

TAMÁS IVÁNYI

## Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā of Khiva Personal Experience and Poetic Images in the Teachings of a *Ṣūfī* Master

*“The ṣūfī is he who does not care if his blood be spilled  
and his property taken away from him.”*

Sahl AL-TUSTARĪ (d. 896)

### 1. *The name of the author*

The full name of our author is Aḥmad b. ‘Umar b. Muḥammad Abū Jannāb Najm al-Dīn AL-KUBRĀ al-Khwārizmī al-Khīwaqī. His other honorary names are: Ṣānī’ al-Awliyā’ (‘the maker of God’s friends’), al-Muḥaddith (‘the ḥadīth scholar’) and al-Shahīd (‘the martyr’). He also was called Imām (‘a leading religious scholar’) and Qudwa (‘example’). All these names signify either a stage of his life or a segment of his work.

He was born in Khīva, in the district of Khwārizm (Khorezm, nowadays Özbekistan), ca. 540/1145, at that time a flourishing region of Central Asia, where he lived most of his life and died in a heroic way – thus receiving the attributive ‘the Martyr,’ fighting against the Mongol invaders of Genghis Khan together with his disciples.

His ethnicity is not known, since at the time of his birth the original Khwarizmian population of Iranian stock had been heavily mixed with the incursion of different Turkish tribes, so it may be simply noted that he was a Khwarizmian. He was educated from his very youth in the Muslim sciences, before anything else the knowledge of the traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad, hence his other attributive the ‘Muḥaddith,’ so he surely considered himself first a Muslim and then a citizen of his homeland.

His most famous name is, however, AL-KUBRĀ, which became the eponym of his later followers, the Kubrāwīs and the Kubrāwī *ṣūfī* path or order (*ṭarīqa kubrāwīyya*). According to the medieval sources, as a student his talent for theological disputation earned him the epithet AL-KUBRĀ, an abbreviated form of the Qur’ān phrase, *al-tāmma al-kubrā* ‘the greatest calamity’ (Q 79:34), since he had always defeated his opponents in religious debates.

After having concluded the usual elementary religious education in his homeland, he spent several years in travelling following the course of the *ṭalab al-‘ilm* (the quest for knowledge), knowledge meaning the Prophetic traditions, *ḥadīth*, which had been his main interest in his early years. During his travels in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt, however, he had met several *Ṣūfī* masters whose teachings

impressed him greatly, so after his return his attention turned to transferring his mystical knowledge to the growing number of his disciples. This activity is reflected in his literary output in which, beside his Qur'ān commentary, the mystical teachings dominate.

## 2. *Najm al-Dīn AL-KUBRĀ'S work under discussion*

2.1 My interest lies in this paper in analysing his *magnum opus*, *Fawā'ih al-jamāl wa-fawātiḥ al-jalāl* ('The fragrance of the /divine/ Beauty<sup>1</sup> and the commencements of the /divine/ Glory'), to shed light on the main objective of the author in compiling his work and to disclose the methods he used for reaching his aim. I start with presenting two well-known opinions on the character of Najm al-Dīn AL-KUBRĀ'S work, and I will continue throughout my paper with trying to refute them.

The first to write about Najm al-Dīn in detail in the vast introduction to his edition of the work under discussion was the outstanding Swiss scholar of Islamic mysticism, Fritz MEIER.<sup>2</sup> He evaluated it as a masterpiece of *ṣūfī* literature,<sup>3</sup> despite containing an unordered set of different subjects and themes. Therefore, he undertakes, according to his view, to order in a systematic way the material contained in the book. In my view, however, he succeeded in altering and destroying altogether the original well-laid plan of the work, annihilating the objective of the author, which was to give a well-conceived guidance for his disciples following the voyage on the mystical path. Thus, he states: "Kubrā gibt jedoch keine systematische Darstellung und auch kein zusammenhängendes Bild der Weltanschauung, aus der die Deutungen bezieht. So ergibt sich für uns die Aufgabe, das Material in eine Ordnung zu bringen."<sup>4</sup> All this after he noted earlier that KUBRĀ classified his work as a cross-section (of mysticism) through the experiences of mystics. ("KUBRĀ bezeichnet die *Fawā'ih al-ḡamāl* als einen Querschnitt durch die Erfahrungen des Mystikers", *ibid.*)<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Although the word *jamāl* is generally considered to mean 'beauty,' in the mystical context it means in reality the divine goodness. Even in today's ordinary language *jamil* means a good deed.

<sup>2</sup> *Die Fawā'ih al-ḡamāl wa-fawātiḥ al-ḡalāl des Naǧm ad-Dīn al-Kubrā. Eine Darstellung mystischer Erfahrungen aus der Zeit um 1200 n. Chr.* Herausgegeben und erläutert von Fritz MEIER. Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden 1957. 299 + 126 p. (Arabic text).

<sup>3</sup> MEIER: *op. cit.* 243.

<sup>4</sup> MEIER: *op. cit.* 65.

<sup>5</sup> MEIER'S thesis of the nature of the *Fawā'ih* became widespread in the Western scholarly literature and has been accepted without argument, e.g., by Annamarie SCHIMMEL: *Mystical Dimensions*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1975. 254 ff.

2.2 One of my starting points in my paper will be, then, to refute the apparent disorderliness of the *Fawā'ih al-jamāl*. It is well ordered but its systematization differs greatly from the systems of the earlier well-known *ṣūfī* compendia to which Meier compares it, namely, AL-KALĀBĀDHĪ'S *Ta'arruf*, AL-QUSHAYRĪ'S *Risāla*, AL-HUJWĪRĪ'S *Kashf al-mahjūb*, AL-SARRĀJ'S *al-Luma'*, or other similar *ṣūfī* works.<sup>6</sup> This book was not meant to be another *risāla* (epistle) for the purpose of making the concepts and the earlier mystics known to those who are interested in the topic, but it was meant as a guideline or guidebook for the disciples of the author who were eager to take the *ṣūfī* path towards God as voyagers.

2.3 About one and a half decades later, the famous French philosopher and expert of Iranian mysticism, Henry CORBIN, dedicated a large chapter to Najm al-Dīn AL-KUBRĀ and his work *Fawā'ih al-jamāl* in his book on the Iranian mystical light theories.<sup>7</sup> In the fourth chapter of his book, *Visio Smaragdina*, most importantly, Corbin analyses AL-KUBRĀ'S teaching about the lights of different colours, and he states with profound elaboration that AL-KUBRĀ'S book signifies an innovative and pioneering work in this field. I do not want to contest his main arguments on this topic of which he was far the best master. His thesis: "Far from merely constructing a theory, Najm Kobra describes real events which take place in the inner world, on the 'plane of visionary apperception' (*maqām al-mushāhada*), in an order of reality corresponding specifically to the organ of perception which is the imaginative faculty (Imaginatrix)" can be accepted without discussion.<sup>8</sup>

I only want to challenge another statement in the chapter dealing with Najm al-Dīn: "Since Najm Kobra's book is a spiritual journal rather than a didactic treatise, a *diarium spirituale* not unlike that of Rūzbihān BAQLĪ, the best we can do is to single out certain of its leading themes."<sup>9</sup>

(i) First, Najm al-Dīn KUBRĀ'S main work does not resemble Rūzbihān BAQLĪ'S *Kashf al-asrār* (Unveiling of the Secrets), since the latter is an autobiography, as

<sup>6</sup> See Abū Bakr Muḥammad AL-KALĀBĀDHĪ: *al-Ta'arruf li-madhab ahl-al-taṣawwuf*, ed. by Arthur J. ARBERRY, Cairo, al-Khānji, 1934; Abū l-Qāsim AL-QUSHAYRĪ: *Risāla*, ed. by 'ABD AL-ḤALĪM MAḤMŪD, Cairo, Dār al-Sha'b, 1989; 'Alī 'Uthmān AL-HUJWĪRĪ: *Kashf al-mahjūb*, tr. by Reynold A. NICHOLSON, London, Luzac, 1911; Abū Naṣr AL-SARRĀJ: *al-Luma'*, ed. by 'ABD AL-ḤALĪM MAḤMŪD, Cairo, Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1960.

<sup>7</sup> Henry CORBIN: *L'homme de lumière dans le soufisme iranien*. Paris, Edition Présence, 1971. Ch. IV: *Visio smaragdina*, pp. 71–108. The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism. Translated by Nancy PEARSON. Omega Publications, New Lebanon, N.Y., 2nd. ed., 1994. Ch. IV: *Visio Smaragdina*, 61–97.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 76: "Najm Kobra ne construit nullement une théorie; il décrit les événements réels qui s'accomplissent dans le monde intérieur, au « plan de l'aperception visionnaire » (*maqām al-moshāhada*), dans l'ordre de réalité correspondant en propre à l'organe de perception qui est la faculté imaginatrice", 76.

<sup>9</sup> "Le livre de Najm Kobra étant plutôt qu'un traité didactique. un journal spirituel, un *diarium spirituale* non sans analogie avec celui de Rūzbehūn. le mieux à faire est d'en dégager certains thèmes conducteurs- les lignes en sont convergentes." *Ibid.* 75.

Carl ERNST, its translator calls it,<sup>10</sup> while the former is a guidebook for beginners on the path; a detailed comparison, however, is outside the scope of this paper.

(ii) Secondly, CORBIN thought similarly to Meier in that he also treated Najm al-Dīn KUBRĀ'S work as an inventory of ideas and themes thrown together without any conception of ordering.

(iii) Thirdly, last, but not least, I cannot accept CORBIN'S statement that the *Fawā'ih al-jamāl* is not a didactic treatise. It is really a didactic work, and the primary aim of my paper is to prove this statement.

2.4 Consequently, reading and analysing the *Fawā'ih al-jamāl* gave me the impression that it contains, contrary to the views of the two scholars mentioned above, a well-ordered train of thoughts which form a continuous and cohesive field of mystical notions, progressing on the mystical path from the beginning till the point when the voyager, i.e., the disciple, reaches the so called 'realisation' (*taḥqīq*). But Najm al-Dīn did not follow the way of ordering used by AL-QUŞAYRĪ, which had become the standard work till this day, and which was taken as an ideal by the researchers of Islamic mysticism. The *Risāla* of AL-QUŞAYRĪ, and the similar works of AL-KALĀBĀDHĪ, AL-HUJWĪRĪ and AL-SARRĀJ are thematic encyclopaedias, compiled from a thousand quotations of a hundred *şūfī* masters and put together in a taxonomic way.

Najm al-Dīn KUBRĀ wanted to write a guideline for his many students (*murīds*) who surrounded him according to the biographical sources. His work bears the features of a pedagogical work, which is meant to lead them through both the difficulties and the beautiful experiences of travelling on the *şūfī* path. Thus, the book does not contain unrelated motives scattered in it and therefore every attempt to 'improve' it by rearranging its parts leads to the destruction of this original plan.

There is abundant evidence to support this view:

(i) The most famous eponym of AL-KUBRĀ is *Şāni' al-awliyā'*, Maker of God's friends, i.e., *şūfīs* who went through the path, successfully ended their journey and thus also became masters on their own right. As far as I know, he was the only *şūfī shaykh* who was given this title.

