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DIVINE "IMAGINATION" AND THE INTERMEDIATE WORLD: IBN 'ARABĪ ON THE BARZAKH

For centuries after the time of the Andalusian mystic Ibn 'Arabī, his remarkable discussions and conceptions of the "Imagination" (*al-khayāl*) were elaborated by Islamic philosophers, poets, artists and critics in order to explain, interpret and justify the full range of artistic and creative activities carried on within later Islamicate cultures, as far away as India and Indonesia (1). Modern western students of Ibn 'Arabī writing on such themes have tended to focus on the development of those ideas in his celebrated *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* ("The Bezels of Wisdom") and its long line of traditional philosophic commentaries (2). But another major source of those classical Islamic understandings of the Imagination was in the Shaykh's many discussions of the eschatological "Barzakh" or "intermediate world" of the divine Imagination -as well as his accounts of his own striking experiences and decisive spiritual encounters there- which are scattered throughout his magnum opus, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīya* ("The Meccan Illuminations").

One of his most extensive and widely influential discussions of the Imagination/*Barzakh*, in all its humanly relevant dimensions, was in the set of five eschatological chapters (61-65) within the long opening section of the *Futūḥāt*-chapters first brought to the attention of a wider Western audience in the famous studies by Asín Palacios of Islamic themes in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Those chapters whose arrangement follows the traditional popular ordering of the symbolic "events" and "places" of the Resurrection mentioned in Islamic scriptures, begin with descriptions of Gehenna and the "Fires" and other torments of its residents (chapters 61-62) and conclude with the stages of redemption and eventual bliss of souls who have reached the Gar-

dens of paradise (chapters 63-65) (3). The chapter translated here (4) is therefore the centerpiece of this broader eschatological section and focuses relatively more on the "theoretical" dimension of the Imagination, on the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the spiritual experiences and phenomena discussed in greater detail in many other sections of the *Futūḥāt*.

It is always a challenge, and often a near-impossibility, to attempt to outline the structure of any of Ibn 'Arabī writings in a linear and straightforward fashion. (And serious attempts to convey something of their deeper inner structure inevitably require an involved commentary much longer than the mystic's own original text). However, a few such indications have been added here for the benefit of those who may be encountering his distinctive style of writing for the first time. Like almost all chapters of the *Futūḥāt*, chapter 63 opens with a short and highly allusive metaphysical-didactic poem summarizing virtually all the themes treated in the rest of the chapter; the remainder of this eschatological chapter, quite typically, is an extended and (at first glance) apparently somewhat disordered commentary on the topics suggested by those opening verses. In this case, Ibn 'Arabī begins his exposition with [I] an explanation -at once linguistic, symbolic and philosophic- of the basic notion of a *barzakh*, or "limit" between two metaphysical realms: here, the domains of purely physical and purely intelligible/noetic being, and the mysterious eschatological realm of Imagination that lies between them. The exposition then moves from the ontological-theological mode of discourse to [II] an openly epistemological and experiential evocation of the kinds of experience (and scriptural allusions) which begin to reveal more clearly the central *existencial* importance of this realm of being. Next, working through the rich symbolism of a famous Prophetic statement comparing this reality to the "Horn" that is blown to announce the

Resurrection, Ibn 'Arabī begins to develop [III] the mysterious correspondences between the universal, ontological dimensions of this plane of Imagination and the manifestations of its "Light" in the experiences of each individual. And finally, the Shaykh returns [IV] to the more explicitly eschatological implications of his earlier discussions, developing the parallels between this universal reality of the Imagination and our more familiar experience of sleep and dreams -an approach to which he later returned in a number of famous passages in his *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*.

