Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, P.184

are objects, the correlata of the Divine Names. This is the world of Absolute Mystery ('alam al-ghayb al-mutlaq, Hadrat al-Dhat). The second and the third Hadrat are respectively the angelic world of determinations or individuations constituting the spirits (ta'ayyunat ruhiya) and the world of individuations constituting the souls (ta'ayyunat nafsiya). The fourth Hadra is the world of Idea-Images ('alam al-mithal) typical Forms, individuations having figure and body, but in the immaterial state of "subtle matter". The fifth Hadra is the sensible and visible world ('alam al-shahada), of dense material bodies. (73)

The division of the various presences demonstrates the ontological levels of existence in a hierarchy. This hierarchy is the order of creation beginning from the Divine Essence to the material world. The hierarchy is not solely determined through the closeness to the Divine Essence, but also through the "receptacles" which accept the authority of this descent. The acceptance is not haphazard; rather it is the inherent preparedness of the receptacle which determines its level. Ibn 'Arabi explains, saying;

And know that if He gives you, whatever He gives you, of the knowledge of Him, He doesn't give it to you until He prepares you for it, and makes you for Himself.(74)

Hence, the innate preparedness of the receptacle is a crucial determinant for its location in this ontological hierarchy. The ascension through the various presences is based on a preparatory process, whereby the Lord "makes you for Himself". But what does that mean? One could understand this statement in relation to the allegory of the cave. When the prisoner is freed within the cave; he/she refuses to admit that the things-themselves are more beingful than their shadows. This Heidegger calls "failed liberation". Plato writes:

- Suppose one of them [the prisoners] were unshackled and compelled to suddenly stand up, turn his head, and look and walk towards the light; but all this would be painful, and because of the flickering brightness he would be too dazzled to see properly the things whose shadows he used to see. What do you think he would say if he were told that what he used to see

⁷³(?) Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, P.225

⁷⁴(?) Ibn 'Arabi, *Kitab al-Tarajim*, P.12 & 13

was so much empty nonsense, and that he was now nearer to beings and turned towards more beingful beings, so seeing more correctly? And if he were compelled to say what each of the passing objects was when it was shown to him? Don't you think he would be at a loss, and think that what he used to see was more unhidden than what was now being shown to him?

- Absolutely.

- And if he were made to look directly into the light, would this not hurt his eyes, and would he not turn back and retreat to things which he had the power to see, thinking that these [shadows] were in fact clearer [more visible] than the things now being shown to him?

- Yes. ⁽⁷⁵⁾

As one could conclude, the preparatory process whereby God "makes you for Himself" involves a great deal of violence, as depicted in the allegory. Even in the very beginning of the procedure the prisoner is made to stand up, when he/she has spent his/her whole life sitting down at the bottom of the cave –since, as asserted by Plato the prisoners are sitting in the cave since birth. Hence, his/her muscles would ache, to say the least, from the sudden rising. Not only that but the prisoner is also first made to look at the objects whose shadows he/she used to witness and try to identify them. Then he/she is forced to look directly in the light of the fire, which causes him/her to retreat and find refuge in his/her previous stage of ignorance. This situation reminds one of the situation of the prophet Muhammad, when he first received the message from the arch-angel Gabriel. Muhammad was meditating alone within a cave, as well, Ghar Hira, when suddenly he perceived a being that appeared in front of him and ordered him to read. The prophet replied that he cannot read, but this being only repeated his command and the prophet repeated his reply, until Gabriel held the prophet so close to him that it hurt. Then Gabriel recited the first *Sura* to be revealed from the Qur'an and the prophet repeated it after him. When the

⁷⁵(?) Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, P.24. This excerpt is Heidegger's own translation of Plato.

prophet returned home to his wife Khadeega, he told her 'Cover me, cover me'. So, she covered him. The violence which was depicted within this narrative can only match up to the violence experienced by the freed prisoner at the bottom of the cave. The prophet after being more enlightened and turned towards more beingful beings wanted to retreat to his state of ignorance. He wanted to return to the cave, the originary cave that every human being lived in, the womb, so he went underneath the covers. One can interpret this tale as one about death and life. Gabriel affected the death of the prophet to himself through the violence of his embrace. The embrace shattered the carapace that every person creates around him/herself from the day he/she is born. The destruction of the carapace left the prophet vulnerable and naked, unable to protect himself, so he returned to the cave, to take refuge in the darkness of the cover, of the womb. The prophet had to die to himself, to receive true life, to receive the living, *al-Hayy* –one of God's names-. The prophet's emergence from underneath the covers is his resurrection and rebirth. This is the preliminary stage of the liberation of man from the shackles within the cave, which is followed by his/her ascent towards the light, which with regards to the prophet can be understood as the journey of *mi'raj* (Nocturnal Ascent), which only came after the incident in the cave.

