The Man Without Attributes:
Ibn ‘Arabi’s Interpretation of Abu Yazid al-Bistami

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One of the characteristic epithets of the great Sufi master Ibn ‘Arabi is Muhyi al-Din, the “Revivifier of the Faith”. When we ask what this means in practice, it raises the question of how a mystic interacts with the tradition. A Sufi of the stature of Ibn ‘Arabi does not simply recapitulate the experiences and commentaries of early generations of Sufis. The more comprehensive the vision of a thinker, the more important it is to examine how this vision integrates, or in this case revivifies, the insights of previous thinkers into a synthetic edifice. It has long been recognized that Ibn ‘Arabi paid close attention to his spiritual forebears, certainly the prophets but also of course the many Sufis who first elaborated the parameters of the Islamic mystical tradition. The interpretations that he has given to the sayings and experiences of earlier Sufis provide valuable indices of the ways in which the Shaykh constructed his relationship with the Sufi tradition. As an example of Ibn ‘Arabi’s treatment of his predecessors, I would like to examine his interpretation of Abu Yazid al-Bistami (d. 848-9), the enigmatic Persian whose bold ecstatic sayings have posed a continuing challenge to subsequent generations. Especially when we contrast Ibn ‘Arabi’s interpretation of Abu Yazid with the Bistamian legacy as seen by other Sufis, we can come to understand the distinctiveness of Ibn ‘Arabi’s approach to the tradition.

Ibn ‘Arabi has creatively appropriated the legacies of many other early Sufis, but the role of interpretation in the processes of oral and literary transmission has not yet been clarified. Probably his best known reflection on an earlier Sufi is his commentary on the 157 questions of al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi on the subject of the “seal of the saints”. Ibn ‘Arabi also provided a critical commentary on a treatise by the Andalusian Ibn Qasyi (d. 1151).
Ibn Arabi considered himself a Sufi authority, and this view is widely accepted. His work is considered to be one of the most influential in the history of Sufism. Ibn Arabi was born in Cordoba, Spain, in 1165 CE and died in 1240 CE. He is known for his works on mysticism, metaphysics, and theosophy.

Ibn Arabi's philosophy is deeply influenced by the Islamic tradition, particularly the Sufi tradition. He is known for his ideas on the relationship between the individual and the divine, and his concept of the "universal being" that encompasses all existence.

Ibn Arabi's writings are characterized by a rich use of language and symbolism, often employing allegory and metaphor to convey his ideas. His works include the Kitab al-Futuha, the Kitab al-Futuhat al-Makkiyyah, and the Kitab al-Futuhat al-Makkiyyah al-Kabirah.

Ibn Arabi's teachings have had a profound influence on Sufi thought and practice, and his works continue to be studied and discussed by scholars and practitioners alike.

In the context of the image provided, the text appears to be discussing Ibn Arabi's role in the Sufi tradition and his influence on later generations of Sufis. The text mentions the importance of Ibn Arabi's works in the development of Sufism and highlights his contributions to the understanding of the relationship between the individual and the divine.
Abu Yazid, as he did with Dhu al-Nun, so our task theoretically requires us to comb through the works of Ibn ʿArabi, especially al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya, for significant references to Abu Yazid. In the scope of this article, it will only be possible to comment on a few examples, but these will suffice to frame the problem of how Ibn ʿArabi subtly interprets Abu Yazid in terms of his own overall perspective. Our main check will be the largest and oldest independent collection of the sayings of Abu Yazid, which was assembled in the eleventh century by al-Sahli (d. 1083) under the title Kitāb al-nur min kalimat Abī Tayfūr (“The Book of Light on the Sayings of Abu Tayfūr [Abu Yazid]”). The archaic and faulty Arabic text, with full isnāds, was edited by ʿAbd al-Rahman Badawi from two MSS in 1949, and a considerably abridged French translation by Abdelwahab Meddeb has recently appeared.\(^{23}\)

We may first consider cases where Ibn ʿArabi has reported the sayings of Abu Yazid with little or slight variation. An example is a saying on inspired exegesis. Ibn ʿArabi reports the following:

Abu Yazid said to the exoteric scholars, “You take your knowledge dead from the dead, but we take our knowledge from the Living who does not die!”\(^{24}\)

If we compare the version given by al-Sahli, we find an account with the isnād plus a slightly different context:

