

THE HEART (*AL-QALB*) AND SPIRITUAL COGNITION

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the nature of the heart (*qalb*) as the spiritual organ for cognition. The relation between spiritual experiences and intellectual cognition is delineated in the soul's quest for and at attaining to certainty, wisdom, illuminative knowledge, and guidance. The apex of knowledge is the event of the prophetic reception of Revelation as it is shown as the highest level of apprehension of the highest degree of knowledge which occurs to the heart of the best of God's sentient being. The intellectual tradition in Islam views the soul as having four modes: these are the *nafs*, *rūh*, *'aql* and *qalb*, while the degrees of knowledge which arrives to the soul and which the soul arrives at are four; these are revelation (*wahy*), wisdom (*hikmah*), intuition (*ilhām*), and knowledge (*'ilm*). This article analyses the primacy of the *qalb* as the spiritual organ of cognition and elaborates its ontological reality with a brief exposition of the stations and states of soul. The central position and function of the *qalb* is supported by verses from the Qur'ān and the writings of earlier Muslim scholars such as al-Junayd, al-Jāmī, al-Qastallānī, al-Rānīrī as well as Shāh Walī Allāh. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas continues this tradition to bring to the fore the recognition of the *qalb* in his writings on the human soul. This study also sheds light on the activity of the *qalb* in understanding the meanings derived from knowledge that has been gifted to it, such as in the revelatory experience of the Prophet and trans-empirical experiences by others. The *qalb*, unlike the intellect, does not act on meanings logically or by way of ratiocination; it leaves the content as it is and unimpaired by the receiver's act by the subjective imagination of the intellect. The article ends with outlining the stations and states of the heart and ways to achieve them from the tradition of the Sufis.

Keywords: *qalb*, cognition, revelation, metaphysics, *tasawwuf*

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The nature of man is that he is composed of body and soul.¹ The soul is equipped with internal senses attendant with the internal faculties. For a long time, the perfection of man is associated with, not only the perfection of the physical body, but more importantly with the perfection of his intellect. Intellectual prowess is in turn associated with wisdom. Aristotle classifies wisdom into theoretical and practical wisdom. The theoretical wisdom is associated with the knowledge of metaphysics. Practical wisdom is knowledge about particulars, of living in accordance with virtues that can be gained through experience. In this writing we put forward another aspect to be considered as the primary aspect for the perfection of man, one that is more along the lines of the teachings of revealed religion, as exemplified in the lives of the Prophet and the historical evolvement of their mission, and that is his heart (*qalb*). As the ultimate and final Prophet is the emblematic figure, Prophet Muhammad is not only the closure of the Prophetic Mission but also as the Perfect Man, *his* is the ultimate model of man²: his spiritual and intellectual faculties are at the highest, perfect. Gifted with Revelation, it is *his* heart that is the ultimate and highest receptacle and crucible of the highest knowledge.

I. KNOWLEDGE AND SPIRITUAL COGNITION

The Qur'an attests that Prophets were gifted with revelation and wisdom (*ḥikmah*).³ Al-Attas defines *ḥikmah* as that which is lit from the lamp of prophecy, and wisdom is also gifted to select People of God; whereas intuition (*ilhām*), different and lower from that of *ḥikmah*, is given to select people (*khawas*).⁴ Therefore, we can outline here the rank and degrees of knowledge accorded to man as follows: 1) Revelation (*wahy*); 2) Wisdom (*ḥikmah*); 3) Intuition (*ilhām*); and 4) Knowledge ('*ilm*).⁵

1 S.M.N. al-Attas, "The Nature of Man and the Psychology of the Human Soul," Chapter IV in his *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam: An Exposition of the Fundamental Elements of the Worldview of Islam* (first impression, Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 1995; reprinted Johor Bharu: Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) Publishing, 2014), 143. Hereafter cited as *Prolegomena*.

2 Qur'an (33):21. 'Surely in the Messenger of Allāh there is an excellent example for you.' Translation is based on Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*.

3 Qur'an (17):39. 'This is part of the wisdom which your Lord has revealed to you 'O Prophet'. And do not set up any other god with Allāh 'O humanity', or you will be cast into Hell, blameworthy, rejected.'

4 See Fazlur Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1958), 36.

5 See below the table with Qur'anic verses on page 9 to 14 that list the said differential in knowledge in relation to the *qalb* as the organ for spiritual cognition. See also al-Attas, *The Oldest Known Malay Manuscript: A*

Etymologically, knowing is to perceive [a thing] and to have knowledge (*ma'rifah*) of it, as the theologians (*Ahl al-Kalām*) say: "That [the meaning of] mystical intuition ('*irfān*) and illuminative knowledge (*ma'rifah*) is the grasp of knowledge over the objects of knowledge." Therefore, the antonym of knowledge ('*ilm*) is ignorance (*jahl*). As for knowing ('*ilm*), according to the Law, it is to have firm conviction that a thing is known; to conclude that the knowledge of it is attained; and that it [the knowledge of the thing attained] is certain and confirmed with strong belief (*i'tiqād*) without a trace of doubt in it.⁶

The difference between knowledge ('*ilm*) and illuminative knowledge (*ma'rifah*) is that knowledge is general ('*āmm*) while illuminative knowledge is specific (*khāṣṣ*). This means knowledge ('*ilm*) is superior to illuminative knowledge (*ma'rifah*) because knowledge ('*ilm*) is to know [both] the general (*mujmal*) as well as the particular (*mufaṣṣal*), while illuminative knowledge (*ma'rifah*) is to have knowledge of only the particular (*mufaṣṣal*). This is so because when a person recognizes something, [initially] his knowledge does not encompass the thing recognized [in its entirety]; but when he recognizes something such that his knowledge encompasses it [in its entirety], he is thus said to have knowledge of it. As al-Junayd⁷ says, "Knowledge ('*ilm*) is higher in rank compared to illuminative knowledge (*ma'rifah*); it is superior and more comprehensive and more perfect; hence, the Truth Most Exalted is referred to as '*Ālim* and not as '*Ārif*, which explains what is said in the Qur'an: "That those whom God has given knowledge are in ranks (as opposed to those whom He has not given knowledge)"⁸—thus, His command to Prophet Muḥammad (may God shower His blessings and peace be upon him), "Say, O Muḥammad, 'O my Lord, advance me in knowledge.'"⁹ According to al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, this knowledge is *ma'rifah*, the knowledge of the reality of things.¹⁰

The heart of the Prophet being the crucible and receptacle for the highest knowledge,

16th Century Malay Translation of 'Aqāid Al-Nasafī (Kuala Lumpur: Department of Publication, University of Malaya, 1988), 50; in his *Islām and the Philosophy of Science*, in *Prolegomena*, 121; and in his *On Justice and the Nature of Man*, (Kuala Lumpur: IBFIM, 2015), 10.

6 M. Z. Uthman, *Laṭā'if al-Asrār li-Ahl Allāh al-Aṭyār of Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānūrī* (Kuala Lumpur: UTM Press, 2011), 202. Hereafter cited as *Laṭā'if al-Asrār*.

7 He is Junayd al-Baghdādī, whose full name is Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd b. Muḥammad (d. 297/919). His ancestors came from Nahāwand, but he was born in Baghdad, 'Iraq. He is learned in the legal school of Abū Thaur and used to dispense legal judgements, having followed this madhhab in the circle of Abū Thaur even at the young age of twenty. See Abu al-Qasim al-Qushayri, *Risālah Qushayriyyah*, trans. by Alexander D. Knysh (Reading: Garnet Publishing Limited, 2007), 320f; see also A. H. Abdel Kader's *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd* (London: Luzac & Company, 1962).

8 Qur'an: Āl 'Imrān (58): 11.

9 Qur'an: Ta Ḥa (20): 114.

10 See al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1992), 580.

namely revelation, is corroborated in the following verse: “فَأَيُّهُ نَزَّلَهُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ” He revealed it, the Qur’ān unto your heart.” Al-Baqarah (2): 97; also (26): 194).

Al-Ghazali, in his *‘Ajāib al-Qalb*, states that the heart has the capacity to receive the true nature of reality in all things.¹¹ The realities of all things are known to God in His Consummate Knowledge, and they are in His Hidden Knowledge, metaphorically referred to as written on the Preserved Tablet (*Lawḥ Maḥfūz*); they are perceived by the hearts by virtue of *kashf*, unveiling, through illumination of the heart. Thus, knowledge of this nature which is referred to as *‘ilm al-ladunni*, a kind of illuminative knowledge from on high and so too knowledge in general are described as light, with God being the Ultimate Light of the Universe.¹² The reality of things are the *ḥaqā’iq* or the “*māhiyyah*” of things and the origin of this term can be traced to a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet, according to Al-Attas. He says:

Māhiyyah is a compound of the Arabic words *mā* (what is) and *hiya* (it). In a *ḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet, in which he who may God bless and give peace is reported to have said: “O God, show me things as they really are” (*Allahumma arinī al-ashyā’a kamā hiya*), *mā hiya* refers to the realities (*ḥaqā’iq*) of things; thing as they really are in themselves—their real essences. We are of the view that the concept *māhiyyah* as developed later by the philosophers is ultimately derived from this *ḥadīth*. In *Ṣūfī* literature in Malay *ada* also translates *māhiyyah* and *huwiyyah*, both key elements in the conceptual structure of *wujūd* and *mawjūd*.¹³ In point of fact, *ḥaqā’iqah*, *māhiyyah*, and *huwiyyah* all refer to the same reality, that is, to that which constitutes the identity of a thing: the real essence (*‘ayn*), or very self (*nafs: diri*) of a thing.¹⁴

The reception in the heart of the true nature of reality of things is through *kashf* or unveiling, an act of illuminating the heart (*tanwīr al-qalb*)¹⁵ with the imprints transferred from the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūz*). It can occur as fast as a flash of lightning or delayed, extended and continuous up to a certain point, although this is most rare. Intuition

(*ilhām*)¹⁶ does not differ, from the acquisition aspect, as regards the knowledge itself, its seat and its cause, namely the heart (*qalb*) and God respectively. It differs only in the removal of the veil, for this is not accomplished by man’s volition because it is dependent on one’s stations and states.¹⁷ Intuition, in a manner of speaking, may not appear as different from prophetic inspiration (*wahy*) in any of these respects, namely the seat being the *qalb* (as stated above) and God the Almighty as the cause.¹⁸ The main difference between intuition and prophetic inspiration is in the matter of the vision of the accompanying angel at the imparting of that knowledge in prophetic inspiration; we base our reasoning on the following verse of the Qur’ān: “And it is not for any human being that God should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a partition or that He sends a messenger [an angel] to reveal, by His permission, what He wills (42: 51).”¹⁹

