

Imago Dei: Ibn ‘Arabī’s Perspective in Light of Judeo-Christian Tradition

*Imago Dei: la perspectiva de Ibn ‘Arabī a la luz de
la tradición judeocristiana*

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The concept of the divine form of human being has been mentioned in various descriptions in the three largest Abrahamic religions. The Judeo-Christian traditional approach to *Imago Dei* (The Image of God) holds three major perspectives: *substantive*, *functional*, and *relational*. Ibn ‘Arabī, as a Muslim thinker and mystic, explained this concept through the concept of mirror and two other concepts, namely the ‘Perfect Man’ and God’s vicegerency. He considered the divine form of human being as a mirror through which God manifests Himself. This paper provides a comprehensive overview of Ibn ‘Arabī’s interpretation in light of Judeo-Christian approaches. Ibn ‘Arabī’s explanation includes three approaches. Through the concept of perfect man, Ibn ‘Arabī’s explanation approaches the substantive interpretation, and through the concept of vicegerency, he reveals the func-

El concepto de la forma divina del ser humano es mencionado en varias descripciones en las tres religiones abrahámicas mayores. El enfoque tradicional judeocristiano de *Imago Dei* (La imagen de Dios) tiene tres perspectivas principales: sustantiva, funcional y relacional. Ibn ‘Arabī, como pensador y místico musulmán, explicó esta idea a través del concepto de espejo y otros dos conceptos, a saber, el ‘Hombre Perfecto’ y la vicegerencia de Dios. Consideró la forma divina del ser humano como un espejo a través del cual Dios se manifiesta. Este artículo ofrece una visión general comprensiva de la interpretación de Ibn ‘Arabī a la luz de los enfoques judeocristianos. La explicación de Ibn ‘Arabī incluye tres enfoques. A través del concepto del hombre perfecto, la explicación de Ibn ‘Arabī se acerca a la interpretación sustantiva, y a través del concepto de vicegerencia, revela la interpretación func-

tional interpretation. The paper recognizes a relational interpretation of the divine form through some contradictory explanations which can be found in his books. This survey of his explanation also sheds much light on aspects of his anthropological perspective.

Key Words: *Imago Dei*; substantive; functional; relational; mirror; Lord.

cional. El artículo reconoce una interpretación relacional de la forma divina a través de algunas explicaciones contradictorias que pueden hallarse en sus libros. Este análisis de su explicación también arroja bastante luz sobre aspectos de su perspectiva antropológica.

Palabras clave: *Imago Dei*; sustantivo; funcional; relacional; espejo; Señor.

1. Introduction

The concept of *Imago Dei* concerns the divine form as manifest in human beings. The theory originates with Judeo-Christian tradition and derives from the *Old Testament*. Borrowing their *substantive*, *functional* and *relational* approaches, Ibn ‘Arabī¹ interpreted the theory nearly a thousand years ago. The concept initially appeared among Muslims with mystics like Shiblī and Ḥallāj.² Ghazzālī also analyzed it but Ibn ‘Arabī’s approach became an integral part of his philosophical system. His paradigm recognizes three major attitudes and lends perspective on human nature and purpose. His school of thought intimately entwines with anthropology and substantially influenced later schools of thought. This paper acknowledges and attempts to decode his most important contributions in light of Judeo-Christian concepts.

Abrahamic religious expositors often emphasize the divine form of the human being. The source of the theory is found in the *Old Testament*; “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness”.³ The *New Testament* presents this divine form as optimized in Christ as the human archetype or *Imago Dei*. Thus, humans are said to have potential to perfect the image actualized through Christ.⁴ In Is-

¹ Muḥyī l-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-‘Arabī, born in Murcia, al-Andalus (1165 CE).

² Although they were not Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachers, they debated the concept of divine image (form) for the first time among the Muslim mystics.

³ Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them” (Gen: *Genesis*. 2001, English Standard Version (ESV), 1: 26-27).

⁴ Schwanz, *Imago Dei*, p. 21. For detailed histories on the theology of *Imago Dei* see: Berkower, *Man: The Image of God*, chapters 2, p. 37 and chapter 3, p. 67; Cairnes, *The Image of God in Man*, p. 146.

lamic thought God originated everything, including mankind who has a special position among all creatures. The Qur'ān says:

We have honored the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea, given them for sustenance things good and pure, and conferred on them special favors above a great part of our creation...⁵ When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of my spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him.⁶

Prophet Muḥammad also mentioned Adam's priority over other creatures. One of the most famous ḥadīths mirrors the *Old Testament's* motif by stating God created Adam in His form.⁷

Different scholars use various methods and approaches to explain *Imago Dei*. Some interpret the divine form anthropomorphically according to physical likeness.⁸ St. Augustine, a chief representative of this view, explained it as 'prototype'. Nonetheless, the theme of 'man's relationship to God' runs through all interpretations.

Recent commentators on Ibn 'Arabī's works pay much attention to his explanation in light of his 'Perfect Man' and 'Unity of Being' (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) theories.⁹ 'Afīfī (1939) explains Ibn 'Arabī's concept by using the latter's singular perspective on universal reason and pantheism.¹⁰ However, 'Afīfī does not expound on universal reason or its

⁵ Qur'ān, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, 17:70.

⁶ Qur'ān, 15:29.

⁷ Ibn 'Arabī explains this ḥadīth in *Futūḥāt*, Vol. 1, P. 200. قوله صلى الله عليه والسلام ان الله خلق آدم على صورته (باعاده الضمير على الله تعالى). He mentions it many times in Vol. 2, 391, 170. There is controversy regarding the third person pronoun: "his form". The possessive pronoun either refers to: (1) Adam himself, per Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Asmā' wa-l-Ṣifāt*, Cairo, 1939, p. 290 and Al-Juwaynī K. *Al-Shāmil fī Uṣūl*, ed. Luciani, Paris, 1938, Arabic text p. 93; or to (2) some person previously mentioned in the ḥadīth. According to some versions, when the Prophet saw a man striking another in the face, he said, "Don't strike him, for God created Adam in his shape," per Ibn Khuzayma K. (1968), *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd wa-ithbāt ṣifāt al-rabb*, Cairo, p. 38. See also Al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, p. 93, idem *Shāmil*, p. 560; Watt, "Created in His image", 38-49. For sources of the cited ḥadīth, see Wensinck, A.J., *Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane*, 7 Vols., Leiden, 1936-1969, vol. 3, p. 438.

⁸ McFague, "The world as God's body", p. 4.

⁹ This theory posits there is nothing besides God and that existence belongs to God and that everything else is His manifestation. Hence, God's Being has three levels: absolute oneness or *Aḥadīyat*; the oneness of many-ness (*kathrat*) in which His names appear; and the objective world (cf. Ashtiani, Sayyed Jalal-ed-din, *Muqaddamah-i Qayṣari bar sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam-i ibn 'Arabī*, Tehran, Amir Kabir Publication, 1991, p. 205; Chittick, W., "Qūnawī on the One Wujūd", *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society*, 49 (2011), pp. 117-127, p. 2.

function regarding the relationship between God and man. Henry Corbin (1988) posits that *Imago Dei* implies that God shines through humanity and presents an existential narration of the human ‘self’ based on Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought. Nasr (1988) offers a mystical narration of Ibn ‘Arabī’s text while William Chittick (1994, 1989 & 2005) writes at some length on Ibn ‘Arabī’s ‘Perfect Man’ and the Divine Names. Izutsu, whose interpretation reflects ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī’s exposition of Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought (1966), keeps to Sufi terms and analyzes elements of *Imago Dei* using mysticism’s terminology.

Most scholars examine Ibn ‘Arabī’s positions on *Imago Dei* in terms of his theological worldview. But numerous such commentators have not investigated *Imago Dei* as a singular concept in theological, philosophical or existential contexts. Consequently, the present work reviews the cited Judeo-Christian approaches to show their potential application(s) to Ibn ‘Arabī’s textual content(s). The authors specifically analyze his definition of ‘Divine Form’ through the Judeo-Christian *relational* approach to demonstrate how Ibn ‘Arabī reached his existential interpretation(s).

2. Judeo-Christian Approaches of *Imago Dei*

Five major concepts are used to illustrate *Imago Dei* in Judeo-Christian theology. First, is the anthropomorphite, which interprets *Imago Dei* as a physical phenomenon;¹¹ the second posits God’s ‘being’ as the Trinitarian prototype; the third defines God’s image in terms of man’s dominion over creation; the fourth considers the Image of God in ethical and cognitive terms; the fifth says it is societal in

¹⁰ *Waḥdat al-wujūd* concerns a variety of religious-philosophical doctrines that define mystical pantheism. Instead of naturalistic pantheism, which dissolves God within nature, mystical pantheism dissolves nature within God and refers to the principle: ‘*All is God*’. See: Stepaniants, *Sufi Wisdom*, p. 24. As for Ibn ‘Arabī’s pantheism: Nasr disputes that pantheism is even a philosophical system and that Ibn ‘Arabī does not have a philosophy at all since he never claimed to follow or create any such system (Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, pp. 104-105).

