

A Thematic Analysis of *Īqāz al-Himmam*:
Ibn ‘Ajībah’s commentary on the Aphorisms
(*Hikam*) of Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh.

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Dedication

In the name of God, most Merciful and Compassionate.
Praise be to God and may the blessings and peace of God
be upon Sayyidina Muḥammad
and upon his family, his people and his companions.

For my parents (may God shower His mercy on them both)
who in their own unique ways taught me that the true value
of a spiritual life is determined by how it ends.

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I have dedicated this work to my parents who both passed away in the span of less than a week, two years prior to the completion of this research. They were the ones whose support and encouragement set me on this path and in their own unique ways they taught me the facet of spirituality that goodly ends ultimately determine goodly lives. I also want to thank my dearest wife Umm Easa who has been a foundation of support for me throughout these many years and without whom I am sure I would not have found the strength to finish this process. Her editing skills were extremely helpful in bringing the draft of my research to final completion. Finally, I want to thank my son and little wonder, Easa, for being the joy of my eyes, the light of my life, and for simply being Easa.

Needless to say, all the deficiencies and flaws that remain in this thesis come from me, and all the good that can be found within it comes from the grace of the One. To Him we belong and to Him we are ever-returning.

Abstract

This thesis thematically analyses Ibn ‘Ajībah’s (d. 1224/1809) commentary on the Aphorisms (*Ḥikam*) of Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh (d. 709/1309), entitled *Īqāz al-Himam fī Sharḥ al-Ḥikam* (The Awakening of Spiritual Aspirations in the Commentary of the *Ḥikam*). The analysis uses Toshihiko Izutsu's methodology of semantic analysis to read and thematically parse the *Īqāz* before arranging the core thematic content under the analytic categories of teleology, ontology, soteriology and epistemology. Collectively these analytic categories encompass the notion of the ‘origin and the return’ (*al-mabda’ wa al-ma‘ād*), which is a comprehensive way of looking at the subject of spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*). The thesis concludes by identifying the pivotal semantic phrase (focus word or phrase) that best serves as the overarching theme across the *Īqāz* and by extension across its source text, the *Ḥikam*. The thesis highlights this central theme as being *ādāb al-ma‘rifah* (lit. the proprieties required of gnosis), that is, the propriety required to engender the experiential dimension of witnessing the One-ness of God (*tawḥīd*).

The thesis fills two significant gaps within western academic literature. Firstly, it demonstrates an effective and rigorous method for reading and studying Sufi texts in the form of semantic analysis. Whilst this method has been advocated as an ideal form of hermeneutics for Sufi and mystical texts by Giuseppe Scattolin it has yet to be applied and demonstrated across an entire Sufi text in scholarly criticism. Secondly, by performing such an analysis on a commentary of the *Ḥikam*, the thesis highlights the role of a commentarial tradition and how commentarial literature can clarify meanings of otherwise terse source texts. In doing so it demonstrates the pedagogical importance of structural textual correspondence within Sufi literature as evidenced through the case study of the *Īqāz*. Though the methodology of the thesis is primarily exegetical, mostly focused on textual analysis of the *Īqāz*, significant research was conducted in situating Ibn ‘Ajībah and the metaphysical ideas expressed within the *Īqāz* historically. Whilst limited by its focus on one text and its writer, the thesis demonstrates how such studies may be performed on other Sufi texts.

Transliteration and Abbreviations

The transliteration for Arabic used in this thesis follows the system of the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* except the Arabic *tā' marbūṭah* has been rendered ah not a. The system can be summarised as follows:

Consonants: ʾ, b, t, th, j, h, kh, d, dh, r, z, s, sh, ṣ, ḍ, ṭ, z, ʿ, gh, f, q, k, l, m, n, w, y

Tā' marbūṭah: -ah (-at in *idāfah* constructions)

Long and short vowels: ā, a, ī, i, ū, u

Diphthongs: ay, aw

Doubled vowels: iyy (final form ī), uww (final form ū)

Definite article: al- and 'l-

Case endings were only marked when necessary.

Common English names such as Sufism and Islam were not transliterated except when appearing as part of quoted Arabic text.

Dates

All dates have been given according to both the Hijri and Gregorian Calendars. Where there is only one date given it is the Gregorian date.

Abbreviations

EI1 *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st ed.

EI2 *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.

EI3 *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed.

Īqāz *Īqāz al-Himam fī Sharḥ al-Ḥikam*

Ḥikam *Kitāb al-Ḥikam*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The *Kitāb al-Ḥikam* (The Book of Aphorisms), henceforth called the *Ḥikam*, written by the Sufi Shādhilī master Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1309) has been described by the late Dr. Martin Lings (d. 1426/2005) as representing the "core of Sufism."¹ In a similar vein, the Sufi master Aḥmad Ibn ‘Ajīb al-Ḥasanī (d. 1224/1809), author of one of the most popular commentaries on the *Ḥikam*,² notes:

The greatest work authored in the realm of Sufism is *al-Ḥikam al-Aṭā’iyyah* ('The Aphorisms of Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh'), being a divinely conferred gift and lordly secret, given articulation to by sanctified thought as unfolding mysteries preceding from the realms of God’s absolute omnipotence (*al-Jabarūt*). I heard the teacher of my teacher, Mawlāy al-‘Arabī al-Darqāwī (d. 1238/1823) say something to the effect of: “I heard the Jurist, al-Bannāniyya, state”: "The *Ḥikam* of Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh is almost a revelation. If it were ever possible to pray with other than the Qur’ān, it would be permissible with the words of the *Ḥikam*."³

An indication of the *Ḥikam*’s influence and its widespread popularity can be gauged by the rich commentarial tradition to which it has given rise. This deserved reputation has arisen because its aphoristic format lends itself to the commentarial genre, designed to inspire a vibrant, intellectual and spiritual dialectic able to traverse lands and span across generations. Accordingly, some of its most prominent commentaries have been written by significant Islamic scholarly figures bridging divides of time and lands such as Ibn ‘Abbād al-Rundī (d. 792/1390),⁴ Aḥmad al-Zarrūq (d. 899/1493),⁵ ‘Alī Ibn ‘Abd Allah Bārās (d.

¹ Victor Danner, *Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s Sūfi Aphorisms: Kitāb al-Ḥikam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), XI.

² Entitled *The Awakening of Aspirations in the Commentary of the Ḥikam (Īqāz al-Himam fī Sharḥ al-Ḥikam)*. This text is the subject of this thesis and it shall henceforth be simply called the *Īqāz*.

³ Aḥmad Ibn ‘Ajīb al-Ḥasanī, *Īqāz al-Himam fī Sharḥ al-Ḥikam* (Beirut: Dār al-Khayr, 2005), 11.

⁴ Ibn ‘Abbād al-Rundī, *Ghayth al-Mawāhib al-‘Aliyyah Sharḥ -al-Ḥikam al-‘Aṭā’iyyah* (Damascus: Dār al-Khayr, 2020).

⁵ Aḥmad al-Zarrūq, *Sharḥ al-Ḥikam al-‘Aṭā’iyyah* (Cairo: Dār al-Sha‘b, 1985). Shaykh al-Zarrūq wrote around thirty different commentaries on the *Ḥikam*.

1094/1683),⁶ Aḥmad Ibn ‘Ajībāh (d. 1224/1809),⁷ Nūr al-Dīn al-Barīfakānī (d. 1268/1852),⁸ ‘Abd Allāh Gangōhī (d. 1329/1921),⁹ ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Sharnūbī (d. 1348/1929),¹⁰ and Sa‘īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī (d. 1434/2013).¹¹ Illustrative of this diversity, the preface to a recently published edition of ‘Alī Bārās’s commentary lists 54 different commentaries by title of book and name of author, listing 7 commentaries for the 9th/15th century; 9 commentaries for the 10th/16th century; 8 commentaries for 11th/17th century; 7 commentaries for 12th/18th century; 13 commentaries for 13th/19th century; and 10 commentaries for the 14th/20th century till 2016.¹² In the most striking example of the power of the *Ḥikam* to catalyse new meanings and insights as commentarial output, one need look no further than Aḥmad al-Zarrūq, who is reported to have written around thirty different commentaries on the *Ḥikam* during his lifetime, with each commentary purportedly befitting a different spiritual vantage point in his life.¹³

Whilst in itself the *Ḥikam* is a pithy Arabic text of 262 aphorisms (*ḥikam*), 4 epistles (*risālāt*), and an intimate meditative colloquy with God (*munājāt*) serving as its conclusion, its discourse is designed to encompass the entire spectrum of the spiritual wisdom (*ḥikmah*) required to traverse the Sufi path from beginning as a novice to ending as an adept. Containing all the essential insight required for spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*) on the Sufi path, its appeal lies precisely in its ability to speak to the essential problems and queries that plague the human condition in spiritual journeying along this trajectory. It is for this reason that any study of the *Ḥikam* or its commentaries promises to be especially instructive in expanding the horizons of intellectual and spiritual exploration, for it engages with the most

⁶ ‘Alī Ibn Abdāllah Bārās, *Shifā’ al-Saqam wa Fath Khazā’in al-Kilam fī ma‘ānī al-Ḥikam* (Beirut: Dār al-Ḥawī, 2016).

⁷ Aḥmad Ibn ‘Ajībāh al-Ḥasanī, *Īqāz al-Himam fī Sharḥ al-Ḥikam* (Beirut: Dār al-Khayr, 2005).

⁸ Nūr al-Dīn al-Barīfakānī, *Talkhīs al-Ḥikam Sharḥ al-Ḥikam al-‘Aṭā’iyyah* (Cairo: Al-Nāshir al-‘Arabī, n.d.).

⁹ This commentary is now available in English translation, alongside the Arabic text of the *Ḥikam* and Victor Danner’s English translation. See: Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh and ‘Abd Allāh Gangōhī, *The Book of Wisdoms, Kitāb al-Ḥikam: A Collection of Sufī Aphorisms* (London: White Thread Press, 2013).

¹⁰ ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Sharnūbī, *Sharḥ al-Ḥikam al-‘Aṭā’iyyah* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1989).

¹¹ Muḥammad Sa‘īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī, *al-Ḥikam al-‘Aṭā’iyyah Sharḥ wa Taḥlīl* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 2003)

¹² Bārās, *Shifā’*, 28- 34.

¹³ Danner, *Sūfī Aphorisms*, 21.

universal human aspects of concern and interest in spirituality. Given this broad spectrum of interest, it is no surprise to find the existence of a wide array of translations of the *Hikam* into modern European languages. According to Annemarie Schimmel the first English translation of the *Hikam* appeared in 1937, done by a certain R.Archer for a journal publication of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.¹⁴ More recent prominent examples of translations include Paul Nwyia's French translation in the second part of his book on Ibn 'Atā' Allāh,¹⁵ and Annemarie Schimmel's own part translation into German.¹⁶ When it comes to English, Victor Danner's pioneering translation of the *Hikam* along with its useful glosses continues to set the standard for translations that have come afterwards.¹⁷ It should be noted that Danner's published translation was built on his PhD, which at the time of this thesis, still remains the only PhD thesis in English which focused on a textual analysis of the *Hikam* or any of its commentaries.¹⁸ Despite these translation efforts, as of now there are no English publications which explore the important literary feature of the *Hikam*'s thematic arrangement of its aphorisms. The importance of this feature was alluded to by Danner himself who states that the connectivity and thematic arrangement displayed between the aphorisms of the *Hikam* "can be likened to a necklace of precious jewels."¹⁹ In alluding to what he thought this greater thematic connectivity and macro-structure was, Danner states that it is "illuminative gnosis, or *ma'rifa*, that constitutes the inner thread holding the many jewels in place and giving to the work its underlying perspective and unity."²⁰ In his commentarial notes, he equates this theme with the Islamic doctrine of

¹⁴ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 251.

¹⁵ Paul Nwyia, *Ibn 'Atā' Allāh (m.709/1309) Et la naissance de la confrerie sadilite* (Beirut: Dar Al Machreq, 2007).

¹⁶ Annemarie Schimmel, *Ibn 'Atā' Allāh, Bedrängnisse sind Teppiche voller Gnaden* (Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 1995).

¹⁷ Danner, *Sūfi Aphorisms*.

¹⁸ See: Victor Danner, "Ibn 'Atā' Allāh: A Sūfi of Mamlūk Egypt – An Introductory Study of the Origins of the Shādhiliyya and a Translation of the Kitāb al-Ḥikam," PhD diss., (Harvard University, 1970). Whilst there has not been another PhD in English on the *Hikam* there have been PhDs focusing on *Shādhiliyyah*, including notable research on Ibn 'Atā' Allāh. See: Benjamin G. Cook, "Understanding Sufism: Contextualising the Content," PhD diss., (University of Tasmania, 2014), Permalink: <https://eprints.utas.edu.au/22366/1/Whole-Cook-thesis.pdf>

¹⁹ Danner, *Sūfi Aphorisms*, 17.

²⁰ Danner, *Sūfi Aphorisms*, 18.

Divine Unity or *tawḥīd*.²¹ In similar vein in the foreword to Danner's work, Martin Lings states that the main theme of the *Ḥikam* is gnosis (*ma'rifah*) which is closely bound with the theme of spiritual propriety (*adab*) wherein such *adab* represents conformity of the soul with the Divine presence. Lings states:

The main theme of the *Ḥikam* is...Gnosis (*ma'rifah*). In other words, instead of being a purely objective exposition of Oneness of Being, that doctrine is "aimed" at the reader so that he may experience as it were a continual knocking on the doors of his intelligence. Bound up with this is the theme of *adab* which, when it is a Sufi term, may be translated "pious courtesy". Gnosis is not merely an act of the intelligence; it demands a total participation; and *adab* in its highest sense is the conformity of the soul, in all its different facets, to the Divine Presence.²²

Beyond these brief comments neither Lings nor Danner offer any further textual analysis of the *Ḥikam* to support their conclusions. Instead Danner alludes to a potential pathway for such textual analysis by stating that it would be the commentators from the same Shādhilī lineage of the *Ḥikam* who are best qualified to illustrate the jewel-like structure of its macro-theme. He states that this is because of their adherence to the same spiritual school which allows for a homogeneity of perspective and orientation.²³ This thesis follows Danner's pointer towards the *Ḥikam*'s commentarial tradition by thematically analysing the *Īqāz*, one of the *Ḥikam*'s leading commentaries. In thematically analysing the *Īqāz* we will be able to test the intuitions of Danner and Lings concerning the central theme of the *Ḥikam* and evaluate their claims in light of textual evidence that can be cross-checked and emulated by others.

²¹ Danner, *Sūfi Aphorisms*, 18.

²² Danner, *Sūfi Aphorisms*, Foreword.

²³ Danner, *Sūfi Aphorisms*, 16 – 17.

Why focus on a commentary of the *Ḥikam*?

Given the lacuna in research on the thematic structure underlying the *Ḥikam*, my thesis agrees with Danner's suggestion that it is the *Ḥikam*'s commentarial tradition which is best suited as a means to discern this structure. Accordingly, as mentioned, it thematically explores Ibn 'Ajībah's *Īqāz*, one of the leading commentaries of the *Ḥikam*. My reasons for choosing a commentary for such analysis is intended to address another lacuna, namely, the lack of PhD research on Islamic commentarial works in English. In this regard Eric Van Lit notes how despite the commentarial genre being extensively used in post-classical Islamic discourse there still remains remarkably little discussion on it within western academic literature of Islamic studies.²⁴ This neglect may have arisen because of judgments on the lack of intellectual benefit to be gained from such research, as epitomised by the likes of Montgomery Watt who held the Islamic commentarial genre to be representative of a "lack of originality" and intellectual "stagnation."²⁵ This thesis holds the opposite perspective, agreeing with Robert Wisnovsky who notes, "Once we have shuffled off our prejudices about commentaries' being inevitably dry, unoriginal and philosophically uninteresting, we can begin to see that the post-classical Islamic period (ca.1100–1900 AD) might well contain a rich lode of philosophy to be mined by current and future researchers".²⁶

The current paucity of research on Islamic commentarial works especially applies to Sufism, a research gap that persists because of a lack of contextualization of its subject matter. Sirajuddin Cook notes how two dominant trends in Sufi academic studies within the west continue to be either the philological approach which focuses on primary texts or

²⁴ L.W.C. (Eric) Van Lit, "Commentary and Commentary Tradition", *MIDÉO*, 32, (2017), 3-26. Online since 23 April 2017, connection on 16 August 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/mideo/1580>

²⁵ W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985), 134.

²⁶ Robert Wisnovsky, "The Nature and Scope of Arabic Philosophical Commentary in Post-Classical (ca.1100–1900AD) Islamic Intellectual History: Some Preliminary Observations," in *Philosophy, Science and Exegesis in Greek, Arabic, and Latin Commentaries*, eds. Peter Adamson, Han Baltussen and M.W.F. Stone (London: Institute of Classical Studies, University of London, 2004), 149–91.

the anthropological approach which focuses on Sufi social networks.²⁷ Referring to this "problem of contextualising Sufism," Cook states that in both approaches Sufism in its social institutions and its texts are seen as not being systematically connected and underpinned by a greater historical context of the Islamic tradition, a view he holds to have arisen as a remnant of early Orientalist positions that saw Sufism as ancillary to Islam.²⁸ In his opposition to this view, he cites how even the most expansive and expository of Islamic Sufi texts such as al-Ghazālī's *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (*The Revival of the Religious Knowledge*) or Ibn 'Arabī's *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyah* (*Meccan Openings*) are never self-contained, in that they would be incomprehensible and appear elliptical without their readers possessing a greater knowledge of the historical, Islamic context underpinning them.²⁹

It is in this regard of exploring such historical and intellectual context that studying a commentary becomes particularly useful, for commentarial traditions allow for an exploration of the historical genealogy of ideas as they develop beyond the original horizons of its source texts. In this manner, the commentarial tradition on the *Ḥikam* becomes part of its historical continuity, serving in this manner as a "structural textual correspondence."³⁰ Eric Van Lit defines such correspondence as being a historical "commentary tradition" that develops between a source text (hypotext) and a later series of texts (hypertexts) wherein the latter derive their construction from the source text by using its terminology and textual content in structurally significant ways.³¹ Such correspondence with the hypotext (*matn*) may include a variety of hypertexts such as commentaries (*sharḥ*, pl. *shurūḥ*), glosses (sing. *ḥāshiyah/ta'liqah*), summaries (sing. *mukhtaṣar*), comparisons (sing. *muḥākamah*), versifications (sing. *naẓm*) and blurbs (sing. *taqrīz*), wherein the hypertexts serve as pedagogical tools that enable a school of discourse to develop around the selected hypotext.³² Of such commentarial traditions Van Lit states that the truest form

²⁷ Abu Bakr Sirajuddin Cook, *Ibn 'Ata'Allah, Muslim Sufi Saint and Gift of Heaven* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 7-12.

²⁸ Cook, *Ibn 'Ata'Allah*, 7-12.

²⁹ Cook, *Ibn 'Ata'Allah*, 30.

³⁰ Van Lit, "Commentary Tradition," 4.

³¹ Van Lit, "Commentary Tradition," 15-20.

³² Van Lit, "Commentary Tradition," 15.

of such correspondence would be when the hypertext fully includes the hypotext.³³ The *Īqāz* is an example of this type of commentary.

Khaled El-Rouayheb demonstrates how such commentarial traditions developed in an array of Islamic sciences through the course of centuries of Islamic intellectual history by specifically focusing on the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb in the Seventeenth Century.³⁴ Asad Ahmed notes how this cross-generational and cross-cultural pedagogical function of commentarial works was particularly dominant within spiritual and philosophical discourse wherein “the author of a lemma deliberately presents his argument in a truncated and allusive form, so that it may serve as a prompt for perpetuating a living philosophical dialectic.”³⁵ Paul Nwyia notes how Sufi literature is particularly representative and prominent in this regard, deliberately employing metaphor, poetry, aphoristic and symbolic wording to generate a living tradition and language founded on spiritual experience.³⁶ He states that Sufi allusion is, “an existential analysis in that it construes the real by bringing it up to the light of consciousness so that experience and language are born in the same act.”³⁷

Ibn ‘Ajībah explains how such allusion working as literary device both contains and transmits spiritual experience when he states: “[This] subject matter [of Sufism] is not permissible to be put in books in an openly discursive manner but it is instead mentioned through indicative pointers by metaphors and allusion. Indeed, this knowledge of ours is entirely allusion.”³⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah’s position is that when Sufis depart from such allusion it is usually to cater to less refined spiritual states and perspicacity wherein a need arises to resort to more explicit outward expression (*‘ibārah*).³⁹ Given Ibn ‘Ajībah’s understanding

³³ Van Lit, “Commentary Tradition,” 15.

³⁴ Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

³⁵ Asad. Q. Ahmed, “Post-Classical Philosophical Commentaries/Glosses: Innovation in the Margins,” *Oriens* 41 (2013): 317-348, 320.

³⁶ Paul Nwyia, *Exégèse coranique et langage mystique* (Beirut: Dar al Machreq, 1998), 312-313.

³⁷ Nwyia, *Exégèse*, 4.

³⁸ Aḥmad ibn ‘Ajībah al-Ḥasanī, *al-Futuḥāt al-Ilāhiyyah fī ‘l-Mabāḥith al-Aṣliyyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2000), 24 (as translated by me).

³⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 150.

of Sufi literature, it is not surprising that he would author his own commentary upon the *Hikam* as being a response to the greater expository need of his time. He cites that it was his teacher, Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad al-Būzīdi (d. 1229/1813), who requested him to expound upon the original aphoristic nature of the *Hikam* and to author a “medium length commentary (*sharḥan mutawassīṭan*) that clarifies the meanings [of the *Hikam*] and realises its structural aims.”⁴⁰ Notably, his teacher instructed him to rely on God alone and whatever He opens up from the treasures of His knowledge and wisdom (*ḥikmah*).⁴¹ The historical fact that the *Īqāz* became amongst the most widely read and disseminated commentaries of the *Hikam* indicates Ibn ‘Ajībah achieved much success in realizing his teacher’s intent. Accordingly, this thesis thematically explores the *Īqāz*, considering it be amongst the best representatives of the commentarial tradition of the *Hikam* and hence an ideal prism for articulating its structural aims, which is the subject of our study.

Why specifically the *Īqāz*?

The *Īqāz* itself stands as a masterpiece of the Sufi tradition and has been cited as being amongst the most authoritative commentaries on the *Hikam* by Sufi masters within the same lineage, being said to contain valuable material “for the person at the beginning, the middle, and the end of the spiritual way.”⁴² Danner cites the most well-known commentators of the *Hikam* as being those authored by Ibn ‘Abbād al-Rundī, Aḥmad Zarrūq and Ibn ‘Ajībah. He states that these three commentators particularly stand out because they mirror Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s life trajectory, becoming known as spiritual guides within the same Shādhilī lineage.⁴³ As a gauge to their enduring success and legacy, Aḥmad Zarrūq and Ibn ‘Ajībah would eventually have eponymic offshoot Shādhilī branches named after them, called the Zarrūqiyyah and Ajībiyyah respectively.⁴⁴ Amongst this trilogy of

⁴⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 11.

⁴¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 11.

⁴² The quote is from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Shāghūrī al-Ḥusaynī (d. 1425/2004), a spiritual guide of the Shādhilī path in Syria, as referenced by his student and fellow Shādhilī guide Nuh Ha Mim Keller. See: Nuh Ha Mim Keller, *Sea Without Shore: A Manual of the Sufi Path* (Amman: Sunna Books, 2011), 135.

⁴³ Danner, *Sūfī Aphorisms*, 16 – 17.

⁴⁴ Jean Louis Michon, *The Autobiography (Fahrasa) of a Moroccan Soufi: Ahmad Ibn ‘Ajība*, trans. David Streight (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 1999), 25.

commentaries, I deem the *Īqāz* to be the most relevant as it incorporates the insights of the previous two commentaries and illustrates a culmination of an evolution of five centuries of Sufi discourse. I also believe Ibn ‘Ajībah’s mode of expression and voice to be clearer to discern than other major commentators. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, Ibn ‘Ajībah would often use particles of semantic connection to distinguish his own voice from intratextual connectivity with other people within his commentarial tradition, making it much easier to perform textual analysis. Supporting my view of preferring Ibn ‘Ajībah to other commentators is Dr. ‘Āsim Ibrāhīm al-Kayyālī, a spiritual guide in the same Shādhilī lineage of both Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh and Ibn ‘Ajībah, whose scholarly credentials include a PhD in Islamic philosophy from Sorbonne University. In the introduction to his critical edition of the *Īqāz*, Dr. ‘Āsim lists what he deems to be the most important commentaries on the *Ḥikam* before stating that the *Īqāz* is to be considered the most beneficial of all of the *Ḥikam*’s commentaries, being the one most circulated amongst spiritual aspirants (*murīd*) and the one most advised to be read by spiritual guides (*shuyūkh*) for their students.⁴⁵ Notably Ibn ‘Ajībah authored his commentary in the midst of a revival of the Shādhilī order of which the *Īqāz* was a key part, wherein his grand teacher Mawlāy al-‘Arabī al-Darqawī (d. 1238/1823) is said to have personally trained 40,000 disciples.⁴⁶ Given this understanding, by focusing on the *Īqāz*, in addition to our thematic analysis, we will be able to explore the underlying historical genealogy of ideas of the *Ḥikam* within the Shādhiliyyah School as they developed until 19th century Maghreb. This is a pivotal historical point in that it coincides with the dawn of the colonialist project within the Maghreb, a point after which both the Maghreb and the wider Muslim world would never again be the same.

⁴⁵ Aḥmad Ibn ‘Ajībah al-Ḥasanī, *Ib ‘ād al-Ghumam ‘an Īqāz al-Himam fī Sharḥ al-Ḥikam* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2014), 4.

⁴⁶ Mawlay al-‘Arabī ad-Darqawī, *The Darqawī Way: Letters from the Shaykh to the Fuqara*, trans. Aisha Bewley (Cambridge: Diwan Press, 1981), 26.

Publications of the *Īqāz*

The *Īqāz* has not yet been fully translated in the form of a published English translation although incomplete draft versions of English translations do exist online.⁴⁷ In terms of Arabic print, it has been published in multiple different Arabic editions by different publishers. Some of its popular prints include the original Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah 1996 edition published in Beirut, followed by the 2013 and recently republished 2016 version also by Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah in Beirut. Notably this last edition has been edited and checked by Dr. ‘Āsim Ibrāhīm al-Kayyālī. There is also the relatively recent 2005 Dār al-Khayr version, also published in Beirut which was edited and checked by Dr. Mājid ‘Arasān al-Kaylānī who was a student of the late Shaykh Muhammad Sa‘id al-Kurdi, al-Kurdi considered the founder of the Shadhili-Darqawi order in Jordan.⁴⁸ Given that all of these versions are relatively similar, I have utilised and referenced the *Dār al-Khayr* version throughout this thesis.

The Methodology of Semantic Analysis

The hermeneutical methodology I have employed in analysing the *Īqāz* is based upon the method of semantic analysis advocated by the Japanese scholar, Professor Toshihiko Izutsu (d. 1414/1993). Izutsu was a scholar of mysticism in addition to a philosopher of language, and he saw language as consisting of semantic fields, which are collections of interdependent words that are ordered and structured in accordance with common semantic conceptual associations that underpin them.⁴⁹ To Izutsu, it is in studying these semantic relationships through such fields that the *Weltanschauung* or worldview of the people who use that language can be discerned. This is why he defines semantic analysis of words as being the process by which we can obtain "a most faithful reflection of the general

⁴⁷ Aisha Bewley, "Wakening Apiration (Iqādh Al-Himmam): Commentary on the Hikam by Ibn ‘Ajiba." Last accessed September 9, 2021. <http://bewley.virtualave.net/hikcom1.html>

⁴⁸ Hasan A. Hanieh, *Sufism and Sufi Orders: God's Spiritual Paths Adaptation and Renewal in the Context of Modernization*, (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Amman, 2011), 120.

⁴⁹ Toshiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Qur'an: Semantics of the Qur'anic Weltanschauung* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, reprint. 2008, 2002), 20.

tendency, psychology and otherwise, of the people who use the word(s) as part of their vocabulary."⁵⁰ Amongst contemporary scholars Giuseppe Scattolin builds on Izutsu's methods and considers semantic analysis to be particularly appropriate for reading and analysing Sufi texts. Scattolin states that Sufi literature should be studied and analysed on three levels: the contextual or synchronic, the historical or diachronic, and the meta-historical or transcendental.⁵¹ At the synchronic level Scattolin suggests adopting the approach of semantic analysis because it allows for demonstrating "objectivity" towards a text in that it maps mutual connections between words according to their actual literary context.⁵² For the diachronic level Scattolin notes how a historical linguistic study should be carried out that places the author of a Sufi text in the context of a historical tradition of "Sufi language".⁵³ He cites how linguistic research indicates the capacity of words to continually transform in meaning according to variances in time and cultural milieu and that this is particularly relevant when situating authors in the frame of their historical development.⁵⁴ Such a historical study entails not only a mapping of the key personalities associated with an author and their text but more importantly a mapping of the development of the key motifs within the text as expressed within its historical epistemological horizons. Scattolin describes the synchronic and diachronic approaches as collectively being a necessary, objective, 'historical-phenomenological', but ultimately only exterior approach to reading a Sufi text.⁵⁵ To him, these approaches serve as the necessary and "just" prerequisites for textual analysis purely so that they can act as the fairer ground for the conveyance of the mystic experience embodied in them. In his analysis, he terms this final stage of reading as one that opens to accessing the ultimate purpose of Sufi texts, namely the transmission of a mystic experience of God as the Absolute, a level of engagement he terms 'meta-historical' or 'transcendental'.⁵⁶ This thesis restricts itself to adopting the first two levels of Scattolin's approach, namely the synchronic and diachronic approaches only.

⁵⁰ Izutsu, *God and Man*, 17.

⁵¹ Giuseppe Scattolin, "Reading Sufi Texts: Some Hermeneutical Insights," *Islamochristiana* 33, (2007): 101-119.

⁵² Scattolin, "Hermeneutical Insights," 104.

⁵³ Scattolin, "Hermeneutical Insights," 111.

⁵⁴ Scattolin, "Hermeneutical Insights," 111.

⁵⁵ Scattolin, "Hermeneutical Insights," 112.

⁵⁶ Scattolin, "Hermeneutical Insights," 112.

It adopts the synchronic approach by performing semantic analysis on the *Īqāz* in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. It adopts the diachronic approach by performing historical analysis on the life of Ibn ‘Ajībah and studying the historical development of key motifs within the *Īqāz* in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. The thesis does not apply Scattolin's third level of transcendental analysis because I believe there are inherent problems in seeking to map the conveyance of mystic experience within an academic study. This will be discussed in greater detail in the thesis conclusion. The core of this thesis is the performing of semantic analysis on the *Īqāz*. Scattolin notes that such an analysis helps builds the "semantic vocabulary" of a text which in turn, "shows the way words are organized and interconnected according to the author's inner perception and vision expressed in the fabric or texture of the text."⁵⁷ These mutual connections between words in the form of semantic fields consisting of reciprocal relationships eventually reveal a general structure over the text.⁵⁸ By seeing this macro-structure of semantic fields across a text, the purpose of semantic analysis is to point out to the degree possible, "the central focus-word or focus-phrase (or maybe a number of pivotal words or phrases) around which the whole semantic vocabulary of the text is organized, and through which the author's vision in its inner unity and consistency is shown."⁵⁹

Izutsu applied his semantic analysis to the Qur’ān's conceptual terminology in his book *God and Man in the Qur’an*,⁶⁰ isolating outstanding key terms such as *Allāh*, *islām* (submission), *īmān* (faith), *kāfir* (disbeliever), *nabī* (prophet), *rasūl* (messenger) and *waḥy* (revelation).⁶¹ In analysing these terms from their relationships amongst themselves and other words Izutsu was able to identify several important semantic fields in the Qur’ānic vocabulary, indicating a multi-strata structure arranged across a polarity of opposing themes. Once the relevant semantic fields were highlighted, Izutsu was able to determine the highest focus word as being that which reigns across the entire domain of semantic fields and resolves the tension of opposites, which he identified as being *Allāh*.⁶²

⁵⁷ Scattolin, "Hermeneutical Insights," 109.

⁵⁸ Giuseppe Scattolin, "Reading Sufi Texts: Between Ibn al-Fāriḍ's and Rūmī's mystical experience." In *International Mevlānā Symposium Papers*, Istanbul, (2010), 1497.

⁵⁹ Scattolin, "Hermeneutical Insights," 110.

⁶⁰ Izutsu, *God and Man*.

⁶¹ Izutsu, *God and Man*, 3, 18, and 74.

⁶² Izutsu, *God and Man*, 31.

Employing the same mode of textual study, Scattolin applied such semantic analysis to ‘Umar ibn al-Fāriḍ’s (d. 631/1234) ode *Naẓm al-sulūk* (*The Order of Spiritual Wayfaring*) commonly known as *al-Tā’iyyat al-Kubrā* (*The Greater Tā’*).⁶³ In his exercise he concluded that the absolute focus-word which governs the entire text was the term *anā* (I, Myself). He highlighted how the term reflected different facets throughout the text wherein the individuated "self (*anā*)" at the beginning of the text later gives way to an absolute "Self," in which what is witnessed (*shuhūd*) becomes the "One Absolute Subject" as the centre of all existence who alone truly has the right to say *anā*.⁶⁴ Consistent with Izutsu’s approach, in my semantic analysis of the *Īqāz*, I will be analysing and isolating the key words and terminology within it that play a pivotal role in forming its basic thematic structure. These words will be arranged and discussed conceptually within the thematic analytical categories I have highlighted, namely, teleology, ontology, soteriology, and epistemology. Whilst discussing these terms and concepts within the analytical categories, their interdependent meanings, broader semantic structures and conceptual associations underpinning them will be highlighted before identifying the highest focus word which reigns across the entire domain of semantic fields. The choice of my themes and analytical categories is not coincidental as collectively these analytic categories encompass the notion of the ‘origin and the return’ (*al-mabda’ wa al-ma’ād*), which is a most comprehensive way of looking at the subject of spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*). Illustrative of this importance, Islamic mystics such as Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad Shīrāzī (d. 1050/1640), also known as Mullā Ṣadrā, and Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) hold that the Qur’ān is fundamentally concerned with three themes: the origin (*mabda’*), the return (*ma’ād*), and the path that one must take to his place of return (*ṭarīq*).⁶⁵ Mullā Ṣadrā further cites these themes as underlying the opening chapter of the Qur’ān, *Sūrat al-fātiḥah*, itself considered a microcosm of the book.⁶⁶ Given that the Qur’ān is the foundational text of spiritual guidance for Muslims, it would be no exaggeration to posit that these themes effectively

⁶³ Giuseppe Scattolin, "The Mystical Experience of ‘Umar Ibn al-Fāriḍ or the Realization of Self (*anā*)," *The Muslim World*, LXXXII/3-4 (July-October, 1992): 274-286.

⁶⁴ Giuseppe Scattolin, "Reading Sufi Texts," 1501.

⁶⁵ Mohammed Rustom, *The Triumph of Mercy: Philosophy and Scripture in Mullā Ṣadrā* (New York: SUNY Press, 2012), 15.

⁶⁶ Rustom, *Triumph of Mercy*, 15.

encompass the broader metaphysics of Islamic spirituality. This is the reason why some of the greatest Islamic texts authored in the realms of philosophy, theology and mysticism have concerned themselves exclusively with these categories.⁶⁷ As my thesis is concerned with the semantic analysis of the *Īqāz* from the perspective of *sulūk* I have chosen to restrict myself to these themes as analytical categories. In its approach this thesis would be similar to the works of William Chittick on Ibn al-‘Arabī,⁶⁸ Benjamin Cook’s studies on Ibn ‘Ata’ Allah,⁶⁹ and Mohammed Rustom's research on Mullā Ṣadrā.⁷⁰ My aim is to further build on such research in setting an example of how Sufi literature and its commentaries can be read and analysed thematically. The hope is that any insights may inspire further research concerning studies of Sufi commentarial traditions and their authors.

Related Research on Ibn ‘Ajībah

Beyond the *Īqāz* I have been fortunate to avail many of Ibn ‘Ajībah’s works in Arabic that have been published, with some even translated into English that have helped serve as companion pieces to the *Īqāz*. The most relevant of these include his commentary on the *al-Mabāḥith al-‘aṣliyyah* (*The Foundational Research*), which was a didactic poem authored by Ibn al-Bannā of Zaragoza on the principles of the spiritual path.⁷¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah’s commentary on the poem has been translated into English under the title *The*

⁶⁷ See: *al-Mabda’ wa al-ma’ād* by Ibn Sīnā (d.428/1037); *Risālah fī al-mabda’ wa-al-ma’ād*, by Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī (d.663/1265); *Risālah dar mabda’ wa ma’ād* by ‘Azīz al-Nasafī (d.686/1287); *Sayr al-‘ibād min-al-mabda’ ilā-al-ma’ād* by Abul-Majd Sanā’ī Ghaznavi (d.535/1141); and *al-Mabda’ wa al-ma’ād* by Ṣadr ad-Dīn Shīrāzī (d. 1050/1640).

⁶⁸ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-‘Arabi’s Metaphysics of Imagination* (New York: SUNY Press, 1989).

⁶⁹ Abu Bakr (Benjamin) Sirajuddin Cook, *Ibn ‘Ata’ Allah, Muslim Sufi Saint and Gift of Heaven* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017).

⁷⁰ Rustom, *Triumph of Mercy*.

⁷¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah’s commentary is entitled *al-Futuḥāt al-ilāhiyyah fī ‘l-mabāḥith al-aṣliyyah* (Divine openings in the Foundational Research). The original poem *al-Mabāḥith al-‘Aṣliyyah* (The Foundational Research) was authored by Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf al-Tujaybī also known as Ibn al-Bannā of Zaragoza, his life and death remained relatively unknown. The poem was popularized after his death as an instructive manual on the principles of the spiritual path (*Uṣūl al-ṭarīq*), despite Ibn al-Bannā’s anonymity. The Sufi scholar Aḥmad al-Zarrūq in Ibn ‘Ajībah’s commentary is quoted as saying: "I have not come across the date of his death, other than that I assume he (Ibn al-Bannā) was of recent times." See: Aḥmad ibn ‘Ajībah al-Ḥasanī, *al-futuḥāt al-ilāhiyyah fī ‘l-mabāḥith al-aṣliyyah* (Beirut: Dar al-kutub al-‘ilmiyyah, 2000), 4.

Basic Research.⁷² This work was written prior to the *Īqāz* and elucidates on many of Ibn ‘Ajībah’s metaphysics that underpin the *Īqāz*, allowing for it serve as a useful cross reference. Another key companion piece is Ibn ‘Ajībah’s lexicon of Sufic terminology, entitled *Mi‘rāj al-tashawwuf ilā ḥaqā’iq al-taṣawwuf* which has been translated by Mohamed Fouad Aresmouk and Michael Abdurrahman Fitzgerald as *The Book of Ascension to the Essential Truths of Sufism*.⁷³ This work was most useful in understanding Ibn ‘Ajībah’s terminology in the *Īqāz* especially given he references this as a companion text within his introduction therein.⁷⁴

With regards to research in Arabic print on Ibn ‘Ajībah and the development of the spiritual path of the *Darqāwīyyah* during his lifetime and afterwards, a recent seminal work is that authored by Dr. Muḥammad al-Mahdī al-Tilmisānī entitled *al-Shurafā’ awlād Ibn ‘Ajībah* (The honoured ones: The children of Ibn ‘Ajībah).⁷⁵ The work traces the development of Ibn ‘Ajībah’s own specific lineage following his demise. It begins with exploring the biography of his brother Sayyid al-Hāshimī (d. 1224/1809) who lived only 16 days after Ibn ‘Ajībah’s death,⁷⁶ and then focuses on the lives of Ibn ‘Ajībah’s sons Mawlāy al-Ṣādiq, Sayyid Aḥmad (d.1274/1858) and Sayyid al-Ḥājī ‘Abd al-Qādir thereafter (d.1314/1896).⁷⁷ ‘Abd al-Qādir was Ibn ‘Ajībah’s last son and it was at his hands that several thousands of disciples would enter the Sufi path, before he eventually died at the ripe age of 90.⁷⁸ The author of this work has also written biographies on Ibn ‘Ajībah’s teacher, Muḥammad al-Būzīdī (d. 1229/1814), and his grand-teacher, Mawlāy al-‘Arabī al-Darqāwī (d. 1238/1823) both of whom outlived Ibn ‘Ajībah.⁷⁹ Concerning research on Ibn ‘Ajībah’s life in western

⁷² Aḥmad ibn ‘Ajībah al-Ḥasanī, *The Basic Research: being the commentary on the poem of Ibn al-Banna of Saragossa*, trans. AbdalKhabir al-Munawwarah and Haj Abdassabur (Kuala Lumpur: Madinah Press, 2004).

⁷³ Aḥmad ibn ‘Ajībah al-Ḥasanī, *Mi‘rāj al-tashawwuf ilā ḥaqā’iq al-taṣawwuf*, trans. The Book of Ascension to the Essential Truths of Sufism: A Lexicon of Sufic Terminology, Mohamed Fouad Aresmouk & Michael Abdurrahman Fitzgerald (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2011).

⁷⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz al-Himam fī Sharḥ al- Ḥikam* (Beirut: Dar al-Khayr, 2005), 16.

⁷⁵ Muḥammad al-Mahdī al-Tilmisānī, *al-Shurafā’ awlād Ibn ‘Ajībah – al-far‘a al-‘Ajībī min al-Ṭarīqah al-Darqāwīyyah* (Beirut: Dar al-kutub al-‘ilmiyyah, 2017).

⁷⁶ al-Tilmisānī, *al-Shurafā’*, 56.

⁷⁷ al-Tilmisānī, *al-Shurafā’*, 86 – 94.

⁷⁸ al-Tilmisānī, *al-Shurafā’*, 94.

⁷⁹ Muḥammad al-Mahdī al-Tilmisānī, *al-Imām Mawlāy al-‘Arabī al-Darqāwī Shaykh al-Ṭarīqah al-Darqāwīyyah*, (Beirut: Dar al-kutub al-‘ilmiyyah, 2007); and Muḥammad al-Mahdī al-

academia much of that recently done has built upon the pioneering work of Jean-Louis Michon, a French scholar who was primarily responsible for introducing Ibn ‘Ajībāh to the western academic community through translating his biography and other works from Arabic to French.⁸⁰ This biography has been translated into English by David Streight.⁸¹ Another key work translated by Michon into French and then later by Streight from the French into English are two treatises written by Ibn ‘Ajībāh on the topic of 'Oneness of Being/Existence' (*waḥdat al-wujūd*).⁸² Two further prominent commentaries written by Ibn ‘Ajībāh which have been translated are his commentary on the poem of the Sufi path written by his teacher Muḥammad al-Būzīdī entitled the *Sharḥ al-rā’iyyah* (*Commentary on the Poem ending in Rā’*) and a commentary on ‘Abd al-Salām ibn Mashīsh’s famous eulogy of blessing on the Prophet Muḥammad.⁸³ In more recent times Dr. Florian A.G. Lützen has examined the concept of religion (*dīn*) in Ibn ‘Ajībāh’s works in his PhD which has been published as a monograph.⁸⁴ In Turkey, Dr. Mahmut Ay, a professor of Islamic Studies in the University of Istanbul has conducted research on Ibn ‘Ajībāh’s Sufi hermeneutics illustrating how his exegetical method combines both the outward and more symbolic (*ishārī*) method of interpretation.⁸⁵ Within the UK, Dr. Omneya Ibrahim has also conducted research and written a thesis on Ibn ‘Ajībāh’s pattern of exegesis of the Qur’ān.⁸⁶

Tilmisānī, *al-Imām Sayyidī Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Būzīdī Tarjumatuhu was ba’d āthārihi*, (Beirut: Dar al-kutub al-‘ilmiyyah, 2006).

⁸⁰ Jean-Louis Michon, *Le Soufi Marocain Aḥmad Ibn Ajība (1746-1809) et son Mi’rāj: glossaire de la mystique musulmane*, (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1973).

⁸¹ Jean Louis Michon, *The Autobiography (Fahrasa) of a Moroccan Soufi: Ahmad Ibn ‘Ajība*, trans. David Streight (Lousiville: Fons Vitae, 1999).

⁸² Ibn Ajība: *Two Treatises on the Oneness of Existence*, trans. by Jean-Louis Michon and trans. David Streight (Cambridge: Archetype, 2010).

⁸³ Aḥmad ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Two Sufi Commentaries by Aḥmad ibn ‘Ajība (d.1224/1809): The Poem in Rā’ Concerning the Sufi Way by Muḥammad al-Būzīdī and The Prayer of Blessing upon the Prophet by ‘Abd al-Salām ibn Mashīsh*, trans. by Arjan Post and Michael Abdurrahman Fitzgerald (Lousiville: Fons Vitae, 2015).

⁸⁴ Florian A.G. Lützen, *Sufitum und Theologie bei Aḥmad Ibn ‘Ajība (gest. 1223/1809) – Eine Studie zur Methode des Religionsbegriffs*, Hg. Lejla Demiri, Samuela Pagani und Sohaira Z. M. Siddiqui (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020).

⁸⁵ Mahmut Ay, “The Sufi Hermeneutics of Ibn Ajība (d. 1224/1809): A Study of Some Eschatological Verses of the Qur’an,” in *The Spirit and the Letter: Approaches to the Esoteric Interpretation of the Qur’an*, ed. Annabel Keeler and Sajjad H. Rizvi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 415 – 441.

⁸⁶ Omneya Ibrahim, “Divine Love in the Moroccan Sufi Tradition: Ibn ‘Ajība (d. 1224/1809) and His Oceanic Exegesis of the Qur’ān”, (PhD diss., University of Exeter, 2018).

In light of this recent research, my thesis contributes and further clarifies Ibn ‘Ajībah’s spiritual understanding and hermeneutics in that it focuses on a single text in the *Īqāz* and uses the text as a lens to understand his worldview.

The Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into three parts. The first part consists of Chapters 2 and 3 which introduces and situates Ibn ‘Ajībah and the *Īqāz* in their historical setting as a culmination of a broader historical tradition (diachronic). This entails looking at the development and evolution of Ibn ‘Ajībah's spiritual personality as a corollary of the spiritual and intellectual tradition he was a part of and explores how this translated to his expression within the *Īqāz*. The second part of this thesis then introduces the hermeneutical methodology employed by Ibn ‘Ajībah in the *Īqāz*, consisting of Chapters 4 and 5. The third part of this thesis explores the contextual setting of the text itself (synchronic) by performing the semantic analysis, consisting of three chapters which parse key themes within the *Īqāz* into the analytical categories of teleology (Chapter 6), ontology and soteriology (Chapter 7), and epistemology (Chapter 8). The thesis concludes by highlighting the overarching focus phrase that acts across the entire *Īqāz* in Chapter 9.

Exploring the chapters in more detail, Chapter 2 focuses on the historical dimension of the Shādhilī Order as it relates to Ibn ‘Ajībah. It does this by reviewing the biographical details of key personalities and figures that culminated in Ibn ‘Ajībah’s milieu in 18th century Maghreb, discussing how the religious, socio-political milieu in Maghreb went onto shape his scholarly and spiritual life. It notes how being steeped in the exoteric Islamic sciences led to an initial tension for Ibn ‘Ajībah wherein entry into the spiritual path from a position of such identification entailed that he initially had to undergo a spiritual regimen of rigorous asceticism seeking to break this egoic identity. This tension was eventually resolved as Ibn ‘Ajībah’s spiritual life came to fruition in his authorship of the *Īqāz* and his being transformed from being a jurist and theologian to a spiritual guide (*shaykh al-tarbiyyah*). Ibn ‘Ajībah’s writings in the form of the *Īqāz* towards the end of his life echo this life journey, balancing the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of the spiritual path.

Chapter 3 elucidates the sources that led to the spiritual and intellectual tradition that informs the *Īqāz* as a text and shapes its discourse. It does this by exploring the tradition and school of discerning wisdom (*Hikmah*) that underpins the *Īqāz*, looking at its conceptual evolution from the earliest Sufis up to the Shādhilīyyah, thereby focusing on their understanding of Sufi social praxis and spiritual journeying (*sulūk*). It concludes by highlighting a series of metaphysical principles that elucidate Ibn ‘Ajībah's thought. In this manner the Chapter sets the tone for the remainder of the thesis, as it outlines many of the key motifs and salient teachings which inform the hermeneutical principles around which the *Īqāz* can be analyzed.

Chapter 4 then highlights some of the macro-hermeneutic themes employed by Ibn ‘Ajībah, exploring some of the historical genealogy of these ideas, thereby further providing the diachronic setting preceding our thematic analysis. The chapter highlights the methodology of semantic analysis in greater detail and specifically looks at how this was applied lexically to the *Īqāz*.

Chapter 5 explores the structure of the *Īqāz* by focusing on the microcosmic outline of the *Īqāz* as detailed in the first two chapters of the aphorisms and first two epistles. It tests and proves the assumption that these sections of the *Īqāz* act as microcosms to the greater macrocosmic text of the *Īqāz*. Having established that these sections determine the microcosmic message of the *Īqāz*, an analysis of its contents is carried out to reveal two legs of spiritual wayfaring. The first leg is found to represent the journey culminating in the annihilation of the ego in the Divine presence, termed *fanā*. The second leg acts as a return in that presence, representing the subsistence of the person therein, termed *baqā*. The chapter concludes by positing that the *Īqāz* determines different vantage points of spiritual propriety (*ādāb*) across both of these legs.

Chapter 6 begins the thematic analysis of the *Īqāz* through exploring it in light of the analytical category of teleology, which represents the orientation of the spiritual path in terms of its *teleos* or ultimate spiritual goal or end which is taken to be the teleological

arrival (*wuṣūl*) unto God. It examines this trajectory in the light of four thematic opposites: ‘beginning and arriving’; ‘grace and works’; ‘light and darkness’; and ‘expansion and contraction’. The chapter concludes by noting that the concept of *wuṣūl*, far from implying a union between two separate entities, heralds the spiritual aspirant's coming to realise and thereby arrive at the knowledge of his perpetual ontological dependence (*faqr*) to his Lord.

Chapter 7 builds on the previous chapter, this time exploring the dimension of *sulūk* in the *Īqāz* in the context of ontology and soteriology. Here ontology is interpreted to be the ontological ‘descent’ wherein God undertakes self-disclosure (*tajallī*) from His undifferentiated essence (*dhāt*) to His Divine attributes (*ṣifāt*), culminating in His acts (*af‘āl*) which represent the created traces (*athār*) or corporeal effects that appear in the cosmos. Soteriology is then seen as the reverse journey of the soteriological ‘ascent’ whereby the spiritual aspirant progressively comes to witness the Divine fiat in ascending up this hierarchy by removing the delusional veil of their ontological independence at each of these levels. Collectively, the ontological ‘descent’ and soteriological ‘ascent’ are seen to be two arcs of the same circle of existence, representing the journey of creation's origination (*al-mabda`*) from God and that of its return (*al-ma`ād*) to God. The chapter highlights various aspects relevant to the wayfarer along this journey such as contrasting between the wayfaring of those pulled out of their own agency (*majdhūb*) and those given to operate on their own agency (*sālik*). It also discusses the deeper wisdom of suffering and opposition on the spiritual path with the chapter concluding by highlighting the seminal role of God's grace in His choosing to manifest His lordship to the aspirant.

Chapter 8 discusses the *Īqāz* in the context of the category of epistemology, focusing on how knowledge (*ilm*) as realisation of God's unicity (*tawhīd*) can be attained in the heart of the spiritual aspirant. It details the means by which this knowledge is determined and delineated. It highlights how such knowledge is not discursive but experiential and is attained directly from God wherein the nature of such knowledge is that it discloses the Divine presence. The chapter discusses the impediments to attaining such knowledge such as self-reliance, being content with the exoteric alone, attachment to the ephemeral, and the need to find a spiritual guide. The chapter ends by highlighting how such knowledge is

seen as analogous to light, wherein this light discloses the reality of existence in which aspirants come to perceive their own non-existence whilst apprehending the all-pervading nature of God's existence.

Chapter 9 then serves as the conclusion of the thesis by summarising its various chapters and identifying the central focus phrase as per Izutsu's semantic analysis. The constant theme running throughout the categories of the *Īqāz* is revealed to be that of the reverential propriety (sing. *adab*/ pl. *ādāb*) that the spiritual aspirant is tasked to embody towards the graded realisations of God's unicity (*ma'rifah*) encountered in the course of their spiritual wayfaring. The focus phrase is thus revealed to be *ādāb al- ma'rifah* (lit. the proprieties required of gnosis), that is, the propriety required to engender the experiential dimension of witnessing the One-ness of God (*tawhīd*). This concurs with Danner's initial assessment that *tawhīd* is the theme that serves as an inner thread connecting the many jewels as aphorisms throughout the *Īqāz*.⁸⁷ The focus phrase also confirms the inference given by Lings in his foreword to Danner's book, wherein he states that the main theme of the *Hikam* is gnosis (*ma'rifah*). Lings defines this *ma'rifah* as demanding a total participation in the theme of *adab*, being in its highest sense "the conformity of the soul, in all its different facets, to the Divine Presence."⁸⁸ The concurrence of my research outcome with the inference of Lings and Danner illustrates how Semantic analysis can corroborate what is sometimes inferred by textual familiarity alone. The thesis thus makes a substantial and original contribution in the field of research methodology on Sufi texts and holds great promise in its results for application to other Sufi texts.

⁸⁷ Danner, *Sūfi Aphorisms*, 18.

⁸⁸ Danner, *Sūfi Aphorisms*, Foreword.

Chapter 2: Situating Ibn ‘Ajībah and the *Iqāz*

Before discussing the life of Ibn ‘Ajībah and his *Iqāz* we will first look at the essential outline of the wider spiritual and historical context in which he functioned. This necessarily includes looking at the foundations of the Shādhilī Order, its major personalities and teachings, as well as its eventual manifestation in the Maghreb through its Darqāwī offshoot, which Ibn ‘Ajībah was to eventually become a spiritual guide in. In this regard, it is noteworthy that almost all the primary source material on the early formation of the Shādhilī Order comes from two major works. They are: *Laṭā’if al-minan fī manāqib al-shaykh Abī al-‘Abbās al-Mursī wa shaykhihi Abī al-Ḥasan (Laṭā’if)*, by Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1309) and *Durrat al-asrār wa tuḥfat al-Abrār fī aqwāl wa af‘āl wa aḥwāl wa maqāmāt wa nasab wa karāmāt wa adhkār wa da‘awāt sayyidī Abī al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (Durrat)* by Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh al-Ḥimyarī (d. 763/1362). Both of these works have been translated and published in English.⁸⁹ In recent times a third relatively early source has been discovered and critically edited by Professor Kenneth Honerkamp entitled *Taqyīd fī tarjamat wa aḥwāl Abī al-Ḥasan* by ‘Abd al-Nūr al-‘Imrānī.⁹⁰ Samia Touati notes that whilst this new work from Honerkamp contains some additional original material, it mostly has “paragraphs [that] resemble anecdotes already mentioned in *Laṭā’if* and *Durrat*.”⁹¹ Also citing discovery of another significant potential primary source, Richard McGregor highlights the *Risālat al-Shaykh Abu al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (Risālat)*.⁹² McGregor states that this short treatise of various sufic concepts consists of fifty-six sections, of which five correlate to the *Durrat* with none relating to the *Laṭā’if*, raising the interesting question of which came first: the *Risālat* or the *Durrat*? Notably, in his notes to *Sanctity and Mysticism*

⁸⁹ Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh al-Iskandarī, *The Subtle Blessings in the Saintly Lives of Abu al-Abbas al-Mursi and His Master Abu al-Hasan*, trans. Nancy Roberts (Louisville, Ky: Fons Vitae, 2005); and Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh al-Ḥimyarī, *The Mystical Teaching of al-Shadhili: Including his Life, Prayers Letters, and Followers*, trans. Elmer H. Douglas (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

⁹⁰ ‘Abd al-Nūr b. Muḥammad al-‘Imrānī, *Taqyīd fī tarjamat wa aḥwāl al-shaykh Abī al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-shahīr bi al-Shādhilī*, ed. Kenneth Honerkamp (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 2012).

⁹¹ Samia Touati, “The Wanderings of Abū Al-Ḥasan Al-Šādhilī (d. 1258) According to Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s *Laṭā’if al-minan* and Ibn Al-Ṣabbāgh’s *Durrat al-asrār*,” in *Geographies of Arab and Muslim Identity through the Eyes of Travelers*, ed. George Grigore and Laura Sitaru (Bucharest: University of Bucharest: Center for Arab Studies, 2018), 227-241.

⁹² Richard McGregor, *Sanctity and Mysticism in Medieval Egypt: The Wafā’ Sufi Order and the Legacy of Ibn ‘Arabī* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 29.

McGregor also alludes to another unexplored manuscript in Abū al-Ṣalāḥ ‘Alī Muḥsin’s *Ta’zīr al-anfās bi manāqib Abī al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī*.⁹³ Other significant hagiographical material can be found in *al-Laṭīfah al-Marḍiyah* written by Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s successor Dāwūd ibn ‘Umar al-Bākhilī (d.732/1332), as well as the later *al-Mafākhir al-‘Aliyya fī Ma’āthir al-Shādhilīyya* (*The Eminent Account of the Great Deeds of the Shādhilīs*) written by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Ubād al-Maḥallī (d.1153/1740). Of more recent works, we can consult *Jāmi‘ al-Karāmāt al-‘Aliyya fī Ṭabāqāt al-Sādāt al-Shādhilīyyah* (*A Compendium of Divine Grace Concerning The Biographies of the Shādhilī Masters*) by Abu ‘Alī al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad bin Qāsim al-Fāsī al-Maghrībī (d. 1347/1928) and *al-Madrasah al-Shādhilīyyah al-Ḥadīthah wa imāmuhā Abū al-Ḥasan* written by the former Grand Imam of al-Azhar ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (d. 1399/1978). The Arabic source material is further supported by Ibn ‘Ajībah’s own autobiography (*Fahrāsah*) and hagiographical material by his contemporaries, as well other Arabic historical writings.

This thesis adopts the position of Cornell who states that the best way to trace Sufism is to focus on its ‘scholars and mystics, not sultans and viziers’. To him, the latter are important only when they impinge on specific doctrines or practices, for otherwise “dynastic histories tell us little about what went on in premodern Muslim societies beyond the palace walls”.⁹⁴ In similar vein, Richard Bulliet states that the history of Islam when “viewed from the edge” (i.e. as a product of communities and cultures) reveals itself to be a history of its scholarly class, the ‘*ulamā*’.⁹⁵ Cornell states that accordingly the same scholars imposed a “normative homogeneity” on the practise and definition of sainthood and hagiography written by ‘*ulamā*’ for potentially other ‘*ulamā*’.⁹⁶ Accordingly this study will focus on the major personalities of the Shādhilī order before tracing its evolution to Ibn ‘Ajībah in the Maghreb.

⁹³ McGregor, *Sanctity and Mysticism*, 173.

⁹⁴ Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 37.

⁹⁵ Richard Bulliet, *Islam: The View from the Edge* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1995), 9-10.

⁹⁶ Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 53.

The Maghreb and North Africa

The area incorporating the Maghreb only became the nation state known as Morocco in 1956 when its colonial status as a French protectorate ended. The pre-colonial division and boundaries between the Islamic West (Maghreb) and the Islamic East (Mashriq) was loosely defined as existing somewhere between Tunisia and Egypt. The interplay of migration between Egypt as the Mashriq and the broader Maghreb, is one of importance when seeking to understand the evolution of the Shādhilī order. Richard McGregor notes that such movement had been reciprocal since the times of Idrīs I (d. 175/791) who in arriving from Arabia, founded the city of Fez and the Idrīsīd dynasty in 788 CE which lasted until the latter half of the tenth century. This was followed by travel in the reverse direction, from West to East, as the Fatimid Caliph al-Mu‘iz (d. 365/ 975) moved his centre of power from *Ifriqiyah* (modern day Tunisia) to Egypt, founding the city of al-Qāhirah (Cairo) in 969 CE.⁹⁷ The tide was reversed again by the migration of Arab tribes in the 11th century away from the Fatimid centre into the Maghreb. In this manner, Arab tribes such as Bani Hassan, Banu Hilal and Banu Sulaym, all played a subsequently major role in the linguistic and cultural Arabization and Islamization of the Berber population of the Maghreb.⁹⁸ Vincent Cornell notes that from about the eleventh and twelfth century onwards the transmission of knowledge across these two regions was bidirectional reflecting long-established, reciprocal intellectual ties.⁹⁹ This was precipitated in part by the state patronage of Mālikī *fuqahā’* (jurists of Mālikite law) by the nascent Almoravid state. Abdallah Laroui notes that it was only through the Almoravid state, at the end of the eleventh century that the Maghreb was for the first time subject to a single political authority.¹⁰⁰ Whilst he states this authority was twofold: military and religious; it was the latter, the Mālikī *fuqahā’* who were empowered to guide the state in its juridico-political policies. The weight of this authority can be gauged by the Almoravid’s initially declaring

⁹⁷ McGregor, *Sanctity and Mysticism*, 49.

⁹⁸ McGregor, *Sanctity and Mysticism*, 49.

⁹⁹ Vincent Cornell, *The Way of Abu Madyan*, (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1996), 20

¹⁰⁰ Abdallah Laroui, *The History of Maghreb: An Interpretive Essay*, trans. By Ralph Manheim, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 163.

all fiscal innovation illegal and their return to the orthodox policy of the Prophet's state in Medina.¹⁰¹

This patronage of jurisprudence in the Maghreb would soon be allied with the patronage of popular Sufism. Whilst Mackeen notes that most spiritual life in the Maghreb prior to Ibn al-‘Arīf (d. 536/1141) remains historically relatively undocumented,¹⁰² this can perhaps be explained in geopolitical terms, for it was only after Ibn al-‘Arīf that we see the first emergence of an orthodox and institutionalized spiritual and regional identity. As Cornell states, “The height of the Almohad era, which spanned the years between the caliph ‘Abd al-Mu‘min’s conquest of Marrakesh in 541/1146 and the death of his grandson Muḥammad an-Nāṣir in 611/1214, is considered to be the period in which the peoples of the Maghreb first became conscious of a common identity.”¹⁰³ Cornell notes that this identity was borne out of an increased patronage of the scholarly class and a literary campaign that, like the governing rulers, was seeking a sort of Islamic universalism. This focus on methodology, *‘ilm al-uṣūl*, was not only adapted to philosophical theology (*‘ilm al-kalām*), jurisprudence and hermeneutics (*‘ilm uṣūl al-tafsīr*) but was applied to Sufism too. Cornell states that the “Western variant of orthodox mysticism” or “*uṣūl*-oriented Sufism” drew heavily from the works of “the great Eastern systematizers of Sufism, such as as-Sulamī, al-Qushayrī, and al-Ghazālī.”¹⁰⁴ Consequently, Abdallah Laroui refers to the spiritual movement that emerged under the Almohades as a “[Sufi] movement which for the first time provided the Maghreb with a truly popular ideology” being one that “was to define the essential features of western Islam”.¹⁰⁵ Although the Almohades marked the first time that the rulers of Maghreb were natives, and the first time the population of Berbers became Islamized, their exclusive ideology also culminated in their eventual dissension and collapse in 1269 CE.¹⁰⁶ It was in the wake of the collapse of the Almohades, and the subsequent birth of several offshoot dynasties, prominent of which were the Ḥafṣids of Tunis, that historians of Sufism

¹⁰¹ Laroui, *History*, 165.

¹⁰² See: A.M.M. Mackeen. “The Early History of Sufism in the Maghreb Prior to Al-Shādhilī” (d.656/1258), *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 91 (1971), 398 – 408.

¹⁰³ Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 169.

¹⁰⁴ Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 172.

¹⁰⁵ Laroui, *History*, 192.

¹⁰⁶ Laroui, *History*, 185.

in the Islamic West (Maghreb) such as Victor Danner, Vincent Cornell and Abdallah Laroui assert that a major affirmation of Sufism occurred. This was the time of the Crusades in Egypt and greater Syria; the Christian ‘Reconquista’ and weakening of al-Andalus, as well as the Mongol destruction of Baghdad and the rise and fall of the Almohad caliphate in the Maghreb.¹⁰⁷ Danner notes that this was also a period of spiritual revival in the Islamic West heralding luminaries such as the likes of Abu Madyan Shu‘ayb Al-Ghawth (d. 593/1197), his student ‘Abd al-Salām ibn Mashīsh (d. 625/1228), Ibn ‘Arabī (d.637/1240), Abu al-Ḥasan-al-Shustarī (d. 668/1270) and Ibn Sab‘īn (d. 669/1271).¹⁰⁸ It was also a flourishing period of spiritual poetry in the Muslim world, producing the two of the most eminent Sufi poets of the Persian language, Farīd al-Dīn ‘Attār (d.617/1220) and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmi (d. 671/1273), and the great Sufi poet of the Arabic language, ‘Umar ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235), to name just a few. It was in this period, in 1196 CE, near Ceuta, in the north of Morocco that the eponymic founder of the Shādhilī path, Abu al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 684/1285) was born.

It should be noted that two decades prior to the birth of Abu al-Ḥasan in the Maghreb, the Mashriq saw the Ayyūbid dynasty through Saladin depose the Fatimids in Egypt and subsequently seek to institute Sunni Islam through the construction of Mālikī and Shāfī‘ī madrassas in the city and greater region.¹⁰⁹ This set into play an intellectual exchange that Danner notes was primarily centred on Mālikism, wherein the Maghreb being ‘uniformly Mālikī in its coloration’ would connect with Alexandria, a port city on the Mediterranean, serving as a point of entrance to and exit from Egypt. In this regard, Alexandria served as the meeting-place between West and East, containing a flourishing colony of Maghrebīs whom the Ayyūbids hosted by building and providing patronage to several of the madrassas for the teaching of Mālikī jurisprudence.¹¹⁰ Abu al-Ḥasan and a number of his followers were also part of this migration of scholars from the Maghreb to Alexandria in

¹⁰⁷ Nathan Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt, 1173- 1325*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 106.

¹⁰⁸ Victor Danner, “The Shādhiliyyah and North African Sufism,” in *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, (SCM Press Ltd, 1991), 26–48.

¹⁰⁹ M.C. Lyons & D.E.P. Jackson, *Saladin: The politics of the Holy War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 41.

¹¹⁰ Danner, “The Shādhiliyyah,” 35.

the thirteenth century. It was in Alexandria that the spiritual order was to enjoy a long period of prosperity, as the Ayyūbid dynasty would give way to a Mamlūk one, which under the Baḥrī sultans would go on to pursue the promotion of Sunni Islam even more vigorously than the Ayyūbids.¹¹¹ As Linda Northrup notes, “The Mamlūks surpassed their predecessors in the number of both Sunnī and Ṣufī religious institutions they established during their rule.”¹¹² Northrup states that whilst the Mamlūks continued their predecessors’ policies of supporting the *madrassas*, it was their patronage of moderate Sufism, which resulted in the endowment of several Sufi institutions that allowed the Mamlūk elite to win the support and cooperation of the masses.¹¹³ The Shādhilī order like other Sufi orders was a beneficiary of this policy, as illustrated by the fact that Ibn ‘Atā’ Allāh spent the last years of his life as a teacher in the Maṣūriyya madrasa under the patronage of the state. It was from this position of success that the Shādhilī order was positioned to not only expand further into Egypt and the Levant, but to return back to the Maghreb with strengthened authority.

Evolution of the Shādhilī Ṭarīqah

Metaphysically speaking, from its inception, the Shādhilī *ṭarīqah* attached itself to some of the early gnostic works of the likes of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 285/898), reconciling the seemingly more eccentric words of the likes of al-Ḥallāj (d. 310/922) with relatively more sober works of the likes of *Qūt al-qulūb* (Sustenance of the Hearts) of Abu Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996) and *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn* (Reviving the Sciences of Religion) by Abu Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111). Notably, Abu al-Ḥasan was a contemporary of Ibn ‘Arabī and whilst there is no recorded meeting between the two, they did share a common spiritual lineage in Abu Madyan (d. 593/1197) and may well have met. In any case, indicative of a spiritual connection, we do know that Ibn ‘Arabī’s spiritual successor and stepson, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274) did meet Abu al-Ḥasan during one of his trips to Cairo.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Linda.S. Northrup, “The Baḥrī Mamlūk sultanate, 1250-1390”, in *The Cambridge History of Egypt: Vol I: Islamic Egypt, 640-1517*. ed. Carl F. Petry, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 268.

¹¹² Northrup, “The Baḥrī Mamlūk,” 270.

¹¹³ Northrup, “The Baḥrī Mamlūk,” 270.

¹¹⁴ Danner, “The Shādhiliyyah,” 36.

The meeting is reported to have taken place two years after the death of Ibn ‘Arabī’ and is somewhat cryptic in that Abu al-Ḥasan asks al-Qūnawī whether he could tell him who the *qutb* (spiritual pole) and his deputy are? Given that in their common understanding the *qutb* cosmologically represents the foremost spiritual person of his time, Qūnawī’s silence is hagiographically interpreted within the Shādhilī tradition to be his consenting to the idea that Abu al-Ḥasan was indeed the pole and his foremost disciple Abu al-‘Abbās al-Mursī (d. 680/1281) was his spiritual deputy. This tacit endorsement from Ibn ‘Arabī’s spiritual successor could also to be seen as the reverse endorsement of Ibn ‘Arabī’s school and teachings from Abu al-Ḥasan and the earliest Shādhilīs who chose to document and narrate this incident.¹¹⁵ Historically, the Shādhilīs were quick to be seen to come to the defense of Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachings whenever it would come under attack from critics. This is best illustrated by the anecdotal debate that is said to have taken place between Ibn ‘Atā’ Allāh and the Ḥanbalī scholar, Ibn Taymiyyah, which despite being historically questioned is still representative as an illustration of the Shādhilī proximity to Akbarian ideas.¹¹⁶ As Victor Danner notes, “while the first two Shādhilī teachers did not leave behind books, they nevertheless discussed more or less the same subjects we find treated in the works of the Shaykh al-Akbar [Ibn ‘Arabī] ... [wherein] the gnostic positions of Ibn ‘Arabī found a ready echo in the teachings of the Shādhilīs.”¹¹⁷

For the early Shādhilīs, this depth of metaphysical interior was allied with a sober exterior, demonstrating concern with the outward Law, credal belief, as expressed through the dominant Mālikism¹¹⁸ positing a form of “normative sufism”¹¹⁹, one which was outwardly sober, yet inwardly intoxicated. This was in contradistinction to how much of Sufism in the Mamluk capital, Cairo, functioned. Often posited “in opposition to the religious authorities of the Law”¹²⁰, wherein through State patronage, many of the Sufi orders flourished, the word Sufi was often understood to “designate a legitimate professional

¹¹⁵ Ibn ‘Atā’ Allāh, *The Subtle Blessings*, 113.

¹¹⁶ Danner, “The Shādhiliyyah,” 36.

¹¹⁷ Danner, “The Shādhiliyyah,” 36.

¹¹⁸ Early Mālikī Scholars such as Ibn al-Ḥājib (d.1248) and Ibn al-Munayyir (d.1285) were disciples of Abu al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī. See: Danner, “The Shādhiliyyah,” 35.

¹¹⁹ Danner, “The Shādhiliyyah,” 36.

¹²⁰ Danner, *Book of Wisdom*, 18.

occupation within the religious establishment”¹²¹, to become part of a reified class, often denoted through specific garbs, titles, and even political seats for those endorsed by the State. This ‘exteriorization of piety’ would often involve a ‘synthetic’ display of poverty; the wearing of the *khirqah*, a patched robe or cloak, or the *muraqqa‘ah*, a coarse, woollen, patched-up garment, which once worn would allow for such Sufis to take on the role of ‘religious mendicants’¹²². In this atmosphere, the early Shādhilīs wore no distinctive clothing, sometimes even deliberately dressing ostentatiously, causing other Sufis to doubt their spiritual ascription. Disciples were encouraged to seek their own means of livelihood, with the early rule encouraging autonomy through a specific trade or profession. Contemplative life within this paradigm was not seen as an escapism or detachment from the world, but rather was to be encouraged in the very midst of worldly activities.¹²³ In this manner, the Shādhilī path was construed as a middle-way reformation of both an exaggerated formalism of exoteric Islam, and an insincere display of asceticism that had barred claimants from a genuine renunciation that leads to its esoteric core. It has been stated that of all the Sufi orders of the thirteenth century, it was the Shādhilī initiates who could most lay claim to resembling the earliest pristine Muslim community.¹²⁴

It was arguably this middle-way that enabled the Shādhilīs to be forerunners of a reverse current of spiritual revival across the Muslim world. Whereas Islam first spread from East to West, Sufism as expressed through their order travelled back from the Maghreb to the East in the thirteenth century. Following the Shādhilīs becoming established in Mamluk Egypt, the fourteenth century then saw the proliferation of various offshoots, at the forefront of whom were the Wafā’iyyah. Founded by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Wafā’ (d. 760/1359), dubbed *Baḥr al-ṣafā’* (“The Ocean of Purity”), his order was inherited by his illustrious son, ‘Alī ibn Wafā’ (d. 807/1404). It was this father and son partnership that allowed for the order to spread throughout the Near East outside Egypt.

¹²¹ Federick De Jong & Bernd Radtke, “Faḳīh versus Faḳīr in Marinid Morocco” in *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 207-224.