The final Prophet (pbuh) is gifted with the closest proximity to the Angel Gabriel, the likes of which is not granted to any other Prophets before him.²⁰ Al-Qaṣṣallānī explains this unique aspect of the Prophet at length in his commentary on the very event of the Prophet receiving the first Revelation:²¹

The Messenger (pbuh) said [in relation to his encounter with Jibrīl], “He took hold of me,” which means Jibrīl (فغطني) “held me tightly,” that is to say, Jibrīl hugged the Messenger Ṣ.A.W, and pressed him. According to al-Ṭabarī, to replace ت with ط in (فغطني) gives the meaning, “he pressed me” to the point of constriction of breath, “to the point where it reached my utmost”, that is to say, he was held so tightly and strongly secured to the point that he reached his utmost extreme limit of capacity. [On the contrary] in the commentary of *al-Mishkāt* (referring to al-Ṭībī’s commentary of *al-Mishkāt al-Maṣābīh*), the meaning of this is that Jibrīl was the one who has reached his utmost degree of capacity. [However] al-Tūrbushtī added [by following up the argument] “that Jibrīl was the one who held [the Messenger] until he reached his limit and none of his power left”, [further saying] that:

16 See the definition given by Sayyid Sharif al-Jurjānī, *al-Ta’rīfāt* (Cairo: Maṭba’ah Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa Awlāduhu, 1938), 28.

17 See our discussion on *Stations and States* in page 15 below.

18 Refer also the story of Umm Mūsā in Qur’ān (28): 7 and the definition of *al-ḥadīth al-qudsī* in al-Jurjānī, *al-Ta’rīfāt*, 74.

19 Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb Sharḥ ‘Ajāib al-Qalb*, trans. by Walter James Skellie, *The Marvels of the Heart* (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2010), 52-53.

20 al-Qaṣṣallānī’s *Irshād al-Sārī fī Sharḥ Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 10 vols. (Cairo: Maṭba’ah al-Kubrā al-Amīriyyah, 1323 H), 1: 63, 6: 202-206.

21 *Ibid.*, 1: 63-64.

11 Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ‘Ajā’ib al-Qalb* from *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, 10 vols. (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2011), 5: 67-68.

12 There are many veils of light that account for the different levels and ranks of those illuminated and gifted with knowledge. See al-Ghazali, in *Niche of Lights (Mishkāt al-Anwār)*, parallel English-Arabic text translated by David Buchman (Utah: Brigham University Press, 1999), 9-10.

13 For a semantic analysis of the concepts of *wujūd*, *ada*, and *diri* in *Ṣūfī* literature in Malay, with particular reference to the writings of al-Fanṣūrī, see Al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Ḥamzah Fanṣūrī* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1970), ch. V.

14 See Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Commentary on the Hujjat al-Siddiq* (Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Culture Malaysia, 1986), 230. See further, for example, definitions of the technical terms of the *Ṣūfīs* and the *Mutakallimūn* in al-Jurjānī as referred by al-Attas in *Ta’rīfāt*, pp. 235-236; al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-‘Aqā’id*, 16-17; al-Taḥānawī, *Kashshāf*, V, pp. 1084-1085, in ff. 221.

15 Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma’ fī al-Taṣawwuf*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1963), 428.

this statement is not accurate since the nature of human body cannot overpower the strength of the angel (*quwwah malakiyyah*) to the point of exhaustion, especially when it has been shown earlier that [the Messenger] was shivering and in a state of fear and trembling, therefore the one who narrated it in *naṣab* can perhaps be doubted. Al-Ṭibī [however] answered that the state of Jibrīl when he was holding tightly [the Messenger] is actually not in his actual form (*ṣūratihī al-ḥaqīqiyyah*) when he is being manifest at the *Sidrat al-Muntahā*. Therefore the meaning of “he reached his utmost degree of capacity” is in relation to the [specific] form manifested when Jibrīl held the Messenger tightly and with that it suffices to clear away any confusion. (The Angel Gabriel is in a human form; and in human form, he is of a lower rank to that of the Prophet—*emphasis mine*).

“Then he let loose of me and [or release me],” that is to say, to set him free from the engagement. “Then he said, ‘read’, and I said,” according to Abū Dhar and Abū al-Waqt and al-Aṣīlī...and then I replied,” “I am not from among those who read’, and he grabbed me again and embraced me the second time, again to the point where it reached my utmost,” “Then he let loose of me again, and repeated ‘read’, to which I replied ‘I am not among those who read’, and he took hold of me and embraced me the third time.” This strong embrace of the Messenger (pbuh) by the Angel Gabriel is to free him from preoccupation with the matters of this world, and to prepare him to receive with his whole being what he is about to experience. It was repeated [three times] for intensification. This incident is used as proof for the educators not to hit a young child more than three times. [And among the other views], it is said (*qīla*) that the first embrace is to free him from the preoccupation with worldly matters; the second is to prepare him for what will be revealed unto him; and the third is to emphasize the degree of intimacy between him Ṣ.A.W. and Jibrīl (*li al-muā’nasah*), without mentioning any effort (*al-juhd*) here anymore, at this third time.

This matter [concerning the Prophet] was attested to be true based on the *tafsīr*. Some considered that this is among the many special qualities given or accorded to the Messenger (pbuh) that were not given to any other Prophets at the commencement of receiving revelations.

Al-Attas defines *waḥy* as “the speech of God concerning Himself, His creation, the relation between them, and the way to salvation communicated to His chosen Prophet and has represented in words, then conveyed by the Prophet to mankind in linguistic form, new

in nature yet comprehensible, without confusion with the Prophet’s own subjectivity and cognitive imagination.”²² The heart of the Prophet receives revelation, but the prophetic intellect does not perform any of its operations on the received revelation—neither estimation nor imagination, the intelligential capacity is arrested, kept solemn yet informed by this revelation because the heart of the Prophet is endowed with a faculty of higher operation for spiritual cognition of the highest actuality; thus revelation as the Prophet receives it is not a product of intellection. The heart (*qalb*) is connected with the imaginative faculty of the soul,²³ and the power of imagination is not equal in men as it differs according to their degrees of intellectual, spiritual excellence and nobility of the soul. This brings us to discuss the relationship of the revelation to the heart as a spiritual faculty.

II. REVELATION (AL-WAḤY) AND THE HEART (AL-QALB)

The Qur’ān, as Revelation in words, is written in letters. According to al-Attas, the Arabic of the Qur’ān, “its interpretation in the Tradition, and its authentic and authoritative usage throughout the ages establishes the validity of that language to a degree of eminence in serving to describe reality and truth,”²⁴ hence “language reflects ontology.”²⁵ As Jāmī explained in his *Naqḍ al-Nuṣūṣ*, “The reality of the letters, is the *Alif* that takes different forms with various shapes depending on the [types and] levels of speech and writing.”²⁶ He proceeds to further explain:²⁷

The meaning of *Alif* at the level of Speech is the absolute-non-determined voice elongation, dependent on a certain point of articulatory phonetics (*makhraj*: points of articulation of letters) and not the non-existence of it. And the meaning of *Alif* at the written level is the non-determined elongation of the script in specific shape from various shapes of the letters, and not the non-existence of it.

22 Ibid., 6.

23 Al-Attas, *Prolegomena*, 170.

24 *Prolegomena*, 6.

25 *Prolegomena*, 20.

26 Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī, *Naqḍ al-Nuṣūṣ fi sharḥ Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*, ed. W. Chittick & S. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Āshtiyānī (Tehran: Mu’assasat Muṭāla’āt Taḥqīqāt Farhang, 1370), 68-69.

27 Ibid., 68.

For him whom Allāh unveils the nature of the reality of Absolute Existence, he will have no need to exert his effort in acquiring the knowledge of the realities of existences—like those who have no need to learn the realities of the letters after he has experienced a vision on the reality of *Alif*.

Know that the Realities at the degree of Knowledge, when they are viewed without their states, they are called as *Hurūf Ghaybiyyah* (the Unseen Letters), and if they are viewed together with their states, they are *Kalimāt Ghaybiyyah* (the Unseen Words). For the Existential Realities, or the Realities at the degree of Existence, when they are viewed without their states, called *Hurūf Wujūdiyyah* (the Existential Letters), and together with their states, as *Kalimāt Wujūdiyyah* (the Existential Words). A proper term designating the two in one [clear] sentence is “āyat”; and [a proper term] to designate the comprehensive part aspect of those sentences is “Sūrah”; and [a proper term] to designate the whole intelligibles or existents from the point of view of their differentiated aspect (*tafsīl*) is “*Furqān*”; and from the point of view of their comprehensiveness, their gathering together into a unified whole, it is “Qur’ān”. And for their comprehensiveness [contained within] the *al-Insān al-Kāmil* (Perfect Man), referring to his very self, and according to designation revealed by *al-Ḥaqq*, it is also called as “Qur’ān”.²⁸

When you know that, therefore we say that, the *mu’jizah* (lit. miracle) which signifies the Prophethood of the Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) is the Qur’ān, and that the Qur’ān is the very essence of his self and his reality—in consideration of the aspect of its comprehensiveness—which brings all realities together into a unified whole, or any expression described by *al-Ḥaqq* which signify the nature of that kind of comprehensiveness to the Prophet s.a.w. Whatever it is, he is the one who was given *mu’jizah*, therefore there is no other reality that possesses [this kind] of comprehensiveness because: all the realities being contained in the *Ḥaqīqah Muḥammadiyyah* (the Reality of Muḥammad) are [almost] similar as to the “parts” contained in the “whole”. There are also no other Books (*lā li kitāb min al-kutub*) which have this degree of comprehensiveness, and indeed it is the only Book, namely the Qur’ān which epitomizes the Unity of all books of divinity. It was reported that the Prophet (pbuh) has stated that, Allāh has sent down one hundred and four books from the Heaven and deposited the knowledge of those one hundred books into four: the Tawrah, Injil, Zabūr and Furqān. Then Allāh deposited

