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**THE UNIVERSAL DEGREES,  
MANIFESTATIONS AND PRESENCES  
OF EXISTENCE IN IBN ‘ARABI’S SCHOOL  
OF MYSTICISM**

One of the most basic discussions in *‘irfān nazarī* (theoretical mysticism), in the section where its adherents discuss ontology, is the debate surrounding the degrees of God’s manifestation. The reason for this is that, in the mystic’s view, real existence, or the reality of existence, is the existence of the Truth (i.e., God) who manifests Himself in the degrees and mirrors that are the manifold creatures of the world.

In any case, the Truth, from the point of view of its reality and essential self, is hidden within the veil of its honor and awesomeness. This magnanimity and loftiness prevent it from being revealed. In the words of the famous mystic of Neyshabur, ‘Attar, there is no relation between Him and anything other than Him:

He always is and always will be the Absolute King;  
He is drowned in the perfection of His honor.  
He does not display Himself, in that state in which He essentially is.  
When will the intellect reach the pinnacle of absolute existence,  
where He resides?

It is for this very reason that it is pointless for anyone to spiritually aspire to attain Him and seeking His presence is to pursue a goal which is impossible to achieve. The only thing which we can confess is that behind all the limited beings and possible existences there is a Reality that is unlimited and unconditional, that has been manifested in the mirrors that these limited beings are. Behind the curtain and veils of these conditions and conditional beings, there is the Absolute Truth that has shown its face from behind the Curtains of the Unseen. It is for this reason that the Being has affectionately said the following, guiding us:

“And God warns you of Himself and God is compassionate to the servants” (Qur’an, 3/30).

In this way, with His infinite compassion God has denied creatures permission to seek that which is impossible to attain.

But this absolute and hidden being reveals itself from the point of view of His manifestation and descent into the various degrees and levels of His Names and Attributes that serve as mirrors reflecting His infinite exquisiteness. These [names and attributes] are the archetypes of the possible beings. In the wake of this manifestation, the Truth acquires certain properties that lay the ground for knowledge of Him. Everything that is said about the reality of the Truth must eventually go back to these limitations. It explains that which is unlimited and unconditional in the guise and behind the veils of that which is limited. The reason for this is that we cannot find a language that can adequately convey the reality of the hidden persona of the Truth. Nor can we find speech that properly expands on what is found there. Rather, speaking about that station and level only increases its ambiguity and elusiveness.

### **I. The Explanation of the Degrees and Levels of Existence in the Words of the Great Master, Sadr ad-Din Qunawi**

In his book *Nafahāt*, the Great Master, Sadr ad-Din Qunawi, states that there are five general levels or mirrors of existence which he describes with the term, “the Five Divine Presences.” He states that the Truth in an Honorable Mystic Vision made him realize that the principal degrees of existence can be summed up in the “Five Divine Presences”:

“The first is the Presence of the Absolute Hiddenness which comprises the Names and Attributes of God, the Archetypes of Possible Beings, immaterial meanings and Manifestations of His Knowledge.

The Second, which stands exactly opposite to the Presence of the Absolute Hiddenness, is the Presence of Absolute Witnessing and that of sense perception, manifestation and revelation.

The Third is the Middle Presence that is a combination and isthmus between the two sides that are the Absolute Hiddenness and the Absolute Witnessing. This Presence is solely relegated to the All-Encompassing Being, that is, the Perfect Man.

The Fourth is the Presence of the Spirits, the Greatest Spirit and the Words of the High Pen. This stands between the Absolute Hiddenness and the All-Encompassing Being.

The Fifth is the Presence of the Imaginal Realm that is the place of the Divine Scriptures that stem from the Universal Book of the Lord.”<sup>1</sup>

The words of this perfect mystic are explained as follows: even though in existence there cannot be found more than one being, which is nothing other than the existence of the Truth, and even though it is only He who is pure existence, this existence still has manifestations in the levels, degrees and stations of existence. The particulars and extensions of these manifestations are unlimited and uncountable but at the same time they are limited to five Universal Presences. As a result, the universal realms will also be five in number. The word “Presence” implies the presence and manifestation of the Truth in its receptacles and the term “world” (*'ālam*) means a manifestation and specific degree of the reality of the Truth's existence which is present and apparent. Imam Khomeini says the following in his marginal notes on the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*:

“The Five Divine Presences have been named ‘Presences’ since they are present in the manifestations of God and because the manifestations are reciprocally in their presence. This is because the worlds are in the presence of the Lord and it is for this very reason that the Essence of the Truth, from the point of view of itself, is not named a Presence, since it does not manifest itself or make itself present in a presence or a manifestation.”<sup>2</sup>

We can conclude from this explanation that counting the Essence, “the Most Hidden of the Hidden,” “the Eastern Phoenix,” and the station of “That which has no name or sign” as one of the Presences is not correct. This is a matter that has also been mentioned by the commentator on the Introduction of Qaysari to the *Fuṣūṣ*.<sup>3</sup> The reason for this is that, in the view of Imam Khomeini, the level of the Essence is absolutely hidden and cannot be truly regarded as a Presence.

