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The fully annotated translation of this and other shorter treatises (and chapters from the *Futūhāt*) of Ibn 'Arabî on practical spirituality is planned for a forthcoming short volume entitled *Spiritual Practice and the Spiritual Path: Ibn 'Arabî's Advice for the Spiritual Seeker*.

Introducing Ibn 'Arabî's "*Book of Spiritual Advice*"

One of the misfortunes that can befall a true genius, perhaps most obviously in fields like music or poetry, is that the fame of their most celebrated masterpieces can easily obscure the extraordinary qualities of "lesser" works which—by any other hand—would surely be renowned in their own right. Certainly that has too often been the case with Ibn 'Arabî's Fusûs al-Hikam and his Futūhāt. Among the smaller treasures they have sometimes overshadowed is his remarkable book of spiritual aphorisms, the "Book of Spiritual Advice" (*Kitâb al-Nasâ'ih*),¹ a short treatise whose many extant manuscript copies and profusion of later titles reflects the great practical value placed on it by many generations of Sufi readers. Here we would like to offer a partial selection of some of the most accessible (and easily translateable) sayings from that work, which we hope to publish soon in a complete and more fully annotated version as part of a larger volume bringing together Ibn 'Arabî's shorter works of practical spiritual advice.²

Our own experience in working with earlier versions of those practical works, in the classroom and more intensive workshops, has amply confirmed those distinctive qualities which

¹ See Osman Yahya, Histoire et Classification de l'oeuvre d'Ibn 'Arabî (Damascus, Institut français de Damas, 1964), vol. II, pp. 408-409 (= *Répertoire Général*, no. 532); Yahya notes that it is mentioned (by this title) in the Futūhāt and cited in both of Ibn 'Arabî's well-known lists of his own work. Titles found in other manuscripts include *al-Nasâ'ih al-Qudsîya wa-l-mawâ'iz al-'irfânîya* ("The Sacred Advices and Spiritual Admonitions"); *R. fî ahwâl taqa' li ahl tarîq Allâh* ("Treatise concerning the States Which Befall the People of the Path of God"); and the mnemonic *R. fî mâ lâ yu'awwal 'alayhi*, which is the title given in the (textually problematic) Hyderabad, 1948 edition of Ibn 'Arabî's Rasâ'il which was used in preparing this preliminary translation.

² *Spiritual Practice and the Path: Ibn 'Arabî's Advice for the Seeker*. (This volume will also include selected shorter chapters from the Futūhāt.)

no doubt accounted for the special place of these texts in earlier Islamic tradition: their richness, profundity, mysterious spiritual effectiveness, and their constantly transformed meanings each time one returns to them, whether alone or—far more effectively—in the kind of serious, intimate and probing discussion (*suhba*, in traditional Sufi language) which better reflects the practical context for which they were originally intended. A few words of caution and background explanation should be helpful in approaching these sayings in the proper spirit.

To begin with, the original title of this book is both significant and revealing. *Nasîha*, the “pointed advice” or “straight talk” in question, actually has resonances here—as in the famous canonical hadith Ibn ‘Arabî has in mind whenever he employs that term³--of unsolicited, provocative and dis-illusioning insight, the sort of pointed, properly timed revelation of unconscious “hypocrisy” and self-delusion which is surely one of the primary functions of true spiritual guides in Sufism or any authentic spiritual tradition. And in fact these short sayings are meant to function as a probing mirror of one’s spiritual conscience, examining the authenticity and proper integration of each user’s states and stations.

³ See the following key autobiographical passage from Ibn ‘Arabî’s *R. al-Mubashshirât*, translated in *Some Dreams of Ibn ‘Arabî*, pp. 1-3 in the *Newsletter of the Muhyiddîn Ibn ‘Arabî Society* (Oxford, Autumn, 1993):

