Chapter VII

THE CONCEPT OF SELF IN SUFISM

The word self has different connotations. There are two ways to describe the self. The first way is to see the self as a collection of socially determined, changeable roles – the self within society. The second is to see the true self, the innermost core of one’s being distinct but absorbed into God. The Sufi teaching, according to Fadiman and Frager (1976), is one way to learn to shift your identification of who you are from the first point of view to the second.¹

Umruddin in his small but insightful treatise – ‘Psychological Basis of Imam Ghazali’s Religious Philosophy’, writes:

“According to Ghazali the conception of the self is expressed in Arabic by four different terms, namely ‘qalb’, ‘ruh’, ‘nafs’ and ‘aqil’. Ghazali has himself defined them and also given the different meanings in which they are generally used. ‘Qalb’ denotes two things (1) the physical heart, and (2) a ‘divine entity’. ‘Ruh’ means the same spiritual entity as denoted by the word ‘qalb’ in the verse of the Quran. ‘Say, the spirit (ruh) proceedeth at my Lord’s command,’ it has been used in this sense. It also means a subtle, vapour like substance, which issues from the hollows of the physical heart and through the tissues spreads over into the whole body. The third word ‘nafs’ also signifies the same spiritual entity as denoted by the words ‘qalb’ and ‘ruh’ and as also according to the Sufis the combined forces in man of anger (alghazab) and animal desires (alshahavat). It represents life on the side of passions and appetites as constituting the evil tendencies in man. But ‘nafs’ is also described by different attributive names in accordance with the

different states that predominate at one time or the other. (1) when it is in agreement with
the Will of God and is not disturbed by animal passions, it is called the ‘pacified soul’
(nafs mutmaina) (cf the Quran, ‘Oh, then soul which art at rest, return to thy Lord, pleased and pleasing Him’). (2) when it is not a ‘pacified’ and though the desire nature is not under its complete control, yet it offers resistance to it, then the nafs is called the ‘self-accusing soul (nafs lawwameh) (cf the Quran: I swear by the self-accusing soul). And (3) when the soul ceases to struggle against the onslaughts of passions and is under their complete control, it is called ‘the insinuating soul’ (nafs ammarah) (if the Quran: yet I hold not myself clear, for the heart is prone to evil). In this last sense ‘nafs’ is equivalent to alnafs alshahwaniat (the desire-nature), which according to the Sufis, stands for the bad qualities in man. The fourth word ‘aql’ (Reason) means the knowledge of the true nature of things. It also means the same spiritual entity or percipient mind as denoted by the other three words.”

Ghazali prefers to use ‘qalb’ in all his religious and moral writings. Umruddin following Ghazali suggests to use qalb as the best equivalent to the soul, the mind and the self:

‘The self’, continues Umruddin, ‘has an ideal to realize, for which it has an inborn yearning and for which it has been specially equipped. In order to achieve this ideal the self must dwell in a physical body in this world which is its preparatory ground. For the realization of the ideal the first preliminary, therefore is to provide for the physical needs of the body. For this purpose the self has three powers (1) anger and lust (2) power (3) perception or knowledge.

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1 Psychological Basis of Imam Ghazali’s Philosophy, p.3
1. (a) Sexual passions or lust (Shahwat) is the disposition which enables the body to obtain what is good for it, it includes such basic instincts as hunger, thirst, sex etc. (b) Anger (ghazab) is the disposition which enables it to repel or avoid what is harmful; it includes such qualities as anger, pugnacity, etc. These basic dispositions are called by Ghazali ‘the pushes’ (albawais); he describes them as inherited psychophysical dispositions, which modern psychology terms ‘instincts’.

2. Power (qudrat) is the capacity which enables the body to carry out the behests of anger and sexual passions distributed in all parts of the body, and acts as a ‘moving force’.

3. Perception (idrak) is that faculty in the body which perceives and knows the objects which should be acquired and those which should be avoided. It acts as an instrument of perception and recognition of what is harmful and what is good for the organism. Without it the above mentioned forces would have floundered blindly. This faculty of knowledge and apprehension is formed by two main groups; (a) the special senses, namely sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch, which have special sense organs; and (b) the five internal faculties of imagination, reflection or recollection, memory and common sense. The common sense is a special faculty which by synthesizing the sensuous ‘impressions coming to the brain gives a meaning to them. These above internal faculties have no special sense organs, but are located in the folds of the brain. The five special senses enable the organism to act in present
situations, the five internal faculties enable it to learn from past experience, and to foresee future situations.¹

'These forces', continues Umruddin, 'and faculties control the whole physical organism which acts as a vehicle for their manifestation; while all these forces together with all the bodily organs, though unconscious of themselves and their ends, have been so fashioned as to obey the self implicitly. Thus it is really the self that controls all the bodily functions of the organism. It may be added here, says Umruddin, that with regard to the correlation of mind and body, Ghazali is, in modern philosophical terminology, an 'Idealist'. He believes in the supremacy of mind over matter. Mind is the source of all activity; it is the active principle which fashions matter according to its own needs, even the growth of bodily organs is to be ascribed to the inward yearnings of the soul.²

Umruddin writes that 'while the modern theory of Evolution regards mind a bye-product, Ghazali considers mind to be the moving force in the universe and matter a bye-product. Mind contains in itself a great possibility of development, and can, according to him progress to an infinite degree. But what is that by which man can make such progress and attain to such spiritual perfection. There are in man two qualities which raise him above the animal and make him capable of perfection. They are (1) knowledge (ilm) and will (irada). Knowledge stands for the knowledge of the affairs of this world and the next as well as the knowledge of abstract truths and self-evident truths. Knowledge cannot be acquired through the senses alone, it lies behind the objects of sense. It is gained through intellect (aql) which enables man to generalize and form concepts. Will has been defined by Ghazali thus: when a man understands the full significance of the consequences of an

¹ Ibid, p. 6
² Ibid, p.6
act and its desirability, a strong desire is aroused in him to achieve that end by procuring the proper means for it; then that strong desire in him is his Will or irada. The Will should be distinguished from conation in animals which latter consists only in the qualities of anger and sex. According to Ghazali it is reason which determines the end, but power behind it is supplied by the Will.¹

Let us hear Ghazali himself. He writes in his *Ihya Ulum-id-din* "Soul (or self) is a King over body as a King over an empire. In the empire of soul, hands, feet and other organs are like different business men and industrialists in a town. Greed is a collector of revenue in that town, anger is its police, intellect is its minister and soul is its King. The Collector greed is like one who collects food and anger is like a police who keeps guard over it. The collector greed is a downright liar and a deceiver. It ostensibly wishes good but there is destructive poison in it. The region of soul over the region of body is similar. It goes on well if all organs and attributes are under the rule of soul. When soul takes the help of its minister intellect, it rules over greed keeping anger in control. In order to bring anger under control, sometimes it seeks the help of greed and then its character and conduct become good. He who goes away from this path, becomes like one about whom God speaks in the following verse. Have you looked towards one who takes his passion as deity - 25:43? God speaks in another verse about the person who controlled his passion: As for such men as entertained the fear of standing before their Lord and controlled their souls from low desires, their abode will be Paradise – 79:41²

Ghazali writes about intellect "Intellect is like a rider, greed is like a horse and anger is like his hunting dog. When the rider is expert and his horse and dog are trained,

¹ Ibid. p. 8
² *Ihya*, Vol. III, p. 5-6
success can be obtained in hunting. When the rider is inexperienced, horse disobedient and dog biting, then the horse does not obey the rider and the dog does not run obeying him. Similarly when intellect is mature and greed and anger are submissive to intellect, success is sure, but if intellect is immature and greed and anger are not under control, there is surely ruin.”

Thus according to Ghazali, ‘the body is a town and intellect (or conscience) rules over that town like a King. Its armies are external and internal senses and its subjects are its organs. Sexual passion and anger are the enemies of the region of body and soul its guard. If it fights against its enemies and defeats them and compels them to do what soul likes, its actions become commendable and it returns to the Almighty. If it neglects its duty it will be punished on the Resurrection Day.’

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1 Ihya, Vo 7, p. 7
2 Ibid, p. 6
Dr. Raza Arasteh (1980)\(^1\) writes that the real self in Sufism is not what environment and culture develop in us, but it is basically the product of the universe in evolution. He refers to it as cosmic self or universal self in contrast to the phenomenal self. The cosmic self embraces all our being while the phenomenal self designates only a part of our existence. We shall study Arasteh’s description of the self in Sufism in the following lines.

Arasteh, a psychiatrist and a leader of a Sufi order in Iran, has studied Sufism from the perspective of modern psychology. He presents Sufism in the terminology of psychology. He has also developed a new method to study human nature based on Sufism. According to him Sufis view self not as an atom or narrow principle but as a vast sea that continually extends its boundaries. Unlike Western psychologists and psychoanalysts who have limited themselves in depth and dimension to the familial, social and occasionally to the historical self, the Sufis give an infinite and unlimited potential to self, which extends from the unknown point of creation (azal) to the unknown point of eternity (abad) – way beyond the death bed. One’s root of self is not in America, Persia or Africa. It is beyond the inorganic earth and beyond the time of the earth’s formation.

The Sufis believed that it has taken man a million years to reach and evolve to his present state. First he was in a state of inorganic things, and from that state he evolved to a vegetative state. Many centuries he lived in this state of vegetation until he forgot that we once were solid. Then from a vegetative state, we evolved into an animal state, and we forgot about our previous state. Finally from the animal state we evolved towards humanity. From conception we pass through birth, but we fail to remember the recreation

\(^1\) Raza Arasteh, Growth to Selfhood, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, p. 8
of the universe which took place in the mother’s womb. From birth we pass through socialization, develop a social self and forget our purpose that if we do not forget our aim and keep on unfolding our potentials. We may attain a state that Sufis called cosmic self. In other words we must be born again and again to undergo the spiritual growth. This above long path of growth is beautiful expressed by the Master Sufi Jalaluddin Rumi –

Low in the earth
I lived in realms of ore and stone;
And then I smiled in many tinted flowers;
Then roving with the Wild and wandering hours,
O’er earth and air and ocean’s zone
In a new birth
I dived and flew,
And crept and ran.

And all the secret of my essence drew within a force that brought them all to view

And lo, a man!
And then my goal.
Beyond the clouds, beyond the sky,
In realms where none may change or die –
In angel form; and then away
Beyond the bounds of night and day,
And life and Death, unseen or seen,
Where all that is hath ever been.
As one and whole.

Arasteh says that "what we call self is really that which veils our 'self' and what to us is 'we' is only a barrier to becoming 'we'. In short from conventional 'I' to real 'I', from conventional 'we' to real 'we' is a long way to go which requires freeing ourselves of undesirable desires and attitudes." This freeing oneself by the removal of the false self in reality means the annihilation of those experience which bar the revealing of the real self. Sufis call the experience of removal of 'I' as 'fana', which ends in a state of ecstasy, the feeling of union, it is the beginning of 'baqa', the state of conscious existence.

Sufis used different concepts to describe the human self. In fact, the basic 'light' of the self is the same metaphysical light but its gradations differ as there is difference in the intensities of light in a candle and the sun though the light is the same. It is not possible to know the self in all of its qualities because it has the nature of chameleon as told by the great Shaikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardi in his the Awarif ul Ma’arif. Even light here is a metaphor used to hint at to describe the essence of self.

According to the different grades of purification and the spiritual development achieved, the self has been described by the terms nafs (soul), qalb (heart), ruh (spirit), Sirr (secret), Sirr-e-sirr (the most secret) etc. Sirr and Sirr-e-Sirr are also called Khafi and akhafa. Sufis call these subtle spiritual principles as 'Lataif' (singular latifa) let us study them one by one.