Yusuf ibn al-Husayn said, “I heard Iṣṭanba [Ibrahim al-Harawi] say, ‘I was attending the assembly of Abu Yazid, and the people said, ‘So-and-so has met so-and-so.’ Abu Yazid said, ‘Beggars! They have taken [their knowledge] from the dead, but I have taken our knowledge from the Living who does not die.’’’”\(^{25}\)

The basic point is the same, although the nuances are different. Ibn ʿArabi’s version does not refer to the people praising scholars for their direct transmission of learning from other scholars – Abu Yazid ridiculed this as a dead letter in comparison with the living God who is always accessible to the saint. Rather than being a comment on exoteric learning occasioned by a chance remark, Ibn ʿArabi’s version is a direct address to exoteric scholars as a class. There are other slight differences of tense and person that make al-Sahli’s version more circumstantial and Ibn ʿArabi’s more general. But none of this has major significance.

Another example is a saying which, shorn of context, becomes for Ibn ʿArabi an opportunity to explain a general point about the relationship between the servant and the divine Lord. Ibn ʿArabi’s comment actually precedes and sets up the quotation from Abu Yazid:

At root the servant was created only to belong to God and to be a servant perpetually. He was not created to be a lord. So when God clothes him in the robe of mastership and commands him to appear in it, he appears as a servant in himself and a master in the view of the observer. This is the ornament of the Lord, the robe that He has placed upon him. Someone objected to Abu Yazid that the people touched him with their hands and sought blessing from him (ṣīrāmatuṣ al-nās wa ṣabāturahuḥīm). He replied, “They are not touching me, they are only touching an adornment with which my Lord has adorned me. Should I forbid them from that, when it does not belong to me?”\(^{26}\)

The earlier version is somewhat different. It gives a dramatic account of a meeting between the youthful Abu Yazid and a condescending hadīth scholar, to whom Abu Yazid replies with a stunning revelation of his level of mystical experience:

A man from the Hadīth Folk said to Abu Yazid, “Do you pray properly?” He said, “Yes, God willing.” So he asked, “How do you pray?” He said, “I proclaim ‘God is Most Great’ in obedience, I recite with modulation, I kneel in veneration, I prostrate with humility, and I give salutation full of peace.” Then he said, “Boy, if you have this understanding, excellence, and knowledge, why do you permit the people to touch you seeking blessing?” He replied, “They are not touching me, they are only touching an adornment with which my Lord has adorned me. Should I forbid them from that, when it does not belong to me?”\(^{27}\)

While Ibn ʿArabi has quoted Abu Yazid’s words without significant variation, his omission of the context has displaced a story about the contrast between mystical experience and scholarly learning and transformed it into an instance of a metaphysical relationship.

Next are cases in which Ibn ʿArabi has given a critical interpretation of Abu Yazid’s saying, in which there is a major textual difference between Ibn ʿArabi’s version and Sahli’s. Here is an example:

Abu Yazid heard a Qu’ran reciter reciting the verse, “On the day when We shall muster the godfearing to the All-merciful in dromes” [9:85]. He wept until his tears drummed upon the pulpit. It is also said that blood flowed from his eyes until it struck the pulpit. He cried out, saying, “How strange! Where will he who is sitting with Him be mastered?” When it came around to our time, I was asked about that. I replied: “There is nothing strange except the words of Abu Yazid.”\(^{28}\)
Ibn 'Arabi goes on to say that the "god-giving" are those souls who are related to the Name of the All-merciful, the Overbearing, and not to the god-giving of the Quraanic name. Ibn 'Arabi explains this apparent anomaly by pointing out that the divine names, by being the same names of God, have different connotations depending on the context. He states that the Name of the All-merciful and the Overbearing are appropriate to the speaker, while the Quraanic name is appropriate to the listener. Ibn 'Arabi notes that Abu Yazid was amazed at the paradox of the Quraanic name and God's divine attributes.

Abu Yazid's reaction to the statement is recorded in the "muster" verse (1820):
1. "He became excited (al-bad'i) and said, "Whose is this with God?"
2. "No, for He is with me."

Ibn 'Arabi also comments on the Gregory A. Smith, "The Insurmountable Wall of the Names of God," in which he explains the relationship between the divine names and the Quraanic name.