28 Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī, *Naqd al-Nuṣūṣ fi sharḥ Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*, ed. W. Chittick & S. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Āshiyānī (Tehran: Mu’assasat Muṭāla’āt Taḥqīqāt Farhang, 1370), 274.

the knowledge contained in the four books in the Qur’ān, and after that, the summation of the whole knowledge in its differentiated aspect contained in the Qur’ān into each and every sūrah in the Qur’ān, which is in turn deposited [and summated] into the *al-Fātiḥah*. For those who know the meaning of *al-Fātiḥah*, know the meanings of the whole revealed books.”²⁹

At this point, it is best to explain the epithet *Rasul Ummī*, as the Prophet is also described as the Unlettered Prophet. Al-Ghazālī says:

...Because it was not within the power of human beings, [in their writings] to combine the succinctness of the phrases of the Qur’ān and the smoothness of its style (notwithstanding the richness of the Qur’ān in narratives of early history and the fact that the Prophet himself was unlettered (*ummī*) and was not trained or unfamiliar with books) with the prediction of future unknown events, the subsequent occurrence of which established the truthfulness of the Prophet...”³⁰

The Prophet is reported to have said, “I was appointed a Prophet while Adam was still in between water and clay,”³¹ referring to the epithets of *Nūr Muḥammad* or *Ḥaqīqah Muḥammadiyyah*, the level in which Revelation was gifted to him. The Prophet knows his reality, his station and rank above all others, because on the Day of *Alastu*, where all the progeny of Adam were gathered to testify on the Lordship of the Creator. The unison reply in the plural “We testify” points to the recognition and acknowledgement of individual differences among sentient creatures of God.³² At this manifest human level of existence, that unique quality is explained by Shāh Walī Allāh thus:

29 Ibid., 275.

30 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, 10 vols. (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2011), 1: 417. Trans. Nabih Amin Faris, *The Foundations of the Article of Faith* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf), 90-91.

31 The ḥadīth reads “*Kuntu nabiyyan wa Ādam bayna al-mā’ wa al-ṭīn*”, can be found in variations of lafz and among them, as mentioned by al-Qasṭallānī in *al-Mawāhib al-Ladunniyyah*, ed. Sāliḥ Aḥmad al-Shāmī (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 2004), 1: 58-59, was narrated by Imām Aḥmad in his *Musnad*, al-Bukhārī in his *Tārīkh*, and Abū Nu’aym in *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā’*.

32 Qur’ān (7): 172. For further details see the commentary given by Al-Ālūsī in his tafsīr, *Rūḥ al-Ma’ānī fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm wa al-Sab’ al-Mathānī*, 30 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1970), 9: 103-108.

While [for] the knowledge of the Holy Prophet, the interpretation (*ta'wīl*) for its origin (*uṣūl*) involves a few things: [One of it is] there was an imprinted [natural] correspondence (*munāsabah jibilliyyah*) between the Holy Prophet and the Sublime Assembly (*Mala' al-A'lā*) from the aspect of his higher rational soul, and the [second] is the 'mixture' (*mizāj*) of his human constitution that was moulded in a state of equilibrium, necessitating the emergence of the excellent virtues and characters (*akhlāq fāḍilah*). Besides, the condition that these two [higher rational soul and his mixture] were gathered together is only a matter of language (i.e. consensus).³³

It is here that the verses of *Sūrah al-Kahf* and *al-Fuṣṣilat* come to mind:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ

Say: "I am but a man like yourselves, (but) the Revelation has come to me"³⁴

As we have stated earlier, Revelation is revealed to his heart; in *Sūrah al-Ḥaṣhr*, it is clear that the verse "Had We sent down this Qur'an on a mountain, verily, thou wouldst have seen it humble itself and cleave asunder for fear of Allah"³⁵ is a testimony to the whole strength of the person of the Prophet, whose constitution as a human is over and above that of Angel Gabriel, whose energy was spent to the point of exhaustion at the event of the Prophet's receiving Revelation.³⁶

Based on the discussion above on the function of the heart as the spiritual organ for cognition, we now proceed to say that certainty (*yaqīn*) resides in the heart rather than the intellect, which corresponds with the degrees of certainty as classified in the Qur'an, namely certainty derived from knowledge (*'ilm al-yaqīn*), certainty derived from witnessing (*'ayn al-yaqīn*) and certainty derived from experience of the truth (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*). The final certainty is that which is affirmed in the heart, rendering calmness, peace, and gives solace in man.

33 Shāh WaliyulLāh al-Dihlawī, *Ta'wīl al-Aḥādīth*, ed. Ghulam Muṣṭafā al-Qāsimī (Hyderabad: The Academy of Shāh WaliyulLāh al-Dihlawī, 1966), 76.

34 Qur'an (18): 110; also in Qur'an (41): 6. (Translation is based on Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*).

35 Qur'an (59): 21.

36 See also the explanations by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawwānī, *Ḥaqqīqat al-Insān wa al-Rūh al-Jawwāl fī al-'Awālim*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Azhariyyah li al-Turāth, 2006), 15.

We have established the primacy of the *qalb* as the spiritual organ of cognition. The following table lists all the verses of the Qur'an related to guidance (*hidāyah*), certainty (*yaqīn*), illuminative knowledge (*ma'rifah*), faith (*īmān*), happiness (*sa'adah*), and peace (*salim*, or *sakīnah*) and the negative aspects of the *qalb* in relation to these qualities.

	Chapter and Verse no.	Translation (Yusuf 'Ali)	Qurā'nic verse
1.	<i>Al-Baqarah</i> (2:97)	Say: Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel for he brings down the (revelation) to thy heart by God's will a confirmation of what went before and guidance and glad tidings for those who believe.	قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِجِبْرِيلَ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ عَلَىٰ قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ
2.	<i>Al-Baqarah</i> (2:204)	There is the type of man whose speech about this world's life may dazzle thee and he calls God to witness about what is in his heart ; yet is he the most contentious of enemies.	وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيُشْهَدُ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا فِي قَلْبِهِ وَهُوَ أَلَدُّ الْخِصَامِ
3.	<i>Al-Baqarah</i> (2:260)	Behold! Abraham said: "My Lord! Show me how thou givest life to the dead. He said: "Dost thou not then believe?" He said: "Yea! But to satisfy my own understanding ." He said: "Take four birds; tame them to turn to thee; put a portion of them on every hill and call to them; they will come to thee (flying) with speed. Then know that God is Exalted in Power Wise."	وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ ۖ قَالَ أَوَلَمْ تُؤْمِنْ ۖ قَالَ بَلَىٰ وَلَٰكِن يَّظُنُّنَّ قَلْبِي ۖ قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ أَجْعَلْ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْيًا ۚ وَأَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

4.	<i>Al-Baqarah</i> (2:283)	If ye are on a journey and cannot find a scribe, a pledge with possession (may serve the purpose). And if one of you deposits a thing on trust with another let the trustee (faithfully) discharge his trust and let him fear his Lord. Conceal not evidence; for whoever conceals it his heart is tainted with sin. And God knoweth all that ye do.	وَأِنْ كُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ وَلَمْ تَجِدُوا كَاتِبًا فَرِهْلُمْ مَقْبُوضَةً فَإِنْ أَمِنَ بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا فَلْيُؤَدِّ الَّذِي أُؤْتِمِنَ أَمَانَتَهُ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ وَلَا تَكْتُمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ وَمَنْ يَكْتُمْهَا فَإِنَّهُ آتِمٌ قَلْبُهُ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ
5.	' <i>Ali 'Imrān</i> (3:159)	It is part of the Mercy of God that thou dost deal gently with them. Wert thou severe or harsh-hearted they would have broken away from about thee; so pass over (their faults) and ask for (God's) forgiveness for them; and consult them in affairs (of moment). Then when thou hast taken a decision put thy trust in God. For God loves those who put their trust (in Him).	فَمَا رَحْمَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ لَئِنْ لَمْ تُكُنْ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَأَفَضْتَهُ مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ
6.	<i>Al-Anfāl</i> (8:24)	O ye who believe! Give your response to Allah and His Messenger, when He calleth you to that which will give you life; and know that Allah cometh in between a man and his heart , and that it is He to Whom ye shall (all) be gathered.	يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَأَنَّهُ إِلَهِهُ تُخْشَرُونَ
7.	<i>Al-Tawbah</i> (9:48)	Indeed they had plotted sedition before and upset matters for thee until the Truth arrived, and the Decree of Allah became manifest much to their disgust.	لَقَدْ ائْتَعَوْا الْفِتْنَةَ مِن قَبْلُ وَقَلَّبُوا لَكَ الْأُمُورَ حَتَّىٰ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَظَهَرَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ وَهُمْ كَارِهُونَ
8.	<i>Al-Nahl</i> (16:106)	Anyone who, after accepting faith in God, utters Unbelief,—except under compulsion, His heart remaining firm in Faith—but such as open their breast to Unbelief,— On them is Wrath from God, And theirs will be a dreadful Penalty.	مَنْ كَفَرَ بِاللَّهِ مِن بَعْدِ إِيمَانِهِ إِلَّا مَن أُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَكِن مَّن شَرَحَ بِالْكَفْرِ صَدْرًا فَعَلَيْهِمْ عَذَابٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

9.	<i>Al-Kahf</i> (18:28)	And keep thy soul content with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His Face; and let not thine eyes pass beyond them, Seeking the pomp and glitter of this Life; nor obey any whose heart We have permitted to neglect the remembrance of Us, One who follows his own Desires, whose case has Gone beyond all bounds.	وَأَصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْعَدْوَةِ وَالْعَتَمِ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَن ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا
10.	<i>Al-Shu'arā'</i> (26:89)	"But only he (will prosper) that brings to Allah a sound heart ;	إِلَّا مَنْ آتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ
11.	<i>Al-Shu'arā'</i> (26:194)	To thy heart and mind, that thou mayest admonish.	عَلَىٰ قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ
12.	<i>Al-Qasaṣ</i> (28:10)	But there came to be a void in the heart of the mother of Moses: She was going almost to disclose his (case), had We not strengthened her heart (with faith) , so that she might remain a (firm) believer.	وَأَصْبَحَ فُؤَادُ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ فَارِغًا إِنْ كَادَتْ لَتُبْدِي بِهِ لَوْلَا أَن رَّبَطْنَا عَلَىٰ قَلْبِهَا لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
13.	<i>Al-Aḥzāb</i> (33:4)	Allah has not made for any man two hearts in his (one) body: nor has He made your wives whom ye divorce by <i>Zihar</i> your mothers: nor has He made your adopted sons your sons. Such is (only) your (manner of) speech by your mouths. But Allah tells (you) the Truth, and He shows the (right) Way.	مَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِّن قَلْبَيْنِ فِي جَوْفِهِ وَمَا جَعَلَ أَرْوَاحَكُمْ أَلْسِنِي تَطَاهَرُونَ مِنْهُنَّ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ أَدْعِيَاءَكُمْ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ ذَلِكُمْ قَوْلُكُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَقُولُ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ يَهْدِي السَّبِيلَ
14.	<i>Al-Aḥzāb</i> (33:32)	O Consorts of the Prophet! Ye are not like any of the (other) women: if ye do fear (Allah), be not too complacent of speech, lest one in whose heart is a disease should be moved with desire: but speak ye a speech (that is) just.	يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَاءِ إِنْ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَحْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا

