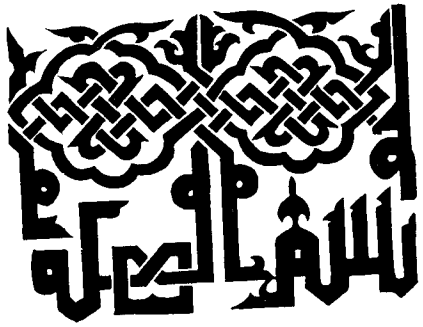
1. WHAT IS SUFISM?



In recent years many books have been published on Sufism and the spiritual life in Islam. Each of them has touched upon a different facet, for the phenomenon usually called Sufism is so broad and its appearance so protean that nobody can venture to describe it fully. Like the blind men in Rūmī's famous story, when they were made to touch an elephant, each described it according to the part of the body his hands had touched: to one the elephant appeared like a throne, to another like a fan, or like a water pipe, or like a pillar. But none was able to imagine what the whole animal would look like (M 3:1259–68).[1]

Such is the case with Sufism, the generally accepted name for Islamic mysticism. To approach its partial meaning we have to ask ourselves first, what *mysticism* means. That *mysticism* contains something mysterious, not to be reached by ordinary means or by intellectual effort, is understood from the root common to the words *mystic* and *mystery*, the Greek *myein*, "to close the eyes."

1. See Fritz Meier, "Zur Geschichte der Legende von den Blinden und dem Elefanten," in "Das Problem der Natur im esoterischen Monismus des Islams," *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 14 (1946): 174. "The Blind Men and the Elephant," a Hindu fable by John Godfrey Saxe. Shāh Walīullāh of Dehli speaks of the blind who tried to describe a tree according to the part their hands touched; see Shāh Walīullāh, *Lamaḥāt*, ed. Ghulām Muṣṭafā Qāsimī (Hyderabad, Sind, n.d.), p. 4.

Mysticism has been called "the great spiritual current which goes through all religions." In its widest sense it may be defined as the consciousness of the One Reality—be it called Wisdom, Light, Love, or Nothing.[2]

Such definitions, however, merely point our way. For the reality that is the goal of the mystic, and is ineffable, cannot be understood or explained by any normal mode of perception; neither philosophy nor reason can reveal it. Only the wisdom of the heart, *gnosis*, may give insight into some of its aspects. A spiritual experience that depends upon neither sensual nor rational methods is needed. Once the seeker has set forth upon the way to this Last Reality, he will be led by an inner light. This light becomes stronger as he frees himself from the attachments of this world or—as the Sufis would say—polishes the mirror of his heart. Only after a long period of purification—the *via purgativa* of Christian mysticism—will he be able to reach the *via illuminativa*, where he becomes endowed with love and gnosis. From there he may reach the last goal of all mystical quest, the *unio mystica*. This may be experienced and expressed as loving union, or as the *visio beatifica*, in which the spirit sees what is beyond all vision, surrounded by the primordial light of God; it may also be described as the "lifting of the veil of ignorance," the veil that covers the essential identity of God and His creatures.

Mysticism can be defined as love of the Absolute—for the power that separates true mysticism from mere asceticism is love. Divine love makes the seeker capable of bearing, even of enjoying, all the pains and afflictions that God showers upon him in order to test him and to purify his soul. This love can carry the mystic's heart to the Divine Presence "like the falcon which carries away the prey," separating him, thus, from all that is created in time.

One can find these essentially simple ideas in every type of mysticism. The mystics of all religions have tried to symbolize their experiences in three different groups of images: The never-ending quest for God is symbolized in the "Path" on which the "wayfarer" has to proceed, as in the numerous allegories dealing with Pilgrim's Progress or the Heavenly Journey. The transformation

2. The best introduction to mysticism is still Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* (1911; paperback ed., New York, 1956).

of the soul through tribulation and painful purification is often expressed in the imagery of alchemy or similar processes from nature and prescientific science: the age-old dream of producing gold from base material is realized on the spiritual level. Eventually, the nostalgia of the lover and the longing for union was expressed by symbols taken from human love; often a strange and fascinating combination of human and divine love permeates the verses of the mystics.

Notwithstanding similarities of description of mystical experiences, it is advisable to distinguish between two main types, which have been classified as Mysticism of Infinity and Mysticism of Personality. The former type has found its highest and purest expression in the system of Plotinus and in the Upanishads, particularly as elaborated in Shankara's *advaita* philosophy. Sufism comes close to it in some of the forms developed by the Ibn ʿArabī school. Here, the Numen is conceived as the Being beyond all being, or even as the Not-Being, because it cannot be described by any of the categories of finite thought; it is infinite, timeless, spaceless, the Absolute Existence, and the Only Reality. By contrast the world possesses only a "limited reality," which derives its conditioned existence from the Absolute Existence of the Divine. It may be symbolized as the boundless ocean in which the individual self vanishes like a drop, or as the desert, which shows itself in ever new sand dunes that hide its depths, or as the water out of which the world is crystallized like ice. This type of mysticism was often attacked by prophets and reformers, because it seemed to deny the value of the human personality and to result in pantheism or monism, thus constituting the greatest threat to personal responsibility. The idea of continuous emanation in contrast to the unique divine act of creation was considered, by both Muslim and Christian mystics, to be incompatible with the Biblico-Koranic idea of a *creatio ex nihilo*. In the so-called Mysticism of Personality, the relation between man and God is perceived as that of creature and Creator, of a slave in the presence of his Lord, or of a lover yearning for his Beloved. This type is more commonly found in earlier Sufism.

These two types of mystical experience, however, are rarely met with in their purest forms. Especially in mystical poetry, an author may describe God in terminology taken from a pure love relation

and a few lines later use language that lends itself to an exclusively "pantheistic" interpretation.

A differentiation between the "voluntaristic" and the "gnostic" approaches to mystical experience is somewhat easier. The mystic of the voluntaristic type wants to "qualify himself with the qualities of God," as the Prophetic tradition says, and to unite his own will completely with God's will, thus eventually overcoming the theoretical difficulties posed by the dilemma of predestination and free will. This mysticism can be seen as a practical life process. The mystic of the gnostic type strives for a deeper knowledge of God: he attempts to know the structure of His universe or to interpret the degree of His revelations—although no mystic could ever dare to "know" His Essence. Did not Dhū'n-Nūn (d. 859), usually regarded as one of the founders of speculations about *ma'rifa,* or gnosis, warn his fellow mystics: "To ponder about the Essence of God is ignorance, and to point to Him is associationism (*shirk*), and real gnosis is bewilderment" (N 34)? Despite this bewilderment, the gnostic approach often led to the building of theosophical systems with its adherents tending to interpret every aspect of mysticism in the light of their own particular theories, sometimes even denying the simple experience of loving submission. In Islamic mysticism, both aspects are equally strong, and in later periods they are intermingled.

In their formative period, the Sufis admitted of a twofold approach to God. As Hujwīrī (d. circa 1071) says in his discussion of the states of "intimacy" and "respect":

> There is a difference between one who is burned by His Majesty in the fire of love and one who is illuminated by His Beauty in the light of contemplation. (H 367)

> There is a difference between one who meditates upon the Divine acts and one who is amazed at the Divine Majesty; the one is a follower of friendship, the other is a companion of love. (H 373)

One might also recall the distinction made by Jāmī in speaking of the two types of advanced Sufis: some are those

> to whom the Primordial Grace and Lovingkindness has granted salvation after their being submerged in complete union and in the wave of *tauḥīd* [unification], [taking them out] of the belly of the fish "Annihilation" on the shore of separation and in the arena of permanent subsistence, so that they might lead the people towards salvation.
>
> The others are those who are completely submerged in the ocean of Unity and have been so completely naughted in the belly of the fish "Annihilation" that never a news or trace comes to the shore of separation and the direction of subsistence . . . and the sanctity of perfecting others is not entrusted to them. (N 8–9)

The distinction that modern history of religions makes between the so-called "prophetic" and the "mystic" spirit is clearly visible in Jāmī's description of the two types of mystics—those who practice complete reclusion (*Weltabkehr*) and are solely concerned with their own salvation in the first "flight of the one toward the One," and those who return from their mystical experience in a higher, sanctified state of mind and are able to lead other people on the right path.

Approaches to the phenomenon "Sufism" are manifold. To analyze the mystical experience itself is next to impossible since words can never plumb the depths of this experience. Even the finest psychological analysis is limited; words remain on the shore, as the Sufis would say. It would be easier to understand Sufism through an analysis of given structures: the French scholar Henry Corbin, in his book on Ibn 'Arabī, has shown to what depths such a study of structure underlying a specific mystical-philosophical system can lead. Analyses of the language of mysticism and the development of the "mystical lexicon" (Louis Massignon and, more recently, Paul Nwyia) can help illuminate the formative period of Sufi thought. The study of symbols and images used by the mystics and of the degree of their interdependence belongs to this field; it opens the way to an examination of the contribution of Sufism to the development of Islamic languages, literatures, and arts.

Since Sufism is to a very large extent built upon the principle of the disciple's initiation, the different methods of spiritual education, the exercises practiced in the Sufi orders, the psychological phases of the progress, the formation of orders, and their sociological and cultural role are rewarding fields of research. Of prime importance here are the penetrating studies of the Swiss scholar Fritz Meier.

European scholars have responded to the phenomenon of Islamic mysticism in different ways, as can be understood from these remarks. Europe's first contact with Sufi ideas can be traced back to the Middle Ages: the works of the Catalanian mystic and scholar Ramon Lull (d. 1316) show a remarkable influence of Sufi litera-

ture.[3] The first figure from the history of Sufism to be introduced into European literature was Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya, the great woman saint of the eighth century; her legend was brought to Europe by Joinville, the chancellor of Louis IX, in the late thirteenth century. Rābiʿa's figure was used in a seventeenth-century French treatise on pure love as a model of Divine love,[4] and her story has been retold more than once in the West, the latest echo being a contemporary German short story (Max Mell, "Die schönen Hände").

Travelers who visited the Near and Middle East in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries brought back information about rites of the dervishes, with both the ritual dance of the Whirling Dervishes (Mevlevis) and the strange performances of the Howling Dervishes (Rifāʿī's) attracting casual visitors. In 1638 the learned Fabricius of Rostock University edited and translated, for the first time, a poem by the great Egyptian mystic Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 1235).

Most of the information about oriental spirituality, however, was derived from the translations of Persian classical poetry—Saʿdī's *Gulistān* has been one of the favorite books of European intellectuals since Adam Olearius produced its first complete translation into German in 1651. A century later, Sir William Jones at Fort William, Calcutta, fostered the study of Persian poetry, among other subjects, and as a result the first translations of Ḥāfiẓ became available in the West. His ideas about Sufi poetry have influenced many English-speaking orientalists, although one may find, in some works on Sufism written during the nineteenth century, rather absurd views in wild confusion. Ḥāfiẓ's poetical imagery—unfortunately mostly taken at face value—has largely colored the Western image of Sufism.

In the nineteenth century, historical sources and important Sufi texts were made available in print both in the Middle East and in Europe, so that scholars could begin to form their own ideas about the origin and early development of Sufism. Yet most of the sources available were of rather late origin and rarely contained reliable information about the earliest stages of the mystical movement in Islam. That is why the interpreters usually agreed that Sufism must be a foreign plant in the sandy desert of Islam, the

3. Annemarie Schimmel, "Raymundus Lullus und seine Auseinandersetzung mit dem Islam," *Eine Heilige Kirche*, fasc. 1 (1953–54).

4. Henri Bremond, *Histoire du sentiment religieux en France*, vol. 9 (Paris, 1928).

religion that was so little known and even less appreciated and that could not possibly be related to any finer and higher spiritual movement.[5]

A German professor of Divinity, F. A. D. Tholuck, produced the first comprehensive book on Sufism in 1821, called *Ssufismus sive theosophia persarum pantheistica*, and four years later an anthology called *Blüthensammlung aus der Morgenländischen Mystik*. Amazingly enough, Tholuck—himself a good Protestant and therefore not at all prone to mystical ideas—understood that "the Sufi doctrine was both generated and must be illustrated out of Muhammad's own mysticism." This statement is all the more surprising in view of the miscellaneous character of the manuscripts and printed books at his disposal.[6]

During the following decades, several theories about the origin of Sufism were brought forth, as A. J. Arberry has shown in his useful book *An Introduction to the History of Sufism*.[7] It will suffice to mention a few of those theories.

E. H. Palmer, in his *Oriental Mysticism* (1867), held that Sufism is "the development of the Primaeval religion of the Aryan race"[8] a theory not unknown to some German writers during the Nazi

5. Basic sources are: A. J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (London, 1950), which deals with the history of the classical period of Sufism; Marijan Molé, *Les mystiques musulmans* (Paris, 1965), the best short introduction to Sufism, its history and meaning; G.-C. Anawati and Louis Gardet, *Mystique musulmane* (Paris, 1961), a fine study of the early period of Sufism and of Sufi practices, mainly *dhikr*, "recollection," as seen by Catholic theologians. See also Louis Gardet, *Expériences mystiques en terres nonchrétiennes* (Paris, 1953). Cyprian Rice, O. P., *The Persian Sufis*, 2d ed. (London, 1969), is a lovable and understanding booklet about mystical experience. Fritz Meier, *Vom Wesen der islamischen Mystik* (Basel, 1943), is a small scholarly book that stresses the importance of initiation in Sufism; it contains rich source material. Seyyed H. Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (London, 1966; New York, 1967), contains a number of important remarks about the Iranian aspect of Sufism, which is dealt with more fully in the same author's *Sufi Essais* (London, 1972). Inayat Khan, *The Sufi Message*, which has been reprinted many times, is a modern subjective, yet impressive interpretation. Idries Shah, *The Sufis*, as well as his other books, should be avoided by serious students.

6. Friedrich August Deofidus Tholuck, *Ssufismus sive theosophia persarum pantheistica* (Berlin, 1821), and the same author's *Blüthensammlung aus der Morgenländischen Mystik* (Berlin, 1825), are still quite revealing.

7. The history of Sufi studies in Europe has been discussed by A. J. Arberry in *An Introduction to the History of Sufism* (London, 1942).

