

An Introduction to Sufism

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Abstract

This article seeks to introduce the reader to one of the world's great spiritual currents—to Sufism or *Tasawwuf*, as it is known in the Muslim world. The article draws primarily from classical or Islamic Sufi orders, and utilizes the terminology familiar to those orders in an effort to provide a generally accepted overview of Sufi metaphysics, practices and methods. It touches intermittently upon Universalist and non-Muslim Sufi orders, which teach various classical Sufi philosophies and practices, but which represent an eclectic synthesis all their own. The article discusses Sufism's complex and controversial origins, along with such pivotal concepts such as Oneness with God, the Unity of Existence and The Perfect Man. Also examined is the Sufi Path to Union, which involves, among other things, the purification of the carnal soul or lower nature, Sufi Gnosis, the Alchemy of the Heart and the Invocation of God's Beautiful Names. An examination of the major way stations or milestones on the path back to the Divine Presence is included.

Sufism and its Origins

Think not that if thou passest away, the world will also be gone: A thousand candles have burned out, yet the circle of Sufis remains.

(Popular Sufi Saying)

Sufism is a vast, multifaceted path of spiritual advancement that can be difficult to define or simplify. There are many traditional Sufi orders, branches or paths (*ṭarīqah*), as well as a number of non-traditional Sufi groups, each with a particular emphasis. Traditional Sufis, who make up the vast majority, mix conventional Islamic observances and disciplines, such as the mandatory call to daily prayer (*ṣalat*), with a broad range of additional spiritual methods and practices. Sufis can be associated with Sunni Islam,¹ Shi'a Islam,² or

other currents of Islam. Non-traditional groups,³ found primarily in the West, require no adherence to Islamic law (*Shariah*) or the Muslim faith, and combine multiple traditions. Even the term *Sufi* (*Tasawwuf*)⁴ has a wide variety of meanings and interpretations based on different sources and traditions. Complicating the issue further is the fact that the inner, oral and initiatic dimensions of Sufism are, especially in the traditional orders, veiled from the uninitiated. Therefore, a full explanation of Sufism in an article such as this will be necessarily incomplete.

Broadly considered, Sufism can be held to be the esoteric or inward dimension of Islam, which began to develop in the 8th century and which “was generated,” as the German professor of Divinity, F.A.D. Tholuck understood, “out of Muhammad's own mysticism.”⁵ If, however, Sufism is considered from an earlier historical and universalist perspective, Sufism's antecedents can be traced back to various religions in the pre-Islamic Middle East, i.e., to the “desert fathers” or mystics of Syria and Egypt, to the Essenes, the ancient Pythagorean orders, and the mystery schools of the Egyptians, Zoroastrians and the Pahlawan⁶ religion in Iran. Therefore, before discussing what Sufism is, or providing an outline of the fundamentals of Sufi doctrine and methods from both traditional and non-traditional perspectives, this article will touch upon the controversy surrounding the origins of Sufism.

About the Author

Donna M. Brown is a long-time student and teacher of esoteric philosophy. Her background includes a career in the arts and election to public office in the District of Columbia. She has served as a Board Member for the *Center for Visionary Leadership* and the *School for Esoteric Studies* where she continues as a commentator. Donna is also involved with a Universalist Sufi Order.

Religious scholars and even Sufis themselves disagree about the origins of Sufism. In the *Mystical Dimension of Islam*,⁷ Annie Marie Schimmel (1922–2003), turns to a well-known parable from Rumi⁸ about a group of blind men who each touch a different part of an elephant to illustrate the difficulty in discussing Sufism and its origins. In the estimation of E. H. Palmer (1840–1882), the Mid-East/Arab specialist and explorer who helped unveil the Sufi journey to God, Sufism was a kind of “theosophical mysticism,” and a “development of the primeval religion of the Aryan race.”⁹ The Dutch scholar Reinhart Dozy (1820–1883), in his *Essai sur l’histoire de l’Islamisme*, argued for the Indo-European origins of Sufism, which he reasoned came from Indian and Persian sources.¹⁰

Helena Blavatsky (1831–1891) seems to have supported these views and maintained that Sufism’s linguistic roots relate to Sophia or Wisdom. In *The Secret Doctrine* she links Sufism to the now lost Chaldean Religion, which had been translated into Arabic and preserved by some Sufi initiates.¹¹ She goes on to describe Sufism as:

A mystical sect in Persia something like the Vedantins; though very strong in numbers, none but very intelligent men join it. They claim, and very justly, the possession of the esoteric philosophy and doctrine of true Mohammedanism. The Suffi (or Sofi) doctrine is a good deal in touch with Theosophy, inasmuch as it preaches one universal creed, and outward respect and tolerance for every popular exoteric faith. It is also in touch with Masonry. The Suffis have four degrees and four stages of initiation: 1st, probationary, with a strict outward observance of Mussulman rites, the hidden meaning of each ceremony and dogma being explained to the candidate; 2nd, metaphysical training; 3rd, the “Wisdom” degree, when the candidate is initiated into the innermost nature of things; and 4th final Truth, when the Adept attains divine powers, and complete union with the One Universal Deity in ecstasy or Samâdhi.¹²

Hazrat Inayat Khan (1882-1927), founder of the Sufi Order International (now the *Sufi Or-*

der Ināyati), a non-Muslim Sufi movement in the West, emphasized the multi-religious roots of Sufism and sought to bring a message of spiritual liberation to the West based on religious unity and the wisdom of all faiths.¹³ He maintained that: “Every age of the world has seen awakened souls, and as it is impossible to limit wisdom to any one period or place, so it is impossible to date the origin of Sufism.”¹⁴ In Hazrat Khan’s distinctively western version of Sufism, the barriers of race, creed or religion are eliminated, for Khan saw Sufism not as a religion, but more exactly as an experience and “a way of life that enhances and fulfills every religion.” “The Sufi, he said, “sees the truth in every religion.”¹⁵

Another influential popularizer of Sufism in the West was Idries Shah (1924 –1996). Shah, who claimed to be an emissary for the Central Asian Sufi tradition where Gurdjieff (1886 – 1949) allegedly obtained his teachings, said that: “esoteric wisdom is independent of ‘mere religion’ and is often disguised in an ‘exoteric religious’ form.”¹⁶ For Shah there was only one truth, and he concluded that Sufism must be independent of Islam. He presented Sufism as a universal form of wisdom, emphasized its adaptive and dynamic nature and framed his teachings in Western psychological terms.

Others, such as Mehmet Sabeheddin, a contemporary researcher, writer and spiritual teacher who focuses on the fluid and multi-faceted dimensions of Islam and Sufism says:

No one knows who the first Sufi was. Sufism is not a religion, and ultimately exists above and beyond all labels. It is said Sufism is older than Islam and that it really had no beginning, being just the latest flowering—taking on the form of Islam—of the ancient secret tradition stretching back to Adam.

A Sufi tradition relates how “the seeds of Sufism were sown in the time of Adam, fermented in the time of Noah, budded in the time of Abram, and began to develop in the time of Jesus, and produced pure wine in the time of Muhammad.” The Prophet Muhammad and Jesus are revered as the greatest Sufis. Sufi Masters like Ibn ‘Arabî

and Suhrawardi studied Plato and Pythagoras declaring the Pagan sages to be Sufis.¹⁷

Similar beliefs are even held by a few traditional Sufi orders who perceived Sufism as “a phenomena that has accompanied Humanity since the advent of self-consciousness.”¹⁸ Such an interpretation, however, fully embraces Islam’s unmistakable contributions to Sufi thought and practice.

Numerous Western Oriental specialists have also claimed that Sufism is an innovation that has its roots in Hinduism, Buddhism, Neo-Platonism, or Christianity, but is not authentically Islamic. It is of interest to note here that many Muslims, especially the ultra conservative “Salafi” movement within Sunni Islam, claim that Sufism is “a Trojan horse for unwarranted innovations that owe their origins to non-Muslim civilizations”¹⁹ such as those mentioned above. While the aforementioned pre-Islamic influences have been well documented²⁰ and will not be discussed in detail here, it must be remembered that Sufism, while not explicitly mentioned in the Qur’ān, is co-extensive with Islam. Titus Burckhardt (1908–1984), an expert on Islam, who dedicated his life to the study and exposition of the *philosophia perennis*, holds that Sufi masters only borrowed from pre-Islamic inheritances “provided they were adequate for expressing those truths which had to be made accessible to the intellectually gifted men of their age and ideas which were already implicit in strict Sufi symbolism in a succinct form.”²¹ He goes on to say that most of what shapes the Sufi spiritual method is drawn from the Qur’ān and the Prophet’s teachings. Indeed, the majority of the worlds Sufis are Muslims who believe that Sufism is largely inoperative without its relationship to Islam. As such, they would be hard pressed to see Sufism as anything other than the inner dimension of Islam that had its beginnings in the period following the life of the Prophet Muhammad.