- And if he were forcibly dragged up the steep and rugged ascent of the cave and not let go till he had been dragged out into the sunlight, would he not experience pain, and so struggle against this? And would he not, as soon as he emerged into the light, his eyes dazzled, be unable to see any of the things he was now told were unhidden?

- No, at least at first.

- He would need, I believe, to first be accustomed to the light before he could see things in the upper world. First he would find it easier to look at shadows, next at the reflections of men and other objects in water, and later on at the things themselves. After that he would find it easier to observe the sky at night and the heavenly dome, and to look at the light of the moon and stars rather than at the sun and its light by day.

- Of course.

- Finally, I believe, he would be able to look directly at the sun

itself, and gaze at it as it is in itself, without using reflections in water or any other medium.⁽⁷⁶⁾

Although the process of ascension towards the light is quite violent, it is also a moment of liberation, and, therefore the freed prisoner does not try to recoil back into his/her previous stage. He/she perseveres to reach the light. Now, he/she is no longer forced to follow the path, but only guided along it. This willingness is a direct product of the preliminary stage of the liberation, where the prisoner was violated by a knowledge, which once known to him/her cannot be ignored. This is the knowledge of being qua being which, experienced within the cave, and, thus, still on a lower level, is, nevertheless, as Ibn 'Arabi will explain, a muddled form of the original essence; the good, or God. Ibn 'Arabi explains that:

Each of these *Hadrat* (planes of being) or Descents is also designated as a "marriage" (*nikah*), whose fruit is the Presence or *Hadra* which follows it in the descending hierarchy. For this reason each lower Presence is the image and correspondence (*mithal*), the reflection and mirror of the next higher. Thus everything that exists in the sensible world is a reflection, a typification, of what exists in the world of spirits and so on, up to the things which are the first reflections of the Divine Essence itself.⁽⁷⁷⁾

In this quotation Ibn 'Arabi resorts to using sexual elements in describing the process of creation. The underlying reason for using this language resides in the divine motivation to create the world, namely love. And as discussed previously, love's ultimate realization occurs in the act of intercourse. Thus, when Ibn 'Arabi described the relation between the various presences as *nikah*, which describes the sexual relation between a married couple, it is to affirm that these presences and descents are united in and through love. The divine mercy offered itself to the human being so that

⁷⁶(?) Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, P.30, quoting Plato

⁷⁷(?) Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, P.225

he/she know it and love Him. Given that, each presence resembles the prior one "The vision of the Real for the realized one (*al-muhaqiq*) in the Holy Light is not clearer or more distinct than seeing Him in the darkness of clay"⁷⁸. The unshackled prisoner finds him/herself in a situation of unhiddenness within the cave. This situation is a product of the "marriage" of the planes of being. The unhidden is always an element of life within the cave. Corbin adds;

If we consider the creature in relation to the creator, we shall say that the Divine Being descends toward concrete individualizations in their epiphanic function, we shall say that they rise, that they ascend toward Him. And their ascending never ceases because the divine descent into the various forms never ceases. The ascent is then the Divine Epiphany in these forms, a perpetual effusion, a twofold intradivine movement. That is why the other world already exists in this world; it exists in every moment, in relation to every being. ⁽⁷⁹⁾

Not only is the unhidden present within the cave, but also the other life is already contained within this one. Corbin is referring to the duality that is necessarily contained within the cosmos. The beginning always implies the end, and life always necessitates death. Creation, as described in the various *Hadrat* or planes of being, is nothing but the descent and how it affects the various receptacles. Therefore, it is the ascension of the various receptacles to be affected by the divine. And since the liberation from the cave never ceases, which causes the freed prisoners to ascend to the light, the divine descent in the form of the liberator never ceases. This descent of the liberator can only occur through his/her death and subsistence in the truth. The liberator dwells within the truth, and is sent from it to guide others to it. Heidegger understands him/her to be the philosopher. Ibn 'Arabi sees him/her in the prophets and the folk of God. Whoever he/she is said to be, the liberator is always someone who is

⁷⁸(?) Ibn 'Arabi, *Kitab al-Shahid*, P.15

⁷⁹(?) Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, P.206&207

sent to others. He/she doesn't descend to the cave to prove to the prisoners that he/she is better than them but in order to help them and guide them to reality and truth, to give them an illuminated view. The liberator is a servant of the truth or God, he/she doesn't choose to return out of free will, but he/she is ordered to return and they do obey. This obedience is out of love not fear. The liberator is a form of the good. He/she is a form of divine descent, of the love and desire to be known, that is why he/she urges people to ascend.

