

Ivan Aguéli

~ SELECTIONS OF THE SWEDISH SUFI ~



BERSERKER

BOOKS



Abdul-Hâdi

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DRAFT EXPLANATION OF TECHNICAL TERMS DIFFERENT TRADITIONAL DOCTRINES

*Published in December 1910
(signed La Direction, i.e. Palingénius).*

The whole analytical side of a doctrine is, in short, nothing more than the complete enumeration and exact definition of the technical terms used by the writers associated with that doctrine. It can be said that this terminology constitutes the external, and therefore communicable, part of the doctrine, because the idea can only be transmitted when it is expressed, either in words, symbols or any other mode of formal representation.

The study of technical words is as important for esotericism and metaphysics as, for example, the study of the simple elements, metals and metalloids, is for chemistry (we say simple elements from the point of view of ordinary chemistry only). Each of these words represents a fundamental element, a 'basic idea' of the doctrine; each of them deserves a separate monograph, because they are, so to speak, the building materials whose assembly constitutes the edifice.

To translate these terms into the foreign language, doubly foreign even, of another doctrine, is, in the intellectual order, a work analogous to that which would consist in removing a material obstacle, for example to break through a mountain or to cross a sea preventing two countries from communicating with each other. This is why we thought it would be a good idea to compile a sort of explanatory glossary of the main metaphysical terms used in the various traditional doctrines.

The project was prompted by an Islamic student, Abdul-Hâdi. He knew nothing of Christianity, Judaism, Hindu or Chinese traditions. He knew only Islam, or rather only one school of Islam, that of Mohyiddin ibn Arabi, the Malâmatiyah and Abdul-Karîm El-Guîli. But he knows almost all the European languages and the so-called Semitic languages, and he has a method for determining the exact meaning of words, even if they are taken from a foreign language. On his own responsibility, he has written a brief commentary on a certain number of Arabic terms, to which we have added the following.

have included a comparison with the corresponding terms in various other traditions. We have then conventionally established :

1° A French word corresponding more or less exactly to the oriental terms explained, and in particular to the Arabic term which gave rise to each commentary;

2° Some synonyms for the French word chosen by our first convention.

We must insist on the fact that the French word chosen is only conventional; it can hardly be otherwise, since, generally speaking, the words of each language do not have exact equivalents in the other languages. Moreover, the Eastern terms themselves are already conventional, and the native doctors do not always fully agree on their meaning. Each school, sometimes each doctor, gives these words a particular meaning, or at least a special nuance; but it has to be said that, when it comes to orthodox schools, the various definitions thus given are never contradictory to each other. This would not be the case if we were to consider the heterodox schools: for example, the Djâinas and Buddhists use certain Brahmanic terms in a sense quite different from their traditional meaning, and often even contrary to it.

It would therefore be the height of temerity and presumption to try to render exactly, by a single ordinary French word, what the greatest Eastern doctors have not been able to express by an ordinary word (i.e. intelligible to everyone) in their own language. They were themselves obliged to give the ordinary word an artificial meaning, i.e. a conventional one; sometimes they even had to resort to entirely forged words, artificial not only in meaning but also in form.

When a technical word in a text can be translated by a single corresponding French word, even a conventional one, this avoids the tedious circumlocutions that make oriental translations as unpleasant to read as they are difficult to do. As for synonyms, which are also conventional, their role is to replace the word chosen first, in the event that, because of its material form or consonance, its introduction into the sentence would disrupt the phonetic harmony of the speech.

Let us add that, in a translation, conventional terms or their synonyms must always be placed between inverted commas, to distinguish them from ordinary words¹. With this precaution, intended to make confusion impossible, their use no longer presents any inconvenience, and makes it possible to show in a more sensitive way, by the comparison of texts thus translated, the real concordance of all the traditions.

(1) This is what has been done in the translation published below; definitions and explanations of the various technical terms used will be given later.

EPISTLE ENTITLED THE GIFT ON THE MANIFESTATION OF THE PROPHET*

BY THE INITIATED AND INSPIRED
SHEIKH MOHAMMED IBN FAZLALLAH
EL-HINDI

This text is too elementary and too didactic to give any indication of the author's personality. I only know him from this little treatise, unpublished and little known even in the East. I have only been able to find one manuscript, which is rather mediocre. I chose this work from among hundreds of others of the same kind, because it is to some extent, in terms of esotericism, what "Ummul-barâhîn" or the little Senoussiyah is to exoteric doctrine.

I

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

Know, brothers - may Allah make you happy! - that the "True God" is Existence; that Existence has no forms or limits; that, in spite of this, It appears in the world and manifests itself in all its glory in discernible forms. And yet It does not change. It has never ceased to be without form and without limits. "*He is as He was*". Existence is unique, but Its modes of appearing are diverse and numerous. It is the intimate (and mysterious) reality of all beings. "*Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth. - Everything disappears except His face. - Allah was and nothing was with Him*"¹

All things, right down to the atom, do not lack Existence, but it must not be considered as an effectuation or a result, because these two conceptions are "secondary ideas", and they are confused in the material. The tangible reality of things in the world must not be referred to as Existence in the sublime sense of the word. God is far above such a conception.

(*) Published in December 1910, January 1911].

¹ *Lâ-Shay* (= non-thing), nothing, nothingness. *Shay* (= thing) derives from *Sha'a* = to want. Some say: "*El-lâ- Shay*" (= the non-thing, nihility), thus considering the primordial void as an entity.

By Existence we understand the superlative reality that exists by itself, through which all beings exist, and of which there can be only one in the world².

No one can discover what Existence really is. Neither intelligence, imagination nor the senses can grasp it, even by comparison or analogy. All the intellectual faculties have been created; all the methods of thinking are human inventions. What is under the influence of time cannot understand what is free from it. God, his 'quiddity' and his 'attributes' are far above the temporal. Anyone who seeks to know God as we seek to know created things is wasting his time.

Existence is organised into several 'series':

1° *The Unassignable*, or the Absolute without form or indication of any kind, and which is outside any attribution whatsoever. It must not be imagined that Existence, in this "degree", is defined in a constant and essential way by the fact of being absolute and free from any attribution. It must be understood that, in this "degree", It is free from any limiting addition of characteristic or epithet; that It is sanctified by the emondation of every intelligible link; that It is indefinable to such an extent that even its indefinable quality does not constitute a definition of Its true nature. "Pure Unity" is the name of this "degree". It is the 'very quintessence' of the 'True God'. There is no "degree" above it; all others are inferior.

2° *The first assignment* is the awareness that God has of his This "degree" is called "the Primacy" or "the Truth of Muhammad". This "degree" is called "the Primacy" or "the Truth of Muhammad".

3° *The second assignment* is the awareness that God has of his This "degree" is called "Identity" or "the Truth of Man". This "degree" is called "Identity" or "the Truth of Man" ³. These three "degrees" are eternal, without beginning or end. Their succession is not temporal, but mental and speculative⁴.

4° *Spirits*, i.e. abstract and simple creatures, which manifest themselves in their primary essences.

5° *The world of primary forms*, i.e. composed but subtle creatures that cannot be split, divided, broken up or merged (without ceasing to be what they are).

²The superlative is always unique. It is impossible to imagine two superlatives. The grammatical plural of superlatives considers each of them to be unique.

³Also known as "Adam's Truth". Esoterically speaking, Mohammed came before Adam; historically speaking, he came after. The secret doctrine of Arab Sufism is not contrary to the Law or to common sense.

⁴See *Il Convito*, Cairo, July-August 1907, p. 97: Quando si legge nei testi sacri che Iddio fosse primo tal cosa e poscia tal altra, non bisogna immaginarsi che Iddio fosse costretto nella prigione del tempo o della causalità, poi questo è una concezione grossolana ed ufficiale di Dio. In the succession and order of the things that have happened together in history, we should note the degree of intimacy with the Absolute, and the number, greater or lesser, of intermediaries through whom you communicate with God.

6° *The world of bodies*, i.e. gross things that can be split or divided (without fundamentally changing their nature).

7° *The universal degree*, which encompasses all the other "degrees", the corporeal, the two luminous, "Identity" and "Primacy". It is man.

The first of these seven "planes" is that of the "*Unmanifested*", while the other six comprise the whole of manifestation or "expansion". When man in the seventh (and last) "degree" exalts himself towards the sublime, when the other (five) "planes" emerge in him in perfect fulfilment, he is "universal man". This exaltation and magnitude reached their apogee in our Prophet ⁵- may Allah pray upon him and greet him! - He seals the chain of prophetic inspiration.

II

The names of the divine "degrees" must not be used to designate the "degrees" of the world or of creation. In the same way, we must not use the names of the "The 'degrees' of the world to designate the divine.

Existence has two universalities: *that of "quiddity"* and *that of names*. According to the first, God manifests Himself to Himself, by Himself, in Himself and for Himself, without any relation to any phenomenon or entity other than Himself. This universality implies "absolute sufficiency" and "perseverance". God contemplates in Himself all things, divine or accidental, their laws, relationships and destinies. His cosmic speculation is of perfect perspective, for everything is enclosed in the bowels of His "quiddity", included in His "harmonious unity", as the palm tree is found in the stone of the date, or (better still) as all numbers are found in the number.

It is called "absolute sufficiency". It is called "absolute sufficiency", because God's meditation, his inner vision of the whole Universe, could have sufficed (for his creative love) without his needing to externalise the world in detail (in order to know himself)⁶. He did not

(5) That is to say: it is the solution to human antitheses, some of which are as follows:

Exaltation × *Magnitude*.

Height × width.

Inside × outside.

Convergence × divergence.

Whole × details.

Synthesis × analysis.

Theory × practice.

Words × deeds.

Spirit × letter. Christianity ×

Judaism. Asceticism ×

Urbanity.

Aristocracy × Democracy.

Faith × Law.

Esotericism × Exotericism.

Solitude with the Creator × Universality with creatures. Etc. etc.

⁶Here is a tradition that formulates the whole cosmogony: "God said: I was a hidden treasure; - I loved to know, - and I created the world". It doesn't matter whether this tradition is authentic or not, because the synthesis is beautiful. The "hidden treasure" refers to the "Unassignable". Creation, "expansion" or "assignment" is the discovery of this treasure. The link between the "Assigned" and the "Unassigned" is found in the second part. The Arabic word for

was obliged to produce the Cosmos, since, everything being in Him and belonging to Him In this "harmonious unity", He can see all things in Himself through meditation on Himself. Meditation is, on this level, a vision that is all interior and mysterious, purely "theoretical" (if I may put it that way). It perceives the detail in the whole, the plurality in the unity, the palm tree with all its branches in the simple stone of the date.

The universality of names consists in the fact that God reveals Himself through Himself and contemplates His "quiddity" in external "assignments", that is, in the world. His synoptic meditation embraces all substances (of the different worlds) with an "operative" gaze that brings everything to life, and gives all things an individual life and a concrete nature. It could be compared to the vision of the whole in the detail, of unity in plurality, of the kernel in the tree. The universality of names corresponds to the creation of the material world. Since its character is realising and expansive (I almost said 'practical'), it finds its full notion only in the detailed, precise and concrete manifestation of the Universe.

Existence must not be considered as a descent towards a created thing, or as an incarnation in it, for a descent towards a thing, as well as a transélémentation with it, logically presupposes two Existences, one of which descends towards the other and identifies with it. Now, Existence is unique. The plurality of Its 'attributes', noted by the feeling and 'intuitive taste' of the initiates, such as worship (symbolic, ritual or charitable), the obligation imposed by the Law, happiness, pain, etc., all relate to 'assignments'. In its first 'degree' of Absoluteness, Existence is completely freed from all this.

Existence includes all beings, just as, for example, an obligation includes all obliged persons, or a qualified thing includes all its attributes. Between It and beings, there is no relation of container to content or of whole to parts. God is far above such a supposition.

Existence, as a pure abstraction (nevertheless hyper-real), circulates in the "quiddities" of beings and constitutes their "intimate substance", just as these same "quiddities", before "expansion", constituted Its "intimate substance". The perfect, universal and absolute attributes of Existence circulate in the attributes of beings and constitute the "intimate substance" of these same attributes, just as the attributes of beings, before "expansion", resided in the perfect and universal attributes of Existence and constituted the "intimate substance" of these same attributes.

The world and everything that depends on it are ephemeral accidents, whereas Existence is always before the thinker's eyes.

The world has three "evolutionary faces":

1° *The first assignment*; here the world is called "primitive will"; 2° *The second assignment*; here the world is called "fixed substances";

the element of knowledge can be read in different ways, all of which are accurate. The different interpretations relate to the different degrees of assignment. God ultimately created "something other than Himself", according to exotericism, in order to be known by someone other than Himself, i.e. externally.

3° *Assignment to the exterior*; the world is called "external substances".

The "fixed substances" are what we call "the fragrance of Existence". The sensible world indicates their laws and their effectualities.

The first thing we grasp about a thing is its Existence. It is from Existence that we understand the thing itself. It is to things what light is to colours and shapes. But since 'expansion' is continuous and violent, understanding beings according to Existence is the exclusive prerogative of the elite.

III

We approach God through two kinds of works: supererogatory and obligatory. The first consists in the (gradual) obliteration of man's (selfish and separatist) attributes, so that the divine "attributes" appear in him. He then lives, dies, hears and sees through his whole organism, and no longer exclusively through his ears and eyes. He has far-away hearing, second sight and so on. This is how we must understand the "extinction" of man's attributes in the "attributes" of God. It is the fruit of supererogatory works.

The approach to God through obligatory works, i.e. those prescribed in the Law, consists in man's disinterestedness with regard to all things, including his own person, to the point of dead indifference, so as to consider in everything only the "True God"⁷. This is "extinction".

⁷This self-denial is sometimes called "Fanâ-ed-dhât", i.e. "the extinction of the quiddity of man in the quiddity of God". It is more complete than the first: "Fanâ-es-Sifât", that is to say "the extinction of the attributes of man in the attributes of God". It may seem strange that obeying the law can produce such a brilliant result, but we must not forget that the law we are obeying is not man's law, but God's law, the Shariyah. Again, it is above all a question of conforming to its esoteric meaning, which is a magnificent doctrine of universality and hieraticism. Its exoteric meaning refers only to the rights of humans and animals, but its esoteric meaning embraces the entire Universe. His explanation of the Microcosm is a masterpiece of human thought. "Shariyah" literally means "a great national highway". Its purpose is to balance all the rights and duties of creatures, as well as the legitimate share, in the great community of life, of all particular, social, family and natural egoisms. Respect for the rights of others, whether people, beasts or things, not out of fear of men or devils, but out of love for God, universal harmony and cosmic responsibility, is the very spirit of "Supreme Identity" or Arab-Muslim esotericism.

The Sharaite right of others is called "God's right", and in practice, this right can, in some cases, become God himself, by a shortcut of language that stimulates the lukewarm. - This belief does not lead precisely to asceticism, but to a kind of objectivity by virtue of which we consider ourselves from the outside, as a simple social and vital case. However, it may happen that you yourself become "God's right" (Haqq Allah), in which case your egoism, limited but external, takes the form of a religious obligation. This explains why those who die defending their personal, human or social rights are considered martyrs, i.e. they die for the cause of God.

Since the "Right of God", in which all the units of the Universe participate, can, with certain restrictions, pass for the "True God", that is to say for Himself, it is easy to understand why the author did not want the "Right of God" to pass for the "True God".

The "unassignable" was limited in an absolute and essential way by the quality of the abstract.

See *Il Convito*, nos. 3 and 4, p. 101, in the series of my articles entitled "El-Akbaryah": ...Se un musulmano uomo dabbene dice : " Ogni cosa è Dio ", non bisogna prenderlo alla lettera, ma esaminare se per caso, ei riguarda la parole " Allah " come un puro tetragrammo, o se nella sua espressione v'è un'elissi e se la frase non sia incompleta : - se v'è un'elissi, la frase completa è : " Ogni cosa è diritto di Dio "...

of man (himself, his "quiddity") in God. It is the fruit of the works of the Law.

IV

There are several species in the "supreme identity", that is to say in the unity of Existence. Some know theoretically that God is in nature. Others see it in their hearts, in their states of emotional exaltation. The latter are superior to the former, in that they are closer to their origins. Still others see God in nature and nature in God, without the vision of the one overshadowing the vision of the other. These are even more elevated, even more primitive than the other two groups; their place is that of prophets and 'spiritual pivots', as well as disciples of both. It is impossible for anyone who does not fulfil the Law and the Way to reach the second of these degrees, let alone the third, which is the highest.

V

Beings, in relation to Existence, constitute the "intimate substance" of the "The difference between God and nature is relative. The difference between God and nature, from a relative point of view, exists; but, from an absolute point of view, the whole of all beings is the "True God". Take, for example, a drop of water, a wave and snow. Basically, these three things are just water, but when we want to specify, they are different. Another example is the mirage, which, being nothing but emptiness, appears to be water.

There are many Qur'anic (and prophetic) proofs in favour of "supreme identity". The first of these is: "God owns the East and the West. Wherever you turn, you face Him". - We (God) are closer to him (man) than the jugular vein (in his body). - "We (the Prophet) are closer to Him than you are, but you do not see Him." - Those who make a pact with you make it with God. His hand is above theirs. - "He is the first and the last, the apparent and the occult; He knows all things." - "... and in yourselves; do you not see! - "When My worshippers ask you about Me, tell them that I am near." - When you throw (the projectile), it is not you who throw, but God." - God surrounds all things.

The following words are taken from prophetic tradition: "The most truthful maxim of the ancient Arabs is the word of Labid: Is it not true that all is vain except Allah? - We speak with our Lord when we pray, for the Lord of each of you is between him and the *qiblah*. - "God said, "My worshipper never ceases to draw near to Me by supererogatory works until I love him; and when I love him, I become the ear with which he hears, the eye with which he sees, the hand with which he grasps, and the foot with which he walks."" -

"God said: Man! I was sick, and you did not visit Me. I was hungry, and you did not give Me food." - Tirmidhi relates a tradition from the class of

Tharvîlah: "By Him in whose hands is the life of Mohammed, if you were to descend a rope to the lower earth, you would find God". The great traditionalist adds: "He is the first and the last, the apparent and the occult; He knows all things." - This is enough (for our thesis) as far as authentic traditions of the Prophet of God are concerned.

The maxims of the initiates relating to "supreme identity" are so numerous that it is superfluous to quote them. Anyone who wishes to know them need only open the classic books on the lives of the saints; they will not fail to find them.

VI

If you want to reach God, you must begin by following the Prophet in word and deed, in letter and in spirit. Then you will practise "respect" and "supreme identity". This is the meaning of "the good word exempt from ritual ablution", time preference and other formalities. However, when the "good word" is accompanied by canonical and symbolic purity, it is all the more meritorious. So don't worry so much about the external conditions in which you begin or end your "meditation". Don't stop at the letters of the formula, but consider above all what it means in all circumstances: (it doesn't matter) whether you are standing, sitting, walking or lying down, moving or standing still, drinking or eating, and so on. "Respect" is practised by erasing the "temporality of the self", which consists in having another (interest) within oneself than "the true God" or "the Right of God". The negation expressed by the words *Lâ ilaha* (= there is no God), i.e. by the first part of the creed, is therefore aimed only at "the temporal self". This is how *Lâ ilaha* should be understood. Then we affirm "the True God" in ourselves. This is the true meaning of *illallah* (= if not God), i.e. the second part of "the good word".

If you ask me: "Since Existence is unique, since outside of It nothing is, what then do you deny, and what do you affirm?" I answer: We deny the superstition of "disparity" and "bi-existence", which consists in attributing an absolute existence to created things. Such a belief is superstitious and vain; one must reject it in order to be able to affirm "the True God" within one's consciousness.

You who seek the Truth! If, by Grace, the divine emotion overcomes you, you will no longer be able to reject the superstition of the "temporal self", because you are nothing but the testimony of the "True God".

May Allah grant us such an elevated state of mind, through the protection of the Prophet - may prayer and salvation be upon him!

PAGES DEDICATED TO MERCURY*

SAHAÏF ATARIDIYAH

Among the various esoteric doctrines, there is, to my knowledge, none that offers as much analogy with that of the Arabo-Islamites as Chinese Taoism, as expounded by Matgioi in his various works. This is all the more surprising given that Islam, not only exoteric but also esoteric, is, I would not say the combination, but the happy medium and the balance between Judaism and Christianity. The Qabbalah can be a link between Talmudists and Christians, I cannot say otherwise. The Muslim Qabbalah is not quite the same as that of the Sepher ha-Zohar and the Sepher Yetzirah, despite the many similarities. Islam may have adopted most of the characters and places of the two Testaments in its symbolism (even with an identical meaning), but its spirit is different. It distances itself from the other so-called Semitic traditions and comes much closer to Taoism, or the "primordial tradition". Islamism, even if exoteric, has always denied being a new religion; it has always claimed the title of "Dinul-Fitrah", i.e. the primitive religion, that of the beginning of Humanity. There is a very curious tradition of the Prophet Mohammed: "Seek Science, even in China". The mention of China here is taken as a mere figure of speech, to designate a very distant and unknown country, meaning that no effort should be spared to find Science. But it may well be that the Prophet was referring to Taoism or the Yi-king, for the difference between Islam and the Chinese tradition is none other than that between universal religion and sacred science. To point out all the points of comparison between Islam and Taoism, I would have to comment line by line, page by page, first on Matgioi's Taoist books, then on Philastre's translation of the Yi-king. It would be well worth the effort, given the surprising results of such a study. Here, I will content myself with pointing out a few fundamental principles: fatalism, transcendental pantheism in what we call "Supreme Identity", Universal Man, the cerebral nature of visual reasoning, unlimited tolerance, because of their nature, I do not say contrary to religion, but extra-religious. I repeat that the enumeration of the agreement of the two doctrines on the very principles can be extended indefinitely.

Transcendental fatalism has nothing to do with the present decadence of the Eastern majorities. The cause of this lies solely in the demoralising action of despotic governments, and in the ethnic heterogeneity of

(*) [Published in January and February 1911].

these peoples. Wherever you are in the presence of a homogeneous and free group, you have as much collective morality and individual value as in the best countries of Europe. Abjection begins only with government contacts, and therefore in the major centres, whether capitals or emporiums. Fatalism consists in the notion that Heaven does everything, not directly, but indirectly, through men and things. Our fatalism leads us to regard natural or human history as a sacred book, of which we are a more or less important part. A great writer who calls himself a Catholic, but whom Catholics are inclined to disavow, M. Léon Bloy, summed up our fatalism in a pithy phrase: "Everything that happens is admirable". It is our fatalism that makes us find certain events monumental. In the whole of Europe, I have found only a few rare Parisians, sceptical boulevardiers, who have been able to understand what resignation to the will of Heaven and transcendental fatalism¹really mean.