In a commentary on the Mevlevi Sufi Way,²² the Rumi scholar, Ibrahim Gamard states that:

To use the word “sufism” to mean a universal spirituality that pre-dates Islam is to rob the term of its meaning and to make it

equivalent to the word “mysticism.” Mysticism can be defined as experiential or intuitive understanding of spiritual realities beyond intellectual understanding. Therefore, mysticism can take religious forms (spiritual experiences of feeling close to God) or non-religious forms (such as spiritual experiences involving nature or the cosmos). The mysticism of Islam is a distinct form of religious mysticism that is called “*tasawwuf*” [The inward or esoteric dimension of Islam that is both knowledge and action.] in Arabic and a Muslim mystic is called a “*sufi*” (author’s brackets).²³

In an article discussing arguments for and against the non-Islamic origins of Sufism,²⁴ Mollie Magill traces the word “Sufi” (commonly meant to apply to those who wear “wool”), to the Arabic *Soofa*, meaning “purity of heart and the shunning of material wealth in reaction to the Islamic conquests.”²⁵ Magill also notes that the word “Sufi” can be equated with *Ahl al-suffā*, translated as “people of the bench,” and goes on to note that the “term was given to the poor companions of the prophet; devoted individuals.”²⁶ René Guénon (Sheikh Abdel Wahed Yahya), one of the great metaphysical luminaries who laid the groundwork for the Perennialist School of thought in the twentieth century, concluded that the term was a purely symbolic name, a sort of “cipher” whose true meaning is to be found in the gematrical value of the letters that form the word “sufi,” which has the same numerical value as the Arabic word *al-Hikmatu’l-ilahiya* or Divine Wisdom.²⁷

Kabir Helminski, a Sheikh of the Mevlevi Order of Sufis that traces its inspiration to Jelaluddin Rumi, supports the assessment that Sufism is at heart Islamic mysticism, and that its serious study necessitates an appreciation of the message of the Qur’ān and its messenger. Louis Massignon (1883–1952), an influential Catholic scholar of Islam, also states that: “It is from the Qur’an, constantly recited, meditated, and experienced, that Sufism proceeded, in its origin and its development.”²⁸

Acclaimed scholars and Sufi’s such as Burckhardt, Henry Corbin (1903–1978), Martin Lings (1909–2005), and Seeyed Hossein Nasr

(1933~), hold fast to the originality and authenticity of Sufism as the central, most powerful current of the Islamic Revelation. As such, Sufism is perceived as an “an interiorization and intensification of Islam,”²⁹ and as “Islam’s life-giving core.”³⁰ This argument is bolstered by pointing to Sufism’s inherently Islamic philosophical foundations, to its essential Qur’ānic support, and to the many Sufi scholars, systematizers, poets and mystics such as Rabbi’ā al-Adawiya (713–801), Al-Junayd al Baghdadi (830–910 AD), Abu Sulayman al-Darani (d. 830), Al-Ghazali (1058- 1111), and Ibn al-’Arabî (1165–1240), to name only a few, whose powerful influence shaped Sufism. The aforementioned 20th century experts, Burckhardt, Nasr, et al., along with a growing number of modern scholars, insist that to deny Sufism’s relationship with Islam is to deprive it of its originality as well as its impetus.³¹ As Burckhardt maintains:

The decisive argument in favor of the Muhammadan origin of Sufism lies ... in Sufism itself. If Sufic wisdom came from a source outside of Islam, those who aspire to that wisdom—which is assuredly neither bookish or purely mental in its nature—could not rely on the symbolism of the Qur’ān for realizing that wisdom ever afresh, whereas in fact everything that forms an integral part of the spiritual method of Sufism is constantly and of necessity drawn out of the Qur’ān and from the teachings of the Prophet.³²

Furthermore, traditional Islamic and Sufi scholars point to the fact that Sufism has been passed down from certain Spiritual Masters to their disciples in an unbroken chain (*silsilah*) leading back to the Prophet himself. This chain of transmission is thought to have taken place when Muhammad’s closest Companions pledged to wage the “Greater Jihad” against their own inner enemies or lower self. Since that time, a continuous chain of masters and disciples has handed down the esoteric ritual and teachings lying at the heart of the Quranic Revelation from one generation to another. However, in the non-Muslim orders the chain of transmission and authority is believed to lead back to the founder of their particular or-

der and/or to a combination of other and perhaps older sources. Nevertheless, as Hazrat Inayat Khan explains, the *silsilah* is of pivotal significance in the work of virtually every genuine Sufi order where it serves as the primary conduit of divine influx and the *Baraka* (the stream of blessings from Allah), which links the *murshids* (spiritual guides) of a particular order with “the combined spiritual power of their spiritual antecedents and with the unseen transformative forces that transpire behind the outward manifestation of the Chain.”³³

In concluding this part of the discussion, it should be noted that this article does not wish to contribute to the controversy surrounding Sufism’s origins, nor does it attempt to settle the question as to its Islamic legitimacy. The author believes that it is important to acknowledge the universality or perennial nature of revelation and the idea that “Truth is One” in essence, albeit clothed in a diversity of forms, while recognizing the fact that Sufism has been and continues to be deeply and forcefully inspired by Islam.

What Is Sufism?

See but One, say but One, know but One,
In this are summed up the roots and branches
of faith.

(Mahmud Shabistari)³⁴

Sufism or *Tasawwuf*, like all esoteric teachings, is concerned with the interior or inward journey toward God. In general terms, Sufism, which is described as “wisdom uncreate,” can be defined as the actualization of divine ethics or the attributes of God and as the path to the “center of the cosmic wheel.” More evocatively, and to paraphrase Martin Lings (1909 -2005), Sufism is a Revelation that flows from the great Ocean of Infinity to the shores of our finite world.³⁵ Sufis are, by definition, concerned with “the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven,” the path back to the Source³⁶ and the inner spiritual states as opposed to formal disciplines, such as exoteric knowledge, theology or the law. Most Sufi’s,³⁷ however, do not dismiss Islamic disciplines, rather they employ them as a foundation from

which they can ultimately free themselves from the world of duality and the shackles of the concrete mind.³⁸

Sufism can also be defined as a “science of the soul,” or as an initiatic path of self-purification and self-realization, which teaches that Allah or the Supreme Identity can be known and experienced directly. The ultimate goal for Sufis is *tahwīd* (the experience of oneness), the recovery of the lost state of original unity with God. S. H. Nasr, one of the great contemporary intellectual figures in Islamic history, explains in an essay on “Sufism and the Integration of Man,” that:

...The whole program of Sufism...is to free man from the prison of multiplicity, to cure him from hypocrisy and make him whole; for it is only in being whole that man can become holy.³⁹

Such a program, he maintains, involves the integration of the body, mind and spirit, for “just as God is one, so man must become whole in order to become one.”⁴⁰ Hence, Sufism addresses the structure of reality and man’s place in it. Sufi doctrine consists of metaphysics, cosmology, psychology and eschatology. It combines both doctrine and method into an integral spiritual tradition, that includes invocative and various meditative or contemplative practices.⁴¹ But, the goal of integration and union or oneness does not imply a disconnection or withdrawal from the outer world; indeed one of the principle aims for all Sufis is to make of the daily life a profound spiritual practice. *Tahwīd* or union involves regaining the state of human perfection that was possessed before the Fall. Such a person has actualized all his divine potential and become the “Perfect Man” (*Al Insān al-Kāmil*) and now serves as the perfect mirror in which God’s qualities and attributes are reflected.

Sufis are also seekers after the Truth (*al-Haqq*) who strive to selflessly experience and actualize Truth by the means of love—or an inner alchemy of the heart—based on inspiration, a successive process of unveiling and a devotion to the Real.

The core substance of Sufism might be described as: 1) the quest to understand the na-

ture of humanity, and realize the Unity of Being (*Wahdat al-Wujūd*) i.e., the belief that all existence is One, a manifestation of the Divine Reality from which all reality originates and to which it will return; and 2) an effort to facilitate recognition of the presence of love and wisdom in the world. Hence, the essential features of Sufism are the inward or direct experience of unity with the Divine (*Tahwīd*), and its focus on the love and knowledge, or heart and mind. This process commences with the struggle against the ego and the *nafs* or passions of the carnal soul.

But before discussing the various methods for experiencing unity with the God or Allah, it is necessary to examine three pivotal Sufi concepts: *Al-Insān al-Kāmal* (the Perfect Man), *Tahwīd* (union) and *Wahdat al-Wujūd* (the Unity of Being) in greater detail.

Fundamental Concepts

Tahwīd - Oneness

Knowledge of the absolute Oneness of God (tawhid) is the goal; it is the most glorious of the sciences and the most illustrious of the religious obligations.

(Sayyidna Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al-Naysaburi,⁴²)

One of the defining themes of Sufism and the Qurānic Revelation, from both a traditionalist and Universalist perspective, is divine Unity, as expressed in the *shahāda* or testimony of faith, *Lā ilāha illa’ Llāh* (There is no God but God).⁴³ The testimony of faith holds that God (Allah, literally *Al-Ilāh* “the God”) is One (*Al-’Aḥad*) and Single (*Al-Wāḥid*).

The concept of God’s Oneness is also expressed by the Arabic word *tahwīd* (also transliterated as *tawheed*, *tauḥid* or *tauheed*), which emphasizes the unity and uniqueness of God as creator and sustainer of the universe.⁴⁴ Its appearance and use in the Qur’ān gives it special credence, especially among strict, legalist interpreters of Islam who hold that God exists as a distinct entity, separated and existing independently of the world. Such sober interpretations of *tahwīd* do not accept that there are any intermediaries in the worship of God.

