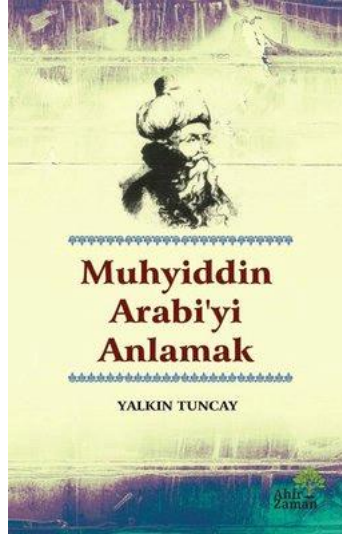


# UNDERSTANDING MUHYIDDIN ARABI

## YALKIN TUNCAY



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"There is no path to closeness except through servitude to Allah."

(Muhyiddin Arabi)

## INTRODUCTION

Since the early years of my acquaintance with Sufism, the perspective of Muhyiddin Arabi on religion and truth has always deeply inspired me. When I began reading his works, I struggled to fully grasp the meaning of those divine sparks I felt in my heart. Despite not being able to intellectually comprehend it all, I prayed to my Lord, asking Him to flow these fountains of knowledge and wisdom into my heart. As a result of this prayer, for over 40 years, I have continuously felt the guidance of Arabi, following the path of our Prophet. Even back then, seeing the worldwide influence of Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi and observing the institutes established in his name filled me with even greater joy. At every stage of my Sufi journey, his spirituality and works continued to be a source of inspiration for me. Indeed, his enlightenment was always present in all my efforts.

I noticed that Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi was often misunderstood or not understood at all within society. Moreover, it saddened me to see that even some individuals from the Sufi community fell short in this regard. This inspired me to delve into the wisdom behind this situation. After discovering Ibn Arabi's own statement in his works, which suggested that his teachings could only be truly understood by those who approached them with heartfelt connection, my heart was reassured. I then prayed to establish this closeness to his spirit. With my prayers and his guidance, I began writing this work. Undoubtedly, success and achievement are solely from Allah. By Allah's will, I was able to complete this work in seven chapters in a very short time.

With this humble work, I hope and pray it serves as a starting point, even if only a modest one, for all those who wish to read Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi but are uncertain of where to begin, and especially for those who genuinely and without prejudice strive to understand him.

Yalkın Tuncay, Ankara, 2022

*"The true reader of the Quran is the one who reads it from the heart."*

(Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi)

## CHAPTER I

Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi, who lived between 1165 and 1240, was a renowned Islamic philosopher, mystic, writer, and poet. His full name was Muhyiddin Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Muhammad al-Arabi al-Hatimi al-Tai. Those who appreciated his views acknowledged his authority in Sufism by calling him "Shaykh al-Akbar" (The Greatest Master) and his role as a renewer of religious sciences by bestowing upon him the title "Muhyiddin" (Reviver of Religion).

In all his works, Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi placed ma'rifatullah (knowledge of God) at the center of the circle of sciences. From this focal point, he provided explanations for various aspects of the sciences of truth (ilm al-haqa'iq). His extensive body of work spans a broad range of fields, including Sufism, Quranic exegesis, Hadith, Islamic jurisprudence, history, and ilm al-hawas (science of esoteric knowledge), all with ma'rifatullah as the primary foundation.

Born in Murcia, Andalusia, he moved with his family to Seville at the age of eight. Among his relatives were individuals with knowledge of Sufism. His family belonged to the Arab Tayy tribe, hence he and his ancestors were known as "Arabi" (Arab). After spending some time in Andalusia, he traveled to Damascus, Baghdad, and Mecca, meeting renowned scholars and spiritual leaders of these regions. His father mentioned his exceptional qualities to the philosopher Ibn Rushd, who wanted to meet him. While Ibn Rushd argued that true knowledge could be acquired through reason, Ibn Arabi believed that true knowledge did not solely arise from reason but was accessible primarily through the path of Sufism. Thereafter, he dedicated his life to the spiritual path of Sufism.

Historically, the region where Ibn Arabi's influence has been most notable is Anatolia. During his travels in Anatolia, he visited cities like Konya, Kayseri, Malatya, Sivas, and Aksaray, where he engaged with scholars and trained students. Among them, the most famous was Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi, who later explained and transmitted Ibn Arabi's teachings to future generations through his interpretations and explanations. Al-Qunawi, who was also Ibn Arabi's stepson due to his marriage to Al-Qunawi's mother, holds a prominent place in history as the first person to systematically articulate the doctrine of wahdat al-wujud (Unity of Being).

According to the extensive research of Osman Yahya, the total number of works attributed to Ibn Arabi is estimated to be around 550. Based on various studies and reliable lists, about 245 of his works have survived to the present day. He wrote the most comprehensive of these, the Futuhat al-Makkiyya (Meccan Revelations), by hand twice, with very few differences between the two versions. In this monumental work, which spans over 15,000 pages, he discusses the exoteric and esoteric truths of Islam from different perspectives. The Futuhat al-Makkiyya synthesizes his teachings, which he summarizes in his widely known and studied book Fusus al-Hikam (Bezels of Wisdom). Through divine grace, he reached a synthesis of Islamic law, theology, philosophy, Sufism, cosmology, psychology, and other sciences. His countless students spread his teachings throughout the Islamic world.

In the Western world, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, scholars like Titus Burckhardt, Henry Corbin, and Toshihiko Izutsu recognized the importance of Ibn Arabi's contributions beyond his role in the Islamic intellectual tradition, highlighting his relevance in the history of human thought. Interest in Ibn Arabi has continued to grow in recent times, with various studies exploring different aspects of his personality and teachings.

*"My God, my aim is You, and Your pleasure is my desire."*

(Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi)

## CHAPTER II

While it's generally believed that the works of Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi are challenging to understand, some people approach his writings cautiously. In fact, certain groups have voiced opinions suggesting that reading his works might not be appropriate, and they've critiqued his views. The

central theme of this book, therefore, is a response to these criticisms. By illustrating his methodology and approaches, it aims to foster a closer connection with Ibn Arabi and offer readers an intimate understanding of his insights through example texts.