15.	<i>Al-Şaffāt</i> (37:84)	Behold! he approached his Lord with a sound heart .	إِذْ جَاءَ رَبَّهُ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ
16.	<i>Al-Ghāfir</i> (40:35)	"(Such) as dispute about the Signs of Allah, without any authority that hath reached them, grievous and odious (is such conduct) in the sight of Allah and of the Believers. Thus doth Allah, seal up every heart - of arrogant and obstinate Transgressors."	الَّذِينَ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي آيَاتِ اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ سُلْطَانٍ أَتَاهُمْ كَبِيرًا مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَعِنْدَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ۗ كَذَلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ قَلْبٍ مُتَكَبِّرٍ جَبَّارًا
17.	<i>Al-Shūrā</i> (42:24)	What! Do they say, "He has forged a falsehood against Allah"? But if Allah willed, He could seal up thy heart . And Allah blots out Vanity, and proves the Truth by His Words. For He knows well the secrets of all hearts.	أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا ۗ فَإِن يَشَاءِ اللَّهُ يَخْتَمِ عَلَىٰ قَلْبِكَ ۗ وَيَمْحُ اللَّهُ الْبَلْطِلَ وَيُجِئُ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتٍ ۗ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ
18.	<i>Al-Jāthiyah</i> (45:23)	Then seest thou such a one as takes as his god his own vain desire? Allah has, knowing (him as such), left him astray, and sealed his hearing and his heart (and understanding) , and put a cover on his sight. Who, then, will guide him after Allah (has withdrawn Guidance)? Will ye not then receive admonition?	أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِ ۖ وَقَلْبِهِ ۖ وَجَعَلَ عَلَىٰ بَصَرِهِ عَشْرًا ۗ فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اللَّهِ ۗ أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ
19.	<i>Qāf</i> (50:33)	"Who feared (Allah) Most Gracious Unseen, and brought a heart turned in devotion (to Him):	مَنْ خَشِيَ الرَّحْمَنَ الْعَلِيمَ ۖ وَجَاءَ بِقَلْبٍ مُنِيبٍ
20.	<i>Qāf</i> (50:37)	Verily in this is a Message for any that has a heart and understanding or who gives ear and earnestly witnesses (the truth).	إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرًا لِمَنْ كَانَ لَهُ قَلْبٌ أَوْ أَلْقَى السَّمْعَ وَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ
21.	<i>Al-Taghābun</i> (64:11)	No kind of calamity can occur, except by the leave of Allah: and if any one believes in Allah, (Allah) guides his heart (aright) : for Allah knows all things.	مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَمَنْ يُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ قَلْبَهُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

We have mentioned earlier that the soul, via its cognitive and articulate powers of the intellect, apprehends the meaning of universals and employs its intelligential capacities towards that purpose.³⁷ We have also established in the foregoing discussion that the heart (*al-qalb*), as a faculty³⁸ of the soul, is the seat of “firm believing” (*īmān*); it confirms and affirms the truth and the higher spiritual truths by *taṣdīq*.³⁹ According to al-Attas, the heart is also “the intellect (*al-ʿaql*) operating at a higher, spiritual level of experience,”⁴⁰ and at the higher, spiritual level or transcendental order, “the rational has merged with the intellectual, and the empirical with what pertains to authentic spiritual experiences such as inner witnessing (*shuhūd*), tasting (*dhawq*), presence (*ḥuḍūr*) and other interrelated states of trans-empirical awareness (*aḥwāl*).”⁴¹ Now that we have established the human heart (*qalb*) as the spiritual faculty in relation to the Revelation, we would like to show how it raises within the levels (stations) of spiritual knowledge.

III. STATIONS AND STATES OF THE HEART

The trans-empirical states of awareness of the heart are referred to as stations (Ar. pl. *maqāmāt*) and states (Ar. pl. *aḥwāl*) among the Sufis—they are the life or activities of the heart. At lower degrees, they afford the subject with a quality of knowledge commensurate

37 See our previous article in this journal, M. Z. Uthman, “Al-Attas on Action, Thinking Framework, and the Human Soul,” *IJAPA*, Vol. 13, 1 (January 2020), 43-68. See also Illustration 2 on page 52.

38 The heart is a faculty because it has its own level of *quwwah* and activity. It is an aspect of the soul with its own heightened faculty, it is intellect functioning at a higher level. Unlike what is delineated by Aristotle who said that imagination is neither a faculty nor activity, the heart is not one of the internal senses of the soul. The heart has its own activity and that it performs such activity because of its being a faculty.

39 It receives guidance (*hidāyah*) when it is so rightly prepared; it is gifted with *maʿrifah* when it strives for it deservedly, and the heart informs the intellectual aspect of the soul, namely the cognitive and the articulative powers to acquiesce and assent to the guidance of higher realities and spiritual truths. The Qurʾān describes this as, “He guides his heart” (64): 11 and the soul which assented to the higher realities and spiritual truths thus attain a degree of tranquility, as described in the Qurʾān as “those whose hearts are compensated with peace and tranquility in remembrance of God,” (13): 28.

40 Al-Attas, *Commentary*, 131. It is a commonly held misunderstanding that the heart, the soul, the intellect and the spirit are different entities associated with man. Here, Al-Attas makes the distinction in his thesis in that these terms are referring not to separate entities acting independently in man; rather, they are one and the same reality of man, and each one of them is referred to when the soul directs its attention to the kind of activity that is entertained.

41 *Ibid.*, 135.

with its appropriate nature and attribute—its capacity (*wus'*). This is what is referred to, in the philosophers' parlance, as knowledge arriving at the conjunction or union of the knower and the known via knowledge.⁴² Whereas at higher degrees of knowledge—to be sure, along the experiences of illuminative knowledge (*ma'rifah*) and guidance (*hidāyah*) that is of higher rank and in varying degrees, depending on the quality of the spiritual predisposition (*wus'*) of the subject—spiritual cognition (*ma'rifah*) is attained. It is the heart, the heightened intellect, that attains to the truth of higher realities and other higher spiritual truths—in a manner described by al-Attas' usage of the term 'intussusception' to describe, by way of analogy, the soul's active *wuṣūl* at meaning, that is, "the soul's 'taking in' of what has come from outside itself and 'assimilating' it into a system of relation with other meanings that are already present in the soul."⁴³ Thus, meaning as denoted by "*ma'nā*" is a form in both the sensitive and rational imagination of the intellect; in the soul's act of intellection, it identifies "*ma'nā*" as something sensible or intelligible placed in relation to other such things forming a network of a complex whole. This allows the soul to recognize the place of anything in a system, occurring within the relation a thing has with others in the system, thus clarifying it to the understanding. This is the intrinsic connection between meaning and knowledge. In such wise, "concepts of objects and concepts of concepts, their relations and associations, judgments about them involving discrimination and clarification become ever increasing knowledge."⁴⁴

Spiritual cognition attained via illuminative knowledge (*ma'rifah*) is a certain gifted knowledge from on high (*'ilm ladunnī*) that is not characteristically derived through reasoning and logical ratiocination. Figuratively, the experience of attaining to or receiving that gifted knowledge is referred to as 'union' with the Truth Most Exalted, and that state of realization (*tahqīq*) comes about as the servant (*'abd*) attains to illuminative knowledge and unification (*tawhīd*). Such an experience is privileged to those who exert the utmost effort in attaining to all the stations (*segala maqām*). According to al-Rānīrī, stations serve as the foundation for progress along the spiritual path⁴⁵ which may eventually lead to union (*tawhīd*).

What is metaphorically referred to as 'union' or 'arrival' is the state achieved by the servant

who experiences and sees with his inner spiritual vision the gathering (*jam'*) as he passes away.⁴⁶ In this state, "at the very essence of gathering (*'ayn jam'*), there is nothing but He",⁴⁷ meaning, the Multiplicity is seen converging into One Single Reality, a Unity. Multiplicity refers to what is posited in the mind of all limited manifestation (*wujūd muqayyad*) as Existence becomes manifest through self-manifestation (*tajallī*) and determinations or individuations (*ta'ayyunāt*).⁴⁸ All that can be found in existence (*mawjūd*) is but God's Existence particularized in every concrete existence (*wujūd 'aynī*) which is also referred to as possible existence.⁴⁹ Possible existence belongs to Necessary Existence, which is His Essence. Since everything that exists are but His theaters of manifestation (*maḥḥar*),⁵⁰ they are His outward manifestation, without incarnation (*ḥulūl*) or union (*ittiḥād*). During this experience, the servant's focused concentration (*tawajjuh*), says Rānīrī, it is the servant's heart⁵¹ with its faculties⁵² that holds its attention, a fixed gaze, on the Truth Most Exalted, and by turning away from what is other than He, the servant is made to pass away in God (*fanā' fī Allāh*) and to subsist in God (*baqā' bi Allāh*).⁵³ According to Rānīrī, those who in their contemplation have come to a state of realization that all things are but His theaters of manifestation (sing. *maḥḥar*) and self-manifestations (*tajallī*), and that He becomes outwardly manifest in them without incarnation or union, arrive at that state in their spiritual ascent either as travellers (*sālikīn*) 'to God' or those who are being drawn to Him. Those who are drawn to God are the ones who are called the *majdhūbīn*, those who are possessed by God, who utter, "I see nothing but God prior to it."⁵⁴ Those who are possessed by God do not require help in affirming the unity of the Truth Most Exalted; in a manner of speaking, they "rely on God to prove things" for, in their view, God is more manifest than what is other than God.⁵⁵

Those who arrive at the very gathering (*'ayn jam'*) see the reality underlying existent things.⁵⁶ In the words of Junayd, affirming Divine Unity is to isolate the eternal from the

46 M. Z. Uthman, *Laṭā'if*, 70, referring to Rānīrī's subchapter on no. 28 of Affirmation of Divine Unity, 303.

47 Ibid., Affirmation of Divine Unity, 21. See also Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd & Maḥmūd al-Sharīf (Cairo: Maṭābi' Mu'assasah Dār al-Sha'b, 1989), 145.

