CHAPTER 8

The Vast Earth

On ma'rifah of the Earth, which was created from the leftover fermented clay of Adam She is called a True Earth. And the story of some of the strange and wondrous things in her.

Sister! No, we recognize you as aunt, sister of our father Adam;

you are our sweet mother, of unrecognized origin.

The children look to you, sister of their father; they fight each other, with sickly purpose - The hadīth is 'Do not fight each other, but be brothers.'

Except a few of the children:

they bend affectionately to you with giant spirits.

Aunt! Tell me, How did he manifest his fraternal secret in you, his descent to the Earth affirmed,

Such that from someone like you there would appear a universe

the Cherisher of humanity would be pleased to trust us with?

You have the state of being the imamah f, and the imam m is your brother, and the led are his likes drawn out from him.

One line in the manuscript

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earn that God, when He created Adam who, who is the first human body brought into being, and He made it a basis for all the human bodies, and there was a leftover of his fermented clay, He created from the leftover the date-palm. She is a sister of Adam and to us she is an aunt. The Law calls her an aunt and likens her to the believer. She has mysteries apart from the rest of the plants.

'And He said: And sway toward you the trunk of the date-palm to let fall on you (Mary) moist fruit. Eat and drink and soothe your eyes (Maryam 19:25-6) - that is, heal your self. This is why Amr bin Maimūn said, "There is nothing better for women than fruit and dates"; then he recited this gracious verse. And from 'Alī, who said Messenger said, "They honor your aunt the date-palm, because she was created from the clay from which Adam was created." From Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr.

After the creation of the date-palm there was left over some clay, as invisible as the measure of a sesame seed, so God stretched out from this leftover a vast expanse of Earth. If the Throne and everything encircling it, and the Footstool and the heavens and the Earths and everything underground, and the Gardens, all of them, and the Fire were placed next to this Vast Earth, all of it would be as a ring tossed in a desert of the Earth. In her are wonders and strange things whose metric cannot be measured and whose situation overwhelms intellects. In every breath, God creates in her worlds orbiting night and day without flagging.

al-anbiyā' 21:20

In this Vast Earth the greatness of God appears, and His measure is magnified upon witnessing her. Many logical impossibilities against which sound intellectual proof arises to declare them impossible actually exist in this Earth. She is a pasture for the eyes of the 'árifūn who recognize God, the ones who know God, and in her they roam. God has created, amidst all her worlds, worlds in our image; when the 'árif sees them, one sees oneself in them. Something like that was alluded to by 'Abd-Allāh bin 'Abbās in what was reported from him in a ḥadith about this Ka'bahthat 'she is one of fourteen Houses,' and that 'in each one of the seven Earths, there is a creation like us, up to there being in them an Ibn 'Abbās just like me.'

See al-Sayyid Maḥmūd al-Alusī al-Baghdādī, Rūḥ al-Maʻnan, commentary on alanʿām 6:38 This report is authenticated by the people of kashf. But let us return to the story of this Earth and her vastness, and the many worlds created in her and from her, and what occurs to the 'árifīn in her, such as brilliant Divine radiances (tajalliyāt). One of the 'árifīn reported an event that I know as an eye-witness. He said: 'One day I came upon in this Earth a gathering called the gathering of kindness. I had never seen a more wondrous gathering before. As I was sitting there, suddenly a Divine flash (tajalli) struck me, but it did not take me out of myself; no, I stayed with myself. This is one of the particularities of this Earth, because flashes that inrush onto the 'árifīn here in this world while they are in this bodily structure take them out of themselves and they vanish from their consciousness, both prophets and friends.

'For everyone to whom that happens - and the higher heavens are like that, and the brilliant Footstool, and the encompassing upper Throne - when the Divine tajall\(^1\) strikes, it takes them out of themselves and leaves them thunderstruck. But this Vast Earth, when the 'arif\(^1\) n having unveiled sight reach her, and a tajall\(^1\) strikes, it does not make them vanish from their consciousness, nor are they snatched from their being. Both sight and speech are combined for you.'

He said, 'Events and mysterious occurrences happened to me in this gathering which I am not able to speak of because of their obscure significances and a lack of common terms, never having seen anything like these sights there before. In her there are gardens and hidden grounds, and animals and minerals, the measure of which only God knows. Everything in her, of all of these, is alive, articulate, like the animation of everything alive, articulate here; but they are not like the things in this world - they remain and do not vanish, and they do not change, nor does her world die.