However, even the most cursory and uninformed reading of this chapter would make quickly make it evident that Ibn 'Arabī's intention was *not* to "clarify" in any sort of rational, conceptual and logical form the different ways in which we can speak of and understand the Imagination -however broadly or narrowly one might define that term- and all its manifestations. In this respect, chapter 63 is an excellent, highly typical introduction to Ibn 'Arabī's unique rhetoric and style, an inimitable form of writing which is always intimately linked to his larger spiritual and didactic intentions. As readers familiar with other texts of his may more quickly recognize, the recurrent mixture of -and sudden shifts between- a whole spectrum of contrasting approaches, images, perspectives and technical vocabularies is not accidental or the result of "bad writing" (or fuzzy thinking), but instead forms a complex, highly self-conscious rhetorical technique. The Shaykh's ultimate aim here, as so often throughout his writings, is not simply heightened intellectual understanding nor a more deeply grounded religious faith and practice -although both of those outcomes may also result from serious study of his writing. Rather, as one can see most clearly at those moments where he suddenly shifts to the singular imperative ("Know!", "Realize!", etc.) it is to bring about in the properly prepared and attentive reader a suddenly transformed state of immediate realization and awareness, in which each

of the implicit dualities (or paradoxes) of our usual perception of things -the recurrent categorical suppositions of subject and object, divine and human, spiritual and material, earthly and heavenly- is directly transcended in an enlightened, revelatory moment of unitive vision. His ultimate aim in this chapter, as throughout his writings, is to bring his readers to *see* -not just to acknowledge intellectually or theologically- everything as ongoing theophany (*tajalliyāt*) and "ever-renewed" divine creation.

In the case of this chapter, Ibn 'Arabī's efforts to break through his readers' ordinarily unquestioned separations between what is "divine" and "human", or "objective" and "subjective", or "this-worldly" and "other-worldly", are repeatedly sustained by certain basic features of the Arabic language that cannot easily be reproduced in a western tongue. For example, his most basic term and underlying subject here, the Arabic expression *al-khayāl*, refers most often, in ordinary contexts, to what we would ordinarily call an "image" or "object of imagination", and ultimately to the actual underlying reality of *all* the "imaginal" (*not* "imaginary") objects of our perception in virtually all forms and domains. Given this primacy of the *ontic*, "objective" dimension of the term *al-khayāl* -whether that is expressed in theological or cosmological terms- any translation referring to "imagination" (5) inevitably risks falling into the psychologizing or individualistic, subjectivist assumptions that are embedded in the usual usages of that concept in western languages, whether the term is being employed positively or pejoratively. In fact, precisely at those points where Ibn 'Arabī wants to refer explicitly to something like a psychological "faculty" or individual activity of "imagination" -or to the individual psychic "objects" of such an activity- he invariably uses separate and quite distinct Arabic terms to emphasize that partial, subjective aspect.

Finally, and again quite typically, a

deeper appreciation of Ibn 'Arabī's meaning and intentions here often requires a degree of acquaintance with Islamic scriptures and classical forms of religious learning that can rarely be assumed among modern readers. Thus any effort to communicate fully that web of allusions and assumptions to a modern audience naturally requires a body of notes and commentary several times longer than Ibn 'Arabī's text itself. In this case, given the constraints of article length, we have chosen to translate as much of the chapter itself as possible (omitting only a few repetitive or highly technical sections), at the price of eliminating all such explanatory notes (6) -apart from the basic identification of Qur'anic quotations and allusions, which are so often indispensable for understanding the Shaykh's intentions.

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NOTAS

(1) Thus the incomparable architectural accomplishments of the Tāj Mahāl turn out to have been inspired, from the overall plan down to sometimes minute details, by the elaborate eschatological discussions and diagrams of the *Futūḥāt*: see the detailed explanations in W. Begley, *The Myth and Meaning of the Taj Mahal*. Two of the most elaborate and influential later Islamic philosophic developments of Ibn 'Arabī's eschatological conceptions -including many of the key images mentioned here in chapter 63 of the *Futūḥāt*- are the theories of imagination of the Iranian Shiite thinker Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1640) and the South Asian author, Shāh Waliullāh of Delhi (d. 1762). The literal inspiration of Ibn 'Arabī's thought (and indeed of this particular chapter) is clearly visible in such

translated works as our *The Wisdom of the Throne: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā* (Princeton, 1981) and Shāh Waliullāh's *Lamahāt*, tr. G.N. Jalbani (Hyderabad, 1970).