These two concepts differ in the language used to describe the divine names and the Quraanic name. Abu Yazid's emotional reaction to the statement is explained in the context of the Quraanic name and God's divine attributes.
utterance (\textit{shathh}), but ‘place’ requires it of him.\textsuperscript{36} We shall return to the question of ecstatic utterances below, but for the moment it suffices to notice that Ibn ʿArabi’s frequent references to this saying primarily indicate his interest in the problem of attributes and the concept of delimitation. This has theological ramifications for the divine attributes as well as mystical significance for those who have, like Abu Yazid, gone beyond the attributes.\textsuperscript{39}

Other Sufis give a different version of this saying with an interpretation that follows another line entirely. Ruzbihan Baqli follows the version given by Sahlagi: “Morning and evening only belong to one who is held by the attribute, but as for me, I have no attribute.”\textsuperscript{40} This version preserves a much more archaic flavor than Ibn ʿArabi’s version, which uses a term from his own technical vocabulary; instead of saying that one is “held by” (\textit{taʾkhdhuhu}) the attribute, Ibn ʿArabi’s version has it that one is “limited by” (\textit{taqqyyada bi}) the attribute.\textsuperscript{41} In his original Arabic version of the commentary on ecstatic sayings, the \textit{Mantiq al-asrār} (“The Language of Consciences”), Ruzbihan Baqli comments that Abu Yazid’s experience of witnessing God has taken him beyond time, to participate for a moment in eternity:

By this saying he alludes to his being drowned in the vision of eternity, and none of his attributes remains in the vision of the might of the Real. “God has no morning or evening.” Morning and evening are from the course of sun and moon in the heavens, and in the conscience of Abu Yazid during the witnessing of the Real there was no existence of one who is less than “by the Real, with the Real, in the Real”. He did not perceive time, place, the moment, or the seasons in this momentary state. I recall what the Master of the Gnostics [i.e., the Prophet] said, “I have a time with God.”\textsuperscript{42}

In his own later Persian translation of the same commentary on ecstatic sayings (\textit{Shahr-i shathiyāt}), Ruzbihan appears to have had new thoughts on the subject. He now begins by stressing passion, ecstasy, and annihilation as the main features of Abu Yazid’s experience:

He alludes to ravishing (\textit{welad}) and agitation (\textit{hayajān}), and astonishment (\textit{hayat}) and bewilderment (\textit{haywān}), that is: “I am intoxicated and unconscious. From hearing the commands of creation without an ear, peace has been stripped from me, the bird of the elements has flown, my soul is lost in the hidden of the hidden, the form of existence has become changed for me, I remain in bewilderment without the attribute of wayfaring. Having recited the existence of the verse “Everything upon it is vanishing” (\textit{fānā}, Qur. 11:26, alluding to \textit{fānā}), I

am in the world without any trace, lifeless in love, and in the falsification of intellect and the confirmation of love, I cannot tell day from night.

Only after exhausting this theme does he return to the earlier interpretation of transcending time through witnessing God:

It is also possible that he alludes to the drowning of the soul in the vision of eternity, and in this cipher he explains that in eternity, the soul has no traces of temporal existence. “There is no morning or evening for God.”\textsuperscript{43}

The saying “There is no morning or evening for God”, also cited as \textit{hādith} by other Sufi writers,\textsuperscript{44} brings Ruzbihan to invoke another Prophetic saying, “The time I have with God”, the eternity that is the mode of relationship between God and the prophet. He concludes, “Abu Yazid became qualified by the all in the essence of the all.”

The variance between the views of Ruzbihan and Ibn ʿArabi does not provide any grounds for privileging one line of interpretation over any other – Ruzbihan has felt free to elaborate new interpretations and relegate his own earlier thoughts to a secondary position. Divergent texts and interpretations indicate rather that these Sufis used the sayings of earlier mystics as a way to explore the possibilities of meaning and experience rather than search for a single authoritative teaching. If we wished, we might try to reconstruct Abu Yazid’s “doctrine” of divine attributes, on the basis of a number of passages in which he uses the term \textit{sifā} or attribute.\textsuperscript{45} Such an archeological purpose did not play a part in the projects of either Ibn ʿArabi or Ruzbihan.

Another instance of Ibn ʿArabi’s reflection on Abu Yazid contains a complex meditation on two different sayings about the all-encompassing nature of the heart:

The heart of the gnostic is infinite and contains all. Abu Yazid said, “If the Throne and all that surrounds it, multiplied a hundred million times, were to be in one of the many corners of the Heart of the gnostic, he would not be aware of it.” This was the scope of Abu Yazid in the realm of corporeal forms. I say, however, that, were limitless existence, if its limit could be imagined, together with the essence that brought it into existence, to be put into one of the corners of the Heart of the gnostic, he would have no consciousness of it. It is established that the Heart encompasses the Reality, but though it be filled, it thirsts on, as Abu Yazid said.\textsuperscript{46}
Is this one-upmanship? It appears that Ibn 'Arabi criticizes Abu Yazid for merely using God’s Throne as the measure of the heart, instead of all of existence and the divine essence too. Ibn ‘Arabi’s commentator Qashani feels required to explain,