¹¹ Lidums, “The doctrine of *Imago Dei*”, p. 2. In the Islamic tradition there is a theological idea that attributes God with physical features called *Mujāsama* c.f. *Kashf al-Murād fī sharḥ Tajrīd al-‘itiqād*, Khāje Naṣīr ad-Dīn Ṭūsī, explained by Ḥasan Bin Yusif Ḥilī, Qum, Imām Ṣādīq Institute, 2003, p. 25.

nature.¹²

Another classification system takes six approaches to *Imago Dei*: (1) those who distinguish between a natural and supernatural likeness of God; (2) those who define likeness as spiritual capabilities; (3) those who interpret the image as an external form; (4) those who oppose the third group; (5) those who believe the human being is God's counterpart; (6) and those who interpret it as man's ability to represent God on earth.¹³

Yet another system utilizes four approaches: (1) man's dominion over creation; (2) the image as moral virtue; (3) the image as moral capacity; (4) the image as similarity between God and man in personable things.¹⁴

2.1. *Substantive*

Millard Erickson (1983-85) integrated interpretative categorizations of *Imago Dei* into three major groups: *substantive*, *functional*¹⁵ and *relational*¹⁶. Substantive views suggest God gave His features to human beings, which implies man exists in the actual form of God; and thus concerns human essence and substance (physical structure).

Pre-modern discussions on humanity concerned human nature and post-modern theological, philosophical and anthropological drifts changed the discourse to man's capacity to know God as well as to mankind's fall. For scholars such as Thomas Aquinas, however, the analysis of human nature helped to explain common features shared by man and God.

Irenaeus was the first theologian to systematically discuss *Imago Dei* in terms of endowments such as the rational mind and free will.¹⁷ In fact, Irenaeus was the first to declare that an everlasting human com-

¹² Lidums, "The doctrine of *Imago Dei*", p. 1.

¹³ Claus Westermann, *Genesis* (vol. 1, p. 148), *Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament* (Neukirchen, Neukirchen Verlag, 1980). Quoted in Hefner P.J., "The Human Being" in *Christian Dogmatics* (vol. 1, p. 330), C.E. Braaten and R.W. Jenson (eds.), Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1960, pp. 323-340.

¹⁴ Crabb, *Understanding People*, p. 89.

¹⁵ Ramsey, *Basic Christian Ethics*, p. 250.

¹⁶ Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, p. 56.

¹⁷ Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, vol. 2, p. 123. Irenaeus differentiates image from similitude. He considered the image to consist of endowments; i.e., a rational mind and free will. He perceived similitude as the gratuitous life of the Spirit that was lost through the 'Fall' but restored by grace in Christ (*Genesis* 1: 27).

ponent of *Imago Dei* actually belonged to man's substance and stemmed from primal creation: this being the human capacity for rationality. Although some aspects of his theory were challenged and later rejected, the major thematic of the 'indispensable' part of man's structure and personality remains.

Man possesses capacities and faculties that distinguish him from the balance of creation.¹⁸ According to Augustine, these are manifested as an ability to reason (rational mind), a faculty that incorporates memory, understanding and free will.¹⁹ Augustine's commentary on *Genesis* indicates human significance consists of being made in God's image for the purpose exercising dominion over all creatures without a capacity to reason. Thus, being in God's image indicates that humans possess a mind capable of reasoning and comprehension.²⁰ Having been influenced by Irenaeus as well as Peter Lombard and Anselm, Aquinas' formulation of *Imago Dei* was therefore based on anthropology. As such, he further stipulated that man's natural powers of reason and free will were endowments of righteousness.²¹

Rahner, a contemporary agent of Roman Catholic theological anthropology, wrote "The more we become what we are, free beings endowed with a certain degree of power, the more we see him to whom this subject of lordship, which never belongs to ourselves, can be entrusted-God".²² Rahner says man has a metaphysical dimension he calls 'spiritual essence' and posits that God created man in His image *with* this 'spiritual essence' as an indispensable part of human constitution. Every human being, therefore, possesses a supernatural existential dimension that precedes the advent of individual freedom as well as self-understanding and experience.²³

¹⁸ Barth and Bromiley, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, p. 186.

¹⁹ Ramsey, *Basic Christian Ethics*, p. 250.

²⁰ Mahoney, "Evolution, Altruism and the Image of God", p. 5.

²¹ Aquinas, 13.1a.93.2 notea; Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, vol. 2, p. 124.

²² Rahner, *Do you believe in God*, p. 53.

²³ Rahner, *Foundation of Christian Faith*, p. 126. Rahner (1978) considered man both person and subject. His concept of 'personhood' comprises four determinations: (1) transcendence; responsibility and freedom; (2) a tendency towards incomprehensible mystery; (3) a 'being' within both world and history; (4) and social nature. Rahner posited that freedom and responsibility were not mundane faculties but directly related to man's subjective entirety: "In real freedom the subject always intends himself, understands and posits himself. Ultimately he does not do something, but he does himself. Freedom is the capacity of

Niebuhr (1963) agrees with Augustine (1991)²⁴ regarding reason and self-consciousness. Paul Tillich (1951) explains *Imago Dei* as man's comprehensive wholeness. Taken together, Augustine, Niebuhr and Tillich form a kind of theological sect. Augustine was determined to transcend and ascend: "I will pass beyond this power of mine which is called memory; yea I will pass beyond it that I may approach unto Thee".²⁵ Niebuhr's approach to self-transcendence per *Imago Dei* sought a relationship with God in the end.²⁶ And Tillich interpreted *Imago Dei* as rationality plus a wider faculty for ontological reasoning, through which man comprehends complex levels of reality, which provided a gestalt perception other creatures lacked.²⁷

2.2. Relational²⁸

The definitive functional quality concerning *Imago Dei* is that of man's relationships with the Creator, His creation and with each other. Niebuhr and Tillich considered the faculty of reason an actual link with God. Hence, the relational approach interprets *Imago Dei* as an experiential process between man and 'other'. This involvement requires mutual understanding and experience that are neither coincidental nor qualitatively equivalent. Therefore, no universal human divine form exists for all humans or for life's entirety. This specific interpretation is the crux of what it means to be in the 'form of God'.

one subject to decide about himself in his single totality" (Rahner, p. 94). Finally, since "freedom of the subject in relation to himself is his final and definitive validity" (Ibid, p. 100), man is free to say *yes* or *no* to God. This is something Rahner argued as 'the fundamental option' (Ibid, p. 93).

²⁴ Early theologians were influenced by Greek philosophy and metaphysics and many considered reason a unique human characteristic. For example, Aquinas believed whoever lacks an intelligent mind does not qualify as *Imago Dei*. However, he thought animals had a partial likeness to God, since they exist and live (Aquinas, ST.13.1a. 93.2 notea).

²⁵ Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*, vol. 1, p. 165.

²⁶ Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, p. 25.

²⁷ Tillich, *Systemic Theology*, p. 160.

²⁸ Many theologians considered this approach, including Bohnhoeffer, Barth, Brunner, Macquarrie, Cullman and others. However, we chose Barth and Brunner because their conceptualization of *Imago Dei* approaches Ibn 'Arabi's perspectives.

Karl Barth and Emil Brunner are esteemed theologians of the relational approach and founders of neo-orthodoxy.²⁹ For Barth, *Imago Dei* is neither a quality nor any essential human attribution but rather man's inherently existential relationship with God. Barth considers here the plural pronoun 'us' as well as dynamics within the Godhead implicit in the verse: "Let us make man in our image". For him, the inclusive pronoun 'us' demonstrates a differential relationship between 'I' and 'Thou' even within God.³⁰ This 'I-Thou' relationship is therefore a God-given enabling that allows man to enter into relationships with God and *others*.³¹ Consequently, man never ceases to 'be' *Imago Dei*.³² Brunner's greatest and most enduring impact was that he insisted that God becomes known solely by a personal encounter³³ because He created mankind for an especially personal relationship. Hence, God does not merely manifest His glory to man as with other creatures, but God actually wills to possess man as a free being,³⁴ although this liberty is limited due to man's responsibility before God. Brunner explains:

This is the heart of his being as man and it is the 'condition' on which he possesses freedom. In other words, this limited human freedom exists so he may respond to God in such a way that through this response God may glorify Himself and give Himself to His creature.³⁵

²⁹ Rahner, *Foundation of Christian Faith*, p. 126; Montgomery, "Neo-Orthodox Theology", p. 4. Emil Brunner wrote *The Theology of Crisis* as a Neo-orthodox theologian with an outstanding reputation in America. See Kim, "From Neo-orthodox to rationalistic Deism: A study of the Religious Influence on the Development of John Rawls's Political Philosophy", p. 26.

³⁰ Barth and Bromiley, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3, p. 192.

³¹ Barth and Bromiley, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3, p. 198. This 'I-Thou' confrontation exists within the Godhead and provides a foundation for man's creation; implying man's capacity for relationship is naturally inherent. Barth wrote that the 'I-Thou' between Father and Son within the godhead is prototypical of *Imago Dei* (Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3, p. 220).

³² Barth: "Man can and will always be man before God and among his fellows only as he is man in relationship to woman and woman in relationship to man. And as he is one or the other he is man. ... The fact that he was created man and woman will be the great paradigm of everything that is to take place between him and God, and also of everything that is to take place between him and his fellows" (Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3, p. 186).

³³ Linder, "Brunner, Heinrich Emil", p. 175.

³⁴ Brunner wrote: "The doctrine of *Imago Dei* in particular is the fundamental principle of the Protestant doctrine of justice" (Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine*, p. 39).

³⁵ Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine*, p. 56.