Another example of the intradivine movement, of the mirroring of those opposing and complimentary poles –Lord and vassal- is embodied in prayer.

Muhammad (PBUH) said: ((the freshness of my eye was put in prayer)) because of its witnessing, because the eye of the lover exists solely through witnessing the beloved, and that is because it is –prayer- a conversation between Allah and His servant, like what Allah Al mighty said –"Remember me and I will remember you"-. This act of worship is divided in halves between Allah and His servant, one half is for Allah and the other is for His servant, as it was mentioned in the true tale about Allah Al mighty when He said: I divided prayer between me and my servant in halves, one half is for me and the other for my servant, and for my servant what he asked for⁽⁸⁰⁾

Prayer then represents not only one pillar of Islam, or *Islam* as submission to the divine will, but also *Ihsan*, which is to worship God as if you see Him. Prayer is where the eye of the lover feasts on the vision of his/her beloved. It is the occurrence of vision par excellence. Ibn 'Arabi describes the equivalence of the prayer of *al-Haqq* and that of Creation. Each instance of prayer for the creature is a replica of the existentiating prayer of *al-Haqq*. This simile explains the aforementioned quote of Ibn 'Arabi which situates Adam/man as the vehicle through which the Divine Mercy of existence takes place, because the prayer of man is not only an act of showing obedience, but also a tool of recurring existence, since it mimics the originary and recurring act of bringing into being by God. However, one needs to understand Ibn

⁸⁰(?) Al-Qashani, *Sharh al-Fusus*, P.340

'Arabi's conception of prayer as theophanic before making such a claim of closeness. According to Ibn 'Arabi; not everyone who performs prayer is an orant (*mussali*). Firstly, in the prayer of the servant:

A movement of pure thought (*harakat ma'qula*) transfers the universe of beings from its state of occultation or potentiality to the manifest state of concrete existence which constitutes theophany in the visible world (*'alam al-shahada*). In this visible and sensible world, the movements of natural beings can be reduced to three categories (that is three dimensions). And the ritual of prayer embraces all these movements:

(a) There is the ascending, vertical movement which corresponds to the faithful's erect stance. This is the movement of the growth of man, whose head rises towards the heavens.

(b) There is the horizontal movement, which corresponds to the orant's state of the profound inclination. This is the direction in which animal's grow.

(c) There is the inverse, descending movement, corresponding to the prostration. This is the movement of the plant, sinking its roots in depth.

Thus prayer reproduces the movements of the creatural universe; it is itself recurrence of creation and new creation.⁽⁸¹⁾

Prayer for Ibn 'Arabi is a prime example of the correspondence of Lord and vassal because the prayer of man is a venue of divine mercy, thus it is a divine descent. One has to note that prayer, as it is described in this quotation and as it was revealed to the prophet, was revealed on the night of the nocturnal ascent. Before the prophet's ascension to the heavens, he was made to journey from the Arab peninsula to Jerusalem where he prayed for the first time. Thus, praying as a ritual always had a paramount importance in the journey of ascension towards the divine within Islam. The prophet also once described prayer as the believer's ascension (*Mi'raj al-mu'min*). This quote describes the different movements involved in prayer and the significance of every one of them. The movement in prayer unifies the movements of the cosmological elements. In this sense, prayer is the exhaustive ritual that depicts the various elements of the universe. Hence, it pays tribute to all these elements. On the other hand, man, as the microcosm, contains within him/herself all the elements of the universe. Thus, prayer serves as a reminder to man of him/herself as constituted by

⁸¹(?) Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, P.260&261

these elements. It is also that which brings about knowledge of the self with regards to its different components. Corbin explains how man mimics the actions which bring about creation. To understand this statement one has to put the prayer of man in contradistinction with the prayer of God;

As for the movement of pure thought which is the aspiration of the Deus absconditus to theophany giving rise to the genesis of the cosmos, the same homologations are revealed.

