

# Ibn 'Arabi: Le dévoilement des effets du voyage

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*Ibn 'Arabi: Le Dévoilement des Effets du Voyage.* Texte arabe édité, traduit et présenté par Denis Gril. Combas [France], Éditions de l'Éclat, 1994. [Introduction (pp. i-xxxiii), translation (pp. 1-77), facing Arabic edition and notes (pp. 1-85), and indexes of Qur'anic verses and proper names.]

This new edition and pioneering translation of Ibn 'Arabi's *Kitâb al-Isfâr 'an Natâ'ij al-Asfâr* – previously accessible only in the defective Hyderabad version of his *Rasâ'il* – is a fresh reminder of the extraordinary riches still to be discovered among the Shaykh's dozens of shorter treatises, most of which are not yet available in critical editions. At the same time, this book is the latest landmark in a long series of editions and studies by Professor Gril which – along with recent works by S. Hakim, C. Addas, G. Elmore, and others – are gradually illuminating in much greater detail the historical development and contexts of Ibn 'Arabi's many writings, with regard to both form and content. The present work dates from the earlier, Maghrebi period of Ibn 'Arabi's life, and Prof. Gril's translation admirably conveys the richly allusive and poetic style of writing characteristic of that period, a style in which the mystic's inspiration and experience is typically expressed in the form of a symbolic, mysterious 'per-

sonal commentary' on certain verses and stories of the Qur'an. Fortunately, the translator's notes and introductory explanations, based on years of study of Ibn 'Arabi's understanding of the Qur'an (especially in the *Futûhât*), help to elucidate the manifold allusions of this challenging, compressed and highly personal text.

The structure of this work follows a series of meditations – at first theological and cosmological, then increasingly personal and mystical – based on the Qur'anic descriptions of the 'journeys' of Muhammad (the *mi'râj*), Adam (the Fall), Idris/Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Jacob and Joseph, and Moses, whose trials inspire the last third of the entire book. Its remarkably personal form and intention are well summarized in the following passage, which also suggests the characteristic compression, intensity, and scope of this outwardly brief treatise:

Now this is a sample of *our* share in Lot's journey. Indeed every journey about which I am speaking is like that: I only speak of it in regard to *my* essence/self; I'm not trying to give an exegesis of their actual story (in the Qur'an). *For these journeys are only bridges and passageways set up so that we can cross over them (or 'interpret' them) into our own essence/selves and our own particular states.* They are beneficial to us because God has set them up as a place of passage for us: *'Everything that We recount to you of the stories of the messengers is so that We might strengthen your heart through that. For through this there has come to you the Truth and an admonishment, and a Reminder to all the worlds'* (11:120). And how eloquent is His saying that *'there has come to you through this the Truth'* and *'a Reminder'* of what is within you and in your possession that you have forgotten, so that these stories I've recounted to you will remind you of what is within you and what I've pointed out to you! For then you will know that you *are* every thing, in every thing, and from every thing.

As this passage would suggest, this is not the sort of treatise whose contents could really be 'summarized' in any short review. In fact, as Prof. Gril points out, many passages and allusions of this work are later developed at much greater

length, and usually in more accessible language, in various chapters of the *Futûhât al-Makkiyya*.

However, one of the fascinating features of this work (shared by his other writings from the same early period) is its consistently personal tone and the corresponding revelation, from time to time, of Ibn 'Arabi's own uniquely *personal* perceptions and insights. One striking example, at the very beginning (pp. 9–11), is his explanation – based on a famous hadith about the special spiritual rewards of those who will continue to strive for God in the corrupted circumstances of the 'latter days' – of the way that the inner realities of the spiritual world (*barzakh*) will become more and more manifest and accessible, at least to the saints and friends of God, as the Hour approaches. Such revealing passages illuminate Ibn 'Arabi's own personality and self-conception, while they can also provide indispensable 'keys' for deciphering other more cryptic allusions, in later works, to his deeper understanding of Islamic eschatology, the Mahdi and the 'manifestation' (*zuhûr*) of the messianic age.

The bilingual presentation of this translation, with facing Arabic text, will be greatly appreciated by all readers able to benefit from both languages, and the careful scientific edition (based on early manuscripts used by Qunawi and Fanari, among others) is complemented by abundant notes, including necessary explanations of hadith and Qur'an allusions, and cross-references to parallel developments in the *Futûhât* and other later works. As the above remarks indicate, the translation and edition alike presuppose a fairly thorough acquaintance with Ibn 'Arabi's work and its wider Islamic background; an eventual English version for a wider public might require more extensive notes and explanations. However, the bilingual publication of this remarkable text, like the comparable Arabic-Spanish edition of Ibn 'Arabi's *Mashâhid al-Asrâr* (by S. Hakim and P. Beneito) appearing in the same year, is another encouraging sign of the development of an increasingly sophisticated and well-informed international audience already familiar with the broad outlines of the Shaykh's thought, and ready to move on to a deeper appreciation of its depths and perennial significance.

*James Winston Morris*