2 Ibid, p. 7
NAFS

Literally nafs means ‘essence’. In Aristotelian terminology the term ‘essence of a thing’ signifies ‘soul’, whether the soul is material e.g. vegetable soul and animal soul, or abstract e.g. the souls of heavenly bodies and the human rational soul. According to Dr. Valiuddin, in the terminology of ethics, ‘nafs’ means the false fancy of a separate and independent human ego. It also means the carnal or appetitive soul – the seat of passion and lust, called nafs ammarah. The Sufis understand nafs in the sense of the carnal self. Sufis believe that this carnal self is the source of the blamable qualities in man. ³

Shaikh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi describes its following attributes of the nafs (in Awarif al Ma’arif).

(1) **Hawa** or the slavery to the carnal desires.

The nafs always want to enjoy sensuous pleasures and fulfill its sensual desires. Its cravings are for worldly pleasures and regards lust as its God. It is the same idol worshipper which the Quran has referred to in the following words:

‘Then lust thou such a one as takes as his God his own, vain desire.’ (The Quran XLV 23)

This quality of the nafs cannot be eradicated except by austerity and love of God.

(2) **Nifaq (hypocrisy)**. In many cases the nafs is not concordant with its interior – it praises people in their presence and disparages them in their absence. This quality must be replaced with sincerity.

(3) **Riya** (ostentation or dissimulation or exhibitionism) – The nafs appear before others as having laudable qualities, though these may be blamable before God,

e.g. abundance of wealth and property and the pride of it. Ibn Maja has said (as quoted by Valiuddin).

‘Even the least dissimulation is false worship.’

(4) **Claim to Godship (uluhiyya)** – The nafs (here the ego) always wants that people should praise it, follow it and obey it; they should prefer it to all others, and be afraid of it, have confidence in its mercy in all circumstances. This is nothing but a claim to divinity because these are the qualities of God’s Lordship, not of an earthly man.

Sufis believe that, so long as the Divine attributes are not revealed to the devotee, the nafs does not renounce its claim to Divinity. When the devotee becomes aware that the attributes of existence, e.g. knowledge, power, will, etc. belongs really to the Almighty God alone, and that his existence is only relative, only then he is able to free himself of the false claims.

(5) **Pride and Self-beholding.** The nafs always considers himself as having beautiful qualities and is satisfied with own conditions of false self-conceptions. If he helps someone, he always remembers it and expects others to be obliged to him for this. But if somebody else helps him, he forgets it very soon. This attributed cannot be shown off except through self-contempt.

(6) **Avarice and Parsimony** - The nafs does not want to part with his possessions because he is full of pride or fears future poverty. When this attributes grows strong in the nafs, envy and hate springs from it. It hates others and desires their destruction.
(7) **Greediness.** The \textit{nafs} is never satisfied with what he has. It always asks for more and more.

(8) **Levity and light-headedness.** The \textit{nafs} rests on nothing. When thoughts of lust and of desire arrive, it does not want to delay its fulfillment. The sages have likened it to the spherical globe-plain and smooth. It is always in motion. This attribute cannot be eradicated save by patience.

(9) **Haste to fatigue:** The \textit{nafs} gets sick of everything very soon. It thinks that if he leaves the present state and move to another place may give him rest. When he follows his whim, he meets contrary results. If he gets rest in the new condition, everything that was pleasing becomes abhorrent to it. It can be overcome by offering thanks to God.

(10) **Negligence:** The \textit{nafs} tends to be quick in satisfying the desires, but towards devotion and good deeds it is slothful.\(^1\)

Sufis believe that the above qualities are the mother of qualities, wherefrom many other qualities are derived. Sufis consider the \textit{nafs} as a veil that hides the Reality. Dhul-Nun-the Egyptian says: “Vision of the \textit{Nafs} and its promptings is the worst of the veils.” Another great Sufi Hazrat Junayd says: “To fulfill the desires of your lower soul is the foundation of infidelity.” (The above two quotations are from the Hujwiri).

Ali Bin Uthman Al-Hujwiri (born in the first part of the fifth century Hijri) shows his keen Sufi insight into human nature in his Persian masterpiece \textit{The Kashf al Mahjub}. We have already quoted long of his views on the human nature. Here we quote his views on the carnal self that he wrote in the same chapter of his above mentioned book.

\(^1\) The Awarif ul Ma'arif, Taj Company, New Delhi 1984; pp 130-134
Hujwiri gives one more viewpoint about *hawa* (desire or passion). He traces the root of ‘*hawa*’ to the physiological make up of the body deeper than the lower self. He traces it in the natural make-up, *taba*, of man. It occupies the same seat as is occupied by the ‘Id’ and instincts in the Freudian Psychoanalysis. Attar says:

> طبع تیست از گل به گل افتاده است
> همی تبکی نستی استادان بست

Rumi says

> رحم برکیستی تن بزرگ می فریع را عقل نبو کرد سر می
> فیض را هل برید زار زار تو از و بستنا و دیواران زار
> سالا فرینده بودی بس بود راندم فرینده ز وراین بود

Sufis say that the *tabiyat* or nature of man is like a wolf. So says Shaikh Sadi –

> آر آپن دیوند فوری ت ز طبعیت بسیرد
> حیث عمرو نزدیک باشی به روان اد میف

Rumi says –

> طبع خواهند ناکش د از خشم لیلین
> عقل بر نفس اسبت بند آهنین

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2. Ibid. p. 7
3. Ibid. p. 8
The human being when born is equipped with this *taba*. Self is a later development as he grows. So it is considered as the basis of the human personality as ‘id’ is the basis of personality in Psychoanalysis of Freud as discussed in the first part of this thesis. Let us hear Hujwiri himself –

‘You must know that according to the opinion of some, passion is a term applied to the attributes of the lower soul, but according to others, a term denoting the natural volition (*iradat-i-taba*) whereby the lower soul is controlled and directed, just as the spirit (*ruh*) is controlled by intelligence (*aql*). Every spirit that is devoid of the faculty of intelligence is imperfect and similarly every lower soul (*nafs*) that is devoid of the faculty of passion is imperfect. Man is continually being called by intelligence and passion into contrary ways. If he obeys the call of passion he arrives at error and infidelity. Therefore, passion is a veil and a false guide, and man is commanded to resist it. Passion is of two kinds: (1) desire of pleasure and lust and (2) desire of worldly honour and authority.”¹

He says further –

“Go and seek yourself, and when you have found yourself keep watch over yourself, for this passion clothes itself every day in three hundred and sixty diverse garments of godhead and leads men astray.”²

Hajwiri says: ‘Passion is mingled, as an ingredient in the clay of Adam. Desire is an essential part of the human psyche. It is not given from outside. This is what says Shaikh Shabistri in his ‘Gulshane Raz’

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² Ibid, pp. 208
'Behold the world is kneaded even as dough,
The angle with the fiend; The cherubim with Satan.'

Because Hujwiri says that the *satan* is nothing but in reality a man's lower soul and passion. Man has two natures – satanic and angelic. Man is a bridge between these two worlds also. It depends upon man whether to follow his instincts or pull of the higher or Transpersonal Self.

In addition to the above ten attributes of the 'nafs' as described by Shaikh Suhrawardi. Shaikh Hujwiri tells us about one more attribute of the *nafs* – *Shahwat* or Lust.

The two words lust and passion (*Shahawat and Hawa*) denotes the same reality. The only difference, perhaps, is that passion is the psychological part and the lust is the physical part of the desire. Hujwiri says:

'The most manifest attribute of the *nafs* is lust (Shahwat). Lust is a thing that is dispersed in different parts of the human body, and is served by the senses. Man is bound to guard all his members from it, and he shall be questioned concerning the acts of each. The lust of the eye is sight, that of the ear is hearing, that of the nose is smell, that of the tongue is speech, that of the palate is taste, that of the body is touch, land that of the mind is thought. It behoves the seeker of God to spend his whole life, day and night, in ridding himself of these incitements to passion which show themselves through the senses and pray God to make him such that this desire will be removed from his inward nature, since

1 Pasha, Johnson (Tr.) Gulshan-e-Raz (1974) pp. 27
2 Shabistary, M. Gulshan-e-Raz Kitabkhana Tahusi, Iran (1371jy) pp. 73
whoever is afflicted with lust is veiled from all spiritual things. If anyone should repel it by his own exertion, his task will be long and painful, the right way is resignation (taslim).”

According to Hujwiri it is very difficult to get rid of the promptings of the nafs by himself. On the other hand ‘he can get an attribute changed by Divine aid and by resigning –himself to God’s will and by divesting himself of his own power and strength.’

Every Sufi advises to avoid the promptings of the nafs. Shaikh al – Arabi Ad – Darqawi (died in 1823, the founder of the Darqawi Order) says in his letters –

“Always flee from sensuality, for it is the opposite of spirituality and opposites do not meet. In as much as you strengthen the senses you weaken the spirit, and vice versa.”

(The letters of a Sufi Master, Titus Burchart page 1)

He says further:

‘Woe to the faqir, woe to him, if he sees the form of his own soul (nafs) just as it is, and does not strangle it until it dies!”

Sufis call such a carnal self as nafs-nimsah. Dr. Raza Arasteh (1988) names this as conventional self. He describes this carnal self as a psychologist in a very lucid style. He says that this conventional self can become the greatest barrier to the growth of man. It can cause regression in man, and can create a negative tendency in him. It can divest

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1 Kashfal Mahjub, pp. 209
2 The Letters….. pp 1
3 Ibid, p.
4 Ibid, p. 34
man’s total energy toward unnecessary activities and make him believe deception as truth, fiction as reality and self-glorification as man’s goal in life.¹

Arasteh (1972) says further “The conventional self (nafs ammarah) in Eastern literature is compared with a snake, beautiful on the outside, poisonous inside. It has also been compared to the poppy seed, which produces nostalgia. When the force of the conventional self dominates man, he loses his senses, he pays no heed to truth at all, and submits to any man, woman or thing to satisfy his carnal desire. Ever in rational man, if this impulsive self becomes dominant it uses his reason. Such a man becomes a master of ‘rationalization’. His impulses dictate the act but his memory never remembers it. In Sufi literature Satan is known as the first misguided rational and argumentative being.”²

“In a social and historical sense, such a process produces a Hitler, Stalin, Nepoleon, Genghiz Khan and many others like these.”³

Arasteh gives us an example of his keen psychological insight in the Sufism by analyzing the conventional self. He says further:

“Those persons, who are weak but have a strong conventional impulsive self, become foxy and submit to the powerful. They have no security alone and are always dependent and fearful, finding escape mechanisms and often conceding truth and manipulating others.”⁴

Arasteh analyzes the behavioral aspects of the person who is under the influence of nafs anmarah. He continues:

¹ Arasteh. op. cit. p. 8
² Ibid. p. 12
³ Ibid. p. 13
⁴ Ibid. p. 13
“An insecure conventional self often develops a miserly and hoarding character. He neither enjoys his possessions nor lets others enjoy them. As a child I knew a millionaire who lived alone and ate the cheapest stale bread, often three days old. Everyone pitied him until he died and his millions were discovered. This kind of soul cannot love, and fame and infame are equal to him.”1

In addition to the above analysis, Raza Arasteh then refers to Fariduddin Attar, the Great Master Sufi of the twelfth century whose master work the Mantiq-al-Tair (Conference of the Birds) we shall study in detail in the next chapter. Arasteh refers to his another wonderful work the Ilahi Nama (the Book of Divine). In this book Attar discusses the role of false desires, interests and values (the contents of the nafs ammarah) which can block the growth of human self.

In ‘Ilahi Nama’ Attar discusses the story of a wise man who has six educated sons. All of the sons were successful, but still malcontented (unsatisfied, uncontented). One day the wise father called them and said, “If you inform me of your deep desires, I promise you to help you to attain satisfaction, or at least to show you the path to happiness.” The son responded to their father’s request, and each one presented his desire as follows:

The first son told that he was in love with the daughter of the king of the fairies, and that nothing would make him happy except Wedlock with that beloved.

The second son told the father that he was madly in love with magic and Sorcery.

The third son wanted to have the crystal ball.

The fourth son was seeking the everlasting spring for an everlasting life.

The fifth son was in search of King Solomon’s ring.