8. E. H. Palmer, *Oriental Mysticism: A Treatise on Sufistic and Unitarian Theosophy of the Persians* (1867; reprint ed., London, 1969), is immature but has some good material. John P. Brown, *The Dervishes* (1868; reprint ed., London, 1968), gives much source material, though it is not scholarly.

period. In any case, Sufism has often been considered a typically Iranian development inside Islam. There is no doubt that certain important Iranian elements have survived through the ages beneath its surface, as both Henri Corbin and Seyyed H. Nasr have recently emphasized.[9]

Many eminent scholars, mainly in Great Britain, have stressed the importance of Neoplatonic influences upon the development of Sufism. Nobody would deny that Neoplatonism had deeply permeated the Near East—the so-called "Theology of Aristotle" (which is, in fact, Porphyry's commentary on Plotinus's *Enneads*) was translated into Arabic as early as 840. Neoplatonism was "in the air," as Reynold A. Nicholson pointed out in the famous introduction to his selection from Jalāluddīn Rūmī's lyrical poetry in 1898—the first book in the long list of his still unrivaled publications in the field of Sufism.[10] Nicholson, however, understood that the early ascetic movement can be explained without difficulties from its Islamic roots and that, therefore, the original form of Sufism is "a native product of Islam itself." Since Islam grew out of a soil in which ancient oriental, Neoplatonic, and Christian influences were strong, a number of secondary influences may have worked upon Islam even in its earliest phase.

It is only natural that the Christian influences should have interested many European scholars (Adalbert Merx, Arend Jan Wensinck, Margaret Smith),[11] who mainly tried to explore the relations of Muslims with the Syrian monks. The best studies in this field have been written by the Swedish Bishop Tor Andrae, to whom we also owe the classical discussion of the veneration of the Prophet Muhammad in mystical Islam.[12]

The problem of influences becomes more difficult when one thinks of the relations with religious traditions outside the Near

9. See also Emil Brögelmann, *Die religiösen Erlebnisse der persischen Mystiker* (Hannover, 1932); a short survey is given by A. H. Zarrinkoob, "Persian Sufism in Its Historical Perspective," *Iranian Studies* 3 (1970): 3–4.

10. Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (1914; reprint ed., Chester Springs, Pa., 1962), is still a classic, though it is outdated at certain places. His *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (1921; reprint ed., Cambridge, 1967), contains three excellent studies on outstanding personalities (Abū Saʿīd, Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Jīlī); and his *The Idea of Personality in Sufism* (Cambridge, 1923) is a collection of lectures.

11. Adalbert Merx, *Ideen und Grundlinien einer allgemeinen Geschichte der Mystik* (Heidelberg, 1893). Arend Jan Wensinck, *Abūʾl-faraǧ Bar hebreaus, The Book of the Dove* (Leiden, 1919).

12. Tor Andrae, *I Myrtenträdgården* (Uppsala, 1947). For his other works see the Bibliography.

Eastern world.[13] Many scholars were, and some still are, inclined to accept Indian influences on the formative period of Sufism, beginning with Alfred von Kremer (1868) and Reinhart P. Dozy (1869). But even Max Horten's numerous articles in this field could not bring any stringent proof of such influences[14] in the early period; for later times, the situation is slightly different.[15]

For the earliest period, influences from Turkestan are much more important, as Richard Hartmann has shown; Ignaz Goldziher had already pointed out parallel traditions in Islamic mystical tales and Buddhist stories, but this kind of parallelism can be easily traced back to the common sources, e.g., the Indian fables of the Hitopadeśa and Panchatantra, which were translated into the Near Eastern languages before and shortly after the advent of Islam. And the miracles of saints are the same all over the world. The Turkestani contribution is, however, highlighted in our day by some Turkish mystics who show a tendency of speaking of a typically "Turkish" type of mysticism that comprises a strict Mysticism of Infinity, which describes God as "positive Not-Being." But such generalizations are dangerous.

Even the rather far-fetched possibility of early Chinese—i.e., Taoist—influences on Sufism has been discussed (first by Omar Farrukh). For the later period, the Japanese scholar Toshihiko Izutsu has drawn some interesting parallels between Taoist structures of thought and Ibn ʿArabī's mystical system.[16]

The study of a single mystic's life and work can occupy a scholar throughout his life: Louis Massignon's research into the personality of al-Ḥallāj, the "martyr of divine love," is the best example for this approach; Hellmut Ritter's masterly book on ʿAṭṭār, *Das*

13. See Ignaz Goldziher, "Materialien zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des Sufismus," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 13 (1899). Reynold A. Nicholson, "A Historical Enquiry concerning the Origin and Development of Sufism," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1906, p. 303; Richard Hartmann, "Zur Frage nach der Herkunft und den Anfängen des Sufitums," *Der Islam* 6 (1915); Annemarie Schimmel, "The Origin and Early Development of Sufism," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, 1958.

14. Max Horten, *Indische Strömungen in der islamischen Mystik* (Heidelberg, 1927–28); like his article "Der Sinn der islamischen Mystik," *Scientia*, July 1927, this book should be used with caution.

15. Robert C. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (London, 1960), is well documented and thought-provoking, though it overstresses the Indian elements.

16. Omar Farrukh, *At-taṣawwuf fiʾl-Islām* (Beirut, 1957). For parallels see Toshihiko Izutsu, *A Comparative Study of the Key Philosophical Concepts of Sufism and Taoism*, 2 vols. (Tokyo, 1966–67).

Meer der Seele (The Ocean of the Soul), is the result of an ideal combination of strict philology combined with aesthetic and religious understanding. On the other hand, an investigation of a particular mystical attitude, like Benedikt Reinert's study of *tawakkul*, "trust in God," reveals the various facets of one single stage of the Path and sheds light on many kindred problems.

Whether we concentrate upon the history of Sufism, by using a vertical cut, or upon its methods, expressions, and experiences, by taking a cross section, the main problem is the fact that previously unknown manuscripts frequently come to light.[17] The libraries of the Islamic countries, and those in the West, still contain many works that may shed new light upon any of the problems at stake. Even now there is so much material available in the different languages of Islam that any generalization seems impossible.[18] That is why this book can give only a glimpse of a few aspects of Sufism; even this will, probably, be tinged by a personal predilection for mystical poetry derived from the large area of Iranian cultural influence.

How did the Sufis themselves interpret the meaning of the word Sufism?

In interpreting Islamic mystical texts, one must not forget that many sayings to which we give a deep theological or philosophical meaning may have been intended to be suggestive wordplay; some of the definitions found in the classical texts may have been uttered

17. For this problem see Fritz Meier, "Ein wichtiger Handschriftenfund zur Sufik," *Oriens* 20 (1967).

18. As an antidote to the large amount of Arabic and Persian sources, one should consult Ibn al-Jauzī, *Talbīs Iblis* (Cairo, 1340 h./1921–22), translated by David Samuel Margoliouth as "The Devil's Delusion," *Islamic Culture* 12 (1938), a poisonous book attacking the degeneration of Sufism in the twelfth century. Oriental scholars have published a number of general studies on the history of Sufism in the last twenty years, during which there has been a growing interest in the spiritual life of Islam. Abū'l-ʿAlā' ʿAffīfī, *At-taṣawwuf: ath-thaurat ar-rūḥiyya fī'l-Islām* [Sufism, the Spiritual Revolution in Islam] (Cairo, 1963); Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī, *Al-ḥayāt ar-rūḥiyya fī'l-Islam* [Spiritual Life in Islam] (Cairo, 1954); M. Qāsim Ghanī, *Ta'rīkh-i taṣawwuf dar Islām* [History of Sufism in Islam] (Tehran, 1330 sh./1951). Among the anthologies of Sufi texts produced in the West, the following useful collections should be mentioned: Johannes Pedersen, *Muhammedansk mystik* (Copenhagen, 1923); Margaret Smith, *Readings from the Mystics of Islam* (London, 1950); Margaret Smith, *The Sufi Path of Love* (London, 1954); Martino Mario Moreno, *Antologia della Mistica Arabo-Persiana* (Bari, Italy, 1951); Émile Dermenghem, *Vies des saints musulmans* (Algiers, 1942); Virginia Vacca, *Vite e detti di Santi Musulmani* (Torino, n.d.). Specialized studies and anthologies will be mentioned in relevant places.

by the Sufi masters as a sort of *ko'an*, a paradox meant to shock the hearer, to kindle discussion, to perplex the logical faculties, and thus to engender a nonlogical understanding of the real meaning of the word concerned, or of the mystical "state" or "stage" in question. The resolution of apparent contradictions in some of these sayings might be found, then, in an act of illumination. This is at least one possible explanation of the fact that the masters give many different answers to the same question. This "willful paradox" and "pious highfalutin" was perhaps "intended to make their flesh creep a little for their health's sake," as W. H. Temple Gairdner puts it, who with full right asks: "Do we not take their language too seriously? It parades as scientific; it is really poetico-rhetorical."[19] Indeed, one aspect of mystical language in Sufism that should never be overlooked is the tendency of the Arabs to play with words. The structure of the Arabic language—built upon triliteral roots—lends itself to the developing of innumerable word forms following almost mathematical rules. It might be likened to the structure of an arabesque that grows out of a simple geometric pattern into complicated multiangled stars, or out of a flower motif into intricate lacework. A tendency to enjoy these infinite possibilities of the language has greatly influenced the style of Arabic poets and prose writers, and in many sayings of the Sufis one can detect a similar joy in linguistic play; the author indulges in deriving different meanings from one root, he loves rhymes and strong rhythmical patterns—features inherited by the mystics of the Persian, Turkish, and Indo-Muslim tongues. But this almost magical interplay of sound and meaning, which contributes so much to the impressiveness of a sentence in the Islamic languages, is lost in translation. So also are the numerous hidden allusions inherent in every root of the Arabic tongue, which point to the whole range of historical, theological, and poetical experiences that may have been present in the mind of the author of an apparently simple statement or an easy-flowing verse.

Another problem is posed by the fondness of many Sufi authors for inventing classifications, usually tripartite, to define certain mystical states; they often press the meaning of a word rather than explain it. The titles of the books composed by Sufis, particularly

19. W. H. Temple Gairdner, *Al-Ghazzālī's "Mishkāt al-anwār": The Niche for Lights* (London, 1915), p. 71.

in the postclassical centuries, show the same peculiarities; they allude to mystical states, to technical expressions, and often contain in themselves a whole spiritual program; other authors may give, by the numerical value of the title, the date of its composition.

What, then, did the Sufis say about the origin of the name *taṣawwuf*, which we translate as Sufism (or, the older form, Sufiism)?

Their definitions go back to the earliest period and thus defy the tendency of some modern Western writers to apply this name only to the later "theosophical" aspect of Islamic mysticism. Some of the pious would even ask the Prophet when he blessed them with his appearance in their dreams: "What is Sufism?" (N 255) Hujwīrī, in the mid-eleventh century, summed up the discussion:

> Some assert that the Sufi is so called because he wears a woollen garment (*jāma-i ṣūf*), others that he is so called because he is in the first rank (*ṣaff-i awwal*), others say it is because the Sufis claim to belong to the *aṣḥāb-i Ṣuffa* (the people of the Bench who gathered around the Prophet's mosque). Others, again, declare that the name is derived from *ṣafā* (purity). (H 30)

Another—Western—definition, namely the derivation from Greek *sophos*, "wise," is philologically impossible. The derivation from *ṣūf*, "wool," is now generally accepted—the coarse woolen garment of the first generation of Muslim ascetics was their distinguishing mark. Kalābādhī, one of the early theoretical writers on Sufism (d. ca. 990), says in this respect:

> Those who relate them to the Bench and to wool express the outward aspect of their conditions: for they were people who had left this world, departed from their homes, fled from their companions. They wandered about the land, mortifying the carnal desires, and making naked the body; they took of this world's good only so much as is indispensable for covering the nakedness and allaying hunger. (K 5)

But Sufism is more. Junayd, the undisputed leader of the Iraqian school of mysticism (d. 910), wrote: "Sufism is not [achieved] by much praying and fasting, but it is the security of the heart and the generosity of the soul" (QR 60). Junayd is also credited with a definition in which he sees the prototypes of the Sufis in the prophets as mentioned in the Koran (in later times the ascent through the different stages of the prophets, or the identification with the spirit of one of them, is one aspect of certain Sufi schools):

> Sufism is founded on eight qualities exemplified in eight apostles: the generosity of Abraham, who sacrificed his son; the acquiescence of Ishmael, who submitted to the command of God and gave up his dear life; the patience of Job, who patiently endured the afflictions of worms and the jealousy of the Merciful; the symbolism of Zacharias, to whom God said "Thou shalt not speak unto men for three days save by signs" (Sūra 3:36) and again to the same effect "When he called upon his Lord with a secret invocation" (Sūra 19:2); the strangerhood of John, who was a stranger in his own country and an alien to his own kind amongst whom he lived; the pilgrimhood of Jesus, who was so detached therein from worldly things that he kept only a cup and a comb—the cup he threw away when he saw a man drinking in the palms of his hand, and the comb likewise when he saw another man using his fingers instead of a comb; the wearing of wool by Moses, whose garment was woollen; and the poverty of Muhammed, to whom God Almighty sent the key of all treasures that are upon the face of the earth, saying, "Lay no trouble on thyself, but procure every luxury by means of these treasures," and he answered, "O Lord, I desire them not; keep me one day full fed and one day hungry." (H 39–40)

Some of Junayd's contemporaries emphasized the ascetic side of Sufism, a complete break with what is called "the world" and egotism: "Sufism is to possess nothing and to be possessed by nothing" (L 25).

"Sufism is freedom and generosity and absence of self-constraint" (L 57). Ruwaym's (d. 915) advice to young Ibn Khafīf, "Sufism is to sacrifice one's soul—but do not occupy yourself with the small-talk of the Sufis!" (X 90) shows that the danger of talking too much in a sort of technical and quasi-esoteric language was felt quite early. The Sufi should rather insist upon "faithfulness with the contract" (N 226) and should be free, "neither tired by searching nor disappointed by deprivation" (L 25). "The Sufis are people who prefer God to everything and God prefers them to everything else" (L 25). Some decades after Dhū'n-Nūn (d. 859), who is credited with the last sayings, Sahl at-Tustarī defined the Sufi: "It is he whose blood is licit and whose property is allowed [i.e., he who can be killed and whose property can be legally given to the faithful] and whatever he sees, he sees it from God, and knows that God's loving-kindness embraces all creation" (B 370).