We agree with Matgioi that sentimentality has no place in the esoteric evolution of the personality, because it is fundamentally selfish. It is above all a blindness and a dangerous confusion of planes. It is difficult to distinguish between what is universal and what is particular, between what is done solely "for God" and what is done for a tiny earthly interest. Yet the indispensable condition for the very first glimmer of "esoteric enlightenment" (El-Ishrâq) is precisely a place reserved exclusively for God in the inner being. It makes no difference whether this place is large or small, rich or poor, but it is of the utmost importance that it be completely pure and without any mixture. It is very difficult, in the present turmoil of life, to produce sincerity and absolute divine Solitude, even for a single minute of sixty seconds.

If it is objected that the evolution of the Muslim esotericist consists in the gradual transmutation of 'Passion' (Shawq) into 'Love' (Ishq), I reply that the sentimental man is in no way what the Sufites designate by a 'Passion' (Shawq).

"that sentimentality, in the ordinary sense of the word, can be useful in the evolution of communities, for, under skilful guidance, it can become modesty, the "solidarity of the species" (Matgioi), or other forms of well-understood egoism; that it contains, as egoism and unconsciousness, the two greatest obstacles to the individual evolution of personality; that the term "El-wijdân" should be translated as "emotionality"; that the term "Ed-dhawq" (= taste) should be translated as "intuitive taste"; and, finally, that the European word "sentimentality", in its ordinary sense, has hardly any correspondent in the language of Sufites, but that what comes closest to it is "sentimentality".

¹The most obvious Qur'anic document on fate is Allah's command to creation to come willy-nilly. It responds, "We come obediently." Since everything obeys Allah in one way or another, we can consider that everything is "Muslim", i.e. abandoned to His will. The Tao explains this phenomenon by "The Activity of Heaven".

plus, is what is known as "Et-tawajjud", i.e. "the simulation of pure and unmixed emotionality"².

"Supreme Identity" (*Wahdatul-wujûd* = the Identity of Existence) is based on the perfect harmony between the external and the internal. God is Existence, and Existence is always unique and absolute, as a superlative. As long as the human brain can only conceive of the singularity of the *logical* superlative, monotheism will be the natural and primitive religion (*Dinul-Fitrah*) and will be in perfect accord with the "Primordial Tradition" (Matgioi). I have been careful to avoid the words pantheism and mysticism, as these terms are outdated and give rise to unfortunate misunderstandings. "Supreme Identity" is a kind of transcendental and synthetic materialism. Freethinkers should have been our brothers; but, lacking breadth of vision, they stopped halfway, and, obeying the obscure instinct of the "religious animal", they established themselves as pontiffs like the others, but without the ancient art.

The concept of 'Universal Man' (El-Insânul-Kâmil) in Muslim esotericism is closer to that of Taoism than to that of the Kiliastes' dreams of 'Messianism' and the 'Reign of God', because of its social modesty, fatalism and intimacy. Mohyiddin ibn Arabi's theory of the Universal Khalifate and Mahdism has nothing in common with that of the scoundrels of Alexandria and other anthropophagi, whether white or black.

The high cerebral nature of visual reasoning means that, despite the identity of the tradition, esotericism and exotericism live on two entirely different planes. As they cannot touch, any conflict is impossible, except in the case of the profanation of the mysteries, and in this case it is always the exoteric doctors who are right. Martyrs are those who died fighting, either against savages (i.e. exclusivists) or for the rights of man and the citizen, i.e. against tyrants. We cannot call martyrs the esotericists who crashed into the street by deliberately falling from their ivory towers. We must judge them neither for good nor for ill. Allah alone knows the things of the other world and what is hidden in the depths of the human soul.

I am referring to the famous martyrdom of Ibn Hallâj, who was executed as a heretic in Baghdad³. Depending on one's theological views, one may find his execution just or unjust. The truth is that he was justly condemned, not as a heretic, but as a profaner and a meddler. There were initiates among his judges, and the same people who find his condemnation just venerate his memory. He

²The term "sentimentality" has several meanings, of which we will mention only three: Parisian, French and pan-Western. The Parisian meaning of 'sentimentality' is a kind of moral convention, and its use is not laudatory. For the other meanings, consult dictionaries and etymology.

We sometimes confuse feeling with sensitivity, which is not at all the same thing. Sensibility is the very basis of the esoteric mentality, because it is the starting point for the evolution of the sixth sense, through which the ego and the not-ego are identified. Initiatic evolution is directly linked to this identification. The progress of sensitivity is part of the "Sunday mysteries". It is through the confusion of terms that most heresies arise. The confusion between sentimentality and sensitivity allows a few sourpusses to deflect all the generous movements of the spirit.

⁽³⁾ In the year 309 of the Hegira (= 921 of the Christian era), on a Tuesday morning in the month of *Dul-qadah*, near the gate of Et-Thâk.

spoke a language foreign to the plebs, who became confused and had him executed. But social misadventures don't prove anything, even if they are tragic.

The heaviest religious tax in Islam is not tithing, but democracy and respect for certain rights of ignorance. I do not know what to admire most in Mohyiddin's style, whether it is boldness or tact. But, enlightened from his youth, the great Master had a premonition of the delicacy of his mission, and he only accepted the posts of secretary to the princes of Western Islam in order to train himself to spare susceptibilities. Yet he is the most Muslim of all Muslims, and there is no doubt that it was precisely meditation on the Mohammedan spirit and the Qur'an that awakened in him the esoteric mentality from which all the sacred sciences sprang. However, it is wrong to say that he is orthodox as an esoteric Master. It was as a doctor and jurisconsult that he was orthodox. It is also false to say that exoteric perfection inevitably leads to enlightenment. One can practise external religion for a whole century without seeing anything of the esoteric, whereas Omar ibn *Fâriç* rose to the pinnacle of spirituality because of a violent love. From this we must conclude that the relationship between the outer and inner Ways is rather minimal⁴.

I insist that they cannot be compared. The most perfect of all esotericists, the Malâmatiyah, treat dogmatic discussions as idle preoccupations, worthy of mere quietists, and seek enlightenment in pragmatism. It is almost a general rule that, as soon as one crosses the threshold of the Sanctuary, one no longer thinks in everyday words and formulas. Intelligences that are only auditory can only advance with difficulty on the Inner and Higher Paths, and all those who are not born visual must learn to reason by means of geometrical figures or points of light. It is therefore absurd to speak of the orthodoxy or heterodoxy of the great Masters of Arab-Islamic metaphysics, for any comparison between their opinions and those of the Doctors of the Outer Way is quite impossible⁵.

Where do the extraordinary similarities between esoteric Islam and Chinese Taoism come from? I exclude a priori any historical filiation, because no serious document could prove it. Rather, I believe that the two schools are similar because they reached the same depths of human consciousness. They saw the same thing, and it is necessary to have similar faculties to have the same vision. I am not denying the unity of the 'primordial Tradition', nor the spiritual genealogy of the initiates, but I am saying that certain parts of the chain may be on an extra-temporal plane, and therefore beyond the investigation of historians.

⁴I translate "Shariyah" as the Outer Way, "Tariqah" as the Inner Way, and "Haqiqah" as the Higher Way. The latter is more the goal of evolution than a mode of progress, but I yield to the need for analogy.

⁵Esotericism can be seen or not seen. When it is not seen, the most beautiful speeches and the most subtle dialectics are incapable of showing it. When it is seen, words are superfluous. In either case, discussion is pointless.

THE TWO INITIATORY CHAINS.

One is historical, the other spontaneous. The first is communicated in established and well-known Sanctuaries, under the direction of a living, authorised Sheikh (Guru) who possesses the keys to the mystery. This is "Talîmur-rijal", or the instruction of men. The other is "Talîmur-rabbâni", or Sunday or lordly instruction, which I take the liberty of calling "Marian initiation", because it was received by the Blessed Virgin, the mother of Jesus, son of Mary. There is always a master, but he may be absent, unknown or even deceased several centuries ago. In this initiation, you draw from the present the same spiritual substance that others draw from antiquity. It is now fairly common in Europe, at least in its lower degrees, but it is almost unknown in the East. About eight centuries ago, the Marian initiation was as common as the other in the Muslim East, because it is above all pragmatic.

The many shreds of truth that are scattered throughout the works of Western poets and heroes are the remnants of more or less incomplete Marian initiations.

US AND THE TIMES.

Abul-Hassan Es-Shâdhilî warns us against those who come to invite us to trouble, because we take the "Inner Way" to achieve rest and not agitation. Mohyiddin ibn Arabi calls those who exhort you to be like them, to do as they do in everything, and who do not respect the legitimate freedom of the individual, exclusivists, in other words fanatics and misguided. Everything comes from God, the disbelief of the infidel as well as the faith of the believer. Any zeal outside the public sphere is a thoughtless act, committed by people who have a crude conception of the power of God. It is impiety to intervene without a legitimate reason - preferably an external one - in the development of people. The delirium of the pontificate is one of those enormous antediluvian sins which make us consider the miseries of the Adamic fall as a blessing, because it is thanks to them that the sins of cosmic mortality can only reach a certain limit in their consequences. Instead of cataclysms, we have the ugliness of the middle class. So I am not unaware that it is a serious thing to invite meditators to look at the world. But I don't want to confuse anyone, or make any kind of propaganda for my personal opinions. But I do believe that the world is a book from God like any other. His signs are everywhere, and we are part of them. All His books hold together and explain one another, and what is obscure in one passage may find its explanation in another.

Moreover, the difference between the outer world and the inner world is illusory. What we call "matter" is opaque only in the lower "degrees" of Existence. The more we evolve, the more diaphanous it becomes. What's more, however opaque it may be, it is still significant. What would a book be without paper and letters? Besides, in almost every language there are words of very noble origin

to designate the world and even matter. And nothing reflects the "primordial tradition" better than etymology.

In fact, nine-tenths of quietists are simply runaways. Since the world is bigger than their souls, they try to make it smaller in order to appear bigger. Mohyiddin is stern with them, and marks out in the corner those who seek only the good weather in a small artificial world.

We all agree that life is an obligation. The decadence of the Islamic East coincided with the disappearance of the Malâmâtîyah (the Pragmatic Way) and the appearance of the Quietist ways, whose names I will not mention.

So there are all sorts of good reasons to react against quietism, because its inaction is worth the worst destructive agitation.

POLARISATION.

Since this is the world of contrasts, "*Âlamul-açdâd*", it follows that the study of phenomena, whether they be objects or facts, first involves discerning the complementary contrasts by which they subsist. Thought, like an electric current, breaks down the subject into two categories of elements, positive and negative; then intelligence recomposes these same elements into a new, purely cerebral product. The soul restores in crystalline form, eternal and hieratic, what it has taken in raw form. Here is the formula:

The idea: Hierarchy.

- \times +: Antitheses.

The subject: Nature.

Let us consider for a moment, according to this formula, the problem of the rebirth and decadence of societies. We see that the most general antithesis in the present is: past \times future. The first figure would therefore be :

<p>Each term-couple can develop indefinitely, in parallel with the other.</p>	<p>The present, The past \times the future. Still time, stability, the absolute calm of an integral society, the totality of material time.</p>
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The past is tradition, habit, community. In aesthetics, we say classicity and style. In politics, we say conservatism. The future means emotion, initiative and individuality. In art: romanticism. In politics: liberalism, at least in principle. Individualism is always futuristic, because secret, rigorously personal aspirations always tend towards the future. If you write your x along the lines of tradition, for example, you will find that the ideal tradition would be one that develops individuality through all the means of ancient wisdom, i.e. through the intellectual heritage of all humanity. With such a tradition, there would never be decadence.

Among Arab Islamists, the Guru is called "Morabbul-Morīdin", i.e. the teacher of aspirants, or more generally "Sheikh" (= old man). The true Sheikh is not the one who trains the aspirant according to his personal image, but the one who, on the contrary, develops the "morīd" (the aspirant) according to the will of God, i.e. who makes you your own, and enlarges your own self. You believe you are following in the footsteps of the Sheikh, when in reality you are following your own path, that is, the path that is personal to you according to divine destiny.

PURE ART.

The title of this series of articles is, in itself, an explanation of the diversity of the subjects we deal with. We have no intention of specialising in contemporary aesthetics, but only of defining the question, showing the importance of pure art in esoteric studies, outlining the principles of this art, and illustrating our theory with a few brief critical examples.

The plastic arts are, so to speak, the graphology of the human soul, as a spontaneous, albeit abstract, revelation of personal and higher desire. Studying them provides excellent training in visuality, as well as in solar logic, which is almost indispensable for engaging in the metaphysics of form. In many cases, it lies between theory and practice. Those who have read Tolstoy - whom I am in no way presenting as an initiate - will perhaps remember one of the heroes of his novel *War and Peace*, who, when hit by a bullet, looked up at the blue sky in amazement, as if seeing it for the first time. This sensation of a luminous void, consoling and rich in thoughts that ordinary words cannot translate, is in a way a raw material from which to sculpt an esoteric mentality. I confess, to my great regret, to knowing nothing about Greek civilisation, but I assume that the philosophers of Hellenic antiquity used the word 'music' in a much broader sense than that of harmonious sounds, and that by this they meant the emotive number, evocative of a new world, more or less what we call aesthesia today. You could say that art is passion doing mathematics: the mind playing with matter. But we must remember that it is passion that is spirit, and that it is mathematics that relates to matter, of which it is the perfect science. Moreover, *matter itself is a science*, and *science is matter*. And matter, as the 'Great Innocent One', is absolutely sacred, whatever the priests say. It is sacred above all because of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Immaculate Conception, a fundamental and indispensable dogma without which esotericism would be a quietist's daydream or a kind of diverted alcoholism¹.

⁽¹⁾ The author has shown us Arabic texts that confirm his thesis. These texts are not manuscripts of dubious authenticity, but books printed in Muslim countries under the eyes of religious authorities, who are often hostile to esotericism. It is strange that the Catholic Church should have neglected such an important dogma for so many centuries; and what is the remarkable event that has finally made up for this oversight?

(Editor's note.)

More specifically, art gives us a glimpse of "still time" or the "permanent actuality of the extra-temporal, immortal self", which in turn leads to an understanding of the fourth dimension, the esoteric importance of which needs no further explanation.

In fact, many people write about modern music in publications devoted to esoteric studies. So I am simply following a precedent, albeit in a freer way.

I can only talk about pure art, the only kind that interests us here. This is why I make a distinction between cerebral art and sentimental art. The latter, which is the most common, produces its aesthetic effect mainly by means of the viewer's memory, through the association of ideas, by stirring up more or less confused memories; whereas the former makes a direct impression, without any intermediary of any kind, through the *material*, albeit interior, *sensation* of the pulsating beat of life. Please note that its superiority over the other consists precisely in the wide interval between the two extremes of its escape, namely the abstract and the concrete, - and even quality and quantity, - as well as in the concentration of intermediaries between these two extremes. There is no point in trying to make the uninitiated understand the primordial grandeur of a realistic work, whose material precision increases as a direct result of the abstraction that the author of this work makes of his own person, and of his self-effacement in universal life ². The intelligence of this transcendent simplicity is a dividing line between the vulgar and the elite.

Pulsation means rhythm, in other words, the action of numbers³. Pure art exerts its hallucinatory empire over the mind only by taking from matter its subtleties and its government, leaving the rest. Matter is ultimately limited by time and space, which numbers immediately regulate. An English aesthete whose name I have not been able to find once said: "In art, everything is series, contrasts and repetitions". That, after all, is the whole science of aesthetics.

When, according to the principles of the purity of art, we refuse to see, for example, in a painting, anything other than colour on canvas, the esoteric mentality meets - as it always does, moreover - with common sense. What we mean is that painting must be pictorial, sculpture sculptural, and so on. Any emotion that comes from the subject is extra-artistic, and therefore harmful, because it is irrelevant, even if it is moral. Anything that art says by means other than eloquent proportion, i.e. the harmony of numbers with an individual and passionate meaning, comes from the Evil One. This is why a still life by Chardin (vegetables, kitchen utensils) has more artistic value than the great historical or religious machines of our firemen.

²Cézanne used to say, when the bitterness became too great: "I'm off to the landscape". Gauguin left for Tahiti, above all to immerse himself in the primitive world of simple emotions. In a way, this return to his origins was a bath of innocence. The Parisian critics did not understand that his journey was above all a displacement in time rather than in space.

⁽³⁾ ¹is through 'dikr' that the Dervishes assimilate certain rhythms. The "dikr" is therefore a kind of "Hatha-Yoga".

Anyone who despises still life is not a painter. He can be a writer, a poet, anything you like, except a painter, because what we call "still life" on a canvas is the same thing as pantomime in dramatic art.

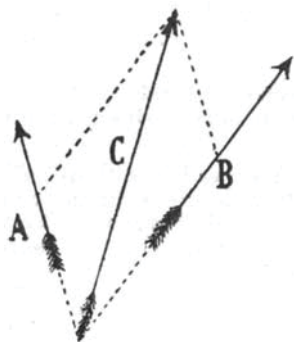
Any plastic art operation consists of specifying one's passionate or amorous will through accents measured in three-dimensional Euclidean space, in other words through drawing. This word, taken in its broadest and most artistic sense, means form, which always implies light, and therefore colour, expressed or implied. The perfect identity between what is vulgarly called drawing and colour is the touchstone of the artistic or inartistic nature of a work, because the antithesis line \times colour finds its immediate solution in light. You only have to look at a drawing by the old masters: despite being monochrome or black and white, it always gives an impression of colour.

Their paintings, however blackened or faded by time, always seem to be lit by a sun that God created expressly for each of them.

In short, pure plastic art is less the creation of objects than the establishment of personal and voluntary proportions in every sense of Euclidean space. We will refer to each of the dimensions of this space by its typical axis. So we have three axes: the vertical, the horizontal, and the optical or visual; this is the anterior-posterior direction from the eye to the horizon. I want to avoid the word "perspective", because it has only a very narrow meaning in everyday language: that of linear perspective, to the exclusion of all others. But in art, solar perspective and, above all, the perspective that corresponds to the mental state of the moved spectator, to name but two, are far more important than engineering perspective.

The mysterious element of art manifests itself above all in the drawing on this axis. It is its harmony with the drawing on the other two axes (the vertical and the horizontal) that makes line and colour identify in an impression of luminosity that gives life and magic to a work of art. Its accuracy can never be calculated, no matter how ingenious, whereas the drawing on the other two planes can be calculated and discussed to a certain extent. The depth of the painting, that is to say its luminous, psychic or other perspectives, is solely a matter of spontaneity and inspiration. One either has it or one does not. If you don't have it, you can't get it unless you have an unexpected coup de grâce, whereas anyone can be taught to draw in the other two directions. Such a drawing can have a certain extra-pictorial interest. It can be literary, dramatic, psychological, whatever you like. From the point of view of pure art, it will never be anything but a platitude.

The drawings of some modern masters are mental. The figure is not the one represented by the material lines, but another one, implied, though very precise, which is formed by the tendencies of these lines. This is drawing through movement, indicated indirectly. A dynamic parallelogram will make the idea clear.



A and B are the lines expressed. They are the components of the parallelogram; C is the result. It is implied, and it determines by its direction and intensity the mental figure which was the object of the artistic operation. The number of components and results of an ordinary drawing is incalculable; I am merely formulating the theory.

The fundamental antithesis whose solution is the artist's problem is emotion (individual love, personality, nature) and style (collectivity, external order, tradition). The exclusive perfection of style produces a work without flaws, but also without merit. Without emotion, there is no merit, but a personal work without style is a confusion of merits and defects that is no better than an impersonal work with a cold style. Paris exerts its absolute power over the whole of modern art only through the balance it maintains between tradition and nature. Only in Paris do so-called romantic painters appreciate and study the old masters in an intelligent way. The most apparently modernist painters are also the most fervent devotees of the Louvre. Tradition without initiative produces only cunning and evasion, in art of course, whereas the secret of equalling the great masters of more fortunate eras in terms of beauty lies in combining initiative with method, the loving and personal study of nature with the intelligence and taste formed by ancient tradition. It is in this way that masterpieces with a regal allure are born, because, in their *personal style*, they give us the effect of a collective under the beneficent and hieratic order of a single personal and luminous will. The purest, most cerebral painters of the nineteenth century are Daumier and Cézanne. Our younger contemporaries are Picasso, Le Fauconnier and Léger. We'll talk more about them in the next issue of *La Gnose*.

(To be continued.)

PAGES DEDICATED TO
MERCURY SAHAF
ATARIDIYAH

PURE ART.
(*continued*)*

(For the sake of clarity, we will first summarise the first part of this article, which appeared in the previous issue.)

We have established a profound difference between cerebral art and sentimental art. Only the former interests us from an esoteric point of view. It teaches *solar logic* and develops the sensation of *motionless time* or of the *permanent Actuality of the extra-temporal and immarcescible self*, without which the fourth dimension is an impossibility. This art, based on the *emotional number*, corresponds in part to the music of Western classicism. There are several treatises on Muslim esotericism in the form of explanations of the principles of Arabic grammar. The aestheticism of sentimental art is *indirect*. It operates mainly in the viewer's memory, through associations of ideas, by stirring up confused, atavistic or habitual memories. Cerebral art deserves the name of pure art, because of its *direct* aestheticism, because of the fact that it makes an impression without the intervention of any foreign self or external object, solely through the inner sensation of the pulsating beat of life, in other words, through rhythm. Rhythm is simply number in psycho-physiological activity. This is why the 'dikr' of the Dervishes is a vital assimilation of certain initiates' rhythms. The first condition of a sacred, or even priestly, language is therefore to allow itself to be rhythmised without great difficulty, i.e. to balance its consonants and vowels on its own. The importance of pure art, from the point of view of Gnosis, is to link the concrete to the abstract, quantity to quality, space to time, simply through the extreme limit of matter, i.e. numbers. I call this art pure art, because it takes from matter only its very principles, what is deepest, most general and most subtle about it. We therefore say that any emotion that comes from the subject is extra-artistic, and therefore harmful, because it is irrelevant. Anything that art wishes to express by means other than eloquent proportion, that is to say by the harmony of numbers with an individual and passionate meaning, comes from the Evil One.

Any plastic art operation consists of specifying one's passionate or amorous will through accents measured in three-dimensional Euclidean space, in other words through drawing, through form in the broadest sense of the word. Now, where there is form there is light, and where there is light there are colours, expressed or implied. It is therefore easy to see that, at a certain elevation of the mind, the antithesis of *line* × *colour* disappears in luminous perfection.

(*) [Published in February 1911].

The identity between line and colour is the criterion for the accuracy of *solar* or *mental perspective*. It is the perspective of the moved spectator, and it is formed by a new arrangement of the three planes. Only the dominant is what we call subjective, but the rest follows known laws.

This article is only for people who know what mental perspective is. Anyone who doesn't know what it means had better read something else. But anyone who really wants to learn about it need only study *Mohyiddin* ibn Arabi. If linguistics gets in the way, study Arabic art. All you have to do is look for the reason why *ancient* monuments of purely Arab architecture, even the most modest ones, always appear larger than they really are. They seem to grow under the gaze, with a sort of spreading of wings or movement of a fan that is opened. But, short of Arabism, the transformation that space undergoes as death approaches can be studied anywhere. All you have to do is observe with artistic attention the moment there is a real and conscious danger of death. There are many sailors and soldiers who are students of Kabbalah; they usually belong to this school.