(a) There is the intentional movement (*harakat iradiya*) of the Divine Being, His "conversion" (*tawajjuh*) toward the lower world in order to existentiate it, that is, manifest it, bring it to light: this is a movement descending in depth (corresponding to prostration, to the movement of the roots of the plant)

(b) There is the Divine "conversion" toward the higher world, that of the divine Names, the eternal hexeties and the relations between them. This is the pleromatic creation (*ibda'*) by an ascending movement epiphanizing the spirits and souls (corresponding to the erect stance, the movement of man's growth).

(c) There is finally divine conversion toward the celestial bodies intermediate between the two worlds, from one horizon to the other (corresponding to the profound inclination, the horizontal movement of animal growth).

And all this constitutes the prayer of God (*salat al-Haqq*) as His existentiating theophany (*tajalli ijadi*).⁽⁸²⁾

The prayer of God is the actions by and through which creation takes place. It involves the same movements as the prayer of His servant. Yet, these movements when they are performed, if one could use this term, by God, are no longer obligatory movements; rather, they are "intentional movements" that bring about creation. God's "movements" cannot be qualified as anything other than willful. They, further on, are not movements of the body because that would indicate an anthropomorphic god. The movements are "turns" towards something. He would turn His attention towards something and thus bring this thing into existence. Corbin also uses spatial terms to express the synchronicity of the prayer of God and the prayer of the servant. These spatial terms, of course, are used in a metaphorical sense since God as absolute and omnipotent is not to be limited through direction. Direction, space and time are tools

⁸²(?) Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, P.261

that are given to man in order to know his/her Lord. It is out of love and mercy for His creatures that He strikes likenesses that they are familiar with.

For Ibn 'Arabi, God has given man prayer not only to communicate with Him, which is an enormous thing in and of itself, but to see Himself within and through the human being. As quoted earlier; Adam is the pupil of God's eye. God sees and brings things into existence through man, even more precisely through the prayer of man.

The prayer of God is His aspiration to manifest Himself, to see Himself in a mirror, but in a mirror which itself sees Him (namely, the faithful whose Lord He is, whom He invests in one or another of His Names). The prayer of man fulfills this aspiration by becoming the mirror of this form, the orant sees this "form of God" in the most secret sanctuary of himself. But never would he see the Form of God (*Surat al-Haqq*) if his vision were not itself the Prayer of God (*Salat al-Haqq*) which is the theophanic aspiration of the *Deus absconditus*.⁽⁸³⁾

The role of man in this respect is to be nothing but a transparent medium through which being, in its originary primordial sense, can be transferred to beings. Man as an occurrence of the unhidden has been discussed in chapter two. Yet, being a medium for the comportment of being is a precondition for viewing the Divine, or rather for the Divine to view itself. Man is that being which is formed of two contradicting elements; darkness and light. The darkness comes from the clay that Adam was created from and light is from the divine spirit that was blown into Adam. Since the creation of man these two elements have been at war, each element wanting to overrule and subjugate the other. But as indicated by Heidegger, light is much more powerful than darkness, since it pushes through darkness. The one whose vision is the Prayer of God is the one whose light has completely conquered the darkness. In this sense, bearing in mind that light is transparent, this person would be the pupil of God's eye. Ibn 'Arabi explains how this person approaches God;

The most magnificent and highest approach occurs for him whose approach to God is identical with his emerging breath and whose procession from God –which is the same as his approach to Him- is the same as his entering breath. He approaches God

⁸³ (?) Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, P.261&262

because He encompasses the emerging breath, and he approaches God in his procession through his entering breath because his heart embraces the Real. Hence he acquires the benefits in every breath between a manifest divine name and a nonmanifest divine name. The breath emerges to the All-Encompassing, Manifest Real so that He can show him the Entity of the Real in the signs of the horizons, and the breath enters to the Nonmanifest Real so that He can show him the Entity of the Real in himself. He witnesses nothing that is manifest and nothing that is nonmanifest if not a haqq [reality], so that he may put courtesy into effect. For the speaker and what is spoken are one entity in two forms through two attributions.