“I saw in a dream that I was at the Sacred Shrine in Mecca, and it was as though the Resurrection had already begun. It was as though I was standing immediately in front of my Lord, with my head bowed in silence and fear of His reproaching me because of my negligence (*tafrît*). But He was saying to me: ‘*O My servant, don't be afraid, for I am not asking you to do anything except to admonish [root n-s-h] My servants. So admonish My servants, and I will guide the people (al-nâs) to the straight path.*’ Now when I had seen how rare it was for anyone to enter the Path of God I had become spiritually lazy. And that night I had resolved only to concern myself with my own soul, to forget about all the other people and their condition. But then I had that dream, and the very next morning I sat down among the people and began to explain to them the clear Path and the various evils blocking the Path for each group of them, whether the learned jurists, the ‘poor’ (*al-fuqarâ*) the Sufis or the common people. So every one of them began to oppose me and to try to destroy me, but God helped me to overcome them and protected me with a blessing and lovingmercy from Him. (The Prophet) said: ‘Religion (*al-Dîn*) is admonishment (or “straight advice,” *al-nasîha*), for God, for the leaders of the Muslims, and for the common people among them,’ as is mentioned in Muslim's *Sahîh*.”

Secondly, brevity here is a sign of compression, not of a simple or elementary text. In fact, this work clearly presupposes a relatively advanced state of such active engagement with the inner, spiritual life that each significant “moment” of conscience (or of unconsciousness) is subject to its caustic scrutiny. In this respect, it is important to note that we should not normally speak of a “reader” of a text like this. For in the original Arabic these highly compressed sayings--like other famous *hikam*--are often made up of only a few short, readily memorable phrases, which would normally remain in the deeper memory rather easily after a single reading, only to be suddenly “illuminated” and recalled precisely at that moment when their actual spiritual counterpart is actually encountered (or recalled) in one’s own experience. It is noteworthy that, in practice, even the much more cumbersome English equivalents given here still manage to have something of that (often initially troubling!) practical efficacy.

More prosaically, on a practical linguistic level, Ibn ‘Arabî’s language here presupposes an intimate (and concrete, non-theoretical) acquaintance with the elaborate Sufi technical vocabulary and symbolism of the Path. Like the many other famous illustrations of the *hikam* genre—literally, “words of wisdom”—those technical allusions often require an extensive commentary for the uninitiated modern reader.⁴ In order to avoid such an extensive apparatus of commentary and explanation, we have selected here those sayings (roughly half of the original number) which can be given relatively straightforward English equivalents.

Finally, it is necessary to stress that the significance of the recurrent ending to almost every phrase, “...*can’t be relied upon* [i.e., *totally* or without further scrutiny]” (*lâ yu’awwal ‘alayhi*) should be taken in a strictly “neutral” sense, and *not* primarily as some sort of sheer negation. That is, each of these sayings normally operates as—to adopt a fitting, if uncomfortable, image—a sort of comprehensive spiritual “dental examination.” If a particular

⁴ The most influential Sufi writing of this genre, written down by the Shâdhilî shaykh Ibn ‘Atâ’illâh only a generation after Ibn ‘Arabî’s death, gave rise to hundreds of commentaries: See Victor Danner (transl.), *Ibn ‘Atâ’illâh’s Sûfî Aphorisms* (Leiden, Brill, 1973), which is preferable for serious study of that book; or the more readily available popular version in Ibn ‘Ata Allah, *The Book of Wisdom* (tr. Victor Danner) pp. 1-161, (“Classics of Western Spirituality”, Paulist Press, 1978). In a broader sense, central earlier Arabic examples of this genre in Islamic spirituality would include many of the shorter hadith and *hadîth qudsî* (favored throughout the Sufi tradition), the popular latter parts of ‘Ali’s *Nahj al-Balâgha*, and the ecstatic

touches a raw nerve—and one’s immediate reactions are often the most telling in this regard—then it is simply indicating an area that deserves closer scrutiny. But in many cases, these same sayings will also help to reveal and verify the “real thing.” Indeed, one has really begun to appreciate the meaning and function of this deceptively brief text when, after “practicing” and frequenting it for some time, one begins to perceive with assurance the constantly ongoing, normally indispensable role of spiritual “mistakes” and illusions in the lifelong process of spiritual growth, learning and maturation.⁵

shatahât of al-Hallâj, Bastâmî and other early Sufis. Others may be more familiar with such equivalent genres as *koans* and many Gospel sayings and parables.