The social and practical aspect of Sufism is understood from definitions like those of Junayd and Nūrī, according to whom "Sufism is not composed of practices and sciences, but it is morals" (H 42), and "who surpasses you in good moral qualities surpasses you in Sufism" (N 311). It means to act according to God's orders and laws, which are understood in their deepest spiritual sense without denying their outward forms. This way of life is possible only through loving devotion: "Sufism is the heart's being pure from the pollution of discord"—a sentence which Hujwīrī (H 38) ex-

plains as follows: "Love is concord, and the lover has but one duty in the world, namely to keep the commandment of the beloved, and if the object of desire is one, how can discord arise?"

The Sufis have spoken of the threefold meaning of *taṣawwuf* according to the *sharīʿa*, the Muslim law, the *ṭarīqa*, the mystical path, and the *ḥaqīqa*, the Truth. It is a purification on different levels, first from the lower qualities and the turpitude of the soul, then from the bondage of human qualities, and eventually a purification and election on the level of attributes (L 27–28).

But there are also warnings against "Sufism." Shiblī (d. 945), as was so often the case, wanted to shock his audience when he asserted: "Sufism is polytheism, because it is the guarding of the heart from the vision of the 'other,' and 'other' does not exist" (H 38). He thus attacks the ascetic who closes his eyes to the created world and wants to concentrate exclusively upon God—but since God is the only Reality, how can one think of "otherness" and so try to avoid it? Therefore, "a true Sufi is he who is not," as Kharaqānī says, with a paradox that has been repeated by other mystics (N 298, 225).

The Islamic mystics enjoyed the play with the root *ṣafā*, "purity," when they discussed Sufism and the qualities of the ideal Sufi: "He that is purified by love is pure (*ṣāfī*), and he who is purified by the Beloved is a Sufi" (H 34), i.e., he who is completely absorbed in the Divine Beloved and does not think of anything but Him has attained the true rank of a Sufi. It is not surprising that the Sufis made attempts to designate Adam as the first Sufi; for he was forty days "in seclusion" (like the novice at the beginning of the Path) before God endowed him with spirit; then God put the lamp of reason in his heart and the light of wisdom on his tongue, and he emerged like an illuminated mystic from the retirement during which he was kneaded by the hands of God. After his fall he performed acts of penitence in India for 300 years until God "elected" him (*iṣṭafā*; see Sūra 3:25) so that he became pure (*ṣāfī*) and thus a true Sufi.[20]

Even a poet who cannot be called exactly a mystic, namely Khāqānī, the greatest panegyrist of Iran (d. 1199), claims: "I am pure since I am a servant of the purity of the Sufi"; and in one of the long chains of oaths that he likes to insert in his *qaṣīdas* he swears "by the Sufis who love afflictions and are enemies of wellbeing." He is thus close to Rūmī, who a century later defined Sufism in this way:

20. Quṭbaddīn al-ʿIbādī, *At-taṣfiya fī aḥwāl aṣ-ṣūfiyya, or Ṣūfīnāme*, ed. Ghulām Muḥammad Yūsufī (Tehran, 1347 sh./1968), p. 27.

"What is Sufism? He said: To find joy in the heart when grief comes" (M 3:3261). Khāqānī alluded to the Sufis

> who carry in their waterbowl the water of life, like Khiḍr, and whose rods are as miraculous as the rod of Moses.[21]

Later Persian, Turkish, and Urdu literature abounds in poems that praise the wonderful qualities of this or that Sufi saint or describe the miracles worked by a mystical leader.

Sufism meant, in the formative period, mainly an interiorization of Islam, a personal experience of the central mystery of Islam, that of *tauḥīd*, "to declare that God is One." The Sufis always remained inside the fold of Islam, and their mystical attitude was not limited by their adherence to any of the legal or theological schools. They could reach their goal from any starting point—neither the differences between the legal *madhhabs* nor theological hairsplitting was, basically, of interest to them. Hujwīrī sums up the early Sufi attitude toward science and theology when he poignantly observes: "Knowledge is immense and life is short: therefore it is not obligatory to learn all the science . . . but only so much as bears upon the religious law" (H 11). That means: enough astronomy to find the direction of Mecca as required for the correct performance of prayer, enough mathematics to figure out the legal amount of alms one has to pay—that is what the Sufi, like every good Muslim, should know. For God has condemned useless knowledge (Sūra 2:96), and did not the Prophet say: "I take refuge with Thee from knowledge that profiteth naught" (H 11)?[22] *ʿIlm*, "knowledge," the pursuit of which is incumbent upon every male and female Muslim, is the knowledge of a Muslim's practical duties: "Do not read *ʿilm* except for the true life. . . . Religious science is jurisprudence and exegesis and tradition—whoever reads anything else, becomes abominable" (L 34). True gnosis, namely the gnosis of the One, is not attained through books, and many a legend tells how a Sufi who had reached, or thought he had reached, his goal threw away his books, for: "Books, ye are excellent guides, but it is absurd to trouble about a guide after the goal has been reached" (NS 21).

"To break the ink-pots and to tear the books" was considered by some mystics the first step in Sufism. The great saint ʿUmar Suhrawardī, who studied scholastic theology in his youth, was blessed by

21. Khāqānī, *Dīwān*, ed. Sajjādī (Tehran, 1338 sh./1959), qaṣīda p. 250, 51, 369.
22. N 32 attributed to Abū Hāshim aṣ-Ṣūfī.

a saint who put his hands on his chest and made him forget all he had studied, "but he filled my breast with the *ʿilm ladunnī*" (Sūra 18:65), the "knowledge immediately derived from God" (N 515). ʿAbdu'l-Qādir Gīlānī performed a miracle by suddenly washing away the text of a philosophy book he considered dangerous to his disciple (N 517); other Sufis were urged by dreams to cast their precious collections of books into a river (N 432).

This predilection for immediate knowledge as contrasted with legalistic scholarship was expressed in later times by many poets and mystics who ridiculed the founders of the great law schools, especially Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 767) and Shāfiʿī (d. 820). Sanā'ī's verse (attributed to both ʿAṭṭār [AD 100] and Rūmī [D 498]) is a case in point:

> Abū Ḥanīfa has not taught love,
> Shāfiʿī has no traditions about it.
>
> (SD 605)

Sanā'ī (d. 1131) has often contrasted the *Sufi* with the *Kūfī*, the learned lawyer Abū Ḥanīfa from Kufa, and still in eighteenth-century Sindhi mystical poetry the Sufi is called *lā-kūfī*, "non-Kūfī," i.e., not bound to a particular religious rite.[23]

The Sufis claimed that the whole wisdom was included in the letter *alif*, the first letter in the alphabet and symbol of God (see Appendix 1). Are not many scholars who rely upon books "like the donkey which carries books" (Sūra 62:5)? Did not Noah live for nine hundred years, with only the recollection of God? And, as Rūmī adds with a slightly ironical bent, "he had not read the *risāla* nor the *Qūt al-qulūb*" (M 6:2652–53), the two handbooks of moderate Sufism. For although the Sufis often condemned the bookishness of scholars and admonished their disciples to "strive to lift the veils, not to collect books,"[24] it is a fact that they themselves were among the most productive writers in Islamic history. And many of their theoretical works are no more readable or enjoyable than the dogmatic treatises that they attacked in their poems.

The main target of Sufi criticism was philosophy, influenced by Greek thought: "There is nobody more distant from the law of the

23. For the whole complex see Annemarie Schimmel, "Shah ʿAbdul Laṭīf's Beschreibung des wahren Sufi," in *Festschrift für Fritz Meier*, comp. Richard Gramlich (Wiesbaden, 1974).

24. Maulānā ʿAbdurraḥmān Jāmī, *Lawā'iḥ* (Tehran, 1342 sh./1963), no. 24, p. 40.

Hashimite prophet than a philosopher" (U 54; see also MT 291), says ʿAṭṭār, echoing Sanā'ī's sentiments when he wrote:

> From words like "primary matter" and "primary cause"
> you will not find the way into the Presence of the Lord.[25]

The whole "Universal Reason" is nothing in the presence of a single divine order, "Say!" (U 45)—a fine pun on *kull*, "universal," and *qul*, "say," the divine address to the Prophet. The "little philosopher" is both the laughing stock and the scapegoat for the mystics. Strangely enough, Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna, d. 1037) has become the representative of dry rationalism, although he was as much of a mystical thinker as some of those classified as Sufis.[26] Perhaps the Sufi aversion to him, though already visible in Sanā'ī's poetry (SD 57), was fostered by a story about Majduddīn Baghdādī (d. 1219): "He saw the prophet in his dream and was informed by him that 'Ibn Sīnā wanted to reach God without my mediation, and I veiled him with my hand, and he fell into the fire' " (N 427).

Such an anti-intellectualism, as it was sensed by the orthodox, could lead to dangers for the communal life. One might mention the type of the "wise idiot,"[27] represented in Islamic lore first by Buhlūl, a strange character who lived during the caliphate of Hārūn ar-Rashīd (d. 809). To him, as later to many unknown and unnamed mentally deranged persons, are ascribed sayings in which they give frank expression of their criticism of contemporary life. But since they were insane they escaped punishment: "God has freed them from order and prohibition" (N 296). They are set free by God from their normal state as "slaves" and live in perfect loving union with Him, as ʿAṭṭār points out (MT 245). The type of the *majdhūb*, the "enraptured one" who, under the shock of a mystical vision or any psychological experience, is bereft of his senses and walks around in a fashion prohibited by the religious law (i.e., stark naked) belongs to the darker side of the Sufi world. Many a mystical leader has complained about simpletons who attracted, by their strange behavior and their alleged miracle mongering, the interest of the crowd, who took them for representatives of true spirituality.

25. Abū'l-Majd Majdūd Sanā'ī, "Sanā'ī'ābād," in *Mathnawīhā*, ed. Mudarris Raẓawī (Tehran, 1348 sh./1969), line 42.

26. Henri Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital* (New York and London, 1960).

27. Paul Loosen, "Die weisen Narren des Naisaburi," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 27 (1912), deals with this type of mentally deranged "wise" man or "saint."

In the introduction to his *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, Jāmī poignantly criticizes the imitators of the different Sufi types and their vain and dangerous attitudes. The innumerable verses of Persian poets who juxtapose *mollā* and lover, pulpit and gallows, and claim that true love is the greatest enemy of reason and that the lover should be comparable to *Majnūn*, the demented lover who was the laughing stock of children, may have enhanced the importance of this class of illiterate, crude, and sometimes even very nasty "saints."

Comparatively harmless types, living on the charity of the pious, did not really endanger the Sufi movement; but the degeneration of the wandering dervishes or *faqīrs*, the "poor," who performed miracles and were beyond the law (*bī shar*ᶜ), has done much to bring Sufism into discredit. It was such people whom European travelers in the East met first, so that one of the honorific names given to the genuine mystic, *faqīr*, "poor," has become, in German, the designation of a mere trickster.

From the very beginning, the mystics strictly distinguished between the true Sufi, the *mutaṣawwif* who aspires at reaching a higher spiritual level, and the *muṣṭawif*, the man who pretends to be a mystic but is a useless, even dangerous, intruder. They knew well that the spiritual path is "hard to travel except for those who were created for that purpose" (H 4), and that it is impossible to become a true Sufi if one is not born that way: "This patched frock must have been sewn in pre-eternity," for, as much as a person may strive to reach the rank of a Sufi, "no ass can turn into a horse by energy and zeal" (U 70–71). Therefore, the complaint about the decline of Sufism almost coincides with its beginning; a saying of the ninth-century mystic, the Persian Yaḥyā ibn Muᶜādh, warns his fellow mystics: "Avoid the society of three classes of men—heedless savants, hypocritical Koran-readers, and ignorant pretenders to Sufism" (H 17; cf. B 411). Poets have satirized the self-styled Sufi (S 666), and in the eleventh century it was repeatedly said: "Today Sufism is a name without reality, but formerly it was a reality without name. . . . The pretence is known and the practice unknown" (H 44). People were content with empty confession, and "blind conformity has taken the place of spiritual enthusiasm" (H 7). The mystical concerts in which the Sufis might become enraptured and begin to spin around their axis were taken, by many, for the essence of Sufism. And to pretend mystical knowledge and experience was—and still is—quite easy. The stock of delightful stories and the legends of

ancient saints could always attract people; well-recited verses might move the listeners to tears; and it was certainly easier to beg food at the doors of the rich and give a blessing in exchange than to pursue a normal profession. Thus a saint of the eleventh century angrily declared: "I looked into Hell, and I saw that most of its inhabitants were those donning a patched frock and carrying a food-bowl" (B 309). These accursed people are, as Baqlī explains the saying, the traitors to mysticism, those who claim gnosis but have only the external color of truth, because they lack knowledge of the Muhammadan religious law. "Their prayer-direction is the charming beloved [*shāhid*], the candle [*shamᶜ* at joyous meetings] and the belly [*shikam*]" (SD 82). As time passed the complaints about the degeneration of Sufism became more eloquent. ᶜUrfī, one of Akbar's court-poets (d. 1591), says in a quatrain:

> The Sufi is busy with deceiving men and women,
> The ignorant one is busy with building up his body,
> The wise man is busy with the coquetry of words,
> The lover is busy with annihilating himself.[28]

He thus attributes to the lover the quality that should be that of the Sufi: namely, to annihilate himself in the Beloved.

The word *Sufi* became a pejorative expression; the great mystic of Delhi in the eighteenth century, Mīr Dard, insistently repeated that he did not want to be called a Sufi, but rather "a true Muhammadan." He did not hesitate to call the representatives of mystical doctrines opposed to his stern, law-bound mysticism "pig-natured," and he often expressed his contempt for the "shopkeeper sheikh," the "seller of patched frocks" who was found everywhere in the country. He would have agreed completely with his Arabian contemporary al-Badr al-Ḥijāzī, whose satire on the decline of Sufism Arberry has translated:[29]

> Would that we had not lived to see every demented madman held up by his fellows as a *Pole*!
> Their *ulema* take refuge in him, indeed, they have even adopted him as a Lord, instead of the Lord of the Throne.
> For they have forgotten God, saying "So-and-so provides deliverance from suffering for all mankind."