Most classical Sufi's, however, hold that *tawhīd* has several meanings. As Dr. Steven Masood explains: *tawhīd* means: 1) belief in the Unity of the One Being; 2) discipline of the subjective and objective life in the light of that belief; 3) the experience of union and fusion with the Divine; and 4) a theosophical or philosophical conception of reality in the light of the true mystical experience.⁴⁵ He notes further that:

The first two senses are accepted by all Muslims. However, the third and fourth senses are the particular teaching of Sufi Islam. For them Tawhid in the third sense is to have the perception of the One Being through mystical experience. It is the highest experience of the unity of God. In the fourth sense, one loses his own identity and becomes one with the One being.⁴⁶

In discussing the Sufi conception of God Hazrat Inayat Khan explains that to a Sufi,

God and man are not two; the Sufi does not consider God separate from himself. The Sufi's God is not in Heaven alone; He is everywhere. He sees God in the unseen and in the seen; he recognizes God both within and without. Therefore there is no name which is not the Name of God, and there is no form which is not the form of God, to the eyes of the Sufi.⁴⁷

Sufi's seek to explicitly associate themselves with God—not to become Gods, but to unite completely their individual consciousness and identity with God, whose existence is both transcendent and immanent and therefore pervasive and manifest throughout all creation.

S. H. Nasr, who comes from a long line of Sufi's, when speaking of the principle reality of the One God, says in *The Heart of Islam* that

...His oneness (*tawhīd*) is "the axis around which all that is Islamic revolves. Allah is beyond all duality and relationality, beyond differences of gender and of all qualities that distinguish beings from each other in the world."⁴⁸

Allah or God is neither male nor female, for at the highest level, the One is both Absolute and Infinite. Yet, in Sufism and Islam, the Divine Essence is seen as Infinite and is usually re-

ferred to in feminine form and often spoken of as "the Beloved." The feminine aspect of God, typified by such qualities as Mercy, Beauty and Wisdom, is seen as the non-creating, or metacosmic aspect. God as the Absolute, the Creator and the Sustainer, is addressed in the masculine form. Both masculine and feminine qualities are found in the nature of the Divine, which transcends the duality between them.⁴⁹

Elsewhere, Nasr says that while creation or manifestation expresses first as polarization and then as a multiplicity, he notes that: "in relation to Divine Unity, multiplicity is veil."⁵⁰ He goes on to say that Divine Substance embraces "all the reverberations of the One in the mirror of the many which we call the world, or in fact the many worlds which at once hide and manifest the One."⁵¹

The Creator, in the Sufi view, is not removed from creation; it is just that there is one presence everywhere, which expresses as diversity within the unity. This idea has been expressed in the following Sufi poem from the Persian Sufi master, Fakhruddin Iraqi (1239–1289).

Each image painted on the canvas of
Existence is the form of the Artist himself
Eternal Ocean spews forth-new waves.
Waves we call them; but there is only the
sea.⁵²

Wahdat al-Wujūd - The Transcendent Unity of Existence

Another doctrine that focuses on unity and the idea that God and His creation are One is *Wahdat al-Wujūd*. This philosophical doctrine is highly complex and controversial—controversial because it would seem to imply that God is both one and many. Although its advocates see it as a restatement of *tawhīd* in the advanced language and understanding of later Islamic history, some orthodox interpreters of Sufism surmise that *Wahdat al-Wujūd* denies the sovereign will of God and tends toward pantheism (all essences and manifestations are divine). They either reject the doctrine as heresy outright, or else dismiss it as misleading.

But from a Sufi perspective, the concept of *Wahdat al-Wujūd* is thought to be more or less

synonymous with the highest expression of *tawhīd* or the union,⁵³ which is only attainable by those who have achieved a lasting state of spiritual annihilation or *fana*. Sufi doctrine conceives the world as an emanation of Deity. In “so far as anything exists at all, it exists as a ray of His light.”⁵⁴

As the legendary Iranian Sufi Master Mansur Al Halaji (858–922), maintained, *Wahdat al-Wujūd* does not imply that “everything is God,” but rather “God is everything and in everything,” while also “being beyond everything.” Such statements, like those of Al Halaji, Ibn ‘Arabi and others are analogous to the Hindu Advaitic doctrine, which states that the universe is one essential reality, and that all facets and aspects of the universe are ultimately an expression or appearance of that one reality.

While the two terms each imply the idea of Non-Duality and Unity or Oneness, there are some distinctions between them. *Tawhīd* represents the process of making one or the realization of God’s unity and uniqueness. There are however, various levels and degrees of union or *tahwīd*. These include such things as the realization of God’s attributes, his acts and his will. *Wahdat al-Wujūd* is *tawhīd* realized on a universal level. It implies a level of conscious identification with God or Allah and can be understood as the permanent realization of all the levels or degrees of *tahwīd*. Such a station is only achieved by the greatest of saints.

A famous Sufi mystic and poet, Ibn al-Fariīd (1181–1235) who wrote about the lover’s longing for the Beloved describes the concept of the Unity of Being thus;

She (the Supreme Being) appeared in phenomena. They supposed that this phenomenon was other than She, while it was she who displayed herself therein.

There is naught but Thee in the whole world. Everything in the universe is Thy Face that we see. In which every direction I turn my eyes, there are Thou. Without Thee, there is nothing that there is.⁵⁵

This same idea of the all-pervasive existence of God (that God and his creation are one) in

creation is expressed in the following poem from Rumi:

I am dust particles in sunlight
I am the round sun.
To the bits of dust I say, Stay.
To the sun, Keep moving.
I am morning mist,
And the breathing of evening.
I am wind in the top of a grove,
And surf on the cliff.
Mast, rudder, helmsman, and keel,
I am also the coral reef they founder on.
I am a tree with a trained parrot in its
branches. Silence, thought, and voice.
The musical air coming through a flute,
A spark of a stone, a flickering In metal.
Both candle, And the moth crazy around it.
Rose, and the nightingale Lost in the fragrance.
I am all orders of being, the circling galaxy,
The evolutionary intelligence, the lift,
And what isn’t. You who know
Jelaluddin, You the one
In all, say who
I am. Say I
am You.⁵⁶

If *tawhīd* and *Wahdat al-Wujūd* are considered in theoretical terms or as a doctrine of faith, both concepts are identical to that which is espoused in the *Bhagavad-gita*, where Krishna, in speaking to Arjuna, reflects this view. “Having pervaded the universe with Myself, I remain.”⁵⁷

And elsewhere, where Krishna explains:

There is nothing else besides me, Arjuna.
Like clusters of yarn-beads by knots on a thread, all this is threaded on me.

Arjuna, I am sapidity in water, light of moon and sun, the sacred syllable OM in all Vedas, sound in ether and manliness in men.

I am the subtle principle of odour in the earth, brilliance in fire, life in all beings and the austerity in me of askesis.

Arjuna, know me the eternal seed of all beings. I am the intelligence of the intelligent and the glory of the glorious.⁵⁸

Al-Insān al-Kāmil - The Universal Man

One of the other significant concepts in Islamic theology and Sufism is *Al-Insān al-Kāmil* (The Perfect or Universal Man) The term was applied as an honorific title to describe the Prophet Muhammad, but it is also used to refer to those who have been totally transformed, achieved perfection or faultlessness and become a living manifestation of God or Allah.

The notion of the perfect man in Sufism is complex, due in large part to a number of different “philosophies of perfection.” But the doctrine is based on the premise that the primordial, archetypal man embodies within himself all of the divine attributes of the One Being (as expressed in His 99 Names), but has fallen from his perfect state and now has a false sense of self, which separates him from his Universal Self. Sufis believe that it separation from God that is the cause of all suffering, and that the ancient longing to return to the Essence is present but veiled in every human soul.⁵⁹ Man’s purpose in life is to regain this lost unity by reabsorbing himself so completely into the One Being’s essence that no distinction of consciousness exists between them. He then becomes the one “who has fully realized his essential oneness with the Divine Being in whose likeness he is made.”⁶⁰ Self-revelation of the One Being or God occurs thorough a series of stages and subjective experiences until complete annihilation (*fana*) takes place and the individual becomes *Al-Insan al-Kamil*, or the “Perfect Man.”⁶¹

The perfect or Universal Man refers to one who has realized Union or the Supreme Identity. As such, he has unified the spiritual or metaphysical and physical realms of existence in his own being. Such a one serves as an eminent spiritual meditator, a prophet, a Mahdi or *Qutb* (axis, pivot or pole) and is head of the saintly hierarchy. The *Qutb* or perfect man has a connection to God and passes on spiritual light and wisdom to the world. There are two different conceptions of the Perfect Man, the pole or *Qutb*: a temporal and a cosmic *Qutb*. The temporal *Qutb* resides on earth and is an active agent in the world, but the cosmic “pole” is manifested in the temporal “pole” as a virtue. The temporal *Qutb* is the leader or

guide for the earth-bound saints.⁶² The cosmic *Qutb*, derives his power from Allah or the One, and serves as the “Axis of the Universe” on a higher plane.⁶³

Although only a rare group of individuals can attain the level of the Perfect Man,⁶⁴ Sufis believe that such an attainment is inherently possible for every human being. Therefore, *Al-Insan al-Kamil* is the ideal set before all Sufis, the prototypical human being who serves as a perfect mirror reflecting the qualities and attributes of Divinity. As such, the concept of the Universal and Perfect Man plays an essential role in guiding Sufi’s toward their own perfection and service as a light unto the world.

