



Ibn Arabi

## The Secrets of the Fast

Chapter 1

### Introductory Poem

*Futûhât*, chap.71, vol.9, p.96-98 O. Yahya ed.

*O laughter in the form of One who weeps  
Thou art within us both Plaintiff and Accused.<sup>1</sup>*

*The fast - is it abstinence without exaltation  
or exaltation without abstinence?  
Is it not both for whoso affirmeth Unity  
by means of an "association"? <sup>2</sup>*

*Intelligences are hunted and rendered impotent  
yet without snare or net.  
Intelligences are besieged and rendered impotent:  
a blade honed sharp in the service of the Law.*

*They submit, then, their proofs rejected,  
and believe without understanding.  
The guiding star leads them safe and sound  
through the torrents of the spheres and the kingdoms.*

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. The Prophet's appeal - Grace and Peace be upon him -: "I seek refuge in Thee from Thee."

<sup>2</sup> Association exists when the Unity of Allah is affirmed by "other than Allah". Association necessitates abstinence whilst exaltation realizes Unity.

## The Secrets of the Fast

*O my soul, without thee I would not be Him  
"as if it were He"<sup>3</sup>;  
aye, without thee, without thee!  
My fast concerns the world.  
It is, rather than to thee, to the God of creation.  
I mean: the Fast which is Him,  
for through the world, on the contrary, He  
nourishes thee.  
Hadst thou contemplated its supreme meaning  
no more would creation inhabit thee.  
The fast is without peer, I am told  
by the Proclaimer of His Law: consider this!*

*It is relinquishment: where then is that which thou  
perform? Where is thy claim?  
The manifested order returns unto its Principle:  
my Lord resumes possession of thee.  
Reflect! The fast was determined by Him  
whilst it has meaning only for thee.  
Whereafter has He made it known to thee  
that He has divested thee of the fast placed in  
thy charge:  
The fast is Allah's - be thou not heedless!*

*Thou art the support of His Epiphany  
be thou mindful of this!*

*It belongs unto Allah! Thou art alone, know it well,  
to die of hunger!  
The Most-Merciful has made of thee a wife  
for He who, having so harmoniously disposed  
thee, will be born of thee.<sup>4</sup>*

*Glory to the Transcendence of Him who has so disposed  
thee as a bride for Him.  
Alone hast thou obtained this privilege  
Thou art, even as the Earth, a bed for Him  
and His Being, portrayed as "one who weeps".<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>3</sup> An allusion to Qur.27,42. This Quranic expression is often considered as being indicative of an incomplete realization.

<sup>4</sup> Literally: "will appear from thee" (*yazharu min-ki*); the reference being to the Divine Spirit, whose appearance presupposes a support within the domain of manifestation. The wording of this passage may contain an allusion to Qur.19,17-19.

## **The Secrets of the Fast**

*Betwixt ye twain does the work of Allâh appear;  
and thou, where then art thou?  
If thou implore Allah and humble thyself  
before Him - the Most-High! - He places Himself at thy service.*

*The Pen Supreme on His Tablet inscribes at His Behest  
thy qualification most pure.  
Thou art all without being Him.  
By one Face is He Nigh unto thee, by the other, Far.  
Beware of being satisfied with what pleases thee!  
Beware!*

*Dwell in accord with thy principal being in all  
that thou desire. Be not forgetful, lest He  
forget thee...<sup>6</sup>*

*Such is the science that is come to me  
from a veracious Utterance.  
I reveal it on the order of Him who knows it totally,  
among the abstinents and the ascetics.  
Praise unto Allâh who has favoured me  
with a brilliant knowledge and with it adorned  
thee,  
Who has favoured me with a form  
whose perfection is not possible...  
save under thine aegis!*

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<sup>5</sup> This is an explanation of the first verse.

<sup>6</sup> An allusion to Qur.9,67.