The human antithesis whose solution is imposed on the artist is *emotion*× *style*. The problem has different approaches, according to the different forms of universal opposition. Here are a few of them: individual love, personality, nature, innate gift (on the emotional side), versus the collective, external order, tradition, acquired skill (on the stylistic side). Without emotion, we produce a work of banal style, without faults, yes, but also without merit. Without style, you have a confusion of faults and merits, which is no better than a cold, soulless, vaguely prostituted work of style.

The goal of the scrupulous artist is *personal style*, achieved by combining the loving, personal study of nature with the intelligence and taste developed by the study of the artistic past. Art is the balance between nature and tradition, not only in alchemy but also in aesthetics.



We can say that every pictorial emotion oscillates between Spain and China as between two poles. China represents the *formal succession* of inner sensation, while Spanish art suddenly transports you into the artist's new world, where the fullness of perspective erases all preoccupation with the past and the future. Chinese art can be savoured piece by piece. Spanish art, on the other hand, surrounds you with a mental atmosphere of simultaneous rays. In art, China means time and Spain means space. I must add that, without the union of these two elements, there can never be art, that is, progress towards God through the union of complementary contrasts in formal reality. China and Spain both achieve this union, but not in the same way: what is the beginning in one is the end in the other. The personality of the Chinese artist is made clear in the succession of notes, to which tradition gives a growing and dominical background, whereas the Spanish artist manifests his ego through the simultaneous accentuation of the three traditional planes of space. Hence the emotional intensity of his art, against which the forms stand out. At

In art, Italy is closer to China than to Spain, whereas France is closer to Spain, and Tintoretto is the most Spanish of the great Italians. Many people may object to my classification of French aesthetics, but here I can only speak of principles. You only have to look at the French primitives to see the enormous difference between them and the old Flemish, German or Italian masters. We cannot attribute any kinship whatsoever to them apart from the Spaniards.

Nowhere is the union between succession and simultaneity more perfect, more profound than in Arab art, African art and Malavian-Polynesian art. By African art I mean not only ancient Egyptian art (sculpture), but also the art of the Berbers of the Sudan and the Abyssinians. Some elements of Khmer art are also to be found in Malay art. I want to call all these beauties by a single name: *equatorial art*, despite the fact that Egypt and Arabia are not strictly speaking tropical countries. Singhalese art, the art of ancient Javanese, and even that of the Dravidians must be excluded, because a Nordic element has diverted them from their primitive tendency.

What distinguishes equatorial art from all others, what gives extraordinary importance to all its products, even the most modest, is the notion that it possesses in the highest degree of what I can only describe as *living immobility*, by a character of eternity and infinity, which exerts on the mind a fascination of great calm, whose hallucinating power is far more profound than the most subtle narcotics.

The contradictory and abrogative antithesis of this art is German (modern) art. The one, despite its ecstasy, is never sentimental; the other always is and cannot be otherwise. One is always cerebral, despite the intensity of its emotion; the other never is. The artist of the tropics, even if he is a savage, knows instinctively that aesthetic balance rests on the Trinitarian unison, which is the very basis of the eurythmic tradition. All Chinese, Spanish, Italian and French artists agree on this; whereas the German artist, even if he is a first-class scholar, only ever sees two planes in space. This is the only reason for their lack of success in Paris; chauvinism has nothing to do with it, whatever people may say. Do we not see the French public exaggerating Wagner's minor musical qualities to the detriment of Berlioz?

The purists, though fairly numerous, form a homogeneous group. In spite of this, they are nothing less than doctrinaires; even less are they pasticheurs; but, as they pursue the same goal by the same path, they are, although very distinct among themselves, even more separate from other painters. I think I can sum up all their theories by saying that they seek truth in the precision of light, through the simplest of means. The result of this twofold condensation is an intense, personal theory and an art full of frankness and insight. When faced with a work by a purist, you know at first glance who you are dealing with. His commitment to extreme clarity alone should make him, if not likeable, at least worthy of respect, because he never wastes your time.

In every school, there is a doctrine (theory) that shows the goal, and a discipline (practice) that leads to the goal proposed by the theory. Let's examine both in this case. So, is pictorial truth to be found exclusively in

in the precision of the light? I say that this is the case, and all French painting affirms that the most important thing in a painting is the values, in other words the exact and intelligent distribution of light. It is also the architecture of space and the balance of masses in the void. There are informal sketches that give a striking impression of reality. This is because the superlative accuracy of a few main values takes the place of all the lines that give objects their shape.

You may tell me that determining the gradations between a white spot and a black spot is not an occupation that requires the effort of man's higher faculties. This is a profound error. Wisdom (*El-Hikmah*) is simply the art of putting everything in its place, of giving it its right value, of exposing it in its true light. The unconscious (or subconscious) esotericism of purist painters - some of whom represent the admirable type of transcendental brute - has understood that this modest manual work, this small detail of nothing at all, is in reality the Great Arcanum, the core of orthodoxy, the crown of sacred and primitive Tradition. This is why they sacrifice everything to the accuracy of tone. This alone proves that the first principle of this school is absolute honesty and common sense. It is deplorable to see them called jokers who make fun of people. Those whose only discipline is abstraction from anything that might confuse their dominant thinking cannot be liars. The only reproach that a loyal adversary might level against them is that they want too much clarity, and push the obvious to the point of brutal nakedness. To this attack, we can reply that there is heavenly nudity and profane nudity, and that the Lady of the Well cannot be better clothed than by a ray of sunlight. It is good to have intelligent opponents; in spite of themselves, they teach you.

You may also say that we don't fully understand the relationship between the self and a clever gradation between black and white. I say that the light of the same Sun is not the same for everyone. We stated in principle (in the previous issue of this Review) that the artist is the one for whom God seems to have created a special Sun. It is by clarifying, through the work of a simple conscientious worker, the light of this Sun, of his own Sun, that the artist reaches the highest summits of wisdom and personality. If he likes to imagine that his *personal Sun* is really the only one that exists in the Universe, I have no problem with that. This is a matter of intimate conscience; perhaps the innocent habit of this little fanaticism is part of his working hygiene. There are few things in modern life that bring consolation to the artist; a little alcoholism - I'm speaking figuratively, of course - is, therefore, only a venial sin.

Simplism is the principle not only of all art, but of all mental activity. It is the hallmark of mastery. Cézanne, with his choice of parallel strokes, from the top right of the canvas to the bottom left, used it as a means of controlling a material element in the work, an element that distracted artists who were searching from the highest problems of painting. Unable or unwilling to suppress this indispensable and often rebellious material, he regulated it by circumscribing it within conventional forms, which he turned into eloquent rhythms. Controlling it in this way, he could easily draw it into his technical speculations, from which emerged the superb visions that are the glory of his highly cerebral works. The

The purists of today have taken up and developed this idea, and their drawings are to those of other painters what algebra is to ordinary arithmetic. The reduction of all shapes into geometric figures gives their works an unusual appearance that shocks the layman. Yet it is an ingenious system for precisely determining not only masses, planes and distances, but also values and chiaroscuro. It creates an indissoluble link between line and colour, producing a rhythmic progression along the visual axis. It constructs the luminous and psychic perspectives in which all that is occult in a work of art manifests itself. We have said ⁴that drawing on the visual or optical axis cannot be obtained by any kind of apprenticeship, being the fruit of inspiration alone. Drawing through geometrical abstraction and mental drawing⁵ are in the same situation. The latter, formed by implied results whose components alone are expressed visually, is, in painting, what "nuance only" is in literature in relation to colour, in Verlaine's famous aphorism. Of course, this system is not for everyone; you have to be very inspired and very sure of yourself to draw this way.

Purist discipline makes sentimentality impossible, but what you lose in sentimentality you gain in cerebration. I have seen works by Picasso whose beam of light has crystallised into a mosaic of cut precious stones and enormous diamonds of extraordinary transparency. But I have also seen, by the same master, drawings that would stand up very well in the company of the greatest Italians. It is through purism that we will end up discovering the secret of the ancient arts, Greek, Arab, Gothic and Renaissance. Picasso has transformed the whole aesthetic of ancient Spain by bending it to the tenderness and virginity of Polynesia. Le Fauconnier has all the magnificent qualities of an old French primitive, but with a modern twist. Léger has taken up the aesthetic problem that haunted Ingres, who sought the secret of Raphael, who in turn sought the ideal of the Greeks. Yet, while remaining himself, Léger expressed the beauties that Ingres was pursuing. It goes without saying that today's purist has done away with any kind of guitar in his work.

When we say that art is the union of contrasts, we are referring specifically to the union of complementary contrasts, especially that of time and space, succession and simultaneity. That of abrogative contrasts is outside our subject, since they do not come under the influence of Mercury. We can sum up definitively and clearly by saying that rhythm is a unifying series of linear or dynamic contrasts; that values, contrasts between light and dark, are simply rhythms in the depth direction of the visual axis. This is why the perfect gradation of values suddenly evokes other rhythms, those which evolve in the direction of the other axes, the horizontal and the vertical, and which constitute form in the ordinary sense of the word. The contrast of

⁴See previous issue of *La Gnose*, p. 37.

⁵*Ibid.*

Complementary colours are rightly neglected by purists, because the famous theory that concerns them, the one that has poisoned a whole generation of painters, is no more than a laboratory theory. On the other hand, they carefully observe the contrasts between muted and sonorous colours, contrasts that are far more important than those between, say, a green and a red, because they sometimes resemble a conflict between the active and the inert, or even between life and death.

The purist movement is the modern manifestation of the eternal principle of "Art for art's sake". Cézanne can be considered its founder, and he in turn continued Chardin's tradition.

PAGES DEDICATED TO THE SUN*

SAHAIF SHAMSIYAH

I

The Arabic school of Muslim esotericism - which is quite distinct from the Persian school of the same formulae - is essentially synthetic. It is, without doubt, the finest example of what I would like to call lucid mysticism. It is not only scholastic, or rather logistic, but also psychological and, above all, natural or primitive. In other words, it regards man and nature as sacred books in the same way as historical or scriptural revelation, expressed in the simplistic language of the Semites. The passages in the Qur'an that support this assertion are too numerous to be cited without controversy. It is less well known that the great Masters of Muslim esotericism use the terms "epistle" (*Risâlah*), "copy" (*Nuskah*) and "book" (*Kitâb*) to refer to three different aspects of the initiate.

Geography tells us that the Arab-Eritrean countries are hot and dry, and that their inhabitants are distinguished by their lyrical faculties. This is enough documentation to explain their religious philosophy.

Lyrical intensity leads to a mental state of 'subjectivity', which translates into a kind of naïve enthusiasm accompanied by a healthy dose of scepticism and finesse. "You will be as naïve as doves and as subtle as serpents", says the sacred book of the Christians. These two sentiments, which modern life considers incompatible, go very well together in the mind of an educated, old-fashioned Muslim. Full of vitality, they love. As intellectual tendencies go, they are somewhat ideological. They believe that, basically, man can only know what he says¹. For them, the doctrine of the Logos is less the result of religious fideism than of the primitive's subconsciousness of the Unfathomable. Since words and things exist side by side, poets find it only natural that the mysteries of creation should be analogous to those of the spoken word. In this way, metaphysics follows the movements of consciousness, especially when it is awakening for the first time,

- and the workings of thought become almost as interesting as thought itself. Ignorance and unconsciousness end up symbolising nothingness and night; then we imagine that the world is born with daylight. When our primitives see nothing,

(*) [Published in February 1911].

¹See the review *La Gnose*, on the sacred language.

they say there is nothing. To be is to be seen, then to see, because it is light that gives existence to things.

The Sun not only illuminates the world, but also gives objects their respective shapes. The great Sun over there is almost unknown here; we barely see it for a few days during a year that is exceptionally favourable in terms of good weather. It shines so brightly that all the local colours disappear, so that all you can see are its own, that is to say it and nothing else. The landscape changes so quickly that it hardly seems to be anything other than the pretext for a solar demonstration, or, if you like, a cosmomorphic theophany. All we see are the reflections of the sky; what the details of the landscape might be apart from their heliophoric function is a question that ceases to interest us.

Everything, including perspective, distances and the relationship between things, depends solely on the radiant star, which, absolute master of the horizon, sculpts the mountains as it pleases and arranges the masses of immensity according to its sudden and architectural will.

The power of the Sun explains the Chinese perspective. It is summery, and by no means erroneous. The more the Sun shines, the higher and more surprising the sky appears, the wider and deeper the horizon, while what is in front of our feet, the foreground, becomes neutral and narrower. The opposite phenomenon occurs in the winter or northern perspective. There, the foreground develops to the detriment of the others; close-up objects take on enormous importance; what is at eye level, the horizon, contracts and diminishes; the sky sinks.

We said that "to be is to shine". In principle, an illuminated or even white object appears larger than life. Primitive painters exaggerate the proportions of anything that occupies a prominent place in the painting. From the point of view of Muslim esotericism, existence is a careful distinction, and creation is the act of specifying. The more a thing is characterised by attributes, qualifiers or particles - explicit or implied - the more concrete and real it is,

We call it "existing" because, from our point of view, existence involves gradations. An idea comes into being as its latent faculties unfold in broad daylight, as its resources come to the fore, and as all its forces come into play. It grows in all directions, multiplying indefinitely, while remaining "One", i.e. identical to itself. The concept of "unity in plurality and plurality in unity"² holds the same place in Arab-Muslim esotericism as the cross does for Christians. Instead of sculpting the figure of a dead man lying on two crossed bars, we say that "the divine station is that which unites contrasts and antinomies"³. This station, i.e. this degree of initiation, is reached by "El-fanâ", i.e. by the annihilation of the lower self. "El-fanâ" is not without analogy with the Hindu "Nirvâna", but only in the sense that the Bhagavad-Gîtâ gives to this term, for "El-fanâ" can and must be achieved by the following means

²El-wahdatu fil-kutratu wal-kutratu *fil-wahdati*.

³El-maqâmul-ilahi, *hoa maqâm ijtîmâ-ad-çiddâini*.

in ordinary life. In this case, it appears as tolerance, impartiality, selflessness, abstraction and self-sacrifice, self-discipline and active fatalism.

We can distinguish two aspects of divine unity: 1° the neutral and absolute unity; 2° the primitive unity which is the basis of all numbers. These two aspects are, so to speak, the two graphic sides of the number "one": the incalculable zero and the incalculable indefinite. From the human point of view, absolute unity is an emotion, to which intelligence can give no direct or suitable form. The other, that which runs through the numbers, multiplying them to the incalculable, contains all the aspects of the Divinity, which practical theology calls "Asrâr rabbâniyah" (Sunday mysteries). It is the countless-faceted reverberating surface of the Absolute that magnifies every creature that is directly reflected in it. This unity can only be represented by the superlative accent in the individual apotheosis. But the world is, by its very nature, resistant to the postulate of all the prophets of the race of Shem. It will never understand that extreme distinction can only be achieved in extreme universality, and that the paroxysm of the ego can be the height of altruism. Just as the aesthetics of petty intellectuals cannot grasp the hallucinating beauty of the simple proportions that criss-cross the rough stone wall of an ancient Saracen fortress, so the bourgeois, for biological and anatomical reasons, is incapable of understanding that the highest conceivable aristocracy is the ideal of an enlightened democrat.

God is what distracts me from everything that is not Him. Those who do not know how to focus on any point of existence are the only ones who are atheists, because faith, in short, is nothing but the highest transcendental distraction. There is absolutely no religion other than that of intensity, and its dogmas are mathematical.

We must also discern the two elements of religious life which are formulated by unity and by the binary. "One" is the divine superlative. It is the object of worship for true monotheists. "Two" is the divine reciprocity around which the Sunday mysteries and the great spectacle of universal mirroring are played out. The laws of this catadioptric system are, at heart, occult; we can scarcely know them outside the strictly personal case.

Objects in our landscape, however ephemeral, are beautiful because they carry a fragment of the day's beauty. The more they contribute to the irradiated coruscation of ambient light, the more beautiful they become. On their own, they are nothing, existing only as carriers of light. When contemplated in isolation, they may appear real, but this is an illusion. However, this illusion is not diabolical, as some schools claim. On the contrary, it is so holy that religion obliges us to believe in it on pain of heresy and posthumous punishment. The sacred law of Islam, the '*Shariyah*' (= the great Way, the outer Way) surrounds material life with rites, ceremonies, observances and obligations of various kinds, simply to teach us that things exist,

how they exist, and the just measure of respect due to their existence⁴. Islamic canon law is undoubtedly a social order, but it is first and foremost a magnificent treatise on symbolism, setting out the place of all things in the universal hierarchy. The speculative theology of the great Arab initiators seeks to prove that things are theophoric in order to interest us in material life other than as ferocious beasts. Allow me to point out that the practice of religion leads to scientific notions in the disciplinary or doctrinal order, whereas the enlightened speculation of the great Masters produces an inner flame that is the supreme force of all activity.

Let's go back to the landscape. We've seen that the excess light gives it that special fairy-tale illusion, and that you get the feeling that you're walking through things that aren't real at all. Everything is extraordinary. Every day, or should I say every hour, you look at the same things as if you were seeing them for the first time. In this way, your gaze never ceases to be virginal and fresh, like the Houri in the celestial gardens⁵, and your soul never grows old. It is the perpetual union of contrasts that makes us drink from the fountain of youth, for the world regains its primitive sense of purity and candour through the solution of antitheses in magnificent serenity. The earth shudders like the sea. The light and diaphanous element, air, is immobile and serious. The Sun, just above your head, surrounds you everywhere like the chastisement of an angry god, and the shadow does not exist. In its place are moonlit chunks of night.

II

I think I have expressed the ontological principles of Arabo-Muslim esotericism correctly when I say that the tangible Universe is little more than an immense collective, hereditary and inveterate hallucination. It is as if the human race, autosuggested for generations, were playing a spiritist séance, and that the most serious events in the history of man or nature, considered in themselves, are no more than the jolts of a spinning table. Not only are our joys and pains merely false sensations regulated by long ancestral habits, but the sensory conventions of almost everyone have given matter its present appearance. Man was not created by his environment. Man created the environment through the crystallisation of his subconsciousness. When, subsequently, the environment influences the individual, the environment is merely the instrument by means of which the collectivities of the past and present take hold of the individual to reduce him to the most ignoble slavery, preventing him from seeing with his own eyes, hearing with his own ears, acting on his own initiative and, above all, loving with his heart. They make him so vile that he does not even deserve to be punished when he commits crimes. When we talk about

⁴Initiators from the North urge people to believe in God, because they cannot see Him directly. Those of the South need to exhort faith in things. Both explain the invisible according to the circumstances.

⁵The masculine singular "*Ahwaru*" means someone with a very black eye.

You have to see the whole of humanity against a single person who has amused himself by breaking the hypnotic chain of universal indulgence.

The link between all these servile habits is time. Now, time itself is sacred, because it is one of the foundations of the world, which is, in principle, the great purity, as its name indicates. It is the foundation of successive seriation, and an exoteric tradition (*Hadîr*) forbids us to curse the century, because

"The age is God"⁶. On the other hand, all that is transitory is vain and null. "Ed- dahru" (the century) takes on the meaning of all centuries, i.e. indefinite time, *fatum*. Here it also means that which is unchanging over the centuries, that which is constant and therefore always true. The Sacred Books are sometimes referred to as "God", firstly by ellipsis⁷, and secondly because they recount events that are questionable from the point of view of ancient history, but which happen every day in the inner world. In this respect, the raw material of all that which is vulgarly called the supernatural - by which I mean *non-time* - is included in the logical conception of time, as an antithesis, as a negative value, as the sign

"This is like saying: $\pm n$ "⁸.

We escape the tyranny of collectivity by breaking down the small sides of time. Past, present and future are united by commutation into motionless time⁹. But I neither want nor need to concern myself with these elements of sentimental pedagogy. Anyone wishing to learn about them need only open a catechism from any "Tarîqah" or Islamic religious congregation¹⁰.

The higher degrees of the mystical science of time, which consist in the permutation of time into space and vice versa, are more suitable for metaphysical research. Firstly, the question is more abstract, more cerebral, less tied to personal experience. Secondly, a number of leading scientists and academics have written admirable treatises on hyperspace. The fourth dimension is said to be a mental state characterised by man's ubiquity through the unification of time and space. The subject is, despite its appearance, logical, or

⁶Ed-dahru Allah.

⁷(The Book of) God.

⁸*Non-time* is not a figure of speech, for it designates a substance outside the limited form that time has given to creation. I say substance because it is positive on the other side of the limit, though negative on this side. It is nevertheless perceptible in this world. You can even train yourself to feel nothing but it, but I wouldn't advise anyone to do that. Not only Semitic spiritualism, but also magic with grimoires, are based on *non-time*. The study of the phenomenon is outside the scope of this study.

It is by observing antitheses - oppositions or counterwords - that we form the abstract ideas without which thought is not possible. Through the exact calculation of negative or imaginary values, we realise that hyper-reality that is wrongly called nothingness. All Semitic philosophy begins by being negative. According to the chronometry of the peoples of this race, the solar evolution of 24 hours begins with the night, from the setting sun, and continues with the day. They do not say "day and night", but "night and day", just as it says "evening and morning" in Genesis.

Similarly, the Muslim Creed begins with a negation: "Lâ ilaha" (= there is no God), followed by an affirmation: "Illallah" (= other than God). The beginning is nihilistic, the end mystical. But we must not confuse the lucid mysticism of the "Supreme Identity" with the schools of the past and present that are usually referred to as mysticism or neo-mysticism, etc. We are replacing theology with mathematics.

⁹See *La Gnose*, revue d'études ésotériques, January 1911, pp. 33-34 [*Pages dedicated to Mercury*].

¹⁰While awaiting the external reorganisation of the very ancient "Malâmâtîyah" order, the *Shâdilite*, Qâdirite or Naqshabendi books can be consulted with advantage. The *Shâdilite* authors are the most remarkable of all.

rather mathematical, and any serious artist can understand the problem when he changes his successive impressions into simultaneous notes, since simultaneity is already the embryo of space. I mention these technical and simple things only to sketch out all the approaches to our subject¹¹.

Hyperspace offers a glimpse of *non-time*, which in turn opens the door to the only reality that really *exists* in the tangible Universe. Two great men of different races, eras and religions have given this material reality, which is above the sidereal plane and which *non-time* uses as a vehicle, a formula so lapidary that it would be vandalism to try to change it.