¹²² Danner, “The Shādhiliyyah,” 31.

¹²³ Danner, “The Shādhiliyyah,” 31.

¹²⁴ Danner, “The Shādhiliyyah,” 34.

After the fifteenth century the order began to readapt its institutionalized format, with some offshoots adopting a particular garb and returning to modes of formal asceticism seemingly at odds with early Shādhilīsm. This pattern of increased distinction and institutionalization was echoed with the various other offshoots that arose not only further east, but also upon the order's re-travelling back to the Maghreb, specifically Morocco.

Morocco, Sharīfism and Sufism

In the Maghreb and the region currently known as Morocco, the Shādhilī path was further adapted and adjusted into different forms particular to the region. Whilst the institutional framework of the Shādhilīs alongside other Sufī orders there retained the format of spiritual lodges (*zāwiyah*) as centres for the training of spiritual aspirants, from the 15th century onwards some of these lodges also served as outposts (*ribāṭ*) to protect the country against foreign invaders, usually as a means of countering waves of Iberian expansion.¹²⁵ Clifford Geertz notes how these defensive *jihads* gave rise to the notion of the *murābiṭ* (lit. the one who is garrisoned) as being a socio-religious term denoting the spiritual rank of the 'warrior saint' who channels God's blessing unto the wider community. In this capacity, the idea of ascription to a spiritual order or hermitage also denoted a form of soft political power, as the term *murābiṭūn* (pl. *murābiṭ*) would come to run "through the warp of Moroccan history."¹²⁶ For if the *murābiṭ* was seen to channel *baraka* (lit. blessings) in the form of divine favour, then in the Moroccan sense this was seen as being more because of spiritual ascription than personal charisma, either through a Sufi order, or by lineal descent from the Prophet, with the most ideal sense being both.¹²⁷ Geertz notes how this genealogical view of the basis of *baraka* compares with what Max Weber calls hereditary charisma wherein the ascription to a lineage confers a form of elevation within the confines of a fixed social status system. Geertz further argues that this genealogical conception of nobility became embedded into Moroccan statehood and society almost from its very inception, in the form of Idris I (d. 175/791) and his son, Idris II (d. 213/828), who as the Idrissids and the first

¹²⁵ Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 46.

¹²⁶ Geertz, *Islam Observed*, 43.

¹²⁷ Geertz, *Islam Observed*, 45.

kings of Morocco, derived their legitimacy from their being of *sharīf* descendancy (possessing hereditary lineage back to the Prophet Muhammad).¹²⁸ Later, Geertz states how the Alawites' dynasty (1664-present) came to literally licence such genealogical ascendancy as a justification of their rule.¹²⁹ Within this Moroccan context of state legitimized ascendancy through familial ascription to the Prophet, it would be understandable that the Sufi orders would also come to reflect the role of the *ashrāf* (sing.*sharīf*).

Accordingly, most Moroccan Sufi orders came to be dominated by descendants of the Prophet, wherein spiritual legitimacy would come to rest on either direct or indirect ascription to the Prophetic lineage. In the 15th century, the first prominent Moroccan offshoot of the Shādhilīs were the Jazūliyyah, founded by Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Jāzūlī al-Ḥasanī (d. 869/1465), a *sharīf* descendant through Ḥasan, the grandson of the Prophet. Cornell notes how al-Jāzūlī's spiritual charisma was primarily borne out of his own lineage and devotion to the Prophet, wherein this was coupled with his advocacy that it was only true love of God and His Prophet that provided the ultimate yardstick of one's faith. His discourse played a huge role in instilling a public moral conscience throughout rural Morocco in a time of social immorality.¹³⁰ To this day al-Jāzūlī's composition of regular benedictory prayers upon the Prophet, termed the *Dalā'il al-Khayrāt* (Evidences of Goodness) remains amongst the most popular devotional litanies read throughout Morocco and wider Muslim world. The Jazūliyyah branch of the Shādhiliyya order was swiftly followed by another eminent order called the Zarrūqiyyah, founded by a late contemporary of al-Jāzūlī, Sidi Aḥmad Zarrūq. A Sufi and a Jurist, Zarrūq was recognized as possessing the highest calibre of scholarship, being a product of the Moroccan religious educational system and its unwavering adherence to a juridical Malikīsm. He met his spiritual teacher, Aḥmed ibn 'Uqbah al-Ḥazramī (d. 894/1489), in Cairo, during a stint of studies there. His teacher himself was from the lineage of the Prophet, and had taken the Shādhilī path from its Wafā'iyyah offshoot through 'Alī ibn

¹²⁸ Geertz, *Islam Observed*, 45-46.

¹²⁹ Geertz, *Islam Observed*, 45.

¹³⁰ Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 179 - 184.

Wafā'. It was Zarrūq who carried this lineage with him back to Morocco wherein given his own training, he infused it with a more juridical and circumspect outlook. Illustrative of this was Zarrūq's position of caution when it came to the more theosophic leanings of someone like Ibn 'Arabī. He advocated that all authentic Sufi expression should be constrained by its necessary partner of constant adherence of Islamic Law (*Sharī'ah*) and came to be known as a regulator and critic of Sufi excesses not in conformity with normative Islam. His seminal book in this regard, the *Qawā'id al-taṣawwuf* (Principles of Sufism) served as a benchmark of evaluation of correct Sufi practise and Ibn 'Ajībah himself regularly quotes from it in the *Īqāz*. The book remains a key reference for outlining the essential rules and principles of the Sufi path, particularly in its interaction with the *Sharī'ah*.¹³¹ Following Zarrūq, this continued efflorescence of the Shādhiliyya path extended right down to the 18th century, before culminating in the specific manifestation of an offshoot of the Shādhilīyyah that Ibn 'Ajībah ascribed to the Darqāwiyyah.

The Darqāwiyyah: Teachings and Setting

It was at the end of the eighteenth century, when France was beginning to colonize parts of North Africa that another powerful spiritual rebirth of the Shādhilīs occurred with the offshoot branch of the Darqāwā or Darqāwiyyah, named after its founder, Mawlay Muḥammad al-'Arabī-al-Darqāwī (d. 1239/1823). Born into the Berber tribe of Banū Zarwāl, his ancestry could be traced back to the founder of the Idrīsid dynasty and the inception of the Moroccan nation, Mawlay Idrīs al-Akbar also known as Idrīs I. Whilst the political power of the Idrīsid dynasty would wane towards the end of the 4th/10th century, its reverential and historical significance as marking the establishment of the first instance of Moroccan statehood governed by descendants of the Prophet would continue well into al-Darqāwī's time. The phenomenon of Sharīfism and its specific manifestation in the Idrīsiyyah lineage would come to mark the epitome of veneration of nobility within the cultural milieu of Morocco. Accordingly, it would be common to see an alliance of political and religious authority within an Idrīsid descendancy. This sense of class ascendancy would continue even after the formal end of the Idrīsid dynasty at the end of the 10th

¹³¹ Danner, "The Shādhiliyyah," 41.

century, as the Sharīf descendants would continue to exert significant authority through the Arabization of rural society. We have already highlighted how Sufism in Morocco came to be largely led by the Sharīf descendants of the Prophet, Danner notes how this spiritual authority came to become indiscernible from the political scene, with power claims either through direct leadership or implicit indirect influence.¹³²

Mawlay al-‘Arabī’s own eponymic name al-Darqāwī was derived from his grandfather Muḥammad Ibn Yūsuf also known as Abū Darqa literally meaning the one with the leather shield on account of the fame he acquired carrying it into battle as a *murābiṭ*.¹³³ Having mastered Qur’ānic recitation in childhood, it was in al-Darqāwī’s moving to Fez to pursue further education that his heart became attached to the Sufi path when he met his master ‘Alī Ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-‘Imrānī (d. 1194/1780) also called ‘al-Jamal’ (lit. the camel), named so after the impressive physical feat of his single-handedly moving a dead camel from the middle of the road.¹³⁴ His teacher was known for the rigorous training of his students, tasking them with the wearing of coarse patched clothing (*muraqqa‘ah*), walking barefoot and sleeping in the streets, and instituting a form of ritualised begging that was intended to break the egoistic tendencies of the spiritual aspirant.¹³⁵ Notably this re-introduction of the wearing of an ‘ascetic uniform’ in the form of the *muraqqa‘ah*, a woollen patched garment, coupled with a large rosary of heavy wooden beads that was to be worn around the neck was outwardly in contrast to the position adopted by the Shādhilī order’s founders who had previously disapproved of such formal displays of asceticism. Closer analysis reveals that this difference of prescription in terms of appearance and method indicates the essential flexibility of Sufi practice in responding to the need of the times. We have already discussed how the early Shādhilī path in the face of an exteriorization of piety and an insincere asceticism encouraged by state patronage, required the Shādhilī teachers to do away with Sufi distinctive clothing, and to encourage disciples to seek their own means of livelihood. In al-Darqāwī’s time and milieu the situation had

¹³² Danner, “The Shādhiliyyah”, 42-43.

¹³³ ‘Abdullah al-Tālidī, *Al-Muṭrib bi- mashāhīr awliyā’ al-Maghreb*, (Beirut: Dār al-Amān, 4th ed., 2003), 205.

¹³⁴ Mawlay al-‘Arabī al-Darqāwī, *Majmū‘āt Rasā’il Mawlay al-‘Arabī al-Darqāwī*, ed. Bassām Bārūd (Abū Dhabī: al-Mujamma‘ al-Thaqāfī, 1999), 41-43.

¹³⁵ Mawlay al-‘Arabī Al-Darqāwī, *Majmū‘āt Rasā’il*, 53.

come full circle, as there had already been an initial influx and gradual infiltration of western, materialistic and secular values and norms as inspired by the French Revolution and its encroachment into Morocco. This sense of division was only accentuated alongside the previously entrenched social divide existing between an elite class (*khāṣṣ*) who mostly resided in the major cities and were more exposed to these new cultural trends and the common folk (*‘āmm*) who resided in the rural areas of Morocco. The situation was particularly complicated by the fact that such eliteness was often readily ascribed to those of formal religiosity such as state sponsored religious scholars and the various *sharīf* descendants of the Prophet who alongside their claim to a spiritual authority would hold significant government posts. This entailed that religious and spiritual ambition was often indiscernible from its worldly counterpart and government officials and wealthy merchants would frequent associations with the *sharīf* and spiritual orders on the premise that this would increase their status and power. Within such a stratified and materialistic culture it was very easy to succumb to hubris, for society had become bifurcated into an elite who relied on common people that were expected to work in menial jobs for which they would receive very little respect or pay.¹³⁶ Given these circumstances and the associated propensity for exterior display it is possible to interpret al-Darqāwī’s instructions for a return to more formal, outward asceticism (*faqr*) and renunciation (*zuhd*) as being motivated by a desire to introduce a more egalitarian ethic between his disciples in spite of their varied social classes. The goal in this instruction would be to establish an equilibrium of heart between the outward and the inward and importantly to remove any egoic disposition towards social artifice and worldly prestige.¹³⁷ Within this paradigm al-Darqāwī’s prescription of the wearing of the *muraqqa ‘ah* and the ritualistic use of begging was seen as a means in defeating the ego, as the intent therein was to attract blame and humiliation in a manner similar to earlier Sufi praxis, such as that carried out by the Malāmatiyyah.¹³⁸ This ‘begging’ had its strict rules, such as not being done for personal

¹³⁶ Muḥammad al-Mansour, *Morocco in the Reign of Mawlay Sulaymān*, (Cambridgeshire: Middle East and North African Studies Press, 1990), 11.

¹³⁷ Danner, “The Shādhiliyyah,” 45.

¹³⁸ The Malāmatiyyah were a Sufi order first emerging in 9th century Greater Persia, in the Khurāsānī town of Nīshāpūr. Nīshāpūr served as the *de facto* centre of Sunnite Islam at the time through to at least the mid-fifth/eleventh century and was given to much material wealth. Given the prevalence for ostentatious display in the region at the time, the Malāmatiyyah order was renowned

benefit, to give away the money accrued in charity, and the essential requirement that the practice be heavy on the ego and not something one inclines to, for if it did then the begging would be replaced by another task that was heavier upon the ego.¹³⁹

The highlighting of humility and poverty as a key tool to break the ego is echoed as one of the main features of the Darqāwā in biographical accounts on Mawlay al-Darqāwī. His humility was particularly evident in his societal interactions with people where he would treat people the same irregardless of their social class, all whilst he himself would continue wearing coarse clothing, eat simple and uncooked foods, and sit on dusty floors. Despite this his definition of asceticism was not premised on the outward but on the embodiment of *faqr*, an emptying out of the sense of ontological independence of the spiritual aspirant wherein he turns aside from everything other than His lord.¹⁴⁰ Beyond this nuanced understanding of asceticism, the doctrine of the Darqāwā was mostly orthodox, emphasizing devotion towards and contemplation of God, solitary retreat and prayer, repeated invocation of the Divine Name (“Allah”), and communal sessions of sacred recitation. Living a long and fruitful life, having succeeded his own master ‘Alī al-Jamal in 1779, Mawlay al-‘Arabī al-Darqāwī lived to be about eighty years old and died in 1823 in the village of Bū Brih in the Rif Mountains.

The Political and Social Milieu of the Darqāwiyyah

During al-Darqāwī’s lifetime Morocco was mostly governed by Mawlay Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abdullāh also known as Mawlay Muḥammad (reign from 1757-1790) and Mawlay Sulaymān (reign from 1792-1822), who collectively ruled the region except during the brief reign of Mawlay Muḥammad’s other son Yazīd (1790-1792). All three were part of the Alawites dynasty (1664-present) who remain the current rulers of Morocco. The Alawites, like the Idrīsid dynasty before them claim to be descended from the Prophet

for its endorsement of the Path of Blame (*malāmah*) wherein the main principle on which the Malāmatī Path was based was the attracting of public censure such that inner sincerity grow in the aspirant in place of social artifice. See: Sara Sviri, “Hakīm Tirmidhī and the Malāmatī Movement in Early Sufism” in *The Heritage of Sufism* vol. I, ed. L. Lewisohn, 583-614 (Oxford: Oneworld Publications 1999).

¹³⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *al-Futuḥāt al-Ilāhiyyah*, 185 – 194.

¹⁴⁰ Michon, *Autobiography*, 20.

through his cousin and son-in-law ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭalīb (d. 41/661) from whom they derive their eponymic dynasty name. The inception of the Alawites was remarkably stable in that Mawlay Ismā‘īl bin al-Sharīf (reign 1672-1727), the second ruler of the Alawites’ dynasty and the grandfather of Mawlay Muḥammad, governed for 55-years, and still holds the record for the longest rule of any king in Morocco. Perhaps inevitably such a long reign was followed by a period of chaos, as the father of Mawlay Muḥammad, ‘Abdullah Ibn Ismā‘īl, was desposed five times in the span of thirteen years (between 1734 – 1747) and only established a more lasting authority at his sixth attempt wherein he ruled from 1748 to 1757 before dying and handing succession over to his son.¹⁴¹ The reign of Mawlay Muḥammad was thus mostly a period of consolidation of peace and order after the turmoil involved with the various succession battles and it was under him that the reign of the Alawites began to be cemented again. The prosperity and stability that he effected was briefly shaken during the turbulence that occurred in the brief reign of Mawlay Ismā‘īl’s son Yazīd (1790-1792). It was only when another of Mawlay Ismā‘īl’s sons, Mawlay Sulaymān was able to assert his authority and anoint himself the sultan in 1792 that peace and stability returned.¹⁴² Barring the early part of the reign of Mawlay Sulaymān which involved a brief civil war in 1795, the rest of his reign ensured this peace and passivity for the subsequent decades of his rule and life.¹⁴³ This peace extended towards the Sufī orders and, as Michon notes, both Mawlay Muḥammad and Mawlay Sulaymān had a favourable attitude towards Sufism. It was only towards the end of Mawlay Sulaymān’s reign that we see a certain tension arise towards the Darqāwā, one borne more out of political expediencies than any theological opposition, and even this squabble was resolved.¹⁴⁴

The Darqāwā themselves were keen to generally remain apolitical, a wise stance within a political and social milieu that could swiftly turn against one. Despite this, some of al-Darqāwī’s students did engage in armed resistance against the early attempts of French invasion in the neighbouring regions. The Darqāwī order’s focus was initially successful and popular in the countryside where it was centred in small lodges (*zāwiyah*) where

¹⁴¹ Al-‘Arawī, *Mujmal tāriḫ al-Maghreb*, (al-Dār al-Baydā’: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-‘Arabī, 1999), vol.3, 88- 89.

¹⁴² Michon, *Autobiography*, 112.

¹⁴³ Mansour, *Mawlay Sulaymān*, 132-135.

¹⁴⁴ Michon, *Autobiography*, 99-100.

spiritual aspirants would engage in a regimen of litanies and invocations and frequent proselytising excursions to neighbouring villages. It was only as they grew that their influence would extend to the towns and the religious centres of learning, none more so than Fez, where al-Darqāwī established his central *zāwiyah*. Fez being considered the spiritual and intellectual centre of Moroccan Islam naturally attracted greater attention towards the Darqāwā. It was in this context, given their attraction of the masses, that the governor of Tangier is said to have reported his concern about the Darqāwī order to Mawlay Sulaymān in the early part of his reign, only to then be ignored.¹⁴⁵ This relaxed approach later changed into one of concern, resulting in a policy of repression and even instances, such as in 1211/1796, when the Darqāwā of Tetuan, including Ibn ‘Ajībah, were imprisoned, and charged with religious innovation (*bid‘ah*). Perhaps in response to such events the Darqāwī order began to retreat further away from the towns redirecting their attention to countryside and the mountainous region of northern Morocco where they met with great success in attracting even more adepts and the founding of several additional *zāwiyas*. This success in turn allowed for a counter shift of the Darqāwī order towards including greater circles of the noble and political elite. The order particularly began to attract success in neighbouring western Algeria, where they even began to undermine the authority of the Turkish governing authorities. In conciliatory tone and accepting of this positive development, Mawlay Sulaymān is reported to have altered his previous repressive policies and encouraged a more formal acknowledgement of the Darqāwī order.¹⁴⁶

Key Students of al-Darqāwī

The most prominent student during al-Darqāwī’s lifetime was Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad al-Būzīdī (d. 1229/1813), referred to mostly by his last name in Darqāwī sources as al-Būzaydī or al-Buzīdī, a name deemed to be a Moroccan conflation of Abū Zayd.¹⁴⁷ The phrase Abū ‘Abd Allāh and Abū Zayd literally means father of ‘Abd Allāh or Zayd and could suggest children by that name, however al-Būzīdī is not known to have fathered any children and in Arab and Moroccan tradition it is not uncommon for such

¹⁴⁵ Mansour, *Mawlay Sulaymān*, 167.

¹⁴⁶ Mansour, *Mawlay Sulayman*, 167-169.

¹⁴⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Two Sufī Commentaries*, 17.

phrases to serve as a *kunya* or nickname only, not implying parentage.¹⁴⁸ Hailing from the tribe of Banī Salmān al-Ghimāriyya, al-Būzīdī like his teacher al-Darqāwī and his student Ibn ‘Ajībah was a *sharīf*, a descendant of the Prophet. Unlike them, al-Būzīdī was not known as a scholar of formal religious learning, for his religious training mostly consisted of the sixteen years of direct spiritual tutelage he undertook with Mawlay al-Darqāwī. Prior to that, in his youthful years, he is described by his fellow disciple of al-Darqāwī, Muḥammad bin Aḥmad Būziyyān al-Ma‘askarī al-Ighrīsī (d. 1250/1835) in his *Ṭabaqāt Darqāwiyya* (Biographies of the *Darqāwiyya*) as having spent several years taking refuge in sanctuaries being preoccupied in devotion and invocation.¹⁴⁹ It is Būziyyān who provides the largest entry of biographical information of al-Būzīdī in his *Ṭabaqāt*, followed by that which al-Būzīdī mentions about himself within his manual of spiritual propriety entitled *al-Ādāb al-marḍiyyah lī sālik ṭarīq al-ṣuffiyyah* (The required propriety for the wayfarer on the spiritual path of the Sufis).¹⁵⁰ Whilst al-Būzīdī did not receive formal training before entering the spiritual path and is even described by Ibn ‘Ajībah as being unschooled (*ummī*) he did produce a number of writings that Būziyyān claims would result in several volumes without there being mention of him having dictated them.¹⁵¹ It appears that Ibn ‘Ajībah’s reference to his master as an *ummī*, was not to imply he was illiterate and not intended to be derogatory, but to simply point out al-Būzīdī’s tendency for linguistic and stylistic errors by Ibn ‘Ajībah’s own exacting standards of scholarship.¹⁵²

It was after his years spent under Mawlay al-Darqāwī that he was conferred the title of being a spiritual guide and told to return to his tribe of Banī Salmān, and it was in this capacity that his teacher conferred upon him the epithetical title of *al-fard* (the unique one).¹⁵³ In his *Ṭabaqāt*, Būziyyān mentions how this was understood by al-Darqāwī to be an acknowledgement that al-Būzīdī had surpassed him in knowledge of God, for he stated that the *fard* was greater than the *qutb* (spiritual axis), the latter being a title and rank

¹⁴⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Two Sufi Commentaries*, 17.

¹⁴⁹ Būziyyān Ma‘askarī, Al-Ighrīsī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Darqāwiyya*, Bibliotheque Nationale du Royaume du Maroc. MS. no 2339 D. Moroccan National Library. <http://bnm.bnm.ma:86/Arabe/pdf.aspx?IDc=928>. Last accessed 07-08-2021. p. 91.

¹⁵⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Two Sufi Commentaries*, 15.

¹⁵¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Two Sufi Commentaries*, 19.

¹⁵² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Two Sufi Commentaries*, 20.

¹⁵³ Al-Ighrīsī *Ṭabaqāt al-Darqāwiyya*, 93.

Darqāwī understood himself to have.¹⁵⁴ Arjan Post states that al-Būzīdī must have become a fully-fledged Sufi guide, authorised to initiate disciples himself, before his first meeting with Ibn ‘Ajībāh in 1208/1793-4 in Bū Brīh.¹⁵⁵ In the *Fahrāsa*, being Ibn ‘Ajībāh’s autobiography, he states that his actual initiation happened after he returned to Tetouan, following a lengthy correspondence with al-Būzīdī and the latter’s coming to Tetouan to visit himself. Whilst Ibn ‘Ajībāh does not offer details of the actual event, Būziyyān’s account in the *Ṭabaqāt* describes al-Būzīdī as grabbing a reticent Ibn ‘Ajībāh by the hand and pulling him into the middle of a circle of Sufis conducting the ritual of Sufic audition (*samā’*) causing him to be overtaken by a state of divine attraction (*jadhb*) which marked the onset of his initiation.¹⁵⁶ In manner and nature, this form of initiation tells us a lot about the character of al-Būzīdī and also explains the initial reluctance of Ibn ‘Ajībāh to join the Darqāwī movement, for despite being inclined to Sufism in having studied its literary genre prior, Būziyyān mentions Ibn ‘Ajībāh was initially critical of certain aspects of the Darqāwī renunciate lifestyle.¹⁵⁷ It appears that al-Būzīdī was an immensely successful guide in his own right for he attracted many people to the Sufi order and perhaps indicative of his rank his path came to be referred to as *ṭarīqah būzīdiyyah* in recognition of his own independent spiritual authority during his life and after.¹⁵⁸ Described by Ibn ‘Ajībāh to mostly employ an intuitive style wherein he channelled a form of divine inspiration, his way was to emphasize the importance of heart states such as love and sincerity frequently.¹⁵⁹

Amongst other prominent disciples of al-Darqāwī were Muḥammad Ḥasan Zāfir al-Madanī (d. 1263/1847) who left the city of the Prophet, Medina, in 1807, searching for a spiritual guide, before meeting al-Darqāwī two years later. He kept his company for nine years, becoming one of his key students and became of those authorised by him to guide. This was formalised when al-Darqāwī told him to return back to Medina saying “you have attained unto that which is attained to by the perfect among men...I have made you the

¹⁵⁴ Al-Ighrīsī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Darqāwiyya*, 93.

¹⁵⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Two Sufi Commentaries*, 33.

¹⁵⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Two Sufi Commentaries*, 32-33.

¹⁵⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Two Sufi Commentaries*, 31.

¹⁵⁸ Michon, *Autobiography*, 23.

¹⁵⁹ Al-Ighrīsī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Darqāwiyya*, 93.

instrument of my credit with God and link between me and His Prophet.”¹⁶⁰ Al- Madanī would later return to spend some months with al-Darqāwī until his death before going back to Medina via a prolonged stay in Tripoli where most of his disciples and branch would be established.¹⁶¹ Another noteworthy and influential disciple of al-Darqāwī was Muḥammad al-Ḥarrāq (d. 1261/1845) who was a *sharīf* that was born in the blue painted town of Chefchaouen in northwest Morocco. Famed for his Sufi poetry as the author of three famous *diwans* (collections of poetry) that are still widely sung today, he later adapted the Darqāwī order into a format that was more appealing to the social elites of Morocco. Emphasising the role of litanies and devotional poetry instead of the order’s previously strict and ascetic teachings he marked a formal shift in the Darqāwī way towards a more societally acceptable Sufi order.¹⁶²

Soliciting Information on Ibn ‘Ajībah

In soliciting information on Ibn ‘Ajībah’s life, we are fortunate in that there exists significant biographical and hagiographical data, the primary source of which is his own autobiography (*Fahrasa*),¹⁶³ translated into French by Jean-Louis Michon,¹⁶⁴ and then later translated from the French into English.¹⁶⁵ In Ibn ‘Ajībah’s own introduction to his autobiography he mentions his intention to write it as being to describe God’s bountiful gifts upon him, and to articulate his own narrative such that it be accurately conveyed and not added to or detracted from by scholars of the biographical genre (*Ṭabaqāt*).¹⁶⁶ He cites how previous Sufi teachers had engaged in similar precedents, specifically mentioning his grand-teacher Al-‘Arabī al-Darqāwī, Sidi Aḥmad Zarrūq who was the ninth master of Ibn

¹⁶⁰ Martin Lings, *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century: Shaikh Ahmad al-Alawi*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2nd Edition, 1971), 70.

¹⁶¹ Martin Lings, *Sufi Saint*, 71.

¹⁶² Mansour, *Mawlay Sulayman*, 167-169.

¹⁶³ The word *fahrasa* is derived from the Persian *fihrist* and is a catalogue in which a learned individual lists his teachers and contents of works studied under them. There may also be autobiographical accounts and didactic developments. – EI2, II, article by Ch. Pellat.

¹⁶⁴ Michon, *Le soufi*.

¹⁶⁵ Michon, *Autobiography*.

¹⁶⁶ Michon, *Autobiography*, 35.

‘Ajībah’s Shādhilī lineage and Al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī (d. 1103/1691) the Sufi theologian, all of whom used their autobiographical material to convey spiritual instruction.¹⁶⁷

Ibn ‘Ajībah’s concern to articulate his own life narrative was justified in that shortly after his death there would subsequently come to be biographical accounts about him detailed by his close contemporaries.¹⁶⁸ These include that of his student Abu Muḥammad Skīrj (d. 1250/1834) and that of his fellow *sharīf* (of prophetic descent) and *Darqāwi* disciple, Būziyyān al-Ma‘askarī al-Ighrīsī, the author of *Ṭabaqāt Darqāwiyya* (Biographies of the *Darqāwiyya*).¹⁶⁹ As Ibn ‘Ajībah does not provide one himself, it is infact Būziyyān who we turn to for a physical description of Ibn ‘Ajībah, a description that indicates his ascetic nature. Būziyyān states: “He was thin, and his skin was stretched tightly over his bones as a result of the intense spiritual discipline, asceticism, and scruples that were characteristic of him.”¹⁷⁰ With Būziyyān’s account we also have significant biographical information on both of Ibn ‘Ajībah’s spiritual guides: his grand teacher al-‘Arabī al-Darqāwī and his direct teacher who died before him Muḥammad al-Būzidī; as well as other prominent companions such as his brother Ḥāshimī and the famed poet and spiritual guide Muḥammad al-Ḥarrāq. That said, in reconstructing the main synthesis of Ibn ‘Ajībah’s life I have relied primarily on his own voice in the *Fahrāsa* and for ease of reference I have quoted mostly from the published English translation of the *Fahrāsa*, adapting the translation myself in accordance with the Arabic original where deemed relevant. Beyond this, the secondary material I have consulted has been mostly Būziyyān’s *Ṭabaqāt Darqāwiyya*, ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al Kattānī’s *Fihris al-Fahāris* and Michon’s and Tayeb Chouiref’s articles on Ibn ‘Ajībah in the second and third editions of *The Encyclopedia of Islam*.¹⁷¹

The Life of Ibn ‘Ajībah

Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Mahdī ibn ‘Ajībah al-Ḥasanī, more commonly known as Ibn ‘Ajībah was born in 1746-7 C.E. in the Moroccan village of al-

¹⁶⁷ Michon, *Autobiography*, 36.

¹⁶⁸ Michon, *Autobiography*, 35.

¹⁶⁹ Michon, *Autobiography*, 12.

¹⁷⁰ Michon, *Autobiography*, 12

¹⁷¹ ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī, *Fahrās al-fahāris* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1982).

Khamīs, in the Anjra tribe which inhabited the Mediterranean coast between Tangier and Tetouan. He was a *sharīf*, indicating he hailed from lineage directly traced to the Prophet of Islam, in a family renowned for its piety and scholarship, growing up with one foot in the countryside and the other in the contrasting milieu of city life in Tetouan. An avid student from a young age, he first memorised the Qur’ān, then divided his childhood between working as a shepherd and completing a syllabus of religious studies with local religious scholars. Tayeb Chouiref states that it was at the age of eighteen, that Ibn ‘Ajībah left home and undertook what he referred to as his “study of exoteric knowledge” (*ṭalab al-‘ilm al-zāhir*).¹⁷² The *Fahrasa* says that this journey first took him to Qaṣr al-Kabīr (in northern Morocco) where he studied for two years with the Jurist (*faqīh*) Muḥammad al-Sūsī al-Samlālī, then to Tetouan where he studied with the Jurist ‘Abd al-Karīm b. al-Qurrīsh (d. 1197/1783) amongst other teachers.¹⁷³ It was in Tetouan that he was gifted various treatises of the Shādhilī path, such as Ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh’s *Ḥikam* and Aḥmad Zarrūq’s *Uṣūl al-ṭarīqa* and *Naṣīḥat al-kāfiyah*,¹⁷⁴ by Shaykh Muḥammad al-Janwī al-Ḥasanī. It was only after al-Janwī’s death, having attained juridical licenses (*ijāzāt*) in the teaching of Mālīkī jurisprudence from both him and al-Qurrīsh that Ibn ‘Ajībah left for Fez. There he earned teaching licenses (*ijāzāt*) in the canonical Ḥadīth collections, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Muslim* from Muḥammad al-Tawdī b. Sūda (d. 1210/1795) and Aḥmad Bannīs al-Fāsī, wherein notably his chain of transmission would include Muḥammad al-Bannāni, a famous commentator on the Shādhilī litany *Ḥizb-al-kabīr*.¹⁷⁵

A survey of the books he studied during this period, as discussed in his own autobiography, reveals him to have followed the well-rounded syllabus expected of scholars in the Maghreb. This included his covering subjects such as Arabic grammar,¹⁷⁶ morphology, rhetoric, classical logic, Qur’ānic exegesis, Ḥadīth sciences, Islamic theology, and Mālīkī jurisprudence.¹⁷⁷ Victor Danner indicates that many of the eminent authorities of Mālīkism

¹⁷² Michon, *Autobiography*, 52 and Tayeb Chouiref EI3.

¹⁷³ Michon, *Autobiography*, 52 -55.

¹⁷⁴ Michon, *Autobiography*, 56.

¹⁷⁵ Michon, *Autobiography*, 59-60.

¹⁷⁶ Books such as: Ibn Ajrum’s *Ajurrūmiyya*, Ibn Malik’s *Al-fiyya*, and Ibn Hishām’s *Tawdīh* and *Qawā‘id*.

¹⁷⁷ Michon, *Autobiography*, 54-57.

were influenced by the early Shādhilīs, such as the students of Abu al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī: Ibn al-Ḥājib (d. 646/1248) and Ibn al-Munayyir (d. 684/1285).¹⁷⁸ It is possible that this in addition to the aforementioned Shādhilī treatises may have further endeared Ibn ‘Ajībah towards the Shādhilī mystical path. It was while he was still in his early twenties that he returned to Tetouan as a religious scholar in his own right, settling to teach Mālīkī jurisprudence and produce written works in Islamic jurisprudence and Ḥadīth.

The *Fahrassa* states that it was after ten years of leading the life of a traditional religious scholar that Ibn ‘Ajībah’s transformative orientation towards esoteric teachings occurred, a phase described by him as moving from “outward knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-zāhira*) to inward knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-bātin*)”¹⁷⁹ or “from knowledge to practice”¹⁸⁰ (*min al-‘ilm ilā al-‘amal*). Ibn ‘Ajībah defines such esoteric knowledge as that marked by ‘intuitive realities’ (*al-ḥaqā’iq al-‘irfāniyya*) and ‘lordly secrets’ (*asrār al-rabbāniyya*), borne by ‘contemplative gnosis’ (*ma’rifat al-‘iyān*), heralding a ‘station of spiritual excellence’ (*maqām al-iḥsān*)¹⁸¹. This is indicated as being triggered by his reading two books: the *Hikam* of Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh, followed by one of its earliest commentaries, *al-Mawāhib al-ghaythiyya fī sharḥ al-ḥikam al-‘aṭā’iyyah* by the Sufi scholar Ibn ‘Abbād al-Rundī.¹⁸² Given that the *Hikam* had already been given earlier to Ibn ‘Ajībah by al-Janwī in Tetouan, its more pronounced effect in this later reading is attributed by Ibn ‘Ajībah’s to his greater preparedness in understanding its material and the power of Ibn ‘Abbād al-Rundī’s commentary in expounding on its meanings. In his own words he states:

When I acquired the share of exoteric knowledge that God had destined for me, I actively prepared myself to receive esoteric knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-bātin*). This preparation rests on the practice of exterior religious law, for action cannot pass [from the exterior domain] to the inner self unless the senses and the external

¹⁷⁸ Danner, "The Shādhiliyyah," 35.

¹⁷⁹ Michon, *Autobiography*, 69.

¹⁸⁰ Michon, *Autobiography*, 69.

¹⁸¹ Michon, *Autobiography*, 76.

¹⁸² Ibn ‘Abbād of Ronda was himself a spiritual guide and director of the Shādhilī path whose letters of instruction have been translated and published in French and English. See: John Renard, S.J., *Ibn ‘Abbād of Ronda: Letters on the Sūfī Path* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1986).

faculties are held straight. Religious law (*sharī'ah*) is a door (*bāb*) and spiritual reality (*ḥaqīqah*) is a return (*iyāb*).¹⁸³

As part of this preparation Ibn 'Ajībah copied the entire *Ḥikam* for himself, alongside reading Ibn 'Abbād's commentary, wherein he “abandoned exoteric knowledge” and dedicated himself to “devotional practice”.¹⁸⁴ It is possible Ibn 'Ajībah saw a lot of himself in Ibn 'Abbād, for they both came from the same cultural milieu of Maghrebi Malīkī scholarship, and both served as Imāms and Friday preachers. Ibn 'Abbād served as Imām at the famous Qarawiyyīn mosque in Fez in 1375 C.E., alongside being a spiritual director in the Shādhilī path. Ibn 'Abbād's commentary, said to have been written between 1370 C.E. and 1372 C.E., embodies in a manner similar to the original text of the *Ḥikam* of Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh, a conjoining between Islamic law, exoteric knowledge and Sufism.¹⁸⁵ Profoundly affected by these two works, and perhaps the scholar-sage personalities of its authors which were similar to his own, Ibn 'Ajībah felt compelled to give himself unreservedly to the spiritual path. Intending to renounce his worldly possessions as well as his societal role as a renowned scholar for a life of solitude, he resolved to sell all his books and retire to nearby Jabal 'Alam amidst the Rif Mountains, roughly between Fez and Tetouan, to spend the rest of his life near the shrine of its patron saint Ibn Mashīsh. He states in his autobiography:

After this reading [Ibn 'Abbād's commentary of the *Ḥikam*], I abandoned exoteric knowledge and dedicated myself to devotional practice, to the remembrance of God, and to the invocation of blessings upon God's Messenger. Then I felt a desire to practice retreat and I began to detest the world and its denizens. Whenever someone approached me, I fled.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Michon, *Autobiography*, 69.

¹⁸⁴ Michon, *Autobiography*, 69 – 70.

¹⁸⁵ Renard, *Ibn 'Abbād*, 45 – 50.

¹⁸⁶ Michon, *Autobiography*, 69-70.

It was at this juncture, contemplating abandoning a life of formal learning, in the midst of a retreat at the mausoleum of a local saint, Sīdī Ṭalḥā,¹⁸⁷ that Ibn ‘Ajībāh notes the deceased saint appearing to him in a dream vision and resolving his dilemma by bequeathing him to “Study knowledge in depth”¹⁸⁸, upon which he reassumed his scholarly responsibilities. Evidently, despite the instructions, his heart remained attached to spiritual solitude, but beholden to the vision and the saint’s instruction, he continued to engage in scholarly activities for more than a decade. During this time he got married to his first wife at the age of 32 in 1779 C.E.¹⁸⁹ In time he would go on to become one of the most respected scholars of Tetouan, serving as a local Imam in addition to giving a number of religious lessons in its mosques and *madrāsas*.

Based on his own biography, his formal entry unto the Sufī path did not take place until 1793-94 C.E., when at the ripe age of 46-47, on a trip back from Fez, having visited some of his former theology teachers he decided to take a trip to the land of Banī Zarwāl to meet the well-known spiritual guide Mawlāy al-‘Arabī al-Darqāwī. There at the master’s spiritual lodge (*zāwiyah*) in Bū Brīḥ, he also met Mawlāy al-‘Arabī’s foremost student and spiritual guide in his own right, Sīdī Muhammad al-Būzīdī. The meeting was dramatic in its effect, with both teachers offering him their clairvoyant predictions on the spiritual fortune awaiting him. Yet Ibn ‘Ajībāh, despite reporting his heart’s intent in taking the pledge of allegiance, did not do so at the time. In his *Fahrāsa* he claims that this was due to the mistaken assumption that such initiation was not necessary, causing Michon to note that this may be illustrative of the difference between Ibn ‘Ajībāh’s theoretical knowledge of Sufism and its practical embodiment. Michon also postulates that Ibn ‘Ajībāh’s social position as a famed scholar may have led to a possible “unconscious psychological resistance to going through initiation.”¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ Michon notes that the saint is relatively unknown and not detailed in any of the popular hagiographies of the time, such as al-Tādilī’s *Tashawwuf*.

¹⁸⁸ Michon, *Autobiography*, 73.

¹⁸⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībāh would go onto be married six times, one of whom he would divorce, one who would die during his lifetime, and four of whom would survive his death. See: Michon, *Autobiography*, 38 – 139.

¹⁹⁰ Michon, *Autobiography*, 78.

In any case, in the *Fahrassa* narrative, it was shortly thereafter, on a return journey to Bū Brīḥ that he would finally make the pledge of allegiance, at the behest of Mawlāy al-Darqāwi, not to himself, but to his foremost disciple, al-Būzīdī, who would subsequently take on the responsibility of guiding Ibn ‘Ajībah through the rigorous program (*tarbiyyah*) that characterised the Darqāwi path at the time. Why Ibn ‘Ajībah was delegated to be guided by the student and not the master himself may perhaps be best explained by the particular character and nature of al-Būzīdī. Although not a religious scholar of his own reckoning, he was given the title of “the solitary one” (*fard*) by Mawlāy al-Darqāwi and was already considered a spiritual guide (*murshid*) of some stature. His style of teaching was said to be more extemporaneous than al-Darqāwi, born out of a nature described by fellow disciples as being given to intuitive inspiration.¹⁹¹ This reputation is further embellished in Būziyyān’s *Ṭabaqāt Darqāwiyya* wherein it is al-Būzīdī’s grabbing and pulling a reluctant Ibn ‘Ajībah into a sacred audition ritual (*samā’*) that is seen as the catalyst in his spiritual transformation, putting him into a state of ecstasy (*jadhb*) and initiating him into the spiritual path. Given that this story is not repeated in the *Fahrassa*, Michon posits it to be apocryphal.¹⁹² However, in his introduction to al-Būzīdī’s life, Arjan Post challenges Michon’s dismissal, criticizing him for not disclosing the full account.¹⁹³ Post considers Būziyyān’s story to actually fill in gaps in the *Fahrassa* narrative by illustrating Ibn ‘Ajībah’s reluctance and demonstrating al-Būzīdī’s spiritual authority. Given al-Būzīdī’s general approach and Ibn ‘Ajībah’s own scholarly personality and credentials, it is possible that al-Darqāwi felt his spiritual path would better function were he to be under the tutelage of someone given to more intuitive underpinnings and not of similar scholarly background, such that he be better guided unto the spiritual interior of his heart and its accompanying states. This understanding is supported by Ibn ‘Ajībah’s own narrative in the *Fahrassa* of his spiritual initiation wherein al-Būzīdī praised him by mentioning his new disciple’s possession of an array of interior heart states such as detachment (*zuhd*), scrupulousness (*warā’*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), clemency (*ḥilm*), submission (*taslīm*), piety (*shafaqah*), compassion (*raḥmah*), and magnanimity (*karam*)

¹⁹¹ ‘Abdulla al-Talīdī, *Kitāb al-muṭrib bi mashāhīr awliyā’ al-Maghrib* (Beirut: Dār al-Amān, 2003, 4th ed.), 216-217.

¹⁹² Michon, *Autobiography*, 78.

¹⁹³ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Two Sufi Commentaries*, 30.

alongside a dozen other such interior states, never mentioning once Ibn ‘Ajībah’s scholarly knowledge or academic credentials as being worthy of such praise.¹⁹⁴ Almost as if to illustrate his point further, al-Būzīdī then goes on to state that this litany of interior states that Ibn ‘Ajībah has already achieved possession of are nothing but ‘exterior Sufism’ and that he still has to learn the reality of ‘interior Sufism’ which al-Būzīdī promises to teach him.¹⁹⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībah in turn notes his immense confidence in al-Būzīdī, referring to him as the “perfect shaykh” and in his being a master educator, or *shaykh al-murabbī*.¹⁹⁶ By Ibn ‘Ajībah’s account it appears al-Būzīdī was true to his word in delivering this promised form of interior knowledge, as through company with his master in the form of repeated visits to his *zāwiyā* in Banī Zarwāl, Ibn ‘Ajībah claims to have later attained unto what he refers to as the ‘great illumination’ (*al-faḥ al-kabīr*).¹⁹⁷

Michon notes that it was after his initiation at the hands of al-Būzīdī that Ibn ‘Ajībah’s life takes on a dramatic shift, wherein he renounces his office and possessions, dons the patched ascetic cloak (*muraqqa‘ah*) of the Darqāwis, and commits himself to a rigorous course of meditative retreats, continual invocation and ritualistic begging.¹⁹⁸ We have already discussed how the ritualised use of such ‘begging’ was aimed at ‘annihilating the ego’ (*fanā‘ al-nafs*), intended to break the strong sense of pride that would typically characterise someone of Ibn ‘Ajībah’s status. Given its specifically sanctioned function, this ‘begging’ would follow a strict protocol, involving any money collected being further distributed to charity and not kept by the one begging. Likewise the begging would be deliberately solicited in places likely to attract censure, as the intent was not the money itself, but the soliciting of societal blame, intended to facilitate a ‘break’ in the habits (*kharq-al-‘awā‘id*) of the ego.¹⁹⁹ It appears Ibn ‘Ajībah was pleased with its efficacy in his own case, stating

¹⁹⁴ Michon, *Autobiography*, 78.

¹⁹⁵ Michon, *Autobiography*, 78-79.

¹⁹⁶ Michon, *Autobiography*, 102.

¹⁹⁷ Michon, *Autobiography*, 79.

¹⁹⁸ Michon, J.L., “Ibn ‘Adjība”, in: *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Second Edition, edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 05 January 2019.

¹⁹⁹ The word *kharq* is often used in Sufi terminology to mark a “break with egoic habits” (*kharq-al-‘awā‘id*) marking a point of reformation in the journey to ultimate egoic death (*fanā‘ al-nafs*). For more information on the protocol of ‘organized begging’ as conceived by Ibn ‘Ajībah see: Ibn ‘Ajībah, *al-Futuḥāt al-Ilāhiyyah*, 185 – 194.

that it was upon his begging that “I heard, within me, my soul crying for help; sweat was trickling down my body: it was actually the first time I experienced a break (*kharq*).”²⁰⁰ In practise this begging was often coupled with other menial tasks of deemed low social standing to effect the same aim, such as carrying the city’s garbage to its outskirts, sweeping the market place, and carrying water to quench the thirst of the public. In Ibn ‘Ajībah’s case he was told to do these activities specifically targeting the areas of Tetouan where his former colleagues from the scholarly class (‘*ulamā*’) would often frequent, such that they would be embarrassed to see him and he presumably would bear this embarrassment at the expense of his ego. Explaining this methodology, Ibn ‘Ajībah in his autobiography notes:

Know that the path must necessarily entail a break from one’s habitual norms (*kharq al-‘awā`id*), the acquisition of valuable traits (*iktisāb al-fawāid*), and struggle against individualistic egoic tendencies (*ijtihād an-nufūs*), [this] so that you might enter into the Holy Presence. How is a break with habits going to take place for you if you cannot manage to break the habits of your ego? If there were no battle grounds of the egos (*mayādīn nufūs*), no traveller would make the spiritual journey. The men of the elite are only distinguished from normal men by the battle they wage against their individual egos.

The most tenacious of the habits that must be torn away from the ego are [love of] glory and [of] wealth, such that glory be transformed into humility and wealth into poverty. Humility and poverty are two monumental doors for gaining access to God and attaining His presence. Abū Yazīd (Bastami), was addressed by God through an interior voice, in the following words: “O Abū Yazīd! Our stores are filled with acts of obedience (*khidmah*), come to me through the small door of humility and dependence (*iftiqār*)!”²⁰¹

Once deemed ready, presumably through ‘breaking his ego’ sufficiently through some of the aforementioned tasks, the next phase of Ibn ‘Ajībah’s spiritual education through

²⁰⁰ Michon, *Autobiography*, 91.

²⁰¹ Michon, *Autobiography*, 89.

instruction from al-Būzīdī would involve spiritual wandering (*siyāḥah*) to the nearby villages that lay along the rugged mountain paths of the Anjara region. The goal of such wandering would be for self-transformation, to further reveal any hidden faults of the ego, as the journeys were often arduous, carried out barefoot, with limited provisions, intended to lay bare the degree of trust in God the spiritual adept actually had. There was also a missionary element, as the Darqāwi disciples, dubbed *fuqarā*²⁰², would often chant out loud invocations such as the testimony of faith (*shahādah*), the Supreme Name of God (*ism al-jalālah*) and engage in teaching sessions at each of the villages they would stop by. Frequently attracting disciples, and occasional non-muslim co-participants (Ibn ‘Ajībah cites Christian Spaniards as sometimes joining the processions²⁰³), they were also often met with instances of opposition and even volleys of stones.²⁰⁴ It was during the course of one of these journeys that Ibn ‘Ajībah and a group of *fuqarā* were jailed in Tetouan. Ibn ‘Ajībah’s own narration of the event is that the imprisonment was motivated by jealousy. He states that false charges of initiating a woman in the privacy of her home were put against his brother who was in the group by a wealthy local in Ouezzane who appeared to materially influence the local judge (*qāḍī*). Refusing to abandon his brother to his fate, Ibn ‘Ajībah and a group of other *fuqarā* opted to be imprisoned alongside him. In keeping with his attitude of self-renunciation, Ibn ‘Ajībah claims to have found the incarceration to his liking, stating, “I have not lived better days than those: [as] the prison was transformed into a spiritual lodge (*zāwiyah*) and we did nothing other than invoke God’s name.”²⁰⁵ Released after three days through intercession from another judge and city notables on condition they desist from their activities, Michon notes that another imprisoned disciple would later author a treatise striking a comparatively more indignant tone than Ibn ‘Ajībah’s serene perspective.²⁰⁶ Perhaps reflective of a more passive spirit, with an intent to avoid such confrontation in the future, al-Būzīdī then bade Ibn ‘Ajībah and his group to journey entirely out of the area in which this event occurred, whereupon they journeyed two

²⁰² The plural of *faqīr*, literally being “someone in need”, a term commonly used by Sufis in attesting to their essential need of God, based on the Qur’ānic verse (35:15): “O Mankind! You are the ones in need (*fuqarā*) and God is the free of need and praised.”

²⁰³ Michon, *Autobiography*, 85.

²⁰⁴ Michon, *Autobiography*, 86.

²⁰⁵ Michon, *Autobiography*, 96.

²⁰⁶ Michon, *Autobiography*, 96.

hundred and fifty kilometres further south along the Mediterranean coast towns of Sale and Rabat. Ibn ‘Ajībah’s autobiography details this period of spiritual wandering as cumulatively stretching up to five years, a period he deems as being his most rich in spiritual maturation, reflected by his composition of a number of esoteric commentaries on the writings of mystic luminaries such as Ibn ‘Arabī, Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235) and Abu Ḥasan al-Shushtārī (d. 668/1269). He finally emerges from this wandering and from what he calls in the *Fahrasa* as “the time of trial” in 1799 C.E., as a spiritual guide in his own right, returning to the north of Morocco, founding numerous *zāwiyas* across the Jabāla region. He later finally settled and built a house and *zāwiyā* for himself near the village of Zammij. It was there that he spent the last ten years of his life, dedicated to devotional practice, further writing and teaching. This last period can be considered when the densest and most spiritually profuse of his writings were to be authored.

By the time of his death in 1809, in Ghumāra, at his master al-Būzīdī’s house, at the age of sixty-two, one of the several thousand struck down by the plague, he was recognised as a saintly figure. The people of the Anjra tribe amongst whom he was born and where he had settled down promptly arrived to carry their patron saint’s body back to the hamlet of Zammij (20 kilometres south-east of Tangiers) where he was buried, at a short distance away from his house and *zāwiyah*.²⁰⁷ Illustrative of his continued legacy, it was not long thereafter that an entire new branch of the Shādhilī tariqāh would eponymously emerge bearing his name, the *Ṭarīqah al-Darqāwiyyah al-‘Ajībiyyah*. His direct successor was Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Laghmiṣh, who educated Ibn ‘Ajībah’s last child and later successor, ‘Abd al-Qādir ibn ‘Ajībah (d. 1314/1896) at whose hands several thousands of disciples would enter the Sufī path. ‘Abd al-Qādir himself would eventually die at the ripe age of 90 becoming in turn the spiritual guide for a new generation of spiritual adepts that included luminaries such as Muḥammad Ja’far Kattānī (d. 1346/1927) the author of *Salwat al-anfās*, a biographical book on the Scholars of Fez.²⁰⁸ Even today, it is the many descendants of Ibn ‘Ajībah who maintain and run the network of *zawiyās* founded by their ancestor.

²⁰⁷ Michon, *Autobiography*, 25.

²⁰⁸ Michon, *Autobiography*, 25.

Ibn ‘Ajībah’s spiritual lineage

After mentioning the Prophet as the founder (*wāḍi*) of Sufism in the *Īqāz*, Ibn ‘Ajībah gives a general spiritual lineage by which Sufism spread, listing it as a precursor to his own lineage, he states:

The first of those who spoke with regards to it and manifested it was our Master ‘Alī, may God ennoble his countenance, taking from him was al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, whose mother was Khayra, the freed slave of Umm Salama, the wife of the Prophet, his father being the Prophet's freed slave, Zayd ibn Thābit. Taking from al-Ḥasan was Ḥabīb al-‘Ajamī; taking from Ḥabīb was Abu Sulaymān Dawūd al-Ṭā’ī (d. 160/777); taking from Dawūd was Abu Maḥfūz M‘arūf ibn Fayrūz al-Karkhī (may God be pleased with him) and taking from M‘arūf al-Karkhī was Abu al-Ḥasan Sirrī ibn Mughlis al-Saqatī (d. 151/768). Taking from al-Sirrī was the leader (Imām) of this path and a manifestation of the knowers of ultimate reality, Abu al-Qāsim Muhammad ibn al-Junayd al-Khazāz, originally from Nahāwand, he grew up in Irāq, learning jurisprudence at the hands of Abu Thawr, keeping the company of Imam al-Shāfi‘i, he used to give legal opinion on the school of Abu Thawr. He then kept the company of his maternal uncle, al-Sirrī, and Abu al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, and others. His speech and realities have been recorded in books, having passed away on 297 A.H. His grave is in Baghdad, being famous and oft-visited. Then Sufism spread amongst his companions, and so on, until the present day, a continuation that will not be cut off until religion itself comes to an end.²⁰⁹

Ibn ‘Ajībah’s choice to cite this popular Sufic lineage and thereby ascribe himself to it is not coincidental, for Ahmet Karamustafa notes how the connection of al-Junayd (830-910) to the *tābi‘ūn* (‘second-generation Muslims’) is from the earliest and most normatively known Sufi lineages documented, he states:

²⁰⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 14.

The earliest examples of such genealogies, known as *silsila* (literally, ‘chain’), can be traced back to Khuldī (d. 348/959), who declared that Junayd had inherited his teachings ultimately from the ‘Followers’ (*tābi ‘ūn*, ‘second-generation Muslims’) via a chain that included Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), and, soon after Khuldī, to Abu ‘Alī al-Daqqāq (d. 405/1015), who also traced Junayd’s teaching to the Followers, but via Dāwūd al-Ṭā’ī (d. 165/781–2). From here it was but a short step to the idea that all those who shared the same pedigree made up a familial community.²¹⁰

Junayd is also credited with having authored one of the earliest formulations that detail the rules associated with the spiritual teacher-novice relationship, what are called the Eight Rules of Junayd.²¹¹ These rules cover the etiquette of what the *ṣuḥba* (companionship) of connection between the teacher and student should be, a relationship that progressively came to be formally solemnised through initiation ceremonies such as an oath of allegiance (*bay‘ah*) often represented by a handclasp during the initial instruction of a given *dhikr* formula.²¹² In ascribing himself to the ‘Imām of this path’, Ibn ‘Ajībah is first grounding himself in the most normative of Sufi lineages. It is only after doing this that he introduces his own specific spiritual lineage, what he refers to as an alternative narrative chain (*riwāyatan ukhrā*). His specific lineage departs from the general lineage that he gives through Junayd unto al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d.110/728) by bypassing Junayd’s chain entirely, and instead goes back to al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī (d. 50/670), the grandson of the Prophet. This specific Shādhilī lineage was also that claimed by Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh (d. 709/1309) as narrated in his book the *Laṭā’if al-Minan* wherein he states:

His [Abu Ḥasan al-Shādhilī’s] spiritual path (may God be pleased with him) is associated with Shaykh ‘Abd al-Salām Ibn Mashīsh, while Shaykh ‘Abd al-Salām was associated with Shaykh ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Madanī. Beyond that the path is traced one by one back to al-Ḥasan the son of ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib (may God be

²¹⁰ Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 116.

²¹¹ Although the authorship of the ‘Eight Rules’ has alternatively been arguably traced to Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. 617/1220) instead, see: Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 120.

²¹² Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 120.

pleased with him). I heard my Shaykh Abu Abbās Aḥmad al-Mursī (may God be pleased with him) state: “This path of ours is not ascribed to the east nor the west but is from a single person taken from a single person, all the way unto al-Ḥasan the son of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and he was the first of the *Aqtāb* (sing. *Quṭb*)”.²¹³

The table below contrasts Ibn ‘Ajībah’s specific spiritual lineage with the general popular spiritual lineage he lists in the *Īqāz*.

Table 1. Comparing Ibn ‘Ajībah’s listed spiritual lineages within the *Īqāz*

Ibn ‘Ajībah’s personal Spiritual Lineage	General Spiritual Lineage
Prophet Muḥammad (d. 11/632)	Prophet Muḥammad (d. 11/632)
‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 41/661)	‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 41/661)
al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī (d. 50/670)	al-Ḥasan al-Basrī (d. 110/728)
Abu Muḥammad Jābir	Ḥabīb al-‘Ajamī (d. 119/737)
Sa‘īd al-Ghazawānī	Dāwūd al-Ṭā‘ī (d. 166/783)
Faṭḥ al-Sa‘ūd	Ma’rūf al-Kharkhī (d. 199/815)
Sayyidi Sa‘d	Sarī al-Saqaṭī (d. 222/837)
Aḥmad al-Marwānī	Abu al-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 297/910)
Ibrāhīm al-Baṣrī (d. 291/904)	
Zayn al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī	
Shams al-Dīn al-Turkumānī	
Tāj al-Dīn al-Turkumānī (d. 497/1104)	
Abu al-Ḥasan Nūr al-Dīn	
Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Alī	
Taqī al-Dīn al-Fuqayyir (d. 594/1198)	
‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Madanī	
‘Abd al-Salām ibn Mashīsh (d. 624/1227)	
Abu al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258)	

²¹³ ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, *Laṭā’if al-Minan*, (Beirut: Dār al-Mā‘rif, 2006), 88; also quoted in Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Siddīq al-Ghumārī, *Burḥān al-Jālī fī Taḥqīq intisāb al-Ṣuffiyah ilā ‘Alī*, (Beirut: Maṭba‘ah al-Sa‘ādah, 1969), 16.

Abu al-‘Abbās al-Mursī (d. 680/1281)	
Aḥmad ibn ‘Atā’ Allāh (d. 709/1309)	
Dāwud al-Bākhilī (d. 731/1331)	
Muḥammad al-Wafā’ (father, d. 764/1363)	
‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Wafā’ (son, d. 808/1405)	
Yahya ibn Aḥmad al-Qādirī (d. 881/1476)	
Aḥmed ibn ‘Uqbah al-Ḥazramī (d. 894/1489)	
Aḥmad Zarrūq al-Fāsī (d. 898/1493)	
Ibrāhīm Ifḥām al-Zarhūnī (d. 922/1516)	
‘Alī al-Ṣanhāji al-Dawwār (d. 947/1540)	
‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Majdhūb (d. 976/1568)	
Yūsuf al-Fāṣī (brother, d. 1013/1604)	
‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Fāṣī (brother, d. 1096/1685)	
Muḥammad ibn ‘AbdAllāh al-Fāṣī (d. 1061/1651)	
Qāsim al-Khaṣāṣī (d. 1083/1672)	
Aḥmad ibn ‘AbdAllāh (father, d. 1120/1708)	
‘Arabī ibn Aḥmad ‘Abdallah (son, d. 1166/1753)	
‘Alī ibn ‘Abd Raḥman al-‘Imrānī (d. 1194/1780)	
Mawlāy al-‘Arabī al-Darqāwī (d. 1238/1823)	
Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Būzīdī (d. 1228/1813)	
Aḥmad Ibn ‘Ajībah al-Ḥasanī (d. 1224/1809)	

Ibn ‘Ajībah’s own lineage illustrates the development of the Shādhilī spiritual path and its early development in Egypt, before subsequent interchange of movement between Egypt and the Maghreb. Notably all of Ibn ‘Ajībah’s immediate predecessors until Shaykh Aḥmad Zarrūq al-Fāsī were from the Maghreb, being predominantly connected to Fes, often in some formal teaching capacity. Beyond Aḥmad Zarrūq however the chain returns to Egypt, for Zarrūq’s own teacher, Aḥmed ibn ‘Uqbah al-Ḥazramī, originally from Ḥazramaut, present day eastern Yemen, had settled in Egypt, residing in Cairo, which is where Zarrūq met him and took the path from him. Aḥmed al-Ḥazramī had taken the Shādhilī path from ‘Alī al-Wafā’, the son of Muḥammad al-Wafā’. Richard McGregor

notes how this father and son Wafā'iyah combination originally hailed from the Maghreb with their grandfather having migrated to Egypt, they traced their lineage to Idris I (d. 172/788) the founder of Fez and the Maghreb Idrisid dynasty which lasted into the 10th century.²¹⁴ They had taken the Shādhilī path in Egypt from Dāwud al-Bākhilī, who was an accomplished jurist prior to becoming the student of Abu al-'Abbās al-Mursī. Upon his master's death, Dāwud al-Bākhilī subsequently became a student of al-Mursī's successors, Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh and Yāqūṭ al-'Arshī (d. 732/1332), the latter also known as Yāqūṭ al-Ḥabāshī, a former Ethiopian slave.²¹⁵ It was Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh who later gave the authorisation of being a guide to al-Bākhilī, and together it was through al-Bākhilī and Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh that the Shādhilī path went to Cairo from its previous Alexandrian headquarters established under al-Mursī and Abu al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī.

Writings of Ibn 'Ajībah

Ibn 'Ajībah's prolific authorship commenced from about the time he returned to Tetouan as a teacher and continued right until his death. He lists most of his works in his autobiography, the *Fahrasa*, taking care to leave space for unfinished works, intending to complete the list later but dying before being able to do so. Jean-Louis Michon lists most of these works in his *Encyclopedia of Islam* article entitled "Ibn 'Aḍjība" (written in 1970) and he also provides a chronological table of the works as an appendix item in his translation of Ibn 'Ajībah's autobiography.²¹⁶ Based on Michon's appendix, Ibn 'Ajībah's works can be divided into those prior to his initiation in the Darqāwī order, numbering about fifteen and those completed post-initiation, which number about thirty-five. Unsurprisingly, the writings prior to his initiation focus on a range of exoteric topics, such as his commentaries on the Mālīkī *fiqh* text *Mukhtaṣar al-Khalīl*, which Michon lists as being incomplete, or his commentary on the devotional Ḥadīth compendium, *Ḥiṣn al-ḥaṣīn*, likewise listed as incomplete. Given that Michon lists both these texts as probably being commenced relatively close to the time of his initiation, it is likely that their

²¹⁴ McGregor, *Sanctity and Mysticism*, 49.

²¹⁵ McGregor, *Sanctity and Mysticism*, 33.

²¹⁶ Michon, J.L., "Ibn 'Aḍjība", in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Second Edition, Ed. by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 05 January 2019; and See: Michon, *Autobiography*, 182 – 184.

incompleteness is reflective of a shifting priority in Ibn ‘Ajībah’s focus. Notably, all the texts after Ibn ‘Ajībah’s self-cited spiritual conversion have an esoteric dimension, including his Qur’ānic exegesis, *Baḥr al-madīd*, wherein Ibn ‘Ajībah follows up a standard commentarial style with his spiritually speculative *ishārāt* (mystical allusions). In similar manner is his esoteric commentary on the grammatical primer, the *Ajurrūmiyyah*, which contains his mystical interpretation of grammatical rules and symbols. This mystical orientation should not be seen as an abrupt break from his previous patterns of writing but more of a graded progression that was reflective of his life trajectory. This is evidenced by the fact that coming up to the time of his conversion, his focus was already shifting from more exoteric jurisprudential works to commentaries on devotional poems highlighting love for the Prophet, namely the *Burdah* and the *Hamziyyah*, authored by Imām al-Būṣīrī (d. 693/1294), himself a Shādhili disciple of Abu Abbās al-Mursī and fellow disciple of Ibn ‘Atā’ Allāh. Ibn ‘Ajībah’s spiritual realignment is further evidenced by his authoring commentaries on the spiritual litanies of the *Wazīfa* of Aḥmad Zarrūq and the *Ḥizb al-kabīr* of Imām Abu al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī shortly thereafter. To Michon, these early spiritual works, despite their rich content, remain demonstrative of Ibn ‘Ajībah’s initial phase of “theoretical *taṣawwuf*” as they fall short of the depth of his later writings.²¹⁷ Other scholars such as Abdurrahman Fitzgerald and Fouad Aresmouk echo this position, noting that the writings after Ibn ‘Ajībah’s formal initiation at the hands of al-Būzīdī are “more clearly suffused with spiritual insight, containing more instruction to his fellow spiritual travellers in the path, and portray a strong conviction that Sufism is the key to reviving faith.”²¹⁸ The work considered most illustrative of that development, marking his conversion to practice, was the *Īqāz*, being in turn a commentary on the *Ḥikam*, the book he cites as changing his life. Michon says Ibn ‘Ajībah began writing the *Īqāz* in 1209/1794, the same year Ibn ‘Ajībah was briefly imprisoned in Tetouan, a year wherein he states “I have not lived better days than those.”²¹⁹ He continued writing the *Īqāz* during the years of his spiritual wandering that followed afterwards and it is likely he would have finished the text during the years of his settling down near the village of Zammij. This marks the *Īqāz* as being

²¹⁷ Michon, *Autobiography*, 182.

²¹⁸ Aḥmad ibn ‘Ajība, *The Book of Ascension to the Essential Truths of Sufism*, trans. M.F. Aresmouk, M.A. Fitzgerald, Fons Vitae, xix.

²¹⁹ Michon, *Autobiography*, 96.

written during the most mature period of his spiritual insight and notably it was towards the end of this period that we find his commentaries on the works of mystic philosophers such as Ibn ‘Arabī and Abdul Karīm al-Jīlī appear, both of whom he quotes in the *Īqāz*. This allows us to conclude that the *Īqāz* demonstrates the full circle and depth of Ibn ‘Ajībah’s spiritual journey, one that began with his reading Ibn ‘Abbād’s commentary on the *Ḥikam* and which finally culminated with his own superlative commentary on the same text.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to explain and locate the spiritual, intellectual, cultural and political milieu that led to the formation of the person of Ibn ‘Ajībah and the culmination of his spiritual thought in the form of his writing the *Īqāz*. In his person Ibn ‘Ajībah is representative of a spiritual lineage and intellectual tradition that stems from the Prophet Muhammad and the early source traditions of Islam unto his own teachers al-Būzīdī and al-Darqāwī in early 19th century Morocco. As an era this marked the onset of colonisation by western powers in the region. As such, focusing on the person of Ibn ‘Ajībah alongside his text, the *Īqāz*, is of utmost historical importance in that it demonstrates the scholarly milieu of pre-colonial Morocco. Significantly, Ibn ‘Ajībah’s life precedes the dawn of the colonisation project in the Maghreb and he represents the last bastion of a form of scholarship that existed prior to the effects of colonisation. His type of scholarship would increasingly recede as the educational project of French colonisation would begin to take hold of Moroccan society, the effects of which would continue to abide long after the later inception of the modern nation state. Admittedly, this thesis is not able to contribute more research on this aspect of colonisation due to our focus being primarily on determining aspects of Ibn ‘Ajībah’s spiritual personality that are relevant to the *Īqāz*. Any future studies exploring the effects of colonisation would do well to study the comparative syllabi employed within religious institutions prior to and after Ibn ‘Ajībah. In this regard as a pointer, Marouane Zakhir and Jason O’Brien demonstrate how French colonisation systematically dismantled the traditional education system based on Islam and Qur’ānic

primary schools and secondary schools (madrassa) that existed prior.²²⁰ From 1912 to 1956, Morocco was governed as a French protectorate wherein Moroccan elites alongside the French community would study in schools where the main language of instruction was in French. Even the small number of private schools and madrassas specialising in religious scholarship (*madāris al-hurra*) which sought to maintain classical and Moroccan Arabic as the main language of instruction were limited in their effect on the widespread use of French. The long term effects of this pattern was such that when Morocco formally declared independence in 1956, French continued to be seen as the primary language of instruction in Moroccan universities.²²¹ Thus Ibn ‘Ajībah and the *Īqāz* represented a key turning point for the Shādhiliyyah School in Morocco and greater Maghreb, in that the world of religious scholarship that would be inhabited by Sufis post-Ibn ‘Ajībah could not be revived, making it very difficult to produce another *Īqāz*. In many ways this explains why there has been no equivalent contribution to Shādhili Sufi literature post-*Īqāz*.

In summarising Ibn ‘Ajībah’s life we must note how being born into a *sharīfian* family of Prophetic descent meant that he was already established amongst a social class of the religious elite. This sense of nobility was further emphasized when he assumed the formal role of a scholar as teacher of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Qur’ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*), theology (*usūl al-dīn*) and grammar (*naḥw*) in a number of Tetouan’s mosques and madrasas. He was already known for his ascetic temperament, deep piety, keen mind and indomitable will prior to his spiritual calling towards the Shādhilī Darqawwiyyah path, which occurred when he was over 50. Paradoxically it was arguably this prior social standing coupled with his independent and indomitable will that perhaps led to a delay in his being able to fully commit himself to being under another spiritual authority. He delayed committing to his grand-teacher Mawlāy al-Darqāwī and his immediate guide Muḥammad al-Būzīdī, despite meeting them prior more than once. Notably his commitment happens through al-Būzīdī in a form that breaks the norms of his prior social standing, with his teacher pulling him into an ecstatic dance. His immediate path follows this pattern of an uprooting of social

²²⁰ Marouane Zakhir and Jason O’Brien, “French neo-colonial influence on Moroccan language education policy: A study of current status of standard Arabic in science disciplines,” *Language Policy*, 16, 1 (2017), 39-58.

²²¹ Zakhir and O’Brien, “neo-colonial influence,” 40-41.

norms, and once committed, he ably undergoes a rigorous inner and outer spiritual apprenticeship that results in him being transformed into a master guide (*shaykh al-tarbiyyah*) on the spiritual path.

In his character and life Ibn ‘Ajībah emerges as someone who sacrificed all he possessed in the pursuit of his realisation of a select form of knowledge of God which he and other Sufis termed *ma’rifah*. He details his way as being to pass through the narrow door of *faqr*, or 'spiritual poverty', being a continual call of adherence to the Qur’ānic injunction: “God is rich, you are the poor” (Qur’ān: 47:38). This translates into a scrupulosity borne by a constant refusal to attach himself to anything other than his goal of God, embodying what one of his grand teachers Aḥmad Zarrūq refers to as the ultimate definition of Sufism itself, namely *sidq al-tawwajuh* (lit. the sincerity of one’s orientation).²²² Ibn ‘Ajībah’s goal is to be a *faqīr*, to realise his own ontological poverty by being stripped of his sense of ontological independence. This sincerity of purpose was evident from the moment he was initiated into the Sufi path, with his willingly giving up the social status and respectability he had acquired before.²²³ Whilst his *Fahrasa* as autobiography claims to attest to the success of his pursuit it does not do this from the perspective of self-aggrandisement. Instead in the spirit of other prominent Sufi autobiographies such as al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsabī’s (d. 243/873) *The Book of Advice* (*Kitāb al-nasā’ih*), Abu Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī’s (d. 505/1111) *Deliverance from Error* (*al-Munqidh min al-dalāl*), and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī’s (d. 911/1505) *Speaking of God’s Blessings* (*al-Taḥadduth bi ni‘matiAllāh*), the intent appears to be one of glorifying and thanking God for His bounties. In listing his spiritual success he appears to do so in the manner of an impartial witness, more keen to ascribe any glory to God, whilst readily admitting his many faults and hubris prior to such grace.²²⁴

In fact Ibn ‘Ajībah’s primary intent in his *Fahrasa* appears to be to inform the reader of the correct propriety or attitude (*ādāb*) that are to be held in the myriad relationships that one will encounter in the spiritual path through his own practical life demonstration. These

²²² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 13

²²³ Michon, *Autobiography*, 13.

²²⁴ Michon, *Autobiography*, 13.

relationships include that between the master and disciple, with fellow disciples, with wider society, with political authority, and in the ultimate sense with one's creator, which to him translates into the propriety displayed with each moment of one's existence (*adab al-waqt*).²²⁵ In method Ibn 'Ajībah's way was to seek the constant opposition to the ego, which alternatively translates into a constant practise of aligning oneself with God's presence through embodiment of spiritual virtues and His remembrance.²²⁶ Ibn 'Ajībah's particular standout contribution to the nature of his path, demonstrated both intellectually in his written works and through his lived experience is his constant alignment of balance between its exoteric and esoteric dimensions. As his life story unfolds, Ibn 'Ajībah finds himself at the intersection of these two currents having mastered the former before embarking on the latter. Resultantly his long spiritual apprenticeship can be seen as a stripping away (*takhliyah*) of the psychological identification borne out of his acquisition of exoteric knowledge (*'ilm al-zāhir*), followed by the later embodiment (*tahliyyah*) of its inner dimension (*'ilm al-bāṭin*). In this manner his life serves as a demonstration of the Sufi understanding of one's ego being annihilated by God (*fanā'*) followed by a subsistence in seeing the world and its forms through God's constant perpetuation (*baqā'*). This dichotomy has been collectively termed the path or tradition of wisdom (*ḥikmah*), the deeper underpinnings and metaphysical assumptions of which will be explored in the next chapter.

²²⁵ Michon, *Autobiography*, 20-21.

²²⁶ Michon, *Autobiography*, 19.