- (2) The classic study from this perspective (including as well many important sections of the *Futūḥāt*) remains Henry Corbin's *L'Imagination créatrice dans le Soufisme d'Ibn 'Arabī* (Paris, 1958), translated (by R. Manheim) as *Creative Imagination in the Sūfism of Ibn 'Arabī* (Princeton, 1969).
- (3) See our forthcoming study (with complete, fully annotated translations and annotations of these and other eschatological chapters), *Ibn 'Arabī's Divine Comedy: an Introduction to Islamic Eschatology and Cosmology*. A considerable range of representative translations on this subject are already included in our contributions to *Ibn 'Arabī: Les Illuminations de la Mecque/The Meccan Illuminations*, ed. M. Chodkiewicz (Paris, 1989) and in the article "Seeing Past the Shadows: Ibn 'Arabī's Divine Comedy", *JOURNAL OF THE MUHYIDDĪN IBN 'ARABĪ SOCIETY*, XII (1992), pp. 50-69.
- (4) Vol. IV, pp. 406-425 in the new critical edition of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīya*, by Dr. O. Yahya (Cairo, 1975/1395); this corresponds to vol. I, pp. 304-307 of the lithographed (Cairo/Beirut) edition cited in most earlier studies of the *Futūḥāt*.
- (5) Such as our frequent use in this case of capitalization ("Imagination") or a parenthetic qualification ("divine", etc.).
- (6) Which will be found in great detail in our forthcoming book-length translation of these and other eschatological chapters and sections from the *Futūḥāt* (n. 3 above). Omitted sections are indicated in the translated section below by points of suspension [...].

CHAPTER 63: Concerning Inner Understanding of (How) People Remain in the *Barzakh* Between This World and the Resurrection (at the Last Day)

Between this world and the Resurrection, for whoever reflects, / there are intermediate (*barzakhīya*) levels, each with their limits:

What they hold is according to the influence of how their possessor is / *right now*, before dying -so consider deeply [O people of vision] (59:2)!

They have influences and authority over everything, making the wonders / appear; they do not spare (anyone), nor leave (anyone) alone (74:28).

They have wide-open manifestations in being, without restriction, / yet they are neither essential-realities, nor (mere) effects.

They (have only to) say to God (*al-Haqq*) "Be!", and God is (already) creating them -so how can a mortal-human (*bashar*) escape from their influence?!

Through them are the (forms of) knowing and every chastisement; / through them are the signs (of God) and miracles and exemplary lessons.

Were it not for this (divine) Imagination, today we would be in nothingness: / no goal or purpose would have been accomplished through us!

"As though (you saw God)" is Its realm of authority, if you've understood It: / revelation has come through/with It, as have intellect and reflection.

Among the expressions alluding to It is the "like..." of the (divine) Attributes: / so you are only detached from forms by your bringing (other) forms!

[I] Our saying "As though is Its realm of authority" refers to the authority of the (divine) Imagination (*khayāl*), which is the essential reality of (this) "as though" and the inner meaning of (the Prophet's) saying "Worship God as though you see Him..."

... Know that the word "*barzakh*" is an

expression for what *separates* two things without ever becoming either of them, such as the line separating a shadow from the sunlight, or as in His Saying -may He be exalted!: "He has loosened the two Seas. They meet:/between them a *barzakh*, they do not go beyond" (55: 19-20) -meaning that neither of them becomes mixed with the other. But even if our senses are unable to perceive what separates those two things, the intellect judges that there is indeed a divider separating them -and that divider grasped by the intellect is precisely the *barzakh*. Because if something is perceived by the senses, it must be one of those two things, rather than the *barzakh*. So each of those two things, when they are adjacent to each other, have need of a *barzakh* which is not the same as each of them, but which has in itself the power of each of them.

Now since the *Barzakh* (of the creative divine Imagination) is something separating what is knowable and unknowable, existent and non-existent, intelligible and unintelligible, affirmed and negated, it has been given the name "*Barzakh*" as a technical term. It is intelligible in itself, yet it is nothing but the imagined-image (*al-khayāl*)! For when you perceive it -assuming you are in a rational state- you know that you have perceived something existent on which your gaze has fallen; indeed you most definitely know that there is absolutely something there. But what *is* this about which you affirm that it is an existent thing, while at the same time you are also denying that?! For this Imagination-Image (*al-khayāl*) is neither (entirely) existent nor nonexistent, neither (entirely) known nor unknowable, neither (entirely) affirmed nor denied.