First and foremost, it should be known that every saint, particularly those who've attained a certain level of spiritual insight, expresses truths based on their personal rank and knowledge. In this respect, the ranks of the saints differ, as each represents varying degrees of understanding. A careful examination of the works of these saints reveals that each one interprets subjects from the perspective of their own level, expressing truths as they comprehend them. When viewed this way, we see that Ibn Arabi and those who follow his path explain concepts such as the Unity of Being (Wahdat al-Wujud) or Divine Oneness from the highest perspective of truth. His works reveal a single truth presented from different levels, allowing any reader, regardless of their level of understanding, to gain some insight or draw personal meaning. This approach underscores the brilliance of Ibn Arabi's methodology.

Throughout history and even today, Ibn Arabi has faced substantial criticism. Some believe that reading his works could lead to confusion, misunderstandings, and even faith-related issues. This criticism stems primarily from a lack of understanding of Ibn Arabi's perspective and his nuanced way of presenting truths across various levels of insight. If someone were to read all of his works and establish a heartfelt connection with him, they would undoubtedly grasp the truths embedded in his writings in the most beautiful way. Those who critique him often do so because they have failed to comprehend his holistic approach. Select passages from his works are sometimes taken out of context, leading critics to allege contradictions with religious law (Sharia). However, a thorough reading of his complete works would make it clear that there is no opposition to Sharia, and claiming otherwise is untenable.

Understanding the style and intent behind Ibn Arabi's exposition of truths is essential. He addresses subjects from varying levels and provides readers with comprehensive details, unveiling the mysteries one by one. These mysteries, however, are grasped by those with the intellectual and spiritual capacity to understand them. His method involves constantly reminding the reader of their servitude to Allah. His central message, often reiterated, is: "The servant is a servant, and the Lord is the Lord." He firmly reminds us that these two realms—the Creator and the created—never merge.

Allah created humans with unique abilities and capacities, and no two beings are alike, in line with the boundless nature of Allah's knowledge. Consequently, people's understanding levels differ naturally, as do their ranks in knowledge. Not everyone is expected to grasp the highest levels of truth, nor is this even possible. It's important to appreciate Ibn Arabi's explanations and approach

with this in mind.

This idea can be illustrated by a comparison. Consider life as a school where education is provided at levels suitable to each person's age and understanding. In the same way, Ibn Arabi's explanations resemble an advanced university curriculum. Just as someone who hasn't completed primary or secondary education can't comprehend university-level studies, anyone who hasn't internalized Sharia cannot properly understand Ibn Arabi. Those who lack a solid grounding in Sharia and devotion to Allah's commands risk falling into confusion when they read his works directly, as their foundation is not secure.

Ibn Arabi himself says, "He who has no Sharia has no reality." In other words, someone who does not know or live by Sharia cannot claim to understand or live by the truth. Claiming otherwise, he says, is deceitful. Truth cannot be lived without Sharia. For a person's journey to knowing Allah, their first objective should be to learn how to worship Allah within the framework of Sharia, fulfilling its commands and understanding Islamic knowledge and jurisprudence. After mastering these essentials, they can proceed to other stages, traversing through paths of *tariqa* (spiritual path), *haqqiqah* (truth), and *ma'rifah* (gnosis), all while maintaining adherence to Sharia.

*"Those who worship the material life are like those who drink seawater; the more they drink, the thirstier they become."*

(Muhyiddin Arabi)

### SECTION III

Muhyiddin Arabi guides those who follow his path and methods toward reaching spiritual heights in the shortest possible time. However, certain important considerations must be observed along this journey. This can be best explained through an example. When mountaineers set out to reach a peak, they equip themselves with all the necessary gear for the journey. On the way to the summit, they encounter various dangers. Therefore, an aspiring climber must carry all the essential equipment flawlessly. This includes ropes, spikes, hammers, shoes, clothing, and other gear. Any lack of equipment may result in numerous difficulties during the climb, and there's a high probability of slipping and falling downwards. Such a fall could lead to serious injury or worse. Therefore, those who walk the path of Muhyiddin Arabi must embark on their journey with the

necessary preparedness. Here, the “equipment” signifies the complete and thorough adherence to the principles and commands of the Shariah. To claim a deep spiritual understanding without living in accordance with Shariah or applying its rules in one’s life is akin to a mountaineer attempting to reach the summit without proper gear.

Muhyiddin Arabi’s works are read and interpreted by different groups, some offering insightful interpretations while others deviate far from the truth. Such people resemble climbers who, as previously mentioned, attempt to reach the summit without the necessary equipment. In fact, it can be said that many of these interpretations are self-centered. These explanations are based on personal desires rather than divine insight. In such cases, there is no room for true spiritual understanding, only self-serving interpretations. Those who are not grounded in the principles of Shariah and lack true knowledge in this path often misinterpret his teachings. Thus, those who undertake this path must exercise caution and seek knowledge from qualified individuals. It is also essential to acknowledge that there will always be more advanced interpretations and scholars, as Allah mentions in the Quran, “Above every knower, there is one who knows more.” No one can claim absolute knowledge without recognizing the possibility of a higher understanding. For this reason, some people may possess unique abilities granted by Allah to grasp deeper truths in Muhyiddin Arabi’s works, due to their elevated disposition and inherent spiritual capacities.

When examining the criticisms directed at Muhyiddin Arabi, we often find that the critics lack significant knowledge or maturity in spiritual truths. We see especially that some groups perceive Shariah and spiritual truth as distinct, even contradictory concepts. However, these two concepts should be seen as complementary, much like the shell and core of a walnut. Shariah is the outer shell, and spiritual truth is the essence within. Shariah opens the door to spiritual truth. Unfortunately, those who remain fixated on the outward practices of Shariah often fail to recognize the truth within and may even view spiritual truth as independent of Shariah, thus becoming hostile toward it. Such individuals tend to harbor prejudices against what they do not know and adopt a dismissive stance. With their entrenched mindsets, they may choose to ignore knowledge outside their current understanding. As a result, they reject the truths expressed by Muhyiddin Arabi, ensnaring themselves in a cocoon of preconceptions and biases. In other words, they shape their beliefs within a restrictive framework, constructing walls around their understanding. This attitude is especially prevalent among older individuals or those who resist changing their ingrained perspectives.