The Path to Union

Tazkiyat an-nafs - Purification and Augmentation of the Self

He travels with whoever looks for Him,
and having taken the seeker by the hand, He
arouses him to go in search of himself.

(Al -Ansari)⁶⁵

Success on the Sufi Path is directly tied to purification as a preparation for the receipt of sacred knowledge. In broad terms the concept of purification (*tazkiyat an-nafs*) is seen as the means to eliminate ego-centrality, negativity, base desire and weakness.⁶⁶ Thus, Islamic and Sufi psychological sciences (*Ilm-al Nafsiat*) involve an awareness of what is hidden deep within the self in order to rid oneself of any and all adulterants or obstacles to soul realization. The exercise of *tazkiyat an-nafs* can be described as a system of spiritual therapeutics designed to purify the lower self so that one becomes a mirror reflecting the divine.

To facilitate purification, different Sufi brotherhoods may utilize various rites such as adherence to Islamic law, fasting, prayer, spiritual retreat, meditation, dreams, poetry, music and ritual movements and sacred turning or dance. Spiritual poverty (*faqr*) is also one of the cornerstones of Sufi spiritual practice and *tazkiyat*. While spiritual poverty can have a number of different meanings, its innermost meaning can perhaps be best summed up in a quote from the 11th century Persian Sufi and

scholar, Ali-Hujwir, who says: “the poor man is not he whose hand is empty of provisions, but he whose nature is empty of desires.”⁶⁷ The primary emphasis for nearly all Sufis is correct knowledge, disengagement from one’s own will, right motivation, correct actions and the opening and purity of the heart. The purification of the self is generally thought to involve:

- 1) Liberating oneself from the psychological distortions and complexes that prevent one from forming a healthy, integrated individuality in service to God and one’s fellowman. [This also involves cultivating the spiritual virtues (*fadā’il*) of the heart, such as patience, compassion, tolerance, detachment, etc.] (Author’s brackets.)
- 2) Freeing oneself from the slavery to the attractions of the world, all of which are secondary reflections of the qualities within the heart. By seeing these attractions as veils over one’s essential yearning for union with the divine, the veils fall away and the naked reality remains.
- 3) Transcending the veil that is the self and its tyrannical selfishness.
- 4) Devoting oneself and one’s attention to God or Allah; living in and through Allah, in *Haqiqah* (essential truth), and in Love.⁶⁸

However, some Sufi Orders believe that the purification of the *nafs* involves more than purification of the ego; hence, they outline six or more formal stages of purification (to be discussed later) along the path to exalted spiritual development. This process of purification concerns the development of the soul, and involves an effort to eliminate anything that deflects from knowledge, love and service to one’s fellowman, as well as complete surrender to God or Allah.

Although there are numerous ways to transform the *nafs*, as Dr. Anab Whitehouse points out:

These ways are overlapping, reinforcing and not mutually exclusive in the sense that, for instance, what helps the heart,

helps the *nafs* to transform, and the spirit to be enlivened, and similarly what transforms the *nafs*, also has benefits for the heart and spirit, and so on.⁶⁹

This idea is reflected in the dual meaning *tazkiyat an-nafs*, which in addition to the idea of purification or refinement, means augmentation of the Self or Soul. Concurrent with the act of purification of the *nafs* is the cultivation of the Soul’s virtues, its stature and spiritual piety.

One of the key practices employed by Sufis to purify the *nafs* and cultivate the highest moral virtues is the constant recollection and contemplation of Allah and his attributes.

Dhikr - Remembrance of God and The Ninety-Nine Names of Allah

I thought of you so often
That I completely became You.
Little by little You drew near
and slowly but slowly I passed away.

(Javad Nurbakhsh)⁷⁰

In the Qur’an the Prophet Muhammad invoked God or Allah by a number of different names in an effort to explain the metaphysical complexity of Divine Unity, God’s nature and His immanence or presence in creation. In response to this historical tradition, a practice arose involving the recitation (*dhikr* or *zhkir*) and contemplation (*fikr*) of “God’s Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names.” Supported by a widely accepted *hadith* regarding the “Recitation of Names,”⁷¹ this act of remembrance and devotion is practiced by various religious orders or brotherhoods throughout much of the Islamic world. Although some strict Muslims⁷² believe that there is no basis for the practice since it appears to contradict the *shadaha*⁷³ or profession of faith, i.e., “there is no God but God;” recitation and meditation on the 99 Names exists as the quintessential component in classical Sufism as well as Universal Sufism,⁷⁴ which also places an emphasis on the evocative use of the Ninety-Nine Names of God or Allah.

Muslim theologians and Sufis alike understand God's 99 Names as *sifat* or attributes of Allah. But they are careful to emphasize that the attributes of Allah "have no independent existence of their own" and "only exist as differentiated aspects" of God or Allah; "they are neither identical to nor distinct from the essence."⁷⁵ Rather, the Names are regarded as reflections of the divine essence, the One Reality. Ibn 'Arabî, the great Arab Andalusian scholar, described them as the "outward signs of the universe's inner mysteries."⁷⁶

The practice of remembrance or *dhikr* (along with *wazifa*,⁷⁷ which involves the recitation and meditation on various Quranic phrases and Prophetic supplications), are a means by which the seeker is brought into the divine presence. As a form of ritual prayer or invocation it helps focus the attention and allows the practitioner to know, evoke and develop the different qualities or attributes of God or Allah. Thus the Names are a medium by which one can come to understand something of the divine potential inherent in every soul.⁷⁸

The Ninety-Nine Names, in the words of Pir Zia Inayat Kahn, president of the *Sufi Order Ināyati*, a Universalist order, are not just theological abstractions. They are "sovereign remedies for the ailing human heart."⁷⁹ They are used for the purpose of psychological, mental and spiritual healing; for as the Qur'an says: "In the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest." (Verse 13:28). The Names and phrases can be recited silently in the mind or said aloud. They can also be sung and/or accompanied by various ritualized movements. As one commentator explains, the idea is to sound the Name "until only silence reigns and the seeker's ego is extinguished and only God remains. For true *dhikr*, as the saying goes, means forgetting the *dhikr*."⁸⁰

In some Sufi Orders, knowing and reciting the Names of God as theurgic mantras or words of power, is a fundamental impetus for those who are seeking to open the heart and connect with the Divine. The practice, which is derived through initiatic knowledge, is based, in part, on the idea that sound and vibrations are the cause or basis of all manifestation and on the

No one knows who the first Sufi was. Sufism is not a religion, and ultimately exists above and beyond all labels. It is said Sufism is older than Islam and that it really had no beginning, being just the latest flowering—taking on the form of Islam—of the ancient secret tradition stretching back to Adam.

belief that each letter of the Arabic script derives its power from its links to "the four elements, to the heavens and the lower worlds, to numbers and to either light or darkness."⁸¹ Each name is thought to be a unique, living field of energy⁸² with its own frequency and light or color. Through the recitation and contemplation of certain names and sacred phrases, the sacred qualities or attributes of Allah

are revealed and unfolded in the life of the practitioner. More importantly, remembrance of Allah, one of the pillars of the Islamic and Sufi doctrine, can be fulfilled through the recitation and contemplation of God's Beautiful Names.

With respect to the Names themselves, Muslims and Sufis agree that the 99 Names of God are really 100, excepting 1. Allah (the One), being the Supreme Name that includes all the others. There are, however, more than 99 Names by which Allah is addressed in the Qur'an and Sunnah,⁸³ among other places. Some scholars claim that Allah actually has "three-thousand names: 1,000 known only by the angels, 1,000 known by the prophets, who include Abraham, Moses and Jesus; the 300 of the Torah or Old Testament; the 300 of the Psalms of David; the 300 of the New Testament; the 99 of the Koran; and, the 3000th name, the greatest name, *Ism Allah al-azam*, the concealed name of the God's Essence."⁸⁴ Others maintain that Allah has an infinite number of names. Therefore, 99, the most

commonly used number, is merely a symbolic figure depicting an unlimited quantity of attributes or vibrations that reflect the multiplicity of the Divine Essence.

Ma'rifa - Gnosis

At the level of gnosis (*marifa*), there is
“no me and no you.”

The individual realizes that all is God, that
nothing and no one is separate from God.

This is the ultimate goal of Sufism.

(Robert Frager)⁸⁵

As indicated earlier, one of Sufism's foremost concerns is the pursuit of Gnosis (*ma'rifa*), which is the highest knowledge that an individual can possess. Various writers, such as al Junayd⁸⁶ and Ibn al-'Arabī⁸⁷ placed an emphasis on gnosis and believed that the essence of the One Being is “all knowledge.” Both believed that there was no greater goal than human gnosis or knowledge of Allah. “The goal,” says John Gilchrist, a leading author on Islam, “is to attain a personal knowledge of the Divine Reality so that the knower and known are one and there is no awareness of any distinction of personality between them.”⁸⁸ Ma'rūf al-Karkhī (d. 815), a Sufi saint, who is thought to be the founder of the Sufi school of Bagdad, said that Sufism consists of “seizing upon Divine Realities and forsaking all that comes from creatures.”⁸⁹

The term *ma'rifa*, as Reza Shah Kazemi explains, implies a paradox because the ultimate content of this knowledge radically transcends the individual...