⁵ Hence its very apt description in certain manuscripts (see n. 1 above) as the “Treatise concerning the States Which Befall the People of the Path of God.”

Selections From: The Book of Spiritual Advice

In the Name of God the All-Merciful, the Compassionate

-- The state of ecstasy (*wajd*) which occurs as a result of *trying* to achieve ecstasy (*tawâjud*) can't be relied upon. And the "finding/experience" (*wujûd*) which comes from that sort of ecstasy can't be relied upon.

-- The passing thought (*al-khâtir al-thânî*) that comes back a second time, or more, can't be relied upon.

-- A theophany (*al-tajalli*)⁶ in the form of a "controlling spirit" (*dhât rûh mudabbir*) can't be relied upon.

-- The "fresh inspiration" (*al-wârid*) that one has been anticipating can't be relied upon.

-- Being (spiritually) "informed" of what has its equivalent in the world can't be relied upon.

-- The state which leads to your being transparently aware of others within your carnal soul (*nafs*) can't be relied upon....

-- [2] The conversation of the person who experiences an "unveiling" (*al-mukâshif*) with spiritual beings (*rûhânîyât*) is false and not to be relied upon *if* there is no beneficial *exchange* of giving and receiving (of spiritual knowledge, wisdom, etc.).

-- The "unveiling" (experience) of all things recalling/mentioning (*dhikr*) God with the same *dhikr* that you yourself are (performing/experiencing) can't be relied upon.

-- The "fresh inspiration" (*al-wârid*) that results from a change in one's physical constitution (illness, etc.) can't be relied upon.

¹ Printed text ([Cairo?], 1967, Muhammad 'Alî Sabîh and Sons), kindly provided by Michel Chodkiewicz. This 'Table of Contents' and corresponding numbered subdivisions in the translation are entirely the translator's additions, for ease of reference. For ease of reading, this translation omits the honorific Arabic phrases normally following each mention of God, the Prophet, the Companions, etc.

-- Every spiritual knowing—whether by way of “unveiling,” (divine) “casting” (of an illumination into one’s heart), direct encounter, or by allusion to a (spiritual) reality-- which is contrary to a solidly witnessed and transmitted Revelation (*sharī’a mutawâtira*) can’t be relied upon. *Except for the unveiling (experience) of a (particular) form (kashf sûrî): for that (form itself) is sound.* The mistake comes from the (erroneous) interpretation (*ta’wîl*) claimed by the person who is in that experience of unveiling, of the (true) knowing which was actually intended by that form which appeared to them in that unveiling.

-- Every spiritual knowing of a reality for which there is no opposing judgement in the Revelation is sound. But in the contrary case (i.e., if there *is* an opposing revealed judgment), then that “knowing” can’t be relied upon.

-- Performing miracles and experiencing an increase of bounties—while one is doing things contrary (to God’s Will)—can’t be relied upon.

-- Movement (i.e., dancing, trances, etc.) while listening to pleasing music—and the lack of movement when *that* sort of “listening” is lacking—can’t be relied upon.

-- The true spiritual Knower (*al-‘ârîf*) doesn’t rely on listening to God (*al-Haqq*) through the things (of this world).

-- Every work/craft/art (*fann*) that doesn’t bring about (spiritual) knowing can’t be relied upon.

-- Closeness to God in spiritual retreat (*khalwa*) can’t be relied upon, nor can feeling lonely and estranged (from God) out in society (*jalwa*).

-- The entanglement of the carnal soul (*shugl al-nafs*) with the limited beauty (of things) under the pretense of seeing [3] the Beauty of God (*jamâl al-Haqq*) in things can’t be relied upon.

-- [Perceiving] the glorification of God (*ta’zîm al-Haqq*) in (only) certain things can’t be relied upon.

-- Regarding the creatures (or: “people,” *al-khalq*) and everything other than God from a perspective of God’s having been unfair/imperfect/lacking (*naqs fî janâb Allâh*) can’t be relied upon.

-- Looking down upon the ‘ordinary people’ (*al-‘awâmm*) in relation to the (spiritual) ‘elite’, in the sense of comparing this particular individual with that individual—such as (comparing the famous mystic) Hasan al-Basrî with Hasan ibn Hâni’ (the scandalous poet Abû Nuwâs)—can’t be relied upon.