There is no criticism here, rather he means that Abu Yazid, in his universal specification, gazed at the realm of corporeal forms through annihilation. But if he had gazed with the eye of God, he would have said something like [what Ibn ‘Arabi said]; it was [seen by] the eye of the realm of corporeal forms, however, which is related to the beloveds by existent things.47

Thus the different comparisons used by the two mystics are merely a function of their different perspectives. The appearance of criticism is mitigated, too, by Ibn ‘Arabi’s reference to the infinite thirst of the gnostic’s heart, which Abu Yazid has expressed in several sayings. It seems as though Ibn ‘Arabi uses the experiences and sayings of Abu Yazid as points of departure for exploring his own experiences.48

In spite of his frequent reference to Abu Yazid and the high regard in which he held him, Ibn ‘Arabi shows a certain ambivalence with regard to some of his sayings. We have already seen how Ibn ‘Arabi pointed to limitations in Abu Yazid’s comprehension of the divine names, and to certain mystical perceptions that Ibn ‘Arabi had surpassed. His ambivalence becomes most pronounced when it comes to the classification of Abu Yazid’s sayings as ecstatic utterances (shathiyād). As shown above, Ibn ‘Arabi resisted the suggestion that the “no attributes” saying was an ecstatic utterance, arguing instead that the state of “place” required him (iqtiḍḥa) to speak. This comment needs to be placed into the context of Ibn ‘Arabi’s attitude toward shathiyād.

In his lexicon of mystical terminology, Ibn ‘Arabi briefly defined shath as “a verbal expression having a scent of thoughtlessness (ruḍ‘a) and a claim, which issues from an ecstasy (tawajjud) of the realizers of truth, the people of the religious law.”49 His unease with this category stems from its association with lack of mental control and from the assertiveness of its claims; even though it may emerge as a result of a legitimate spiritual state. In a fuller account of shath in Chapter 195 of al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya, Ibn ‘Arabi elaborated further, describing it as a legitimate spiritual claim made without any divine command and by way of boasting (fadhk). Chittick conveys Ibn ‘Arabi’s disapproval of shath by translating the term as “unruly utterance.”50 Ibn ‘Arabi contrasted this irrepresible form of speaking with the self-control of prophets such as Jesus, who only speak by God’s command and never boast. Indulging in shath is thus a result of heedlessness that never befalls the true knower of God except by accident. Falsely claiming a spiritual state is of course nothing better than a contemptible lie. Ibn ‘Arabi rightly isolates boasting as a characteristic element in shath, for its cultural antecedents go back to the boasting contest (muqaffleh) of pre-Islamic Arabia.51 Ibn ‘Arabi’s distinctiveness lies in his rejecting the boast as an improper assertion of self, while other Sufis view it as a rhetorical form that is an acceptable genre for the expression of ecstasy.

It is curious that in his discussion of shath, Ibn ‘Arabi does not refer to any particular ecstatic utterances of the Sufis, preferring instead to give examples of the sayings of Jesus from the Qur’an by way of contrast. This is odd because on numerous occasions, Ibn ‘Arabi cites famous examples of shathiyād (often without mentioning the names of their authors), in the context of other discussions, sometimes interpreting the same shath in radically different ways depending on the context. For instance, he continues his critical attitude toward spiritual arrogance, pointing out that those who say “I am God” or “Glory be to Me” are like Pharaoh; this condition is only possible when one is overcome by a state such as heedlessness, and it is not possible with a prophet or perfect saint.52 Although this remark does not mention Abu Yazid by name, he is clearly intended, although we have no evidence of Abu Yazid using the phrase “I am God” (anā allāh)53 Elsewhere, in contrast, Ibn ‘Arabi cites this very saying favorably, to illustrate the state of “the proximity of supererogatory works” (qurb al-nawāfīl). He says (in allusion to a hadith qudsi) that the only ones who can say “I am God” are God and the perfect servant whose tongue, hearing, sight, faculties, and organs are God — an example of this is Abu Yazid.54 In another context, Ibn ‘Arabi again refers to Abu Yazid as one who loves God so passionately that he does not see God as different from him, and God loves him to the point of being his hearing, sight, and tongue.55 Ambiguously, he comments on this state by quoting anonymously the first distich of a famous verse of Hallaj: “I am the one whom I desire, whom I desire is I” (anā man ahuw wa man ahuw an).56 As in the case of Abu Yazid, Hallaj was someone whose spiritual status Ibn ‘Arabi respected, though he expressed reservations about Hallaj’s unrestrained speech.57 A comprehensive analysis of Ibn ‘Arabi’s comments on the ecstatic sayings of Abu Yazid and al-Hallaj would certainly be desirable, but from these few examples it is clear that Ibn ‘Arabi sometimes dismisses ecstatic sayings as improper behavior, but that at other times he gives them a positive value in terms of recognized mystical
knowledge. In fact, Ibn 'Arabi makes it clear that the words of the saints do not have any independent meaning aside from the spiritual state (hilal) of the saint, as he understands it. Regarding the interpretation of two sayings on the subject of "gathering" (jam) by an anonymous Sufi and by al-Daqqaq, Ibn 'Arabi remarks,