28. Muhammad ᶜUrfī Shīrazī, *Kulliyāt*, ed. Ali Jawāhirī (Tehran, 1336 sh./1957), p. 448.

29. Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 128.

When he dies, they make him the object of pilgrimage, and hasten to his shrine, Arabs and foreigners alike;
Some kiss his grave, and some the threshold of his door, and the dust . . . .

Ḥijāzī has put his finger on the danger of the exaggerated veneration of the spiritual master, the sheikh or *pīr* (see chapter 5), what Muhammad Iqbal has called "pirism," which means the absolute sway of the leader over his followers and the attendant exploitation of ignorant peasants and villagers.

In their criticism of saint worship and pirism—a facet of popular Islam the danger of which one can scarcely realize without having lived in the East—Muslim modernists and moderate Sufis are united. But to reach this point, we have first to travel the long road through the outward history of Sufism. We shall see how this movement has assumed various shapes appropriate to the times and the personalities of its leaders, though its substance has remained the same.

2. HISTORICAL OUTLINES *of* CLASSICAL SUFISM

THE FORMATIVE PERIOD

"Islamic mysticism is the attempt to reach individual salvation through attaining the true *tauḥīd*," says one of the leading Western orientalists.[1] In fact, the quintessence of the long history of Sufism is to express anew, in different formulations, the overwhelming truth that "there is no deity but Allah" and to realize that He alone can be the object of worship.

The history of Sufism is a chart showing some of the stations on this path of interpretation, some of the forms in which this one reality was expressed, some of the different ways in which the mystics

1. Hans Heinrich Schaeder, "Zur Deutung des islamischen Mystik," *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 30 (1935): 845.

tried to reach their goal, whether individually or collectively, through gnosis or through love, by means of asceticism or through practices leading to ecstatic rapture. Its external history is a history of the spiritual, theological, and literary movements inside Islam. At the same time, because of its deep roots in the ritual practices taught by the Koran, Sufism reflects the different attitudes of Muslims toward "the world"; thus we find among the mystics antiworldly ascetics and active fighters for the glory of their faith, austere preachers of repentance and enthusiastic hymnodists praising God's eternal loving-kindness, builders of highly sophisticated theosophical systems and enraptured lovers of Eternal Beauty.

The aims of all the mystics are essentially the same. For, as Henri Corbin has stated, "the religious conscience of Islam is centered upon a fact of meta-history" (W 46), namely, upon the transhistorical fact of the primordial covenant as understood from the Koranic word in Sūra 7:171. Before creation, God called the future humanity out of the loins of the not-yet-created Adam and addressed them with the words: "Am I not your Lord?" (*alastu bi-rabbikum*), and they answered: "Yes, we witness it" (*balā shahidnā*). The idea of this primordial covenant (*mīthāq*) between God and humanity has impressed the religious conscience of the Muslims, and especially the Muslim mystics, more than any other idea. Here is the starting point for their understanding of free will and predestination, of election and acceptance, of God's eternal power and man's loving response and promise. The goal of the mystic is to return to the experience of the "Day of *Alastu*," when only God existed, before He led future creatures out of the abyss of not-being and endowed them with life, love, and understanding so that they might face Him again at the end of time.

Sufism traces its origins back to the Prophet of Islam and takes inspiration from the divine word as revealed through him in the Koran.[2] God has manifested His will, or rather Himself, in the words of the holy book, which is, basically, the only means by which man can know Him. The Koran was accepted relatively early by the faithful as uncreated and coeternal with God. It has been for every Muslim, and particularly for the mystics, the "unique lexicon," the

2. On Koranic exegesis see Ignaz Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung* (Leiden, 1920); Paul Nwyia, *Exegèse coranique et langage mystique* (Beirut, 1970), an excellent analysis of early Sufi language, adds to Louis Massignon's classical study, *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane*, 3d ed. (Paris, 1968).

"essential textbook of his sciences, the key for his *Weltanschauung*," as Louis Massignon has put it (P 465). For everything concerning worldly and spiritual affairs can be found in this book, and its interpretation in different ages shows how the self-understanding of the Muslim community grew and changed. The mystics have played a decisive role in the development of the Koranic sciences; their hermeneutical methods range from a simple verbal interpretation to symbolical and allegorical exegesis, without, however, denying the value of the exterior meaning of the Koranic words. For the devout—some of whom could find up to seven thousand meanings in a single Koranic verse—the holy book was "the resurrection," for, as Ḥallāj had claimed, "in it there are the signs of Divine Lordship [*rubūbiyya*], information of the resurrection, and news about the future till the eternity of eternities. Whosoever knows the Koran is, so to speak, in the Resurrection" (B 265). The words of the Koran have formed the cornerstone for all mystical doctrines: the early Sufis lived under the threat of the Last Judgment as described in the terrifying words of many *sūras*, until they discovered the promise of mutual love between God and man (Sūra 5:59); they found in it the different stages of the human soul, which rises from the "soul that commands evil" (*an-nafs al-ammāra*) to the "soul which is at peace with God" (*an-nafs al-muṭma'inna*). They read that God is closer to man than his jugular vein (Sūra 50:16) and is, at the same time, the Lord and Creator of the universe, immanent and transcendent. "The sights do not reach Him" (Sūra 6:103), but "whithersoever ye turn there is the Face of God" (Sūra 2:109). God has "put signs into nature and into the human soul" (Sūra 51:21), and it is necessary to see and to understand them.

God, as revealed in the Koran, is both the stern Judge and the Merciful and Compassionate; He is All-knowing and Wise, but He is also the Most Cunning. The numerous and often contradictory attributes given to Allāh in the Koran form the chain of the ninety-nine most beautiful names—names that were to play an important role in later mystical theories and in the life of prayer and were sometimes used in almost magical connections. The hope of discovering the Greatest Name of God has inspired many a Sufi who dreamed of reaching the highest bliss in this world and the next by means of this blessed name. God appears, through the Koranic words, as the only real Agent who creates and predestines human actions. He is the Absolute Personality—as the Sufis defined it: "He

alone has the right to say 'I' " (W 249)—and the Reality, *al-ḥaqq*, a word that was used by most of the later mystics to designate God.

Just as the scholastic theologians defined God by forty-one attributes—twenty attributes of necessity, twenty of impossibility, and one of possibility—many of the later Sufis invented complicated systems to draw closer to the mystery of the divine, the Absolute Being, the Pure Existence, or whatever names they might find. Pious mystics have often objected to these pseudophilosophical definitions containing names and words not found in the Koran and therefore ill becoming Him who revealed Himself in the holy book.

But the Koran contains more than the description of God and of the otherworld; it also regulates the practical and moral life of the community, and the Sufis meticulously followed its injuctions. Further, the recitation of the Koran was an important means of leading the spirit into a meditative state, or even of producing a mystical rapture. Recited in beautiful tones, the rhythmic and musical wording of the holy book carried the minds of the devout into higher spheres and might open a higher level of understanding to them. The language of the Koran was common to Muslims all over the world; it has helped to shape the expressions not only of theologians or lawyer divines but of poets and men of letters; it permeated the Islamic community as a living force. Even though millions of men and women did not and do not understand its Arabic wording, they still sense the numinous quality of the book and live with it. One can certainly speak of a "koranization" of the memory[3]; and everyone who has read Persian, Turkish, or any other Islamic idiom knows how strongly the language of the Koran has penetrated the literature and everyday language, and how beautifully the "letters of the Koran" have been elaborated according to the artistic taste of Persians, Turks, Indians, and Africans, creating the most exquisite calligraphy—the typical art of the mystics.

Sufism traces its origin back to the Prophet himself. He is described in the Koran as *ummī*, "illiterate" (Sūra 7:157–58), a quality that is central to the understanding of Islamic religiosity: just as in Christianity, where God reveals Himself through Christ—the word made flesh—the virginity of Mary is required in order to produce an immaculate vessel for the divine word, so in Islam, where God reveals Himself through the word of the Koran, the Prophet had to be

3. Paul Nwyia, *Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh et la naissance de la confrèrie šāḏilite* (Beirut, 1972), p. 46.

a vessel that was unpolluted by "intellectual" knowledge of word and script so that he could carry the trust in perfect purity.

Muhammad is the first link in the spiritual chain of Sufism, and his ascension through the heavens into the divine presence, to which the first lines of Sūra 17 allude, became the prototype of the mystic's spiritual ascension into the intimate presence of God. According to the tradition, esoteric wisdom was transmitted from Muhammad to his cousin and son-in-law ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the fourth of the righteous caliphs (d. 661). Other members of his family and his friends, according to legend, were endowed with mystical insight or pursued mystical practices. The traditions (*ḥadīth*) that go back to the Prophet, or at least are attributed to him, served the Sufis when they elaborated their own definitions of the various stages and states. Every tendency within Islam, and so within Sufism, found material to support its claims from Prophetic traditions. In later times a considerable number of *ḥadīth* that are not found in the official collections as they were compiled in the second half of the ninth century were used by the Sufis. In a comparatively short time, Muhammad's personality gained great importance for the spiritual life of his community. He was the ideal leader, and the duty of every Muslim was to imitate him. His veneration soon reached mythical heights, until he was conceived by the medieval mystics as the Perfect Man par excellence, the cause and goal of creation, the friend of God and the intercessor on behalf of his community (see chapter 4).

The Western student of Islam, used to the traditional picture of Muhammad as it emerged during hundreds of years of hatred and enmity in the Christian world, will be surprised to see the strong "mystical" qualities attributed to this man who was, according to the usual Western understanding, a mere politician, shrewd and sensual, or, at the best, the founder of a heresy derived from Christianity. Even most recent studies of the Prophet, which have shown his sincerity and his deep religious concern, do not convey that quality of mystical love that his followers feel for him.

We do not know how many of the later tales of Muhammad's ascetic piety are true and how many simply reflect the ideals of later mystical devotion. A number of his sayings about the importance of prayer, and mainly of the night vigils, seem to be authentic, and "when his eyes slept his heart did not sleep," as his beloved young wife Āʿisha relates. The classical manuals of Sufism contain large collections of sayings in which the Prophet exhorts the faithful to

constant prayer and to the recollection of God during every moment of life (L 64; G 1:265–66). Indeed, a prophet who was so certain of being God's instrument must have relied upon prayer; for through prayer he could experience, over and over again, the presence of Him who had sent him.

Mystical tradition includes some of Muhammad's companions among the spiritual ancestors of Sufism—we have already mentioned the so-called *ahl aṣ-ṣuffa*, "the People of the Bench," poor and pious members of the community who lived in the mosque of Medina. Among the Prophet's companions, Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (d. 653) is often mentioned as "un socialiste avant la lettre," as Louis Massignon puts it; it is to him that the tradition ascribes many sentences about poverty, and he appears as the prototype of the true *faqīr*, the poor person who possesses nothing but is totally possessed by God, partaking of His everlasting riches.

Even more important is Salmān al-Fārisī, a Persian-born barber who was taken into Muhammad's household and became the model of spiritual adoption and mystical initiation—he is, thus, the symbol of the Persians, who were adopted into Islam, and links the Arabian world with the Iranian tradition. His spirituality was later considered a decisive element in the history of Persian Sufism and in Shia thought.[4] Salmān the Barber was later regarded as the patron saint of small artisans, just as some of the ninth- and tenth-century Sufis were to become patrons of the artisan groups whose professions they shared; Salmān came to stand for the impact of Sufism on the large masses (see MM 5).

Another name mystically connected with the Prophet is that of Uways al-Qaranī, who is supposed to have lived in Yemen and who never met the Prophet.[5] It is said that Muhammad knew of his piety and uttered these famous words: "The breath of the Merciful (*nafas ar-Raḥmān*) comes to me from Yemen." Uways, about whom the tradition relates that he spent all his nights in prayer (T 1:21), became, for the later Sufis, the prototype of the inspired Sufi who has been guided solely by divine grace, knowing of the Prophet without outward connection. Thus *uwaysī*, or, as the Turks say, *veysi meshreb*, is the mystic who has attained illumination outside the regular mystical path and without the mediation and guidance of a

4. Louis Massignon, "Salmān Pāk et les prémices spirituelles de l'Islam iranien," *Société des études iraniennes* 7 (1934).

5. A. S. Husaini, "Uways al-Qaranī and the Uwaysi Sufis," *Moslem World* 57, no. 2 (April 1967).

living sheikh. And the "breath of the Merciful" has become, in poetical language, the symbol for the act of divine guidance, which, like the morning breeze, opens the contracted bud of the human heart.

Out of this nucleus of pious people around Muhammad has emerged a definition that was adopted by the Sufis: that is, the threefold attitude of *islām*, *īmān*, and *iḥsān*.[6] The Koran speaks of *islām* and *īmān*; *islām* is the complete and exclusive surrender of the faithful to God's will and his perfect acceptance of the injunctions as preached in the Koran, whereas *īmān*, "faith," constitutes the interior aspect of Islam. Thus a *muslim* need not be a *mu'min* "one who has faith," but the *mu'min* is definitely a *muslim*. As to *iḥsān*, it was added—according to most traditions by the Prophet himself—with the meaning "that you worship God as if you see Him," for even though man does not see God, God always sees man, and the Koran asserts that "mercy is with those who practice *iḥsān* [*al-muḥsinūn*, 'those who do well']" (Sūra 7:54). With the addition of this third element the complete interiorization of Islam begins; for the believer has to feel that he stands every moment in the presence of God, that he has to behave with awe and respect, and must never fall back into the "sleep of heedlessness," never forget the all-embracing divine presence.