'This Earth does not accept any human clay bodies, only ones of her world or a world of the spirits among us specifically. When the 'árifūn enter her, they enter her with their spirits, not their bodies, and they leave behind their bodily structure in this transitory world and become detached.

'In this Vast Earth are figures strange in growth, wondrous in origination, standing at the mouths of the rows

'mouths of the rows' is afwah al-sikkah. In Lisān al-'arab, sikkah 'is wider

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than an alley, called that because the houses are there in rows similar to the sikkah of the date-palms. The sikkah is an evenly spaced path; that is why the sikak of the post-stations are so called where messengers on riding animals are posted at even intervals to convey messages.'

overseeing this cosmos which we are in, including the Earth and sky, and the Garden and Fire. When one of us wants to enter this Earth, someone from the 'árifīn of whatever kind - human, jinn, angel, or someone from the Garden, with the prerequisite of having márifah and detaching from one's body - one finds these figures at the mouths of the rows standing, charged to do so. God has put them to this occupation. One of them rushes over to this entrant and places the cloak on you, according to your station, and takes you by the hand and roams with you over this Earth, to settle in her wherever one wills, and you reflect on the designs of God. You do not pass a stone or a tree or a clod of earth or anything wanting to speak with it, except you speak with it as one person speaking to another person. They have different languages. This Earth gives specially to everyone who enters her understanding of the languages of everything in her.

Yūsuf 12:56

'When you have fulfilled your desire and want to return to your place, your friend walks with you until reaching the place from which you entered. He says goodbye and removes this cloak from you with which you had been adorned and departs. You will have acquired entire sciences and data, and you will have increased in knowledge of God, even without seeing for yourself. I have not seen understanding avail itself faster than it avails itself when one has reached this Earth.'

There appeared to me in this land here in this bodily configuration something that supports this statement, and about it, something I saw myself but I did not speak of. An example is what Awhad al-Dīn Ḥāmid bin Abī al-Fakhr al-Kirmānī reported, God give him success, when he said: 'I was serving a master when I was young, and the master became ill and was in the howdah. He was holding his stomach; so when we arrived in Tikrīt,

Ibn al-ʿArabī relates the story again in Chapter 311.

From the other telling, we know they were traveling from Baghdad to Mosul. They were with a rakb (traveling party), coming back from the hajj.

I said to him, "Sidi, let me go and find for you a clutching medicine

(in the other telling, the illness is described as diarrhea and the medicine as 'constricting' for the loosened bowels) from the man from the hospital in Sinjār, the road man." When he saw my fire, he said to me, "Go to him."

He said: 'So I went to the road man. He was seated in his tent with his men standing in front of him and the torch in front of him. He did not know me and I did not know him, but he saw me standing among the crowd and got up to come to me and took my hand and welcomed me. He asked me, "What do you need?" and I related to him the state of the shaykh. He had the medicine procured and gave me some. He came outside with me to help me, and the servant had the torch. I was worried the shaykh would see him and be upset, so I entreated him to return, and he did.

'I came to the shaykh and gave him the medicine and mentioned to him the welcome of the road man to me. The shaykh smiled and said to me: "My son, I was concerned for you when I saw your fire for my sake, so I gave leave to you; but when you walked off, I was afraid that the leader would embarrass you by not receiving you, so I stripped off this structure and entered into the structure of that leader, and I sat in his place. So when you came, I welcomed you and did with you what you saw. Then I returned to my structure. I have no need of this medicine and I will not use it." This man had appeared in the form of another, so how much more so the people of this Vast Earth?

One of the 'árifīn said to me: 'When I entered this Earth I saw in her an earth all of musk attar; if one of us smelled it in this dunyā here, one would be destroyed by the power of its scent spreading out as much as God desires it spread out. I entered in this Earth, an earth of soft red gold - on her trees, all of them, gold and their fruits all of gold. You pluck an apple or some other fruit and you eat it, and you find a pleasure in its eating and its delicate scent and its delightfulness that no words can describe; the Garden's fruits are less than them, so how much more so the fruits of this dunyā! The body and the form and the shape are gold, and the form and the shape are like the form of fruits and their shape with us, but they differ in taste. On the fruit are astonishing colorings and beautiful decorations no one could imagine. You have to see it with your own eyes.