(ii) In the *thanā'*, the first paragraph of the book praising God, the author says:<sup>11</sup> "Glory to God who taught us the speech of birds and showed us the signs of voyage." AL-KUBRĀ calls his disciples 'travellers' (*sayyār*). Throughout the book the two most important words are the journey (*sayr*) and the voyager, traveller (*sayyār*), i.e., his *şūfī* disciple. The plural 'us' refers to the friends of God (*awliyā' Allāh*), the mystical masters.

<sup>10</sup> Ruzbihan BAQLI: *The unveiling of Secrets. Diary of a Sufi Master*. Tr. by Carl W. ERNST, Chapel Hill, N.C., Parvardigar Press, 1997, x.

<sup>11</sup> Najm al-Dīn AL-KUBRĀ: *Fawā'ih al-jamāl wa-fawātiḥ al-jalāl*, ed. by Yūsuf ZAYDĀN, Cairo, Dār Su'ād Şabāḥ, 1993, 121.

(iii) The text of the book evidently fixes a teacher–pupil relation, not only an author–reader one, when he calls his reader (or listener to the lecture of the master) ‘my dear one’ (*ḥabībī*), which is a very intimate mode of addressing in Arabic and which I have not yet found in any other *ṣūfī* book. Another word which shows the same intimate relationship is the imperative ‘know’ (*i‘lam*). Although this command is very much used in Arabic books, I will try to demonstrate that in our text it is always used after the description of an unusual, not everyday phenomenon or experience which, according to my assumption, may have been told to the master by one of his disciples or in other cases by someone else during AL-KUBRĀ’s long travelling around the Islamic world. Then he says ‘know’, and a spiritual or mystical explanation of the previous experience follows – what else could it be called if not a didactic method?

(iv) Last but not least, the whole text is a proof of the author’s intention, starting at the beginning of the stations and states of the *ṣūfī* path and ending up with demonstrating the signs of the final steps towards the mystical realization, the divine love and divine knowledge.

(v) Finally, the comparatively small number of Qur’ān quotations, as contrasted to the book of his disciple, Najm al-Dīn Rāzī AL-DĀYA, *Mirṣād al-‘ibād*, written in Persian,<sup>12</sup> shows that AL-KUBRĀ used a Qur’ān quotation only when he felt compelled to support the characterisation of a mystical state or station and not for the sake of the Qur’ān quotation. Najm al-Dīn AL-DĀYA, on the contrary, used many more quotations for the cause of defending the *ṣūfīs* against the accusation of heresy (*bid‘a*). This fact also proves that the *Fawā’iḥ al-jamāl* was not intended for the purpose of a *ṣūfī* handbook, but it served rather as a textbook for his disciples. A detailed analysis of why the Qur’ān quotations were used in certain places of the book cannot be carried out in this article.

### 3. The pedagogical elements in the work of al-Kubrā

The structure of the work according to the voyage (*ṣayr*) of the aspirant (*murīd*) or voyager (*sayyār*) testifies well how the author leads the aspirant through the *ṣūfī* path (*ṭarīqa*), following the stations and states and explaining the meaning of each of them, always keeping in mind what the teaching requires. Here I must mention that, though Najm al-Dīn AL-KUBRĀ kept a copy of the *Risāla* in his library till his death and he considered it his favourite book, he did not follow its structure and did not even use its terms and definitions or cite its stories. His main sources were, besides his personal experiences, those of his masters or the stories told him by them. Hence these stories cannot be found verbatim in any other books because they had been memorised by the author by listening. The context

<sup>12</sup> AL-KUBRĀ quotes only 54 Qur’ān āyas, without explanations, while his former disciple, AL-DĀYA, quotes 69 āyas with complete explanations, and quotes many more ones without explanation.

sometimes suggests that the mystical experience was gained by one of the disciples and the master explains its significance.<sup>13</sup>

3.1 *The direct manifestations of the master – disciple relation in the Fawā’ih al-jamāl.* The first signs of the educational nature of AL-KUBRĀ’S imposing work are two expressions which refer to the aim of this *ṣufī* textbook: *manṭiq al-ṭayr* (‘speech of birds’, cf. Qur’ān 27/16), i.e., the mystical language, so that we can hear and understand the divine messages which spread by the speech of the birds, and *‘alāmāt al-sayr* (‘signs of voyage’),<sup>14</sup> both of which express the same meaning: “God has taught us the path ascending to Him and I, God’s modest servant and friend, want to transmit this divine knowledge to my disciples. By this divine teaching, which is followed strictly by my teaching, one can avoid the calamities of this world, that is, everything which is not Him.” The first expression may refer at the same time to the title of Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār’s famous poetic work, *The Speech of the Birds (Mantiq al-ṭayr)*.<sup>15</sup>

The author addresses his disciples intimately: *yā ḥabībī* (‘O, my dear one!’) and *i’lam* (‘know!’),<sup>16</sup> then the two expressions together: *i’lam yā ḥabībī*.<sup>17</sup>

AL-KUBRĀ sets off his disciples on the path in a personal way with a sincere advice: close your eyes and view what you see, and if you said: I do not see anything, it is your mistake, and if you like to find (God) behold him in front of you, even if your eyes are closed.<sup>18</sup>

Then he shows the disciples the ways of striving for the repulsion of everything that is other than God: the (worldly) existence, the (lower) soul and the devil (*wujūd, nafs, shayṭān*), calling their attention – by citing Junayd’s teaching – to the utilization of the knowledge of the mystical events through the master. It is the first time the importance of the master–disciple relation is emphasized, which later occurs so emphatically throughout the work.<sup>19</sup>

His didactic way appears in the structure of presenting the mystical notions: first he tells a mystical experience, then a simile from everyday life which brings closer the meaning of the event to the disciples, and then he puts forward its mystical explanation. E.g.: “The first lights which come to the traveller are the lights of the Power (of God) during the revelation (*tajallī*) ... It makes him agitated

<sup>13</sup> Although it would have been interesting to point out in detail how the author devised the structure of his book, this task outgrows the frames of this article. It is my intention to execute this project in a separate article.

<sup>14</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 121. The first two lines of the book are in rhymed prose, *ṣaj’*, making use of the rhyming of the two main concepts, *ṭayr* and *sayr*.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 121: AL-KUBRĀ may have known this work, the composition of which preceded his *Fawā’ih al-jamāl*. It may have been finished in 1177.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 121–122.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 130.

<sup>18</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 122.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 124.

and depressed ... Then the angels arrive from behind his back ...”<sup>20</sup> This is followed by a personal experience of the author in a vision,<sup>21</sup> which supports the previous vision of the disciple: “An angel raised him and during his remembrance in seclusion he heard the angels reciting the glorification of God (*tasbīḥ*), hastening in their words as if they had feared and demanded rescue.” And after this vision he brings the event closer to a beginner, perhaps a young disciple, by a simile taken from everyday life: “They were like small children, whom their father intends to beat and say: I repented, I repented.”

In the first appearances of the vision and explanation model, the vision probably belonged to a disciple:<sup>22</sup> “If you viewed ... then know that it means.” For instance: “If you viewed seas which were clear and saw in them drowning suns then know that they are the seas of knowledge.” Similar descriptions of experiences and their explanations can be found on the next page and in several other places. These and several other descriptions of visions and their explanations prove without doubt that the starting point of the teachings of Najm al-Dīn AL-KUBRĀ were based principally on personal mystical experiences, of his and probably of others, not on philosophical or theosophical speculations, and the mystical theories only followed these experiences.

On the same page<sup>23</sup> we read for the first time about the role of the different colours in the mystical visions: green means strength while yellow means weakness. Then, as if he does not feel these statements sufficient, he gives examples from the well-known world around us: “We may argue with the different stages of the plants: The plants when they are green it shows that they are strong, living and in rapid growth. But whenever their colour is yellow it shows the weakness of the plants.” This example is followed by some mystical speculations on the meaning of the colours as if the master felt reassured that his words had reached their goal and the disciples understood the mystical meanings better. The two important Sufi expressions *talwīn* and *tamkīn* are also explained for the students (or later readers) by way of visual experience: the mixture of colours vs. the continuous green colour. These, after having become abstract mystical notions, mean the inconstancy of one’s spiritual state and the opposite, the stability of the spiritual state.<sup>24</sup>

AL-KUBRĀ continues the realistic characterization of important *ṣūfī* terms, *ghayba* and *yaqza*, in the following way:<sup>25</sup> “If the well of the existence reveals (manifests) itself to you in wakefulness (*yaqza*), you feel intimacy and admiration, but if

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 136.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 136-7.

<sup>22</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 130-131.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 131.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. AL-QUSHAYRĪ: *op. cit.*, 192-195, where *talwīn* (inconstancy) is the attribute of those having states while *tamkīn* (stability) is the attribute of those who attained true reality. Najm al-Dīn AL-KUBRĀ, contrarily, characterizes the traveller by both these two experiences of colours in one and the same phase of the mystical voyage.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 133.

it reveals (manifests) itself in the world of divine realm (vision) (*ghayba*), you feel as if awe and distress have fallen on you.”<sup>26</sup>

Najm al-Dīn AL-KUBRĀ, as a good teacher, calls the attention of the beginners to the disturbing fact that the contradictory tastings (*adhwāq*) in one and the same emotional, ecstatic state may naturally occur and must not confuse them. The characterization of the absence from the self (*ghayba*)<sup>27</sup> is followed by two personal experiences of the author in vision which raised him to the realm of the unseen, the world of the angels.

In the path leading to God’s proximity divine inspiration (*ilhām*) may descend on the traveller, which is explained by a simile: “It is like a script written on a board which is then overspread by dust. Later, when the dust would be removed, the script appears clearly again.”

This is followed by a strange personal experience in a vision of absence where a pro-‘Alī *hadīth* is mentioned as the only sign of the author’s supposed but otherwise unproved Shiite inclination.

Najm al-Dīn AL-KUBRĀ uses some well-known expressions differently from other *ṣūfī* sources like AL-QUSHAYRĪ’S *Risāla*. For example, *ḥuḍūr* means the state of sobriety as opposed to the *ghayba*, which denotes an extreme emotional state (fn.: *ḥuḍūr* in the *Risāla* means presence with God). At the same time *‘ālam al-shahāda*, ‘the world of witnessing’, denotes the perceptible world as opposed to the world of absence (*‘ālam al-ghayb*), which is not perceptible (fn.: *shahāda* is a term applied to the witnessing of God in the *Risāla*). It is to be noted, too, that he uses *ghayb* and *ghayba* without distinction. He warns his disciples that the perceptible world is identical with wakefulness (*yaqẓa*), so they must endeavour reaching the spiritual state of witnessing God through seclusion and remembering God.

The author draws the traveller’s attention to the significance of one of the most important mystical attributes, sincerity (*ikhhlās*), since it is the only way for the refutation of the Satan. He accosts the reader again as *yā ḥabībī* (‘oh, my dear’) and gives order and prohibition concerning the behaviour of his disciple: “Be sincere ... and do not see (that you are) in the station of sincerity (consciously), since it is a flaw<sup>28</sup> in the sincerity ... and do not trust in the devil.”<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> The two similar expressions can be characterised in the following way: *ghayb* is the unseen, the divine realm, while *ghayba* is when the heart is absent from knowing the circumstances of creatures, i.e., absent from oneself and others through remembering God’s rewards and thinking of God’s punishment. It means at the same time absence from the self (*nafs*).