Therefore, the realm of the Kingdom or *Nāsūt* (the Corporeal Realm) is a manifestation of the Realm of *Malakūt* and the World of Absolute Imagination. This realm, in turn, is a manifestation of the Realm of *Jabarūt* (the Kingdom of Spiritual Power) which is the realm of immaterial beings. Now, this realm is the manifestation of the Archetypes, which, in a way, are the manifestations of the Divine Names existing in the Presence that is unity. The Presence that is Unity is the manifestation of the Presence of Singularity.<sup>4</sup>

Keeping in mind what Qaysari has stated in his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*, we can conclude that the term “Presence,” according to him, is, in reality, exactly

<sup>1</sup> *Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qānawī*. “Miftāḥ ḡhayb al-jam' wa 'l-wujūd,” in Shams al-Dīn Ibn Ḥamza al-Fanāri. *Miṣbāḥ al-uns bayna 'l-ma'qūl wa 'l-mashhūd*. Ed. M. Khājavi. Tehrān: Intishārāt-i Mawlā, 1374/1995. P. 98.

<sup>2</sup> *Imām Khumaynī*. *At-Ta'liqāt 'alā Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam wa Miṣbāḥ al-Uns*. Tehrān: Mu'assisa-i pāsdār-i islām, 1410 L.H. P. 31.

<sup>3</sup> *Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī*. *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*. Ed., with the introduction by Seyyid Jalāl ad-Dīn Āshtiyānī. Tehrān: Intishārāt-i 'ilmī wa farhangī, 1375 S.H. P. 450.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*. P. 38.

what Qunawi has stated in his *Nafahāt*. There is, however, a divergence between the two. That difference is that, according to Qunawi, “the Presence of Absolute Hiddenness” is “the Presence of Unity” that encompasses the Names, Attributes and Archetypes of Beings. On the other hand, according to Qaysari, this station only comprises within itself the Archetypes, without enveloping the Names and Attributes. Sometimes this station is referred to by the term “the World of Meanings” or “the World of Depiction.”

## II. The Five Divine Presences in the Words of the Perfect Saint, Sa‘id ad-Din Farghani

The Perfect Saint, Farghani, in his Persian commentary on the *Tā‘iyyah* of Ibn Farid, has also walked along the same lines with the difference that he considers the Presence of the Absolute Hiddenness to comprise the two stations of Unity and Oneness, or the First and Second Individuations. This great mystic writes the following in *Mashāriq ad-Darārī*:

“The first (of the Divine Presences) is called the ‘Presence and Station of Hiddenness and Meanings.’ This is the Presence of the Essence [, considered together] with the first and second manifestation and individuation and whatever is encompassed by those two, first, of the aspects and viewpoints of the first [manifestation ?], and, second, of the realities of the Divine and the world.

The second Presence, which stands opposite the first, is the station of Witnessing and sensible beings. This spreads from the Throne of the Merciful to the World of Dust and encompasses everything that lies between the two. It comprises the forms of every genus, species and individual of this Universe.

The third, which comes after the station of the Hidden, in descending order, is the station of Spirits.

The fourth, which follows the realm of sensible in ascending order, is the Imaginal Realm or the Separated Imagination.

The fifth, which encompasses all these stations, if considered in detail, is the reality of this world and, if taken concisely, the elemental form of the human being.”<sup>5</sup>

The aforementioned saint, in his Arabic commentary on the *Tā‘iyyah*, entitled *Muntahā al-Madārik*, has limited the Universal Degrees to five and has made the Perfect Man the sixth of these, which is “the Presence of Encompassment.” He states:

“The Universal Presences are five. Two of these are related to the Truth. The other three degrees are related to the world and existence. The sixth of these comprises all of them.

<sup>5</sup> *Sa‘id al-Dīn Farghānī*. *Mashāriq al-darārī*. Ed. S.J. Āshtiyānī. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Qum: Markaz-i intishārāt-i daftar-i tablighāt-i islāmī ḥawza-i ‘ilmī-i Qum, 1379/2000. P. 144.

In order to explain, since these aforementioned stations are the manifestations and theophanies of the Truth, they cannot be other than the following: either they are manifestations and theophanies that are only manifest to the Truth itself and not apparent to the possible beings or they are manifestations that are manifest both to the Truth and to the possible beings...<sup>6</sup>

We can conclude from everything that this great mystic has stated that the Five Divine Presences are the following:

1) The first is the primary level of the Hidden. This is nothing other than the First Individuation and the Presence of the All-Encompassing Simplicity.

2) The second is the second station of the Hidden, which is nothing other than the Second Individuation and the World of Meanings (the Archetypes). This is called "the Presence of Unity." Together, these two stations of the Hidden are called "the Presence of *Lāhūt*."

3) The third is the station of the Spirits which is called "the Presence of the *Jabarūt*" (the Presence of Spiritual Power) or the World of Intellects.

4) The fourth is the station of the Imaginal Realm, which is known as "the Presence of the *Malakūt*" and the World of Souls.

5) The fifth is the station of sensible beings and the Realm of Absolute Witnessing, that is, the world of bodies. This is known as the realm of *Nāsūt* (the Corporeal World).

6) The sixth is the existence that encompasses all the other realms. It is the Perfect Man who holds within his being all other Divine Presences. Of course, he possesses in a concise manner what they possess in detail. It is for this very reason that he is also called "the Great Universe."

It could be said that what Farghani has stated in the *Mashāriq* is exactly what he says in the *Muntahā al-madārik*, with the difference that in the former the two stations of the Hidden were combined in one station. It is for this reason that the universal and general degrees of existence are five.