(⁸⁴)

Ibn 'Arabi here describes the process through which that person, who is the pupil of God's eye, is able to witness reality through the two divine names "Manifest" and "Hidden/Nonmanifest". The element of breathing was mentioned before in the first chapter in explicating the process of creation as a direct product of the breath of the all-Merciful. This time Ibn 'Arabi speaks of breathing, but regarding a different being, regarding man. Breathing, as aforementioned, brings about appeasement and comfort. It is through the breath of the all-Merciful that the names found comfort in the creation of the cosmos. Breathing has a vital importance to man. It is through breathing that man lives. Through breathing oxygen is carried to the body and carbon dioxide is carried out of the body. Thus, breathing is that which carries, it is a carrier. Ibn 'Arabi claims that for the person who is invested with one or more of the divine names, the breath doesn't carry chemical elements only, rather it carries knowledge. Moreover, this person has become so completely integrated in the cosmos that his/her breathing has become an approach to God. That person's exhalation which is directed to the external world brings him/her knowledge and signs of Him as He encompasses everything. Wherever that person looks he/she sees nothing but God. In Platonic terms, he/she sees being not as it is in opinion but as it is in the truth. And that

⁸⁴(?) Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, P.216

person's inhalation, which is directed to his/herself, brings him/her knowledge of Him who is within their hearts, since it is He who said "My earth and heavens cannot contain me, only the heart of my faithful servant can". Thus it is only through that person's very being that correspondence between Lord and vassal is completely achieved.

As stated previously God's theophanies are situated everywhere. The prisoners in the cave comport themselves to unhiddenness. "Somehow in this situation [being shackled in an underground cave watching shadows on the wall] there is unhiddenness."⁽⁸⁵⁾ The unhiddenness given in the cave is a sign of mercy, so that the prisoners know Him even in their ignorance. It is also a result of the Divine Descent in the different planes (*Hadrat*). Other than this Ibn 'Arabi mentions two more situations; first, the situation of dogmatic faith, where sight –as a mechanism that operates through projective perceiving- is the dominating factor:

The God who is in a faith [...] is the God whose form the heart contains, who discloses Himself to the heart in such a way that the heart recognizes Him. Thus the eye sees only the God of the faith.⁽⁸⁶⁾

This person is incapable of seeing the other epiphanies of God, because he/she is governed by the sight of faith which corresponds to Heidegger's sensory sight, a sight that restricts. Ibn 'Arabi warns against attributing such constriction to the Divine Essence, by saying; "If the Divine manifestation became restricted in itself, it can't be depended on, for the Divine manifestation can only be restricted in the eyes of the looker and not in itself."⁽⁸⁷⁾ Another situation of the people of dogmatic faith is described on the day for resurrection:

⁸⁵(?) Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, P.22

⁸⁶(?) Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, P.197

⁸⁷(?) Ibn 'Arabi, *Risalat la ya'ul 'alayh*, P.3

At the resurrection, the Real will disclose Himself and say, "I am your Lord". They will see Him, but nevertheless they will deny Him and not acknowledge Him as their Lord, despite the *wujud* [i.e. existence of] vision because of the lifting of the veil. When He transmutes Himself for them into the mark through which they recognize Him, they will say to Him "Thou art our Lord". Yet He is the one whom they were denying and from whom they were seeking refuge, and He is the one whom they confessed and recognized ⁽⁸⁸⁾

The Divine epiphanies are infinite. But those who are ruled by sensory sight will not be able to recognize God in the Form He assumes which is different from the one that is contained within their hearts. Their faith is true, but it is a faith that dogmatizes the Divine Essence and limits it to a single manifestation. Their vision is one that does not profess the diversity of the One.

Accordingly, the ability to see Him in every manifestation and form requires the disengagement of this faculty of premodelling. This ability is only given to the Perfect Man.

This conception [knowing God in every form] is the key to an entire system of thought; it opens the highest perspective of that system, namely the idea of a continuous ascension of beings, beginning with the untying of the knot (*'aqd*) of the dogmatic faiths (*i'tiqad*), when dogmatic science (*'ilm al-i'tiqad*) gives way to the science of vision (*'ilm shuhudi*).⁽⁸⁹⁾

And Ibn 'Arabi further adds:

When the Divine Being is epiphanized to the believer in the form of his faith, this faith is true. He professes this faith in this world. But when the veil is lifted in the other world, the knot (*'aqd*), that is to say, dogma (*'aqida*) which binds him to his particular faith is untied; dogma gives way to knowledge by direct vision (*mushahada*). For the man of authentic faith, capable of spiritual vision, this is the beginning of an ascending movement after death.⁽⁹⁰⁾