<sup>27</sup> *ghāba l-sayyār ‘an wujūdihi* = the voyager became absent from his existence.

<sup>28</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 142 reads: *fa-innahu shā’ibatun* “Since it is a flaw”. MEIER: *op. cit.* Arabic text 14 fn. 8 and 142, fn. 2: Both editors notice that it should have been *innahá*, but this is an erroneous correction, since Arabic grammar allows the possibility to use *-hu* as *ḍamīr al-sha’n* (impersonal pronoun), so it does not refer to *shā’iba*. Cf. RECKENDORF: *Die syntaktische Verhältnisse des Arabischen*, Leiden, Brill, 1895, 802. This forms an important point for me since it shows how excellent and grammatically spotless the Arabic text of our author is.

<sup>29</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 142: *al-shaytān ya’tī l-insān min kull ṭarīq illā min bāb al-ikhhlās fa-kun mukhlīṣan fa-law kunta fī l-ikhhlās fa-lā tara fī maqām al-ikhhlās fa-innahu shā’iba fī l-ikhhlās fa-yadkhulu ‘alayka wa-lā ta’mān al-shaytān.*

AL-KUBRĀ cites a well-known anecdote about Jesus which serves as a parable for warning the disciples against neglecting the requirements of poverty (*faqr*) and the renunciation of worldly affairs (*zuhd*) to keep the Devil away from them.<sup>30</sup> According to this story, even Jesus, a prophet in Islam, had to beware of Iblīs (Satan):<sup>31</sup> “It is said about Jesus that while he was sleeping with a brick (*labina*) under his head, he suddenly awoke from his sleep finding that the ‘cursed one’ (*al-la’in*, Satan) stood at his head. Jesus asked him: ‘What brought you to me?’ The Satan answered: ‘I have aspired after you!’ ‘I am the Spirit of God (*Rūḥ Allāh*), how could you aspire after me?’ ‘You have taken my cloth and so I can aspire after you.’ ‘And what is this cloth?’ ‘It is this brick under your head.’ Then Jesus took the brick and slung it away, so that the Satan had to depart from him.”<sup>32</sup>

This point is further developed in inserting a personal experience of the author with the Satan in a dream from whose trick he could only be saved by consulting his master in absence. Thus, this story has a twofold aim: warning against the temptations and emphasizing the advisability to turn to the master for advice and guidance.<sup>33</sup>

Speaking of the so-called secret thoughts (*khātir / khawātir*),<sup>34</sup> the author calls the disciples’ attention to the danger of these coming from evil thoughts or diabolic suggestions finding their way into their hearts. Thence it is the shaykh who should decide whether the *khātir* is coming from the *Ḥaqq* (God) or not.

AL-KUBRĀ advises his disciplines to try the *khātir* (passing thought) coming to him by tasting (*dawq*) – using the word in both the ordinary meaning and the *ṣūfī* meaning at the same time – to know whether it is “sweet like the honeycomb or bitter like the colocynth. (Cf. the similes in 3.3 below.) If your tasting has become bad you would taste what is sweet as if it had a bitter taste.” He advises: “Always

<sup>30</sup> Abū Ṭālib AL-MAKKĪ (died in 998), after telling this anecdote, draws the moral of the story: *ḍarūrat al-tajarrud al-tāmm*, ‘the necessity of the absolute detachedness (from this world)’. *Qūt al-qulūb*, Cairo, 1932, II. 192. See also II. 819, ed. by Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm Muḥammad AL-RADWĀNĪ, Cairo, Maktabat al-Turāth, 2001.

<sup>31</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 143.

<sup>32</sup> This droll account of the encounter of Jesus with Iblīs is told in many medieval sources, but none of them agrees word for word with AL-KUBRĀ *op. cit.*’s variant, a fact which reaffirms that he collected his material by memorizing the teachings of his masters, not by reading them in books. Besides AL-MAKKĪ’s above mentioned place, see IBN ABĪ L-DUNYĀ (died in 894): Makā’id al-shayṭān, Cairo, no date, 23, cited also by Majdūd b. Ādam SANĀ’Ī al-Ghaznawī (died between 1131 and 1141): *Hadīqat al-haqīqa wa sharḥ al-ṭarīqa*, Arabic tr. by Ibrāhīm AL-DASŪQĪ, vol. I, Cairo, Dār al-Amin, 1995, 219–220. See also Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Aḥmad AL-GHAZĀLĪ (died in 1111): *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, vol. III, Cairo, no date, 33. It is interesting to note that this story is also told in a legal work, the commentary of the *Muwaṭṭa’* by MĀLIK b. Anas written by Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdallāh Ibn al-‘Arabī AL-MAĀFIRĪ al-Ishbīlī (died in 1148), under the heading “*kasr al-nafs bi-tark al-shahwa*” (breaking the soul by abandonment of the desire), al-Qabas - *Šarḥ al-Muwaṭṭa’*, vol. XXIII, ed. By ‘Absallāh b. ‘Abd al-Muḥsin AL-TURKĪ, Cairo, Markaz al-Buḥūth al-‘Arabiyya wal-Islāmiyya, 2005, 648.

<sup>33</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 143–144.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* 144–145.

turn to the master for the evaluation of your tasting.” Then the author, to clarify his thought, adds a line by the famous 10th century Arab poet, AL-MUTANABBĪ, in which the poet says that the bitterness of the mouth is caused by its illness, a concept which fits in well in the *ṣūfī* concept of corruption (*fasād*).<sup>35</sup>

The voyager hears during his voyage secret conversations, the source of which he can decide for himself by way of his feeling, since the conversation of the devil causes difficult and tiresome feeling, while the one coming from God is the most delightful of all things. The above advice and many similar ones are not theoretical but essentially practical instructions worded in a simple ordinary language which is understandable even for a young beginner in the *ṣūfī* path.

The disciples receive a description of a highly realistic and explicative character about the tasting of the world of divine realm by way of vision, the beginning of which is an ordinary sleep and dream.<sup>36</sup> This makes the voyager feel as if he got rid of the problems of the existence. Then his ordinary senses become blocked and changed into other senses, those of the divine realm (*ghayb*). This alteration makes the voyager feel extraordinary phenomena as if he could fly or walk on water or enter a fire without burning himself. These so-called wonders of God’s friends (*karāmāt al-awliyā’*) can be explained and comprehended in a simple way as the natural consequence of the states and stations of the *ṣūfī* path, i.e., the different *ṣūfī* practices.

One of the most important concepts of the Islamic mystical way is the *wārid* (pl. *wāridāt*), the occurrence of divine visitation, essentially the descent of spiritual meanings upon the heart, which is in essence the equivalent of the Prophetic inspiration for the *ṣūfīs*. Therefore, it is a crucial task of the master to bring it close to the disciples. This, according to Najm al-Dīn AL-KUBRĀ, is best done by a simile.<sup>37</sup>

After the great efforts (*mujāhadāt*) which are so heavy like the immovable mountains, an agreeable easiness descends upon him (the disciple), the colour of which is green.<sup>38</sup>

AL-KUBRĀ explains quite originally the effects of the two important states of the voyager, the constriction (*qabḍ*) and the extension (*baṣṭ*) of the heart:<sup>39</sup> “Sometimes the heart becomes extended and the effects of the extension (relaxation) appear on the face (of the voyager), sometimes the heart becomes constricted and the signs of the constriction (anxiety) appear on the face (of the voyager).”<sup>40</sup> The involvement of the face in the description of the two aforementioned mysti-

<sup>35</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 146. Cf. ‘UQBĀRĪ, *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, vol. III, p. 228. *al-qāfiya: al-jamālā*. See in detail in the quotations, 7.13.3.

<sup>36</sup> The connection between dream and vision, and the recognition of the dream as mystical reality is presented in detail on KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 149–150.

<sup>37</sup> See the hunting simile, 150–151.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* 153. See: 131, the simile of the colours.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 189.

<sup>40</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 189: *tāratan yakūnu l-qalb munbaṣiṭan wa-taḥharu āthāruhu ‘alā l-wajh wa- tāratan yakūnu l-qalb munqabiḍan wa-taḥharu āthāruhu ‘alā l-wajh.*

cal terms serves teaching purposes, since the face reflects clearly the inner states of the heart and this makes the understanding easier for the young disciples. No *ṣūfī* author had ever used before the changes on the face as the visible signs of *qabḍ* and *bast*.

The *samāʿ* ('listening') stories of AL-JUNAYD and AL-NŪRĪ<sup>41</sup> were also chosen by the author because they excellently show the influence of the *ḥāl*, or the lack of it, on the outward appearance and behaviour of the *ṣūfī* and so they seemed very useful for didactic purposes.

3.2. *The description of the author's personal experiences in the Fawā'ih al-jamāl.* The descriptions of the many personal mystical experiences of the author serve well the teaching purpose of the work in two ways: with their contents and their personal characteristics through which the master gives examples for the disciples. This is a peculiar feature of this book that cannot be found in any other work of the vast Islamic mystical literature.

The educational character of the *Fawā'ih al-jamāl* manifests itself perhaps in the most obvious way in AL-KUBRĀ'S personal experiences, which are unevenly scattered in the work but always found in places which otherwise could be difficult to comprehend because of their complexities, while a personal experience, due to its simplicity of description, brings the given mystical phenomenon closer to the disciples.

At the beginning of the mystical path the voyager perceives lights and feels the angels in his heart. This is illuminated for the beginner by a personal experience of AL-KUBRĀ in the form of a vision: "An angel raised me ... carried me and kissed me, so that his light radiated into my eye. Then he said: In the name of God there is no god except Him the Merciful and Compassionate. Then he put me down."<sup>42</sup>

The previous vision continues with a perception of external sounds (hallucination): "I heard the angels, when remembering God in my seclusion, glorifying the Almighty."<sup>43</sup> Then two similes follow (see the similes in 3.3) with the aim of explaining the significance of the vision and sound perception for the disciples.

Personal experience in the form of a vision (not clear whether in a dream or awake) is used to explain the way external thoughts (*khawāṭir*) pour into the heart of the voyager: "Once I was absent (in the unseen world) and I perceived the Prophet who was accompanied by 'Alī. Then I hurried to 'Alī without delay and shook hands with him and was inspired as if I heard the Prophet's tradition: Whoever shakes hands with 'Alī will enter the Paradise. Then I started asking 'Alī whether this *ḥadīth* was right and he answered in the affirmative."<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* 191–192.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 136: *'arrajanī malak...* The *basmala* is partly from Qur'ān 2/163, which is the most complete version in the Qur'ān.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 137: *kuntu asma'u fī waqt al-saḥar wa-anā dhākir fī l-khalwa tasbīḥ al-malā'ika.*

<sup>44</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 138: *ghibtu fa-abṣartu l-nabī...* The *ḥadīth* quoted here is a Shī'ite tradition, not found in the six books of the Sunnite traditions.