### **III. The Five Divine Presences in the View of the Perfect Saint, 'Abd ar-Razzaq Kashani**

The Perfect Saint, Kamal ad-Din Kashani, states in his book on Sufi Terminology that there are five universal Appearances (*majālī*) or Dawns (*maṭāli*'), in which the Sun of God's existence rises, whereas there are six general Stations. It

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<sup>6</sup> *Sa'īd al-Dīn Farghānī*. *Muntahā al-madārik*. Ed. Wisām al-Khiṭāwī. 2 vols. Qum: Eshraq, 1386 S.H. Vol. I. P. 70. Cf. *'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī*. *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ Naqsh al-fuṣūṣ*. Ed. W.C. Chittick. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Tehrān: Mu'assisa-i pazzhūshihī ḥikmat wa falsafa-i Irān, 1381 S.H. P. 30–31.

is for this reason that he has placed a difference between what he terms Appearance and what he calls Station. He believes that Station is a term that is more general than Appearance. The apparent meaning of this is that the term Appearance is the very thing that has been named Presence in the Five Divine Presences. This Presence signifies and necessitates the presence, manifestation and theophany of the Truth. This is different from the term “station,” which encompasses both that and the station of existence that is not apparent and not manifest.

While explaining the terms<sup>7</sup> “The Universal Appearances” (*majālī*), “Dawns” (*maṭāli*) and “Seats” (*munaṣṣāt*), he says the following:

“These are the manifestations of the Keys of the Unseen. It is for these ‘keys’ that the locks of the closed doors of existence, in between the two names of the Hidden and the Apparent, have been opened. These appearances are of five kinds:

The first is the appearance of the Unitary Essence and the Reality of Encompassment and the station of ‘or even closer’ and the ‘Major Disaster’ (*tāmmat al-kubrā*) and the Reality of Realities. This is the goal of the goals of spiritual ascent.

The second is the appearance of the first Isthmus that is the border between the two seas and the station of ‘the Two Bows,’ and is the Presence which encompasses all Divine Names.

The third is the appearance of the world of *Jabarūt* (the Realm of Spiritual Power) and the unveiling and revelation of the Pure Spirits.

The fourth is the appearance of the *Malakūt* (the Spiritual Kingdom) and the Heavenly Leaders and the *Ūlu ’l-Amr* (‘Those who carry out the Divine Command’). These are the beings that exist in the realm of Divine Lordship.

The fifth is the appearance of the *Mulk* (the World, that is, the Kingdom). This is manifest through sensible forms and also the wonderful beings of the *‘Ālam al-Mithāl* (Imaginal World). These are the beings who govern the realm of material existence in the lowest world.”<sup>8</sup>

In our view, we can interpret what has just been stated about the Appearances and Presences to mean exactly what the first commentator said in his Arabic commentary on the *Tā’iyyah*. This is because the Appearance of the Divine Essence is the First Individuation, while the station of ‘the two bows’ is the Second Individuation.

The Perfect Master, Kashani, in his *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*, has stated the following in his explanation of the term “the Universal Degrees” (*marātib kullīyya*):

“There are six degrees: The first is the degree of the One Essence. The second is the station of the Divine Presence or Presence of Oneness. The

<sup>7</sup> Note that this is a compound but single term (*the editor’s note*).

<sup>8</sup> *‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī. Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya. Ed. M. Hādīzāde. Tehrān: Ḥikmat, 1381 S.H. P. 53.*

third is the station of the immaterial spirits. The fourth is the station of the operative souls. This is the Imaginal Realm or the *Malakūt* (the Realm of Spiritual Kingdom). The fifth is the Kingdom and the Station of Witnessing. The sixth is the station of the All-Encompassing Being and the Perfect Man that is the Theophany of all of these various levels and the form in which they all come together ... the rest of the stations are manifestations of Man, whether those be stations that are hidden or those that are apparent. And there is no being in which the Unity of the Essence is manifest other than the Perfect Man.”<sup>9</sup>

Kashani also says the following in this book:

“The word *Aḥad* (‘the One’) is a name designated to refer to the Essence in the aspect that negates the multiplicity of the Names and Attributes, as well as [the multiplicity of] the relations that these Names and Attributes have with the creatures and also the conditions that limit them. Also, the term ‘Oneness’ (*aḥadiyya*) is used to refer to the Essence when the aforementioned multiplicity is subtracted from it. What is more, the term ‘the Oneness that Encompasses’ (*aḥadiyyat al-jam’*) means the Essence ‘qua essence’ without taking into consideration whether or not multiplicity has been subtracted from it or has been affirmed for it. Taken in this way, it comprises the relations that the Presence of the One has with the world.”<sup>10</sup>

In this very book, he interprets “the Reality of Realities” (*ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqā’iq*) as meaning the Essence of the One that comprises all other Realities. This is also called “the Presence of Encompassment” (*ḥaḍrat al-jam’*) and “the Presence of Existence” (*ḥaḍrat al-wujūd*).<sup>11</sup> He also states:

“The Most Comprehensive Isthmus (*al-barzakh al-jāmi’*) is the Presence of Oneness and the First Individuation, which is the root of all Isthmuses. It is for this reason that it is called the first Isthmus and the greatest and grandest of them all.”<sup>12</sup>

Of course, it is clear that the Presence of Oneness, according to the popular meaning of this term, is the second Individuation, not the first.

In any case, from the above quotations from the *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*, we can conclude that the Universal Degrees of Existence are the following:

1) The One Essence or the Most Hidden of the Hidden, which has also been named the Hidden Person or the Eastern Phoenix. In some cases, it is also called “that which has no attribute or description.”

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. P. 59.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. P. 6–7.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. P. 37–38.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. P. 17–18.

