

## Ethics And Spiritual Intelligence

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### Introduction

As with other writers around the works of Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi, the non-academic "I" often makes its appearance. It is personal with me, too. Frankly, I have my doubts about writing about Ibn 'Arabi. But not speaking about him. To start to explain why, I have to go back to what brought me to Ibn 'Arabi.

My first contact with Ibn 'Arabi was the translated book *Sufis of Andalusia* (R.W.J. Austin). I was in college, and I had been reading Foucault. I was visiting the friends in D.C. who were my best friends from Geneva, Switzerland. I liked Foucault because he was telling me that everything was discourse, that "crime" was not just this thing we all know about, nor was "punishment" or "civilization." These things were in fact social constructs. So the entire enterprise of "fighting" "crime" with "police" was a game played by people who constructed and maintained the rules. If you wanted to find out what was behind that game, you had to ask from where did "police" come? You had to go back to Prussia and the beginnings of bureaucracy, and the notion of policy and procedure and police, because these things were not givens. No, they came into being for certain reasons, they were sustained for certain reasons, and they morphed into something else for certain reasons.

All this was making sense to me, especially when I turned this approach toward Palestine. There, I kept seeing that a little Palestinian kid could throw a rock, and that was aggression and violence inherent to a violent and ugly race and religion, and the Israeli army could wipe out a village, and that was revenge. It was very clear that this was a discourse, and that this discourse was very powerful, because events almost wrote themselves into the newspaper or TV. If you wanted to counter this discourse, you had a hugely difficult time. You sounded off, raving even,

when you said something about the Palestinians that did not fit the discourse. This happens all the time. If you say maybe water is free and a human right, you sound like you should just go hug a tree and shut up while the responsible people take care of things.

This was making sense, that the world was the world constructed by people, determined by the language used. And this has been the case throughout history and everywhere. It is stronger now, I think, because of the intensification of capitalism and globalism and so on.

So when I read *Sufis of Andalusia*, I saw a world peopled by people who challenged me in the way they challenged their contemporaries. Here was a world with people from Spain to Turkey, from Morocco to Arabia, who shivered when it was hot and wrapped themselves in blankets when it was cold, people who sank during 'asr prayers and could not rise until sunset.

For the next decade or so, I took this approach to Islamic law. I found the classical sources enlightening. They challenged my views and the views of almost all Muslims about what Islamic law was all about. If you hang out with the largely self-appointed experts of Islam, and if you read the contemporary legal codes of Muslim countries, you get a certain, shall we say negative, view of homosexuality, transgender, and the "other." But if you read the classical sources, you get something quite different. There is an entire subject on where transgender people stand for the *solat*. This woke me up, and I spent much effort trying to communicate classical Islamic law to Muslims who were concerned about Islam.

Then, for a year and a half, something remarkable came together. I was asked to lead a *dars* in Abiquiu, New Mexico, where there was the hearty remnants of the Dar al-Islam community. People came from Albuquerque, Taos, Santa Fe, driving two hours one way. Many of the participants had been with an active sufi group in the U.K. Europe, and North Africa. We sang *qasidas* and then I read from the *Futuh al-Makkiyyah*. What happened there is the answer I am trying to provide for "Why Ibn 'Arabi?"

Since then I have written much and talked much, and the writing seems ineffective but the speaking seems good. For twenty years now I have sat daily with Ibn 'Arabi, somehow "only"

reading the *Futuhāt* and not the *Fusus* or *Diwan*. I think I understand why writing does not work and why speaking does. This writing is for a seminar to be held 8 August 2007 in the University of Malaya sponsored by the Center for Civilizational Dialogue, which has had as visitors, not coincidentally, two of the most distinguished scholars of Ibn 'Arabi alive. The seminar I hope is an experiment for me to see exactly why writing does not work and speech does. I hope to provide an epilogue to assess the result. Ibn 'Arabi says after describing the Qur'anic verse 66:4,

*If you understand, I have flung you on the path.'*

That is why we listen to Ibn 'Arabi, to be flung on the path. What follows are pieces in the *Futuhāt al-Makkiyya* that open windows on the Qur'an that may fling one on the path. Here is the above passage in full.