-- (Our) “confidence” (*i’timâd*) in God—which is totally entrusting oneself (to Him: *tawakkul*)—can’t be relied upon *except* in a time of need/distress (*hâja*).

-- Being tranquil in (a situation of) need/distress (supposedly) because of the power of (one’s) knowing can’t be relied upon, as long as it is accompanied by (any trace of) the human-animal condition (*al-basharîya*), because (such apparent tranquility) is a transient, quickly vanishing state.

-- The pretense of seeing God (*al-Haqq*) in the things (of this world)--while (at the same time) ascetically renouncing (*zuhd*) those things--can’t be relied upon. For ascetic renunciation (*zuhd*) is not part of the distinctive rank and condition of the person who has attained that spiritual station (of seeing God in all things).

-- That (delusive mystical) ‘knowing’ (*al-ma’rifa*) which breaks down the distinction between what is permissible for the morally responsible person (*al-mukallif*) to do, and what is *not* permissible, can’t be relied upon.

-- That (delusive mystical) ‘knowing of God’ (*al-ma’rifa bi-llâh*) which is devoid of (knowing of) the divine Names (Attributes) can’t be relied upon. For it is not (actually) knowing at all.

-- The increase in a (subjective emotional) state (*hâl*) [4] which doesn’t produce (spiritual) knowing can’t be relied upon.

-- Experiencing/‘finding’ God (*wujûd Allâh*) in the heart can’t be relied upon. God said: “*What is with you passes away, but what is with God remains* (forever)...” (16:96)

-- “Finding”/experiencing God (*wujûd al-Haqq*) during a compelling emergency (*idtirâr*) can’t be relied upon, because that (urgent situation) is a (passing emotional) state, and (such subjective) states (*al-hâl*) can’t be relied upon. But if one finds God in what is not a state of compelling urgency, then *that* is what one can rely upon. Simply not being in a state of

compelling urgency is not (in itself) satisfying, while finding/experiencing God does contain what is (truly) satisfying.

-- (Acting) without recourse to the (ordinary natural) “secondary causes” (*raf‘ al-asbâb*) [--solely by appealing to God, the ultimate Cause--] is not relied upon by the greatest of the accomplished ones. Indeed (one sign of) their distinctive rank and condition is their stopping at (i.e., not going beyond) the secondary causes. But the spiritual seeker (*al-murîd*) *can’t* rely upon stopping with the secondary causes, even if (religious) knowledge (*‘ilm*) supports him in depending on them.

-- Hunger (and any experiences resulting from it) can’t be relied upon.

-- The ‘fresh inspiration’ (*al-wârid*) that results from a disorder of the bodily constitution can’t be relied upon, even if it is sound, because its soundness is an accidental and exceedingly rare occurrence.

-- “Knowing” the aim of action without actually acting can’t be relied upon.

-- Acting [5] without totally pure devotion (to God) can’t be relied upon.

-- That “knowing” of God (*ma’rifat Allâh*) which is the result of thinking (*fikr*) can’t be relied upon.

-- That “spiritual trust-and-perseverance” (*sabr*) (in the face of affliction) which comes second (i.e., after the initial affliction) can’t be relied upon. For that *sabr* which *can* be relied upon is that which occurs at the first onslaught (of the affliction), since it is a sign of (your) being present with God.

-- Don’t rely on anything that comes to you and you don’t know its (spiritual) source.

-- Repenting of (only) certain sins (but not *all*) can’t be relied upon.

-- Entrusting (oneself to God: *tawakkul*) (only) in *certain* situations can’t be relied upon.

-- Every state—whether it be one of “unveiling” or of knowledge—which gives you (the misimpression) of being safe from God’s cunning ruse (*makr*) can’t be relied upon.

-- Every affection/love (*mahabba*) which doesn’t cause the lover to prefer the intention of the beloved over his own intention can’t be relied upon.

-- Every affection/love (*mahabba*) in which the lover doesn't *take pleasure* in being in conformity (*muwâfaqa*) with the beloved regarding what his carnal self naturally detests can't be relied upon.