2) The All-Encompassing Unity. In this station, the multiplicity and diversity of the names and attributes are negated and therefore from one point of view this can be considered the Essence Itself. On the other hand, it comprises within itself all Divine Names, in a simple way, so that their individualities are lost. This station has also been referred to as the station of “or even closer” and “the Reality of all Realities.”

3) The Presence of Singularity: This is the degree in which the multiplicity of the Names, Attributes and the Archetypes of Creatures are manifested. This station has been called “[the station of] the two bows.”

4) The level of Spirits and immaterial intellects, which is known as the Realm of *Jabarūt* (the Divine Power).

5) The station of the Absolute and Separated Imaginal World, which has been named the Realm of *Malakūt* (the Spiritual Kingdom).

6) The level of sensible and material beings that is the Realm of Absolute Witnessing and that has been named the *Nasūt* (the Corporeal World).

7) The station of the Perfect Man known as the all-encompassing being.

Therefore, in our view, the reason why the aforementioned mystic stated that the Stations are six is that he regarded two of these stations as one. These two are the Presence of “the All-Encompassing Unity” and the Presence of “Singularity.” This is because the Presence of Singularity is an expansion and manifestation of the Presence of the All-Encompassing Unity. The difference between these two Presences is simply a matter that lies in the hands of the mystic witnessing them. This has been reconfirmed in the book *Mashāriq al-Darārī*.

The *Majāli* are limited to five, first of all, because the first station, which is the station of the Unseen of the Unseen, cannot be considered a *Majla* at all, since it is not manifested in the least. Second, since the last station comprises all of the stations, it also cannot be considered a *Majla*. It is for this reason that there are only five *Majāli*, while there are six stations. However, if we do not accept this difficult explanation, then the stations will be five and the *Majāli* will be six.

In any case, when we speak of the *Ḥaḍarāt* (Divine Presences), we are in reality speaking about stations that are manifested in some way. It is for this very reason that the station of *Ghayb al-Ghuyūb* (the Most Hidden of the Hidden) is not considered one of the *Ḥaḍarāt* (Divine Presences). The other *Marātib* (Stations) are not like this, however, and therefore they can be considered amongst the *Ḥaḍarāt* (Divine Presences). Of course, if we say that the station of *Aḥadiyyat al-jam‘* (the All-Encompassing Unity) and the station of *Wāḥidiyyah* (Divine Oneness) are two distinct stations, then the number of *Ḥaḍarāt* will reach six, as it was previously related in the *Muntahā al-madārik*. If we do not take this into consideration, then there will only be five *Ḥaḍarāt*. The latter viewpoint has been related in the *Mashāriq al-darārī* and in Qaysari’s commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*.

#### IV. The Ḥaḍarāt (Divine Presences) in the View of Imam Khomeini

Imam Khomeini in his marginal notes on the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* ("The Bezels of Wisdom") has mentioned some interesting points that deserve to be taken into consideration.<sup>13</sup> There, in brief, he says the following:

1) He mentions that there is a difference between the *Ḥaḍarāt* (Divine Presences) and the *'Awālim* (Worlds). The difference is that the *Ḥaḍarāt* have a relation with the Divine dimension of the Universe, while the *'Awālim* have a relation with its earthly dimension. Or, to put it in other words, he relates the former to the dimension of the Truth, but the latter to the dimension of the cosmos. The reason for this is that being present is a quality that is the sole prerogative of the Truth, while the quality of manifesting something and being in the presence of something is the quality of creation. As a result, there will be five *Ḥaḍarāt*, in the same way that there are five *'Awālim*.

2) Since the word *'Ālam* (World) means that via which something else is known, each one of the *'Awālim* is a locus, in which one of the *Ḥaḍarāt* (Divine Presences) is manifested. In this way, a correspondence is achieved between them.

3) Keeping in mind what has been stated above, the *Ḥaḍarāt* come back to the *Dhāt* (Essence) and the *Asmā'* (Names) of the Truth, while the *'Awālim* go back to the *A'yān Thābita 'Ilmiyyah wa 'Ayniyyah* (the Archetypes in the Knowledge of God and the External World).

4) The *Ḥaḍarāt* can be arranged in this way:

A. *Ḥaḍrat al-Ghayb al-Muṭlaq* (the Presence of the Absolute Hiddenness) or *Aḥadiyyah al-Dhātiyyah* (the Oneness of the Essence), which is the hidden dimension of the *Ism-i A'zam* (God's Greatest Name).

B. *Ḥaḍrat Aḥadiyyat al-Jam'*, which is the manifested dimension of the Greatest Name.

C. *Ḥaḍrat al-Ghayb al-Muḍāf* (the Presence of the Relative Hiddenness), which is the hidden dimension of the Names of God. It can also be called the station of the *Wāḥidiyyah al-Ghaybiyyah*.

D. *Ḥaḍrat al-Shahādah al-Muḍāfah* (the Relatively Apparent Divine Presence) that is the manifested dimension of the Names of God. It can also be called the station of the *Wāḥidiyyah aẓ-Zuhūriyyah*.

E. *Ḥaḍrat al-Shahādah al-Muṭlaqah* (the Absolutely Apparent Divine Presence) that is the apparent aspect of the *Fayḍ al-Aqdas* (the Most Holy Emanation) and the *Fayḍ al-Muqaddas* (the Holy Emanation).