A divine name is *al-quwwiyya* [power]  
 Allah ta'ala says, *over which are angels, exceedingly rough*  
 And about the angels, ta'ala says, *they do what they are commanded to do* [Qur'an 6:66]  
 And says,  
*Allah does not put a demand on the nafs except its ability*  
 [Qur'an 2:286]  
 and except what is given to it;  
 the command is *taklif*.  
 The *quwwat* comes out in the angels with the help of the name  
*al-quwwiyya*  
 Because they are helped by its *quwwat*  
 There is nothing in the created universe stronger than the  
*quwwat* [power] of the woman because of a *sirr* (secret) known  
 only to the one who knows why the universe came into being  
 and by what movement ta'ala brought the universe into being  
 it is from (these) two forefronts because the universe is an end-  
 product the *naakih* (one doing *nikah*) is the pursuer (*taalib*)  
 and the pursuer is needy while the object of *nikah* is sought,  
 and the one sought has the 'izzat of the one needing  
 him and desire is predominant

I have just described for you the place of woman among the created beings and how she is seen in the divine presence and why she is *quwwat* brought out Allah has called attention to what is special in her with regards *quwwat* in ta'ala's words about 'A'ishah and Hafsah

*If you two come out against him [66:4]*

That is, if you two help each other against him,

*Allah is his protector [66:4]*

That is, his defender,

*And Jibril and the righteous believers and angels*

*after that will be his protector [66:4]*

All of this is to match two women

And only the most powerful who have intensity and *quwwat* are mentioned

The righteous believers act with enthusiasm,

And enthusiasm is the strongest act

So if you understand, I have flung you on the path.

For the seminar, we studied this passage and gained some insight with participants recounting the story that prompted this situation, with the two women 'A'ishah and Hafsah. Its *sirr*, however, remains elusive. In a remarkable passage, Ibn 'Arabi describes his own journey with this verse. He says, (someone) said to me, There is something stranger than that (the verse mentioning the *junud*, the army, in 74:31). I said, What is it?

He said, What Allah said about the two women, wives of the messenger s.a.w. then he recited,

*If you two join against him, then Allah is his protector  
and Jibril and the right believers and the angels after  
that will have his back 66:4*

This is stranger than the mention of the *junud*  
And the mysteries of Allah are strange indeed  
So when he said that to me,

I asked Allah to give me some valuable insight into this  
 issue  
 Wherein Allah made himself the opposer  
 To these two, and Jibril and the right believers and the  
 angels  
 And he told me about it, and I was happy as never  
 before with the knowledge of that  
 And I knew on whom the two were leaning for support  
 And where their power came from  
 And that if Allah did not mention himself as protector  
 The angels and the believers would not have been able  
 to oppose them,  
 And I learned that the two had achieved some  
 knowledge of Allah and impact on the universe given  
 to them by this power  
 And this is from knowledge which is a hidden  
 preparation  
 And I thanked Allah for what came to me  
 And I do not think that anyone in the creation of Allah  
 is supported by what these two women were supported  
 by Lut, peace on him said,

*Would that I had power against you, or could take  
 myself to a strong support, 11:80*

In fact he did have a strong support, but he did not  
 realize it, because the prophet s.a.w. said, attesting to  
 that, "Allah have mercy on my brother Lut, he could  
 take himself to a strong support." "A'ishah and Hafsa  
 knew it, And if people knew what those two knew,  
 They would understand the meaning of this verse.<sup>2</sup>

These two passages about the "strong support," from the  
 phrase spoken by Lut in the Qur'an to the event with Hafsa  
 and `A'ishah, bring us to the problem with academic study of  
 Ibn `Arabi. One can simply mention this and other mysteries, as  
 an academic, and leave it at that. But if we stretch the bounds of  
 academic discourse, as this monograph does, we move from  
 merely describing a mystery to a reader to engaging the reader

in a different enterprise. That enterprise is to translate the parts of the Futuhat; not only the words, but the intent as well. In the seminar, this is what we did. And as the words and their intent (which is to fling one on the path) are conveyed, the reader or the audience becomes engaged.

The academic approach to Ibn 'Arabi is very unsatisfying. It is no coincidence that scholars writing today about Ibn 'Arabi inevitably let their own engagements with Ibn 'Arabi "leak" into their academic books. Without this leakage, the discourse will be bland and therefore not Ibn 'Arabi.

If the intent of the writer is conveyed, the audience will become actively engaged and "take" the words with them. Insights and understandings will come seemingly at random. An academic book tells you what the author wants you to know. This other kind of writing does not say this or that means this or that. This other kind of writing is saying, what do you think about this? The other kind of writing points to rather than explains things.

Quantum Mechanics, Newtonian World, Akbarian World  
String theory is an elaborate and highly complex mathematical solution to a problem: Why is the sub-atomic world different from the human scale world? Let us look at the main themes of this question from three perspectives: quantum, Newtonian, and Akbarian<sup>3</sup> physics.

