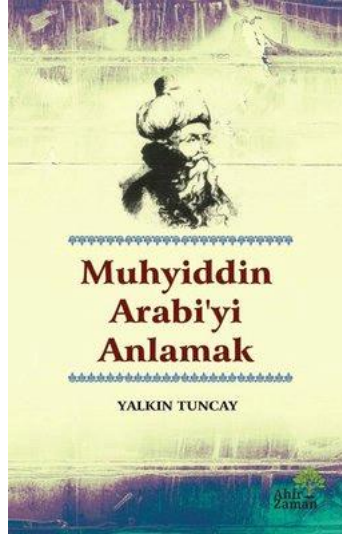


UNDERSTANDING MUHYIDDIN ARABI

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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