<sup>13</sup> *Imām Khumaynī. At-Ta'liqāt 'alā Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam wa Miṣbāḥ al-Uns. Tehrān: Mu'assisa-i pāsdār-i islām, 1410 L.H. P. 32.*

In this way, the Five *Ḥaḍarāt* (Five Divine Presences) are the following: *Aḥadiyyah al-Ghaybiyyah* (the Hidden Oneness), *Aḥadiyyah az-Zuhūriyyah* (the Manifested Oneness), *Wāḥidiyyah al-Ghaybiyyah*, *Wāḥidiyyah az-Zuhūriyyah*, the *Fayḍ al-Aqdas* (the Most Holy Emanation) and the *Fayḍ al-Muqaddas* (the Holy Emanation). The five 'Awālim (Worlds) will be the following: the *Wajhat al-Khāṣṣ* (Specific Dimension) or *Sirr al-Wujūdī* (the Existential Secret), the *Kawn al-Jāmi'* (the All-Encompassing Being) or *Insān al-Kāmil* (the Perfect Man), the hidden dimension of the *A'yān al-Thābitah* (the Archetypes), the apparent dimension of the *A'yān al-Thābitah*, or the *A'yān al-Thābitah al-'Ilmiyyah* (the Archetypes Present in the Knowledge of God) and the *A'yān Mawjūdiyyah al-'Ayniyyah* (the Archetypes Existing in the External World). In this case, the first world will be a manifestation of the first *Ḥaḍra* (Divine Presence) and the second world will be a manifestation of the second *Ḥaḍra*, and so on, until the last of the Presences and the last of the Worlds.

In our opinion, the basis of Imam Khomeini's view regarding the Worlds and the Divine Presences is that the meaning of Divine Presence is *Ḥuḍūr* (presence of the Divine). This is an attribute of the Truth, not of its creatures. It is for this reason that all of the *Ḥaḍarāt* must return to the *Ḥaḍrāt-i Lāhūtī* or the station of Divinity (*ulūhiyyah*).

On the other hand, Divine Presence, in the opinion of other well-known mystics whom we have previously mentioned, means the same as *Mazhar/Maḥḍar* (Manifestation). The reason for this is that, according to what can be gathered from the sayings of experts on theoretical mysticism (such as Qunawi, Farghani, Fanari, Kashani, Jami and Seyed Haydar Amuli), the meaning of *Ḥaḍra* (Divine Presence) is *Maḥḍar* or *Mazhar*, not *Ḥuḍūr* (Presence) or *Zuhūr* (Manifestation, Appearance). In other words, the meaning of this word *Ḥaḍarāt* is the *Ta'ayyunāt* (Individuations, Determinations) of Existence that are sometimes referred to as *Marātib* (Stations, Degrees) and sometimes as *Mazāhir* (Manifestations). Here, by way of example, we will quote one of the sayings of the famous mystic Sa'id ad-Din Farghani from his *Mashāriq ad-Darārī*:

“Some of the Universal Realities serve as Loci for the manifestation of other Universal Realities, and their Particulars and Corollaries (*lawāzim*), so that every Reality, be it universal or particular, follower or followed, is related to one of such Loci, in such a way that if its manifestation is taken into consideration that Reality would be under the ruling (*ḥukm*) of that locus and its manifestation would occur according to it. These universal realities are called Degrees (*marātib*), Worlds ('*awālim*) and Presences (*ḥaḍarāt*).”<sup>14</sup>

This is an explanation of the five Divine Presences in the view of Imam Khomeini, and it is based mainly upon his marginal notes to the Qaysari's com-

<sup>14</sup> *Farghānī*. *Mashāriq al-darārī*. P. 143.

mentary upon the *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam*. On the other hand, from certain passages in the Imam's *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah*, it can be concluded that the universal Degrees of existence, apart from the degree of the Hidden Persona (*huwiyyah al-ghaybiyyah*), the Hidden of the Hidden (*Ghayb al-Ghuyūb*) and the level of "That which has no name or sign or attribute," are six in number. These are the same six Degrees that were mentioned in the text regarding the five Divine Presences, quoted from Farghani's Arabic commentary upon the *Tā'iyyah*. Of course, here we are discussing Degrees, not Appearances. Therefore, the Degrees, according to Imam, will be the following:

- 1) The Degree of the Essential Oneness (*martabat al-aḥadiyyah al-dhātīyyah*) or the Hidden Persona (*al-huwiyyah al-ghaybiyyah*);
- 2) The Degree of the Station of All-Encompassing Unity (*martabat aḥadiyyat al-jam'*), or the Greatest Name of God, or the First Individuation;
- 3) The Degree of the Unity (*martabat al-wāḥidiyyah*) or the Second Individuation and the Presence of Knowledge and the Archetypes;
- 4) The Degree of Power (*martabat al-Jabarūt*) and the Commanding Lights of the Intellects;
- 5) the Degree of the Spiritual Kingdom (*martabat al-Malakūt*) and the Dominant Lights of the Soul (*anwār al-isfahbudiyyah an-naḥsiyyah*) and the Imaginal Forms;
- 6) The Degree of the Kingdom (*martabat al-mulk*) and the *Nāsūt* (the Corporeal World of the Material Beings that have time and place);
- 7) 7) The Degree of the All-Encompassing Existence or the Perfect Man.

### **V. The Manner in which the Truth is Manifested in Degrees and Presences of Existence in the View of Imam Khomeini**

Imam Khomeini in his famous book *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah*, after mentioning the Hidden Persona, which is also referred to as the '*Anqā'* *al-Maghrīb* (the Western Phoenix) and the Station of "That which has no name or sign" (*Lā ism lahu wa lā rasm lahu*), points towards the fact that the aforementioned station was not fathomed by any of the prophets and apostles. This was even so for the Seal of the Absolute Muhammadan Sainthood or the Seal of Prophecy. Keeping this in mind, the Prophet said: "We have not known You as You deserved to be known and we have not worshipped You as You deserved to be worshipped." Rather, the Friends of God and the Possessors of Knowledge have admitted that the pinnacle of wisdom of the Possessors of Mystical Witnessing, not to mention those predisposed to purely intellectual discussions, is simply the admission that they cannot know the Truth as it deserves to be known.