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1 Ibid, pp. 13-14
The sixth son was in love with alchemy.

Hearing them all, the father analyzed each case according to its merit. Utilizing various allegorical stories, examples and wise sayings, he showed that their desires were unrealistic and illusory. He then represented the path of Sufi growth to selfhood to them.¹

¹ The above account of the Ilahinama is from Arasteh. Raza (1988). The Growth to Selfhood, pp 15-16
LEVELS OF NAFS

The nafs are impulses, drives to satisfy desires they dominate our reason and judgment. They are defined as the lower forces in our nature which must be brought under control. All nafs are products of the self-centered consciousness – the ego, the “I” – and eventually can be transcended. Most of the Sufis have described the following levels or kinds of the nafs.

1) **The Commanding Soul** (nafs ammarah)

   It is also termed the carnal soul. – This nafs is instinctual and untamed and untrained and raw part of the human nature. Its chief components are lust and aggression. Al-Ghazali calls them the swine and the dogs of the soul, the sensual nafs behaving like swine, the ferocious like dogs or wolves, wrath, greed, sensual appetites, passion and envy are examples of these nafs. These are obstacles to growth. All kinds of nafs are obstacles to the spiritual growth of man. Nafs ammarah has a very strong drive that commands minds. Its nature is similar to descriptions of the ‘id’ in psychoanalytic theory.

   The person under the influence of nafs ammarah knows nothing but eating, sleeping and indulging in useless activities. Sufis called this nafs man in form but satan in contents. This nafs craves for bodily pleasures and tries to drag ‘the heart’ down to its own level, means it tends to suppress the higher nature of man. Nafs ammarah is the seat of evil and sin. The Quran says: ‘Nafs ammarah is active towards sin and badness.’ (Yusuf-53).

   **Naumana Amjad** (1992), a psychologist from Pakistan, contributed a research paper in the seminar or ‘the Quranic concept of Human Psyche’. He describes the

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traditional Sufi concepts in the language of modern psychology. Writing about nafs ammarah, he writes –

‘al-nafs al ammarah’ is called the egotistical soul and the tendencies of the soul as representing the tendencies of the ego in so far as they represent the self-centred attitude of the soul. When ego comes to dominate the self and recognizes no other entity apart from itself, man loses sight of his spiritual nature and is confined within the narrow realm of individual consciousness. This is the most harmful tendency of nafs i.e. to mistake its ego-bound consciousness for total reality, and hence to act accordingly. The ‘I’ with which we usually identify is locus of subjective reality and consciousness, the most immediate reality for us in reference to which we identify things as other than us. But this stream of consciousness or locus of subjective reality is not the total reality nor the real core of our being. The greatest error of nafs lies in believing that it is. Descartes committed this same kind of error when he said – ‘I’ think, therefore, I am.’ Most of the ‘spiritual diseases’ so called by al-Ghazali arise or follow from this basic error. As T. Burckhardt (1978) has written, “in mind ‘to be’ becomes dissociated from ‘to know’ and in the process of man’s degeneration it leads to all other ruptures and separation.”

‘This is what the Sufi teachings seek to prevent. By putting the Divine name against the tendencies of the ego, they seek to open ‘the eye of the heart’ and to put man in touch with his inner self so that he can know the truth. It is impossible for the heart to open up to the Divine Truth so long as the soul retains, even if not consciously, an attitude which denies the Truth; it is difficult to avoid this, since the domain of the soul

\[1\] In Quranic Concepts of Human Psyche, (ed) Zafir Afar Ansari, Int. Inst. Of Islamic Thoughts 1992, pp 50
(nafs) is a priest governed by the ego centric illusion. That is why all disciplines aiming at ‘irfan’ or gnosis give special importance to the treatment of nafs and this also explains the tremendous emphasis laid on control and balance of the turmoils of nafs in the Islamic doctrines.¹

(2) **The Soul Admonishing** (Naṣʿ lawwameh)

This naṣʿ shows itself in self-accusation. It accuses the carnal soul for its evil properties. It has many parallel aspects of the psychoanalytic superego.

Naṣʿ lawwameh is between the carnal soul and the tranquil soul. When it faces the carnal soul, it accuses the carnal soul for its baser elements. When it faces the tranquil naṣʿ it accuses itself for its past misdeeds and sins. Naṣʿ lawwameh is a preface to the appearing of ‘heart’. It tries to empty the mind of all the animal instincts.

According to Abdubrazaq Kashani² (6th century, Ingri) the naṣʿ lawwameh is a soul who receives light from the heart. Its receiving of light depends on its Wakefulness to God. Having awoken from the slumber of forgetfulness, it makes itself ready for improvement. And during the period of the slumber of darkness of ignorance, whatever sin he had committed, accuses himself for it. It accuses itself for bad deeds and repent for its sins and makes itself to be in the good books of God. That is why God praises it and vows in its name in the Quran - we vow by the soul admonishing (Doomsday – 2).

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¹ Ibid. p. 51
3. **The Inspired Soul (Nafs Mulahma)**

This nafs receives the knowledge of what is good and what is evil through revelation (ilham, hence the name mulahma). This and higher nafs arise from the higher levels of consciousness termed as ‘revelation’. Their source is not animal level but higher selves. Behaviors common to the inspired soul include gentleness, compassion, creative acts and moral action. A person who is inspired with this soul seems to be an emotionally mature and respectable person.

The inspired soul is like a sun that scatters the light of revelation. It is called inspired soul because it gets ‘inspiration’ from God about the goodness whatever good actions are executed by the human soul is due to this inspiration and whatever evil is done, originates from the baser nature of the self itself. Sufis acquired this term, nafs mulahma, from the Quran:

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In the ‘rasail Shah Niamat Allah Wali’, the inspired soul is said to have ten characteristics – intellect (aql), wisdom (hikmat), knowledge (Danish), revelation (wahi), inspiration (ilham), message (Khebar), perfection (Kamal), grace (fazal), favor (ahsan), and generous nature (Khulq-e-sakhawat).

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1. Dil-o-nafs, p. 65
4. **The Tranquil Soul (Nafs mutamainna)** -

When the carnal soul clean itself of all the baser elements which are always keeping the person on tenterhooks of lust, anger, avarice etc. the soul gets peace. It becomes tranquil. Its faith in God is consolidated into surety and satisfaction. Its consciousness withdraws its tentacles from the objects of the world and attends towards God. The Sufis have taken this term from the holy Quran:

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\text{(O Tranquil Soul, return to your Lord, he is satisfied with you and you be satisfied with Him!)}
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Rozbahan Baqli Shirazi (1128-1209 A.H.) says ‘carnal soul when get forceful kicks of love, it becomes tranquil soul’.1 2 3

Najamulddin Kabra says that the nafs lawwameh with invocation gets itself clean, it reaches near the tranquil soul. It tries to make itself to be decorated with laudable qualities so that the Lord attends to it and reaches it. When it happens so, it becomes tranquil nafs.2

Azizuddin Mahmud Kashani says (in his misbah al hidayat) when the soul complies to the Divine Will it becomes tranquil soul.3

Abdulrazaq Kashani says that the tranquil nafs has been enlightened with the light of heart in such a way that it has shorn itself of blamable qualities and acquired praiseworthy qualities and turned its face towards heart in order to develop above towards the Divine and keeps itself aloof from the sinful acts. It follows the path of

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1 Dil-o-Nafs p.67
2 Ibid, p. 67
3 Ibid, p. 69
obedience to god, worship and attention and rises towards higher planes of consciousness and awareness where he hears god saying:

O tranquil soul, return to your Lord, he is satisfied with you, you be satisfied with Him, and come in the company of my men and come in my paradise. (Fagar, )

Dr. Burhan Ahmad Faruqi (1940) writes:

'The tendency to disobey God is the fountainhead of all evils and vices. The soul begins to hate virtue and indulges in vice. The state is called nafs-I-ammara or the Evil itself. But in spite of sin and disobedience the soul preserves the capacity of overcoming vice. So through purification there begins gradually to arise in it a state of repentance. This is called nafs-i-lawwama or the Reproaching itself. Having progressed further, it attains to another stage where it achieves perfect harmony will the Divine Will. To act according to any commandments of commission or omission ceases to be unpleasant to it. This stage of spiritual development is called nafs-i-mutamainna or the beatified self. This is the zenith of human perfection and the highest end for man; indeed it is the very purpose of the creation of man. The attainment of nafs-i-mutmainna or beatified self is called the stage of 'abdiyya' or servitude. Abdiyya is attained when man becomes absolutely free from bondage to everything other than Allah.' (In these lines Dr. Faruqi described the views of the Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, who is generally called the Mujaddid-i-Alf-i-Thani, born in 971 A.H.)

According to Rozebahan Baqli Shirazi it is heart that is called tranquil nafs.

In 'the rasail Shah Nemat Allah Wali' there have been described ten characteristics of the tranquil soul – poverty (faqr), patience (sabr), justice (adal), equity

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1 Ibid. p. 67
2 The Mujaddid's Conception of Tawhid, pp 136-137. Idarah Adbiyad Delhi 1977
(insaf), satisfaction (raza), knowledge (ilm), search (tahqeeq), faith (yaqiz), promise (ahd), faithfulness (wafa)

The above two quotations are from Dr. Javed Nurbaksh’s Persian treatise – Dil-o-Nafs (Heart and Soul). He considers tranquil soul as the soul that has achieved the status of ‘heart’ and is ready for the next station – Ruh.

5. The Contended Soul (al nafs al raziat),
6. The Approved Soul (al nafs al marzi), and
7. The Perfected Soul (al nafs al Kamil).

These final levels are not easily distinguished or described. These are described as the journey within God, the journey from God and the journey into God. Sometime even these nafs are considered obstacles if the growth is arrested by any one of these.2

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1 Dil-o-Nafs pp. 67
Q A L B

T. Burckhardt (1983) defined qalb as the organ of supranational intuition which corresponds to the heart just as thought corresponds to the brain. Just as the mind transcends the brain, so the spiritual heart transcends the physical heart.¹

Al Ḥazālī prefers to use the word ‘qalb’ for the self in all his writings. The knowledge of this entity is essential to the knowledge of the ultimate Reality.

The term heart (qalb) is used by the mystics as the repository of the innermost secrets of divine knowledge. It is not the physical organ of the human body. It is a symbolical term for the rational or spiritual aspect of man. Following Ibn Arāhī, Al Jīlī identifies it with the spirit of God, which, according to the Quran was breathed into Adam.²

The heart is the eternal light which was revealed in the essence (ain) of existents (i.e. in Muḥammad or the perfect man), so that God may see man through it. It is the center of God’s consciousness and the circumference of the circles of all existents. It symbolizes that which is described in the Quran as the light. It reflects all the divine names and attributes and yet at times it directs its attention to some particular name and then becomes a complete reflection of it.

The true nature of the heart is divine and pure. But due to animal passions sometimes it loses this purity which, however, can be recovered after a period of physical and spiritual training, the duration of which varies according to the degree of the influence of the animal passions.

¹ Quranic Concepts of Human Psyche pp 53-54
² Insan-e-Kamil Maktaba Thanvi. 1923 p. 313.
Al Jili writes in his ‘Insan-o-Kamil’ that ‘names and attributes from the nature of the heart. Sufis believe that heart is like a mirror to the realities of being or it may be called the reflection of the universe. God says, “The sky and the earth do not contain Me, it is only the heart of my believing servant which can contain Me.” This statement, according to al Jili, proves that the heart is primary and the universe is only secondary.

God’s comprehension by the heart is of three kinds;

(a) By knowledge – Heart alone is able to comprehend and know God as He is. Other things can and do know God either in one or other of His aspects, but heart alone can know Him in all comprehensiveness.

(b) By observation (mustahadah) – Through this seeing (kashf) the heart observes the beauties of the face of Allah and enjoys the taste of His names and attributes.

(c) By vicegerency – At this stage, man becomes a complete embodiment of divine names and attributes so much so that he feels his essence to be identical with divine essence. He then becomes God’s vicegerent.