On speaking about the immersion (*istighrāq*) of the existence in the remembrance (*dhikr*), AL-KUBRĀ recalls one of his personal experiences: Once when in seclusion doing remembrance (*dhikr*), his head was filled with frightening sounds of musical instruments and therefore he was scared, thus his master advised him to stop remembering to avoid death.<sup>45</sup>

The author told his master his personal experience during the seclusion when he had become absent (from this world, *ghibtu*) and had been raised to the ascending Sun. His shaykh, 'Ammār, was very glad and told AL-KUBRĀ his experience the same night when he saw in dream that he was walking in the holy precinct of Mecca together with AL-KUBRĀ while the Sun was in the middle of the heaven. AL-KUBRĀ told his master that he was that Sun because he had been annihilated in one of the circles of light of the Sun.<sup>46</sup> Then the two experiences are followed by a detailed explanation. The primary aim of this passage is to show the relevance of the strict connection between the disciple and the shaykh, which can lead to parallel dreams in the same night.<sup>47</sup>

AL-KUBRĀ says about one of his mystical experiences: “When I reached this station it was written in my plate: In the name of the Merciful and Compassionate God (*basmala*).”<sup>48</sup>

He describes his next personal experience as follows: “I became absent (from this world, *ghibtu*), and I felt as if I was accompanied by the Prophet Muḥammad and his companies (*aṣḥāb*). Then I asked the Prophet what the word *raḥmān* meant and he answered: ‘He who sits down (*istawā*) on His Throne’” (cf. Qur’ān 7/54).<sup>49</sup> The meaning of the *raḥīm* can be found in the following Qur’ān verse 33/43: “He is compassionate with the believers.”<sup>50</sup>

In another personal experience the author describes how close the (perfect) sincerity (*ikhhlās*) is to death:<sup>51</sup> “It was not by my choice that I traversed to the abode of sincerity, but I was carried there. At that time, I tasted death, then I felt tranquillity in glancing at this presence. I received the inspiration that it was the presence of the divine mercy (*raḥma*). ... Later my shaykh came to me and whispered into my heart: Devote yourself to God. From this I understood that it had been he who had sent me to the presence of the divine power (*ulūhiyya*) and the divine lordship (*rubūbiyya*). ... Then I returned to the existence and was relieved from my fatigue.” This seems to be a parable exemplifying the significance of the shaykh’s guidance for the voyager.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* 155–156: *kuntu fī l-khalwa dhākiran ... qāla l-shaykh: uhkruj min al-khalwa wa-da’ al-dhikr ḥattā lā tajunna wa-tamūta.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 164: *kuntu fī l-khalwa wa-ghibtu thumma ‘urrijtu ilā l-samā’...*

<sup>47</sup> The explanations are found in KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 164–165.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* 205: *waṣaltu ilā hādihā l-maqām fa-awwal mā kutiba fī lawḥī: bism illāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 205: *mā’nā raḥmān ... alladhī ‘alā l-‘arsh istawā.*

<sup>50</sup> *wa-kāna bil-mu’minīna raḥīman: 33/43.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 208: *dār al-ikhhlās wa-hiya dār man dhahaba ... lā ya’buruhu ḥattā yadhūqu l-mawt.*

Another personal experience serves the aim to show to the disciples their future significance in an easily comprehensible way: “I absented myself (from the existence) and saw the Sun quit the Sagitta and enter the North Star. Then the chief minister of the emir came to me, and it signified for me that the emir humbled himself in front of a mystic (*faqīr*).”<sup>52</sup>

The following story or experience reflects even the author’s doubts whether all this, what he is going to tell, really happened to him or not. It is told in connection with the section of the book on the visitation of the spirits (*tazāwur al-arwāh*): “My shaykh, AL-BADLĪSĪ, travelled to a village then returned to us. When he was near our city his dignity (*waqār*) and his shadow (*ẓill*) and his determination (*himma*) fell on me like a mountain and I could not move from it. Then I was inspired (*ulhimtu*) that the shaykh had already returned and was near to us. Thus, I told my companions to accompany me for welcoming the shaykh. However, they did not believe me and asked me who had informed me about this. Nevertheless, they came with me to the road and there we met the shaykh. After this amazement filled them having seen this wonderful event.”<sup>53</sup> This story is meant to show how a disciple can establish spiritual contact with his shaykh.

Other personal experiences serve as explanations of what the *ṣūfī* sees in his seclusion when he gazes at the heaven in his absence from the real world. AL-KUBRĀ said: “I saw a religious scholar who asked me the meaning of the stars and the Sun. I asked him to tell me the answer, so he said: God watches his servant night and day. At night, his gaze is the stars, at day his gaze is the Sun.”<sup>54</sup>

A personal experience about the Qur’ān says: “I saw in my absence the heavens with the stars, so I understood from the stars the Throne verse of the Qur’ān (2/255) without letters and words.”<sup>55</sup>

Another personal experience connects with the Qur’ān: “I absented myself (from this world): (I saw) the stars appear as if they were the Book of the Qur’ān written in it with quadrangular vowel signs and dots, two verses of the *sūrat Ṭāhā* (20/39-40): ‘And I bestowed on you love from Me, and (it was) so that you might be formed under My eye – when your sister went.’<sup>56</sup> So I understood (this verse) and I knew by inspiration that it was about a woman I had known once whose name had been Banafsaḥ (Violet) but in the absence (dream) it was Istaftayna.”<sup>57</sup> This

<sup>52</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 235: *fahimtu annahu tawāḍa’a l-amīr lil-faqīr.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* 237: *kuntu fī btidā’ ittiṣālī bi-khidmat al-shaykh ‘Ammār al-Badlīsī mutaraddidan bi-hādhā l-sha’n a-huwa ṣaḥīḥ am lā?*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* 238: *qāla (al-‘ālim): a-tadrī mā ma’nā l-kawākib wal-shams? qultu: qull! fa-qāla: inna Allāh yanẓuru ilā ‘ibādihī bil-layl wal-nahār fal-kawākib naẓaruhu bil-layl wal-shams naẓaruhu bil-nahār.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* 239: *ghibtu ... fa-fahimtu min kawākib (al-samā’) al-Qur’ān āyat al-kursī bilā ḥarf wa-kalima...*

<sup>56</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 239-240: *ghibtu fa-badat samā’ ka-annahā kitāb al-Qur’ān fī-hā maktūb bi-ashkāl murabba’a bil-naḩḩ ... wa-hādhīhi āya min sūrat Ṭāhā 39-40.* Translated by Alan JONES, *The Qur’ān*, Gibb memorial Trust 2007, Exeter.

<sup>57</sup> This name, which means ‘they (women) asked for a (divine) ruling’ refers to Qur’ān 4/127: *yastaftūnaka fī l-nisā’,* “They ask you for a ruling about women”.

experience explains to the disciples that the voyager on the *sūfī* path may receive divine inspirations relating to his everyday life, which he can interpret freely because they help him in his voyage.

The next personal experience is about the role the learning of the Prophetic traditions and the continuous recitation of the Holy Book at night play in the mystical manner of life: “When I was in Alexandria and learnt the *ḥadīth* from the Shaykh al-Ḥāfiẓ AL-SILAFĪ al-Iṣfahānī one night I saw the Prophet in my absence (dream) so that we two were sitting together ... and I had been inspired that I should recite every night one section (*wird*) of the Qur’ān. So, I did it in front of the Prophet. When I finished it he found it excellent and said: It is the right way, to learn the *ḥadīth* by day and recite the Qur’ān by night.”<sup>58</sup>

Another personal experience: “Then (after the previous encounter with the Prophet) I received an inspiration to ask him what was my kunya: Abū Janāb or Abū Jannāb? He answered that the second one because it means a choice between this world and the afterlife.”<sup>59</sup>

Personal experience of the name of the devil during a chance encounter with him: “I saw him, when in absence, recognizing him, although he claimed that he was a stranger and his name was Yūnāq, but I found out that he was ‘Azāzīl.<sup>60</sup> He jumped on me, and our garments became mixed. Then I asked him how to escape from him. He answered that the only way of escape was to separate my clothes from his and it was made possible only by fasting.<sup>61</sup> This is the meaning of the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet: The faith is naked, and its garment is the fear of God.”<sup>62</sup> The moral of this experience is: At the final phase of the mystical voyage the devil means the greatest danger and it can be overcome only by ceaseless fasting.

Personal experience of the Greatest Name of God, the ultimate aim of every mystic to know: “I dreamt that I was in the Shūnīziyya mosque in Baghdad in seclusion (*khalwa*) and I saw a paper (*kāghid*) with one word written on it which I copied: it was the Greatest Name of God, ‘*Iftaḥbiḥanīn*’.<sup>63</sup> I brought the paper to the servant of the place and when he read it he lost consciousness. When he regained his consciousness ... he told me that he saw a dream in which angels appeared

<sup>58</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 241: *fa-lammā sakattu ‘an il-qir’a istajwadahā wa-qāla: hākadhā tasma’u al-ḥadīth bil-nahār wa-taqra’u al-Qur’ān bil-layl.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* 241: The meaning of Abū Jannāb is ‘he who avoids the worldly things’, while Abū Janāb is a worldly title of respect: ‘honourable’.

<sup>60</sup> The name of the devil before his expulsion from Paradise.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* 242: *wa-ammā ism al-shayṭān fa-ghibtu fa-ra’aytuhu ma’rifatahu...*

<sup>62</sup> It is generally considered a weak tradition. The text of the *ḥadīth* in Arabic: *al-īmān ‘uryān wa-libāsuhu l-taqwā*. The source is WAHB B. MUNABBIH, first quoted by IBN ABĪ L-DUNYĀ (died 894): *Makārim al-akhlāq*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir AḤMAD ‘AṬĀ’, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1989, 84. It is found in AL-GHAZĀLĪ: *op. cit.*, vol. I, 6. Also quoted by IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYA (died 1350) in his *Miftāḥ dār al-sāda wa-manshūr wilāyat al-‘ilm wal-irāda*, ed. by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥasan b. QĀ’ID, Mecca, Dār ‘ālam al-Fawā’id, 2010, vol. I, 399.

<sup>63</sup> Meaning ‘Open with desire!’

who told: The Greatest Name of God is given as the result of great effort (*mujāhada*) and it is the reward of the friend of God (*walī Allāh*).<sup>64</sup>

3.3. *Similes and metaphors in the book.* The large collection of similes, metaphors and parables are meant to bring the esoteric teachings of the book closer to the young disciples' understanding.

For the explanation of the expression 'gradual decrease of the nutrition' as an obligation for the disciple, the following metaphor is used:<sup>65</sup> Nutrition (of the voyager) feeds not only the body, but also the (lower) soul and strengthens the power of the devil (dwelling in men). "Since the supply of the (earthly) existence, the (lower) soul and the devil are (coming) from the nutrition, then if the nutrition decreases their (negative) power also decreases."<sup>66</sup>

The right way of the behaviour of the disciple is characterised by the following simile:<sup>67</sup> "Abandonment of the decision and its annihilation in the decision of a reliable informer master, since (the voyager) is like a boy or small child or a useless squanderer – all of these should have a guardian or protector or judge who assumes the responsibility of their affairs."

Speaking about the existence he uses the following simile: "If it becomes righteous it whitens *like the white rain-cloud*."<sup>68</sup>

A simile concerning the state of the soul can be found on the same page: "In the lower soul (a spring) is flowing *like the flowing of the water* from the depth of the well."<sup>69</sup>

Calling attention to the nature of the devil, AL-KUBRĀ says:<sup>70</sup> "It is an unclean fire ... and it takes form in front of you as *if it were* a black *zanjite*."<sup>71</sup> Here the simile mingles with a metaphor.