In one respect it is a light that illumines and clarifies, in another respect its very brilliance dazzles, blinds and extinguishes the one who is designated as the knower. This luminous knowledge that demands “unknowing” is also a mode of being effacement; and it is the conjunction between perfect knowledge and pure being that defines the ultimate degree of *ma'rifa*. Since such a conjunction is only perfectly realized in the undifferentiated unity of the Absolute, it follows that it can only be through the Absolute that the individual can have access to *ma'rifa*.⁹⁰

From above statements it becomes clear that *Ma'rifa* in Sufism is more than the attainment of divine knowledge. *Ma'rifa* or Gnosis implies Self-realization and the transcendence of polarities or the opposites, access to and unification with the divine presence and being enraptured by reality of the Absolute One.⁹¹ For Sufis, this “knowing of God” is the very reason that humanity was created. This idea is expressed in a saying from the prophetic tradition: “I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known, so I created the world.”⁹²

But it is useful to point out that Islam and Sufism place a value on two kinds of knowledge, i.e., *ma'rifa*— knowledge that is related to God, and *ilm*— knowledge that has no apparent spiritual meaning. But these two terms, according to Abu-Yazīd, a 9th century Sufi from Iran, are seen as synonymous, for to know that God exists in the datum of manifestation is to know that God alone is. God's reality transcends the world, but also mysteriously penetrates all things. “For whomever is close to God (*Al-Haqq*) everything and every place is God, for God is everywhere and everything.”⁹³

Another way of articulating this idea is to say that true gnosis surpasses limited, incomplete perspectives, without necessarily abolishing them, for *ma'rifa* is a perspective that includes both the transcendent and the immanent. In another well-known *hadith* or saying, the Prophet Muhammad explains the goal and the fruit of knowledge. “He who knows himself knows his Lord.” Elsewhere the Prophet stated that: “Seeking knowledge [of God or the Cosmos] is incumbent upon every Muslim,” and such knowledge should be sought far and wide, “even,” he says, “unto China.”⁹⁴

Yet, one is advised not to acquire knowledge for its own sake, as this feeds the ego or little self (*nafs*) and leads one away from the Divine Essence. Ibn al-'Arabī, who developed a complex theosophical system akin to that of Plotinus, thought that knowledge, even of the Cosmos, could be a divergence, a veil or a blind if one did not recognize the Creator's workings behind all outer appearances or signs.⁹⁵ While the living realization of self-knowledge and God-knowledge is one of the Sufi's principle

quests, the precedence given to true knowledge in Sufism, as Burckhardt explains, “in no way implies an emphasis on the mind at the expense of the emotional faculties”⁹⁶ whose organ is the heart and center of person’s being.

Mahabba - Love

The union of the mind and intuition, which brings about illumination, and the development which the Sufis seek, is based upon love.

(Idries Shah)⁹⁷

The prominence of “Love” (*hubb* or *mahabba*) and the “Heart” (*qalb*) equals, and in some Sufi Orders, surpasses that of the knowledge or intellect. This is evidenced in the following quotes from the Qur’an, which teach that “God’s mercy is greater than His wrath” and that “God’s love is His supreme attribute.” In fact, Sufism is frequently called “the path of love” and “the religion of the heart.” In Islam and in Sufism in particular, the heart carries a special importance. The heart is seen as the seat of spiritual awareness. The heart is the man’s innermost reality, the center of consciousness and the true essence of human being. The following passage from the Qur’an (8:24) speaks to its significance in reminding us that: “Allah intervenes between man and his heart.”

Yunis Emre⁹⁸ (1240–1320), one of the great Turkish Sufi poets of love, maintained that while reason and free will can link one to God, it is the purified heart, the seat of the soul and also the intellect, which can intuit God’s essence. The heart, as Martin Lings held, can be found to be a synonym for the intellect, but in the full sense of the Latin *intellectus*, meaning

that which perceives the transcendent.⁹⁹ Lings goes on to say:

In virtue of being the centre of the body, the heart may be said to transcend the rest of the body, although substantially it consists of the same flesh and blood. In other words, while the body as a whole is “horizontal” in the sense that it is limited to its own plane of existence, the heart has, in addition, a certain “verticality” for being the lower end of the “vertical” axis which passes from Divinity Itself through the centres of all the degrees of the Universes. If we use the imagery suggested by Jacob’s Ladder, which is none other than this axis, the bodily heart will be the lowest rung and the ladder itself will represent the whole hierarchy of centres or “Hearts” one above the other. This image is all the more adequate for representing each centre as distinct from the others and yet, at the same time connected with them. It is in virtue of this interconnection, through which the centres in the body are, as it were, merged into one, that the bodily heart receives Life from Divinity and floods the body with Life.¹⁰⁰

From these comments one can see why the heart in Sufism is often seen as synonymous with the spark of Spirit, which has both a Divine and Created aspect. The heart is also regarded as a solar symbol or inward Sun and a manifestation of one of the 99 Names of Allah—*al Nur*—the essence of the all-pervading Light or luminosity. The following lines from a Persian mystical poem, speak to the importance of opening the Heart. “Split the atom’s heart and lo! Within it thou wilt find a sun.”¹⁰¹



The Winged Heart superimposed upon the Sun¹⁰²

The heart is not only the source of vision or light, but also the endless font of love. The great Sufi poets of love, like the female mystic Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah (d. 801), Emre and Rumi, believed that love dominates and determines the Sufi's inward and psychological states and is thus what defines the relationship between humans and God. Hazrat Inayat Khan explains that: "Love draws us back to Love."¹⁰³ He goes on to say that: "The greatest principle of Sufism is '*Ishq Allah, Ma'bud Allah*.'" (God is love, lover, and beloved.)

The Path of Love is the path that leads one away from the bondage of the *nafs* or base self to the freedom and wholeness of one's divine nature, a nature that loves and serves all beings as manifestations of God. Love has an immense transformative power and is one of the methods for achieving an inner alchemy by which the Sufi rids him or her self of "everything-other-than-God." The famous Andalusian Sufi, Ahmad ibn-al 'Arif (1088–1141), said that love is the "beginning of the valleys of extinction (*fanā*) and the hill from which there is a descent towards the stages of self-naughting.... In Sufism, the willful annihilation of the self—to die before you die¹⁰⁴—and the resultant *baqa* (everlasting subsistence through God), takes place when magnetic power of the Spirit draws the soul to it and the loving heart lays down in the arms of the Beloved or God.

But, as has been previously noted, the emphasis in Sufism today tends to be on an intermingling or synthesis of love and knowledge. As Fakhrudin 'Araki (1213–1289), one of the great Sufi masters, poets and scholars held, "Love is not juxtaposed to knowledge, It is realized knowledge."¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless there are Sufis who tend to place a focus on either one or the other—either the mystical and ecstatic approach or sober, mental approach. This was especially the case in Sufism's formative period, where as Schimmel points out, "Sufism admitted a two-fold approach to God,"¹⁰⁶ which she illustrates with the following quotes from Hujwiri:

There is a difference between one who is burned by His Majesty in the fire of love,

and one who is illuminated by His Beauty in the light of contemplation.

There is a difference between one who meditates upon Divine acts and one who is amazed at the Divine Majesty; the one is a follower of friendship [wanting what is good for others], the other is a companion of love.¹⁰⁷ (Author's brackets)

Another Sufi theologian and poet, Maulanā Jāmī (1414–1492), held that there are two types of Sufis, the mystical and gnostic/prophetic: those who have annihilated the self and are submerged in complete union with the Divine, but return to the shores of separation to lead others to salvation; and those who remain within "the Ocean of Unity, that never a news or trace comes to the shore of separation...and the sanctity of perfecting others is not entrusted to them."¹⁰⁸

The first type can be likened to the Bodhisattva ideal in Buddhism, those who have achieved Enlightenment, but are motivated by compassion to return to the world of samsara to aid others on the path to Buddhahood. The second type are those who have achieved Enlightenment and have chosen not to return to the realms of incarnation and maya.

Maqāmāt or Stations on the Path

As previously noted in the section on the purification of the lower self or *nafs*, classical Sufism describes a series of spiritual milestones, states, stations and degrees along the path of return. Although Sufis make a distinction between the stability of the stations (*maqāmāt*) and *ahwāl* (the many temporary states of the soul), the focus here will be limited to the permanent stations.

The various degrees or stations represent cumulative and permanent stages or degrees in self-awareness and spiritual development, which are attainable through sustained effort and spiritual practice.

Each metaphysical degree or *maqām* exemplifies the seeker's level of initiatic attainment and awareness of the spiritual subtleties behind the world of outer form, his perception of Truth, the meaning of life, especially one's

own life purpose, and one's attunement with Divine Will. Hence, the *maqām* reflect the dominant quality of the soul and signify where the seeker is "stationed" until he moves on to the station that looms ahead.

According to N. Hanif, the stations of wisdom, as they are also called, "are degrees of penetration into the divine unity," or Oneness of God.¹⁰⁹

They mark progress on the path of discipline and attainment before the Sufi can achieve union with God.