This is like a human being perceiving their (reflected) form in the mirror. The person definitely knows that they have perceived their (own) form in a certain respect, while they know just as absolutely that they have not perceived their form in another respect, because of the

smallness of the image they see in the mirror, assuming the body of the mirror is small -since they know that their own form is a great deal larger than the one they saw... So what *is* that reflected form? And *where* is it actually located? And what is its (ontological) status? For it is both affirmed and denied, both existent and nonexistent, both known and unknown.

Now God -may He be praised!- has made this reality appear to His servants, by way of making a fitting image, so that they might know and come to realize that if they are bewildered and incapable of grasping the reality of this phenomenon, which is (only) part of this world, and cannot attain full knowledge of its reality -then how much more incapable and ignorant and bewildered they must be regarding the *Creator* of that reality! In this way God has pointed out to (His servants) that the divine Self-manifestations (*tajalliyāt al-Haqq*) to them are even more subtle and delicate than this case in which their intellects are already so bewildered and incapable of perceiving the reality of things...

It is to something like this reality that each human being goes in their sleep and after their death (cf. 39:42). So that person sees (moral and spiritual) qualities and characteristics as self-subsistent forms that speak to him and with which he converses, as being (human) bodies without any doubt. And the person of spiritual unveiling (*al-mukāshif*) already sees (here), while they are awake, what the sleeper sees in their dream state or the dead person sees after they have died. Likewise they will see the forms of their actions being weighed in the other world (according to the Qur'anic symbolism of the "Scales") -despite their being (apparently non-substantial) qualities and characteristics (in this world)- and they will see death (according to the description in a famous hadith) as "a spotted ram being sacrificed", even though death is (really only) a relation (between two states of

being)... So praise to the One Who remains unknowable, so He is not known -and Who is known, so that He is not unknown! [*He is the One Who gives form to you-all in the Wombs, however He wishes:*] *There is no god but Him, the Unapproachable, the All-Wise* (3:6)!

[II] Now there are some people who perceive this imaged-object (*al-mutakha-yyal*) with the eye of the (physical) sensation, and there are others who perceive it with the eye of imagination. Of course I'm referring here to (our perceptions) in the waking state, since during sleep (everyone) definitely perceives with the eye of imagination. So if a person wishes to distinguish between (those two modes of perception) in their waking state, whether in this world or at the Day of Resurrection, they can determine (which sort of perception it is) by looking at the imaged-object. Thus if [a] the states of what one is looking at continue to change as it changes its shape and characteristics, even though you can't deny that it is still the same thing, and [b] the fact of observing it does not stop it from changing its shape and formation -as when a chameleon, when you observe it, stops changing its colors- then that is undoubtedly (being seen) with the eye of imagination, not with the eye of the senses. For you perceive what-is-imagined (*al-khayāl*) with the eye of imagination, not with the eye of (physical) sensation.

Indeed few of those who lay claim to the unveiled vision of spirits, whether of fire (i.e., *jinn*) or of light (angels), really understand how this is. When (those spirits) take on the image of perceptible forms, (most people) don't know whether they are perceiving them with the eye of the imagination or with the eye of (physical) sensation -since both sorts of perception involve the sensing activity of the eye. That (inner sensing activity) is what presents the perception through *both* the eye of imagination and the eye of (physical) sensation. So this is a subtle form of knowledge: I mean the knowledge of the

distinction between the two "eyes", and between the sensing activity of the eye and the eye of (physical) sensation. One can know that (what one perceives) is indeed sensible, not imaginal, and that one has perceived it with the eye of sensation, not the eye of imagination (by the following conditions): [a] when the eye perceives the imaged-object and, without being distracted, sees that its shape and characteristics don't change; [b] when it doesn't see that imaged-object in different places at the same time, assuming it is definitely a single reality; and [c] that imaged-object doesn't become changed or transformed into different states.