Chapter 3: *Hikmah* and the Shādhilīyyah

In order to understand the intellectual underpinnings of the *Īqāz* it is important to focus on the concept of *ḥikmah* (wisdom) and to particularly examine how this concept was later understood by the Shādhilīyyah as a central theme in their understanding of spiritual journeying (*sulūk*). This chapter highlights the trajectory of various motifs that would come to underpin the *Hikmah* tradition. It examines how these motifs were articulated in the metaphysics of pivotal Sufis and how they would come to be incorporated into the broader theme of *sulūk* before being used by Ibn ‘Ajībah within the *Īqāz*. It should be noted that the title of Ibn ‘Atā’ Allāh’s *Hikam* is the plural of *ḥikmah*, which is the Arabic word for aphorism and the same term for wisdom. This similarity of wording was not coincidental in that Ibn ‘Atā’ Allāh and then later Ibn ‘Ajībah were inheritors of a wisdom (*ḥikmah*) tradition whose metaphysical understanding can be gleaned by a study of the etymological usage of the word *ḥikmah*. Hikmet Yaman points out that the term *ḥikmah* serves as an example of a “complex network of multiple conceptual interrelationships in the cross-disciplinary context of early Muslim scholarly work” and accordingly should not be limited to a purely etymological or atomistic analysis.²²⁷ In aiming to treat the concept of *ḥikmah* in its contextual and interdisciplinary context, Yaman examines *ḥikmah* as related to Arabic lexicography, Qur’ānic exegesis, Sufism and Islamic philosophy. He states the primary material indicates that the root of the word *ḥikmah*, *ḥ-k-m*, has multifaceted meanings.²²⁸ Citing the foremost meaning as being “to restrain” (*mana ‘a*) alongside two other secondary derivative meanings of “to perfect” (*atqana*) and “to judge” (*aḥkama*), he identifies *ḥikmah* as being representative of all forms of knowledge which prevent “a person from acting in a corrupt manner.”²²⁹ Further investigating the lexicological origins of the term, Yaman states that *ḥikmah* as indigenous terminology may have entered into the classical Arabic vernacular from other Semitic languages. In this regard he references Dimitri Gutas who

²²⁷ Hikmet Yaman. *Prophetic Niche in the Virtuous City: The Concept of Hikmah in Early Islamic Thought* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2011), 1.

²²⁸ Yaman’s etymological investigation of the term *ḥikmah* is wide-ranging and he covers most of the major lexicological works, such as the first Arabic language dictionary *Kitāb al-‘Ayn* by al-Khalīl al-Farāhīdī, *Tahdhīb al-lughah*, and *al-Muḥīt fī al-luhgah*, alongside Qur’ānic dictionary works, such as *al-Mufradāt fī Gharā’ib al-Qur’ān* by al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī.

²²⁹ Yaman, *Prophetic Niche*, 2.

discusses the concept of *ḥikmah* in his article, “Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature: Nature and Scope.”²³⁰ Gutas posits that Hellenistic and early Jewish and Christian understandings of the word *ḥikmah* were already existent in pre-Islamic Arabia. Importantly, Gutas indicates that the term was mostly employed as a descriptive of wisdom literature in Pre-Islamic times, designating a genre of written and oral expressions of wise maxims of Pre-Islamic sages such as those attributed to Luqman about whom the Qur’ān says: “And We had certainly given Luqman wisdom (*ḥikmah*).”²³¹ Significantly to Gutas, Ibn Durayd’s (d. 321/933) *Jamharat al-lughah*, considered to be amongst the earliest extant dictionaries of the Arabic language, defines and delimits the term *ḥikmah* only in the sense of a “maxim”.²³² Gutas defines such maxims as: “a general truth, fundamental principle, or rule of conduct, especially when expressed in sententious form.”²³³ This is echoed in the classical sense by lexicologists such as Ibn Durayd who states: “Every saying which exhorts you, or urges you, or calls you to a noble trait or deters you from a disgraceful one is a *ḥikmah*.”²³⁴

This understanding of *ḥikmah* as a maxim or words of wisdom affected into moral action appears to have continued into the formative period of Islam within the Prophet’s own discourse, as evidenced by a Prophetic Ḥadīth which states: “A saying of *ḥikmah* is the lost property of the believer, so wheresoever he finds it, he is more worthy as claimant.”²³⁵ Yaman indicates that the most exegetically commented upon Qur’ānic verse mentioning the word *ḥikmah* is: “He [God] gives *ḥikmah* to whomsoever He wills, and whoever has been given *ḥikmah* has indeed been given much good; yet none comprehends except men of insightful understanding (Qur’ān: 2:269).”²³⁶ Yaman argues that the use of the word *ḥikmah* in the Qur’ān despite attracting diverse interpretations from the earliest exegetical

²³⁰ Dimitri Gutas. “Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature: Nature and Scope,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* Vol. 101, No. 1 (Jan - March, 1981), 49-86.

²³¹ Gutas, “Arabic Wisdom,” 50.

²³² Gutas, “Arabic Wisdom,” 50.

²³³ Gutas, “Arabic Wisdom,” 76.

²³⁴ Gutas, “Arabic Wisdom,” 50.

²³⁵ For Arabic reference, see: *Jāmi‘ah al-Tirmidhī, Kitāb al-‘Ilm, Bāb mā jā’ fī faḍl al-fiqhī ‘alā al-‘Ibādah*. Book 41, Hadith 43. Online: <https://sunnah.com/tirmidhi/41/43> [As accessed on 14th April, 2019].

²³⁶ Notably, Ibn ‘Ajībah begins his introduction to the *Īqāz* quoting this verse.

authorities, alludes to a common underpinning and connected meaning. Indicatively, as the word *ḥikmah* in the Qur'ān was often paired with the word *kitāb* (book), early exegetes such as Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687) asserted *ḥikmah* meant a discerning understanding (*fiqh*) of the Qur'ān itself, without which one would be unable to differentiate between revelation that was clear and ambiguous, earlier and later, the lawful and unlawful, and the metaphorical and literal.²³⁷

Ḥikmah among the Sufis

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), as one of the earliest interpreters of the Qur'ān from a Sufi perspective, interprets verse 2:269 and its reference to *ḥikmah* as being moral scrupulousness (*wara'*) and God-given understanding (*fahm*).²³⁸ Another early Sufi, Ja'far al-Ṣadiq (d. 148/765), one of the prominent saints and mystics listed in most early hagiographical works, and the sixth Imam in Shi'ī Islam, defines *ḥikmah* as an active epistemological notion.²³⁹ To him *ḥikmah* is connected to the function of the heart (*qalb*) which listens (*yasma'*), understands (*ya'qil*) and sees (*yubṣir*).²⁴⁰ Another early Sufi exegete Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896) interprets the reference of *ḥikmah* in 2:269 as being correctness in the way of God, concluding that *ḥikmah* means the consensus of the sciences (*ijmā' al-'ulūm*) which are all firmly rooted in the way (*sunnah*) of the Prophet.²⁴¹ He considered the capital (*ra's māl*) of *ḥikmah* to be of three kinds: training the soul (*nafs*) in abstaining from reprehensible things (*makrūhāt*); emptying the heart of love for carnal desires (*shahawāt*); and thirdly watching over the heart as mindfulness of God with regards to incoming thoughts (*khaṭirāt*) such that the limbs only move towards correct action.²⁴² Similarly, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996) gives a detailed analysis of verse 2:269 in his book *ʿIlm al-qulūb* (Knowledge of the Hearts) listing fourteen aspects (*wajh*) of *ḥikmah*.²⁴³ Most of these aspects reflect a form of discerning knowledge or aspects connected to it

²³⁷ Yaman, *Prophetic Niche*, 50.

²³⁸ Yaman, *Prophetic Niche*, 170.

²³⁹ Yaman, *Prophetic Niche*, 112.

²⁴⁰ Yaman, *Prophetic Niche*, 112.

²⁴¹ Yaman, *Prophetic Niche*, 122.

²⁴² Yaman, *Prophetic Niche*, 123.

²⁴³ Yaman, *Prophetic Niche*, 124 - 126.

such as perspicacity (*firāsah*), intellect (‘*aql*), comprehension (*fiqh*), moral scrupulousness (*wara’*), and correctness in speech, action and will (*irādah*).²⁴⁴ To al-Makkī such *ḥikmah* represents one of the ten divine blessings given to mankind, which should be sought through renunciative practices like hunger (*jū’*) and thirst (*zīm’*).²⁴⁵ The scholar Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021) in his commentary on verse 2:269 cites *ḥikmah* as being God-given knowledge (‘*ilm ladunnī*), spiritual allusion (*ishārah*), spiritual witnessing (*ishhād*), and a distinguishing light (*al-nūr al-mufarriq*), representing an indicator (*mushīrah*) of Divine grace (*fadl*).²⁴⁶ He interprets *ḥikmah* in verse 2:269 as being the “light of perspicacity” (*nūr al-fīṭnah*).²⁴⁷ According to al-Sulamī’s terminology, the attainment of gnosis (*ma’rifah*) is the epistemological outcome of *ḥikmah*, being a gift (*mawhibah*) by which God illuminates the hearts of His gnostic servants.²⁴⁸ Such an understanding was consistent with that of ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī (d.465/1074), who in his exposition of verse 2:269 reported that *ḥikmah* was the witnessing of the Real (*shuhūd al-Ḥaqq*) and a correctness of action in all matters (*ṣawāb al-umūr*) wherein one is never under the authority of egoic caprice (*hawā*).²⁴⁹

In conclusion to his analysis, Yaman notes that underlying all of these seemingly diverse interpretations is an epistemological interrelatedness that also connects other concepts embedded in the terminology of words such as ‘*ilm* (knowledge), *ma’rifah* (gnosis), ‘*aql* (intellect), *qalb* (heart), and *fiqh* (comprehension).²⁵⁰ This alludes to the common role of *ḥikmah* as a type of discernment, namely that type of knowledge which separates and delineates in a morally beneficial manner, which ultimately results in gnosis (*ma’rifah*). This particular understanding of *ḥikmah* as discernment in a dualistic world, culminating in a non-dual epiphany of God realisation, would come to be explored amongst the earliest Sufis. In time this eventually culminated in the institutionalisation of a theosophy that

²⁴⁴ Yaman, *Prophetic Niche*, 124 - 126.

²⁴⁵ Yaman, *Prophetic Niche*, 126.

²⁴⁶ Yaman, *Prophetic Niche*, 130 – 131.

²⁴⁷ Yaman, *Prophetic Niche*, 132.

²⁴⁸ Yaman, *Prophetic Niche*, 132 – 133.

²⁴⁹ Yaman, *Prophetic Niche*, 139.

²⁵⁰ Yaman, *Prophetic Niche*, 60.

would underpin both the social and spiritual praxis of many Sufi *ṭarīqahs*; prominent of whom would be the Shādhilīyyah. The following sections chart this synthesis.

The Synthesis of *Ḥikmah*

Yaman’s examination of the perception of *ḥikmah* amongst the earliest Sufis affirms the findings of earlier scholars like Louis Massignon (d. 1962) who state that the earliest Sufi conceptual frameworks were deeply connected in a contemplative relationship with Qur’ānic foundations.²⁵¹ Demonstrating this, Aiyub Palmer explores the trajectory of the concept of *ḥikmah* and how its evolution culminated in the theosophy of Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 255/869), which served as a precursor to the thought of Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638/1240), whose thought provided the metaphysical foundations to numerous Sufis thereafter, prominent of whom were the Shādhilīyyah.²⁵² Palmer notes that the earliest Sufis such as Ibrāhīm ibn Adham (d. 165/782) saw *ḥikmah* as a special esoteric knowledge given only to those who were deserved.²⁵³ As Maṣūr b. ‘Ammār (d. 225/839) stated: “Wisdom (*ḥikmah*) is articulated in the hearts of the knowers of God (‘*ārifīn*) with the tongue of true belief.”²⁵⁴ Amongst the most notable early figures in the development of normative Sufism, Al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857) sees the embodiments of *ḥikmah*, i.e. the *ḥukamā’* (plural of *ḥakīm*) as being akin to ‘sowers of seeds’, wherein the ‘seeds’ resemble ‘wise words’ that sprout a knowledge of divine realisation.²⁵⁵ Yaman notes that Muḥāsibī defines *ḥikmah* within a “network of associated epistemological and practical concepts,” such as the ability to be silent (*ṣamt*), listening to knowledge (*istimā’ uhu*), putting it into practice (*al-‘amal bihi*) and further spreading it (*nashruhu*).²⁵⁶ To Yaman, Muḥāsibī seems to view the role of the intellect (‘*aql*) as being synonymous with *ḥikmah*, being “a discerning light that God places

²⁵¹ Louis Massignon, *Essays on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, trans. Benjamin Clark (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 94.

²⁵² Aiyub Palmer, “The Social and Theoretical Dimensions of Sainthood in Early Islam: Al-Tirmidhī’s Gnoseology and the Foundations of Ṣūfī Social Praxis” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2015).

²⁵³ Palmer, “Dimensions of Sainthood,” 81.

²⁵⁴ Palmer, “Dimensions of Sainthood,” 82.

²⁵⁵ Palmer, “Dimensions of Sainthood,” 83.

²⁵⁶ Yaman, *Prophetic Niche*, 144.

in the heart.”²⁵⁷ Whilst the development of Sufi thought is often complex and nonlinear it does appear that two Sufis in particular stand out in their building upon Muḥāsibī’s teachings to become theoretical progenitors of two connected streams of discourse concerning *ḥikmah*. These scholars were Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and Abu al-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 298/910). Notably, both belonged to a class of Sunnī ‘*ulamā*’ who were not only progenitors of a particularly spiritual discourse but also spoke on the role of religious power and authority in light of the various factional challenges faced in their time from competing narratives of a Shi‘ī, Mu‘tazilī and Murji‘ī nature.²⁵⁸ Perhaps for this reason, their discourse arose at a time of synthesis and institutionalization across various formats of Sunnī Islamic knowledge and Sufism would prove to be no exception, with these two Scholars laying the foundation for what Aiyub Palmer calls “The Great Mystical Synthesis of the 5th/11th-Century.”²⁵⁹

In the case of Junayd, he builds upon and refines Muḥāsibī’s ideas rather than purely borrowing them.²⁶⁰ In sharing Muḥāsibī’s methodology of refining the self, Junayd posits Muḥāsibī’s ultimate goal of an illumined intellect (‘*aql*’) as being a lesser stage that itself should be traversed in pursuit of spiritual realisation. Here Junayd, states that such realisation is to transcend the intellect itself, and thus to transcend all material form (*rasm*).²⁶¹ Deeming this an act of pure divine grace that one has to ready themselves for (i.e. the *khuṣūṣiyyah* or ‘being chosen’ by God), Junayd sees this higher station as being above the intellect (‘*aql*’) and instead being an annihilation (*fanā*’) of the soul’s egoic sense of individuality. To him, the mystic should recover from this ‘spiritual death’, and return to ascend to an even higher station of subsistence (*baqā*’) in God. Thus, Junayd was amongst the first to posit a spiritual annihilation (*fanā*’) and subsistence (*baqā*’) dichotomy as representing the peak expression of *ḥikmah*. In this manner his articulation lay in contrast to Muḥāsibī, for to Junayd, the spiritual journey was not simply a process of refinement

²⁵⁷ Yaman, *Prophetic Niche*, 144.

²⁵⁸ In the case of Junayd, this was despite his personal position which was to remain apolitical and maintain a low profile on social issues and points of religious doctrine as the events of the inquisition (*Miḥna*) of Sufis demonstrated. See: Alexander D. Knysh. *Islamic Mysticism: A short history*, (Leiden: Brill. 2010), 55–56.

²⁵⁹ Palmer, “Dimensions of Sainthood,” 144.

²⁶⁰ Knysh. *Islamic Mysticism*, 53.

²⁶¹ Palmer, “Dimensions of Sainthood,” 157.

and accounting for one's moral rectitude and sincerity (*muḥāsaba*), but instead was one that should culminate in a vision of God (*mushāhada*). He defines this vision as the process whereby the mystic ceases to see his own independent existence through a process of spiritual annihilation (*fanā'*), ultimately becoming nothing but the locus of God's presence, and thereby subsisting through Him (*baqā'*).

***Fanā'* and *Baqā'* with Junayd**

To Junayd, the ultimate spiritual goal of *ḥikmah* is to make such *fanā'* an abiding feature of one's consciousness, wherein a permanent sense of being existentially by God, termed *baqā'* (subsistence), becomes the norm of one's lived experience. Coterminous with *baqā'* he refers to this intended final state as 'true sobriety' (*saḥw*), implying anything otherwise as being drunken stupor.²⁶² In this manner, Junayd's discussion is seen as a refined continuation of Muḥāsibī's 'radical interiorization' of the spiritual path.²⁶³ It is here that Junayd assigns *ḥikmah* the role of the necessary interior knowledge required in traversing such a path (*tarīqah*), existing in apposition to its outward counterpart ('*ilm*), wherein its possessor (*ḥakīm*) is of a higher rank than the scholar of outward knowledge ('*ālim*).²⁶⁴ This contrast between inner and outward knowledge is illustrated by Junayd in his *Letters* (*Rasā'il al-Junayd*) wherein he stages a dialogue between a scholar of exoteric knowledge ('*ālim*) and a sage of esoteric knowledge (*ḥakīm*). In it the *ḥakīm* brings the '*ālim* to tears, facilitating the "dawning of the sun of *ḥikmah* and the attainment of the limpidity of its light."²⁶⁵ Here Junayd describes the function of the *ḥakīm*, likening him to that of a 'physician of the heart', wherein just as a physician of the outward treats the diseases of the body, it is the *ḥakīm* who retains knowledge about how to treat the inner spiritual maladies.²⁶⁶ Notably, Junayd sees the *ḥakīm* and the wisdom or *ḥikmah* he speaks of as being akin to a type of inspiration. He says in the *Letters*: "know that the speakers of *ḥikmah* don't speak except after they are permitted to do so, but when they do, great benefit

²⁶² Junayd understands *baqā'* or subsistence to be already occluded reality, because subsistence through God is already the norm of reality, it just has not been realized.

²⁶³ Palmer, "Dimensions of Sainthood," 157 – 159.

²⁶⁴ Palmer, "Dimensions of Sainthood," 85.

²⁶⁵ Abū al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad al-Junayd. *Rasā'il al-Junayd*. Ed. 'Abd al-Qādir, Ḥasan. (Cairo: Bura'ī Wajdawī, 1988), 9.

²⁶⁶ Palmer, "Dimensions of Sainthood," 85.

descends upon those who are given to hear it.”²⁶⁷ Deeming such *ḥikmah* to be analogous to a flowing stream (*jāriyah*) of light (*nūr*), he states that it is this illuminatory nature of *ḥikmah* that “pours over the soul” of a listener and awakens their spirit in the first stage of spiritual seeking.²⁶⁸

Fanā’ and Baqā’ with Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī

Like Junayd, al-Tirmidhī draws on the analogy of the physician (*ṭabīb*) to explain the *ḥakīm* and his function with *ḥikmah*. In doing so, he specifically highlights the four humors and their corresponding characteristics and seasons as common to Galenic or ancient greek medicine to be an interplay of opposites that reveals an underlying unity. Whilst this indicates the possibility that al-Tirmidhī may have studied such medicine or even some type of Hellenistic philosophy, his purpose in alluding to this is to indicate that the role of the *ḥakīm* and the function of *ḥikmah* exists at the level of opposites. He states that just as Greek Galenic medicine uses sensorial properties such as hot, cold, wet and dry as a heuristic for understanding balance and imbalance in the body, the *ḥakīm* is the one whose knowledge encompasses spiritual opposites in a manner that brings about balance which aids his journeying unto God. In the opening lines of al-Tirmidhī’s *Kitāb al-Ḥikmah*, a pivotal book detailing his thought, he defines *ḥikmah* as being: “The judgment of things, according to their various harmful properties, in the way they function and proceed from the Lord to his servant, and from the servant to his Lord in terms of their causes and effects.”²⁶⁹ Accordingly, al-Tirmidhī in this encompassing definition joins between two opposites, the inward (*bāṭin*) causes and effects which relate to those ‘that proceed from the Lord’ and their outward opposite (*ẓāhir*) which proceed ‘from the servant’ in the reverse direction., Like Junayd, al-Tirmidhī posits the ultimate goal of the spiritual path as being a point wherein all oppositions and points of reference are lost, in which the mystic himself is annihilated (*fanā’*), and then subsists in the divine presence (*baqā’*). For this

²⁶⁷ Junayd. *Rasā’il*, 9.

²⁶⁸ Junayd. *Rasā’il*, 35 and 36.

²⁶⁹ Previously only existing as a manuscript it has only recently been ably rendered into legible Arabic font and translated by Aiyub Palmer in his Phd thesis. See: Palmer, “Dimensions of Sainthood,” 272 – 274.

reason al-Tirmidhī divides beneficial knowledge in traversing to God into a tripartite reality, wherein the people of knowledge (*‘ulamā’*) can be divided into three categories. The first are those scholars of sacred law and exoteric knowledge, these being the *‘ulamā’ bi-umūr Allāh* (Scholars of the outward commandments of God). The second and higher category of people are those who utilize an esoteric knowledge of discerning between opposites, i.e. *ḥikmah*, and accordingly they possess a knowledge of the ‘inward commandments’ (in addition to the outward) of God, these are the *‘ulamā’ bi-tadbīr Allāh* (Scholars of God’s management of the world). The final category of people of knowledge, analogous to Junayd’s *fanā’-baqā’* dichotomy are those who are freed from seeking signs unto God, in that they have attained unto the source itself, these are the *‘ulamā’ bi-Allāh* (Scholars through and by God). It is the final category who al-Tirmidhī posits are the *awliyā’* (lit. those under the sole authority of God, indicating a rank of true freedom and saintliness), not to be confused with the *ḥukamā’* who are the second stage of people, prior to this point of spiritual arrival (*wusūl*).²⁷⁰ The understanding of *awliyā’* as those who ‘are truly free’ from form (*rasm*) according to Junayd, and free from a duality of opposites according to al-Tirmidhī, can be understood by the latter’s analysis of the term used to denote such a saint, *walī*. As Palmer notes, “The *walī* in al-Tirmidhī’s epistemology characterizes the *maqām* (station) of *fardāniyya* (singularity, non-duality) precisely because the *walī* goes beyond the dualities that are characteristic of the world of the *ḥakīm*.”²⁷¹ Tirmidhī directly equates the concept of true ‘freedom’ with *wilāyah* (governing authority) because of the connotations this has with the institution of clientage (*walā’*) present at the time of the Abbasid era in Khurasan. During al-Tirmidhī’s time and specifically where he resided, the term *awliyā’* was synonymous with the *mawālī*, who were freed slaves upon whom was bestowed proxy governing authority (*wilāyah*). This was done by the Abbasid Caliphs, who sought loyalty from them on account of the debt of allegiance the *mawālī* owed to them as freed slaves. Metaphorically building on this, al-Tirmidhī’ cites true *wilāyah* as being ‘freed by God’ from slavehood to created form and not being ‘freed by men’ only to be enslaved to one’s own passions to the sensorial. By

²⁷⁰ Palmer notes that prior scholarship seems to have missed this tripartite categorization and distinction between *ḥukamā’* and *awliyā’*, mistakenly taken to be synonymous terms. See: Palmer, “Dimensions of Sainthood,” 92 – 93.

²⁷¹ Palmer, “Dimensions of Sainthood,” 99

stating true freedom as realisation of one's slavehood to God, al-Tirmidhī indicates that it is through God that real governing authority resides, i.e. governing the world in a spiritual sense. Thus, to al-Tirmidhī, the true successors of the Prophet, i.e. the *khulafā'* (pl. *khalīfa*) are the *awliyā'* of God, for it is they who are the truly 'free' ones (*aḥrār*).²⁷²

The Light Motif in explaining *Hikmah*

In describing this *fardāniyya* (non-duality) al-Tirmidhī borrows and builds upon an already present idea of equating knowledge with the motif of light (*nūr*). As a motif, the reference to knowledge or spiritual guidance as light can be traced back to the Prophet and the Qur'ān itself, consisting of the famous 'light verse',²⁷³ with the Prophet himself being described as an 'illuminating lamp'.²⁷⁴ This was built upon by both Sunnī and Shī'ī scholarship, wherein knowledge and belief (*īmān*) being construed as light was already present in theological circles prior to al-Tirmidhī. Palmer notes that al-Tirmidhī built on this motif by equating the concept of 'light-knowledge' with sainthood, wherein sanctity (*wilāyah*) is when God's light is able to shine on the believer's heart in an unaltered and unobscured fashion thus making the saint (*walī*) a more completed form of the believer (*al-mu'min al-bāligh*).²⁷⁵ By positing this shining of light as true knowledge and further positing it as an act of grace, al-Tirmidhī negated a deterministic external criterion by which knowledge, faith and sainthood can be measured. Tirmidhī construed his understanding of such knowledge as having evaluative criteria, for he held that God's grace was commensurate to the degree of sincere effort expended to master one's lower self, and accordingly should have signs. It was perhaps in preventing anarchic possibilities of laying claim to such light-knowledge without any reality, that he posited the necessary knowledge of the rulings of

²⁷² Palmer, "Dimensions of Sainthood," 57.

²⁷³ Qur'ān: 24:25, which reads: "God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp. The lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star, lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west. Whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. God guides to His light whom He wills. And God presents examples for the people, and God is Knowing of all things."

²⁷⁴ Qur'ān: 33:45-46, which reads: "O Prophet, indeed We have sent you as a witness and a bringer of good tidings and a warner. And one who invites to God, by His permission, and an *illuminating lamp* (*sirājan munīrah*)."

²⁷⁵ Palmer, "Dimensions of Sainthood," 190.

God (*aḥkām Allāh*) as a precursor to a more esoteric knowledge. As for the higher level of knowledge, he famously posited a series of one hundred and fifty questions involving esoteric aspects such as God’s preordainments (*maqādīr*), the primordial covenant (*mīthāq*), the disjointed Arabic letters (*ḥurūf*), all of which were intended to ascertain as to whether the claimant had attained the degree of knowledge al-Tirmidhī called *ḥikmat al-ḥikma* or *al-ḥikmat al-‘ulyā* (the ‘wisdom of wisdoms’, or the ‘highest of wisdoms’).²⁷⁶ Thus, the interplay between light (*nūr*) and darkness (*ẓulmah*) was seen as directly consonant with al-Tirmidhī’s approach to *ḥikmah*, in itself representing a path of complementary opposites that disclose an intimate spiritual understanding of God. The function of light was therefore not to eradicate and destroy all darkness, but was to demarcate and allow for the ‘seeing’ of darkness as the absence of such light, such that there be no turbidity (*kadar*) or admixture (*ikhtilāf*) in these opposites, and that in similar manner all of God’s traces (*āthār*) can be framed in the world. Hence, for al-Tirmidhī the saint (*walī*) is the conduit for God’s light and becomes himself a perfected sign of His trace in the world. To him, the *walī* as a foremost representative of God’s trace on earth, becomes not only a means of enabling God’s mercy and protection for others, but in himself becomes a loci for the witnessing of God’s light, wherein the heart of the *walī* is a primary conduit through which God’s light enters the world. This is important in the context of the thought of the Shādhilīyyah, and is the reason why we have focused and crystalized specifically on Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī’s understanding of light-knowledge. Prior to him, light was seen as a motif for knowledge but not placed at the center of a gnoseology, or understanding of how gnostic knowledge is attained. After al-Tirmidhī, a new spiritual topography was established through the hearts of the living saints wherein the functions of God’s light continues through them, and in this manner that they are deemed the inheritors of the Prophet, who continue to provide guidance to humanity.

This discourse of delineating a fundamental ontology through an intensity of light would later find fruition in the School of Illumination (*ishrāq*) of Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥya Suhrawardī (d. 605/1208). Describing this school Seyyed Hossein Nasr notes, “According to Suhrawardī, all of reality is nothing but light which possesses various degrees of

²⁷⁶ Palmer, “Dimensions of Sainthood,” 191-192.

intensity...The Pure Light, which Suhrawardī calls the Lights of lights (*nūr al-anwār*), is the Divine Essence whose light is blinding because of its luminosity and intensity. The Supreme Light is the source of all existence, since the Universe in all its planes of reality consists in nothing more than degrees of light and darkness.”²⁷⁷ Mehdi Razavi notes that there is evidence that Suhrawardī’s ideas did travel to Maghreb through ‘Abd al-Haqq Ibn Sab‘īn (d. 669/1270) who references Suhrawardī’s book *al-Talwīhāt* in his own book *al-Risālat al-faḡiriyyah*.²⁷⁸ Ibn Sab‘īn in turn was a spiritual guide of the mystic poet Abu al-Ḥasan al-Shushtarī, who later became Shādhilī and is frequently quoted by Ibn ‘Ajībah throughout the *Īqāz*.²⁷⁹ Similarly, Khaled El-Rouayheb notes how the Moroccan Shādhilī scholar ‘Abdullah al-‘Ayyashī (d. 1090/1679) studied the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* of Suhrawardī with scholars in Medina before returning to Morocco as a teacher of the tradition.²⁸⁰ Whilst it is clear that these intellectual connections and their subsequent journey as scholarly currents and ideas into Maghreb warrant greater research, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to delve further here except to point out such a direction for future scholars. It is however possible to indicate that Ibn ‘Ajībah was influenced by this light motif of *ḥikmah* denoting a spiritual travel unto the source of light which symbolizes the stage of *fanā*’ and *baqā*’. For whether or not Ibn ‘Ajībah was formally aware of Suhrawardī’s school, the motif associated with it had already come to be incorporated and articulated through an intellectual milieu prevalent in the Maghreb through the Shādhilī discourse stream he was a part of, and Ibn ‘Ajībah utilizes this motif throughout the *Īqāz*.

The Light analogy and sainthood

In a way, sainthood, to a reduced and less absolute degree, is thus seen as a continuation of the function of prophethood, even if formal revelation has come to an end. In his various writings, al-Tirmidhī builds upon this theme, using the analogy (*mathal*) of a silver ring

²⁷⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* (New York: Caravan Books, 3rd ed.1997), 69.

²⁷⁸ Mehdi.A. Razavi, *Suhrawardī and the School of Illumination* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1997), 141.

²⁷⁹Yousef Casewit, *Shushtarī’s Treatise on the Limits of Theology and Sufism: Discursive Knowledge (‘ilm), Direct Recognition (ma‘rifa), and Mystical Realization (taḥqīq) in al-Risāla al-Quṣāriyya*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2020), 7.

²⁸⁰ El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 254-256.

(*khāṭam*), positing not just the Prophets but also the *awliyā'* as being the site of God's theophany.²⁸¹ Thus, the ring analogy itself becomes an extended analogy for the motif of 'knowledge as light' found in al-Tirmidhī's works. For just as the quality and type of a ring stone determines the manner and degree to which it refracts light, so it is with the heart of the saint, and their ability to refract spiritual light-knowledge connected to a deeper mine/source (*ma'din*) of their heart; the ring analogy encapsulates knowledge as 'captured light'.²⁸² The Sufi Ibn 'Arabī (d. 637/1240) would later use the same ring analogy in his book *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam (The Ring Stones of Wisdom)*, wherein the ring stones become archetypes for specific modes of Prophethood. For Ibn 'Arabī, all saints could be seen to inherit (*yarithūna*) their sainthood from a specific mine (*ma'dan*), which in turn represents the hearts of a particular prophet. Thus, to him all saints were continuations, albeit in lesser forms, of archetypes of Prophethood. Beyond Ibn 'Arabī, the founders of the Shādhilī Ṭarīqah then clearly borrowed and built upon al-Tirmidhī's and Ibn 'Arabī's understanding of *ḥikmah* in articulating their systematic methodology of spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*).

Ḥikmah with the Shādhilīyyah

The reason why we have focused and crystalized specifically on Junayd and more relevantly Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's concept of *ḥikmah* as well as the impact it had on Ibn 'Arabī was because of its role as a direct precursor to the Shādhilīyyah and their understanding of spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*). Aiyub Palmer notes that within the eponymous Ṭarīqah founder's litanies, *The Great Litany (Ḥizb al-Kabīr or Ḥizb al-Barr)*, we see al-Shādhilī asking God for *ḥikmat al-ḥikmah* ('the wisdom of wisdoms'). This terminology was used exclusively previously by al-Tirmidhī and corresponds to his demarcating the highest degree of wisdom (above that of the *ḥukamā'* or sages), namely the *ḥikmah* (wisdom) of the saints (*awliyā'*), being a wisdom that resolves all duality through a unicity of realisation of God.²⁸³ More clearly, in his hagiographical biography

²⁸¹ He primarily uses the ring motif by building on reports in the *Sīrah* (early biographical) literature, wherein the Prophet had a seal ring that was then passed to his successors. According to tradition, the Caliph 'Uthmān lost the ring as it fell into a well. See: Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī, Volume 7, Book 72, Number 767. Also see: Palmer, "Dimensions of Sainthood," 203.

²⁸² Palmer, "Dimensions of Sainthood," 207-208.

²⁸³ Palmer, "Dimensions of Sainthood," 239.

Laṭāʾif al-Minan (The Subtle Blessings) about Abu al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī and his own teacher Abu al-ʿAbbās al-Mursī, Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh prefaces his entire discussion of their lives with a schematic of *wilāyah* (sainthood) that clearly matches that of al-Tirmidhī. It is notable that in his introduction Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh describes the saints (*awliyāʾ*) as “the bearers of his (God’s) secrets and the mines (*maʿādin*) of his (God’s) lights.”²⁸⁴ Elsewhere whilst distinguishing between the *awliyāʾ* (saints) and *anbiyāʾ* (prophets), he states that it is the knowledge acquired through God of the saints that allows for the continuation and maintenance of the light of Prophecy in the world.²⁸⁵ Just like al-Tirmidhī saw the *awliyāʾ* themselves as being amongst the greatest of sign of His trace (*athār*) in the world, Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh calls and refers to the saints as the *ʿāyāt Allāh* (the signs of God).²⁸⁶ Notably amongst the narrators of Ḥadīth and the Ṣūfī masters (*mashāyikh*) of the Shādhilī initiatic chain (*silsila*) that Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh lists, it is only al-Tirmidhī who is cited by name. Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh also provides five *aḥādīth* (pl. of *ḥadīth*) and two direct quotes from al-Tirmidhī on topics such as *walāya* and *maʿrifā* (gnosis).²⁸⁷ Amongst these co-narrated *ḥadīth* is the statement, “My community is like the rain in that one does not know if its first part is best or its last.”²⁸⁸ This demonstrates that Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh was clearly an adherent to al-Tirmidhī’s views of a continuation of guidance and sanctity being in the form of the *awliyāʾ* (saints). Ibn ʿAjībah implies something similar in the *Īqāz* when he explicitly states that the spiritual school (*madhab*) of both Abu al-ʿAbbās al-Mursī and Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh was the school of Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, only mentioning the three of them in this connection.²⁸⁹ Likewise the *Laṭāʾif al-Minan* notes that Abu al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī used to read from Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī’s book *Khatm al-walāyah* (The Seal of Friendship) in his teaching gatherings.²⁹⁰ It was in the utilization of al-Tirmidhī’s concept of *ḥikmah* as a means of

²⁸⁴ Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, *Laṭāʾif al-minan fī manāqib al-shaykh Abī al-ʿAbbās al-Mursī wa-shaykhihi al-shaykh Abī al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī* (Cairo: Maktaba al-Qāhira, 2004), 19.

²⁸⁵ Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, *Laṭāʾif al-minan*, 16.

²⁸⁶ Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, *Laṭāʾif al-minan*, 16.

²⁸⁷ Palmer, “Dimensions of Sainthood,” 240.

²⁸⁸ Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, *Laṭāʾif al-minan*, 17.

²⁸⁹ Ibn ʿAjībah, *Īqāz*, 127.

²⁹⁰ Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandari, *Kitāb Laṭāʾif al-minan fī manāqib al-shaykh Abī al-ʿAbbās al-Mursī wa-shaykhihi al-shaykh Abī al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī: The Subtle Blessings In the Saintly Lives of Abu Al-Abbas Al-Mursi and His Master Abu Al-Hasan*, translated by Nancy Roberts (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2005), 144.

articulating a method of spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*) that we find the Shādhilīyyah were particularly characterised. In this regard, Aiyub Palmer notes that the structure of Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s *al-Ḥikam* appears to take its inspiration from al-Tirmidhī’s and Ibn ‘Arabī’s approach to *ḥikmah* (wisdom).²⁹¹ This is evidenced by the fact that just as al-Tirmidhī’s *ḥikmah* deals with understanding the role of the world of duality functioning as opposites (*aḍḍād*) as a way of coming to know God, similarly the *al-Ḥikam* uses an interplay of thematic opposites to instill a contemplative faculty in its reader. The intent in both cases is to culminate with a non-dual unifying wisdom (*ḥikmah*) that represents God-realisation (*ma‘rifah*).

The Shādhilī Ṭarīqah (brotherhood) in many ways became a living embodiment of the spiritual hierarchy, epistemological, teleological and ultimately ontological understanding particularly espoused both by al-Tirmidhī and Ibn ‘Arabī in their doctrines of *ḥikmah* and *wilāyah*. Richard McGregor has alluded to this connection between al-Tirmidhī and Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought and the early founders of the Shādhilī Ṭarīqah.²⁹² He particularly highlights the role of the Shādhilī sub-branch Wafā’iyyah in Egypt through the father and son relationship of Muḥammad al-Wafā’ (d. 764/1363) and ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Wafā’ (son, d. 808/1405). The former had taken the Shādhilī path from Dāwud al-Bākhilī (d. 731/1331), who in turn was from those who inherited the path from Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1309) via Abu al-‘Abbās al-Mursī (d. 680/1281). McGregor notes how it was the Wafā’iyyah who systematically employed the metaphysical universe of al-Tirmidhī and Ibn ‘Arabī into their Sufic understanding through adoption of their writings, language and implicit doctrine.²⁹³ Far from employing their corpus as a passive object of study, they employed a spiritually living tradition of praxis wherein the metaphysics was applied towards an examination of existence, by incorporating it into their paradigm of spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*). Consistent with Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought and spiritual school, the prime position of the Wafā’iyyah metaphysics was the non-dual affirmation of God’s sole claim to an ontological reality, as Muḥammad al-Wafā’ in his book *Kitāb al-azal* (*The Book*

²⁹¹ Palmer, “Dimensions of Sainthood,” 244.

²⁹² Richard J. A. McGregor, *Sanctity and mysticism in medieval Egypt the Wafā’ Sufi order and the legacy of Ibn ‘Arabī* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 30.

²⁹³ McGregor. *Sanctity and mysticism*, 35.

of *Preexistence*) states that existence, “is one in itself, with no duality or plurality. There is no existence to any existent, except He.”²⁹⁴ McGregor also highlights how the Wafā’iyyah’s systematic use of illuminative philosophical terminology bears much in parallel to the style and vocabulary used by Ibn ‘Arabī’s successor and stepson, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qunāwī (d. 673/1274).²⁹⁵ In another major work of Muḥammad al-Wafā’, entitled the *Nafā’is al-irfān min anfās al-Raḥmān (Precious gems of gnosis from the Divine Breaths of the Merciful)*, he introduces the seminal concept of their being three levels of creation; namely the domain of the corporeal world (‘*Ālam al-mulk*), the world of spiritual form (‘*Ālam al-malakūt*) and the world of Divine omnipotence (‘*Ālam al-jabarūt*).²⁹⁶ Such spiritual inheritance derived from al-Tirmidhī and Ibn ‘Arabī continued as the Shādhilī path further developed.

Later developments of the *Ḥikmah* tradition

Whilst Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh was clearly influenced by Ḥakim al-Tirmidhī and according to Ibn ‘Ajībāh had the same metaphysical school of thought, this school also developed a more systematic form of mystical philosophy after its more detailed exposition by its chief proponent Ibn ‘Arabī. It was Ibn ‘Arabī and later his spiritual students who provided a systematic and increasingly philosophical articulation of his teachings giving rise to what has been called the Akbarian school or the “school of Ibn ‘Arabī” that was to have widespread effect on both Philosophy and Sufism throughout the Muslim world.²⁹⁷ Rustom notes how the writings and thought of this school would go onto shape the intellectual contours from North Africa to Malaysia for well over five centuries.²⁹⁸

The central ideas of this school was that of the nature of existence itself or being, or *wujūd* in Arabic. In this regard the school appropriated an emerging philosophical vocabulary to

²⁹⁴ McGregor. *Sanctity and mysticism*, 76.

²⁹⁵ McGregor. *Sanctity and mysticism*, 76.

²⁹⁶ McGregor. *Sanctity and mysticism*, 79.

²⁹⁷ Mohammed Rustom, “Philosophical Sufism” in *The Routeledge Companion to Islamic Philosophy*, edited by Richard.C. Taylor and Luis Xavier Lopez-Farjeat (London & New York: Routeledge, 2016), 399.

²⁹⁸ Rustom, “Philosophical Sufism,” 400.

explain its own central teaching of what has been referred to as *waḥdat al-wujūd* (translated as “Oneness of Being” or “Oneness of Existence”).²⁹⁹ Ibn ‘Arabī himself did not use this terminology, he instead employed the term Necessary Being (*wājib al-wujūd*) taken from Ibn Sīnā/Avicenna (d. 428/1037) as a description of God's intrinsic existence wherein all other existence was referred to as having “contingent being” (*mumkin al-wujūd*), in that it derived its existence from God's constant fiat. In Ibn ‘Arabī's conception God's Being and knowledge of Himself pre-instantiation of the cosmos was unqualified, and unqualifiable, as He had no quiddity (*māhiyya*) in Himself without its expression, and it was to provide this expression that creation was instantiated whereby God grants quiddities (*mahiyyāt*) to aspects of His knowledge that were previously undelineated.³⁰⁰ In this manner created being manifested as the cosmos serves simultaneously as the locus of God's manifestation (*maẓhar*) and His “self-disclosure” (*tajallī*) of Himself, wherein in its manifold components and dimensions the cosmos mirrors God's endless beauty, order, and creative capacity as the objectivized reflection of His own self-knowledge.³⁰¹ Rustom states how to Ibn ‘Arabī God's originating the cosmos as a result of His seeking self-knowledge finds its perfect analogue in the human quest of spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*), whereby the spiritual aspirant seeks his own self-knowledge. At the pinnacle of this spiritual achievement the seeker finds his own self-knowledge to be that of God's for Himself, as his own perceived separation and apparent duality dissolves into a realisation of God's innate Unicity in the face of a manifest multiplicity. In this potentiality, Ibn ‘Arabī's cosmology posits the human being as representing the capstone of creation, for he reflects within his soul the multiplicity of the macrosocmic cosmos in its microcosmic form. This is what gives rise to the spiritual imperative for the human to achieve a self-knowledge that embodies this ‘spirit of the cosmos’, wherein he becomes perfect reflection of God's manifest perfection. Ibn ‘Arabī refers to such a type self-realised human being as being the “Perfect Human” (*al-insan al-kamil*), who having realised the emptiness of his intrinsic non-being, comes to manifest the fullness of God's Being as His objectivized self-knowledge, for only God truly exists intrinsically.³⁰²

²⁹⁹ Rustom, “Philosophical Sufism,” 400.

³⁰⁰ Rustom, “Philosophical Sufism,” 402.

³⁰¹ Rustom, “Philosophical Sufism,” 402-406.

³⁰² Rustom, “Philosophical Sufism,” 402-408.

In its historical trajectory, the initial codifiers of this school were Ibn ‘Arabī’s stepson and spiritual inheritor, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qunāwī (d. 673/1274) who is cited as visiting and meeting Abu al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī during one of his trips to Cairo. In the meeting Qūnawī’s silence on being questioned about the spiritual axis of the age is hagiographically interpreted within the Shādhilī tradition to be his consenting to the idea that Abu al-Ḥasan was indeed the axis and his foremost disciple Abu al-‘Abbās al-Mursī (d. 680/1281) was his spiritual deputy. We have already noted that how this could be interpreted as the need for recognition from Ibn ‘Arabī’s school and teachings from Abu al-Ḥasan and the earliest Shādhilīs who chose to document and narrate this incident. Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qunāwī was followed by Mu’ayyad al-Dīn al-Jandī (d. 699/1300), Sa‘īd al-Dīn Farghānī (d. 699/1300) then ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qashānī (d. 734/1334), and Dā’ūd al-Qaysarī (d. 752/1351).³⁰³ Hasan Spiker notes how the prominent positions of Dā’ūd al-Qaysarī and later Mullā Shams al-Dīn Fanārī (d. 834/1431) in the early Ottoman government and society, established the school of Ibn ‘Arabī as a permanent feature of the Ottoman intellectual milieu.³⁰⁴ The Ottoman Empire in turn being the bastion of Sunni Islam and Sufism, representing the largest and longest serving Muslim dynasty, controlling three continents between the 14th and early 20th centuries ensured that this school reached the far corners of the Muslim world. With Persian (alongside Arabic) being the *lingua franca* of intellectual religious discourse in the Ottoman Empire, the school found able proponents in the Persianate world in the form of ‘Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī (d. 897/1492) and later Ṣadr al-Dīn Shirāzī also known as Mullā Ṣadrā. In North Africa, the mystical teachings of Ibn ‘Arabī were reflected by the likes of ‘Afīf al-Dīn al-Tilmisānī (d. 1689/290), ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq bin Sab‘īn (d. 668/1270) and his student, the mystic poet Abu al-Ḥasan al-Shushtarī (d. 667/1269).³⁰⁵ Shushtarī who is described by Ibn ‘Ajībāh as being a "vizier and a scholar"³⁰⁶ is the poet most quoted throughout the *Īqāz*. This may be because of Shushtarī’s own

³⁰³ McGregor, *Sanctity and mysticism*, 75.

³⁰⁴ Hasan Spiker, The Possibility of a Mystical Kalām amongst the Ottoman ‘Ulamā’: The Case of Ibn Bahā’ al-Dīn in *Osmanlı’da İlm-i Kelam - Âlimler, Eserler, Meseleler*, edited by Murat Demir, Osman; Kaya, Veysel; Gömbeyaz, Kadir; Kilavuz (Istanbul: ISAR Vakfı Yayınları, 2016), 415.

³⁰⁵ Casewit, *Shushtarī’s Treatise*, 4.

³⁰⁶ Casewit, *Shushtarī’s Treatise*, 5.

spiritual ascription to the Shādhiliyyah order, as he himself is reported to have expressed in rhyme: "My masters, they are Shādhilī, in loving them, my heart finds its pleasure."³⁰⁷

Given this background it is not surprising to note Ibn ‘Ajībah's own connection to Ibn ‘Arabī's school and his students. Ibn ‘Ajībah actually cites Ibn ‘Arabī in his introduction to the *Īqāz* as one of his key sources of Islamic spirituality in understanding discourse on the reality (*taḥqīq*) of spiritual states (*aḥwāl*) and stations (*maqāmāt*), referring to him by his eponymic title *al-Ḥātimī*.³⁰⁸ He also quotes from him later in the *Īqāz* saying: "Whoever witnesses creation as having no action [in themselves] succeeds, and whoever sees them as having no life has surpassed [such success], and whoever sees them as essentially being non-being has arrived [at the goal]".³⁰⁹ Listing this spiritual connection more formally, in his spiritual autobiography (*Fahrassa*) Ibn ‘Ajībah mentions his having studied Ibn ‘Arabī al-Ḥātamī's *Taṣliyah*.³¹⁰ Similarly in his *Fahrassa* Ibn ‘Ajībah frequently quotes one of Ibn ‘Arabī's spiritual descendants such as Sa‘d al-Din Farghānī,³¹¹ ‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha‘rānī (d. 691/1292) and ‘Abd al-Karīm Jīlī (d. 827/1424).³¹² Cornell notes Ibn ‘Ajībah's subscription to Ibn ‘Arabī's thought and mystic philosophy by stating it was arguably the dominant school in its influence upon Moroccan Sufism and greater North Africa at the time.³¹³

Key Motifs within the *Ḥikmah* tradition

Having covered the historicity of the *Ḥikmah* tradition as expressed by early Sufis and noting how this was systematized through the likes of al-Junayd, Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and

³⁰⁷ Casewit, *Shushtarī's Treatise*, 7.

³⁰⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 18.

³⁰⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 90.

³¹⁰ Michon, *Autobiography*, 67.

³¹¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah does reference Farghānī in his *Fahrassa*, citing his having read his Commentary on Ibn al-Fārid's *Tā‘īyyat al-kubrā*, entitled *Muntahā ‘l-madārik*. See: Michon, *The Autobiography*, 146.

³¹² Ibn ‘Ajībah often refers to ‘Abd al-Karīm Jīlī as *Ṣāhib al-‘Ayniyyah* (author of *Ayniyyah*) given his authorship of the ode *al-Nawādiru al-‘Ayniyya fī ‘l-Bawādiru ‘l-Ghaybiyyah* (The graceful lens towards the transcendental descent of metaphysical knowledge).

³¹³ Vincent J. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1998).

then later through Ibn ‘Arabī and his school until its incorporation into the Shādhiliyyah, we can begin to see the thematic relevance of this tradition to the *Īqāz*. Hamza Yusuf notes, “Like many later Shadhilis, he [Ibn ‘Ajībah] was heavily influenced by the thought and writings of Shaykh Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī.”³¹⁴ For this reason studying motifs within the school of Ibn ‘Arabī, also called the Akbarian School,³¹⁵ allows us to directly open up a comparative window in examining these motifs within Ibn ‘Ajībah's thought, which is relevant to our analysis of the *Īqāz*. The following sections discuss some of these common motifs.

The Unity of Existence with Ibn ‘Ajībah

The most obvious theme to begin our discussion is the famous Akbarian doctrine of ‘Unity of Existence’ (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). Michon states that as far as Ibn ‘Ajībah's broader metaphysics are concerned, his views on the nature of existence (*wujūd*) are in line with Akbarian doctrine.³¹⁶ Demonstrative of this are two treatises Ibn ‘Ajībah authored that were translated firstly by Michon into French and then later by David Streight into English under the title *Two Treatises on the Oneness of Existence*. These treatises further support our previous discussion on Ibn ‘Ajībah mirroring Akbarian thought on *waḥdat al-wujūd*. Notably, Ibn ‘Arabī was not the first in advocating the unicity of God's Being (*wujūd*) as being the highest expression of God's unity (*tawḥīd*) – for many Sufis expressed similar views well before Ibn ‘Arabī.³¹⁷ Instead, it appears that the doctrine was eponymously ascribed to Ibn ‘Arabī because of the strength and boldness of his exposition, for as Mohammed Rustom notes “he articulated this concept in a unique way, relating the

³¹⁴ Ibn Ajība: *Two Treatises*, 7.

³¹⁵ This is in eponymic reference to Ibn ‘Arabī's honorific title amongst many Sufis as *al-Shaykh al-Akbar* (The Greatest Sheikh).

³¹⁶ Ibn Ajība: *Two Treatises*, 23.

³¹⁷ William Chittick argues that several prominent Sufis before Ibn ‘Arabī held to this same doctrine, albeit given to different articulations of it, it was by no means an exclusive doctrine introduced by Ibn ‘Arabī. He states them as including: Ma‘rūf al-Karkhī (d. 205/820), Junayd of Baghdad (d. 297/910), ‘Alī al-Hujwīrī (d. 469/1077), Khwaja Abdullah Ansari (d. 481/1088), Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d.505/1111), ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166), and Mu‘īn al-Dīn Chishtī (d.633/1236). See: William Chittick, “*Rūmī’ and Waḥdat al-wujūd*,” in *The Heritage of Rūmī*, ed. A. Banani (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 70–109.

implications of the unity of Being [or Existence] to almost every branch of Islamic learning to such an extent that it permeates his entire literary corpus.”³¹⁸ The doctrine states that God, as absolute, unconditioned, and non-manifest Being solely existed as the eternally abiding Essence (*al-dhāt al-azaliyyah*), and prior to existentiating creation was known only to Himself by Himself, for all relationship implies a duality which His innate unicity negated. For this reason, desiring to be known in the domain of relationship, God as non-manifested Being chose to become manifest by conditioning Himself through the determination and instantiation of His Names and Attributes, wherein everything in the existentiating cosmos would be forms of these determinations. Therefore, in an absolute sense, despite the manifestedness of the created cosmos, nothing is said to truly exist independently of God, as every form of existence remains contingent on Him, ultimately only revealing His determination and what He desires to be known about Himself. To illustrate this, Ibn ‘Ajībāh in his commentary on the poem *al-Mabāḥith al-aṣliyyah* (*The Foundational Research*) entitled *al-Futuḥāt al-ilāhiyyah fī al-mabāḥith al-aṣliyyah* (*Divine openings in the Foundational Research*) states:

Know that the Real, exalted by His Majesty, is singularly One (*wāḥid*) in His dominion. He has no partner alongside Him, no adversary and no equal. He was and nothing was besides Him and He is now as He was before. In the eternity of His timelessness, He remained Subtle and Hidden. All-Wise and Omnipotent; Subtle, being not conscious of, and Hidden, being not known; He existed by Himself, embodied by the Divine meanings of His Names and Attributes. So He intended, transcendent by He, that He be known by Himself, and that the vestiges of His Names and Attributes be made manifest.³¹⁹

To Ibn ‘Ajībāh, in order to be known in distinction and relation, the first determination marks the point at which God first made Himself known through theophanic self-manifestation (*tajallī*). He represents the tension and contraction of this event through usage of the term ‘the handful’ (*al-qabḍah*), stating:

³¹⁸ Rustom, "Is Ibn al-‘Arabī's Ontology Pantheistic?", 53–67.

³¹⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *al-futuḥāt*, 21.

So, He (God) intended that He be known by His Essence and that there be made manifest the creative trace (*athar*) of His Names and His Attributes. Thus, He manifested³²⁰ a disclosure (*qabḍah*)³²¹ from His subtle light, and intensified it through His Omnipotence, that through it He be known. Then the light was variegated according to the number of His Names and Attributes. Thus, when that disclosure of light was made to appear, He manifested Himself through the Name *al-Bāṭin* (The Inwardly Hidden), for the Divine Presence³²² was hidden in its manifestation and concealed in its apparency. Thus, all things, in their entirety, are nothing but a manifestation of the Real.³²³

Given the above excerpt, Ibn ‘Ajībah like Ibn ‘Arabī held to the understanding that God’s existence always has two aspects: non-manifest Being and manifest Being: the former only being known to Him, the latter being that which can be known by "other than Him", which ultimately is His knowing Himself in the domain of relationship. Ibn ‘Arabī held that the latter, the aspect of God considered in relation to creation, which he termed the “Divinity” (*al-ulūhiyyah*) is the “God [that] is known through the relations, attributions, and correlations that become established between Him and the cosmos.”³²⁴ On the other hand he stated that "in respect of His relationship of independence [from the cosmos], He knows Himself and we know Him not.”³²⁵ To Ibn ‘Ajībah, the word ‘the handful’ (*al-qabḍah*), represents the primordial effusion of that disclosure of God that can be known (*al-ulūhiyyah*). He states that the *qabḍah* contains both an inner modality, of spiritual intelligibility (*ma‘nā*), as represented by light; and an outer modality made up of sensorial,

³²⁰ The use of the verb *azhara* (lit. cause to appear or manifest) as opposed to *khalāqa* (he created) is deliberate, as the latter may imply an ontological independence post-creation, whereas the former implies a continuous contingency and dependence on God’s creative fiat.

³²¹ As discussed, the word *qabḍah* used here, literally means "a handful".

³²² The form used for the verb (*baṭanat*) is feminine, and so it would be incorrect to say "He" was hidden, as the implications of a feminine form indicates that the verb goes back to the feminine *al-qabḍatu al-nūriyyah* (the portion of light). Note that I have taken idiomatic liberty to depict this femininity of the "portion of light" as the "Divine Presence", for in Arabic the phrase Divine Presence (*ḥuḍūr al-ilāhiyyah*) is feminine and corroborates the implied meaning.

³²³ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *al-futūḥāt*, 21.

³²⁴ William.C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Metaphysics of Imagination* (State University of New York Press, 1989), 62.

³²⁵ Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:533.4, trans. Chittick, *Path of Knowledge*, 64.

dense matter (*hiṣṣ*). Given the *qabḍah* is the disclosed Being of God beyond the totality of the unknowable Godhead, Ibn ‘Ajībah is keen to belie any notions of finitude or anthropomorphism that the term *qabḍah* may connote. In his treatises he explains the *qabḍah* by analogy to be a block of ice floating in an ocean of infinite proportions; seemingly separate and yet the same, denoting the attributes of both:

Seen from its material manifestation it (*qabḍah*) appears to be limited and finite, whilst seen from its spiritual manifestation, it is neither limited nor finite, but rather connected to the infinite Ocean of Spiritual Unfolding (*baḥr al-ma‘ānī*). So, it may be compared to a block of ice floating in an Ocean without a Shore; [wherein] the ice from the perspective of its physicality is finite, and from its inner reality (water) it is united with the Ocean in which it is merged. The relationship between the *qabḍah*, looked at from its materiality, and the Ocean of Spiritual Unfolding, whose spiritual subtlety remains immutable, is analogous to that of a drop and the ocean...Consequently, the *qabḍah* that appears in the Ocean of Spiritual Unfolding is indistinguishable from the Ocean itself, from which it originates.³²⁶

So, in summary, Ibn ‘Ajībah like Ibn ‘Arabī, deems the Being of God to manifest itself at various levels of theophanic reality, from the indivisible Unity, to the Divine Names and Attributes, from thereon into Acts; each in reference to a universal aspect of the self-determination of God as manifest in the cosmos. All of these levels of self-determination remain different modalities of the One Essence. God thus remains the Real Being (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqq*) or Necessary Being (*wājib al-wujūd*) whereas everything else (*mā siwā Allāh*) has only contingent or metaphorical existence (*majāz al-wujūd*), being permanently relative or contingent on His existentiating of them. In the final analysis, true existence or *wujūd* thus belongs only to God, for everything "other" is nonexistent in itself, existent only to the extent that it is existentiating to manifest the only truly Real and this is what is meant by the term "Oneness of Existence" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*).

³²⁶ See: Ibn Ajībah: *Two Treatises*, 42-43. [I have adapted the translation of Michon where felt necessary]

The Veil from God and Levels of Theophany

Another dimension of the term *wujūd* can be construed as subjective experience, for the term *wujūd* is derived from the root *wajada* which means "to find", and in passive form (*wujida*) meaning "to be found", implying that God being the ultimately Real, is both the One finding and also the One who is found. This perspective implies that by the means of God's theophany of manifested creation (with man at its apex) – God finds/discovers Himself. This is why Ibn ‘Arabī also defines *wujūd* as "finding God in ecstasy,"³²⁷ wherein the "veil" too, serves its purpose in revealing His theophany. Ibn ‘Ajībah agrees, for he notes the theophanic manifestation of God involved the choice to veil Himself in the alternating of light and darkness:

However, the Beautiful One must have a veil, as the Sun must have clouds. Hence, that subtle, timeless Wine³²⁸ was woven by the Omnipotent Power of the Divine Presence into a garment-like cloak, wrapping itself through its Wisdom into an engulfing cover. The Divine Presence then said, "Magnificence is My cover and Exaltedness is My cloak so whosoever contends with Me in any one of them, I shall break him." Then the Wisdom became differentiated in its weaving and spinning; from it was delicate texture and fine thread, such that in it the light was closely apparent and from it was heavy thread and thick texture, wherein the light was occluded by the denseness of the veil. Amongst those whose texture was delicate and whose thread was fine were the Angels, made from pure light. And amongst those who were a composite of light and darkness, with the light overpowering their darkness, were human beings (*banū ādam* or literally the "children of Adam"). Then there were those who were a composite of light and darkness but were overcome by the appearance³²⁹ of darkness, being inanimate objects and

³²⁷ Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:538. Translation taken, with slight modification, from: Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 212.

³²⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah is using "wine" metaphorically, indicating the intoxicating effect and blissful capacity of the Divine Presence.

³²⁹ In Ibn ‘Ajībah's ontology darkness has no inherent ontological reality, for all that was made manifest "was a *qabḍatun* from His subtle light", thus what 'appears' to be darkness is the mere absence of light.

unconscious animals. What is meant by light here is the consciousness of spiritual meaning (*al-ma'nā*) and what is meant by darkness here is the sensorial matter (*al-ḥiss*) alone (bereft of such spiritual meaning³³⁰). Thus, the inward dimension of the created cosmos consists of nothing but subtlety and light, denoted by His Omnipotent Power (*Qudrah*); whereas the outward dimension of the cosmos is dark and dense, denoted by His Omnipotent Wisdom (*Hikmah*).³³¹

To Ibn 'Ajībah the levels of theophany by which such finding happens can be summarised into the general categories that correspond to God's Essence, Attributes and Acts, namely: (1) *al-jabarūt*, indicating the highest and most subtle domain of the all-enveloping ocean of [Divine] omnipotence, (2) *al-malakūt*, the inward, spiritually-intelligible dimension and (3) *al-mulk*, the world of material forms or sensorial matter.³³²

Man as the Microcosm of the Universe

If the *qabḍah* is the theophany of God's wanting to be known, then it is noteworthy that Ibn 'Ajībah interprets the Prophetic saying (*hadith*) of "God [having] created Adam in his form"³³³ as being the 'Greater Adam' who corresponds to Ibn 'Arabī's 'Muhammadan Reality', i.e. the creative light or effusion from which all creation proceeds. In this regard Ibn 'Ajībah states:

³³⁰ The positing of these (*ma'nā* and *ḥiss*) as opposites is common in Sufi discourse, as evidenced by a statement of Ibn 'Ajībah's own teacher and spiritual guide Muhammad al-'Arabī al-Darqāwī (1760–1823) also known as Moulay al-'Arabī al-Darqāwī who in one of his letters to his disciples writes: "You should always flee from the sensory (*al-ḥiss*) since it is the opposite of the [spiritual] meanings (*al-ma'nā*). Two opposites are not joined together." See: Moulay al-'Arabī al-Darqāwī *The Darqawī Way: The Letters of Shaykh Mawlay al-'Arabī ad-Darqawī*. trans. Aisha Bewley (Norwich: Diwan Press, 1981), 33.

³³¹ Ibn 'Ajībah, *al-futuḥāt*, 21-22.

³³² In Sufi idiom the domain of *jabarūt* indicates the highest and most subtle domain of "the all-enveloping ocean of omnipotence" from which the corporeal domain of existence (*al-mulk*) and the inward, spiritually-intelligible dimension (*al-malakūt*), pours forth. See: Ibn 'Ajībah, *Mi'rāj al-tashawwuf*, 48-49.

³³³ *Fa inna Allaha khalaqa 'ādama 'alā ṣūratihī* as narrated in the Ḥaḍīth collection of Saḥīḥ al-Muslim, *Kitāb al-birr wa ṣilah wa al-ādāb, Bāb al-nahī 'an ḍarb al-wajhi* (Book 45, Ḥaḍīth 152). See: <https://www.sunnah.com/muslim/45/152>.

Some of the scholars of history [state that] the existence of the entire of the cosmos has been created upon the form of Adam...hence it may be that the Prophetic light of the *qabḍah* was upon the form of Adam, after which the entirety of the universe was differentiated (*tafarraʿat*) from it, so God condensed the entirety of this cosmos in this Adam. This is sufficient evidence of his nobility and honour in the cosmos and this is what is meant by the saying: “You are a microcosm of existence.”³³⁴

Elsewhere Ibn ʿAjībah refers to this creative effusion of light as the form of Muhammad which he states is the ‘seed of existence’, thereby agreeing with Ibn ʿArabī’s terminology of ‘Muhammadan Reality’. He states in one of his treatises translated by Michon:

The ‘Handful’ (*qabḍah*) at issue here is called ‘Muhammadan’, since when God decided to reveal Himself so that He could be known, he fashioned a Handful of His Light and had it appear, saying to it: “Be Muhammad!” As we know from certain *ḥadīths*, the Handful then took on the form of Muhammad (upon whom be peace!). All beings are derived from this Handful; it is the seed of existence. As the Sufi Ibn Mashīsh³³⁵ said: “All secrets emanate from it, and from it do all lights radiate,” meaning the secrets of the Essence, and the lights of the Attributes. Another name for it is ‘the greater Adam’ since both bodies (*ashbāh*) and spirits (*arwāh*) have their origin in it.³³⁶

For Ibn ʿAjībah, Man is thus prototype of the whole, whilst all of creation in its multiplicity are parts. For if the cosmos as macrocosm, with all its multiplicity, reflects the Divine Names and Attributes/Qualities of the Manifest Being of God that desires to be known through individual determination; then Man, as microcosm, reflects these same Attributes/Qualities, in their totality.

³³⁴ *al-wujūd kulluhu khalaqahu Allah ʿalā ṣūrat al-ādamiyy* See: Ibn ʿAjībah, *al-futuḥāt al-ilāhiyyah*, 248.

³³⁵ Being ʿAbd al-Salām ibn Mashīsh (d. 624/1227)

³³⁶ Ibn Ajība, *Two Treatises*, 49.

This motif and interplay between a microcosm and macrocosm, involving the embodying of wider macrocosmic meaning into a smaller microcosmic format would be consistent with much of Sufic literature. In fact as a trope and motif common in Islam its origins could even be traced back to the Qur'ān, as many of the Qur'ān commentators consider the first chapter, the Fātiḥah, to be a microcosm of the wider meaning contained throughout the rest of the book.³³⁷ Illustrating this trope of distilling macrocosmic meaning into microcosmic form the Prophet's famous cousin and son-in-law 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib (d.40/661) is reported to have said, "The whole of the Qur'ān is contained in the Fātiḥah, the whole of the Fātiḥah in the *basmalah* [the phrase: 'In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful'], the whole of the *basmalah* in the *bā'* [the opening letter of the phrase], and the whole of the *bā'* in the diacritical point under the *bā'*."³³⁸

The Epistemological Imperative to Know God

To Ibn 'Ajībah man being a microcosm speaks of the imperative for man to attain self-knowledge. This is how Ibn 'Ajībah interprets the concept of the primordial innate disposition (*fiṭrah*), wherein Man only truly becomes a representative (*khalīfah*), when he actualizes his self-knowledge. Thus, Man's self-knowledge of himself, when acquired, includes knowledge of the manifest cosmos, wherein the microcosm and the macrocosm are like two mirrors facing each other, signifying the knowledge of God's Manifest Being.³³⁹ In this way, Man acts as the connecting interspace ('isthmus' or *barzakh*) of such knowing, for through him, "separation between the things and the separating factor become manifest as one in entity." In this regard, Man is in fact the "barzakh of all barzakhs" (the interspace who encompasses all interspaces).

³³⁷ Alexander Knysh, *Sufism: A New History of Islamic Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 93.

³³⁸ Joseph E. B. Lumbard "Commentary on Sūrat al-Fātiḥah," in *The Study of the Quran*. ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Caner Dagli, Maria Dakake, Joseph Lumbard, Muhammad Rustom (San Francisco: Harper One, 2015), 3.

³³⁹ Following the analogy, the subject of the Mirror, looking at Himself – is God.

For God says: "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a representative (*khalīfah*)"³⁴⁰ and He says with regards to that representative, "And He taught Adam the Names - all of them."³⁴¹ About this affair is that He, transcendent be He, gave mankind seven of the Attributes that resemble the essential seven affirmative Attributes of divine timelessness (*ṣifāt al-maʿānī al-azaliyyah*), except that they were weakened by the encompassing of His overbearing authority (*al-qahriyyah*), there being: Power, Will, Knowledge, Life, Hearing, Seeing and Speech; making Man thereby an archetype, resembling that of the Perpetual Lordliness (*al-ṣamdaniyyah al-rabbāniyyah*). Thus He, glorified and transcendent be He, made Man a microcosm of existence itself, communing through his form with all of creation. Indeed, if he were to acquire gnosis of the Real, existence itself would become a microcosm of him!³⁴²

As Ibn ʿAjībah emphasizes this by quoting a couplet written by one of the greatest systematizers and greatest exponents of the work of Ibn ʿArabī, ʿAbd al-Karīm Jīlī (d. 827/1424), who states in his poem ʿAyniyyah³⁴³ : "The example of the cosmos is nothing but a flake of snow, to which, you [Man] are like water of gushing outflow."³⁴⁴ Thus, to Ibn ʿAjībah, it is Man who in his potentiality fills the gap between the Absolute Manifest Being-ness of God and the absolute nothingness of other than Him. In cosmic function, and in actualized potential, this is the perfect Man/human being (*insān al-kāmil*), he who brings together God and creation. Thus, it is the perfect Man who joins between God's *tanzīh* (transcendence) and His *tashbīh* (immanence), between the Oneness of His Being and the multiplicity of the cosmos, and ultimately between everything being Him/not Him

³⁴⁰ Qurʾān: al-Baqarah: 2:30.

³⁴¹ Qurʾān: al-Baqarah: 2:31.

³⁴² Ibn ʿAjībah, *al-futuḥāt al-ilāhiyyah*, 21 -22.

³⁴³ Being the ode *al-Nawādiru al-ʿAyniyya fī ʿl-Bawādiru ʿl-Ghaybiyyah* (The graceful lens towards the transcendental descent of metaphysical knowledge) authored by ʿAbd al-Karīm Jīlī (d. 827/1424).

³⁴⁴The actual lines are: *wa mā ʿl-kawn fī ʿl-timthāl illa ka thaljatīn wa anta laha al-māʿu aladhī huwa nābiu ʿ*.

(*huwa lā huwa*),³⁴⁵ thereby "assuming the traits of God's Names" (*al-takhalluq bi asmā' Allāh*).³⁴⁶

Mystic Vision of Two Eyes

Both Ibn 'Arabī and Ibn 'Ajībah refer to those who witness the cosmos in this way as being "the possessors of two eyes" (*dhū 'l-'aynayn*), Ibn 'Arabī states:

The perfect human being [*al-insān al-kāmil*] has two visions [*nazar*] of the Real, which is why God appointed for him two eyes. With one eye he looks upon Him in respect of the fact that He is "independent of the worlds" [Qur'ān: 3:97]. So, he sees Him neither in any thing nor in himself. With the other eye he looks upon Him in respect of His name All-Merciful [*al-Raḥmān*], which seeks the cosmos and is sought by the cosmos. He [from this perspective] sees His *wujūd* permeating all things."³⁴⁷

In this manner, Michon states that Ibn 'Ajībah considers this realised human being as the 'perfect man', who having been created as a microcosm of the universe, has access to all orders of reality depending on how he 'looks'. In reference to seeing the world with two eyes, there is a reference to holding two opposing visions as being simultaneously theophanically revealing the Divine. So the perceiving of the external (*ẓawāhir*) senses and the perceiving of the internal (*bawātin*) senses are no longer opposites that are incompatible with such a person, as he does not posit either mode of perception as being exclusive to occlude the reality of the other.³⁴⁸ Instead he assigns each its meaning in accordance with the underpinning theophanic reality of God's disclosure. Thus, the realised Sufi for Ibn

³⁴⁵ Chittick notes that this is actually Ibn 'Arabī's preferred phrase and most succinct expression on the nature of *wujūd*. Indicating that if Ibn 'Arabī affirms that from one perspective the cosmos is He, he also constantly affirms that the cosmos is not He. See: William Chittick, "Rūmī' and Waḥdat al-wujūd," in *The Heritage of Rūmī*, ed. A. Banani (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 76–77.

³⁴⁶ Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 22.

³⁴⁷ Ibn al-'Arabī, *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Beirut, n.d) III, p.151.26; for passage in its context, see: Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 368.

³⁴⁸ Ibn Ajība, *Two Treatises*, 28.

‘Ajībah is one for whom the apparent individuated separatedness (*farq*) of creation does not hide the essential unicity (*jam* ‘) underlying all created form. In such a manner there is no longer any opposition between the duality of created form, for the aspirant has realised the non-dual reality (*aḥadiyyah*) underpinning and acting as a single synthetic vision of the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*). Ibn ‘Ajībah discusses the nature of this opposition in one of his treatises, highlighting the seminal Sufi concepts of omnipotent power (*qudrah*) and discerning wisdom (*ḥikmah*). Concerning *qudrah* he states it is linked to the Essence (*dhāt*) and with regards to *ḥikmah* he states it is linked to the ephemeral ‘traces’ of creation (*al-āthār*) and whatever is connected to it of causality (*al-asbāb wa ’l-’ilal*).³⁴⁹ In highlighting the interaction between these two concepts and the inbuilt opposition in all of manifest creation within his treatises, he states:

The Real (*al-Ḥaqq*) thus revealed Himself between two opposing modes: the sensory (*ḥiss*) and the spiritual (*ma ’nā*), the aspect of Lordship (*rubūbiyyah*) and servitude (*’ubūdiyyah*), omnipotent power (*qudrah*) and the wisdom of causality (*ḥikmah*). The technical term *qudrah* refers to the spiritual secrets established within created form and the technical term *ḥikmah* is a term that represents that which is manifested in form, from its determination and appearance, limitation and specificity, and that which is necessitated from human attributes and the rulings of servitude.³⁵⁰ So, these two opposing polarities are present in every manifestation. The world of *qudrah* is true and real (*ḥaqq*) and it is called the world of spiritual (lit. royalty) form (*’ālam al-malakūt*), or also called the world of spiritual intelligibles (*’ālam al-ma ’ānī*), or the world of souls (*’ālam al-arwāḥ*). It is the place wherein the perfections of Lordship are made manifest. Similarly, the world of *ḥikmah* is true and real, it is what is called the world of corporeality (lit. property) (*’ālam al-mulk*), or the world of sensory (*’ālam al-ḥiss*) or the world of bodies (*’ālam al-ashbāḥ*). It is the place wherein the imperfections of the state of servitude

³⁴⁹ Ibn Ajiba, *Two Treatises*, 60-61. Here the term *ḥikmah* is used in a restricted and technical terminological sense to denote theophanic manifestation at the level of causality, not in the deeper sense of the *Ḥikmah* tradition as a philosophy or metaphysics that we have been discussing throughout this chapter.