-- Every (true) love (*hubb*) which doesn't give rise to *ihsân* toward the beloved in the heart of the lover can't be relied upon.

-- Every love whose proximate cause/occasion (*sabab*) is known and is among those things which may come to an end can't be relied upon.

-- Every love (*hubb*) that doesn't depend upon (God) Himself—which is what they call “being in love with love”—can't be relied [7] upon.

-- Every love that doesn't annihilate yourself from (any selfish concern for) yourself and which doesn't change with the changing of (God's ongoing) theophany (*taghayyur al-tajalli*) can't be relied upon.

-- Every (state of) “presence-with-God” (*hudûr*) that doesn't give rise to transforming love (*hubb*) from God and is not accompanied by reverent awe (*hayba*) in the heart of the person who is so “present” can't be relied upon.

-- Every “repentance” (*tawba*) which is not all-inclusive [i.e., including *all* of one's faults] is really only the abandonment (of certain misdeeds), so it can't be relied upon—and God doesn't accept it as real repentance.

-- Every act of spiritual scrupulousness (*wara'*) which is restricted to certain matters and not to others can't be relied upon.

-- Every act of (spiritual) intention (*irâda*) that has no real effect can't be relied upon.

-- Every (spiritual) “state” that causes you to notice the past and future can't be relied upon.

-- Every (state of) “perseverance/patience” (*sabr*) in the face of affliction which prevents you from calling on God to remove that (affliction) can't be relied upon.

-- Every “faith” in a revealed judgment/command (*hukm mashrû'*) in which you also find in your carnal soul a preference for its contrary can't be relied upon.

-- Every (state of outward) “surrender/submission” (*islâm*) in which is not accompanied by (deep inner) faith-and-confidence (*îmân*) can’t be relied upon.

-- Every (state of) *ihsân* in which you view/see **yourself** “doing good” (*muhsin*)—even if you (felt you) were with your Lord--can’t be relied upon.

-- Every (state of) “relying (on God)” (*tawakkul*) in which you don’t apply (that) judgment to others just as you do with regard yourself can’t be relied upon.

-- Every (state of) “total surrender (to God)” (*taslîm*) into which there enters some fear on your part—even if only at a certain time--can’t be relied upon.

-- Every (state of) “entrusting everything (to God alone)” (*tafwîd*) into which there enters [9] a fear of illness can’t be relied upon.

-- Every special (ascetic) effort (*mujâhada*) which is not ordered by a master (*shaykh*) can’t be relied upon—and likewise with every sort of (supplementary) spiritual discipline (*riyâda*). For (such) disciplines entail harm for the soul, and (such ascetic) efforts entail harm for the body.

-- Every thankfulness (*shukr*) which doesn’t bring with it an increase (in spiritual blessings) can’t be relied upon.

-- Every “absolute certainty” (*yaqîn*) which also brings with it change (in one’s state) can’t be relied upon.

-- Every (state of) “being in accord (with God)” (*tawfiq*) that doesn’t bring with it the corresponding appropriate behavior and attitude (*ta’addub*) can’t be relied upon.

-- Every (state of) “serenity” in which the *heart* is not at peace can’t be relied upon.

-- Every “affliction/hardship” (*balâ’*) that is not a spiritual trial/test (*ibtilâ’*) can’t be relied upon.

-- Every “nearness (to God)/sainthood” (*walâya*) that doesn’t come [from?] prophethood (*nubuwwa*) can’t be relied upon.

-- Every “spiritual knowing” (*ma’rifa*) that is not constantly varying in its forms can’t be relied upon.