Sultan Bahu says –

He says further –

1 Al Jili, op. cit. p. 317
What is called ‘tranquil soul’ is actually this heart. The philosophers call this reality as the ‘intelligible soul’ or ‘nafs natiqa.’

Dr. Javad Nurbaksh writes –

Heart in the Sufi terminology is a luminescent substance (Jauhar – nurani) which is between ruh and nafs and with it humanity is established in man.

Ibn ‘Arabi, the great Shaikh, in his ‘Fusus’ says that God manifests Himself in two ways: an unseen manifestation (faiz-e-aqdas) and a sensible manifestation (faiz-e-muqqaadas). It is from the former type that the predisposition of the Heart is bestowed, being the essential self-manifestation, the very nature which is to be unseen. This is the divine Identity in accordance with which He calls Himself (in the Quran) He.

Sadruddin Qunwi in his ‘Kitab al Fakuk’ describes the structure and the sublevels of the heart. He writes.

1 Ibid, p. 181
2 Dil-o-Nafs, p. 77
Shaikh Abdul Razaq Qashani describes heart as follows:

The Sufis believe that the heart is situated between nafs (the lower self) and ruh (the spirit). The lower passions of the nafs tries to attract it towards them and the higher passions of the ruh also tries to attract the heart towards it. The

2 Farhang Istilahat Irfan-o-Tasawwuf. Maula Pub. Tehran. 1372 h. p. 112
Heart is a place where unity (ruh) and multiplicity (nafs) meet. If is a place where contrary and opposing forces meet. Shaikh Mehmud Shafistary says the same thing:

Болан фори кад раджуб дил
Хваонд з ду Калам Расист مننزل
دور دو جهه لشنہ بشر دو کلام
ہوئی بھیس کردر کہ دنم
دوسی شیخ بشر ہم دنم سردار
مند در دنیا وشیخانہ دن نوشند

Upon one little spot within the heart Resteth the Lord and Master of the worlds. Therein two worlds commingle may be seen; sometimes Iblis prevaleth; sometimes Adam. Behold the world is kneaded even as dough. The angle with the fiend, the cherukim with satan.

(†r Johnson Pasha)

Heart is, the manifestation of the name ‘Aladal’ (the justice or balance). As in the case of the physical heart the temperance of body and its organs depends on it, in the similar way the balance and equilibrium among the spiritual, psychological and also physical parts of the man depends on the spiritual heart, which is meant here. This heart is the manifestation of the wholeness of the divinity. The realities of the external and internal levels of the divinity are present in the human heart. The contrarities derived from two basic divine qualities Jamal (Beauty) and Jalal (Majesty) have been manifested in him according to his

1 Gulshan-e-Raz. Kitab Khana Tahiti. 1321 h. p. 73
spiritual aptitudes. His mind is always tackling the outcome of these opposing tendencies within him. Sometimes the man is under the sway of the qualities of Jalal (i.e. Satanic) and sometimes he is under the influence of Jamal (i.e. the angelic), though in man the qualities of Jamal prevails over the qualities of Jalal, but his heart is always regaining new modes of states and combating negative influences.

According to Martin Lings “In speaking of the majority, the Quran says: ‘It is not the eyes that are blind but the hearts.’ (XXII). This shows – and it would be strange if it were otherwise – that the Quranic perspective agrees with that of the whole ancient world.

1 Shahrah Gulshan-e Raz
2 Ibid
both of East and of West, in attributing vision to the heart and in using this word to indicate not only the bodily organ of that name but also what this corporeal center gives access to, namely the center of the soul, which itself is the gateway to a higher ‘heart’, namely the spirit.”

He writes further:

“The Heart is ‘the isthmus’ (barzakh) which is so often mentioned in the Quran as separating the ‘two seas’ which represent Heaven and earth ‘the sweet fresh water sea’ being the domain of the spirit (ruh) whereas ‘the brackish salt sea’ is the domain of soul (nafs) and body; and when Moses says: ‘I will not cease until I reach the meeting-place of the two seas,’ (XVIII:60) he is formulating the initial vow that every mystic must take, implicitly if not explicitly, to reach the lost center which alone gives access to transcendent knowledge.”

(Jung’s process of ‘individuation’ too aims for this restoration of the lost center represented by the symbol of ‘the lost child’).

Maulana Muhammad Abdul Qadeer Siddiqi in his translation and commentary on the chapter on Shoaib of the Fusus, describes three kinds of Hearts.3

1. **Muneeb**

This heart is afraid of the Merciful despite His ‘absence’, and always is under the influence of His Majesty. From this heart a sense of repentence (trauba) is born, the devotee is inspired for worship and hardships.

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1 What is Sufism.
2 Ibid.
2. **Saleem**

On the day of judgement nothing will be of any help and use to us but this qalb-e-saleem. This heart saves the man from attachments to other than God, yearns for mystic knowledge and desires growth towards God.

3. **Shaheed**

This is the heart of those people who give hears to what god has said through the lips of the prophets. Ir. the chapter mentioned above Ibn Arabi himself explains this saying ‘By this it meant one who gives ear in witness, indicating the plane of the Imagination and its use, alluded to in the saying of the Prophet, “that you should worship God as if you saw Him,” for God is in the giblah of the one who prays. Because of this he is a witness (Shaheed) to God.’ (Fusus, p. 152).

This heart of the witness is always in the presence of God.

Sufis believe that the heart of man is a microcosm. In it he perceives all the realities that are present in the whole cosmos and beyond it. Mahmud Shabistary says in his Gulshan-e-rajab:

1 Gulshan-e-Raz p. 23

In every grain a thousand harvests dwell,

The world within a grain of millet’s heart

(Dr. S. Pasha)

The Sufi believes that the Reality is Absolute Reality. Without Him there is nothing. His heart always perceives this fact inside and outside. Everything else
is merely a shadow of the Absolute Being.

The Sage’s heart existence doth behold;

In witness manifest creation standi (Tr. J. Pasha)

Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) said that the heart of a believer is the throne of Mercy (arsh al-rahmani). It should be known that in the sky (afaq) the Throne is the manifestation of the name Mercy. In the same way human heart represents Mercy.

Following this the Sufis believe that the heart is the center of the circumference of the great throne and their movement depends on heart which is the center.

According to Shaikh Rozbahan Baqli Sheerazi

According to Khwaja Hasan Nizami Dehalvi

Hakim Sanai, the great poet, in his ‘Walled Garden of Truth’ (Hadiqa al Haqaiq) writes about the heart as follows

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1 Gulshan-e-Raz p. 80 op.cit.
2 Dil-o-nafs op. cit.
The above lines mean that although it seems that heart is very near to us but in fact to realize its reality is very far. The person who has no pangs, belief and love has no faith also. This present heart of yours that you call it own is full of perturbations with animal passions. You have named heart to this piece of flesh and have forgotten the real heart. The real heart is center of divine meanings. The real heart has awareness of the day of judgment. It is above intellect. It is the place to see the Truth. Its structure is as light. It is not the follower of the satanic whisperings. The chief characteristic of the real heart is that it does not forget God come what may.

Somebody asked Hazrat Junaid, “When is the heart happy?” He replied, “When it is a heart.” (Tazkiratul Aulia Attar)²

Mansur bin Umar said, “Heart of man is a spiritual quality. When worldly desires enter into it, it is veiled.” (Tazkira)³

¹ Ghuzida Hadiqa al Haqaiq, Daneshgah Payam Nur, Tehran (1375 h) p. 125
² Dil-o-Nafs p.
³ Ibid. p. 85
When the heart is cleaned of the dirt of the carnal desires it attains the ability to perceive the realities of the unseen. In the process of cleansing it goes on attaining the higher levels of perception. The more it is cleaned, the more it becomes acquirer of the spiritual visions.

Shaikh Azzuddin Kashani tells us about heart that by heart we mean the center which causes the movement of the circle of Existence towards its perfection and in it the secrets of eternal and temporary meet. In it the divine qualities of Jakal and Jamal are illuminated. It is the Throne of Mercy, abode of the Quran and the mystics and the esthimus (Barzakh) between nafs and ruh, invisible and visible world, giver and taker and lover and the beloved. Heart is born of the marriage between spirit (ruh) and soul (nafs). When the soul moves away from the spirit both of them fell in disputes. But when both of them meet, the heart is born. It becomes a bridge between soul and spirit.

Shaikh Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi is of the view that heart is a spiritual principle (latifah) and has its locus in the heart of flesh. It comes into being as a result of mutual attraction between the human soul and the appetitive self. According to a tradition of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.), there are four kinds of hearts. The first is like a pure soil free from all kinds of vegetation. It is illumined as if by a shining lamp. It is the heart of a true believer. The second is a dark inverted heart which belongs to an unbeliever. The third belongs to a hypocrite and is enveloped in a veil. The last is a pure but many faceted heart, with an inclination towards good as well as evil (Awarif alMaarif).1

While discussing what heart is, we cannot ignore the reality of love. Heart is the seat of love (ishq). In Arabic-Persian literature there are few words for love – ishq and

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1 Awarif al Maarif, p. 221
Mohabbat. Ishq when gains intensity and depth of passions, it is called Mohabbat. Mohabbat has its abode in ruh (spirit). We shall discuss it more in later chapters.

Azzuddin Muhammad Kashani says that love (ishq) is the forming principle of the heart. Heart was formed by dint of love, and beauty. Love lives by virtue of heart and heart lives by virtue of love. Heart in man is like the arsh-rahan (The Throne of Mercy). Throne is a macroheart in the macrocosm and heart is a micro throne in the microcosm. All the hearts are under the power of the Throne as the individual spirits (arwah) are in under the control of Universal Spirit (ruh-e-azam) and individual souls are under the power of Universal Soul (nafs Kulli). The form and the reality of the heart is like that of the Throne.

Heart is a link between the two worlds – visible and the invisible. It has the faces one is towards nafs and other towards ruh what it receives from the unseen world of the ruh, sends it to the seen world of the nafs. It is in the same way as the Divine Mercy first falls on the Throne and from there it is scattered over the visible world (alam-e-shahadat).
**RUH (The Spirit)**

In Sufism this word, *ruh*, has the following principal significances.

1. The Divine Spirit, so, uncreated (*ar-ruh al-ilahi*), also called *ar-ruh al quds*), the Holy Spirit.

2. The Universal Spirit, created (*ar-ruh ar-kulli*).

3. The individual spirit or more exactly polarized with regard to an individual.

4. The vital spirit, intermediary between the soul and the body. Quran says:

   ‘They will ask thee concerning the spirit; tell them; the spirit was created at the command (*amr*) of my Lord.’ (XCI 84), Christ is called *Ruh Allah*, ‘Spirit of God.’

Khwaja Hasan Nizami (1948) writes about *ruh* or spirit as follows:

‘According to the Quran *ruh* is the command of God. In *hadith* it is said that God created man in His image. God has no image and can never have any. From this it is understood that this image is the *ruh*. Divine Essence is the vitality (*Jan*) and the spirit or *ruh* is its image (*Surat*). As there is not any form of the Divine essence and not of the *ruh* also. As the Essence is hidden so the *ruh* is also hidden. As this earthen human being is unable to understand the Divine Truth so he is unable to have any knowledge of the *ruh*. There is only one spirit (called the Universal Spirit or *Ruh-e-azam*). Its division is impossible. The different spirits that we see in different bodies are the shadows of this Universal Soul. So, *ruh* is the mirror of the Essence in which His Beauty and Splendour is seen.’

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1 Glossary to the Eng. Tr of Fusus al Hikam of Ibn Arabi, by Angela Culme-Seymour, Taj Company, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 144

2 *Taalim Asrar Tasawwuf* op. cit, p. 39
So says Rumi:

‘The world resembles a mirror, thy love is the perfect image; O, people, who has ever seen a part greater than the whole?’