³⁵⁰ Ibn Ajiba, *Two Treatises*, 52.

are made manifest. If, in this latter sense, one speaks of imperfections, then it is only in deference to the state of Lordship; there is no imperfection from the position of absolute reality. For this reason, the author of the *ʿAyniyyah* (poem ending in *ʿayn*)³⁵¹ wrote: "Everything ugly, when ascribed back to its beauty, will immediately open beautiful meanings unto you. The imperfection of the ugly is made perfect by its beauty; so [truly speaking], there is no imperfection and there is no ugliness."³⁵²

Conclusion

In highlighting these various motifs we have come full circle in understanding the trajectory of the *Ḥikmah* tradition. From understanding the development of such motifs within the metaphysics of pivotal thinkers among the early Sufis, to their incorporation into patterns of *sulūk* by the likes of Junayd, Hakīm al-Tirmidhī and Ibn ʿArabī alongside other Sufis and members of the Akbarian school we can clearly see how these concepts came to be further incorporated and used by Ibn ʿAjībah within the *Īqāz*. The culmination of such a *Ḥikmah* tradition is to perceive the dualistic nature of the cosmos in a non-dualistic manner. It is to transcend opposites that are inbuilt in the manifestation of the cosmos and to directly witness the underlying unicity (*tawḥīd*) of all creation through such spiritual perception. This deeper analysis of the metaphysics and thought underpinning Ibn ʿAjībah's worldview will help us in our semantic analysis of the *Īqāz*, as it will help inform our hermeneutic principles by which we examine the text. The following chapter explores these hermeneutic principles in more detail.

³⁵¹ The ode *al-Nawādiru al-ʿAyniyya fi ʿl-Bawādiru ʿl-Ghaybiyyah* (The graceful lens towards the transcendental descent of metaphysical knowledge) authored by ʿAbd al-Karīm Jīlī (d. 827/1424).

³⁵² Ibn Ajiba, *Two Treatises*, 52-55.

Chapter 4: Hermeneutics and the *Īqāz*

This chapter builds on the previous chapter and focuses on the specific hermeneutics I have used in analysing the *Īqāz*. The term “hermeneutics” is etymologically derived from a Greek root word with the meaning of to “interpret/understand.”³⁵³ Whilst the term in its broader philosophical sense has acquired a vast application in modern scholarship often beyond the remit of pure scriptural interpretation, this chapter adopts the functional approach of Dr. Annabel Keeler in her book *Sufi Hermeneutics*.³⁵⁴ In it Keeler combines two functional definitions of hermeneutics into one methodology wherein it is both “the aims and criteria of interpretation” and “the principles and method of interpretation.”³⁵⁵ Following that approach this chapter will examine the overall hermeneutics of the *Īqāz* by exploring the aims, criteria and the principles and methods of interpretation employed by Ibn ‘Ajībah therein. This entails an understanding of Ibn ‘Ajībah’s own statements concerning his reasons for writing the *Īqāz* as well as examining his own interpretive and commentarial approach and exegetical procedures.

Ibn ‘Ajībah’s reasons for writing the *Īqāz*

In examining the hermeneutics of the *Īqāz*, and specifically looking at Ibn ‘Ajībah’s aims and criteria in authoring it, we are greatly aided by Ibn ‘Ajībah’s own introduction. In it he explains the primary reason for his embarking on writing the *Īqāz* as a commentary of the *Ḥikam* as being due to a direct request by his teacher Muḥammad al-Buzīdī. He states that his teacher requested a “medium length commentary (*sharḥan mutawassīṭan*) that clarifies the meanings [of the *Ḥikam*] and realises its structural aims. This [should be done] whilst relying on the power and capability of God alone, and whatever He opens up from the

³⁵³ Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 12.

³⁵⁴ Annabel Keeler, *Sufi Hermeneutics: The Qur’an Commentary of Rashid al-Dīn Maybudī* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

³⁵⁵ Keeler, *Sufi Hermeneutics*, xxii – xxiv. Keeler takes both definitions from an article by Jane Dammen McAuliffe, “Qur’anic Hermeneutics: The Views of al-Tabari and Ibn Kathir” in Andrew Rippin (ed.), *Approaches to the Interpretation of the Qur’an* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 46-62.

treasures of His knowledge and wisdom (*ḥikmah*).³⁵⁶ The reference to relying on God’s wisdom in this endeavour ties in with Ibn ‘Ajībah’s own choice to begin the *Īqāz* with the Qur’ānic verse: “He [God] gives wisdom (*al-ḥikmah*) to whom He wills, and whoever has been given wisdom has certainly been given much good. And none will remember except those of a discerning heart [Qur’ān: 2:269].” Both the quote from his teacher and the verse he quotes from Qur’ān highlight how Ibn ‘Ajībah sees wisdom as a pure bestowal from God, namely, as an act of grace. This grace in turn requires a sense of readiness to be grasped and understood, for it is dependent on people being in possession of a *lubb* (pl. *albāb*). The word *lubb* itself means the innermost core or ‘heart’ of something, but as the Qur’ānic linguistic expert al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (d.502/1108) notes, its usage here in this verse is intended to mean the most discerning type of heart which in turn serves as the source of what he calls the pure and unblemished mind or intellect (*‘aql al-khāliṣ*). He defines such a mind as being one freed from the tumultuous emotions, distracting thoughts and egoic patterns that otherwise prevent the consanguinity required to recognize the messages given to it by God.³⁵⁷ It is through such an outpouring of grace that Ibn ‘Ajībah cites that the *Īqāz* was mostly written, stating: “the bulk of this commentary that we have put down, indeed is nothing but a gift, for I write a word of wisdom and do not know what I am writing, and instead remain waiting needy for whatever will be sent from God therein.”³⁵⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah cites the majority of his *Īqāz* as being gifted (*mawāhib*) as such inspiration, stating that his style was to commence writing without knowing what to write, simply allowing for words to come to him spontaneously by waiting in a state of neediness of God.³⁵⁹ It would only be post-inspiration that he would consult secondary literature to support the words that came to him, often being amazed by what he himself had written, astounded that the likes of that had proceeded forth from him.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 11.

³⁵⁷ al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *al-mufradāt fī gharīb al-qur’ān* (Maktabah nazār Muṣṭafah albāz, n.d), 575.

³⁵⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 6.

³⁵⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 344.

³⁶⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 344.

Ibn ‘Ajībah’s own introduction

Before formally commencing his commentary on the aphorisms within the *Īqāz*, Ibn ‘Ajībah provides an elaborate perspectival definition of the science of Sufism based on the classical style of what is known as ‘the ten foundations of every science’ (*al-mabādī’ al-‘asharah*). Within works and teaching manuals denoting Islamic sciences such as the *Īqāz* with Sufism, the format of the ten foundations would be penned as an introduction to provide the necessary concise information to students on their prospective topic and text such that they can better conceptualize and apply their knowledge.³⁶¹ These ten foundations are:

1. The definition of the science (*ḥadd* or *ta’rīf*);
2. Its subject matter (*mawḍū’*);
3. The aims of the science (*ghāyah*);
4. Its founder (*wāḍi’*);
5. Its name (*ism*);
6. Its sources (*istimdād*);
7. The legal ruling of learning the science (*ḥukm al-shāri’*);
8. Its issues investigated in the science (*masā’il*);
9. Its merits (*faḍilah*); and
10. Its relation to other sciences (*nisbah*).

In exploring Ibn ‘Ajībah’s take on these perspectives we can come to understand aspects of his hermeneutical theory such as his aims and criteria for the *Īqāz* and the epistemological methodology he employs in conveying his information. What would be of particular value here in our examination of Ibn ‘Ajībah’s hermeneutics would be the foundations he delineates as definition (*ḥadd*), aims (*ghāyah*), subject matter (*mawḍū’*), and the issues investigated therein (*masā’il*), as these best highlight his differentiated understanding of Sufism.

³⁶¹ Omar Qureshi, "Disciplinary and Islamic Education," in *Philosophies of Islamic Education: Historical Perspectives and Emerging Discourses*, ed. Nadeem. A. Memon and Mujadad Zaman (New York & London: Routledge, 2016), 95-98.

Defining Sufism

Looking at the definition of Sufism within the *Īqāz*, Ibn ‘Ajībāh discusses the etymological origins of the word Sufi and *Taṣawwuf* (the Arabic word for Sufism). He quotes Shaykh Aḥmad Zarrūq who states: "Sufism has been defined, interpreted and elucidated in ways that number approximately two thousand, and all of them return back to the sincerity of one's orientation (*ṣidq al-tawajjuh*) towards God, being nothing more than aspects of this."³⁶² In highlighting such sincerity of orientation as being the axial definition of Sufism, Ibn ‘Ajībāh further quotes Aḥmad Zarrūq to explain that any potential differentiation in the definition of Sufism is nothing but a demonstration of the multifaceted aspects of such an inclusive orientation, for he later quotes Zarrūq again stating:

Profuse differentiation of opinion pertaining to a single reality indicates the degree of difficulty of comprehending its totality. So if this differentiation returns back to a single point that encompasses all that has been said in regards to it, then the explanations used with regards to this origin would be dependent on how it was understood. The totality of all statements pertaining to this single origin occurs due to its details, being dependent on each person's perspective, commensurate to their knowledge, practice, state, spiritual realisation and so on. The differences of opinion pertaining to *Taṣawwuf* stem from this. Due to this reason, al-Ḥāfīz ‘Abu Nu‘aym (may God be pleased with him), when describing the characteristics of most of the people mentioned in the *Ḥilya*³⁶³, appended quotes on the definition of *Taṣawwuf* from each person, being commensurate to their spiritual state, stating: 'It is said that *Taṣawwuf* is such and such'. This entails that whosoever has a portion of sincerity of orientation towards God gains a portion of *Taṣawwuf*, and that the *Taṣawwuf* of each is the sincerity of that person's turning towards God. So understand this!³⁶⁴

³⁶² Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 13.

³⁶³ *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā’ wa Ṭabaqāt al-Aṣfiyā* by Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 429/1038), a ten-volume biographical work on various Sufi men and women.

³⁶⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 13.

In the quote above Ibn ‘Ajībah quotes Principle number 3 from Shaykh Aḥmad Zarrūq’s book *Qawā‘id al-Taṣawwuf* (The Principles of Sufism), indicating that the essential truth of Sufism as an orientation of sincerity towards God alone, does not preclude the existence of other perspectival definitions and applications. This allowance for multiple perspectives to a single reality is relevant throughout the *Īqāz* because at different points there are different themes that Ibn ‘Ajībah highlights from the same word or phrase indicating different levels of discourse for different levels of consciousness. Such an understanding is reflected in Ibn ‘Ajībah’s broader approach to words, wherein he often poses different facets (*wujūh*) of meanings based on which perspective they are looked at, most often contrasting between the exoteric and the esoteric. By way of example, in his commentary on the first aphorism he begins by defining the word ‘*amal* (action or deed) in its outward exoteric sense as being ‘movement of the body’ (*ḥarakatu ‘l-jism*) and in its inward esoteric sense as being ‘movement of the heart’ (*ḥarakatu ‘l-qalb*) before then defining three different levels of ‘*amal* with the ‘People of the Art [of Sufism]’ (*ahl al-fann*) as corresponding to the three levels of Islam, being that of the degrees of *sharī‘ah*, *ṭarīqah* and *ḥaqīqah*.³⁶⁵

Sharī‘ah alongside Ḥaqīqah

This conjoining of the exoteric and the esoteric extends towards Ibn ‘Ajībah’s perspective of viewing the outer law (*sharī‘ah*) in its interaction with a corresponding inner realisation (*ḥaqīqah*). To Ibn ‘Ajībah, the sincerity of ‘facing God’ has to translate towards both an inward conformity of spirit as *ḥaqīqah* and an outward corporeal conformity with the *sharī‘ah*, for just as bodies have no life without spirit, the expression of spirit in the corporeal world still requires a body. In similar manner spiritual resolve and intent should be expressed through outward deeds of piety. Here, he once again quotes Aḥmad Zarrūq from his book, *Qawā‘id al-Taṣawwuf* (*The Principles of Sufism*) in highlighting the importance of adherence to the *sharī‘ah*, stating:

³⁶⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 19.

The sincerity of one's orientation towards God is conditioned on him being pleasing to God, Most-High, and through that which pleases Him. For that which is conditioned is not valid except through the fulfillment of its condition: 'And He does not approve for His servants disbelief.' So, faith is a condition that is necessitated, 'And if you are grateful, He approves it for you.' [Qur'ān 39:7]. Thus, it is necessary that virtuous deeds be performed according to Islam. So, there is no Sufism without jurisprudence (*fiqh*), in that the outward dimension of the rulings of God cannot be known except through it. Likewise, there can be no jurisprudence without Sufism, for devotional acts necessitate a sincerity of orientation towards God. Similarly, neither of these two can be without faith, since neither of them are valid without it. So hold firm to them all, because they are all necessitated in principle, just as souls necessitate bodies, in that they have no existence without bodies, just as bodies have no life except through souls...and know this, that there is no existence for it (Sufism) except in it (deeds conforming to jurisprudence), just as there is no perfection in it (jurisprudence) except through it (Sufism), so understand!³⁶⁶

In situating Sufism and the subject matter of the *Īqāz* within the outward fabric of Islam, namely its jurisprudential outward, Ibn 'Ajībah later alludes to a sequence of this disclosure. He does this in his discussion on the identity of the founder (*wāḍi'*) of Sufism wherein he states that the formal revelation of outward Law (*sharī'ah*) preceded the later revelation of the inward dimension of Sufism. He says [*italics are mine for emphasis*]:

It [the founder of Sufism] is the Prophet, [Sufism was] taught to him by God as revelation and inspiration, as the Angel Gabriel descended *first* with the outward Law (*sharī'ah*), and when this was established, he descended *secondly* with the inward reality (*ḥaqīqah*); with some singled out for it and others not.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁶ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 13.

³⁶⁷ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 14.

Ibn ‘Ajībah does not provide any textual sources in citing Sufism as a secondary revelation (termed *ḥaqīqah*) which was first subject to the outward establishment of ritualistic practice and law (*sharī‘ah*). His claim that the Angel Gabriel descended with the *ḥaqīqah* a second time at a later date is confusing, especially given as I have not been able to locate any other Sufi scholar from Ibn ‘Ajībah's spiritual lineage citing such a belief or making such a statement. It is possible that in providing this temporal delineation, he does not mean a sequential order of revelation, but is instead indicating a marker of a higher level of consciousness wherein the esoteric *ḥaqīqah* operates in conjunction with the *sharī‘ah*, after the foundation of the exoteric *sharī‘ah* being established first. Ibn ‘Ajībah himself states in the *Īqāz* that the *sharī‘ah* and *ḥaqīqah* are contemporaneous and two sides of a single reality, the former being the outward embodiment of the latter inward reality, there being an equivalency between them.³⁶⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah even goes to the point of saying that the two primary sources of Islam themselves, the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, rotate between the *sharī‘ah* and the *ḥaqīqah*, such that if one aspect is delineated from the *sharī‘ah* in one text, then that same aspect will necessarily be delineated by the *ḥaqīqah* elsewhere in another sacred text and vice-versa. It thus appears that in positing the *ḥaqīqah* secondarily Ibn ‘Ajībah is alluding to a deepening of depth of perception, the way seeing through two eyes (binocular vision) gives greater depth perception than seeing through one eye (monocular vision). The object is still seen from its previous position of exteriority but is no longer relegated to that and is instead revealed to be something else. This is why Ibn ‘Ajībah cites the need for a perspicacious perceiver of sacred text and text in nature as the created cosmos, with both being signs (*ayāt*) pointing towards God, to have what he calls two eyes, namely to possess the depth of vision that simultaneously sees and conjoins between both the absolute and the relative, the outward and the inward, and specifically both the *sharī‘ah* and the *ḥaqīqah*.³⁶⁹

Whilst it is possible that Ibn ‘Ajībah was alluding to a deepening of depth perception of the nature of faith itself, it is also possible that in providing his early temporal demarcation between the *sharī‘ah* and the *ḥaqīqah*, Ibn ‘Ajībah was deliberately alluding to a historic

³⁶⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 65.

³⁶⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 22.

tension between the exoteric and the esoteric. Perhaps it is this tension and wariness that causes Ibn ‘Ajībah to posit the need for the *sharī‘ah* to be outwardly established first before the *ḥaqīqah* could be engaged with. This theory seems to agree with Ibn ‘Ajībah’s own reasoning for the delineation, as he says:

When God called people to His unicity (*tawḥīd*) and worship He knew that they would not be able to enter therein without selfish desire (*ṭama‘*), hence He promised them reward commensurate with their deeds (corresponding to *sharī‘ah*). So, when their feet became firm in Islam, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) took them out of this [selfish desire] and caused them to ascend towards the sincerity of slavehood and towards being realised (*taḥaqqaq*) in the station of sincerity (corresponding to *ḥaqīqah*).³⁷⁰

In the quote above we can clearly see Ibn ‘Ajībah alluding to his conception of graded ascension and trajectory unto God realisation (*ḥaqīqah*) with there being a need to establish the *sharī‘ah* first. He later states that it is only the gnostics (*‘arīfīn*), representing those whose spiritual path has borne ultimate fruit, who truly come to realise that the *sharī‘ah* is itself the *ḥaqīqah* and vice-versa.³⁷¹ Methodologically, Ibn ‘Ajībah claims that this is the way of the people of the Shādhīlī path, being those who join between the *sharī‘ah* and the *ḥaqīqah*, with their realisation that they acquire acting as a connecting intermediary and interspace (*barzakhan*) between the two.³⁷²

Scholars and Sources Ibn ‘Ajībah references

Ibn ‘Ajībah’s references in his introduction is also very helpful in alluding to his scholarly inheritance. The table below illustrates Ibn ‘Ajībah’s listing of subjects as different types of knowledge covered in the *Īqāz* alongside the frequently mentioned scholars and texts he references connected to that knowledge type:

³⁷⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 22.

³⁷¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 53.

³⁷² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 423.

Table 2. The texts and scholars Ibn ‘Ajībah references in the *Īqāz*

Subjects in the <i>Īqāz</i>	Scholars and their Books referenced in the <i>Īqāz</i>
Sufism (<i>Taṣawwuf</i>)	<p><i>Al-Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn</i> by Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 504/1111).³⁷³</p> <p><i>Kitāb al-Tanwīr fī Isqāṭ al-Tadbīr</i> by Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1309), which Ibn ‘Ajībah says is a companion piece to a bulk (<i>jumlah</i>) of the <i>Īqāz</i>.³⁷⁴</p> <p><i>Qawā’id al-Taṣawwuf</i> by Aḥmad al-Zarrūq (d. 898/1493).³⁷⁵</p>
Knowledge of spiritual admonition, rectification and oratory	<p>Ibn ‘Ajībah lists the books of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) whose relevant works on this topic include <i>Ṣifāt al-Ṣafwah</i> and <i>Talbīs Iblīs</i>. He also quotes the works of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥasibī (d. 243/857) whose works on the topic include <i>Risālah al-Mustarshidīn</i>, <i>Ādāb al-Nufūs</i> and <i>Kitāb al-Riā’yah li Ḥuqūq Allah</i>. He also cites the initial portions of <i>al-Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn</i> by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, and <i>Qūt al-Qulūb</i> by Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996), alongside the book <i>al-Taḥbīr fī ‘Ilm al-Tadhkīr</i> by ‘Abd al-Karīm Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 464/ 1072).</p>
Knowledge of purifying outward action and the rectification of inward states	<p>Sources of which are from the likes of the books of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī such as <i>al-Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn</i> and <i>Minhāj al-‘Ābidīn</i>, and the books of <i>Shihāb al-Dīn ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī</i> (d. 631/1234) such as <i>‘Awārif al-Ma‘ārif</i></p>
Sufi terminology	<p><i>Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah</i> by Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (986-1072). Ibn ‘Ajībah also quotes his own book on Sufi terminology termed <i>Mi‘rāj al-Taṣawwuf ilā Ḥaqā’iq al-</i></p>

³⁷³ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 15.

³⁷⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 18.

³⁷⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 15.

	<i>Taṣawwuf</i> . Likewise, he references <i>Qawā'id al-Taṣawwuf</i> by Aḥmad al-Zarrūq. ³⁷⁶
Sufi biographical information	<i>Laṭā'if al-Minnan</i> by Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī which Ibn 'Ajībah says is a companion book to the bulk (<i>jumlah</i>) of the <i>Īqāz</i> . ³⁷⁷ <i>Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah</i> by Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (986-1072). <i>Al-Dībāj al-Madhhab fī Ma'rifati a'yān 'Ulamā' al-Madhab</i> by Ibrāhīm bin 'Alī ibn Farḥūn (d. 799/1397), which Ibn 'Ajībah quotes as being a reference work on Malīki Jurists that cites Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh as being a polymath who joined together knowledge of <i>tafsīr</i> , <i>fiqh</i> , grammar (<i>naḥw</i>) and juristic methodology (<i>uṣūl</i>). ³⁷⁸
Knowledge pertaining to spiritual experiences and the abidingness of spiritual ranks (<i>al-munāzalāt</i>).	Ibn 'Ajībah gives general reference to the books of al-Ḥatīmī by whom he means Ibn al-'Arabī al-Ḥātīmī (d. 637 /1240), who is famously the author of <i>al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah</i> and <i>Fusūs al-Ḥikam</i> . Ibn 'Ajībah also references Aḥmad al-Būnī (d. 622/1225) as a source on spiritual symbolism, he is the author of the book <i>Shams al-Ma'ārif wa Laṭā'if al-'Awārif</i> . ³⁷⁹
Knowledge of gnosis and inspirational unveilings.	Ibn 'Ajībah lists <i>Kitāb al-Tanwīr fī Isqāṭ al-Tadbīr al-Tanwīr</i> and <i>al-Laṭā'if al-Minnan</i> authored by Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī, as companion books to the <i>Ḥikam</i> , also listing them as companion books to the <i>Īqāz</i> .
Methodologies for Spiritual rectification	He lists <i>'Uyūb al-Nafs</i> by Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān xxand <i>'Uyūb al-Nafs wa Dawā'uhā</i> by Aḥmad al-Zarrūq. ³⁸⁰

³⁷⁶ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 15.

³⁷⁷ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 18.

³⁷⁸ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 17.

³⁷⁹ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 18.

³⁸⁰ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 86.

Previous commentaries on the <i>Ḥikam</i>	The two commentaries that Ibn ‘Ajībah quotes are <i>Ghayth al-Mawāhib al-‘Aliyyah Sharḥ -al-Ḥikam al-‘Aṭā’iyyah</i> by Ibn ‘Abbad al-Rundī (d. 792/1390) and <i>Sharḥ al-Ḥikam al-‘Aṭā’iyyah</i> by Aḥmad Zarrūq (d. 899/1493). It should be noted that Shaykh al-Zarrūq wrote around thirty different commentaries on the <i>Ḥikam</i> , but Ibn ‘Ajībah does not reference a specific one.
Spiritual Poetry	The major poets who Ibn ‘Ajībah quotes are Al-‘Izz ‘Abd al-Salām ibn Ghānim al-Maqdisī (d. 678/1280), Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shushtarī (d. 667/1269) and ‘Umar ibn ‘Alī ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 631/1234).

Looking at the various authors Ibn ‘Ajībah cites alongside their works it is clear that his Sufism in concordance with his explicit position is one which seeks to conjoin between the exoteric and the esoteric, between the *sharī‘ah* and the *ḥaqīqah*. This is evident by the various scholarly personalities he quotes, wherein most of them are simultaneously scholars of the outward Islamic sciences as well as the inward Sufic ones, being equally competent in matters of the outward such as jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and its juristic methodology (*usūl al-fiqh*), theology (*kalām*), as well as Sufism. This is consistent with his highlighting of the personality of the original author of the *Ḥikam*, Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh, wherein he quotes a jurist in Ibrāhīm ibn Farḥūn specifically citing Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh as being one who brought together the exoteric knowledge of exegesis (*tafsīr*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), grammar (*naḥw*) and juristic methodology (*uṣūl*) with the esoteric of Sufism.³⁸¹ The scholar who most represents this conformity between the outward and the inward is the one he most quotes in this regard, namely Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī and his book *al-Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, about which he says:

The Sufis often incorporate into Sufism matters of knowledge of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) due to the need thereof. Imam Ghazālī has clarified these matters in the *Iḥyā’*

³⁸¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 17.

Ulūm al-Dīn (Revival of the Religious Sciences) in four books: Book of Worship (*al-ʿIbādāt*), Book of Habitual Norms (*al-ʿĀdāt*), Book of Destructive Vices (*al-Muhlikāt*) and the Book of Salvific Traits (*al-Munjiyāt*). The inclusion of these matters is from the position of perfection, not as a necessity, except for what cannot be done without from the field of worship.³⁸²

By connecting himself to al-Ghazālī, Ibn ʿAjībah is also connecting himself to Ghazālī's scholarly lineage, a point he makes explicit by citing his indebtedness to Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī and his book *Qūt al-Qulūb*. Abū Ṭālib was Ghazālī's primary influence for his writing *al-Ihyā*. Tracing Ibn ʿAjībah's references further back to the earliest scholars he references we find Ibn ʿAjībah mentioning the likes of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥasibī (d. 243/857) who is a pivotal figure in Sufic literature being amongst the first to author spiritual treatises on the subject. Likewise, we had previously discussed how in Ibn ʿAjībah's spiritual lineage he primarily roots his own lineage through Abu al-Qāsim Muhammad ibn al-Junayd who he cites as having kept the company of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥasibī.³⁸³ In listing these two personalities Ibn ʿAjībah is highlighting his intellectual and spiritual continuity with the earliest systematisers and most normative representatives of Sufism. In the early phase of Sufism, instruction took the form of a master imparting spiritual wisdom to a group of aspirants through meetings typically held at the master's house or public mosque. These were typically "masters of spiritual training" (*shaykh al-tarbiyyah*) as opposed to more formal "masters of spiritual instruction" (*shaykh al-taʿlīm*), a designation clarified and introduced by Ibn ʿAbbād al-Rundī.³⁸⁴ Whilst the former category would give spiritual discourse and advice in a general capacity, usually in the form of public lectures, Ibn ʿAbbād highlights how the latter were more prescriptive, often giving bespoke spiritual prescription to their students in the manner a physician may need to treat specific maladies with medication. He notes how the earliest Sufi writings such as those of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥasibī and Abu Ṭālib al-Makkī were of the former category, imparting fundamental

³⁸² Ibn ʿAjībah, *Īqāz*, 15.

³⁸³ Ibn ʿAjībah, *Īqāz*, 14.

³⁸⁴ Renard, *Ibn ʿAbbad*, 184-186.

Sufi teachings in a manner that the majority of wayfarers could traverse the path without having recourse to a more formal "master of spiritual instruction" (*shaykh al-ta'lim*).³⁸⁵

Ibn 'Ajībah continues this pattern of normativeness with the previous commentators of the *Hikam* he lists, as he only references Ibn 'Abbad al-Rundī and Aḥmad Zarrūq. Both were distinguished scholars of the outward sciences alongside their possessing inner spiritual achievements. Both at various points of their lives taught at the famous Qarrawayyīn institute in Fes and followed a similar scholarly trajectory to Ibn 'Ajībah. Ibn 'Ajībah highlights them both in his autobiography, being particularly indebted to Ibn 'Abbad's commentary on the *Hikam*, for he cites that as being the primary cause of causing his heart to incline to the spiritual path in the first place. That said, whilst Ibn 'Ajībah freely borrows from both scholars and their works, often quoting verbatim from their previous commentaries, he does markedly depart from them on select topics. This is illustrated by his specific alterations and changes to their words when quoting from them, demonstrating his own differences therein. We will examine this in more detail later on when focusing on his references to previous commentaries of *Hikam*.

The only personalities who Ibn 'Ajībah references who could be considered to rank outside the normative framework he highlights are Ibn al-'Arabī and al-Buni, alongside a group of poets known for their mystical poetry such as al-Shushtarī and Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 631/1234). In both cases he references them for select subject matter only, highlighting Ibn al-'Arabī and al-Buni for their writings and knowledge pertaining to spiritual experiences and spiritual ranks and the poets for their poems conveying the ineffability of mystical experience. Whilst Ibn al-'Arabī was to attract some controversy amongst theologians, he was and is revered amongst Sufis and was even given the title 'The Greatest Teacher' (*Shaykh al-Akbar*); so his being referenced by Ibn 'Ajībah is not surprising. Ibn 'Ajībah's referencing Aḥmad al-Buni potentially raises more questions, since his spiritually symbolic writings in the book *Shams al-Ma'ārif* introduces concepts such as the talismanic effect of numbers, letters and squares, which borders on the occult. To focus on this though ignores the fact that al-Buni was also ascribed to the orthodox Malikī school and that a normative

³⁸⁵ Renard, *Ibn 'Abbad*, 184-186.

scholar such as Yūsuf ibn Ismā‘īl al-Nabahānī (d. 1350/ 1932) notes in his book *Jāmi‘ Karāmāt al-Awliyā’* that Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s teacher Abū al-‘Abbās al-Mursī (d. 686/1287) had a spiritual connection and also took mystic knowledge from al-Buni.³⁸⁶ It would be safe to assume it is al-Buni’s more normative side and his connection to the same spiritual lineage of Ibn ‘Ajībah that would be the primary reasons for him to cite him as one of his sources. The same can be said regarding the poets, for he references their poetry as a means of spiritual allusion, using poetry whenever there is a discussion of an experiential dimension of Sufism that he deems a more normative discourse as being unable to do justice to.

Ibn ‘Ajībah’s use of metaphorical language

Ibn ‘Ajībah clarifies his use of metaphorical language in the *Īqāz* by delineating three degrees of spiritual discourse, namely that of outward expression (*‘ibārah*), allegory (*ishārah*) and the figurative (*ramz*). He states that with the order going from the outward expression to its figurative form, each subsequent format of discourse becomes finer and more precise than what preceded it. In this order Ibn ‘Ajībah is reversing the way most people understand communication. In everyday normal speech the figurative is considered more abstruse and less definitive than overt expression. Ibn ‘Ajībah is stating that for him and the Sufis, they see their knowledge as best expressed in subtle terms using allegory and metaphor precisely because of its exclusive audience, in that the ability to grasp such knowledge is a rare capacity that has not been endowed to the common person. Given this knowledge is intuited through select hearts, its conveyance is not dependent on formal expression and accordingly efforts to express such knowledge more overtly actually weakens its power of expression.³⁸⁷ It is for this reason that Ibn ‘Ajībah states Sufis prefer to use poetry (*ghazal*), mystical odes (*qasāi’d*), metaphorical parables and stories as their primary teaching device for this allows them to convey the deepest meanings of their message through the intuition of the heart. About such usage of art forms the contemporary

³⁸⁶ Yūsuf ibn Ismā‘īl al-Nabahānī, *Jāmi‘ Karāmāt al-Awliyā’*, (Beirut: Maktab al-Thaqāfiyah, 1991).

³⁸⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 150.

Shādhilī spiritual guide Nuh Ha Mim Keller notes: “The purpose of *Qasidas* (mystical odes) in the Sufī path is to convey the experiential gnosis of forbears to subsequent generations, for what comes from the heart goes into the heart.”³⁸⁸

The approach highlighted above is definitely Ibn ‘Ajībah’s way, for he frequently intersperses the *Īqāz* with mystical poetry whenever he is speaking about experiential aspects of the Sufī path, utilising them specifically for the purpose of conveying a spiritual state that would otherwise be hard to express with more formal discourse. The poetry itself is always metaphorically rich and conveys a select terminology and convention that the Sufis are familiar with amongst themselves. He explains this is the reason why Sufis use female names such as Laylā and Salmā, reference intoxicating wine and cups filled to their brims, or luminous bodies such as the moon and the sun, and the vastness and depths of oceans and drowning therein, all as metaphors for the Divine presence to be employed in their poetry and expressions.³⁸⁹ He also states that such use of metaphor indicates a degree of intimacy between those who understand its terminology in that it entails a shared communion which serves as a secret that only opens its understanding up to mutual lovers and friends. In this regard he cites two instances of communication that occurred between the Prophet and his closest companion Abu Bakr, wherein the Prophet used figurative speech such as saying, “that is that” and “the day of the day”, phrases which would remain indecipherable to anyone except Abu Bakr.³⁹⁰ In this trajectory of intimacy Ibn ‘Ajībah states that the mystics reach the point when they become free from all indicative pointers, free even from the need of figurative metaphors, for their experience of being comes to point to the Divine so absolutely that they are relieved from needing any pointers. This happens when as Ibn ‘Ajībah somewhat cryptically and metaphorically says: “the indicator (*al-mushīr*) has become the very thing it is indicating unto (*al-mushār ilayhi*), due to the annihilation of its existence (*fanā` wujūdihi*) in the existence of its beloved, and the folding up of its essence in the essence of that which it witnesses.”³⁹¹ With expressions like that

³⁸⁸ Mustafa Styer, *Echoes from Eternity: Choral Qasidas Sung by the Shadhili Tariqa*, (Birmingham: NoOtherDesign, 2010), xi.

³⁸⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 150.

³⁹⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 150.

³⁹¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 151.

we can perhaps appreciate Ibn ‘Ajībah’s use of poetry, for it helps to not only clarify the meanings that could otherwise appear cumbersome to express, but also acts as a means of bypassing the rational mind in the engaging of the poetic meter and beauty of the melody itself. As Mustafa Styer notes: “The singing of Sufī qasidas is largely an oral tradition, in the sense of the melodies and words being orally transmitted by those who memorise and/or master them...Understanding the meanings of the poetry is thus an integral part of this tradition, even if a certain blessing (*barakah*) is obtainable by merely listening.”³⁹² This focus on experiential spiritual transference as *barakah* is entirely consistent with Ibn ‘Ajībah’s use of poetry throughout the *Īqāz*, as we will explore in the next section.

Ibn Ajibah’s use of Poetry

The three most common poets Ibn ‘Ajībah quotes are Al-‘Izz ‘Abd al-Salām ibn Ghānim al-Maqdisī (d. 678/1280), Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shushtarī (d. 667/1269) and ‘Umar ibn ‘Alī ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 631/1234), all well known for their mystical poems. The very first poem quoted in the *Īqāz* is that of ‘Abd al-Salām ibn Ghānim al-Maqdisī. In it Ibn ‘Ajībah uses one of Maqdisī’s poems as his exposition of the first aphorism of Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh,³⁹³ using the poem to highlight the necessary need of effort in the spiritual path whilst simultaneously not relying on such effort but on God alone.³⁹⁴ A translation of the lines of the poem he quotes is below:

O lover of the spiritual essence of our beauty,
 Our dowry is expensive for whoever wishes to be betrothed to Us:
 [It is] an exhausted body and a soul that has been humbled,
 and eyelids that have not tasted sleep,
 and a heart in which there is nothing other than Us.
 So, if you wish – then pay the price.
 Then be annihilated if you are able, an annihilation that is perpetual;
 an annihilation (*fanā’*) that brings you close to that courtyard (*finā*).

³⁹² Mustafa Styer, *Songs of Presence: Qasidas of the Shadhili Path*, (Istanbul: Ihsan Press, 2014), xxii.

³⁹³ “From the signs of relying on work is the loss of hope with a misstep.”

³⁹⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 21.

And remove your two sandals when you come,
for that is the area in which lies Our sanctity.
And be divested from the two worlds,
and remove that which is between us from coming between us.
And if it be queried: "Who is that you love?" Then respond:
I am the One who loves, and the One I love is "I".³⁹⁵

Even though Ibn ‘Ajībāh does not mention who the author is when he quotes this poem, it has been authoritatively ascribed to Al-‘Izz ‘Abd al-Salām ibn Ghānim al-Maqdisī.³⁹⁶ The poem itself illustrates many of the metaphorical points Ibn ‘Ajībāh makes about the discourse of the Sufis. So, the reference to 'dowry' is metaphorically indicated to be outward commitment in the form of bodily fatigue and inward commitment as spiritual humility and sincerity of love. There is also a play on the word annihilation (*fanā`*) with the word courtyard (*finā`*), the latter being an enclosure that is in front of a house, which one is allowed to enter into only on account of prior intimacy and connection.³⁹⁷ The notion in this metaphor is that only through annihilation (*fanā`*) from one's ego does one enter into an intimate proximity with God. The further reference to remove 'sandals' prior to entering the sanctity of the site metaphorically builds upon a similar command given to Moses in what is both a Qur’ānic and Biblical story of Moses being summoned unto the Divine presence at the site of the ‘Burning Bush’, a place the Qur’ān refers to as a blessed site (*al-buq‘ah al-mubārakah*).³⁹⁸ Here the command to remove the two sandals indicates the need to be divested from two attachments, understood to be attachments to this world (*dunyā`*) and the world of the hereafter (*ākhirah*), an imperative for self-divestment that is reiterated two verses later even more explicitly. In the removal of all attachments to other than God, the supposed barrier between God is removed entailing an intimate disclosure. The final couplet reveals some of this disclosure and illustrates what Ibn ‘Ajībāh refers to as an

³⁹⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 21.

³⁹⁶ See: Al-‘Izz ‘Abd al-Salām ibn Ghānim al-Maqdisī, *Hal al-Rumūz wa Maqāṭīḥ al-Kunūz fī Sharḥ ba‘d al-Muṣṭalahāt wa -‘l Maqāḥīm al-Ṣūfiyyah al-Mubhimah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2011), 22.

³⁹⁷ F.Steingass, *Arabic-English Dictionary*, (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2005), 805.

³⁹⁸ See: Qur’ān: 28:30.

openly cryptic or secret discourse of the Sufis who have 'tasted' spiritual experience, for in this disclosure the apparence of the lover and the beloved is revealed to be the same entity. This is an allusion to the experiential dimension of *tawḥīd*, a one-ness or unification despite the presence of a duality or multiplicity.

The next poem quoted by Ibn ‘Ajībah is one by Ibn al-Fāriḍ. Ibn al-Fāriḍ is esteemed in being given the title 'the Sultan of the lovers' (*Sulṭān al-‘āshiqīn*) and is considered by some to be “by far the greatest mystical poet in Arabic literature.”³⁹⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah himself has written an entire commentary on one of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's masterpieces called the 'Wine Ode' (*Khamriyyah*). Ibn al-Fāriḍ is also the first poet Ibn ‘Ajībah quotes by name in the *Īqāz*. The poem he references is translated below and it speaks for itself, as Ibn ‘Ajībah uses it to highlight the sincerity of having an aspiration for God alone:

My request is not for bliss of the Garden.
It is only that I desire to see You.
All of the people worship You out of fear of the Fire [of perdition],
and see salvation as being a generous allotment.
Or it may be that they wish to reside in the Garden, relaxing therein,
in meadows and drinking the drink of *Salsabīl* (a paradisiacal fountain)⁴⁰⁰.
I have no concern with the Fire and the Garden,
I do not seek any recompense for my love.⁴⁰¹

The poet who Ibn ‘Ajībah most quotes and references in the *Īqāz* is Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shushtarī. Unlike the previous two poets, he discusses his life a bit, introducing him as being a vizier and a scholar whose father was an emir (governor of a province).⁴⁰² Ibn ‘Ajībah notes that it was in order to radically break this previous life of luxury and prestige

³⁹⁹ A.J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 94.

⁴⁰⁰ See: And they will be given to drink a cup [of wine] whose mixture is of ginger. [From] a fountain within Paradise named *Salsabīl* [Qur’ān: 76:17-18].

⁴⁰¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 38.

⁴⁰² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 41.

that Shushtarī's teacher Muḥammad ibn Sabʿīn (d. 669/1271), better known as Ibn Sabʿīn, commanded him to wear the ascetic Sufi patched cloak and to beat a drum attracting public censure in the markets through soliciting socially transgressive behavior. Apparently all it took was three days of such behavior to result in the veils being lifted from Shushtarī and to make him a person of spiritual experience and 'taste' (*adhwāq*).⁴⁰³ Whilst Ibn ʿAjībah does not mention Shushtarī's spiritual kinship in the *Īqāz*, it is noteworthy that Shushtarī would later claim affiliation with the Shādhilī order in Cairo, allegedly having met its founder Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī, along with his two spiritual inheritors, Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Mursī and Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī.⁴⁰⁴ Shushtarī himself expresses his ascription to the Shādhiliyyah order as follows: "My masters, they are Shādhilī, in loving them, my heart finds its pleasure."⁴⁰⁵

An example of the degree to which Ibn ʿAjībah uses Shushtarī can be gleaned from his commentary on the fifteenth aphorism of the Ḥikam which states: "From that which indicates the existence of His Omnipotence is that he veiled you from Himself with that which has no existence alongside Him."⁴⁰⁶ The aphorism itself is amongst the most abstruse in the *Īqāz* in that it alludes to the phenomenon of being veiled from God despite there being no existence of such a veil! In illustrating the shadow-like nature of existence and its veil, whilst also pointing to the inner 'secret' of man's spiritual ability to pierce this veil and behold God therein, Ibn ʿAjībah quotes three separate poems of Shushtarī, giving his own commentary to each poem.⁴⁰⁷ Below are the translated lines from the quoted poems in the order Ibn ʿAjībah introduces them:

Poem 1:

The creation is Your creation and the command is Your command.
So, what am I except one of the shadows?

⁴⁰³ Ibn ʿAjībah, *Īqāz*, 41.

⁴⁰⁴ Yousef Casewit, "Shushtarī's Treatise *on the Limits of Theology and Sufism*: Discursive Knowledge (*ʿilm*), Direct Recognition (*maʿrifa*), and Mystical Realization (*tahqīq*) in *al-Risāla al-Quṣāriyya*" in *Religions* 11, no.5: 226. See: <https://doi.org/10.3390/re111050226>

⁴⁰⁵ Casewit, "Shushtarī's Treatise," 226.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibn ʿAjībah, *Īqāz*, 56.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibn ʿAjībah, *Īqāz*, 56 -58.

There is no place for the veil in Your existence,
except by the secret of the phrase: "Look at the mountain."⁴⁰⁸
You indicated Yourself. From You and for You is perpetuity,
as has been designated by the depths of pre-eternity.
I have come to know through You that which is ever-aware of You.
You are that which gives life to the heart. O my hope!⁴⁰⁹

We will discuss Ibn 'Ajībah's commentary on this poem and specifically his analysis of the cryptic command given to Moses to "Look at the mountain" later in this thesis but for the purposes of our hermeneutical analysis here it is important to focus on how Shushtarī's poetry is itself intertextual in that it cross references Qur'ānic stories. Ibn 'Ajībah later quotes another poem:

Poem 2:

I am something wondrous for whoever looks at me,
I am the beloved and the lover, there is no other.
O you who seek the essence of knowledge you have been occluded by your "I",
the intoxicating presence is from you, and the knowledge, the 'secret' is with you;
Return back to your essence and contemplate – there is no other.⁴¹⁰

The third poem he quotes discusses the fruit of such diligent contemplation and the disclosure of the nature of the 'secret':

Poem 3:

My secret was disclosed without words,
and manifested from me in this form.
You see the existence of other than me is impossible.

⁴⁰⁸ This is a reference to the Qur'ānic verse 7:143 which discusses the incident of Moses asking to see God whereupon he is told: "You will not see Me, but *look at the mountain* [italics mine]; if it should remain in place, then you will see Me."

⁴⁰⁹ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 57.

⁴¹⁰ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 58.

And all that is other than Me is imagination in Me.
Being unified as One in everything.
I am the beloved,
I am the lover.
There is no other.
And love for me, from me, is a wondrous thing.
I am singularly alone, so understand.
My secret is uniquely rare.
So, whoever looks at My essence sees Me as something,
and in the folds of My essence I am concealed as nothing.
My attributes are not hidden from one who perceives.
And my essence is known from these appearances.
Annihilate yourself to the sensory and you will see the spiritual meaning,
I concealed myself in the secrets and meaning so I can be manifested.⁴¹¹

After quoting these three poems Ibn ‘Ajībah makes an interesting comment on those to whom the poems are directed towards, stating: “None will understand these expressions except the people of spiritual taste and comprehension. It is sufficient for whoever does not attain to its meaning and who does not encompass its knowledge that they submit and hand over its understanding to those who possess it. They should instead maintain the perfection of God’s transcendence and the negation of His resembling creation. This is because the meanings of these lines are experiential and have a taste that cannot be attained except by the people of spiritual taste.”⁴¹² Given these poems are supposedly intended by Ibn ‘Ajībah for a select audience of those who possess prior spiritual taste and comprehension, does this imply a redundancy for everyone else? I think this is not the case, rather it appears Ibn ‘Ajībah is using these poems evocatively to awaken and bring about a cognition within whoever is receptive. Within this understanding, his affirming that ultimately true understanding will only be attained by those of spiritual taste is simply a post facto statement, retroactively implying that it is the degree of spiritual taste one has which

⁴¹¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 58.

⁴¹² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 59.

represents the readiness to receive the message. In this sense Ibn ‘Ajībah’s use of poetry and allusion ties in with what Giuseppe Scattolin would call a “metalanguage”, one “which serves to transmit, in an almost instant way, that which ordinary and the conventional language finds difficult to convey and is, in most cases, incapable of doing so.”⁴¹³

The Terminology of the *Īqāz*

Given the rich history of discourse in Sufism, Ibn ‘Ajībah himself alludes to the need to know its terminology in his introduction to the *Īqāz*, alluding thereby to the importance of a synchronic understanding of Sufi discourse. Noting that it is essential for anyone concerned with reading the *Īqāz* to embark with a prior understanding of this rich vocabulary, he states:

Its issues (*masā’il*) entail that one know the terminology and words used amongst the Sufis such as *al-ikhlas* (sincerity), *al-ṣidq* (truthfulness), *al-tawakkul* (trust on God), *al-zuhd* (abstinence), *al-war’a* (conscientiousness), *al-riḍā* (contentment), *al-taslīm* (submission), *al-maḥabbah* (love), *al-fanā’* (effacement), *al-baqā’* (subsistence), *al-dhāt* (the essence of God), *al-ṣifāt* (the attributes of God), *al-qudrah* (power pertaining to essence of God), *al-ḥikmah* (wisdom pertaining to manifestation of creation), *al-rūḥāniyyah* (spiritual) and *al-bashariyyah* (humanness).⁴¹⁴

In noting that these terms do not exist as stand-alone entities, Ibn ‘Ajībah also lists essential sources to understand such terms, thereby alluding to the need for a diachronic dimension. Amongst the books he lists is the Sufi classic *The Epistle (al-Risālah)* authored by Abu al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, the other is his own companion book of spiritual terminology, the *The Book of Ascension (Mi’rāj al-tashawwuf)*. He states:

⁴¹³ Scattolin, "Hermeneutical Insights," 100.

⁴¹⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 16.

Imam al-Qushayrī has mentioned in the first part of his book *al-Risālah* a comprehensive list of such terms. I also put together a compendium of a hundred essential truths of *Taṣawwuf* in a book entitled *Miʿrāj al-taṣawwuf ilā ḥaqāʾiq al-taṣawwuf*, so whosoever wishes may consult it, to use it in understanding the discourse of the *Ṣūfīs*.⁴¹⁵

A key example of terminology that a reader would need to familiarize himself with would be levels of theophany that open up to the spiritual adept in his spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*). Ibn ʿAjībah lists these as three, which in order of ascending theophany are: *al-mulk*, being the world of material forms or sensorial matter; *al-malakūt*, being the inward, spiritually intelligible dimension; and finally, *al-jabarūt*,⁴¹⁶ indicating the highest and most subtle domain of "the all-enveloping ocean of [Divine] omnipotence."⁴¹⁷

Ibn ʿAjībah’s own Esoteric Hermeneutic

The typical format of Ibn ʿAjībah’s commentary on the aphorism would be as follows:

- 1 - Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh's quoted aphorism.⁴¹⁸
- 2 - Ibn ʿAjībah’s linguistic and religious commentary on meanings of the aphorism.⁴¹⁹
- 3 - Ibn ʿAjībah’s own thematic commentary on the aphorism after its linguistic analysis.⁴²⁰

This section may be marked by phrases such as “*qultu*” (I say), *wa ʿlam* (and know), the

⁴¹⁵ Ibn ʿAjībah, *Īqāz*, 16. Note: The referenced book (*Miʿrāj al-taṣawwuf*) has been translated and I have used some of its definitions whilst adapting others. See: Aresmouk and Fitzgerald, *The Book of Ascension*.

⁴¹⁶ Although the tem *Jabarūt* does not appear in the Qurʾān, derived forms of its verbal root j-b-r, which expresses notions of "restoring something to strength" and "exerting power over something" occurs in 10 places, including in the divine name al-Jabbār, i.e. the One who is exalted in omnipotent might. See: Aresmouk and Fitzgerald, *Book of Ascension*, 48-49.

⁴¹⁷ Aresmouk and Fitzgerald, *Book of Ascension*, 48-49.

⁴¹⁸ Taking the first aphorism as an example, as with all original aphorisms from the *Hikam*, Ibn ʿAjībah quotes it in full stating: “From the signs of one relying (*al-ʿitimād*) on their deeds (*al-ʿamal*) is the loss of hope when a slip occurs.” Ibn ʿAjībah, *Īqāz*, 19.

⁴¹⁹ In his commentary on Aphorism 1, Ibn ʿAjībah clarifies the meaning of *al-ʿitimād* as “reliance upon something,” and *al-ʿamal* as “outward action of the body and heart” wherein when such action conforms to the *sharīʿah* it is termed obedience (*tāʿah*) and when it is in opposition it is termed disobedience (*maʿṣiyah*). See: Ibn ʿAjībah, *Īqāz*, 19.

⁴²⁰ In Ibn ʿAjībah’s commentary on Aphorism 1 this section commences when he says, “*wa ʿlam* (and know) that the discussion here is concerning deeds that necessitate the spiritual purification

particle “*fa*” (and so), “*wa ammā*” (as for), all indicating a point of departure from the linguistic commentary on the aphorism. In this section Ibn ‘Ajībah offers elucidatory remarks on the aphorism often quoting supportive secondary material consisting of quotes from the Qur’ān, Ḥadīth, other Sufis and their writings alongside extracts from Sufi poetry and previous commentaries on the *Hikam*.

4 - Ibn ‘Ajībah’s linkage or connecting the aphorism under discussion with the following aphorism.⁴²¹ This section is usually prefaced by his using semantic connectors such as the particles *thumma*, *idhā*, and *lammā* which collectively have the meaning of “then, therefore, in that case, consequently, hence.”⁴²² These Arabic words are from the category of grammatical particles known as *ḥurūf al-rabt* (particles of connection). Functionally, these particles act as conjunctive adverbs and are interchangeably used to denote the meanings of 'subsequently' or 'accordingly', thereby heralding a thematic connection with the subsequent aphorism.

Finding Ibn ‘Ajībah’s unique voice

Ibn ‘Ajībah’s own commentary style is intertextual in that he often comments by quoting other authors and their texts, illustrating a hermeneutic that connects him to a broader commentarial tradition. That said, it is in his use of semantic connectors that he gives his own unique voice. As already highlighted some points to focus on when looking at Ibn ‘Ajībah’s own voice is his use of the phrases such as “*qultu*” (I say), “*wa lam*” (and know), the particle “*fa*” (and so), “*wa ammā*” (as for), which mark the onset of his commentary on the aphorism under discussion. Likewise, it is his use of particles of connection such as

of the limbs, hearts and soul.” See: Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 19. He then follows this comment by an extensive commentary over five pages in which he quotes the Qur’ān ten times, references four Prophetic Ḥadīth, quotes from a book entitled *Ḥal al-rumūz wa maḥāṭih al-kunūz* (*Resolution of Symbols and Keys to the Treasure*) by ‘Izz al-dīn al-Maqdisī (d. 678/1279) to explain obstacles in the spiritual path, before concluding in explaining the interaction between the *sharī‘ah* and the *ḥaqīqah*. See: Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 19-23.

⁴²¹ Continuing our example of Aphorism 1, this section commences when Ibn ‘Ajībah says, “Since (*lammā*) moving from outward deeds to inward deeds necessitates that there be the manifestation upon the limbs...” See: Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 23.

⁴²² Hans Wehr, *Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 4th Edition, (New York: Spoken Language Services, 1993), 13, 1029.

“*lammā*”⁴²³ and “*idhā*”⁴²⁴ which detail his meta-understanding of how he sees the aphorisms as a progressive within a broader unfolding structure in the *Īqāz*. Through focusing on the particles as semantic connectors one can discern Ibn ‘Ajībah’s skeletal structure illustrating how he sees the micro-concepts elucidated by the individual aphorisms to be connected to macro-themes throughout the *Īqāz*. It is in focusing on these semantic connections, a process which involves a deep reading of the *Īqāz*, that larger picture meta-themes are revealed. These themes were then arranged into broader thematic categories of teleology, soteriology, ontology and epistemology as will be discussed in detail in the later chapters of this thesis. It is this semantic connection and intratextual connectivity that highlights for me the added value of Ibn ‘Ajībah’s commentary as being above the commentary of other luminaries such as Ibn ‘Abbad ar-Rundī and Shaykh Aḥmad Zarrūq, for the latter two did not use such connectors in their own commentaries on the *Hikam*, making it more difficult to determine the bigger macro themes within. The table below illustrates and demonstrates how Ibn ‘Ajībah uses the connecting particles ‘*lammā*’ and ‘*idhā*’ as a way to navigate between the first five aphorisms, a pattern continued throughout all 262 aphorisms, albeit with different connecting particles.

Table 3. Ibn ‘Ajībah’s use of connecting particles between the first five aphorisms.

Connecting particle	Ibn ‘Ajībah’s discussion
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>lammā</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">[Introducing Aphorism 1]</p>	<p>Since (<i>lammā</i>) Sufism is the result of sound deeds and the fruits of pure states: [namely] when a person acts on what he knows he is bequeathed to by God that which he does not know, he [Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh] began his discussion [on aphorism 1] on deeds.⁴²⁵</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>lammā</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">[Moving from Aphorism 1 to Aphorism 2]</p>	<p>Since (<i>lammā</i>) moving from outward deeds to inward deeds necessitates that there be the manifestation upon the limbs, as God says: “Indeed Kings - when they enter a city, they ruin it” (Qur’ān: 27:34), this manifestation of</p>

⁴²³ Which means "When, after, since" See: Hans Wehr, *Arabic-English Dictionary*, 1029.

⁴²⁴ Which means “then, therefore, in that case, consequently, hence”, See: Hans Wehr, *Arabic-English Dictionary*, 13.

⁴²⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 19.

	<p>outward traces is <i>tajrīd</i> (stripped away for God). Hence he [Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh] indicated this [<i>tajrīd</i>] by stating: “Your desire for <i>tajrīd</i> even though God may have placed you in the world to gain a living is a hidden caprice. Whereas your desire to gain a living in the world, even though God may have put you in a state of <i>tajrīd</i> is a comedown from lofty aspiration [aphorism 2].⁴²⁶</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>lammā</i> [Introducing Aphorism 3]</p>	<p>Since (<i>lammā</i>) the spiritual ambition of the aspirant who has done <i>tajrīd</i> (<i>faqīr mutajarriid</i>) is not in error most of the time, as the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “Indeed God has men, if they were to swear an oath upon Allah, He would fulfil them in their oath”, our Shaykh (Muḥammad al-Būzīdī) said: “God has men, if they were to have ambition for something it would be through God [and not through themselves].” Likewise, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “Be conscious of the perspicacity of the believer, for indeed he sees through the light of God”. So it was feared by the Shaykh (Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh) that one could be deluded into thinking that spiritual ambition can actually penetrate the forms of destiny and enable that which is not brought about by the predestination and divine decree, hence he sought to remove this delusion by his stating: “Prior aspirations do not pierce the walls of destiny” [Aphorism 3].⁴²⁷</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>idhā</i> [Moving from Aphorism 3 to Aphorism 4]</p>	<p>If (<i>idhā</i>) spiritual ambition does not affect the forms of destiny, then what do you think about selfish plotting (<i>tadbīr</i>) and choosing for oneself (<i>ikhtiyār</i>), which he [Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh] indicated by saying: “Free yourself from</p>

⁴²⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 23.

⁴²⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 26.

	selfish plotting (<i>tadbīr</i>), for that which another has carried out on your behalf, do not undertake for yourself to do” [Aphorism 4]. ⁴²⁸
<i>lammā</i> [Introducing Aphorism 5]	Since (<i>lammā</i>) being preoccupied with <i>tadbīr</i> and <i>ikhtiyār</i> is an indicator of the blurring of spiritual insight, and the leaving of them or doing them through God is an indicator of an opening in spiritual insight, he [Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh] mentioned another sign that is more manifest and famous than the two of them concerning the blurring or opening of insight, when he said: “Your striving for what has been guaranteed to you, and your remissness in doing what is asked of you is evidence of the blurring of your spiritual insight” [Aphorism 5]. ⁴²⁹

Semantic Analysis in the *Īqāz*: Seeing with "Two Eyes"

Sufi writings are intended to bring about contemplative space, and the *Īqāz* is no exception. We have already discussed the metaphysical concept of ‘seeing with two eyes’ in the previous chapter on the *Hikmah* tradition. Ibn ‘Ajībah directly employs the same terminology and concept in the *Īqāz* by stating: "So it is necessary upon human beings to have ‘two eyes’: one through which they behold ultimate reality (*al-ḥaqīqah*) and the other through which they behold the sacred law (*al-sharī‘ah*)."⁴³⁰ Here the impression given is that the existence of the phenomenal world has a contingent reality, one that can only be affirmed by the existence of the higher ultimate reality, which is God who is existentiating all created phenomena. This perspective of the phenomenal world in its apperency supported by the absoluteness of the Divine, suggests a conjoining of opposites which Toshihiko Izutsu (d.1413/1993), the late Japanese philosopher of language and mysticism

⁴²⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 27.

⁴²⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 29.

⁴³⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 22.

indicates is a joining between 'metaphysical unification' and 'phenomenal dispersion'.⁴³¹ Izutsu having been a scholar of both Zen Buddhism and Islam saw such a conceptual opposition as applying at the essential level of existence itself, wherein at the level of everyday human experience the subject stands eternally opposed to the object. Within this context Izutsu states that it is the 'man of two eyes' who truly grasps the interplay of existence. He notes:

He is a man who, with his right eye, sees Unity, i.e. absolute Reality, and nothing but Unity, while with his left eye he sees Multiplicity, i.e. the world of phenomenal things. What is more important about this type of man is that, in addition to his simultaneous vision of Unity and Multiplicity, he knows that these two are ultimately one and the same thing.⁴³²

Mystic perception in reading the *Īqāz*

How can we operationalize such perception when it comes to reading mystic texts such as the *Īqāz*? Unsurprisingly, Izutsu being a philosopher of language in addition to his being a teacher of mysticism proposes a systematic use of semantic theory consistent with this mystic vision. Izutsu's methodology of semantic analysis focuses on the semantic network of relationships between words and linguistic expressions and is dependent on the concept of semantic fields. Izutsu advocated that by systematically employing semantics towards revealing the underlying substructure of a text, linguistic structures called semantic fields emerge, which he defined as a "whole body of words arranged in a meaningful pattern representing a system of concepts ordered and structured in accordance with a principle of conceptual organization."⁴³³

⁴³¹ Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 48.

⁴³² Toshihiko Izutsu, "The Basic Structure of Metaphysical Thinking in Islam," in *Creation and the Timeless Order of Things* (Ashland: White Cloud Press, 1994), 11-14.

⁴³³ Izutsu, *God and Man* 20.

These fields emerge because Izutsu regarded texts to be "a large multi-strata system standing on a number of basic conceptual oppositions."⁴³⁴ To him the world of text mirrors the Sufi concept of theophanic manifestation in creation, existing within an "atmosphere of strain and tension"⁴³⁵ through which a "drama always occurs only where there is dynamic opposition between the principal actors."⁴³⁶ He states that this "system of oppositions"⁴³⁷ is formed by "two poles that stand facing each other"⁴³⁸ wherein each "pole is indicated, semantically, by what is called a 'focus-word'."⁴³⁹ Izutsu's method is to conjoin between these opposite poles of words in the manner of the mystic vision of seeing with 'two eyes' wherein the goal is to locate the field which holds these poles in much the same way a magnetic field is built of opposing polarities. He states that the relationship in such fields is thus "neither simple nor unilateral; it is a multiple and bilateral, that is, reciprocal relationship."⁴⁴⁰ Notably the prisms through which such fields can be analyzed also vary, as Izutsu lists the analytic categories of ontological, conceptual, ethical and communicative (lexical) as being different categories for thematic analysis, each revealing different contrasts and therefore different aspects of the tension that exists between the polarities.⁴⁴¹ It is in the eventual constructing of these fields that Izutsu's methodology aims to elaborate on the overall conceptual structure of a text, for it is intended that in their construction certain semantic fields shall appear to be "axial" around which other semantic fields revolve, alluding therein to the highest 'focus-word' or the theme which reigns over or exerts the deepest influence over the entire semantic structure of the text (the totality of the semantic fields).

In following Izutsu's method of analysis, we have not only an effective methodology of hermeneutically analysing mystical texts, but also a method that adheres faithfully to the same mystical vision outlined by Ibn 'Ajībah. This is because his system of constructing

⁴³⁴ Izutsu, *God and Man*, 75.

⁴³⁵ Izutsu, *God and Man*, 75.

⁴³⁶ Izutsu, *God and Man*, 75.

⁴³⁷ Izutsu, *God and Man*, 75.

⁴³⁸ Izutsu, *God and Man*, 75.

⁴³⁹ Izutsu, *God and Man*, 75.

⁴⁴⁰ Izutsu, *God and Man*, 77.

⁴⁴¹ Izutsu, *God and Man*, 77 – 78.

semantic fields built on an opposition between words or phrases concurs with Ibn ‘Ajībah’s metaphysical view of the cosmos itself disclosing meaning built on the conjoining of opposites. So, our hermeneutic methodology of analysis would be to identify fields of relational meaning (Izutsu's semantic fields) within the *Īqāz* by delineating certain 'focus-words' which act as the conceptual centers or opposites for the related field of discussion. Also in keeping with Izutsu I have chosen to analyse these fields through different perspectival prisms of analytic categories of teleology, ontology, soteriology and epistemology. We have already discussed in our introduction how the choice of these categories collectively cover the seminal notion of the "origin and the return" (*al-mabda’ wa al-ma’ād*), being a comprehensive way of understanding *sulūk* or spiritual wayfaring.

The use of distinct analytical categories in this thesis is also supported by the methodology advocated by Professor Alan Godlas termed 'religiological analysis'. Religiological analysis has been defined as an attempt to provide a coherent, systematic, and relatively objective method for analysing metaphysical systems attributed to spiritual figures or religions. Suleyman Eris states how in this methodology Godlas puts forward six questions which he reduces to six key analytical categories: epistemology, ontology, anthropology, psychology, teleology, and methodology.⁴⁴² Notably, three of these categories (epistemology, ontology and teleology) are covered in this thesis, and my additional category of soteriology, which Godlas does not use, is actually used as a complement to the dimension of ontology. In this sense the categories I am using are entirely consistent with the key ones proposed by Alan Godlas and complements other academic research already done using his methodology in such categories.⁴⁴³ Whilst it is acknowledged that Ibn ‘Ajībah did not utilize analytical categories such as ontology, epistemology, etc., by parsing topics into these categories we can better demonstrate our thematic analysis for an academic audience within the west. We have already mentioned how such an approach is common in modern academia and has been similarly previously used with various Sufi

⁴⁴² Suleyman Eris, “A *Religiological Comparison of the Sufi Thought of Said Nuris and Fethullah Gulen*”, (MA diss, University of Georgia, 2006), 1.

⁴⁴³ Eris, “*Religiological Comparison.*”

figures, like Mullā Ṣadrā,⁴⁴⁴ Ibn al-‘Arabī⁴⁴⁵ and Ibn ‘Aṭā’ illah al-Iskandarī.⁴⁴⁶ This would be the first time such an approach has been done for the writings of Ibn ‘Ajībāh, making this thesis a noteworthy contribution to such research and literature.

In summary, my methodology for thematic analysis builds and implements research carried out by the likes of Izutsu, Scattolini and Godlas. The conclusion of my analysis would be to identify the highest 'focus-word' or focus-phrase' being the most representative semantic field governing the entirety of the semantic structure of the text. The following chapter commences our analysis of this structure by applying some of the hermeneutical principles and metaphysics of the *Hikmah* tradition we have covered in the last two chapters.

⁴⁴⁴ Rustom, *Triumph of Mercy*.

⁴⁴⁵ Chittick, *The Sufi Path*.

⁴⁴⁶ Cook, *Ibn ‘Ata’ Allah*.

Chapter 5: The Structure of the *Īqāz*

Concerning the aphorisms listed within the *Īqāz*, their original author did not adopt a numbering format and accordingly the earliest manuals did not have enumeration, relying instead on demarcating phrases (indicating a jump in aphorism) or as in the case of some of the earliest manuscript commentaries, using different colours (indicating a new aphorism).⁴⁴⁷ Additionally, the earliest commentaries did not even have chapters and instead the phrase *wa qāla raḍiya llāhu 'anhu* (“And he said, may God be pleased with him!”) was understood by later commentators such as Aḥmad Zarrūq to be the result of different dictating sessions of the aphorisms indicating a different theme or “particular coloration of thought.”⁴⁴⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah’s *Īqāz* follows Aḥmad Zarrūq’s classification of chapters but like Zarrūq he does not number the aphorisms. For this reason, for ease of referencing we have adopted the numbering used by Victor Danner in his translation, who considered there to be 262 Aphorisms (in 25 Chapters),⁴⁴⁹ four Epistles and a concluding Colloquy consisting of 34 intimate pleas to the divine, each beginning with the vocative phrase 'My Lord' (*Ilāhī*). This is the numbering layout we will adhere to in our discussion of the structure of the *Īqāz*.

As mentioned, thematically, the chapters grouping the aphorisms mark the dominance of a particular pattern of thought consistent between them, spelling out new departures and remaining more or less evenly spaced amongst the 262 aphorisms. Some recent publications have sought to identify what these themes are by giving each chapter unofficial chapter headings interspersed by the relevant editors. This is usually demarcated as separate text to Ibn ‘Ajībah. For example, the 2005 *Dār al-khayr* publication of the *Īqāz* which was edited by Dr. Mājid ‘Arasān al-Kaylānī and is the version we reference in this

⁴⁴⁷ See the commentary of Ibn ‘Abbad ar-Rundī (d.792/1390) who as one the earliest commentators of the *Hikam* mentions that he demarcates the aphorisms by using the red colour.

⁴⁴⁸ Danner, *Sūfi Aphorisms*, 19.

⁴⁴⁹ Danner notes that some commentators such as ‘Abd al-Majīd ash-Sharnūbī (d. 1348/1929) counted some 264 aphorisms; but did not list them as such in his commentary. The fact is that given the original *Hikam* were not numbered, scholars and translators differ concerning their numbering. See: Danner, *Sūfi Aphorisms*, 20.

thesis, lists their chapter headings in red, indicating it is not part of the original text. Whilst Kaylānī's headings are beneficial and provide a useful departure point for my own analysis they do not follow Izutsu's methodology of semantic analysis which I believe to be more holistic and so I do not rely on them except in an incidental manner. Illustratively, in most instances Kaylānī's headings are limited in that they are simply reflective of the first aphorism of the relevant chapter.

Whilst the aphorisms themselves are found to be repetitive in content, my analysis reveals that the repetition of themes serves a purpose and does not imply there is no change in trajectory. Instead, akin to a whirlpool of meanings, each current revisits a similar terrain, but does so at a higher intensity and closer frequency to the overall goal of the trajectory. When looking at the 262 aphorisms divided into 25 Chapters, Chapters 1 and 2 particularly stand out in delineating this trajectory. This is because at the end of Chapter 1, Ibn 'Ajībah explicitly says that Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh has opened the door and introduced the reader into the Divine presence and removed the delusion of there being a veil from God.⁴⁵⁰ He then states that the ensuing Chapter 2 is a summary of the propriety (*ādāb*) required to abide within that presence. In this manner it appears Ibn 'Ajībah is alluding to Chapter 1 as detailing the journey towards *fanā'* or the annihilation of oneself in God's presence, and of Chapter 2 being its complementary 'return' leg of *baqā'* detailing the way to subsist in that presence. As we have referred to in our thesis chapter on the *Hikmah* tradition with the Shādhilīyyah, Ibn 'Ajībah understands *fanā'* and *baqā'* to embody the totality of the spiritual path. Thus, it appears that Ibn 'Ajībah is effectively covering, albeit in a concise format as a preface to the rest of the *Īqāz*, the spiritual journey in its entirety in Chapters 1 and 2. The remaining Chapters from 3 to 25 may then be seen to delineate and discuss more specific aspects of this trajectory and further elucidate on aspects of the propriety (*ādāb*) required to abide with the divine presence. This is evident in reviewing their contents, for the remaining chapters of the aphorisms within the *Īqāz* revisit key themes already discussed within the first two chapters, such as the non-existence of a veil to God,⁴⁵¹ orientation (*tawajjuh*),⁴⁵²

⁴⁵⁰ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 64.

⁴⁵¹ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 84 – 90 (Chapter 3).

⁴⁵² Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 91 – 96 (Chapter 4).

spiritual detachment (*zuhd*),⁴⁵³ gratitude (*shukr*),⁴⁵⁴ submission (*taslīm*),⁴⁵⁵ commitment (*iltizām*),⁴⁵⁶ dealing with suffering and detailing the impediments such as caprice that sustain the ego.⁴⁵⁷ The focus of the chapters towards the end of the *Īqāz* seem to focus more on exalted spiritual states such as perpetual bliss (chapter 23), and the attainment of true humility which is defined as freedom from the ego (chapter 24), and a call to constancy in contemplation of the divine presence (chapter 25).⁴⁵⁸ A more detailed discussion of the contents of the chapters with their page numbers referenced can be gleaned from the table below. The table consists of a column summarising each chapter of aphorisms wherein I have relied on and paraphrased Ibn ‘Ajībāh’s own summaries at the end of each chapter. The column listing the key themes in each chapter was derived from these summaries alongside being based on the aphorisms within the chapters themselves. The final column lists the number of aphorisms in each chapter alongside their relevant page numbers within the *Īqāz*.

Table 4. Summaries and key themes of the chapters of aphorisms in the *Īqāz*

Chapter No.	Chapter Summary	Key Themes in each Chapter	No. of Aphorisms and Page Nos.
1.	This chapter implies the journey towards <i>fanā’</i> or the annihilation of oneself in God’s presence. It does so by ensuring that intent, action resolve and reliance is orientated towards God alone.	Works, Grace, Spiritual impediment, Control orientated planning (<i>tadbīr</i>), Contentment with God, Importance of Seclusion, Contemplation of God, and the impossibility of a Veil from God.	16 Aphorisms [1-16] [pp.19-64]

⁴⁵³ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 97 – 105 (Chapter 5).

⁴⁵⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 172 – 192 (Chapter 10).

⁴⁵⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 193 – 200 (Chapter 11).

⁴⁵⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 201 – 222 (Chapter 12).

⁴⁵⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, Chapters 15 (252-259), 16 (260-268), 20 (299-316) and 21 (317-330).

⁴⁵⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, Chapters 23 (341-354), and 25 (377-406).