There is no universally accepted order or number of stations. Different teachers and Sufi Orders have outlined the stations in a way that reflects their own experience and conceptions of reality. Thus, some Sufis say there are 4 stations, other list 6, or 7, and still others 40 or as many as 100. Adding to the complexity of the subject is the fact that some Sufis relate the *maqāmāt* to the heart, to various *Lataif-e-sitta*, the psychospiritual organs or centers of perception in the heart and or body, or to various classifications of knowledge. To complicate matters further, there is, in some quarters, a continuous process of modification and adjustment in the light of new understanding and experience on the path. Such fluidity can be seen to be one of the hallmarks of the Sufi path given that Sufis, as Helena Blavatsky says, have "no external, ritualistic, and dogmatic religion."¹¹⁰ For, "the journey of the soul towards God, as S. H. Nasr explains, "includes too many imponderable elements to allow it to be reduced to a set scheme."¹¹¹

Some Sufis, for example, view the stations as the grounds for a spiritual life which deal with such considerations as: 1) *tawba* or repentance; 2) *wará* or watchfulness; 3) *zuhd* or renunciation; 4) *faqr* or poverty (the absence of desire); 5) *ṣabr* or patience; 6) *tawakkul* or trust; 7) *riḍā* or acceptance.

Others give the following seven stations beginning with: 1) the *nafs* or the sensitive soul; 2) the *qalb* or heart; 3) '*aql* or intellect; 4) *rūh* or spirit; 5) the *sirr* or secret of innermost heart; 6) *jafī* (also *khafī* or that which is hidden; 7) *al-afiā* or true Being.¹¹²

According to William Chittick, Ibn 'Arabī, considered by many to be one of the world's greatest Muslim philosophers, represented the various levels, states and stations as "the actualization of potential deiformity," (likeness to Deity).¹¹³ In Ibn 'Arabī's characterization, the stations correspond to one or more of the divine archetypes or Names. Of special interest in his philosophy was the "Station of No Station," the station that includes all the other stations and is, in one sense, the final "Reality of Realities."

God and man are not two; the Sufi does not consider God separate from himself. The Sufi's God is not in Heaven alone; He is everywhere. He sees God in the unseen and in the seen; he recognizes God both within and without. Therefore there is no name which is not the Name of God, and there is no form which is not the form of God, to the eyes of the Sufi.

Maqām lā Maqām -The Station of No Station

The Station of No Station pertains to the Perfect Man who has come full circle in his evolutionary growth and development and has achieved union or *tawhīd*, knowledge of the Real. Chittick portrays the Perfect Man standing in this station as the "human analogue of Nondelimited Being, which assumes every delimitation without itself becoming limited."¹¹⁴ Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi (1210–1274), one of the most influential Sufi thinkers, describes this station as the "exact middle" or "the point at the center of the circle of existence." The Station of No Station is also *fana*, the ultimate goal – a dissolution of the Sufi's consciousness and identity through a total absorption in the love and knowledge of God.

Thus the *Maqām lā Maqām* is the highest level of human perfection; it refers to one who expresses all of the Divine attributes or potentialities of God and has come to understand the

relationships within the Divine field that have hitherto been concealed by the veils of illusion.

The Station of No Station is often described as an unknown station that exists outside of our limited conception of space and time and represents liberation from the dual nature of existence. In the philosophy of Ibn ‘Arabī, the Station of No Station, as previously stated, embraces all the other stations. So as Anub Whitehouse explains, the Station of No Station is “the zero degree” before the seeker has attained the first *maqām*, the final “terminus” or station, and the place where the “two extremes meet and the serpent bites its own tail.”¹¹⁵ He goes on to say that every station is a no station until a new unimagined station presents itself:

The station of no station would ... be the station where one no longer perceives that which is lower as such, where everything is leveled by reference to what is higher, and where it is revealed to us that all stations are perfect at whatever degree they might be situated. The degrees disappear. The miracle is to see that God is to be found in His totality at all degrees, at all stations where he manifests, in all degrees of manifestation, from the most radiant to the most obscure. ... [where] every thing is a *maqām*, the whole of life presents *maqāms*.¹¹⁶

The ascent to the Station of No Station is, in Whitehouse’s opinion, an attempt to bring together precreation, creation and de-creation into a unity. It is the place where all points of view are comprehended, where the object/subject disappears, where affirmation and negation cease to exist and the still point gives entry into the Divine Essence.¹¹⁷

The Station of No Station is further described as an unknown station. In his reading of Ibn ‘Arabī, Chittick says that:

The Station of No Station brings together every quality in utter differentiation, pure unity, sheer consciousness, total freedom, complete lack of delimitation and identity with Real self-disclosers. The nature of consciousness experienced in this station can only be expressed in analogies and metaphors. It is utterly inaccessible to ordi-

nary language, which is to say that people are blinded of the shining of its light. In fact of course, the light witnessed by human beings is forever shining in the darkness of the cosmos, it is only human capacity that prevents people from seeing it.¹¹⁸

The Station of No Station exists outside of our limited conception of space and time. It is the place where there is a direct recognition of the Unity of the One. While the Station of No Station is thought to be the final station and the actualization of all of God’s Beautiful Names, in truth “there can be,” as Whitehouse maintains, “no so set number of stages, states or stations,” for the Absolute Infinitude transcends and encompasses even the transfinite numbers and infinities.¹¹⁹

Conclusion

This article explored the fundamentals of Sufism, which Sufis themselves have claimed to be deeply complex. Indeed, Sufism is multifaceted, diffuse and fluid, making it nearly impossible to present a one-dimensional model. There is a great spectrum of Sufi theory and practice as well as a wide variety of Sufi orders: classical, reformed and interfaith orders, which have been shaped within various cultural, political and historical contexts. Furthermore, “Sufism holds a secret,” which as Idries Shah says, “is only to be found in the spirit and practice of the Work.” “Sufism,” therefore, “cannot be understood by the intellect alone, neither can it be understood from the outside.”¹²⁰ Nor is it possible to advance beyond a superficial grasp of the Sufi Path without the guidance of a teacher who is one with the Beloved and connected to an unbroken lineage of authentic Masters.

In addition to Sufism’s complexity and dynamism, conflict and violence in the Middle East and elsewhere, along with the media’s negative portrayal of Muslims, has cast a great pall over everything Islamic. Nevertheless, Sufism, as this article has attempted to show, is one of the world’s great spiritual currents.

Sufism is an ancient school of self-knowledge, of human development, a system with a diversity of methods and disciplines designed to facilitate the realization of one’s identity with

Supreme Identity and one's oneness with God. Sufism is both philosophical and experiential. Some orders can be classified as "drunken." These are Sufis who tend toward the "Heart approach" and employ aesthetic and devotional practices, such as the Invocation of Names, rhythmic movement, music and poetry as a means of producing an ecstatic experience or "state" in which the participant's sense of self is dissolved in the Presence. Such an approach can be contrasted with a more "sober" or intellectual approach, which emphasizes knowledge, discernment and contemplation, and "fixity" on the Real. Many Sufi orders acknowledge the need "to see with both eyes," as Ibn 'Arabi says; in other words, to seek an all-important balance between the heart and head, plus right action.

Sufism also has a decidedly inclusive and universal nature. The core principles of Sufism belong to the transcendent unity of truth and wisdom lying behind all the major faiths and esoteric traditions. Like most spiritual paths, the Sufi Way encourages beautification and mastery over the lower self along with the development of qualities such as charity, service, compassion, humility, honesty, detachment and wisdom. Thus, Sufism serves the function of helping seekers to free themselves from the prison of the senses so that he or she becomes a perfect mirror, which reflects the attributes of Divinity. The ultimate goal on the Sufi path, as S.H. Nasr says, is to lead the disciple from "the particular to the Universal, from separation to Unity, from form to the supra-formal Essence," to *tawhīd* and to "the truth that has always been and will always be."¹²¹

It is the author's hope that this introductory paper will allow students of esoteric philosophy and the other metaphysical traditions to see Sufism as one of the world's hidden treasures and a profound exposition of the Perennial Wisdom and the Life of the Spirit.

¹ Sunni Islam is the largest denomination of Islam making up approximately 80% of the Muslim population in the world. Sunni's hold that the Prophet Muhammad's first Caliph was his father-in-law Abu Bakr, a political and so-

cial leader as well as a close companion of the Prophet. Sunni's regard themselves as the orthodox branch of Islam. For Sunnis, authority is shared by all within the community (even if certain individuals have, in practice, claimed special authority) Sunni Muslims may follow one of several law schools named after their four founders or Imams. Source: *New World Encyclopedia*.

www.newworldencyclopedia.org/.

- ² Shi'a Islam or Shi'ism is the second largest school within Islam. Shi'a Muslims also adhere to the teachings of the Islamic prophet Muhammad and his family. Shi'as believe that the Imam must belong to the direct lineage of Muhammad through his daughter Fatima and her husband (and Muhammad's cousin), Ali ibn Abi Talib (Imam Ali, the fourth caliph), who the Muhammad appointed as the sole interpreter of his spiritual legacy. Shi'as reject the first three caliphs as usurpers of Ali's Imamate. The theme of lineage and infallibility of the Imam developed within Shi'a Islam, as well as the idea of a hidden Imam who will bring God's judgment in the Last Days. There are several sub-divisions. The majority of Shi'a believe that the Imam is now "hidden" but will return as the Mahdi. Source: *New World Encyclopedia*,

www.newworldencyclopedia.org/.