In addition to this personal attitude towards his personal concept of God, Brunner says every person is responsible to God, which accountability constitutes man's actual existence regardless if he does or does not believe, specifically because man was *created* to respond to God. This inherent '*law of responsibility*' not only establishes formal existential structure for purposeful existence³⁶ but also "universally applies to every human being by definition".³⁷ Brunner considered this his formal aspect of *Imago Dei* by defining it as "that which distinguishes man, whether believer or unbeliever, from non-human creation".³⁸ Formally, therefore,³⁹ Brunner's concept of *Imago Dei* comprises responsibility, freedom, reason, consciousness, language and similar attributions, all of which cannot be lost. Moreover, both Brunner and Barth considered self-transcendence inseparable from *Imago Dei*'s human constitution.

Barth believed *Imago Dei* identified the human being as God's counterpart.⁴⁰ Beginning with God rather than human qualities and functions, he posits the 'divine call' addresses both '*I and Thou*' by referencing "*Let us make man in our image*".⁴¹ Thus, this 'I-Thou' confrontation within the Godhead, provides context for the creation of human beings. In fact, our nature appears fundamentally rooted in relationships with *others*. Barth wrote "... Man is the repetition of the divine form of life; its copy and reflection... in fact, the counterpart of God, the encounter and discovery in God Himself being copied and imitated in God's relation to man".⁴²

Imago Dei therefore exists in the context of man's relationship with God. For Barth, another facet of *Imago Dei* concerns man's connection to the *other*. This is to say man reiterates the divine form of life: "God lives in togetherness with Himself, God lives in togetherness with man

³⁶ Lidums, "The Doctrine of *Imago Dei*", p. 109.

³⁷ Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine*, p. 57.

³⁸ Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, p. 93.

³⁹ Another aspect of *Imago Dei* is the material sense, which is identical to 'being-in-the-word' of God. This happens when man is 'in Christ' who is the 'Word of God' (*Logos*) or, in this instance, where Christ is the true image of God. Man is required to respond to God and if he does not answer correctly he loses his divine image but it is justly restored through Jesus (Brunner, *man in revolt*, p. 102).

⁴⁰ Herzfeld, "*Imago Dei/Imago Hominis*", p. 47.

⁴¹ Barth and Bromiley, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3, p. 192; Gen 1: 26.

⁴² Barth and Bromiley, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. 3, p. 2 and p. 82.

and man lives in togetherness with one another”.⁴³ As such, humans also confront each other as both ‘I’ and/or ‘Thou’.⁴⁴ Barth deemed the togetherness of God with man optimally manifest by Christ.⁴⁵ Also for Barth, God is entirely *other* to humanity and therefore created man to enter into a relationship with a being totally different from Himself (deity). Thus, humans are real partners and at the same time answerable to God.⁴⁶

Barth says that God’s calling to His ‘Self’ implies the presence of a being capable of responding; hence, both Caller and called are within Him. However, post-creation man is entirely separate from God and as such, is potentially God’s counterpart. The key point in this schema is that humans do not exist as solitary individuals but live in confrontation within *other* human-to-human and human-to-God relationships. If no humans existed, there would therefore be no complete form of God because having form depends on two components: an Original and its copy.⁴⁷

[I]t [the image of God] is not a quality of man. Hence, there is no point in asking in which of man’s peculiar attributes and attitudes it consists. It does not consist in anything that man is or does. It consists as his self consists, as do the creatures of God. He would not be a man if he were not the image of God.⁴⁸

Barth emphasized that God’s divinity is relational and thereby joined to creation, after which it manifests. In fact, being human for Barth, as the ‘*other*’ before God, is only actualized by relationship with God just as being human is actualized by relationships with other humans. Barth’s final argument proposes that the purpose of mankind’s creation is to have fellowship with God⁴⁹ as “The existence of I and

⁴³ Barth and Bromiley, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. 3, p. 2 and p. 82.

⁴⁴ For Barth, the creation of humanity includes male and female, a principle that couples relationship with differentiation. Humans are intended for relationships, to stand in confrontation to *others*, being both similar and dissimilar to them (Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3, p. 185).

⁴⁵ Barth, *The Humanity of God*, p. 49.

⁴⁶ Barth, *Table Talk*, p. 57.

⁴⁷ Some scholars interpret Barth in such a way that man’s being in the form of God is not a structural capacity by which man has relationship with God but that actually “exists first in our relationship to God” (Herzfeld 1999, p. 42). Others explain his theory of *Imago Dei* as a capacity for relationships with both God and other humans (Lidums, “The doctrine of *Imago Dei*”, p. 115).

⁴⁸ Barth and Bromiley, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. 3, p. 16.

⁴⁹ Mueller, “What it means to be created in the image of God”, p. 20.

Thou in confrontation".⁵⁰ Hence, the primary meaning and purpose of *Imago Dei* is man's ability to enter into relationship.

Pannenberg developed Biblical and Anthropological positions, writing "Jesus is the New Adam, the second heavenly man, the life-giving Spirit in contrast to the first earthly man... He [Jesus] is the prototype of reconciled humanity. Therefore, Jesus is man's representative before God".⁵¹ He positions man (1970) as the sole creature capable of dealing with the question of identity and exclusively so due to an attribution he called '*openness to the world*'. This openness is a foundation that led him to two other human characteristics, 'relationship-with' and 'governance-of' the world.⁵² Pannenberg writes "Man's infinite dependence on an unknown being before who he stands has turned out to be the core of the somewhat vague expression 'open to the world'.⁵³ He therefore considers man a fundamentally relational being. Another side of being human is self-centeredness. Hence, being 'open to the world' and 'self-centeredness' conflict within the ego and the unity through which both are united lies outside of man. This implies that the solution is solely grounded in God who overcomes the conflict. Pannenberg's paradigmatic view of man as a relational being therefore justified man's dominion over the world as God's representative.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Barth and Bromiley, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. 3, p. 185.

⁵¹ Pannenberg, *Jesus-God and Man*, pp. 196-197. Pannenberg considered Jesus the second Adam, God's representative on earth to rule over nature: 'The totality of the material world does not possess its unity in itself apart from man, but this unity is only structured through man. The cosmos is not in itself a unity, as the majority of ancient Greek thinkers held, which is given prior to man and merely copied in him as a microcosm. Rather, the multiplicity of things in nature is first united to form the world through man. By means of thought and technical skill, man rules the multiplicity of cosmic events and makes of them his world.

⁵² Lidums, "The Doctrine of *Imago Dei*", p. 93.

⁵³ Pannenberg, *What is Man*, p. 11. "While the needs of animals are limited to their environment, man's needs know no boundary. Man is dependent not just on particular conditions of his surroundings but beyond that, on something that escapes him as often as he reaches for fulfillment. Man's chronic need, his infinite dependence, presupposes something outside himself that is beyond every experience of that world. In his infinite dependence he presupposes with every breath he takes a corresponding, infinite, never ending, otherworldly being before whom he stands, even if he does not know what to call it. Man's infinite dependence on an unknown being, before whom he stands, has turned out to be the core of the somewhat vague expression 'open to the world' (Pannenberg, *What is Man*, pp. 10-11).

⁵⁴ Pannenberg, *What is Man*, p. 11.

Man Pushes beyond everything he meets in the world and he is not completely and finally satisfied by anything. However, would that not mean an ascetic turning away from the world rather than openness for it? One might easily think so. The fact is, however, man's communion with God directs him back into the world. In any case, this is the thought involved in the biblical idea of man as the image of God. Man's destiny for God manifests itself in his dominion over the world as the representative of God's dominion over the world.⁵⁵

2.3. *Functional*

Pannenberg's 'openness to the world' led him to human relationships and mankind's dominion over the world as components of *Imago Dei*. He considered man a fundamentally relational being and emphasized man's relationship to God as an essential prerequisite for any proprietary approach to man's dominion over the world. To compliment this concept, additional aspects such as form and function were also recognized,⁵⁶ with the latter's dualism as ontological and existential, respectively beginning with God as form and function.⁵⁷ Both are so intertwined that one can only understand *Imago Dei* in light of their inseparability.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, this togetherness is metaphysical rather than physical, comprising divine authorization to govern as God's representative:⁵⁹ "The image and likeness of God consists essentially in one's sharing the domain of God".⁶⁰ Johannes Hehn first drew attention to this dynamic as *the* primary function implicit in *Imago Dei*. Although important, being God's representative, as a concomitant with being in the image of God, does not, however, constitute the actual office. Here is where Hehn refers to extra-Biblical sources to suggest an understanding of *Imago Dei* as 'royal' — i.e., as a *designation* rather than *attribution* of human nature.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Pannenberg, *What is Man*, p. 14.

⁵⁶ Mueller, "What it means to be created in the image of God", p. 19.

⁵⁷ Clines, "The Image of God in Man", p. 101.

⁵⁸ Schmidt writes "In the old Testament, wherever human being is, God is proclaimed. The person represents, attests, 'God on the earth'. So the person as such, created by God, is God's witness... it is of the nature of an image to allow what it represents to appear: so where the person appears, God also appears" (Schmidt, *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschaft*, p. 144: quoted in Mueller, *What it means*, p. 20).

⁵⁹ Mueller, *What it means*, p. 20.

⁶⁰ Gross, "Die Gottebenbildlichkeit des Menschen." cited in Mueller, *What it means*, p. 12.