2.	This chapter details the journey in <i>baqā'</i> detailing the propriety required to subsist in the Divine presence. It discusses the eight manners tasked of the gnostic to ensure they abide in the Divine presence and the four signs they should embody therein.	Manners of the gnostic, Signs of the gnostic, Ignorance vs. True knowledge, Utilising time, Submission to God, Contentment with the Divine decree, Conscious attention to God's creation, Witnessing of God]	15 Aphorisms [17-31] [pp.65-83]
3.	This chapter focusses on how to engage in the removal of the maladies of the ego (<i>takhliyah</i>) as well as the taking of its remedies (<i>taḥliyah</i>). It details how self-satisfaction with the ego serves as the ultimate veil from witnessing God.	Removal of Vices of Ego, Taking of Spiritual Remedies, Ego, Ignorance, Veil from God, Intellect, and True knowledge vs. Fake knowledge.	6 Aphorisms [32-37] [pp.84-90]
4.	This chapter highlights the importance of orientation towards God with sincere intent. It stresses the need for high aspiration stating it is the provision for the spiritual journey.	Nature of Attachment, Sincere Orientation, The Etiquette of Supplication, Having a good opinion of God, and Fleeing/Emigrating to God from created things.	5 Aphorisms [38-42] [pp.91-96]
5.	This chapter discusses the need for the aspirant to be wary of that which blocks them from God such as ephemeral attachments and lusts, worldly ambition, bad company and a lack of Remembrance of God.	Good Company vs. Bad Company, Actions, States, Attachments, Detachment, Renunciation, and Remembrance of God.	5 Aphorisms [43 – 47] [pp.97-105]
6.	This chapter discusses the need for reforming of the hearts with a discussion of signs of its death, illness and health. It indicates the signs of acceptance from God and the indicators of His disapproval, highlighting the importance of spiritual light.	Reforming the heart, Signs of the death and life of the heart, Fear and Hope, Spiritual experiences, Light, Darkness, and Joy in Piety.	12 Aphorisms [48 – 59] [pp.106-117]

7.	The chapter discusses the necessary conditions of drawing near to God until one attains Gnosis. It highlights the false nature of insatiable desire and the delusion of the Ego.	Nature of desire, Insatiable desire, Ephemerality, Nature of aspirants, Importance of Litanies, Goodly service, Gratitude for blessings, Love and Gnosis.	9 Aphorisms [60-68] [pp.118-139]
8.	The chapter discusses the signs and evidence of God's Divine concern for the aspirant. It discusses the nature of spiritual experiences and inspiration. The sign that such experiences are genuine gifts from the Divine is when they are concealed and used to further busy the aspirant with devotion of God, not being used for ephemeral, worldly ambitions.	Spiritual experiences and inspiration, Manners with spiritual gifts, Sincerity in works, and Knowing one's true worth with God.	6 Aphorisms [69-74] [pp.139-147]
9.	This chapter discusses the signs of perfection of the gnostic in giving preference to God's requirements over their own. It illustrates how they should prefer God in their seeking, their states of expansion and contraction, and in their being prevented from or given to by God.	Desire, Seeking God, Signs of delusion, Signs of true hope in God, Expansion, Contraction, Prevented from God, and Gifts from God.	14 Aphorisms [75 – 88] [pp.148-171]
10.	This chapter mentions how the doing of good deeds itself is sufficient as a gift from God. Aspirants should find solace in God's acceptance of their being able to perform such deeds and His drawing near to them thereby, not through beholding their own service. The fruits of this constant	The Reward of Good deeds, Recompense with God, Deprivation, Essential indigence, Desperation with God, Etiquette of supplication, and Illumination	16 Aphorisms [89-104] [pp.172-192]

	seeing of God's benevolence allows for an attainment of an illuminated heart full of gratitude to God.		
11.	This chapter discusses the need for complete submission to God's decrees of fate and a commitment to oppose the nature of caprice in the heart.	Trials and Affliction, Accepting fate, Caprice, Lust, Submission, Resignation, and Liberation.	7 Aphorisms. [105-111] [pp.193-200]
12.	This chapter highlights the need for the aspirant to honour their litanies and to diligently strive to purify themselves through reflection, ritual prayer and goodly deeds. This is because Divine Aid only arrives commensurate to readiness acquired through such means.	Importance of Litanies, Inspiration, Spiritual sustenance, Receptivity, Heedlessness vs. Intelligence, Ritual Prayer, Establishing Prayer, Recompense, Divine Grace, Sincerity, and Beneficence.	13 Aphorisms. [112-130] [pp.201-222]
13.	This chapter highlights the need for the aspirant to realize their own innate slavehood to God as that is what enables them to be attached to His attributes of Lordship. This entails the imperative to reform the bad habits of the ego and to inculcate virtuous conduct in oneself.	Attributes of slavehood, Attributes of Lordship, Laws of nature, Miracles, Virtuous conduct, Arrival unto God.	6 Aphorisms. [125 – 130] [pp.223-232]
14.	This chapter gathers aspirants upon the love of God, by mentioning His favours, gifts and His gentleness even in His veiling.	Forbearance, Veil in disobedience, Veiling from disobedience, True companionship, Light of certitude, Contemplating creation, and the Manifestation of God.	11 Aphorisms [131-141] [pp.233-251]
15.	This chapter is a summary of the proper propriety of the aspirant in praise and blame.	Propriety in Praise, Propriety in Blame, Ignorance vs. Certainty, Ascetics vs. Gnostics, and Expansion vs. Contraction.	6 Aphorisms. [142 – 147]

	The central principle being that the ego is always deserving of vilification so the aspirant should not attach importance to praise people give them.		[pp.252-259]
16.	This chapter focuses on the manners of wayfaring in the difficulties of constriction and the elation of expansion. It advocates an equanimity borne of witnessing God's attributes wherein the soul does not despair through the occasioning of troubles nor delight in the arrival of spiritual lights.	Despair, Sin, Righteousness, Sadness, Hope, Hearts, Alterities, Opaqueness, and Veil of Lights.	8 Aphorisms [148-155] [pp.260-268]
17.	This chapter discusses the issue of guidance and highlights that the unveiling of the metaphysical world is a trial for the aspirant if not accompanied by an embodied mercy for creation. The general pattern is that one learns such conduct through emulation, by being guided to and being in the company of the saints (<i>awliyā</i>).	Unseen realm, Embodied mercy, Egoic spirituality vs. True spirituality, Sincerity, Spiritual companionship, Saints of God, Contentment with God, Contemplation, and Veil as Proximity.	10 Aphorisms [156-165] [pp.269-282]
18.	This chapter deals with the etiquette of asking for and seeking provision, stating that it should be through a desire to manifest one's slavehood and not a desire to be given. The aspirant should recognise that their spiritual destiny was already apportioned, as everything derives its source from God's Will and returns back to Him in the end. This does not preclude the need to	Works vs. Grace, Asking of God, Seeking provision, Secret of Providence, and Divine Will.	6 Aphorisms [166-171] [pp.283-291]

	strive and works, for that too is under God's decree.		
19.	This chapter discusses the manners tasked of gnostics with regards to supplication in times of difficulty. Instead of resorting to outward supplication, gnostics make true their attributes of sincerity and neediness such that they be supported by God's attributes of generosity. Such spiritual aid is deemed to be the true spiritual miracle, unlike miraculous events of the physical world.	Good manners, Sufficiency in God, Gifts from God, Attributes of slavehood, Attributes of Lordship, Divine Aid, and True Miracles.	7 Aphorisms [172 - 178] [pp.292- 298]
20.	This chapter builds on the idea that True Miracles are remaining firm upon worship and beholding the light of Lordship. If this firmness is true in the saints, they flow with wisdom and are honoured by being given permission to speak and call unto God. The chapter then touches upon the conditions and nature of such true spiritual discourse.	True Miracles, Divine permission to speak, Spiritual states vs. Spiritual stations, Lights of sages, and Spiritual discourse.	13 Aphorisms [179- 191] [pp.299- 316]
21.	This chapter focuses on the nature of caprice, its source, what increases it and its cure. Once hearts are freed from caprice through either unsettling fear or restless desire of God, they become receptive to God's light. There are some hearts where the light can penetrate to its very core, and others where it is blocked at its outward, for spiritual	Opposing the Ego, Hope in God, Divine Omnipotence, Divine Rigor, Divine Beauty, Caprice in the heart, and Removing caprice.	12 Aphorisms [192- 203] [pp.317- 330]

	illuminations are dependent on receptivity.		
22.	This chapter further builds on how spiritual illuminations are contingent on the readiness and receptivity of their intended hearts. So, the aspirant should take themselves to account on their lack of receptivity and not the supposed lack of bestowal. For no aspirant is made distant from God except through His justice and no-one arrives at God's presence except through His grace.	Lights of the heart, Created forms, Emptying heart of Alterities, Importance of Time, Obligations of the moment, and True slavehood.	9 Aphorisms [204-212] [pp.331-340]
23.	This chapter highlights how to arrive unto God is arriving at His Knowledge. It mentions that closeness to God is the witnessing of His closeness unto one (through witnessing one's non-existence alongside His perpetual existence).	Arrival unto God, Closeness to God, Inner Illumination, Hope in God, Spiritual States vs. Spiritual Stations, Divine Presence, Spiritual Inspiration.	10 Aphorisms [213-222] [pp. 341-354]
24.	This chapter discusses how all bliss is connected to witnessing the closeness of God and all suffering is from the distress of being veiled from Him. It focusses on what the four impediments are to the ultimate goal of witnessing God. The removal of these impediments leads to true humility which arises from knowing God in everything.	Nature of suffering, Nature of bliss, Nature of the ephemeral world, Bitter taste of the world, True knowledge, Sufficiency in God, Perpetual Bliss, Witnessing God, True humility, and Knowing God.	15 Aphorisms [223-237] [pp.355-376]
25.	This chapter discusses how the removal of impediments to witnessing God results in a true humility. Such humility is	True humility, True love, Human Being as Microcosm, Cosmos as Macrocosm, Humanity as a medium between Corporeal and Spiritual,	27 Aphorisms [238-262]

	referred to as true because it is founded on true love and is the witnessing of the Divine in all of creation. Having no ego to behold, there is nothing to ascribe to oneself, including humility itself. For this reason such witnessing is the highest form of contemplation, it is the seeing of all Creation as being through God, being from God and to God (this is a reference to <i>baqā`</i>).	Wayfaring vs. Being pulled out (<i>jadhb</i>), True Remembrance of God, True Contemplation, Witnessing God, Knowing God, and Returning in God.	[pp.377-407]
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Following the section on the aphorisms, there are the two remaining parts of the *Īqāz* which are the four epistles (*rasā`il*) and the concluding colloquy (*munājāt*). Whilst at first glance, a non-discerning reader may feel that these two parts are supplementary additions to the essential substance of the *Īqāz* serving as addendums to the main text, this impression is soon negated on closer reading. Instead, as Danner notes, the *rasā`il* and the *munājāt* form an organic part of the whole as “a welcome interlude between the concise structure of the aphorisms and the equally brief supplications that end the work... [for] after the long series of aphorisms calling for maximum concentration of mind, the tension is broken by an expansive treatise that relaxes the mind.”⁴⁵⁹ My own reading supports this observation, with the additional note that along with this welcome change in intensity, it does appear that Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s intention to use different formats to convey the same message. The use of variegated means of discourse as a tool of reinforcement was already an established pedagogical technique in Sufi circles in Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s time. So, his fluctuating between the formats of aphorisms, epistles and colloquy, appears to be buttressed by the intention of increasing the efficacy by which his message is delivered. This becomes apparent on further analysis of the different formats.

⁴⁵⁹ Danner, *Sūfi Aphorisms*, 20.

With the epistles, as with the aphorisms, there is a continuance of the pedagogical technique of learning via repetition, but in it there is now a variegation in the format of the message itself, being a letter or epistle instead of an aphorism. Letters are more expansive than pithy aphorisms, and meanings can be described more explicitly in terms of their exposition, which is perhaps why Ibn ‘Ajībah describes the first epistle as being about “the exposition of *sulūk*, its beginning and its ending.”⁴⁶⁰ He later states in his conclusion to this particular epistle that: “The summary [of this epistle] is that it exposts spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*) from the beginning to the end, and so suffices for those of realised hearts (*lubb*) in having to consult the entirety [the rest] of the book.”⁴⁶¹ In this manner Ibn ‘Ajībah seems to be introducing a motif he has used elsewhere in the *Īqāz*, that of the microcosm in contrast to the macrocosm, wherein in this case the first epistle serves as a concise summary (microcosm) of the entire *sulūk* dimension of the *Īqāz* (macrocosm). We should note that this dimension primarily focuses around the leg of *fanā*’ being the annihilation of oneself in God’s presence, and its complementary ‘return’ leg of *baqā*’ detailing the way to subsist in that presence. If we take this basic dichotomy of *sulūk*, then it appears as if the first epistle is primarily concerned with *fanā*’ as Ibn ‘Ajībah concludes his commentary on it by referencing the *fanā*’ of corporeality.⁴⁶² He then refers to *baqā*’ as being the ‘open space of witnessing the Divine’ akin to being ‘born again’.⁴⁶³ This reference to *baqā*’ appears to serve as a prelude to the other letters.

The second epistle picks up on this reference to *baqā*’ and appears to be more concerned with the propriety required to maintain this presence, which it translates as being an adherence to the *sharī‘ah*. For this reason, the second epistle looks at the issue of conjoining the *sharī‘ah* with the *ḥaqīqah* and in describing it, Ibn ‘Ajībah states:

This treatise is an exposition of arriving unto the ‘Ocean of Ultimate Reality (*baḥr al-ḥaqīqah*)’ whilst honouring the sanctity of the *sharī‘ah*, including both ends of its extremes (*ṭarafān*, indicating those who reject the *sharī‘ah*) and its mean (i.e.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 421.

⁴⁶¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 420.

⁴⁶² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 419.

⁴⁶³ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 419.

encompassing the entirety of the *sharī'ah*). For there are people who neglect it [the *sharī'ah*] and there are people who are made to neglect it [through being overcome by *ḥaqīqah*] and then there are the people who adopt the mean and join between both [the *ḥaqīqah* and *sharī'ah*].⁴⁶⁴

The second epistle then ends by highlighting the paradigm of gratitude (*shukr*), which it equates to dealing with means (*asbāb*), being the wisdom (*ḥikmah*) behind the *sharī'ah*.⁴⁶⁵ In this regard Ibn 'Ajībah explicitly refers to the *sharī'ah* as being the 'affirming of the means of causality' (*ithbāt al-ḥikmah*).⁴⁶⁶ In ending this epistle Ibn 'Ajībah states something revealing, for he says: "This is the last of the treatise that he [Ibn 'Aṭā'illah] wrote to some of his brethren and it is of the highest level of precision and perfection. For if there was nothing in this book except this epistle and the one that came before, then it would be sufficient".⁴⁶⁷ Here Ibn 'Ajībah's reference to the first two epistles is telling in that collectively just as the *fanā'* and *baqā'* dynamic summarizes the spiritual path, then these two epistles, the first being *fanā'* and the second being *baqā'* appear to do the same.

The remaining epistles seem to be answers to specific overarching questions and themes raised by the book as a whole, or to continue our theme, responses and delineations to specific aspects of *baqā'*. They are given in the style of a dialogue in response to questions posed by disciples, they assume a prior familiarity not just with the themes and content of the aphorisms, but with popular Islamic knowledge, being rich in quotations from the Qur'an, Prophetic reports (*Hadīth*), Sufi saints and poetry. It is this inter and intra-textual union amidst a setting of broader tradition that can be partly attributed to the universal appeal the *Ḥikam* and the *Īqāz* has had, for in a broader sense they serve as a vehicle for demonstrating the spiritual wholeness and intellectual coherence of a particular school of Islamic scholastic tradition of which Ibn 'Ajībah was a major inheritor and proponent.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 421.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 427.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 421.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 427.

The third epistle discusses the issue of prayer, with Ibn ‘Ajībah highlighting that the prayer of the gnostic is different to those of the heedless. He focuses on the Prophet’s description of his prayer as being the ‘Coolness of his eyes’ (*qurrat al-‘ayn*) and implies that the gnostics have an inherited portion of such ‘coolness’ which he states is a metaphor for intense bliss.⁴⁶⁸ The contention here is that the true gnostic can measure his degree of gnosis by the very real gauge of the degree of bliss he feels in prayer. In this manner Ibn ‘Ajībah is not positing *ma‘rifah* (knowledge of God) as an abstract concept but one that finds its expression and presence in the everyday ritualistic aspects of worship a Muslim is tasked to do.

Consistent with this theme is the fourth epistle, which then extends this sense of presence and focuses in on the felt sense of gratitude which was briefly alluded to at the end of the second epistle. Ibn ‘Ajībah describes the fourth epistle as being about rejoicing in the blessings of God through rejoicing in God for he posits that true gratitude entails a beholding of the One giving the blessing not to focus on the blessing itself.⁴⁶⁹ In this manner Ibn ‘Ajībah illustrates how the realisation of one’s perpetual dependency to God is cause for bliss and how the spiritual path culminates in this sense of bliss borne by the witnessing God’s perpetual creative fiat.

In contrast to the aphorisms and the epistles, the last part of the *Īqāz*, the colloquy (the *munājāt*), appears to be a conclusion of sorts. The use of a medium of colloquy is also instructive in that the onus then shifts onto the reader to develop their own personal relationship with God. Representing an intimate conversation with God, it poses a series of paradoxical questions of Divinity in the form of supplications. In keeping with the *Īqāz* as a whole, it is as if a crescendo of meanings have built up within the reader, resulting in series of heartfelt pleas, which are in themselves permeated by the themes of complete neediness and dependency of the servant (*‘abd*) with that of the absolute sovereignty of the Lord (*Rabb*). The implication is that the paradoxical exclamations seemingly deepen an already acquired contemplative state that has learnt to bridge and resolve this paradox.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 427.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 435.

Thus, in keeping with the contemplative nature of the text, this as Danner notes, provides a ‘fitting end’ wherein “the *munājāt* depict the state of the soul that has found its Center and is receptively open to Heaven and now on intimate terms with its Creator.”⁴⁷⁰ Demonstrating thereby that the “contemplative has at last found the eye of the storm in the central axis of his being and is now in a state of peace and serenity: [wherein] the questions and paradoxical exclamations... are really for the sake of others, not for himself.”⁴⁷¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah stipulates that the best time to employ such a colloquy is in the hours just before dawn or after the dawn (*ṣubḥ*) prayer, in that there lies therein a great secret for these two times have an expansive element beyond the norm.⁴⁷²

Ibn ‘Ajībah himself says that the colloquy consisting of 34 divine pleas each beginning with the vocative 'My Lord' (*Ilāhī*) is to be divided into two parts, a part that requires the abstention of other than God through exposure to the good and the preparation for His presence; and a part that requires witnessing His Reality and the correct propriety (*adab*) with that state.⁴⁷³ Whilst he does not delineate these two parts formally, a distinct shift occurs after the first 20 pleas and the pleas from 21 onwards till plea 34. The first part, being the first 20 pleas, all imply a type of dissociation, whether it be from one's own sense of independence, knowledge, strength, sense of virtue, decisions, etc. Ibn ‘Ajībah describes the arrival unto this point as being the 'culmination of love' (*nihāyat al-maḥabbah*) which he refers to as being the annihilation in one's beloved (*fanā ‘ fī al-maḥbūb*). Plea number 21 shifts that orientation in that it highlights the sense of a 'return', its translation is:

My Lord: You have commanded me to return to created traces; so return me to them with the raiment of lights and the guidance of inner vision (*al-istibṣār*), this so that I may return to You through them just as I entered upon You through them. May my secret (*al-sirr*) be protected from looking unto them and may my spiritual

⁴⁷⁰ Danner, *Sūfi Aphorisms*, 20.

⁴⁷¹ Danner, *Sūfi Aphorisms*, 20.

⁴⁷² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 439.

⁴⁷³ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 439.

ambition (*al-himmah*) be raised above being dependent on them. For, truly, You have capability over everything.⁴⁷⁴

The plea above indicates a return to creation after a certain illumination wherein now the servant is seeing creation through God and not the other way round, so within such a state the created traces do not veil from the witnessing of their creator. Ibn 'Ajībah describes this phase as being subsisting in God (*al-baqā'*).

The Microcosm and the Macrocosm

Analysing the aphorisms, epistles and colloquy, a common theme can be gleaned. They all seem to indicate a twofold journey of spiritual wayfaring, the first being a journey to the Divine presence (*al-sulūk ilā Allah*), and the second being a journey in that presence (*al-sulūk fī Allah*). In these two legs the first leg is considered to be the journey unto God in the form of *fanā'* which seen as the annihilation of one's sense of independent selfhood in God's presence. The second leg then becomes the 'return' leg of *baqā'* wherein one's selfhood becomes reaffirmed, but this time with the constancy of seeing oneself being subsisted by God, not as an individuated, separate entity amongst other seemingly separate entities. We have already mentioned how in its summation, *fanā'* and *baqā'* embody the totality of the spiritual path for the wayfarer and these two legs collectively were seen to represent the *Hikmah* tradition. Beyond this summative spiritual *fanā'* and *baqā'* dichotomy, the extra details contained with the *Īqāz* seem to pertain towards detailing the propriety required to subsist and navigate along either trajectory presence, i.e. how to traverse unto *fanā'* and how to abide in *baqā'*. From this perspective the spiritual journey seems to be repeated in much the same way across the different formats of the aphorisms, epistles and colloquy.

Concerning the aphorisms, the first chapter details the journey unto *fanā'* and the second chapter illustrates the journey in *baqā'*. Chapters 3 to 25 then detail select aspects required to abide in *baqā'* as already introduced in the previous chapter, but which are now being introduced from the perspective of higher trajectories within *baqā'*. Concerning the

⁴⁷⁴ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 468.

epistles, the first epistle details the journey unto *fanā*’, and whilst the second epistle speaks about the conjoining of *sharī’ah* with *ḥaqīqah*, this is really an allusion to the dimension of *baqā*’ since Ibn ‘Ajībah understands this to be the conjoining between the absoluteness of the Divine presence (*ḥaqīqah*) with contingent means that have a causality (*sharī’ah*). He explicitly refers to the *sharī’ah* as being the "affirming of the means of causality" (*ithbāt al-ḥikmah*).⁴⁷⁵ In this regard the second epistle is a call unto interacting with causality whilst being immersed in the Divine presence, namely, *baqā*’. The remainder of the epistles, the third and the fourth, then become the detailing of select aspects of such *baqā*’. This includes the inculcation of bliss into ritual worship (Epistle 3) and the inculcation of gratitude for being existentiated and for existence itself (Epistle 4). With regards to the colloquy the bifurcation into the dichotomy of *fanā*’ and *baqā*’ happens approximately midway through the 35 intimate pleas, with pleas up to the 20th plea being the leg of *fanā*’ and everything after the 21st plea signifying the return or *baqā*’ leg.

Given this broad overview we can now enter into more detailed analysis of the *Īqāz* and its various sections. The first thing to note which will aid us in our analysis is that the overview we have just provided supports our contention that the use of different modes of discourse as aphorisms, epistles and colloquy was primarily to convey the same message in variegated formats. This is because the sections on aphorisms, epistles and colloquy all convey the same *fanā*’ and *baqā*’ dual leg of spiritual wayfaring. The only difference is the level of detail and focus on specific aspects of these legs. As discussed this is a pedagogical technique that Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh the original author of the *Ḥikmah* uses, which Ibn ‘Ajībah builds upon in his commentary.

What is also apparent in these varying sections and formats is the use of the motif of a microcosm coupled against a macrocosm. This is a common motif within Sufism, we have already traced the historical basis of this motif within the *Ḥikmah* tradition of which Ibn ‘Ajībah was a key exponent. He explicitly states his own subscription in the context of seeing the human being as being a microcosm unto the macrocosmic universe, for he states within the *Īqāz* that: “The universe is nothing but a large man, and you [man] are like it,

⁴⁷⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz al-Himam*, 421.

[but] smaller.”⁴⁷⁶ In this quote Ibn ‘Ajībāh refers to human beings as a microcosmic universe (*nuskhat al-‘ālam*), or a small universe (*kawnun saghirun*). He later reverses the order stating that those exceptional human beings whose spirituality triumphs over their humanity are actually the larger universe (*al-‘ālam al-akbar*), wherein it is the physical universe itself which is a microcosm of them (*nuskhatun minhu*).⁴⁷⁷

So, my understanding is that the *Īqāz* in its elaboration of the *fanā’* and *baqā’* dual leg of spiritual wayfaring uses this motif in the first two chapters of the section of aphorisms, wherein the first two chapters are the microcosm and the rest of the aphorisms are the macrocosm. This pattern is then repeated in the section of the epistles, wherein the first two epistles are the microcosm and collectively the four epistles are the macrocosm. With regards to the colloquy, given it details the legs of *fanā’* and *baqā’*, its entirety could be said to be a microcosm to the rest of the *Īqāz*. Within this perspective the meanings that we see within the first two chapters of the aphorisms, the first two epistles and the colloquy should be broadly the same, in that they are each the microcosmic form to the rest of the *Īqāz*. Whilst this point may be deemed speculative, my position is supported by textual analysis, for in an explicit sense Ibn ‘Ajībāh himself states this when he indicates that reading the first two epistles suffices one from reading the rest of the *Īqāz*. This he does in his conclusion to his commentary on the second epistle when he states: “If there were not in this book nothing except this epistle, alongside the epistle that came before [*risālatun fi al-sulūk*, being epistle 1], then that would have been sufficient (*kāfiyah*).”⁴⁷⁸

What does it mean for a portion of the *Īqāz* to be a microcosm to the rest? It means that this section provides a synopsis of the entire spiritual journey, effectively acting as a summary or a detailed ‘contents page’ for the rest of the *Īqāz*. We have already seen Ibn ‘Ajībāh explicitly state this about the first two epistles. Whilst he does not state this as explicitly concerning the first two chapters of the aphorisms, a review of its thematic contents supports this argument, with the following section detailing this thematic analysis.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz al-Himam*, 390.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 390.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 427.

Chapter 1 of the Aphorisms – Delineating the stage of *Fanā*'

This section discusses our textual analysis of the first two chapters of the aphorisms within the *Īqāz*. A review of the thematic patterns in the first chapter which consists of 16 aphorisms (*ḥikam*) illustrates it dealing with works (*'amal*), being those works that are found across the spectrum of the traditional threefold division of *islām*, *īmān* and *iḥsān*. Ibn 'Ajībah's summary of Chapter 1 towards its end illustrates the role of the correct propriety (*adab*, pl. *ādāb*) in such works which are taken to be a summation of the spiritual path unto a form of arrival unto the Divine presence through annihilation of the ego, this being the stage of *fanā*'. He states:

The summary of what is included in this Chapter [1] commencing the beginning of the book [i.e. *Īqāz*] are three affairs: Works of *sharī'ah*, *ṭarīqah* and *ḥaqīqah*; or you could say works of *islām*, *īmān* and *iḥsān*; which are in effect the [actions of] the beginning (*bidāyah*), middle (*wasat*) and end (*nihāyah*) [of the spiritual path]. From the signs of succeeding in the end is returning to God in the beginning. Hence, he [i.e. Ibn 'Aṭā'illah] instructed you to return to God and to trust in Him without relying on your effort, even though there needs to be effort [This is Ibn 'Ajībah paraphrasing Aphorism 1]. Then He guided you to *adab* in the state of being stripped of means (*tajrīd*) or whilst being able to partake of them (*asbāb*) [Ibn 'Ajībah paraphrasing Aphorism 2]. Then he [i.e. Ibn 'Aṭā'illah] prohibited you in your state of spiritual wayfaring from busying your inward heart with the murkiness of seeking control and selfish planning, for it itself is the means of distress [Paraphrasing Aphorisms 3 and 4]. Then he stirred you towards striving in that demanded of you (of spiritual effort) whilst being non-occupied towards that guaranteed to you (of worldly providence), such that your spiritual insight (*baṣīrah*) opens up [Paraphrasing Aphorism 5]. And from that which has been guaranteed to you is what you sincerely ask of God in your supplication, so do not seek to hasten to that which has seemingly been delayed from its time and do not despair of His merciful compassion [Paraphrasing Aphorism 6]. And if God has promised you concerning something, then do not doubt in His promise [Paraphrasing Aphorism 7] and do not accuse Him with regards to what may befall you from His availing

you of Him and His rigor (through events of outward strife such as loss or illness) [Paraphrasing Aphorism 8]. These are the actions of people of the beginning, their categories differ because the states amongst them differ [Paraphrasing Aphorism 9].

Hence, his [Ibn ‘Aṭā’illah’s] aphorism: “From the signs of reliance upon one’s works... [Aphorism 1]” until the aphorism: “Works are but lifeless forms... [Aphorism 10]” are all from works of the *sharī‘ah* that represent the station of *islām*. And his aphorism: “Works are but lifeless forms... [Aphorism 10]” until the aphorism: “The created cosmos is all darkness... [Aphorism 14]” are from the works of *ṭarīqah* that represents the station of *īmān*. The area of focus of *īmān* is on the purification of the inward and its instructive rectification. Hence, he [Ibn ‘Aṭā’illah] instructed you to embody sincerity [Paraphrasing Aphorism 10] and truthfulness (*ṣidq*) which is the essential ‘secret’ of sincerity. He also instructed you to seek obscurity because that is where sincerity is to be found and where it is made manifest [Paraphrasing Aphorism 11]. He then instructed you with spiritual retreat that you may establish contemplation therein [Paraphrasing Aphorism 12] and polish clean the mirror of your heart from the vested images of the created cosmos that are imprinted on it. This is so that your heart may take on the illumination of the suns (illuminating lights) of experiential spiritual knowledge (*irfān*) of God [Paraphrasing Aphorism 13].

It is then that he [Ibn ‘Aṭā’illah] opened up for you the door and raised for you the veil and said to you: “Here you are, and here is your Lord”. This [last station of *iḥsān*] is represented by the aphorism: “The created cosmos is all darkness... [Aphorism 14]” until the end of the chapter [Aphorism 16]. So, he [Ibn ‘Aṭā’illah] cut away from you every delusion of the veil, [and he did] this from every perspective.⁴⁷⁹

In his summary of Chapter 1 Ibn ‘Ajībāh denotes aspects of works along the entire spiritual path, i.e. the works of *sharī‘ah* (corresponding to the foundational station of *islām*), works

⁴⁷⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 64.

of *ṭarīqah* (corresponding to the interim station of *īmān*) and works of *ḥaqīqah* (corresponding to final station of *iḥsān*). In this regard, Ibn ‘Ajībah marks Aphorism 1 to Aphorism 9 as being of the first category, that of the “actions of the *sharī‘ah* that represent the station of *islām*.” In my own reading Ibn ‘Ajībah does not include Aphorism 10 in the actions of the station of *islām* as his preceding paragraph concludes its summary of that section with a reference to Aphorism 9 only, stating “These are the actions of ‘people of the beginning’ [*ahl al-bidāyah*], their categories differ because the states amongst them differ”.⁴⁸⁰ It thus appears that Aphorism 1 to Aphorism 9 represents a trajectory focusing on the outward alone, which whilst culminating in a reference to inward states, does not delve into the manner of reforming them and hence still relates to the outward, i.e. those referred to as ‘people of the beginning’. In contrast, Aphorism 10 marks the point there is a deliberate shift towards focusing on the inward, primarily marked by its focusing on sincerity. This heralds the onset of the actions of *īmān* for the ‘people of the middle’, culminating in Aphorism 13 which focuses on purifying the heart. The trajectory beyond this then becomes increasingly more transcendent, as Aphorisms 14 to 16 denotes the experiential dimension of the soul and its perception of the Divine, marking the station of *iḥsān* wherein the focus is now on the witnessing of God (*mushāhadah*) and the removal of that which veils such witnessing. In Ibn ‘Ajībah’s discourse he states that there are particular ways of ethical comportment or spiritual proprieties (*ādāb*) intended across all of these stations as represented by the particular Aphorism referenced therein. In reviewing the content of the *Īqāz* I have sought to delineate these *ādāb* as per Ibn ‘Ajībah’s commentary in tabular format as below:

Table 5. The *ādāb* listed by Ibn ‘Ajībah across the spiritual stations in the *Īqāz*

Aphorism number	Actions/Station	Aspect of Sufi ethical comportment (<i>Ādāb</i>)
1	<i>Sharī‘ah/Islām</i>	With mistakes (reliance on actions instead of God)
2	<i>Sharī‘ah/Islām</i>	With outward worldly means or their lack
3	<i>Sharī‘ah/Islām</i>	With spiritual ambition (<i>ḥimmah</i>)
4	<i>Sharī‘ah/Islām</i>	With self-planning and seeking control

⁴⁸⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 64.

5	<i>Sharī'ah/Islām</i>	With worldly providence
6.	<i>Sharī'ah/Islām</i>	With supplication
7.	<i>Sharī'ah/Islām</i>	With faith in the Divine promise
8.	<i>Sharī'ah/Islām</i>	With hardship and illness
9.	<i>Sharī'ah/Islām</i>	With the states across all previous categories
Here ends <i>ādāb</i> for the 'people of beginning', what follows is the <i>ādāb</i> for the 'people of the middle' (<i>ahl al-wasaṭ</i>):		
10.	<i>Ṭarīqah/ Īmān</i>	With sincerity in actions
11.	<i>Ṭarīqah/ Īmān</i>	With sincerity through obscurity
12.	<i>Ṭarīqah/ Īmān</i>	With spiritual retreat and contemplation
13.	<i>Ṭarīqah/ Īmān</i>	With the heart: its passions, forgetfulness and offences
Here ends <i>ādāb</i> for the 'people of the middle', what follows is the <i>ādāb</i> for the 'people of the end' (<i>ahl al-nihāyah</i>)::		
14.	<i>Ḥaqīqah/ Iḥsān</i>	With contemplation of God in the universe
15.	<i>Ḥaqīqah/ Iḥsān</i>	With the existence/non-existence of the veil
16.	<i>Ḥaqīqah/ Iḥsān</i>	With God's evident manifestation and there being no veil

In the above trajectory the *ādāb* shifts across a spectrum that becomes increasingly transcendent, a spectrum that could be broadly defined as corresponding to the threefold triad of body (as defined by *islām*), mind/heart (*īmān*) and spirit (*iḥsān*). This is a triad that Ibn 'Ajībah uses throughout the *Īqāz*, using the word *nafs* or *jism* for body, *qalb* for heart and *rūh* for spirit. In Ibn 'Ajībah's classification the first group are people very much functioning with externalities such as outward deeds, fame and worldly means; all of which correspond to seeing the world at a very dense, bodily level only, and hence perhaps for this reason he alternatively refers to them as the 'people of the beginning (*bidāyah*)'. It is when these people transcend their bodies and occupy themselves with the inward, demanding of themselves sincerity and busying themselves with their hearts that they graduate to being the 'people of the middle (*wasaṭ*)'. The final category is reserved for those who transcend even further, for they are meant to have realised the non-existence of

any possible veil in connection with God’s all-encompassing manifestation and presence, culminating an ‘ending (*nihāyah*)’ of sorts. In Ibn ‘Ajībah’s framing of the various *hikam* and their corresponding *ādāb*, each higher level necessarily includes the previous level, thus the transcending is not a discarding of the previous *ādāb* but a further building upon. This approach of continual application of *ādāb* seems to be maintained throughout the book, often serving as a demarcation point between one chapter and the other. Thus, in his conclusion to Chapter 1, Ibn ‘Ajībah builds upon these degrees of transcendence even further and is keen to point out that end goal of ‘witnessing God’ or being in the ‘Divine presence’ is not an end to *ādāb* but is the introduction to an even higher degree of *ādāb* that remain perpetually as an implicit demand of abidance in such presence. He thus alludes to the commencement of Chapter 2 of the *Īqāz* by stating “And when he [Ibn ‘Aṭā’illah] entered you [i.e. the spiritual aspirant] into the ‘Divine Presence’ [*al-Ḥaḍrah*], he then guided you unto proper manners [*ādāb*] with it.”⁴⁸¹

Chapter 2 of the Aphorisms – Delineating the stage of *Baqā*

Accordingly, the entirety of Chapter 2 of the *Īqāz* is intended to be an elucidation of the *ādāb* with the Divine Presence, being the stage of spiritual wayfaring known as *baqā*. In this case the *ādāb* is articulated to be for those for whom the veil has already been removed, i.e. the *arifīn* (gnostics), literally ‘those who know’. Here Ibn ‘Ajībah lists eight core *ādāb* for the gnostic. These *ādāb* are referenced individually throughout Chapter 2, Ibn ‘Ajībah numbers each *adab* and gives his own short succinct description, wherein they do indeed come to eight. In this case, he often prefaces their discussion with the phrase “Then he [i.e. Ibn ‘Aṭā’illah] mentioned the *adab*...” In the table below I have translated the relevant aphorisms (*hikam*), including some of Ibn ‘Ajībah’s short descriptions pertaining to them as summarised in the table below:

⁴⁸¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 54.

Table 6. Delineating aphorisms alongside Ibn ‘Ajībah’s short descriptions

Adab no.	Aphorism no.	Translation of aphorism	Ibn ‘Ajībah’s short description
1	17	He who desires that there appear, at any given moment, other than what God has manifested therein, has not left the slightest bit of ignorance behind whatsoever.	“From the <i>ādāb</i> of the true gnostic (<i>‘arīf al-ḥaqīqī</i>) is that he places all things in their proper place and that he acts in accordance with things as they are meant to be...the upshot being that the gnostic never denies the existence of a thing nor is he ignorant of it” ⁴⁸²
2	18	Putting off spiritual works in the presence of free time is of the antics of the ego.	“Then he [i.e. Ibn ‘Aṭā’illah] mentioned the second <i>adab</i> from the <i>ādāb</i> of the Divine Presence (<i>ḥaḍrat ul-quḍsiyyah</i>), which is leaving aside the foolishness of [commonplace] humanity (<i>tark al-ra‘ūnāt al-bashariyyah</i>).” ⁴⁸³
3	19	Do not desire from Him to get you out of a state, so as to use you in another. For if He had wanted this for you, He could use you without bringing you out.	“Then he mentioned the third <i>adab</i> which is to remain wherever God has placed one (<i>īqāmatuhu haythu āqāmahu Allāh</i>).” ⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 65-66.

⁴⁸³ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 66.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 68.

4	20	<p>Never does the desire of the spiritual aspirant stop with that which has been unveiled for him, except that the voices of ultimate reality summon him saying: “That which you seek is [still] ahead of you.” And never does the exteriority of creation display its outward charms, except that their inward reality cries out: “We are nothing but a trial [of temptation], so disbelieve not.”</p>	<p>“Then he mentioned the fourth <i>adab</i> which is to raise one’s aspirations beyond the created universe (<i>akwān</i>) and to constantly ascend in the stations of gnosis.”⁴⁸⁵</p>
5	21	<p>Your asking of Him is to accuse Him. Your asking for Him is to be absent of Him. Your asking of other than Him is your lack of shame before Him; and your asking for other than Him is only because of your remoteness from Him.</p>	<p>“Then he mentioned the fifth <i>adab</i> which is to leave aside asking ‘things’ of God. As he [Ibn ‘Aṭā’illah] says in what follows: ‘It is possible that their manners (<i>adab</i>) directs them to stop asking (<i>tark al-ṭalab</i>).”⁴⁸⁶</p>
6	22	<p>Not a breath do you take, except that a decree of destiny from Him makes it go forth.</p>	<p>“Then he mentioned the sixth <i>adab</i> which is submission and contentment with whatever the decrees of divine omnipotence</p>

⁴⁸⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 68.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 71.

			and destiny sends one's way." ⁴⁸⁷
7	23, 24	<p>23: Do not wait to be freed from distracting alterities, for that is the very thing that cuts you off from vigilant attention towards Him in the exact state He has placed you in.</p> <p>24: Do not be surprised that upsetting things continually occur so long as you are in this abode. For, truly it manifests nothing except what is in keeping with its attribute and its inevitable nature.</p>	<p>“Then he mentioned the seventh <i>adab</i> which is conscious attention (<i>dawām al-murāqabah</i>) towards God, until one witnesses Him directly (<i>mushāhadah</i>).</p> <p>...From the <i>ādāb</i> of the gnostic [concerning this] is that he should not be surprised by what comes into existence, whether be it from God's rigor (<i>jalālillayh</i>) or beauty (<i>jamāliyyah</i>)...This is because the dominant attribute of this abode is that it manifests His rigor as it is a place of temporality, separation and inevitable loss."⁴⁸⁸</p>

⁴⁸⁷ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 73.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 73-75.

8	25	Nothing you seek through your Lord will be made hard, and nothing you seek through your self will be made easy.	“Then he mentioned the eighth <i>adab</i> which is that the gnostic’s dealings (<i>taṣarruf</i>) are through God, for God, to God, this being the station of complete truthfulness (<i>ṣidq</i>), the essence of sincerity. The sincerity of the ‘select of the elect’ (<i>ikhlāṣu khawāṣ ul-khawāṣ</i>).” ⁴⁸⁹
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In his conclusion to Chapter 2, Ibn ‘Ajībah in his summary of the chapter further supplements the eight *ādāb* of the gnostic by listing four signs. He states:

The upshot [of this second Chapter] is about the proper propriety [*ādāb*] of the gnostic [*‘arīf*] and his signs [*‘alāmāt*]. So, the *ādāb* [of the gnostic] are eight and his signs are four: [The *‘alāmāt* are] (1) Returning back to God in every affair and reliance upon Him in every state. (2) To be inwardly with Him in all things [and not with the things as objects in themselves] and taking Him as an indicative source of all things. (3) Expansion in providence of one’s knowledge and the opening of the treasuries of one’s understanding. Finally, the (4) Arrival unto the ‘source of lights’ and being consumed through it by the witnessing of the overpowering Oneness of God.⁴⁹⁰

It should be noted that in the above quote Ibn ‘Ajībah does not clearly and explicitly demarcate by number, the different signs [*‘alāmāt*] of the gnostic [*‘arīf*], even though he states them to be four. My own numbering which I have inserted into the translation is based on a reading that notes the corresponding usage of similar or identical key words employed by Ibn ‘Ajībah in his description of the aphorisms accompanying the signs. To

⁴⁸⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 76.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 83.

illustrate this numbering, I created the table below which highlights how the signs correspond to specific aphorisms:

Table 7. The signs of gnosis and their correspondence to specific aphorisms

<p style="text-align: center;">Signs (<i>‘alāmāt</i>)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Aphorisms numbers with Translation</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Translated phrases that indicate the signs</p>
<p>Returning back to God in every affair and reliance upon Him in every state.</p>	<p>26 – Amongst the signs of success at the end is the turning to God in the beginning.</p> <p>27 – He who is illumined at the beginning shall be illumined at the ending.</p>	<p>“Someone whose knowledge is through God, returns to Him in everything and is reliant upon Him in all states.”⁴⁹¹</p> <p>[corresponding to Aphorism 26]</p> <p>“He then completed discussion concerning this issue by a universal principle which realises what came before [from Aphorism 26] and other than it.”⁴⁹²</p>
<p>To be inwardly with Him in all things [and not with the things as objects in</p>	<p>28 – Whatever is deposited in the inward of hearts is manifested in the corporeal world of visible phenomena.</p>	<p>“Then this affair...is an inward affair...however there must be by necessity the manifestation of outward traces”⁴⁹³</p>

⁴⁹¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 77.

⁴⁹² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 78.

⁴⁹³ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 79.

<p>themselves] and taking Him as an indicative source of all things.</p>	<p>29 – What a difference there exists between one who proceeds through God and who seeks to proceed deductively [through created form] unto Him. He who proceeds through Him knows the Truth as it is, so ascertains the affair [of creation] from the existence of its originating source. Whereas deductive inference comes from lack of having arrived unto Him. Otherwise, when was He ever absent such that one proceeds deductively unto Him? And when was He ever distant such that created traces be that which lead us unto Him?</p>	<p>[corresponding to Aphorism 28]. “The greatest of that which has been deposited in the unseen realm of the inward of hearts is the knowledge of God. This is of two types: a deductive and inferential knowledge of God; and a knowledge of direct witnessing of the Divine. He thus alluded to the difference between the two.”⁴⁹⁴ [corresponding to Aphorism 29]</p>
<p>Expansion in providence of one’s knowledge and the opening of the treasuries of one’s understanding.</p>	<p>30 – Those who have arrived unto Him [are described by the verse]: “Let him who has Abundance spend out of his Abundance.” Those who are still voyaging unto Him [are described by the verse]: “And whoever has his provision straitened, then let him give from what God has given.”</p>	<p>“...Concerning those who have arrived He expanded upon them the providence of knowledge and opened for them the treasuries of understanding which is unlike those who are still proceeding unto Him. For the latter, he has reduced their provision of knowledge, this due to the</p>

⁴⁹⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 80.

		presence of the delusion of the veil.” ⁴⁹⁵ [corresponding to Aphorism 30]
Arrival unto the ‘source of lights’ and being consumed through it by the witnessing of the overpowering Oneness of God.	31 – Those who are still voyaging unto Him are guided by the lights of their orientation, whereas those who have arrived have the lights of being directly face-to-face. The former belong to their lights, whereas the lights belong to the latter, for they belong to God and to nothing besides, [as the Qur’ān states] “Say: Allah! Then leave them playing in their idleness.”	“Then he mentioned the reason for this expansion of knowledge for those who arrive unto God unlike those still travelling. This is because those who arrive did not stop with their witnessing lights, rather they penetrated forth unto the source or the light of all lights. This is unlike the travellers, for they stop with the lights, being dependent upon them, belonging in their possession.” ⁴⁹⁶ [corresponding to Aphorism 31]

Ibn ‘Ajībah completes his commentary on Chapter 2 by elaborating upon its last aphorism, Aphorism 31, in a manner that keenly parallels his conclusion to Chapter 1. In his commentary Ibn ‘Ajībah once again paints a spiritually evolutionary picture of ascendancy across the stations of *islām*, *īmān* and *iḥsān*, the key distinction this time being that it is in

⁴⁹⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 81.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 82.

the context of ‘lights’. Given that Aphorism 31 discusses the difference between the lights of travellers (*rāḥilūn*) and the lights of those arrived (*wāsilūn*), wherein ‘the lights own the former, but the latter own the lights, as they belong to God and nothing besides’, it could be construed that the motif of ‘lights’ here serves as a metaphor for the ‘Divine Presence’ (*al-ḥaḍrah*). In this case Chapter 2 clearly builds upon the culmination of Chapter 1, for in the case of Chapter 1 the presence is only disclosed towards the end, whereas in Chapter 2 it is a journeying in this presence itself, bringing it ever more into the foreground.

Thus, by focusing on a textual analysis of Chapters 1 and 2 of the *Īqāz* we can see it to be a microcosmic summation of the spiritual path in the form of the dual legs of *fanā’* and *baqā’*, acting as a microcosm to the rest of the *Īqāz*. Beyond this the chapters also allude to the spiritual path, as represented by these two chapters, to be a continuum of spiritual propriety (*ādāb*). This trajectory of spiritual propriety is also expressed through several recurring and dominant motifs that delineate the theme of spiritual wayfaring *sulūk*, a key motif being that of light.

A Thematic Analysis of the Aphorisms in the remaining Chapters:

A review of the broader thematic patterns and subject matter that encompasses all of the 262 aphorisms in the remaining chapters of the 25 chapters within the *Īqāz* demonstrates that none of the remaining chapters differ significantly in a macro-sense, from the themes Ibn ‘Ajībāh already covers in his first two chapters. The table below seeks to illustrate this as it indicates how the broader themes in the remaining chapters either revisit a theme or subtheme already discussed in the aphorisms (*ḥikam*) found within Chapters 1 and 2:

Table 8. Themes in Chapters 3 to 25 revisit themes discussed in Chapters 1 and 2

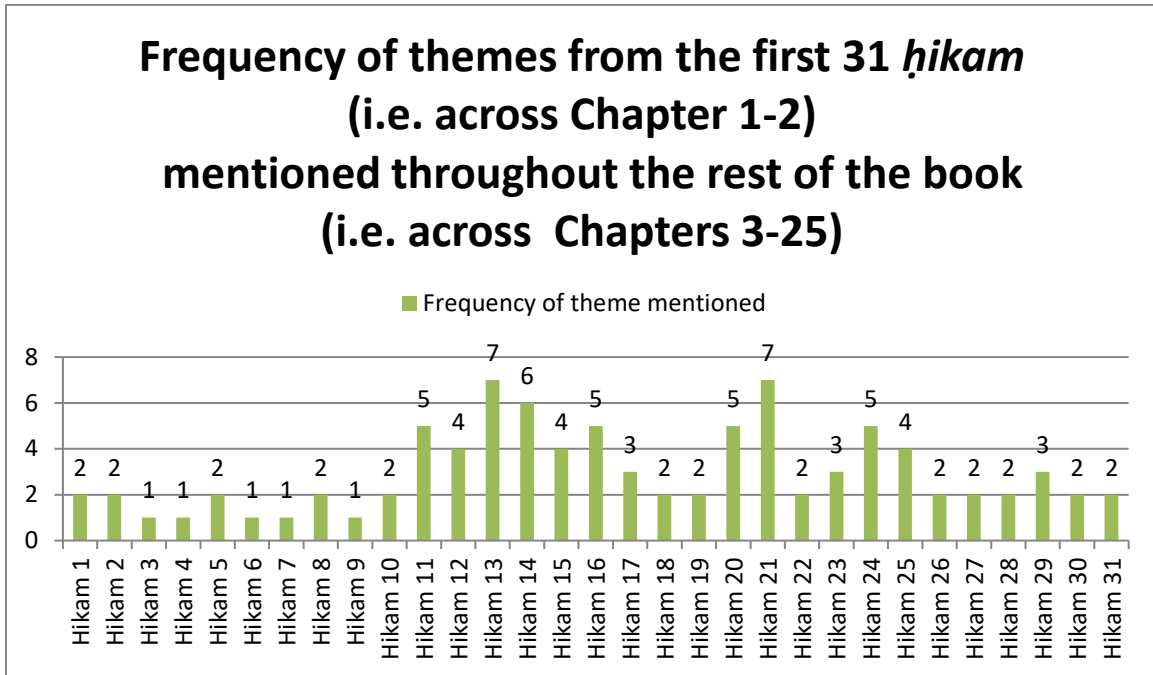
Chapter No.	Theme of the Chapter	Relevant Aphorisms (<i>ḥikam</i>) in Chapters 1 and 2
3	Purifying the heart for the ‘veil’ to drop away.	5, 13 and 16.

4	Orientating aspiration towards God and seeking good company.	1, 2, 26 and 27.
5	Detaching from the world, seek good company and focus inward.	4, 10, 11 and 12.
6	Reforming of the heart through knowledge of its signs.	12 and 13.
7	Raising spiritual ambition, serving and being grateful.	1, 3 and 21.
8	<i>Adab</i> with divine gifts and concealing one's secret.	6,11 and 20
9	<i>Adab</i> with seeking, expansion and contraction and being denied.	11, 20 and 25.
10	Being content with God and open to His trials.	7,8, 17 and 24
11	Being open to His trials and denying caprice to attain freedom.	3, 8, 13 and 24
12	Honouring one's litanies. Purifying ones' inward.	18 and 23
13	Purifying the self and strengthening attachment to God.	9,10, 13 and 21
14	Taking God as one's companion and turning away from creation.	11, 12, 20,22 and 23

15	<i>Adab</i> in praise and censure, having fear and hope in God.	11, 14, 20, 21,24
16	Patience in trials and <i>adab</i> with the onset of lights.	17, 20, 21, 24
17	Seeking isolation for sincerity and the secrets of unveiling.	11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 28
18	<i>Adab</i> in supplication and spiritual effort.	13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 23
19	<i>Adab</i> in trials. Being a slave outwardly and inwardly free.	19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 27
20	Opposing the ego and beholding the light of Lordship.	2,3,4,5,13,14,16,20,27 and 31
21	Purifying the heart from caprice and lust.	2, 12,13,21,25 and 28
22	Mystic arrival through purifying the heart.	12, 13, 23 and 28
23	The witnessing of God as ultimate freedom.	14, 15, 16 and 29
24	Removing the 'veil' through annihilation of oneself, i.e. <i>fanā'</i> .	14, 15, 16, 29 and 30
25	True humility is in <i>baqā'</i> - i.e. being through, from and to God.	14, 15, 16, 29, 30 and 31.

The figure below demonstrates this reflection and spread of aphorisms across the book in the graphical format of a chart.

Figure 1. Frequency of themes covered within Chapters 1 and 2 as per rest of *Īqāz*



The table and chart above demonstrate that thematically speaking, the remaining Chapters (from 3 to 25) do not cover any new ground beyond the first two chapters. It also alludes to other forms of correlation by revealing the following patterns:

1. Chapters 3-25 do not often repeat the themes found in the first nine aphorisms, which lends weight to taking those nine aphorisms as being foundational in the sense of a ‘beginning’. This supports the contention and corresponds with the fact that these aphorisms were stated by Ibn ‘Ajībah as referring to the actions of ‘people of the beginning’ [*ahl al-bidāyāt*]. In this sense the implication is that the themes in these aphorisms are introductory after which the spiritual seeker graduates and focuses on other themes without the need to revisit them. This position is further supported by the fact that the original author of the *Ḥikam*, Ibn ‘Aṭā’illah, dedicated an entire book exploring one of its key themes, namely that of *tadbīr* (self-direction or control-orientated planning). His book entitled *Kitāb al-tanwīr fī isqāṭ al-tadbīr* (lit. *The Book of Illumination in the dropping of Self-Direction*) is considered a companion piece to the *Ḥikam* and is often quoted by commentators upon it such as Ibn ‘Ajībah himself.

2. The themes that are most frequently resonant with the Chapters 3-25 are those in the middle of the first two chapters, i.e. Aphorisms 11-21. This would support the idea that these aphorisms serve as a central component of the microcosm, as the most popular aphorisms covering an interplay of opposites central to the teleological process such as: illumination and darkness, the role of seeker and sought, and the correct response to changing events of blessings and trials.
3. The later themes covered in the last chapters match the last aphorisms covered in the first two chapters. Likewise, their conclusions are similar, thereby supporting the idea of the first two chapters being microcosmic summaries of the rest of the text.

Ibn ‘Ajībah’s spiritual path echoes the *Īqāz*

Unlike the aphorisms which we have had to extensively textually analyse in the manner above to support the claim that the first two chapters act as a microcosmic summary to the rest of the *Īqāz*, we do not need to do this for the epistles as we have already stated that the claim that the first two epistles function in the same manner comes from Ibn ‘Ajībah himself.⁴⁹⁷ But beyond the aforementioned textual analysis, there is another reason to infer the first two chapters and first two epistles are microcosmic summaries of the entire *Īqāz* and its paradigm of *sulūk*. This is the fact that Ibn ‘Ajībah’s explanation of his own spiritual path indicates a methodology wherein an exposure to its microcosmic spiritual reality is brought about at the outset of his wayfaring. Accordingly, if the aphorisms and epistles in the *Īqāz* are intended to outline the nature of Ibn ‘Ajībah’s understanding of *sulūk*, they would be expected to similarly reflect this early microcosmic exposure too. Ibn ‘Ajībah alludes to this understanding of the spiritual path in his commentary on the 250th Aphorism. In outlining the nature of *sulūk* and *jadhb* (being spiritually 'pulled out of oneself'), Ibn ‘Ajībah notes that the people of *jadhb* have their unveiling and their witnessing of God in the first instance without spiritual struggle, but are prone to being intoxicated and overcome by their experience. In contrast he states that the path of spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*) is the opposite to this, implying a more methodological, inferential

⁴⁹⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 427.

process, culminating in the theophanic witnessing of God. He then cites his own case and highlights his own path as being a conjoining of both of these trajectories from the very 'first step' (*min awwali qadam*), thereby implying a microcosmic unveiling followed by a macrocosmic methodological wayfaring. He states:

As for the path of the Shādhilīyyah, then what is predominant in their case is the conjoining between *jadhb* and *sulūk* from the very first step (*min awwali qadam*). And what is meant by *jadhb* here is the soul's being pulled into witnessing the Creator of the cosmos as opposed to witnessing the cosmos [as an independent entity] ...the reality of this second type of *sulūk* is the witnessing of creation through its Creator. ⁴⁹⁸

If Ibn 'Ajībah's spiritual path involves a theophany from its very inception, one that conjoins between being 'pulled' (*jadhb*) into the witnessing of God which is then followed by methodological spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*), then it would be expected that the *Īqāz* would reflect this pattern. So, our position that the *Īqāz* adopts a microcosmic disclosure before a broader, wider macrocosmic trajectory, would only be consistent with the author's own articulated spiritual experience.

Comparing between the Microcosms

Having now parsed the first two chapters we are now in a good position to compare them with the first two epistles for our greater thematic analysis of them as a microcosm to the entirety of the *Īqāz*. Given our understanding that the first two chapters of the *Īqāz* as well as the first two epistles as being microcosmic summaries of the entire text, this entails that if we align the thematic opposites revealed in either format they should reveal the most important themes in the *Īqāz*'s trajectory of *sulūk*. This in turn should allow us to further highlight relevant themes that are deserving of greater analysis. The table below illustrates this comparison:

⁴⁹⁸ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 396 – 397.

Table 9. Comparing themes in first two chapters with first two epistles

Topics discussed in Chapters (1 and 2)	Topics discussed in Epistles (1 and 2)	Topical Summary
Beginnings vs. Endings	Beginning vs. Endings	Teleology and Ontology
Reliance on God vs. False Reliance	Busied with God vs. Busied from God	Ontology and Soteriology
True Supplication vs. False Supplication	True seeking vs. False seeking	Teleology and Soteriology
Hardship vs. Ease	Total Reliance on God vs. False Reliance on Others	Teleology and Soteriology
Sincerity vs. Lack of sincerity	True Existence vs. Non- existence	Teleology and Ontology
Contemplation vs. Heedlessness	Rejoicing with Permanence vs. Rejoicing with ephemeral	Epistemology and Soteriology
True Existence vs. Non-existence	Ambition for God vs. Ambition for an Other	Teleology and Ontology
True Resolve vs Being attached to falsity	Persistent wayfaring (<i>dunyā</i>) vs. being stalled	Teleology and Ontology
Divine Presence (and its signs)	Divine Presence (and its signs)	Teleology and Soteriology
Returning back to God in every affair	Returning with God vs. Returning with Ego	Ontology and Soteriology
Reliance upon Him in every state	Having Permission vs. Not being Permitted	Teleology and Epistemology

Turning aside from all things through seeking God alone	Good <i>adab</i> vs. Poor <i>adab</i>	Teleology and Soteriology
Taking God as the source and witnessing His Oneness in all	Beholding God vs. Beholding oneself	Ontology, Teleology, and Soteriology
<i>Adab</i> with the veil being removed.	<i>Adab</i> between witnessing God and the <i>sharī'ah</i> .	Ontology, Teleology, and Soteriology

Our textual analysis demonstrates correlation between topics discussed in the first two Chapters and first two Epistles, in that it reveals similarities of trajectories and topics. This supports our thesis that both these different formats are not only reflexive in content, but also similar in function in that they both serve as microcosms for the greater text. In this regard our four broad categories that we seek to parse the *Īqāz* text into, namely teleology, ontology, soteriology, and epistemology, are expressed throughout the microcosm. This acts as a further assurance that our choice of topics allows for the broadest expression of the *Īqāz*. The rest of the thesis commences the analysis in accordance with these categories.

Conclusion

Having established that the first two chapters of aphorisms, the first two epistles, and the colloquy all serve as a microcosm to the macrocosmic meanings within the broader *Īqāz*, we were able to thematically parse the first two aphorisms and epistles as a precursor to our broader thematic analysis. In this process we were able to discern a thematic pattern that would inform our broader research within the analytic categories. The theme that becomes apparent is one of *adab* (pl. *ādāb*), which is the correct propriety the aspirant has to display at various stages of his spiritual wayfaring. This *adab* is intended for the purpose of bringing about *ma'rifah* (gnosis) of witnessing God in His absolute unicity (*tawhīd*). As such, the *adab* that is required varies at different developmental stages of the spiritual path, based on the perspectival capacity of the aspirant at that stage. So, for example in Chapter 1 of the aphorisms and Epistle 1 of the epistles, the focus is on *adab* for beginners who have the experience of being veiled from God, and accordingly there is an imperative of spiritual work to be done at all levels of the aspirant's being, whether it be the body, mind

or spirit. The subtlety of such *adab* is that whilst such work is being done, and whilst one sees oneself as the agent of such work, the *adab* imperative is to negate such independent agency in light of the understanding of *tawḥīd*, which is that God is the ultimate doer, even if in one's everyday experience this has not become an experiential reality. Given that the sense of effort arises out of seeing one's own egoic agency, the call of such *adab* is to an 'effortless effort' in which the aspirant works whilst attributing his works to God's grace. Both Chapter 1 and Epistle 1 end with an allusion to the veil from God being removed and the aspirant coming to behold what he previously only believed, wherein he comes to see God's agency in him, marking the experience of *fanā*'. Chapter 2 and Epistle 2 then detail a higher degree of *adab* with the Divine Presence, heralding the onset of the stage of *baqā*', or subsistence with God. At this level Ibn 'Ajībah particularly highlights the importance of conjoining between the *sharī'ah* with *ḥaqīqah*, for with the aspirant having opened up to the experiential dimensions of the latter, there could be the danger of him negating means or causality of the *sharī'ah*. The core *ādāb* for the gnostic that Ibn 'Ajībah highlights find their echo in Epistle 2, whose concluding focus is on gratitude, because this is the abiding experience of one who deepens in *baqā*'. Effectively, the microcosmic journey in the *Īqāz* is *ādāb* with *fanā*' and *baqā*', being the two legs that are undertaken for *ma'rifah* of *tawḥīd*. Given this overview of the structural content of the *Īqāz*, we are now in a position to carry out our semantic analysis. The first analytical category we will analyse will be teleology.

Chapter 6: Teleology

With the previous chapter having highlighted the microcosmic themes within the *Īqāz*, this chapter commences our broader semantic analysis across the text through placing macro themes within analytic categories. It begins with teleology which is the explanation of phenomena in terms of the purpose they serve, looking at design and purpose from the function of how things end.⁴⁹⁹ Given this definition, what is the design of *sulūk* within the *Īqāz*? Having defined *sulūk* as the way of spiritual wayfaring unto the Divine, our analysis of Ibn ‘Ajībah’s teleology in the *Īqāz* focusses on the teleological goal of *sulūk* termed *wuṣūl ilā Allāh*, or “arrival unto God”. In this section we will explore the various semantic structures employed in the *Īqāz* concerning such teleological arrival (*wuṣūl*). To better illustrate this, I have narrowed my analysis to themes with four major polarities that occur throughout the *Īqāz*: beginning and arriving; grace and works; light and darkness; and finally, expansion and contraction. We had previously discussed how the *Īqāz* is not layered as a series of progressive arguments or points, rather its thematic structure is circular, and could be said to be akin to a whirlpool of meanings, in which concentric circles of currents pull a reader into its core. In this manner, whilst the current of the *Īqāz*’s information repeatedly take the reader pass similar landmarks, this is not repetition for its own sake alone, but a recurrence of greater meaning, wherein the closer to the goal the reader arrives, the greater the immensity of the meaning that dawns upon one. In similar manner what is noticed in these themes in the *Īqāz* is that whilst they may differ in their discourse, they all concur teleologically in their culminating in the *wuṣūl*, marking the annihilation (*fanā*’) of the sense of egoic independence of the mystic traveler followed by the return leg of *baqā*’, wherein he exists no longer by himself but through God. Herein lies a major query concerning such teleological arrival, for conventionally speaking an arrival suggests a degree of determinism implying a sense of agency of the doer and yet it is that very independent identity and agency of the doer that is sought to be negated. The metaphysical problem facing Ibn ‘Ajībah is locating a common bridge and demarcation between human beings and God, where does the agency of one end and the other begin? How is it possible

⁴⁹⁹ Charles Dubray, "Teleology" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 2020), 14.

for there to be such a bridge or intermediate link, when phenomenally speaking, created beings owe their existence to their Creator? Ibn ‘Ajībah’s response to this is to provide signs on the path, to give instructions, to define the mystical vocation, positing cycles of progressive annihilation of degrees of selfhood and the abiding of more refined spiritual stations, until there is an ultimate culmination in the mystic traveler’s own sense of individuation being revealed to be fundamentally illusory. Thus, ultimately Ibn ‘Ajībah’s concept of *wuṣūl* is posited as a phenomenological realisation that one has to undergo for themselves, not a theoretical construct that one can acquire understanding of in a purely discursive manner. The manner by which such realisation is attained will be further elaborated upon and made clear in our discussion on our chosen four themes of polarities.

Beginning and Arriving

Words connected to travel and movement are conspicuous throughout the *Īqāz*, denoting both a sense of beginning (*bidayāh*) and an arriving (*wuṣūl*). Illustrative of this, the very first aphorism discussed in the *Īqāz* begins with figurative discourse on how to correctly place one’s step. It states, “From amongst the signs of relying on one’s own deeds is the loss of hope upon the occurrence of a misstep (*zalal*).” The word *zalal* here literally means to misstep, slip, stumble or trip and in figurative terms denotes reliance on other than God, which is why Ibn ‘Ajībah advocates the correct step to be placing one’s reliance on God alone.⁵⁰⁰ In his summary of the first chapter he states, “From the signs of someone succeeding in the end is the returning to God in the beginning. Hence, He commanded you to return to Him, to rely upon Him alone without relying upon your works, though they need to be there.”⁵⁰¹ Therefore Ibn ‘Ajībah posits a successful beginning in the path as being when one is sincerely desirous of God with no other ulterior, self-serving motive. He defines such sincere desire (*irādah*) as existing within a reciprocal relationship with the Divine, wherein the degree one desires God (*murād*), is the degree to which one is desired by God (*murād*), so if one “draws near to Him with a handspan (*shibran*), He draws near

⁵⁰⁰ Hans Wehr, *Arabic-English Dictionary*, 380.

⁵⁰¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 64.

to you [the distance of] an arms-length (*dhirā'an*).”⁵⁰² He also equates such sincerity of desire with spiritual illumination. In this regard, in a potential allusion to his role as a spiritual guide, he cites how he can predict the outcome of a spiritual aspirant by their willingness to spend of themselves in demonstrating this sincerity, stating:

Beginnings are what is apparent in the aspirant at the beginning of his entering into [spiritual] struggle, toil, sincerity and sincere belief; and it is the place of manifestation and disclosure for how things will end. In other words: disclosed in it is what will come about at the end, for he whose beginning is illuminated, will have his end illuminated. So, whoever we see as being earnest in their seeking the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*), spending of themselves, their wealth, their souls, their honour, their prestige; all for the sake of arrival (*wuṣūl*) unto the realisation of slavehood (*al-taḥaqquq bi-l-'ubūdiyyah*), we know that their ending will be illuminated through arrival (*wuṣūl*) unto their beloved.⁵⁰³

So, for Ibn 'Ajībah an illuminated beginning is 'through God' and thereby entails that such a person willingly surrender their own sense of agency. The actual phrase used by Ibn 'Ajībah is that the aspirant not see for themselves any *ḥawl* (movement) or *quwwah* (strength), using the common idiomatic expression *la ḥawla wa la quwwah illa billah* (there is no strength nor movement except through God). Whilst the phrase literally translates into 'no movement nor strength', what is implied is 'movement' away from what one detests and 'strength' towards acquiring what one desires. Collectively the phrase is thus a negation of agency both in avoidance of harm and acquisition of benefit and is indicative of submissive surrender to God. Success in the spiritual path for Ibn 'Ajībah then becomes commensurate to the degree of this surrender, wherein he states that ultimate success entails that this surrender must be total. Ibn 'Ajībah states that the spiritual aspirant

⁵⁰² Ibn 'Ajībah appears here to be referring to the Hadīth in *Jāmi'a al-Tirmidhi*, Book 48: Hadīth 234, with the wording “*man taqarraba minnī shibran taqarrabtu minhu dhirā'an...*” which translates to "Whosoever draws near to Me by a hand-span I draw near to him by an arms-length."

⁵⁰³ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 407.

must embody such submission in every aspect of his apparatus of self-reliance, whether it be his deeds, spiritual states, discipline or toil. He states:

The beginning through God is that one not see for themselves any agency, whether it to be to avert themselves from something they dislike (*hawla*) or acquire something they like (*quwwah*). Such a person beholds no agency in his deeds, nor in his states, spiritual discipline, or in his spiritual toil; rather what comes forth therein he sees as being a divine grace from God and as guidance unto him. So if the matter is like this, then his beginning is correct through God, and unto Him will be the ending...When you see a person as possessing sincere intent and resolve in the beginning, know that he shall be from the people of divine concern. So whoever in his spiritual wayfaring is dependent on God, and delegates his affair to God, the ultimate outcome of his spiritual wayfaring is arrival (*wuṣūl*) unto God.⁵⁰⁴

The Imperative for Work

It is important to note that Ibn ‘Ajībah’s advocacy for not relying on deeds is not tantamount to stating that the effort and works to perform them are not needed. Rather, Ibn ‘Ajībah considers such effort to be an essential requirement for the path, but only if performed in a spirit of non-reliance, wherein such deeds are seen as emanating from Divine grace and not through oneself. To him, this is the only way for deeds to have their efficacy on the spiritual path as otherwise such deeds are devoid of spiritual life, being like ‘propped up images’, wherein the degree of their spirit is commensurate to the degree of sincerity therein, being negated by its lack.⁵⁰⁵ In explaining this seeming paradox of working without relying on one’s works, Ibn ‘Ajībah’s commentary on the first aphorism is noteworthy. In it he denotes how works proceed in progressive degrees of illumination, moving from ‘works of worship’ (*‘ibādah*) to ‘works of slavehood’ (*‘ubūdīyyah*), before finally culminating in ‘works of freedom’ (*‘ubūda* or *ḥurriyyah*). Referring to these stages as the beginning (*bidāyah*), middle (*wasat*) and ending (*nihāyah*) of the spiritual path, he correlates them to the threefold demarcation of *islām*, *īmān* and *ihsān*, which he considers

⁵⁰⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 408.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 37.

coterminous with the *sharī‘ah*, *ṭarīqah* and *ḥaqīqah*. Illustratively, the root word *‘abada* is retained in increasingly intensive forms across these three stages of works, and whilst the word is traditionally understood to denote slavehood, it is also understood to be the flattening of an entity, such as in the flattening of a road (*ṭarīq al-mu‘abbad*).⁵⁰⁶ In this latter sense, Ibn ‘Ajībah’s referring to the final stage of *‘ubūda* as also being called *ḥurriyyah* supports the notion of the ego being ‘flattened’ or annihilated, for there is now freedom from it, indicating a change in the nature of selfhood. In this context of mystical trajectory, ‘works of freedom’ in this analogy indicate that the works themselves are now arising free from the notion of an egoic doer. Here is how Ibn ‘Ajībah states this in a relevant passage:

And works within the people of this knowledge are of three types: the outward works of the path (*‘amal al-sharī‘ah*), the inward works of the path (*‘amal al-ṭarīqah*), and works of ultimate reality (*‘amal al-ḥaqīqah*). Or you could say: works of Islam, works of faith (*īmān*) and works of spiritual [mystic] excellence (*īḥsān*). Or you could say: works of worship (*‘ibāda*), works of slavehood (*‘ubūdīyyah*), and works of freedom (*‘ubūda* or *ḥurriyyah*). Or you could say: works of those of the beginning, works of those in the middle and works of those at the end. So the outward path (*sharī‘ah*) is that you worship Him, the inward path (*ṭarīqah*) is that you seek [and desire] Him, and ultimate reality (*ḥaqīqah*) is that you behold Him. It could be said that the *sharī‘ah* is for outward rectitude, the *ṭarīqah* is for inward rectitude and the *ḥaqīqah* is for the rectitude of the inmost meaning [lit. ‘secrets’]. Outward rectitude is through three things: repentance, God-consciousness and uprightness. Inward rectitude is through three things: sincerity, truthfulness [being an embodiment of sincerity] and contentment. And rectitude of the inmost meaning is through three things: vigilant awareness [of God], witnessing [of God] and gnosis [experiential knowledge of God].⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁶ Hans Wehr, *Arabic-English Dictionary*, 685.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 19.

Grace and Works

Given the quote above, it is evident that the *Īqāz* from the very outset addresses the themes of the role of human agency, causation and the teleological tension between grace and works. Given that the aphorisms within the *Īqāz* commence with the image of the mystic traveler stepping towards God, then the teleological endpoint (*nihāyah*) of such journeying, is the ‘arrival’ unto Divine presence (*wuṣūl*). It is this presence that enables one to attain freedom (*ḥurrīyah*) from the fatigue (*ta‘b*) of travelling, and ultimately from the source of such fatigue, being the egoic identity of the spiritual aspirant. This teleological understanding would be consistent with some of the earliest Sufis, such as Abu al-Qāsim al-Naṣr-Abādī (d. 367 /977) who defined the term *wuṣūl ilā Allāh* (lit. arrival unto God), as being: “an illumination of truth leading to the Truth...your *fanā*’ (annihilation) from the two worlds (the ephemeral world and the hereafter), with only the Creator of both subsisting (*bāqī’un*).”⁵⁰⁸ Similarly, Abu Bakr al-Kalābādhī (d. 380/990) notes that the first imperative of spiritual wayfaring for Sufis is “to rise above the plague of the ego, to know it, and exercise it, and discipline its manners.”⁵⁰⁹ This trajectory of spiritual wayfaring posits a journey that could be said to begin by departing from the primal transgression of egoic-independence before culminating in an arrival with the Divine presence. In Qur’ānic terms, this departure is articulated in the verse: “No! [But] indeed, man transgresses all bounds, because he sees himself self-independent,” whereas the arrival is alluded to with the verse: “and He is with you wherever you are.”⁵¹⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībāh in alluding to this trajectory states that one cannot move to a higher spiritual stage or station, unless the prerequisites of the lower stations have been fulfilled prior:

Know that discussion here concerns works that are needed for the purification of limbs, hearts or souls, and this is what was previously identified for each category...and it is not correct to move to a station until one has realised that which

⁵⁰⁸ ‘Abd al-Malek al-Kharkoushi, “*tahdhīb al-asrār*” (lit., “Refining/ Disciplining Secrets”), Ed. Bassam Baroud, *Al-Mujama’ al-Thaqāfi* (The Cultural Center), Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE); 1999, 36-37.

⁵⁰⁹ Abū Bakr Al- Kalābādhī, “*Kitāb al-ta’arruf li-madhhab ahl al-tasawwuf*” (tr. The Doctrine of the Sufis), New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 2000; 105.

⁵¹⁰ From: Qur’ān: 96:6-7 to Qur’ān: 57:4.

comes before. So he whose beginning is illuminated, shall find his ending illuminated. Hence one does not move to the works of the inward path (*tarīqah*), until he has realised the works of the outward path (*sharī'ah*), and his limbs conform likewise...thus if he is purified from [base] human attributes, he becomes adorned with spiritual attributes, such as proper manners with God concerning theophanies which are His manifestation. At that point, his limbs can rest from fatigue [of egoic self-direction], for nothing remains except goodly manners (*ḥusn al-adab*).⁵¹¹

In this vein, Ibn 'Ajībah cites the need for the spiritual aspirant to traverse six obstacles (*'aqabāt*) before one can attain the stations of proximity (*manāzil al-qurubāt*). These obstacles include the need to avoid sins by the limbs, frivolous habits, disagreeable traits, turbid behavior, excessive sensorial attraction and delusionary thoughts.⁵¹² To him, it is the rising above each of these obstacles that precipitates the unleashing of spring-like effusions (*yanābī'*) of grace which further aid the seeker in ascending even higher. These springs take various forms of Divine aid such as heart wisdom (*ḥikmah al-qalbiyyah*), divine inspirations (*'ulūm al-ladunniyyah*), angelic discourse (*munājāh al-malakutiyyah*), stations of proximity (*manāzalāt al-qurbiyyah*), and the witnessing of the beloved (*mushāhadāt al-ḥubbiyyah*) before culminating in an arrival unto the divine presence (*ḥaḍrah al-quḍsiyyah*). In what is construed as a reference to *fanā'*, Ibn 'Ajībah states that upon attaining unto this mystic arrival, because of the immensity of what one is witnessing (*bi-mā tushāhiduhu*) a person becomes absent (*tughīb*) from the heaviness of sensoriality (*kathā'if al-ḥissiyyah*). Similarly, in what may constitute a possible reference to the subsequent spiritual state of subsistence (*baqā'*), he states that if God wants to single a person out for His chosen specialness (*khuṣūṣiyyatihi al-iṣṭifā' iyyah*), then He returns such a person to sobriety through the cup of His love (*ka'su muḥabbatihi*), wherein the more he drinks, the more he thirsts and becomes more desirous of its taste (*dhawq*), ever-increasing in his closeness to the Divine.⁵¹³

⁵¹¹ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 19-20.