48 Ibid., Affirming the Existence of the Truth Most Exalted, 6.

49 Ibid., Affirmation of Divine Unity, 16.

50 Ibid., Affirmation of Divine Unity, 19.

51 The spiritual organ of cognition.

52 These are the internal faculties of imagination, estimation, contemplation, reason and retention according to Rānīrī. See Illuminative Knowledge, 22. To be sure all are fixated at the witnessing of the Truth Most Exalted.

53 M.Z. Uthman, *Laṭā'if*, 71; Affirmation of Divine Unity, 17.

54 Ibid., Affirmation of Divine Unity, 19.

55 Ibid., Illuminative Knowledge, 123.

56 Ibid., Affirmation of Divine Unity, 21.

42 See also Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology*, 69.

43 Al-Attas, *On Justice and the Nature of Man*, 17.

44 Ibid.

45 It is referred to as spiritual path because at this level of operation and activity, the intellect has reached such a heightened status that the prerogative of the heart (*qalb*), as the organ for spiritual cognition, takes over and is active; the heart's activity is now rendered proximate and immediate to its fundamental spiritual state, *rūḥi* as opposed to *jasmani*. Henceforth the progress is marked and referred to as spiritual path (*ṭarīqah*, *sulūk*, etc.)

originated, meaning the Truth Most Exalted is One since eternity; He has no equal, no likeness, no partner; there is not even anything of the same kind as He;⁵⁷ there is no trace of immanence nor qualification; neither form nor similitude can be made of Him;⁵⁸ and the originated is this world of multiplicity whose existence is borrowed and reality is non-existence. Hence, “at the very essence of gathering (*‘ayn jam’*), there is nothing but He.”⁵⁹ Al-Attas describes “union” in the following:

At the level of ordinary reason and experience, the ‘known’ refers to the meaning of things, and not to the things themselves; and ‘union’ - if we apply such a term at that level does not mean union with the material objects of sense perception, but with their intelligible forms that have been abstracted by the intellect from all their characteristics of materiality. The elements of meaning derived by the intellect from the objects of sense perception are not found in the objects themselves, but are constructions of the intellect or soul as it receives illumination from the Active Intelligence. The material objects in the world of sense and sensible experience are in themselves particulars which the intellect transforms into universals: in themselves they merely provide the ground for the special occurrence that gives rise to the soul’s projection of perceptible forms from within itself. At the higher level, ‘union’ of the knower and the known means the identity of thought and being or existence. Existence has different degrees, and the Absolute Existence or the Truth has a degree unique to Himself, and a degree in relation to other than Himself. ‘Union’ refers to the latter aspect of the Truth. ‘Union’ with the Truth therefore means union not with the Truth as He is in Himself, but as He manifests Himself in the form of one of His Names and Attributes.⁶⁰

In his *Commentary on Hujjat al-Şiddiq*, al-Attas explains further that it is at this “union” that the verification of the truth as reality is experienced. This is what al-Rānīrī refers to when he says “*fa haqqaqa haqqahum haqqa al-tahqīq*,” referring to those who have attained to *baqā’* in the stage of the ‘second separation’, whose truth or real knowledge God has verified in them by making them actually experience it (i.e. *haqqaqa... haqqa al-tahqīq*).⁶¹ At this verification is the placing of secrets (*asrār*) that afford them with the gifted experience of certainty (*yaqīn*) which God favored them in varying degrees, the highest being guidance (*hidāyah*), and in yet

further of its varying degrees of attainment of illuminative knowledge (*ma’rifah*), which we have indicated earlier that that knowledge is referred to as from on high (*‘ilm ladunnī*). Those who experienced these trans-empirical states are referred to as the People of Verification (*Ahl Al-Taḥqīq*) or the People of Truth and Reality (*Ahl Al-Ḥaqq*).⁶² As they experience their reality, the knowledge that is afforded of them is their “truth” (*ḥaqq*) which “refers to the knowledge whose real content is truth of the highest degree of certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*),” the locus of which is the heart (*qalb*) because it is gained by direct experience.⁶³ Al-Attas further clarifies, “the term *ḥaqq* there is construed in the singular form, whereas it in fact refers the plural (i.e. to *hum*), the truth meant must be the same kind of truth for all of them, and that is: the Reality that Existence is the Multiplicity in the Unity, and the Unity in the Multiplicity.”⁶⁴ It is certainty (*yaqīn*) obtained from that certain knowledge of the structure of this Reality and Truth thus gained by means of direct experience, whereby they are “not to deny existence to the world together with all its parts and regard them all as sheer illusion, but to affirm instead both the Existence of God Who, as the absolute Reality underlying all creation, is called ‘the Truth’ and the existence of the creatures, not, to be sure, as independent, separate, self-subsistent entities or essences, but as so many particularized forms of the determinations or individuations (*ta’ayyunāt*) and manifestations of the Truth (*tajalliyāt*) in the context of the transcendent Unity of Existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*).”⁶⁵ This is intuition of existence (*wijdān*). Those who are privileged to experience these trans-empirical state, according to al-Attas:

62 They are so referred to in *Aqa’id Al-Nasafi* who stipulates that it is the position of the People of Truth and Reality that the realities of things are established and the knowledge concerning them can be verified. See Al-Attas, *The Oldest Known Malay Manuscript: A 16th Century Malay Translation of Aqa’id Al-Nasafi* (Kuala Lumpur: Department of Publication, University of Malaya, 1988), 47 & 65.

63 This is referred to as *dhawq*, experiential “tasting;” hence, the heart has been wrongly associated with “feeling” or emotions. This misappropriation of the heart with emotions occurs because the heart, the intellect, the soul, and the spirit are of the one and the same reality of man, each is predisposed for its appointed faculty and activity. Feeling and emotions are characteristics of the animal soul (*al-nafs al-ḥayawāniyyah*) which is charged with the maintenance of the physical body — it is the actuator to instigate motion of all physical organs internal as well as the external, thus the association of feeling or emotion with the heart although the heart, as the heightened organ for spiritual cognition, it does not possess the capacity nor the capability to initiate physical motion; its cognitive and articulative powers informs the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nātiqah*) which in turn influences the animal soul (*al-nafs al-ḥayawāniyyah*) to initiates its activity, hence, indeed it is the animal soul that controls the physical body to perform activities, and such is the case with the heart when one gives one’s “heart” or utmost focus, attention, and effort at fulfilling the initiation of intent.

64 *Commentary on the Hujjāt*, 149. This experience of witnessing *al-kathrah fi’l-wahdah* and *al-wahdah fi’l-kathrah* is the conjunction or known as *‘ayn al-jam’* as witnessing the coming into being of individuations and the returning of individuations into non-existence (*‘adam*). See about our quotation from *Laṭā’if al-Asrār*, 70-72.

65 Ibid., 149.

57 Ibid., Affirmation of Divine Unity, 23

58 Ibid., Affirmation of Divine Unity, 25.

59 Ibid., Affirmation of Divine Unity, 21.

60 *Commentary on the Hujjāt*, 136-137; see also Intuition of Existence in *Prolegomena*, 185-186.

61 *Commentary on the Hujjāt*, 149.

...were able to distinguish between the true vision of reality (*ḥaqq*) and the false vision of reality (*bāṭil*). Now the term *bāṭil* here conveys two connotations: the one refers to the ontological value of things, whether they are real or not; the other refers to belief concerning the ontological value of things, as to whether they are real or not, and its consequent projection as a religious or theological belief.⁶⁶ In the first case, and with reference to the Veracious or the Saints, we have already said that for them the things in creation are real when considered in relation to their metaphysical Source; they are not real only when they are considered in themselves as self-subsistent entities—they have no existence of their own since they have no being (*ma'dum*, sing. 'adam').⁶⁷ It is in this last sense that things are *bāṭil* because they give a false impression of being; otherwise, in the first sense, they are real (*ḥaqq*). In the second case, and still with reference to the Veracious and the Saints, they know by experience that the knowledge of God is in reality knowledge of the Self as a form of the direct self-manifestation of God by means of one of His Names or Attributes. The Self is not God as the Absolute, but it is a particularized form of the Absolute. So he who knows his Self is he who knows it to be a particularized form of the Absolute, and as such it knows God as the Absolute. The World together with all its parts, including man, also in reality consists of particularized forms of the Absolute. Thus, knowing God as the Absolute by being one of the particularized forms of the Absolute, involves knowing also the other particularized forms of the Absolute, such as the essential nature of things that constitute the world together with all its parts, including other selves. This knowledge is only possible at the ontological level of God as the Absolute; beyond that level, that is, the ontological level of God in His Essence, further knowledge is not possible for man.⁶⁸

Just as the quickness of the intellect (*hads*) differs from one person to another in arriving at meaning or for meaning to arrive in the soul in intellection, so too are stations and states (sing. *ḥāl*) of individual hearts at attaining to illuminative knowledge and “union”; that

spiritual predisposition or the capacity of individual soul (*wus'*) is not the same nor equal, and for that reason stations are acquired to commensurate effort, while states come by way of gift from the Truth Most Exalted.⁶⁹ Hence, there are people who are referred to as “the surpassing ones” (*shaṭṭār*) on account of their swift ascent (*aṭyār*) to God; and they are those whose path is called the path of Love and they are distinguished from others, namely the excellent ones (*akhyār*) and the pious ones (*abrār*), because their subjective will that is preoccupied and driven by the animal soul is completely diminished (*mawt irādī*).⁷⁰ There are many stations as one progresses in “ascension” to higher realization of spiritual truths;⁷¹ and the major ones Rānīri highlighted are ten, which are as follows:

1. The first station is repentance (*tawbah*). For the general group of believers, it is to feel utter remorse for past transgressions followed by a determination to eschew such deeds and to redeem what was lost by good works. To the elect group of believers (*khāṣṣ*) they repent not from transgression but from negligence. For them there are three degrees of repentance: repentance of the heart (*qalb*), the sign of which is to fear God's punishment; repentance of the spirit (*rūḥ*), and its sign is to hope for God's mercy; and repentance of the innermost ground of being (*sirr*) whose sign is to abandon all that is other than God.⁷² The renunciation of transgressions in terms of deeds as the lowest level of *tawbah* is akin to the abstraction of the sensibles from the physical and empirical properties of the material world; whereas the repentances of the *qalb*, the *ruh*, and the *sirr* are acts of the faculties of the soul at the heightened level, above and beyond that of the empirical world, that of the pure intelligibles in traversing and surpassing the realms of *nāsūt*, *jabarūt* and *malakūt* and eventually be in touch with realm imaginal (*ālam al-khayal*) of creative imagination.
2. The second station is temperance (*qanā'ah*) and abstinence (*wara'*). While the

69 *Laṭā'if al-Asrār*, 415. This is the first point in the chapter of Stations and States.