- Every “act/state of pure sincerity” (*sidq*) that can be questioned can’t be relied upon.
- Every longing that is quieted by the meeting (with what was longed for) can’t be relied upon.
- Every shame (at wrongdoing) that doesn’t include abandoning (that wrongdoing) can’t be relied upon.
- Every (state of) zeal/fervor that is not inclusive and evenhanded (in its objects), so that your judgment about yourself in that matter is the same as your judgment of others, can’t be relied upon.
- Every (so-called) “zeal/fervor for God’s sake” can’t be relied upon. For (such pretensions) are sheer ignorance, devoid of any spiritual awareness, and not among the attributes of the spiritually accomplished ones: that (fanaticism) is the complete contrary of (truly) “calling (people) to God,” and it includes “bad behavior/attitude” (*sû’ al-adab*) toward God, in a way (such fanatics) are unaware of....
- [11] Every “intuitive perspicacity” (*firâsa*) that doesn’t come [in the words of a famous hadith] from “the light of true faith” can’t be relied upon.
- That scrupulousness (*al-wara’*) which is not inclusive of the inner spiritual states (as well as outward religio-legal actions and prohibitions) can’t be relied upon.
- Ascetic renunciation (*zuhd*) can’t be relied upon.
- The granting (by God of one’s wish) after *asking* (for it) can’t be relied upon.
- “Giving preference to others” (*al-îthâr*) can’t be relied upon, neither in regard to God—since that is not appropriate for Him—nor in regard to people, because it is (simply) fulfilling what has been entrusted (to us).
- (Spiritual) journeying (*safar*) which doesn’t also lead to obtaining something (*zafar*) can’t be relied upon.
- Every longing other than the longing of (true divine) love (*al-hubb*) can’t be relied upon.
- Being “absent” (from this world) in God can’t be relied upon.

-- Spiritual knowing (*ma'rifa*), if it doesn't take on different forms with each of the breaths/instants, can't be relied upon.

-- Intimate friendship (with God: *al-khilla*), if it isn't like Abraham's, can't be relied upon.

-- Loving affection (*al-mahabba*), if it isn't all-inclusive, can't be relied upon.

-- Respectfulness, without actual serving (*al-khidma*) (of the other), can't be relied upon. And serving (another) without (real) respectfulness can't be relied upon.

-- Listening (to God: *al-samâ'*), if it is limited (to specific circumstances or aims), can't be relied upon.

-- The (spiritual) traveler without any provisions shouldn't be followed/imitated.

-- The voyager towards a light from the manifest aspect/Face (of God) can't be relied upon and shouldn't be followed/imitated.

-- A spiritual "place" (*makân*) which is not also a (solid spiritual) station (*makâna*) can't be relied upon.

-- The ecstatic utterances (*shath*: of the "drunken" mystics like al-Hallâj) can't be relied upon.

-- The distinctive signs of proximity (to God), when they are joined with acts of opposition (to His commands: *mukhâlifât*) can't be relied upon, even if (those acts of opposition) are veiled/disguised.

-- The experience/finding of closeness along with the actual reality of distance (from God), and the experience of distance with the actual reality of closeness are deceptions (of Satan: *talbîs*) and can't be relied upon.

-- The good tidings of one's being secure/safe from God's cunning ruse (*makar*) that comes by way of "unveiling" can't be relied upon. For that (sort of informing) is one of those knowings of the (divine) Secret/mystery (*'ulûm al-sirr*) which are the special domain of God.

-- That "realization of unification" (*tawhîd*) which is perceived by intellectual argumentation can't be relied upon.

-- Every conversation/companionship of a disciple (*murîd*) with his shaykh, during which the disciple is in the end (really) conversing with his (own) carnal self for a while, can't be relied upon.

-- Every theophany that doesn't give you the knowledge of a (divine) reality can't be relied upon.

-- Every reality (*haqq*) that says "I am a real essence," but you don't find it to have any influence/effect upon you other than your witnessing it, can't be relied upon.

-- You shouldn't rely upon any "inner/hidden (spiritual reality)" (*bâtin*) which doesn't cause you to witness its outward manifestation (*zâhir*).

-- Every master of a "breath"/moment (with/from God) (*nafas*) who doesn't bring with him release/relief (*tanfîs*) can't be relied upon.

-- Every (spiritual) light which doesn't take away a darkness can't be relied upon.

-- Every "unveiling" that causes you to see the disappearance of things after their existence can't be relied upon.

-- Every spiritual station that doesn't cause you to see God (*al-Haqq*) *creating continuously* can't be relied upon.

-- Every truly divine love (*hubb ilâhî*) that is accompanied by constraint/limitation can't be relied upon.