One of these is the extraordinary Spanish-Arab thinker *Mohyiddin ibn Arabi*¹², rightly nicknamed '*Es-Sheikul-Akbar*', i.e. the greatest of all the Masters of Muslim cerebration. The other is the admirable Celtic writer Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. I believe that, of all known authors, they alone have spoken of the 'sensation of eternity'¹³. By this term, they are both referring to an indestructible and very subtle element that God has placed in the soul of each being, and which is strictly personal to him, so that it never doubles. We call it "*Es-Sirr*" (= the occult, the mystery), because it is the special secret between every creature and its Lord. It is an enigma whose solution is the responsibility of all vital efforts, so that it constitutes a cosmic duty of the highest order. No one can know what is in the lordly secret of another, and any offence against the ineffable celestial signature that every being bears within is a crime more serious than murder. The law that recognises this secret, and its inaccessible, inviolable and incommunicable nature, guarantees the most precious of man's four cardinal freedoms, for it is the supreme expression of the highest life¹⁴.

When man has penetrated his Sunday secret, he begins to know the most majestic divine Name¹⁵, the possession of which gives access to the sanctuary of fatality. Then he perceives, above the collective illusion, a kind of star, a fixed point in the void, analogous in part to that of Archimedes. By the force of a certain ecumenical yet natural cult, and by prayers to the Prophet, this point develops and takes on a human form, which, by irradiation, produces the horizon of a new world in harmony with one's place in eternity.

¹¹See the review *Il Convito*, Cairo, July-August 1907, p. 96 of the Italian section and p. 100 of the Arabic section:

"Si comincia con volgere la successione in simultaneità. Ecio che chiamasi volgarmente *cangiar il tempo in spazio* e vice versa... Io ho scelto il termine più generale, più astratto e più metafisico. Ma il termine arabo corrente è : la facoltà di veder il passato nel presente..."

On Arabic page 100, I wrote: "*Tabdîluz-zamâni makânan walaksu*."

¹²See the series of articles in *Il Convito* entitled "*El-Akbaryah*".

¹³"*El-Hissul-Azali*". In some manuscripts, we find "*El-Hissu bil-Azal*". The context gives the two formulas an identical meaning. One of Villiers' heroes says: "*la sensation de mon éternité*" (*Morgane*).

¹⁴This freedom, which I call, for want of a better expression, "*Sunday freedom*", involves the other three: political, intellectual and sentimental. They are represented in the world by Islam, Celtic England, France and Italy. It is clear that Islam, in its true abstract and metaphysical sense, must not be confused with the political or ethnic communities of the East, which we are obliged to call Islamites to designate them by any name. - The theory of these four freedoms was first formulated in a Parisian magazine in August 1900.

¹⁵"*El-Ismul-Atham*".

This, in a nutshell, is what we call "the culture of the self", and what we refer to as "El-Insânul-kâmil", i.e. Universal Man.

Documents

*I took a moss among the snows, and saw the splendour of the tropical forest.
Under the cold mist, - In a great dark palace, - A goddess in black stone with the
head of a lioness - Showed me the African Sun on the burning sand.
I read the Master's books before I knew Arabic. I saw
him himself before I knew his name.*

EL-MALÂMATIYAH*

The term "people of blame" (Ahlul-Malâmah) refers to three very distinct things, which can nevertheless be identified in exceptional circumstances. The "Malâmatiyah" are firstly a group of great initiates, a kind of "Mahâtâmâs" ¹occupying the fifth degree in the spiritual hierarchy of Muslim esotericism.

Here is an extract from the "Treatise on Sufi Categories" by *Mohyiddin* ibn Arabi.

"The fifth degree is occupied by "those who bow down", those who humble themselves before the dominical Grandeur, who impose upon themselves the hieraticism of worship, who are free from any claim to any reward in this world or the next. These are the Malâmatiyah. They are the "trusted men of God", and they constitute the highest group. Their number is not limited, but they are placed under the direction of the Quthb or the "Spiritual Apogee"². Their rule obliges them not to show their merits or hide their faults. Nevertheless, they act openly, and they evolve in all areas of "spiritual virility" (Er-rajûliyah). They have ten "stations" to which they return and about which they speak. These are: the charity of Knowledge, wisdom, foresight, the art of judging the intimate nature of people and things from external signs, glorification, inspiration, the "Great Peace" (Es-Sakînah), security and elevation of the spirit³. They are attached to the following divine names: He who lowers, He who raises, He who makes glorious, He who humbles, etc., etc. They talk about controlling one's actions (by purifying one's intentions), refining one's piety, restraining one's passions, making no claims on God, obeying the Prophetic Tradition, voluntary poverty, indulgence towards others, disciplining one's speech, not only by silence, but also by the obligation to speak according to God's permission, the Sharaite light, etc., etc., etc. They also talk about the different "inner warnings" (*El-Kawathir*), the Sunday, the angelic, the intellectual, the animic and the diabolic, as well as the different nuances between the Sunday warning, that of Allah, and that of the Merciful. They say that the first comes from "Majesty"; that of the Merciful comes from "Beauty", and the divine warning comes from "Beauty".

(*) [Published in March 1911].

⁽¹⁾ I use this word here, for want of a better one, and although it has a different meaning in Sanskrit, because it has the advantage of being known to everyone; but it goes without saying that what I mean by it has nothing in common with the imaginary entities to which theosophists have given this same name. By this term I mean initiates who have attained full possession of the powers of their complete Being.

⁽²⁾ The number of *Afrâd* or "Solitaires" is not limited either, but they are not placed under the supervision of the Quthb of the time. They form the third category in the esoteric hierarchy of Islamism.

⁽³⁾ The copyist of my manuscript forgot the name of the tenth "station". These omissions are too frequent to surprise Arabists.

comes from "Perfection". The first warning is always true, according to their tradition. In the case of the "disciple" (El-Murîd), it manifests itself as the exact interpretation of external signs; in the case of the "traveller" (Es-Sâlik), as "intuition" (Mokâshafah); and in the case of the "initiate" (El-Ârif), as "contemplation" (Moshâhadah). The warning that comes from "Majesty" (El-Jelâl) erases and annihilates; that which comes from "Beauty" (Jamâl) strengthens and fortifies; that which comes from "Perfection" (Kamâl) improves and leads to the right path. Majesty" is prepared for by "Constancy" (Eç-Çabr), "Beauty" by "Gratitude" (Es-Shukr), and "Perfection" by "Great Peace". According to them, the height of Sufism is the restraint of passions, the absence of pretensions, attachment to the names and attributes of God, and incarnation with them. They say that Sufism is humility, poverty, the "Great Peace", and contrition. They say that "the face of the Sufi is downcast (word for word: black) in this world and in the next", thus indicating that ostentation falls with pretensions, and that sincerity of worship manifests itself in contrition, for it is said, "I am with those whose hearts are broken for My sake." The invocations of the Malâmities are formulated by divine words whose literal meaning indicates abstraction and purification, such as "Praise be to God the Immense", "Praise be to the Holy King", etc., etc., etc. When they are perfect, these names, in their invocations, they see what they lack, for "order comes from the Wise, the Knowledgeable and the Well-Informed par excellence". What they possess in the way of Graces comes from the very source of divine favours. They no longer have their own names or features, but are obliterated in 'true prostration'".

Secondly, the word "Malâmâtîyah" designates one of the three fundamental elements of Islamic religiosity. It constitutes the "Higher Way" or pragmatic way, which sums up the other two: the "Inner Way" or quietist, Sufi way, and the "Outer Way" or exoteric, ritual, moral and social way. The Arabic treatise we are translating today takes "Malâmâtîyah" in this second sense.

But there is also a religious congregation, a "Tharîqah" of the same name. It is rather rare; it is found only in Albania, Syria and India. In the past, it was powerful and widespread, but, being democratic and liberal, it was ruined by government persecution. Its name is still venerated among Dervishes of all orders. It is a Malâmite tradition to take shelter with the Naqshabendîyah and the Bektashîyah during difficult times. The ruin of this order coincided with the decline of the entire Muslim world.

Books on this order are exceedingly rare, because its *Sheiks* don't like to write much. I have only found one manuscript of the only book I know of on the subject. My manuscript is in a very poor state. It's badly written and can barely be deciphered. Words and whole sentences have disappeared through the destructive action of time, mould, worms and tears. It's so full of gaps that you sometimes don't know whether it's a yes or a no. I therefore ask for the reader's indulgence, and reserve the right to redo this translation at a later date, if I ever find another, more complete manuscript of this treatise. Despite all these difficulties and the resulting misunderstandings, I am risking publication of the pamphlet, because it is a unique document on a completely new subject.

PRINCIPLES OF MALÂMATIYAH

by the learned Imâm, the learned Initiate, the Seyid Abu Abdur-Rahmân, (grandson of Ismaïl ibn Najib).

In the name of Allah, the Clement, the Merciful; May Allah pray over our Lord Mohammad, his family, his companions, and the first Muslims, the followers of his Tradition.

Glory be to God, Who has chosen among His servants; Who has established His chosen ones as pontiffs in His kingdom; Who has embellished their exteriors with worship, and Who has illuminated their interiors with His knowledge and love. He has shown them how to come to know their lower selves. He gave them the power to dominate this self by making them aware of its traps. He has helped them to reduce this proud and selfish self to nothing, and He has taught them to despise it. Those who obey His orders and know His sovereign Grace are the true scholars. God distinguishes by His mercy whom He wills.

You asked me to explain the Malâmâtîyah, their methods for evolving *the Self*⁴, and their spiritual states. You should know that the initiates of this order do not possess written books or collections of stories, for their "Way" consists only in the acquisition of a mental state peculiar to them, in the evolution of character and in spiritual exercises. I will explain as best I can the means they use to develop this mentality, as well as all the practical or psychic consequences of this education; all this after asking God to assist me in this work, to make me worthy of my task, and to put me on the right path. He is enough for me, and He leads everything to a good result.

Know then - may Allah prepare the right path for you! - that the masters of the sciences of the heart and brain are of three kinds. Those of the first category are inclined towards the science of Sharaite decisions, being above all concerned with the public good and the maintenance of religious law. They collect, teach and explain the various precepts of this law, which regulates all ordinary relations between people through the distribution of rights and property. They do not concern themselves in any way with what concerns only the elite of Muslims, i.e. their ecstatic states, their spiritual degrees and their visions of the hypersensitive. They are the scholars of esotericism, the arbiters of differences and disputes, who watch over the principles of the *Shariyah* and maintain the religious and hieratic atmosphere. They are responsible for the rules of good conduct in relation to the outside world, according to the Book of God and the Tradition of the Prophet. They are the "Ulama" in the true sense of the word, i.e. the connoisseurs of the *Shariyah*. They are the princes of religion, as long as they do not err and do not give themselves over to the ambitions and desires of this perishable world and its vanities, which corrupt souls⁵.

⁽⁴⁾ In other words, all the states of being that make up the Personal Entity.

⁽⁵⁾ Moreover, they can only make mistakes in ordinary life, in the same way as all other human individuals; there can never be any regression in the spiritual hierarchy, to any degree whatsoever. Doctors of the *Shariyah* are always infallible when they speak "ex cathedra", in the name of the Law and Tradition, because they then share in the infallibility of the Doctrine itself (see *La Prière et l'Incantation*, 2^e année, n° 1, p. 23).

The second category is formed by the elite of believers, by those whom Allah distinguishes by His knowledge, those whose actions and desires have been separated from everything that is not the "Divine Truth", so that they are concerned only with Him, direct their desires only towards Him, aspire to nothing that is the object of the aspirations of ordinary people, and are not concerned in the least with external life ; but they concentrate all their wills on God, are concerned only with the spiritual world, and find no rest for their souls in commerce with creatures, who are (moreover) perfectly incapable of understanding them. They are an elite chosen by God, isolated from the rest of the world and favoured with various marvellous faculties. They belong to Him, through Him, and are directed towards Him in everything; this is after they have accomplished the Way of external works, kept the "Sunday secret"⁶, and fought the great holy war of spiritual battles⁷. In their "Sunday secret", they look unceasingly towards the "Divine Truth" and contemplate the occult things of the hypersensitive world. Their bodily life is embellished by the splendours of worship, so that their exterior is in no way contrary to the *Shariyah*. This notwithstanding, their interior is in perpetual contemplation of the hypersensitive. It is about them that the Prophet said: "Whoever takes God⁸ as the sole purpose of his care, God (Allah) will exempt him from all other concerns." They are "the people of Knowledge"⁹.

The third category are those called *Malâmatiyah*. These are the ones whose interior Allah has embellished with various marvellous qualities, such as *El- Qurbah* or "Divine Proximity", *Ez-Zulfâ*, or "Celestial Approach", *El-Uns* or "Bliss", and *El-Ittiçâl* or "Spiritual Union". In their "Sunday secret", they have realised the ideals of the hypersensitive and can no longer be separated from them. As they have realised (the "Divine Truth") in the higher degrees (of the Microcosm); as they have affirmed themselves among the "people of concentration"¹⁰, of *El-Qurbah*, *El-Uns* and *El-Waql*¹¹, God is (so to speak) too jealous of them to allow them to reveal themselves to the world as they really are. He therefore gives them an exterior that corresponds to the state of "separation from Heaven"¹², an exterior made up of ordinary knowledge, Sharaite preoccupations - ritual or hieratic - and the obligation to work, practise and act among men. However, their interiors remain in constant contact with the "True Divine", both in concentration (El- jam') and in dispersion (El-farq), i.e. in all states of existence. This mentality is one of the highest that man can attain, even though there is nothing outwardly apparent about it. It resembles the state of the Prophet - may Allah pray upon him and greet him! - who was elevated to the highest degrees of "Divine Proximity", indicated by the formula

⁶On the "Sunday secret", see *La Gnose*, 2^e année, n° 2, p. 65 [*Pages dedicated to the Sun*].

⁷El-Mojâhidât", derived from "El-Jihâd", i.e. Holy War.

The war waged against the infidels, i.e. the external and aggressive enemies of Islam, is called the "little holy war".

⁸In the text: "Allahumma"= Elohim.

⁹Ahlul-Marifah", i.e. the Gnostics.

¹⁰Ahlul-Jam'i.

¹¹Spiritual Union.

¹²El-iftirâq.

Qur'anic: "And he was at the distance of two bow-lengths, or even closer"¹³. When he returned to the creatures, he spoke with them only about external things. Nothing of his intimate conversation with God appeared on his person. This state is superior to that of Moses, whose face no one could look at after he had spoken with God. The Sufites, i.e. the scholars of the second category, are in the same position as Moses, because their enlightenment and their "Sunday secrets" are revealed to the outside world. The Malâmatîyah, on the other hand, never speak of their spiritual experiences, and only teach their disciples the different ways of obeying God and truly following Tradition in all circumstances. They do not allow them to claim the rewards of good works, to divulge miracles or extraordinary things, or to relate to them. But they teach them the true way to act and to persist in sacred endeavours. They admit the disciple to their teaching and raise him according to their hieratic principles. When they see faults in his states or actions, they explain what he lacks and show him how to correct himself. They never approve anything and do not spend themselves on fine words.

If the disciple claims to participate in higher "states" (*Ahwâl*), seeing himself as beautiful, they make him see that his "state" (*Hal*) is nothing, until they have checked the truth of his intention. Only then do they show him what they themselves are, advising him to keep the higher "states" of ecstasy secret, to observe external reports, to do what he is ordered to do and to avoid what is prohibited (according to external law). Thus, the control of the "spiritual stations" (*Maqâmât*) lies entirely in the will; the rightness of the will, according to them, makes all the "spiritual stations" valid... (gap in the text; the passage is unintelligible)...

The Sheikh of the group, *Abu-Hafç* En-Nisabûrî, said: "The Malâmite disciples evolve by spending themselves. They do not care about themselves. The world has no hold on them, and cannot reach them, because their outer life is all out in the open, while the subtleties of their inner life are rigorously hidden. Sufi disciples, on the other hand, make claims to the rewards due to their good deeds in this world and the next, claims that the Malâmites consider to be so many fools. The disproportion between their claims and their merits makes critics laugh." Abu Hafç was once asked why the name Malâmiyah was used. He replied: "The Malâmiyah are constantly with God by the fact that they always dominate themselves and never cease to be aware of their *dominical secret*. They blame themselves for everything they cannot avoid showing in terms of "divine closeness", in the prayer service or otherwise. They conceal their merits and expose their faults. Then people accuse them on the outside; they blame themselves on the inside, because they know human nature. But God favours them by the discovery of mysteries, by the contemplation of the hypersensitive world, by the art of knowing intimate reality

¹³See *Qorân*, chap. 53, v. 9. The two bows are *El-Ilm* and *El-Wujûd*, i.e. Knowledge and Being. See F. Warrain, on Wronski, *La Synthèse concrète*, p. 169.

things according to external signs (El-ferâsah), as well as by miracles. The world ends up leaving them in peace with God, distanced from them by their ostentation of what is blameworthy or contrary to respectability. Such is the discipline of the "Tharîqah" of the people of blame¹⁴."

Ibrahîm El-Fattâl told *Ahmad* ibn *Ahmad* El-Malâmafi that one day he asked Hamdûn El-Qaççâr (= the degreaser) about the Malâmian Way. Hamdûn replied: "It consists of renouncing all embellishment of oneself by pretending to perfect 'states', with the aim of appearing in the eyes of people; renouncing seeking their approval with regard to one's character and actions; so that no blame (on the part of God) befalls you with regard to God's rights over you¹⁵."

Ahmad ibn Mohammad El-Farrâ told me that Abd-Allah ibn Manâzil once said, when asked about the Malâmâtiyah: "These are people who have no human respect or hypocritical dissimulation before the world, and who in no way claim that God should grant them a reward because of their good deeds. Their behaviour towards the world as well as towards God is spontaneous, devoid of any intellectual or sentimental artifice. I heard my grandfather, *Ismail* ibn Najib, say: "As long as a man's mental states and actions are devoid of all pretence and ulterior motives, he cannot attain any degree of malâmite.

One of their *Sheikhs* was once asked: "What is the superiority of your 'Way'?" He replied: "The lowering and contempt of the lower self; the training to do without everything that satisfies it and in which it finds its rest; believing that others are better than you; thinking well of them, and excusing their faults. However, one must depreciate oneself and diminish one's own merits." Abu *Hafç* said, "God has made known how one attains to Him, the 'Divine Proximity' and the 'Highest Degrees'. I ask God to show me the way to the 'True Divine', even if it is only the length of a single step." Abu Yazîd El-Bosthâmî said: "People think that the path to God is more obvious than the Sun, more discernible than the Moon. In my opinion, this path is hidden. I ask Him to open it for me, even if it is no wider than the eye of a needle¹⁶". All the great Masters of this Way were like this. The more truthful and exalted their intimacy with God, the more humble and modest they were; not only in order to train disciples according to the right tradition, but also to consolidate their relationship with the "True Divine", so that they would never turn to anyone "other than Him" and thereby invalidate their spiritual situation. One of them was asked:

"What is the matter with you? He replied: "Aren't your claims falling?" He added:

"To claim a reward for one's good works is blasphemy or mockery. When one enters into oneself, one sees oneself devoid of all merit, for one is far from

¹⁴These words of Abu-Hafç were collected by Abul-Hassan El-Warrâq, who reported them to Ahmad ibn Aîsa, who in turn was the informant of Abu *Abdur-Rahmân*, the author of this treatise.

¹⁵Which is to say that you must only seek approval from *yourself* in order to obtain God's approval. The world always wants the opposite of what God wants you to do.

¹⁶In the text, it is said: the head of a needle. This expression is rare, whereas the metaphor of the needle's eye is extremely common.

God. Is it not as the poet says: The gaze of the impaired towards the water is a sorrow
- When the path to the watering hole is cut?"

I asked *Ahmad* ibn Mohammad El-Farrâ (= the shoveler): "What are the Malâmatiyah?" He replied, "The truer their relationship with God, the more they take refuge with Him through humility, the more they apply themselves to the fear and veneration of God. At such a level of mental evolution, the risks of *Istidrâj*¹⁷ are very great(text incomprehensible, at cause of gaps)

..... What I heard narrated by Ibn Nidâr (?) about *Sheik* Abu Hafç still relates to this state. Abu Hafç used to say: "For forty years I have been waiting for God to look favourably upon me. However, my work indicates that I am unworthy". The whole method of Abu Hafç and his companions consisted in exhorting the disciples to works, to holy efforts, to give them an example to show them how to act and do well, so that they would not cease to devote themselves to the practices with zeal, selflessness and assiduity. The method of Hamdûn El-Qaççâr and of his companions consisted of belittling the works of the disciples, pointing out their faults, etc., so that they would not become infatuated with themselves. Abu *Otman* chose a third method, saying: "Both methods are good; each has its application according to circumstances."

(*To be continued.*)

¹⁷*El-istidrâj* is a diabolical trick in evolution. It is a well-known and frequent phenomenon; all Sheiks are familiar with it. The disciple makes rapid progress and quickly reaches the higher levels; all of a sudden he falls and never gets up again. The higher his position, the more terrible the fall.

UNIVERSALITY IN ISLAM*

We wanted to develop, in the form of a solar transfiguration of the exotic landscape, the doctrine of reality according to "Supreme Identity". We have seen that, despite absolute unity, there are, from the human, particular or disjunctive point of view, two realities: the collective and the personal. The first is acquired (imposed or adopted), historical, hereditary, temporal and, so to speak, Adamic. The other is original, innate, extra-temporal and dominical. It may be more or less obscured, hindered, but it always exists. It cannot be abdicated; it cannot be destroyed; it is fatal, because it is the reason for each person's existence, i.e. their destiny, to which all spiritual and cosmic work is but a return¹. The first is reality as seen by ordinary people, i.e. the perceptions of the five senses and their combinations according to the laws of mathematics and elementary logic. The second reality is the *sensation of eternity*². In the concrete world, one corresponds to quantity, the other to quality. The collective reality is often called the universal Will, but I prefer to call it the *Need*, reserving the term *Will* to indicate, as best I can, the personal reality. *Will* and *Need* can be compared to *Science* and *Being*. These terms have been familiar not only to European thought since Wronski (according to Warrain: *La Synthèse concrète*, p. 169), but also to an important school of Muslim esotericism, followed above all in India. Science and Being are literally "El- Ilmu wal-Wujûd", the two primitive aspects of Divinity. It hardly needs reminding that only Will exists positively, and that Need has only a relative or illusory existence. All religions and philosophies agree on this point. This is why there are aristocratic minds everywhere. So all Muslims say: Et-Tawhîdu *wâhidun*, which means, literally and with appropriate commentary: "The doctrine of supreme Identity is basically the same everywhere", or: "The theory of supreme Identity is always the same". But I

(*) [Published in April 1911].

¹See *Yi-king*, interpreted by Philastre: I^{er} vol, p. 138; the 6^e Koua; Song, § 150.

²The word destiny designates the true reason for the existence of things; to fail in the exact reason for the existence of things is what is called "to thwart destiny"; so submission to destiny is considered to be a return. To contradict is not to conform with submission.

(Tsheng's traditional commentary).

"Destiny, or celestial mandate, is the true and straightforward reason for the existence of everything. (The Commentary entitled: Primitive Meaning.)