He may mean this, which is the position that we maintain and that the realities bestow. If we knew who is the author of this saying, we would judge it by his state, as we judged al-Daqqaq through our knowledge of his station and state.\(^{58}\)

The same words could have another meaning if uttered by someone else in a different state.

To return to the "man without qualities" saying, it appears that Ibn 'Arabi regarded it as distinct from shath or ecstatic utterance, on the grounds that the spiritual state required (iqudidi) its expression by Abu Yazid. In other words, Abu Yazid did not say it of his own volition, as a boast, but he was in effect ordered to do so by God. In this way it remains a valid source of spiritual knowledge rather than the willful result of thoughtlessness or frivolity. Ruzbihan Baqli, on the other hand, classified this saying as shath without qualification; in his view that classification, far from discrediting the saying, raised it to a level of lofty spiritual experience. The difference lies in the varying attitudes of the two authors toward ecstatic expressions. Yet there is a rhetorical tone in some of Ibn 'Arabi's sayings about his own experiences that suggests shath, especially when he contrasts the experiences of others unfavorably with his own. In terms of his own theory as just discussed, however, Ibn 'Arabi's descriptions of his spiritual attainments do not constitute boasting, because he has not expressed them of his own will. On numerous occasions, Ibn 'Arabi maintains that his books and teachings have been the direct products of the divine will: "I swear by God, I say nothing, I announce no judgment that does not proceed from an inbreathing of the divine spirit in my heart."\(^{59}\) Although technically this escapes from the reproach of boasting, since it is under divine command, it nonetheless has the appearance of a rhetoric of transcendental hyperbole that shares important characteristics with shath. When he says that none of his teachings derive from his own will, Ibn 'Arabi is making the boast that he makes no boast.

To continue the line of thinking, one might view, for instance, the claims of later Naqshbandi Sufis such as Ahmad Sirhindi as a continual raising of the stakes sur-doultry earlier Sufis (such as Ibn 'Arabi) in a sort of spiritual one-upmanship, and it is worth noting that some of Sirhindi's statements were also characterized as ecstatic utterances.\(^{60}\) If Ibn 'Arabi's statements are not simply taken at face value as irrefutable guides to his spiritual status, then his critical attitude toward shath should be taken with a grain of salt. Ibn 'Arabi's dramatic statements about his own status as the "seal of the saints", for example, place him in a position beyond that of any other saint and only just below the prophets. To regard this as devoid of boasting while rejecting the ecstatic sayings of Abu Yazid or Hallaj amounts to special privilege. Unless an argument is to be made for extending this special privilege to Ibn 'Arabi, then his interpretations of earlier Sufis should be treated as exactly that. I suggest that analysis of this kind of rhetoric of transcendental hyperbole, as an extension of the boasting factor of shath, would be a fruitful way to approach the self-descriptions of a number of later Sufis.