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Note: In Q, 'clutched' (ghalaqa); but by its side, 'folded into' (ṭaba'a) is in the original pen. 'And I saw the immensity of their fruit such that if the fruit were placed between the sky and the Earth, the people on the Earth would be screened from seeing the sky; and if they were placed on the Earth, they would surpass her by double. But when you pluck them, when you want to eat them, with this hand of conventional measure, you spread your hand over them to enjoy them - more delicate than air, your hand folds over them, despite this great size.

'This is something that intellects here declare to be impossible in their view. When Dhū'l-Nūn of Egypt saw them, he articulated what has been related from him about the adduction from the large to the small without the large getting smaller or the small getting larger - or the widening of the narrow or the narrowing of the wide. The great size of the apple according to what I mentioned remains, while the grasp of it with the small hand and the encompassing of it actually happen. The *how* is seen but unknown, known only to God. This is knowledge God is alone in knowing. The period of a single day with us has the count of two years with them. The time periods of this Earth are varied.'

Thus, the observer of the person's bodily configuration in this world would say one day elapsed, while the 'ārif having shed the bodily configuration would experience two years. Consider also the famous story of Jawhārī, who dips in the Nile and experiences in a few moments years of married life, with children, with someone in Baghdad. Ibn al-'Arabī uses this example to answer the 62nd question of Tirmidhī in Chapter 74. The time dilation here is 1:720 (1 day to 360x2 days), so a dreamer being observed sleeping for one minute will have experienced twelve hours in the dream world.

He said: 'I entered in there an Earth of white silver in appearance, full of trees and rivers and various fruit - all of them silver. The bodies of her people were all of silver. In this way, each Earth of hers had trees, fruits, rivers, oceans, and creations of her kind. When they are plucked and eaten, the taste found in them and the scents and flavors are like other foods, except the pleasure cannot be described or related.

'I entered in there an Earth of white camphor. In places there was heat more intense than fire; the human being wades through (and fords) it and does not get burned. And there were places mild

and places very cold. Each Earth of these Earths - which are places on this immense Earth - if the heaven were placed in her, it would be as a ring in an empty desert in comparison with her.

'There was among all her Earths none more beautiful - in my opinion - or more agreeable to my constitution than the saffron Earth. I never saw a world, among the worlds of each Earth, with more expansive people, or any more cheerful to the guest who comes to them. They receive one with a warm welcome and make one part of the family. Among the wonders of their foods is that whatever you eat there, when you cut off a piece of fruit, in the time you cut it off there grows another in its place, closing up the wound. Or you pluck with your hand some of their fruits, and in the time you plucked it, another just like it comes up in its place, such that only a sharp perception would realize it. No damage appears in her at all.

'When you consider her women, you would think that the women living in the Garden with contrast-eyes in comparison with them are like our human women compared with the contrasteyes women in the Garden. And as for intercourse with them, the pleasure is like that pleasure. Her people are the most passionate of creation toward one who comes to them. They have no obligations to worship; rather, they automatically glorify the True and His majesty *exalted*. If they tried to do otherwise, they could not.

'As for their constructions, some of them come about through their intentional thoughts, and some of them come about as we build them, by taking up tools, and good workmanship.

'Then, their oceans do not mix one with another; as He said, He sent the two oceans to meet, between the two a barrier they do not breach. The end of one ocean of gold is seen crashing its waves and al-Raḥmān 55:19-20 touching the adjacent ocean of iron, but nothing of one enters the other. Their waters are lighter than air, in movement and flow. It is so clear that the sea creatures are not hidden from you, nor anything on the bottom over which the ocean flows. If you want to drink from it, you find it as pleasurable as if you had never found a drink before.

'The beings grow in her as other vegetation does, without sexual reproduction; rather, they are created from her soil as insects are created with us. There is no child coming from the fusion of

From 'aynun ḥawra'u, a synecdoche based on the contrast between the whites of the eyes and the black pupils.

their fluids in their intercourse; their intercourse is instead only for pure passion and enjoyment. As for their transports, they become larger or smaller according to what the rider wants. When they travel from one country to another, they travel by land and by sea, and the speed of their progress on the land and the sea is faster than the eyesight gets to the sight.

Although elsewhere it is clear that Ibn al-'Arabī does not think that light travels to the thing sighted (Plato's theory of emission), he does use the linguistic convention of seeing. Here he is saying that the speed of their traveling is faster than the speed of the light of the thing sighted reaching the eyesight. The sentence without the 'emission' convention might read, 'faster than the light catching up to the eyesight'.