⁶¹ Hehn, "Zum Terminus 'Bild Gottes'", quoted in Herzfeld, "*Imago Dei*" p. 33.

Von Rad (1962)⁶² believed chaos threatens creation and human kind. For this reason, God created and called humans to impose order on nature and participate in God's plan of salvation, as nature was created with reference to mankind.⁶³ He therefore considered man's significant role in the universe as central to being in the form of God. What therefore reveals *Imago Dei* is man's functional capacity to join God in a developmental capacity to establish and maintain order in the universe.

The divine likeness consists in the fact that man was invested with might at creation. There is no other evidence in the OT as to the proper interpretation of divine likeness... In *Genesis* 1: 26 we are told man was to be created in the divine image that he may control the whole of creation. This is expressed very strongly in 'P', who argues that creation is referred to man and requires his dominion as a principle of ordering.⁶⁴

Thus, the functional approach to *Imago Dei* concerns the human capacity to exercise duties as God's deputy on earth. This interpretation considers the whole of man physically and intellectually, which means *Imago Dei* can be interpreted as the extent to which a human being responds and functions on earth as God's vicegerent and image. This markedly functional interpretation is far more comprehensive than the substantive because it embraces a holistic view of humanity's essence; specifically, creation in God's image was immediately followed by the divine commission to exercise dominion. This approach supports moral responsibility and attitudes, especially towards community and environment by positing man's dominion over nature.⁶⁵

⁶² Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, p. 144. Gerhard von Rad extended Hehn's work as a functional approach to *Imago Dei*. He rejected substantive views, especially those that interpreted the image of God based on mental or spiritual aspects or human capacity (Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, p. 392). Von Rad believed any debate over the substantive approach was futile and argued there was no evidence in the OT to indicate a proper interpretation of divine likeness except in *Genesis*, where it robustly expressed creation's need for man's dominion (Von Rad, *Old Testament*, p. 145).

⁶³ Von Rad, *Old Testament*, p. 144.

⁶⁴ Von Rad, "Divine Likeness in the OT", vol. 1, pp. 391-392.

⁶⁵ Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, p. 392.

3. Attitudes of Islamic Scholars Regarding *Imago Dei*

Sufis offer significant interpretations of *Imago Dei*, including Shibli⁶⁶ and Ghazzālī.⁶⁷ Ghazzālī reported a ḥadīth from Shibli who discussed *Imago Dei* and said Adam was created in view of the divine names but the Essence of God had been forever hidden.⁶⁸ According to Shibli, Adam was created in the form of God's names and attributes, not His Essence. Sufi theologians who followed further developed this new distinction between divine names and essence.

Hallāj gave the motif a symbolic theme by assigning Adam as *nāsūt* or 'transcendence of God'. Thus, Adam became the Godhead clothed in humanity.⁶⁹ Rūzbihān Baqlī explained the idea by saying that when God looks at a thing He makes in it an image of Himself, such that the image remains eternal. Therefore, when God manifests Himself eternally to a human (*shakhṣ*), He becomes identical with that person and specifies attributions similar to His own. That same individual then causes those attributions to visibly manifest via activities. Thus, God manifests Himself both 'in him' and 'from him'.⁷⁰

Then God wanted to make these attributes appear [starting] from Love in separateness (*infirād*) so that He could see them and speak to them. He looked at pre-ternity and created an image, which is His image and His Essence, because if

⁶⁶ Shaykh Abu Bakr Shibli (861-946): Important Sufi of Persian descent. Disciple of Junayd al-Baghdādī.

⁶⁷ Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al Ghazzālī (1058-1111). Al-Ghazzālī, known as Algazelus or Algazel in the Western medieval world, was a Persian theologian, jurist, philosopher and mystic. Some historians refer to him as the single most influential Muslim after Muḥammad. See: Ghazali, al. *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/al-Ghazali> (consulted on 17 Dec 2012); Adamec, *Historical Dictionary of Islam*, p. 110; Watt, *The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghazali*, p. 11.

⁶⁸ Ghazzālī, *Kītāb al-Imlā'*, vol. 5, p. 32. Ghazzālī used the ḥadīth 'God created man in His form' in his book, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, to explain the human heart: "the heart is a mystery from the world of divine command (Amr = أَمْر) ... and all parts of the universe belong to it. It is the same mystery about which God said 'Say: The spirit (cometh) by command of my Lord' [Qur'ān 17: 85] and this mystery is king because it comes from the world of the divine command. There is a hierarchy through which the world of the divine command and the world of creation are connected to each other. Therefore, someone who perceives the meaning of that will also understand the meaning of his soul, and someone who knows his soul knows his Lord, and in such a way the Prophet's statement, 'God created man in His form' would be meaningful" (Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, ed. A.B. B.H. Ḥāfiz Irāqī, nd, Beirut, Dār Al-Kitāb Al-'Arabī, vol. 1, p. 184).

⁶⁹ Masataka, *Ibn 'Arabī's theory of the perfect man*, p. 20.

⁷⁰ Baqlī Shīrāzī, *Shathīyāt*, pp. 433-444.

God looks at a thing, He makes in it an image from Him, and that image will remain through eternity, and in that image will remain Knowledge, Power, Movement, Will and all [His] Attributes through eternity. When He manifests Himself eternally to a person (*shakhṣ*) He becomes identical (*huwa huwa*) with him, and He looks at that [person] for an aeon (*dahr*) of His eternity... He specifies certain attributions in him similar to His own, attributes which He created form the meaning of the manifestation (*zuhūr*) in that person whom He had created in His own image. Thus, he [that person] becomes both creator (*khāliq*) and nourisher (*rāziq*) who praises and glorifies and makes these attributions and actions visible. In like manner, He made substances and wonders visible and brought that person into His kingdom and manifested Himself in him and from him.⁷¹

Although Ḥallāj mentions the creation of an image or *person*, he does not stipulate Adam or mankind. Hence, the image or *person* can be interpreted as intellect, spirit or concrete existence, as it is not specified.

Ghazzālī expounds his theories on *Imago Dei* in different books and places, in both theological and philosophical contexts. In *Iḥyā'* he states that communication between God and man takes place within the human spirit because God breathed His spirit into man and that such interaction concerns a mystical union with God.⁷² He stresses that common attributions between God and man do not exist⁷³ but rather that one can be nearer to God by imitating His attributes by imitating angels. He stated that what characterizes living comprises perception and action, which are liable to deficiencies and mediocrity but open to perfection. The more you imitate angels in these characteristics, the further you leave behind animal qualities and draw nearer to angelic likeness. Since angels are near to God, one who is near to angels is near to God.⁷⁴ Ghazzālī also concluded that man's being in the form of God indicates his being in the form of *The Most Merciful*,⁷⁵ which is the most comprehensive name of God⁷⁶ since it includes all divine names as taught to Adam by God. At the same time he writes that the image of God (Allāh) and the image of *The Most Merciful* are different, although man can be in the image of *The Most Merciful*:

⁷¹ Baqlī Shīrāzi, *Shathīyāt*, Translation taken from the Persian version: Rūzbihān Baqlī, *Sharḥ*, pp. 433-444, which corresponds to the Arabic version in Daylamī, *A treatise on mystical love*, pp. 27-28.

⁷² Ghazzālī, *Kūtāb al-Imlā'*, vol. 5, pp. 34-38.

⁷³ Ghazzālī, *al-Maqṣad*, pp. 49-50.

⁷⁴ Ghazzālī, *al-Maqṣad*, p. 46.

⁷⁵ Ghazzālī, *Mishkāt*, pp. 70-71.

⁷⁶ Masakata, *Ibn 'Arabī's theory of the perfect man*, p. 44.

Maybe one sees such a mystic and applies to him the saying, “*God created Adam in the image of the Merciful One.*” However, if one contemplates it attentively, one knows that this saying has an interpretation (*ta`wīl*) just like the saying, “*I am God*” or “*Glory to me*” and also like God’s words to Moses, “*I became sick and you did not visit me,*” and “*I become his hearing, his sight, and his tongue.*” But now I must stop the explanation here.⁷⁷

Ghazzālī influenced the mystic and philosopher Ibn ‘Arabī,⁷⁸ who mentions three levels of manifestation in *Futūḥāt*: outer (*zāhir*), inner (*bāḥīn*) and intermediate, the latter being the human who possesses both inner and outer forms.⁷⁹ In *Fuṣūṣ* he says that because of both forms humans have the real form of God.⁸⁰ Ibn ‘Arabī posits that God manifests Himself in the human heart, for which reason the human heart has the form of God.⁸¹ But at the same time he warns there is no real definition of the heart.⁸²

William Chittick, a contemporary commentator, took extraordinary steps to explain Ibn ‘Arabī’s theories. He suggests that being in the form of God identifies man with the all-comprehensive Name of God, which therefore gives meaning to divine Essence and Attributes.⁸³ Thus, form is everything manifest and everything perceived, implying the universe is an immeasurable collection of forms and, although everything is a form of God, man is the most complete form.⁸⁴

Whatever the situation of anything in the cosmos, it is the form of the Real because of what He has given to it, for it is not correct for anything in the cosmos to have a *wujūd* that is not the form of the Real.⁸⁵

⁷⁷ Ghazzālī, *Mishkāṭ*, p. 61, cited in Masataka, *Ibn ‘Arabī’s theory of the perfect man*, p. 41.