Some sub-atomic particles spin in pairs. There is a "left-hand" particle and a "right-hand" particle. When one particle's spin is reversed, the other particle's spin reverses. Years ago experiments were run to separate paired particles and then reverse the spin of one. The particles were separated a few miles apart and at a predetermined moment, one particle was reversed and the other matched by reversing itself. It happened simultaneously. But how? How could one particle communicate with the other particle and say that it had been reversed? The phenomenon is so commonly seen now that the engineers are working on ways to exploit it commercially. But the mystery remains. To describe it, one must use strange language like "the two particles, no matter how far apart they are separated, remain 'one'," or "everything that happens touches everything else."

Newtonian physics says that communication is either a wave or a particle. If I want to signal you to stand up, for example, I either have to send a ball with "stand up" written on it or I send a sound wave through the air vibrating in the words "stand up." But the paired particles reversed each other faster than a wave or a particle could travel. Is the universe some kind of field or fabric? In any case, if everything is connected *now*, faster than waves or particles can move, then we have to talk about a oneness of existence.

In the quantum world, there is no cause and effect. Things happen, appear, disappear, move one way, move another way, without sequence. Newtonian physics cannot explain this. Schroedinger came up with a thought experiment to show the absurdity of quantum physics. A cat is in a box. A particle has a half life of one week. If the particle goes to another energy state, the cat will die of radiation. If it does not, the cat will live. The only way to describe this quantum situation is to say that there are two wave forms, one with a particle that did not lose energy and one where the particle did lose energy. The "live cat" and the "dead cat" are two realities that co-exist. Only when the box is opened will one reality collapse and the other be seen.

We think things are solid. But look at the table. Increase magnification until you see molecules. There is hugh empty space and then some molecules. Now look at the molecules. There is hugh empty space and then some atoms. Now look at the atoms. There is hugh empty space and then sub-atomic particles. These sub-atomic particles flicker in and out of existence. Where is the solidity?

The Akbarian solution to this problem is, the sub-atomic world is real and the Newtonian world is a veil. The problem is we think this world is real.

Here is how Ibn 'Arabi describes the situation.

There is no stillness in the universe at all Rather it fluctuates (q.l.b.) forever,

From one state to another state

In this world and the next Outwardly and inwardly<sup>4</sup> It is impossible for one state to last for two moments Because of the divine infinite vastness. Here, we tried to look at vastness. A speck of dust contains maybe  $3 \times 10^{12}$  atoms. How many dust particles are in the room? A drop of water contains  $2 \times 10^{21}$  atoms of oxygen. How big are these numbers? If we hold in our hand a world with everyone on it, and the person next to me does the same, and we go outside and give each person we meet one, and so on to the next country and the next, we are at a number of perhaps the atoms in the dust speck. Each atom is vibrating and moving and we want to take a "snapshot" of the atoms every nanosecond; we give each snapshot to each person in the world. All that for one particle of dust in a room. Continue to a dust particle in Alpha Centauri...!

Ibn 'Arabi contrasts the ability of the 'aql (the confining intelligence) with the heart to perceive vastness. He says,

*As for the differences in 'aqa'id (belief systems) about Allah among the people with divine shari'ahs and others, the people in the world, if Allah held them accountable for mistakes, he would have to hold every person with 'aqidah (belief) in him, because they have restricted their lord with their intellects and their views and have confined him, and only itlaq (unrestricted) is appropriate for Allah, because "in his hand is the ownership of everything"*

[Qur'an 36:83], [Futuhah 6:25]

Throughout the Futuhah, Ibn 'Arabi reminds us of vastness, and he often contrasts the vastness of the creation with the limitations of our minds to comprehend. He says,

*As the skies and the earth refused (the amanah) and the mountains to bear it Wa hamalaha al-insan innahu kaana zaluman (but humankind carried it; verily they are unjust), (that is,) had insan not borne it, and jahulan, (ignorant, that is,)*

Because knowledge of Allah is the same as ignorance of Allah, perception of incapacity to perceive is perception, because if one knows that there is more that one does not know, then one does not know, but it is knowledge that there is more that one does