- ³ It should be noted here that many classical or tradition Islamic Sufi's view the Universalist and Non-Muslim orders as quasi or pseudo Sufis, since they are more or less disconnected from the teachings of the Qur'an and Sharia or Islamic Law, which serves as the foundation of the classical Sufi Path.

- ⁴ The common exoteric explanation of *Tasawwuf* means, "to wear wool." From an esoteric perspective *Tasawwuf* implies Divine Wisdom or Sophia based on an internal approach to Islam.

- ⁵ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, quoting F. A. D. Tholuck in his 1821 volume on Sufism (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 9.

- ⁶ The Pahlawan religion (champions) was one of the Persian religions that focused on chivalry and etiquette around which the essence of Sufism is shaped. See for example: *Sufism in the Secret History of Persia*, by Milad Milani.

- ⁷ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 3.

- ⁸ On one level, the widely diffused parable of the *blind men and an elephant* is a story of a

- group of blind men (or men in the dark) who were made to touch an elephant to learn what it is like. Each one feels a different part, but only one part, such as the side or the tusk. They then compare notes and learn that they are in complete disagreement. The story refers to one's biases and the inability to see the completed whole, as well as the problem of assessing the world purely through the senses.
- 9 E. H. Palmer, *Oriental Mysticism: A Treatise on Sufistic and Unitarian Theosophy of the Persians* (1876; reprint; London: Luzac and Co., 1969), 18.
- 10 Atif Khalil and Shiraz Sheikh, in *Sufism in Western Scholarship: A Brief Overview*, a paper made available through Academic.edu: <https://www.academia.edu/> (accessed March 22, 2016).
- 11 Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I (reprint: 1888; Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1974), 288.
- 12 Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Theosophical Glossary* (1930; reprint; London: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1892), 311.
- 13 Hazart Inayat Kahn was an Indian classical musician who had been initiated into the Chrishti Sufi Order. In 1907, he was encouraged by his spiritual teacher, Shaykh Muhammed Abu Hashim Madani to bring Sufism to the West (London). In so doing he abandoned Islamic Sufism in favor of an approach that did not emphasize Sufism's connection to Islam.
- 14 Inayat Khan. Quoted from *Sufism* in the unpublished papers from the Nektakht Foundation.
- 15 *The Life and Teachings of Hazrat Inayat Khan*, https://wahiduddin.net/hik/hik_origins.htm (accessed March 21, 2016).
- 16 Idries Shah, *The Sufis* (reprint, 1964; London, UK: Octagon Press Ltd. 1999) 356.
- 17 Mehmet Sabeheddin, "The Secret Path: Sufi Mystics and the Spiritual Quest," in *New Dawn Magazine*, No. 85, July-August 2004. www.newdawnmagazine.com (accessed March 22, 2016).
- 18 *The Origins of Sufism: Pre & Post Islam*: From a lecture by the Silsilah-e-Aaliya Mujumma Al Baharian Community.
- 19 Vincent Cornell, *Practical Sufism: An Akbri-an Foundation for Liberal Theology of Difference*, http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/cornell_practicalsufism.html (accessed March 21, 2016).
- 20 See for example: *Mystical Islam: An Introduction to Sufism*, by Julian Baldick, or *Sufism: A Global History*, by Nile Green.
- 21 Titus Burckhardt, *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, (reprint: 1959; Bloomington, Ind: World Wisdom, Inc., 2008), 5.
- 22 The Mevlevi/Mawlawīyya Order is Sufi order in Konya, Turkey founded by Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī, the 13th century Persian poet and theologian.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Mollie Magill, *Discuss the Non-Islamic Origins of Sufism*, <https://moliemagill.wordpress.com/discuss-the-arguments-for-the-non-islamic-origins-of-sufism> (accessed February 14, 2016).
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 This system is based on the Abjad numerals, which are a decimal numeral system in which the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet are assigned numerical values. They have been used in the Arabic-speaking world since before the 8th century Arabic numerals. In modern Arabic, the word *abjadīyah* means "alphabet." The *Qu'ran* is also structured on an ingenious mathematical formula, based primarily on the number 7. Gematria plays an important role in Sufism. Many Sufi's believe that the numbers are part of the creative system by which all things in the cosmos were created.
- 28 Louis Massingon, *Essai sur les Origines du Lexique Technique de la Mystique Musulmane* (Paris: Geuthner, 1954), 104.
- 29 Professor John L. Esposito, *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Modern Islamic World* (Oxford: ENG: Oxford University Press, 1995).
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Martin Lings, *What is Sufism* (Lahore, Pakistan: Suhail Academy, 1983), 16.
- 32 Titus Burckhardt, *An Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, 4.
- 33 Hazrat Inayat Khan on "Silsila," *Who we are*, from the "Sufi Order International." <http://www.centrum-universel.com/silsilae.htm> (accessed may 20, 2016).
- 34 Shaykh Mahmud Shabistari, *Gulshan i raz: The Mystic Rose Garden* (London: Forgotten Books, 2012), 84.
- 35 Martin Lings, *What is Sufism*, 12.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Universal Sufism, as noted in the text, does not strictly adhere to Islam law. However, they share many of the same practices, methods and rites as the traditional orders. In contrast to the more traditional or Islamic orders, Universal Sufism focuses on the importance of eliminating the boundaries that divide traditional religions, and incorporates the “Wisdom of all Faiths” into its beliefs and practices.

³⁸ Eric Geoffroy, “Approaching Islam,” in *Sufism: Love and Wisdom*, edited by Jean-Louis Michon and Roger Gaetani (Bloomington, Ind., 2006), 50.

³⁹ Seeyed Hossein Nasr, *Sufi Essays* (Chicago, IL: ABC International Group, 1999), 43.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 39.

⁴² Sayyidna Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al-Naysaburi, *A Code of Conduct*, tr.: Verena Klemm & Paul E. Walker; *The Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies*, Volume 5, Issue 3, Summer 2012, 44.

⁴³ Traditional Muslims repeat the shahāda: *lā 'ilāha 'illā-llāh, muḥammadur-rasūlu-llāh* (There is no God but God. Muhammad is God's messenger), five times a day, but Universal Sufism also rhythmically recites the first part of this phrase (*lā 'ilāha 'illā-llāh*) as part of the *dhikr* or Practice of Remembrance.

⁴⁴ The concept of *tahwid* have long been used by Islamic reformers and activists as an organizing principle for human society and the basis of religious knowledge, history, metaphysics, aesthetics, and ethics, as well as social, economic, and world order.

⁴⁵ Dr. Steven Masood, *Wahdat al-Wujūd: A Fundamental Doctrine in Sufism*, <http://www.stevenmasood.org/article/wahdat-al-wujud-fundamental-doctrine-sufism> (accessed May 7, 2016).

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Hazrat Inayat Khan, “Prophets and Religions,” *The Unity of Religious Ideals*, Vol. 9, From the Hazrat Inayat Khan Study Database www.hazrat-inayat-khan.org/php/views.php?h1=31&h2=14&h3=2 (accessed May 7, 2016).

⁴⁸ Seeyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), 3.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Seeyed Hossein Nasr, “The Male and Female in the Islamic Perspective,” *Studies in Comparative Religion*, Vol. 14, No. 1 & 2. (Win-

ter-Spring, 1980), World Wisdom, Inc. www.studiesincomparativereligion.com (accessed May 7, 2016).

⁵¹

Ibid.

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Fakhruddin Iraqī, *Divine Flashes* (trans: William Chittick and Seeyed Hossein Nasr; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1982), 69

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For more detailed information see for example: *In Search of the Lost Heart: Explorations in Islamic Thought*, by William C. Chittick, Mohammed Rustom, Atif Khalil.

⁵⁴

Medhi Azminrazavi, *Sufism and American Literary Masters* (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 2014), 154.

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Ibnul Farid, *Taiyyat ul Kubra*, p. 245-46, as quoted from the *Shared Vision of Sufi and Yogic Vision*

http://www.bahaistudies.net/asma/the_shared_besuties_of_sufi_&_yogic_vision.pdf (accessed April 11, 2016).

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Coleman Barks, and John Moyne trans., *The Essential Rumi* (San Francisco: Harper-SanFrancisco, 1995), 275-6.

⁵⁷

The Bhagavad Gita, trans. Annie Besant, 111. Available online at:

<https://archive.org/details/bhagavadgt00besagooq> (accessed May 7, 2016).

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The Sirimad Bhagavad-Gita, trans., A Kaushik (New York: Hippocrene Books Inc., U.S., 1998), 186.

⁵⁹

See *The Doctrine of the Perfect Man (Al-Insan al-Kamil) and its Significance Today*, by Anisah Bagasra at: <http://www.israinternational.com/the-perfect-man.html>.

⁶⁰

Reynold A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (reprint 1921; Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, LLC, 2007), 78). This highly recommended book is also available online at: <http://sacred-texts.com/isl/siim/index.htm>.

⁶¹

Ibid.

⁶²

P. Bearman; P. Kunitzsch and F. Jong, *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2> (accessed May 21, 2016).

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Theja Gunawardhana, *Theosophy an Islam* (Nugegoda: Theosophical Society of Sri Lanka, 1983). 78.