This is how you should understand how a human being can perceive their Lord -may He be exalted!- in a dream, even though He transcends any form or image, as well as how that perception of Him takes place and its limitations. And through this you may understand what has come down in the sound report (of the famous hadith) concerning the Creator's "manifesting Himself (to souls at the Resurrection) in the most unlikely of forms among those in which they saw Him", and concerning His "transformation into a form which they knew (before then)", after they had been denying Him and taking refuge from Him (in more agreeable forms of His manifestation).

So you should know with *which* eye you are seeing Him! For I have already let you know that (the divine) Imagination is perceived either through itself -I mean through the eye of imagination- or through the (physical) vision. And which of those two is the sound one on which we should rely?! Regarding that we (wrote these verses):

When my Beloved appears to me, with which eye do I see Him?

With *His* eye, not with mine: for none sees Him but Him!

(This is only) in accordance with the transcendence of His Station and confirming His Words, since He says: "*The gazes do not perceive Him, [but He per-*

ceives the gazes]" (6:103), and He did not specify any particular Abode (of this world or the next), but sent it as an Verse unrestricted (in its applicability) and as a definite, confirmed matter. For none other than Him perceives Him, so it is with *His* eye -may He be praised!- that I see Him, as in (the famous divine saying in) the sound hadith-report: "... I (God) was his gaze through which he sees".

So *wake up*, you who are asleep and heedless of all this, and pay attention! I have opened up for you a door to forms of awareness and inner knowing that thoughts can never reach, though intellects can come to accept them, either through special divine Providence or by "polishing hearts with *dhikr* and recitation (of the Qur'an)". Then the intellect accepts what the divine Self-manifestation (*tajalli*) gives it and knows that that (imaginal revelation) is beyond its own power with respect to its thinking, indeed that its thinking could never give it that. Therefore (that person) gives thanks to God -may He be exalted!- Who created their constitution (*nash'a*) so that it could receive things like that: this being the constitution of the (divine) Messengers and prophets and those among the saints who are the recipients of special divine Providence. This is so that (such a person) may know that their *receptivity* (to what is bestowed by God) is higher and more noble than their own thinking. So *realize*, o my brother, from now on Who it is that is manifesting Himself to you from behind this door (of the imagination)! For this is a prodigious matter, where even the innermost hearts become bewildered.

[III] Then the prescriber (of Revelation), who is the truthful speaker, called this thing -which is the (divine) Presence of the Barzakh to which we are brought after death and in which we directly witness our souls- a "Horn" (*al-ṣūr*) and "Trumpet" (*al-nāqūr*). Here the word *al-ṣūr* is (also) the plural of the word *ṣūra*, "form". So (according to the Qur'anic

accounts of the Resurrection) "*it is breathed into the Horn/forms*" (6:73, etc.) and "*it is blown upon the Trumpet*" (74:8). And the two of them (the "Horn" and "Trumpet") are exactly the same thing, differing only in the names because of the various states and attributes (of the underlying reality)...

Know that the Messenger of God, when he was asked what this "Horn" (*al-ṣūr*) was, replied: "It is a horn (*qarn*: an animal horn) of Light upon which (the angel) Isrāfil blows". So he reported that its shape was the shape of (an animal's) horn, described as being broad (at the base) and narrow (at the tip)... Know, then, that the breadth of *this* "Horn" (of the Barzakh-Imagination) is as broad as possible, since none of the generated things are broader than it. That is because through Its reality It has sway over every thing, and (even) over what is not a thing. It gives form (alike) to absolute nothingness and to what is (ontologically) impossible, necessary and contingent, turning what is existent into nothingness and what is non-existent into being. Regarding this divine Presence (i.e., ontological realm of being) the Prophet says: "Worship God as though you see Him..." and "God is in the *qibla* of the person who is praying" -i.e., imagine Him in your direction of prayer and be attentive to Him, so that you are fully mindful of Him and humble before him. And always observe the appropriate courtesy (*adab*) with Him while you are praying, since if you don't do that you are being discourteous and inconsiderate.