We know little about the earliest appearance of ascetic tendencies in Islam. But when, in 661, ʿAlī, the fourth caliph, was assassinated and the dynasty of the Omayyads came to power, the different trends within the community became more conspicuous. The continuous expansion of the Muslim Empire made the pious ponder the discrepancy between the eschatological threat in the early Koranic revelations and the necessity to expand the realms of Muslim rule by conquering more and more of the lands of the infidels. These conquests were led by a dynasty whose members were anything but representative of Muslim ideals: the Omayyads were always accused of utter worldliness and impious behavior (with the exception of ʿUmar II, 717–20). The resistance of the pious circles to the government grew stronger and was expressed in theological debates about the right ruler of the faithful and the conditions for the leadership of the community. The negative attitude toward the government engendered during these decades has significantly shaped the

6. Arend Jan Wensinck, *Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane* (Leiden, 1936–71), 1: 467b.

feeling of the pious throughout the history of Islam; the Sufis would often equate "government" with "evil." Medina, the city of the Prophet, was one center of pious conservatives; other groups lived in the new Muslim settlements in Iraq, a province where the love for Muhammad's family was particularly strong and which was antagonistic to Syria, the country where the Omayyad rulers had set up their capital.

The name that stands for the early ascetic, antigovernmental attitude is that of the patriarch of Muslim mysticism, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 728).[7] He saw the glorious conquests of the Arabs in 711, the memorable year when they crossed the straits of Gibraltar (which still bears the name of the Muslim conqueror Ṭāriq, *jabal Ṭāriq*, "Ṭāriq's mountain"), and when they also reached Sind, the lower Indus valley, and laid the foundation of a Muslim rule that still continues in present Pakistan; in the same year, 711, the Muslims reached the borders of Transoxania, which was destined to become an important center of Muslim learning and piety. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, however, sober and clearsighted as he was, sensed the dangers inherent in a society that had become interested in conquest alone, in collecting wealth and worldly goods, while tending to forget the Koranic word (Sūra 55:26): "Whatever is on earth is perishing save His Face." He used to admonish his listeners to live strictly according to the rules laid down by the Koran so that they would not be ashamed at Doomsday: "O son of Adam, you will die alone and enter the tomb alone and be resurrected alone, and it is with you alone that the reckoning will be made!" Why care so much for this perishable world? "Be with this world as if you had never been there, and with the Otherworld as if you would never leave it." Many centuries later his words still echo in Persian, Turkish, and Pashto mystical verses.

Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was deeply steeped in the sadness and fear so typical of ascetics of all religions. "It was as if Hellfire had been created exclusively for him and for ʿUmar II," says one historian. His preaching and his exhortations, produced in beautiful sonorous Arabic, influenced many a pious soul in Iraq and elsewhere. His scrupulosity and his fear of the Day of Judgment are reflected in many sayings of his contemporaries or of later Muslims, who might

7. Hans Heinrich Schaeder, in "Hasan al-Basri," *Der Islam* 13 (1923), dealt for the first time with Ḥasan but never completed his study. Hellmut Ritter, "Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Studien zur Geschichte der islamischen Frömmigkeit," *Der Islam* 21 (1933), gave an excellent analysis. Quotations are taken from Ritter's article.

exclaim, when thinking of God's terrible wrath and of their own sinful lives: "O that I were dust and ashes!"—a saying that was projected back even into the mouth of Muhammad's most trustworthy companions (cf. Sūra 78:41).

Louis Massignon has seen in Ḥasan and in the ascetics who followed him a "realistic critical tendency" as opposed to the more "idealistic tradition" that prevailed in Kufa, the seat of the first Shia groups and the home town of Abū Hāshim, the first to be called *aṣ-Ṣūfī*. It is true that the first ascetic tendencies in Basra and its environment were almost exclusively devotional and lacked any interest in speculative thought. In contrast with the growing luxury of life, the men and women of these groups advocated strict renunciation of the world and what was in it and relied upon the Prophet's word: "If ye knew what I know ye would laugh little and weep much." Therefore they were known as "those who constantly weep" (*al-bakkāʾūn*), for both the miserable state of the world and the meditation of their own shortcomings made them cry in hope of divine help and forgiveness. Ibn ar-Rūmī, the Iraqi poet of the ninth century, has dramatically described them in one of his poems, and Kharaqānī, in the eleventh century, attests that "God is fond of His servant's crying" (N 299). It is, therefore, not surprising that one of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's disciples founded a settlement of ascetically inclined people in Abbadan on the Persian Gulf: that disciple was ʿAbduʾl Wāḥid ibn Zayd (d. 794), described as a typical representative of the virtue of *waraʿ*, "abstinence," and of permanent sadness. Through him, Ḥasan's ideals reached Syria, where Abū Sulaymān ad-Dārānī (d. 830) and his disciple Aḥmad ibn Abīʾl-Ḥawārī (d. 851) are the best-known members of the Basrian ascetic movement.

A new chapter in the history of Islam was opened when the Abbasids—related to Muhammad's uncle ʿAbbās—came to power in 750. According to the traditional interpretation, the long rule of this dynasty (their last member was killed by the Mongols in 1258) marks the high tide of Muslim culture and civilization. Arts and sciences, law and philology, theology and philosophy were developing; every branch of human knowledge was cultivated. The legal injunctions of the Koran were brought into a more systematic form by the scholars who are considered the founders of the four orthodox law schools: Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 767), Mālik ibn Anās (d. 795), ash-Shāfiʿī (d. 820), and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855). They took into account legal points ranging from obscure matters pertaining to

laws of inheritance to the smallest details for the correct performance of the ritual prayer or the pilgrimage. The four schools differed from each other only on minor points; they were all founded upon the Koran and the *sunna*, i.e., the Prophetic tradition, and made the *ijmāᶜ*, the consensus of the "doctors of law" on a certain point, an instrument for introducing innovative legal decisions. They differed on the degree of personal judgment that was granted to the jurist in making his decisions. As early as the late tenth century, the possibility of free investigation into the sources of law (*ijtihād*) in matters that previously had been decided was no longer permitted; this led to a fossilization of jurisprudence, and the *ijmāᶜ*, once a force for creative change in Islam, became the cause of its stagnation. Although Islamic law was never codified, the classical handbooks, along with their commentaries and scholia, were handed down verbatim through the generations—and the Sufis have often raised their voices against the spiritless legalism that stifled free development of the personal spiritual life.

Theological issues were widely discussed, mainly in connection with the problem of the legitimacy of the leader of the community, which embraces the question of predestination as well as the problem of whether or not a grave sinner can remain within the pale of Islam. The first attempts at defining the central theme of Islam, the unity of God, were made at approximately the same time, with theologians gradually learning the skills of dialectical disputation and logic. They fought relentlessly against any trace of Manichaean dualism, of Christian trinitarianism, or of whatever seemed to constitute *shirk*, "associating anything with God," i.e., worship of anything besides the sovereign ruler Allah. Defense of God's absolute unity led to discussions concerning the attributes of God, from which ensued the problem of whether the Koran, as God's own word, was created (according to the Muᶜtazila) or uncreated (according to the followers of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and the majority of the faithful). But here, too, the zeal for accuracy of definition led the scholars into hairsplitting discussions—as had been the case with the legalists—and Maᶜrūf al-Karkhī, a leading Sufi of the early ninth century in Baghdad, sighed: "When God loves His servant, He opens for him the door of actions [i.e., religious and pious acts] and closes the door of theological disputations."[8] The theological

8. ᶜAbdur Raḥmān as-Sulamī, *Kitāb ṭabaqāt aṣ-Ṣūfiyya*, ed. Nūraddīn Sharība (Cairo, 1953), p. 87.

discussions had repercussions upon religious thought in general, as, indeed, was the case with the new interest in Greek science and philosophy. The reign of the caliph Maʾmūn (813–33) marks the beginning of that remarkable activity of Arab translators (many of whom were non-Muslims) who made Greek science and philosophy available to Muslim scholars; these, in turn, elaborated the given data, adding many new practical insights. The noteworthy results of their scholarship deeply influenced Western thought and science in the later Middle Ages.

All these currents helped develop the language; the jurists, the theologians, and the translators gave Arabic a greater pliability, adding new dimensions to an already rich and beautiful language. The mystics, too, made considerable contributions in this regard—Paul Nwyia, noting the "adventures of the mystics" in language, has highlighted the fact that, "thanks to the mystics, in the Arabic language, an authentic language, that of experience, was born" (W 4). The writings of the early Sufis show not only variety of expression but an increasing profundity of thought as the mystical experience is refined. In the prayers of some of the Sufis in the tenth century, or in certain poems by Ḥallāj, the ineffable experience has been abstracted in words of unforgettable beauty.

A similar development is visible, in later times, in the non-Arab countries: the literary language of Iran owes much to writers who gave voice to mystical yearnings in Persian; Turkish was transformed by the mystical poet Yūnus Emre (d. circa 1321) into a delightful literary idiom. Likewise the Indo-Muslim languages (Sindhi, Panjabi, and to a great extent Urdu and Pashto) are in large part the result of the speech and song of mystical leaders who could not address their simple disciples in high-flown theological Arabic or poetical Persian; in order to express the mysteries of divine love and devotion, they were obliged to use the vernaculars, making them vehicles of the most lofty thought. Then they emerged as languages well able to serve as a literary medium for nonmystical writers.

The expansion of the Islamic Empire during the late Omayyad and early Abbasid periods had brought the Muslims into contact with large groups of non-Muslims representing different cultural levels and varied traditions. The presence of Zoroastrian influences must certainly be accepted from the beginning of the Abbasid period, when the capital was shifted from Damascus to Baghdad. Per-

sian noblemen served at the court; Persian traditions from the "Book of Kings" were incorporated into the Arabic narrative literature, helping to shape the image of the ideal ruler; and Persian mythology was to become a substitute for the weak pre-Islamic Arabic tradition. In Eastern Iran and Transoxania, the Muslims met Buddhists whose ascetic practices were of some interest to them. Their contacts with Hinduism as a religion were negligible in this period, although India contributed extensively to the development of Islamic mathematics and astronomy. But India in general was considered the country of the sage, and the home of magical practices performed by blackish, ugly people. Manichaeism, so widespread in the Near and Middle East, and in Central Asia, attracted the interest of the theologians, and more than one mystic was accused of Manichaean inclinations. Mandaeans and Jews constituted a small, but active, minority.

The most significant contacts of the early Abbasid Muslims were with Christians, split into numerous groups ranging from the Nestorians to the many Monophysite sects and churches.[9] Christian ascetics and hermits who inhabited places in Iraq and the mountains of Lebanon are mentioned frequently in Sufi stories—and in pre-Islamic poetry there were already allusions to the light shining forth from the Christian hermit's cell. A meeting with a Christian ascetic or with a wise monk is a fictional element in Sufi legends of early times: such a person usually explains some mystical truths to the seeker; or the disciple admires his austerity but is informed by a heavenly voice that all his asceticism will not gain him salvation since he has no faith in Muhammad. Jesus, the last prophet before Muhammad according to Koranic revelation, appears to the Sufis as the ideal ascetic and also as the pure lover of God. A homeless pilgrim, wandering without knowing where to put his head, he instructs the devout about the importance of modesty, peace, and charity, for "just as the seed does not grow but from dust, so the

9. There are several studies devoted to the mystics of the first three centuries: Henry Frederick Amedroz, "Notes on Some Sufi Lives," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1912; Margaret Smith, *Studies in Early Mysticism in the Near and Middle East* (London, 1931), deals with the relationships between Christian and Islamic mysticism. The same problem has been discussed by Tor Andrae, "Zuhd und Mönchtum," *Le monde oriental* 25 (1931), and in several other studies by this Swedish theologian. His posthumously published book *I Myrtenträdgården* (Uppsala, 1947), translated into English by Birgitta Sharpe as *In the Garden of Myrtles* (Albany, N.Y., 1988), is an excellent introduction to the pre-Ḥallājian development of Sufism.

seed of wisdom does not grow but from a heart like dust."[10] It is the Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount whose image is reflected in sayings of the first generations of Sufis, and he continued to be a favorite figure in later Sufi poetry as well: he and his virgin mother become exalted symbolic figures—the woman unspoiled by worldly concern, the pure receptacle of the divine spirit, and the prophet born out of the divine command, surnamed "Spirit of God," became models of the pure spiritual life.

It is even possible that the first Sufis adopted from the Christian ascetics the woolen garment from which their name derives. These Sufis were people who meticulously fulfilled the words of the law, prayed and fasted, constantly recollecting God, and were absolutely bound by Koran and tradition. Thus says one of them: "Sometimes Truth knocks at my heart for forty days, but I do not permit it to enter my heart unless it brings two witnesses, the Koran and the Prophetic tradition" (L 104). The country of incomparable ascetic achievement was Khurasan in the northeastern part of the Abbasid Empire. A saying ascribed to one of the ninth-century Khurasanian ascetics serves well as an introduction to the mentality typical of this remarkable group: "Who wants to attain to the highest honor should prefer seven to seven: poverty to wealth, hunger to satiety, the low to the elevated, humiliation to honor, modesty to pride, sadness to joy, death to life" (N 45). As late as the thirteenth century Jalāluddīn Rūmī alludes in one of his verses to the ascetics of Herat and Merw-i Taliqan, declaring that even they would be intoxicated if the scent of the wine of love were to reach them from the Maghreb, the far west (D 1966). But this scent very rarely reached them, though perhaps more true mystical love is hidden beneath their outward austerity than a modern reader can realize.[11]

One of the most famous conversion stories in early Sufism is that of Fuḍayl ibn ʿIyāḍ. He was a highwayman, albeit a magnanimous one, between the cities of Abiward and Sarakhs. One day, on the way to his beloved, he happened to hear a verse from the Koran and immediately gave up banditry, thereafter devoting himself to the study of the Prophetic tradition in Kufa. He died in Mecca in 803.

10. Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī. *Qūt al-qulūb fī muʿāmalāt al-maḥbūb*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1310 h./1892–93), 2:74.

11. Early ascetic Sufism has been treated by Paul Klappstein, *Vier turkestanische Heilige, ein Beitrag zum Verständnis der islamischen Mystik* (Berlin, 1919), and Jakob Hallauer, *Die Vita des Ibrahim ibn Edhem in der Tedhkiret al-Ewlija des Ferid ed-Din Attar* (Leipzig, 1925)—both rather superficial.