⁷⁸ Afifi, *The Mystical Philosophy*, p. xi, and p. xii. Afifi holds that Ibn ‘Arabī qualifies as a mystical philosopher. That is, one who assumes tension toward the transcendent divine ground of being as the fundamental attribute of human reality *per se*, and then explores the entire hierarchy of being from this decisive perspective. See Ellis Sandoz, “What is a mystic philosopher and why does it matter? Preliminary Reflections.” Paper, Eric Voegelin Society, 27th Annual International Meeting, Seattle, Washington (Sep), 2011, p. 3.

⁷⁹ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fūṭuḥāt*, vol. 2, p. 319.

⁸⁰ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 56. Ibn ‘Arabī writes that this ḥadīth refers to the Prophet who said ‘*God created man in His form or ṣūra*’ (*Futūḥāt*, vol. 1, p. 200). Ibn ‘Arabī mentions this many times in *Futūḥāt*; e.g., vol. 2, p. 391 and p. 170. See: Watt, “Created in His image: a study in Islamic theology”, p. 7.

⁸¹ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fūṭuḥāt*, vol.1, p. 416.

⁸² Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fūṭuḥāt*, vol.1, p. 573.

⁸³ Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabī*, p. 74.

⁸⁴ Chittick, *The Self-disclosure of God*, p. 27.

⁸⁵ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, vol.3, p. 409; Chittick, *The Self-disclosure of God*, p. 27.

The Qur'ān states "... and He taught Adam the names of all things"⁸⁶ which includes all of God's names as well as those of creation. This implies that Adam learned all forms of what is real from God and that the knowing of these forms cannot be disassociated from Adam's existence because God's knowledge is not separate from God's existence.⁸⁷ However, Chittick emphasizes that all people do not hold this 'knowing' equally; hence, mankind is divided into categories reflecting higher and lower levels of this knowledge.

'Afīfī writes that Ibn 'Arabī introduced human beings as *logos* by using concepts such as *Real, Adam, Pole, Spirit* and *Vicegerent*. Moreover, he says Ibn 'Arabī's 'Perfect Man' is the optimal manifestation of God as 'perfect existence'⁸⁸ and that his Principle of Universal Reason is immanent in everything, extraordinarily so in humans who thereby merit the vicegerency of God as His image for the specific purpose of manifesting God's attributions. Henry Corbin calls man *theophanic* or actual shining of God, which radiates via human form in union with God's 'imaginative presence' to mirror divinity. This divine presence resides within man's consciousness as a divinely placed *theophanic* image within humans.⁸⁹

Nasr contends that Ibn 'Arabī formulated the *Logos* as the complete manifestation of God's names with man as prototype of the universe. This is to say, that because of the *Logos*, man includes all extant possibilities within the universe. Thus, macrocosm (the universe) and microcosm (man) are two mirrors reflecting each other even as both reflect the common prototype, which is the universal man as the universal spirit or First Intellect.⁹⁰ Izutsu posits that Ibn 'Arabī depicted two levels of the Perfect Man. The first is as a species or perfect existence in the image of God, constituting a complete abstract and spirit of the universe as microcosm. The second concerns men as unequal individuals with a few deserving the attribution of 'perfection' while most remain at the animal level.⁹¹

This classification of approaches to the interpretation of *Imago Dei* aids our understanding of philosophical, cosmological, theological and

⁸⁶ Qur'ān 2: 31.

⁸⁷ Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī*, p. 75.

⁸⁸ 'Afīfī, *The Mystical Philosophy*, p. 67.

⁸⁹ Corbin, *Alone with the Alone*, p. 275.

⁹⁰ Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, p. 110.

⁹¹ Izutsu, *A Comparative Study of the Key Philosophical*, vol. 2, p. 218.

mystical contexts within which the theory's constructs are embedded. We now attempt to map substantive, functional and relational approaches as found in Ibn 'Arabī's treatises and thereafter discuss the relational approach as a subject of controversy.

4. Substantive, Functional and Relational Approaches to *Imago Dei* Found in Ibn 'Arabī's Perspective

4.1. *Ibn 'Arabī and a General Conception of Imago Dei*⁹²

The Judeo-Christian tradition on *Imago Dei* is based on two attitudes: one being theoretical and interpretative, which relates to the idea that God created all human beings in His image. This concept refers to the creation of Adam and generalizes that Adam's features were bequeathed to all humans. The second attitude relates to the actualization of a complete prototypical image of God, which in Christianity is Christ. Ibn 'Arabī applied this Judeo-Christian paradigm but also introduced the concept of the Perfect Man as an actual prototype of *Imago Dei*. He attempted thereby to depict an image of the Perfect Man as an amalgamation or complete divine 'image', since God is the only perfect being. In doing so, Ibn 'Arabī's anthropological approach differentiates the Perfect Man from animal man.

The Perfect Man had already been explained both in Greek philosophy⁹³ and the Islamic tradition prior to Ibn 'Arabī's dissertation.⁹⁴ Ibn 'Arabī (1946) referred to the completion of his ideas on the Perfect Man in the initial chapter of *Fuṣūṣ* (Chapter 'Adam').⁹⁵ He associates his Perfect Man with Adam's creation but not with all aspects of a com-

⁹² قوله صلى الله عليه والسلام ان الله خلق آدم على صورته باعاده الضمير على الله تعالى. The Prophet (pbh) said 'God created man in His form'. The pronoun 'His', refers to God-be-exalted (*Futūḥāt*, vol. 1, p. 200).

⁹³ Zaehner, *The Teaching of the Magi*, p. 76.

⁹⁴ Badawī, *Muwsū'at*, p. 35.

⁹⁵ The Perfect Man is the most complete creature and possesses all the divine names. Through him, God sees the universe and sees His names. Based on Ibn 'Arabī's theory, all human beings are divided into two groups: Perfect Men and animal men. He features of the Perfect Man include the divine names and attributes such as life, knowledge, free will, power and others. However, he says the most important feature of the Perfect Man is knowledge and that men with other features are not necessarily perfect (*Fuṣūṣ*, pp. 50-61).

plete existence as perfect but rather as having priority over other beings in the knowing of God's importance. Thus, he connects knowing God with the divine form, meaning that to the extent man knows himself as being in the form of God he is complete at some level of existence, implying that knowledge is crucial to actually *being* in the divine form. Consequently, the most important attribution placed within humans is knowledge of God as expressed in several passages of Ibn 'Arabī's texts. In fact, the knowledge of God is knowledge of His names and attributions, and since His names are the things of the universe, knowledge of God implies knowledge of the universe, which includes human beings.⁹⁶

Adam is thus an all-inclusive being or synthesis (*Jam'īya*) of all things. And as God sees Himself as an inclusive being (*kawn jāmi'*),⁹⁷ Adam is thus considered a synthesis of both the image of God and the universe.⁹⁸ Referring to two components (physical and spiritual), God said "I created Adam by my two hands".⁹⁹ Ibn 'Arabī interprets God's hands as two forms, that of God and that of the universe. Adam's vicegerency thus comprises two contrasting forms implying human 'being' is an assembly of opposites and that he is not God's representative without them and furthermore, that he cannot interact with the universe without the form of the universe or that of God.¹⁰⁰

Going a step further, Ibn 'Arabī says these forms are outward and inward, the former being that of the universe and the latter being that of God, the Real (*Ḥaqq*).¹⁰¹ Based on this view, God created the human 'self' in His image (form). Sight and hearing are related to the inner aspect (*bātin*) of the human self.¹⁰² Referring to "being his sight and hearing", 'Arabī explains this is why God did not refer to physical eyes and ears but to hearing and his sight. 'When I have fashioned him (indue proportion) and breathed into him of my spirit, fall ye down in

⁹⁶ Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, vol. 1, p. 565.

⁹⁷ لما شاء الحق سبحانه من حيث أسماؤه الحسنی التي لا يبلغها الاحصاء أن يرى أعيانها و إن شئت قلت أن يرى عينه في كون جامع يحصر الأمر كله، لكونه منتصفاً بالوجود، و يظهره به سرّه اليه: فإن رؤيه الشيء نفسه بنفسه ما هي مثل رؤيته نفسه في أمر آخر يكون له كالمرأة: فإنه يظهر له نفسه في صورة يعطيها المحل المنظور فيه مما لم يكن يظهر له من غير وجود هذا المحل و لا تجليه (فصوص الحکم، 1946، 49)

⁹⁸ Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 48.

⁹⁹ Qur'ān 38: 75.

¹⁰⁰ Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 55.

¹⁰¹ Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 56.

¹⁰² Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 55.

obesance unto him”.¹⁰³ Thus, humans see and hear through the spirit God breathed into him and this spirit is the inner aspect that obtains understanding. In other words, human beings understand via the image of God or divine form. Ibn ‘Arabī reiterates that all creatures are in God’s form according to the respective capacities but the complete form is reserved only for the Perfect Man as God’s vicegerent.¹⁰⁴

God therefore manifests in man in two aspects, outer (*ẓāhir*) and inner (*bāṭin*). Since man has both he can potentially disclose inner and outer manifestations. Hence, both inner divine form and outer divine form¹⁰⁵ comprise the real form of God,¹⁰⁶ which must possess features bestowed by God.