(Tr. Nicholson)

Let us see what a great Sufi writer Al-Hujwiri (also known as Data Ganj Baksh), born in the first part of the 5th century Hijri, says on ruh in his magnum opus, the Kashf al Mahjub –

“Discourse on the spirit (al-ruh) – you must know that knowledge concerning the existence of the spirit is intuitive, and the intelligence is unable to apprehend its (the spirit’s) nature. Every Muslim divine and sage has expressed some conjectural opinion on this point, which has also been debated by unbelievers of various sorts. When the unbelievers of Quraysh, prompted by the Jews, sent Nadr b. al-Harith to question the Apostle concerning the nature and essence of the spirit, God in the first place affirmed its substance and said, “And they will ask thee concerning the spirit”, then He denied its eternity, saying, “Answer, ‘The spirit belongs to that which (i.e. the creation of which) my Lord commanded’” (Qur XVII, 87). And the Apostle said: “The spirits are hosts gathered together, those that know one another agree, and those that do not know one another disagree.” There are many similar proofs of the existence of the spirit, but they contain no authoritative statement as to its nature. Some have said that the spirit is the life whereby the body lives, a view which is also held by a number of scholastic

\[ \text{Mathnavi} \]
philosophers. According to this view the spirit is an accident (araz), which at God’s command keeps the body alive, and from which proceed conjunction, motion, cohesion and similar accidents by which the body is changed from one state to another. Others, again, declare that the spirit is not life but that life does not exist without it, just as the spirit does not exist without the body, and that the two are never found apart, because they are inseparable like pain and the knowledge of pain. According to this view also the spirit is an accident like life. All the Sufi Shaykhs, however, and most orthodox Moslems hold that the spirit is a substance, and not an attribute; for so long as it is connected with the body, God continually creates life in the body, and the life of Man is an attribute and by it he lives, but the spirit is deposited in his body and may be separated from him while he is still living, as in sleep. But when it leaves him, intelligence and knowledge can no longer remain with him, for the Apostle has said that the spirits of martyrs are in the crops of birds, consequently it must be a substance; and the Apostle has said that the spirits are hosts (junnud), and hosts are subsistent (baqi), and no accident can subsist, for an accident does not stand by itself.

"The spirit, then, is a subtle body (jismi latif), which comes and goes by the command of God. On the night of the Ascension, when the Apostle saw in Heaven Adam, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Jesus and Abraham, it was their spirits that he saw; and if the spirit were an accident, it would not stand by itself so as to become visible, for it would need a ‘locus’ in substances, and substances are gross (Kathif). Accordingly it has been ascertained that the spirit is subtle and corporeal (jasim), and being corporeal, it is visible, but visible only to the eye of intelligence (chasm-i dil). And spirits may reside in
the crops of birds or may be armies that move to and fro, as the Apostolic Traditions declare.

“There we are at variance with the heretics, who assert that the spirit is eternal (qadim), and worship it, and regard it as the sole agent and governor of things, and call it the uncreated spirit of God, and aver that it passes from one body to another.”1 (Tr. Nicholson).

Abu Bakr al Kalabadhi (died in 995 AD) in his book, ‘Kitab al Taarruf’ quotes many Sufi authorities’ views on the ruh. He writes:

‘Al-Junayd said, “The spirit (ruh) is a thing the knowledge of which God has reserved to Himself, not suffering any of His creatures to understand it. Therefore, it cannot be expressed in any other way than as being existent (mawjud). God says: ‘Say: The spirit is of the bidding of my Lord.’” Abu Abdillah al Nibaji said:

“The spirit is a body which is too subtle to be perceived, and too great to be touched; it cannot be expressed in any other way than as being existent” Ibn Ata said:

“God created the spirits before the bodies: for He says, ‘And we created you,’ that is the spirits, ‘then we formed you,’ that is, the bodies.” Another Sufi said, “The spirit is a subtle (essence) materializing in a dense (body), just as sight, which is a subtle essence, materializes in a dense (body).”

The majority are agreed that the spirit is an object through which the body lives. One Sufi said: “It is a light, fragrant breath through which life subsists, while the soul (nafs) is a hot wind (rih) through which the motions and desires exist,”2

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1 Kashf al Mahjub, op. cit., pp. 161-62
2 ‘Kitab al Taaruf’ (The Doctrine of the Sufis) Cambridge University Press 1977, p. 52
According to the Quran, the human spirit is an ‘amr’ or command of the Lord. Mir Valiuddin (1980) writes that “it is reported in the hadith that the Prophet was asked whether the spirit was created by God or was it an eternal being? He replied that the spirit is a created and originated entity. As the word amr also signifies ‘action’, it may mean that the spirit is an ‘act of the Lord’, that is to say, it is created, and thus contingent. This is how the above verse has been interpreted by Sayyid Murtda in his well known work entitled *Durar-i-ghurar*.”

Valiuddin (1980) writes further ‘The verse under consideration (i.e. ‘The spirit is by command of my Lord...’) may also be interpreted to mean that the spirit is ‘mujarrad’ or an ‘abstract entity’. ‘By my Lord’s command signifies that the spirit belongs to the alam-i-amr’ or the world of command’ and ‘baqa’ or everlastingness’; and not to the world of creation and extinction or the Elam-i-khalq wa fana. The world of command is also the Elam-i-ghayb or the invisible world’, as well as the ‘alam-i-akhira’, or the ‘world of hereafter’.

The Quran also says: ‘His verily is all creation and command’ (VII, 53).

‘This means that both the corporeal and the spiritual worlds belong to God. In the thinking of some of the Sufis, the ‘world of command’ is created by God, but not from matter and not in time. It was brought into existence by God directly, by His word of command Kun, ‘Be’; while the world of creation is fashioned from something already existing and is in time and space. Therefore, the substance of ‘say, the spirit is by my Lord’s command’ seems to be that the spirit belongs to the world of command, which has come into existence by the command of God and is incorporeal and non-temporal. It follows that the spirit is an abstract substance. In the terminology of the philosophers, an

‘abstract substance’ is defined as an entity that is neither the locus of any substance, nor does it inhere in any substance, nor it composed of any substance.

‘A great majority of the Sunni ulama’ deny the existence of abstract entities in this originated world. According to them, God alone is abstract and none else besides Him. Most of the Shia ulama also hold this same view. In our view, there is the valid argument against the existence of abstract entities. But the belief in the eternity (qidam) of any abstract entity is certainly false, both from reason and authority. The argument advanced to refute the abstractness of the spirit is that abstractness (tajarrud) is a special attribute of God, and therefore none can partake of it. In fact, the special attributes of God are ‘self-subsistence’ (wujab-bi-dhat) and ‘absolute eternity’ (qidam-i-mutlaq). Now if one believes that the abstract entity is contingent, temporal and non-eternal, there should be no objection.

‘Consequently, there are some Sunni ‘ulama’, like Shaykh Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali, Dawwani, Raghib of Isfahan and some shi‘te ‘ulama’, like Khwaja Nasir addin Tusi, Shaykh Ajal Mufid, Shaykh Ibn Babawaihi etc., who have held that the human spirit is a substance that is free from all matter, but that it works in a material environment, and that is the reason why it is related to a body. But it is related to a body to the extent that it manages and controls it. In itself, it belongs to the invisible world, or the world of command, and not to the visible world or the world of creation. It is neither sensuous nor rational, it is neither in the body nor outside of it, it is neither joined to the body, nor separated from it. It has the same relation to the body as God has with the cosmos.
Shaykh al Ishraq, Shaykh Shihab-ad-Din, in his book the *Hayakil an-Nur*, expresses astonishment about how this holy entity (i.e. the spirit) has been regarded as a body! When it goes in ecstasy, it seems that it will leave the world of material bodies and soar towards an infinite world. Were you merely a body, or as a part of it, your ego would have changed every second and there would have been no continuity in the perceiving self.

What the Shaykh means is that the body and its parts are ‘in constant change from their very birth and this process goes on incessantly until death, and yet the ego, or the subject, remains identical with itself. The Ishraqiya or the illuminationists believe that the soul is eternal and without a beginning, but this according to the *Fuqaha* (the Muslim jurists), is blasphemy. The Sufis believe that the soul is originated or created and contingent.

‘According to the Peripatetic School (*Mashshaiyya*), when the *sperma hominis* attains the highest reach of its capability, it is endowed with the soul of the Supreme Being. This may have some affinity with what has been said in the Quran……I have breathed into him of My spirit’ (XV, 29).

‘An attempt has been made to reconcile the paints of view of the Illuminationists, the Peripatetics and the Sufis. The Supreme Being may be regarded to have the same relation with the individual souls or spirits, as for example, the cloud has with the drops of rain. If we call the cloud eternal, we will have to call the drops of rain eternal also, because the cloud is the quintessence of the drops. And the drops may also be regarded as originated (*hadith*), for they assume their form when they are separated from the cloud and not before. There is no doubt that the Supreme Being is eternal, and hence the souls
or the spirits are eternal in one sense, and they are originated also in another sense, as they have limited forms and are determined.¹

He says further:

‘The Sufis call the spirit the *ruh*, and the ‘self’ the *nafs*. Kashi explains these terms as follows:

The spirit *ruh*, in the terminology of the Sufis, is a human *lautfa* and is an abstract entity; in the terminology of the philosophers it is a fine vapour which arises in the heart. That which has the potentiality to receive life, sensibility and heat, the Sufis call the *nafs* or self. The one that occupies the middle stage between the spirit and the self and which is conscious of universals and particulars is called the *qalb* or the heart, philosophers have made no distinction between—the heart and the human spirit and have called them both the rational self (*nafs-i-natiqa*).

‘Sayyid Sharif Jurjani has elaborated this point in his book *Ta’ifat* thus:

The human spirit is a human *lautfa* which knows and perceives and it is borne by the animal soul. It has descended from the world of command and reason is incapable of knowledge its essential nature. This spirit is sometimes abstract and apart and it sometimes enters into a body.’

Further, this is how he defines the ‘Great Spirit or *Ruh-e-azam*:

The Great spirit is what is called the human spirit. It is a manifestation of the Essence of God, and an expression of this aspect of Care and Providence. That is why nobody can acquire its gnosis. It will remain an arcane secret. God alone knows the secret.

‘Qaysari has said:

¹ Ibid, pp. 137-139
The rational self (spirit) is immanent in the body in the same way as the Absolute Reality is immanent in all beings. In one sense, it is other than the body.’

‘Imam Ghazali says that the human body is like a lamp, the human heart is like the wick, the animal soul like fire, and the human spirit is like the light. The only difference is that the light of a lamp depends on the fire, but the human spirit does not depend on the animal soul. The human spirit is the real thing and the animal soul depends on it. It is like a lamp lit from the lights of the unseen Domain. From this example, it may be understood that God has attributed certain things with a quality so that when the reflection of opposite thing falls on them, it assumes a definite shape in them. So also, the animal soul is gifted with the attribute that when the lights of the Unseen World cast their reflections on it, it becomes luminous and assumes a new form. Now this reflection, together with that part of the animal soul on which the reflection has fallen, is called the human spirit. When this new form is established, the animal soul (which is the term for the vapours issuing from the fine humours of the human body) becomes a mount for the human spirit. The body is mortal, but as the lights of the Unseen are eternal (abadi), their reflection will necessarily also be eternal, hence, the human spirit is without end (abadi). It has a permanent, constant relation with its source. As the ray of the sun has a perpetual relation with the sun, and as also after the demolition of a house, the reflection of the sun continues, so also, after the annihilation of the body or of the animal soul the human soul is not annihilated; it still persists and endures. It has some connection with the external world as it contains an element of the animal soul within it. Therefore after the extinction of the body, the human spirit survives in a similitudinary world (which is between the world of the spirit and the world of the bodies).
‘Sayyid Shah Ali Qalandar has said:

The spirit comes into the external world with an aptitude to acquire knowledge. If it acquired discursive knowledge alone, i.e. knowledge proceeding from argument or reason only, and not intuitive knowledge, it remains imperfect. But if by austerity and self-discipline it purified itself so much that it acquires the knowledge of direct observation of God (ilm-i-shuhudi) it becomes perfect.