The effort to understand Muhyiddin Arabi is more prevalent among younger people, who have yet to develop rigid beliefs and can view matters from a broader perspective. Younger individuals demonstrate a greater inclination toward understanding the Sheikh because they have not confined their beliefs to a narrow framework. Being open to new insights, they seek to comprehend the truths they hear and make connections. Such individuals advance more quickly, whereas those who

block themselves with fixed beliefs, unfortunately, cannot progress. Both situations must be considered in light of individual capacities and predispositions.

Some scholars and respected religious figures have criticized the Sheikh out of a desire to protect religious principles and Shariah. They have warned the Muslim community against adopting beliefs that might disrupt faith, advising people to refrain from reading his works unless they are well-prepared, as it may shake their beliefs and lead to mistakes. Certain religious scholars, tasked with safeguarding Islamic doctrine due to their spiritual duty, may thus advise that only those capable of deep understanding should engage with the Sheikh's teachings. Muhyiddin Arabi, with his profound vision, teaches us to recognize the perspectives of each individual, explaining from which angle they approach a topic. He emphasizes that judgments may vary according to one's viewpoint, knowledge level, and perspective. In his work *Futuh al-Makkiyya*, he frequently reminds us that judgments change based on circumstances, knowledge, and perspective.

Ultimately, Muhyiddin Arabi ties these various perspectives together, viewing matters from a comprehensive standpoint and remarking, "From our perspective, what should be here is as follows; the judgment is as follows." He refrains from claiming absolute finality in his statements, instead saying, "This is how it appears to us." Through this, we recognize the high level of wisdom he possesses.

An example hadith given on this subject is interesting. According to the hadith, "When the people of Paradise enter Paradise, Allah will unveil the veil of His Majesty and Grandeur and will manifest Himself to them, saying, 'Am I not your Lord?' They will reply, 'No, You are not our Lord,' and very few will prostrate, while the others will not. When Allah manifests again, lifting the veil of His Majesty and Grandeur, He will ask them, 'Am I not your Lord?' Again they will say, 'No.' Only a small group will say, 'Yes, You are our Lord,' and will prostrate. For the third time, very few will prostrate. When Allah will ask those who do not prostrate, 'O My servants! Is there a sign between you and your Lord?' they will say, 'Yes.' Then Allah will manifest to each of the people of Paradise in the form of their silhouetted Lord, and they will all prostrate, saying, 'Yes, You are our Lord.'"

It is clear that He will manifest according to everyone's belief and assumption. Ultimately, they accept it as it corresponds to their assumptions. However, among that group, the chosen ones, like Muhyiddin Arabi, who are enlightened, will know that He is always their Lord in every manifestation. The enlightened will accept all manifestations and will affirm, "Yes, You are our Lord." But since most people are unaware of this, they will object. The Sheikh expresses that this is indeed how it is concerning belief. He uses the expression, "The enlightened do not confine their belief to any framework." That is, they do not imprison their belief in a specific mold. Because they do not confine it, they can see from every perspective and understand how it is viewed. Therefore, he accepts how they believe according to their understanding. Consequently, everyone's belief in Allah is different; everyone believes in Allah according to their assumptions. They worship



according to what they call Allah based on their assumptions. Muhyiddin Arabi explains this in detail. Because he sees all this, the enlightened person knows that everyone worships the Allah of their assumptions. Here, he invites people to worship the Allah referred to by the name of Allah, in the true sense of monotheism, instead of worshipping the deity they have named based on their assumptions. Similarly, among the enlightened, those who respond to this invitation can grasp these truths to the extent of their capacity and clarity.

"I am as My servant thinks of Me." (Qudsi Hadith)

"Every servant has a state, and every state has a place. The servant speaks of his Lord according to the state he believes in. According to the level of that state, the Truth manifests to the servant." (Muhyiddin Arabi, *Fütûhât-ı Mekkiyye*, vol. 17, p. 31)

"The enlightened is not limited by any belief." (Muhyiddin Arabi)

Every person acts according to their capacity and the composition of divine names. For this reason, they can evaluate their beliefs and understandings based on their accumulated knowledge. In this way, they recognize and know Allah. This knowledge is different for each individual. Moreover, another reason for this difference is that Allah manifests differently to each servant. Allah does not perform the same manifestation for one servant as He does for another. This stems from divine vastness, from His infinity and boundlessness. For this reason, the servant experiences states throughout their daily life, as they are constantly under the influence and encompassing of a divine name. Depending on which name's manifestation they have experienced, at that moment, they hold a belief about Allah based on the influence of that name and their inherent belief in Allah. The statement "I am as My servant thinks of Me" points to this truth. If a person's knowledge is limited and they do not have much knowledge about the truths, they may see only their assumption as correct and consider others' assumptions as incorrect and unacceptable. However, the enlightened person—who possesses extensive knowledge about all beliefs—knows that everyone's assumption is correct in its own way, and that it should be this way. They also know and accept all assumptions that surpass the common people's assumptions.

Allah cannot be confined by any specific belief. He can take on the form of any belief. Because He cannot be compared to any belief. The Sheikh says, "He is far above being confined or being reduced from one form to another." Allah manifests in every belief; however, no belief, conviction, or opinion can confine, limit, or fit Him into certain molds. Consequently, the enlightened, who reach perfection in their knowledge of Allah's manifestations in the universe and in their own selves, comprehend the validity of all beliefs. In summary, with their presence in the state of Being Beyond States, they fulfill the rights of every state and belief because each corresponds to one of Allah's infinite manifestations. What must be is as it should be; therefore, every belief is determined by the level of the believer's capacity.

Since Allah's mercy encompasses everything, He accepts all beliefs. The deity each believer turns to ultimately leads to their happiness, even if their belief requires being concealed from Allah. Every believer has confined their Lord to their own intellect and imagination, thus limiting their Lord. Even in this case, the Truth forgives everyone in this matter.

When the Truth wants someone to reach the reality, He first grants them knowledge, bestows upon them the vastness of His knowledge, and thus, this is witnessed in every believer's belief. The Truth cannot be distant from a believer's belief because this belief connects them to the Truth. A person with this knowledge will always see and acknowledge the Truth in every manifestation. Upon reaching the state of Being Beyond States, the perfected beings recognize that all beliefs are true and that each belief leads a person to Allah. They free themselves from any bond and thus fully understand what each divine name expresses. They know what each name requires in the universe and in humans because they find that name within themselves.