On 'the fires of remembrance' as compared to 'the fires of the devil' he says:<sup>72</sup> "The fires of remembrance are clean, moving rapidly and ascending upward while the fires of the devil are muddy and dark, and consequently, moving slowly. ... The voyager, if he feels great heaviness as if his parts of body were loaded with stones ... he observes the fire of the devil. But if the voyager feels easiness

<sup>64</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 247–248: *ra'aytu kāghidan fihi maktūb „iftahbiḥanīn”*. ... *hā ism Allāh al-A'zam*.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* 123: *taqlīl al-ghadhā' bil-tadrij*.

<sup>66</sup> *madad al-wujūd wal-nafs wal-shayṭān min al-ghadhā' – fa-in qalla l-ghadhā' qalla sulṭānuhā*.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* 123: *tark al-ikhtiyār wa-ifnā'uhu fī khtiyār shaykh muballigh ma'mūn. fa-innahu mithl al-tifl aw al-ṣabi ... aw as-safīḥ al-mubadhdhir ... kullu ha'ulā'ika lā budda lahum min al-waṣī aw walī aw qāḍin ... yatawallā amrahum*.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* 125: *al-wujūd ... idhā ṣaluḥa ibyaḍḍa mithla l-muzn*. (The last word originates from Q 58/69.)

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.* *bihā nab'ān ka-nab'ān il-mā' min aṣl il-yanbū'*.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* 126: *wal-shayṭān nār ghayr ṣāfiya ... wa-qad yatashakkalu quddāmaka ka-'annahu zanjī*.

<sup>71</sup> This simile occurs once more in KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 171: *lawn aswad zanjī ṭawīl dhū hay'a 'azīma yaṣā ka-'annahu yaṭlubu l-dukhūla fīka*. *Zanjite* is the usual attribute of black people working in the Islamic empire.

<sup>72</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 127: *inna nīrān al-dhikr ṣāfiya sarī'at al-ḥaraka wal-ṣu'ūd ilā l-fawq wa-nār al-shayṭān fī kadar wa-dukhān wa-zulma wa-kadhālika baṭī'atu l-ḥaraka*.

and dignity ... he sees a clean fire like we would see in the fire of dry wood. This is the fire of remembrance.”<sup>73</sup>

Remembrance is likened to fire, thus “it leaves (alone) nothing and spares nothing, it enters a house and if there is wood in the house it burns it and it (remembrance) becomes fire, and if there is darkness in the house it becomes light and illuminates the house.”<sup>74</sup>

Speaking about the symbols of existence AL-KUBRĀ cites several images to characterise the deception and illusion of the existence connected with it. The well-known deception which snares and bewilders the traveller staying in a moving vehicle is that he feels that he stands still while the environment is moving or that he does not move but only the ground moves under his feet. This apparition is used by the author to point out the differences between the surface and the depth of the existence, the appearance, and the truth. E.g.: “You see the desert which you are traversing as if it moved under you, although it is only you who move.” Or: “Whoever travels in a boat thinks that the coasts are passing by him.”<sup>75</sup> These similes are supported by a Qur’ān quotation: “And you will see the mountains that you supposed to be firm passing by like clouds.”<sup>76</sup> The same phenomenon of sensual disappointment may occur according to AL-KUBRĀ when you see as if you were in a well and the well descended (upon you) from above, although it is you who ascended.<sup>77</sup>

AL-KUBRĀ tells the disciple that when he is in the state of ascension (*urūj*) in his heart he may see rain falling and he must know that “this rain falls from the presences of the (Divine) Mercy.”<sup>78</sup>

Speaking about the visions of ascension AL-KUBRĀ states that the voyager will see different colours, the colours of his different states, to which his traversing through the air aims. We gather our information (on our states) from the states of the vegetation: when it is green it means power, life and growing, but when it is

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* 127: *fa-inna s-sayyār idhā kāna fī thiqal ‘aẓīm ka’anna aḍḍ’uḥu turaḍḍu raḍḍan bil-ḥijāra ...wa-hu-wa yushāhid ... nār al-shayṭān - wa-in kāna l-sayyār fī khiffa ... yarā nāran ṣāfiyatan mithla mā yushāhidu aḥadunā al-nār fī l-ḥaṭab al-yābis fa-hiya nīrān al-dhikr.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* 127: *al-dhikr nār “lā tubqī wa-lā tadharu”* (quotation from Q 74/28) ... *dakhala baytan ... fa-idhā kāna fī l-bayt ḥaṭab aḥraqahu fa-kāna nāran fa-idhā kāna fī l-bayt zulma kāna nūran wa-nawwara l-bayt.*

<sup>75</sup> The same simile of the boat and coast can be found at IBN ‘ARABĪ (died 1140): *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, ed. YAḤYĀ ‘UTHMĀN, Cairo, GEBO, 1985, vol. III, 314. Its source may have been from the *Fawā’ih*, written earlier than the *Futūḥāt*, or it may have been taken by both authors from a common but unknown source.

<sup>76</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 129: *tushāhidu ... mafāwiza taqṭa’uhā fa-tasīru l-mafāwizu tahtaka wa-innamā anta tasīru walākinna man tasīru bihi l-safīna yaḥsubu anna l-sawāhila tamurru ‘alayhi* (Cf. Q 27/88).

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* 129: *wa-tushāhidu ayḍan ka-annaka fī bi’r wal-bi’r tanzilu min fawq wa-innamā taṣ’udu ilā fawq.*

<sup>78</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 130: *wa-idhā shāhadta maṭaran nāzilan fa-‘lam annahu matar nāzil min maḥāḍir al-raḥma.* Cf. IBN ‘ARABĪ: *op. cit.* vol. VII. 359: *al-maṭar min al-raḥma.*

yellow it demonstrates the weakness of the vegetation.<sup>79</sup> The colour simile is then continued as a metaphor of the green colour as the life of the heart.<sup>80</sup>

AL-KUBRĀ likens the changes of the different mystical states and visions (*mushāhadāt*) to the change of the face when turning red, reflecting different inner states like shame or fear or joy or grief or anxiety.<sup>81</sup>

During his remembrance he felt “as if God descended to the lower heaven” and the angels whom he heard glorify God “made it quick as if they were afraid and sought for aid.”<sup>82</sup>

When the author speaks about the unclean state of the soul (*al-nafs al-khabītha*) he makes the fear of the voyager like the fear of the small child who stole an egg and ran away.<sup>83</sup>

AL-KUBRĀ explains how to taste (mystical experience, *dhawq*) the thought coming from outside (*khātīr*): “The disciple is obliged to differentiate between useful and harmful thoughts just like when he tastes physically the honeycomb (*shahd*) and the colocynth (*ḥanzal*) and experiences their respective sweetness and bitterness.”<sup>84</sup>

In connection with the mystical contemplation or vision (*mushāhada*) AL-KUBRĀ uses a simile comparing the comprehension of the meanings of the divine visitation or quasi-inspiration (*ḍabt maʿānī l-wāridāt*) to hunting. He is not satisfied with the bare mentioning of this simile, but he goes on to give a detailed analysis of the simile, ensuring the proper understanding of the similarity by the disciples: “There are two faculties of comprehension in our head serving the intellect in catching the divine vision, the image and imagination (*al-ṣūra wal-khayāl*), similarly to the net and snare of the hunter.”<sup>85</sup> Then the author interweaves the images of the mystical life and ordinary life into metaphors: the intellect resembles the dog of the hunter, insofar as it throws the snare (*ḥabāla*) of the faculties of the image and imagination if the (divine) meanings appear (*waradat*) together with their essences or the dog of the perception (*naẓar*) runs to them and hunts them.

AL-KUBRĀ describes the voices he heard during the remembrance (*dhikr*) when he was in seclusion (*khalwa*) using a series of similes: first the sounds of musical

<sup>79</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* p. 131: *nastadillu bi-aḥwāl al-nabt - akhḍar: quwwa, ḥayāt, numw - aṣfar: dalla 'alā ḍu'f al-nabt.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* 153: *lawn al-khuḍra ... lawn ḥayāt al-qalb.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* 131: *wa-kadhālika al-wujūh: idhā ḥmarrat dalla dhālika 'alā 'arīḍ 'araḍa lahā min khajal aw wajal aw surūr aw taraḥ aw humūm.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* 137: *ka-anna l-Ḥaqq nazala ilā l-samā' al-dunyā ... wal-malā'ika asra'at fī qawlihim ka-anna khāfū wa-ṭalabū l-najd.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* 141.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* 145: *fa-in waṣalta ilā l-dhawq dhuqta l-khātīr fa-'araftahu wa-mayyaztahu 'an ghayrihi ḥasba l-farq bayna l-shahd wal-ḥanzal ... fa-innaka taqūlu fī l-farq dhāka ḥulw wa-hādhā murr.*

<sup>85</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 150–151: The simile of the hunter: *wa-sabab al-ṣūra wal-khayāl, quwwatāni khādīmatāni lil-'aql fī l-ra's, li-ḍabt al-ashyā' lahu mithla l-ḥabāla wal-shabaka lil-ṣayyād wal-naẓar mithla kalb al-ṣayyād.* The hunting metaphor continues on the following pages.

instruments (drums and trumpets), then submerging in the remembrance he heard hissing sounds like the rippling of water and the roar of the wind.<sup>86</sup>

According to another simile, remembrance (*dhikr*) causes effects in the head and the members of the one who remembers (*dhākir*) as if he were bound by shackles and chains.<sup>87</sup>

AL-KUBRĀ characterises the face near the end of the voyage as if it were as clean as a polished mirror, since the voyage makes the voyager.<sup>88</sup> Another of his similes about the face of the *sayyār*, the mystical voyager is as follows: “If the face circle becomes clean it is overflowed by lights like the well (is overflowed) by water.”<sup>89</sup> The face becomes of light, says AL-KUBRĀ, and then from beyond the curtain of the face a sun can be seen (i.e., the sun of the spirit), which comes and goes similarly to the seesaw.<sup>90</sup>

Speaking about the voyager’s vision, AL-KUBRĀ uses several metaphors which help the disciples understand their experiences: “A heaven with stars looms for him and it is a *qur’ān* (for the *ṣūfī*). And he understands it and reads it by way of the guidance of the dots (of the Arabic letters which are similar to the stars on the heaven for him who looks up to it).”<sup>91</sup> And then the author uses the stars as metaphors for remembrance (he calls it the Canopus<sup>92</sup> of *dhikr*) and concentration (*himma*, Saturnus) saying that “this (Canopus) is the Canopus of *dhikr* ascending from the prosperity of the faith ... and the Saturnus of the concentration may appear in its hiding from a distance. This is the end of the universe (*kawn*). It (the Saturnus of the concentration) may seem growing if it approaches you and descends from the height and it becomes similar to the Jupiter.”<sup>93</sup>

Different means of transport are used by the author in his description to express the different grades of the states in which the voyager has a vision: “If he sees he is riding a donkey it is the sign of his possessing the desire. If he sees he is riding a mule it is the sign of his possessing the lower soul (*nafs*), if he sees he is riding a horse it is the sign of the voyage of the heart, if he sees he is riding a

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* 155–156: *aṣwāt al-dabādīb wal-kaws wal-būq ... thumma kharīr al-mā’ wa-dawī l-rīḥ.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* 160: *ṭayarān al-dhikr fīka ... shudda l-dhikr ra’saka wa-aḍā’aka jamī’an fa-takūnu kal-mashdūd bil-salāsīl wal-quyūd.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* 163: *wajhuka min al-nūr ṣāfiya mithla l-sajanjal al-maṣqūl (polished burnished-mirror, reference to Imru’u l-Qays, al-Mu’allaqa al-lāmiyya v. 31: tarā’ibuhā maslūqa kal-sajanjali).* See Abū ‘Abdallāh AL-ZAWZANĪ: *Sharḥ al-Mu’allaqāt al-sab’*, ed. Lajnat al-taḥqīq, Cairo, Dār al-‘Ālamiyya, 1993, 24.