Now had the prescriber (of Revelation) not known that there is within you a reality called "imagination" that has this (immense) sway, he would not have said to you "(Worship God) as though you see Him" with your (physical) vision. For the indications of the intellect rule out this "as though", and the intellect holds, with its arguments, that any "likeness" (between God and created things) is impossible: vision can perceive nothing but the

wall (in front of the person praying)! Yet we have also learned that the prescriber (of Revelation) called upon you to imagine that you are facing God (*al-Haqq*) in your direction of prayer; indeed it has been prescribed for you to accept that. And God says: "*So wherever you may turn, then there is the Face of God!*" (2:115) -and the "face" (*wajh*) of something is its reality and its individual essence. So the Imagination *has* given form to the One Who, according to the arguments of the intellect, cannot possibly be conceived or given any form. That is why (the Imagination) is so all-encompassing.

But as for the "narrowness" and restrictiveness of the imagination, that is because it does not extend to receiving anything -whether sensible things, or spiritual ones, or relations and connections, or God's Majesty and His Essence- except through some form. If it were to try to perceive something without using a form, its reality would not allow it to do that, since it is precisely the (faculty of) imaginal representation (*wahm*), and nothing else... So the imagination is the most extensive of all the objects of knowledge -yet despite the immense breadth of its sway, which extends to every thing, it is also incapable of receiving the purely immaterial (noetic) realities (without using some image or likeness). Hence the imagination (as indicated in many familiar hadith) sees knowledge in the form of milk, or honey and wine and pearls; and it sees Islām in the form of a dome and pillars; and it sees the Qur'an in the form of butter and honey; and it sees Religion in the form of a bond; and it sees God (*al-Haqq*) in the form of a human being and in the form of light...

As for this "horn" (of the Barzakh/Imagination) being made of "light" (according to the hadith mentioned above), that is because light is the immediate cause for (things) becoming unveiled and clearly appearing, since without light, vision would perceive nothing at all. So God made this Imagination as a "light" through

which could be perceived the Bringing-into-form (*taṣwīr*) of every thing, whatever that might be, as we've already mentioned. His Light passes through the absolute nothingness so that He might shape it into the forms of being. Hence the Imagination is more deserving of the (divine) Name "the Light" (*al-Nūr*) than all the created things ordinarily described as "luminous", since Its Light does not resemble the (created) lights and through It the divine Self-manifestations are perceived.

And It (or 'He') *is* the Light of the eye of imagination, not the light of the eye of sensation. So understand this! For if you understand how (the divine) Imagination is Light, and you know in what way it is (always) correct, then you will have an advantage over those who don't know that-the sort of person who says: "that is only a false imagination!" That is because such people have failed to understand the perception of the light of imagination which has been given them by God. This is just like their saying that our senses are also "mistaken" in some of their perceptions, when in fact their sense-perceptions are sound, while the judgment (regarding the meaning of those perceptions) belongs to something else, not to the senses themselves. It is the judgment that is false, not the sensation. Likewise the imagination perceives with its light whatever it perceives, without passing judgment. The judgment only belongs to something else, which is the *intellect*, so the error can't be attributed to the imagination. Thus there never is any "false imagination" at all -indeed all of it is correct!

Now as for our companions, they were mistaken in their thinking about this "Horn" (of the Barzakh/Imagination), in that most of the intellectual thinkers represented its narrowest point as the center (of the earthly sphere) and its widest point as the highest, outermost celestial sphere, so that the "forms" which it contains would be the forms of the (physi-

cal) world. They considered the wide segment of this Horn its highest part and its narrow section the lowest part of the world -but things are not at all as they claimed! Instead, since the Imagination (even) gives form to God (*al-Haqq*), as well as everything in the world below Him, including even nothingness, its highest section is the narrow one and its lowest section is the wide one. That is just how God created It: for the first thing He created from It was "narrow", while what He created from It later widened out, like the part of a horn adjoining the animal's head.