The personalities therein are varied in emotions. Some of them are dominated by passions, and some of them are dominated by glorifying the Divine Side. I saw in her colors I did not recognize among the colors of this world, and I saw in her minerals like gold - but they were not gold or brass - and rocks of translucent nacre that pierce the sight with their clarity, including red ruby.

'One of the strangest things there was the perception of colors on lower bodies which were like air. The perception would attach to their colors as it attached to colors that are on solid bodies. And on the gates of their cities were arches of sapphire gemstones, each stone there more than five hundred arm-spans. The upper gate in the air was magnificent, weapons and instruments suspended from it; if the possessions of the Earth were amassed, they would not counterbalance them.

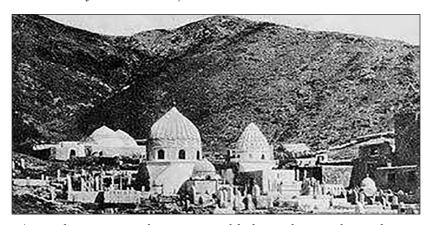
'They have darkness and light - without a sun - the two alternating, and by the alternation of the two they recognize the time. Their darkness does not obscure the sight from perceiving its object of sight, just as light does not do so. They fight one another without anger or enmity, not ruining buildings. When they travel on the ocean and plunge in, the water does not leap at them the way water leaps at us; no, they proceed as the ocean's creatures proceed, until they reach the shore.

'Earthquakes are unleashed on this Earth. If they were unleashed on us, the Earth would turn inside out and whatever was on her would be destroyed.'

And he said: I was one day with a group of them in conversation,

and an intense earthquake came about such that I could see the buildings moving with a movement that the sight could not fix in its vision, due to the rapidity of the movement, to and fro again. We had no information. It was as if we were cut off from the Earth, until the earthquake subsided. When it subsided and the Earth was still, the group took my hand and consoled me about my daughter named Fāṭimah. I said to the group, "I left her healthy, with her mother!" They said, "You are correct, but this Earth never shakes us while someone is with us except that person dies or one of his dies; and this earthquake has killed your daughter, so look after her affairs."

'I sat down with them as long as God willed, and my companion waited for me. When I was ready to leave them, they walked with me to a mouth of the narrows. They took their cloak and I came to my house. I met my friend and he said to me, "Fāṭimah is dying." I went in to her but she had died. I was in the environs of Makkah, so we had her funeral and buried her in Muʻallā. (This is the cemetery where Khadījah was buried.)

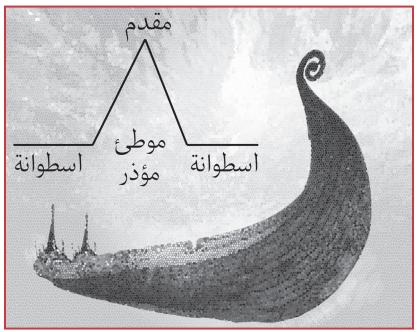


'This is the strangest thing I was told about this Earth. And I saw a Kaʿbah circled by her people, uncovered. She was larger than the House in Makkah, having four pillars. When they circled her, she spoke to them and greeted them, and she gave them knowledge they had not had.

'And I saw in this Earth an ocean of dust (turāb), flowing like water flows; and I saw stones small and large flowing one to another as iron flows toward the magnet. These stones are cleaved together, and one of them cannot be separated from the other naturally

unless a partition separates them, like something that would separate the iron from the magnet; otherwise it is not in its capacity to resist. Thus when they are left alone, by their nature they flow one to another, according to a measure of a particular area. Thus these stones are coalesced together, one to another, and based on them a ship's form is configured.

'I saw there a small transport of twin hulls. When they have consolidated the ship from these stones, they launch her onto the dust ocean and ride. They travel wherever they please to any country. Only, the bottom of the ship is of sand or dust, adhering one to another with a special adhesive. Of all the things I saw, nothing is more wondrous than the coursing of these ships on that ocean. The configured form of the transports is the same; however, they have on the ship's sides where they meet her stern two great pillars taller than the transport by a fathom. The area of the transport at its stern between the two pillars is open, level with the ocean - but, strangely, none of the ocean's sand (raml) enters at all. This is her design here, as you see.



The manuscripts have a line drawing of the ship in the margin.