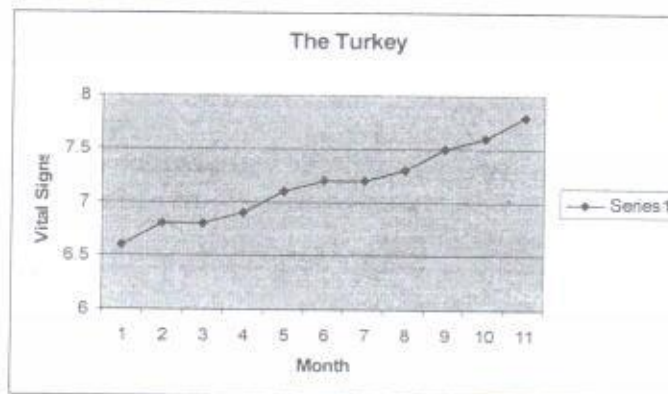


not know, and to one's knowledge is attached only ignorance of it. [Futuhat 3:255]

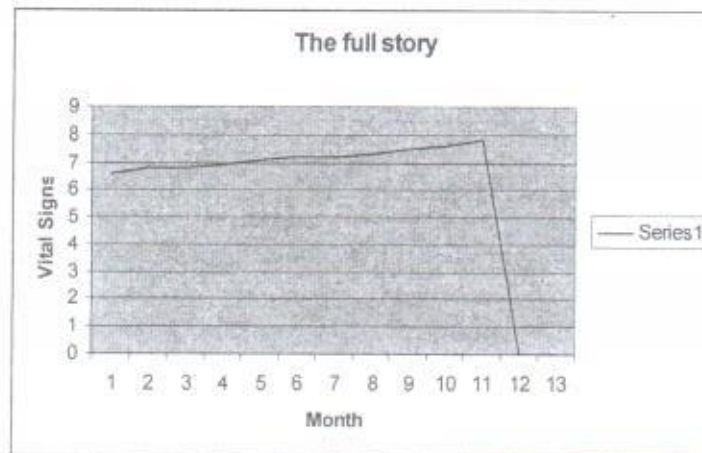
This vast quantum physical world is the real one, according to Ibn 'Arabi. The Newtonian one is a veiled illusion, a world created by our restricting intelligences. The methodology of the path, therefore, focuses on these two areas: *kashf*, which is the blinding insight which occurs when the veiling curtains are suddenly removed; and perception by the heart, instead of the restricting 'aql.

When does the veiled universe seem to us to be real? When do we forget the real, quantum mechanical universe? The answer points to another theme of sufism and the development of spiritual intelligence: the dream world. Ibn 'Arabi tells us that dreams show us the real world—a world of strange occurrences, where there is no arrow of time, and where narrative fails.

Books such as *Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* by Nassim Nicholas Taleb address spiritual intelligence. Our 'aql or restricting intelligence believes that one thing follows another and that future action is based on the past and present. Nassim Taleb uses the case of a turkey in America. If we chart the turkey's vital signs, they look like this:



One can easily predict the next month's results. Except, as we said, this is a turkey in America, and in November it is Thanksgiving Day, and the favorite meal is going to be turkey. So here is the rest of the story.<sup>5</sup>



This chart, developed in Excel, actually shows how hard it is get out of our restricting intelligence. The actual result is that the turkey's vital signs go to zero in one minute, but the chart automatically rounds out the "death" of the turkey to an entire month. That is why the line does not go vertically down. The chart itself is trying to "average out" the turkey's last month! Yes, the turkey began the month with "7.8" vital signs, and it ended the month with "0." But it went from 7.8 to 0 in the minute that its head was chopped off. The chart, and our restricting intelligence, insists on a gradual, not immediate, line from 7.8 to 0 over one unit (the month).

If we say, does the Newtonian model not work in the macro world? The answer is, somewhat. The chart on top looks Newtonian and it works—until the turkey dies suddenly. So, what is our response? In the Newtonian world, we have to say that in one year, the turkey's average vital life signs was 5, averaging the 7's with the 0 at its death. But that is neither true nor helpful. How can we say the turkey averaged 5, which is a number it never had in life or death? So the diagonal line from 7 to 0 over the year is not a helpful representation of the turkey's existence. So the Newtonian model collapses.

The actuarial model says that we do not know when one person will die, but we can say that among 1,000 people, this many will die in this many years. What is interesting is that the "average" person who lives 71 years, for example, is not real. Perhaps a thousand people with this health and this lifestyle live to an average of 71 years, but the average person does not exist. It is our creation, just the way the line drawn on the turkey chart from 7 in January to 0 in November – that diagonal line – starts on a true vital sign and ends on a vital sign but never in the months intervening does it accurately describe the turkey. The fallacy of coincidence is that we expect the value  $x$  at time  $t|1$  to be the basis from which we get a value at time  $t|2$ . If the value increases the same amount each time period, we think we are on to something. In fact, if the value deviates from what we expect, we probably do not even notice it. We make meaning out of everything we see, even if that means ignoring "outliers."

