



The Whispers of Gabriel's Wings

In the prologue of this recital, Suhrawardi says that when Sheik Abu Ali Farmadhi was asked about "the whispers of Gabriel's wings", the eminent Sheik answered that '...most of the things that your senses perceive comes from the whispers of Gabriel's wings. ... You are yourself one of the whispers of Gabriel's wings.' Suhrawardi says that the Sheik's words didn't receive the credit they were due to and, because of this, he decided to write himself a treaty to elucidate the subject.

This treaty begins with a description of Suhrawardi about his own inner preparation. He says that he came out of his house and, under the starry sky, he "circumambulates until the break of dawn" on an emotional state he describes as "restlessness". Then he went to the "khangah" of his father and through a door he penetrates into the garden, in the "immense plain". In the garden, he finds Ten Wisemen (Pir) of intense nobility and splendor. Their "snowy hair" are a signal of their high spiritual stature. The Sheik was taken with fright, and for some instants he loses his speech. Fighting against the fear, he directs to the Wiseman who was "in the row end", sensitized with his extreme affability and beauty. Then a dialog begins.

It is interesting to emphasize the methodology described for Suhrawardi and what is behind the recital introduction. The Sheik detached himself of the mundane tasks, and because of a state that he describes as "restlessness", he spent all the night in vigil. This is the restlessness of the soul which, sometimes, contemplates itself as being in separation or in imperfection. Instead of trying to appease this emotion, Suhrawardi keeps himself awake and "circumambulates", which means he whirls around the needs of his essence until the sunrise, the Ishraq's moment, or illumination. As a result, the Alam Al-Mithal (Imaginal World) opens itself, and this is the place where the visionary experiences occur. The Active Imagination acts as the visionary perception organ. It is guided by the Angel itself and it's capable of being projected on the Imaginal World and contemplating the spiritual realities and the perfect truths.

The term khangah is translated as a "Sufi store" and must be understood as the own interior of the searcher, or his heart. It is interesting to note Suhrawardi's reference to his connection with Sufism. For many times it was told that he wasn't a sufi because he wasn't associated to any formal lineage (tekkes). However, he professes a "vertical connection", which unites him directly to Khidr's manifestation, the hidden guide, represented by his contact to his "father" in the celestial sense, which means, the Angel of Humanity or Gabriel.

The Ten Wisemen are constantly referred to in Suhrawardi's texts. They are representations of the Ten Intelligences or Ten Celestial Spheres. The last Wiseman, or the Tenth Intelligence (the Wiseman with whom Suhrawardi chats at the current recital) is the Archangel Gabriel or the Shapes Donator (see The Philosophers' Faith Symbol).

When the dialog begins, the Sheik answers the Wiseman where do they come from. He answers that they all came from "nakoja-abadi", a term coined by Suhrawardi that means the "land of nowhere" and also the Eighth Climate situated beyond the Sphere of the Spheres. This point is located above the human concept of paradise, and it can be defined as "to be in front of God's face", which means a location of intimacy and closeness.



When asked about their functions, the Wiseman affirms "our work is the sewing" and they are the guardians of the Verbs of God. The concept of sewing will be resumed further on this recital. Regarding the Divine Verbs, these are the Wiseman themselves, or the Archangelic Intelligences and it will also be described later in this recital.

The Sheik asks why only he (the last Wiseman) talks to him, while the others remain in silence. The Wiseman answers that humanity's present state makes impossible to talk to the rest of them, and that he (the Tenth Wiseman or Gabriel) is the spokesman of the superior hierarchies. Once men are able to understand him, he turns to be the middleman among the highest Archangelic Intelligences and the humanity. Because of this, Gabriel is also called the Angel of Humanity.

Here the visionary experience intensifies and Suhrawardi describes the representation that he sees of the universe, as being an "inverted tureen" whose set seems to be a perfect sphere. In his description one can see Avicena's cosmological model, also present in his other treaties. He describes "eleven concentric compartments", where nine represent the nine spheres and in the center there is water, and in the center of this water is sand, and above it there are some animals. The sand represents the Earth itself, which stays in the central point of the whole universe.

The nine superior Spheres are the Wisemen themselves, who are near Gabriel. The First one is called Bahman, a name withdrawn of Zoroastrism. Through the contemplation of its Creator, the Second Intelligence arises from it. By the act of contemplating its being that can not be a being, a sky is generated, which in the case of the First Intelligence is the Sphere of the Spheres. By the contemplation of its own Essence, the Moving Soul of this sky arises (see the text *The Philosophers Faith's Symbol*). Thus, all the others spheres are generated until the Tenth, the Wiseman with whom Suhrawardi is talking to, and it creates the earth and all the beings that inhabit it and because of this he is also called Shapes Donator.