70 *Mawt irādī*, “willful death” is a metaphorical term referring to oft-quoted saying associated with the sufis, namely “*Mūtū qabla an tamūtu*” (render your self dead before your own mortal death). It is when the animal soul is in complete submission to the rational soul and its direction for the journey (*sulūk*) demands the animal soul to remand in abeyance to the rational soul, to be sure, that heightened intellect that has opened to the workings of the heart (*qalb*), for spiritual cognition.

71 On Stations and States, Ruzbihān Baqlī Shirāzī has written *Kitāb Mashrāb al-Arwāḥ*, or better known as *A Thousand and One Stations*. This book is divided into twenty chapters, each covering a particular station (*maqām*). Rānīri lists only ten stations in this work, and clearly this is a summary. As for states, as the saying goes, there are as many states as there are souls, those mentioned by Rānīri are not only intended as a summary but more importantly, they indicate many other noble states and stations attainable by the Ṣufis in their progress along the path.

72 *Laṭā'if al-Asrār*, 416.

66 “The term *bāṭil* conveys two connotations, referring to the ontological and theological domains respectively, because it is the contrary of the term *ḥaqq*, which means both ‘reality’ and ‘truth’, pertaining on the one hand to the ontological domain, and on the other to the theological domain, which includes the religious and ethical aspects of human life.” See *Commentary on the Hujjāt*, 150, n. 57. It is at this point of departure that the *Mutakallim* adopted the experience of the Sufi higher metaphysicians with the conclusion succinctly recorded by al-Nasafi, thus: The realities of things are established and knowledge concerning them can be verified.

67 See *Ta'rīfāt*, 243 (in the list of technical terms used by ibn 'Arabi in the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*).

68 Al-Attas, *Commentary on the Hujjāt*, 150.

servant or the traveller (*salik*) is fast in renouncing the pleasures of the carnal soul and physical body, there are limits physical and physiological to abide by and that exception is of what is humanly necessary such as food and clothing. In like manner, “temperance of the heart (*qanā’ah qalb*) is to bear with patience of things lost and its sign is to address all needs to the Truth Most Exalted”⁷³, which is to return and retain that renunciation within the domain approved by Shari’ah. The temperance of the spirit (*ruh*) is “to abandon all vain desires and its sign is to hold fast to the Speech of God,”⁷⁴ and by this is meant to return all affairs to God because it is the Speech of God from which everything ensues and takes its place in existence and returns to non-existence;⁷⁵ and temperance of the innermost ground of being (*sirr*) is to remain in continuous absorption (*karam*) in the Truth Most Exalted and its sign is the Truth Most Exalted suffices him. Abstinence is a station where the servant turns away from every diversion along the path which leads him to the station of gathering.⁷⁶

3. The third station is renunciation (*zuhd*). The servant finds his motivations in this quest not from and of this world and as it is to renounce all worldly motives, all desires and self glory. Renunciation of the generality of believers is to abstain from all forbidden things (*ḥarām*) while renunciation of the elect group of believers is to abandon excess of lawful things (*ḥalāl*) but the renunciation of the super-elect is to abandon all that preoccupies one from the Truth Most Exalted.⁷⁷ In attending to witnessing of the Truth Most Exalted, in order not to be swayed by what is other than He, that renunciation of what-is-other-than-He is paramount and this too is akin to abstracting the physical material dimensions from things observed externally to be entertained as sensibles and intelligibles in thought.
4. The fourth station is patience (*ṣabr*). The most trying of stations is where a traveler and servant must remain firm and fast on the path of religion to fight against the lust of the carnal soul by striving (*mujāhadah*) in obedience. This includes maintaining right

73 Ibid., 417.

74 Ibid.

75 When He wants to create He utters His Command (*amr*), “Be” (*kun*), and things come into existence and unto him return all affairs (*Wa ila Allāh turja’ al-umūr*), Qur’ān (2): 117, (3): 47, (3): 59, (6): 73, (16): 40, (19): 35, (36): 82, (40): 68, and Qur’ān (3): 109.

76 *Laṭā’if al-Asrār*, 417-418. This is the fifth point under the chapter Stations and States. See our explanation on gathering (*al-jam’*) as the conjunction of the witnessing of multiplicity-in-unity and unity-in-multiplicity actively replicating which requires the focused concentration (*tawajjuh*) of the traveler.

77 Ibid, 418. The sixth point of Stations and States.

action (*adab*) during times of trials, and abandoning complaints, for the one most patient is he who remains steadfast during trials and suffering from pain.⁷⁸ *Adab* or right action has two dimensions: one external and the other internal. External right action is to act in conformity with what is true and real in accordance to its degrees and ranks in reality, in conformity with the Shari’ah in compliance with the requirement of daily living (*mu’amalat*) and with the rules and regulation of religious obligation (*ibādah*); whereas internal right action is an act in keeping with the knowledge at verifying the true and real at the appropriate ranks and degrees of ontological reality based on degrees of spiritual truths and their ranks.

5. The fifth station is poverty (*faqr*). It is a station where the servant loses his subjective consciousness at the witnessing of Divine Unity (*‘ayn jam’ aḥadiyyah*), referring to a state where the servant is divested of all human attributes.⁷⁹ Real poverty is in the destitute nature of existence, of needing the gift of existence from the One True and Real Existence and the consistent subsistence of that Absolute Existence for continuance in being and existence. That state is the *fiṭrah* of all creatures of God: from *ma’dūm* to *mawjūd* and only to be returned to *ma’dūm*, all at the behest of God’s leave and mercy.
6. The sixth station is gratitude (*shukr*). According to the knowers, gratitude is a verbal declaration of all God’s blessings, to perform good service and religious obligations relating to the body. For the generality of believers, they are grateful for the physical sustenance afforded them such as food and clothing, but the elect are grateful for the meanings in their heart granted by God.⁸⁰ And those meanings are not of the same level of degree in profundity for they are gifted befitting the capacity of the souls to receive them.
7. The seventh station is fear (*khawf*). Fear has three degrees. The first, experienced by all, but mostly by the generality of the believers, is fear of punishment (*khawf*) as a consequent to the acts of transgressions against God’s established laws, rules, and regulations; it is a requirement of belief (*sharaṭ īmān*). The second is reverential fear (*khashyah*) and it is a requirement of knowledge (*sharaṭ ‘ilmu*). This is a condition for the novice on the path. As for the adept, the third is awe (*haybah*) and it is a

78 Ibid, 418-419. The seventh point.

79 Ibid., 420. The eighth point.

80 Ibid., 420-421. The ninth point.

requirement of illuminative knowledge (*ma'rifah*).⁸¹ This awe is to be maintained in the heart having experienced intuition of existence (*wijdān*) and arrival at "union" (*wiṣāl*).

8. The eighth station for the heart is hope (*rajā'*). Hope is to put hope in the Truth Most Exalted and not in His generosity.⁸² To put hope in one of His attributes is not a sign of one who has arrived, for the Truth Most Exalted will be forever hidden should one remain attracted to the effects of any of His attributes.
9. The ninth station is trust in God (*tawakkul*). The traveler abandons all worldly motives and puts his hopes only in the Truth Most Exalted. It is to be dependent on the Truth Most Exalted in all states and to renounce all causes because it is only God Who continuously acts in producing all effects.⁸³
10. The tenth station is satisfaction (*riḍā'*). The traveler abandons self-satisfaction to seek only the satisfaction of the Truth Most Exalted by submitting his self to the dictates of God. He who is pleased with the Truth Most Exalted has tasted the sweetness of faith, so says the Prophet.⁸⁴

From the station of satisfaction, humility before God (*tawāḍu'*) is achieved; for those who maintain their stations, God will grant them radiant illuminations and unveiling of illuminative knowledge from Him (*mukāshafah 'ilmu ladunnī*). A station remains with the servant all the time but states are transient. A state is granted by the Truth Most Exalted upon His servant due to good deeds. It enters the servant's heart due to his heart's condition of being pleased with God by submitting his self. His innermost ground of being is purified, his morals elevated and his grief and doubt erased. If such a state ceases, then it is not a station.⁸⁵ A station is called a station because of its establishment, whereas a state is transient and disappears. A state, if it remains, can turn into a station. According to the People of Verification, says Rānirī, states are like lightning; it does not last and it disappears almost instantly.⁸⁶ But this will lead us to self-examination which will hopefully led to such spiritual activities as remembrance, presence, unveiling, witnessing, and contemplation which we shall examine next.