Those who have achieved realization have been given a comprehensive understanding and perspective that encompasses all views. In every case, they know where the view, belief, or sect originates from and attribute it to its source. For this reason, they do not see faults in anyone. "For we did not create the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in vain." (Sad 27) "Allah has not created mankind in vain." (Surah Al-Mu'minun 115) They support this with the hadith, "He created mankind in His own image." The perfected beings do not deny any of Allah's manifestations in the Hereafter due to their understanding of the validity and legitimacy of every belief.

The perfected human resembles the entire universe. Conversely, imperfect individuals only embrace a limited part of the possibility of existence, thus recognizing Allah only when He reveals Himself according to their limitations on the Day of Resurrection. The reason some may deny Him when He reveals Himself on the Day of Judgment is precisely this. However, the perfected human does not deny Him. Not every person can reach this perfection. When Allah reveals Himself in a form that they can recognize, they acknowledge Him.

In the view of the perfected beings, the truth that all beliefs are true, and that all beings exist by the decree of creation, is based on their seeing with the eyes of their hearts. However, this does not contradict the reality that "Everyone is invited to follow the command that leads to happiness." For this reason, Muhyiddin Arabi says, "It is your duty to worship Allah according to what the Sharia and Sunnah bring."

Ultimately, the perfected beings accept the truth of every belief and follow the path of the giver of blessings, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Their deeds are based on the practices of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which encompass the paths of all prophets.

*"Choose the pure and correct path established by the Prophet, for this path is the highest, the most superior, and the most beneficial."*

(Muhyiddin Arabi)

## CHAPTER IV

Many books have been written by the chosen ones among the people of God regarding the high status of Muhyiddin Arabi and his being a very exalted saint. Unfortunately, since most people do not understand or comprehend the truths he grasped, they fled from those truths in fear. This topic has also been expressed by Sadreddin Konevi and Ismail Hakki Bursevi in their works.

To avoid unjust criticism, it is essential to read all of his works and establish a connection with him. While reading his works, one should evaluate them with an objective eye, without seeking to find faults or shortcomings. It is necessary to approach the subjects and narratives with fairness and justice. By trying to understand how the truths are articulated, one can establish a connection and familiarity with the Sheikh's works and himself. Muhyiddin Arabi says, "Those who are close to us understand us." Here, the closeness refers to the proximity of the heart, knowledge, and understanding. When this closeness is established, one can make progress in understanding.

Some of the people of God have stated that they established a direct spiritual connection (the relationship the human mind has with the active intellect, the last of the cosmic intellects) with him and that they could understand him in this way. An example of this is Abdullah Salah Uşşakî. When Salahî Uşşakî read the Sheikh's work "Mevâkı'u'n-nücûm" (The Position of the Stars), he found it filled with strange phrases, peculiar signs, symbols, and enigmas, and concluded that understanding these through reason and analogy was impossible. He sought help from the Sheikh himself, and as a result, he reached a particle of his light and a drop of his familiarity, becoming enlightened by his light and gaining insight into his secrets. He later stated that the book appeared to him very succinctly and clearly, to the point where he was able to write a commentary on it.

Another commonly misunderstood statement in society is that the Sheikh said not to read his own books. However, such a statement does not exist in his works. As mentioned above, the expression “Those who are close to us understand us” is present. While he used this expression, there is no declaration of “Do not read our books.” If he wanted them not to be read, it would be illogical for him to write these works. In fact, he states, “I saw the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in my dream. He had a book in his hand. He gave it to me. ‘Take this book and write it so that my community may benefit,’ he said. I wrote exactly what I received, neither adding a letter of my own nor omitting a letter from the book.” Therefore, it would be illogical to prohibit the reading of a book that was instructed to be written. On the other hand, the group that will benefit from this work should be understood as a specific group. It is not expected that every group will understand in the same way. In other words, it would be a mistake to expect the entire community to benefit from this knowledge at the same level. As we have tried to express in previous writings, different temperaments, understandings, levels of knowledge, and capacities vary among individuals. Therefore, it is natural for differences in understanding to arise.

On the other hand, those who read the Sheikh’s works may not derive the same meaning. There is a meaning corresponding to everyone’s level. The Sheikh explains topics in such a broad sense and articulates truths that he addresses every level of understanding. He explains topics step by step, starting from elementary school level to master’s level, tackling the subject from different angles. Each reader has the opportunity to catch a meaning suitable for themselves. In other words, his style of expression is akin to the level of courses offered at university or master’s level.

If we want to understand Muhyiddin Arabi and learn the truths he conveyed, we must establish a certain level of foundational understanding. As we have likened before, if we have not yet passed and completed school levels, we need to listen to those who are knowledgeable about these works. In other words, if we read this work by our own effort, we may derive an incorrect meaning. We might fail to grasp the intended meaning or assign a different interpretation, potentially leading to error. Therefore, to avoid mistakes and harms, we must attend the gatherings of those who are knowledgeable and read their commentaries and explanations of the Sheikh’s works to develop our contemplation, understanding, and comprehension. Acting in this way is essential. Thus, we would have our feet firmly on the ground and set out on the journey correctly.

He emphasizes that he did not write his works as any other author would, and the information contained in these works is not merely a mental product but rather a “divine dictation.” He particularly stresses this in his “Fütühat.” He compares the experience of writing these truths to a birth pang, noting that when the “influxes from Allah” reached the heart and began to overwhelm him, he recorded what he could before being unable to endure it any longer, whether through the direct unveiling of the truth or by the command of Allah. He even states that due to this, there might

be instances of irregularities in his books, but he points out that these are not due to his own will. The Sheikh, who has works comprising several volumes, has the very special situation of having written all his texts as they came to him without the habit of drafts.