I would add that in Chinese, Muslims are called "Hwei-hwei", those who obediently return to their destiny. Muslim tradition says that Allah calls all things to Himself, so that they come, willy-nilly. Nothing can fail this call. This is why everything is Muslim in a general sense. Human beings who come to Him willingly are called Muslims in a more restricted sense. Those who do not come to Him, i.e. who follow their destiny only by force, in spite of themselves, are infidels.

²See *La Gnose*, 2^e année, n° 2, p. 65 [*Pages dedicated to the Sun*].

want to insist on a distinctive fact of Islamism, on the capital point of the idea of Mohammad the Prophet. The Will can only reach its fullness through Need: on the one hand through the need of Heaven, and on the other through the effort to respond to the just needs of collective reality. The latter is therefore indispensable as a salutary effort, as a means of developing all the latent faculties of the Will. The negative inertia of the one is as indispensable as the positive energy of the other. One has as great a need to receive as the other has to give. They are as hard-working as each other. On the rare occasions when they act as they should, they don't find the opportunity to look for the one who is richer than her sister.

In the order of romantic, humanist psychology, personal reality corresponds somewhat to the Don Quixote element, collective reality to Sancho Pança. Cervantes' immortal masterpiece must be seen as an admission of the impotence of Christianity (at least in the forms we know it today). Has this religion ever been Catholic (i.e. esoteric, Eastern) and Roman (exoteric, Western) at the same time? It has only ever been able to be one at the expense of the other. As for Christians who do not belong to Rome, are they really Christians? I don't know. When a religion seriously declares that its ritual and dogmatics have no hidden or inner meaning, it is making a public profession of superstition and deserves only to be consigned to the museum of antiquities.

Europe has made several attempts to merge Don Quixote and Sancho Pança into a single character. They have all failed, because those that have succeeded have left Christianity behind by founding free thought. I mention only two of these failed attempts, two extremes, the satanic and the grotesque: the Jesuit and Tartarin de Tarascon. I can think of only one Westerner capable of solving the problem: Saint Rabelais. But he, who was an initiate, probably knew that the solution had existed for centuries, through the Malâmatîyah. To illustrate our analysis, we will compare the Malâmatî with Tartarin. The Malâmatî shows Sancho Pança and hides Don Quixote deep down inside, like a sort of ulterior motive that haunts him but which he never utters. Daudet's hero, on the other hand, exposes his Don Quixote in the Tartarin of faraway expeditions, while his Sancho Pança, the Tartarin in flannel, is hidden from everyone except the maid.

Personal and collective realities, Will and Need, outer and inner, unity and plurality, One and All, merge into a third reality that Islam is the only religion to know, recognise and profess. This reality is the *Mohammadan* or prophetic reality. Our Prophet was not only *nabî* or eloquent inspired, but also *rasûl* or law-making envoy. He touched the (intellectual) aristocracy through *En-nubûwah*, or inspired eloquence. He prevented the complete decadence of the people and the weak through *Er-risâlah*, or divine law. The fusion of the elite and the common people, the Islamic aristo-democracy, can be achieved without violence or promiscuity thanks to the particularly Islamic institution of a conventional type of humanity, which I will call, for want of a better term, the average man or human normality. Some Anglo-Saxon philosophers speak of 'the average man' or the man of mediocrity, but I'm not familiar enough with their theories to dare express an opinion. This guy is always fictional, never real. He serves as a neutral insulator and

It is an impersonal system that facilitates certain relationships, planned and regulated in advance, and makes impossible irregular contacts and relationships that are too personal between people who want to ignore each other socially. Being no one and being everyone, without any concrete reality, always the rule, never the exception, it is merely a universal yardstick for all possible social, moral and religious rights and duties. This formalism, this fair balance between interests (material, spiritual-material and religio-ritual), this complete record of all the external circumstances of social and religious life is the best agent of Islamist propaganda. Thanks to it, the social state of the Arab-Semitic tribe, which is an ideal of justice, comprehensiveness, cooperation and solidarity, can be extended throughout the Universe.

The perfection of some truly primitive societies has been noted by many sociologists, ethnographers and poets. But the virtues of the "savage" never go beyond the narrow confines of the tribe. That is why the savage is an ideal only in poetry. His antithesis, today's civilised man, is no better than he is in terms of human wholeness. In one, quality is developed at the expense of quantity. With the other, we have quantity, which is something, it's true, but the quality is far from praiseworthy. Formalism, the institution of the average man, allows primitive man to achieve universality without losing any of those precious characteristics that are attached to the first, quasi-paradisiac Adamism.

It is precisely the "average man" who is the object of the *Shariyah* or sacred law of Islam. It is very simple when there is no great external difference between the elite and the common man. In that case, the primitive letter is sufficient. But with social progress, the complication of life and the change in external conditions, the direct application of the letter would have contradicted the spirit of the law. The average man had varieties, the texts had commentaries, and the science of the jurists progressed with life. However, the difference between the text and the commentaries is only apparent. Evolution is natural and logical, whatever the orientalist of the barracks or the sacristy may say.

Certain Sharaite prescriptions may seem absurd to Europeans. But there is a reason for them. A universal religion must take account of all intellectual and moral levels. The simplicity, weaknesses and peculiarities of others are, to a certain extent, entitled to consideration. But intellectual culture has its rights and its demands too. The average person establishes a kind of neutrality around each person that guarantees all individualities, while obliging them to work for humanity as a whole. History knows of no other practical form of human wholeness. Experience bears irrefutable witness to the universality of Islam. Thanks to the Arabic formulae, there is a means of perfect understanding between all the possible races that lie between the Pacific and the Atlantic. It is hardly possible to find greater ethnic distances than those that exist, for example, between the Sudanese and the Persian, the Turk and the Arab, the Chinese and the Albanian, the Indo-Aryan and the Berber. No other religion or civilisation does as much. It can therefore be said that Islam is the best agent of spiritual communication in existence. Europe can only establish the material international. That is something, but it is not everything. And it is not Christianity that is doing this, but Western positivism, not to say free thought.

This is why we consider the prophetic chain to be complete, *sealed*, with Mohammad the Prophet of Arabs and non-Arabs, because he is its apogee. The prophetic spirit is the doctrine of "Supreme Identity", of the One-All in metaphysics, of Universal Man in psychology, and of Integral Humanity in social organisation. It began with Adam and was completed by Mohammad.



The word *Islam* is an infinitive of the causative verb *Aslama*, to give, to deliver, to hand over. There is an ellipsis: "Lillahi" (to God) is implied. "El-islâmu lillahi" therefore means to hand oneself over to God, i.e. to follow one's destiny obediently and consciously. Now, since man is a microcosm, composed of all the elements of the Universe, it follows that his destiny is to be universal. He does not follow his destiny when inertia dominates his higher faculties. Islam, as a religion, is the path of unity and totality. Its fundamental dogma is called *Et-Tawhîd*, meaning unity or the action of uniting. As a universal religion, it has degrees, but each of these degrees is truly Islam, meaning that any aspect of Islam reveals the same principles. Its formulas are excessively simple, but the number of its forms is incalculable. The more forms there are, the more perfect the law. We are Muslims when we follow our destiny, that is, our *raison d'être*. Since each person carries his destiny within himself, it is obvious that all discussions about determinism or free-will are pointless. Islamism, even if it is exoteric, is beyond this question. This is why the great Doctors have never wished to pronounce on it. It is impossible to explain to the ordinary man how God does everything, how He is everywhere, and how everyone carries Him within himself. All this is clear to the man who "knows his soul" (man *yaraf* nafsaho), i.e. his ego, himself, and who knows that everything is vain apart from "the sensation of eternity". The "ex cathedra" speech of the "mufti" must be clear and understandable to everyone, even an illiterate negro. He has no right to pronounce on anything other than a commonplace of practical life. In fact, he never does, especially as he can avoid questions that do not fall within his remit. It is the clear demarcation, known to all, between Sufi and Sharaite questions that allows Islam to be both esoteric and exoteric without ever contradicting itself. This is why there is never any serious conflict between science and faith among Muslims who understand their religion.

Now, the phrase "*Et-Tawhîd*" or monotheism is commonplace, Sharaite. The scope you give to this formula is your personal affair, because it comes under your Sufism. All the deductions you can make from this formula are more or less good, as long as they do not abolish the literal meaning, because then you would destroy Islamic unity, that is to say its universality, its ability to adapt and suit all mentalities, circumstances and times. Formalism is *de rigueur*; it is not a superstition, but a universal language. Since universality is the principle, the *raison d'être* of Islam, and since, on the other hand, language is the means of communication between beings endowed with reason, it follows that exoteric formulas are as important in the religious organism as arteries are in the animal body. I

have allowed myself to write this essay mainly to show that "intelligence" (inter + legere, *El-Aqlu*), by which I mean universal intelligence, resides in the heart, the centre of blood circulation.

Sentimentality has nothing to do with this location, because its place is in the mucous membranes of the intestines, although it is in the place it should occupy in the physiological economy.

Intelligence and discernment are the two main aspects of human reason. One conceives unity, the other plurality. Sound reason, possessing these two faculties developed to their last limits, can therefore conceive of the One-All Being; but this Being is not the Absolute, which is beyond all intellectual operation. We have reached the limits, not only of science, but also of the

This is the "scibile", when we know that we can go no further. The admission of the impossibility of knowing is the knowledge of the Infinite (*El-ajzu an el-idrâki idrâkun*). It is the only one, it is true, but we would be touching on the disclosure of secrets if we were to affirm that it is not a paradox or a figure of speech, but a real, fertile and, after all, sufficient science. Anything that is merely exoteric inevitably leads to scepticism. And scepticism is the starting point for the chosen ones. Beyond the limits of "scibile", however, there is scientific progress, but then knowledge becomes all negative. It is all the more fertile because it exposes our "poverty" (*El-faqru*), i.e. our needs in Heaven. If we are aware of our needs, we can formulate our requests. I say requests, not prayers, because we must avoid anything that remotely resembles a clergy. It is important to know how to ask, because in this case, Heaven is like nature, which always answers with the truth when we question it properly, but only then. A chemical or physical experiment produces a revelation. Done badly, it leads to error. Heaven always grants something good when we ask as we should. It gives nothing, or even evil, when you ask the wrong way. This is an effect of divine mutuality or of the law of universal catadioptry³.

Sentimental moralists, whether Christians, Buddhists or others, have glorified humility. So be it, but it means nothing to be humble or not, since we are all nothing. They have made humility a virtue, a goal, whereas it is only a means, an exercise and a training. It's just a little station on the road, where you stop as the journey takes you. Vanity is foolishness. So can misplaced humility.

We saw earlier⁴ that the Muslim Creed begins with a negation, which is followed by an affirmation. What I deny and what I affirm both have the same name, A L H; but, in the first case, it is indeterminate (36), and, in the second, it is determinate (66). I say that the vague is non-existent, but that the distinction is the real. Considering only the form of the letters, this is a transformation of infinity, represented by the straight (vertical) line (A), into

³Life is organised according to the law of retaliation, according to a *hadîth*.

⁴*La Gnose*, 2th year, no. 2, p. 64, and no. 3, p. 111 (errata of no. 2). [*Pages dedicated to the Sun*].

the indefinite, represented here by the circle (H), passing through the angle (L). In the case of the distinct statement, angle (L) is repeated twice.

The greater part of practical esotericism concerns destiny, the identity of the self and the non-self, and the art of giving, based on faquirism. The order consists in *obediently and consciously* following one's destiny, which is to live, to live one's whole life, which is the destiny of all lives, that is to say, the destiny of all beings⁵.

Life is not divisible; what makes it seem so is that it is susceptible to gradation. The more the life of the ego is identified with the life of the not-ego, the more intensely we live. The transfusion from the ego to the not-ego takes place through a more or less ritualistic, conscious or voluntary gift. It is easy to understand that *the art of giving* is the main arcane of the Great Work. The secret of this art lies in absolute selflessness, in the perfect purity of the soul of the act, that is to say of the intention, in the complete absence of any hope of return, of any payment whatsoever, even in the other world. Your act must in no way resemble an exchange of courtesies. It is, therefore, more perfect and purer to give to what appears inferior or weak than to the equal or the strongest. From an esoteric point of view, it is better to give to a species that is far from your own than to your own kind. This is why the attraction of the antipode, the taste for the exotic, zoophilia and the loving study of nature are all indications of esoteric dispositions. The famous poet *Abul-Alâ El-Moarrî*, considered by some to be a heretic, a materialist or a free-thinker, in fact occupies a very high place in the spiritual hierarchy of Muslim esotericism. To stop at humanitarianism is therefore a social and sentimental error. To be socially perfect, all you need to do is to get rid of your animalistic and nutritious egoism, because all civic virtues are nothing but more or less good politics, i.e. advantageous politics. It is impossible today to do good for humanity without some utilitarian ulterior motive. Charity towards our fellow man is a duty, an act of precaution or high foresight. It can hardly contain something done "only for God". Sentimentalism always leaves a selfish stain on everything we do in His name, even if it is only by adorning ourselves with fine motives for very simple acts. The *Malâmatiyah* always give themselves a series of bad reasons before performing the fine deeds they are called upon to do.

The good we do to an animal brings us closer to God, because selfishness is less relevant, at least in ordinary cases. The mental displacement is greater, the conquest in the universal soul is further away. You become attached to human beings, and they become attached to you for all sorts of practical reasons. The attachment between an animal and a human being is of a higher order. It is also highly instructive, because the formula: *x* is to you as you are to your cat, for example, reveals many secrets of destiny. It's true that the zoophilic gesture is extremely useful.

⁵I'm not talking about the Ibsenian thesis: live your life. Those who don't dare, who bargain for their pleasure, are too ill-prepared to be addressed with esoteric words. Ibsen, Tolstoy, Nietzsche, etc., are very respectable people, I'm not saying otherwise, but they have no traditional value. Moralists of local influence, they can only interest us as little provincial prophets.

But, just to understand this usefulness, egoism must have evolved a great deal in the transcendental. The man who perceives that the powers judge him as he judges his weaknesses no longer needs a spiritual guide. He is definitely on the right track, in the process of becoming the universal Law himself, by a beginning incarnation of fatality. He may need technical instruction to evolve more quickly, but since he knows how to give without trading, he already has his own heaven. It would therefore be inappropriate to criticise as egotistical those who cultivate zoophilia for astral purposes, for example to ward off what is called "the evil spell" in the inner order, or to restore, as far as possible, the Edenic state of primitive Adamism⁶. These are people who know something, and who use their science to procure for themselves an earthly happiness that Tradition regards as licit.

I cannot stress enough that the art of giving is the Great Arcanum. Absolutely pure and selfless giving is the sensation of nothingness in practical realisation. This crystallised perception is a touchstone - the best one - for controlling Existence in the Absolute. This precious instrument for investigating the beyond may have a very simple, rustic, even crude appearance, but it is instantly spoiled by a single atom of sentimentality. You can say Saint Rabelais, but you can never be too circumspect about Christian (in the ordinary sense) or Buddhist theories.

Readers who have been willing to follow me up to this point without weariness or irritation can easily see that humanitarian giving is simply the right understanding of our material advantages and disadvantages. In fact, everyone understands that it is useful for everyone to have the essentials they need to live humanly. True charity only begins with the beast; it continues with the plant, but then it requires the sciences of the initiate. These sciences lead to Alchemy, which is human charity towards stones and metals, in other words towards inorganic nature. The height of this charity is the gift of the Self to the primitive numbers, for then the Universe is sustained by its rhythmic breath. Allow me to point out that cosmic charity progresses in the opposite direction to the evolution of matter, as the saying goes.

Thanks to the perfect harmony that Islam establishes between the esoteric and the exoteric, it can be spoken of in any tone, i.e. it supports propaganda, even with regard to the esoteric, - at least to a certain extent. Propaganda strengthens it, in the sense that it enriches it from a purely intellectual point of view. It is true that several branches of the Islamic sciences developed only because several non-Arabic peoples joined Islam. Several orientalists, having observed this phenomenon, have attributed it to a juxtaposition of the Aryan or Turanian spirit on the Arab-Semitic mentality. But this is a mistake.

These sciences were already present in primitive Islam. As it accepted rationalism and freedom of thought, it imposed on itself the obligation to explain itself.

⁶Muslim tradition says that wild animals only began to flee from man after Cain's fratricide. Before this event, they sought his proximity to reassure and protect themselves in the great peace that emanated from him.

newcomers to take on a form that suited their mentality. Development took place through collaboration between students and teachers. Questions led to answers. The rational and scholastic sciences of Islam were born out of the external need to formulate one's subconscious. The Arabs took nothing new from foreigners. They merely transformed a little of their gold into silver, so to speak, with the sole aim of simplifying relations between peoples.

I would ask students of Kabbalah to please note that, from a purely scientific point of view, you instruct yourself by teaching others; the interior is enriched by external work; Heaven gives you as you distribute among creatures the little you already possess. But you have to know how.

Let's say straight away that altruism is an empty word; it should be banned from the language of metaphysics, because others do not exist. There is no difference between you and others. You are others, all others, all things. All things and all others are you. We only reflect each other. Life is unique, and individualities are only the inference of destiny that shines through the crystal of creation. The identity of self and non-self is the Great Truth, and the realisation of that identity is the Great Work. If, in the case of theft, you cannot understand that you are the thief and that you are also the robbed; if, in the case of murder, you are both the murderer and the victim; if you do not know how to blush with shame or guilt at accounts of monstrous, new, inconceivable crimes that you would never in your life have been tempted to commit ; if you do not feel that you had anything to do, however small, with the earthquake in Turkestan or the plague in Manchuria, you had better not study esotericism, because you will be wasting your time.

It is above all the criminal community that demonstrates that there is almost no such thing as an isolated act, and that it is difficult to distinguish one man from another. I am not saying that all men are the same, but I am saying that they are all "the same". Let's look, for example, at the sequence of actions. Have you noticed that a general suspicion, however unjust, creates sufficient evidence of guilt around the presumed culprit? This happens all the more quickly when he is innocent to the point of not knowing how the crime was committed. If he is guilty, but intelligent, he can create a negative, deliberate aura around himself that repels the collective aura that wants to overwhelm it. - It's easy to see how the moral aura of a community gradually gathers around the nerve centres of a society, condenses and takes on a human form, usually that of the perpetrator of a crime. But the criminal is merely the hand that strikes. The true origin of the act lies in the community. It does nothing, no doubt, but it causes things to be done, which amounts to the same thing. This is how there are no innocents⁷.

When I find everyone guilty, I am not pleading for the acquittal of the criminal. Even less do I call for punishments for everyone. Esotericism

⁷Any impersonal or anonymous crime is, a priori, a collective crime.

has nothing to do with the code, which is a natural product - however bad - of the history of society. Man can only exercise human justice. Divine justice will always be an enigma to him. From our point of view, attempting to handle this justice is one of the most serious crimes that man can commit. - Allow me to cite a few examples. Theft and murder are crimes, at least in principle; therefore, the thief or murderer must be punished according to the social convention of the moment, but that's all. You are free to avoid him or to associate with him, once he has suffered his punishment. You can refuse him your daughter's hand in marriage, etc., but if you say that this man is evil, that he deserves hellfire, etc., then you are worse than he is, because you want to put yourself on God's throne. You want to judge where no one can see.

Another example: you condemn prostitution, and you are not wrong. However, you can only condemn the prostitute when there is an indecent assault on the public highway. Her crime is merely a reflex crime. In today's society, the man is the inside, the cause, and the woman is the outside, the effect. The woman sells her body because the man sells his soul. You can apprehend one, but the other, the real culprit, escapes prosecution because he is anonymous and legion. Let us confine ourselves to judging the facts alone. It is impossible to judge consciences.

A final example: the scandalous acquittals for crimes of passion. Some have taken this to be a sign of amorality. This is not the case at all. They are simply declarations of the court's incompetence. The scrupulous judge avoids pronouncing on cases that only God can know.

The universal conscience is becoming increasingly fatalistic. It has long been said that "people only get the governments they deserve". A good government cannot reign over a people of scoundrels; it would be obliged to allow itself to be corrupted if it wished to retain power. Day by day, we understand better the great truth about the logic of events: that man is always judged according to his own laws, that is, according to the laws he imposes on the beings under his vital influence. There are subtle links between the executioner and the victim, for both are two aspects of the same fact. Everyone understands that it is the fault of the rich if there are poor people; that it is the fault of the learned if there are ignorant people; that there are vicious people because virtuous people leave too much to be desired. Several Islamic saints have complained of having received the gift of second sight. They saw too many extraordinary things in the minutiae of everyday life. They are naive, those who seek superhuman faculties outside the order. When sorcerers' apprentices fall into intellectual or moral derangement, it is because God has been merciful to them.



The law of universal poverty (El-faqr) is therefore an Islamic principle. Each of us is poor (faqr). We are all poor (foqarâ), because we all need either the Creator or creation, and more often than not both. Since we have to give in order to receive, it follows that the great curse consists in no longer being able to do good, in having lost one's right to exercise charity. When we

you must give more modestly than the beggar receives alms from your hand.

It is above all through its conception of collective reality that Islam definitively distinguishes itself from all other religions, civilisations and philosophies. All enlightened people know that collective reality is a fiction. Muslim enlightened men know this as well as anyone else, if not better. However, in order to follow the Prophet, one does not withdraw into the desert, but pretends to take the world seriously. A hadîth says that we must work for this world as if we thought we would live a thousand years, and yet we must work for the other world as if we thought we would die tomorrow. The doctrine of identity and unity is more developed in Islam than elsewhere. Its precious esoteric-exoteric quality derives above all from its conception of collective reality as an indispensable agent in the transformation of personal reality into human universality or prophetic reality. Christianity and Buddhism reject collective reality with horror or contempt in order to make universal Man in a small quietude. They therefore differ from Islam qualitatively and psychologically. Islam differs from esoteric Brahmanism quantitatively, because it is more vast. Brahmanism is only local, at least from a practical point of view, whereas Islam is universal. It differs from anti-doctrinaire positivism from a formalist and metaphysical point of view. It is in direct opposition to German philosophy, which, by confusing feudalism with aristocracy, has completely distorted the idea of government. Everywhere outside Germany, responsibility is the measure of nobility: the more noble you are, the more responsible you are, and vice versa. The crime of the free and the noble is judged more severely than that of the slave or the ignorant, according to the *Shariyah*. Unfortunately, feudalism is more or less everywhere arranged in such a way as to ensure impunity; - but it is also distinguished from nobility, whereas in Germany feudalism is the only condition of aristocracy. The stronger party is under no obligation whatsoever to the person whom misfortune has placed in a position of inferiority to him.