81 Ibid., 421-422. The tenth point.

82 Ibid., 422. The eleventh point.

83 Ibid., 422-423, the twelfth point.

84 Ibid., Stations and States, 13.

85 Ibid., Stations and States, 16.

86 Ibid., Stations and States, 17.

IV. SELF-EXAMINATION, REMEMBRANCE, CONCENTRATION, PRESENCE, REVELATION, UNVEILING, WITNESSING, AND CONTEMPLATION

The maintenance of the stations (*maqāmāt*) requires constant care and vigilance on these various states. Self-examination is to preserve one's innermost ground of being and thoughts, realizing that the Truth Most Exalted is ever watchful over everything.⁸⁷ The servant who conducts his affairs at a degree of realization that God Sees him although he sees Him not has achieved perfection of virtue (*ihsān*).⁸⁸ The servant is aware that God is scrutinizing each and every act of his, and when he completes his self-examination, he comes to a realization of his complete dependence on God. This renders his heart pure and his carnal soul free of incitation. He becomes conscious of the closeness between him and his Lord; he who is heedless of all this, according to Rānirī, is far from attaining to the beginning stage of the rank of union (*martabat wāṣil*) and far indeed from knowing the reality of Divine proximity (*ḥaqīqat qurb*).⁸⁹

Self-examination which brings about in the servant the realization of God's scrutiny and proximity is related to piety (*taqwā*).⁹⁰ The servant who does not establish these aspects in his self shall never arrive at unveiling (*kashf*) and proper contemplation (*mushāhadah*).⁹¹ According to Jurayrī⁹², for those who intend to acquire knowledge of reality (*'ilmu ḥaqīqat*) there are two things they must have: the first is to accustom themselves with self-examination in the presence of the Truth Most Exalted, and the second is to perform the obligations of the Sacred Law (*Sharī'ah*).⁹³ There are three kinds of self-examination: the first is self-examination of the heart (*murāqabah qalb*), which is to fear the wrath of God, and its sign is to be patient over everything; the second is self-examination of the spirit (*murāqabah rūḥ*), which is to fear separation from the Truth Most Exalted, and its sign is to perform all religious obligations sincerely; and the third is self-examination of the innermost ground of being, which is to fear

87 Ibid., Conclusion, 1, 5.

88 Ibid., Conclusion, 2.

89 Ibid., Conclusion, 3.

90 Piety here means consciousness of Him.

91 Ibid., Conclusion, 4.

92 Abū Muḥammad Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Jurayrī, a scholar and also a well-known Ṣūfī of the 4th century of Hijrah. He is among the companions of the *sayyid al-tā'ifah* (the Leader of the Ṣūfīs) Junayd al-Baghdādī, who inherited knowledge and the position after the passing of al-Junayd. See al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyyah*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn Sharībah (Cairo: Maktabah al-Khānījī, 1986), 259-264.

93 *Laṭā'if al-Asrār*, Conclusion, 5, 6.

the Truth Most Exalted, and its sign is to hold fast to the rope which will never break, referring to God's help and protection. This is in reference to the state wherein the servant:

As he contemplates his self in the field of detachment (*maydan tajrīd*), all his human attributes are removed because at that field nothing exists except God's existence. At this station, I-ness (*anāniyyah*) is denied and his spirit is free from all limitations (*quyūd*). God's Unity and His expansion (*basīṭNya*) manifest to his spirit and he is moved from the station of subsistence and ontological difference (*maqām kawn dan bawn*) to the station of protective presence and help (*maqām ḥaḍrat al-ṣawn dan 'awn*), and he has gone through the experience of verifying the reality of being a poor one (*ḥaqīqat faqīr*).⁹⁴

Self-examination is dependent upon the servant's remembrance of God (*dhikr Allāh*). Remembrance is a strong pillar along the path of the Truth Most Exalted and it provides a strong hold for the servant; only with continuous remembrance of God that union (*wāṣil*) can be achieved. There are two kinds of remembrance: the first is remembrance with the tongue and the second is remembrance with the heart. Remembrance as mere utterance with the tongue only is heedlessness and forgetfulness, whereas remembrance with the heart can lead to unification (*tawḥīd*) and faith (*īmān*). The servant who practices both reaches perfection on the path, meaning servitude and perfection of virtues (*iḥsān*).

There are three degrees of remembrance. The first is remembrance which is performed with the tongue and consists of extolling God's glory (*tasbīḥ*), laudation (*taḥmīd*) and magnification (*takbīr*) with His Beautiful Names and Sublime Attributes. By this remembrance, intimacy and presence with God is achieved. Thus, the servant who observes this degree of remembrance derives pleasures out of it and he is absorbed in it.⁹⁵ Those who are at this rank are called mutual reminders (*mutadhākirūn*).⁹⁶ God remembers him and he remembers God.

The second degree of remembrance is remembrance with the heart where the servant glorifies his Lord and contemplates on His Attributes, but sometimes forgets Him although He remembers him.⁹⁷ Those who are at this rank are called the rememberers (*dhākirūn*).⁹⁸

The third degree of remembrance, and it is the highest of all, is the remembrance of the

servant in his state of being without a form, without understanding, without knowledge and without being known. This is the level of abstraction and detachment, where the inner spiritual vision of man, in its recollection of his preexistence, has reached the degree of looking at his self as being devoid of creaturely attributes.⁹⁹ Those who achieve this level are those who are attracted to God, and they are called the ones remembered (*madhkūrūn*) by Him.¹⁰⁰

Those who constantly remember God seek four things: the first is verification (*taṣḍīq*), the second is glorification (*ta'zīm*), the third is refinement (*ḥalāwah*), and the fourth is reverence (*ḥurmat*).¹⁰¹ Remembrance implies both affirmation and negation since it is the testimony of faith: "*La ilāha illā Allāh*"—There is no God but Allāh. By negation in remembrance, all meaningless requests arising from a diseased heart, opprobrious behavior and animal qualities disappear; and by affirmation, the requests of the healthy heart are fulfilled by illumination from God Most Exalted. One's spirit experiences self-manifestation during contemplation on the Truth Most Exalted and one is rendered unconscious of one's subjective ego. Thus remembrance (*dhikr*) leads to passing away (*fanā*).

Tawajjuh or concentration is to concentrate on the Truth Most Exalted with all of one's heart so that during the limited period in which one concentrates, neither a moment nor a second passes by without concentrating on Him.¹⁰² The one who wholeheartedly concentrates on God renounces all desires for what is other than God to the extent that neither desire nor a longing remains in him except for the Truth Most Exalted. According to Junayd, should one who has been facing or concentrating on God for a long time turn away for but a moment, he would be losing far more than what he would be gaining.¹⁰³

Concentration on God prepares the heart for the state of presence (*muḥāḍarah*). Presence is the heart of the servant being with the Truth Most Exalted while receiving effusion (*fayḍ*) from the Names of the Truth Most Exalted.¹⁰⁴ During the state of presence, the servant preserves his thoughts and breaths so that not a single movement of his thought or breath goes without him being present with Truth Most Exalted, and by doing so it allows the servant to inherit revelation (*kashf*) and unveiling (*mukāshafah*).¹⁰⁵

There are three kinds of revelation: that of the soul, the heart, and the innermost ground

99 Ibid., Conclusion, 16.

100 Ibid., 17.b.

101 Ibid., 19.

102 Ibid., 24.

103 Ibid., 25.

104 Ibid., 26.

105 Ibid., 27.

94 Ibid., Affirmation of Divine Unity, 206.

95 Ibid., Conclusion, 14.

96 Ibid., Conclusion, 17.

97 Ibid., Conclusion, 15.

98 Ibid., Conclusion, 17.a.

of being. By revelation of the soul, the servant attains to knowledge of certainty (*‘ilm al-yaqīn*), that is, knowledge that is dependent on what is exterior to knowledge (*zāhir ‘ilm*); by revelation of the heart, the servant attains to vision of certainty (*‘ayn al-yaqīn*), that is, knowledge that is dependent (*ta’alluq*) on what is interior to knowledge (*bāṭin ‘ilm*); and by revelation of the innermost ground of being, the servant attains to experiencing the true and real certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*), that is, knowledge that is dependent on the Truth Most Exalted (*Ḥaqq Ta’ālā*). The People of Truth and Reality (*Ahl al-Ḥaqqīyah*) are those who have attained to certainty (*al-yaqīn*) of the nature described.¹⁰⁶ Certainty (*yaqīn*) begins with unveiling (*mukāshafah*), which is followed by witnessing (*mu’āyanah*) and then contemplation (*mushāhadah*).¹⁰⁷

Unveiling is the presence of the servant’s heart with the Truth Most Exalted in a clarified manner, complete with proof and demonstration. At this state, there is no need to ponder on proof (*dalīl*), to seek the path and to seek refuge from all doubtful claims and veils of the unseen. It lifts doubt from the heart due to being enlightened by illuminative knowledge. There are three kinds of unveiling.¹⁰⁸ The first is unveiling of the heart (*mukāshafah qalb*) where the heart contemplates on the world with the eye of desire and its sign is to be ashamed of the Truth Most Exalted. The second is unveiling of the spirit (*mukāshafah rūḥ*) and it is to contemplate on the Hereafter with the eye of thought, whose sign is not to despair over by-gones. The third is unveiling of the innermost ground of being (*mukāshafah sirr*), and it is to contemplate on the Truth Most Exalted with the eye of union whose sign is to renounce rejoicing over what the Truth Most Exalted has granted.¹⁰⁹

Unveiling leads the servant who is established in it and who does not incline to the other during revelation to taste “the gratification of witnessing”.¹¹⁰ Witnessing is to verify illuminative knowledge of God’s Essence (*ma’rifat dhāt Allāh*), and if there is a desire for something other than He, then it is invalid. In order to achieve this state, the servant is recommended to “drown” himself in His Ocean until the servant is effaced (*maḥw*), annihilated (*maḥaq*) and obliterated and passes away to arrive at the side of union and God’s everlastingness (*baqā’ Allāh*). This is the place of return and the ultimate goal of the path.¹¹¹

The servant who is bestowed with unveiling and revelation is in a state of witnessing

(*mu’āyanah*). Quoting al-Qushayrī, al-Rānīri describes the servant who is the possessor of presence as bound by His Signs; the servant who is the possessor of unveiling is contented with His Attributes and he is brought nearby his knowledge; and as for the servant who is the possessor of contemplation, his essence is inspired whereby illuminative knowledge of Him is said to obliterate him.¹¹²

Finally, from witnessing (*mu’āyanah*), the servant reaches contemplation: it is to find the Truth Most Exalted in one’s state of loss, that is, passing away. It is also described as the presence of the innermost ground of being with the Truth Most Exalted at the station of spiritual communion; there, certainty attained is of the level of *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*. Metaphorically, it is described as seeing the Truth Most Exalted as existent without undue assertion.¹¹³ There are three kinds of contemplation (*mushāhadah*). The first kind is the contemplation of the aspirant or the novice. It is vision with the heart. The second contemplation is the contemplation of the veracious, whose heart is free from what is other than He. The third is contemplation of the knower who sees the Truth Most Exalted in everything, meaning he sees the effect of God’s power in everything.¹¹⁴