Muhyiddin Arabi claims that he did not convey the words and opinions of others or from books. He asserts that he is not among those who repeat the words of others, follow another work or author, or convey the words and thoughts of philosophers or similar thinkers, emphasizing that his books contain solely what Allah has revealed to him through unveiling and dictation. He argues that the knowledge he possesses is purely based on the state of being annihilated in Allah, which is manifest in his heart when the “sultan of his knowledge” prevails over him. He also indicates that Allah has commanded him to teach this knowledge to His chosen servants, and for this reason, he praises Allah. He states that he previously had no intention to write these, but with the command to advise people, he felt a yearning and enthusiasm for this, which he could only do with Allah’s permission. However, he notes that he did not disclose all the knowledge he had, speaking only as much as the permission given to him allowed, as he mentions again in his work “Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye.” It is reported that he either wrote down the influxes that came to him very quickly or had them written down by those around him. Indeed, he himself states that he wrote his quite voluminous work “Mevâkı‘u’n-nücûm” in eleven days, “et Tedbîrâtü’l-ilâhiyye” in less than four days, “et Tenezzülâtü’l-Mevşiliyye” in a few days, “el-Celâl ve’l-cemâl” in one day, “Kitâbü’l-Hüve” one morning, and “el-Ğasemü’l-ilâhî” in one hour.

In his work “Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye,” he emphasizes the need to pay attention to the poetic fragments at the beginning of the chapters, as they point to the knowledge intended to be conveyed in that chapter. In this work, there are 1428 pieces of poetry attributed to him, with a total of 7102 couplets, which is several times more than the number of couplets in his divan. He states, “Whether our poems begin with a dialogue with the beloved, a eulogy, or are filled with names and attributes of women, rivers, lands, and stars, all are merely manifestations of divine knowledge under these forms,” indicating that these arts are merely tools.

Another point is specifically directed at those who wish to start reading the Sheikh’s works from “Fusus’ül Hikem.” “Fusus’ül Hikem” (The Essence of Wisdom) can be considered the Sheikh’s masterpiece. It contains metaphysical and theosophical content that differs from traditional Sufi works. In the text, 27 prophets mentioned in the Quran are addressed and examined as manifestations of various aspects of wisdom. The small-sized “Fusus’ül Hikem” has been extensively commented upon. The first Turkish commentary is by Abdullah Bosnevi (d. Konya, 1644), and the latest is by Ahmed Avni Konuk (d. 1938). Its content is dense and heavy. For this reason, it is advisable first to read and attempt to understand “Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye.” Reading “Fusus” without having read “Fütuhât” can lead to many difficulties, especially for those who do not have a Sufi background; we do not recommend reading “Fusus” directly. This is because

misunderstandings may arise, and understanding will also be challenging. Remaining veiled from the truths may lead to problems like incorrect interpretations. Unfortunately, many individuals today, after reading “Fusus,” tend to disregard the Sharia.

Claiming to have learned the truth, they reach the point of saying, “I have no business with prayer.” In fact, they view the prayer that our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) never abandoned as unnecessary, asserting that they are in a constant state of prayer. When these works are not read under the guidance of a mentor, one can easily lose their footing.

Dr. Abu'l-Ala Afifi, known for his research on the Sheikh, shares that initially he could not understand the Fusus. He states that after reading about 20 of its related books, he came to see the Futuhat as a key that unlocks the Fusus. He says: “When I started reading the Futuhat, the doors of the Fusus opened, and signs appeared that led to an understanding of Ibn Arabi’s style and intent. I realized that this Sufi uses two languages, addressing the reader with both at different times, and when he wishes to conceal his main purpose, he mixes these two languages together.” These languages refer to the expressions used in the clarification of external and internal meanings, in other words, the languages of Sharia and truth.

*“Without the life of the heart and its spiritual perceptions and feelings, one cannot transcend into the realm of infinite truths merely through intellect.”*

(Muhyiddin Arabi)

## CHAPTER V

As Muhyiddin Arabi addresses the reader, he descends and ascends through levels. One must remain alert and attentive to understand from which level he is speaking in each sentence. In one of his sentences, he addresses, “O awakener, take your intellect to heart, understand these matters,” while in another he says, “Truth will awaken you.” He even states, “Without awakening, your awakening is impossible.” It is essential to comprehend and appreciate this well. While advising us, he says, “Understand this place well and comprehend it... Listen carefully to that... reflect deeply on it...” For instance, from a lower level, he almost says, “Make an effort so that your understanding may open. May Allah assist you.” Then he transitions to another level and states, “In terms of the knowledge of Allah, Allah has already created you in the form of knowledge; your annihilation, that is, your non-existence is impossible, as something that exists cannot be annihilated.” This is a

separate level... Since the judgments and truths expressed at these two levels are explained from different levels, they may appear to contradict each other. In the transition between levels, each level's judgment is presented differently, and that judgment binds the person at that level. Ultimately, ignorance is dispelled by reaching this knowledge. When one passes to the level of annihilation, it is not considered the final station; beyond that exists eternity. Afterward, judgments from the perspective of eternity are explained. The decree that one is eternal with Allah is proclaimed at this level. This time, in this level, he says, "You exist, you will never cease to exist." From this viewpoint, one sees that in the context of eternity, one's existence is sustained and constant with Allah. This subject is significant in demonstrating the differences in judgments between levels.

On the other hand, due to the change in levels regarding the topics he addresses, at times, contradictory situations arise. These paradoxical statements are structural characteristics of this type of literature. For example, expressions such as "Knowledge also means ignorance," "Existence can be understood as non-existence," "Freedom is slavery," "True guidance means both bringing closer and distancing," "You are not He; perhaps you are Him," can only be understood within the context of his thought system.

Muhyiddin Arabi does not see the diversity of views as a source of disorder and crisis. On the contrary, he accepts it as one of the signs leading all created beings to ultimate peace, showing that Allah's mercy surpasses His wrath. He states in the Futuhat: "The multitude of beliefs in the world arises from a creation that belongs to no one, as everything in the world exists due to Allah, and everyone will ultimately attain mercy."

One of the subjects that Muhyiddin Arabi particularly emphasizes is the concept of Lordship (Rab). In this regard, Lord (Rab) means nurturing, managing, and organizing. Allah nurtures and organizes each of His servants uniquely, each person has a distinct aspect of their Lord. "Our Lord is Allah." (Surah Al-An'am/ 12) Every existing Rab is connected to Allah. All of creation constantly experiences companionship with Allah through their unique Rab. The hadith "One who knows oneself knows one's Lord" can also be evaluated in this context. That is to say, a person who understands the nature of their special bond with their Lord has attained very special knowledge with the awareness of why they were created. Just as they recognize their structure as an understanding of Allah's purpose for creating them, they also gain knowledge of their temperament, abilities, which matters they are sufficient in, and where their weaknesses lie. This provides significant insights into how a person will fulfill their servitude and in what manner.