On the other hand, Islam has points of comparison and contact with most forms of belief or social organisation. However, it is neither a mixed religion nor a new religion. The Prophet expressly states that he did not invent anything in the way of dogmas or laws. He restored the primitive and ancient faith. This is why there are so many similarities between Taoism and Islam. It is not I who risk such an assertion, but the famous authors of Islamism in China. Taoism differs from Islam only in that it is exclusively esoteric, whereas Islam is esoteric-exoteric. This is why one can propagandise its doctrines, the other cannot. Islam knows both neophytism and adepthood, whereas the Tao can only recognise the second of these two forms of expansion.

ISLAM AND ANTHROPOMORPHIC RELIGIONS*

Following some comments made to me about my previous articles, I felt it necessary to make the following statement, as a precaution against possible misunderstandings.

Islam is not a religion based on anthropomorphism. This is why it is forbidden to represent God in any form, any image of God being considered an idol. The mission of Islam is precisely to abolish idolatry. The text of the Qur'an is explicit in several places, especially in the sublime and revered passage entitled "The Verse of the Throne", a passage that is well known and studied in every sense by followers of Muslim Qabbalah. In this place, it is clearly and distinctly stated that nothing can bear any resemblance to God.

In good religious Arabic, we do not say: The Lord (Er-Rabb), without any apposition. We always say the Lord of someone, of some, of something, of all or of everything. Nowhere do we say The Lord in an absolute way. It would be the negation of all individual freedom to try to impose on everyone the same aspect or the same conception of the Supreme Being.

In practice, however, there is a certain anthropomorphism in Islam, but only as an indulgence, a temporary, accidental concession to the weakness of human understanding. Any idea that is intensely thought about ends up "figuring itself", taking on a human form, that of the thinker. It is as if thought flows into the human being like molten metal into the mould of the foundryman. The intensity of thought means that it occupies the whole person, in much the same way as water fills a vase to the brim. It takes on the shape of that which contains it and limits it, in other words it becomes anthropomorphic. To want to relate everything to one's small self, to one's species or to one's particularities, is only a fatal imperfection from which one can scarcely escape. It is obvious that the claim to impose one's imperfections on the whole of humanity is the height of despotism and heresy. Sentimentalism consists in not being able to detach eternal Truth from the little accidents of one's own exclusive and selfish life.

Islam is the only religion in the world that can do without a clergy or priestly institution in any form, while remaining firmly on the foundations of Tradition. The clerical idea is clearly anti-Islamic, which is why priests of every robe and sect have dedicated themselves to a ferocious hatred of Muslims.

(*) [Published in May 1911].

No matter how much they respect the Christian priests, according to the formal order of the Qorân, nothing can be done. Just think: a belief that makes the whole corporation superfluous, even harmful!

Two things absolutely require the priest: the fetish and that conventionalism of feeling known as sentimentality. The two are closely related. They seem to be the exoteric and esoteric parts of the same doctrine. Sentimentality is a kind of inner fetishism, just as the fetish is collective sentimentality in tangible form. Fetish, priest and sentimentality are the three aspects of any anthropomorphic religion. Islam is not such a religion, either in letter or in spirit. It hates the fetish, accepts the priest only in others, and ignores sentimentalism.

THE SUPREME IDENTITY IN MUSLIM ESOTERICISM*

The little treatise we want to translate is one of the most interesting on the subject. As far as I know, the Arabic text has never been printed anywhere. Manuscripts abound, but they are rarely accurate and contain many variations on the original text. It therefore has to be restored, but this is not a very difficult task in the circumstances. The dominant thought is very clear, so that the various redactions and the numerous errors of the copyists do not constitute any obstacle to a perfect understanding of the text. The only questionable points are the title of the work and the name of the author.

The work is often referred to as: "The epistle of knowing the Lord by knowing oneself". This is also the subject of the essay. Other titles: "The Treatise of Self-Knowledge", - "The Key to Knowledge (of Allah)", - "Kitâbul-Alif", - "*Kitâbul-Ajwibah*", - "The Treatise of Balabâni" (after the name of a presumed author). The title most frequently used by writers and Derwish alike is: "*Risâlatul-Ahadiyah*", or the Epistle of Unity. This is the one we have adopted.

The question of the author is always debatable. We can state that he is still called Mohammad Abd-Allah, but that does not get us very far. The manuscripts which specify the name of the author more precisely fall into two categories: some say that the author is Mohammad Abu Abd-Allah ibn Ali *Mohyiddin* ibn Arabi *el-Hâtimi et-Tâ'i* el-Andalûsi, nicknamed the greatest of the Sheikhs (d. 638 H.). I am convinced that our great Master is indeed the author of this admirable treatise. The style indicates this sufficiently. Other manuscripts attribute it to a Mohammad or an Abd-Allah Balabâni, Bilbâni or even Balayâni. Who is this Sheikh? There is an Awhadud-Din Abd-Allah el-Balayâni (d. 686 AH). It could also be that Balabâni is a Kurdish-Persian nickname, from *Bala* = high, and *Bân* = voice. Kurdish scholars, more than others, have always had a great veneration for *Mohyiddin*. Balabâni would therefore be a Kurdish paraphrase of Es-Sheikhul-Akbar = the greatest of the Sheikhs or spiritual Masters. Allah knows best the truth of this.

I have heard that some manuscripts attribute the authorship of this treatise to one of the Soyuti. It seems improbable to me that such a work could have come from either of these two scholars, for it is not a product of erudition but of esoteric mastery. However, the question of the true author remains open until further notice.

(*) [Published from June to August 1911].

order. I am firmly convinced that the author is *Mohyiddin* ibn Arabi, but I cannot, at present, scientifically refute a contrary opinion.

I have a dozen manuscripts at my disposal, none of which is even remotely correct. My translation was three quarters complete when I learned that the book had already been translated into English, I don't know where, when or by whom. In any case, there is no French translation. We will follow up ours with the final version of the text when the Arabic printing works for this magazine are fully up and running.



THE UNITY TREATY (*RISÂLATUL-AHADIYAH*)

by the greatest of spiritual Masters
MOHYIDDIN IBN ARABI

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. We implore His help.

Glory be to Allah, before Whose Unity¹ there is no antecedent, except He Who is that First²; after Whose Singularity³ there is no after, except He Who is that Next⁴. Concerning Him⁵, there is neither before nor after, neither above nor below, neither near nor far, neither how, nor what, nor where, nor state, nor succession of moments, nor time, nor space, nor being⁶: "He is as He was". - "He is the One, the Tamer"⁷ without (the ordinary conditions of) Unity⁸. He is the Singular⁹ without singularity¹⁰. He is not composed of name and named, for the name is He and the named is still He¹¹. There is no name except Him. There is no named except Him. This is why it is said that He is the name and the named¹². He is the First without anteriority. He is the Last without the ordinary conditions of finality, that is, without absolute finality. He is the Obvious without exteriority. He is the Occult without interiority. I mean that He is

¹*El-Wahdaniyah.*

²*Qablu.*

³*El-Fardâniyah.*

⁴*Ba'adu.*

⁵Word for word: with Him, Maaho.

⁶*Kawn*, changeable, conditioned, temporal being.

⁷*El-Wâhid, El-Qahhâr.*

⁸*El-Wâhidiyah.*

⁹*El-Fard.*

¹⁰*El-Fardâniyah.*

¹¹*Hôa*= 11= 𐤃𐤁 (see *La Gnose*, 2^e année, n° 5, p. 151). [Palingenius, *The Symbolism of the Cross*].

¹²He still calls it, as we shall see later when dealing with the divine Lordship, *Er- Rabbâniyah*, or more specifically here *El-Marbûbiyah*.

the existence of the Glyphs¹³ of the external as He is the existence of those of the internal. There is neither external nor internal except Him, and this without these Glyphs changing to become Him, or Him changing to become these Glyphs. It is important to understand this arcana well, lest we fall into the error of those who believe in the incarnations of the Divinity. He is not in anything, and nothing is in Him by any entrance or exit¹⁴. He must be known in this way, not through science, intelligence, imagination, sagacity, the senses, outer vision, inner vision, understanding or reasoning. No one can see Him except Himself. No one grasps Him except Himself. No one knows Him except Himself. He sees Himself¹⁵. He knows Himself through Himself. Other-than-Him¹⁶ cannot see Him. Other-than-Him cannot grasp Him. His impenetrable veil is His own Oneness. Other-than-Him does not conceal Him. His veil is His very existence. He is veiled by His Oneness in an inexplicable way. Other-than-Him does not see Him: no prophet sent, no perfect saint or angel approached¹⁷. His prophet is Himself. His messenger (apostle)¹⁸ is Him. His message (apostolate) is He. His Word is He. He has mandated His ipseity by Himself from Himself to Himself, without any intermediary or (external) causality other than Himself. There is no disparity (of time, space or nature) between the One who sends, between the Message, and the Recipient of this missive. His existence is that of the Letters of prophecy, no other. Other-than-Him has no existence (or nominality), and *therefore* cannot be annihilated (having never existed). That is why the Prophet said, "He who knows his soul (i.e. himself) knows his Lord." He further said, "I have known my Lord by my Lord." The Prophet of Allah wanted to make clear by these words that you are not you, but He; He and not you; that He does not enter you and you do not enter Him; that He does not come out of you and you do not come out of Him. I don't mean that you are or that you have this or that quality. I mean that you absolutely do not exist, and that you will never exist either by yourself or through Him, in Him or with Him. You cannot cease to be, because you are not. You are He and He is you, without any dependence or causality. If you recognise this quality (i.e. nothingness) in your existence, then you know Allah, otherwise you do not.

Most initiates say that Gnosis, or the Knowledge of Allah, comes as a result of *Fanâ el-wujûdi* and *Fanâ el-fanâ'i*, i.e. by the effect of the extinction of existence and the extinction of this extinction. However, this opinion is completely wrong. It is a manifest error. Gnosis does not require the extinction of existence (of the self) or the extinction of this extinction; for things have no existence, and that which does not exist cannot cease to exist. To say that a thing has ceased to exist, that it no longer exists, is equivalent to affirming that it has existed, that it has enjoyed existence. Therefore, if you know your soul, that is to say yourself, if you can conceive that you

¹³*Hurûf*= letters, i.e. spiritual elements (see the *Sepher ha-Zohar*).

¹⁴In other words: He enters nothing and nothing enters Him; He leaves nothing and nothing leaves Him.

¹⁵*Nafsaho*, word for word: His soul, i.e. Himself, His ipseity.

¹⁶*Ghairoho*.

¹⁷Qorân, IV, 170.

¹⁸The nuances between Prophet (Nabî), Apostle (Rasûl) and Saint (Walî) must be observed.

does not exist and, consequently, that you are not extinguished, then you know Allah, otherwise not. To attribute Gnosis to *Fanâ* and *Fanâ el-fanâ'i* is an idolatrous creed. For, if you attribute Gnosis to the *Fanâ* and the *Fanâ el-fanâ'i*, you claim that *other than Allah* can enjoy existence. This is to deny Him, and you are formally guilty of idolatry. The Prophet said: "He who *knows* his soul⁽¹⁹⁾ (i.e. himself) knows his Lord." He did not say: "He who extinguishes his soul²⁰ knows his Lord." If one affirms the existence of another, one can no longer speak of his extinction, for one must not speak of the extinction of what one must not affirm. Your existence is nothingness, and nothingness cannot be added to anything, temporary or otherwise. The Prophet said: "You do not exist now, just as you did not exist before the creation of the world." The word "Now" (taken here in its sense of absolute present) means eternity without beginning, as well as eternity without end. Now, Allah is the existence of eternity without beginning, and eternity without end, as well as pre-existence. These three aspects of eternity are He (Allah is the existence of these three aspects of eternity, without His ceasing to be the Absolute). If it were not so, His Solitude would not be; He would not be without a partner. Now, it is an obligation (rational, dogmatic and theological) that He be alone and without any companion. His partner would be one who exists by himself, not by the existence of Allah. Such a person would have no need of Allah, and would therefore be a second Lord God, which is impossible. Allah has no partner, similar or equivalent. Whoever sees a thing with Allah, of Allah or in Allah, even by making it pertain to Allah by Lordship²¹, makes that thing a partner of Allah, pertaining to Him by Lordship. Whoever claims that a thing can exist with Allah (regardless of whether this thing exists by itself or through Him), whether it is extinguished by its existence or by the extinction of its existence, such a man, I say, is far from having the slightest perception of the knowledge of his soul and of himself²². For he who claims that something other than Him can exist (whether by Himself or through Him or in Him), then disappear and become extinct, then become extinct in its extinction, etc., etc., such a man turns in a vicious circle through extinction upon extinction indefinitely. All this is idolatry upon idolatry and has nothing to do with Gnosis. Such a man is an idolater, and he knows nothing of Allah or himself or his soul.

If one asks by what means one comes to know one's "soul" (i.e. the "proprium", oneself) and to know Allah, the answer is: The path to these two knowledges is indicated by these words: "Allah was and nothingness with Him²³. He is now as He was. If someone says: "I see my soul (my

"The answer is: By the term "soul" the Prophet means the "proprium", your (particular) existence, what you call "myself", and not the psychic element which is called sometimes "the soul imperious" or "that which pushes

¹⁹*Man yaraf nafsah.*

²⁰*Man afna nafsah.*

²¹*Er-Rubûbiyah*; this is, from the exoteric and even pietistic point of view, glorification.

²²Word for word: ... is far from smelling the fragrance of knowledge of the soul, that is to say of himself.

²³See *La Gnose*, 1^{ère} année, n° 12, p. 270 [*Epistle entitled Le Cadeau, on the manifestation of the Prophet*].

²⁴But by "soul" he means all that is other than Allah, as he said: "Make me see (O God!) things as they are", designating by "things" all that is not Allah (may He be exalted). He meant to say: "Make known to me what is not You, so that I may know and so that I may know (the truth about) things, whether they are You or other-than-You; are they without beginning or end, or have they been created and will they disappear?" Then Allah made him see that all that is not Him is (man) himself, and that all that is not Him has no existence. And he saw things as they are; I mean he saw that they were the quiddity of Allah, outside of time, space and all attribution²⁵. The term "things" can be applied to the soul as well as to anything else. The existence of the soul and that of things are identified in the general idea of thing²⁶. Therefore, he who knows things knows his soul, his "proprium", that is to say himself, and he who knows himself knows the Lord²⁷. For what you believe to be other than Allah is not other than Allah, but you do not know it. You see Him, and you do not know that you see Him. As soon as this mystery has been revealed to your eyes, that you are not other than Allah, you will know that you are the goal of yourself, that you do not need to annihilate yourself, that you have never ceased to be, and that you will never cease to exist, never, as we have already explained. All the attributes of Allah are your attributes²⁸. You will see that your exterior is His, that your interior is His, that your beginning is His and that your end is His, that without a doubt and without any doubt. You will see that your qualities are His and that your intimate nature is His, without you having become Him or He having become you, without (transformation,) diminution or increase of any kind. "Everything perishes except His face"²⁹, both externally and internally. This means that there is no other than Him; that other-than-Him has no existence, but is fatally lost, so that only His face remains; in other words: nothing is stable except His face³⁰. (Some manuscripts add: "Wherever you turn, you turn towards the Face of God": Qorân, II, 109). An example: A man does not know something, then he learns it. It is not his existence that is extinguished, but only his ignorance. His existence remains; it has not been changed for that of another;

⁽²⁴⁾ The soul, *En-nafs*, نَفْس, from the root *nafasa*, to breathe, to blow. This word means many things in Arabic, but above all: (a) The personal pronoun "even", to emphasise the individuality of a living being, preferably a reasonable one. Hence the meaning of "proprium" among Sufites. (b) The vital soul, animal or human, whose gradual evolution through seven stations is the moral goal of Derwishism. This subject has already been touched upon by several orientalists; we will return to it later.

²⁵ See *La Gnose*, 1^{ère} année, n° 12, p. 272 [*Epistle entitled Le Cadeau, on the manifestation of the Prophet*].

²⁶ *Sheyyiyah* = "thingness", from *Shey*= thing.

²⁷ Sic: *Er-rabb*; one should say "his Lord" *rabbaho*, according to the established formula (see *La Gnose*, 2^e année, n° 5, p. 152). [*Islam and anthropomorphic religions*].

²⁸ In some manuscripts, we find: You will see that all your actions are those of Allah and that all His attributes are yours.

²⁹ See *La Gnose*, 1^{ère} année, n° 12, p. 270 [*Epistle entitled Le Cadeau, on the manifestation of the Prophet*].

³⁰ This passage can be interpreted, and therefore translated, in different ways, but the traditional meaning is that things only exist through our ignorance. They disappear as our ignorance diminishes. Since their existence is an illusion, their disappearance is just a figure of speech. I tried to explain this fundamental idea of Muslim esotericism in *La Gnose: Pages dédiées au Soleil*, 2^e année, n° 2, p. 63, and *L'Universalité en l'Islam*, 2^e année, n° 4, p. 121. I have referred to 'things' as 'collective reality'.

The existence of the scholar has not been added to the existence of the ignorant; there is no mixture of these two individual existences; only ignorance has been removed. Do not think, therefore, that it is necessary to extinguish your existence, for then you veil yourself with this very extinction, and you yourself become (as it were) the veil of Allah³¹. Since the veil is now other-than-Allah, it follows that other-than-Allah can defeat Him by pushing one's gaze towards Him, which is a serious error and misunderstanding. We said earlier that oneness and singularity are the veils of Allah, not others. This is why it is permissible for the *Wâçil*, i.e. the one who has arrived at (personal) Reality³², to say: "I am the True Divine", or else:

"Glory be to me; how great is my celsitude!" Such a *Wâçil* has not reached such a sublime degree without having seen that his attributes are the attributes of Allah and that his intimate being is the intimate being of Allah, without any transformation of attributes or transubstantiation of intimate being, without any entry into Allah or exit from Him (or vice versa). He sees that he is not extinguished in Allah and that he does not persist with Allah either. He sees that his soul (i.e. his "proprium") does not exist at all, not as having existed and then died out, but he sees that there is no soul or existence except his own. The Prophet said, "Do not insult the Century³³, for it is Allah." He meant by these words that the existence of the Century is the existence of Allah (may He be glorified and magnified). It is too high to have any partner, similar or equivalent. The Prophet says in a *Qodsî* tradition³⁴: "Allah says: My servant! I was ill, and you did not visit Me. I was hungry and you did not give Me food. I asked you for alms, and you refused." He meant that it was He who was the sick man and the beggar. Just as the sick man and the beggar can be Him, so you and all the things of creation, whether accidents or substances, can also be Him. When you discover the enigma of a single atom, you can see the mystery of all creation, both inner and outer. You will see that Allah not only created all things, but you will also see that, in the invisible world as well as in the visible world, there is only Him, for these two worlds have no existence of their own. (You will see) that He is not only their name, but also He who (names) them and He who is named (by them), as well as their existence. You will see that He has not only created a thing once and for all, but you will also see that He is the One who creates it.

"That He is every day in the state of the sublime Creator" ³⁵, by the expansion and occultation of His existence and attributes outside all intelligible conditions. For He is the First and the Last, the Exterior and the Interior. He appears in His unity and conceals Himself in His singularity. He is the First by His perseverance. He is the Last by His eternal permanence. He is the existence of the Glyphs of the First and the Last, of the Exterior and the Interior, as the existence of these Glyphs is Him. He is His name; He is He who is named. As His existence is fatal, logical and

³¹Allah is never veiled. He appears so, but it is an illusion. It is man who is veiled, by himself or by others, so that he cannot see his Lord. This is the tradition.

³²See *La Gnose*, 2^e année, n° 2, *Pages dédiées au Soleil*, and n° 4, *L'Universalité en l'Islam*.

³³*Ed-dahrû*: see *La Gnose*, 2^e year, no. 2, p. 63 [*Pages dedicated to the Sun*].

³⁴The traditions thus named contain what Allah said directly to the Prophet. The Qorân is the Word of Allah, revealed through the angel Gabriel.

³⁵Qorân, LV, 29.

In the same way, the non-existence of any other-than-Him is fatal. What we think of as other-than-Him is not, in fact, a bi-existence, because His existence means that a bi-existence does not exist; otherwise this bi-existence would be like Him. Now, other-than-Him is not, because He is exempt from another-than-Him being other-than-Him. This other is still Him without any internal or external difference. He who is thus possesses attributes without number or end.

(To be continued.)

SUPREME IDENTITY IN MUSLIM ESOTERICISM THE

TREATISE ON UNITY (RISÂLATUL-AHADIYAH)

by the greatest of spiritual Masters
MOHYIDDIN IBN ARABI

(Continued)^()*

He who is thus qualified possesses innumerable attributes. Just as he who dies, in the literal sense of the word, is separated from all his praiseworthy or blameworthy attributes, so he who dies, in the figurative sense, is separated from all his praiseworthy or blameworthy attributes. Allah - may He be blessed and exalted - is in His place in all circumstances³⁶. The "intimate nature" of Allah takes the place of his "intimate nature"; the

Allah's "attributes" take the place of his "attributes". This is why the Prophet - may Allah pray upon him and greet him - said: "Die before you die", i.e.: "Know yourselves (your souls, your "proprium") before you die". He also said: "Allah says: My worshipper does not cease to approach Me by supererogatory works until I love him. And when I love him, I am his hearing, his sight, his tongue, his hand, etc."³⁷. The Prophet means: He who kills his soul (his "proprium"), i.e. he who knows himself, sees that his whole existence is His existence. He sees no change in his

"He sees no need for his attributes to become His own. He sees no need for his attributes to become His own. For (he realised that) he was not himself the existence of his own "inner nature", and that he had been ignorant of his "inner nature".

^(*)[Published in July 1911].

³⁶Allah is to be considered here as the formula of Destiny, whether universal or individual.

³⁷A famous "Holy Tradition" (*Hadîth qodsî*) (see *La Gnose*, 2^e année, n° 6, p. 174, note 2). [*Supreme Identity in Muslim Esotericism*, note 34].

When you know what your "proprium" is, you will be rid of your dualism. When you become aware of what your "proprium" is, you are rid of your dualism³⁸, and you will know that you are none other than Allah. If you had an independent existence, an existence "other than Allah", you would not have to erase yourself or know your "proprium". You would be a Lord God other than Him. May Allah be blessed, so that there is no Lord God other than Him.

The point of knowing the "proprium" is to know, but to be absolutely certain, that your existence is neither a reality nor a nihility, but that you are not, have not been and never will be. You will clearly understand the meaning of the formula: *Lâ ilaha ill'Allah* (= there is no God but God)³⁹, i.e. there is no God other than Him, there is no existence other than Him, there is no other but Him, and there is no god but Him.