Imam Khomeini says that the first Manifestation of the Truth is the Most Holy Effusion.<sup>15</sup> This is so even though the first Individuation of the Truth is the Presence of the Oneness. In the same way, the Holy Emanation is a Manifestation, not an Individuation.

Therefore, according to his special terminology, there is a difference between Manifestation (*tajallī*), which implies becoming apparent (*zuhūr*) and Individuation, which presupposes the Locus of Manifestation and Self-Disclosure. It is for this very reason that Manifestation is Emanation (*fayḍ*), while Individuation is the Receiver of Grace (*mustafīḍ*). Because of this we read in the *Misbāḥ al-Hidāyah* that the first *Mustafīḍ* (Receiver of Grace from the Most Holy Emanation) is the *Ism al-A'zam* (the Greatest Name of God) or Allah.<sup>16</sup>

According to what we learn from Qaysari's commentary upon the *Fuṣūṣ* and even from the *Fuṣūṣ* itself, the Holy Emanation is a medium between the Divine Presence of the Unity of the Divine Names and the Presence of Divine Knowledge or the World of Meanings and Forms (*'Ālam al-Ma'ānī wa 'l-Irtisām*).<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, from the words of Imam Khomeini, it follows that the Most Holy Emanation is a medium between the Hidden Dimension of the Divine Person, or the Hidden Persona, on the one hand, and all Individuations of Essence, Names and Archetypes, on the other. It begins with the Hidden Oneness (*al-Aḥadiyyah al-Ghaybiyyah*) and ends with the World of Meanings and Archetypes. In the same way, the Holy Emanation (*Al-Fayḍ al-Aqdas*) is a medium between the Station of Divinity, or the Presence of Divine Unity, on the one hand, and the Individuations of the Possible Beings in the External World, on the other. It begins with the Enraptured Angels (*al-malā'ika al-muhayyamūn*) and ends with the Material World.

It is for this reason that, according to the most renowned mystics, Emanation (*fayḍ*) is a medium between the Truth and Its creation, meaning thereby the Archetypes Present in God's Knowledge and the Archetypes of the Beings in the External World. This has been named *'Ālam* ("The World"), *Siwā* ("[What is] Other than God") and *Khalq* ("Creation"). On the other hand, in the parlance of Imam Khomeini, Emanation has a more general meaning. This is because, according to him, *Fayḍ* implies *Muṭlaq al-Wisāta* (Absolute Intermediacy) and *Tajallī* (Manifestation) between the Truth in the most specific meaning of this term (*al-ḥaqq bi 'l-ma'nā al-akhaṣṣ*), that is the Hidden of the Hidden, and the Creation, that is the Absolute Individuation (*muṭlaq al-ta'ayyun*). This includes the Individuations of the Names of God, which, in the view of most mystics, lie at the Threshold of the Truth, not at doorsill of the Creation. Therefore, all Individuations and Presences, from the Oneness (*aḥadiyyah*) and Unity (*wāḥidiyyah*)

<sup>15</sup> *Imām Khumaynī*. *Misbāḥ al-Hidāya ilā Khilāfah wa 'l-Wilāyah*. Tehrān: Mu'assisa-i nashr wa tanzīm āthār-i Imām Khumaynī, 1376 S.H. P. 16.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* P. 17.

<sup>17</sup> *Qaysarī*. *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*. P. 65.

to *Jabarūt*, *Malakūt* and *Nāsūt*, are both Recipients of the Divine Grace and Bestowers of it. It is for this reason that Imam also considers the Degree of the First Individuation of Hidden Unity, which is the same as the the Station of the Greatest Name, to be both a Granter and a Recipient. In any case, the first Individuation of the Most Holy Emanation is the Presence of Divine Oneness conditioned with Absoluteness, that is, the Greatest Name that includes within itself all the Beautiful and Powerful Names of God.<sup>18</sup>

After the aforementioned Individuation, which is also the first Individuation of the Most Holy Emanation, Imam Khomeini mentions the second Individuation of this Emanation. This is none other than the Presence of All-Encompassing Unity or the Presence of Divine Knowledge. This is also the first instance, in which Multiplicity manifests itself. This will also be the source of all other multiplicity that manifests itself in the subsequent degrees.<sup>19</sup> Sometimes he refers to this Degree as the Degree of Divinity (*martabat al-ulūhiyyah*).<sup>20</sup>

Imam Khomeini also believes other Individuations of the Reality of Existence to be Individuations created through the Forms of the Divine Names or the Archetypes (*ta'ayyunāt al-kawniyyah bi 'ş-suwar al-asmā' al-ilahiyyah aw al-a'yān al-thābitah*). This Degree is referred to as the Presence of Knowledge, the Station of Inscription and the World of Meanings. According to his explanation, God's Names and Attributes possess effects that are the Realities of the External Beings. They exist through the Existence of the Truth, not through that of Its creation. For this very reason, it has been said that the Archetypes "have never felt the fragrance of existence." Therefore, their uncreatedness must be viewed as the uncreatedness of the Divine Essence.<sup>21</sup>