Primarily, the essence (Zat) of Allah points to the One who is singular. However, in terms of names, He exists in the dimension of multiplicity. While referred to by many names, each name (asma)

indicates different meanings. These names arise from the Absolute One, the singular essence, through manifestation and recipients. When we refer to the Lord of Mehmet or the Lord of Ahmet, it should be understood that a specific manifestation of the Lord emerges for each individual. This is called "Rabbi Has." It should not be inferred that there are separate Lords. All "Rabbi Has" points to a singular essence, which is Allah.

Muhyiddin Arabi reflects on the subject as follows:

"The One who is named Allah is singular in essence but multiple in attributes. Every being has a Lord, which cannot form its entirety. Blessed is the one who is pleased with their Lord. (Since everyone has their own Rabbi Has) in this case, there is no one who is displeased with their Lord; because that name maintains its lordship over the servant. Just because one servant is pleased in the presence of their specific Lord (Rabbi Has), it does not mean that another servant's Lord is also pleased with them. Each one has only taken their suitable share; what they have taken is their Lord... Thus, while there is a distinction among servants, there is also a distinction among Lords." (Fusus'ul Hikem - Muhyiddin Arabi Hz.)

"Everyone has a belief. It is impossible for someone to see the same belief in another. Because each person's essential name (Rabbi Has) and combination of names is unique to them. There has never been two identical individuals or units. For this reason, when one person's thought encounters another's, contradictory subjects inevitably arise. The subjects on which they agree stem from the common meanings of names, apart from their Rabbi Has..." (Muhyiddin Arabi Hz.)

"The diversity of natures is a known fact. Because natures are opposites, and everyone realizes this. Therefore, in the realm of nature, disputes cannot be denied. However, in the realm above nature, the existence of dispute is denied. The people of Allah do not absolutely reject the existence of debate and order in creation. Because they know the divine names and that they exist in the form of creation. Indeed, Allah has created the world in their form. Because the essence is the divine names, and within them are oppositional and conflicting, suitable and mutually assisting names." (Futuhat, c14, s45 - Muhyiddin Arabi Hz.)

Sadreddin Konevi (may Allah be pleased with him) mentions in his interpretation of Fatiha:

"The parts of this verse resemble spiritual-Rabbani questions and the answers given. When the servant says, 'Guide us to the straight path,' the language of Lordship says: 'Which path do you seek? Because there are many paths, and they all belong to Me.' Thereupon, the language of servitude (the servant) says: 'I seek the straight path among them.' The language of Lordship responds: 'All paths are straight. Because I am the goal of all paths. Those who walk on all paths will ultimately reach Me. Then, which one of these do you desire in your request?' Thereupon, the



language of servitude says: 'I seek the path of those upon whom You have bestowed favors.' The language of Lordship responds: 'Whom have I not favored? Is there anything in existence that is not encompassed by My mercy and My favor?'"

Moreover, in another section, Muhyiddin Arabi states:

"The path of Allah is the one that traverses above all actions and leads all to Allah. For this reason, all rulings established by divine law and intellect fall under this. This path leads to Allah and includes both the wretched and the fortunate. This path is what the People of Allah say, 'The path to Allah is as numerous as the breaths of His created beings.' Because Allah encompasses all conflicting and non-conflicting names within Himself." (Futuhāt - M. Arabi Hz.)

*"When you see a closed door, know that there is something behind it; try to open it."*

(Muhyiddin Arabi)

## CHAPTER VI

Another frequently mentioned concept is "Ayan-ı Sabite." The initial discoveries revolve around the reality of existence (ayan-ı sabite). These are the divine names and attributes. Every existent is planned in the ayan-ı sabite and transitions into manifestation through the connection of its essence to the specific existence. The essence of each existent is linked to the planned existence through names and attributes, leading to its coming into being. Each existent connects to the Divine through a specific name in the realm of manifestation. This name is referred to as Rabbi Has. The reason is that the Lord governs, manages, and nurtures through that name. The essence is specifically associated with each existent through this name. That is, each name is a different name of the singular essence being observed. However, the essence is one, while the observed names differ. At this point, it is said that the names are manifestations of the essence. In all realms, Allah is recognized and presents Himself through these names. The name Allah connects every individual to Him through "Rabbi Has." Each existent is connected to the Divine through "Rabbi Has" with His absolute dominion. The "Rabbi Has" nurturing each existent is present. The individual is connected to Allah's essence through the divine names, actions, and their manifestations.

The individual will be able to witness the One Essence by uniting the names, which consist of

different and often opposing names, generally known to be 99 in total. By avoiding the actions of Satan through the name Mudil, the individual can follow the Muhammadan traditions through the name Hâdi. Other names also fall under this scope. In times of illness, one may encounter Darr and Kahhar. Seeking help from a doctor relates to the Shafi name, while the doctor's prescription corresponds to Nafi. The name Hay sustains us, and with the name Mümit, the medicine kills the germs in our bodies. As seen in these examples, divine names manifest in every moment of our lives, as if broadcasting from ourselves and our surroundings. Therefore, all existents manifest through these divine names. In other words, an existent is continually connected to Allah through Rabbi Has.

The concept of Hakk cannot be fully understood without recognizing the Lord. Hakk expresses the unity of all names, while Rab conveys the functioning within the multiplicity of the created realm. In summary, a human is a mirror of Hakk. Every person is a name of Hakk. The name Rab oversees and manages these names. Humans are mirrors of the divine names, while the satanic Mudil name plays a role in obstructing the manifestation of other divine names. Through the Mudil name, Satan confounds people with whispers, imagination, and delusions, complicating and confusing actions. It even prevents the manifestation of other divine names. "And say, 'My Lord, I seek refuge with You from the whispers and instigations of the devils.'" (Surah Al-Mu'minun/97)

The duty of vicegerency emerges through revealing Allah's names. The teaching of all names to Adam should be considered in this context. Each name will return to its Lord. These names are not separate lords but different names of Allah, the Lord of lords. If there were separate lords, the system would collapse, leading to conflict. The role of the Mudil name is to create this confusion and lead humanity into shirk (associating partners with Allah).