<sup>89</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 170: *idhā ṣafat dā’irat al-wajh fāḍat bil-anwār kal-yanbū’ bil-miyāh.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.* 170: *wajh min nūr ... wa-turā min warā’a sitrihi (sitr wajhika) shams (metaphor: shams al-rūḥ) tajī’u wa-tadhhabu mithla l-urjūḥa tajī’u wa-tadhhabu.*

<sup>91</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 174: *wa-qad yalūmu lahu samā’ dhāt kawākib wa-huwa qur’ān. wa-yafhamuhu wa-yaq-ra’uhu min dalālat al-naqṭ.*

<sup>92</sup> In Arabic *Suhayl*.

<sup>93</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 174–175: *dhālika Suhayl al-dhikr ṭala’a min yumn al-īmān ... wa-qad yabdū Zuḥal al-himma fī khafā’ihi min ba’id.* The word *suhayl* as a common noun means ‘brilliant, graceful, beautiful and weighty’ and as a proper name, besides Canopus, it is also the name of a legendary figure.

camel it is the sign of his travelling by the love (*shawq*), if he is flying it is the sign of the life of concentration (*himma*).<sup>94</sup>

AL-KUBRĀ uses a quite unique metaphor for the *sharī'a* (Islamic law) and *ṭarīqa* (path to God): “The disciple sees that he is travelling in a boat in the sea where the boat is the *sharī'a* and the sea is the *ṭarīqa*.”<sup>95</sup> Although the sea is a usual metaphor for the mystical knowledge, neither the boat nor the sea is used in this way in the previous literature.

The central notion of all mystical theories is the passionate love (*'ishq*). The *Fawā'id al-jamāl* describes it in a highly sensual way: “The passionate love means the burning of the intestines (or all the inside parts, *al-ḥashā*) and the liver (*kibd*, also meaning ‘heart’).”<sup>96</sup> Then it is followed by the love story of AL-JUNAYD and that of the author. The passage ends up with different parables for the heavenly love.

On characterising the mystical state (*ḥāl*) AL-KUBRĀ uses a metaphoric picture: “The mystical state is (food) provision, drink, and boat, his (the voyager’s) voyage is spiritual (*ma'nawī*) to his absolute/universal goal (*maṭlūb kullī*).”<sup>97</sup> The mystical station (*maqām*) is characterised by using the ordinary meaning of the word, which, however, in a mystical context becomes metaphoric: “The station is for the stopping and relaxation from the fatigue of the voyage.”<sup>98</sup> Then the two main terms of the *ṣūfī* mystic state and station are compared in the simile of the bird: “The state is in the position of the two wings of the bird while the station is in the position of its nest.”<sup>99</sup>

The voyagers are at three stages of mystical perfection. At these stages they are likened to the three ages of human beings: the small child (*al-ṭifl*), the mature man (*al-kahl*) and the wise old man (*shaykh*) who ends his journey (*al-muntahī*). Their voyage is explained metaphorically by the wings of birds of different sizes: the eagle (*nasr*) and the smaller birds (*bughāth*).<sup>100</sup> Then the metaphor passes to the mystical sphere: “The two wings of the small child (*ṭifl*) are fear and hope, the two wings of the adult man (*kahl*) are constriction (*qabḍ*, shrinking of the heart) and extension (*bast*, widening of the heart), while the two wings of the master (*shaykh*) are intimacy (*uns*) and reverence (*hayba*), and hence those of love and knowledge.”<sup>101</sup>

AL-KUBRĀ gives a sensual description of the effects of the main stations on the human body by two similes: The constriction (*qabḍ*) and extension (*bast*) mean

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* 175–176: *qad yarā l-sayyār annahu rākib ḥimāran fa-dhālika 'alāmat annahu malaka l-shahwa.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.* 176: *ra'ā (al-murīd) annahu rākib fī l-safīna fī l-baḥr wal-safīna al-sharī'a wal-baḥr al-ṭarīqa.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* 181–182: *al-'ishq taḥrīq al-ḥashā /intestines/ wal-kibd.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* 185: *al-ḥāl zād wa-sharāb wa-markab, safaruhu (al-sayyār) ma'nawī ilā maṭlūbihi l-kullī.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.* 186: *al-maqām lil-nuzūl wal-istirāḥa 'an ta'b il-safar.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.* 186: *al-ḥāl bi-manzilat al-janāḥayni wal-maqām bi-manzilat al-wakr.*

<sup>100</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 187: *laysa janāḥ al-muntahī mithla janāḥ al-kahl wa-lā janāḥ al-kahl mithla l-ṭifl. i'tabir ḥādhā bil-nisr wa-bughāth al-ṭayr.*

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

tasting in the heart and the body, while *khawf* and *rajā'* mean tasting only in the heart, the scene of the mystical voyage.<sup>102</sup>

The description of the effects of constriction (*qabḍ*) and extension (*bast*) on the traveller are made with the help of two similes: “They are constricted in their bodies as if they were shackled by chains ... those expanding (spreading) in their hearts are like the spreading of the seeds of cotton when the wind is blowing.”<sup>103</sup>

The author uses the following simile for explaining the relation between knowledge and love: “The knowledge (*ma'rifa*) adheres to the love (*maḥabba*) like the shadow to a thing, accompanies it in its increasing and decreasing states.”<sup>104</sup>

The three classes of people are characterised by the following simile: “The perception (*'irfān*) of the ordinary man, and that of the elite and that of the elite of the elite (reflect) similarity to the spring, the sea and water wheel.”<sup>105</sup> The ordinary man means a faithful Muslim, the elite the voyager on the mystical path, while the elite of the elite the *shaykh* who reached the grade of realisation by God.

AL-KUBRĀ expounds the deeper senses of two divine attributes, the *rahmān* (gracious, referring to *jalāl*, majesty) and the *rahīm* (merciful, referring to *jamāl*, grace) in a graphic way referring to the Arabic script – the majesty of the *alif* of *rahmān*, meaning ‘greatness and grandeur, and power’, and the simplicity of the *yā'* of *rahīm*, meaning ‘sympathy and grace, and blessing,’ correspond to the two divine attributes.<sup>106</sup>

The metaphoric description of the sadness (*ḥuzn*) of the traveller is as follows: “The sadness is a garment or shell ... or the sadness is a bite (of food) and the lover is its eater, or the sadness is the drink and the lover is the drinker.” The similes of the growing love: “Like the plant when it rises and breaks through the stone and the earth and begins to grow ... as the chick is growing in the egg, and it comes to life and breaks up the shell.”<sup>107</sup>

The cry of the voyager (*sayyār*) in his elevated station (of remembering God) resembles, according to the author, the sounds of the birds, coming out from the compassion in their breasts.<sup>108</sup>

AL-KUBRĀ characterises the lower soul (*nafs*) by a well-known metaphor, saying: “it is a never dying snake.” But after that he further develops this metaphor: “It is like the viper: if it is slaughtered and its head is struck by a fine strike, then it

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.* 189: *al-qabḍ wal-bast dhawq fī l-qalb wal-ajsād wal-khawf wal-rajā' dhawq fī l-qulūb dūna l-ajsād.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.* 190: *hum munqabiḍūn bi-abdānihim ka-annahum quyyidū bil-salāsīl ... wal-munbasitūn bil-qulūb inbisāt al-fūf 'inda maḥabb al-rīḥ.*

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.* 194: *al-ma'rifa mulāzima lahā (al-maḥabba) kal-zīll lil-shay' yushārikuhu fī l-ziyāda wal-naqṣān.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* 195: *'irfān al-'amma wa-'irfān al-khāṣṣa wa-'irfān khāṣṣat al-khāṣṣa ... mithāl al-yanbū' wal-baḥr wal-sawāqī.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* 201: *ma'nā al-alif wal-yā' ...*

<sup>107</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 231: *al-ḥuzn libās wa-qishr ... aw al-ḥuzn al-luqma wal-'āshiq al-ākīl aw al-ḥuzn al-sharāb wal-'āshiq aw al-'ishq al-shārib ... namat al-ḥabba wa-naqabat al-hajar wal-arḍ wa-nabatat ... wa-kabura l-farakh fī l-bayḍa wa-ḥayya wa-kasara l-qishr.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* 231: *fa-'alā ādhā jamī' aṣwāt al-tuyūr takhruju min ḥanna fī ṣudūrihā.*

is skinned and its meat is cooked and eaten, then its skin dried up for years – but when it is put under the heat of the sun it starts moving again. It is the same with the lower soul.”<sup>109</sup>

Another original metaphor is found in relating to the (infinite) trust in God (*tawakkul*): “The trust in God is the fruit of the certitude (*yaqīn*).”<sup>110</sup> Then this metaphor is further developed: “Those which enter the trust in God are the contentment (*riḍā*), the patience (*ṣabr*), and the gratitude (*shukr*). All are leaves and branches on the tree of certitude (*yaqīn*).”<sup>111</sup>

Finally, I should like to quote one of AL-KUBRĀ’S simple parabolic stories, which serves to point out that “the (final) escape of the hearts is the Real One (*al-Ḥaqq*).”<sup>112</sup> According to this story, a thief who stole the turban of a man was compelled to return to the scene of his stealing because the victim had taken his amulet. This was, as stated by the author, the divine foreordainment of the punishment (*qadar al-jazā’*).

3.4. *Quotations of ṣūfī sources in the Fawā’iḥ al-jamāl*. The *Fawā’iḥ al-jamāl* is not a collection of quotations from hundreds of earlier *ṣūfīs*, like the earlier mentioned introductory works.<sup>113</sup> The author did not aim at making known the teachings, sayings, and mystical tales of other eminent *ṣūfīs*, he only wanted to present his mystical path to his disciples and to lead them on it to the utmost goal of attaining the true realisation of the Divine Truth. His teachings, as I pointed out earlier, relied mainly on his personal experiences and those of others (in my supposition, his disciples and followers) and on what he had learnt from his masters during his wandering years in Baghdad and Alexandria. He uses quotations in a limited number and only when they support his thoughts as concise illustrations. The sources of the external references mentioned in the book are noticed, listing only those which could have been read by the author and leaving out all later sources. It will be evident, however, from the following presentation that al-Kubrā seemingly did not use written sources but instead he relied on his memory of what he had been taught by his masters in Iraq and Egypt.