God's Names differ in the aspect of their Comprehensiveness and Being Comprehended, Universality and Particularity, Priority and Posteriority. It is for this reason that their Individuations in the Presence of Knowledge are also different. Therefore, the same relations that exist between the Names of God, also exist between their Individuations. For this reason, Imam Khomeini states in the *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah* that the first Individuation in the World of Archetypes or Individuations (*a'yān*) is the Greatest Name, that is *Allāh*, which is also the most Comprehensive of His Names. This is because this Name is the most Inclusive of all the Names. The Archetype that is derived from the Manifestation and Individuation of this Name is the Archetype of the Perfect Man. Now, all other Archetypes fall under the Sovereignty of this one and accept the Divine Emanation through it.<sup>22</sup> In conclusion, the relation between the Archetype of the Perfect

<sup>18</sup> *Imām Khumaynī*. *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah*. P. 17.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* P. 18.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* P. 22.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* P. 30.

Man and other Archetypes is the same as the relation between the God's Greatest Name and His other Names in the Presence of Divine Unity.

Hitherto, we have been discussing the Individuations and the Universal Degrees of the Existence of the Truth in light of the Degrees of His Essence. After that, Imam attempts to explain the Contingent Individual Individuations (*al-ta'ayyunāt al-imkāniyyah al-'ayniyyah*) that are related to the beings of the external world. These, in turn, can be divided into the World of Command (*'ālam al-amr*) and the World of Creation (*'ālam al-khalq*).<sup>23</sup>

The first Manifestation of the Presence of the Truth in the Presence of the Archetypes is the Absolute Will and the Universal Existence that is referred to as the Holy Emanation, the Existence that is spread upon the Archetypes, the Breath of the Merciful, the Lordly Breath, the Closest Veil, the Prime Matter, the Greatest Isthmus, the Station of Coming Near, the Station "or even closer," the Muhammadan and Alian Station and in other terms.<sup>24</sup>

The first Individuation from the Holy Emanation in the External World is called by the philosophers "the Reality of the Intellect" and by the mystics, the Reality of the Spirit. Its World is the Presence of the Spirits and the World of Power that comprises the Latitudinal Commanding Intellects and the Longitudinal Illuminating ones. In order to prove the existence of this degree (the Intellectual Reality), Imam Khomeini presents a special demonstration that one can find in the *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah*.<sup>25</sup> I have extensively discussed this matter in my treatise "Spiritual Sovereignty in the Islamic Mysticism."<sup>26</sup>

After the Station of the Intellect and the Power, comes the Imaginal World and the Angelic Kingdom. Imam Khomeini refers to them briefly, without going into detail. One can find valuable discussions regarding this matter in such books as *Miṣbāḥ al-Uns*,<sup>27</sup> Qaysari's commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*<sup>28</sup> and also in the introduction to Jami's *Naqd al-Nuṣūṣ*.<sup>29</sup>

Regarding the Perfect Man or the All-Encompassing Being, Imam Khomeini presents an insightful discussion in a certain passage in the *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah*. In his marginal notes to the chapter on Idris (Enoch) in the *Fuṣūṣ*, he admits that there is a correspondence between God's Greatest Name and His other Names. Such a correspondence also exists between the Archetype of Perfect Man and the rest of the Archetypes Present in God's Knowledge. In fact, the same correspondence exists between the Holy Emanation and the External Created Individua-

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. P. 44.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. P. 45.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. P. 59.

<sup>26</sup> *Abū 'l-Faḍl Kiyāshimshakī*. Wilāyat dar 'irfān. P. 285.

<sup>27</sup> Shams al-Dīn Ibn Ḥamza al-Fanārī. *Miṣbāḥ al-uns bayna 'l-ma'qūl wa 'l-mashhūd*. Ed. M. Khājavī. Tehrān: Intishārāt-i Mawlā, 1374/1995. P. 179.

<sup>28</sup> *Qaysarī*. Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam. Chapter 6 of the Introduction.

<sup>29</sup> *Jāmī*. Naqd al-nuṣūṣ. P. 52.

tions, which begin with the Throne of the Intellect and terminate at the Earth of the Matter. This is because all three realities possess the True Real Oneness (*al-wahdah al-haqqah al-haqiqiyah*). One of them is Principal and Hidden, while the other is Principal and Manifest. Finally, the third is Shadowy (*zillī*).<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, the Universal Degrees of Being (that are referred to as the Five, Six or Seven Presences) and also the ways of the Manifestation and Appearance of the Truth (which is the principle and basis of Existence) in the aforementioned Degrees, according to Imam Khomeini, can be listed as follows:

The Hidden Persona (*al-huwiyyah al-ghaybiyyah*) — the Most Holy Emanation (the first Self-Disclosure or Appearance) — the Presence of Oneness (*ḥaḍrat al-aḥadiyyah*: the first Individuation) — the Presence of Unity — the Archetype of the Perfect Man — the World of Archetypes — the Holy Emanation — the World of Intellect or the *Jabarūt* — the Imaginal World or the *Malakūt* (the Spiritual Kingdom) — the World of Nature or the *Nāsūt* — the Perfect Man (in the Ascending Arc).

In the view of Mirza Mehdi Ashtiyani (which, in reality, is a summary of the viewpoints of the greatest mystics and sages of all times), the Degrees of Existence can be understood as Books that are the manifestations of the Divine Knowledge and Speech. According to him, the first Station of the Divine Scriptures is that of the Divine Quran (which is the basis of all Universal Scriptures, and the source of all Books of God, and the cause of the entire Tablets of the Truth and Creation), which is the Presence of Essential Oneness and the Station of the First Individuation, which is [also] called the Station of Encompassment, the Reality of Realities, the Muhammadan Reality, the Station of “or even closer,” and the Highest Horizon.