⁶⁴

It is of interest to note that that the concept of the Universal or Perfect Man played a significant role in the Rumi's poems and that for Rumi, Shams al Din of Tabrizi was the em-

- bodiment of what he called the “Perfect Man.” One of the few contemporary individuals who came to believe that he had attained the level of *al-insan al-kamil* was the Iranian Shia Muslim religious leader, revolutionary, politician and the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ruhollah Mūsavi Khomeini. Khomeini never publically made such a claim, as it would have been considered heretical, but he was preoccupied with the concept of the perfect man. The belief not only formed the core of his writings, it was the impetus behind his desire, as Ted Thornton and numerous others have maintained, “to guide society from multiplicity to unity, from blasphemy to faith and from corruption to a life of absolute perfection.”
- 65 As quoted in *Love is a Fire* by Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee (Point Reyes Station, CA: The Golden Sufi Center, 2000), 20.
- 66 Certain Sufi Orders claim that the *nafs* reside in the lower abdomen where they create a hot smoke or fog that is the source of all evil desires and passions. If these desires are not controlled through spiritual disciplines, they escape from the stomach area and enter into the breast filling it with smoke. The light in the heart is obscured by this smoke and can no longer illuminate the breast. See for example: *A Sufi Work on the Stations of the Heart*, <http://faculty.washington.edu/heer/stations.pdf> . (accessed May 1, 2016).
- 67 Ali-Hujwiri, *The Kashf al-Mahjub* (The Revelation of the Veiled) of Ali b. 'Uthman al-Jullabi Hujwiri, trans., by Reynold A. Nicholson (Gibb Memorial Trust, 2014), 25.
- 68 See for example: <http://www.rifai.org/sufism/english/the-art-of-being/four-stages-for-the-purification-of-the-heart> (accessed, April 1, 2016).
- 69 Dr. Anub Whitehouse, *Sufi Amanesis: State, Stations, Stages and Practices*, January 4, 2010. <http://anubwhitehouse.blogspot.com/2010/01/states-stations-stages-and-practice.html> (accessed May 11, 2016).
- 70 Javad Nurbakhsh, *In the Tavern of Ruins* (London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1992).
- 71 The *Hadith* in question is from *Jani-at-Tirmidhi* or *Sunan at-Tirmidhi*.
- 72 Strict orthodox Sunni Muslim sects, such as the Wahhabi disavow the practice.
- 73 *Shadhana* is an essential Islamic creed declaring the oneness of God. *lā 'ilāha 'illā-llāh*, There is no God but God.
- 74 The Universalist Order is now the “Inayat Khan Sufi Order” headed by Pir Inayat Khan.
- 75 Wali Ali Meyer, Bilal Hyde, Faisal Muqaddam and Shaabda Kahn, *Physicians of the Heart, A Sufi View of the Ninety-Nine Name of Allah* (San Francisco, CA: Sufi Ruhaniat International, 2001), 19.
- 76 As quoted in *Essential Islam: A Comprehensive Guide to Belief and Practice*, by Diane Morgan (Santa Barbara, CA: ABD-CLIO LLC, 2010), 10.
- 77 The word *dhikr* is the remembrance of God through the rhythmic repetition of Names. The term *wazifa* refers to the recitation of various verses or phrases as means of going beyond the divine quality or attributes of a specific name. However, the meaning of these terms change in the various branches of Islam and in the different Sufi orders where the names are interchanged.
- 78 Wali Ali Meyer, Bilal Hyde, Faisal Muqaddam and Shaabda Kahn, *Physicians of the Heart, A Sufi View of the Ninety-Nine Name of Allah*, xvii.
- 79 As quoted in *Physicians of the Heart, A Sufi View of the Ninety-Nine Name of Allah*.
- 80 *Dhikr – The Most Common Prayer of Islamic Mystics*. Online at: http://www.holisticonline.com/Prayer/Spl_prayers/hol_prayer_Dhikr.htm. (accessed June 22, 2016).
- 81 Roya Azul, *The Magical Power of Arabic Letters*. Online at: <http://www.theartofislamichealing.com/the-magical-powers-of-arabic-letters>. (accessed June 23, 2016).
- 82 Ibid.
- 83 *Sunnah* is the verbally transmitted record of the teachings, deeds and sayings, silent permissions (or disapprovals) of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad, as well as various reports about Muhammad's companions.
- 84 Shems Friedlander, *Ninety-Nine Names of Allah* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1993), Foreward.
- 85 Robert Frager, *Heart, Self and Soul: The Sufi Psychology of Growth, Balance, and Harmony* (Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, 1999), 23.
- 86 Abu al-Qasim ibn Muhammad Junayd, al-Baghdadi was one of the most celebrated of

- the early Persian Sufi's of Islam. He is central figure in the golden chain or lineage of spiritual masters and was an important figure in the development of Sufi doctrine.
- 87 Muhyi-d-Dīn ibn 'Arabī (d.1240), is considered to be one of most influential Muslim mystics, poets and philosophers, and was given the appellation *ash-shaykh al-akbar* "the greatest of spiritual masters."
- 88 John Gilchrist, *Muhammad and the Religion of Islam* (Benoni: South Africa: Jesus to the Muslims, 1986), 346.
- 89 Eric Geoffroy, "Approaching Sufism," in: *Sufism: Love and Wisdom*, 57.
- 90 Reza Shah Kazemi, "The Notion and Significance of Ma'rifa in Sufism," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 13:2 (London: Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, 2002), 155-181.
- 91 Eunice Villaneda, "Ma'rifa and Gnosis: The System of Divine Knowledge in Sufism and Valentinianism" in the *Claremont Journal of Religion*, Vol. 3, Issue 2, (Long Beach, CA: California State University, 2014), 112.
- 92 This saying is from Hadith Qudsi, which are were given in the Prophet Mummmand's own words.
- 93 Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabī, as quoted in "The Notion and Significance of Ma'rifa," 158.
- 94 From a well known Hadith or saying of the Prophet Muhammad.
- 95 William C. Chittick, "Ibn 'Arabī on the Benefit of Knowledge," *The Essential Sophia*, WorldWisdom Inc., 2006. http://www.worldwisdom.com/public/viewpdf/default.aspx?article=Ibn_Arabi_on_the_Benefit_of_Knowledge_by_William_Chittick.pdf (accessed April 2, 2016).
- 96 Titus Burckhardt, *An Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, 22.
- 97 Idries Shah, *The Sufi's* (London: Octagon Press, 1964), 129.
- 98 Yunis Emre, a Sufi dervish, was one of Turkey's most distinguished poets who exercised a powerful influence of Turkish literature. Emre was venerated as a Saint after his death.
- 99 Martin Lings, *What is Sufism*, 48.
- 100 Ibid., 48-49.
- 101 These lines are thought to be from Bahā'u'llah, *The Seven Valleys*.
- 102 The symbol of the Sufi Path is a Heart with Wings superimposed upon the Sun. It depicts that the heart is medium between soul and body, spirit and matter. The Wings are the symbol of spiritual progress and aspiration. The Crescent represents the responsiveness of the crescent moon to the light of the Sun, for it gradually receives the light, which develops it until it becomes the full moon. Thus Crescent in the heart signifies that the Heart is responsive to the light of God and will be illuminated by the Sun. The explanation of the Five-Pointed Star is a symbol of the perfected Man or the God realized Man. The Sun is a symbol of the Spirit. The image here is used in the Universal Sufi Orders.
- 103 Hazrat Inayat Khan, "Dedication of the Universal," 1926.
- 104 The saying: "To die before you die," is attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. It is also a famous Zen saying.
- 105 As quoted from *BuddhaNet* in an article titled "Sufi and Dzogchen Reflections," <http://www.buddhanet.net/index.html> (accessed May 2, 2016.)
- 106 Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 6.
- 107 Al-Hujwiri, *The Kashf Al-Mahjub* (The Revelation of the Veiled), trans., Reynold A. Nicholson (Gibb Memorial Trust, 2000), 367.
- 108 Maulanā Jāmī, as paraphrased from the Schimmel's *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 6.
- 109 N. Hanif, *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Sufis: Central Asia and Middle East* (New Delhi: IND: Sarup Book Publishers Ltd., 2002), 469.
- 110 Helena P. Blavatsky, "A Treatise on Sufism," *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. 4 (CD-ROM; Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1882), 162.
- 111 Seeyed Hossein Nasr, *Sufi Essays*, 76.
- 112 Seeyed Hossein Nasr, *Sadr al-Dīn Sīrāzī and his Transcendent Theosophy* (Tehran, Iran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1978), 58.
- 113 William Chittick, "Ibn Arabi," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2014 Online at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ibn-arabi/> (accessed June 30, 2016).
- 114 William Chittick, "Ibn Arabi," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- 115 Anub Whitehouse, *Sufi Amanesis: State, Stations, Stages and Practices*.
- 116 Ibid.
- 117 Ibid.
- 118 William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), 377.
- 119 Anub Whitehouse, *Sufi Amanesis: State, Stations, Stages and Practices*.

¹²⁰ Idries Shaw, *The Sufi's* (London: The Indries Shah Foundation, 1964), 20.

¹²¹ Seeyed Hossein Nasr, *Sufi Essays*, 32.