Fuḍayl is a typical representative of early orthodox asceticism, "and when he died, sadness was taken away from the world" (Q 9). This sadness is reflected in many of his sayings. He disliked the company of people, and in words reminiscent of his contemporary Rābiʿa, the woman saint, he said: "When night comes I am happy that I am alone, without separation, with God, and when morning comes I get distressed because I detest the view of those people who enter and disturb my solitude" (T 1:31). Although Fuḍayl was married, he considered family life one of the greatest obstacles on the way to God; he was seen smiling only once in thirty years—when his son died. This event was, for him, a sign of divine grace: "When God loves His servant, He afflicts him, and when He loves him very much He takes hold of him and leaves for him neither family nor wealth" (G 4:282). (The feeling of happiness at the death of family members was not unknown among medieval Christian mystics either, as the story of Angela di Foligno shows).[12] Even Jalāluddīn Rūmī wrote, quite without feeling, in a verse of his *Mathnawī*: "The death of his children was for him like sweetmeat" (M 3:1927); and the indifference of some Indo-Muslim Chishtī saints of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to the death of family members is well known. On the other hand, many of the great Sufis and founders of mystical fraternities were married and had large families—Aḥmad-i Jām had forty-two children (N 357), and ʿAbdu'l-Qādir Gīlānī had forty-nine sons. Yet so rare is it to find any approval of happy family life in Sufi sayings that one is quite unprepared for the exception one meets in Mīr Dard, the saint of Delhi in the eighteenth century, who exclaimed in one of his books: "I love my wife and my children dearly."[13]

Among the early ascetics, a preference for celibacy was common in spite of the Prophet's example of married life and his advice to raise a family. But, as Dārānī says, "the sweetness of adoration and undisturbed surrender of the heart which the single man can feel the married man can never experience" (G 2:22). The restlessness caused by marriage, the distraction from God, has often been described by the Sufis (N 217), and the sorrows of family life might be regarded as "punishment for the execution of legally permitted lusts" (N 185). Fuḍayl's elder contemporary, Ibrāhīm ibn Adham

12. Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* (1911; paperback ed., New York, 1956), p. 216.

13. Khwāja Mīr Dard, "Nāla-yi Dard," no. 70, in *Chahār risāla* (Bhopal, 1310 h./1892–93).

(d. circa 790), whom he met at Mecca, expressed such a notion in a striking sentence often quoted in Sufi poetry and prose: "When a man marries he embarks on a ship, and when a child is born he suffers shipwreck" (L 199). Ibrāhīm ibn Adham—"the key of mystical sciences," as Junayd called him (H 103)—has become, in Islamic tradition, one of the proverbial examples of true poverty, abstinence, and trust in God. According to the legend, he renounced the princely life in Balkh, the old Buddhist capital where he was born (a story embellished with echoes of the Buddha legend). He later became the subject of many pious tales in Eastern Islamic lands. A romance was even composed about his adventures and was known particularly in the Malayan archipelago.

> Although his residence was Balkh,
> Balkh became corrected, namely *talkh* ["bitter"],

says ʿAṭṭār (U 264), with a pun: by changing the diacritical dots of the first letter of Balkh, he implies that the former seat of power and wealth became bitter for the young, highborn ascetic.

Ibrāhīm is credited with making the first classification of the stages of *zuhd*, "asceticism." Because of its tripartition, which was common after the ninth century, it looks like a word from some later source, for it discerns: (a) renunciation of the world, (b) renunciation of the happy feeling of having achieved renunciation, and (c) the stage in which the ascetic regards the world as so unimportant that he no longer looks at it.

The stories of the degree of asceticism achieved by these early Sufis sound somewhat incredible to a modern mind; yet they counted it happiness to live completely free of worldly things, even though they might use only a brick for a pillow (N 49) and a worn-out mat of straw for a bed (if they did not prefer to sleep in a seated position or refrain from sleep at all). They cared neither for their outward appearance nor for their attire, and although they strictly observed the ritual purity required for prayer, Ibn Adham was proud of the huge number of lice living in his coat, and as late as 900, a maidservant of a Sufi from Baghdad exclaimed: "O God, how dirty are Thy friends—not a single one among them is clean!" (N 621).

One of Fuḍayl's disciples was Bishr, called *al-Ḥāfī*, "the barefooted one," who considered even shoes to be a "veil" on the path to God. Bishr, like his master, came from Merw and, also like Fuḍayl,

was converted by a miracle: on the road he found a piece of paper, which he took with him because the name of God was written on it —this pious act of the otherwise worldly man was soon recompensed when, by divine grace, he was transformed into a Sufi. He settled in Baghdad, where he died, after a perfectly scrupulous life, in 841. Bishr is said to have dwelt upon the concept of *ikhlāṣ*, "absolute sincerity," in every thought and action, an attitude that was elaborated to perfection by his younger contemporary in Baghdad, al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī.

Among the early Khurasanian Sufis, the former merchant Shaqīq al-Balkhī (d. 809) is worthy of mention. Recent research has shown that he was not only an expert on *tawakkul*, "absolute trust in God" —a path taken up by his disciples Ḥātim al-Aṣamm (d. 851) and Ḥātim's pupil Abū Turāb an-Nakhshabī (d. 859)—but that he was also the first to discuss the "mystical states" and was deeply concerned with what he calls "the light of pure love of God" (W 228). With this idea he comes close to the saint of Basra, Rābiᶜa al-ᶜAdawiyya, who died only a few years before him (801).[14]

Rābiᶜa was "that one set apart in the seclusion of holiness, that woman veiled with the veil of sincerity, that one enflamed by love and longing . . . , lost in union with God, that one accepted by men as a second spotless Mary . . . " (T 159). Rābiᶜa is generally regarded as the person who introduced the element of selfless love into the austere teachings of the early ascetics and gave Sufism the hue of true mysticism. Jāmī has beautifully explained the difference between these ascetics and the genuine Sufis: "The ascetics regard the Beauty of the Otherworld with the light of faith and certitude and despise the world, but are still veiled by a sensual pleasure, namely the thought of Paradise, whereas the true Sufi is veiled from both worlds by the vision of the Primordial Beauty and Essential Love" (N 10).

Rābiᶜa was a slave girl, set free by her master. The most famous story illustrative of the singlemindedness of her devotion is this: Once, in the streets of Basra, she was asked why she was carrying a torch in one hand and a ewer in the other, and she answered: "I want to throw fire into Paradise and pour water into Hell so that these

14. Margaret Smith, *Rābiᶜa the Mystic and Her Fellow-Saints in Islam* (Cambridge, 1928), is a fundamental study that also deals with the role of women in Sufism in general. ᶜAbdur Raḥmān Badawī, *Shāhidat al-ᶜishq al-ilāhī, Rābiᶜa al-ᶜAdawiyya* (Cairo, 1946).

two veils disappear, and it becomes clear who worships God out of love, not out of fear of Hell or hope for Paradise."[15]

This love for love's sake has become the central topic of Sufism; almost every mystical poet in Islam has expressed the idea that "the lover must be in the way of love so that he does not remember Hell or Paradise" (N 597). For "a few houris and castles" that are promised to the pious in Paradise are mere veils hiding the eternal divine beauty—"when He fills your mind with Paradise and houris know by certain that He keeps you far from Himself" (MT 204). It would certainly be better if God took away Paradise or cast the ascetic who feared hellfire into that very fire, for both Paradise and Hell are created, and thus distinct from God (T 1:73).

Rābiᶜa's love of God was absolute; there was no room left for any other thought or love. She did not marry, nor did she give the Prophet a special place in her piety. The world meant nothing to her. She would shut the windows in spring without looking at the flowers and become lost in the contemplation of Him who created flowers and springtime. This story has often been retold by the mystical poets of Iran. Every true mystic should know that "the gardens and the fruits are inside, in the heart," as Rūmī says in his version of Rābiᶜa's story (M 4: 1357; see also U 198). Rābiᶜa seems to have been the first Sufi to speak about the jealous God—a concept not unknown to prophetic piety; but whereas the jealous God of the orthodox does not allow anybody to *worship* anything besides Him, Rābiᶜa's God "will suffer none to share with Him that love which is due to Him alone."[16] And so she addresses Him in small poetical effusions:

> O Beloved of hearts, I have none like unto Thee,
> therefore have pity this day on the sinner
> who comes to Thee.
> O my Hope and my Rest and my Delight,
> the heart can love none other but Thee.[17]

In such perfect love, the mystic has "ceased to exist and passed out of self. I am one with Him and altogether His."[18] Rābiᶜa had meditated upon the Koranic statement that God's love precedes man's

15. Smith, *Rābiᶜa*, p. 98.
16. Ibid., p. 108.
17. Ibid., p. 55.
18. Ibid., p. 110.

love: "He loves them and they love Him" (Sūra 5:59): "Love has come from Eternity and passes into Eternity and none has been found in seventy thousand worlds who drinks one drop of it until at last he is absorbed in God, and from that comes the saying: He loves them and they love Him" (T 1:67). It was this Koranic passage that provided the Sufis of the following generations with proof for their theories of the mutual love between the Creator and the creature.

There is nothing left to distract the lover from God—the spiritual eye sees nothing but Him when the eye of the body is closed. He is enough for the loving soul: "O my Lord, whatever share of this world Thou dost bestow on me, bestow it on Thine enemies, and whatever share of the next world Thou doest give me, give it to Thy friends—Thou art enough for me" (T 1:73). Rābiᶜa's prayer has been repeated, with variations, by Sufis of all ages, probably in the most shocking form by Shiblī (d. 945), the mystic of Baghdad whose paradoxes are famous in Sufi history: "O God, hand this world and the Otherworld over to me so that I may make a morsel from this world and throw it into a dog's mouth, and make a morsel of the Otherworld and put it into a Jew's mouth, for both are veils before the true goal" (T 2:165). For Rābiᶜa the only thing that mattered was the hope of God and the word of His praise, which was sweeter than any other word. The nightly prayer, one of the pivots of early ascetic life, becomes, with her, a sweet and loving conversation between lover and beloved:

> O God, the night has passed and the day has dawned. How I long to know if Thou hast accepted my prayers or if Thou hast rejected them. Therefore console me for it is Thine to console this state of mine. Thou hast given me life and cared for me, and Thine is the glory. If Thou want to drive me from Thy door, yet would I not forsake it, for the love that I bear in my heart towards Thee.[19]

It was a daring prayer, often repeated by the early Sufis, that the true lover would not leave the door of the beloved even if driven away.

Rābiᶜa was not the only woman saint in the eighth century; several women chose the mystical path, sighing for the heavenly beloved who, though absent from their sight, is never absent from their hearts. Because of her intense feelings Rābiᶜa was accepted as the model of selfless love even by those who otherwise despised

19. Ibid., p. 27.

women—but since in the unity of God the lovers no longer have a separate existence, no distinction can be made between man and woman (T 1:59).

During the ninth century different trends in the mystical teachings and the approach to God emerged, and religious experiences were expressed in various styles and forms. But the roots of these developments went back to an earlier period. That has been shown very clearly in Père Nwyia's research. He has emphasized that Jaᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq, the sixth imām of the Shia (d. 765), was certainly one of the greatest teachers of early Sufism. His commentary on the Koran, part of which is preserved in Sulamī's *tafsīr*, shows an exceptional insight into mystical phenomena (W 161). Jaᶜfar discerned the four different aspects of the Koran: expression, for the common people; allusion, for the privileged or elite; touches of grace (*laṭāʾif*), for the saints; and finally the "realities," for the prophets (W 167). This pluralistic structure of the holy book led Jaᶜfar to sketch a hierarchical structure of the faithful according to the degree of their interior knowledge—a principle developed by later Sufis when they identified the "stages" and "stations" and then divided them into those for the common people, for the elect, and for the elite of the elite. The hierarchical principle is also found in later theories of saintship, and it is a typical facet of Shia thought as well. Imām Jaᶜfar alluded to a structure of mystical experience that leads in twelve stages from source to source, which looks like a preparation for the stations through which the Sufi initiate has to pass on the Path. Some of Jaᶜfar's hermeneutic principles seem to contain thoughts that were, until recently, ascribed to later mystics; he even analyzed the "theopathic locutions," the so-called *shaṭḥiyāt*, in which the mystic utters words that he should not say. Jaᶜfar's model case for such an experience is the conversation between Moses and God on Mount Sinai (Sūra 20:11–21).

Moses was the prophet who heard God—heard His voice speaking in him and through him; but Muhammad was blessed with the vision of God during his ascension—he entered the intimate proximity of the beloved, and here, as Jaᶜfar's modern interpreter states, "the language of experience becomes the language of love" (W 187). That means that before the time of Rābiᶜa the first steps were taken in the direction of an authentic love mysticism. The definition of divine love as given by Jaᶜfar, and often repeated by later mystics, is this: "a divine fire that devours man completely" (W 187).

SOME MYSTICAL LEADERS OF THE LATE NINTH CENTURY

The discoveries about the earliest Sufis show that some of the definitions attributed to mystics of the ninth century can probably be dated much earlier. They also show how Shia and Sufi ideas were, at that early stage, interdependent. But many problems still await solution. The thoughts of Jaʿfar and, perhaps, other early mystical thinkers must have been at work beneath the surface, permeating the mystical life until they appeared in the sayings of a number of Sufis, all near contemporaries, who reveal the potential variety within the mystical life. I refer to Dhūʾn-Nūn the Egyptian (d. 859), Bāyezīd Bisṭāmī the Iranian (d. 874), Yaḥyā ibn Muʿādh from Rayy (d. 871), and al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī the Iraqi (d. 857).