The second of the Stations of the Divine Scriptures is the Presence of Divine Unity and the Second Individuation, which lies before the subsequent Stations and is the Station of Encompassment, the Presence of the Cloud, the Second Isthmus, the Station of the Two Bows, the Wide Mercy and the Radiant Muhammadan Reality. In the parlance of the Quran, it is called *Umm al-Kitāb* (the Mother of Books).

The third Station from amongst the Stations of the Divine Scriptures is the Station of the Existentiating Self-Disclosure (*al-tajallī al-ījādī*) of the Truth, and the Holy Emanation, and the Universal Providential Existential Mercy (*al-raḥmah al-‘āmah al-‘ināiyah al-wujūdiyyah*). This is also referred to as the Existentiating Word, the All-Permeating Divine Will, the Comprehensive Mercy, the Breath of the Merciful and the Truth Through Which Creation Takes Place (*al-haqq al-makhlūq bihi*). The fruit of this Self-Disclosure is the manifestation of what is hidden in the Hiddenness of the Persona of the Truth and what

<sup>30</sup> *Imām Khumaynī. Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāya. P. 148.*

is hidden in God's Knowledge. This Station is also called the Engendered Book (*al-kitāb al-takwīnī*) of the Truth, because it is the fruit of the Engendering Existential Word (*kalimah al-wujūdīyyah al-takwīniyyah*) "Be!" (*kun*). In other words, it is the first word that the Contingent Beings heard and that encouraged them to come into existence. This Scripture and Station can be divided into two types of Books — the Book of the Horizons and the Book of the Soul. The Book of the [Human] Soul itself can be divided into four types and stations: 1) the Divine Intellectual Book of Power (*al-kitāb al-jabarūtī al-'aqlī al-ilahī*); 2) the Book of the Souls of the Highest Angelic Kingdom (*al-kitāb al-malakūtī al-a'lā'ī al-anfusī*); 3) the Angelic Book of Imagination and Soul (*al-kitāb al-malakūtī al-naḥsī al-khayālī*); 4) the Book Written in the Spread-Out Scroll (*al-kitāb al-masṭūr fī 'l-riqq al-manshūr*), that is, the Prime Matter. The Book of the Soul can, in turn, be divided in two kinds: the *'Illiyīn* and the *Sijjīn*. The *'Illiyīn* has two sub-categories: the Highest *'Illiyīn* and the *'Illiyīn*.

Now, the text that comprises within itself all of the principal Scriptures of God is the Most Comprehensive Quran, Which is the Human Being. This is the Clear Imam (*imām al-mubīn*) and the Clear Scripture (*kitāb al-mubīn*). Since the all-encompassing existence of Man corresponds to the degrees and stations of the Quran, the inner layers of the Scripture, that is the Quran, are equal in number to the Quranic existence of the Perfect Man (in other words, to his seven Inner Layers — or, according to one interpretation, seventy layers).

It is for this reason that the Seven Subtleties (or Subtle Levels) (*laṭā'if*) of Man's being correspond to the seven Levels of the Book of Existence. Thus, the Subtlety of Nature in the Presence of Man resembles the Book Written in the Spread-Out Scroll (i.e., the Material World). Next, the Subtlety of the Soul resembles the Book of Predestination and the Tablet of Erasure and Inscription. The Subtlety of the Heart corresponds to the Protected Tablet and the Manifest Book. The Subtlety of the Intellect resembles the Book of the Power (*Jabarūt*) and the Highest Pen. The Subtlety of the Secret resembles the Book of Divinity and the Presence of Unity. The Subtlety of the Hidden corresponds to the Presence of the Essential Oneness, and the Book of He-ness, and the Station of "or even closer." Finally, the Subtlety of the Most Hidden resembles the Most Hidden of the Hidden.

In this way, the Seven Subtleties of the Perfect Man (which are also called the Seven Cities of Divine Love) correspond to the Seven Inner Meanings of the Quranic Existential Scripture.

Hence, it can be concluded that the number of the Divine Scriptures equals the five or six Presences, or the Seven Great Surahs (*sab' al-mathānī*). In addition, the Presence of the Perfect Man constitutes the sixth or seventh of them and comprises within itself the spiritual words and letters of all other Presences. This Divine Scripture is the last of the Stations of Existence, taken in the aspect of its Form and its Particular Created Appearance. On the other hand, in the aspect of

its Spiritual Meaning, Reality, and All-Encompassing Appearance of the Divine Command, it precedes them all. In fact, it is the principle and source of the perfection of all the other books.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we can say that when we scrutinize the writings of Imam Khomeini it becomes clear that, even though he benefited greatly from the writings of such great representatives of Islamic Mysticism as Muhy ad-Din Ibn al-'Arabi, he was able to present and explain certain subtleties regarding problems of the Pure *'Irfān* that we are unable to find in the works left behind by other scholars. He was able to do this in light of the traditions of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (the Blessed Family of the Prophet), in particular, regarding the reality of the Cloud, the Hidden Persona, the Most Holy Emanation, the Muhamaddan Reality, the Alawian Reality, the Archetype of the Perfect Man and other profound matters in the field of Theoretical Mysticism.

May God resurrect him with the Divine Prophets and help us comprehend the lofty teachings of *'Irfān* and the Quran.