There are altogether 29 quotations<sup>114</sup> in the work under study, among them 6 verses, plus one reference to a mystical work (the authors are not always named in the text) and two tales, one about Jesus, the other about an unnamed man. In

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.* 243: *al-naḥs ḥayya lā tamūtu fa-inna mithālahā mithāl al-af’ā.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.* 252-253: *al-tawakkul thamrat al-yaqīn wal-thamra bi-qadr quwwat al-shajara.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.* 254: *wa-yadkhulu fī l-tawakkul: ar-riḍā wal-ṣabr wal-shukr ... kulluhā awrāq wa-ghusūn ‘alā shajarat al-yaqīn.*

<sup>112</sup> *ishāratān ilā an yakūna mafarrata l-qulūb al-Ḥaqq.*

<sup>113</sup> Like AL-SULAMĪ (*Muqaddima*), AL-KALĀBĀDHĪ (*Ta’arruf*), AL-QUSHAYRĪ (*Risāla*) OR AL-HUJWĪRĪ (*Kashf al-mahjūb*).

<sup>114</sup> The number of the letters of Arabic alphabet. In the following I cited the quotations in the order of the dates of death of their authors. The three lines by Arab poets I put at the end of this list.

his personal experiences he mentions some of his teachers in the fields of Ṣūfism (*taṣawwuf*) and Prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*), and some unnamed men, too, but generally not in the form of quotations.

The first reference is unquestionably to the Qur'ān:<sup>115</sup> “Solomon was David’s heir. He said: O mankind, we have been taught the speech of birds,” but the title of Farīd al-Dīn ‘AṬṬĀR’s (died in 1221) *Manṭiq al-ṭayr*, too, may have been in the author’s mind. The Qur’ān verse means the possibility to understand heavenly sounds, while the reference to ‘AṬṬĀR’s work may be a clear reference to the mystical travel, this being the topic of this poetic work written in rhyming couplets.

Abū Yazīd AL-BIṬĀMĪ (died ca. 877) is quoted twice. First his famous saying in ecstasy is mentioned without his name: *subḥānī subḥānī mā a’zama sha’nī*.<sup>116</sup> For *Najm al-Dīn AL-KUBRĀ* it is not AL-BIṬĀMĪ’s name what is important in this place, but only his exclamation, since “when the traveller – he says – feels relaxation after hardship (*faraj ba’da l-shidda*), reverence (*hayba*) changes to intimacy (*uns*), constriction becomes extension (*qabd – bast*). Since he immerses completely in these new feelings he is compelled to cry out: ‘*subḥānī subḥānī mā a’zama sha’nī*, ‘Glory be to me! How great is my dignity!’” Then *Najm al-Dīn AL-KUBRĀ* adds: “If, however, the Sufi traveller restrained himself (*maḥfūz*), he said: ‘*subḥānuhu, subḥānuhu, mā a’zama sha’nuhu*,’ speaking of God.”

The second AL-BIṬĀMĪ quotation is as follows:<sup>117</sup> “He was asked about the Greatest Name of God, and he said: Point out to me the smallest name, then I will point out to you the Greatest Name. The man said: All the Names are great.” This anecdote cannot be found in the medieval Sufi sources. The significance of the story lies in the fact that *Najm al-Dīn AL-KUBRĀ*, speaking about the famous theme of searching for the greatest name of God and some *ṣūfī*’s boasting about having received it from God, emphasizes here that the sign of *walāya* (friendship of God)

<sup>115</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 121, Qur’ān 27/16. I will not try to explain the further *āyāt* quoted by al-KUBRĀ for lack of space.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.* 206. It is in ARBERRY’S translation of ‘AṬṬĀR’S *Tadhkirat al-awliyā’* (“Memorial of the Saints”), London, Routledge & K. Paul, 1966, 141, Persian ed. by NICHOLSON, vol. I. 140, ll. 14–15: *subḥānī* (only once) *mā a’zama sha’nī*, l. 12: by way of AL-SAHLAJĪ’S communication. In the text of AL-SAHLAJĪ (ed. by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān BADAWĪ, *Shaṭaḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*, Wikālat al-Maṭbū’āt, Kuwait, 1987, 143 l. 11) there are three mentions of *subḥānī*, twice it ends up with *sulṭānī*, ‘my power,’ not *sha’nī*, ‘my dignity.’ In another place it is only *subḥānī* twice without *mā a’zama*, 89, and once it corresponds to the quotation in *al-Fawā’ih*: *subḥānī subḥānī mā a’zama sha’nī*, 186. In ‘AṬṬĀR, English tr. by ARBERRY: 141: “On one occasion,” AL-SAHLAJĪ continues, “as he was in seclusion he uttered the words, ‘Glory be to me! How great is my dignity!’” *Najm al-Dīn AL-KUBRĀ*, however, could not have known the *Tadhkirat al-awliyā’*, since it was finished only after his death or around it, either in 1221 or 1221. In any case, his quotation does not cover exactly what ‘AṬṬĀR writes, but it is interesting that it corresponds to what later became famous, with two mentions of *subḥānī*. AL-SARRĀJ: *op. cit.*, 472, contains only the beginning “*subḥānī subḥānī*.” Hujwīrī does not know this ecstatic cry, nor does Rūzbihān BAQLĪ’S *Sharḥ-i Shaṭaḥāt*. The other early authors of the *ṣūfī* handbooks do not include this infamous saying, neither AL-SULAMĪ (*Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*), nor AL-KALĀBĀDHĪ (*al-Ta’arruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf*), nor AL-QUSHAYRĪ (*Risāla*).

<sup>117</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 247.

is that although the *walī* (God's friend) will be given the greatest name of God, every name is equally great. It means, in my opinion, a kind of encouragement for the beginners.

Sahl b. 'Abdallāh AL-TUSTARĪ (died in 896) is represented in the *Fawā'ih* with one saying mentioned twice:<sup>118</sup> He told his disciples not to say *ākḥ* if a misfortune falls upon them because this is the name of the Satan, but to say *āḥ* instead because it is the name of God, or *wah* or *wuh* since they are the inverse forms of *huwa* (He, i.e., God). This saying is told in connection of the name of God but it serves as a good example at the same time of the master–disciple relation, too.

Only one story is told about AL-NŪRĪ (d. 907), a contemporary of al-Junayd.<sup>119</sup> His behaviour during a listening and dancing (*samā'*) ritual was very similar to that of al-Junayd's, since he seemingly remained insensitive during the dance, but after it ended, his face dripped with bloody perspiration. The two 'twin' stories, those of AL-JUNAYD and of AL-NŪRĪ, are included in the *Fawā'ih* to show how differently the *ṣūfīs* are affected by the same mystical event, listening to music (*samā'*).

Speaking about the miracles (*karāmāt*, 'divine favours') of the *ṣūfīs*, the author mentions a famous story of SAMNŪN b. Ḥamza al-Khawāṣṣ called al-Muḥibb ('the Lover') (died between 909 and 912),<sup>120</sup> according to which whenever he spoke about love in the Shanūziyya mosque in Baghdad, it moved to the right and then to the left (from the strength of SAMNŪN's love).<sup>121</sup> "Whenever he was asked to speak about love he answered: I do not know anybody worthy of speaking to about love. Then a bird fell on the earth in front of him and he said: 'Perhaps only this (bird).' So, he started speaking to it about love, while the bird was striking the earth with its beak, till the blood flowed from it. After that it expired."<sup>122</sup>

Most quotations, altogether seven, refer to Abū l-Qāsim AL-JUNAYD of Baghdad (died in 912). In describing how to achieve *mujāhada* (individual striving) by way of practical devices, he mentions Junayd's way as the third way which consists of eight conditions:<sup>123</sup> "The continuous performance of the ablution, fasting, remaining in silence and in seclusion, performance of remembrance, refusing one's inner thoughts, not raising objections to God concerning what comes from Him to him, good or bad, and not asking questions on its aim."<sup>124</sup>

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.* 223 and 227.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.* 192.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.* 177-178.

<sup>121</sup> *kāna idhā takallama fī l-maḥabba ja'alat al-Shanūziyya tajī'u wa-tadhhabu yamīnan wa-shimālan.* This introductory part of SAMNŪN's love-inspired miracle occurs only in the *Fawā'ih*. AL-KUBRĀ may have heard this and the whole story during his studies in Baghdad from his shaykh in the Shanūziyya mosque, which also had a *khānqāt* attached to it.

<sup>122</sup> A slightly different version can be found in AL-QUSHAYRĪ: *op. cit.*, 525, and AL-GHAZĀLĪ: *op. cit.*, vol. IV, 349.

<sup>123</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 124.

<sup>124</sup> This saying cannot be found in the known sources. The closest to it is what AL-QUSHAYRĪ cites in his *Risāla* (English tr. by Alexander D. KNYSH, Reading: Garnet, 2007, 43, Arabic ed. *op. cit.* 79): "I heard al-Junayd say: We learned Sufism not through words

Both the next two AL-JUNAYD quotations refer to the difference between the outer behaviour and the inner state of the *ṣūfī*: “al-Junayd, when asked about the passionate love (*ishq*), answered: I do not know what it is.” But then he told a story about the passionate love between a blind man and a young boy, the moral being that even an earthly love can kill a lover.<sup>125</sup> Junayd said:<sup>126</sup> “If the kings knew what (ecstatic states) we are in, they should wage war against us with swords.”

The fourth mention of AL-JUNAYD is made on account of his so-called sobriety (*sahw*).<sup>127</sup> When he was asked by one of the participants in a *ṣūfī samāʿ* meeting about the cause of not taking part in their dance, he answered with a Quran verse (XXVII. *an-Namal* 88): “And you will see the mountains that you supposed to be firm passing by like clouds.”

AL-JUNAYD is also quoted saying in connection with the (divine) spirit (*rūḥ*): “We cannot say that it is eternal, nor that it is created.”<sup>128</sup>

In speaking about seclusion (*khalwa*), AL-JUNAYD emphasized speaking to his disciples that they should concentrate on the intimacy with God during the seclusion, not bothering with the seclusion itself.<sup>129</sup>

In the context of the cry (*ṣīḥa*) of the ‘enraptured ones’ (*fuqarāʾ*), AL-JUNAYD, when asked about this, said: “It is God’s Greatest Name (*al-ism al-aʿzam*) and no one should dispute or dislike it.”<sup>130</sup>

al-Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr AL-ḤALLĀJ (died in 922) is quoted three times, twice with verses, once with a *ṣūfī* saying, but never mentioning his famous nickname (*laqab*) AL-ḤALLĀJ.

Two lines of the divine love are mentioned, the first hemistich being: *ʿajibtu minka wa-minnī*, “I admired You and me,” the theme of which is that the beloved one annihilates the lover.<sup>131</sup>

AL-ḤALLĀJ (without mentioning his name) is quoted on the divine love: *anā man ahwā wa-man ahwā anā*: “I am the one who is the most desirable, the most desirable one I am,” which is like a dialogue between the lover and the beloved.<sup>132</sup> The

but through hunger, the renunciation of this world, and through depriving ourselves from the things which we are accustomed to and in which we take delight.”

<sup>125</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 180–181.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.* 191. This saying is not found in any of the *ṣūfī* textbooks. ABŪ NUʿAYM al-Iṣfahānī (died in 1038): *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1988, vol. VII, 370, mentions a similar saying attributed to an earlier mystic, IBRĀHĪM IBN ADHAM.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.* 191–192. Tr. by Alan JONES. AL-GHAZĀLĪ: *op. cit.*, also mentions this story: vol. II., 299–300, with an explanation. Cf. AL-SARRĀJ: *op. cit.*, 8–13.