⁵¹² Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 21.

⁵¹³ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 21-22.

Microcosmic function of the first Chapter

In this manner, Ibn ‘Ajībah interprets Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s entire first chapter in its microcosmic function as being in the context of works (‘amal), spanning all dimensions of the religion at the level of *islām*, *īmān* and *ihsān*, wherein the imperative to draw closer to God is never-ending. Therefore, even in the depths of attaining unto the supposed end goal, the mystic arrival unto God, there is a new point of departure on another journey, this time travelling within the depths of knowing God. Ibn ‘Ajībah states that in reality God is ultimately fathomless, known in an absolute sense only by Himself. In this regard the role of aspirant is to remove 'himself' from the equation, so he can behold this constant self-theophany of the Divine, from the first-hand perspective of the Divine Himself.

Prior to partaking in such theophany, Ibn ‘Ajībah posits the primary maxim of the aspirant as tasking himself to sincerity in seeking God, which in turn should translate into the singularizing of one's heart and bodily vigour in a manner that precludes seeking anything other than God.⁵¹⁴ In this manner, spiritual effort is mostly seen as a corollary of sincere intent, being an expression of the felt sense of love one has for the Divine. This love is 'felt' in the sense that it demands a consequential occupation and expression of body, mind and spirit, all occupied in seeking the object of one's affection. To Ibn ‘Ajībah this one-ness of intent or desire is the litmus test for the sincerity of the seeker whereby what is particularly despised and to be avoided is love for the ephemeral world, for its effects on the spiritual heart are toxic, even in small amounts:

The upshot is that which you busy yourself with and avidly desire is that which you love and that which you are [ultimately] moving towards. And that which you stay away from [desiring] is that which you leave aside and have given the love of God precedence over. For there is no doubt God shall make you attain whatsoever you [ultimately] desire... Verily the sign of the truthful [seeker] is that he is never content without [attaining] the aim, even though the aim can never be actually attained [for only God absolutely knows God]...and from the greatest of what the spiritual aspirant (*murīd*) should be busied and stay away from [desiring] is the love

⁵¹⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 409.

of this world (*ḥubb al-dunyā*), for it is a deadly poison. There is no possibility of travelling unto God (*sayr ilā Allāh*) except through the effacing from the heart of what remains of it therein, and [the effect of] a little of it, is like much.⁵¹⁵

The Remedy to ‘loving the world’

In advocating his remedy to this toxicity of ‘loving the world’, Ibn ‘Ajībah cites the spiritual work ethic of occupying oneself with the good, highlighting the importance of the wayfarer to continually strive, and to utilize his spare time for goodly works. Notably, in his commentary on Aphorism 18 he states the need to orientate every moment of one’s life as being in service of attaining or abiding in the Divine presence.⁵¹⁶ He states:

So, putting off works and delaying them for another time wherein you will supposedly be free in both heart and body is from the sign of foolishness and folly. It is also ultimately a delusion (*ghurūr*). For where did you get a guarantee that you will actually live unto such a time when death is ready to pounce on you from where you least expect it? And to the degree you supposedly arrive close to such a time you cannot guarantee that there will not be some other issue to distract you therein. For freedom from being busied is rare in that the Prophet himself stated: “There are two blessings which many people are cheated from: good health and free time.” What this means is that most people have lost these two things and thereby been cheated therein. This is because most people remain perpetually busy in their worldly affairs or are continually tried by their lustful desires or afflicted by illness... So, it is necessary upon a human being to cut aside his attachments and impediments and to oppose his lustful caprice. Instead he should hasten unto service of his Lord, and not await and look unto another time, in that the way of the needy slave (*faqīr*) is to be the ‘son of his moment’ (*ibn waqtihī*). So, you do not find him busy except in contemplation, admonition, remembrance, lessons of spiritual instruction, or service to his *shaykh* (spiritual guide) who will guide him to God. Indeed, I said to some of the brethren: “The truly needy slave does not have a

⁵¹⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 408.

⁵¹⁶ Aphorism 18 is: Putting of spiritual works until you have the spare time is of the foolish antics of the ego-self.

moment of quiet contemplation nor raise his voice except that it be in the Divine presence or in that which leads to it.”⁵¹⁷

Given this outline of perpetual effort and struggle, the question of what constitutes an end point in such spiritual struggle is pertinent, for at what point does the spiritual traveler actually rest from such travel? To Ibn ‘Ajībah, the answer for this question and rest from fatigue (*ta‘b*) is only when one is annihilated from his egoic-self (*fanā’*). For it is *fanā’* that demarcates the attainment of a blissful release from the sense of toil.

Toil exists because of the Ego

By positing tranquility from fatigue as the outcome of the spiritual path, Ibn ‘Ajībah not only links toil on the spiritual path to the existence of egoic-identity, but also simultaneously assumes the necessary ‘existence’ of such an identity at the beginning of the path. In this regard to him it is somewhat inevitable for those at the beginning to be ‘people who are veiled’ (*ahl-al-ḥijāb*) and as such he states, "You will not obtain [such] tranquility except after fatigue, and you will not obtain victory except through aspiration."⁵¹⁸ In delineating both fatigue (*ta‘b*) and tranquility, Ibn ‘Ajībah states that fatigue arises purely because of identification with the egoic-self, mainly because of the need to attend to its selfish affairs and pleasures, whereas for one who has lost [identification] with it, there is only the experience of tranquility.⁵¹⁹ He states:

The sign of reliance on God is that one's hope in Him does not decrease when there is a sin, nor does one's hope increase if there proceeds forth piety...Unlike the one who is reliant on his works, for if his works are few, his hope decreases, and if his works increase, his hope increases, because of his associating another [i.e. "his egoic-self and its works"] with God and his compounding his ignorance [thereby]. If he were to be annihilated from his egoic-self, and to subsist through his Lord, he would be relieved from his fatigue, and be realised in the gnosis of his Lord... [For] The reason for fatigue is identifying with the egoic-self, and attending to its affairs

⁵¹⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 67-68.

⁵¹⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 21.

⁵¹⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 21.

and its pleasures, as for someone who has lost [identification] with it, then he shall only experience tranquility.⁵²⁰

From the position of such praxis, how then is the sincere traveler to undertake such elusive wayfaring? How is he to distinguish his sincerity and conviction from self-reliance? How does he delineate his trust in God from a potential lackadaisical attitude towards his own effort?

Effort Redirected to Oneself

To questions of the sort detailed in the paragraph above, Ibn ‘Ajībah’s repeated answer is in continuation, more striving, more works and more purification, to let the process work itself out. In this regard, he states that it is better that a sincere aspirant be on the lookout for the vices within himself, striving to end them thereby, than to focus on how the spiritual realm of grace functions. He states that this is because the aspirant’s being veiled implies that there is currently no readiness (*ahliyyah*) in him to encompass such meanings anyway, and the fruits of any such search is likely either to simply be a wastage of time and effort (*fuḍūl*) or worse, potentially leading to delusions of grandeur (*ru’yat al-maziyyah*), resulting in arrogance (*kibr*).⁵²¹ Accordingly, he divides the faults (*‘uyūb*) an aspirant should focus on removing from himself into three categories: those of the egoic-self (which mostly pertains to sensorial lusts), the heart (being desires such as prestige, leadership, wanting to be ‘special’, which in turn produces blameworthy traits such as arrogance, jealousy, and hatred) and those of the soul (being attachments to spiritual experiences without sincerely desiring God therein).⁵²² In this manner he cites the Islamic model of healing, being applicable in both a bodily and spiritual sense, as advocating *takhliyyah* (removal of the ailments) before *taḥliyyah* (adjoining of the cure). In his narrative within the *Īqāz*, the ailments here are posited are the faults that exist across the three categories previously highlighted, wherein following a successful *takhliyyah*, the *taḥliyyah* then becomes cure of the gnosis (*ma‘rifah*) of God. To Ibn ‘Ajībah, each of these ailments are nothing but delusionary inclinations of the egoic-self (*ḥuḍūḍihā al-wahmiyyah*) which

⁵²⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 20-21.

⁵²¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 84.

⁵²² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 84.

when removed allow for a true witnessing of the Real (i.e. God).⁵²³ In this regard he notes that it is only when “the heart travels from the abode of its lustful desires, and purifies itself from the stains of its heedlessness, [that] it arrives (*waṣala*) at the presence of its Lord, and is blessed with the witnessing of His proximity.”⁵²⁴ In drawing a metaphorical analogy between the physical act of ritual purification through water, Ibn ‘Ajībah alludes to the equivalent necessity for the sincere aspirant, wherein such ‘purification’ facilitates and allows for his spiritual insight to perceive spiritual realities otherwise hidden behind their sensorial form:

Purify yourself through the ‘water’ that removes you from the seeing of your egoic-self by annihilating you from it by the witnessing of your Lord. Or purify yourself from the witnessing of phenomenal materiality through the witnessing of its spiritual reality, or purify yourself from witnessing the world of sensorial form (*‘ālam al-shahādah*) through the ‘water’ of witnessing the concealed spiritual world,⁵²⁵ or purify yourself from seeing an otherness through the water of God’s knowledge, for He shall eradicate from you everything other than Him. And if you become purified from seeing anything other than Him, you have become purified from all blameworthiness in its entirety, as the poet Shushtari says: “[If you wish to arrive at Us (*waṣlanā*), then it is necessary that your egoic-self die; for none attains unto such an arrival (*wiṣāl*) if he has left in him a remnant (*faḍlah*)]⁵²⁶...so through profuse weeping from the seeing of other than Him purify the eye, by it shall be removed from you every selfish trait thereby (*‘illah*).”⁵²⁷

In taking such means of purification, if the essential task for the spiritual aspirant is to purify himself until he loses identity with his egoic-self (*nafs*), then Ibn ‘Ajībah also admits that at a certain stage this can appear difficult, especially when the *nafs* is empowered and

⁵²³ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 84.

⁵²⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 50.

⁵²⁵ Another appropriate translation of this phrase would be the spiritual world that is “hidden in plain sight.”

⁵²⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībah does not quote these verses from Shushtari but they precede the verses he does quote, and I have included them in brackets as they evidently relate to the context of *wuṣūl* under discussion.

⁵²⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 51.

enlivened by its all too human traits (*awṣāf al-bashariyyah*). In positing such terminology Ibn ‘Ajībah appears to be alluding to the common occurrence of these base traits amongst most human beings and whilst he does not seek to normalize them thereby, he does define them as being all too prevalent lowly characteristics that negate the sincerity of one’s slavehood to God. To him such traits can be divided into two broad categories: beastly traits (*akhlāq al-bahā’im*), which he defines as the sensorial lusts attached to the stomach and the genitals, and devilish traits (*akhlāq al-shayāṭīn*) which he defines as negative attributes such as anger, jealousy, arrogance, etc.⁵²⁸ Of the latter he says the number of such attributes or traits are practically innumerable (*lā yuhṣā*), because they represent the negative polarities of the egoic-self, and the number of its faults are commensurate to the number of perfections of God (being innumerable).⁵²⁹

The Root of all Faults and the Need for a Guide

Ibn ‘Ajībah states that if the imperative is to reform such traits, then any reformative endeavor that does not address the problem at its roots will be ineffective. To Ibn ‘Ajībah the root of all faults arises through a person being content with the delusionary presence of their egoic-self (*nafs*). Hence, Ibn ‘Ajībah exhorts the aspirant to blame his egoic faults, and to never be content with them.⁵³⁰ He also states that the best way to be free of the egoic-self is to seek the company of someone who has become free of it.⁵³¹ Presumably this is because of the suspicion that such reformation when attempted as a self-directed activity would most likely be arising from that very same egoic-self and given its deceptively subtle ways, the chances of any such endeavour succeeding on its own merit would be rare. For this reason, Ibn ‘Ajībah highlights the need for companionship (*suḥba*) of a person who has successfully completed that journey and is now in a position to guide. Hence, consistent with the belief of many Sufis and the function of a spiritual guide (*shaykh*) in much of institutionalized Sufism, Ibn ‘Ajībah explains that it is necessary requirement for success on the spiritual path that one entrust oneself to a spiritual guide, stating:

⁵²⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 85-86.

⁵²⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 86.

⁵³⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 87.

⁵³¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 87.

It is necessary for a ‘complete *shaykh*’ (*al-shaykh al-kāmil*) to remove you from the fatigue of your egoic-self to the tranquility [arrived at] by beholding your Lord.⁵³² Hence the ‘complete *shaykh*’ is the one who relieves you from fatigue, not the one who directs you to fatigue.⁵³³

On this need for a spiritual guide, Ibn ‘Ajībah quotes the popular phrase oft-used in sufic discourse of someone not having a *shaykh* being guided by the devil (*man la shaykha lahu, fa-l’-shayṭān shaykhuhu*).⁵³⁴ He also cites support in his views in this regard from his own spiritual guide, Abu ‘Abbās al-Mursī who he quotes as saying “no-one without a *shaykh* in this affair can be expected to find joy therein.”⁵³⁵ To Ibn ‘Ajībah a true guide must fulfill four conditions. He must be the possessor of sound knowledge (*‘ilm ṣaḥīḥ*), clear spiritual experience (*dhawq ṣarīḥ*), high spiritual resolve (*himmah ‘āliyyah*), and a pleasing disposition (*ḥāl marḍiyyah*). The first condition implies that a person be certain in his knowledge of whatever he is obligated to know in his function, this also implies the second condition, that he be aware of the inward knowledge involving the various states and spiritual stations and their pitfalls having traversed the spiritual journey himself with a ‘complete *shaykh*’. The third condition necessitates that he have no other attachments in his role as a guide except in seeking the pleasure of God, and the fourth is that he be steadfast and upright in his devotion to the best of his ability.⁵³⁶ In addition to these conditions, Ibn ‘Ajībah also states that it is necessary for a true guide to join between the *sharī‘ah* and the *ḥaqīqah*; and to join between being spiritually ‘pulled out’ (*jadhḥ*) and conducting spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*). To Ibn ‘Ajībah this combination entails a joining between inner and outer; wherein such a person is not given to externalities (*zāhiriyyah*)

⁵³² The phrase *al-shaykh al-kāmil* is not to be confused with the phrase *al-insān al-kāmil* (The Perfect Archetypal Man) oft-associated with Ibn al-‘Arabī, as Ibn ‘Ajībah is not referring to perfection here so much as completion (*kāmil* also means complete). The completeness of the Shaykh arises out of the fact that he has completed the stages of *sulūk* or mystic wayfaring himself and is thus familiar with each of their requirements and pitfalls to perform the function of a guide. This does not imply perfection because Ibn ‘Ajībah accepts that such guides can still exhibit human fallibility, which includes the capacity to sin (unlike the Prophets) as discussed elsewhere in the *Īqāz*.

⁵³³ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 20.

⁵³⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 97.

⁵³⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 97.

⁵³⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 98.

nor incapable of spiritually guiding others like the one pulled out of himself (*majdhūb*), whose company is considered more detrimental than beneficial on the spiritual path.⁵³⁷

The Inner informs the Outward

In this emphasis on proper companionship on the path, Ibn ‘Ajībah cites the need for inner and outer balance, however if priority is to be given, he states that it should be the inward dimension. This is evident in his discussion on the concept of abstinence (*zuhd*), positing it less a type of outward renunciation and more the inward dimension of a heart that is solely attached to God, giving Him priority over other things. He states that if one has abstinence (*zuhd*) towards the world and raises his ambition beyond it unto God, then this makes his works weighty even if they be few in number. So, to Ibn ‘Ajībah the dimension of abstinence from all other than God is an inward work which abets one in travelling the spiritual path, being greater than all other outward works if bereft of such *zuhd*. In this regard, Ibn ‘Ajībah states there are three essential foundational levels of such abstinence: *zuhd* from wealth; *zuhd* from worldly prestige; and *zuhd* from spiritual experiences – wherein collectively these foundations are what enable one to have an all-encompassing *zuhd* from everything besides God:⁵³⁸

Abstinence (*zuhd*) in something is the removal of love for that thing from the heart and a type of passive coldness towards it. With the Sufis it is the detesting of all that which busies one from God and which bars one from the Divine Presence. It is firstly attained in wealth, wherein its signs (of attainment) are that gold and dust appear equal, as does silver and stones, poverty and wealth, or being given or prevented (from any worldly thing). It is then secondly attained in honour and prestige and the signs of attaining this level include being respected or humiliated appearing the same to one, as does being known or unknown, being praised or blamed, or being raised or abased. It then appears thirdly in spiritual ranks, miraculous experiences and the sense of being ‘special’. Its signs therein are that

⁵³⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 97-98.

⁵³⁸ Aphorism 45 is: No deed arising from an abstinent heart can ever be paltry, and no deed arising from an avaricious heart can ever be immense.

fear and hope in God are the same, that strength and weakness are seen alike, as does expansion and contraction, wherein one is with this situation the same as he is with that, and is known to be the same in both. Finally, *zuhd* is attained from the entire created universe, by seeing the One bringing it all about and His command. So if the spiritual aspirant ascertains these levels of *zuhd* or most of them then all of his deeds become something immense in their spiritual form with God. This is the case even if their outward manifestation they appear as paltry to people...The worship of an abstinent person (*zāhid*) is by God and for God, whereas the worship of a person desirous of the world (*rāghib*) is by his ego and for his ego. The worship of a *zāhid* thus lives and is perpetual, whereas that of the *rāghib* is dead and perishing.⁵³⁹

Alongside the need for *zuhd*, Ibn ‘Ajībah emphasizes the need for persistence in remembrance of God (*dhikr*). This entails being consistent in one’s *dhikr* of God, even if it be initially bereft of spiritual experience, i.e. be done as litanies recited on the tongue alone (*lisān*) without any interiority. To him perseverance with such *dhikr* will eventually ensure that the *dhikr* goes from heedlessness (*ghaflah*) to one of wakefulness (*yaqāzah*). The latter is defined by Ibn ‘Ajībah as when one is undistracted by thought and is aware of the interior meanings of the *dhikr*, which if one persists in, allows one to enter the presence (*ḥuḍūr*) of the Divine, being the presence of the One being made *dhikr* of (*al-madhkūr*), namely God.⁵⁴⁰ To Ibn ‘Ajībah this presence itself now becomes the *dhikr* of the special (*khawwāṣ*) as opposed to that of the general Muslims (*awwām*), wherein if this presence is deepened, then the *dhikr*, in possible reference to *fanā’* and later *baqā’*, results in an annihilation of everything other than God.⁵⁴¹

Spiritual States and Stations

In this spiritual direction of outward works imbued with inner states, there are signs indicative of progress made along the way. Ibn ‘Ajībah particularly draws the aspirant’s attention to his heart, wherein there are three things that cause its ‘death’: love of the

⁵³⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 100.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 104.

⁵⁴¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 104.

ephemeral world, heedlessness from *dhikr* and the engaging of the limbs in sins. The signs of the ‘death’ of the heart coming about are a lack of sadness of what one may have missed out from devotion, a lack of remorse for what one may have done from sins, and being in the companionship of the heedless. In contradistinction he states there are three things that cause the ‘life’ of the heart: *zuhd* of the ephemeral world, engaging in *dhikr* and the companionship of the spiritually realised.⁵⁴² In observance of the states of the heart, Ibn ‘Ajībah draws attention to the nature of transitory spiritual states (*hāl*, pl. *ahwāl*) and spiritual stations (*maqām*, pl. *maqāmāt*). To him, spiritual states function in a paradigm of grace (*mawāhib*, lit. gifts), being gifted from God as a reward in recompense for deeds, whereas spiritual stations are acquired through further effort and work (*makāsib*, lit. earnings). In either case, Ibn ‘Ajībah argues for the persistency of spiritual works as a means to facilitate grace, in effect implying that just as grace allows for works, then works allow for grace, both being interconnected and interdependent. In his commenting on aphorism 46, he states:⁵⁴³

I say deeds are the efforts of the body in its striving, whereas spiritual states (*ahwāl*) are the efforts of the heart in its striving. As for spiritual stations (*maqāmāt*), they are the settling and resting of the heart with contentment therein. The like of this with the station of *zuhd* for example is that it begins firstly with the act of striving to leave aside the world and its means, then it becomes a struggle with patience upon its loss until this becomes a spiritual state (*hāl*). Then when the heart finds rest and peace and begins to taste the sweetness this becomes a spiritual station (*maqām*). Likewise trust upon God (*tawakkul*), which first is a striving in the leaving aside of means, then it becomes a struggle in patience with the bitterness of the [difficult] events of destiny, then it becomes a *hāl*, and after the heart finds peace and tastes it, then it becomes a *maqām*. Similar is the nature of gnosis (*ma‘rifah*), which is first a striving through outward deeds, such as the breaking of one’s egoic habits. Then it becomes a struggle in the *ma‘rifah* and a willingness to

⁵⁴² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 106.

⁵⁴³ Aphorism 46 is: Goodly deeds come from goodly states and goodly states arise from the spiritual stations wherein abide those who have realisation.

submit and accept when He lets Himself be known to one, at which point it becomes a *hāl*. Then when the soul finds its peace and rests in the witnessing of God and becomes firmly established therein it becomes a *maqām*. So in this sense spiritual states (*ahwāl*) are pure grace (*mawāhib*, lit. gifted) whereas spiritual stations are acquired through effort and work (*makāsib*, lit. earned). In other words spiritual states are gifted from God as a reward in recompense for deeds, so if the work is persistent and the states are supported thereby they become spiritual stations. Thus spiritual states change, they come and go, whereas if they settle in the heart in that spiritual meaning, then they become stations, which are effectively earned from the persistency of that work.⁵⁴⁴

The Primacy of Grace

So, which comes first – works or grace? To Ibn ‘Ajībāh, from a position of orientation and faith, everything is to be seen as grace, for if spiritual states were to be simply acquired in a deterministic manner through toil (*kasb*) then every devotee could lay claim to them simply on account of their outward effort. To him, it is in avoidance of this causal, deterministic and earned (*makāsib*) ascription, that such states are understood to be bestowed as pure grace (*mawāhib*) alone. This is his explanation for why the highest spiritual experiences, such as *fanā’* and *baqā’*, do not come upon an aspirant, except suddenly (*bhaghtatan*). He states such suddenness is for three reasons: one that these states be seen as grace; second that they be valued and rejoiced upon attaining; and finally that these states and experienced be safeguarded from being trivialized through their rarity.⁵⁴⁵ That said, from the position of praxis, Ibn ‘Ajībāh deems the question of priority between works and grace irrelevant, for he states that the way of slavehood is to avoid searching for answers to such ‘secrets’ before their time. Rather the task for the aspirant is to ready themselves for the answer to be opened unto them, by taking the means and displaying the correct propriety unto God in whatever situation they have been placed in. In this regard it is reward enough that one has been ‘graced’ to perform works as good deeds, for Ibn ‘Ajībāh believes God does not ennoble a slave with works except that He wants to bestow

⁵⁴⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 102.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 140.

upon him its fruits. In fact, Ibn ‘Ajībah considers an increase in good deeds and spiritual states to itself be the fruits of prior work, and a manifestation in the form of glad tidings that these deeds were accepted.⁵⁴⁶ To make this point, Ibn ‘Ajībah gives the example of how a noble king does not summon to his service except someone he wishes to honour, nor does he enter someone into his presence except whom he wishes to esteem, and he never ascribes someone to himself, except that those people are ennobled. Thus, Ibn ‘Ajībah’s answer to this question is that the sincere aspirant always joins between performing works and being open to grace, for works themselves are the sign of grace acting upon him. In this manner he echoes Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh who states in his aphorism number 170: “He [God] knew that servants would be avid for the manifesting of the secret of special divine concern, so He said, ‘God chooses for His mercy whom He wills [Qur'an 2:105].’ And He knew that had He left them at that they would have neglected spiritual works by relying on pre-ternity, so He said, ‘Surely the mercy of God is close to those who do good [Qur'an 7:56].’” In commenting on this aphorism, Ibn ‘Ajībah notes:

So, it becomes apparent that the ‘secret’ of the divine concern is in fact made manifest to those who excel in their spirituality (*muḥsinīn*), are purposeful in their worship, and sincere in their slavehood of their Lord. Thus, someone who claims dependency upon a prior decree of God and leaves aside works, is only deluded and cast out [of God’s grace], this is because he has negated the means (*ḥikmah*). Similarly, someone who claims dependency on his own works, without looking at God’s omnipotence (*qudrah*) and His prior determination [of grace] in the matter, is ignorant, distant from the presence of God, and ultimately heedless. It is only a person who joins between them both [grace and works] who is completely realised in God (*muḥaqqiq kāmīl*), and the ‘secret’ of the divine concern will – God willingly - come to such a person.⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 144.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 289.

The Nature of the Arrival unto God

It is thus the fruit of diligent work and trust in God that ultimately bequeaths His grace and the arrival (*wuṣūl*) unto God. In this context, the phrase *wuṣūl* is used metaphorically, as Ibn ‘Ajībah states that God is too exalted for anything to ‘arrive’ unto Him. For this reason, Ibn ‘Ajībah defines such *wuṣūl* as a realisation of experiential knowledge that attests to the sole existence of God, wherein the experience of God’s Oneness is allied to the experience of one’s own non-existence. In fact, Ibn ‘Ajībah considers it a necessary condition of such a *wuṣūl* that one becomes ‘non-existent’ (*‘adamuka ‘indaka ḍarūriyyan*), by which he means the ‘psychological end’ of the egoic-self that deems itself to be an independent entity from God, for he states:

The meaning of the arrival (*wuṣūl*), amongst them [true Sufis], is the actualization of knowledge of His existence alone. So, your arrival unto Him is your comprehension of your nonexistence; such that your nonexistence becomes necessarily apparent. Your knowledge of His sole existence happens then likewise, and this matter may obtained be attained in the same affair, without your comprehending it [i.e. your realizing your nonexistence indicates His sole existence]. And with this meaning, some of them [i.e. Sufis] spoke, amongst them Shushtarī who said: “Between summit and descent, the flirtatious dalliance drives you insane. Annihilate what never was [i.e. egoic-self] (*ifni man lam yakun*)! What abides is what always was and shall be [i.e. God] (*yabqa man lā yazūl*).” So, the disappearance of the ephemeral here is what is called gnosis (*ma ‘rifah*), and this is the meaning of arrival (*wuṣūl*) and the means which bring this about is the journey of contemplation (*al-fikrah*), which is why it has been commanded to do. The teacher of our teacher, Sayyidi ‘Alī, said: “Humanity – all of them – are witnessing [God] but they do not know it (*lā ya ‘rifūn*).” And I heard our teacher state: “Humanity – all of them- are in the Ocean, that is, the Ocean of Oneness, but they are not aware.” So, the arrival of the servant unto God is the realisation of His [sole]

existence, and the absence from himself, and everything besides God...Know that this knowledge of God is by process of acquisition (*kasbiyyan*).⁵⁴⁸

Notably, whilst Ibn ‘Ajībah does contend that this knowledge in a discursive sense can be gained through a process of acquisition (*kasbiyyan*), he is clear that when it comes to its experiential reality, this can only happen through a process of grace (*wahbiyyan*). This is because to him this state requires one to become absent from themselves (*yaghību ‘an nafsīhi*), a state one cannot willingly bring about themselves, as it is tantamount to being spiritually intoxicated (*sakrah*) and being confounded (*ḥayrah*). To him it is only when this occurs that the ‘fog of sensoriality’ (*dabāb al-ḥiss*) and the ‘clouds of ignorance’ (*saḥāb al-jahl*) can fade away, at which point, the aspirant becomes illuminated through the sun of gnosis (*irfān*).⁵⁴⁹ The use of the sun as a motif for spiritual realisation serves as a double metaphor. In one sense it indicates that such gnosis is an alignment with the real state of affairs, as the sun is always present. In another sense it points to the transiency of the delusion of there being other than God, for the sun’s being occluded by clouds does not negate its light giving function. Thus, in this metaphor, the role of light is coupled with reality of the essential being of God, for just as the sun’s rays light up the horizon, with or without clouds being present, so too with God being the creator of all. In discussing this, Ibn ‘Ajībah frequently uses the motif of light throughout the *Īqāz*, deliberately contrasting it with darkness.

Light and Darkness

Ibn ‘Ajībah’s conception of spiritual journeying (*sulūk*) uses the interplay of light and darkness in an archetypal sense wherein light is true being, or consciousness which reveals the deeper meaning behind corporeal form. To be caught in darkness, is to be unconscious of such meaning, and to be attached to that which does not elevate or guide to the Real, instead reinforcing the delusion of the egoic-self that it exists independent of God’s fiat. In this regard, darkness is a metaphor for anything that reinforces the delusion of the independent egoic-self and is a manifestation of the “veil”, thereby shutting out the

⁵⁴⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 341.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 341.

witnessing of the Real. As Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s aphorism number 56 notes: “Light is the army of the heart (*qalb*), just as darkness is the army of the egoic-self (*nafs*). So when God wants to make His servant victorious, He helps him with armies of light and cuts him off from the support of darkness and alterities (*aghyār*)”. In commenting on this aphorism, Ibn ‘Ajībah defines darkness as a “spot (*nuktah*) [of darkness] in the self that comes about because of caprice arising from the clouds of delusion, such that it brings about the state of being blinded from the Absolutely Real (God) because of their [hearts] being inhabited by falsehood (*tamakunni- l-bāṭil*).”⁵⁵⁰ The term for alterities (*aghyār*, literally ‘others’) here represents the perception that created events, or their traces (*āthār*) of divine action, are somehow created by an independent ‘other’ (*ghayr*, pl. *aghyār*), i.e. independent and absent from the divine fiat of God. Through these discussions Ibn ‘Ajībah is consistent with the notion advocated by other Sufis such as Imam Abu Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī that the soul is inherently luminous, defining it as “subtle, lordly and luminous” (*al-laṭīfaḥ al-rabbāniyyah al-nūrāniyyah*), whereupon being placed within the body, it has the capacity to forget its luminosity and thereby get darkened if it occupies itself with the sensorial body alone (*al-jismānī al-zulmānī*).⁵⁵¹ In this capacity, Ibn ‘Ajībah defines light as that which “falls into the heart from the meaning of either the names or attributes [of God], wherein the meaning travels throughout the entirety of the heart [of the person] such that he begins to perceive the truth and falsehood, with a perception that he necessarily cannot oppose.”⁵⁵² For this reason such spiritual light has been metaphorically called ‘the riding mount of hearts’, termed this because it is a vehicle for transmitting understanding (*qābilah li- l-mafhūmāt*) that allows for the heart to become transformed in illumination. The degree this light is received and made operational is the degree to which the soul gets actualized. Hence, the soul is given different names, being called the *nafs* (egoic-self), ‘*aql* (intellect), *qalb* (heart) *rūh* (spirit) and *sirr* (secret); all denoting the same entity, but termed differently based on the soul’s attachment to sensorial form, referring to the difference in spiritual states and degree of actualization of its own luminosity. Ibn ‘Ajībah states:

⁵⁵⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 113.

⁵⁵¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 113.

⁵⁵² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 112.

All of these names (*nafs*, *qalb*, *‘aql*, *rūh* and *sirr*) are names for the soul. So as long as the soul remains darkened through sins, disobedience, lusts and defects, it is called the *nafs*. Whereas if it abstains and is reigned in [by the intellect], the way a camel is hobbled in, then it is called the *‘aql*. In this state it remains alternating (*tataqallab*) between heedlessness (*ghaflah*) and presence (*ḥudūr*) and is hence called the *qalb* (the term for heart, but literally ‘that which alternates’). So if it gains tranquility and peace and freedom from the fatigue brought about by human folly (*ta‘b al-bashariyyah*), it is called the *rūh*. So, if it purifies itself from the darkness of sensoriality (*ghabash al-ḥiss*) it is called the *sirr* (secret) in that it has become a secret from the secrets of God, having returned back to its original nature, which is the secret of the realm of His divine omnipotence (*al-jabarūt*).⁵⁵³

In this phraseology (*nafs*, *qalb*, *‘aql*, and *rūh*; with the exception of the term *sirr*) and in referring to light as the ‘army of the heart’, Ibn ‘Ajībāh is largely consistent with the terminology and conceptual outline of the type of ‘normative’ Sufism advocated by Imam al-Ghazālī, a position he openly notes in the introduction to the *Īqāz*.⁵⁵⁴ To Ibn ‘Ajībāh the heart (*qalb*) represents the first stage of the battleground with the egoic-self (*nafs*), wherein depending on who wins, either the soul begins to return to its origins (*‘asl*) or it descends to the earthly plane of its lusts (*shahawāt*). Lights in this context aid the heart in ascending and defeating the darkness of the egoic-self, for otherwise if the soul settles with its lusts, then darkness overpowers it and it becomes filled with attachments to alterities (*aghyār*).⁵⁵⁵ In this manner light is the ‘army of the heart’ and darkness ‘the army of the egoic-self’. Ibn ‘Ajībāh posits there being three types of light: the light of those who seek (*nūr al-ṭālibīn*), the light of those of sincere orientation (*nūr-al-tawajjuh*) and the light of those who are face-to-face (*nūr al-muwājahah*) with the Divine. He demarcates between the latter two lights as being the difference between those still travelling (*sā‘irīn*) and those who have arrived (*wusūl*). To him, spiritual travelling happens in light, and Ibn ‘Ajībāh revisits the

⁵⁵³ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 112.

⁵⁵⁴ Imam Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb sharḥ ‘ajā‘ib al-qalb* (tr. The Marvels of the Heart), Book 21 of *the Ihya’ ‘ulūm al-dīn* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), trans. Walter James Skellie (Fons Vitae, Lousiville, 2010), 5-11.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 113.

ascending degrees of religion (*islām*) which is the foundational level, faith (*īmān*) as an intermediate level and spiritual excellence (*ihsān*) as peak level in the context of such light. So the lights of those still travelling (*sā'irūn*) is that they are dependent on the 'lights of orientation' (*anwār al-tawajjuh*)' which he considers to be the lights of *islām* and *īmān*. Ibn 'Ajībah alternatively defines these foundational and inetermediate degrees of lights as the lights of devotion (*tā'ah*) comprising of spiritual struggle and hardship (*mujāhadah* and *mukābadah*). In contrast, to him the lights of being face-to-face (*anwār al-muwājahah*) are lights of the highest station of *ihsān* and imply an intimate disclosure and direct recognition that comprise of the lights of witnessing God (*mushāhadah*) and intimate discourse (*mukālamah*). This outline connects to Aphorism 31 which states: "The travellers (*sā'irīn*) to Him are guided by the lights of orientation (*nūr-al-tawajjuh*), whilst those who have arrived possess the being face-to-face (*nūr al-muwājahah*). The lights own the former, while the latter own the lights, for they belong to God and nothing besides: "Say, 'Allah', and leave them playing in their falsehoods" [Qur'an 6:91]. In his commentary on this aphorism, Ibn 'Ajībah notes how the lights of being face-to-face are always contemplative and experiential, whereas those of orientation are always connected to the preparatory groundwork towards enabling such experiences:

I [Ibn 'Ajībah] say: The lights of orientation (*tawajjuh*) are the lights of *islām* and *īmān*, and the lights of being face-to-face are the lights of *ihsān*. Or you could say the lights of orientation are the lights of obedience, outer and inner, and the lights of face-to-face are the lights of contemplation and reflection. Or you could say the lights of orientation are the lights of the *shari'ah* and *ṭarīqah*, and the lights of face-to-face are the lights of reality (*ḥaqīqah*). Or you could say that the lights of orientation are the lights of inner striving and endurance, and the lights of face-to-face are the lights of contemplative witnessing (*mushāhadah*) and intimately inspired discourse (*mukālamah*).⁵⁵⁶

The *Īqāz* states a dichotomy between two classes of spiritual travellers (those travelling and those arrived) in terms of their dependency on lights: travellers, in the midst of their

⁵⁵⁶ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 82.

journey need their “lights of orientation” (*anwār al-tawajjuh*), whilst those who have arrived, possess but yet remain independent of need of their “lights of audience” (*anwār al-muwājahah*). In this manner, the *Īqāz* delineates a difference in the degree of the sincerity and attachment between the two classes, for lights, despite their positive function as guidance, are ephemeral, whereas God is the ever-lasting. This is implied by the word *tawajjuh*, being the fifth verbal form of the root *wajaha*, indicating orienting oneself towards something, or making it a means of orientation. The traveler, still not having arrived, belongs to his lights; in that he is not independent of need from them, for he has not found what he is looking for. The arriver, on the other hand, abides in a different station and does not experience such need. His lights take an altogether different form, they are of *muwājahah*, a third verbal form of the same root, indicating a reciprocity of experience (face-to-face), wherein personal orientation is no longer dependent on the light. The orbit of needs of the one who has arrived is different from the traveler, there is now maturity, which is why the Qur’ānic verse used emphasizes that those who have not yet arrived unto God are to be left in their comparatively immature pursuits (i.e. anything other than God). In further describing lights of orientation, Ibn ‘Ajībah alludes to matters of worship, ethical acts, inclusive of both the outward and the inward such as the qualities of the heart delineated by true faith or *īmān*. Lights of being face-to-face, however, are less concretely described; for Ibn ‘Ajībah uses more metaphorical language, indicative of the more experiential dimension. The first of such lights is the “sweetness” of contemplative witnessing (*mushāhadah*), which leads to a spiritual intoxication, the awakening from which is indicative of gnosis (*ma’rifah*), as Ibn ‘Ajībah states:

Then he orients himself to Him with the light of the sweetness of contemplative witnessing (*mushāhadah*) and it is action on the level of the spirit, being the first light of being face-to-face. So wonder, bewilderment and spiritual intoxication seize him. When he awakens from his drunkenness, sobers up after his being pulled aside through attraction, is steady in witnessing, comes to have gnosis (*ma’rifah*) of the worshipped king and returns to abiding through God (*baqā’*), then he is for God and by God. He is enriched beyond all light in his witnessing the light of all lights because he has become light itself; thus becoming a ruler over the lights, after they had been rulers over him due to his need for them before he arrived (*wuṣūl*) at

their source. And when he arrives (*waṣala*), he becomes a bondsman for God, free of anything other than Him; slavehood (*‘ubūdiyyah*) is his outward and freedom is his inward.⁵⁵⁷

For Ibn ‘Ajībah if the defining characteristic of those who arrive at the station of contemplative witnessing (*mushāhadah*) is that they “exist for God, by God, and not for aught but Him”⁵⁵⁸, then the cause (*sabab*) of the expansion of experience of those who arrive (*wāṣilūn*) is that they did not stop with the witnessing of lights. Rather, they sought the source of all lights, seeking true knowledge of the source of all being, i.e. God. In this manner the semantic field of *wuṣūl* is not only metaphorically connected to the field of light, but also beneficial knowledge, for “beneficial knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-nāfi‘*) is the kind [of light] whose ray expands in your breast and pierces (*yankashifu*) the mask over your heart.”⁵⁵⁹ The analogy of a mask being pierced by light is particularly illustrative because the Arabic word used for mask here is *qinā‘* which in anatomical terms is the pericardial wall that covers the heart, the inflammation of which leads to shortness of breath (with the breath simultaneously denoting both life of the body and metaphorically the soul).⁵⁶⁰ The implication potentially being that an increased light of beneficial knowledge not only guides the seeker but reforms the sincere spiritual aspirant from a state of being ill and fractured to that of being wholesome and healed. The degree of wholesomeness is then revealed to being successive degrees of expansion of mystic vision or insight (*baṣīrah*).

Thus, in Ibn ‘Ajībah’s metaphysical ‘light’ based outlook it is God who determines when a servant arrives unto Him through increased exposure to the source of His light. God first does this by exposing the spiritual seeker to the light of the “sweetness of exoteric worship”, then this is followed by a second light, being the “sweetness of esoteric worship” marking inward states such as “sincerity, truthfulness, contentment, bliss and being alienated from all besides God”.⁵⁶¹ To Ibn ‘Ajībah this light of the inward is thus greater

⁵⁵⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 83.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 83.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 363.

⁵⁶⁰ See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pericarditis> [Accessed on 26th February, 2018]

⁵⁶¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 83.

than the light of the outward in that it involves a stabilisation (*tamakkun*), thereby allowing for the state of diligent observance of one's own consciousness (*murāqabah*), which in turn readies the soul for the final stage of the lights of being 'face-to-face' (*muwājahah*). This stage heralds the direct 'witnessing of God' (*mushāhadah*), which is from the actions of the soul ('*amal al-rūh*) and the first of the lights of being 'face-to-face'. Interestingly, Ibn 'Ajībah notes the overpowering nature of this final degree of light, stating it often leads one to being 'confounded' (*hayrah*) and spiritually 'intoxicated' (*sukrah*). To Ibn 'Ajībah the ability to navigate and be awake after this 'intoxication' is the difference between one who remains 'pulled from his senses' (*majdhūb*) and the true gnostic. He states that it is only when the seeker becomes somber after his drunkenness, and awake after his being pulled out (*jadhb*), that he can be ascertained and stabilised in a stability of witnessing (*tamakkun min al-shuhūd*) that constitutes a return (*rujū'*) to God. This to Ibn 'Ajībah is the onset of the station of subsisting through God (*baqā'*), it is this arrival (*wuṣūl*) which is the final station of 'freedom', about which he states:

If he [the seeker] were to recover from his drunkenness and recuperate from being pulled out of oneself (*jadhb*); and be stabilised in the direct witnessing [of the Divine] and come to know the Lord who is worshipped – then he returns to the state of subsistence through God (*baqā'*). It is then that he becomes for God, and is through God, hence becoming freed of need of light, by his witnessing of the 'light of lights', as he himself has become the essence of all light. Hence, he becomes the possessor of all lights having once been possessed by them through his prior dependency upon them, before arriving at their source. Thus, when he arrives (*waṣala*) he becomes a true slave of God, freed of all besides, [whilst] his outward is slavehood ('*ubūdiyyah*), his inward is freedom (*hurriyyah*)."⁵⁶²

Expansion and Contraction

Given that Ibn 'Ajībah's conception of spiritual freedom entails self-dissolution, or self-emptying, the implication that such self-dissolution would almost necessarily have to

⁵⁶² Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 83.

encounter difficulty and suffering is understandable. This is because the egoic-self would be unlikely to give up its existence without contracting around its attachments. Such a state has been termed spiritual constriction or *qabḍ*, denoting the felt implications of strife, pressure, or an emotional heaviness. This state exists as an opposite to spiritual expansion or *bast* which connotes the more open qualities of love, joy and psychologically corresponds to happiness and contentment. To Ibn ‘Ajībah, these states of *bast* and *qabḍ* from a teleological dimension are two faces of the same coin (and hence necessitate the same response), that is, in their ultimate nature they both represent divine disclosure (*tajallī*) to creation. Accordingly, the sincere spiritual aspirant (*sālik*) should meet aspects of difficulty with the same spirit of rejoicing that he would otherwise meet aspects of ease, in-fact, Ibn ‘Ajībah states that trials and tests should warrant greater joy, since if met appropriately they indicate the unfolding of divine gifts and an increase in divine proximity. In this sense, to Ibn ‘Ajībah, such suffering is a necessary requirement for *sulūk*, being an essential developmental part of the path, in keeping with the instructively ephemeral nature of the world, as he states:

I [Ibn ‘Ajībah] say: From the essential manners of the gnostic is that he should not be amazed by anything that precedes from the theophanies of the Real, and not be surprised by anything from it, whatsoever it be, whether it be from the Divine Rigor (*jalāliyyah*) or Divine Beauty (*jamāliyyah*)...because the theophanies of this worldly abode are mostly from the Divine Rigor, for it is an abode of ephemeral states (*ahwāl*) and a place of separation (*furqatun*) and transition (*intiqāl*).⁵⁶³

Implicit in the above quote is Ibn ‘Ajībah’s position that true contentment can only exist with that which has permanence, for anything ephemeral will eventually result in loss, and consequently end with suffering. Accordingly, Ibn ‘Ajībah directs the spiritual aspirant to direct his attachment towards God, for to him God’s Being is the only thing that is self-subsistent and permanent. He thus addresses the spiritual aspirant by saying: “Rather it is obligatory upon you to know God in the *jalāl* and the *jamāl*, in both the sweet and the bitter.”⁵⁶⁴ To him, knowing God only in the *jamāl* is the spiritual station (*maqām*) of the

⁵⁶³ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 75.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 76.

common-folk (*al-‘awāmm*) and one cannot be sincere in their spiritual seeking until such knowledge transfers to the *jalāl* as well. The signs of this are that one manifests proper spiritual etiquette (*adab*), contentment (*riḍā*) and submission (*taslīm*) in the event of an occurrence of difficulty conforming to the manifestation of such rigour. Hence, he states:

I [Ibn ‘Ajībah] say: If the Real discloses Himself to you through His Divine Name *al-Jalīl*,⁵⁶⁵ or through His Name *al-Qahhār*,⁵⁶⁶ and has opened up for you a door and perspective by which He can be known thereby: then know that God has taken special care of you and has desired to select you for His proximity, singling you out for His Presence. So, adhere to proper disposition and etiquette through being content and submitting yourself therein, and meet that disclosure [or decree of fate] through joy and happiness, not paying attention to what you may lose thereby of not being able to perform deeds⁵⁶⁷; for outward deeds are only a means of facilitating [the greater] inward deeds. In truth, He has not opened up for you this door, except that He wishes thereby to raise the veil between you and Him. Have you not considered that the disclosures of His *jalāl* (rigor) are what is presented to you so that they can be the means of you arriving unto Him, whereas your outward deeds are what you seek to present to Him as means to reach Him. What a vast difference there is between what you give of deeds admixed [of different intentions] and contingent desires and what He gives to you from the reserve of gnostic unveiling and divinely gifted knowledge! So make yourself agreeable, O sincere spiritual aspirant, towards that which is decreed upon you from these disclosures of *jalāl* and overpowering fate such as sickness, hunger, extreme states, or anything that is heavy on the egoic-self and pains it such as poverty, humiliation, or being shunned by people...for when God desires to shorten the distance between him and between His servant, He inflicts upon him tribulation, until he becomes sincere and

⁵⁶⁵ Literally translated as the Exalted, within the Islamic Cosmogony of the Divine Names, it is seen as the more rigorous counterpart to the Name of Beauty (*al-Jamīl*).

⁵⁶⁶ Literally meaning “The One who overcomes or subdues”.

⁵⁶⁷ The implication here appears to be that the divine disclosure may be physically incapacitating to some degree, such that one is able to perform the deeds they could otherwise have done. An example would be sickness or disability of some sort of ailment that causes one to be unable to engage in physical worship to the degree they were previously accustomed.

purified, becoming fit for the Divine presence; just as silver and gold are purified through fire for the treasury of the Kings. Hence the spiritual teachers (*shuyūkh*) and knowers of God (*‘ārifūn*) continue to rejoice at the advent of these decrees...

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The Necessary Encounter with Suffering

The end of the previous quote touches upon an important point in the *Īqāz*, one which is repeatedly visited with varying frequency, i.e. the expectancy of encountering suffering as means of purification on the spiritual path. So Ibn ‘Ajībāh notes how the knowers of God (*‘ārifūn*) rejoice (*yafrahūn*) when facing tribulation, for they see them as being tantamount to immense blessings (*ni‘mah kabīrah*) and profuse gifts (*mawāhib ghazīrah*), to the extent that his grand-shaykh (Shaykh ‘Alī al-‘Imrānī) used to call such events the Night of Destiny (*laylatul-qadr*).⁵⁶⁹ In this regard, the issue of theodicy is not really seen as a contentious issue at all, for both suffering and ease serve the same teleological purpose, namely that the spiritual aspirant completely submit to God. Ibn ‘Ajībāh illustrates such submission by citing how reeds of grass bend themselves when stepped upon, only to rise once again, indicating that the spiritual aspirant should have no contentions in his heart when being metaphorically ‘trampled upon’ by the decrees of fate:

It is necessary for the spiritual aspirant (*faqīr*) to be like reeds of grass (*‘ushbu al-simār*), such that when an expedition passes through the valley it bends its head, and once they have gone, it raises it again. In similar manner, you should not be surprised by the presence of sorrows, so no matter what [difficulty you encounter], you should not be dismayed, nor fear, nor be alarmed. Just as you should not be amazed by the presence of blissful progress...for truly all *jalāl* is accompanied by *jamāl*, and all *jamāl* is accompanied by *jalāl*, they alternate with each other with

⁵⁶⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 34.

⁵⁶⁹ The Night of Destiny is an auspicious occasion, in which, as per the Qur‘ān, any worship performed is deemed to be greater than a thousand months. See: Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 34.

the alternating of night and day, and the true gnostic takes on the color of each of them.⁵⁷⁰

Aside for the imperative to submit, there needs to be equanimity therein, for Ibn ‘Ajībah sees the interaction of the spiritual aspirant with the states of contraction and expansion as a sort of gauge to measure where one is on the spiritual path. The difference between the common folk and the elect is essentially one of witnessing, the latter not being overcome by the states, because they are witnessing them from a theophanic perspective as coming from God, thereby responding in kind. The difference between the elect and the ‘elect of the elect’ on the other hand, is as Ibn ‘Ajībah notes, that the veil has been lifted for the latter.⁵⁷¹

Alongside the use of the contemplative device of turning a moment of tribulation into questioning one’s relationship with God, and understanding them in terms of the larger picture, Ibn ‘Ajībah in keeping with other Sufis sees these moments as a direct test of the sincerity of one’s claim of love for the Divine. He thus quotes a story related from the famed Sufi Junayd of Baghdad wherein his spiritual master and mentor al Sarrī al-Saqāfī (d. 253/867) narrates a mystical vision of God, in which God says:

All of them [my devotees] claim to love me. So, I created the world, and nine-tenths of them fled from Me. Only one-tenth remained, so; I created paradise and nine-tenths of that one-tenth fled from me. Now only one-tenth of a tenth remained, so I let loose for them a fraction of tribulation and nine-tenths of that one-tenth of a tenth fled from me. So, I said to that faction remaining with Me: “You did not want the world, neither did you take the hereafter, nor did you flee from the Fire, what is it that you really want?” They responded by saying: “You know what it is we really want”. So, I said: “I will unleash upon you from tribulation to the degree of each of your breaths that which firm mountains cannot withstand - will you be patient?”

⁵⁷⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 76.

⁵⁷¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 157-158.

They responded by saying: “If You are the afflicter, then do as You please”. Those, they are my true servants.”⁵⁷²

To Ibn ‘Ajībah the sincere spiritual aspirant should find no difference between what may appear as suffering and what is from God’s subtle loving-kindness (*lutf*), for neither are detached from His mercy. He states:

I [Ibn ‘Ajībah] say: From the greatest of God’s magnanimity and benevolence is the fact that His subtle loving-kindness is never detached from His ordained fate, so a blow of fate never occurs except that it has been preceded in origin and accompanied by His subtle loving-kindness. This can be ascertained by both the intellect (*‘aql*) and sacred text (*naql*).⁵⁷³

The Benefits of Difficulty

Having indicated an early attitude of non-determinacy for the spiritual aspirant with regards to what is good for them, Ibn ‘Ajībah does later provide a criterion for the more discerning aspirant. Maintaining the paradox that the realisation of things at their spiritual level often lies in encountering their opposite in its worldly manifestation, Ibn ‘Ajībah contends that it is the things that are most difficult upon the self that are most conducive to the realisation of the teleological goal of realised slavehood (*taḥqīq al-‘ubūdiyyah*). Hence to him, in the spiritual sense, honour lies in humiliation, wealth lies in poverty, strength lies in weakness, etc. In his commentary on Aphorism 100, he notes:

I [Ibn ‘Ajībah] say: Truly the witnessing of indigence is the best of your moments for two main reasons: Firstly, because of what lies therein of the realisation of slavehood (*taḥqīq al-‘ubūdiyyah*) ... Secondly, because in indigence lies an increase in spiritual aid and seeking of such aid... This is because [the realisation of] things are hidden in their opposites: honour in humiliation, wealth in poverty, strength in weakness, knowledge in ignorance (i.e. in the accepting of one’s own ignorance), and so on. As God says: And We wanted to confer favor upon those who were

⁵⁷² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 193.

⁵⁷³ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 194.

oppressed in the land and make them leaders and make them inheritors [Qur'ān: 28:5]. As He also says concerning the companions of the Prophet, may God be pleased with them, when they were in a state of weakness and encountering hardship, diverting them from it: God has promised those who have believed among you and done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession [to authority] upon the earth just as He granted it to those before them [Qur'ān: 24:55]...From this proceeds the divine norm that success is in accordance with the degree of hardship, so in accord with the degree of poverty there will be wealth, and the degree of abasement will be honour, and to the degree of difficulty will be ease.⁵⁷⁴

If the correct propriety for *qabd* is to rejoice, then Ibn 'Ajībah advocates that the correct propriety for *bast* is that one should keep quiet (*lijām al-ṣamt*), embody tranquility (*sakīnah*) and be of dignified poise (*waqār*), and to the degree possible, confine oneself to one's home (*yaltazim baytahu*). The reason being the same principle of things being realised through their opposites, so as *bast* corresponds to a felt sense of elatedness, he sees it as a place where feet can slip on the spiritual path (*mazallati 'l-aqdām*). This is because he states that the self once elated becomes boastful, light and energetic, and hence is feared to possibly say or do something that it may consider to be of no magnitude, yet which causes it to be deprived due to its lack of proper manners. To illustrate his point he gives the analogy of a pot of boiling water that if covered properly can be utilised properly but if left without cover, is likely to overflow and burn those around it. It is because of this potential 'danger' that Ibn 'Ajībah states that the knowers of God (*'ārifūn*) would fear *bast* more than *qabd* in accordance with Aphorism 81: "The knowers of God when given expansion (*bast*) are warier than when given contraction (*qabd*), for none stay within the limits of proper conduct in expansion, except a few." Notably, in commenting on this aphorism Ibn 'Ajībah states that the 'few' able to maintain proper conduct in *bast* are the knowers of God (*'ārifūn*) who are firm (*ahl-al-tamkīn*), being the possessors of their states (*mālikūn al-aḥwāl*) and not the other way round, resembling 'firm mountains' (*jibāl al-rawāsī*) unable to be moved by either *qabd* or *bast*. He contends that there is a more

⁵⁷⁴ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 186-187.

common category of *‘arifūn* who are still travelling (*sāi rūn*), who although having tasted gnosis (*wa in kānū ‘arifīn*) may face the possibility of *bast* taking them out of the limits of propriety. This is because there remains a potential share for the egoic-self in *bast* through the presence of elatedness, whereas it has no equivalent share in the state of *qabḍ*. Ibn ‘Ajībah’s commentary on this theme is consistent and alludes to the principle of slavehood mirroring divine disclosure with its opposite, so when given states of joy and elation (*bast*), the required response is to be inwardly sober and cautious. Similarly, when states of anxiety and difficulty (*qabḍ*) come upon one, the desired response is to meet it with elation. The point in either response is to return towards equanimity being tilted to neither, for as Ibn ‘Ajībah notes ‘opposites do not meet’ (*ḍiḍān lā yajtami ‘ān*), entailing that both *bast* and *qabḍ* negate each other’s polarity when conjoined.

Witnessing God as the Cure for all Distress

Ibn ‘Ajībah having already compared *bast* and *qabḍ* to the alternation of day and night, draws specific attention to the attributes of the ‘spiritual night’ of constriction (*qabḍ*), stating it is a place of tranquility (*sukūn*) and repose (*qarār*), wherein as there is no selfish portion (*ḥazz*) for the egoic-self in it, it is of greater benefit in the spiritual path.⁵⁷⁵ He states that as night is a time of intimate discourse (*munājāh*) and clarity (*muṣāfāh*), a time when beloveds meet and when the veil is raised, it can be hoped that the egoic-self will withdraw, and sensoriality will leave (*dhihāb al-ḥiss*), making the states of *fanā’* and *baqā’* more realizable therein in a continuation of bliss (*muwālāt al-uns*).⁵⁷⁶ To Ibn ‘Ajībah, were this to happen, then all distress would leave one, as the reason for all distress is not being able to witness God, for such a witnessing bequeaths God’s perpetual closeness, and were one to be aware of that, they would feel no other sense of loss. They would also be able to accept all decrees, as they would see it coming from their beloved. This to Ibn ‘Ajībah, is the great ‘with-ness’ (*ma’iyyah*), the arrival (*wusūl*) unto witnessing God (*mushāhadah*) which brings about all spiritual victory. In this regard he quotes the Qur’ān when the Prophet reminded his closest companion Abu Bakr about God being ‘with them’, a reminder that was given as they were hiding in a cave, en route to Madina during their

⁵⁷⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 261.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 261.

emigration, where the latter may have feared their hiding place being exposed to trackers. To Ibn ‘Ajībah, the Prophet’s certainty in not being worried was because of his witnessing this ‘with-ness’ of God, a spiritual vantage point he wanted to raise Abu Bakr towards too, as Ibn ‘Ajībah states:⁵⁷⁷

Indeed, the reason for all distress (*sabab al-humūm*) is the absence of witnessing God (*faqd al-shuhūd*). This is because the Real (i.e. God) is always near (*qarīb*) and always over-seeing (*raqīb*). So, for someone who is close to their beloved, how can they feel the absence of anything or the loss of something? [For] The glance of the beloved makes one absent from every distant and near thing for everything that happens to one because of the beloved is beloved. So, one does not come across anything disliked from the beloved, such that he can give it any importance [to upset him], and he does not lose anything he loves, as his beloved is present, so there is no grief...So in essence, someone who is a slave of God, and is absent from all besides, shall have no grief in him. This is because he has attained ‘the with-ness’ (*al-ma‘iyyah*), that necessitates victory, and success in all that one desires. Do you not see the speech of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings of God be upon him) to Abu Bakr [whilst hiding in the cave] when they were encompassed and surrounded by the pagan Arabs [tracking them], saying: Do not despair, indeed God is with us (*ma‘anā*) [Qur’ān: 9: 40]. For the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was in the state of witnessing, so he was not worried by a thing, nor was he distracted by sorrows, and Abu Bakr at that time was of certain belief but not someone who witnessed God. So, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) guided him to the station of perfection (*maqām al-kamāl*), for directly witnessing God is above certainty brought by belief alone.⁵⁷⁸

Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen how Ibn ‘Ajībah utilizes a variety of themes and motifs to illustrate key teleological points about the nature of *sulūk*, in particular focusing on what

⁵⁷⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 357.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 357.

constitutes a teleological arrival (*wuṣūl*) unto God. In one sense we see how Ibn ‘Ajībah stresses that the beginning of the path necessitates an almost paradoxical form of *adab* or propriety of trust in God, for whilst the spiritual aspirant (*sālik*) has to strive, he also has to simultaneously negate (to the degree possible) his own sense of human causation in such striving. The other relevant form of *adab* he has to demonstrate is a willingness to bear distress whilst seeking God in the darkness of the ‘spiritual night’ in the form of spiritual constriction. Paradoxically again, it is his willingness to bear darkness that involves an increased receptivity to light. This tension is compounded by the beginner’s spiritual state of being veiled from God (*faqd al-shuhūd*) and is only resolved by the continued journeying of the spiritual aspirant, wherein the ‘journey’ reveals itself to be the very undoing of his own agency in his realisation of the experiential knowledge of God. In this manner, having built the semantic landscape that the theme of *wuṣūl* and its cognates occupies across the *Īqāz*, we see the image of a spiritual journey (*sayr*) and the travellers upon it (*sā’irūn, sālikūn, rāḥilūn*). Every journey has its own set of proprieties or *ādāb* and given that this journey is that of contemplative witnessing, with increased light allowing for increased perspicacity of what is ultimately true at the level of ontological being, the proprieties also pertain to such perception. Thus, at each stage of the journey the *Īqāz* directs the attention of the readers to their own sense of being and their sincerity towards God, by shedding light on their attachment to other than Him, whether it be to phenomenal form, or to their own sense of agency. Hence, traversing the spiritual landscape for sincere travellers involves the ongoing *adab* of refining their own teleological perception, wherein ‘worldly loss’ becomes their spiritual gain as they systematically dismantle their own pretension and vice, finally culminating in a *wuṣūl* of *fanā’* and *baqā’*, wherein the aspirant’s entire egoic structure is dismantled.

To Ibn ‘Ajībah the imperative of *adab* never ends, whether it be at the level of *fanā’* or *baqā’*. This translates into a continual wayfaring of systematic effort and obedience towards the exoteric of Islam, for Ibn ‘Ajībah believes in the normative function of the need to reconcile the outward path (*sharī‘ah*) with the inward reality (*ḥaqīqah*). Ibn ‘Ajībah sees such conjoining to only effectively happen when one ceases to behold the self as performing deeds altogether, becoming witness to the divine creative fiat acting through one. This in effect is his *adab* with *tawḥīd* (God’s unicity). The fact that Ibn ‘Ajībah alludes

to this paradigm very early on in the *Īqāz* is a pointer to his understanding of *sulūk* as being more process-orientated as opposed to goal focused. Even the aspirant does not have the experience of such *tawhīd*, if he desires to attain unto this experiential dimension (*maʿrifah*), then he must abide by the *adab* tasked of it. The chapter proceeds to discuss this trajectory of *adab* in the rubric of four themes: ‘beginning and arriving’; ‘grace and works’; ‘light and darkness’; and ‘expansion and contraction’. The chapter distinguished how these four different themes are correlated in their application of the teleological function of *wuṣūl*. Each of these themes demonstrated dialogue around sincerity; spiritual stations and states of the journey; struggle with the egoic-self; openness to bearing and transcending suffering before culminating in the mystic arrival. In this sense Ibn ‘Ajībah’s *wuṣūl* encompasses all these dimensions, as in each of these, it is understood that it is God making His own self-disclosure through phenomenal means.

The chapter also highlighted how the teleological arrival unto God (*wuṣūl*), is one in which there is the actualization of absolute ontological poverty (*taḥqīq al-faqr*) of the spiritual seeker. Such a *wuṣūl* is seen to then join between matters of praxis and psychology, aiding the esoteric experience of the contemplative, mirroring their life, which is why the aphorisms in the *Īqāz* end with imperative to continually contemplate. In its final attainment, Ibn ‘Ajībah’s account of *wuṣūl* reveals a sense of ambivalence at its core, for in addition to a sense of arrival and its denoting a union after a prior separation, the traveler is revealed to have always been in a state of connection (*wāṣil*) unto God, for what is revealed is the continual state of absolute ontological dependence (*faqr*). Hence Ibn ‘Ajībah’s *wuṣūl* is essentially a paradox, for the traveler who has struggled with himself through years of devotion, reflection, and repentance has only come to reach (*waṣala*) that which he always was, a slave (‘*abd*) dependent on His lord (*rabb*) for his existence at every moment. To Ibn ‘Ajībah, it is for this reason that such an arrival can never be a union between two separate entities; rather it is a realignment to the truth that all matters proceed from God and return back to Him. The final completion of the soul’s realisation, its *wuṣūl* unto God, is to Ibn ‘Ajībah that of God’s theophany alone – from Himself to Himself. This entails a connection between the ontological origins of man in his dependency upon God and his soteriological journey unto God in realisation of this dependency. This connection between the categories of ontology and soteriology is explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 7: Ontology and Soteriology

The previous chapter discussed Ibn ‘Ajībah’s understanding of the teleological goal of arriving (*wuṣūl*) unto God within the *Īqāz*. It did this by exploring sections of the *Īqāz* that deal with teleology within the rubric of four themes: ‘beginning and arriving’; ‘grace and works’; ‘light and darkness’; and ‘expansion and contraction’. As discussed, the teleological goal of mystical arrival or *wuṣūl* expressed in the *Īqāz* is the experiential disclosure of One-ness of God. In this manner, whilst the theme of *wuṣūl* is a teleological endpoint, it also reveals an interconnection with ontological, soteriological and epistemological dimensions. In the ontological sense such *wuṣūl* reveals the ontological dependence of the seeker upon God, thereby disclosing the ontological poverty (*faqr*) of the spiritual aspirant. Soteriologically, there is the counterpart imperative of the aspirant to undergo the spiritual journey of *sulūk*. Within such a soteriological perspective of *sulūk*, endings and failures from the ego’s perspective cause the unfolding of new beginnings and successes from the perspective of the illuminated soul, and as outward appearances constantly reveal deeper inner meanings, the aspirant begins to behold the ultimate reality of God’s creative fiat underpinning all passing form. Given this outline, this chapter focuses on the ontological and soteriological dimensions of such *sulūk* as expressed within the *Īqāz*.

Concerning ontology, Ibn ‘Ajībah holds that God is the central principle of existence, wherein everything appearing as other than God is ultimately contingently existent on His creative fiat. This perpetual ontological dependence on God has been referred to as ontological poverty (*faqr*) and raises interesting questions concerning the relationship between the Being of God and the being of man. To explore this, the chapter focuses on the concept of the ontological ‘descent’ (*tanazzul*) of the Divine Presence (*al-ḥaḍrat al-ilāhiyyah*), by which is meant the self-disclosure (*tajallī*) of God from His undifferentiated and unknowable Essence (*dhāt*) to the variegated forms of creation existing in the cosmos. In Ibn ‘Ajībah’s metaphysics the first disclosure of this descent is posited as being that of the Divine Attributes or Names of God (the *ṣifāt* or *asmā*), which he indicates as being the relationships connected with the Essence of God. The next stage of the descent is the

disclosure of the acts (*af'āl*) of God, understood to be the created traces or corporeal effects that appears from creation in the cosmos.⁵⁷⁹ To Ibn 'Ajībah the term Divine Presence (*al-ḥaḍrat al-ilāhiyyah*) is summative in that it designates both God and the cosmos, in as much the latter represents the locus of His manifestation. Effectively, God cannot be divorced from His creation, implying an immanence (*tashbīh*) that is ever-present, which Ibn 'Ajībah evidences by the Qur'ānic verse, “Wheresoever you turn, there is the countenance of God” (2:115). He also holds that from another perspective, were creation to be viewed as ontologically independent, then in this regard God is forever transcendent (*tanzīh*), unable to be encompassed by that which is ephemeral and contingent, evidenced by the Qur'ān noting, “there is nothing like unto Him” (42:11). In Ibn 'Ajībah's view it is precisely because of this paradoxical meeting of immanence and transcendence, that there necessitates the need for the existence of human beings, wherein it is their souls that represent the meeting point for the ontological descent of the Divine to be met by the corresponding soteriological 'ascent' of man.⁵⁸⁰

So, soteriology here is Ibn 'Ajībah's understanding of the necessary spiritual imperative of a journey of ascent of consciousness towards witnessing the Divine disclosure in creation. Specifically, soteriology here indicates the process of seeking gnosis (*ma'rifah*), and is understood to be the liberation from being veiled from God, being the spiritual journey that travels from witnessing other than God to arriving at seeing Him alone. In this regard, Ibn 'Ajībah's soteriological semiotics, far from denying the created cosmos, affirms it in so much as God appears through it, even in the paradoxical situation of His being veiled by it. Within such a soteriological perspective, the denial of God only arises to the degree one is unable to perceive the Divine causality behind creation. The soteriological goal thus becomes to penetrate the veil of creation's supposed ontological independence, to come to see the world as it always was and is, being continually affirmed through God's creative fiat.⁵⁸¹

⁵⁷⁹ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 57-59.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 57.

⁵⁸¹ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 55-56.

By grouping the dimensions of ontology and soteriology in one chapter I intend to highlight how the ontological ‘descent’ and soteriological ‘ascent’ of Ibn ‘Ajībah are two arcs of the same circle of Being, representing the journey from origination (*al-mabda’*) and that of the return (*al-ma‘ād*) to God. To Ibn ‘Ajībah, the descending arc represents the top-down hierarchy of the origination (*al-mabda’*) of existence wherein God allows himself to be manifested through his ephemeral creation. On the other hand, the ascending arc is its inversion, representing the possibility of reintegration and return (*al-ma‘ād*) into that hierarchy, wherein the ephemerality of creation can be transcended and revealed to be God Himself. In Ibn ‘Ajībah’s analysis it is human beings who are specifically tasked with embodying and being representative of this potentiality of spiritual ascension, as it their souls where the fulcrum of these two arcs meet. Human beings thus represent a conjoining between these two arcs, with their base humanity being representative of the ‘descent’ and the potentiality of their spiritual realisation being representative of the ‘ascent’. Ibn ‘Ajībah illustrates this duality and cites the soteriological imperative as being collectively summarized in the Qur’ānic verse: “We created man in the best confirmation and thereafter We reduce him to the lowest of the low” (Qur’ān: 95:5-6). To him, the “best confirmation” is the primordial witnessing of God by the self-realised souls of human beings wherein their perpetual dependency on the Divine creative fiat and innate ontological poverty is shown to them.⁵⁸² As for the “lowest of the low”, he sees this as the baseness of being unaware of this perpetual ontological dependency, wherein one interacts with creation from this delusory position of ontological independence. It is between these two polarities that the soteriological imperative arises, as the only way human beings can escape from this lowliness, is by re-establishing their awareness of the relationship between the Divine as Absolute and seeing their own perpetual contingency therein. Consistent with our methodology this chapter will analyze the ontological and soteriological dimensions of *sulūk* within a theme of opposites, beginning with the opposites of light and darkness.⁵⁸³

⁵⁸² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 389.

⁵⁸³ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 245-246.

Light and Darkness

In the previous chapter, we discussed how Ibn ‘Ajībah uses the pairing of light (*nūr*) and darkness (*ẓulm*) to highlight teleological orientation. In this chapter, we will look at the ontological and soteriological orientation of such ‘light’. In this regard, light is synonymous with the Being of God, whereas darkness is everything other than Him, which by itself is synonymous with nonexistence. For this reason, Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s aphorism number 14 begins with stating, “The cosmos is all darkness. It is only illuminated by the manifestation of God in it.” In commenting on this aphorism, Ibn ‘Ajībah states that the cosmos is darkness when seen as being bereft of the Divine creative fiat of its Creator, and he compares this darkness in function to that of clouds veiling the sun. The analogy is intended to illustrate that the sun’s light continues to shine irrespective of the presence of clouds, even if not perceived, so whilst the sun continues to light up the earth, to someone veiled by the clouds it is as if the sun does not exist. As for one who knows the reality of the sun’s affair in lighting up the earth, then the sun is known to exist, even if the clouds veil it, for all visible light comes from it and nothing can be seen except through it, including the ability to see the clouds themselves. Ibn ‘Ajībah illustrates this as follows:

The cosmos from the position of its constitution and corporeality is all darkness. This is because it is a veil for whoever stops at its externality and does not witness its Lord. It is like clouds that cover the sun of gnosis for whoever stops with the exteriority of its beauty, as indicated by [the poet] Shushtarī who said: “Do not look towards the outer gleaning, [rather] plunge into the oceans of meaning, [for] it may be that of Me, you obtain seeing.” So, from this perspective the entire cosmos is darkness, and the only thing that illuminates it is the manifestation and appearance of God therein. Whoever looks at the outward of corporeality [alone] sees it as physical and opaque [bereft of light], but whoever penetrates unto its inward, sees it as light from the spiritual realm, as God says: “God is the light of the heavens and the earth.” (Qur’ān: 24:35) ...As for the people of gnosis (*‘irfān*), then their mystic insight (*baṣīrah*) has penetrated unto witnessing God, so they see the cosmos

as light pouring forth from the sea of divine omnipotence (*baḥr al-jabarūt*), hence the entirety of the cosmos for them is light.⁵⁸⁴

Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s 14th Aphorism continues, “So whosoever sees the cosmos and does not witness Him in it, or with it, or before it, or after it, is indeed in need of light, and is veiled from the sun of gnosis by the clouds of created traces.” In commenting on this section of the aphorism Ibn ‘Ajībāh cites how God is continually manifest through His creation, as all that exists must necessarily be from His created traces, for all means must necessarily disclose their source of origination. Here, Ibn ‘Ajībāh alludes to the difference in perception between those of *fanā’* and *baqā’*, wherein those of *fanā’* are unable to affirm the means supporting the cosmos due to their being annihilated in the source of their origination (God). As for those of *baqā’*, they are capable of experientially affirming the means (creation) alongside their source (God) and so are at a superior spiritual vantage point to *fanā’*. This is why Ibn ‘Ajībāh maintains that *baqā’* is more complete as a spiritual position, to him contingent creation as traces of the Divine still have a form of existence, albeit a contingent one, and to not affirm them is non-affirmation of an aspect of Divine disclosure. He states:

So, the people of the station of *baqā’* see God (lit. The Real) through the very falling of their eyes upon creation. Thus, they affirm all created traces through God, and do not witness anything other than Him. Notably, in their perfection they affirm the means as well as the source, hence they witness God whilst also witnessing the means, which means they witness God with it (the cosmos) with no prior or after (disclosure), and without any circumstantial proof needed, be it inward or outward....As for the people of the station of *fanā’* they see God prior to seeing creation. In other words, they do not see creation at all. So, they do not affirm creation [as a means]. This is because in their spiritual intoxication they are absent unto means, hence they are annihilated unto all of God’s *ḥikmah* (wisdom in

⁵⁸⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 55.

originating means) and have drowned in the sea of light, wherein created traces have been effaced for them.⁵⁸⁵

In Ibn 'Ajībah's metaphysics the variance in degrees of witnessing of the Divine is then revealed to be in accordance with the degrees of expansion of mystic vision or insight (*baṣīrah*). As Aphorism 36 denotes, "The ray of insight (*shu'ā' al-baṣīrah*) gives you witness of His closeness to you; insight itself (*'ayn al-baṣīrah*) gives you witness of your inexistence in front of His existence; [whereas] the actualized reality of insight (*ḥaqq al-baṣīrah*) gives you witness of [only] His existence, neither your inexistence nor your existence." Commenting on this Ibn 'Ajībah states that the greater the degree of such divine illumination, the greater the depth that the seeker comes to know his ontological poverty, until the very being of the seeker is revealed to be contingent on the continual gift of existentionation, effectively a non-existence disclosing God's sole existence.