Related to this belief we have in continuity is the fallacy of narrative. As part of intelligence tests, children are shown simple line drawings of people and are asked to create a narrative. The "intelligent" child sees an entire story of fathers and mothers and son and daughters and he did that and she did that. The other child sees lines drawn into a picture of a man, but that man is not a father or an uncle. The first child is "reading into" the picture and creating a narrative from the scantiest of information. Spiritual intelligence, on the other hand, rejects narrative.

Psychologists are finding that human behavior is not based on essential individual qualities. We want to say this person is honest. If he does something dishonest, we explain away the dishonesty with some story – he was distracted, or he was worried about something. Anyone working with racial intolerance knows this truth. A racist will attribute bad motives to "them" and good motives to "his" people. If "his" people do something bad, there will be reasons brought forth to explain away that behavior and keep "his" people in the right. And if "they" do something good, it must be from some hidden, bad motive. "They treated me well that day because they are scheming and trying to make me let down my defenses." In every case, the narrative triumphs actual results and behaviors.

Spiritual intelligence, in contrast, does not try to make overarching narrative and morality stories. Religious stories abound which challenge the other kind of intelligence. An example is the Good Samaritan, a story which challenges people who believe that the Samaritans are inferior, because it was the "inferior" person who did the right thing. There was an interesting experiment done along these lines. Seminary students were listening to a lecture on the Good Samaritan. An individual each day would be asked to go to another building to give a lecture on the Good Samaritan. The experimenters had someone who looked like a homeless person sit along the path between the buildings. Now, each individual had just heard about the Good Samaritan and each one was going to another building to give a lecture about the Good Samaritan. The experimenters added a twist. Before they sent the individual to the other building, someone came to him and said, we have to hurry, the class there has been waiting for 10 minutes already. For other individuals, the experimenters had someone come to him and say, we have about 10 minutes before the class there begins. The results were intriguing. Only 20% of the people who were told they had to rush stopped to help the homeless person. But 60% who were told they had time stopped to help the homeless person. The results show that the situation—being rushed or not—was more important for determining behavior than the individual's actual beliefs about the Good Samaritan helping the homeless person. In the same way, someone might stop and wait at a red light in the middle of the night when the road is obviously clear; but if five other cars come up to the light and go through, there is a big chance that that person will go through too. Again, it is the situation, not the "essential" belief system of the individual which determines behavior.

Dreams, then, with their lack of narrative and lack of cause and effect, are the perfect windows to the quantum physical world. The cultivation of dreams and dream states, too, is a major goal for those wanting to increase their spiritual intelligence.

Ibn 'Arabi says,

**Chapter 880:14**

*The messenger s.a.w. used to, when he got up, ask his companions,*

*Did any of you see a dream?*

*Because dreams are nabuwwat (prophecy, cf. nabi)*

*And he loved to see nabuwwat in his ummah*

*But the people today have the utmost ignorance of this level which Rasul*

*Allah s.a.w. was so concerned about, such that he asked them every day*

*about their dreams.*

The fetus and the neonate sleep 80% of the time. They are almost constantly in the dream world. As they get older, they gain our Newtonian veiled and restricted intelligence and sleep less. They shift slowly from the fantastical world of quantum physics where things appear and disappear, where there is no narrative and no coincidence and no continuity, to the world of pattern, predictability, and cause and effect. They gain one intelligence but lose the other – the spiritual intelligence. To regain that intelligence, we must reenter the dream world, and be concerned, as was RasulAllah s.a.w., with dreams, and we must welcome dreams in ourselves and others as *nabuwwat*.

*The asbab (causes, as in cause and effect) all of them are  
zulmaat (dark covers) over the eyes<sup>6</sup>*

**The instruments of perception**

What then are the ways we can perceive, if the eyes as normally understood are inadequate? Ibn 'Arabi moves from a story of Abu Madyan to the hadith qudsi (Allah's statement) where Allah says he may become the eyes with which one sees.