-- You shouldn't rely upon the spiritual stopping-place (*al-manzil*), if it becomes an obstacle between you and your journeying, for there is no "resting" (*qirâr*) there on either part (either with God or the human being).

-- The state of *sabr* (perseverance in the face of affliction) in which you don't complain to God can't be relied upon.

-- The state of *sabr* in which you *don't* hear [15] God's complaining through His servants to Himself about what they are suffering can't be relied upon.

--- Absolute contentment (*ridâ*) with *everything* that God has decreed can't be relied upon.

-- That “total surrender (to God’s Will)” (*taslîm*) in which the person stops observing (God’s) limits/boundaries (*hudûd*) can’t be relied upon.

-- “Freedom of action” (*tasarruf*) which doesn’t (actually) include all the virtuous character traits (*makârim al-akhlâq*) can’t be relied upon.

-- Don’t rely upon (pretending you somehow know) the goal (of the Path): (for) if you missed out on (the process of) realization/verification (*tahqîq*) at the beginning of your Path, so that He traveled with you on a Path other than the revealed/prescribed one—in that case you won’t recognize the Face/aspect of God (*wajh al-Haqq*) which is in every thing.

-- True love (*hubb*), if it gives you the connection with the being/experience (*wujûd*) of the beloved—when the beloved is *not* present—that is the genuine article; but if it doesn’t (give you that connection), then it can’t be relied upon.

-- For the (true) spiritual knower (*al-‘ârif*), retreat (*khalwa*) isn’t sound/possible, so it can’t be relied upon.

-- Isolating oneself from people because you are seeking peace/security from them can’t be relied upon. What you should be seeking is withdrawing from them because you’re seeking their peace/security *from you!*

-- Temptation (or ‘trial’: *fitna*), if it doesn’t reveal what is rotten/malignant, isn’t really a trial, and it can’t be relied upon.

-- That sorrow (*al-huzn*) which doesn’t accompany the fully human being (*al-insân*) perpetually can’t be relied upon.

-- (Spiritual) traveling (*sulûk*) which does not take place based on real experience (*bi-l-hâl*) can’t be relied upon.

-- The state (*hâl*) which was sought by the servant can’t be relied upon.

-- **[18]** Every special spiritual discipline (*riyâda*) that doesn’t overcome a real difficulty can’t be relied upon, for that is only wearing down the soul.

-- Every “spiritual witnessing” (*shuhûd*) that you lose/can’t find in the future can’t be relied upon.

-- Zeal/fervor with regard to the (passing) states can't be relied upon—whereas it can be relied on where the spiritual *stations* are concerned.

-- Whoever accompanies you with his (moral) intelligence ('*aql*) or for the sake of *your* essence: *that* is the one you should rely upon.

-- Whoever accompanies you because of what they can gain from you can't be relied upon, because they are finished when they have acquired what they wanted from you—and they may even be ungrateful for that kindness when they want to leave, so watch out for them!

-- You *should* rely on whoever accompanies you “in God”, and the distinctive sign of such a person is their “right counsel” (*nasiha*: i.e., constructive criticism) in your regard and their acknowledging the truth of the matter when it is explained to them how they were wrong—so that there is always a benefit for them or for you.

-- [19] Companionship (with someone) lacking actual experience can't be relied upon, because (in that case) you don't know what the ultimate outcome will reveal to you. That takes a comprehensive, broad-based practical intelligence ('*aql wâfir*).

-- Every “state of mindfulness/piety” (*taqwâ*) which doesn't give you a way out of adversities/misfortunes can't be relied upon.

-- Every “state of mindfulness/piety” (*taqwâ*) which *doesn't* bestow on you (release/a way out) in a way you couldn't even imagine, so that you are deceived/disappointed (*makhdû'*), can't be relied upon.

-- If your remembering (God) doesn't result in *your* listening (*samâ'*) to *His* remembering/mentioning you (*dhikr al-Haqq laka*), then don't rely on it!

-- If you stand up for God/for what is right (*al-haqq*) and it doesn't result in God's standing up for you in matters that totally surprise you, then it can't be relied upon.