'And in this Earth are cities called Cities of Light. None of the 'arifin enters except each specially chosen one. It is a city of thirteen cities, and they are built on a single roof. Their buildings are strange in that they populate an area of this Earth and build in the area a small city with great walls. A rider wanting to circle them would travel a journey of thirty years. When they found the cities, they make a treasury for their useful things, beneficial things, and instruments. Over a distance from their sides they erect towers, higher than the towers of the city, encircling it. They extend the construction with stones until it becomes with regard to the city like a roof over a house. They make that roof a plane on which a city greater than the first one they built is constructed. They populate it and take up their abodes; but then it cramps them, so they build on it another city, larger than the one before. They keep increasing their habitations as they ascend with their buildings one story above another, reaching up to thirteen cities.

'Then I was absent from them for a time and came upon them another time, and I found they had added two more cities, one on top of the other.

'They have kings gentle and easy. I stayed among them with a group, one of them being the next in line. He is the successor with the status of the Qayl among the Ḥimyar tribe, and I never saw a king remembering God more than he. The remembrance of God preoccupied him from properly managing his kingdom. I benefited from him and I often sat with him.

'Among them is a 'lord of beneficence'; he is a great king. I never saw among the kings of the Earth one who received more ambassadors sent from kings to him than he. He moved a lot, easily and simply; every guest who came he met with gentleness; but when he was angry, nothing could withstand his anger. God gave him power, as He wished.

'And I saw at their ocean a king with an impenetrable fortress, called Skillful. He rarely sat with whoever sought him and he was not interested in anything unless it concerned *him* - not in what was wanted from him.

'At his side is a great king whose name is Precursor. When a delegation comes to him, he gets up from his audience and puts a smile on his face, and he shows happiness with one's arrival; and he gets for you everything you need from him before you even ask him for anything. I asked him about that and he told me: "I hate

that I should see in the face of the petitioner the humiliation of having to ask from another creature like himself, careful lest one be humbled before any other than God. Not everyone stands with God on the foundation of Unity; in fact, most aspects depend on obvious causes, with the veil over God. So this makes me come forward as you see, as part of welcoming the delegation."

He said: 'And I came upon another king, called Establisher of God's Command, who did not incline to any delegation to him, out of a great appropriation by the True of his heart. He just does not even recognize there is a delegation. No one travels to see him, who travels to see him among the 'árifīn, except so they may observe his condition which he is in. They see him standing with hands folded over his chest, a slave bound, humiliated, a criminal, bowed head toward the place of his feet, not a hair shifting, not a muscle moving, as was said about the people of this condition with regard to their king. A poem:

As if there were a bird on their heads - not a fear of injustice, but a fear of awe.

In a hadith: 'We left with Messenger for the funeral of a man from among the Anṣār, and we ended up at the grave. While they were digging, Messenger was sitting and we were sitting around him, and it was like we had a bird on our heads. He had a stick he was scratching the ground with. He lifted his head and said, "All of you seek protection in God from the punishment of the grave." He said it twice or thrice.

The 'arifun learn from him the condition of introspection.'

He said: 'I saw a king among them called Repeller, with terrifying exterior, but soft inside, intensely jealous, always considering what the sight should be looking at. When he sees someone leaving the path of the True, he returns him to the True.'

He said: 'I stayed with him and benefited from him. I sat with many of their kings. I saw among them wondrous things which come from the greatness of God; if we tried to write it all down, the reader and the listener would be exhausted. So, I have limited myself to this amount of wonders of this Earth; her cities' numbers cannot be counted, and they are more than her towns. And of all her kings, eighteen sultans among them, some I have mentioned and some I have been silent about. Each sultan has manners and legal customs that no other has.'

He said: 'I had an audience one day at their sessions to see their hierarchy. Something I saw was that the king among them was the one who gets the daily sustenance for his flock, however many come. I saw that when the food was set out, beings whose number is uncountable, called Collectors, stand waiting. They are sent from the families of each house. The kitchen guardian provides to both the Apportioner and the Collector, according to one's needs. The Collector takes it and leaves. Then, the one who apportions it for them is a single person, none else; he has as many hands as there are Collectors. They eat in a single moment, each person with his food in his bowl, and they leave. Whatever is left over from that is brought up to the treasury. When they are finished with them, the Apportioner enters the treasury and takes what is left over and goes out with it to the destitute who are at the gate of the king's land. He lays it before them and they eat it. It is like this every day.