Every divine name has two orientations. One is directed towards Allah's throne, and the other is directed towards the realm of manifestation. For instance, when we say Rezzak; the names Alim, Sami, Basir, Hakim, and similar names do not fulfill their roles. The name Rezzak signifies its own Has aspect, but "Rezzak is Allah." The name Allah has gathered all names together with His essence. The names manifest when needed. The diversity of names also changes the rulings. Heaven and hell are connected to Allah's names. In other words, Allah's names do not become extinct in the afterlife; manifestations continue.

All these divine names are directed towards the name Allah. With His divinity, they manifest in the realm of creation under the name Allah. Allah becomes the Lord with the names He has manifested. He states in Surah Al-Hijr 85, "We created the worlds in truth," indicating that He is composed of His essence, attributes, and names, thus manifesting with the name Zahir.

Approaching the subject from the perspective of Sharia, it is required to follow the Sharia that Allah has revealed through His messenger, which calls for obedience to the divine laws. The servant who adheres to this request has entered the straight path. When we look at the situation through the lens of truth, we encounter the verse, "There is no creature but that He has taken it by the forelock. My Lord is surely on a straight path." (Surah Hud/56). However, it must not be forgotten that Sharia and truth are not different things but rather different aspects of the same truth.

From this, we understand that every being is on its own straight path (sirat-ı müstakim) through its nurturing Lord. This means that whatever it was created for, it possesses the necessary faculties for that purpose. The believing servant strives to fulfill the divine commands brought by Allah's prophet, the Lord of the worlds, while being addressed by the command "Be straight as you have been commanded." (Surah Hud/112). He makes great efforts to fulfill this servitude. He tries to avoid sins and acts according to the divine commands. The sirat-ı müstakim we seek while reciting Surah Al-Fatiha is this path, the path to obey His commands. When Allah holds His servant accountable, He will inquire about how well they have adhered to His commands (not His will).

To understand this well, it is essential to grasp what "Allah's command and Allah's will" mean. The command of existence (tekvini emir) refers to the will (desire/intention), the command of being, and the hidden command. The command of invitation (teklifi emir) refers to the direct command, explicit command.

The Sheikh explains this topic as follows:

"Nothing occurs outside of divine will (tekvini emir) or escapes existence. When one acts against the divine command, which is called sin, the relevant command is not the command of existence but the command of invitation. Because no one can oppose Allah concerning actions in the realm of divine will (tekvini emir). Opposition can only happen concerning indirect commands (teklifi emir)." (Füsüs, 165 - Muhyiddin Arabi)

"No one can rebel against the direct command of Hakk, as it occurs through the 'Be!' command. 'Be!' can be said to something that does not exist. There can be no resistance from something that does not have the quality of existence. If the divine command is indirect (teklifi), it can pertain to forbidding an action. For example, one is commanded to perform prayers or give zakat. The command is to pray. The name of the command is derived from the action form. In this case, while some of the people obey, some may rebel." (Fütühat-ı Mekkiyye 2, 588 - Muhyiddin Arabi)

"The divine command does not contradict divine will, as it falls under the definition and essence of divine will. The confusion arises when the form of command is misnamed as a command. The form is intended. When the commands of Hakk are expressed through the language of the Prophets, they are not commands, but forms of commands; therefore, they can be disobeyed. Sometimes, something that is not desired to happen can be commanded in this sense. Thus, no one has ever rebelled against Allah's command. It is understood that the prohibition regarding approaching the tree addressed to Adam relates to the language of the angel who proclaimed the prohibition. Thus, it is stated, 'Adam disobeyed his Lord.'" (Fütühat-ı Mekkiyye 4, 430 - Muhyiddin Arabi)

From these explanations, it becomes clear that Allah's command and His will may sometimes differ. That is, while Allah commands the performance of something, He may simultaneously will its non-performance. In this case, the servant has opposed Allah's command, but at the same time, he has done what aligns with His will. When Allah commanded Adam (a.s.) not to approach the tree, He willed for him to approach it, leading to his apparent mistake and subsequent expulsion from Paradise. Thus, he was sent to the world, and the attribute of his vicegerency could manifest. Similarly, when commanding Iblis to prostrate to Adam, Allah willed for him to refuse and show arrogance. This issue is one of those razor-thin subjects; if it is not grasped properly, it may lead a person into shirk.

Every ruling in the universe is undoubtedly the ruling of Allah. This ruling, even if contrary to the decree known as sharia, still holds true. In reality, it is only the ruling of Allah that prevails. Therefore, no one can ever oppose Allah in all matters of His will. In this case, opposition and rebellion can only be possible against the divine commands through intermediary means. This understanding must be clear.

"At one time, it may be named opposition to the divine command. At another time, it may be called compliance with the divine command. In summary; the language of praise and blame is dependent on the action that occurs." (Fusus al-Hikam)

The reason Allah decrees actions in accordance with or contrary to the commands of sharia is to manifest the effects of His attributes of majesty and beauty in external forms. Obedience and its related actions are manifestations and effects of the attributes of beauty. Sins and their related actions, on the other hand, are manifestations and effects of the attributes of majesty. Allah says, "If you were a people who did not commit sin, I would destroy you and create a people who would commit sin and repent to Me instead." The existence of gradation in the universe is inevitable. Nonetheless, everything that has been created complies with the command of its Lord.

On the other hand, Muhyiddin Arabi states: "Allah has one will and one command. Hold on to whichever of these will save you!"

While there will be those who cling to His command for salvation, there will also be those who cling to His will. A person who does not fully comprehend the absoluteness of the ruling of His will must certainly cling tightly to the command. Otherwise, they will face destruction.