There are three degrees of contemplation.¹¹⁵ The first is contemplation of the heart, which is to see the external with the eye of the heart and its sign is to remain firm on the path of God. The second is contemplation of the spirit, which is to look at the internal with the vision of love and its sign is to continuously contemplate on the Truth Most Exalted. The third is contemplation of the innermost ground of being, which is to see with the eye of inner vision and its mark is to forget what is other than God.¹¹⁶

Contemplation begins when certainty and manifestation increase with revelation of presence; this is the perfection of the heart, where continuous presence is attained by inheriting from all that is unseen.¹¹⁷ Contemplation is continuous arrival of the lights of self-manifestation in the heart of the servant. The heart of the servant who is continuously bestowed with such illumination will be purified and he has no need of any help or aid in ‘seeing’ the Truth Most Exalted.¹¹⁸

112 Ibid., 35.

113 Ibid., 36.

114 Ibid., 37.

115 Ibid., 38.

116 Ibid., 39.

117 Ibid., 40.

118 Ibid., 41.

106 Ibid., 28.

107 Ibid., 29.

108 Ibid., 30.

109 Ibid., 31.

110 Ibid., 33.

111 Ibid., 34.

CONCLUSION

The ontological reality and the knowledge concerning them can be verified—this is the position of the Ṣūfīs on the concept and the reality of existence, a distinction which is analysed in detail by al-Attas.¹¹⁹ The proper foundation of the concept and the reality of existence is necessary to substantively follow the discussion on illuminative knowledge (*ma'rifah*) and unification (*tawhid*). The journey to “reach” the Truth Most Exalted begins with the affirmation of His existence. Knowing what existence is and how the reality of existence is related to God, Who is also referred to as the Truth or the Creator, is necessary.

The knowledge of an existent is arrived at through a definition based on a concept or a judgement—this is knowledge logically verified; attributes can be affirmed or otherwise negated of an existent thing (*mawjūd*), contrary to a non-existent (*ma'dūm*), of which attributes can be neither affirmed nor negated.¹²⁰ What is non-existent, however, can arise in the mind but attributes cannot be ascribed to it. Although what is non-existent is “not a thing” (*lā shay'*) since it has no real existence in itself, as an object of knowledge it can be referred to as an “object known”.

The scholars of the past have been using the word ‘part or ‘division’ to describe the *juz'iyiyyāt*. This term refers to a distinct part or division, but when the parts are gathered together, they form a whole that is composed of complementary parts. Its opposite is *kulliyyāt*, which is a unified whole. The external senses only receive the external aspects of the objects of knowledge such as hot or cold, rough or smooth, heavy or light, big or small and others, not the universal aspect of the objects of knowledge that will inform us the meaning and reality of a thing.¹²¹

God's existence is not determined by absoluteness (*iṭlāq*) and limitedness (*taqayyud*), by being universal (*kullī*) and partial (*juz'ī*), general (*'āmm*) or particular (*khāṣṣ*); it is neither multiplicity nor plurality; and neither having shape (*shakl*) nor limit (*ḥadd*). Nevertheless it is necessary to attribute to that existence all those things mentioned [above] as aspects of the degrees (*martabāt*) and stations (*maqām*) proper to Him, as He says: “He is above all degrees, He is Possessor of the Throne”. Thus it comes about that the existence of the Truth Most Exalted is absolute and determined, universal and partial, general and particular, shape and

119 For a detailed elucidation on this analysis, see al-Attas, *Commentary*, 269-274.

120 Al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 149.

121 *Laṭā'if al-Asrār*, 196.

limit, [plural] and multiple; and yet there is no changing in the Reality of His Essence from having form and limit since “He is as He was”.¹²²

That existence is real is instantiated by existent things (*mawjūdāt*), or creation in general, and they, in turn, point to the reality of their Creator. Creation is originated and things originated are imbued with potentialities. What is potential derives its potentiality from something actual; hence the existence of originated things is dependent on existence, which in itself is actual existence—that which is truly and really existing—that is God's existence, whose actuality which is not preceded by potentiality, for His existence is necessary (*wājib*), and self-subsisting. Hence the method of affirmation¹²³ (*ithbāt*) is the method of the Ṣūfīs, while the method of negation¹²⁴ (*salb*) is the method of the philosophers. Ibn 'Arabī says, “Intellects could know God inasmuch as He is an existing Being (*min ḥaythu kawnuhu mawjūdan*) by way of negation (*salb*) not by way of affirmation (*lā min ḥaythu ithbāt*).”¹²⁵ The Ṣūfīs, while not denying the validity of the method of negation, admit of another method in attaining to the knowledge of the Truth Most Exalted, namely contemplation (*mushāhadah*) and spiritual witnessing (*mu'āyanah*) of God's revelation (*kashf*). To be sure, the two methods of arriving at the knowledge of God lead to two kinds of knowledge of God: one that is intellectually arrived at, which can be considered as a theological formulation of who God is based on proof of tradition, whereas the second is illuminative, the kind that is bestowed upon as a gift from God. In order to receive illuminative knowledge (*ma'rifah*) through spiritual experience, according to Ibn 'Arabī, it is necessary for the intelligent man (*al-'āqil*) to empty his heart (*an yakhlā qalbahu*) from deliberation (*al-fikr*).¹²⁶ Knowledge of God (*al-'ilm bi-Allāh*), says Ibn 'Arabī, as obtained by deliberation (*al-fikr*) is different from knowledge of God's existence (*al-'ilm bi-wujūd Allāh*), which is obtained by spiritual witnessing (*mushāhadah*). By *mushāhadah*, the Ṣūfīs mean to “actually know by direct experience and vision (*shuhūd*) the Reality and the Truth that is revealed to them.”¹²⁷

Those who experience this state of “union” or “arrival” are those who are referred to as

122 Ibid., 202-203.

123 It is a judgement that is based on the certainty of another thing, *Ta'rifāt*, 7.

124 i.e. elimination of relation (*intizā' al-nisbah*), *Ta'rifāt*, 126. Rānīrī 's affirmation of the existence of God is along the lines of Ibn 'Arabī who makes the same statement concerning the method adopted by the Ṣūfīs in regard to the reality of existence in his letter to Muhammad al-Rāzī. See footnote below.

125 Ibn 'Arabī, “Risālah ilā al-Imām al-Rāzī” in *Majmu'ah Rasā'il ibn 'Arabī*, 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār Maḥajjat al-Bayḍā' & Dār al-Rasūl al-Akram, 2000), 1: 609.

126 Ibid.

127 *Commentary on the Ḥujjat*, 133.

having a moment (*waqt*) with their Lord. By moment, Hujwīrī, in his *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, says it is “that whereby a man becomes independent of the past and the future, as for example, when an influence from God descends into his soul and makes his heart collected (*mujtami*) he has no memory of the past and no thought of that which is yet to come.”¹²⁸ Rānīrī quotes Ibn ‘Arabī on this point to bring to the reader’s attention that a servant should remain at the station of servitude because it is the noblest and the safest of all from the dangers of disbelief and heresy. Quoting al-Ghazālī, Rānīrī puts this admonition in stronger terms: although the experience is described as ‘having a moment with God’, referring to ‘arrival’ and ‘union’, the unitarian should not say and believe that he has become the Lord nor the Lord has become the servant, or the lord incarnates in the servant.¹²⁹ In the language of Ibn ‘Arabī, unification and the illuminative knowledge attained is like tasting the potent drink of lovers that renders the one who drinks it inebriated. In the language of the alchemists, it is like the philosophers’ stone: whatever it comes into contact with turns into gold.¹³⁰ In his own language, Rānīrī draws the similitude of this experience as that of the iron and fire. As the iron attains the characteristics of fire after being burned for some time, the iron thinks that it is of the same kind as fire. But as Rānīrī goes on to say, it is only the attribute that has been transformed, namely the redness of the iron like the redness of the fire, yet their substances remain unchanged.¹³¹

These similitudes are meant to draw attention to the fact that in the state of ‘union’, one does not become the Lord nor the Lord becomes the servant. Attributes are exchanged, and to be sure, the attributes of the servant are exchanged with that of the Lord’s without impairing His Oneness with His Attributes. Thus it is important to bear in mind, as recommended by al-Ghazālī, that the path (*sulūk*) is to adorn oneself with virtues (*khuluq*), acts (*amal*) and knowledge (*ma’rifah*) and that the servant is preoccupied with maintaining his physical well-being by following the recommendations of the Sharī’ah, while inwardly he is preoccupied with purifying his self with reality. For the generality of believers, they are classified into the elect and the super-elect, and they are further divided into two major groups: *Ahl al-Tamkīn*, those who are steadfast in their stations, and *Ahl al-Talwīn*, and those who are of spiritual inconsistency. Al-Attas’ definition of *taṣawwuf* as “the practice of Sharī’ah at the *maqām* of *ihsan*” is in agreement with Rānīrī, who does not miss pointing out that the opinion of others who regard the Law (*Sharī’ah*) as having limits which cannot be transgressed and those who

transgress these limits have to be stopped.¹³² The Qur’ān relates incidents where the Prophets Ibrāhīm a.s., Mūsā a.s., Zakariya a.s. asked God to embolden and to appease their hearts.¹³³ The Prophets and Messengers of God are above and beyond the states and stations mentioned above—that is to say, after they are commissioned with prophethood and messengership, their whole being, body and soul, are no longer susceptible to the incitations that could render their apprehension of Reality and Truth to waver, hence the Qur’ān attesting to the Prophet’s witnessing the Truth “*ma kadhaba al-fu’ād ma ra’a*,”¹³⁴ that his heart does not obfuscate what he perceives. This is that quintessential difference that sets the Prophet apart, above and beyond other Prophets and Messengers.

128 *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, 367.

129 *Lāṭā’if al-Asrār*, Affirmation of Divine Unity, 214.

130 Ibid., 199.

131 Ibid., 116.

132 Ibid., 196.

133 Qur’ān (2): 260, where Prophet Ibrāhīm (a.s.) asked Allāh to show him how He gives life to the dead.

134 Qur’ān (53): 11.