‘Ghazali says in his ‘Ihya’

The world ‘spirit’ has two meanings. According to the first meaning, it is a subtle body having its source in the vacuum of the bodily heart, from where it pervades the entire body through the arteries. Its permeation in the body, and the giving of life to the five senses is just like placing a lamp in a house from which light spreads into the four corners of the house. So also, the spirit is like a lamp, and life is like the light, the moving of the spirit and its permeation through the body is just like moving of the lamp in the house. This is what the physicians mean by the word spirit, and they treat the body. But the physicians of the spirit, who wish to lead the spirit to sanctum sanctorum, do not accept this meaning. What they mean by the spirit (and this is the second meaning of the word spirit referred to above) is that it is a latifa-i-mudrika or an organ of the knowledge. This is what is meant by the verse ‘say, the spirit is by my Lord’s command.’ We have dealt with this meaning when we elaborated on the second connotation of the word qalb. It is a wonderful divine entity whose quiddity reason is unable to grasp.1

For Ghazzali the word ‘spirit’ and the word ‘heart’ connote the same sense, and that it is not possible to comprehend them by any intellectual effort.

1 Ibid. pp. 140-41
Valiuddin (1980) quotes from the book *Mutammimat-i-Jamal-i-Usul* –

'The human spirit is a knowing perceiving *latifa* of man. Its mount is the animal soul. It has come down from the world of command. Reason is incapable of knowing its nature. The Great Spirit is the same human spirit, being a manifestation of the Essence of God, and an expression of the aspect of this Care and Providence. That is why nobody is able to acquire its gnosis. God alone has it. It is the First Intelligence (*aql-e-awwal*), and the Reality of Muhammad (*Haqiqat-e-Muhammadiyya*) and the Reality of the Names (*Haqeeqat-i-Asmaiya*). It is the ‘First of all beings’ whom God has created in His own form. It is the ‘Great vicegerent of God’ (*Khalifa-i-akbar*). It is a spiritual substance, and in view of its substantiality, it is called self (*nafs*) and in view of its being light, it is called First Intelligence. It has many names and manifestations in the macrocosm, such as the First Intelligence, the Pen (*al-qalam*), the Light (*al-nur*), the Universal Self (*al-Nafs as *Kulliyya*), the preserved Tablet (*al-Lawh al Mahfuz*). Similarly it has many names and manifestations in the microcosm. In the terminology of the Sufis they are called *Sirr, Khafí, Akhfa, ruh, qalb, kalima, ranw, fuad, sadr, aql, nafs*.¹

*Al-Razi* believes *ruh* to be eternal, and the intellect of man to be created out of Divine Substance.² *Ibn Miskawayh*’s ideas exhibit Platonian influence.³ He declares that the essence of the soul is motion. This motion is of two kinds: one towards intellect and other towards matter. The First motion brings man nearer to the source of the intellect and thus it is illuminated and in turn illuminates the

1. Ibid, pp. 143-44
2. Quranic concept of Human Psyche, p.43
3. Ibid, p.43
Matter. This implies ‘a transcendental aspect of the human Self which is ruh and a sensible self which is nafs’ (Naumana Amjad, 1992).

Naumana Amjad (1992) a psychologist from Pakistan, writes:

‘By the word al-ruh what is meant is the Universal Spirit, which is present in all manifestations, and one of its manifestations is the individual soul of man. The Universal spirit is variously described as uncreated (as in the verse: ruh proceeds from the command of my Lord), and as created, as in the saying of the prophet that “the first thing that God created is the spirit.”’

Amjad (1992) then quotes Titus Burckhardt (1983). According to Burckhardt these (above) two aspects, created, and uncreated, of the spirit can be explained on the grounds that the spirit is a mediator between the Divine Being and the conditioned universe. The uncreated aspect is reflected in the universal soul, created intellect, etc. Just as there is a Universal Spirit (al-ruh) i.e. a realm of the Spirit, similarly there is a universal soul or psyche (al-nafs al-kulliyah). The individual soul is conditioned by form whereas the universal soul is necessarily beyond form. In either case the soul is to spirit, as is substance to essence, or materia to forma. According to Burckhardt (1983):

The Sufi term for Universal substance – is al-haba. This signifies literally ‘the fine dust’ suspended in the air which becomes visible only by the rays of light it refracts. The symbolism of al-haba illustrates the double nature of the spirit, for it is the spirit which illumines al-haba and thus corresponds to the ray of light refracted by fine dust. Since the dust becomes visible only to the extent that it refracts light, the ray only shows as such on the screen of the dust.

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1 Ibid, p.43
2 Ibid, p.40
Burckhardt concludes that the undifferentiated light symbolizes the uncreated spirit while the light determined as a ray on the other hand symbolizes the created spirit.1

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1 Ibid, p.41
The term ‘aql’ is used in various meanings depending on its context. Philosophers use it in the sense of discursive reason (which is view held commonly) and the Sufis use it in the sense of a seat of illumination. It is understood by two expressions – ‘aql-i-juz’ or partial intellect and ‘aql-i-kulli’ or universal intellect also termed as reason and intellect respectively. Aql-i-juz’ or reason is the faculty of discursive and analytical thought. Whereas intellect or ‘aql-kulli’ is the faculty of intuition. Naumana Amjad (1992) says that “in the attainment of self, the latter is the main source though reason helped by intellect, can discern certain theoretical aspects of the truth. Hence spiritual experiences are suprarational and should not be confused with irrational, which is equivalent to the animal soul in man.”

Dr. Sayyed Jafar Sajjadi in his ‘Dictionary of Sufi Terminology’ writes that the term aql is used variously. Aql is a stage of unity (martaba-i-wahdat); some others say that it is the Light of Muhammad (mur-i-muhammad), others say that it is archangel Gabriol, some others equate aql with the essence of man.

Aql-i-juz’ or reason is the faculty of discursive and analytical thought. Whereas intellect or ‘aql-kulli’ is the faculty of intuition. Naumana Amjad (1992) says that “in the attainment of self, the latter is the main source though reason helped by intellect, can discern certain theoretical aspects of the truth. Hence spiritual experiences are suprarational and should not be confused with irrational, which is equivalent to the animal soul in man.”

Al Ghazali in his ‘Ihya’ writes –

“It (aql) has got many meanings two of which we shall narrate here. The first meaning of ‘aql’ it intellect with which true nature of things of this material world is known and its seat is in soul. The second meaning of ‘aql’ is power to understand the secrets of different learning. It is a subtle essence called knowledge which is an attribute. Attribute and the thing which contains it are two different things. Intellect is the name of both. ‘This is supported by the following Hadith! The first thing which God created is

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1 Naumana Amjad, op.cit., p.53
2 Farhang Istihalat wa Tabirat Irfani. Kitab Khana Tahuri. Tehran, p.586
intelect. The attribute of intellect is an immaterial thing but the attribute cannot stand without a material thing. So, the place of intellect should be created first or along with it. Knowledge is the content of intellect and so it was created first." (Tr. Fazlul Karim)¹

Shaikh Shahbuddin Suhrawardi (1145-1234 AD) in his ‘The Awarif ul Maarif’ writes –

‘Aql is a natural light, whereby becometh distinguished good from evil.

The aql that distinguisheth between the good and evil:

a) of this world is an ‘aql’ that belongeth to the Kafir as well as to the faithful.

b) of the next world is an aql that belongeth only to the faithful.

c) ‘Ilm is special to the faithful; ‘ilm’ and ‘aql’ are necessary for each other.’

‘Ilm is special to the faithful, ‘ilm’ and ‘aql’ are necessary for each other.

The eye of aql (of the next world) is luminous with the light of guidance, and anointed with the ‘kuhl’ of the ‘shariat’. In its essence, it is one, but it has two forms.

a) One in respect of the Creator. Its meaning is the aql of guidance, special to the faithful.

b) One in respect of the created. Its meaning is the ‘aql’ of livelihood.

‘For people of faith and for seekers of God and of the next world, “The aql of livelihood” is obedient to the “aql of guidance”’. Whenever these two ‘aqls’ agree, they credit “the aql of livelihood,” and according to exigency act; whenever they disagree, they discredit it, and to it pay no attention. Thus to the seekers of God,

¹ Ihya. Vol.3 P.4
the man of this world ascribe weak \( aql \). He knoweth not that outside their \( 'aql \)’ is another \( 'aql \). (Tr. H.W. Clarke)\(^1\)

Islamic mystic – philosophers have devoted much space in their writings to the discussion of ‘\( aql \)’. Al Kindi (803-873 AD) the first Arab philosopher wrote a small treatise on the intellect. He describes the degrees of reason or intellect to be four, of which three are innate in the human soul but one comes from without and is independent of it. This four fold division is as follows:–

a) Active intellect or agent intellect (\( aql fa'al \))

b) Latent or potential intellect (\( aql hayyulani \))

c) Acquired intellect (\( aql mustafad \))

d) Manifest intellect or intellect in action (\( aql zahir or aql bil-fi'l \))\(^2\)

Saeed Sheikh (1969) explains the above divisions as follows –

‘Active intellect is the over-mind of the universe. The same as the Nous of Plotinus, the Logos of Philo or “the world of the universals” of Plato. It is the source of fundamental laws of thought, mathematical axioms, eternal truths and spiritual verifies. From thence comes, it is believed, the mystic’s illumination, the prophet’s revelation the poet’s inspiration and also that of the scientist’s and the philosophers.’

‘Since the principle of active intellect or “\( aql fa'al \)” could explain the pure reason of the philosophers, the revelations of the prophets and the visions of the saints, it is no wonder that it had such a fascinating appeal for a syncretic philosopher like al-Kindi.’

‘Latent or Potential Intellect’. We all have the latent capacity to acquire the eternal truths subsisting in the realm of active intellect, but very few of us actually came

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1 Awarif al Maarif, op cit, pp 93-94
to acquire them. The acquisition of these truths in the case of the selected few transforms their latent intellect into acquired intellect. To give a clear enunciation and explicit formulation of the truths so acquired or to put them into practice the function of the intellect in action.

'The acquisition of eternal truths is really the gift of God, but to put the acquired intellect into activity and thus to have actual intellect or intellect in action is the act of man himself. This somewhat involved scheme of intellects, of which it is not easy to give an interpretation in modern terms, may be illustrated by taking the examples of poetic experience. The poet’s experience comes to him from active intellect as an inspiration to his latent intellect transforming it into acquired intellect. To give expression to this inspiration in words and thus to put acquired intellect into activity i.e. to give it the status of intellect in action, is the poet’s own work.'

To avoid a sort of atomism or breaks in consciousness as it seems the self consisting of the above divisions, Al-Kindi writes in ‘On the Intellect’ –

‘When acquired by the soul, a form is in the soul. It is acquired by the soul by virtue of its being in it in potentiality. And once joined to the soul it passes to be in the soul in actuality. However, to be in the soul is not similar to being in a vase, nor is it similar to an impression engraved upon a body, because the soul is not a sensible body, nor is it divisible. It (the form) is in the soul and it is one and the same thing with it. There should be no necessary difference between two things just because that which sustains is different from that which is sustained.'

1 Ibid, pp 63-64
2 Alkindi, Kitab Bhawan, New Delhi, p. 212
Any discussion in Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism cannot be understood to be complete without the name of Ibn Sina (Avicenna) (980-1037 AD). He was a philosopher, physiologist, physician, mathematician, astronomer and poet. It is admitted 'that his thought represents the climax of Arabian philosophy. He is called by the Arabs al Shaykh al Ra'is i.e. 'the Shaykh and prince of the learned.' T.J. De Boer (1903) writes that 'he (Avicenna) became the great philosopher of accommodation in the East and the true forerunner of compendium writers for the whole world.' His influence on the philosophy was tremendous. Saeed Shaikh finds Avicenna’s influences on the modern philosophers as well. He quoted an authority who is of opinion that in Avicenna’s speculative system we come across clear anticipations of some of the foremost views of Descartes, Kant and even Bergson’s.