Dhūʾn-Nūn is one of the most attractive and intriguing figures in the history of early Sufism, aptly called "one of the most eminent of their hidden spiritualists" (H 100). Thaubān ibn Ibrāhīm, surnamed Dhūʾn-Nūn, "he with the fish," was born of Nubian parents in Ikhmim in Upper Egypt; he studied religious sciences and is reported to have transmitted traditions from Mālik ibn Anās, the founder of the Maliki law school. Dhūʾn-Nūn was "the unique [authority] of his time in scholarship and piety and mystical state and culture" (Q 8). During the Muʿtazilite persecution of the orthodox he, too, was imprisoned, because of his belief in the doctrine that the Koran was uncreated; the caliph Mutawakkil, however, deeply impressed by one of his sermons, set him free. He was accused of being a philosopher and an alchemist, and the genuineness of his mystical state was sometimes doubted; Ibn an-Nadīmʾs *Fihrist* (2: 862) in the tenth century mentions two of his works among alchemistic scriptures. We know little about his life, and his teachings are still scattered in the hagiographic books. Ibrāhīm al-Qaṣṣār, who saw him in his childhood, remembers that he was disappointed by the great mystical leader who was outwardly so humble and meek, but Dhūʾn-Nūn reproached the boy, whose thoughts he had read by means of his inner power (N 166). Many miracles are ascribed to him, and in strange legends he figures as a kind of magician whom men and jinn obeyed. It is said that "he traveled the road of blame." But when he died, legend asserts, "it was written on his forehead: 'This is the friend of God, he died in love of God, slain by God' " (H 100). This love of God has been expressed in one of his

sayings (which has also been attributed to other mystics because it shows very well the inclination of the early Sufis to speak in allusions without divulging the secret of their loving intimacy with God): "O God! Publicly I call Thee 'My Lord,' but in solitude I call Thee 'O my Beloved'!" (A 9:332). According to the tradition, Dhūʾn-Nūn formulated for the first time a theory of *maʿrifa,* intuitive knowledge of God, or gnosis, as opposed to *ʿilm*, discursive learning and knowledge; many sayings about "love" and "intimacy" are also attributed to him. However, we would scarcely agree with Edward G. Browne, who considers him "the first to give to the earlier asceticism the definitely pantheistic bent and quasi-erotic expression which we recognize as the chief characteristics of Sufism."[20] Nicholson was inclined to accept Neoplatonic influences upon Dhūʾn-Nūn. Since this mystic lived in Egypt, where Neoplatonic and hermetic traditions were in the air, and was regarded by some of his contemporaries as a "philosopher," he may well have been acquainted with some Neoplatonic ideas. In a famous passage, he has described the gnostic (*ʿārif*), the true mystic with spiritual insight; but we do not find a "philosophical" approach in these words of his:

> The gnostic becomes more humble every hour, for every hour is drawing him nearer to God. The gnostics see without knowledge, without sight, without information received, and without observation, without description, without veiling and without veil. They are not themselves, but in so far as they exist at all they exist in God. Their movements are caused by God, and their words are the words of God which are uttered by their tongues, and their sight is the sight of God, which has entered into their eyes. So God Most High has said: "When I love a servant, I, the Lord, am his ear so that he hears by Me, I am his eye, so that he sees by Me, and I am his tongue so that he speaks by Me, and I am his hand, so that he takes by Me."[21]

This last-quoted *ḥadīth qudsī,*[22] an extra-Koranic word attributed to God, forms one of the cornerstones of mystical teaching in Sufism: man is, through acts of supererogatory piety, slowly lifted above his own base qualities and instead distinguished by the good qualities seen in God, until he completely lives in Him and through Him.

Dhūʾn-Nūnʾs alleged "philosophical-gnostic" character is not re-

20. Edward G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia,* 4 vols. (1902; reprint ed., Cambridge, 1957), 2:505.

21. Margaret Smith, *Readings from the Mystics of Islam* (London, 1950), no. 20; see A 9:385 ff.

22. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. L. Krehl and W. Juynboll (Leiden, 1862–1908), 4:231.

flected in another of his sayings either: "I knew God by God, and I knew what is besides God by the Messenger of God" (L 104). "The sign of the lover of God is to follow the Friend of God, i.e., the Prophet, in his morals, and his deeds and his orders and his customs" (T 1:125).

Stories connected with the Greatest Name of God are told about this mystic; but his reply in the following anecdote reveals the pious Muslim rather than a man who relies upon magical practice: "One said to Dhū'n-Nūn: 'Show me the Greatest Name of God.' He said: 'Show me the smallest one!'—and scolded him"[23] Dhū'n-Nūn emphasized God's incredible majesty and power and, inspired by two of the Koranic names of God, *al-muḥyī*, "He who bestows life," and *al-mumīt*, "He who kills," he appropriately described the state of the mystic: "Nothing sees God and dies, even as nothing sees God and lives, because His life is everlasting, and who ever sees Him, remains in Him and is made everlasting" (A 9:373). The theories of *fanā* and *baqā*, "annihilation, extinction," and "everlasting life, duration" in God, central topics of Sufism, are developed here out of the Koranic context.

Dhū'n-Nūn, like most of the mystics, often juxtaposed the divine qualities and names. *Jamāl*, "eternal beauty," and *jalāl*, "eternal majesty," coinciding in *kamāl*, "eternal perfection," are the qualities of Him who must be addressed as "Thou art who Thou art, eternally, in eternity."[24] God, the eternal perfection to which no created being has access, reveals Himself to man under the aspects of beauty and fascination, kindness and mercy, or under the aspects of majesty and wrath, power and revenge. More than a thousand years after Dhū'n-Nūn, the German theologian Rudolf Otto has built up a theological system based upon the contrast between the *mysterium tremendum* and the *mysterium fascinans*, which constitute the two main qualities of the Numen; he has, thus, expressed in scientific language a truth that had been known to every Sufi in the world of Islam for centuries. Dhū'n-Nūn frequently dwelt upon the quality of majesty, *jalāl*, the *tremendum*, in God—an approach typical of early Islamic thought. That is why he believed affliction to be indispensable to man's spiritual development; it is the "salt

23. ʿAbdul Wahhāb ash-Shaʿrānī, *Lawāqiḥ al-anwār al-qudsiyya* (Cairo, 1311 h./1893–94), p. 144.

24. Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (1914; reprint ed., Chester Springs, Pa., 1962), p. 183.

of the faithful, and when the salt lacks, the faithful becomes rotten" (A 9:373). The faithful lover enjoys the tribulations sent by his beloved, as Dhū'n-Nūn has said; but the great mystic disliked those who turned this attitude into a mere show: "When one of his brethren, a so-called lover, was boasting during his illness: 'Who suffers from the pain which God sends him, does not love God,' he replied: 'I would rather say: "He who boasts of his love of God, does not love Him" '" (T 1:123).

One of the most attractive aspects of Dhū'n-Nūn is his poetic talent and his wonderful command of the Arabic language. He composed small, charming poems—a new development in Sufism, although Rābiʿa is credited with a few poetical exclamations. He praised the Lord in long, hymnlike poems and popularized a kind of romantic mystical story, a literary type often found in later hagiographic works. He told how he wandered along the Nile, or strolled alone in the desert, when suddenly he would meet a stranger who revealed to him mysteries of the Path: "He met a woman at the sea shore and asked her: 'What is the end of love?' And she answered: 'O simpleton, love has no end.' And he asked: 'Why?' She said: 'Because the Beloved has no end' " (T 1:123). This story is typical of Dhū'n-Nūn's tendency to introduce a dramatic element into the discussion of complicated problems that cannot be resolved through intellectual efforts. The answer of the unknown woman (in other cases it may be a slave girl, a negro, or an old anchorite) points immediately to the heart of the matter: since love is the essence of the divine, it is, like God Himself, without beginning and without end.

The romantic and poetic aspect of Dhū'n-Nūn can be understood best from his prayers. The Koran asserts that everything created worships God; everything utters praise and thanks to its creator in its own tongue, which may be the human voice, the humming of the bee, the growing of the leaves, the scent of the flower, or just the *lisān ul-ḥāl*, the "state of speaking by itself," someone's whole attitude. The created world gains, thus, a religious meaning—a meaning that the early ascetics had lost sight of because they considered it to be a detestable veil that distracted them from God. But for Dhū'n-Nūn and the generations of Sufis following him, the worth or worthlessness of the world is determined not by itself, but by man's relation to it. It is again regarded as God's creation and

thus as something dependent upon Him and belonging to Him. That is how Dhū'n-Nūn felt:

O God, I never hearken to the voices of the beasts or the rustle of the trees, the splashing of the waters or the song of the birds, the whistling of the wind or the rumble of the thunder, but I sense in them a testimony to Thy Unity, and a proof of Thy incomparability, that Thou art the All-Prevailing, the All-Knowing, the All-True. (A 9:342)

Such psalmlike prayers of praise, in beautiful, rhythmic rhyme-prose are unforgettable, and they deeply impressed the mystical writers of later centuries. The great poets of Iran understood the language of the flowers and birds as clearly as Dhū'n-Nūn; the proems of ʿAṭṭār's epics translate this praise of the creatures into human poetical language, and he was able to express the silent yearning of all creatures in the forty chapters of his *Muṣībatnāma.* Dhū'n-Nūn's compatriot Shaʿrānī, the last great mystic of Egypt in the sixteenth century, tells a story that reminds the reader immediately of Dhū'n-Nūn's hymnic praise:

Whoever recollects God in reality, forgets all else besides Him, because all the creatures recollect Him, as is witnessed by those who experience a revelation (*kashf*). I experienced this state from evening prayer until one third of the night was over, and I heard the voices of the creatures in the praise of God, with elevated voices so that I feared for my mind. I heard the fishes who said: Praised be the King, the Most Holy, the Lord.[25]

The late thirteenth-century mystical poet Yūnus Emre, who declared that he would praise the Lord together with the stones and the fountains, with the gazelles and with the prophets, was just as faithful an interpreter of the Koranic words that everything was created in order to worship and praise the Creator as was his seventeenth-century compatriot Merkez Efendi, about whom a charming story was told to me by Turkish friends:

The *sheikh* of the Khalvati order in Istanbul, Sünbül Efendi, in looking for a successor, sent his disciples forth to get flowers to adorn the convent. All of them returned with large bunches of lovely flowers; only one of them—Merkez Efendi—came back with a small, withered plant. When asked why he did not bring anything worthy of his master, he answered: "I found all the flowers busy recollecting the Lord—how could I interrupt this constant prayer of theirs? I looked, and lo, one flower had finished its recollection. That one I brought." It was he who became the successor of Sünbül Efendi, and one of the cemeteries along the Byzantine wall of Istanbul still bears his name.

The poetic aspect of Dhū'n-Nūn has been highlighted because

25. Ash-Shaʿrānī, *Lawāqiḥ,* p. 156. See also the description of Kāzarūnī in T 2:295.

that is most conspicuous in his sayings. A detailed study of his life and work would, in all probability, reveal many previously unknown aspects of his teachings and show whether he was, indeed, the first "theosophist" among the Sufis or rather the hymnodist who rediscovered the divine glory as praised by the creatures. In later times Dhū'n-Nūn became a subject of tales and legends.

Another early saint has been almost completely transformed into a kind of Sufi symbol—Abū Yazīd (Bāyezīd) Bisṭāmī (d. 874).[26] His personality looms large on the horizon of early Persian Sufism. Few mystics have impressed and perplexed their contemporaries and successive generations as much as this ascetic from the little place known as Bistam (Basṭām) in northwestern Iran. Strange experiences and great faith are ascribed to him. His theopathic locutions and paradoxes attracted another, though very different, mystic, Junayd (d. 910), the leader of the Baghdad school, who, however, held that Bāyezīd had not reached the final goal of the seeker.

Numerous attempts at explaining Bāyezīd's personality and his enigmatic utterances have been made in Europe. The finest one is the short and penetrating study by Hellmut Ritter. R. C. Zaehner has stressed the possibility of Indian influences upon Bāyezīd. The import of the story that Bāyezīd's mystical master was a certain Abū ʿAlī as-Sindī, i.e., from Sind, is still doubtful; even if this man had been from the lower Indus valley and not from a village called Sind close to Bistam, it seems scarcely possible to draw far-reaching consequences from this geographical fact: not every man from Sind could be expected to know all the intricacies of Hindu monistic philosophy. It is, of course, tempting to imagine such an acquaintance with Vedantic speculations on the part of Bāyezīd, and some of the equations brought forth by Zaehner seem very plausible; yet it seems more likely that the mystic of Bistam should have reached his goal by means of the Islamic experience of *fanā,* annihilation, as he formulated it for the first time, rather than by an experience

26. Hellmut Ritter, "Die Aussprüche des Bāyezīd Bisṭāmī," in *Westöstliche Abhandlungen, Festschrift für Rudolf Tschudi,* ed. Fritz Meier (Wiesbaden, 1954). Reynold A. Nicholson, "An Early Arabic Version of the Miʿrāj of Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī," *Islamica* 2 (1925). On possible Indian influences see Robert C. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (London, 1960), and the critical article by M. ʿAbdur Rabb, "The Problem of Possible Indian Influence on Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society,* January 1972. ʿAbdur Raḥmān Badawī, *Shaṭaḥāt aṣ-ṣūfiyya, I: Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī* (Cairo, 1949).

that, in the Vedantic sense, would have led him to an extension of the *atman*, "the innermost self," until it realizes its unity with the essence of everything as expressed in the words *tat twam asi*, "that is you." Bāyezīd hoped for a complete extinction of the traces of self, not for an extension of anything created (cf. MM 56). The negative way is his; but he was also the first to describe the mystical experience in terms of the image of the *miʿrāj*, the heavenly journey of the Prophet. His sayings burn with hopeless longing and possess a weird beauty, and they are often frightening in their powerful imagery. His yearning is absolute, and so is his disappointment.

Bāyezīd's nephew, to whom we owe the transmission of many of his sayings, once asked him about his renunciation, and he answered:

> Renunciation (*zuhd*) has no value. I was three days in renunciation, on the fourth day I had finished it. The first day I renounced this world, the second day I renounced the Otherworld, the third day I renounced everything save God; when the fourth day came, nothing was left to me but God. I reached a desperate longing. Then I heard a voice addressing me: "O Bāyezīd, you are not strong enough to endure with Me alone." I said: "That is exactly what I want." Then the voice said: "You have found, you have found!" (T 1:167)

God is so overwhelming that man becomes nothing even when thinking of His name or pronouncing the word *Allāh* with proper awe: "Bāyezīd once uttered the call to prayer and fainted. When he came to his senses he said: 'It is amazing that a man does not die when uttering the call to prayer.' "[27] But then, how are we to understand his description of his flight beyond space three times thirty thousand years—until eventually he found nothing but Bāyezīd in the divine throne and behind the veil that hides God? And again there is his reply to someone who asked him: When does man reach God? "O you miserable one—does he reach Him at all?"[28] One of his mystical friends—the traditions about the name differ—sent him a prayer rug on which to pray; but he answered: "I have put together the worship of the inhabitants of the heavens and the seven earths and put it into a pillow and put that pillow under my cheek" (T 1:144). And at other times, when somebody came to see him, he replied: "I myself am in search of Bāyezīd."[29]

His sentences are paradoxes, wrapped in wonderful imagery: for

27. Ritter, "Bayezid," in *Westöstliche Abhandlungen*, ed. Meier, p. 234.
28. Ibid., p. 240.
29. Ibid.

twelve years he was the blacksmith of his self until he made of himself a pure mirror (T 1:139); he saw "longing" as a palace in which the sword "horror of separation" is placed and a narcissus stem "union" given in the hand of hope—but even after seven thousand years the narcissus is fresh and green, for no one has ever attained it (T 1:166).