Each king has someone handsome in bearing who is at the treasury. They call him the Treasurer. Under his hand is all that king possesses. One of their laws is that after he is authorized, he does not step down.

'And I saw among them a person whose movements amazed me. He was sitting at the king's side, and I was at the right hand of the king. I asked him, "What is the station of this man with all of you?" He smiled and said, "You are shocked?" I said, "Yes." He said, "This is the architect who built for us the abodes and cities. Everything, including the monuments, is his work."

'And I saw in the market of their money changers that no one paid them their coin except one, in the entire city and throughout any of the cities which were under the hand of that king.'

He said: 'And similarly, I saw their conduct concerning every matter: only one took up the matter by himself, and he had an assistant!

'The people of this Earth are the wisest of people about God. Everything that the intellect declares impossible by its reasoning, with us, we find it in this Earth to be something possible, having already occurred.'

Recognitions

al-bagarah 2:20

And God is over everything, the Measuring-Power

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيِ قَدِيرٌ

We learn that the intellects fall short - and in fact God is able to bring together two opposites, and there is an existence of a body in two places, and the effect arising by itself with no cause and its passing away, and the performance of meaning by what is meant.

This is the qiyām al-ma'nan bi'l-ma'nan, which will be explored later. For ma'nan bi'l-shāy', meaning based on the thing, this is the conventional understanding: something is beautiful. But as with the 'eye of the beholder', Ibn al-'Arabī is saying that the sense of awe, and beauty, actually arises in the observer, not in the thing or person observed.

Every hadith and every verse coming to us which the intellect tries to twist away from its literal meaning, we find it to be according to its literal meaning in this Vast Earth, and we find each body which the spirits are visibly fashioning, whether angelic or jinn, as well as every image form human beings see themselves during sleep. Some of the bodies of this Vast Earth have on this Earth special places, and they have vibrating-rays extending toward the entire world, and by each ray there is a guardian. When that guardian inspects one of the spirits having been prepared for one of these images which is before him, he clothes that spirit with that image form, as the image of Dihyah became the clothes for Gabriel.

From Lisān al-ʿarab, Diḥya with an 'i' is Diḥya ibn Khalīfah al-Kalbī, in whose image Gabriel came. He was the most beautiful of people and had the most handsome form of them all.

The reason for this is that with this Earth, the True extended her in the *barzakh*, and He assigned in her a place for these (virtual) bodies which the spirits dress, and the souls are transported to her upon sleeping, and after death; thus we are already part of one of her worlds.

'God takes to Himself the souls when they die, and the ones that are not to die, during their sleep. He holds the ones fixed for death and sends back the others, until a set time. In that surely is a sign for a people who reflect' (al-zumar 39:42). Thus we are already traveling to this other world.

In this Earth there is a fringe that enters into the Garden, called the Market.

There is in the Garden a market, and they will come to it every week. A north wind will waft. Al-Qaḍī said, "The wafting of the Garden is from the north, because it is the wind of rains, according to the 'arab, and it spreads across their faces and their clothes." From Ṣaḥāḥ al-Muslim, with the commentary of al-Nisābūrī.

Yes, I will elucidate for you the allegory of the stretched fringe form which adjoins the world of this Earth. It is that the human being, when you look at a lamp or the Sun or the Moon, and then you interpose the eyelashes (fringes) of the eyelid between you the observer and the illumined body, you see of that illumined body something similar to the rays of light connecting from the lamp to your eyes variously. When these eyelashes are raised in front of you the observer bit by bit, you see these extended rays shrinking back into the illumined body.

Thus the illumined body is an allegory for the assigned places in this Earth for these forms. The observer is like the world. The extension of these rays is like the bodily forms which are conveyed to this world during sleep and after death and inside the Market of the Garden, the ones which the spirits dress. Your intent to see these rays by doing this experiment, by lowering the eyelashes, interposing between you the observer and the illumined body, is an allegory of the preparation (the guardian does). The dispatch of these rays at this moment is the dispatch of the image forms after having been prepared. The shrinking back of the rays to the illumined body after the lifting of the interposing (eyelashes) is the return of the image forms to this Vast Earth upon the expiration of their readiness.

After this there is no more explanation. I have elaborated the discussion of the wonders of this Earth and what is connected to her of mystic sciences in a large book of mine devoted to her.



The eleventh manuscript ends.