⁸⁸(?) Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, P.214

⁸⁹(?) Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, P.205

⁹⁰(?) Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, P.206

So, the disengagement of premodelling or untying of the knot, of removing the veil can only happen after death. God says in Surat Qaf, verse 22 " you were inattentive to this, so we removed your cover and today your sight is iron". The cover or veil is the premodelling and its dominating/domineering authority over your perception. Once it was removed your sight became like iron, meaning your sight now is no longer a severed part of the diverse eyesights, rather it has become a unifying eyesight that harnesses the multiplicity. It has become the eyesight of the Real, which means that you no longer exist. This verse is directed to those who die, but one must understand that death here is not understood as physical, but rather as death of the selfish self, an annihilation of the self which is coupled with subsistence in, with and through Him. The prisoner who ventures out of the cave dies, his/her death is a turning of the soul. The novice who treads the path dies; his/her death is emulation and a following of the Prophet. Either way, whether philosophical or religious the Truth cannot let anyone see It but Itself. Thus the natural tendency of man to seek out knowledge is the moth's tendency to venture and be burned by the flames of the fire.

The self is a manifestation of one or more of the Divine Names. Hence presencing the Lord which governs the self is presencing the self to itself, because in order that one might know which Lord is his/her Lord one has to know oneself. The prophet once said "Know thyself and you will know thy Lord". The initiation of the meeting of Lord and vassal is the "return" to the primordial self. Corbin mentions the specific details of this meeting;

Here then is the manner in which Ibn 'Arabi comments on the phases of a divine service that is a dialogue which takes as its "psalm" and foundation the recitation of the *Fattiha*. He distinguishes three successive moments which correspond to the phases of what we may call his "method of prayer" and provide us with a good indication of how he put his spirituality into

practice. First, the faithful must place himself in the company of his God and "converse" with Him. In an intermediate moment the orant, the faithful in prayer, must imagine (*takhayyul*) his God as present in his *Qibla*, that is, facing him. Finally, in a third moment, the faithful must attain to intuitive vision (*shuhud*) or visualization (*ru'ya*), contemplating his God in the subtle center which is the heart, and simultaneously hear the divine voice vibrating in all manifest things, so much that he hears nothing else. ⁽⁹¹⁾

This meeting occurs in the heart of the person who "converses" with his/her Lord. The heart is the organ which is linked with love. The meeting between Lord and vassal is a meeting of lovers in the intimacy of their own sanctuary away from the rest of the world. But to be able to have this meeting, one must firstly attain to the knowledge of which Lord does he/she serve. That is which name is that person a manifestation of. Thus knowledge of the self is the key to acquiring, or rather being acquired by this vision. This knowledge can only be attained through participating in the process of liberation, which is a waking up. Socrates in the Apology likened himself to a gadfly and the city of Athens to a horse. The gadfly bites the horse to awake it from its slumber. The liberation of man from the shackles of the cave, wakes him/her up to open his/her eye, the one which is located within the heart, the place of the meeting.

For Sufism the heart is one of the centers of mystic physiology. Here we might speak of its "theandric" function, since its supreme vision is of the Form of God (*Surat al-Haqq*) –this is because the gnostic's heart is the "eye", the organ by which God knows Himself, reveals Himself in the forms of His epiphanies. ⁽⁹²⁾

The heart is the dwelling place of God, for it does not belong to any person him/herself. It only belongs to the originary being that chose the heart of His faithful

⁹¹(?) Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, P.251

⁹²(?) Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, P.221

as that which contains Him. But how can the infinite be contained? The heart must retain a character of infiniteness as well. Corbin describes the intimate relation between this person and his/her Lord as follows;

"I [i.e. God] myself keep company with him who meditates on me (maintains me present in himself)". But if the faithful's divine Lord keeps him company when the faithful rememorates Him inwardly, he must, if he is endowed with inner vision, see Him who is thus present. This is called contemplation (*mushahada*) and visualization (*ru'ya*). Of course, one who is without this sense of vision does not see Him. But this, says Ibn 'Arabi with gravity, is the criterion by which each orant (*musalli*) can recognize his degree of spiritual progress. Either he sees his Lord who shows Himself to him (*tajalli*) in the subtle organ that is his heart or else he does not yet see Him in this way; then let him worship through faith as though he saw Him.⁽⁹³⁾

Witnessing the Lord within the heart necessitates that one become as subtle as his/her Lord. This subtlety is attributed to the heart. But to reach this level of subtlety and to know Him through tasting one has to persevere through the rugged path of ascent. Perseverance as understood in the context of this quotation would mean that one would have to continue to serve Him diligently without seeing Him hoping that some day one would be allowed to wake up and hear the call, to listen to the voice of the other that always dwelt within and pay attention to the tie that was once established before coming to the world, to remember what was once forgotten.