If someone objects: "You abolish His Lordship"⁴⁰, I answer: I do not abolish His Lordship, because He does not cease to be (Lord) magnifying, nor does He cease to be (adorer) magnified. He does not cease to be Creator, nor does He cease to be created. *He is now⁴¹ as He was*. His titles of Creator or magnifying Lord are not conditioned by (the existence of) a created thing or a magnified (worshipper). Before the creation of created things, He possessed all His attributes. *He is now as He was*. There is no difference, in His Unity, between creation and pre-existence. His title of The Exterior implies the creation of things, just as His title of The Occult or The Interior implies pre-existence. His interior is His exterior (or His expansive, His self-evident), just as His exterior is His interior; His first is His last and His last is His first; the whole is unique and the unique is all. He is qualified: "*Every day He is in the state of Sublime Creator; nothing but He was with Him; He is now as He was.*" In reality, other-than-Him has no existence. *As He was* from all eternity, *every day in the state of Sublime Creator*, (there is) no thing (with Him) and no day (of creation, to the exclusion of another), just as in pre-existence there is no thing and no day.⁽⁴²⁾ for the existence of things or their nothingness is all one. If this were not so, something new would have had to be created that was not included in His Oneness, which would be absurd. His title of The One makes Him too glorious for such a supposition to be true.

When you can see your "proprium" thus qualified without combining the Supreme Existence with any adversary, partner, equivalent or associate, then you know it as it is (i.e. you really know yourself). That is why the Prophet said, "He who knows his 'proprium' knows his Lord." He did not say:

"He who extinguishes his proprium knows his Lord. He knew and saw that nothing is other than Him. Then he said that knowledge of oneself, of the

³⁸*Imāniyah*= dualism; bi-existence; belief in two divinities; from *Imān*= two. In some manuscripts, I find: *Ananiyah*= egoism, from *Ana* = I, myself.

³⁹See *La Gnose*, 2nd year, no. 2, p. 64, and no. 3, p. 111 (errata of no. 2). [*Pages dedicated to the Sun*].

⁴⁰*Er-rubūbiyah*, i.e. lordly, magnifying, glorifying influence.

⁴¹This is still "Permanente Actualité".

⁽⁴²⁾ That is to say: From our human point of view, there is at present no thing with God and no particular day of creation, any more now than before the creation of the world.

"This is the Gnosis or knowledge of Allah. Know what your "proprium" is, i.e. your existence⁴³; know that deep down you are not you, but that you do not know. Know that (what you call) your existence is (in reality) neither your existence nor your non-existence. Know that you are neither existing nor nothing, that you are not other than existing or other than nothing. Your existence and your non-existence constitute His Existence (absolute, such that one cannot *and must* not discuss whether He is or is not)⁴⁴. The substance of your being or nothingness is His Existence. So when you see that things are nothing other than your existence and His, and when you can see that the substance of His Being is your being and nothingness in things, without (however) seeing anything with Him or in Him, then you know your soul, your 'proprium'. Now, to know yourself in such a way is Gnosis, the knowledge of Allah, above all equivocation, doubt or combination of a temporary thing with eternity, without seeing in, through or beside eternity anything other than eternity.

If someone asks: "How then does union (El-wiçal) take place, since you affirm that other-than-Him is not? A thing that is unique can only unite with itself", the answer is: In reality, there is neither union (*waçl*) nor separation (*façl*), just as there is neither distancing (*buud*) nor approaching (*qurb*). We can only speak of union between two things, and not when it is a single thing. The idea of union or arrival implies the existence of two things, analogous or not ⁴⁵. If they are analogous, they are similar. If they are not analogous, they oppose each other. Now, Allah - may He be exalted - is free from any similarity as well as any rival, contrast or opponent. What is usually called "union", closeness or distance⁴⁶, are not such (in the true sense of the word). There is union without unification, approach without proximity, and distance without any idea of distance or proximity.

(To be continued.)

(43) In other words, what your individual life could be, separated from the universal life.

⁴⁴The words in brackets are the translator's attempts to clarify the meaning of the text according to the author's dominant thought. A translation (*Tarjumah*) from Arabic or Chinese into a Western language corresponds exactly to an indigenous commentary in the language of the text itself.

⁴⁵*Mutasâwi*= parallel.

⁴⁶*Wiçâl*, *qurb*, *buud*; very frequent Sufi terms. Designating psychological phenomena, they are used above all in morality. This is why, more than other Sufi ideas, they have fallen into sentimental vulgarity, having lost their true meaning. It is the task of metaphysicians to restore the primitive meaning of words that designate principles. Just as a great artist transforms a banal news item into an immortal monument, so the metaphysician purifies commonplaces by ridding Tradition of routine.

SUPREME IDENTITY IN MUSLIM ESOTERICISM

THE UNITY TREATY (RISÂLATUL-AHADIYAH)

by the greatest of spiritual Masters
MOHYIDDIN IBN ARABI

(Continued)^(*)

If someone asks: "What is junction without junction, proximity without proximity, or distance without distance?", the answer is: I mean that, in the state that you call "proximity" (qurb), you were not other than Him - may He be exalted. You were not other than Him, but you did not know your "proprium"; you did not know that you were Him and not yourself. When you come to Allah, that is, when you know yourself "without the letters of knowledge"⁴⁷, you will know that you are Him, and that you did not know before whether you were Him or not⁴⁸. When knowledge (*El-Irfân*) has come to you, you will know that you have known Allah through Allah, not through yourself. Let us take an example: Let us suppose that you do not know that your name is *Mahmûd*, or that you should be called *Mahmûd* - for the true name and the one who bears it are, in reality, identical. Now, you imagine that your name is Mohammad; but, after some time of error, you come to know that you are *Mahmûd* and that you have never been Mohammad. However, your existence continues (as in the past), but the name Mohammad is removed from you; this has happened because you have known that you are *Mahmûd* and that you have never been Mohammad. You have not ceased to be Mohammad by an extinction of yourself (*El-fanâ an nafsika*), because ceasing to exist (*fanâ*) supposes the affirmation of a previous existence. Now, whoever asserts any existence apart from Him, gives Him an associate - blessed be He, and may His name be exalted. (In our example), *Mahmûd* never lost anything. Mohammad never lived (word for word: breathed, *nafasa*) in *Mahmûd*, never entered him or left him. Likewise *Mahmûd* in relation to Mohammad. As soon as *Mahmûd* knows that he is *Mahmûd* and not Mohammad, he knows himself, i.e. he knows his "proprium", that by himself and not by Mohammad. He was not. How could he have informed about anything?

Therefore, "the one who knows" and "what is known" are identical, as are "the one who arrives" and "what is arrived at", "the one who sees" and "what is

^(*)[Published in August 1911].

⁴⁷Through the transformed and enlivened synthesis of detailed and precise knowledge.

⁴⁸My manuscripts differ greatly from one another. In some I read: "... if you were Him or someone other than Him". Elsewhere I find: "... if you were Him or that He was other than Him". A third category of manuscripts reads: "... if you were Him or that He was Him". The confusion is only apparent, for the tradition is, as we shall see later, that He is Gnosis and that Gnosis is Him. We see God through God's eye.

seen" are identical. "He who knows" is His attribute (çifa); "What is known" is His substance or "intimate nature" (dât). "He who arrives" is His attribute; "What is arrived at" is His substance. Now, quality and that which possesses it are identical. This is the explanation of the formula: He who knows himself knows his Lord. Whoever understands the meaning of this similarity understands that there is neither union (joining or arrival) nor separation. He understands that "He who knows" is He, and that "What is known" is also He. "He who sees" is He; "What is seen" is still He. "He who arrives" is He: "What is arrived at" in union is still Him. No one other than Him can join Him or reach Him. No one other than Him separates from Him. Anyone who can understand this is completely free from the great idolatry⁴⁹.

Most initiates who believe they know their "proprium" as well as their Lord, and who imagine they are escaping the bonds of existence, say that *the Way* is only practicable or even visible through the "extinction of existence" (El-fanâ) and by "The extinction of this extinction" (Fanâ-el-fanâ'i). They only dogmatise in this way because they have not understood the words of the Prophet - may Allah pray upon him and greet him. As they wanted to remedy idolatry (which results from contradiction)⁵⁰, they spoke sometimes of "extinction", i.e. that of existence, sometimes of

"the extinction of this extinction", sometimes of "erasure" (*El-mahw*) and sometimes of "disappearance" (El-içtilâm). But all these explanations amount to idolatry pure and simple, for whoever asserts that there is anything other than Him, which thing subsequently becomes extinct, or speaks of the extinction of the extinction of that thing, such a man, we say, is guilty of idolatry by his assertion of the present or past existence of another than Him⁵¹. May Allah - may His name be exalted - lead them, and us too, to the true path.

(To:) You thought you were you. - But you are not and never have been.

— If you were you, you'd be the Lord, the second of two! - Give up this idea,

— For there is no difference between the two of you as far as existence is concerned. - He does not differ from you and you do not differ from Him. - If you say in ignorance that you are other than Him, - Then you are of a coarse spirit. - When your ignorance ceases, you become gentle, - For your union is your separation and your separation is your union. - Your distance is your approach and your approach is your departure⁵². - This is how you become better. - Stop reasoning and understand by the light of intuition, - Otherwise you will miss what radiates from Him⁵³. - Beware of giving any partner to Allah, - For then you debase yourself, and that by the shame of the idolaters.

⁴⁹Word for word: the idolatry of idolatry, *Shurkus-Shurki*.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ The idolatry of bi-existence (dualism) has not escaped any Islamic theologian who has thought in Arabic. This language is algebraic, so that the study of its grammar is, so to speak, the exposition of the mechanism of thought. It is difficult to make a false argument in Arabic without making syntactical, lexical or other mistakes. The perspicuity of the Arabic sentence is the best proof of the sanctity of this language, i.e. of its primordality or edenism. In Chinese, and to some extent in Malay, we find similar things.

⁽⁵¹⁾ In other words, he is a dualist because he believes in the bi-existence of all that exists.

⁵²*Fa waçluka hijrun wa hijruka waçlum - Wa bu'duka qurbun wa qurbuka bu'dun.*

⁵³Uncertain reading: I am translating this last line at random.

If someone says: "You claim that the knowledge of your 'proprium' is Gnosis, i.e. the knowledge of Allah - may His name be exalted; - man is other than Allah, even if he knows his 'proprium'⁵⁴; but whoever is other than Allah, how can he know Him? how can he reach Him?", the answer is: "Whoever knows his 'proprium' knows his Lord"⁵⁵. Know that the existence of such a man is neither his own, nor that of another, but that of Allah⁽⁵⁶⁾ (without any fusion of two existences into one), without his existence entering into God, coming out of Him, collating with Him or residing in Him. But he sees his existence *as it is*⁵⁷. Nothing has become that did not exist before⁵⁸, and nothing ceases to exist by erasure, extinction or extinction of extinction. The annihilation of a thing implies its prior existence. To claim that a thing exists by itself is to believe that it is self-created, that it does not owe its existence to the power of Allah, which is absurd in the eyes and ears of all. You should note well that the knowledge possessed by one who knows his

"Proprium" is the knowledge that Allah possesses of His "proprium", of Himself, for His "proprium" is none other than Him. By "proprium" (*nafs*), the Prophet - may Allah pray upon him and greet him - meant existence itself. Whoever has reached this state of soul, his exterior and interior are none other than the existence of Allah, the word of Allah⁵⁹; his action is that of Allah, and his claim to know his "proprium" is the claim to Gnosis, that is to say to perfect knowledge of Allah⁶⁰. You hear his claim, you see his actions, and your gaze meets a man who is other than Allah (just as you see yourself as other than Allah), but this is only because you do not possess knowledge of your "proprium". So, if "the Believer is the mirror of the Believer"⁶¹, then he is Himself (through his substance, or through his eye)⁶², that is, through his gaze. His substance (or his eye) is

⁵⁴The accentuated nuance comes from the translator; word for word, it reads: He who knows his "proprium" is other than Allah.

⁽⁵⁵⁾ The author in turn responds with the dogmatic formula. This attitude in the discussion is easy to understand here.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ In other words, he has become a perfect fatalist. He knows his destiny, that is, his reason for being in the universal economy, his place in the hierarchy of all beings. He *voluntarily* carries out his cosmic mission. He is in direct obedience, which gives his progress the harmony of lines. This abandonment to the Will of Allah is "Islam".

⁵⁷*Bihalihi*, i.e.: he sees his place in order. Now, the order is such that everything is everyone and everyone is everything. Each place, each "detail" comprises the whole, and the whole order is found in each place. That's why everything in its place, no matter how small, represents the whole. Whoever is in order is order itself. And God is order.

⁵⁸We consider this treatise to be the best exposition of Islamic-Semitic thought, because of its negation of time and progress. Without this notion, nothing can be understood of the *living immobility* which, under different names, is the principle of art, magic, morality and esotericism.

⁵⁹Elsewhere, in other manuscripts, we find: "... his word is the word of Allah", which is more in keeping with tradition.

⁶⁰Variant: "... his claim to know his 'proprium' is the divine claim to know Himself". Other variant: "... his claim to Gnosis is the knowledge of his 'proprium'."

⁶¹*El-mu'minu mir'atul-mu'mini*, a famous tradition which can be interpreted in different ways, for *El-mu'min* = The believer is also a name of Allah. We can read: the believer is the mirror of the believer, which is the social-moral interpretation; or: the believer is the mirror of the Believer, which is the idea in the psychological order. The one we have preferred in the text is the idea in the metaphysical order.

⁶²*Bia'inihi*; *A'in* = eye, then source, substance; usually used in the sense of "same", as well as the expressions: *binafsihi*, *bidatihi*, etc.

the substance (or eye) of Allah; his gaze is the gaze of Allah without any specification (*keifiyah*)⁶³. This man is not Him according to your vision, your knowledge, your opinion, your fantasy or your dream, but he is Him according to his vision, his knowledge and his dream⁶⁴. If he says: "I am Allah", listen to him carefully, for it is not he but Allah Himself who (through his mouth) utters the words: "I am Allah". But you have not reached the same level of mental development as he has. If you had, you would understand what he says, you would say what he says and you would see what he sees.

To sum up: the existence of things is His existence without things being. Do not let yourself be led astray by the subtlety or ambiguity of words, so that you imagine that Allah is created. Certain initiates have said: "The *ḥuṭī* is eternal", but he has only spoken in this way since all the mysteries (to him) have been revealed and all doubts or superstitions have been dispersed. However, this immense thought can only be suitable for someone whose soul is larger than the two worlds. As for the one whose soul is only as big as the two worlds, it does not suit him⁶⁵. For, in truth, this thought is greater than the sensible world and the hypersensible world, both taken together.

Finally, know that "He who sees" and "That which is seen", that "He who brings into existence" and "That which exists", that "He who knows" and "That which is known", that "He who makes known" and "That which is known".

"He who creates", and "That which is created", that "He who reaches through understanding" and "That which is understood" are all Themselves. He sees His existence by His existence, He knows it by itself and He reaches it by itself, without any specification, outside the ordinary conditions or forms of understanding, vision or knowledge. Since His existence is unconditioned, His vision of Himself, His intelligence of Himself and His knowledge of Himself are also unconditioned.

If someone asks: "How do you look at what is repulsive or attractive? If you see, for example, filth or carrion, do you say that it is Allah?", the answer is: Allah is sublime and pure, He cannot be these things. We speak with the one who does not see carrion as carrion or filth as filth. We speak to the sighted, not to the blind. He who does not know himself is a blind man, born blind. Until his blindness, natural or acquired, ceases, he cannot understand what we mean. Our discourse is with Allah, not with anyone other than Him, or with the born blind. He who has reached the spiritual station that it is necessary to have reached in order to understand, he knows that there is nothing that exists, except Allah. Our discourse is with the one who seeks with firm intention and perfect sincerity to know his "proprium" (in the name) of the knowledge of Allah - may He be exalted - who, in his heart, keeps in all his "proprium" the knowledge of Allah - may He be exalted - who, in his heart, keeps in all his "proprium" the knowledge of Allah - may He be exalted.

⁶³Scholastic word derived from the particle *keif*= how.

⁶⁴Readers of *La Gnose* do not need to be told that He is He according to His vision.

⁶⁵In the text: This mouthful is for someone whose gullet is wider than the two worlds. It is not suitable for someone whose gullet is only as big as the two worlds.

freshness *the form* ⁶⁶in his request and in his desire to reach Allah. Our discourse is not addressed to those who have neither intention nor goal.

If someone objects: "Allah - may He be blessed and holy - has said: Looks cannot reach Him, but He reaches looks⁶⁷; you say the opposite; where is the truth?", the answer is: All that we have said comes back to the divine word: Looks cannot reach Him, that is to say neither no one nor anyone's looks can reach Him. If you say that there is in what exists another than Him, you must agree that this other than Him can reach Him. Now, (in this part of His Arabic word): "looks cannot reach Him", Allah warns (the believer) that there is no one other than Him. I mean that none other than Him can reach Him, but the one who reaches Him is Him, Allah, Him and no other. Only He reaches and understands His true "intimate nature" (*Ed-dât*), no other. Glances do not reach Him, for they are nothing other than His existence⁶⁸.

With regard to someone who says that gazes cannot reach Him, because they are created, and the created cannot reach the uncreated or the eternal, we say that this man does not yet know his "proprium"⁶⁹. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, looks or other things, that exist apart from Him, but He understands His own existence without (however) this understanding existing in any way.

(Verse:) I have known my Lord through my Lord without confusion or doubt. - My "intimate nature" (*dât*) is His, truly, without lack or defect. - Between us two there is no becoming⁷⁰, and my soul is the place where the occult world manifests itself. - Since I have known my soul without mixture or disorder, - I have come to union with the object of my love without there being any distance between us, either long or short. - I receive graces without anything descending from above (towards me), without reproaches, and even without motives. - I have not erased my soul for His sake, nor has it had any temporal duration to be destroyed afterwards⁷¹.

If someone asks: "You affirm the existence of Allah and deny the existence of anything (apart from Him); what then are these things that we see?", the answer is: These discussions are addressed to the one who sees nothing apart from Allah. As for the one who sees something apart from Allah, we have nothing with him, neither question nor answer, because he only sees what he sees; whereas the one who knows his "proprium" does not see anything other than Allah (in all that he sees). He who does not know his The "proprium" doesn't see Allah, because every container allows only its contents to filter through.

- We've already covered a lot of ground. To go further would be

⁶⁶*Çurah*, the form, the image. I have preferred the form: 1° to avoid anthropomorphism as much as possible; 2° because the form, even the formula, has a much greater importance and holds a higher place in Islam than elsewhere. I intend to develop this subject later.

⁶⁷Qorân, ch. VI, v. 103.

⁶⁸From a certain point of view, which is not, however, our own, it could be said that it is matter that becomes conscious of itself. An atheist who is not a cynic is generally well enough prepared to understand the metaphysics of Islam.

⁶⁹Variant: "...is far from knowing..."

⁷⁰So no transubstantiation, incarnation, etc. Variants: *Hijrân* = escape, emigration; *Hairân* = astonishment, etc.

⁷¹Several variants, each more obscure than the last, mainly because of the poor condition of the manuscripts which makes reading uncertain. Some manuscripts even have an extra verse which begins: *Wa niltu* = I have arrived. The rest is illegible.

useless, because he who is not made to see will not see any more (by means of our efforts). He will not understand and will not be able to reach the truth. He who can see, sees, understands and reaches the truth (according to what we have said). For those who have (hyperconsciously) arrived, all that is needed is a slight indication so that in this light they can find the true Way, walk with all their energy and reach the goal of their desire, with the grace of Allah.

May Allah prepare us for what He loves and accepts in words, deeds, knowledge, intelligence, light and true guidance. He can do all things, and He answers every prayer with the right answer. There is no means or power except with Allah, the Most High, the Immense. May He pray over the best of His creatures, over the Prophet and all the members of his family. Amen.

CATEGORIES OF INITIATION*

(TARTÎBUT-TAÇAWWUF)

by the greatest of spiritual Masters
SEYIDI MOHYIDDIN IBN ARABI

Glory be to Allah, Who showers the waters of supreme truths¹ from the clouds of His mercy on the hearts of His saints; - Who fixes in the soil of their intelligences the gradations of Being as well as the meaning of Eternity; - (so that) they distinguish, in the light of spiritual sight, between bodies and the breaths of life², between what is accidental, having arisen through time, and what is ancient. Glory be to Him for these great benefits. He is magnificence and generosity. May the prayers of Allah³ be upon him to whom were given all the words (of Heaven), upon Mohammad, his family and his companions.

(*) [Published in December 1911, January 1912].

¹ *El-Hikam*, plural of *El-Hikmatu*, Wisdom. *El-Hikam* is often translated as "words of wisdom", by

These are "sentences", aphorisms or maxims. Linguistically, it is מִקְוֵה חֵכְמָה in Hebrew. The Muslim form of esotericism does not give *El-Hikmatu* the same metaphysical value that the Qabbalists and Swedenborgians give to *Hokmah* and 'Divine Wisdom'. *Er-rahmatu*, which I translate as mercy, for want of a better word, should not be identified with the 'Divine Love' of Swedenborg and other Christians either. I admit that all these expressions are very similar, but they are far from identical. Already, the name that indicates the indescribable essence of the Supreme Being (*Ed-Dhātu* or the intimate nature), that is to say the term *Allah*, implies a binary which, however, defies analysis. According to some theologians, *Allah* would be *Al-ilah*, of which *Al* is the determining article, and *ilah* a derivative of the root ALH = to desire, to love. *El-ilahu* would then mean "the precision of desire", or "the determined will", and so on. Other theologians say that *Allah* is an artificial name, a simple tetragrammaton, with no Arabic, Semitic or other genealogy. I am, however, inclined to see in the august name an origin, if not Hijazian, at least South Arabian. In the dialects that are more or less sons or grandsons of Himyarite, we find several words based on ALH, meaning to be or to exist. Even the Abyssinian *Alla* could relate to the subconscious South Arabian root in the sense of being. This is one explanation like any other, and it has the advantage of putting the tetragrammaton *Allah* (ALLH in Arabic) as a counterpart to the Hebrew יהוה, from יהוה to be. We are careful not to make any claims in this regard.

Theologians divide Arabic divine names into three categories: *Dhâtîyah*, *Çifâtîyah* and *Afâliyah*. Only the name *Allah* belongs to the first category. The second category includes names that indicate Allah's attributes, such as *Djalâlîyah* (majestic) or *Djamâlîyah* (beautiful). To the third category belong the names *Kamâlîyah*, from *Kamâl*, perfection or fullness; they are all *Afâliyah*, i.e. relating to the action of Allah (from *El-fîlu*, plural *El-afâlu*). The names *Çifâtîyah* or rigorously attributive are polarised into *Djalâlîyah* (majestic) or *Djamâlîyah* (venerable) according to their relationship with *El-Djalâlu* (majesty) or *El-Djamâlu* (beauty), the two aspects of the Lord. In Islam, therefore, we already have two ternaries, *Dhât*, *Çifât*, *Afâl*, then *Djalâl*, *Djamâl* and *Kamâl*, before we can speak of correspondents to Love, Wisdom and Providence. However, *Allah* is often called *Ismul-Djalâlâtî*, or *El-Djalâlâtû*.

² *En-nasamu*, plural of *En-nasamatu*, breath of life; comp. נְשָׁמָה.