The Wiseman continues, saying that each of the nine Wisemen who are with him has a son and he, Gabriel, has "numerous" sons. To these sons is attributed the work of contemplating a mill stone, or the Moving Soul of each sphere, and they do it with an eye contemplating the sphere action and the other contemplating their "father", the Archangelic Intelligence of that level, with whom they seek to resemble through a perpetual and passionate movement.

Gabriel says that once their shift is completed, their sons must return to him, but some among them won't be able to do it: "the return of all the correspondents can't be conceived". This happens, according to the Wiseman, because his "mill stone is extremely narrow".

The Wiseman says that, because of the perfection of his nature, he doesn't suffer alteration. He doesn't need a wife to generate his sons, but he owns one "Abyssinian serve" and she is the one who contemplates the millstone. He says that whenever "the young daughter pupil and her look are directed to me... a child is, from my acts, up-to-date inside her breast, without any action from me nor being suffered any alteration." This serve is the representation of the archetypal matter that has the capacity of receiving the "forms" that constantly emanate from the Shapes Donator, or Gabriel. And



this doesn't refer only to the human forms, but to all the living beings. And thus, when the "embryo" reaches its development, a soul emanates from Gabriel and then, for this soul, begins its "Occidental exile", its existence in a material body in this level of creation (see The Occidental Exile Recital). When its journey is complete, it has the chance of returning to its angel. It is necessary to understand that there isn't a real separation, but a forgetfulness about the state of union.

The Sheik then asks the Angel why he appeared on his father's khangah, his own "interior temple" or heart. His doubt is based on the fact that the Wiseman has asserted that there isn't movement in him: so, how would he have arisen there? The Wiseman says that he has always been there, the Sheik only has not been able to perceive him before. A change was needed in his state in order that to happen. He explains it through a metaphor, where he asserts that a blind man doesn't see the sun because of his weakness, and not because the sun doesn't exist. If his illness is healed, he turns out to be able to see it. And that doesn't indicate a change in the archangelic hierarchy, but in the viewer.

The Sheik asks whether they sing hymns to God and the Wiseman says that "they are the eye witnesses, immersed inside the divine presence" and this doesn't allow them "the leisure" of practicing cults; and if that would happen, it wouldn't be "through the tongue and the members" that they would accomplish this, because "action and agitation" aren't a characteristic of these beings.

The sewing theme is resumed here. The Sheik asks the Wiseman to teach him the sewing science, but the Wiseman says that "this science isn't accessible to the species to which you belong", which means, isn't possible to the man to "sew" the matter with the form. However, he teaches "enough" to the Sheik in order he could "recompose his rude dresses and torn rags" when (and if) necessary.

Then the Sheik asks the Wiseman to teach him about the Verbs of God. The Wiseman teaches initially the abjad, the science of numeric value of letters. This first explanation refers to God's Verb as being God's Word itself, in this case, the Koran. In the Islamic tradition is said that Gabriel was the revelation agent, the middleman between God and His Prophet. A big work is accomplished in the sense of understanding completely the Koran and one of the forms is trying to revert the "revelation descent, "going up" in search for the letter in its archetypal state and that is done through attribution of the numeric values to the letters. This methodology is common, for example, in the studies of Kabala. The Sheik then fills his tablet with symbols and with that, he "understands the secret meanings of God's Verb - the Revealed Book".

When deepening the initial doubt about the Divine Verbs, the Wiseman begins to explain the hierarchy of these Verbs. This theme will be resumed and deepened for Suhrawardi in other treaty called The Verb of Sufism. It is necessary to understand that the Verb is the Intelligence itself, which reveals it (the Verb) within its essential being; which means, that the Verbs are also the hierarchy of the Ten Intelligences. These Intelligences are expressions of the submission to the order "Be" (Kun), made by the Creator; or they are Verbs raised to the state of Being by God's wish. The term "Verb" is significant in this context, because, different from the term "Word", it indicates a perpetual action that doesn't have a beginning or an end, as the perfect movement of the planets in their spheres.