Avicenna’s psychology is a kind of faculty psychology. His psychology gives a carefully systematized accounts of the various kinds of minds and their faculties. Aql stands at the apex of the intellectual powers of the Mind.

According to Ibn Sina there are three kinds of minds: (a) The vegetable mind, (b) the animal mind and (c) The rational or the human mind.

(a) The vegetable mind possesses three faculties (i) nutritive power, (ii) power of growth, (iii) power of reproduction.

(i) Nutritive power which when resident in a body changes another body into the form of the first.

(ii) The power of growth by which the body itself continues to increase without changing its form till it attains full maturity.

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1 The History of Philosophy in Islam, Cosmo Pub. New Delhi 1987 p. 132
(iii) The power of reproduction which draws from the body a part similar to itself in potentiality, capable of producing other bodies similar to it in actuality.

(b) The animal mind possesses two kinds of faculties (i) motive faculties and (ii) perceptive or cognitive faculties.

(i) The motive faculties include appetitive powers and efficient powers. The appetitive power is itself either attractive or repulsive. If attractive, it is simply desire, and if repulsive it is irascibility. The efficient powers which are the producer of the bodily movements reside in the nerves and the muscles.

(ii) The perceptive or cognitive faculties of the animal mind are classified as ten senses, five external and five internal. The external senses are: sight, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. The internal senses are: The general or coordinating sense or senses communis (phantasia), imaginative sense (conservation of images) or memory of the collective sense-images; imaginative faculty (synthetic action) or unconscious apperception referring to particulars; Wahm (via estimate) conscious apperception, wish generalization; and retentive sense or faculty (retention of intentions) or memory of the higher apperception, or *hiss mushtask, khayal, mutkhailah, mufakitrah, wahmiya and Hafizah.*

According to Sayyed Hossein Nasr (1988) these faculties

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1 Three Muslim Sages, op. cit, p. 39
Avicenna locates in various parts of the brain, following the tradition of a Galen. Aristotle thought of three faculties in the human mind – perception, imagination and intellection. The Avicennian internal five senses were a departure from the ancient philosophy.

(c) The human mind alone possesses intellect or reason. Sayeed Shaikh says that ‘Reason or intelligence is considered by Ibn Sina more or less on the Kantian lines to be of two kinds namely the practical reason and the theoretical reason. The practical reason or the active intelligence is that on which morality depends. The theoretical reason or speculative intelligence is that which enables us to have abstract thinking.’

Avicenna divides the rational soul or the nafs-natiqa (or the human mind) into a practical (amli) and a theoretical (nazri) faculty both of which, as he says himself, are called intelligence. Avicenna explains:

‘The practical faculty is the principle of movement of the human body, which urges it to individual actions characterized by deliberation and in accordance with purposive consideration……This faculty must govern all other faculties of the body in accordance with the laws of another faculty – which we shall mention, so that it should not submit to them but that they should be subordinated to it, but passive disposition arising from the body and derived from maternal things should develop in pit. These passive dispositions are called bad morals. But far from being passive and submissive this faculty must govern the other bodily faculties so that it may have
excellent morals.’ (Tr. F. Rahman) ¹

According to Avicenna the soul is unitary substance. Spiritual faculties are not like water-tight compartments functioning independently, but come under one principle which is the soul as a whole. In every act of every faculty it is really the – whole self which operates. Avicenna writes:

‘If we examine them more closely the reason why morals are attributed to this faculty is that the human soul, as will be shown later, is a single substance which is related to two planes – the one higher and the other lower than itself. It has special faculties which establish the relationship between itself and each plane: the practical faculty which the human soul possess in relation to the lower plane, which is the body, and its control and management, and the theoretical faculty in relation to the higher plane, from which it passively receives and acquires intelligibles. It is as if our soul has two faces; one turned towards the body, and it must not be influenced by any requirements of the bodily nature; and the other turned towards the higher principles, and it must always be ready to receive from what is there in the Higher Plane and to be influenced by it.’ (Tr. F. Rahman)²

About the theoretical faculty Avicenna writes –

‘The function of the theoretical faculty is to receive the impressions of the universal forms abstracted from matter. If these forms are already abstract in themselves it simply receives them, if not, it makes them immaterial by abstractions so that no trace whatever of material attachments remains in them.’ (Tr. F. Rahman)³

¹ Avicenna’s Psychology. Oxford Univ. Press. 1952. p. 32
² Avicenna’s Psychology. Ibid p. 33
³ Ibid. p.33
Avicenna, following the example of al Kindi and al Farabi divides this theoretical faculty, or intellect, into four levels. The lowest level is the intellectus materialis (aql hayyulani), which is the given hieratic virtuality and potentiality to acquire knowledge and is possessed by all men. Then as man learns the basic principles of knowledge and correct thinking he reaches the state of intellectus inhabitu (aql balmalkah), and if he progresses a step further and becomes able to arrive at knowledge by himself and to generate his own intellectual activity he reaches the level of intellectus actu (aql balfa’al). Finally, there is the highest stage open to man — excluding the prophets, who enjoy a special state because of the total perfection of their nature — and that is the level of intellectus adeptus or acquisitus (aql mustafad), in which the Universe of being is realized within man and man becomes a copy of the intelligible world. Above these levels of the intellect stands the Universal, or Active Intellect (Aql fa’al), through whom all knowledge is received by illumination (prophetic intuition) and with whom the human intellect at its most exalted level becomes united. In this way Avicenna sees the acquisition of the prophetic intuition as the acme of the growth of the human intellect or self.

Rumi (born in 1207) is considered the greatest mystical poet of Islam. ‘His concept of self is very much similar to the German philosopher Leibniz. Rumi considers that infinite number of egos emerging out of the cosmic Ego that constitute the totality of existence. For him the ground of being is akin to what we feel in ourselves as spirit. All beings have emerged from God by a kind of overflow of the divine spirit, but every being or ego is impelled irresistibly by an urge to return to its origin. This urge which Rumi calls love becomes the evolutionary principle of all
existence. Existence is graded, the egos in one grade being superior or inferior in self-
realization.  

In the magnum opus of Rumi, the Masnavi, we find his ideas scattered about almost every aspect of man and his soul. He, too, distinguished *aql Kulli* from *aql jugwi*:

According to Rumi the reality of the Universal Intellect and the Angels (*Farishtah*) is the same. Their substance is the same. One is wax and the other is ‘made of wax’, one is matter and the other is matter in a form.

Universal Intellect is not influenced by phenomenal happenings. It does not take any step without ‘faith’.

It should be made the guide and the counselor –

It can see the hidden secrets of the world and informs to us about these secrets.

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1 Sharif, N.M. (Ed) A History of Muslim Philosophy, Wiesbaden, 1966, p. 827

2 These quotations of Rumi are from Afkar-I Rumi by Maulana Muhammad Abdul Salam Khan, Muktaba Jamia, New Delhi, 481 h.
Rumi says that this world is nothing but a thought of the Universal Intellect.

اِنْ، ہِئَانُ یک فَرْسَتُ نَزَ عَلَّمُ گُل
عَلَّمُ چُونَ شَآمِ شِیمْ وَ فَرْسَتُ رَسَل

This world is the sensuous form (hissi tashakkal) of the thought of the Universal Intellect.

کُلٰ ہٰلٰم صُرُرہ صُرُرہ گُل اسُسُت
کُلٰ دِنْشہ ہٰلٰم بَرْنُ کُلْ مُہِل اسُسُت

This phenomenal world is a perceptible form of the numeral world of the Universal Intellect. This visible world has overshadowed the Universal Intellect. The phenomenal world is like the waves which have veiled the sea underneath.

کُلٰ ہٰلٰم سُطٰ اَوْ نَظَارہ عَلِیٰ
صُرُرہ ما مُہِل وَ بِیا آزِرِے کے

Rumi says that the partial intellect as ‘aql juzwi’ is also sometime blessed with the union with the Universal Intellect -

عَلَّمُ ہْوَیِز دِنْشہ گُل نِیسُت
شَرِّفَانَا مُتَقَاضِانَا نِیسُت
پُحُوْر تَقَاضِانَا مُتَقَاضِا میسُد
مُوجٰ آن درْیا ِبِرْدِیا میسُد

Rumi says that intellect is under the influence of the spirit (or ruh).

حِسَن اِسپِر کُلْ بِنشَد اَیٰ فَؤال
عَلَّمُ اِسپِر رَجُغ بِنشَد بِم بَدْال

It is the spirit that makes the intellect functional.

عَلَّمُ نَزُّل مَشْتَ بِاَذِرٰک وَ فَرْغ
رَجُغٰ او رَجُ غَاش شَفّد نَیرز نَظر
The spirit gives strength to the hands of the intellect—

The spirit sends the senses to sleep so that the hidden secrets should be known.

Without losing oneself in this infinite sea, none can know it; those men of God who annihilated their own existence and became totally identified with the Universal Intellect, only they are called Universal intellect, Universal Self, throne and the chair (*arsh wa Kursi*)—

Because of this union or unity the Universal Intellect takes the shape of the human intellect.

But in spite of all its characteristics the Universal Intellect is incapable of understanding or knowing God who is transcendent above all the intellects.
Whereas the partial intellect or the 'aql juzwi' is a 'learnt intellect', it is though angelic in source, yet it grows through the worldly training and learning –

The partial intellect has no concern with the 'inner world'. It is like lightening that glitters and charms us; it is not advisable to follow it.

Instead of faith it has doubts and asking:

The ‘partial intellect’ is scattered over in the form of various and many futile longings and desires.
Unless these divided selves are gathered and collected and united into one whole, it is not possible to have any understanding of reality. Only love or ‘ishq’ can do this task –

جمع ای وارد ایرا را ب عشق
نا شوی خوش چیز سوءفند و دشمن

The greatest fault of the partial intellect is that it cannot realize any new form itself, it can receive the information only from outside passively.

کمک براین، تنها اتصال نیست
چرخه نباید که نتیجه نیست

Yes, this very intellect (partial) can grow in spirituality only if it follows the path of God –

قابل تنظیم و هم سپر این قدر
کی ساکب و کی تعلیمش دهد

In fact this partial intellect has defamed the Universal Intellect.

کمک براین کمک را ب زنام کرد

It is better to wash one’s hands off it and become a ‘diwana’ –

زدومن کمک دور اندیشش را
بعد از این دو آسیم دو آشیش را

The best way to get rid of this partial intellect is to lose oneself in love –

کمک را فرایند کس اندر کمکش دوست

Someone who is bestowed with the Perfect Intellect can unite the partial intellect with the Universal Intellect.

مرز عقلی سپر ای در نیاب
کامل العقلی ای در اندر جهان
When the soul of the seeker gets the touch of his master’s soul, the partial intellect is rendered useless –

نفس بَيْنَانْفِس ذُرْ clone پار چود جمَل ں کی گئی شد

The seeker’s intellect after getting united with his masters, increases in wisdom.

کِمَل بَا عَمَل دُر نا شد نور انفرادی نشَت ں و رُو بَیِہا شد

The outcome of Murid’s relationship with his Murshid is the attainment of the whole self, that is, the Universal Intellect.

Rumi says that the intellect is under the influence of the spirit as senses are under the influence of the intellect –

عَسَن رسِم گُمَل باشید ای خوازِن گُمَل اسبر روک باشید یم بِراَن

Umruddin writes in his study of Ghazali –

“It is clear that the Arabic word ‘al-aql’, especially as used by Ghazali, is more comprehensive than the English word REASON Ghazali has traced four stages or elements in al-aql as it develops in man (1) an undeveloped primitive rational faculty, (2) self-evident truths, (3) knowledge (al-ilm), and (4) a highly developed faculty in man
capable of understanding or knowing the ultimate realities. Of these (3) is generally expressed by the word ‘reason’.