³ The prayers and salutations of Allah on the Prophet or Universal Man are ecumenical mysteries, which we have no desire, capacity or authorisation to explain. Suffice it to say that they consist in the exaltation of a human superlative, and that they correspond somewhat to that part of the Christic prayer par excellence, which reads: "Thy will be done on Earth as it is done in Heaven".

Next, (know) that certain brothers⁴ who have honoured me greatly and done me good by the elevation of their character, have asked me to define, for them, the nine categories of Cufism, based on that glorious verse (from the Qorân, ch. IX, v. 113) which summarises all the orders of Cufism (i.e. all the types of initiation or all the categories of great initiates)⁵, all the ways of seeking the truth (or the elite distinction, the special favours of Heaven)⁶. Allah says (in this verse, about the pact between Him and mankind, *El-baia*, the Covenant, סוֹבְרִית the Old Testament): "Those who return to Allah through repentance; those who adore; those who glorify; those who travel; those who bow down; those who prostrate themselves⁷; those who order the good; those who forbid the evil; those who watch over the limitations (or discretions) that Allah has established. Give glad tidings to the Believers⁸".

⁴My manuscript is far from bad; however, it contains not only a few errors but also a few illegible words. I confess that I do not know whether there was one or more people who wanted the author to write our treatise.

⁵*Tartîbut-Taçawwuf*, the orders of initiation. I translate *Taçawwuf* by initiation, because, in our author's language, *Taçawwuf* means: the action of becoming a *Çufî*. Now, in the author's time, and especially in his language, *Çufî* meant either a spiritual Master or a worthy follower of such a Master. The term is very vague, which means that it has become so. Its etymology is uncertain. The question is, moreover, of little importance. Scholars among Muslims today seem to me inclined to avoid its use. They are right to avoid words that can mean very different things. Allow me to warn the kind reader that, when I cannot resist using this word, I always give it the meaning of "quietist". When I translate, it's different; then I place myself, as far as I can, in the author's point of view while speaking the language of my reader.

⁶*Taarruf* also means: to be distinguished by the determinative article.

⁷Their hieratic place is designated by bowing or prostration in the prayer-mass.

⁸Here is the explanation of the same passage according to the commentary of the Qorân, attributed to Seyidi *Mohyiddin*, i.e. his little commentary which can be found in bookshops and in all Islamic libraries:

"When they taste the voluptuousness of renunciation and the sweetness of the light of certainty through abstraction (from the delights of the first paradise, that of the senses and, we add, sentimentality), they turn away from the station of the voluptuousness of the "proprium", leaving its desires and appetites, so that they no longer have anything in common with this paradise. They are then qualified as *Tâ'ibun*, true penitents, people who withdraw from the pleasures of the "self", hoping for no reward of this kind. *El-Âbidun*, "the worshippers", are those who, having withdrawn from the love of "proprium", riches and any expectation of compensation or reward (in this world or the next), worship Allah with true worship, i.e. worship Him in order to worship Him, not to obtain a good or avoid an evil, but solely to serve His reign, *El-Malkût*, by maintaining His divine right; They do this out of modesty, humility and submission before His magnitude and His greatness, with the sole aim of paying a worthy tribute to His glory and His majesty. Then they "glorify" Allah, by their acts as well as by the simple nature of their mental state, in accordance with His true Glory, through the manifestation of the fullness of open and hidden activities, according to their voluntary and firm dispositions to tend towards the supreme goal. Then they "travel" towards Him (drawing nearer) by leaving behind their primordial Edenic character, the vision of constant plenitude, the familiarity with heavenly things, the confidence and bliss they enjoyed in the regions of the great happiness of divine attributes and in the mansions of glorifications. Then they "bow down" at the station of the obliteration of attributes (*maqâmu fanâ'us-çifat*). Then they "prostrate" by the extinction of the "intimate nature" (*fanâ'ud-dhât*). Then they straighten up to "order the good", to "forbid the evil", and to "keep the limits that Allah has established", this in the station called: "the duration after the annihilation" (*El-baqâ bad el-fanâ*)."

As we can see, when *Mohyiddin* speaks the language of all Islamic psychotherapists, he is careful to fix the true meaning of the words. The terms *baqâ* and *fanâ* refer only to relationships. As little as the person of the one who performs the prayer-mass disappears during the service, so little is there an extinction or an annihilation in the evolution or in the spiritual progress.

Comp. *La Gnose: Le Traité de l'Unité Suprême*, 2^e année, n^(os) 6, 7 et 8 (See Qorân, trans. Kazimirski, ch. IX, v. 113).

I

It begins with *Et-tâ'ibun*, "those who return to Allah" (through repentance, *Et-tawbatu*). They are the ones who shook off the torpor of negligence, who rescued themselves from the stagnant waters of lukewarmness and awoke from the sleep of ignorance. Then, in the light of the warning that shone in the deep hiding places of souls, they saw the woes of their faults and the ugliness of their sins. So they hastened to strip themselves (of their old man), to regret the past, and, as far as the future was concerned, to sincerely propose not to fall back into old errors. They point out the snares of the (purely animal) soul, prepare themselves to fight it by making good use of all the human faculties⁹, and are prepared for good works by sincerity and by keeping company with (pious men). They have the firm decision to wage the (great) holy war¹⁰ by integrity, as well as by pointing out the path of worship, by good works on the outside, and by a noble character on the inside.

They are called the "men of canon law", the "Zealots" and (more commonly) the "prefects" (*naqib*, plural *nuqabâ*)¹¹, who bring out the depths of the soul. There are 313 of them, the same number as the people of the battle of Badr¹².

The aim of Cufism, according to them, is: the pain of sin; the direction taken with sincerity towards that which pleases the Lord; to escape from the clutches of the purely animal soul (*En-nafsu*) in order to direct oneself towards the Divine True through intelligence and sensation; to leave behind all evil dispositions of character in order to form a new soul, all good.

Their activity is based on ten foundations (corresponding to the "stations", *maqâmât*): vigilance, repentance, responsibility or awareness of actions, return to Allah, reflection, remembrance, precaution, spiritual exercise or discipline, attention to Allah's will and avoidance (of evil).

⁹I translate *Es-siyâsatu*, which means: to bring things to a good end. The first meaning is: to lead horses. Among pietists, it almost has the meaning of "psychotherapy". In modern Arabic, this word only means It's all about "politics", and more specifically "the art of being opportunistic".

¹⁰*El-Djihadu*, word for word: the sacred effort, i.e. the holy war, of which pietists distinguish two types: the small and the large. The first is waged against non-Muslims who attack Islam or the religious character of the Muslim world. Its laws are based on exotericism and the *Shariyah*. It should not be confused with purely political warfare, in which no religious interests are at stake, these interests being clearly defined by the judiciary. Religious warfare and exclusively political warfare follow two completely different codes. War against rebels is governed by a third code, which is a model of humanity.

The great holy war is the spiritual battle that man wages against his own defects, when he wants to conform to the Law, the Way or the Supreme Reality, in Arabic: *Es-Shariyah*, *Et-Tariqah* and *El-Haqiqah*.

¹¹*Naqib*, plural *nuqabâ*, from the root N Q B which means: (a) to pierce; (b) to scrutinise, to examine; (c) to rule, i.e. to watch over.

I have heard some Israelite say that נקבה = woman, contains an allusion to sex. This is a mistake. נקבה is *naqibatun*, i.e. the Arabic feminine of our word *naqibun*, and means, in good Arabic: soul, insight, character. We often obtain a higher conception of the Hebrew Scriptures by taking the terms, not in the Hebrew sense, but in the Arabic sense. For the Arabs, in general, and Islam, in particular, are of a much more primordial and purer Semitism than the Jews and the Syrians.

¹²It took place in the year 2 of the Hegira. It is mentioned in the Qur'an in several places: in chapter III, v. 11, v. 118-120; in chapter VIII, v. 5, v. 42-43. It comes under the heading of hieratic history, and the Prophet's companions on that memorable day, *Ahlu Badr*, occupy a very high rank among the first Muslims.

The names of Allah to which they prefer to attach themselves are *Et-Tawwâbu* and *El-Ghafûru*, i.e. "He who returns to those who return to Him" (or accepts repentance), and "He who is inclined to forgive the guilty". - When a "prefect" is strengthened by one of these names, he turns to worship in order to seek the true worship of Allah.

II

The second category (word for word: face) is that of the "Adorers", *El- Âbidun*. These are the ones who are preoccupied with performing good deeds and who throw away all their possessions for the cause of Allah. There are forty of them; they are called the "generous" (*nadjîb*, plural *nudjabâ*), and also "those to whom one is grateful", and "those who speak or make speeches". They carry the burdens of creatures and only spend themselves for the good of others, either through services or through vows, prayers, etc.

The aim of Cufism, according to them, is: to turn towards worship in order to attain what is beautiful, excellent or what exceeds the indispensable; integrity and sincerity as a means of reaching the elite and enjoying the special favours of Heaven; to seek the fullness and perfections in the hierarchies established by the *Shariyah*, externally and internally.

Their words concern the exact formulas to be given to the traditional or rational principles of religion; the preservation of the Scriptures; the true interpretation of sacred terms; understanding all the sciences in a synoptic way. People of this second category are masters in the art of associating and combining ideas, which is the height of art in a skilled logician speaking on theology.

(Activity:) Their "stations" (*maqâmât*) are ten: sadness, fear, compassion, modesty, discretion, asceticism, scrupulous conduct, a life devoted exclusively to the service of Allah, hope and the desire to always go further towards the best.

The names of Allah to which they are attached are *El-Hasîbu* and *Er-Raqîbu*, i.e. "He who keeps the accounts", and "He who spies on men without their knowledge". When the "nadjîb" is strengthened by these names, his "station" imposes fidelity and perfection on him. He sees in his interior and exterior various divine favours, as well as ample benefits, by the Glory of Allah, who teaches him what he did not know.

(To be continued.)

THE CATEGORIES OF INITIATION (TARTÎBUT-TAÇAWWUF)

by the greatest of spiritual Masters
SEYIDI MOHYIDDIN IBN ARABI

(continued)*

III

The third category is that of the *Hâmidûn*, i.e. "those who glorify". They are the masters of divine invocations and eulogies, and are prepared for the holy sweets and subtleties of enlightenment. They are also called the *Afrâd*, i.e. the "Solitary Ones", or "those who have reached the goal of initiation" (= *El-Wâçilûn*), or the "Wise Ones" (= *El-Hokamâ*). It was in relation to them that the Prophet said: "Go forward as the isolated go forward". It was asked: "O Prophet of Allah! who are the isolated? He replied: "Those who celebrate... and who come lightly on the Day of Judgement." The number of the *Afrâd* is neither known nor determined. They arrive at initiation (and operate through it) in a particular way (i.e. each of them has a special formula for initiation). They do not (therefore) fall under the gaze or surveillance of the "Spiritual Apogee" of the time¹³, but remain hidden in the *maqâm* called "the Cell".

The "Spiritual Apogee" does not know them and cannot see or judge their situation. *Kidr* - may divine peace be upon him - is their master. This is why this prophet said to Moses - may divine peace be upon him -: "I possess a knowledge which comes from that of Allah and which you cannot have. Now, Moses was the "Apogee" of his time¹⁴. (The tradition we have just quoted shows that) the "Apogees" had absolutely no knowledge of the conditions, circumstances or ecstatic or other states of the "Solitaries".

The words of men in this category concern invocations, their gradations, nuances, etc.; the particular virtues of each of the divine names; the number of those who really invoke in humanity. There are those who invoke by

(*) [Published in January 1912].

(13) This is how I venture to translate the term *Qutb*, plural *Aqtâb*, although this word is usually translated as "Pole". I compare it to the Chinese "Shang", which means: (a) Mountain, (b) Pole, (c) Spiritual Master. Other comparisons can be made with the Sanskrit term *Meru*.

¹⁴ *Kidr* is a character as mysterious as he is important in Muslim esotericism. He often plays the same role with the greatest saints as Gabriel did with the Prophet of Allah. He is the Ocean of esoteric science. He is depicted as the dispenser of the waters of life and immortality, and his name is linked to the universal and important symbol of the fish. His legend is found in the Qur'an, ch. XVIII, vv. 64 to 82.

"language", by "the animal soul", by "the heart", by "the intelligence"¹⁵, by "They are "the occult" ¹⁶. There are also those "who are the very substance of the One they invoke". They say

"I have called upon Thee; yet I have not seen Thee absent from me. - You are not (either) one of those whose invocation is other than the intimate nature (of the invoker). - For Thou art the invocation of those who invoke, their very substance, - When these men strip themselves of their own attributes¹⁷."

They distinguish three aspects of invocation: the beginning, the middle and the end. The beginning is characterized by taking the direction with sincerity. The second period is characterised by a light that exposes the way. The third and final period is characterised by a superior mental state that makes everything penetrate. The invocation also has a root, a branch, a condition, a "carpet" or network of development, and a special virtue. Its root is purity. Its branch is fidelity. Its condition is "Presence"¹⁸. Its "carpet" is beneficent and pious work. His special virtue is the "obvious opening", a kind of conquest of Heaven.

The aim of Cufism, according to them, is purity of morals and verification of what is revealed from above. It is said that purity of thought depends on the permanence of invocations.

Their activity is based on ten pillars: perseverance, hope, gratitude, modesty, sincerity, right preference, good character, humility, courage and the ability to always be ready to act immediately and unreservedly when ordered to do so.

The names of Allah to which they prefer to be attached are: "The Grateful", "The Glorified", "The Independent", "The Light".

When we are in this *maqâm* strengthened by one of these names, we become familiar with "Him whom we invoke", and we miss everything that is not Him, preferring above all travel or solitude, or seeking uninhabited places, such as deserts, etc.

IV

The fourth category is that of the *Sâ'ihûn* or "Travellers", who prefer the "Divine Truth" to everything else,... and exhort each other to the "Divine Truth".

¹⁵I translate *El-Aqlu* as "intelligence" because of the etymology. AQL means to bind together. "Intelligence" comes from *inter+legere*. However, "Reason" would be a less inaccurate term. As a psychic faculty, *El-Aqlu* is to some extent the conscience of man, and to some extent the synthesising faculty. In cosmological terms, *El-Aqlu* is the first thing that Allah created. Therefore, everything created after him is the "scibile". Everything before him is eternal. There are usually two psychic faculties before him: "the occult" and "the occult of the occult".

¹⁶*Es-Sirr*: see *La Gnose*, 2^eyear, no. 2, p. 65 [*Pages dedicated to the Sun*].

¹⁷Here we touch upon the very arcana of practical Dervichism, i.e. the absolute identity between the invocation, the invoker and the invoked. The metaphysical counterpart consists of the absolute identity between the name, the namer and the Named. - *Fanâ'us-çifati* (= the stripping away of attributes) is, at present, the abandonment of any kind of sentimentalism, which we have often spoken of in this Review. *Fanâ'ul-afâl* (= the stripping of actions) is the renunciation of rewards. We could say that it is the abandonment of the fetishism of gestures.

¹⁸*El-Hudûr*, actual presence or presentation, attention or the result of a kind of attention.

and "courageous perseverance"¹⁹. They are called *Abdâl* (singular *Badal* = vicar, substitute) and "masters of perfection". There are seven of them, all men. They transmute their worlds; their persons are purified of the dross inherent in the human condition. They travel around the world with the external aim of meeting people (of Allah), a quest that is the nature of good people. The inner benefit of their travels consists in the acquisition of superior *maqâmât* and states of inspiration from the generous source (of all knowledge), this by (the grace of He who is) Majesty and Perfection.

El-Kalwah, i.e. solitude, even voluntary claustration, has, according to them, two aims: your own tranquillity on the part of people; the tranquillity of people on your part; seeking understanding; seeking knowledge; seeking to obtain as a heavenly favour the infused virtues and inspired sciences (which cannot be acquired by any study, but) which are granted to the elect by pure grace and which are found only near the throne of Allah; being favoured by the identification of names, by realisation, by the "existence of the circle"; the loss of all knowledge from outside; realising oneself in the spirits; the breath of mysteries. Solitude" comprises gradations and hierarchies, one higher than the other, so that it is impossible to accomplish one without having gone through the degrees below it on which it depends.

The people in this category are tolerant, kind-hearted and charitable towards believers.

Their words relate to these four practices: "hunger"²⁰, "watchfulness", the "silence" and "solitude". Hunger" is of two kinds: the hunger of the pious, whose aim is the perfection of spiritual progress, and the hunger of the approached (*moqarrabûn*), whose aim is to increase adamism. There are also two kinds of "wakefulness": external, which consists of the absence of sleep, and internal, which is the absence of all negligence (a kind of self-control). Silence" can be either of the tongue, i.e. not uttering a word, or of the heart, i.e. paying attention only to Allah. There are also two types of "solitude": external, which consists of being out of sight, and internal, which consists of separating oneself from things. These four "arkanes"²¹ lead to the four "heritages". Through "hunger", we learn to know Satan. Through "vigil", we get to know our "proprium". Through "silence", we learn to know the Lord. It is said: to him whose heart and tongue are silent appears his Lord. This is the "occult" (*sirr-ho*), and his Lord reveals himself to him. The inheritance that results from "Solitude" is knowledge of the world.

(*Their activity:*) Their "stations" (*maqâmât*) are ten: surveillance, self-observation, immunity, sincerity, correction, service, the

¹⁹Qorân, ch. CIII, v. 3 (trans. Kazimirski).

²⁰*El-jaw'u* is the gradual deprivation of all food. *Es-çawm* is the restriction of food: nothing is eaten during the day; it is ritual fasting, whereas the first is pure asceticism.

²¹*Rukn*, plural *Arkân*, word for word: corner, then fundamental principle. European languages have adopted the Arabic word with the nuance we know.

trust in Allah, participation in heavenly influences, security and self-surrender (to Allah).

(*The names of Allah* to which they are attached:) Their invocations are based on the name "Allah" and what is added to it in fact other divine names, for example: "There is no god but Allah, the Greatest, the Gentle", "There is no god but Allah, the King, the True, the Obvious", etc..

They discuss the Adâb, i.e. the hieratic conventions of the

In the course of the fast, the monks were given a "revelatory vision" about the conditions of "solitude" or voluntary confinement, the most suitable place in which it should take place, the most suitable food to eat during this exercise, the gradual increase in "hunger", until they were able to go forty days and nights without taking any food. There are many such fasts in hagiography, as well as miracles that followed.

The aim of Cufism, according to them, is *Et-takallî* and *Et-tadjallî*, that is to say the "They say that Çufism, or initiation, is the verification of the "arkanes" or immutable laws with the aim of achieving human perfection or universality. They say that Cufism, i.e. initiation, is the verification of the "arkanes" or immutable laws with the aim of attaining human perfection or universality. They say that initiation is the perfect "preparation", obtained through "silence", "vigil", "hunger" and "solitude". They say:

"O you who aspire to the place of the *Abdâl*... without your desire being accompanied by works, - Do not aspire so high, you are not worthy... if you do not compete with them in ecstatic states. - The house of sanctity, its corners are fixed... The *Abdâls* among our masters are in it - Constantly between silence and solitude,... hunger and watch that torment the zealous."

Know that the *Badal* prepares when it practices silence, strengthens when it adorns itself (with knowledge), and reigns supreme in the "manifestation".

"Then we created him a second time...". When he has "realised" by dint of his travels, his salvation and happiness appear before him. He grows in love, study and words of wisdom during most of his ecstatic states. This happens especially after the practice of silence. The Prophet of Allah said: "When you see a man who devotes himself to the ascetic austerities while speaking little, approach him: he will dictate wisdom to you." Silence is judgmental. It is said that those who practise it erase their egoism and annihilate their quiddity, because of the greatness of "manifestation". He sinks and humbles himself. "When Allah manifests Himself to someone, He humbles Himself before him."

V

The fifth category is that of the *Râkiûn*, i.e. "those who bow down", those who humble themselves before the dominical Grandeur, who impose upon themselves the hieraticism of worship, who are free from any claim to any reward in this world or the next. These are the *Malâmâtiyah*²²; they

²²See *La Gnose*, 2^e année, n° 3, pp. 100 et seq. [*El-Malâmâtiyah*].

are the "trusted men of Allah", and they constitute the highest group. Their number is not limited, but they are placed under the direction of the "Spiritual Apogee" (*Qutb*).

(*Their activity:*) Their rule obliges them not to show their merits and not to hide their faults. Nevertheless, they act openly and they evolve in all the fields of "spiritual virility" (*Er-radjûliyah*). They have ten "stations" (*maqâmât*) to which they return and from which they depart; these are: the charity of Knowledge, wisdom, foresight, the art of judging the "intimate nature" of people and things according to external signs, glorification, inspiration, the "Great Peace"²³, security and elevation of the spirit²⁴.

The names of Allah to which they are attached are: "He who lowers", "He who raises", "He who makes glorious", "He who humiliates", etc.

They talk about controlling one's actions (by purifying one's intentions), refining one's piety, restraining one's passions, not making any claims on Allah, obeying the Prophetic Tradition, voluntary poverty, indulgence towards others, disciplining one's speech, not only by silence, but also by the obligation to speak according to Allah's permission, the Sharaite light, and so on.

They also talk about the different "inner warnings" (*El-Kawathir*), the Sunday, the angelic, the intellectual, the animic and the diabolic, as well as the differences between the Sunday warning, that of Allah, and that of the Merciful. They say that the first comes from "Majesty" (*Jalâl*); that of the Merciful comes from "Beauty" (*Jamâl*), and that of Allah comes from "Perfection" (*Kamâl*)⁽²⁵⁾. The first warning is always true, according to their Tradition. In the

In the "disciple" (*El-Murid*), it manifests itself as the exact interpretation of external signs; in the "traveller" (*Es-Sâlik*), as "intuition" (*mokâshafah*); and in the "initiate" (*El-Arif*), as "contemplation" (*moshâhadah*). The warning that comes from "Majesty" erases and annihilates; that which comes from "Beauty" affirms and strengthens; that which comes from "Perfection" improves and leads to the right path. We prepare for "Majesty" through "Constancy" (*Es-Çabr*), for "Beauty" through "Perfection".

"Beauty" through "Gratitude" (*Es-Shukr*), and "Perfection" through "Great Peace" (*Es-Sakînah*).

The aim of Cufism, according to them, is the restraint of passions, the absence of pretensions, attachment to the names and attributes of Allah, and incarnation with them. They say that Cufism is humility, poverty, the "Great Peace" and contrition. They say that "the face of the Çufi is downcast (word for word: black) in this world and in the next", indicating that ostentation falls with pretension, and that sincerity of worship is manifested in contrition, for it is said: "I am with those whose hearts are broken for My sake."

(*To be continued.*)

²³*Es-Sakînah*: linguistically, this is Hebrew שכנה.

²⁴The name of the tenth "station" has been omitted by the copyist of my manuscript.

²⁵On these three terms, see above, 2nd year, no. 12, p. 324 (note on previous page). [Note 1.]

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