



Letters of a Sufi Master (V)

The Shaikh al-‘Arabî ad-Darqâwî

There was a man who came to visit us off and on over a period of about eight years; his attitude towards us varied; at times his love increased, then again it grew weaker.

One day in conversation with him we spoke in a way that touched him to the very heart (but God knows best). From that moment he turned away somewhat from the world and came closer to us in a burst of enthusiasm. Then it happened that he was flooded by spiritual insights, although he had no previous experience of this, and they became so strong that he imagined there was no man on earth wiser than he.

We lived some distance apart and he ran straightway to share his knowledge with us. When he had spoken and we answered him, he flatly contradicted us, hurling his words in our face and becoming angry; all this in the presence of a gathering of brothers (may God be well pleased with them). Since he had never behaved like that to us before, we forgave him, but he did not forgive us and continued to fight against us with his new knowledge. There in front of him we sat as if we were a robber and his band. However, we did not agree with what he said except in part, that is, except insofar as we felt he was right. After having given us the benefit of his discoveries, he left us and went off to some brothers who, though well and lovingly disposed towards us, yet lacked spiritual strength and so were dependent on theory alone. He unsettled them in their intention, their love and their sincerity, and almost succeeded in leading them away from their religious aim and sincere devotion.

Now he tried to persuade us that we ought to leave our seclusion (*tajrid*) and return to activity in the world. To this we replied: "For our part, if we were to return as you suggest, we would do so without loss of power, for all of us know the one side and the other (the world and the Spirit); but what is necessary in your case is only to flee from sensuality lest you fall back into it, as many like you have done, many even whose spiritual state was far stronger than yours. Beware, if you wish your soul to be saved; listen to what I am saying and follow it; may God take you by the hand. Sensuality, my brother, is still very close to you, since, as for most people, it is the only thing you know. The majority of people know the sensory world only and not the spiritual world, nor the way leading to it. Now if you wish to follow that way, flee from sensuality, as we have fled from it; strip yourself of it, as we have stripped ourselves; fight it as we have fought and walk on the path that we have trod. My brother, if you wish for sensory things, you do not desire the spirit and your heart is not attached to it, for everything that strengthens the senses weakens spirituality and vice versa..." But he did not accept our words and, just as we had warned him, sensuality stole away the spiritual insight that had possessed him, leaving him not so much as the very smell of it; and God is our Warrant for what we say.

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Letters of a Sufi Master - The Shaikh al-‘Arabî ad-Darqâwî (V)

Soon after I had found my master ... he authorized me to initiate a certain man of letters who had been one of my teachers in Koranic reading. This man, following my example, wanted to become a disciple of my own master and kept on asking me to obtain permission for him to do so. When I spoke to my master about it, he answered: "Take him by the hand yourself, since it was through you that he came to know about me." So I transmitted the teaching I myself had received and it bore fruit thanks to the blessing (*barakah*) inherent in my noble master's authorization. However, since I had to leave Fez in order to go back to the Banî Zarwâl tribe where I had left my parents, I was separated from him.

As for the master, he was still living in Fez al-Bâlî and when I was about to set out on my journey to the tribe in question I said to him: "Where I am going there is no one at all with whom I could have spiritual conversation and yet I am in need of such exchange." He answered: "Beget the man you need!" as though he thought that spiritual generation could take place through me, or as though he already saw it. I spoke to him again on the same theme and again he replied: "Beget them!" Now, thanks to the blessing emanating from his authorization and from his secret, a man came to me (may God multiply his like in Islam!) who, at the instant I saw him and he me, was filled by God to overflowing, to such a degree that he attained in one leap the spiritual station (*maqâm*) of extinction (*fanâ'*) and subsistence (*baqâ'*) in God; and God is our Warrant for what we say. In this very event, the virtue and secret power contained in authorization were revealed to me and all doubts or suggestions left me, thanks and praise be to God!

Later, my soul desired to receive the authorization of God Himself and of His Messenger (God bless him and give him peace). I aspired to this most persistently. Now when one day I happened to be in a lonely spot in the midst of the forest and was immersed and overwhelmed in extreme spiritual intoxication and at the same time in extreme sobriety — both aspects exceedingly powerful — all of a sudden I heard these words sounding forth from the depths of my essence: *Urge them to remember, for remembrance profits the believers* (LI, 54). Then my heart became calm and rested, because I knew for certain that these words were addressed to me by God and His Prophet (God bless him and give him peace), immersed as I was in the two generous Presences, the one Dominical, the other prophetic. What came about (but God knows best) was that the ordinary laws were broken, by a rupture proceeding from the very depths of my essence. Of course there can be no "how" and it can be known only by him to whom God makes it known...