4.2. *The Substantive Approach*

Although Ibn ‘Arabī is known as a mystic he also has a philosophical system, which foundation declares that God is the only existence or ‘Being’. Ibn ‘Arabī’s philosophical paradigm is comparable to the Platonic despite Aristotle’s influence, especially regarding human faculties. Jane Clark says the terms ‘potential’ and ‘fulfillment’ (actualization and completion) began with Aristotle,¹⁰⁷ who established his physics on notions such as movement and the translation of potentiality into actuality. Moving from physics to psychology, Aristotle applied the same terms and models he used in physics and said the soul is the first entelechy or actualized state of potentiality as living organisms.¹⁰⁸

These concepts of Plato and Aristotle greatly affected Judeo-Christian tradition and Islamic thought. However, unlike other Islamic scholars who placed reason and intellect as supreme human faculties, Ibn ‘Arabī criticized this prioritization of reason by claiming that man has a superior faculty or *place* in which he receives God’s revelation (*ta-jallī*). He conceives this vessel as the *heart*, in and through which man receives knowledge and calls the process ‘taste’ (*dhawq*) and ‘unveil-

¹⁰³ Qur’ān 15: 29.

¹⁰⁴ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 55.

¹⁰⁵ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, vol. 2, p. 319.

¹⁰⁶ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 56.

¹⁰⁷ Clark, “Fulfilling our Potential”, p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ Clark, “Fulfilling our Potential”, p. 6.

ing' (*kashf*).¹⁰⁹ Nonetheless, Ibn Arabī validates reason as a faculty bestowed by God. William Chittick (1989) writes that reason is a fundamental power of human 'self', a faculty called '*aql*' in spiritual beings, although such beings are themselves '*aql*'; hence, the term can be translated as 'intellect'. Chittick continues "by its nature reason perceives (*idrāk*), whether through an inherent, intuitive knowledge that needs nothing from outside, or through various instruments such as the five senses and 'reflective consideration' (*naẓar fikrī*)".¹¹⁰ Ibn 'Arabī considered all such faculties instruments of the *heart* and made no distinction between intellect and heart. He stresses that man cannot know God as deity without also knowing creation¹¹¹ and that man applies his faculty of reason to know creation.

This divinely endowed capacity is therefore actualized through the human heart as the image of God and is fundamental to human 'being'.¹¹² Moreover, its actualization happens via the reception of divine knowledge within this locus (the human heart). Knowledge received by the heart flows through intellect, imagination and the senses, inclusive of all human faculties.¹¹³ Ibn 'Arabī wrote:

... After making Adam's clay, God said, 'I have created him by my hands',¹¹⁴ then God put into Adam everything that He put into angels as deposit and said 'I am about to create man from clay',¹¹⁵ and deposits that you (angles) brought, will be from you in him. When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of my spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him'.¹¹⁶

In another book, Ibn 'Arabī writes that God taught Adam all the names and instructed him to teach them to all creatures, including the angels.¹¹⁷ God also placed all the qualities of animals within man

¹⁰⁹ Clark, "Fulfilling our Potential", p. 6.

¹¹⁰ Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, p. 159.

¹¹¹ Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 81.

¹¹² Clark, "Fulfilling our Potential", p. 6.

¹¹³ Clark, "Fulfilling our Potential", p. 3.

¹¹⁴ Qur'ān 38: 75.

¹¹⁵ Qur'ān 38: 71.

¹¹⁶ Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 49.

¹¹⁷ لم يخلق الله تعالى الإنسان عينا، بل خلقه ليكون وحده على صورته، فكل من في العالم جاهل بالكل عالم بالبعث، إلا الإنسان الكامل وحده، فإن الله علمه الأسماء كلها، و آتاه جوامع الكلم، فكملمت صورته، فجمع بين صورة الحق و صورة العالم، فكان برزخا بين الحق و العالم، مرآة منصوبه، يرى الحق صورته في مرآة الإنسان، و يرى الخلق ايضا صورته فيه، فمن حصل هذه المرتبه الكمال الذي لا أكمل منه في الإيمان، و معنى رويه صورة الحق فيه، إطلاق جميع الأسماء الإلهيه عليه.

Ibn 'Arabī, *Al-Insān*, p. 7.

but added a special faculty through which man perceives, knows, sees, hears and lives. Hence, God created man as a perceiving being.¹¹⁸ He explained that God placed knowledge in man to justify and acknowledge God's knowledge. Similarly also, he placed the other attributes and names, including speech, hearing, life, etc.¹¹⁹ Ibn 'Arabī demonstrated that human beings know God because God implanted the faculty of reasoning, understanding and knowledge within them and that men could not know God or His knowledge without these faculties. Accordingly, man has a God-given faculty (power) of recognition via reason and intellect ('*aql*'),¹²⁰ so that man perceives all types of knowledge, even that which is intuitive. Ibn 'Arabī considered this capacity for reason and intellect the 'heart' or 'spirit'.¹²¹ Moreover, the spirit ('*aql*') represents all such knowledge placed by God within man.¹²²

Chittick (1989) claims that man in divine form is both infinite and unique, since all possibilities in divine form are infinite. Therefore, humans can potentially reflect on all possibilities of existence.¹²³ Thus, man in divine form, including all possibilities of existence plus the divine law that orders man to position everything in its rightful position (*adab*), was introduced as God's representative on earth to rule over all other creatures. Referring to the Perfect Man, Ibn 'Arabī argues justifications for all human beings as God's caliphs at differing levels because of the inherent divine form, although the Perfect Man solely actualizes all features as God's optimal representative.

4.3. *The Functional Approach*

Ibn 'Arabī says that if humans did not have all the names and attributes of God they could not be God's vicegerent on earth. In *Fuṣūṣ*

¹¹⁸ Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, vol. 1, p. 124.

¹¹⁹ Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Tadbīrāt*, p. 97.

¹²⁰ وكذلك الجسم الطبيعي أين هو من درجة القرية التي للروح و هو العقل فإنه الموجود الأول و هو المنفوخ و منه في قوله نفخت فيه من روجي. And how such a natural body can have a degree of dignity, which the spirit has, is reason. So he was the first existent into whom Allāh breathed, He said '*I breathed into him of My spirit*' (*Futūḥāt*, 1911, vol. 1, p. 564).

¹²¹ Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, vol. 1, p. 564.

¹²² Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, vol. 1, p. 565.

¹²³ Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, vol. 1, p. 124; Chittick, *The Sufī Path*, p. 275.

he insists that God refers to the dignity of man, whom He created with His two hands:¹²⁴ i.e., the divine form and the form of the universe. He then writes that the vicegerent must be capable of manifesting all requirements as God's servant because man has all qualities of the God-head¹²⁵ (Chittick, 1989) and because God protects his creatures through man.¹²⁶

So it was the divine decree to polish the universe, so Adam was the best polished mirror of the universe. He was the spirit of that form (universe)... This being was then called human being (*insān*) and caliph. As for humanness, it comes from the universality of his organism and his ability to embrace all realities. He is the locus of the seal and thus, the token with which the king places the seal on his treasures.¹²⁷

Thus, being in the form of God means to have the attributes and names of God, which also means to be God's vicegerent on earth. God says "I will create a vicegerent on earth".¹²⁸ In *Fuṣūṣ*, Ibn 'Arabī cites this motif and explains that vicegerency indicates dominion over all creatures. Moreover, God did not give Himself any name unless He taught it to man, implying the same name appears in the universe via man. In this way he interprets the well-known ḥadīth "God created man in His image".¹²⁹ Ibn 'Arabī believes that only a Perfect Man who manifests all the names actualizes the vicegerency of God. He posits that other creatures manifest some names according to their respective capacities, their domains of vicegerency being limited to those names. Hence, every human being is accordingly so disposed, at least in his or her body.¹³⁰

Since the servitude means formlessness or nothingness and vicegerency implies all forms and names and attributions of God, Chittick describes servitude as the embodiment of God's incompara-

¹²⁴ Qur'ān 38: 75.

¹²⁵ Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, p. 175.

¹²⁶ Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 50.

¹²⁷ فاقتضى الامر جلاء مراه العالم، فكان ادم عين جلاء تلك المراه و روح تلك الصوره، ... فسمى هذا المذكور انسانا و خليفه، فاما انسانيته فلمعلوم نشأته و حصره الحقائق كلها. و هو محل النقش و العلامه التي بها يختم (Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 50).

¹²⁸ Qur'ān, 2: 30.

¹²⁹ Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 50.

¹³⁰ Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, vol. 2, p. 272.

bility and vicegerency as God's similarity.¹³¹ At the same time he emphasizes that incomparability logically precedes similarity.¹³²

Ibn 'Arabī writes that God gave authority to man for three reasons: He created man with His two hands; He taught him all the names; and then officially announced that He placed Adam as His vicegerent on earth.¹³³ When Adam taught the names to the angels, they immediately realized that he was God's representative.¹³⁴ Since God bestowed vicegerency on Adam and his children, two aspects of the vicegerency can be classified: (1) comprehensiveness, which Ibn 'Arabī says belongs to the *genus* of man and not just Adam,¹³⁵ meaning this vicegerency includes all human beings; and (2) different levels of authority relating to respective capacities as God's caliphs, ranging from governing their bodies at the lowest level to mastery over all creatures at the highest level.¹³⁶

There is no being more complete than the Perfect Man and those who have not completed this end in life are rational animals, a component of the Perfect Man but nothing more. This estate does not earn the degree of humanity and is more like a dead body for the living human. A rational animal has the form of a human being but is not a true human being. This is because a dead body concretely lacks the entire scope of faculties. Hence, such is the case with a person who has not completed his perfection, which is vicegerency. He is not caliph if he does not possess the divine names via the deserving manner.¹³⁷

¹³¹ Comparing substantive and functional approaches, Chittick writes that the substantive approach precedes the functional. According to the substantive approach, God taught the human being His names or faculties through which man was given divine form. Since divine form includes all forms of creation, and since forms of creation are infinite, human beings are therefore infinite. In fact, they do not have any especial form since they are formless, like God (Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*). Chittick then associates this formlessness with vicegerency, which means to have all forms. He explains that nothingness means being God's servant, implying the abandonment of all human attributes and returning everything positive and good to the rightful owner: God, the Real (Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, p. 170).