How should we understand the distinctive interpretation that Ibn 'Arabi gives to the sayings of Abu Yazid? On the issue of selection, judgment must be deferred until a comprehensive study can be made of all the references that Ibn 'Arabi makes to his predecessors. In terms of textual transmission and variants we can say more, based on the examples reviewed above. It would be trivial and idiotic to complain that Ibn 'Arabi has forgotten or willfully altered an existing text, just because the versions that he gives sometimes differ from those found in Sahli and others. The textual variants have greater significance than that. As Chittick remarks, "In his usual manner, Ibn 'Arabi has in mind the sayings of earlier masters as the background for what he wants to explain, but then he takes the concept . . . back to its deepest meaning in the divine realities."\(^{61}\) Some of the textual variants described above certainly permit Ibn 'Arabi to expound upon his characteristic teachings on the divine attributes and the relation between God and humanity. It is in this doctrinal level of interpretation that we find the distinctive position of Ibn 'Arabi, in contrast with the positions of other interpreters such as Ruzbihan Baqli. Ibn 'Arabi is also selective in how he categorizes the genre of the sayings of his predecessors. Sayings classified as ecstatic utterances, even though proceeding from a genuine spiritual state, cannot be accepted as sources of doctrine. Sayings that emerge by divine necessity, untainted by the boasting of shath, may be treated as authoritative. Ibn 'Arabi does not make clear what criteria he uses to describe a statement as ecstatic boasting rather than authoritative inspiration; he at different times considers the same statement as falling under both categories. If Ibn 'Arabi's treatment of shath partakes, however lightly, of the rhetoric of boasting, then his interpretation of
the sayings and states of earlier Sufis also subordinates them to his own immediate doctrinal and experiential concerns.

Beyond the question of doctrinalization, we must also attempt to understand his use of quotations in terms of the function of texts, both written and oral, in Sufism; Ibn ‘Arabi is certainly not unique in this respect, but he has worked out his method in marvelously complete detail. If it is true that words, like people, find their meaning in contexts, it is really only through the reviving of a word, through its quotation from the mouth of another human being, that words receive life — so a quotation approached in this way is not a fixed external text that is “dead from the dead”, but is instead inspired (in the words of Abu Yazid) “by the Living who does not die”. Abu Yazid’s status as an Uwaysi guide, appearing directly like Khidr to inspire later generations of Sufis, may also have contributed to the flexibility with which Ibn ‘Arabi invokes him via quotation.62

We should recall that Ibn ‘Arabi’s model for a text is the Qur’an, a text that is fully personalized, for it is inseparable from the Messenger who brings it. It is also deeply enmeshed in the being of the perfect saint who actualizes the scripture; as Ibn ‘Arabi puts it, “the universal man is the Qur’an”.63 Ibn ‘Arabi himself is a person who is fully textualized; he maintains that “everything about which we speak, both in [my] teaching sessions and in my writings, comes only from the presence of the Qur’an and its treasures.”64 For him, the Qur’an, hadith, and the sayings and visions of the saints who are the inheritors of the prophets are not separate elements to be stitched together by laborious allegoresis. They are rather a seamless whole apprehended in a single intuition. The Qur’an (and by extension the sayings of the saints) is for Ibn ‘Arabi no dead letter, but perpetually renewed for every reciter.65

Quotation and interpretation, when viewed in this light, are not merely literary enterprises. The metaphor of giving life recalls another story that Ibn ‘Arabi relates about Abu Yazid. It seems that Abu Yazid blew on an ant he had killed, and it revived; Ibn ‘Arabi comments that God blew when he blew, and it was like Jesus’ miracles as recorded in the Qur’an.66 Despite its bizarre appearance, this story commends itself as a metaphor for quotation. As with the ant killed by Abu Yazid, the words of the saints have undergone some violence in the course of textual transmission, but their death is necessary before they can be inspired and revived. Quotation, textual variation, and classification cannot be separated from interpretation. Ibn ‘Arabi explained his teachings by reciting and interpreting the words of Sufi saints, so that he could become the revivifier of the faith.

Notes


6. Deladrière, La Vie, pp. 42–4. Al-Suyuti’s work has a similar complexity, relying on extensive quotations from two works by Ibn Bakuya, from Abu Nu‘aym, al-Sulami, and Bayhaqi.


10. Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya III 34.11 (this category includes other figures such as Hamdān al-Qassar and Abu Sa‘īd al-Kharraz).

11. Ibid., II 40.16–17 (citing also Sahl al-Tustari); this occurs in response to the first of al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi’s 157 questions directed to “the seal of the saints”, in the first wa‘l of chapter 75 of al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya.


13. Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya II 657.34; trans. SPK, p. 392, n. 34.

14. Ibid., I 261.11; cf. trans. in SPK, p. 392, n. 34.

15. Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya II 318.30–2 (citing also Sahl al-Tustari, Ibn al-‘Arif, and Abu Madyan); trans. SPK, p. 149.

16. Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya II 6.15, 30–1. For commentary on these terms, see Chodkiewicz, Le Souvenir, p. 120.


Surely there is a Reminder in that for whoever has a heart, or listens attentively, while he is witnessing... (Quran 30:7, 8)