*The Shaykh Abu Madyan had a little child. Abu Madyan was a man with insight and this boy who was seven years old saw and said, I see in the ocean in a place with such and such a quality a boat and on it such and such happened. After some days this boat arrived in Bugia, the city of the boy. The matter had happened as he said. So he was asked, By what do you see? He said, by my eyes, then said, no, rather I see by my heart, then he said, no, rather I see by my father when he is present, and I looked at him*

*and I saw this which you told me about. When he is absent from me, I don't see anything like that.*

*It is related in the authentic report from Allah ta'ala about the 'abd who approaches to Allah with nawafil until he loves him, saying, "When I love him, I become his ears with which he hears and his eyes with which he sees," and so on.*

*By him he hears and sees and talks and strikes and runs, so this is the meaning of our statement, the realizer returns by the same meaning-form by which he made real, and he looks through his father as insan looks through eyes in the perspective, so understand, so like this all the companions on any path of paths use this faculty, and the whole may be combined as one and one sees by every faculty, and hears by each faculty, and smells with each faculty, and it is the most complete combination.<sup>7</sup>*

### **The most obvious secret**

As with the purloined letter, the best place to hide something is in plain sight. Ibn 'Arabi uses this notion of "hidden in plain sight" to explain a fundamental truth of the universe.

A recent study was done on U.S. college students to measure the prevalence of narcissism. Not surprisingly, there is a lot of it going around. But one of the questions posed was, Would the world be a better place if you were in charge? The fact that we so often answer yes is the background of Ibn 'Arabi's discussion. While there is probably more narcissism today than eight hundred years ago, the basis impulse of that concept, that things would be better if I were in charge, is always there. In fact, the Qur'anic description of the creation of humankind prompted just such an impulse from the angels. Their complaint was, would you make a creature who would spoil things and spill blood? And honestly, they have a good point. It is hard not to see human history as an endless progression of war and exploitation, pollution and corruption. Ibn 'Arabi's answer is, you are forgetting the most basic premise of the universe: it was not created for you.

*Creation does not know what makes it complete and what makes it deficient  
Because creation is for another, not for itself  
The one who created creation created it for him, not for us*

*So ta'ala only provided what makes it good for ta'ala  
But the 'abd wants it to be for him/herself, not for the lord  
Because of this, one says, I want this and I am lacking that*

*But if one knew that one is created for one's lord,  
One would know that Allah created creation in the best form that is good for  
its lord*

*A'udhu biLlah an akuma min al jahilin [Qur'an 2:67]  
(I take refuge in Allah from being among the ignorant)  
This is an issue that our companions forget,  
despite the knowledge of the greatest of them of it  
it is something requiring in knowledge beginning, end, and middle,  
it is the basis of divine adab which the Real requires of the creatures  
only the one who say, rabbana wasi'ta kulla shayin rahmatan wa 'ilman,  
(O our lord, your mercy and knowledge encompass everything) know it*

*as for those who say, are you making there ones who will spoil it and spill  
blood? [Qur'an 2:30]  
(this is the complaint of the angels at Adam's creation)  
they have not reached the Real's intent for creation*

*if the matter were not as it happened,  
many names in the divine presence would be inoperative  
not bringing out their hukm (authority/power)*

*RasulAllah s.a.w. said, if they did not do dhunub (sins), Allah would go to  
another people doing dhunub who would ask for forgiveness and Allah would  
forgive them so we are notified that every action that occurs in the universe is  
for the bringing out of the hukm (force) of a divine name, and if the matter is  
like this, then there does not remain in existence anything more wondrous  
than this universe not more perfect and in existence there remains only the  
likes of this to no end.<sup>88</sup>*

**3:143-4.**

This passage ties together the angelic complaint, the divine names, and the startling hadith "if this people did not sin." Ibn `Arabi is saying, the goal of the universe is not to have no sin or no blood shed—that might be our goal, if it were our universe. The "goal" instead is the operation of the divine names.

## Archery

*The knowledge of quwwat [power], which is the throw of the bow, the penetration, the grip of the fingers on the string and the arrow, and the ways of releasing, and the arrow's target, and contests, because Allah did not provide any of the tools of war what he provided for the knowledge of throwing of the bow and he set it up in this place with levels in the name "quwwat," and commanded us in the Qur'an to be ready with it; ta'ala said,*

*Prepare for them what you can of quwwat [Qur'an 8:60]*

*And RasulAllah said, the quwwat is the throw, the quwwat is the throw, the quwwat is the throw.*

*The companion of tasting see it ... there is no proof of it except the throw of the bow, and it is the spirit of "kun" for engendering, and the spirit of wanting (when we want something, we say Be and it is) for what is absent (nonexistent).<sup>9</sup>*

## 'Aqidah

The people disagree about the Jew who becomes Christian and the Christian who becomes Jewish, whether to qatal them or not. They don't disagree about the one who becomes Muslims, because he s.a.w. did not call people to anything but al-Islam, and the ulama al rsum (people with superficial knowledge) take it that this change is subject to law, but it is not according to us.