¹³² Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, p. 170.

¹³³ Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, vol. 2, p. 441.

¹³⁴ Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, vol. 3, p. 400.

¹³⁵ Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, vol. 1, p. 137.

¹³⁶ Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, vol. 1, p. 645.

¹³⁷ فلا موجود أكمل من الإنسان الكامل و من لم يكمل في هذه الدنيا من الأناسي فهو حيوان ناطق جزء من الصورة لاغير لايلحق بدرجة الإنسان بل نسبته الى الإنسان نسيه جسد الميت الى الإنسان فهو إنسان بالشكل لا بالحقيقة لأن جسد الميت فاقد في نظر العين جميع القوى و كذلك هذا الذي لم يكمل و كماله بالخلافة فلا يكون خليفة إلا من له الأسماء الإلهية بطريق الاستحقاق

(Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, vol. 2, p. 2 and p. 44).

Moreover:

Since God created man in His form, the vicegerent must present himself in that form, otherwise he is not vicegerent. Man is called as caliph by God and possesses the power to govern all creatures.¹³⁸

God therefore sees Himself in the essence of His caliph as the best and most complete form; hence, the caliph cannot exist unless he exists in the power and form of God.¹³⁹

God created man in His form and His form is not but His presence and 'form' here is actually God's presence.¹⁴⁰ To be the image of this form it is therefore necessary for the vicegerent of God to imitate the names of the Being who appointed him vicegerent.¹⁴¹ Hence, God's presence encompasses the imitation of His names, which includes His Essence, Actions and Attributes. Moreover, the presence of His Essence in creatures is solely possible through names that cannot be separated from God's Essence. Therefore, God's presence in the human being as His caliph manifests by having His form, which is the exercise of His actions and attributes by imitating His names. Ibn 'Arabī thus views man as (1) a microcosm based on man's inner nature (*fīṭrah*), including all forms within the universe; and (2) man as possessor of all divine names.¹⁴² These are the two hands of God, whose features provide man's vicegerency.

Von Rad believes God called man to join Him in the imposition of order in nature but Ibn 'Arabī says God called man to manage and control all things as His representative rather than assistant. Hence, man does not join God since man, especially the Perfect Man, has complete authority to govern all things. Some scholars believe that being God's representative is concomitant with being in God's image but that it does not constitute the image. However, Ibn 'Arabī mutually connects *Imago Dei* with vicegerency.¹⁴³ He interprets being 'in the form' of God pre-

¹³⁸ Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, vol. 1, p. 263.

¹³⁹ Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, vol. 1, p. 263.

¹⁴⁰ Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 199.

¹⁴¹ Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Tadbīrāt*, p. 145.

¹⁴² Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, vol. 2, p. 69.

¹⁴³ وهو نائب الحق في أرضه... فأما مقصود السائل فإنه يريد الخلافة التي هي بمعنى النيابة عن الله في خلقه فأقامه بالاسم الظاهر و أعطاه علم الأسماء من حيث ما هي عليه من الخواص التي يكون عنها الانفعالات فيتصرف بها في العالم تصرفها

He is the representative of the Real on God's earth... as for the goal of the questioner; vicegerency means to be God's representative over His creatures. Hence, man represents vicegerency through the outward [manifestation of God's] names. God bestowed knowl-

cisely as ‘being His vicegerent’, thus explaining vicegerency as the manifestation of divine form via imitation, which brings the divine presence as image.¹⁴⁴ Thus, Ibn ‘Arabī’s interpretation of *Imago Dei* and vicegerency became an intimately interwoven singular concept. Moreover, since vicegerency requires responsibility it also demands existential independency in its encounter with the ‘Other’. Thus, Ibn ‘Arabī explains how it is that man encounters God via his divine form.

4.4. *The Relational Approach*

Ibn ‘Arabī based his system of thought on the Oneness of Being and *many*-ness of Being’s manifestation. The functional approach to *Imago Dei* allows that God’s vicegerent requires authority to exercise both power and free will as God-given attributes of human ‘being’ but with a relational contingency that limits both. Ibn ‘Arabī the mystic assumed a friendly, intimate relationship with God and via many statements suggested/implied this relationship was reciprocal. He compared the experience of this rapport—between man and *other* (God)—to a kind of mutually active understanding. Judeo-Christian tradition defines this relationship as ‘being within God’, specifically the association in which God addresses the *other* (man) who is in Him. Thus, God is both caller and called and since God has the capacity of calling the *other*, man also, as God’s image, has the capacity to answer the *other* (God). Man can therefore choose to enter a mutual relationship that was divinely imparted through this ‘call-answer’/‘I-Thou’ linkage. Here the relationship specifically means ‘to understand’ the *other*.

edge of the names on His representative in so far as He included features that invoke reactions. Via these reactions, He therefore intervenes in the universe (*Futūhāt* 1911, vol. 2, p. 68).

¹⁴⁴ In many passages, after mentioning man’s vicegerency Ibn ‘Arabī cites God’s teaching the divine names to man and man’s creation in the divine form (*Futūhāt* 1911, vol. 3, p. 270; vol. 1, p. 645; vol. 3, p. 299). When God ordered Adam to teach the names to the angels and he taught them, they knew man was God’s representative on earth. Since the decree of vicegerency belongs to Adam and his children, one can classify two aspects of this vicegerency: (1) comprehensiveness, which Ibn ‘Arabī says is the genus of man as God’s caliph on earth, not just Adam. This means vicegerency includes all of human beings at various levels of authority. Different degrees of authority relate to various capacities of man as caliph, from governing their bodies (the lowest level), to mastery over all creatures as the Perfect Man (*Futūhāt*, vol. 2, p. 441).

Hence, the image of God's extrapolation implies abilities to both enter into relationships-with and understand *others*.

Brunner believed God created man to have this special relationship and Ibn 'Arabī restated this in symbolic language. Ibn 'Arabī's view holds three concepts: the *mirror*, the *other* and the *Lord (Rabb)*.

In *Fuṣūṣ* he suggests God wanted to see Himself in the mirror (*al-Mir'āt*) as Adam, the *other* outside of Himself, especially since Adam's existence manifested the pristine unity of all divine names.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, God had created the universe but could not see a clear reflection because it was not polished. Since such a blurred existence could not represent Him He therefore created man who incorporates the universe but has the capacity to represent God as a polished 'being'.¹⁴⁶ Izutsu writes that man was able to manifest God because his polished being specifically represents consciousness. He further concluded, "only in the highest 'knower' does the spotless surface of human consciousness reflect the Absolute as it really is".¹⁴⁷ A common mirror is passive and reflects only the image of a thing without interaction; but man, as conscious being, is an active mirror that reflects via interaction and manifests God's attributions, which otherwise remain undisclosed within God's Essence. The process of this manifestation happens via mutual understanding, which occurs via consciousness.

As per Ibn 'Arabī's interpretation, God's desire to be understood commanded communication with the *other* (man) as the goal of creation. The common locus initiates a mutual relationship that is focused on the divine names as medium between man and God, but solely within the context of human 'being'. Hence, this relationship is withheld from all other creatures throughout the universe, which also includes God's names but does possess a comprehensive consciousness. Indeed, Ibn 'Arabī holds that comprehensive consciousness and mutual self-disclosure are necessary for this relationship.

Barth asserts the initial criterion for true encounter requires looking the *other* in the eye,¹⁴⁸ which demands both openness to mutual self-disclosure and recognition of the *other* as a distinct being. Ibn 'Arabī's notion perceives man as seeing himself in front of God exchanging

¹⁴⁵ Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, pp. 48-49.

¹⁴⁶ Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, pp. 49-50.

¹⁴⁷ Izutsu, *A Comparative Study*, vol. 2, p. 213.

¹⁴⁸ Barth and Bromiley, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3, p. 250.

both existence and actualization via the heart as venue for the relationship. Early in *Fuṣūṣ*, Ibn ‘Arabī says God desired to see Himself reflected through an ‘other’ who was not Himself. Therefore, he created the universe with all of His names and provided for it to manifest each name separately. But some names (materials) were a far cry from having any connection with Him.¹⁴⁹ Consequently, God’s desire to see Himself demanded an amalgamated ‘connection’ (disclosure) of all divine names through a living being. This especial creature required two forms, an absolute spiritual aspect (God) and an absolute material aspect.¹⁵⁰

The evidence for Ibn ‘Arabī’s relational interpretation of *Imago Dei* is manifest in prophet Muḥammad. Michel Chodkiewicz writes that, according to Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Futūḥāt*, creation began with scattered dust motes (*al-habā’*) and that the very first thing in *al-habā’* to be endowed with existence was the Muḥammadan Reality (*ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya*), which proceeds from the divine name, *al-Raḥmān* (the Merciful). As such it is not confined because it is illimitable.¹⁵¹ The Muḥammadan Reality therefore serves as locus for the *other* in which God sees Himself in a completely unified form.