According to Nasiruddin Tusi (1201-1274 AD) First Intellect (Aql Awwal), creative Intellect (Aql Fa’al) and Universal Intellect (Aql Kulli) are the same in reality.


‘Mention of ar-Ruh calls for the following remarks. In traditional metaphysics ‘intellectual’ or ‘spiritual’ are the adjectives pertaining to the third element in the ternary constituting the human being which in scholastic terms, is: corpus (body), anima (soul), and spiritus vel Intellectus (Spirit or Intellect). The middle term ‘soul’ comprises amongst other things, the mind or reason, the adjectives pertaining to which are, of course, ‘mental’ or ‘rational’. In slipshod modern parlance, however, the term ‘intellectual’ is often wrongly used as a synonym for these, in spite of the fact that it property pertains only to ‘Intellect’ (or spirit). ‘Intellectual’ and ‘spiritual’ are more or less equivalent terms, the first putting the emphasis on the ‘doctrinal’ aspect and the second on the ‘methodic’ or ‘realizational’ aspect. Whereas body and soul are purely human and belong to the ‘individual’ domain, the spirit or intellect is ‘universal’ and transcends the human state as such. As already indicated, the Latin Spiritus vel Intellectus (Spirit or Intellect) corresponds to the Arabic Ruh. Anima (‘Soul’) corresponds to the Arabic nafs.’

1 Umruddin, op.cit, p. 13
2 Nasiruddin Tusi. Raudatn’t Taslim (tr) Ivanow. Jl. of Royal Asiatic Society, July 1931, p. 543
3 William Studdart. op.cit, pp.46-47
SIRR (The Secret or the Hidden)

Human spirit grows and become subtler and is that state the Sufis call it the ‘SIRR’, that is, the secret (pl. asrar) or the hidden. According to Absar Ahmad (1992), a psychologist from Pakistan, -

“Some Sufis recognize within the qalb itself two deeper layers. The first is called ruh, the ‘spirit’ and the second which lies still deeper than the ‘spirit’ and which therefore is the deepest of all the strata of the ‘soul’, is Sirr, meaning literally the ‘secret’ i.e. the innermost recess of the soul. The spirit is represented by the image of an incandescent sun whose dazzling light illumines the whole world of Being. As the sun is the physical world rises from the eastern horizon and ‘illumines all things and activates their life energy, so the divine sun, rising from the spiritual east, illumines the infinitely wide world of the ‘spirit’ and animates all the energies contained in the spiritual faculty of this subtle organ of supersensory cognition. Subjectively the Sufi feels at this stage that he is standing in extreme proximity to god. The Sirr, ‘secret’, on the other hand, is the ‘innermost ground of the soul, the deepest layer of consciousness which is in reality beyond ‘consciousness’ in the ordinary sense of the word. It is the sacred core of the soul, where the divine and the human become united, unified and fused. In other words, it is in this dimension of the soul that the so-called unio mystica is realized. The ego-consciousness which is actualized in this dimension and which naturally is the highest form of ego-consciousness in Sufism is no longer the consciousness of the mystic himself. It is rather than the consciousness of the divine I.”

Idries Shah (1985) writes –

1 Quranic concept of Human Psyche, op. cit., p. 32.
“The word Sirr, generally translated as ‘secret’, stands in accepted Sufi terminology for the ‘innermost consciousness’. So that, if the innermost consciousness is not known to its possessor, it remains for him ‘secret’. And, on the verbal level, when by definition consciousness cannot be experienced, only referred to, it remains for that reason ‘secret’, ‘hidden’.

“One of the abilities of Sufis is that they can see through the outward show and self-deception of the others, and are thus able to teach these prisoners of the secondary self to attach to the real ‘secret’, innermost consciousness within.1

Dr. Mir Valiuddin (1980) describes the various meanings implied by the term Sirr in the following words –

“According to the eminent Sufis, Sirr is an organ of mystical vision, just as the heart (qalb) has the faculty of divine knowledge or gnosis, and the spirit (ruh) is the place of divine love. They consider the latifa-i-Sirr more subtle than the spirit and maintain that asrar (pl. of Sirr) are entrusted to those who are emancipated from the bondage other than God. The word Sirr applies to everything which passes between the finite and the infinite, the ‘abd and the rabb (servant and master, or the contingent being and his creator). That is why it has been said that the bosoms of the emancipated souls are the tombs of asrar, (the secret communications that pass between them and their Creator and nobody knows about them). If we understand Sirr as the faculty or organ that receives divine communication and the ensuing secret state, it would be evident that sirr is not a thing or a substance but a concept. In this sense, it is said that there exists between the abd and the rabb a sirr and a sirr as-sirr or a secret of the secret, or what is otherwise

1 Learning How to Learn, Penguin. NY 1981, p. 65
known as akhfa the Quran says: If you pronounce the word aloud (it is no matter), for verily He knoweth what is secret (sirr) and what is a still deeper secret (akhfa): (Quran, XV, 7).

"Thus, sirr means the secret between the abdl and the raah; and by sirr al-sirr is meant that secret which is not known even to the ‘abdl’ but is known to God alone who knows all the secret and hidden thing.

"The Sufis, who have maintained that sirr is a specific thing or substance, believe that sirr is a higher faculty than the heart and the spirit, but some hold that it is superior to the heart but inferior to the spirit.”

He then describes the views of the Shaykh al-Islam, Shaykh Shihab ad Din Suhrawardi’s opinion. According to the Shaykh al-Islam sirr is not something different from the heart or the spirit. It has no separate or individual existence of its own. According to him, those who regard sirr as of a higher rank than the spirit do so because they have found that the spirit when released from the bondage of the Nafs, or the ‘imperious self’ and the passions of the heart, acquires a new attribute which it did not possess before, and thus they thought that it was altogether a separate entity, quite different from the spirit, they failed to note that it was the same entity, spirit, which having acquired a new attribute looked like a separate entity. Similarly, those who regard sirr as inferior to the spirit and superior to the heart did not understand that when the heart attains perfection and is fully emancipated from the slavery of the nafs, and is free from the dominance of passions and the satanic affectations of the heart, it acquires a marvelous quality, and that is why they thought that it is a separate latifa or ‘faculty’, distinct from the heart and the spirit and its place was above the heart and below the
spirit. But some Sufis, contrary to the above views of the Shaykh al Islam, sirr occupies the position above spirit. They are of the opinion that nafs develops into qalb, the qalb into ruh and the ruh into the sirr. For them sirr signifies a subtle conception which is hidden in the depths of the spirit. It can neither be grasped by reason nor expressed in language. According to the Sufis the function of the nafs is to serve, the function of the heart is to love, the function of the spirit is to seek the proximity of God and the function of the sirr is to lose itself in the vision of God, the Real.¹

¹ Mir Valiuddin, Contemplative Discipline in Sufism, op. cit. pp. 93-95.
**SIRR - i- SIRR (The Secret of the Secret)**

*SIRR as Sirr or Sirr-i-sirr or the secret of the secret or the most hidden is the subtlest form of the consciousness as achieved by the Sufi’s during their spiritual growth of the self. It is the perfection of the psychological growth of the Sufi. Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh, a psychiatrist from Iran, says –

Sirr-i-sirr is the perfection of the growth of human self and the *arif* in this state, see the Truth with the Truth and without the Truth nobody knows its truth.’

*Sirr-i-sirr* is the sea of unity in which all the drops are the sea themselves and no drop is aware of its separate existence. It was in this state Hallaj declared ‘*Ana al-Haqq*’, ‘I am the Truth’.

Shaikh Ruzbahan says –

Sirr-i-sirr is the inner reality of the gnosis.’

The Sufis believe that –

‘*Sirr* may be under the limit of you but about *sirr-i-sirr* only God knows.’

Some Sufis have coined two more terms for the subtle recesses of the soul. They

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1. Dil o Nafs. p. 131-132
2. Dil-o-Nafs. p. 132
3. Dil-o-Nafs. p. 132
Lata'if Ashra

- Akhfa
- the right chest
- Khafif
- Sinaa
- the left chest
- Ruh
- Qalb
- Sadr
- Hearsom
are *khafi* and *akhfa*. In fact these two terms are the other names of the *sirr* and the *sirr-i-
sirr*, though in the Sufi literature we find that some Sufis discriminate between *sirr* and
*khafa*, but in most of the cases these two are one.

In the Naqshbandiya order *sirr* and *khafi* are different from each other. According
to the Mujaddid, a man has ten *lataif* or ‘subtle faculties’ – out of these, five are
concerned with a *Alam-i-Amr* or the world of command’, and five of them are concerned
with the ‘*Alam-i-khalq*’ or ‘the world of creation. By the former he means the world of
existence which has been brought into existence by God directly by His word of
command, *Kun* or ‘*Be*’, while the latter means that which is created gradually by
evolution. The former is not material, but the latter is material. The place of the *Alam-i-
Amr* is above the *Arsh* (Throne of God), and that of the *Alam-i-khalq* is below the Throne.
The faculties or *lataif* of the *Alam-i-Amr* are: *Qalh, Ruh, Sirr, khafi, Akhfa*; and the
faculties of the *Alam-i-Khalq* are the *Nafs* and the four elements, earth, water, air and fire.
These both the worlds constitute *daira-i-imkan* or the sphere of possibility the upper half
of this sphere is above Throne of God and the lower half is below the Throne. The above
two worlds with this subtle faculties can be shown as follows:

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\begin{align*}
&\text{Akhsa} \\
&\text{Khafl} \\
&\text{Sirr} \\
&\text{Ruh} \\
&\text{Qalb} \\
\hline
\text{The \textbf{Throne}} (\textbf{Arsh}) \\
&\text{Nafs} \\
&\text{Fire} \\
&\text{Air} \\
&\text{Water} \\
&\text{Earth}
\end{align*}
```
The *lataif* of the Alam-i-Amr are connected with the inner life of an individual and as such are located in the body. Their exact location, as says the Naqshbandis, including that of the *Nafs* (ego) which also belongs to the physical aspect of man, is: the *Nafs* is under the navel, *Qalb* on the left side, *Ruh* on the right side of the chest, and the *sirr* is exactly between the *Qalb* and the *Ruh*. *Khafi* is said by some Sufis to be in the forehead, and *Akhfa* in the brain; while others locate *Akhfa* in the middle of the chest, *sirr* between the *qalb* and the *Akhfa*, and *khafi* between *Ruh* and *Akhfa*.

Valiuddin (1985) writes explaining the above ideas –

“The place of the *latifas* pertaining to the ‘world of command’ is really above the *Arsh*. But the Almighty God has placed them in the body of man also. They have a close connection with it, and the body and mind are endowed with these faculties. But due to the impurities of the physical body, and the unchasteness of the *nafs* or the carnal self they contaminated and forget their origin. When the light of *Zikr* (remembrance) and the attention (*tawajjuh*) bestowed by the Shaykh (or Pir) purifies them again, they return to their source, and Divine attraction draws them back speedily to their original source and union is attained. This happens only when the selfhood is completely annihilated, and as a result, eternity is attained. This is called ‘*Urus*’ or ‘ascent’.”

According to Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, (also called the *Mujaddid*) the origin of the heart is in the Illumination of Divine Actions (*Tajall-i-fa’li*), the origin of the spirit (*ruh*) is the Divine Positive Attributes (*Sifat-i-thubutiya*), that of the *sirr* is the Divine Essential Potentialities (*shuyunat-i-dhaiya*), that of the *khafi* is the Divine Negative Attributes

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1 Valiuddin. op cit, p. 63-64
2 Ibid, p. 64
(sifat-salbiya) and that of the Akhfa is the all embarrassing Divine Potentiality (shan-i-jama).¹

Not all Sufis may agree with the faculty psychology of the Naqshbandis in locating them differently. For most of the Sufis it is the same spirit that develops from nafs to the last stage akhfa. The self grows in spirituality and acquires subtlety more and more. The consciousness gets rid of its grossness gradually to arrive at subtler states. The lataif are the transformed states of consciousness – the present research sticks to this viewpoint.

¹ Ibid, p. 111