Because the Christian and the people of the Book all of them when they become Muslim they do not change their religion, because part of their deen is the iman in Muhammad s.a.w. and entering into his shari'ah when he is sent, and that his risalah (message) is universal, so no one changes, among the people of deen, his deen when he becomes Muslim, so understanding. And there only remains the mushrik because that is not a shari'ah-deen, rather it is a place other than Allah, and Allah said only "and who reverts among you from his deen" [2:217] and RasulAllah s.a.w. saying, who changes his religion, rather one doesn't call shirk a religion because the religion is jaza' (recompense) and there is no recompense for the good that the mushrik gets from his shirk at root, not for what went before and not for what remains. So when the mushrik leans to what is led to him in fire which is his place which he will not exit from ever, then that is not a recompense, rather that is specified sabiqah rahman (mercy



preceding) which extends everywhere, so its hukm (force) comes out at the time ... so meant by deen is only that which is recompensed, whether good or bad.<sup>10</sup>

This is the strangest thing according to us, that insan follows (taqlid) his thinking...

But the 'aql is dependent on the senses<sup>11</sup>

### Animals

*It is related that a sparrow comes on the day of qiyamat and says,  
Lord, ask this one why he killed me frivolously?  
And likewise for who cut a tree with no benefit or threw a rock with no use that would help any of the creation of Allah.  
When Allah gives this information to these people and they are described with praise for these Men and one learns that from them by kashf and senses like what happens with the companions hearing the tasbih of the stones because there is not between them and frivolous moment any inclusion, rather they side with that all at once.*

*Most of the heavy ones (humans and jinn) ignore this knowledge .. they don't know the level of these Men and don't speak highly of them and they don't pay attention to them, and for this ta'ala said that each thing in the universe praises Allah ta'ala without division (without specifying one or another) except people, and ta'ala said, "Do you not see that yasjudu (they do sujud)..." and does not divide (it is general), "and many people," so there ta'ala divides (it is specific).<sup>12</sup>*

### Intention, RNG

The experiments exploring intention may use a Random Number Generator. It is interesting to see what place randomness has in different traditions. While some cultures see casting lots as a way of divining divine will, casting lots in Islam has been carefully and thoroughly separated from that interpretation, where saying "it will rain" based on lots cast to deities is specifically forbidden and rejected. Rather, casting lots is a way to make decisions without one's ego coming into play, or to make decisions recognizing the limitations of information before one. The prophet, for example, used to cast lots to see which wife would accompany him on a journey.

Randomness is cultivated in the Ibn 'Arabi tradition as a way to perceive reality, which is ever changing and never predictable. One of the reasons that reality is ever changing is because things move from the imaginal world to the sensory world in uncontrollable ways. This discussion of intention and the imaginal and the sensory worlds and the ways they are bridged (*barzakh*) form a large part of the *Futuhāt*. We look at one story that Ibn 'Arabi uses to show what happens when something is fully formed in the imaginal realm and drops into the sensory realm.

The story of Jawhari.

He said himself that he left with dough from his house to the baker's  
He needed to do *ghusl*  
So he went to the edge of the Nile to wash

He saw himself in the water  
As in a dream  
As if he were in Baghdad  
He had married and lived with the woman for six years  
And she gave birth to children, (I can't see/remember the number  
[writes Ibn 'Arabi])  
And then he came back to himself while he was in the water

He finished washing and got out, got dressed  
And went to the baker's  
He took the bread and went to his house  
And told his family what he saw in his *waqi'a*

Then after some months this woman came whom he saw that he had married in the sudden experience (*waqi'a*) asking about his house and when she met him he recognized her and he recognized the children and did not deny them he said to her when did you marry?

She said, since six years, and these are his children from me  
So what was in *khayal* [imaginal world] came out in *hass* [sensory world].<sup>13</sup>

**In the moment**

*As for the story about the dinner table, where a shaykh comes as a guest to another shaykh and he tells his apprentice to bring him food to the table, but he delays.*

*He asks him, what is causing the delay?*

*He said, I saw ants on the table and I did not see, following the code of chivalry, how to get them to leave, so I lay in wait until they left by themselves. The shaykh said to him, you have been meticulous, and being meticulous is part of chivalry.*

*He was happy with what he said and happy with what he let pass.*

*If someone had asked this shaykh, how did you see in him meticulousness in chivalry to be praised when the guests were uncomfortable with the delay and the waiting, when looking out for guests is a priority over looking out for the ants;*