For there is no doubt that the Presence (i.e., ontological domain) of the divine Actions and States is more extensive (than the higher divine "Presences"). That is why the true Knowers (of God) only find comprehensiveness of knowledge to the extent of what they come to know *from the world*. Then when they want to proceed to knowing the Unicity of God -may He be exalted!- they keep on ascending gradually from that breadth (of worldly objects of knowing) toward what is narrower (in extent). So their forms of knowing (lit.: "knowledges") keep on becoming less numerous while they ascend in their knowledge of God's Essence, through spiritual unveiling, until they reach the point where they have no object of knowledge but God (*al-Haqq*) alone -which is the narrowest point in that "Horn". For in reality its narrowest part is its highest, which has the most perfect greatness and majesty.

(The reality of this universal creative process of divine "Imagination" resembles) the first part of (an animal's) horn that appears when God has planted it in the animal's head: it continues to grow upward, beginning with that narrow point, as its lower part widens out. So (this narrowest initial "Point") is the first thing created. Don't you see how (likewise) the first thing God -may He be praised!- created was the "Pen" (68:1; 96:4) or the (universal) "Intellect", as he said. So He only created *one* (reality). Then He brought forth the creatures from that one (cf.

6:98), and the world became fully expanded. This is just like the procession of numbers from the initial "one"...

[IV] Next, now that we have established this, you should know that God -may He be praised!- when He takes the spirits from these physical, material bodies, wherever they may be (at death), deposits those spirits in imaginal-bodily forms within this Horn of Light (of the Barzakh). So all of those things that the human being perceives after death in the Barzakh are only perceived through the eye and with the light of the form in which that person exists in that Horn -and that is a true perception. Among the forms there are [a] some who are restricted in their freedom of activity, and [b] others who are unrestricted, such as the spirits of all the prophets and the spirits of the martyrs; among them are [c] those who are able to look at (what goes on in) this world here-below, even while they are in that Abode (of the Barzakh), and [d] those who manifest themselves to the sleeper in that Presence of the Imagination which is in the person dreaming.

This is why one's dreams are always "true", because every dream in itself is true and not in error. Because if (we say) a dream was "mistaken", it isn't really the dream itself that was mistaken, but rather the *person* who interpreted it incorrectly, in that they didn't recognize the intended meaning of the image in question. Don't you notice what (the Prophet) said to Abū Bakr, when he had interpreted the dream of the person mentioned (in the hadith): "You were right about some of it, and mistaken about some of it". And likewise with what (Muhammad) said to the man who had a dream in which he saw his head cut off and fall to the ground, and then begin to roll around and speak to him. The Messenger of God mentioned to him that Satan was playing with him. He knew the form of what the man had seen, so he didn't say to him "your *imagination* is false" -because what the man saw was real, only he had been mistaken in his interpretation of it. Instead he in-

formed him about the real meaning of what he had seen while dreaming.

Likewise the supporters of Pharaoh (against Moses) "*are exposed to the Fire*" in *those* forms "*morning and night*" (40:46), without entering Hell, because they are captive within that Horn (of the Barzakh) and in that (imaginal) form. But on the Day of the Rising they enter "*the most intense torment*" (40:46), which is the sensible torment -not the imaginal one- which was theirs in the state of their dying on earth.

Now (sometimes) the eye of imagination perceives *both* imaginal forms and sensible forms together. And sometimes the source of imagination, who is the human being, perceives the object of imagination with the eye of imagination, as in (the Prophet's) saying "The Garden (of Paradise) was portrayed for me on the side of this wall". But he (also) perceived that with the eye of (bodily) sensation. And we only referred to the eye of (bodily) sensation because (according to the hadith report) "he came forward when he saw the Garden, to take a fruit from it", and because (according to another hadith) "he backed up when he saw the Fire (of Hell)" once while he was praying. For we know that (the Prophet) had such power that if he had perceived those visions (only) with the eye of his imagination, and not (also) with the eye of his bodily senses, that would not have influenced his body to move forward and to back up (in those two cases). Indeed we have also experienced (that bodily influence of imaginal forms and perceptions), and we have neither his power nor his rank.

Therefore every human being in the Barzakh is "*hostage to what they have acquired*" (52:21; 74:38), imprisoned in the forms of their deeds, until they are raised up from those forms, on the Day of the Rising, in "*the state of being of the other world*" (29:20, etc.). And God says *the Truth and He shows the right Way* (33:4).