⁹³(?) Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, P.262

Conclusion:

A child is born blind to the exterior world and cannot see for the first weeks of life. We are thrown blind in a world that asks us to see the outside. The child is born with his hands clasped, trying to hold on to the knowledge that he acquired through his journey. We open his hands by force, rendering him as ignorant as we are. This world demands your presence, but all you can offer is your re-presentation. For how can one be present to the world when he/she is not present to him/herself? We sense, however, the presence of something higher, something that sees us as we are, not as we represent ourselves to be- a presence that I feel despite myself. I stand helpless looking all around me to see this presence that I feel so vividly. I try to search for it again and I see things that resemble it but not it. I never saw it, but something within knows it very well. The familiarity of this presence drives me on a quest to see the unseen. The transcendence of that figure has driven us, human beings, to yearn and crave this vision, the vision of everything hidden, everything veiled. Some have chosen to disregard the existence of that figure, to claim that He does not exist. Others have brought Him down to be a human being, while others have been satisfied with humanizing only some of His aspects. Those people who were discussed in this research are the ones who have accepted the existence of this figure and tried to elevate themselves to Him. They search for their true identity not amongst the shadows and apparitions of the cave but, rather, amongst true beings under the light of the sun. Our research is not oriented towards preaching monotheism, but aims to display the way to the truth which was presented by Ibn 'Arabi as a Sufi, Plato as a philosopher in his allegory of the cave, and Heidegger through the interpretation of the Platonic allegory as a modern philosopher trying to understand the history of man's liberation. All three tried to know themselves through the paths they described.

They tried to look into the abyss, the very non-ground (*Abgrund*) of man's existence, to find out man's nature. However, they knew that to see this nature they cannot put bounds on it. Nature cannot be treated like an object because then they would fall into the trap of dogmatism. They knew that the nature of man cannot be recognized from within the cave. Man is shackled down there. Hence he/she is an object that is bound. The shackles have to be destroyed to allow the nature of man to manifest. Seeing the unseen, in a sense, is a natural process, that is to say, a process whereby man as a natural being exists in nature and becomes nature and so becomes able to see it not from the outside but from within. Man who is in this world through his/her journey to the primordial reality is natural in the sense that he/she has to return to his/her nature as a being in harmony and in the midst of beings to be enlightened. The result of this journey is to be in tune with the cosmos.

Cosmos is the place of vision; it serves as the stage of vision for the divine names themselves or for the Platonic ideas, since the cosmos is the manifestation of these names. The meaning of being in tune with the cosmos is well illustrated through an incidence that occurred when the prophet Muhammad was emigrating from Mecca with his friend Abu Bakr. When some of his enemies wanted to kill them, they -the prophet and his friend- took refuge in a cave. Then God ordered a dove to lay a nest in front of the opening of the cave, and ordered a spider to cast a web over the same opening. Thus, when their enemies arrived they didn't think that the prophet was hiding in the cave because of the web and the nest. ⁽⁹⁴⁾ In this incident the elements of the cosmos protected the prophet because he fulfilled the premise of the natural being. The knowledge that one seeks is not about some foreign object that does not relate to oneself, rather it is essentially the knowledge of myself qua myself, of being as it is

⁹⁴ (?) I would like to thank Ahmed Gamal for reminding me of this incident and clarifying that these occurrences were due to the Prophet's complete natural integration within the cosmos.

and not as it appears to be. To question myself about myself I have to venture outside of the cave. But, in a certain sense, I also have to turn into myself. The unseen is not only that which points to a place outside of the scope of the eye, but also to something which is within, something which has been dormant for such a long time that one easily forgets its existence. Seeing the unseen is the look which reconnects the other which I have always severed and shackled within myself, the other that existed prior to myself within. In the introduction to this thesis, we quoted a statement from Ibn 'Arabi that spoke of the necessity to hear the call before venturing upon this journey, a turning of the soul, as in Plato's cave. One has to listen to the voice of the other that comes from within to be able to see what is unseen, to actually be the unseen, to be human. This is true being.

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