*then the shaykh might say, the ants are closer to Allah with respect to their obedience to Allah than human beings, compared to when human beings find opposition to and dislike of something that is not pleasing to them.*

*We say, the skin of the human beings and their limbs and hairs and bodies are Articulate (naatiq) with praise (tasbih) of Allah ta'ala just like the ants, and because of this they will bear witness against the Articulate self that is ungrateful and denying.*

*Ta'ala says, "They will say to their skins, why have you borne witness against us?" [41:21]*

*And ta'ala says, "On that day will bear witness against them their tongues, their hands, and their feet" [24:24]*

*They are just and their witness is accepted, so the first thing to look out for is the guests for which the shar'iah has commanded to hurry the preparation of food for them, so had the servant decided to leave the table to the ants, and to ask the shaykh permission, telling him the story, and to look to prepare another way to feed the guests, it would have been better and more meticulous in chivalry.<sup>14</sup>*

### Pain, pleasure located in brain, not things

*One of the things connected to this house of the Good characteristics is  
Cooperation in thankfulness of the benefactor  
And cooperation in receiving trials from the giver of trials  
Because there is no support for lifting the trial from one  
Except from the one who sent it to one  
And it is Allah ta'ala*

*If it was sent by another, it is Poor Characteristics  
And if it was sent by Allah  
Then it is from Good Characteristics  
The 'abd is in two states, seeking removal of the trial from one  
The trial is a metaphor for its presence and its sensory experience of pain,  
nothing else*

*In this level  
Many of the people of the path make a mistake*

*They hold their selves from complaint to Allah for what he sent to them  
But the error in that on their part is that they say,*

*We do not object to what befell us,  
because preferred now is the satisfaction from it,  
so one says to them, the stage of satisfaction came with being free from its  
feeling and an absent of seeking its removal,  
that is the definition of satisfaction, not its recuperation  
because the nafs hates the presence of pain  
and because of this we speak of trial as pain, not as a cause of pain  
and it is appropriate for the 'abd to ask Allah ta'ala to lift from him what  
came to him when it happens to him something that he hates that Allah did  
and certainly one of his stamped hates is it because the pain necessitates its  
hukm (force) on his nafs and the act of its sending down is Allah's  
so combined is the hate of pain and its hatred from the stamp (origin)  
because pain necessitates its hukm and its presence and the presence of pain  
is not in itself but Allah made it arise in this 'abd so hatred is attached by  
condition and by combination to the divine side because of this, it happens  
to the greatest, who say, I have been touched with harm [21:83], and there is  
education for the asker to ask that it not occur to one in the future.<sup>15</sup>*

### Conclusion

One of the topics we ended with concerned the way a growing illegal drug problem is being dealt with. The link suggested is between immorality, drugs, and punishment. Rehabilitation is conceived of largely in punitive terms. Ibn 'Arabi however tells us how strong the *nafs* really is, (Futuhāt 5:22 The *nafs* is stronger than iron, water). But the key is to remember that it was "machined" to love *riyasat* or leadership over its own kind. "So who says leave your nature has demanded something great." The person who is living a wretched existence and the person who is living a happy one, their *nafs* is the same. In recognition of this, Ibn 'Arabi ends one passage with a prayer, "Allah who gave us the faculty where the likes of this are attractive to us." The wretchedness and happiness are not moral consequences.

As one conclusion, the seminar suggests that there is a spark of curiosity and wonder that can be found in all our endeavors, including academia and in academic enquiry. Ibn 'Arabi's words speak to those who are increasing their spiritual intelligence. A seminar such as this one is an ideal opportunity for our discourse to rise to great levels.

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3. Nassim Nicholas Taleb. (2007). *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*. US: Random House.
4. Quranic verses 66:4, 6:66, 2:286, 11:80, 2:30, 41:21, 24:24.
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**Footnotes**

- <sup>1</sup> Futuhat al-Makkiyyah: Volume 4 page 142. Citation format hereafter is 4:142.
- <sup>2</sup> Futuhat 1:274.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibn 'Arabi is often called Shaykh al-Akbar; some writers today describe his style as "Akbarian."
- <sup>4</sup> 6:17
- <sup>5</sup> Taleb, Nassim Nicolas [2007] Black Swan.
- <sup>6</sup> 4:422.
- <sup>7</sup> 1:335.
- <sup>9</sup> 5:32.
- <sup>10</sup> 7:193.
- <sup>11</sup> 1:435.
- <sup>12</sup> 1:374.
- <sup>13</sup> 3:124.
- <sup>14</sup> 3:354.
- <sup>15</sup> 4:369.