Ibn ‘Arabī finalizes his description of *Imago Dei* with a dialogue, demonstrating how man’s consciousness converses with God. He uses a metaphor for the exchange (*hiwār*) between God and the *other* as discourse on the divine names concerning creation.¹⁵² Gerald Elmore (2001) quotes the dialogue and writes that Ibn ‘Arabī attempted to represent God’s desire for communication by using figurative story. The following example shows how relationships with *others* represent the inner features of this aspect of human ‘being’ and has some bearing on God’s effort.

Humans create machines or robots that are rationally designed to perform the functions of men. In spite of agreements and disagreements over AI-based machines, demands for more complicated machines keep increasing. Indeed, “We are insecure in our understanding of ourselves and this insecurity breeds a new preoccupation with the question of who we are. We search for ways to see ourselves. The computer is

¹⁴⁹ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, pp. 48-50.

¹⁵⁰ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 92.

¹⁵¹ Chodkiewicz, *Seal of Saint*, p. 69.

¹⁵² Elmore, “Four Texts of Ibn ‘Arabī”, p. 14.

a new mirror".¹⁵³ These machines therefore inform man of his 'whatness'. Through such interactions man encounters himself as they provide knowledge of his capacities, feelings, emotions, hopes and latent features. Man thus attempts to know himself from outside of himself through a conscious agent that reflects his capabilities and features.

Lordship is another concept Ibn 'Arabī used to describe the God-man relationship. Every creature manifests one or more of the divine names but a Perfect Man actualizes all divine names. Ibn 'Arabī justified the relationship between God's divine names and someone who discloses them in reciprocity. To describe this relationship he employed the concept of a 'Lord' (a divine name) and his servant (a holder of the name). Since there is no conception of a Lord without the concept of a servant, the servant cannot exist without his Lord.¹⁵⁴ Thus, the servant exists permanently because the Lord exists forever.¹⁵⁵ The name (Lord) is within the Essence of God and is not separate from divine Essence. Thus, when the 'Lord' appears in a servant, God appears in him. In another book, *Kashf al-ma'nā 'an sirr asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*, Ibn 'Arabī identifies three levels of the relationship between man and the divine names *ta'alluq* (dependency), *tahaqquq* (actuality), and *takhalluq* (formation).¹⁵⁶

Ibn 'Arabī applied metaphor describes the mutual relationship between Lord and servant as follows:

I venerate my Lord and He venerates me, I help Him, I understand Him, and I create Him while His intention is actualized through me, and I help Him by ac-

¹⁵³ Turkle, *The Second Self*, p. 279.

¹⁵⁴ والإنسان ذو نسبتين كاملتين نسبته يدخل بها الى حضرة الإلهية و نسبة يدخل بها الى الحضرة الكيانية فيقال فيه عبد من حيث أنه مكلف و لم يكن ثم كان العالم و يقال فيه رب من حيث أنه خليفه و من حيث الصورة و من حيث أحسن تقويم فكانه برزخ بين العالم و الحق و جامع لخلق و حق و هو الخط الفاصل بين الحضرة الإلهية و الكونية كالخط الفاصل بين الظل و الشمس و هذه حقيقته فله الكمال المطلق في الحدوث و القدم و ليس له في الحدوث مدخل يتعالى عن ذلك و العالم له الكمال المطلق في الحدوث و ليس في القدم مدخل.

The human 'being' has two complete attitudes, an attitude through which he can enter into the divine presence and one through which he can be connected to existence. In so far as he is connected to existence he is servant; he is *mukallaf* or responsible while he was not there and the universe was. The human 'being' is also said to be lord, in so far as he is caliph and he is form and he is the best creation. So if he is isthmus between the universe and the Real, and is the synthesis of both creatures and the Real, he is mediator between the divine presence and the cosmos, like a line between shadow and sunlight. And this is true; hence there is absolute perfection for him in contingency and eternity, and there is no place higher than this contingency. There is absolute perfection for the universe in its contingency and it has no other path to eternity (Ibn 'Arabī, *Inshā'*, p. 22).

¹⁵⁵ Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 91.

¹⁵⁶ Ibn 'Arabī, *Kashf al-ma'nā*, p. 89.

tualizing His goals, I worship Him and He worships me, He created me and He is known through me.¹⁵⁷

This specific text sparked much scholastic controversy because Ibn ‘Arabī posits a new interpretation for the relationship between man and God as one of two conscious agents who perceive each other through *encountering* and *seeing*.

But moving on, Ibn ‘Arabī referred to other ḥadīth by adding that someone who knows himself knows his God.¹⁵⁸ When man as servant knows his Lord he does not know God in His Essence but knows Him as his Lord, the One Who reveals Himself to His servant’s heart. Ibn ‘Arabī therefore deduces that the Lord man knows through knowing himself is God, Who exists within his belief, i.e., the water takes the color of its cup. In *Inshā’*, he refers to man’s disposition in the universe as a creature, one that is time’s eternal and essential contingent. Ibn ‘Arabī writes that the human ‘being’ fluctuates between ‘Lord’ and ‘servant’¹⁵⁹ and that at times God is known through the human self. For example, when man becomes aware of emotional modalities (anger, satisfaction, etc.) he attributes these to God and sometimes hears from God, Who says, “I will be known only through you”. Here is where man becomes Lord of his Lord because God’s lordliness depends on man’s existence.¹⁶⁰

Imago Dei is therefore considered the actual relationship between God and man, which, according to Ibn ‘Arabī, takes place in the heart of man. Following this consequently, the divine form of human ‘being’ is viewed as God’s manifestation-within and limitation-of man’s heart. Ibn ‘Arabī also writes that since the mystic heart can accept every form of God and since God can manifest in their hearts in infinite forms according to the cosmic capacity of a mystic’s heart, for mystics God is formless and yet takes on all forms because the heart of a mystic encompasses all forms.¹⁶¹ Thus, there exist neither unvarying nor constituted forms of God for all human beings, as explained by Barth. Each person has his or her own form based on his or her belief in God.

فيحمدنى و أحمده و يعبدنى و أعبده ... و أعرفه فأشهده، ... و أنا اساعده ... إنلك الحق أوجدنى فأعلمه ¹⁵⁷ فأوجه. Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 91.

¹⁵⁸ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 50.

¹⁵⁹ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Inshā’*, p. 22.

¹⁶⁰ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, pp. 119-120.

¹⁶¹ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 120.

According to Ibn 'Arabī, when God manifests in various forms He changes so that when He manifests in a human heart, that heart changes its terms of manifestation (*tajallī*) and may be comprehensive or limited. Man sees God in the form that manifests within his heart; hence, he believes in this manifestation of God. Man therefore determines the domain of God in his heart, after which God discloses Himself to man based on that domain. Finally man worships this manifestation of God.

5. Conclusion

We introduced Judeo-Christian and Islamic interpretive approaches to the concept of *Imago Dei* and showed that Ibn 'Arabī's concept was not only similar but also expansive. Because knowledge represents the most significant feature of the human 'being', Ibn 'Arabī insists that God expressly placed knowledge within the human genus by teaching Adam His divine names. But Ibn 'Arabī did not define knowledge as reason, as did traditional Judeo-Christian scholastics such as Augustine. For him, knowledge preeminently includes (i) the divine names of God; (ii) interaction with nature and other creatures; and (iii) the encounter with God. He also posits that man possesses all divine names and attributes, including free will and power. Moreover, Ibn 'Arabī's substantive approach reflects influence from Greek philosophers, especially Plato and Aristotle.

Ibn 'Arabī's texts indicate that man is in the form of God as God's vicegerent. However, unlike his Judeo-Christian counterparts, he does not believe God called man to partnership in the joint-venture management of chaos in nature but rather as God's representative with complete authority over creatures and creation. In other words, God actualizes His affairs in the domain of creation through man.

Ibn 'Arabī's relational approach takes the position of an existential philosopher who interprets the 'divine form' as the grist of a mutual relationship between God and man. As a mystic philosopher, he accepts the human 'being' as an *other-than-God* entity who exercises God's divine attributes *in the presence* of God. Within in Islamic tradition, this component of his schema holds great importance because it reveals a new aspect of man's relationship with God as an Absolute Being and man as a 'servant'. Although familiar to mystics, Ibn 'Arabī reformu-

lates the concept within his philosophical brief and with particular significance for anthropology. Mystics usually begin with God and end with Him, but Ibn ‘Arabī began with the human ‘being’ as the focal point through which God not only knows (sees) Himself but through which man also knows himself as well as the universe. At the same time, and since God is the only ‘being’, this mutual relationship between God and man leads to a better understanding of both God and man from Ibn ‘Arabī’s perspective.

Thus, we see a theory of *Imago Dei* that obtains new meaning regarding man’s self; one that allows us to reposition our identity within a vast relational realm but without contradiction because of the divine form’s infinite attributions, which include all features of the human self. Being human and being God-formed therefore falls within the reciprocity of a relational experience from moment-to-moment and instant-to-instant for all men within the context of *being*, especially that of being in the ‘form of God’, which is a very complicated collection of concepts to explain. Erich Fromm wrote, “If ‘having’ seems to be a relatively simple concept, ‘being’, or the form ‘to be’ is all the more complicated and difficult”.¹⁶²

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¹⁶² Fromm, *To Have or To Be*, p. 67.

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