

LA FUENTE DEL AMOR SECRETO

Cese en su aflicción y se regocije
aquel que conozca las penas de mi corazón,
pues mi sufrimiento ha llegado a su fin.
Ya no hay sitio en mi corazón para la tristeza:
He alcanzado la Unión que era mi objetivo.
Alabo al Señor del Cielo, me prosterno hacia la qibla
y digo: ¡Hoy he sido aceptado!
Estaba sepultado en el sueño de la distracción,
pero he aquí que he despertado a la Alegría.
Quién temerá las palabras del envidioso o del espía?

THE SOURCE OF THE SECRET LOVE

Leave your sorrow and rejoice
Anyone who knows the pains of my heart,
because my suffering has ended.
There is no place for sorrow in my heart:
I have reached the Union which was my goal.
I praise the Lord of Heaven, prostrating myself towards the qibla
and I say: Today I've been accepted!
I was buried in the dream of distraction,
but behold, I have awakened to Joy.
Who fear the words of envious or spy?

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MUHYĪ AL-DĪN IBN AL-‘ARABĪ

*"A pearl for which Thought dives
and remains unceasingly in the deeps of that ocean"*

Ibn al-‘Arabī, in full Muḥyī al-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-‘Arabī al-Ḥātimī al-Ṭā’ī Ibn al-‘Arabī, also called Al-Sheikh al-Akbar (born July 28, 1165, Murcia, Valencia — died November 16, 1240, Damascus), celebrated Muslim mystic-philosopher who gave the esoteric, mystical dimension of Islamic thought its first full-fledged philosophic expression. His major works are the monumental *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah* ("The Meccan Revelations") and *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (1229; "The Bezels of Wisdom").

Ibn al-‘Arabī was born in the southeast of Spain, a man of pure Arab blood whose ancestry went back to the prominent Arabian tribe of Ṭā’ī. It was in Sevilla (Seville), then an outstanding centre of Islamic culture and learning, that he received his early education. He stayed there for 30 years, studying traditional Islamic sciences;

he studied with a number of mystic masters who found in him a young man of marked spiritual inclination and unusually keen intelligence. During those years he traveled a great deal and visited various cities of Spain and North Africa in search of masters of the Sufi (mystical) Path who had achieved great spiritual progress and thus renown.

It was during one of these trips that Ibn al-‘Arabī had a dramatic encounter with the great Aristotelian philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averroës; 1126–98) in the city of Córdoba. Averroës, a close friend of the boy’s father, had asked that the interview be arranged because he had heard of the extraordinary nature of the young, still beardless lad. After the early exchange of only a few words, it is said, the mystical depth of the boy so overwhelmed the old philosopher that he became pale and, dumbfounded, began trembling. In the light of the subsequent course of Islamic philosophy the event is seen as symbolic; even more symbolic is the sequel of the episode, which has it that, when Averroës died, his remains were returned to Córdoba; the coffin that contained his remains was loaded on one side of a beast of burden, while the books written by him were placed on the other side in order to counterbalance it. It was a good theme of meditation and recollection for the young Ibn al-‘Arabī, who said: “On one side the Master, on the other his books! Ah, how I wish I knew whether his hopes had been fulfilled!”

In 1198, while in Murcia, Ibn al-‘Arabī had a vision in which he felt he had been ordered to leave Spain and set out for the East. Thus began his pilgrimage to the Orient, from which he never was to return to his homeland.

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