<sup>128</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 202.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.* 213.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.* 230.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.* 182. In MASSIGNON: *Dīwān al-Ḥallāj*, Paris 1931, 321, there is only the second line, but later Arabic editions contain the whole poem: AL-ḤALLĀJ: *al-Aʿmāl al-kāmila*, ed. Qāsim Muḥammad ʿABBĀS, Riyāḍ al-Rayyis, Beirut, 2002, 325; AL-ḤALLĀJ: *Dīwān, Kitāb al-ṭawāsīn*, Manshūrāt al-Jamal, ed. Abū ʿArīf AL-SHAYBĪ et al., Köln, Al-Kamel Verlag, 1997, 63.

<sup>132</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 197.

second hemistich says more on this special relationship, but it did not seem appropriate here for the author: “We are two spirits who settled down in one body.”

There is a quotation from AL-ḤALLĀJ under his name (*ism*) al-Ḥusayn b. Maṣṣūr on the theme of how to reach friendship (*walāya*) with God by cutting the ties (to this world), adopting the attributes (*ittiṣāf*) of the True Reality (al-Ḥaqq), then annihilation even from the realities in the True Reality (i.e., God).<sup>133</sup> It is interesting to note that this teaching is a usual prescription for the travellers on the mystical path and Najm al-Dīn AL-KUBRĀ himself says: “We say as AL-ḤALLĀJ said,” that is, it is not the saying that bears importance but the person who said it. The author wanted to mention the name of AL-ḤALLĀJ in connection with the friendship (*walāya*) with God. This saying of AL-ḤALLĀJ cannot be found in any of the known sources or editions.

Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī AL-KHARAQĀNĪ (died in 1033) is quoted once, in telling his personal experience in a form of a vision of his circumambulation (*tawāf*) of the Divine Throne (*al-‘arsh*) much quicker than the angels could do it. When the angels asked him how he could do the circumambulation with such a speed, he explained that he was a human being (*ādamī*) in whom there were light and fire, and the fire of desire (*shawq*) had resulted in this speed.<sup>134</sup>

Abū Najīb AL-SUHRAWARDĪ (died in 1168) is mentioned twice, first in connection with the extreme effect of being in seclusion during the remembrance of God (*dhikr*): “Abū Najīb AL-SUHRAWARDĪ mentioned that a *ṣūfī* immersed in his remembrance in such a measure that the remembrance could be heard from his heart (*ṣadr*).”<sup>135</sup> Secondly, a call is quoted for the disciples to cut all ties which bind them to worldly affairs: “Abū Najīb AL-SUHRAWARDĪ said: My heart is like the empty well (which has been emptied) for His (God’s) sake.”<sup>136</sup>

In the final part of his work AL-KUBRĀ speaks about receiving the upper grade of the friendship with God (*walāya*)<sup>137</sup> and he always uses the first person in plural, probably referring to his master AL-BADLĪSĪ (died in 1194), from whom he gained most of his knowledge about mysticism. This fact also proves what significance he attributed to the role of the master.

AL-KUBRĀ cites a saying of an unnamed *shaykh*: “The knower (*ārif*) is standing motionless while the confused one (*mutaḥayyir*) moves on.” His source is probably one of his shaykhs, RŪZBIHĀN AL-FĀRISĪ, but we know nothing about such a person.<sup>138</sup>

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.* 250.

<sup>134</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 140. This vision cannot be found in any known sources.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.* 213–214: *ṣāhib khalwa qad dhukira annahu intahā istighrāquhu fī l-dhikr ilā ḥadd yusma’u l-dhikr min ṣadrihi*. Not found in Abū Najīb AL-SUHRAWARDĪ’s only *ṣūfī* work, *Ādāb al-murīdīn*.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.* 229: *inna qalbī mithla l-jubb al-fārigh li-ajlihi*. See the previous footnote.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.* 248–250.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.* 179. A variant of this saying is mentioned according to Yūsuf ZAYDĀN (edition of the *Fawā’ih*, 179, fn. 1 in AL-KUBRĀ’s *Risāla* (still in MS), Library of Shahīd ‘Alī Pasha, Istanbul, no. 1395, folio 69), where he names his source as his master in Alexandria, RŪZBIHĀN AL-FĀRISĪ, who may have been identical with Rūzbihān AL-BAQLĪ, but this identification is not generally accepted.

Then AL-KUBRĀ adds his own opinion: “But the absolute knower is God, everybody else is only learning the knowledge (from God through the shaykh, *mutāʾarif*).”

An unknown mystic, AL-ḤADRAMĪ<sup>139</sup> is mentioned, who denied that he believed in incarnation (*ḥulūlī*),<sup>140</sup> and stated that there is no inconvenience (*kulfa*) in the devotion to God by the upper class (*khawāṣṣ*, meaning the leading mystics) of His servants.

3.5 *The quotations from Arab poets.* AL-KUBRĀ quotes three verses by famous Arab poets and one from an unknown one. The Arabic puns<sup>141</sup> and lines of Arabic poems and the complete lack of any Persian material help decide the question whether the *Fawāʾih al-jamāl* was written originally in Persian, as it is stated in ḤĀJJĪ KHALĪFA’S *Kashf al-zunūn*,<sup>142</sup> or its language has always been Arabic. It also shows that his readers (or listeners) must also have had a good command of Arabic.

He quotes a line, generally attributed to AL-AKHTAL (died in ca 710), without mentioning the poet’s name, in support of his teaching about the signs of friendship with God (*walāya*): “Verily the speech is in the heart and the tongue only was made as an evidence of the heart.”<sup>143</sup>

Another poetical line quoted by the work, also without mentioning the poet’s name, comes from AL-BUḤTURĪ (died in 897), when the author speaks about the *ṣūfī* being ‘the son of his moment’ (*ibn waqtihī*):<sup>144</sup> “I am in love in any case, whether Layla deals (with me) badly or does good to me”.<sup>145</sup> AL-KUBRĀ gives the following explanation of the verse: “I saw a lover, who whenever his beloved slapped him on his face, began to boast of her to the people, laughing and saying almost gladly: She does not fail to do what we are entitled to. That means that the *ṣūfī* accepts the good and the bad from his beloved, God, with patience and gratitude. The *ṣūfī* is a rider and his occupation with God (*himma*) is his horse.”

The author of the third line of Arabic poetry in the *Fawāʾih al-jamāl* is by perhaps the most famous and popular Arab poet, AL-MUTANABBĪ (died in 965), also not named by the author:

<sup>139</sup> No *ṣūfī* can be found with this name. Fritz MEIER: *op. cit.* 65, fn. 1, suggests that we should read AL-ḤUṢRĪ OR AL-ḤADARĪ instead, but this saying cannot be found under either name.

<sup>140</sup> Believing that the human and divine nature can be united in his own person.

<sup>141</sup> I do not intend to analyse the register of Arabic in AL-KUBRĀ’S work. I bring, however, one example to show the way he uses the language: *qalb* (heart), *yaqbalu* (turns upward), *qalīb* (deep well) and *taqallaba* (be altered) in one passage to form a complicated *jinās* (pun) from the root *q-l-b*. See *op. cit.* 132.

<sup>142</sup> ḤĀJJĪ KHALĪFA: *Kashf al-zunūn ‘an asāmī l-kutub wal-funūn*. Istanbul, 1948, 1992.

<sup>143</sup> *inna l-kalāma la-fī l-fuʾādi wa-innamā \*juʾila l-lisānu ‘alā l-fuʾādi dalīlā*. Not found in his *dīwān*.

<sup>144</sup> By a variant expression “*ibn al-waqt*.” In Annamarie SCHIMMEL’S interpretation: “the Sufi who does not think of past or future,” *op. cit.* 502.

<sup>145</sup> *uḥibbu ‘alā ayyimā ḥālatin \*isāʾata Laylā wa-iḥsānahā*. In the *dīwāns* of AL-BUḤTURĪ there is *kulli mā* instead of *ayyimā*. See AL-BUḤTURĪ: *Dīwān*, vol. I, 254, Quṣṭanṭīniyya (Istanbul), 1300 AH (1882 CE). Also ed. by Ḥasan Kāmīl AL-ṢĪRAFĪ, vol. IV, 2175. no. 818, Dār al-Maʾārif, Cairo, 1964.

“Whoever had a sick bitter mouth \* he found in it (even) the sweet cool water bitter.”<sup>146</sup>

The moral added by AL-KUBRĀ to this verse is that “the secret conversation (*munājāt*) with the Satan is hard and troublesome, while the secret conversation with the Merciful (God) is the most delightful thing.”<sup>147</sup>

At the end of his work AL-KUBRĀ cites two lines from an unnamed poet, without reference to his source.<sup>148</sup> These lines fit well into the conclusion of his work:<sup>149</sup>

“I have revisited all those places which I had known \* and let my glance run among those distinguished abodes,

But I only saw how a confused man placed his palm \* on his chin or how the repentant gnashed his teeth.”

#### 4. Conclusion

I could not have found a better conclusion for this article than AL-KUBRĀ’S OWN concluding words at the end of the *Fawā’ih al-jamāl wa-fawātiḥ al-jalāl*:

“Every sign, allusion, and mark that I mentioned are the results of the conduct, either blameworthy or praiseworthy, of the servant toward his Lord, and they are also the ordinances how the servant should accompany Him. All these show for those aspiring to reach God the example how to get acquainted with the mystical experience (*dhawq*) of the mystics (*dhā’iqīn*), the ardour of the passionate lovers, the light of the knowers (of God), the fire of the lovers, the haste of the yearning ones, the ecstasy of the ecstatic lovers, the fruits of those who endeavour to the unveiling (*mukāshifūn*), the unveiling (*kashf*) of those who endeavour, the secrets of those who make confidential talk with God (*munājūn*), and the method of those who save themselves (*nājūn*). I called my book *Fawā’ih al-jamāl wa-fawātiḥ al-jalāl* (‘The fragrance of the Beauty and the commencements of the Glory’), reminding of those who severed their worldly contacts for God and making understand the sincere ones.”<sup>150</sup>

This passage gives expression to everything the work stands for and perfectly formulates the author’s intentions: Leading and guiding the disciples on the *ṣūfī* path towards God, teaching them the essentials of the mystical experiences and explaining to them the peculiar phenomena which they may encounter during this voyage.

<sup>146</sup> *wa-man yaku dhā famin murrin marīdin \* yajid murran bihi l-mā’a z-zulālā*. See ‘UQBĀRĪ, *Šarḥ Dīwān Abī l-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī*, vol. III, 228. Ed. by Muṣṭafā AL-SAQQĀ et al., al-Ḥalabī, Cairo, 1926.

<sup>147</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 146–147.

<sup>148</sup> These lines can be found in the first page of the theological work of Abū l-Faṭḥ Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Karīm AL-SHAHRĀSTĀNĪ (died in 1153): *Kitāb Nihāyatu l-iqdām ‘alā ‘ilm al-kalām*, ed. by Alfred GUILLAUME, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1934, Arabic text, 3.

<sup>149</sup> *laqad ṭuftu fī tilka l-mā’āhidi kullihā \* wa-ṣayyartu ṭarfī bayna tilka l-mā’ālimī fa-lam ara illā wāḍi’an kaffa ḥā’irin \* ‘alā dhaqnin aw qārī’an sinn al-nādīmī*

<sup>150</sup> KUBRĀ: *op. cit.* 261–262.