The Veil: Existence versus Nonexistence

If the end of the spiritual path is the witnessing of God alone, then this raises the central ontological conundrum of the unrealised spiritual aspirant: how does he reconcile his ordinary experience of being unable to perceive the presence of God with his theological faith in God's omnipresence? Ibn 'Ajībah's response is to see the veil itself as being further proof of the manifestation of God, wherein God through the intensity of His phenomenal manifestation gives the impression He is veiled. Effectively such veiling occurs through the intensity of His manifestation - a veil without a veil, paradoxically manifesting the power of the veiler. This is why Ibn 'Ajībah references the ability to veil in this manner as delineating one of the Names of God, *al-Qahhār* (the Overpowering One), as he notes:

From the Names of God is *al-Qahhār* (the Overpowering One). From the manifestation of His overpowering is His veiling in His manifestation, His

⁵⁸⁵ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 55-56.

manifestation in His being hidden, and His hiddenness in His being manifested. For that which also indicates His overpowering is His veiling when there is no veil.⁵⁸⁶

Elsewhere Ibn ‘Ajībah draws an analogy between the ‘veil’ from God and the role a physical veil (*hijāb*) plays with regards to the beauty of women within Islamic law and custom. Citing his normative understanding that the physical veil (*hijāb*) as per Islamic law and custom is worn in the presence of strangers but can be removed in the intimacy of family, he states that many believers are veiled from an experiential witnessing of God because they have not acquired the degree of intimacy in their hearts which makes them akin to being such ‘family’ to the Divine presence. Ibn ‘Ajībah’s point is that just as physical beauty can only be appropriately shared in the context of intimacy and a familial network, the preciousness of witnessing the Divine beauty must be protected from eyes and hearts of those it is not beholden to, for such people do not possess the requisite readiness of intimacy.⁵⁸⁷

How does one remove the Veil?

In giving further detail as to how such a veil comes about, Ibn ‘Ajībah states that the cause of human beings to be veiled from God is primarily because of a fundamental delusion (*wahm*) of an individuated, separate self, as represented by the ego (*nafs*). Accordingly, the removal of such an ego would allow for the soul to return back to its primordially of witnessing God. This raises the quandary of how one goes about removing something that in itself does not exist? If one accepts Ibn ‘Ajībah’s premise that the ego is a delusion, then any attempt to remove it would in turn be arising from this delusionary state, and arguably such effort within such delusion would only affirm this prior state of delusion, an infinite regression of delusion. This seems to be the reason as to why Ibn ‘Ajībah’s proposed remedy to this dilemma is not to prescribe effort in and of itself, but to instead advocate for effort on the backdrop of contemplative enquiry or reflection which sees such ‘effort’ as

⁵⁸⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 57.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 55-56.

originating from God. In this manner such effort becomes ‘effortless’ in that it has no locus of an individual doer to be ascribed to.

To Ibn ‘Ajībah, the most powerful form of contemplative enquiry is for the spiritual aspirant to reflect on his own essence. His own preferred medium for evoking such contemplative capacity is the medium of poetry, as he sees this medium as being able to transcend the rational mind and summon a wisdom (*ḥikmah*) that penetrates the veils of duality. Ibn ‘Ajībah illustrates the power of this by quoting and commenting on two poems of Abu al-Ḥasan-al-Shustarī, which in their spiritual allusion indicate how an investigation and enquiry into the roots of the ego allows for its delusory nature to be dissolved through discovery of the Divine presence. As a teaching device, by using such metaphysically allusive poetry, Ibn ‘Ajībah demonstrates how he seeks to employ spiritual allusion in overcoming what may otherwise be an ineffable reality to the discursive mind.

He [al-Shustarī] said in this meaning: “I am something strange for whoever looks at me, I am the beloved, I am the lover, there is no other. O you who seek the essence of knowledge [of Reality], you have been occluded by your eyes. The wine [of love] is from you, and the knowledge [of Reality] and the secret [of Lordship] is with you. Return back to your own essence, and contemplate. There never was another.”⁵⁸⁸

Alongside quoting mystically allusive poetry, Ibn ‘Ajībah further comments and builds upon forms of spiritual enquiry put forward by Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh in his aphorisms that are designed to remove the egoic veil. In commenting on aphorism 16, Ibn ‘Ajībah discusses the negation of the existence of a veil from God from ten perspectives.⁵⁸⁹ The aphorism itself has a rhetorical question of constant refrain stating, “How can it be imagined that something veils Him?”, and Ibn ‘Ajībah heightens the query further by narrowing the focus of the seeker unto the ontological conundrum of the existence of God alongside the apparent non-existence of the seeker. These include his firstly citing the impossibility of a veil being present given that God is the One who manifests everything. Ibn ‘Ajībah notes

⁵⁸⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 58.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 59.

that just as the water that irrigates flowers of different colours is ultimately one, so it is that all created diversity returns back the unicity of God’s creative fiat. In this regard Ibn ‘Ajībah poses the rhetorical question: “How wondrously strange – how can He be known through knowing, when it is through Him that we know all knowing itself?”⁵⁹⁰ Secondly, he cites the perspective that God is manifested with everything, in that the contingent existence of anything only exists alongside His true existence. Thirdly, there is the perspective that God is manifested in everything, by which is meant that it is His omnipotent power (*qudrah*) that animates everything. Fourthly, there is the perspective that God is manifested to everything, in that He is being disclosed (*tajallā*) through the light of His attributes (*anwār ṣifātihi*) in all of creation. Fifthly, there is the perspective that God is manifest before everything, for everything in existence is considered originating through Him and returning back to Him. Ibn ‘Ajībah explains this by stating that God was by Himself in pre-eternity (*azaliyyah*) before creating anything, and in manifesting creation He ultimately disclosed Himself to Himself, since He is free of need of anything else knowing Him. So, all of creation is collected (*majmū‘*) in this theophanic disclosure of God to Himself and in this ultimate sense anything other than Him is not possible (*mamnū‘*). Sixthly, there is the perspective that God is manifest more than anything, for the existence of anything is ultimately eclipsed by His existence. This is evidenced by nothing having intrinsic existence (*lā wujūd lahā min dhātihā*), such that if God were not being made manifest, there would be nothing of creation as the independent existence of anything else is impossible (*muḥāl*). Seventh, there is the perspective that God is the solely One (*al-wāḥid*) alongside whom there is nothing, entailing that everything in existence is from His creative act wherein it can all be traced back to the Oneness of God in His actions (*wāḥidun fī af‘ālihi*). Eighth, there is the perspective that God is closer to ourselves than anything. Here, Ibn ‘Ajībah interprets this closeness in ontological terms, explicitly stating it is not a closeness of distance (*lā qurba masāfah*), but a closeness of ontology wherein God’s existence is found to precede all else. Ninth, there is the perspective that were it not for God nothing else would be manifest, this is because He is the sole creator of all, entailing a perpetual ontological dependence. Tenth, there is the ultimate sense that God is the only One who is truly in existence, whereas everything else is intrinsically non-existent. Ibn

⁵⁹⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 59.

‘Ajībah emphasizes this last point by saying that existence and non-existence are actually opposite categories, and as God is necessarily existent whereas creation is in reality non-existent, he calls into question how that which is non-existent can veil the truly existent, or how that which is ontologically true can be veiled by that which is ontologically false.⁵⁹¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah stresses in his conclusion to commenting on aphorism 16, that the ten perspectives by which such a veil is negated are all premised on there being no existence of anything alongside God (*lā siwā*).⁵⁹² Hence to him any talk of union (*ittiḥād*) between creation and God is superfluous and impossible (*muḥāl*), as there is no possible union between God who is pre-eternal and necessarily existent (*al-qadīm*) and His creation which is contingent and temporal (*al-ḥādith*), and essentially non-existent.

The Purpose of the Veil

It is important to note that the non-existence Ibn ‘Ajībah implies does not mean absolute nothingness, instead Ibn ‘Ajībah means created things have no intrinsic existence of their own, as all objects brought into being remain perpetually contingent in their existence, i.e. they exist through God. In this context, they do leave their traces or marks on the cosmos in displaying an apparent causality, but only insofar as they remain a pointer unto God Himself. This alludes to the deeper purpose of creation and the role of the veil therein, in that the appearance of the veil arises because of the interplay between two modes of God’s manifesting Himself, His omnipotent power (*qudrah*), which by definition does not display causality of created traces, and His instantiating means (*ḥikmah*), which demonstrates a causality through creation. Ibn ‘Ajībah states:

Know that when the Real desired to manifest the secrets of His essence (*asrār dhātīhi*), and the light of His attributes (*anwār šifātīhi*), He manifested through His omnipotent power (*qudrah*) a portion (*qabḍah*) from His eternal and everlasting light (*nūruhu al-azalī*). So, His omnipotent power (*qudrah*) required the manifestation of its effects and the witnessing of its light whereas His instantiating means (*ḥikmah*) required the draping of its veil (*hijābahā*), and the manifestation

⁵⁹¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 59 – 62.

⁵⁹² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 62.

of its covering (*astārahā*). So, when the *qudrah* poured forth its light into the manifest cosmos, the *ḥikmah* draped over it the protective cloak (*ridā' al-ṣawn*), such that the cosmos in its entirety became light covered in a veil (*al-akwān kulluhā nūran fī ḥijābin mastūr*).⁵⁹³

For this reason, it is important to note that for Ibn 'Ajībāh, the witnessing of God can never be of His essence, but of God's essence as manifesting Himself in the veil of contingent means (*ḥijāb al-ḥikmah*). He supports his argument by citing how even a Prophet of Moses's stature was barred from seeing God directly (without a veil) and instead instructed to look at a mountain. When God manifested Himself to the mountain without an intermediary of means, the mountain was obliterated, indicating that Moses would not be able to see Him except through an intermediary of means too.⁵⁹⁴ This positing of means is then used by Ibn 'Ajībāh as a pointer to the deeper purpose of man.

Purpose of Creation and Man

Ibn 'Ajībāh states that just as the purpose of manifestation of creation lies in God wishing to manifest Himself through the vehicle of contingent means, then the purpose of man is to be the locus and vehicle for the witnessing and beholding of this manifestation. More precisely, Ibn 'Ajībāh states that such witnessing is only bequeathed to those human beings chosen for God's special love (*li-maḥabbatihi*), for it is for them that the veil is rent asunder, and it only those who are given to behold God therein, or more appropriately to function as the mediums for God's beholding of Himself. As for the rest of creation, they are veiled, either in a form of overt disbelief, or in a form of formal abstract or theoretical belief that is not given to experience the depths of spiritual witnessing of the Divine. Ibn 'Ajībāh states that the latter category are 'veiled believers', being those who are chosen for God's service (*li-khidmatihi*) whilst being deprived of His intimate love that amounts to the bequeathal of witnessing Him. Such veiled believers are confined to attesting to God's existence in an inferential, deductive manner by seeking their proof through the created traces of His creation, which paradoxically is a form of blindness unto the reality of

⁵⁹³ Ibn 'Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 80.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibn 'Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 58.

ontological order. For Ibn ‘Ajībah states that God’s traces can only be secondary to His instantiating fiat of them and to attest to the primary through the secondary is a result of being veiled unto spiritual realities. For this reason, Ibn ‘Ajībah cites that there lies a huge difference between these veiled believers and those whom he calls the ‘lovers of God’, for the latter attest to the created traces through God and not the other way around, understanding the cosmos as it truly is, being the ephemeral traces of God. He states:

Then [after creating the cosmos] the Real (i.e. God) divided creation into two categories and separated them into two divisions: A category whom He chose for His love (*li-maḥabbatihi*). These are those whom He made of sanctity (*ahl al-wilāyah*), so He opened for them the door [unto Him] and removed for them the veil (*kashafa lahum al-ḥijāb*). So, He made them witness the secrets of His essence, and did not veil them therefrom with the created traces of His omnipotent power (*qudrah*). As for the other category, He established them in His service (*li-khidmatihī*), He made them from the people of His instantiated means (*ḥikmah*), having draped over them the veil of delusion (*ḥijāb al-wahm*), making them absent from the light of true knowledge and understanding (*fahm*). So, they stopped with the externality of the shell [of creation] and were not made to see the inward light [therein], this despite the intensity of its manifestation. So how glorious is the One who hides His secret with His *ḥikmah*, and who manifests His light with His *qudrah*...what a huge difference there is between those who take their evidence through Him in affirming the manifestation of His traces, and between those who take His traces as their proof to prove Him. Those who derive their proof through Him know the Truth – that of Real existence – and are its people (deserving of knowing it) ...As for those who derive their proof [from created traces] unto Him, then this is [only] because of their being distant from Him, [whilst they are] in the state of His being close to them; and their being absent from Him [whilst they are] in the state of His being present with them. What has distanced them is their delusion, and what has made them absent is their lack of understanding. For when was He ever absent such that the proof of created things be taken as way unto [proving] Him? Indeed, He is closer to you than your jugular vein. When was he

ever distant such that ephemeral created traces should be that which guide you unto Him?⁵⁹⁵

So, to Ibn ‘Ajībah the manner of interaction a spiritual aspirant has with the created cosmos determines their degree of proximity to the Divine, and whether they possess gnosis or not.

The State of the Gnostics and the World

To Ibn ‘Ajībah those chosen for the love of God are the gnostics (‘*ārifīn*). He defines them by quoting Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd, whom he refers to as the leader of the spiritual path (*imām al-ṭariqah*), as stating:

[The description of the gnostic is] a slave who has left aside his ego, being attached to the remembrance of his Lord, who has stood up to fulfil God’s rights, witnessing Him with his heart which has been set alight with the light of His guidance. The slave’s drink has become pure with the cup of divine love, for God has manifested Himself to him from beyond the curtains of His unseen realm. So, when he speaks, he speaks through God. And when he is silent, he is silent through God. And if he moves, then it is through divine permission, and if he is still then that is with God. So, he is through God and for God, and with God and from God, and towards God.⁵⁹⁶

Ibn ‘Ajībah then further elaborates on Junayd’s definition by defining the gnostic as being one for whom there is no need for anything to indicate God, because all indications imply a state of comparative estimate (*baynūnah*) and separation (*farq*).⁵⁹⁷ Whilst he states that the gnostic may employ such indications when speaking to those who do not share his state (of witnessing and being in God’s presence), he himself is in no need of them, as his own existence has already unfolded within the existence of his beloved.⁵⁹⁸ As for those dependent on created traces as their indications unto God, this is because they have been halted on the spiritual path with their beholding externalities without seeing the inner

⁵⁹⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 80 – 81.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 152.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 152.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 152 – 153.

realities therein. In this regard, he states that the created cosmos when seen from its outward appearance alone is actually an illusory deception (*ghirrah*) on two accounts. Firstly, what has been created of it from external beauty potentially leads to capriciousness and lustful appetites because of the desire to seek to possess it and an insatiable want for more when it comes to food, clothes, women, wealth, property, children and the like. In this manner people become occupied throughout their days, nights, months and years until their death which literally acts as the ‘destroyer of [their] pleasures’ (*hādīm al-ladhāt*), at which point all they have is regret (*nadam*), wherein sadly even that regret will not benefit them.⁵⁹⁹ Secondly, he points out the world has been made a potential deception, as a way of covering up God’s secret of sole independent ontological existence, it does this by manifesting an apparent causality of instantiated means (*ḥikmah*). In this second sense, Ibn ‘Ajībāh notes that the outward of the world when divorced from the inward is a ‘darkness’, which is the metaphorical term he uses for the bereftness of meaning, whilst its inward form is ‘light’ which is the metaphor he uses for disclosed meaning that illuminates the Divine. This is the reason he states that whoever is made to be halted with the outward is veiled and it only those who penetrate unto the inner light within all material form who are the ones beloved to God. In this regard he notes that the outward of the world is a temptation (*fitmah*) and its inward is an admonition (*‘ibrah*).⁶⁰⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībāh also compares the created world to ice, whose outward is solid (*jāmid*), and whose inward is liquid water (*mā’i ‘u*), so when the ice melts it returns back to its original form and there remains no trace of the original solid ice. He states that in similar manner when the subtle secrets (*asrār al-laṭīfah*) of the physical world become manifest, then its corporeal form melts and it returns back to its original form of light disclosing God.⁶⁰¹ This entails that each layer of created phenomena serves a dual function in being both a veil and a pointer. This dual function acting across all levels and gradations of ontological being entails that all conscious phenomena can either act as a pointer to a higher consciousness of meaning or a veil against this higher disclosure.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 164.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 164.

⁶⁰¹ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 243.

The Dual Capacity of Humanity

Ibn ‘Ajībah alludes how even the Prophets (and by implication the gnostics and saints), like other aspects of created phenomena hold the dual nature of being either a pointer towards God or act as veils away from God. Hence Ibn ‘Ajībah notes how the Qur’ān highlights that there is a deliberate trial and test in enabling Prophethood to be manifest as humanity, in that the onus lies on the onlookers to not be veiled by this human element. So, he states that the Qur’ān cites how some people are trials unto one another directly after referring to the phenomenon of Prophets walking in markets: “And We did not send before you, [O Muhammad], any of the Messengers except that they ate food and walked in the markets. And We have made some of you [people] as trial for others - will you have patience?” (Qur’ān: 25:20).⁶⁰² By extension, Ibn ‘Ajībah’s detailed discussion on Prophets is to illustrate his point about spiritual guides too. Humanity is a commonly shared attribute between those of the highest spiritual makeup and those of the lowest. In delineating this hierarchy of spiritual evolution Ibn ‘Ajībah warns against placing value on superhuman physical feats such a prolonged fasting, increased strength, and the ability to not need sleep. Instead he highlights that it is the inward that distinguishes the Prophets and the saints. In focusing on this inward, Ibn ‘Ajībah states how it is necessary that blameworthy inward attributes like jealousy, arrogance, rancour, obstinacy, showing off, anger, anxiety, fear of poverty, and the like, are all purified and cleansed in the hearts of the Prophets and the saints, and that this is where the ascendancy in their spirituality arises from. With regards to the Prophets, he considers them to be preserved of these negative traits from their birth and throughout their lives on account of their Prophethood. This is because Ibn ‘Ajībah subscribes to the normative Sunni view that the Prophets are infallible of such human follies (*ma’sūm*), with their character being the embodied form and representative of the message of the formal revelation that they were bequeathed. However, when it comes to the saints and spiritual guides (*awliyā’*), Ibn ‘Ajībah views their spiritual purity as being brought about by their spiritual struggle and acquisition (*kasb*) in their opposing blameworthy attributes. Resultantly, the saints are not all perfected in this regard, unlike the Prophets, and Ibn ‘Ajībah is prepared to admit degrees of fallibility amongst them. This

⁶⁰² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 393.

means that whilst Ibn ‘Ajībah admits to the possibility of gnostics having the odd lapses (*hafwah*) or slips (*zillah*), he does not see this as negating their spiritual ‘specialness’ (*khusūsiyyah*). So, he allows for the occasional anxiety, anger, and other slips in their saintliness but only in the manner of a passing breeze that comes and goes (*ka-’l-rīḥ yadribu wa yasrah*). This also entails that he does not allow for the rank of sainthood to be persistent in such mistakes and folly, for any such persistence would negate their claims to such a special rank.⁶⁰³ Thus, in Ibn ‘Ajībah's schema, the soteriological ascent (*taraqqī*) unto the experiential knowledge of God does not exclude the occasional slip or mistake, nor does it imply the absence of common human traits. Instead Ibn ‘Ajībah states that when God wishes to remove a person out of his base humanity, He causes the lights of His meaning to shine upon such a person which allows for their spirituality to defeat their sensorial aspects.⁶⁰⁴ In this manner Ibn ‘Ajībah highlights the importance of discerning such light which introduces the soteriological imperative.

Light upon Light

According to Ibn ‘Ajībah, the ability to traverse up this hierarchy of soteriological ascent, effectively a hierarchy of light, is dependent on the degree to which such light has been actualized within the hearts and souls. In this regard, this hierarchy could also be construed as a succession of veils of light, with each layer up the hierarchy opening itself to a more illuminatory or condensed form of light, and this light being further diluted or diffused as the hierarchy descends. It is the ability to traverse up these layers of light that lays the ground for a soteriological framework of evolution of souls in their own spiritual hierarchy. So, within this hierarchy, the lowest level of light becomes the level of the actions (*af‘āl*), corresponding to the creative traces in terms of corporeality. To Ibn ‘Ajībah, the attributes (*ṣifāt*) are veiled by actions (*af‘āl*), so this is level of the veiled believers, reliant upon traces of corporeality to indicate the Divine, and to ascend beyond this level marks the first point of soteriological ascent.⁶⁰⁵ Beyond this level, Ibn ‘Ajībah notes that it is at the level of the attributes (*ṣifāt*) that the gnostics (*‘arifīn*) are further distinguished amongst themselves

⁶⁰³ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 394.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 394.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 246.

and it is in this domain that the believers who are still veiled, relying on inferential proofs of created form as means unto God can actually ascend unto Him and become from the gnostics (*‘arifīn*). It is for this reason that he cites the sage ‘Abd al-Salām ibn Mashīsh as referring to this metaphysical plane of the attributes as the "gardens of spirituality" (*riyād al-malakūt*).⁶⁰⁶ Notably, to Ibn ‘Ajībāh it is this domain of the manifestation of the attributes (*ṣifāt*) that allows for the believer to witness God and to attain unto gnosis (*ma‘rifah*) in the first place. This is because Ibn ‘Ajībāh states the manifestation of the essence (*dhāt*) is pure divine rigor (*jalāl mahd*) such that if even one atom of that original light in its condensed form were to be revealed, then the entire universe would be burnt up and destroyed from its foundations. There thus becomes a need for a veil of light (*hijāb al-nūr*), or further veils of light, that dampen the original light of God. Effectively, he claims that the factor which dampens the intensity of light is the introduction of a medium (*wāsiṭah*) of further light, thereby diffusing its concentration. In this hierarchy of lights all these layers still proceed from the original light of the essence which alone had been disclosed without a medium (*nūruhu al-aṣliyyūn bilā wāsiṭah*). Ibn ‘Ajībāh states his need to articulate his light-based ontological scheme in some detail, citing as his motivation the fact that when he himself was a seeker he was unable to find anyone mentioning the matter in this manner before, despite his searching for it in quite some depth.⁶⁰⁷ This is surprising given that his articulation in terms of delineating a fundamental ontology through an intensity of light bears resemblance to the School of Illumination (*ishrāq*) of Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥya Suhrawardī (d. 605/1208) and is consistent with the development of the light-based metaphysics of the *Ḥikmah* tradition as highlighted in Chapter 3 entitled *Ḥikmah* with the Shādhilīyyah.

The Soteriological Imperative to Traverse beyond Outward Form

Having discussed and highlighted the role of light as successive veils diluted by the medium (*wāsiṭah*) of created traces within the cosmos, Ibn ‘Ajībāh introduces what he deems to be the soteriological imperative to ascend up these layers and traverse these veils. This imperative he believes is supported by the Qur’ānic verse: “Say: Look at what is in

⁶⁰⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 246.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 247.

the heavens and the earth.” (Qur’ān: 10:101). Ibn ‘Ajībah draws attention to the emphasis the Qur’ān places on looking at what is “in” the created cosmos and not simply looking at its outward form. To him, what is intended by “in” here, is that subtle light of disclosed Divine meaning, being the ability to ascend the hierarchy of meaning from Divine 'acts' to the 'attributes', culminating in the 'essence'. This verse is thus interpreted as an imperative for human beings to traverse beyond the outward of the cosmos unto its subtle reality in the world of light. Ibn ‘Ajībah states that those who stop with the outward are people who have remained with the shell (*qishr*), being veiled from the core (*lubb*) of creation. He cites that to remain with the shell of the created cosmos is to remain with its external corporeality alone and this entails a barrier which blocks the door of their understanding in opening up to the reality of meaning that animates the cosmos.⁶⁰⁸

Soteriology and Inward Perception

To Ibn ‘Ajībah the soteriological sense that allows one to look at the inward and ascend unto the knowledge of the essence of God is commensurate to the degrees of one's inner perceptivity. In the first instance, this requires that the aspirant come to know the oneness of God in the realm of His actions (*tawḥīd al-af‘āl*), which entails that one come to know there is no actor or doer except God. In this regard Ibn ‘Ajībah cites a host of Qur’ānic verses such as the following: “And your Lord creates what He wills and chooses (Qur’ān: 28:67);” “Indeed your Lord does whatsoever He wills (Qur’ān: 11:108);” and “And Allah creates you and that which you do (Qur’ān: 37:96).”⁶⁰⁹ The higher degree of perceptivity then becomes for the aspirant to come to know the oneness of God in the realm of His attributes (*tawḥīd al-ṣifāt*), and in this regard Ibn ‘Ajībah highlights four key attributes: hearing (*samī‘*), seeing (*basīr*), speaking (*mutakallim*), and willing (*qadīr*).⁶¹⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah’s use of these four attributes appears to be a part reference to what is theologically known as the seven primordial or entitative attributes (*ṣifāt ma‘ānī*) of God. It is assumed that his reference to four of the seven attributes was not by way of limitation, in that he also intended the other three attributes of knowing (*‘alīm*), intending (*murīd*) and self-living

⁶⁰⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 249.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 249.

⁶¹⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 249.

(*ḥayy*) which collectively constitute the seven primordial attributes. Evidence that Ibn ‘Ajībah sought to reference the more complete list of the seven attributes is demonstrated by his later quoting Qur’ānic verses that indicate the other remaining attributes. He quotes the Qur’ānic verse: “Indeed He is the all-wise, all-knowing (Qur’ān: 51:30),” indicating the attribute of knowing (‘*alīm*), and the verse “You did not intend except that God intended (Qur’ān: 76: 30),” indicating the attribute of intending (*murīd*).⁶¹¹ The only attribute of the seven primordial attributes he does not point to is the attribute of being self-living (*ḥayy*), but given this is considered to exclusively be that of God, this lack of reference would be consistent with normative Sunni understanding. At the highest level of soteriological ascension Ibn ‘Ajībah highlights what it means to arrive at knowledge of the oneness of God in the realm of His essence (*tawḥīd al-dhāt*), by alluding to two Qur’ānic verses: “He is God in the heavens and in the earth (Qur’ān: 6:3);” and “God is the light of the heavens and the earth (Qur’ān: 24:35).” Hence, to Ibn ‘Ajībah the reference to God as light here, is the highest degree of light, namely the light of His essence, undifferentiated by means.⁶¹² In this manner, Ibn ‘Ajībah asserts that all things exist through God existentiating them, being established so that God is witnessed, wherein these things then cease to exist independently once this witnessing happens, for the beholding of His Oneness effectively entails their erasure (*maḥāha*).⁶¹³ For him this lack of intrinsic existence of the cosmos must be witnessed for true beholding of God or gnosis to occur, being the necessary counterpart and corollary to witnessing the sole existence of God.

The Role of Human Beings

To Ibn ‘Ajībah the ultimate honour of human beings is that they have been made the elect of the created cosmos (*nukhbat al-akwān*) through their ability to be those that witness unto God. This he contends is the unique privilege given to human beings, for he holds that no other form of creation was given this role. Ibn ‘Ajībah posits that the capacity that allows for human beings to witness God’s creative traces across the entire ontological and soteriological hierarchy of His manifestation is because they have been made the middle

⁶¹¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 249.

⁶¹² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 250.

⁶¹³ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 250.

intersectionality (*‘ālam al-mutawassiṭ*) of the created cosmos. This entails that they are tasked with intersecting with both the domains of the abode of the corporeal world (*‘ālam al-mulk*), wherein lies the human traits of men, and the abode of spirituality (*‘ālam al-malakūt*), wherein lies the spiritual traits of angels. Ibn ‘Ajībah highlights how the corporeal world is where the animals reside, whereas the spiritual world is where the angels are, and in so far as human beings have access to both realms, they can ascend higher in spiritual rank than angels who are predisposed to good and do not have to rise above any base predispositions. In fact, it is precisely the spiritual struggle (*mujāhadah*) of human beings and their witnessing of God through this struggle, being an exercise of their free-will, which allows for humans to be distinguished (*maziyyah*) above the rest of creation. To Ibn ‘Ajībah this is also why humans have been entrusted with the role of stewardship of the rest of creation (*khilāfah*), as they alone have been singled out for the bearing of this immense undertaking of embodiment of meaning.⁶¹⁴

Effectively human beings have an immense innate potential, the caveat being that the realisation of this potential is dependent on their making the right choices between the polarities of light and darkness, between the angelic and the bestial dimensions of their own selves. In this capacity, human beings are divided into two broad groups: those who are veiled, whose baser humanity overrides their spirituality, with their darkness overriding light; and those whose spirituality overrides their base humanity with their light conquering their darkness. Ibn ‘Ajībah refers to the latter category as the 'special ones', and the former as 'the veiled', a group in which he includes the generality of the Muslims (*‘umūm al-muslimīn*) in that they are experientially bereft of witnessing God. Notably he includes within the special those who are striving to join them, those still travelling on the path but who have not yet arrived unto the experiential goal (*sā’irīn*). In this manner Ibn ‘Ajībah places paramount importance upon intention, highlighting that the very seeking of the goal of gnosis indicates a prior specialness. He metaphorically illustrates such seekers as having entered the 'battleground of the ego' (*maydān al-ḥarb*), referring to the advocates of this noble endeavour as knights (*firsān*). In his opinion, the endeavour and intention of entering such a 'battleground' itself indicates a bestowal of Divine grace wherein each person begins

⁶¹⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 388.

to gain ascendancy of his darkness commensurate to the degree of their sincerity (*ṣidq*) and love of their Lord.⁶¹⁵

The Innate Preciousness of All Human Beings

In alluding to the intersectionality and composite nature of human beings, inclusive of the corporeality of their bodies and the spirituality of their souls, Ibn ‘Ajībah highlights the preciousness of humanity. Pointing out that this balanced nature indicates the inherent nobility of all human beings, he refers to human souls as ‘precious jewels’ (*jawharah naftisah*), enwrapped and protected by a ‘precious corporeal body’ (*ṣadafun naftisun*). In this manner Ibn ‘Ajībah states that all human beings incorporate the entirety of the meanings of cosmos in themselves, for condensed within them is the meaning of the divine throne (*‘arsh*), and footstool (*farsh*), with the entire universe being placed at man’s disposal. To illustrate his point Ibn ‘Ajībah states how the heavens provide shade to humans, how the earth provides them support, how animals serve and benefit them, and how material resources provide them their energy for use, whilst the sun and moon provide them their light, making human beings the very pearls and centre of the universe.⁶¹⁶

To Ibn ‘Ajībah beyond being the most precious form of creation, human beings are also embodiments of the universe in microcosmic form.⁶¹⁷ So Ibn ‘Ajībah refers to the average human being as a microcosmic universe (*nuskhat al-‘ālam*), or a small universe (*kawnun ṣaghīrun*). As for those exceptional human beings whose spirituality triumphs over their humanity, he refers to such people as the larger universe (*al-‘ālam al-akbar*), wherein it is the physical universe itself which is microcosm to them (*nuskhatun minhu*).⁶¹⁸ This is because to Ibn ‘Ajībah, the underlying reality of the soul supersedes the universe, for its reality transcends all physical form. In support of this view he quotes the famous poet Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d.1235) who states that “the soul cannot be encompassed by the heavens and the earth.”⁶¹⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah illustrates his point by stating that the more the soul is purified, the

⁶¹⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 389.

⁶¹⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 389.

⁶¹⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 390.

⁶¹⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 390.

⁶¹⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 390.

more the corporeality of the universe shrinks commensurately.⁶²⁰ The culmination is the annihilation of the universe in its totality, wherein what remains for Ibn ‘Ajībah is the “All-living who never dies” (*fa lā baqā’ illā li ’-l-ḥayy alladhī lā yamūt*).⁶²¹ Whilst this is a matter that he claims can only be experientially understood by the gnostics, he does posit scriptural evidence for his belief as being derived from a prophetic statement, a *ḥadīth al-qudsī* (lit. ‘sacred *ḥadīth*’ in the Divine voice) which states: “God says: “The heavens and the earth cannot encompass me, but the heart of my believing slave can encompass me.”⁶²² To Ibn ‘Ajībah the believing slave referenced in this prophetic statement is the gnostic (‘*ārīf*’), because he is the one who has perfected both his belief and his slavehood. He posits that the sign of such people is that they are perpetually connected and gathered with the Divine (*ahl al-jam‘*), and hence are perpetually in the abode of spirituality (‘*ālam al-malakūt*’) and the Divine omnipotence (‘*ālam al-jabarūt*’). This to Ibn ‘Ajībah is what is represented as the real freedom, for he deems everyone else to be imprisoned by the corporeality of the universe (*masjūnun bi-’l-kawn*), and delimited by their humanity (*maḥṣūran fī bashariyyah*). To Ibn ‘Ajībah such gnosis thus becomes the expansiveness of witnessing God, a freedom from the previous constricted confines of corporeality, freedom from which he posits as the “true happiness/contentment”.⁶²³

Difference between *Jadhb* and *Sulūk*

Ibn ‘Ajībah states that those firmly placed in gnosis (*rāsikhūn fī ’l-ma’rifah*), allow for their souls to become full of Divine light, allowing for its rays to emit from their outward, but not to overpower them, so they are in control of their outward unlike those who are pulled out of themselves (*majdhūb*).⁶²⁴ The word *jadhb* (‘pulled out’) in the context of Sufism describes a spiritual experience that overpowers the intellect and a person denoted by this experience is called someone pulled out of themselves or a *majdhūb* (pl. *majādhīb*). Often understood to be ‘holy mad men’ in the sense that the psychological framework of

⁶²⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 390.

⁶²¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 390.

⁶²² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 390.

⁶²³ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 390.

⁶²⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 394.

such people is often disturbed as a result of this experience, these people are often contrasted with the more methodological format of spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*), serving as a warning to those who stray from its more normative balance. Ibn ‘Ajībah himself is more commending in assessing the worth of a *majdhūb*, not denying to them a type of arrival unto the Divine presence, referring to them as a people of specialness (*al-mukhaṣṣiṣūn*). To him, the definition of true *jadhb* is when an experience of unveiling occurs without the means of spiritual struggle (*mujāhadah*), and is one in which such people are brought to the witnessing of the Divine presence at the level of the light of the essence, wherein that light overpowers them and they are removed from their senses thereby. It is because of this psychological dishevelment that the spiritual journey (*sayr*) of the *majdhūb* becomes the opposite to that of normative spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*), in that the *majdhūb* is tasked with reconstituting a more balanced psyche within themselves, having previously been pulled out of their mind.⁶²⁵

Ibn ‘Ajībah spends some time discussing the way of the *majdhūb* and the difference between them and those of *sulūk*. He cites the path of *jadhb* as being one of spiritual descent (*tadallī*), in contradistinction to the path of spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*), whose more methodological format is that of spiritual ascent (*taraqqī*). By descent here he means a departure from an overpowering spiritual experience, wherein the task is to reconstitute essential human function, the word descent drawing on the metaphor of a person coming down from a height (*ahl al-tadallī*).⁶²⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībah notes that such people may negate the causal wisdom embedded in Divine Law (*sharī’ah*), as the *sharī’ah* effectively operates in a world of contingent means.

Jadhb and the Sharī’ah

It is noticeable that Ibn ‘Ajībah allows for such negation to happen and still be tolerated for the *majdhūb*, contingent on the experience of *jadhb* being true. Having previously validated that the *majdhūb* is a person of a spiritual specialness (*ahl al-khuṣṣiyyah*), his

⁶²⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 396.

⁶²⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 396.

allowing for an outward negation of the Divine Law (*yunkiru -l- sharī'ah*), sets up a conundrum of such spiritual specialness appearing to be in contravention to Divine Revelation and Prophetic prescription. His justification for this understanding is that such people have been psychologically overcome (*maghlūb*) and cannot be held accountable as per the *sharī'ah* itself. He states that just as an insane person cannot be judged on account of their conception of reality, the *majdhūb* having been pulled out of his senses into seeing the unicity of God alone, cannot be held accountable for only being true to his experience.⁶²⁷ Whilst Ibn 'Ajībah does not discuss this scenario in a lot of detail, the question does arise as to whether this understanding could be extended and transposed to *majdhūb* people of other faiths, especially if such *jadhb* was not faith-specific? Given that Ibn 'Ajībah does not delimit the experience of *jadhb* to Muslims alone, and seemingly posits no requirement for spiritual readiness nor spiritual struggle, what would be his theological understanding if such *jadhb* happened to someone outside the Islamic faith, or no faith at all? Essentially, this opens up the possibility for a person from another faith in his state of *jadhb* denying Islam in terms of its formal, ritualistic structure, effectively denying the *sharī'ah* as other *majdhūbs* may do, and to still potentially be considered spiritually special to Ibn 'Ajībah. Given Ibn 'Ajībah's allowance for the possibility of non-conformity to Islam in this state of being spiritually overpowered (*maghlūb*), another question that arises is whether there are grades of such a manner of being overpowered, allowing for the possibility of grades of non-conformity with Islam? These questions are not addressed within the *Īqāz* and given the religious identity politics in the *Maghreb* of his time with foreign missionary activity and colonisation, any discussion of such topics would have been detrimental to his primary mission in preparing and training spiritual adepts.

Sulūk* is more preferable than *Jadhb

What Ibn 'Ajībah does state clearly, is that when given to choose between the two ways of *jadhb* and *sulūk*, the latter is more preferable. Ibn 'Ajībah considers someone involved in *sulūk* or spiritual ascent (*mutaraqqī*) to be higher than the *majdhūb* with the path of spiritual

⁶²⁷ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 396.

descent (*mutadallī*), because the former has faced the difficulties of the path, having confronted his own lusts and passions, and having succeeded in traversing them. As for the *majdhūb* he has been carried along (*maḥmūl*) exclusively from the outset of his spiritual path through divine grace, and as an occurrence this is rare (*nadir*) and hence unable to be emulated.⁶²⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah states that what is desired for people is to be involved in spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*) and then as the culmination and fruits of their struggle, for them to attain unto *jadhb*, wherein they are now able to integrate this experience and return in a functional manner to the world of means with this state. In this interplay between *sulūk* and *jadhb* Ibn ‘Ajībah posits there are four types of spiritual travellers: those exclusively of *sulūk*; those of *jadhb* alone; those who have *sulūk* and then attain unto *jadhb*; and finally, those who have *jadhb* and then do *sulūk*.⁶²⁹ To Ibn ‘Ajībah the best of these four are those who have *sulūk* and then attain unto *jadhb*. Despite this, he retains a special status in this pattern for his own path, the *Shādhilīyyah*, stating that they seem to have both *jadhb* and *sulūk* simultaneously from the outset, literally from the first spiritual ‘step’ (*min awwali qadamin*).⁶³⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah notes:

The wayfaring one who is ascending (in *sulūk*) is more complete than the one who is descending (in *jadhb*) when it comes to being able to impart spiritual guidance and education. This is because the one in *sulūk* has traversed the difficulties of the spiritual path and their states. This is unlike the *majdhūb*, for he has been carried [by God’s grace] and this is rare, in that what is common with people is the way of *sulūk*, followed by their attaining *jadhb* thereafter. The spiritual path of the *Shādhilīyyah* predominantly tends to have a joining between *jadhb* and *sulūk* from the very first step. Here is what is meant by *jadhb* is the ‘pulling out’ (*ikṭīṭaf*) of the soul from seeing the created universe into seeing the Creator of the universe.⁶³¹

⁶²⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 396.

⁶²⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 397.

⁶³⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 397.

⁶³¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 397-398.

Soteriological Semiotics

Ibn ‘Ajībah’s reference to the superiority of the spiritual wayfarer (*sālik*) above that of the *majdhūb* is with regard to the differences in their wayfaring. In terms of ultimate attainment both categories in the end realise the fallacy of their own ontological independence, for if the *majdhūb* realises this at the inception of his path, then the *sālik* realises this at the end of his. To Ibn ‘Ajībah the *sālik* is superior is because in his soteriological development, he comes to perceive his own ontological poverty having undergone the rigors of the spiritual path, and hence has learnt more. This is because to Ibn ‘Ajībah, soteriological development involves adherence to an established order of spiritual discipline and those whose spiritual illumination occurs prior to their undergoing this are bereft of the fruits of this discipline. Hence the *majdhūb* having not done the spiritual work has a sainthood or specialness of a lesser stature to that of the realised *sālik*. The *sālik* can guide others, as he has acquired a degree of soteriological semiotics above the *majdhūb*, being able to read the signs of the spiritual path, whereas the *majdhūb* is unable to impart spiritual guidance and education to others because of his lack of knowledge of such semiotics.⁶³² This is why Ibn ‘Ajībah believes it is the *sālik* who is intended in the Qur’ānic verse: “We shall surely show them our signs in the utmost horizons [of the outer cosmos] and within themselves [their inner universe], until it will become clear unto them that He [God] is indeed the Truth” (Qur’ān: 41:53)⁶³³ So the development of a soteriological semiotics is implied in the makeup of the cosmos and spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*) is determined by the degree this semiotics is developed. This affirming of things through God also applies to the role of spiritual opposition, in that Ibn ‘Ajībah sees soteriological wisdom and purpose even in those things that outwardly oppose one on the spiritual path such as the devil and the ego.

The Soteriological Wisdom of Spiritual Opposition

To Ibn ‘Ajībah everything in existence serves a soteriological purpose whether in a form of guiding afresh or of realigning the spiritual aspirant in his trajectory towards the Divine.

⁶³² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 397-398.

⁶³³ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 398.

In this manner, the sincere aspirant (*sālik*) is tasked with bringing positivity to every phenomenon, for in its ultimate sense, everything serves his journeying to the Divine. Illustrating this Ibn ‘Ajībah discusses the soteriological wisdom behind the existence of both the devil and the ego in his commentary on Aphorism no.237. The aphorism states: “He [God] only made the devil an enemy unto you, that He may drive you through him towards Himself. And He only made your ego machinate against you, so that your approaching unto Him would be perpetual”. Concerning the wisdom of the existence of the devil, Ibn ‘Ajībah highlights four causal factors. Firstly, in recognition of the enmity of the devil and the cognition of his own weakness in opposing him, the believer is forced to flee to God for his protection, which in itself is a good thing. Secondly, the devil serves as a proof and case against humanity, such that when they choose to disobey God this can only be because they have chosen to obey the enemy of God, and in this regard any punishment they requite is just. Thirdly, the devil serves as a convenient metaphorical ‘dustbin’ (*mandīlan*), wherein the evil elements of the world can be placed through their attribution to him, thus lightening the theological issue of theodicy by not directly ascribing such elements to the Divine Hand. Fourthly, the devil allows for the manifestation of the various ranks of the believers, in that they are distinguished in their spiritual warfare (*muḥārabah*) and struggle with him.⁶³⁴ Finally, Ibn ‘Ajībah concludes his soteriological analysis of the devil by quoting a dream narrated by its protagonist, Saḥl ibn ‘Abdullah al-Tustarī, wherein Saḥl encounters the devil joyously laughing. On being asked why he laughs, the devil quotes a Qur’ānic verse that states God’s mercy encompasses all things indicating thereby that he too is deserving of such mercy, given that he too is a thing.⁶³⁵ When Saḥl protests that the availing of such mercy is contingent on righteousness, the devil defeats Saḥl in the debate by highlighting that righteousness is a contingent attribute, whereas mercy is perpetual in its ascription to the Divine, and the perpetual must always override the contingent.⁶³⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībah does not further analyse the story except to say that this is correct from a position of ultimate unicity, for even the manifestation of righteousness on behalf of a devotee is an act of facilitation by Divine grace, since God is the One who instantiates

⁶³⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 374.

⁶³⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 374.

⁶³⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 374.

such righteousness. It appears that by concluding this story with even the devil having hope of attaining mercy, Ibn ‘Ajībah is alluding to a deeper metaphysics and ultimately a theology which foregrounds mercy, wherein the ultimate wisdom behind existence is to manifest and perfect this mercy.

As for the soteriological wisdom behind the ego, Ibn ‘Ajībah notes that its constant downward pull towards the earthly plain of selfish desires necessitates a spiritual opposition which results in a corresponding upward orientation towards the ‘sky’ of piety. He cites that just as the ego is programmed to always bring about spiritual devolution, the soul which opposes it is in constant spiritual evolution (*taraqqī*), and that this is the intent and meaning of the phrase “so that your approaching unto Him [God] would be perpetual”.⁶³⁷ Thus, to Ibn ‘Ajībah both the devil and the ego are inwardly taken to be spiritual blessings, in that they help the spiritual aspirant in his wayfaring towards God, even if they remain trials in their outward form. Ibn ‘Ajībah cites the forms of opposition on the spiritual path as being four: the ego, the devil, caprice and the world. For each of them the remedy differs, so for the world it is seclusion; for caprice it is quietude; for the devil it is hunger; and finally for the ego it is waking up early in the night for worship.⁶³⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah’s advice for the spiritual aspirant who does not get success in their encounter with spiritual opposition is to remain optimistic, for in their perseverance, not giving into boredom or fatigue, he states that whoever knows the goal shall eventually find success facilitated for them.⁶³⁹

The Grace of being covered by Lordly Attributes

In the ultimate soteriological sense, Ibn ‘Ajībah states that the wayfarer does not arrive at gnosis through his own effort but by the grace from God. This he defines as happening when the wayfarer’s baser human attributes are covered by the attributes of God’s lordship (*awṣāf al-rubūbiyyah*). Ibn ‘Ajībah cites Sheikh Aḥmad Zarrūq as listing four such

⁶³⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 375.

⁶³⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 375.

⁶³⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 375.

interchange of attributes: God's freedom of need covering human existential need (*ghinā* over *faqr*); His honour covering human humility ('*izz* over *dhul*); His omnipotence covering human incapacity (*qudrah* over '*ajz*); and finally, His strength covering human weakness (*quwwah* over *ḍa'f*). In culmination, these four attributes result in the wayfarer no longer seeing himself ontologically independent, enabling him to see his ontological poverty (*faqr*), granting him the state of freedom of need (*ghinā*) through beholding his existence through his Lord. Ibn 'Ajībah states:

The attributes of lordship (*awṣāf al-rubūbiyyah*) are honour ('*izz*), magnitude, majesty, freedom from need, omnipotence and knowledge; and the like from the attributes of perfection of which there is no end. As for the attributes of slavehood (*awṣāf al-'ubūdiyyah*) they are humility, neediness, incapacity, weakness, and ignorance, and the like which are appropriate to the state of slavehood from the sense of lack...Shaykh Zarrūq said: "The attributes of lordship are four, and they are met with four attributes of slavehood: firstly, freedom from need (*ghinā*) which is to be met by neediness (*faqr*). Secondly, honour ('*izz*) which is to be met by humility (*dhul*); thirdly, omnipotence (*qudrah*), to be met by our incapacity ('*ajz*); and fourthly, strength (*quwwah*), to be met by weakness (*ḍa'f*). All of these attributes necessitate the others, if one were to be found, then all of them would be found. Likewise, the opposing attributes necessitate that which they stand opposed to.⁶⁴⁰

Thus, in this manner the soteriological process resolves itself by a realisation of the attributes of God's lordship which is premised on a realisation of the attributes of one's own slavehood, culminating in an ontological poverty (*faqr*) unto God. Such ontological poverty finds its expression in virtues such as trust in God, contentment in His decree, obedience to His command, etc. In its function this *faqr* of the gnostic results in the state of witnessing God (*mushāhadah*). Ibn 'Ajībah states that it is only the gnostic who has attained unto this *faqr* who comes to see reality as it truly is by witnessing God. In terms of stages of such realisation, the spiritual wayfarer may be given to experience the state of

⁶⁴⁰ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 223 – 224.

fanā’ (annihilation), wherein he loses consciousness of his own being, but whilst desirable, to Ibn ‘Ajībah this is an interim state. He states such a person is still in the process of spiritual wayfaring (*sā’ir*) as were he to remain in this state, then he would be unable to see anything except the Divine omnipotence, being similar to the *majdhūb* who has been pulled out from seeing the creates traces of the Divine. For Ibn ‘Ajībah the true gnostic (*‘ārīf*) is the one who moves beyond *fanā*’ and takes the ‘return’ leg, wherein by returning unto creation and beholding and affirming its traces through the Divine fiat, he attains unto the station of subsistence (*baqā*’), affirming all things through God and His fiat.⁶⁴¹

Conclusion

Ibn ‘Ajībah's schema of ontology and soteriology within the *Īqāz* begins from a position of God’s absolute unicity and His intention to be known, highlighting the aspirant’s task to come to know God in accordance with this purpose. The chapter then proceeded to list the various forms of impediments and oppositions at different grades and levels that necessitate different spiritual proprieties (*ādāb*) for the aspirant to embody. In exploring the nature of man and that of God, the chapter demonstrated how such queries are to be answered by taking the reader on a journey between the polarities of God to man, and then back again. The ontological domain details the desire of God to manifest Himself, and in the apparent manifestation of ontic entities, there unfolds the ontological descent of God from His essence (*dhāt*) to the cosmos (*kawn*), with man as the elect of this created cosmos (*nukhbat al-akwān*). This ontological disclosure has a graded descent, representing Ibn ‘Ajībah’s threefold disclosure of God. This begins from the domain of Divine omnipotence (*‘ālam al-jabarūt*) as represented by His essence (*dhāt*), descends to an abode of spirituality (*‘ālam al-malakūt*) that represents His attributes (*ṣifāt*) and culminates in the created traces of the corporeal world (*‘ālam al-mulk*) which are His actions (*af‘āl*). To Ibn ‘Ajībah, the three domains of the cosmos represent the levels of God’s manifestation that are to be known, wherein it is specifically the human being who microcosmically encompasses all three domains within himself through whom such knowing happens. In realizing himself, the aspirant realises the entirety of the created cosmos, and in this manner, he serves as an

⁶⁴¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 280.

isthmus (*barzakh*), being the middle intersectionality (‘*ālam al-mutawassit*’), or the means by which God knows Himself. This entails that aspirants are tasked with the soteriological ascent of intersecting their innate abode of spirituality with the abode of the corporeal world. In their spiritual struggle (*mujāhadah*), such aspirants come to realise the soteriological wisdom of their shortcomings, of their suffering and even their spiritual opposition as only serving this ascent. Despite their efforts, the soteriological ascent is only to be resolved by an act of grace, one that microcosmically mirrors the entire arc of God’s theophany, as all things ontologically proceed from Him and soteriologically return back to Him.

Underpinning the arcs of such ascent and descent, is the *adab* imperative for the human being to actualize the attributes of his slavehood, by realizing his innate emptiness (in terms of his former assumed ontological independence). This is the *adab* of *takhalluq* or embodiment of Divine character within oneself which is achieved by first emptying oneself of egoic attachments. Ibn ‘Ajībāh refers to this process as being covered by the attributes of God’s lordship, thereby displaying God’s fullness. Such a person has returned to his primordial witnessing of God, having realised his own and the rest of creation’s innate ontological poverty (*faqr*), he is now ultimately free from any other need (*ghinā*). In this manner both the ontological and soteriological dimensions cannot but correspond to an epistemological framework too, for what is shared about the arcs of ontological descent and soteriological ascent ultimately represent an *adab* with knowledge. This is because the soteriological ascent requires an epistemological shift. It is an embodiment of a knowing wherein the aspirant’s inherent contingency is realised and revealed unto himself. Our final section on thematic analysis on the *Īqāz* will look at this epistemological dimension.

Chapter 8: Epistemology

In the previous chapter we covered the ontological and soteriological dimensions of the spiritual aspirant, detailing the trajectory that results in them realizing their own ontological poverty (*faqr*). This chapter focuses on the epistemological dimension of that trajectory by focusing on the manner of realisation of this mystical knowledge and what this knowledge entails. Whilst it should be noted that Ibn ‘Ajībah does not explicitly advocate an epistemology, the *Īqāz* does indicate an epistemic model which one could say is founded on the realisation of God’s unicity (*tawhīd*). For this reason, this chapter focuses on the *Īqāz*’s discussion of the nature of such knowledge (*‘ilm*) as it pertains to such a paradigm of *tawhīd*. It discusses how such knowledge is established in the heart of the spiritual aspirant (*murīd*), and the means by which this knowledge is determined and delineated.

Types of knowledge in the *Īqāz*

In his introduction to the *Īqāz* Ibn ‘Ajībah posits the book as encompassing four types of knowledge. He states that the first type of knowledge is that of admonition and remembrance (*tadhkīr* and *wa‘z*); the second is the knowledge for purifying outward action; the third is the knowledge of spiritual states and the fourth and final knowledge is that of gnosis.⁶⁴² In positing this order, Ibn ‘Ajībah is listing them in a summative manner as a continuum of spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*) wherein the last two types of knowledge is the ultimate goal of the *Īqāz*, with the three previous elements being essential foundations that lead to it. This is demonstrated by a closer analysis of the types of knowledge as we will discuss.

By the first type of knowledge Ibn ‘Ajībah is not interested in mere oratory but of a discourse by which he can take the soul to task, as a way of provoking an initial awakening of aspiration in the manner of the title of the book *Īqāz al-Himam* ('Awakening of aspiration'). This is why all the works he lists as references of this type are popular, foundational and practical orientated books of Sufism written by well-known Sufi scholars

⁶⁴² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 18.

such as those of Ibn al-Jawzī,⁶⁴³ al-Muḥasibī,⁶⁴⁴ and the initial portions of the books *al-Iḥyā*,⁶⁴⁵ and *al-Qūt*,⁶⁴⁶ and the *al-Taḥbīr al-Qushayrī*.⁶⁴⁷ The implication is that Ibn ‘Ajībāh is stating that the *Īqāz* assumes the need for necessary foundations within Sufism.

Of the second type of knowledge, this is what is commonly referred as the practical Sufism of purification (*tazkiyyatu ’l-nafs*), by which is meant the removal of negative traits (*takhliyah*) and the adorning of positive traits (*taḥliyah*). This is a purificatory framework traditionally used in Islamic medicine, the analogy of which is used explicitly by Ibn ‘Ajībāh in the *Īqāz*.⁶⁴⁸ This entails he knows the various requirements he needs along the way, the praiseworthy attributes he needs to adorn himself with and the negative attributes he needs to remove from himself as purification. Ibn ‘Ajībāh emphasizes this point by stating:

The ultimate issues of concern in this knowledge are the matters that the spiritual aspirant (*al-sālik*) enquires into and acts in accordance with its dictates during the course of his spiritual wayfaring (*al-sayr*). Such as sincerity (*al-ikhhlās*) being a condition for deeds, abstinence (*al-zuḥd*) being a pillar in the spiritual path (*al-ṭarīq*), and spiritual retreat (*al-khalwa*) and silence (*al-ṣamt*) both being key requirements and the like of these dictates. So, these are the issues of concern for this knowledge and its necessary that they be comprehended before beginning to embark in this discipline both intellectually and experientially, and God knows best.⁶⁴⁹

This type of purificatory discourse in Sufism is usually epitomized within a Sunni normative framework by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā’ ’ulūm al-dīn* (*Revival of the Religious Sciences*), especially being denoted by the last two quarters of the *Iḥyā’*,

⁶⁴³ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān bin ‘Alī b. Muḥammad Abu ’l-Farash bin al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201)

⁶⁴⁴ Abu ‘Abdullah al-Ḥārith bin al-Muḥasibī (d. 243/ 858)

⁶⁴⁵ *Iḥyā’ ’ulūm al-dīn* by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111)

⁶⁴⁶ *Kitāb Qūt al-qulūb fī mu’āmalat al-maḥbūb wa-waṣf ṭarīq al-murīd ilā maqām al-tawḥīd* by Abū Ṭālib Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī Makkī (d. 388/998).

⁶⁴⁷ *Al-Taḥbīr fī al-tadhkīr* by ‘Abd al-Karīm ibn Hawāzin Qushayrī (d. 466/1074)

⁶⁴⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 84

⁶⁴⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 16.

consisting of the destructive vices (*al-muḥliqāt*) followed the salvific traits (*al-munjiyāt*). Ibn ‘Ajībah himself references the works of al-Ghazālī by which he most likely intends these aforementioned last two quarters of the *Ihyā’*. He also references the works of Shahāb al-Dīn ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191), by which he most likely intends the book *‘Awārif al-Ma‘ārif* (‘The Knowledge of those Who Know’). Ibn ‘Ajībah states:

[This is] knowledge of purifying outward action and the rectification of inward states through the adornment of the inward with praiseworthy character and the cleansing of it from blameworthy attributes. This is the portion allotted to those who have sincerely orientated themselves towards God and the beginners from amongst those who are wayfaring unto Him. The book has incorporated thereof a fair share, sources of which are from the books of al-Ghazālī,⁶⁵⁰ al-Suhrawardī,⁶⁵¹ and the likes of them.⁶⁵²

About the third type of knowledge, defined as the ‘knowledge of the spiritual realisation of transitory states (*aḥwāl*) and established stations (*maqāmāt*)’, Ibn ‘Ajībah states there is a need to know the "reality and difference between what is a spiritual state (*al-ḥāl*), a passing spiritual experience (*al-wārid*) and a spiritual station (*al-maqām*) and likewise."⁶⁵³ About this knowledge, he describes this in the following way:

Knowledge of the spiritual realisation of transitory states and established stations, and the rulings pertaining to spiritual experiences and the mutual abidingness of spiritual ranks (*al-munāzalāt*). This is the destiny of those honoured from amongst the wayfarers and the beginners from amongst those who have attained unto gnosis. This type of knowledge is most of what occurs in this book. The subject matter of this knowledge is derived from the likes of books authored by al-Ḥātimī⁶⁵⁴ with

⁶⁵⁰ Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111)

⁶⁵¹ Shahāb al-Dīn Abu Hafs ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191)

⁶⁵² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 18.

⁶⁵³ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 16.

⁶⁵⁴ By whom Ibn ‘Ajībah meant Ibn ‘Arabī al-Ḥātimī aṭ-Ṭā’ī (d.638/1240), also known as al-Shaykh al-Akbar (the greatest teacher) amongst Sufis.

regards to spiritual dealings (*al-mu'āmalāt*) and al-Būnī⁶⁵⁵ on the mutual abidingness of spiritual ranks (*al-munāzalāt*), and other than them.⁶⁵⁶

It is interesting that Ibn 'Ajībah states that this knowledge is most of what occurs in the *Īqāz* and that amongst the scholars he chooses to reference for this core subject of his book is Ibn 'Arabī. Here it appears that Ibn 'Ajībah is letting us know the degree of his spiritual allegiance to Ibn 'Arabī, that when it comes to the core of the spiritual tradition he intends to convey, he is in Ibn 'Arabī's intellectual lineage, as we have highlighted in Chapter 3.⁶⁵⁷

Concerning the fourth type of knowledge, Ibn 'Ajībah is succinct in stating it is the "Knowledge of gnosis and inspirational unveilings. And included in the book thereof is what is readily apparent."⁶⁵⁸ Ibn 'Ajībah's succinct definition is presumably because having discussed that most of the knowledge in the *Īqāz* is the knowledge that leads unto gnosis (knowledge type 3), he is now highlighting that beyond such a point, there is not much that can be added discursively. To Ibn 'Ajībah, any sincere engagement with the *Īqāz* has to involve a transformative element, being a path that leads to real *tawhīd*. Once that has been attained, then the journey beyond, within such *tawhīd* is a journey of endless dimension, given that God is continually revealing Himself. So, it is the path to this experiential *tawhīd* that Ibn 'Ajībah is primarily concerned with, not the path within such a *tawhīd* given the near impossibility of such a task and the paucity and rarity of such an audience. So, with a certainty of conviction, Ibn 'Ajībah leaves no doubt to the reader as to his own faith in the *Īqāz* in delivering this subject, stating:

In summation (*jumlah*), this book incorporates whatever is in the books of the Sufis, both in their encyclopaedic larger books and their condensed smaller books. It then, (when compared to them) goes even further in its exposition and in its succinctness

⁶⁵⁵ By whom Ibn 'Ajībah meant a Sufi of Maghrebi origin called Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn Yūsuf Abū al-Abbās al-Būnī (d. 622/1225).

⁶⁵⁶ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 18.

⁶⁵⁷ Interestingly the section on the four types of knowledge is almost a verbatim quote from the 15th commentary on the Hikam of Shaykh al-Zarrūq entitled *Miftāḥ al-ifādati lidhawī al-'uqūli wa al-ḥimam* 'alā ma 'ānī alfāz kitāb al-ḥikam, and yet Ibn 'Ajībah omits a cautionary note about the works of Ibn 'Arabī that al-Zarrūq includes here wherein he says: " *wa fihā mahāwin faḥdharhā* (and in it are slippery slopes so beware)".

⁶⁵⁸ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 18.

of expression. The path that the book has adopted is a path of *tawhīd*. No one is capable of negating this, nor point to faults therein, for there is no praiseworthy attribute except that the book is adorned with it, and no blameworthy attribute except that it was removed therein through the permission of God.⁶⁵⁹

So, the ultimate concern of Ibn ‘Ajībah is that the spiritual aspirant learn the way of spiritual wayfaring (*al-sayr*) and actualize this experiential *tawhīd* in his life.

True Mystic Knowledge is not determined by books

Given that to Ibn ‘Ajībah the *Īqāz* is primarily concerned with actualizing *tawhīd* experientially, then the knowledge that has to be prioritized on the spiritual path is one of spiritual experience (*‘ilm al-adhwāq*), being one attained directly from God (*‘ilm al-ladunnī*, lit. Knowledge from the Divine presence). Accordingly, Ibn ‘Ajībah states that to rely on sources outside of one’s own direct experience can never be a valid means of attaining unto this rarefied form of knowledge. In this regard, he notes that whilst it is natural for people to understand and articulate things based on the perspective that God has destined for them, very few perspectives are summative enough to encompass the entirety of spiritual experience. He also notes that often what is written in books is specific to the experience of the author and reading too many books can actually weaken spiritual aspiration because the nature of such knowledge is that it gives the illusion of acquisition, whereas the impetus to realise such knowledge for oneself still remains.⁶⁶⁰ He states:

If you wish that experiential knowledge (*‘ilm al-adhwāq*) be expanded for you, then cut away from yourself [mere] book knowledge. For the longer you remain dependent on the treasure of another you will not dig unto your own treasure ever. So, desist reading [mere] topics, and instead be needy of God, and the gifts from God shall come unto you: Indeed, charitable expenditures are only for the poor and

⁶⁵⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 18.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 388.

for the needy (Qu'rān:9:60). So, if you wish that the [spiritual] gifts be facilitated for you, make true your poverty and neediness of God.⁶⁶¹

Ibn 'Ajībah also states that it is a common characteristic of scholars given to exoteric knowledge alone to often become the most distant people from the spiritual realities of the mystic path. This he attributes to a mistaken notion that their exoteric knowledge has already bequeathed unto them the extent of spiritual realities, with some of them even claiming the knowledge of the spiritual station of excellence, *ihsān*, to be only the exoteric knowledge they have attained.⁶⁶² Ibn 'Ajībah's own attitude towards such exoteric scholars, those whom he refers to as people of exteriority (*ahl al-zāhir*) is often dismissive. Within the *Īqāz* he notes that answers to religious queries given by them are often of no spiritual benefit and apparently not even worth narrating, especially within the domain of Qur'ānic interpretation.⁶⁶³ He also quotes from Sidi Aḥmad Zarrūq about not keeping the company of such exoteric scholars for the reason that their egos have overpowered them.⁶⁶⁴ Ibn 'Ajībah's own opinion in this regard is later revealed to be even firmer than Zarrūq, for he states that the spiritual aspirant should try to avoid them to the utmost degree possible as their company is worse than the average layperson and ignorant Sufi by seventy degrees (seventy is often used in Arabic to denote a superlative amount). He states this need of avoidance is because such scholars automatically perceive anyone who opposes them in their understandings as being misguided, and hence occupy themselves in disputation against them. Accordingly to Ibn 'Ajībah, whilst such scholars perceive themselves as providing sincere counsel, in reality they are only deceiving themselves and others.⁶⁶⁵ He says that if such scholars must be consulted it should only be done with precaution and the person consulting them should be akin to someone sitting alongside a scorpion or a snake.⁶⁶⁶ He concludes this stark warning by stating he has never seen anyone who was given to keep the company of exoteric scholars to succeed in the spiritual path.⁶⁶⁷

⁶⁶¹ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 82.

⁶⁶² Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 328.

⁶⁶³ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 23.

⁶⁶⁴ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 99.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 99.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 99.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 99.

Ibn 'Ajībah's exception to his principle of avoidance of exoteric scholars is that the rule no longer applies when God gives such scholars a spiritual opening, making them no longer those of exteriority alone. In explaining his reasons for not esteeming exoteric knowledge by itself, Ibn 'Ajībah holds that the nature of exoteric knowledge such as Islamic Law (*sharī'ah*) is that it deals with the wisdom of existentiating means (*ḥikmah*), and the purpose of such knowledge is to traverse thereby to the goal of experiential knowledge of God, not to remain with its outward form. His problem with being relegated to a paradigm of exoteric knowledge alone is that one never really traverses unto the goal of experiential knowledge, for he states the nature of such knowledge is that it constantly opens up new avenues to explore, resulting in a cycle of infinite regression of 'means disclosing further means' (*ḥikmah taḥtahā ḥikam*).⁶⁶⁸

The Inquisition of the Sufis

To Ibn 'Ajībah the spiritual fruit sought by the Sufis is the illuminative knowledge of gnosis, or *ma'rifah*, and it is the inability of exoteric scholars to understand the Sufis and their single pointed goal that has entailed the Sufis have been tried and tested by the exoteric scholars of Islam, often through their accusing them of apostasy, heresy and deviation.⁶⁶⁹ To illustrate his point, Ibn 'Ajībah cites a famous historical trial which he refers to as the 'Sufi Inquisition' (*mihna sūfiyyah*) to make his point and it is the most discussed historical incident in the *Īqāz* occupying a full five pages.⁶⁷⁰ This was the famous heresy trial that took place in Baghdad against Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 297/910) and his disciples who were summoned on the orders of the then Caliph Ja'far Muḥammad al-Mu'taṣim billāh (d. 247/861), referred to by Ibn 'Ajībah by his regnal name al-Mutawakkil ("He who relies on God").⁶⁷¹

In Ibn 'Ajībah's narration the inquisition is initiated by allegations of heresy put forward to the Caliph by of a group of exoteric scholars who are not named, even though other

⁶⁶⁸ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 388.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 388.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 368-372.

⁶⁷¹ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 368.

historical sources tend to attribute the event to a main protagonist, the Baghdad preacher Ghulām Khalīl (d. 275/888).⁶⁷² The Caliph himself is quoted as being reluctant to try the Sufis, accusing the exoteric scholars of having already killed Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 310/922) and seeking to persecute the saints of God.⁶⁷³ Historically, this ascribed quote to the Caliph is problematic in that whilst al-Ḥallāj was tried and imprisoned during Junayd's life, his actual death is said to have occurred after that of al-Junayd (d.297/910) and even after the Caliph's death himself. Ibn 'Ajībāh cites the Caliph as being initially inclined to support Junayd but only agreeing under duress due to pressure from the exoteric scholars, stating that he will execute Junayd and his disciples if they were truly found to be heretics on condition that the same sentence applies to the exoteric scholars if Junayd and his disciples were found to be innocent.⁶⁷⁴ The trial begins with Junayd and 270 of his disciples being assembled. The ruling Judge, named as 'Alī ibn Abī Thawr (n.d.) advises the Caliph to interrogate one of Junayd's students in his place through the false pretext of summoning the first one to their death, being actually intended as a way of soliciting the sincerest amongst them to come forth for the trial first. The student who volunteers turns out to be Abu al-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 295/908), a famous Sufi in his own right, who impresses the Caliph with his altruistic sacrifice of himself and is subsequently summoned into a debate with the Judge.

The resulting debate, whether apocryphal or real, seems to be the key purpose of Ibn 'Ajībāh's narration, who as is evident from his wrong reference to Ḥallāj's death seems more concerned with conveying his intended message of the special nature of the knowledge of the Sufis rather than the historical accuracy of a particular incident. In the debate the Judge's series of queries are: "Who are you?"; "Why were you created?"; "What does God want with your creation?"; and "Where is God with consideration to you?".⁶⁷⁵ It is interesting that in their topical suggestion these queries correspond with the analytical categories we are parsing the key themes of the *Īqāz* into in this thesis, namely the

⁶⁷² Christopher Melchert, "Origins and Early Sufism" in *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 16.

⁶⁷³ Ibn 'Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 368.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibn 'Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 368.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibn 'Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 370.

categories of teleology, ontology, soteriology and epistemology. This supports our selection of these categories, for Ibn ‘Ajībah's referencing these questions appear to be an intimation of the importance he attaches to them, as we have already highlighted how his narrative of this incident seems less premised on a historical accuracy to detail and more on his intent to convey his own message. In this regard, Ibn ‘Ajībah highlights the behaviour and actions of al-Nūrī prior to and as a prelude to his actual response. Before answering the Judge, al-Nūrī looks to his right and seems to speak to an imaginary entity, saying: "Will you answer him?", then being disappointed he looks to his left and repeats the process with the same outcome. He ends by looking straight ahead and actually lowering his head towards his heart before finally repeating his question: "Will you answer him?", at which point he seems satisfied and says: "May God be praised". At this point al-Nūrī proceeds to give a series of answers to the Judge's queries responses as follows:

As for your query "Who are you?", then I am a servant of God in accordance with His saying: "There is no one in the heavens and earth but that he comes to the Most Merciful as a servant (Qur’ān: 19:93)." As for your question "Why were you created?", then [the answer is that] God was a treasure that was not known, so He created me for His being known, as He says: "And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship (*li ya ‘budūn*) Me (Qur’ān: 51:56)." In other words, this means 'to be known' (*li ya ‘rifūn*) as Ibn ‘Abbās and other commentators have mentioned.⁶⁷⁶ As for your query "What does God want with your creation?", then He did not want anything except to honour me, as He says: " And We have certainly honoured the children of Adam (Qur’ān: 17:70)." As for your question "Where is God with consideration to you?", then He is with me wheresoever I am with Him, as He says: " And He is with you wherever you are (Qur’ān: 57:4)."⁶⁷⁷

⁶⁷⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībah seems to quoting al-Nūrī as referencing ‘Abd Allah Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/687), the cousin of the Prophet Muḥammad, who is considered to be the first and greatest exegete of the Qur’ān. Here Ibn ‘Abbās is referenced as interpreting the words 'to be worshipped' (*li ya ‘budūn*) to mean 'to be known' (*li ya ‘rifūn*). Other prominent commentators who have advocated a similar interpretation include Ibn Jurayj (d.150/768) and al-Rabī‘ ibn Anas (n.d.) as referenced in the prominent exegetical work the *Tafsīr* of Ibn Kathīr.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 370.

The responses al-Nūrī gives impresses the Judge and the audience, for they are concise and supported by scriptural reference causing the Judge to respond by saying "You have said the truth."⁶⁷⁸ The problems arise when the Judge then shifts his line of questioning to ask al-Nūrī on why he turned left, right and then looked ahead before delivering his answer. This is where al-Nūrī admits that he himself did not know the answer, and that he actually asked the Angel on his right shoulder, repeating the process with the Angel on his left shoulder, before finally getting the answer after consulting his heart. He says: "I asked my heart, and so it responded from its secret, narrating from its Lord what I answered you with".⁶⁷⁹ The Judge promptly accuses him of heresy for claiming to speak to Angels and God and on being threatened with execution again for this, al-Nūrī readily agrees again, upon which the Judge says: "O Caliph, let them go free. For if these people are heretics, there is not on the face of the Earth anyone who is a Muslim."⁶⁸⁰

Ibn 'Ajībah's narration ends with the Caliph turning the table against the exoteric scholars and giving Junayd the option to subject the scholars to trial in place of himself and his disciples wherein Junayd magnanimously forgives them, saying it was only their ignorance that made them take such a step, and the gathering ends in peace.⁶⁸¹ Once again, Ibn 'Ajībah's narrative does not appear to concord with other historical accounts of the incident, as Christopher Melchert states that narrations indicate that al-Junayd escaped arrest and sentence by denying his ascription to the Sufis entirely, instead claiming to be a student of jurisprudence.⁶⁸² Similarly Melchert states that al-Nūrī far from defeating the Judge in debate, was instead found guilty and had to later flee Baghdad after being sentenced.⁶⁸³ It is clear that Ibn 'Ajībah's narrative of this incident, being the most detailed historical digression he engages with in the *Īqāz*, is ultimately intended to elucidate and communicate his understanding of the nature of Sufi knowledge. The responses al-Nūrī provides are demonstrative of the *'ilm al-ladunnī* (Knowledge from the Divine presence), that arises out

⁶⁷⁸ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 370.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 371.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 371.