The Wiseman says that there are the Larger Verbs, "emanating from the splendor of the Face" of the Creator and that they form a hierarchy. These are the Angeli Intellectualis, or the Archangelic Intelligences themselves. The First Light to emanate is Bahman (or Bahman-Light), already cited previously, and from him the Second Intelligence drifts and from this one originates the Third and so on, as it was presented in other treaties (see The Philosophers Faith's Symbol) until to the Tenth, which is Gabriel.

There are also the Medium Verbs and these are the Angeli Caelestes or Moving Souls, the ones that causes the movements of the Celestial Spheres. From Gabriel the Smaller Verbs proceeds, or the human Spirits. The word Spirit must be understood as the Divine Blow (Ruh) insufflated into the matter. It is necessary to remind that the man, according to scriptural descriptions, was the only being, in the creation, which was touched by God and received His Breath directly from Him.

The Sheik then asks for the Wiseman to explain the meaning of "Gabriel's wings". The Wiseman says that Gabriel has two wings: the right one is pure light and this wing is the relation of Gabriel to God. The left wing owns a "mark of darkness" and has a reddish or purple color (theme that Suhrawardi will resume in his The Purple Archangel, to be soon published in this site). This darkness mark is a result of his being that has a side turned to his not-being, which means, his impotence in giving himself the state of being (see The Philosophers Faith's Symbol).

It is from his wing of light that the human souls emanate. "From the right wing of Gabriel a ray of light goes down and this ray of light is a Verb, which is called Smaller Verb". From each superior Verb, through its contemplation acts, as it was already discussed, the Intelligence of the next hierarchical level, its Sky (Sphere) and the Moving Soul of this Sky are generated. This is the dimension of pure light of each Intelligence. And also from each Intelligence, through the act of contemplating its not-being, there is a darkness mark, and this shadow materializes inside the subtle matter of the Nine Superior Spheres, forming the Sky itself of these Spheres. So, in each of these spheres the birth of three Ones exists, as it was told above: the Intelligence, the Sky and the Moving Soul. However, at the level of the Tenth Intelligence, Gabriel, the emanation explodes in a crowd. The infinite quantity of human souls emanates of his wing of light and because of this, they are souls of light. From his left wing, the shadow wing, instead of the subtle matter that permeates the Nine Superior Spheres, it arises the matter of our terrestrial world, a result of his not-being.

The Wiseman says that the "illusions world" is the shadow of the left wing of Gabriel itself. While, from the right wing the souls of light and "the truths and spiritual realities that are projected in the conscience" emanate. Thus, the fondness to the world of matter, and the illusion of it is all that exists, is constantly opposed by the whisper blown into the heart, which tries to awake the man for his celestial or divine origin (see The Occidental Exile Recital).

It is interesting to cite that in Ismaelism the Tenth Intelligence is called the Spiritual Adam and he is, actually, the Third Intelligence that was created. However he "delays" on recognizing both Intelligences that precede him and because of this he becomes the Tenth. Thus, the origin of human souls would be associated to the Third Intelligence level and not with to Tenth, what could explain the "nobility" checked to the human



being, in front of which the Angels are called to prostrate themselves. This man is associated to the Perfect Man or the Insan il-Kamil, who is called the Creator's vice-manager. Thus, the return of each human soul to the Angel of Humanity would make the Angel itself, and the human souls that returned to him, evolve back to the Third Sphere, their original place.

Here the recital finishes. Suhrawardi says that in his father's khangah, "it arose the light of day" and the door that drove to the interior world was closed; another door was opened. the one that drives to the daily tasks. The hierarchy of Wisemen was gone, leaving in the Sheik the lament and the longing for "their company".

Therefore, we can say that in this recital several of the most frequent themes of Suhrawardi's terminology are presented, like the procession of the Ten Intelligences, the description of the Verbs of God, and the emanations of Gabriel's wings. More than just description, this recital endowes us with the methodology used by the Sheik in order to live these dimensions. His inner preparation and the visionary experience itself place this text among the most essential of his work, because it constantly remembers us of the origin of our being, of our own constitution and of which our efforts must be to recover our spiritual inheritance. With this text we can reach a more profound comprehension about the modern scientific results that some researchers have obtained concerning the constituents' origin of our body. According to the scientists, the origin of the substances combined to form the beings that inhabit the earth are the stars, which constantly produce a "rain" of organic material from the sky. Thus, the yearning and the enchantment that the starry sky causes, since the beginning of civilization, may be actually a reflex of the spiritual truths that were whispered from the "right wing of Gabriel", causing in the humanity the recognition and the longing for the place where it belongs.