*"The reason for testing, no matter who it comes from, is the existence of a claim. Wherever a claim is found, testing takes place there. Whoever defines themselves by a particular trait will be tested according to that trait."*

(Muhyiddin Arabi)

## CHAPTER VII

No one can attain true knowledge about the nature of things with a "this or that" explanation. The real situation should be sought in "both this and that" or "neither this nor that." Nothing is certain except for existence itself; the situation that gathers all opposites into a single truth is the state of the gathering of opposites (cemü'l ezdad). In other words, it can be said that there are opposites, but no opposition exists. Everything that exists derives its existence and quality from the divine truth. When we truly surrender to the reality of things, we understand both the reality of Allah and that Allah is not that thing at the same time. In this context, the universe is "Both He/And He is not." Ultimately, our declaration of testimony (La ilahe illallah - "There is no god but Allah") consists of both denial and affirmation. The essence of Tawhid is hidden in this secret.

Our dreams and visions provide us with a very important understanding and insight into the nature of existence, which is "everything other than Allah." Our dreams serve as a barrier between our soul and our body, just as existence is a barrier between being and nothingness. The realm we observe in dreams consists of the Creator's (in terms of expression) observation of being and nothingness. According to Muhyiddin Arabi, the truth of the state of "Both He/And He is not" can most clearly be understood through imagination. To comprehend the Sheikh's views coherently, we must understand well the concept of "Imagination" that he emphasizes. This concept is not used in the sense that we understand it today. The concept he wants to convey is not a mental fabrication. The Sheikh believes that unless we place the concept of imagination at the focal point, we will not be able to grasp the meaning of religion and human existence. Although the universe is other than

Allah, we know that it also conveys something about Allah to us, for the signs of Allah are displayed in the universe. In other words, the universe is, in a sense, the manifestation or self-revelation of Allah. This is why the Sheikh refers to the universe as “Imagination,” considering the ambivalent states of everything other than Allah and the fact that the reflection in the mirror shows the reality of the person looking into it, just as the universe reveals Allah.

In its second meaning, imagination is the intermediate realm between the soul and the body. These two realms are compared according to opposite qualities like light and darkness, seen and unseen, internal and external, subtle and dense. For this reason, the macrocosmic realm of imagination requires a description of “both/and.” Neither light nor darkness; both light and darkness. As we discussed in our Quantum Sufism series of books, the system compatible with today’s quantum laws was conveyed to us in full clarity by Muhyiddin Arabi centuries ago.

The world, which we are accustomed to looking at with the eye of truth and which we describe as reality, is actually nothing but imagination for him. We perceive many things through our senses and separate them from one another, even to the point of not doubting their reality. However, at this point, according to the Sheikh, this concept of reality is not truly real. In other words, such a thing is not reality in the sense of Existence (Vücud). For someone who is asleep and sees things in their dream, the existence they observe is to the extent that their sensation is related to reality.

They asked Abu Said al-Harraz, “How did you know Allah?” He replied, “By the truth of gathering opposites.” That is to say, everything described as existing and the whole universe is “Both He/And He is not.” The Truth that appears as forms is “Both He/And He is not.” Allah is the unseen seer of the infinite.

The Sheikh expresses it as follows: “Imagination is neither existence nor non-existence; neither known nor unknown; neither affirmed nor denied. For example, a person sees their reflection in the mirror. They certainly know that they can see one aspect of their reflection, but cannot comprehend it from another aspect. They cannot deny that they see their own reflection, nor can they say that it is not in the mirror, nor that it is not between themselves and the mirror. Therefore, if they say, ‘I saw my reflection, I did not see my reflection,’ they are neither lying nor telling the truth.”

The universe is infinite and absolute imagination. Because everything other than Allah exhibits the characteristics and judgments of imagination. Continuous creation and the change of the universe every moment are nothing but the manifestation of the truth of “Both He/And He is not.” The reality of imagination is the continuous change of every state and its emergence in every form. Everything other than the essence of the Truth transforms and emerges with a new formation every moment.

Everything other than the essence of the Truth is an intervening imagination and a lost shadow. The universe can only appear as imagination. The Sheikh expresses this situation as follows: "One of the things that confirms what we are saying is this verse: 'When you threw, it was not you who threw' (Surah Al-Anfal/17). Allah negated what He affirmed in this way. In other words, 'You imagined that you threw, but surely it was He who threw.' This is why He said, 'when you threw.' Then He said: 'The act of throwing is true, but 'Allah threw.' That is, O Muhammad, you manifested as a form of Allah! Thus, what you threw reached its target in a way that no mortal can hit their target."

Based on the famous hadith, "All people (in this world) are asleep; only when they die do they awaken from this sleep," Muhyiddin Arabi makes this interpretation: "The universe is merely a delusion; it does not have a real existence. This is what is meant by 'imagination.' That is, you imagined in your mind that this universe is an independent, self-created reality; a being other than the Absolute Reality (the Truth). However, this is not the case at all... Know that you are also an imagination; everything you perceive and every object you say 'this is not me' is also an imagination. Therefore, the entire realm of existence is also an imagination within an imagination."

Muhyiddin Arabi states that the most general human experience regarding the characteristics of imagination is dreams. He declares that what we experience in the Futuhat is nothing but a dream. In fact, this is a dream that can never be awakened from and will never be awakened. This dream is one that can never be possible to awaken from. Because, having a knowledge form in Allah's knowledge and being imagined entities in His imagination, our original existence has never been and will never be. From this perspective, we can evaluate this universe within a dream perception.

"Muhyiddin Arabi Hazretleri says, 'The world is a bridge to be crossed; it is the dream to be interpreted.' Thus, the actions we take in our worldly life, which is in the state of a dream, form our rank in the afterlife, which is directly the time of awakening. Therefore, our afterlife is equivalent to the interpretation of our dream in this world.

The life of this world is the dream within the dream within the dream. The life of the Barzakh is the continuation of the dream within the dream, although awakening from one of those dreams. The afterlife is also a dream. In fact, we see three interwoven dreams. Among them, our highest awakening in terms of comprehension will be the transition to the afterlife. However, when the matter is looked at in terms of reality, since we do not have an existence that can be compared to the existential being of Allah, and we will eternally remain as knowledge forms in His knowledge, Muhyiddin Arabi describes this from one perspective as a dream. Ultimately, all that we have experienced and will experience is, in this respect, a dream that has never been awakened from.

All existence is sleep, and the awakening of existence is also sleep. Therefore, all existence is in comfort, and comfort is mercy, for mercy encompasses everything (Surah Al-A'raf/156) and ultimately, everything will reach mercy.

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