⁶⁸¹ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 371.

⁶⁸² Melchert, "Early Sufism," 16.

⁶⁸³ Melchert, "Early Sufism," 16.

of his direct spiritual experience (*‘ilm al-adhwāq*), for he did not know the answers prior to being asked. Whilst the answers amaze and satisfy his interlocutor, being from the people given to exteriority, the Judge still condemns al-Nūrī for claiming to be inspired in this format of knowledge that the Judge had no access to. Ibn ‘Ajībāh's story ends with everyone agreeing to the superiority of the Sufis in their displaying magnanimity towards the exoteric scholars when the roles are reversed. Whilst the narrative indicates apocryphal elements, Ibn ‘Ajībāh's key point of Sufis being persecuted precisely because of the rarity of the special knowledge bequeathed to them directly from God is eloquently delivered.⁶⁸⁴

True Knowledge as Disclosure of the Divine presence

Given Ibn ‘Ajībāh's negative view on abstaining from scholars given to exteriority, he applies the opposite with regards to the knowledge of those closest to God. To him, the more a person is able to penetrate the interiority of phenomenal form, the more knowledgeable such a person is, and the more his company should be sought by aspirants. Ibn ‘Ajībāh interprets the Qur’ānic verse 41:53 about reflecting on ‘signs in the horizons’ as a form of spiritual evolutionary delineation, wherein the ability to perceive and witness the disclosure of the Divine in the cosmos serves as a yardstick for ascertaining one's spiritual progress. He states: "Indeed God caused this cosmos to emerge and manifested within it the created domains, so that He can be known thereby, and to manifest His light therein."⁶⁸⁵ Thus, the cosmos is not something to be looked at as an end in and of itself, but rather should be looked at as means of witnessing the Divine fiat. To Ibn ‘Ajībāh this translates into the ability to see the subtle light (*al-nūr al-laṭīf*) which underpins all physical form, this being his interpretation of the Qur’ānic imperative: "Look at what is in the heavens and earth (Qur’ān10:101)."⁶⁸⁶ To him, knowing the truth of something is knowing the reality of that thing as disclosing God through beholding this subtle light, which is why he often uses the Divine Name ‘The Real’ (*al-Haqq*), indicating that nothing in existence can veil Him. Ibn ‘Ajībāh states:

⁶⁸⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 372.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 284.

⁶⁸⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 284.

With regards to the Real (*al-Haqq*), He cannot possibility be veiled. So, nothing veils Him, as He is apparent in everything, before everything and after everything. There is nothing that is apparent alongside Him, and nothing in reality is existent except Him. Thus, he is not veiled from you, rather you are veiled from witnessing Him. This is because of your belief in an otherness to Him, and the attachment of your heart to ephemeral corporeality (*hissiyyah*).⁶⁸⁷

The above quote alludes to Ibn ‘Ajībah’s epistemological understanding. Knowledge to him is not an abstract cognitive property of the knower, rather it is a form of disclosure of the Divine presence (*ḥudūr*) through illumination (*ishrāq*), wherein it is the process of unveiling the reality of existence. To Ibn ‘Ajībah, God already is the ground of all Being and reality, so knowledge becomes nothing but the process of interaction with this reality, wherein God as the ultimately Real is disclosed in the various modalities, forms, shapes, colours and hues creation takes. This perspective is essentially a non-dualist view in that by separating knowledge from an independent knower, the disclosure of all true Being becomes that of God, thereby resulting in the unification of the intellecter and the intellected (*ittiḥād al-‘āqil wa’l-ma’qūl*) within that Being. To Ibn ‘Ajībah, the imperative to realise this knowledge rests more on an undoing of the sense of separateness and duality between the knower and the known, rather than being a formal discursive acquisition of such knowledge through reading, writing, etc. Instead, Ibn ‘Ajībah’s prescription is to challenge and undo beliefs and cognitive frameworks that are founded on the assumption of a separated otherness between the perceiver as a subject and the objects of one’s perception. He goes about this task at various levels incorporating the totality of a human being, inclusive of their psycho-emotional-spiritual makeup at the level of the body, mind and soul. So, at the level of emotions, he states that the task of the aspirant is to undo his emotional attachments to these apparently separate objects, which entails negating the push and pull of desire, negating all of the grasping and aversion that accompanies such attachment. Ibn ‘Ajībah’s sole prescriptive remedy in negating such attachment is to attach the heart to that which is greater, which for him is God alone, which entails turning away

⁶⁸⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 85.

from witnessing other than Him.⁶⁸⁸ By putting forward the goal of spiritual witnessing as a cure to the ailment of being attached to other Him, he alludes to a form of cognitive and emotional restructuring, wherein with the right gaze (*nadhhr*) one can come to see the light of the Real (*nūr al-Ḥaqq*). Ibn ‘Ajībah’s essential point is that people are already in the Divine presence but through their false attachments are misoriented and unaware of this presence, so a realignment may be all that is needed for the sincere seeker. He says, "All of the people are [already] witnessing [the Divine] but do not know it, for all of them are in the Sea [of Divine presence] but do not feel it."⁶⁸⁹ Repeating his assertion that any possible veil unto God is itself a delusion and a delusion itself has no real existence, he does not negate the felt experience of a veil. Instead he states that just as light blocked or prevented from reaching a place brings about the experience of darkness therein, this darkness is still simply the absence of light and has no ontological existence of its own. To Ibn ‘Ajībah the felt experience of a veil unto God operates in a similar way, for he states that occlusion of one's own inherent perceptive luminosity is due to a 'sickness' (*marād*) that arises out of the attributes of human folly (*awṣāf al-bashariyyah*). These attributes are what he lists as being attachments to other than God that operate at the level of the body, mind and soul.⁶⁹⁰ The solution to the removal of such attachments, which he advocates will result in the removal of the veil, is to focus on remedying these faults first.

The Issue of Spiritual Rectitude and Removal of faults

Ibn ‘Ajībah’s focus is that the spiritual aspirant should first focus on rectifying the faults within himself rather than focusing on the realm of the unseen veiled unto him. This is in keeping with his understanding that such a realm only remains hidden and unseen from him precisely because of these faults, a matter which can only be rectified by his own attention and redress of them. Commensurately, the more he rectifies his inward heart, the more he spiritually evolves, and the more the cosmos will reveal its inner meaning and realities to him. To Ibn ‘Ajībah the signs of the horizons tally with the signs within human

⁶⁸⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 85.

⁶⁸⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 85.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 85.

beings, so the more one realises themselves, the more they are able to perceive the signs in the horizons and vice-versa. For this reason, Ibn ‘Ajībah’s methodology for spiritual unveiling is to seek to unveil and rectify one’s own faults. Commenting on Aphorism 32 which states “Your being on the lookout for the faults hidden within you is better than your being on the lookout for the unseen realm veiled from you”, Ibn ‘Ajībah highlights three categories of faults (*‘uyūb*) to focus on: the faults of the ego (*‘uyūb al-nafs*), faults of the heart (*‘uyūb al-qalb*), and faults of spirit (*‘uyūb al-rūh*). The first category of faults of the ego represents attachment to outward objects of perception premised on lusts driven by the physical body such as food, drink, women, acquisition of wealth and properties and the like. He defines the second category being faults of the heart as attachment to inward lusts of the heart such as seeking prestige, leadership, pride, jealousy, disdain, the love of ‘being special’, and the like. The third category being faults of the spirit is defined as selfish attachments that appear to augment one’s ‘spiritual’ sense of self. These include the desire to perform miracles, to attain unto spiritual stations and ranks, and to attain a type of ‘spiritual hedonism’ in paradise such as the acquisition of heavenly castles (*quṣūr*) and celestial maidens (*hūr*).⁶⁹¹

Whilst to Ibn ‘Ajībah all three categories are attachment to other than God and negate the point of sincere slavehood, they each have varying degrees of enormity and accordingly difficulty of cure.⁶⁹² Concerning the first category of lusts pertaining to the physical body then Ibn ‘Ajībah considers their cure to be a relatively easy affair, one ever-close in its proximity to attain (*‘amrun qarīb*). His remedy for them simply involves the aspirant ‘fleeing from their locus’ (*firār min al-awṭān*), which implies disengaging from the behaviour that attracts and fuels them.⁶⁹³ In practical terms this involves the breaking of the physical and external (*zāhirah wa ḥissiyyah*) habits of the ego (*kharq ‘awā’id al-nafs*) through rigorous discipline (*riyāḍāt al-qahriyyah*) and becoming more abstinent concerning these habits.⁶⁹⁴ Such abstinence in these things is best served by exposing the egoic structure to becoming habituated to its opposite, so food is replaced by hunger,

⁶⁹¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 84.

⁶⁹² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 84.

⁶⁹³ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 327.

⁶⁹⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 227.

excessive sleep by getting up in the night to pray, love of fine clothes by wearing coarse and patched garments (*muraqa`āt*), love of being with people by seclusion, excessive speaking with silence, and the like.⁶⁹⁵ Ibn `Ajībah's understanding of the breaking of physical habits being relatively easy to perform is supported by his noting how such feats of physical abstinence are achieved by people of no spiritual ambition nor 'specialness' (*man laysat lahum khuṣūṣiyyah*) or even by people of spiritual deviance such as those given to the dark arts of black magic (*siḥrah*) and sorcery (*shu`dhah*).⁶⁹⁶ His supposition is that if people with negative intent or even a lack of intent can change their external habits, then someone who claims to sincerely love and desire God and intend to travel the spiritual path should find the task of such transformation easier.

Concerning the second category, being lusts within the heart, then these to Ibn `Ajībah represent an illness which is difficult to cure (*al-dā`u l-`uḍāl*), especially when compared to the first category. Here he cites how many attempts at remedy can often only increase the illness owing to the degree such habits and lusts maybe engrained within the heart and hence become self-identified within the psyche of the individual.⁶⁹⁷ By way of illustration of why lusts of the heart are harder to cure, Ibn `Ajībah gives the archetypal examples of Adam and the Devil. Here Adam is posited as having lusts driven by the body and stomach as embodied by his being attracted to the forbidden fruit for which he was forgiven, whereas the Devil is posited as having lusts of the heart in that he saw himself better than Adam, a form of egoic-identification and self-satisfaction for which he was not forgiven.⁶⁹⁸ Ibn `Ajībah holds that an effective remedy of the second category of lusts engrained in the heart is almost entirely dependent on the grace (*ināyah*) of God, attainable either through the means of a spiritual inspiration (*wārid ilāhī*) or through some other form of grace.⁶⁹⁹ To Ibn `Ajībah the nature of such spiritual inspiration or grace often takes the form of some phenomenon that is either majestically rigorous (*jalālī*) manifesting as being fearful and disturbing (*khawfun muz`ij*), or being subtly beautiful (*jamālī*) which manifests as an ardent

⁶⁹⁵ Ibn `Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 228 – 229.

⁶⁹⁶ Ibn `Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 227.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibn `Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 328.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibn `Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 328.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibn `Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 328.

desire that is inducing of restlessness (*shawqun muqliq*). In both these polarities, whether *jalālī* or *jamālī*, there is an ability to induce change and cause a person to forget their egoic habits which in turn brings about a sense of intimate immanence with God.⁷⁰⁰ To Ibn ‘Ajībāh these inspirations work in breaking egoic habits patterns precisely because they shock the ego with the very same primal emotions that built its identity in the first place, namely fear and desire. In this regard he states that such inspirational forms of fear and desire can only act as transformative vehicles when they are of a greater degree to the existing degrees of identification that the person has with his or her egoic fear or desire. Here Ibn ‘Ajībāh highlights three different classes of people as examples of how the effectiveness of spiritual inspirations to induce transformation can vary based on the degrees people possess of egoic identification and self-satisfaction. He considers the most difficult class of people to be transformatively affected by such inspirations to be ‘exoteric scholars’ (*‘ulamā’ al-zāhiriyyūn*), citing them as being particularly susceptible to the lusts of the heart such as pride and vanity. Ibn ‘Ajībāh considers these ‘scholars’ as being the most veiled people from God in that they see their own exoteric knowledge as already being the highest form of knowledge to attain and hence deem themselves to have already arrived at the best of states. In second place, after such ‘scholars’, Ibn ‘Ajībāh lists the class of professional ascetics (*zuhhād*), finding fault in them as being similarly ingrained with lusts of the heart, albeit to a lesser capacity than the exoteric scholars. Their problem like the exoteric scholars is self-satisfaction with their ego, in that they deem their asceticism to be the extent of worship and display of piety. In contrast to these two classes of supposedly ‘pious’ and ‘learned’ muslims, Ibn ‘Ajībāh states that everyday muslims otherwise given to heedlessness are easier to guide and bring to the presence of their Lord precisely because they are not satisfied with their egos. This he cites is mainly because of their simplicity and the soundness of their hearts (*salīm al-ṣadr*).⁷⁰¹

Concerning the third category of faults, those of the spirit, here Ibn ‘Ajībāh cites an improbability of a person to reform himself except through the presence of a spiritual guide. He states that such a spiritual guide has to be a ‘complete’ teacher (*shaykh kāmil*) who joins

⁷⁰⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 328.

⁷⁰¹ Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *Īqāz*, 328.

between matters of outward praxis in the form of religious law (*sharī'ah*) and inward spiritual reality (*ḥaqīqah*).⁷⁰² To Ibn 'Ajībah such a guide has the ability to carry the aspirant through his own spiritual resolve, serving as an exemplar that further reveals the faults still within the aspirant, allowing the aspirant to finally remove and 'slay' his egoic-self in its entirety. The guide is necessary because Ibn 'Ajībah states that in the absence of such a spiritual guide, even if the ego be slain, it retains the capacity to return bigger than it was before, for the ego only truly dies when it is in the company of those for whom the ego has died (being the spiritual guides), a matter he cites as being tried and tested (*hādihā al-amr mujarrab*).⁷⁰³

The Need for a Guide

To Ibn 'Ajībah the source of all the spiritual faults is the *nafs* or ego, this is because "everyone who is pleased with his ego, sees their state as good and as a result cover up their faults."⁷⁰⁴ He holds it is only the 'eye of disaffection' (*'ayn al-sakht*) concerning the ego which reveals its faults, the imperative being on the spiritual aspirant to search for them. For to him it is being pleased with this egoic identity which veils one from the divine presence.⁷⁰⁵ The goal therefore is to make manifest the faults and then to remove them, and in this regard, he states that whoever wishes to be free from faults should keep the company of someone who is free of them.⁷⁰⁶ To Ibn 'Ajībah it is only the spiritually realised, who have attained success on the spiritual path, who can genuinely be seen as being free of faults. He states:

This knowledge is not just rambling oratory but is instead spiritual experience and ecstasy. It is not to be taken from pages (*al-awrāq*), but instead from the people of experience (*al-adhwāq*). It is not obtained through mere sayings but instead through service of real men (*al-rijāl*), the company of people of perfection (*al-kamāl*). For

⁷⁰² Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 329.

⁷⁰³ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 329.

⁷⁰⁴ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 87.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 87.

⁷⁰⁶ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 87.

by God, not one succeeded amongst those who succeeded except by keeping the company of those who succeeded. And with God is all success.⁷⁰⁷

Ibn ‘Ajībah’s advice to keep the company of one who succeeded in the path is a pointer to the need to find a spiritual guide. He deems the ego to have a blind spot that renders it incapable of fully rectifying itself until it surrenders itself to the guidance of another. Such rectification can be carried out by people who has successfully traversed the spiritual path themselves, being familiar with its pitfalls and waymarks, making them capable of guiding others. For this the reason Ibn ‘Ajībah states that the ultimate sign of God’s felicity for the spiritual aspirant is that he be joined with a spiritual guide.⁷⁰⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah’s forthrightness about the need for a spiritual guide causes him to state that nothing can be hoped in terms of success for a spiritual aspirant in their spiritual wayfaring (*fa lā yaṭma‘ fi al-sayri abadan*) if they do not find one.⁷⁰⁹ He is adamant that this inability to succeed would persist as long as one is unable to find a guide, even if such a person were to gain various forms of knowledge, and keep the company with all sorts of learned people otherwise. This is because to Ibn ‘Ajībah the matter of success in the spiritual path is premised on spiritual taste (*dhawq*), and he contends this can only ultimately be acquired through keeping the company of one who has tasted such a reality himself. He cites his own example as being instructive, stating:

Indeed, we prayed a lot. We fasted a lot. We went into retreat a lot. We made much remembrance of God (*dhikr*). We recited much Qur’ān. But I swear by God we did not come to know from our hearts, nor taste the sweetness of these meanings, until we kept the company of the Men of these meanings (*rijāl ahl al-ma‘ānī*). They took us out from fatigue to rest, from turbidity to clarity, from rejection to gnosis.⁷¹⁰

⁷⁰⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 17.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 385.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 385.

⁷¹⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 385.

The Difficulty in finding a Guide

In citing the importance and need of a guide for spiritual realisation, Ibn ‘Ajībah recognizes a potential objection in that some prior spiritual guides themselves have mentioned the difficulty of finding a valid guide, going so far as to imply that they may no longer exist. These teachers include the likes of Aḥmad ibn ‘Uqbah al-Ḥaḍramī, the teacher of Aḥmad Zarrūq who was quoted as stating: “Spiritual reformation (*tarbiyyah*) has been cut off, and nothing remains except spiritual aspiration and states, so you should [instead] persevere with the Qur’ān and the Sunnah.”⁷¹¹ In response to this Ibn ‘Ajībah states that such statements are not meant to be taken literally, but that they are intended as a means of alluding to the increasing difficulty to find guides worthy of the claim. This is evidenced by his stating that in both Aḥmad al-Ḥaḍramī's times and after him there have continued to be many guides. He states:

Al-Ḥaḍramī did not intend this 'cutting off' to be an absolute and perpetual one, for far be it for the likes of him to pass judgment on God, and to deem the omnipotent power of God to be incompetent. Rather what he meant was that in his time there were many false claimants, so he was warning the people of his time about them. Indeed, the gnosis of al-Ḥaḍramī and Zarrūq itself negates such an understanding, and to the degree of what precedes forth from them, they are not infallible, in that all speech is capable of being accepted or rejected except that of the bearer of final message, the Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him). So, there is to be found after al-Ḥaḍramī many men who were people of spiritual rectitude, (inheritors) of prophetic disposition, possessors of spiritual states, stations and aspirations. They [are so many they] cannot be enumerated. For they are present in our time, and apparent like fire on a signpost. God has already guided many people at their hands, and there has proceeded from them other saints not known except to those whom God has blessed to be enabled to know them.⁷¹²

⁷¹¹Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 385.

⁷¹² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 385 – 386.

The Criterion in finding a Guide

Ibn ‘Ajībah states that the core criteria in finding such guides is not the number in existence or the number of people who can point others to them, rather, it is the sincerity of the spiritual aspirant in seeking them. This is because Ibn ‘Ajībah sees these guides as being tantamount to the favour of God and the manifestation of His desire to guide the aspirant unto Himself. In this regard, Ibn ‘Ajībah quotes Ibn ‘Atā’ Allāh as saying:

If you say: “So where is one who has this attribute? Indeed, you have only guided me to the strangest of the legends of the Maghreb”. Then know that what you lack is not the presence of sincere guides, rather what you lack is the presence of sincerity in your seeking them. Be earnest in your sincerity and you will find a guide. You will find this [advice] in the Book of God when He says: “Is He [not best] who responds to the desperate one when he calls upon Him (Qur’ān: 27:62)”. And elsewhere He says: “If they had been sincere unto God, it would have been better for them (Qur’ān:47:21)”. Had you been desperately needy for one who can guide you to God in the manner a thirsty person is desperate for water, or one fearful is desperate for safety, then you would have found that [guide] closer to you than your very own seeking.⁷¹³

Building on this quote, Ibn ‘Ajībah uses Ibn ‘Abbād al-Rundī’s commentary on this quote to stress that the spiritual guide is a gift from God and a way of manifesting His guidance unto the spiritual aspirant, wherein the condition for availing this gift is there being requisite sincerity of intent and will from the aspirant.⁷¹⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah states that one aspect of this sincerity and manifestation of this neediness is that the spiritual aspirant learn to suspend his prior knowledge as a scale to judge the teacher and that they approach the teacher with humility. To him, if judgment is to be made, it is to be on the scale of the divine law (*sharī‘ah*), for he states that all nobility in the spiritual path lies in being upright

⁷¹³ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 386.

⁷¹⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 386.

and in conformity with the *sharī‘ah* outwardly and inwardly.⁷¹⁵ In this regard, he states that the real miraculous feat (*karāmah al-ḥaqīqiyyah*) of sainthood is demonstrated in an uprightness in the following of prescribed religious practise.⁷¹⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībah’s understanding of the *sharī‘ah* is that it serves as the means (*wāsiṭah*) by which gnostic knowledge is realised and maintained. From this perspective he sees the affirmation and conformity with the *sharī‘ah* as being an affirmation of the wisdom by which God has affected means in the world (*ithbāt al-hikmah*).⁷¹⁷ Whilst he sees conformity to *sharī‘ah* as a religious necessity, Ibn ‘Ajībah does stress the need to suspend the scale (*mīzān*) of mental evaluation when meeting a guide. This is because to him such an evaluation brings the ego into the relationship with that guide thereby depriving the aspirant of the necessary emptiness and openness required for them to receive spiritual gifts from the teacher. Methodologically, Ibn ‘Ajībah’s way of effecting such an emptiness in the aspirant is to advise them to put aside their knowledge, making it akin to what one does not know, and to “wash oneself of one’s knowledge and works until they remain needy for what is with them [the guides].”⁷¹⁸ In this regard he cites the example of the founding guide of his path, Abu Ḥasan al-Shādhilī and his experience with his own guide, Mawlay ‘Abd al-Salām ibn Mashīsh. In Ibn ‘Ajībah’s narration, Abu Ḥasan’s first two visitations to ‘Abd al-Salām leave him returning feeling dissatisfied on both occasions with no benefit, to the degree he even claims to not be able to “smell the scent of sainthood” in ‘Abd al-Salām.⁷¹⁹ It is only when he understands a reference to wash himself from ‘Abd al-Salām as being to “drop the weighing scale (*asqaṭ al-mīzān*) of judgment”⁷²⁰ that things start to change and he begins to perceive the guide’s saintliness. So, it is only when he proceeds to “wash himself from his knowledge and deeds and to go to him [‘Abd al-Salām] needy, in a state of innate poverty (*faqīr*), that God bequeathed him riches [of knowledge].”⁷²¹

⁷¹⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 299.

⁷¹⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 299.

⁷¹⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 425.

⁷¹⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 347.

⁷¹⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 347.

⁷²⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 347.

⁷²¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 347.

Knowledge as Light

Ibn 'Ajībah deems the format of knowledge bequeathed to Abū Ḥasan to be one that is light-based and he draws a parallel between the theme of light (*nūr*) and a threefold division of knowledge as mentioned in the earliest Sufi texts as being: knowledge of certainty (*'ilm al-yaqīn*), knowledge of direct witnessing (*'ayn al- yaqīn*) and knowledge of absolute reality (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*).⁷²² About this categorization, he states:

The ray of insight (*shu 'ā' al-baṣīrah*) is the light of *'ilm al-yaqīn* (knowledge of certainty), whereas insight itself (*'ayn al-baṣīrah*) is the light of *'ayn al- yaqīn* (knowledge of direct witnessing), and the light of the reality of insight (*ḥaqq al-baṣīrah*) is the light of *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* (knowledge of absolute reality). So *'ilm al-yaqīn* is for the people of evidential proofs and inference, *'ayn al- yaqīn* is for the people of unveiling and perception, and *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* is for the people of direct witnessing (*shuhūd*) and intimate companionship. The example of this is as someone who hears of mecca and has not yet seen it, such a person is in the state of *'ilm al-yaqīn*. So, if he is blessed to visit it, and sees it without yet entering upon it, this is *'ayn al- yaqīn*. And if he enters mecca and settles therein then this is *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*.⁷²³

Pertinently, Ibn 'Ajībah considers *'ayn al-baṣīrah* which he defines as the "witness of your non-existence in front of His existence" as still being a subtle degree of witnessing oneself. Despite praising this state as being the "removal of one's delusion, through the annihilation of one's own existence"⁷²⁴ he considers it an interim rank below *ḥaqq al-baṣīrah*. This is because he states something can only be "annihilated after its existence has been affirmed in the first place,"⁷²⁵ and thus the person in the rank of *'ayn al-baṣīrah* fails to see his "non-

⁷²² See: Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayri, *Al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya fi 'ilm al-Tasawwuf*, trans. Al Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism, Alexander D. Knysh (Reading: Garnet Publishing, 2007), 107. The three categories of knowledge (*'ilm*) being delineated as: *'ilm al-yaqīn* (knowledge of certainty), *'ayn al- yaqīn* (knowledge of direct witnessing) and *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* (knowledge of absolute reality).

⁷²³ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 89.

⁷²⁴ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 90.

⁷²⁵ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 90.

existence from the very beginning (*mafqūdun min aṣlika*)⁷²⁶, whereas the person in *ḥaqq al-baṣīrah* has "grasped reality/truth from its very source"⁷²⁷ (*adrakat al-ḥaqqu min aṣlihi*).

Elsewhere Ibn ‘Ajībah uses the analogy of the rising and setting of the sun as a way of illustrating the different degrees of spiritual illumination that can occur within the seeker. Here, he uses light in the form of the sun’s rays as an analogy for the illuminative spiritual experiences that remove the sense of a veil for the spiritual aspirant. For just as the rising of the sun illuminates the horizons, its setting is brought by the earth’s face turning away from the sun, wherein despite the sun's presence, this gives rise to darkness. In similar manner, Ibn ‘Ajībah states that God’s light is always shining on His creation, for everything exists only through that light, and yet there are different degrees of this illumination in the human soul, based on their readiness of being willing to orient themselves to God. It is this variance in orientation towards God which gives rise to different terminology when describing that soul, so the different terms used for that soul, such as *nafs*, ‘*aql*, *qalb*, *rūh*, *sirr*, all denote different degrees of illumination of that soul.⁷²⁸ In this regard, Ibn ‘Ajībah defines the *nafs* as a soul whose light has become completely eclipsed, due to its being turned away from God and busied with its selfish motives. He defines the ‘*aql* as being reined in by the limits of divine law, but in its fluctuation between piety and sin, having little light. Only when the soul becomes content and moves away from sin does he say it is called the *qalb*. Ibn ‘Ajībah sees the soul in its state as the *qalb* as being analogous to the first setting for the rays of the light upon the rising of the sun, a stage which Ibn ‘Ajībah refers to as the light of orientation (*anwār al-tawajjuh*). He states that when this light in the heart finds its equanimity, wherein the self finds its contentment with the remembrance of God, then such a state is called the *rūh* and it marks the onset of this light now being face to face (*anwār al-muwājahah*). Finally, if this light becomes all-encompassing then Ibn ‘Ajībah says the veil occluding the aspirant from God is removed and the door to the Divine presence is opened, at which point the soul witnesses nothing other than God and

⁷²⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 90.

⁷²⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 89.

⁷²⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 262.

is called the *sir* (secret), which Ibn ‘Ajībah also calls the light of witnessing (*anwār al-mushahadah*).⁷²⁹

Knowledge as Arrival unto God

Ultimately it is the epistemological shift, rather than an ontological one which becomes the affirmation and embodiment of the new paradigm of realised *tawhīd*, as Ibn ‘Ata ‘Allah notes in Aphorism 53: Your union with God is union through knowledge of Him, Otherwise, God is beyond being joined with anything or anything being united with Him. This epistemological shift is borne not by outward acquisition but paradoxically by a stripping of acquisition, resulting in a sense of ‘poverty’, a knowledge which by its nature should bring about *hashyah*, a lessening of the self-centred consciousness (Quran:35:28). Paradoxically such self-knowledge is only admitted through admittance of one’s ignorance. This is one dimension of what Ibn Ajībah calls *tahqīq ul- ‘ubūdiyyah* (realisation of slavehood) which is the realisation of ontological poverty, namely understanding and realizing the nature of one's own inherent contingency. In this manner the epistemological pursuit of *tawhīd* becomes a deepening of the awareness of one’s intrinsic *‘ubūdiyyah* (slavehood). For this reason, much of the *Īqāz* can be seen as shifts of orientation from a self-orientated outlook to a God-centred one. This is played out across various themes, such as a shift from self-direction of management (*tadbīr*) and self-reliance (*tawakkul*) to the paradigm of humility and dependency on God.

True Knowledge is accompanied by Humility

Ibn ‘Ajībah states that knowledge not accompanied by a reverential humility (*hashyah*) is ultimately of no benefit, and instead is seen negatively in that it serves as a proof and testimony against the one who possesses it, for disobedience performed with knowledge is worse than disobedience done without it.⁷³⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah further states that it is only knowledge accompanied by *hashyah* that enables its possessor to become unattached from

⁷²⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 262.

⁷³⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 364.

egoic desires linked in its acquisition, wherein it is only such detachment that allows for a continual desire to draw nearer to God.⁷³¹ Elucidating the primary means to gain knowledge imbued with such *khashyah* Ibn ‘Ajībah highlights the need to keep the company of a scholar who embodies such an attribute. He contends that it is only such scholars who befit the epithet of being called inheritors of the Prophet in accordance with a *Hadīth* that delineates them in this manner.⁷³² Arguing that knowledge which is the inheritance of the Prophets cannot possibly be limited to its outward form (*rusūm*), he advocates for the necessary embodiment of *khashyah* as a means and *ma‘rifah* (experiential knowledge of God) as outcome. Stating that both means and goals are interconnected, he argues that the goal (*ma‘rifah*) can never be realised when the means of reverential humility (*khashyah*) have not been achieved.⁷³³

The Nature of Spiritual Inspiration

Quoting the book *Latā‘if al-Minnan* and a biographical account of Ibn ‘Ata ‘Allah listed within, the *Īqāz* notes how Ibn ‘Ata ‘Allah's doubts about Sufism were removed when he saw his future teacher Abu ‘Abbas al-Mursī and came to know him as a man given to divine inspiration. Ibn ‘Ajībah quotes this story to illustrate the difference between formal knowledge and that knowledge which ‘flows upon the hearts of God’s saints’.⁷³⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah’s understanding of such inspirational knowledge is that that the soul becomes receptive to inspired truths only once it has been cleansed of the turbidity of sensorial attachment (*ghabash al-ḥiss*).⁷³⁵ He holds that this inspiration usually comes in a condensed form (*mujmalah*), at which point his advice is to write or note it down ‘just as it comes’, after which it can be expounded upon by diligent thought and contemplation. Notably, Ibn ‘Ajībah cites that the inspiration that comes to the saint in this manner is akin to the revelation of the Prophets. In this regard, he states that prophetic revelation is of four types: inspiration (*ilhām*), dreams (*manām*), instruction (*i‘lām*) and legislation (*aḥkām*);

⁷³¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 364.

⁷³² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 365.

⁷³³ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 365.

⁷³⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 346.

⁷³⁵ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 344.

and to him the saints share in the first three categories, being excluded only from the legislative type. In his drawing a distinction between the legislative nature of such inspiration between Prophets and saints, presumably Ibn ‘Ajībah is also pointing to the possible fallibility of such inspiration with regards to the saints, which is why there are no legal obligations of adherence that arise therefrom. In support of this view, he states that the revelation of legislation (*wahy al-aḥkām*) of the Prophets is protected and preserved and so cannot be forgotten, unlike the inspiration of the saints. For the latter, he says the preservation depends on their states and the degree of their attentiveness, for with regards to them, such inspiration can decrease in its clarity from being mountain-like to resembling an egg, before disappearing altogether.⁷³⁶

Effective Contemplation

Ibn ‘Ajībah introduces the imperative to contemplate very early in the *Īqāz* stating that it is rare for an ego to become completely free from the subtleties of ostentation and its own trickery except with contemplation.⁷³⁷ According to him, effective contemplation necessitates a state of retreat or solitude (*‘uzlah*), whether this be figurative such as being alone with God in one’s heart, or a physical retreat. He states that nothing is more beneficial to the heart than contemplation when performed in such solitude.⁷³⁸ The intent here is to negate the state of the ego which is busied outwardly and distracted inwardly, for he states it is only when such busyness and attachments recede that contemplate can function.⁷³⁹ For this reason he stresses the need to reduce being busied in different affairs and to reduce one’s inward attachments, and he states that to become free from these things allows one to draw close to the Divine Presence.⁷⁴⁰ For this reason, he defines contemplation as “the spiritual journeying of the heart to Divine Presence of the Lord.”⁷⁴¹ He states:

⁷³⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 344.

⁷³⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 43.

⁷³⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 44.

⁷³⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 405.

⁷⁴⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 404.

⁷⁴¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 405.

So, someone who has not freed himself up (inwardly and outwardly), has no contemplation. And someone who has no contemplation has no spiritual journeying. And whoever has no spiritual journeying, shall have no spiritual arrival. So, contemplation is the spiritual journeying of the heart to Divine Presence of the Lord. This journeying is [initially] in the fields of otherness of God: In other words, it is in the domain of witnessing other than God, so one can gain indicative evidence thereby of the presence of spiritual light. Whereas the spiritual journeying of the [realised soul in its] secret is the domain of such secrets.⁷⁴²

Ibn ‘Ajībah interprets a Prophetic Ḥadīth to contemplate upon creation only and to not contemplate upon the Creator as not contemplating upon the essential Being of God with regards to the subject matter of His essence (*dhāt*). This to him is where the human being is barred, with the imperative to not reflect on the essence of God not meaning one should not contemplate upon the attributes of God amongst which he lists His One-ness, the inward and outer manner of His manifestation, His mercy and so forth. Ibn ‘Ajībah states that he supports contemplation upon the attributes of God precisely because they lead to an acceptance of the human incapacity to contemplate upon God’s essence.⁷⁴³ In his delineating contemplation, Ibn ‘Ajībah builds upon two essential groups of people of contemplation discussed by Ibn ‘Ata ‘Allah. These groups are firstly those whose contemplation is one of belief alone (without direct experience), and secondly it is those who are given to direct witnessing of the Divine. In distinguishing between the two groups Ibn ‘Ajībah describes the former as being ‘people who are veiled’ (*ahl al-ḥijāb*), being by extension people who cannot contemplate except upon the outward of creation, referring to this type of contemplation as one premised on darkness and bereft of the spiritual light.⁷⁴⁴ In contrast he defines the other group as being ‘people of witnessing’ (*ahl al-shuhūd*), who are those who witness the light of spiritual meaning which underpins corporeality. Ibn ‘Ajībah describes these latter people as having drowned in the seas of such light, with their

⁷⁴² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 405.

⁷⁴³ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 405.

⁷⁴⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 406 - 407.

contemplation resultantly being in the fields of such light.⁷⁴⁵ The *Īqāz* ends its commentary on the aphorisms with a description of the state of such people, it says:

The second contemplation, being the contemplation of witnessing and inner perception belongs to the people of witnessing and inner sight. They are those who have ascended beyond witnessing the creation which indicates God to the Indicator Himself, from the created traces of creation to the Creator of such traces, from otherness to the witnessing of spiritual light, from separation to unicity, and from the material dominion to the spiritual one. So, they witness nothing save the light from the abode of spirituality (*al-malakūt*) that flows forth from the abode of God's divine omnipotence (*al-jabarūt*). So, they have drowned in the seas of such light, the created traces of the world have become blurred for them. So, if they return to witnessing such traces, they see them through God, from God and to God, what a great rank such people have with Allah. About the likes of them a poet said: "They are the real Men, let it be said [to every clan]: Injustice it is to describe one not the likes of them as a man".⁷⁴⁶

This choice by Ibn 'Ajībah to end his commentary on the aphorisms with a description of the people of such contemplation has a sense of circularity to it when compared to the introduction of his *Īqāz*. For it is there that he previously described the saints of God (*awliyā'*) as being immersed in the seas of the Omnipotent power of God (*jabarūt*) and beholding created traces through God therein, where he states:

All praise be to God who has filled the hearts of His saints (*awliyā'*) with His love. Who has chosen their souls through the witnessing of His immensity, and Who has readied their innermost hearts [lit. secrets] to bear the magnitude weight of His gnosis. So, their hearts compose forth in the gardens of His gnosis, and their souls stroll in the meadows of His spiritual abode (*al-malakūt*), whilst their innermost hearts swim and plunge into the depths of His divine omnipotence (*al-jabarūt*). So, their contemplation brings out pearls of knowledge and their tongues articulate

⁷⁴⁵ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 406.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibn 'Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 407.

jewels of wisdom and the fruits of [deep] understanding. So, glory be to the One who has chosen them for His presence. Who has singled them out for His love. They are those who join between the paths of spiritual wayfaring and being divinely pulled out, being both lovers and the beloved, for they are annihilated in the love of His essence, and subsist through the witnessing of the created traces of His attributes.⁷⁴⁷

In both beginning and ending his commentary on the aphorisms with a parallel description of the men of the deepest contemplation, being the contemplation of witnessing the Divine, Ibn ‘Ajībah leaves the imperative on the reader to strive to attain their ranks. With the commentary ending in this open-ended manner, the reader is left with a summons to make his own state akin to the states he has just read about. Notably, Ibn ‘Ajībah uses a similar ending of describing those who have attained unto such spiritual presence in the first epistle of spiritual wayfaring. His conclusion in the epistle is particularly relevant in mirroring a similar conclusion in the *Īqāz* as he says the epistle is one which “clarifies (*sulūk*) from its beginning to the end, being sufficient in and of itself for people of hearts from requiring to look at the rest of the book [*Īqāz*]”⁷⁴⁸. In the conclusion he states:

The upshot is that for the people of Presence their descent is by God, and their acting therein is by God, hence they do not see for their own selves any agency and strength, nor do they seek from their Lord any reward nor recompense... This is only because they have actualized the annihilation of the ego and slain it, and so its selfish desires have actually transformed into rights that need to be fulfilled... Hence they have attained unto a station that requires complete annihilation of selfish interests, and nothing remains therein except the singularly One, without another... They are ‘by God’ in that they have become annihilated unto themselves; ‘for God’ in that they have realised their sincerity; ‘from God’ in that they see their actions as proceeding forth from God; and ‘to God’ in their realizing that all affairs return to God.⁷⁴⁹

⁷⁴⁷ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 11.

⁷⁴⁸ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 420

⁷⁴⁹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 418.

Conclusion

In Ibn ‘Ajībah’s epistemological scheme, knowledge is acquired in a graded capacity that eventually reveals itself to be of one of nondual form, wherein the knower, the act of knowing and the known are all found to disclose God’s Being as existentiating them. In the initial stages of the aspirant’s *sulūk*, Ibn ‘Ajībah contends with the common experience that this knowledge cannot be assumed, and discusses the aspirant as perceiving himself in a dualistic manner, as an apparently discrete, independent, subject in a world of other independent objects. He cites this experience as being a veil, but states that this veil cannot be removed through mere acquisition of an exterior type of knowledge that acts as an abstract cognitive property of the knower. Rather the veil has to be challenged at its very root by proceeding to query this sense of subject-object division, and so he places priority on self-knowledge, the “digging of one’s own treasure” wherein the deeper one goes, the deeper they realise their own innate ontological poverty, or nonbeing in face of the Being of God. In this manner, knowledge to Ibn ‘Ajībah represents a certain *adab* or propriety, being a form of disclosure of the Divine presence (*ḥuḍūr*) through illumination (*ishrāq*), and not mere book knowledge that does not serve the purpose of unveiling the reality of existence. To Ibn ‘Ajībah God’s Being is already the ground of all Being and reality, so knowledge becomes nothing but the process of interaction or *ādāb* with this reality, wherein God as the ultimately Real (*al-Ḥaqq*) is disclosed in the various modalities, forms, shapes, colours and hues creation takes. This perspective of the disclosure of all true being as that of God results in the unification of the intellecter and the intellected (*ittiḥād al-‘āqil wa’l-ma’qūl*) in that Being. To Ibn ‘Ajībah this is the knowledge of arrival unto God, which is the true knowing or gnosis (*ma’rifah*) of God’s Being within the multifaceted dimension of *tawḥīd*. Such a *tawḥīd*, literally the ‘making of One’, whilst being multifaceted is always by definition a unifying paradigm which results in the witnessing of all phenomenal form as having the same underlying Reality, that of God’s creative fiat. For this reason, there always remains the imperative of propriety or *ādāb* with such *ma’rifah*.

To Ibn ‘Ajībah true knowledge is God’s Divine light that in turn comes into existence as a form of God’s self-determination and ultimately His self-knowledge. For this reason, Ibn ‘Ajībah understands the introspective imperative of self-knowledge to serve as the primary

means that discloses the knowledge of ultimate ontological reality as *tawhīd*. This is the *adab* of self-introspection, demonstrated by Ibn ‘Ajībah’s commentary on Aphorism 231 wherein he recommends focusing on self-rectification, for he sees disobedience to be as an epistemological act.⁷⁵⁰ Sins to him are transgressions of the required *adab*, arising because of delusion of reality and an ignorance of who God is, causing an attachment to 'other' than God at the level of the body, mind and soul, despite there ontologically being no real 'other'.⁷⁵¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah's seeing of disobedience to God as a form of epistemological delusion transforms such disobedient acts into a pedagogical tool, whereby the imperative to continually reform and rectify oneself is seen as acquiring true education. In delineating a hierarchy of reformatory focus, Ibn ‘Ajībah states that the root of all sins is heedlessness, the root of all heedlessness is self-satisfaction with the ego, and the root of such self-satisfaction is the delusory love of the ephemeral world.⁷⁵² For this reason, Ibn ‘Ajībah is adamant that spiritual rectitude can never really happen until such delusionary love of the transient world is removed and the false mask of its ephemerality is revealed. In a rare departure from his complete reverence for Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s words he even suggests Aphorism 231 should be reworded, getting its order wrong, in that hearts can only expand unto light when they have given up that which is ephemeral. He suggests the aphorism could be better phrased to be: “Beneficial knowledge is that which reveals the false mask [of the ephemeral world] whereby the ray of light expands in the breast”.⁷⁵³ In this instance of Ibn ‘Ajībah suggesting corrections to Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh’s aphoristic structure we can see the degree to which he sees epistemology as a pointer to ultimate ontological reality, for to him the first fruits of true knowledge must be to reveal the falsity of the ephemeral world. His epistemological schema for spiritual wayfaring therefore commences with the *adab* of journeying away from such delusion. This is the reason as to why his preferred definition of Sufism is to be orientated towards that which is True (*ṣidq al-tawajjuh*), which means to be orientated towards God and to turn away from falsity (all besides). In this manner there exists a mutual relationship between disobedience and repentance, for the Arabic

⁷⁵⁰ Aphorism 231 states, "Beneficial knowledge is that whose ray of light expands in the breast and by which is uncovered the heart's veil."

⁷⁵¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 463.

⁷⁵² Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 463.

⁷⁵³ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 464.

word for the latter is *tawbah*, which means to turn or realign oneself, ultimately to God. Within this epistemological scheme, depending on the degree of sincerity of repentance, even sins can be positively appropriated, provided they result in an effective realignment to God.

Given that Ibn ‘Ajībah states that the gnosis of *tawhīd* is the spiritual witnessing of God as sole ontological reality underpinning all ephemeral form of the cosmos, he states that it is egoic consciousness of itself as a separate ontic reality which is the root factor that prevents such witnessing. Referring to such ontic identification as "egoic self-satisfaction" (*riḍā ‘an al-nafs*), he understands satisfaction with the ego as the factor that reifies its identity as a separate self in a separate world, a paradigm he refers to as *farq* (lit. separation). Ibn ‘Ajībah’s remedy to such egoic satisfaction is twofold, firstly he introduces the *adab* for the wayfarer to continually suspect his ego and be on guard at all times, and secondly to seek a teacher who having freed himself of his egoic-faults can serve as a guide to arrival unto the mystic knowledge of God. Whilst such teachers may be rare and hard to find, Ibn ‘Ajībah states that such teachers represent God’s grace and are a manifestation of concern for His sincere slaves, and accordingly all spiritual aspirants need to do is to work on their sincerity and such guides will become manifest! In finding such guides, Ibn ‘Ajībah introduces the concept of *adab* with the spiritual guide, cautioning the spiritual aspirants from intellectually judging their teachers. This is because the judging mind as an attitude is egoic in itself and ensures that they would be bereft of seeing the real rank and spirituality of the guides. The solution to this is that the aspirants embody the *adab* of stripping themselves of seeing their own knowledge and deeds in a state of innate poverty (*faqr*). This allows for the light of the guide to be availed by the sincerity of the light within the heart of the aspirant (*murīd*). To Ibn ‘Ajībah it is this light dimension of knowledge that is sought by the true aspirant. As this light becomes strengthened the intellects of such aspirants comes to be illuminated, with the aspirants coming to see their own non-existence when apprehending the majesty of God’s existence. This is the realisation of the dimension of *tawhīd* – which in turn is intimately connected to self-knowledge. The marker of this knowledge then becomes the degree of reverential propriety (*adab*) one has towards God in the various situations one finds themselves in with such *tawhīd*.

Chapter 9: Thesis Conclusion

This thesis seeks to lay the framework for an original contribution to the methodology of study for the commentarial genre of Sufi texts. It does this by first outlining an effective methodology of textual study in the form of semantic analysis and then applying this methodology to the *Īqāz*. Beyond Chapter 1 which introduced the thesis, Chapter 2 explored the intellectual and spiritual context of Ibn ‘Ajībah by situating him in the spiritual and intellectual lineage that culminated in his authorship of the *Īqāz*. In reviewing the biographical details of Ibn ‘Ajībah alongside other key personalities and historical developments that led to his intellectual and social milieu, we were able to situate Ibn ‘Ajībah as having undergone a perspectival shift from originally being a jurist and theologian with a rational system of belief to being a mystic, one given to a direct and unmediated experience of witnessing God. In doing so Ibn ‘Ajībah moved from an intellectual tradition of discursive argumentation and scriptural learning to a tradition in which the experiential knowledge of God became his primary means of appraisal. This perspectival transformation did not entail a reversal or contradiction with his prior theological tenets, nor did it hinder his observance of sacred law, but it instead placed them ontologically and epistemologically below the all-embracing experiential reality of God which became his primary prism for the evaluation of truth. To Ibn ‘Ajībah, God’s necessary existence as the proof and source of all things served as the irrefutable metaphysical background to the created cosmos, wherein everything in the cosmos was contingent on His Divine fiat.

In Chapter 3 we explored the deeper assumptions behind Ibn ‘Ajībah’s metaphysics, detailing how the theme of discerning wisdom (*ḥikmah*) as non-dual discernment in a dualistic world translated into the Sufi praxis of constant opposition to the ego and aligning oneself with God’s presence through an embodiment of spiritual virtues. This is what Ibn ‘Ajībah refers to as *ṣidq al-tawwajuh* (lit. the sincerity of one’s orientation), being his preferred and authoritative definition of Sufism.⁷⁵⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah states how sincerity in this orientation culminates in a transformative illuminative experience of a non-dualistic

⁷⁵⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 13.

wisdom (*ḥikmah*), wherein God is found to not be veiled by anything, as the category of other than God itself is revealed to be illusory. In this manner God is not “discovered” as a separate object amongst other ontic objects but is instead experientially known and realised (*maʿrifah*) as the ground of all being. From this perspective, the originating story of creation (*mabdāʿ*) is tied into its teleological return (*maʿād*) wherein God’s originating the cosmos for the purpose of His seeking self-knowledge is reflected in the perfect analogue of the spiritual aspirant seeking his own self-knowledge through the course of his spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*). In this manner, the seeker’s spiritual arrival (*wuṣūl*) is to find his own self-knowledge to be that of God’s for Himself, as his own perceived separation and apparent duality dissolves into a realisation of God’s innate unicity (*tawḥīd*).

Chapter 4 looked at the specific hermeneutics of the *Īqāz*, exploring Ibn ‘Ajībah’s own mystic thought and understanding of *sulūk* by bringing to the fore hermeneutical concepts such as fields of relational meaning (termed ‘semantic fields’) and the interplay between microcosmic and macrocosmic meaning. Ibn ‘Ajībah’s own voice was discerned through identifying the use of select words and phrases which served as semantic particles of connections throughout the *Īqāz*. These phrases then allowed for a discernment of how micro-concepts elucidated by individual aphorisms are further connected to represent macro-themes and meta-themes throughout the *Īqāz*. My research indicated that the first two chapters of the section of aphorisms and the first two epistles alongside the vocative colloquy represented the microcosmic synopsis of the entire *Īqāz*. Collectively, Ibn ‘Ajībah effectively covers the spiritual journey in two legs. The first leg discusses the proprieties (*ādāb*) of being veiled from God, wherein correct comportment eventually results in such a veil being lifted in what is called *fanāʿ* (the annihilation of oneself) in God’s presence. The second leg involves the complementary ‘return’ leg and discusses the *ādāb* required of subsistence in that presence (*baqāʿ*). It was also found that the remaining Chapters of the *Īqāz* from 3 to 25 served as a macrocosm to this microcosm, mirroring the same meanings but in a more specific manner. By focusing on the semantic connectors and semantic fields, this *ādāb* framework was revealed to contain various thematic subthemes which could be broadly arranged under the analytical categories of teleology, ontology, soteriology and epistemology. The rest of the study then looked at the themes within these analytical categories.

Chapter 5 looked at the analytical category of teleology in the context of spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*) throughout the *Īqāz*. It discussed a variety of themes and motifs connected with four major polarities, beginning and arriving; grace and works; light and darkness; and finally, expansion and contraction. In the course of this analysis it was found that Ibn ‘Ajībāh sees the image of a spiritual journey (*sayr*) as being a progressive path of contemplative witnessing, with increased light allowing for increased perspicacity of what is ultimately true at the level of ontological being. Ibn ‘Ajībāh also continually highlights the importance of correct propriety (*adab*) along this path, continually directing the attention of the readers to their own sense of being. This entails sincere self-reflection towards oneself and God, to enquire into one’s attachment to phenomenal form, to examine one’s desires towards ephemeral objects and one’s own sense of agency as seeker of these objects. Should aspirants succeed, then the attainment of their teleological goal is the dismantling of their egoic structure through a non-dual mystical arrival (*wuṣūl*) in the form of an egoic death as *fanā*’ (egoic annihilation) and a subsequent rebirth in *baqā*’ (subsistence in God).

Chapter 6 discussed the dimensions and arcs of this spiritual journeying and arrival in the context of an ontological ‘descent’ (*tanazzul*) of the Divine presence (*al-ḥaḍrat al-ilāhiyyah*) wherein God allows himself to be manifested through his ephemeral creation, and a soteriological ‘ascent’ wherein the ephemerality of creation is transcended and revealed to be God Himself. Collectively these two arcs represent the top-down hierarchy of the origination of creation (*al-mabda*’) and then its bottom-up subsequent reintegration and return unto God (*al-ma‘ād*). Between these two arcs, it is the human potentiality of the soul which serves as an isthmus (*barzakh*) acting as a point of intersectionality (*‘ālam al-mutawassiṭ*), being the meeting point whereby God knows Himself through His creation. In this manner both arcs reveal themselves to have an epistemological dimension wherein God’s knowing of Himself is represented in the spiritual aspirant’s pursue of true knowledge.

Chapter 7 looked at the above-mentioned epistemological dimension of such disclosure and knowledge wherein the spiritual aspirant attains unto the direct perception of the absolute unicity (*tawhīd*) of God. It highlighted the ways and means by which this

knowledge is determined and delineated. Ultimately it was found that the epistemological shift tasked of the aspirant is the realisation of *tawhīd*, wherein ontologically the knower, the act of knowing and the known are all found to be one. The chapter concluded that what determines the various graded realisations of this *tawhīd* is the degree of reverential propriety (*adab*) one has towards God in spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*) unto Him.

Thematic Conclusion

Having reached the conclusion of our thematic analysis of the *Īqāz*, we can see the emergence of a dominant theme as focus words or focus phrase that runs throughout. This theme is the *ādāb al-ma`rifah* (lit. the proprieties required of gnosis), being the propriety required to engender the experiential dimension of witnessing the One-ness of God (*tawhīd*). Arguably, I could have called this phrase the *ādāb al-tawhīd* by which I would have meant experiential *tawhīd* of gnosis, or even called it the *ādāb al-murīdīn* (propriety for Sufi aspirants) or *ādāb al-sulūk* (propriety of spiritual wayfaring). These terms could be used synonymously to highlight the goal of such *ādāb* which is intended to denote an ethical code of comportment, the methodological cultivation of which signifies the quest of the aspirant (*murid*) and the perfection of his spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*).⁷⁵⁵ By appending the word *ma`rifah* alongside *ādāb* I am bringing the goal of the quest to the fore. To choose another word like *tawhīd* in its place, whilst applicable, could raise questions of doctrinal significance, and terms like *murīd* or *sulūk* would have to be qualified in the context of the goal to have the same semantic significance. Hence, my choice of *ādāb al-ma`rifah* seems the most apt. A pertinent quote from Ibn `Ajībah himself supports my assertion, as he notes that every spiritual state and experience upon the path has a corresponding *adab* or a set of *ādāb* that are relevant to it, quoting Abū Ḥafṣ al-Nīsābūrī (d.260/880) in the *Īqāz*, he states:

Sufism resides entirely in *ādāb* (*al-taṣawwuf kulluhu ādāb*). For every moment there are *ādāb*, for every state there are *ādāb* and for every Station there are *ādāb*. Hence, whoever adheres to *adab* reaches the ranks of the spiritually accomplished

⁷⁵⁵ Welle, "Sufi Adab," 116.

(*rijāl*, lit. men) and whoever is deprived of *adab* is distant from where he thinks he is close, rejected from where he thinks himself accepted.⁷⁵⁶

As testimony to the power of the term *adab* in framing the relationship between the spiritual seeker and the Creator, it is noticeable that the earliest Sufi treatises were mostly dedicated to the genre *ādāb al-murīdīn* (propriety manuals for Sufi aspirants), a genre that was pivotal in the early formalization of Sufi institutions and lineages.⁷⁵⁷ Notably, the only book ascribed to Ibn ‘Ajībah’s own teacher al-Būzīdī was of a continuation of this genre, entitled *al-Ādāb al-marḍiyyah li sālik al-ṭarīq al-ṣūfiyyah* (*The Manners Commendable for the Mystic Traveller on the Path of the Sufis*).⁷⁵⁸ Qamar ul Huda notes how such *adab* has been historically construed as being the essential centre of Sufi thought and practice, the full comprehension of which serves as the vehicle that reconciles between the inner and outer worlds and the medium which resolves the tension between the two through conscious synthesis.⁷⁵⁹ In this manner Sufis do not interpret *adab* as being merely a moralistic dimension of ethical conduct alone but rather as the transformative medium “concerned with accentuating the constant opening of the heart that inspires a real journey toward encountering God.”⁷⁶⁰ Ibn ‘Ajībah himself expresses this understanding with the summative statement: “Indeed the spiritual path (*ṭarīq*) is entirely *ādāb*.”⁷⁶¹

Conceptually speaking *adab* is thus ideally suited as the prism to frame other domains of the spiritual path and its relationship to the spiritual seeker. This is because *adab* grounds and connects the spiritual seeker and his myriad relationships with God and the rest of creation within an embodied interaction. By way of example, William Chittick notes that the Sufi conception of *adab* is one wherein “noble character traits are not extraneous qualities that we might acquire if we aspire to become good human beings but which have no real bearing upon our existence. On the contrary, they define our mode of existence,

⁷⁵⁶ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 135.

⁷⁵⁷ Böwering, “Adab Literature,” 68.

⁷⁵⁸ Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Būzīdī, *al-Ādāb al-marḍiyyah li sālik ṭarīq al-ṣūfiyyah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘ilmiyya, 2006).

⁷⁵⁹ Qamar ul Huda, “The Light Beyond the Shore in the Theology of Proper Sufi Moral Conduct (*Adab*),” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 72.2 (June 2004), 463.

⁷⁶⁰ Qamar ul Huda, “The Light,” 470.

⁷⁶¹ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 135.

since they determine the extent to which we participate in the fullness of the Light of Being.”⁷⁶² The accuracy of our discovering the key focus phrase for the *Īqāz* to be *adab/ādāb al-maʿrifah* concurs with Danner's initial assessment that *tawhīd* is the theme that serves as an inner thread connecting the many jewels as aphorisms throughout the *Īqāz*.⁷⁶³ The focus phrase also confirms the inference given by Dr. Martin Lings in his foreword to Danner's book, wherein he states that the main theme of the *Ḥikam* is gnosis (*maʿrifah*). Lings defines this *maʿrifah* as demanding a total participation in the theme of *adab*, being in its highest sense "the conformity of the soul, in all its different facets, to the Divine Presence."⁷⁶⁴ The concurrence of my research outcome with the inference of Lings and Danner illustrates how Semantic analysis can corroborate what is sometimes inferred by textual familiarity alone. The thesis thus makes a substantial and original contribution in the field of research methodology on Sufi texts and holds great promise in its insightful results for application to other Sufi texts.

Final note on Methodology

Given our thesis conclusion, we are now in a position to discuss the effectiveness of the methodology of semantic analysis we employed. It should be noted that Izutsu's understanding of semantic analysis was a hybrid of semantic theory as developed by Leo Weisgerber (d.1985) and ethnolinguistics as developed by Edward Sapir (d.1936) and Benjamin Lee Whorf (d.1941).⁷⁶⁵ The earliest formations of such semantic understanding of language as determining and circumscribing a *weltanschauung* or worldview is usually attributed to Wilhelm von Humboldt (d.1835) in what has come to be known as the 'linguistic relativity hypothesis' or 'Sapir–Whorf hypothesis'.⁷⁶⁶ In its earlier deterministic

⁷⁶² William Chittick, "*The Sufi Path*," 22. The identification of Light as a motif for the Being of God is a consistent one throughout Sufi literature and is used by Ibn ʿAjībah just as it was used by the likes of Ibn ʿAṭāʾillah, Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī and Ibn ʿArabī before him. Its theological origins can be traced to the Qurʾān itself such as the famous 'Light verse' 24:35.

⁷⁶³ Danner, *Sūfi Aphorisms*, 18.

⁷⁶⁴ Danner, *Sūfi Aphorisms*, Foreword.

⁷⁶⁵ Abdul Kabir Hussain, 'The Linguistic Construction of Reality: Toshihiko Izutsu's Semantic Hermeneutics of the Qurʾanic Weltanschauung' in Anis Malik Thoha (ed.), *Japanese Contribution to Islamic Studies: The Legacy of Toshihiko Izutsu Interpreted* (Malaysia: IIUM Press, 2010), 23.

⁷⁶⁶ Robert L. Miller, *The Linguistic Relativity Principle and Humboldtian Ethnolinguistics: A History and Appraisal* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968), 10.

and stronger form this hypothesis posited an exclusivity to language in its ability to delimit cognitive categories, an absolute determinism that has since been discredited by linguists.⁷⁶⁷ It is the weaker version of this theory, which limits language to simply being one amidst other determining factors upon the mind, that remains still supported by modern linguists.⁷⁶⁸ Izutsu himself does not state unequivocally that there is an exclusive direct deterministic relationship between language and cognitive reality so it would be incorrect to place him on the more extreme spectrum of such linguistic relativity. This is why his approach to semantic analysis is not simply based on etymological and linguistic analysis but also includes the historical and cultural relational development of such linguistic terminology.⁷⁶⁹ Despite this, some scholars such as Halil Rahman Açar have posited Izutsu's method to be an exclusively objective one which in an empirical manner allows a text to speak for itself.⁷⁷⁰ Izutsu himself is more reticent in his claims, he admits that the identifying of key words which underpin any *semantic weltanschauung* is to some extent an inherently subjective task.⁷⁷¹ This inherent subjectivity has been criticised by the late scholar Fazlur Rahman (d.1988). In his preface to Izutsu's *God and Man*, Rahman alludes to the difficulties of a semantic methodology wherein the key terms intended to define a system cannot themselves be known except through a prior knowledge of that very system, indicating what he terms a "vicious circle".⁷⁷² To Rahman, it is not the approach of semantic analysis itself which is "vicious", for he deems it a "common-sense approach" that the best way of representing a system is to study it, rather, his contention is with the "desire to make semantics a science and to make grandiose claims on behalf of it."⁷⁷³ To illustrate his criticism, Rahman claims that Izutsu's study of the key terms of the Qur'ān ended up being more indicative of his own personal religious *weltanschauung* in that Izutsu

⁷⁶⁷ Laura M. Ahearn, *Living language: an introduction to linguistic anthropology* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2012), 69.

⁷⁶⁸ Harriet Ottenheimer, *The anthropology of language : an introduction to linguistic anthropology* (Belmont: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2013), 33-34.

⁷⁶⁹ İsmail Albayrak, "The Reception of Toshihiko Izutsu's Qur'anic Studies in the Muslim World: With Special Reference to Turkish Qur'anic Scholarship," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* Vol.14, No. 1 (2012): 73-106, 76.

⁷⁷⁰ Albayrak, Reception, 81.

⁷⁷¹ Izutsu, *God and Man*, 26.

⁷⁷² Izutsu, *God and Man*, viii.

⁷⁷³ Izutsu, *God and Man*, viii.

apparently "entirely ignored the moral field of the Qur'ān as though it forms no part of the basic structure of the Qur'anic *weltanschauung*."⁷⁷⁴ Notably, Rahman's criticism of Izutsu's application of semantic analysis does not amount to his criticism of the methodology itself, for if one negates what Rahman considers to be the "grandiose claims" of semantics by negating a claim of absolute determinism, then we are left with what Rahman himself admits to be a "common-sense approach."⁷⁷⁵ Given that Izutsu himself did not make exclusive absolute deterministic claims for semantics and merely believed it to be the best possible objective means of textual analysis, Rahman may actually be in more agreement with Izutsu than he otherwise indicates. Whilst we can admit semantic analysis has a degree of subjectivity, it still remains a viable method of introducing a degree of objectivity, and furthermore helps map out such objective analysis for an academic audience to evaluate for themselves.

Importantly, Izutsu's semantic analysis should not be construed as a method that required its formal advocacy and technical understanding to be practised. For it could be argued that pre-semantic philologists possessed and implicitly practised many of the concepts and understandings of the semanticists without necessarily advocating their technical vocabulary, concepts or methodologies. The position that words cannot be understood except by studying the relationships in which they are used is indeed "common-sense" and does not require a prior awareness of semantic theory to be utilised. What semanticists have developed are technical methods that help better illustrate and demonstrate how these semantic relationships work, thereby opening up these relationships to further study and scrutiny. It is precisely this demonstrative capacity that I believe is the real value added in employing semantic methodology to textual analysis. Illustratively, the outcome of my research in terms of its discovered focus phrase being *ādāb al-ma'rifah* concurs with what Lings and Danner felt the overall theme of the *Hikam* to be. This indicates that implicitly both Lings and Danner were carrying out semantic analysis too, albeit in their case such analysis would be one borne of their textual familiarity alone without necessarily having a technical knowledge of semantics or its methodologies. Given this understanding, the value

⁷⁷⁴ Izutsu, *God and Man*, ix.

⁷⁷⁵ Izutsu, *God and Man*, viii.

of my research lies specifically in my demonstrating how I have arrived at my conclusion, for having a stated methodology allows for an academic audience to assess my claims as to their validity. From a research perspective this is a key point, for it is precisely the absence of such demonstration that would render any claims I make to be either purely speculative or one asking to be accepted on the authority of the claimant alone, both positions of which are problematic academically.

So, given the above, I reiterate my conclusion that semantic analysis in this research has been demonstrated to be a successful methodology for performing a relatively objective thematic analysis of Sufi texts. I emphasize the words 'relatively objective' for I do not believe it is possible for there to be an absolutely objective criteria for textual analysis and interpretation. My own position is that there always exists a Gadamerian "fusion of horizons" (*Horizontverschmelzung*) between the reader and an interpreted text.⁷⁷⁶ To Hans-Georg Gadamer (d.2002) this meant that there can never really be a purely objective interpretation since the very notion of the interactive situation of textual reading fuses the ontological horizons between the text and its reader, implying the presence of the reader *within* such a reading, being a form of interconnected participation that negates the role of the reader as a disconnected outside observer.⁷⁷⁷ This is why I have cited the threefold method of interpretation advocated by Scattolin as being particularly holistic and aptly suited to the interpretive analysis of Sufi texts. Scattolin builds on Izutsu's semantic analysis with an added phenomenological and experiential final stage of reading he refers to as being 'transcendental'. Despite my broad methodological agreement with Scattolin, I must clarify why I have not incorporated this final stage of 'transcendental' reading into this thesis.

Scattolin states that the first two levels of reading (synchronic and the diachronic) demonstrate a necessary exterior approach and degree of objectivity towards Sufi texts before an inherent interior subjectivity and transmission of experience of the

⁷⁷⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Continuum, 2004), 305, 367.

⁷⁷⁷ Mathew W.Knotts, "Readers, Texts, and the Fusion of Horizons: Theology and Gadamer's Hermeneutics." In *AUC Theologica* 4 (2014) : 233–46, 236.

'transcendental' level can be properly attained.⁷⁷⁸ Agreeing with the phenomenological methodology of Gadamer and others such as Paul Ricoeur (d.2005), he posits this final level of reading as being the end endeavor of the hermeneutical task. About this process Ricoeur states, "The purpose of all interpretation is to conquer a remoteness, a distance between the past cultural epoch to which the text belongs and the interpreter himself."⁷⁷⁹ Scattolin is thus firmly in the camp of a phenomenological hermeneutics, wherein as Ricoeur states, "Every hermeneutics is thus, explicitly or implicitly, self-understanding by means of understanding others."⁷⁸⁰ I agree with Scattolin's positing of such transcendental reading and conveyance of mystic experience as being the hermeneutic goal of Sufi texts. My reasons for not including such a level of reading in this thesis is because I believe such an experience is to be relegated to the personal and private realm and one which cannot be accurately mapped and made subject to public academic scrutiny.

It is true that Ibn 'Ajībah in the *Īqāz* primarily wrote to convey mystical experience, but he was also keen to stress that such experience can only come as a form of grace and cannot be laid claim to nor advertised. The *Īqāz* itself continually warns against the ascription of the experience of *ma`rifah* (gnosis) to oneself. Instead it highlights that true *ma`rifah* must necessarily remain open-ended, that it not be construed as one-dimensional, but be multifaceted, possessing a unitive vision that allows for the conjoining of different and sometimes apparently opposing paradigms. Hence, even though I agree with Scattolin's assertion that the goal of Sufi texts is the conveyance of mystic experience, I would have to state that such experience could not be self-claimed nor admitted to the determinism of an academic methodology. The *Īqāz* does not posit the experience of *ma`rifah* as static, instead it calls for a continual effort to enable a constancy of perception. This is the reason why each of the analytical categories we have discussed in this thesis, be they teleological, ontological, soteriological or epistemological, all culminate in the advocacy of a new form of perception, a transformation from a dualistic way of living to that of a non-dual *tawhīd*. We have stated that it is the constant state of reverential propriety (*ādāb al-ma`rifah*) of

⁷⁷⁸ Scattolin, "Hermeneutical Insights," 111 – 112.

⁷⁷⁹ Paul Ricoeur, Charles E. Reagan, and David Stewart. "Existence and Hermeneutics." In *The Philosophy of Paul Ricœur: An Anthology of His Work*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 101.

⁷⁸⁰ Ricoeur et al, "Existence and Hermeneutics", 106.

the spiritual aspirant that enables such transformation to occur, wherein a perceptive dimension of *ma`rifah* occurs that concludes with the stages of annihilation (*fanā`*) in God and subsisting in God (*baqā`*). We discussed how to Ibn `Ajībah this represents the phenomenological experience of the disappearance of the objective world from its point of ontic separation, with everything being returned back to its original indiscriminative singular point of origin, culminating in the witnessing of God as the absolute Unity of Reality, a stage he refers to as the 'gathering' (*jam`*).⁷⁸¹ We have mentioned how he regards the next stage, *baqā`*, as entailing a regaining of phenomenal consciousness of individuatedness, wherein akin to a phenomenological rebirth, the subjective experience is now no longer that of a phenomenal world of disconnected multiplicity, instead like waves underpinned by a common ocean, all phenomena gives testimony to the unicity of God's fiat. In Ibn `Ajībah's worldview a person in *baqā`* is no longer a self-subsistent entity in an objective world of disconnected, separate entities; rather his own existence becomes part of the variations in the nature of self-determinations and theophany of the absolute Unity of God Himself. It is this coupled vision of absolute unity and contingent multiplicity now functioning as two dimensions of the same metaphysical structure of Reality, this "seeing with two eyes" that is Ibn `Ajībah's *ma`rifah*.

The paragraph above, describing Ibn `Ajībah's *ma`rifah*, explaining his conception of *fanā`* and *baqā`*, alludes to the difficulty of advocating an expository reading at the level of such experience. As Andrew Wilcox has noted, the clarification and enumeration of the various and diverse meanings of *fanā`* and *baqā`* as given by academics when conflated together often yields erroneous and contradictory conclusions.⁷⁸² Whilst in a thesis such as this we can seek to discuss and describe Ibn `Ajībah's experience based on his own words, we cannot thereby imply that they are exactly as we understand them to be. This is the problem with Scattolin's positing of mystical experience as a third-level of reading within the context of academic methodology, for any such evaluation would be an implicit claim that implies a sense of having attained unto such an experience for oneself. Ironically, such an

⁷⁸¹ Ibn `Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 425.

⁷⁸² Andrew Wilcox, "The Dual Mystical Concepts of Fanā` and Baqā` in Early Sūfis," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 38:1 (2011), 95-118.

evaluation would be contrary to the spirit of the *Īqāz*, as even Ibn ‘Ajībah does not claim such an experience for himself in explicit terms. Instead Ibn ‘Ajībah ends his *Īqāz* as an open-ended summons to continually deepen the contemplative vision that enables for such an experience. Whilst he states that the possessor of such mystic vision is always a "man of two eyes" (*dhū al-‘aynayn*), a man who perceives absolute Reality of the world as unicity with one eye, and the world of phenomenal multiplicity with the other eye, he never says he himself is one of them. To him, to become such a person of contemplative vision, to be amongst the "people of witnessing" (*ahl al-shuhūd*), is the very goal of the *Īqāz*. This is why he ultimately dedicates the *Īqāz* to these people, referring to them in both the beginning and ending of the *Īqāz* and stating it is only they who can lay claim to being truly 'men'.⁷⁸³ In his commentary to the final aphorism, as an allusion to the implicit imperative in the *Īqāz*, he calls to the reader to undertake their own journey of actualising such states within themselves and supplicates that God make him and whoever reads the *Īqāz* to become the likes of such people.⁷⁸⁴ So, Scattolin's positing of a third level of mystic experience as being a platform wherein Sufi texts can be studied academically is not one I believe to be practically possible to map, moreso, I consider it against the spirit of such texts which advocate the concealing of attainment of such experience and not its proclamation.

In summary, the intent in this thesis was not to examine mystic experience, but to approximate an academic methodology that allows for us to better analyse Sufi texts within a discourse that can be evaluated by Sufis and non-Sufis alike, whether or not they have had mystic experiences. The thesis could be further improved by conducting a more detailed semantic analysis and further research could be conducted on the linguistic dimensions of the *Īqāz* which includes Ibn ‘Ajībah's other literature as companion pieces to the *Īqāz*. Whilst I believe the analytical categories chosen for discussion were fairly comprehensive, there remains potential to expound upon each of them further as well as including other new analytical categories such as cosmology, eschatology and psychology. Concerning Ibn ‘Ajībah, there remains scope to conduct much more research on his life and the nature of the Maghreb he lived in, particularly by way of contrast with what

⁷⁸³ See: Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 11 and Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 407.

⁷⁸⁴ Ibn ‘Ajībah, *Īqāz*, 407.

happened in Morocco after the onset of colonisation shortly after his demise. We have alluded to some pointers regarding this societal change in the conclusion to Chapter 2, highlighting the study by Zakhir and O'Brien which illustrated how the traditional Islamic education system that played a pivotal role in forming Ibn 'Ajībah was dismantled.⁷⁸⁵ The imposition of French as the main language of academic instruction and the subsequent stratification of Moroccan society into elites who were trained in such schools meant the likes of another Ibn 'Ajībah emerging within post-colonised Morocco would become a harder task. Resultantly, Ibn 'Ajībah and the *Īqāz* remain a landmark in Islamic history and it is notable that no other commentary on the *Hikam* has attracted such eminence since. Does this mean that the author and his text are to be interpreted as amongst the last of a receding type of scholarship? This question deserves further exploration and would be a good topic for future researchers. To conclude this study, whilst, in a personal capacity we can hope that a genuine engagement with the *Īqāz* better disposes us to attain its advocated mystic experience, our intent in this thesis was always much humbler, it was to set the ground for a sincere thematic analysis and positioning of its author and his text. It is posited and hoped that this thesis has achieved a positive step in this direction, after all, this was Ibn 'Ajībah's preferred definition of Sufism - to be orientated in the right direction.

⁷⁸⁵ Zakhir and O'Brien, "neo-colonial influence," 40-41.

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