Bāyezīd might acknowledge at one moment that he eventually found that God had remembered him before he remembered God, knew him before he had known Him, and that God's love of man precedes man's love of God (A 10:34); but at another moment the same Bāyezīd sighs:

> As soon as I attained to His Unity I became a bird with a body of Oneness and wings of Everlastingness, and I continued flying in the air of Quality for ten years, until I reached an atmosphere a million times as large, and I flew on, until I found myself in the field of Eternity and I saw there the Tree of Oneness. . . . And I looked, and I knew that all this was a cheat.

Then again, he exclaimed, with the pride of one who had found his goal:

> He got up once and put me before Himself and addressed me: "O Bāyezīd, my creatures desire to behold thee." So I said: "Adorn me with Thy Unity and dress me with Thy I-ness and raise me to Thy Oneness so that, when Thy creatures see me, they may say: We have seen Thee, and it is Thou and I am no longer there." (L 382)

It must have been in such a state of rapture that Bāyezīd said: "*Subḥānī*—Praise be to Me, how great is My Majesty!" This typical *shaṭḥ* has puzzled many later mystics and has often been repeated by the poets of Iran and Turkey and Muslim India as proof of the unitive state reached by the perfected mystic. Sarrāj, to give one example of moderate Sufi interpretation, understands Bāyezīd to be talking "as if he were reciting the Koranic word: 'I am God, there is no God besides Me' " (Sūra 20:14) (L 390)—which is certainly a mild explanation. Bāyezīd came to attain this state by an austere *via negationis* and constant mortification, by emptying himself of himself, until he had reached, at least for a moment, the world of absolute unity where, as he said, lover, beloved, and love are one (T 1:160), and where he himself is the wine, the wine-drinker, and the cupbearer (T 1:159)—a formulation used by later Persian poets in their hymns praising the purifying and transforming power of divine love.

A strange figure of dark fire, Bāyezīd stands lonely in early Iranian Sufism. His paradoxes constantly yield new meaning, yet they continue to be elusive—unless the reader were to share the mystic's experience. Or would one, then, return and claim with Bāyezīd that "everything was a cheat"?

Whatever the experiences of the mystic from Bistam were, his personality inspired many later writers. His name occurs, in poetry, more frequently than that of any other mystic, with the exception of "Manṣūr" Ḥallāj, with whom he was sometimes associated, although Ḥallāj believed that "poor Abū Yazīd" had arrived only at the threshold of the divine (P 250). The poets could easily contrast his unflinching faith and deep religious engagement with the "infidelity of Yazīd" (playing on the similarity of their names); the second Omayyad caliph Yazīd was responsible for the tragedy of Kerbela, in which the Prophet's grandson was killed, together with his family, in 680, and his name has become anathema to every pious Muslim. Thus Sanā'ī asks:

> Who ever agreed with the Yazīd "base soul,"
> how could he know the state of Bāyezīd?
>
> (S 632)

For the "soul that inspires evil" is similar to the cruel enemy of the Prophet's family and thus stands in contrast to the great mystical leader. "Bāyezīd of his time" has become an honorary epithet for a man of outstanding mystical piety, and Sufi pretenders have been warned "not to make themselves Bāyezīds" (M 6:2548). In his *Mathnawī,* Rūmī tells the legend that Bāyezīd's disciples rebelled against him when he exclaimed: "Under my garment there is nothing but God!" But when they tried to kill him, the strokes of their knives wounded themselves (M 4:2102–40), for the perfect saint is a pure mirror who reflects the attributes of others to them. In another passage he relates the story of a Zoroastrian who refused to accept Islam because he felt too weak to embrace a religion that had produced spiritual heroes like Bāyezīd (T 1:149; M 5:3358)—a story that has been taken over, in our day, by Muhammad Iqbal in his *Jāwīdnāme* (1932), where it serves to assert the spiritual strength of the Islamic religion and the true Muslims.

There are still sacred places dedicated to the memory of the lonely mystic of Bistam in the remotest corners of the Islamic

world: in Zousfana in the Maghreb and in Chittagong in Bangla Desh, where huge, whitish turtles inhabit a tank to which people come to obtain blessings for themselves and for their children.

Sufi hagiography often mentions a letter sent to Bāyezīd by Yaḥyā ibn Mu'ādh, who wrote: "'I am intoxicated from having drunk so deeply of the cup of His love.'—Abū Yazīd wrote to him in reply: 'Someone else has drunk up the seas of Heaven and earth, but his thirst is not yet slaked: his tongue is hanging out and he is crying "Is there any more?" '" (A 10:40). Bāyezīd's metaphysical thirst has never been quenched; he belongs to those who,

> even if they would drink every day seven seas of union from this goblet, they would say from thirst to thirst:
>
> Standing in the water, athirst
> and not being granted a drink . . . .
>
> (B 442)

His correspondent Yaḥyā ibn Mu'ādh ar-Rāzī was a completely different type, personifying another major trend in early Sufism.

Yaḥyā came from Rayy (near present Tehran), lived for a while in Balkh, and died, in 871, in Nishapur, "and he spoke constantly about hope" (Q 16). According to Hujwīrī, he was the author of many books—which seem to be lost—and his sayings "are delicately moulded and pleasant to the ear and subtle in substance and profitable in devotion" (H 122). Indeed, the scattered words and short poems that have come down to us from the "preacher Yaḥyā" are pleasantly different in style from the utterances of the Khurasanian and the Baghdadian Sufis. He was mainly a preacher who called people to God, and, although a number of Sufis are related to have preached in public, he is the only one to be distinguished by the title *al-wā'iẓ,* "the preacher." He also talked about divine love, and to him is ascribed the famous saying: "Real love does not diminish by the cruelty of the beloved, nor does it grow by His grace, but is always the same" (A 10:58)—an idea that has been worked out by the Persian poets to its final consequences.

Yaḥyā held that "one mustard seed of love is better than seventy years of worship without love" (T 1:306). Religion is, for him, hope in God, whose mercy is infinite and who listens to the prayer of the human heart.

The preacher from Rayy once spoke about the difference between

the person who comes to attend a banquet for the sake of the banquet and the one who attends in the hope of meeting his friend; such is the difference between the ascetic who longs for Paradise for the sake of joy and bliss and the lover who hopes for the beatific vision of his eternal beloved (P 516). Yaḥyā spoke the oft-repeated word: "Death is beautiful, for it joins the friend with the Friend!" (T 1:308). The most characteristic expression of Yaḥyā's piety is the reflection, in a number of his prayers, of an almost "evangelical" trust in the compassionate God. In dialectical form, they show the contrast between the helpless sinner and the Almighty Lord who can forgive His miserable creatures out of His inexhaustible treasure of mercy:

> O God, Thou hast sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh the rebel and said, "Talk mildly with him"—O God, this is Thy kindness towards one who claimed to be God; how, then, is Thy kindness towards one who is Thy servant out of his innermost soul? . . . O God, I fear Thee because I am a slave, and I hope in Thee because Thou art the Lord! . . . O God, how should I not hope in Thee, while Thou art merciful, and how should I not fear Thee because Thou art powerful? O God, how can I call upon Thee, being a rebellious slave, and how could I not call upon Thee who art a merciful Lord? (T 1:309–10)

Yaḥyā deeply trusted in God's forgiveness, which can cover every sin, for no matter how near perfect a man may be, sinning is part of human nature: "O God, though I can not refrain from sin, Thou canst forgive sins" (T 1:310). And this God will lead him eventually to the place that He chooses out of His loving-kindness: "O God, I have done nothing for Paradise, and I have no strength to endure Hell—everything is left to Thy mercy!" (T 1:310). The preacher from Rayy stands amazed and overwhelmed before the mystery of divine love—is it not the greatest miracle of grace that God, the ever rich who needs nothing, should love men? How, then, should man, who is so much in need of God, not love Him? He sums up his whole feeling in one short prayer: "Forgive me, for I belong to Thee" (T 1:310).

Among Yaḥyā's successors—though not exclusively his disciples—there are two main ones in central and western Iran who are mentioned by later authors. His disciple in Nishapur was Abū ʿUthmān al-Ḥīrī (d. 910), who had been educated in part by Shāh Kirmānī in the spiritual tradition of Khurasan. Al-Ḥīrī is regarded as one of the great leaders of his time, who established Sufism in Nishapur; but he was criticized by some contemporaries for thinking too much of the purification of the soul without turning his views exclusively to God. He is regarded as one of the first to introduce a strict system of education for his disciples, a trend that developed finally into the *perinde ac cadaver* obedience that distinguishes later Sufi education.[30] The second master of Rayy is Yūsuf ibn Ḥusayn ar-Rāzī (d. 916), who belongs to the line of the ascetic Abū Turāb and who seems to have met Dhū'n-Nūn in his early years. He is credited with sayings about *ikhlāṣ*, "perfect sincerity," as well as with sentences about the constant recollection of God.

Rābiʿa ushered in a new and productive period in the development of the mystical life in Iraq. Among the many Sufis who lived and worked in the capital, Baghdad, as well as in other Iraqian cities, mention must be made of Rābiʿa's younger contemporary Maʿrūf al-Karkhī (d. 815). Legends speak of his strong mystical power; his prayers were heard, and after his death people from Baghdad would cross the Tigris to the section of Karkh and pray for rain at his tomb. He was among the first to speak about divine love, and his teaching that one cannot learn love, for it is a divine gift and not an acquisition (T 1:272), has had a great impact on mystical thought. Qushayrī attributes to Maʿrūf special strength in *riḍā*, perfect contentment with God's decrees (Q 9).

Maʿrūf's disciple Sarī as-Saqaṭī, "the huckster" (d. circa 867), gratefully acknowledged that his teacher's blessings had enabled him to achieve high spiritual rank. The biographers claim that Sarī was the first to discuss the various mystical states (*aḥwāl*), a central topic of mystical writers. His piety and scrupulosity are reflected in the remark that he was afraid that his nose might turn black because of his sins. In his meetings he used to discuss topics of mystical love, which he was apparently the first to define as "real mutual love between man and God"—a scandal to the orthodox, who accepted "love of God" only in the sense of obedience. Also attributed to Sarī are sayings about the problem of *tauḥīd*, "to declare that God is one," which was later elaborated by his disciple and nephew Junayd. A delightful episode preserved in the *Nafaḥāt al-uns* reveals the great Sufi leader in a very human light: "During his illness people used to visit him and would ask him for his blessings and prayers, and he, eventually exhausted, taught them to

30. For the whole problem see Fritz Meier, "Ḫurāsān und das Ende der klassischen Sufik," in *La Persia nel medioevo* (Rome, 1971).

pray: 'O God, teach us how to behave when visiting the sick' " (N 54; A 10:122).

During those years when Sarī was discussing the mystical stages, his compatriot al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 857) was writing his fundamental books on mystical psychology.[31] Born in Basra in 781, he was probably influenced by the teachings of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's followers. Muḥāsibī belonged to the Shāfiᶜī school of law, as did Junayd, Rūdhbārī, and many other Sufis; but he also acquired the theological and philosophical vocabulary of the Muᶜtazila—which brought criticism from the Hanbalites. Yet the study of Muᶜtazilite theological methods gave him greater eloquence, and it is he who gave Sufism a highly developed technical language.

Muḥāsibī—whose surname is derived from *muḥāsaba*, the constant analysis of even the most secret motions of the soul and the heart—taught the relentless fight against man's lower nature, not just the outward struggle of the ascetic against the "flesh," but a subtle psychological analysis of every thought as well as uninterrupted spiritual training. Such training, of course, goes along with utmost scrupulosity. Muḥāsibī claimed to have a nerve in his finger that would warn him whenever food was not perfectly clean legally (N 572). He has described very eloquently the state of the seeker of the path to God:

> God has appointed self-mortification for the seeker, for the training of his soul. Men are ignorant of the high station of that one who is preoccupied with his Lord, who is seen to be thinking little of this world, who is humble, fearful, sorrowful, weeping, showing a meek spirit, keeping far from the children of this world, suffering oppression and not seeking revenge, despoiled, yet not desiring requital. He is dishevelled, dusty, shabby, thinks little of what he wears, wounded, alone, a stranger—but if the ignorant man were to look upon the heart of that seeker, and see how God has fulfilled in him what He promised of His favor and what He gives Him for exchange for that which he renounces of the vain glory of the world and its pleasure, he would desire to be in that one's place, and would realise that it is he, the seeker after God, who is truly rich, and fair to look upon, who tastes delight, who is joyous and happy, for he has attained his desire and has secured that which he sought from his Lord.[32]

Muḥāsibī's subtle analysis of *riyā*, "hypocrisy," and his whole methodological approach became fundamental and indispensable to the early Sufis; Ghazzālī, the master of moderate medieval mysticism, depends largely upon him.

31. Margaret Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad* (London, 1935). Joseph van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt des Ḥārit al-Muḥāsibī, anhand von Übersetzungen aus seinen Schriften dargestellt und erläutert* (Bonn, 1961), is an excellent analysis of Muḥāsibī's teachings. Some of Muḥāsibī's works have been edited; these are listed under his name in the Bibliography.

32. Smith, *Readings*, no. 12.

Among the disciples of Sarī as-Saqaṭī, Abū Bakr al-Kharrāz (d. 899) is known in the West through Arberry's translation of his *Kitāb aṣ-ṣidq*, "The Book of Truthfulness."[33] His mystical hints, *ishārāt*, seem to have influenced Junayd. Tradition credits him with having been the first to discuss the theory of *fanā*, "annihilation," and *baqā*, "permanent life in God." Recently discovered documents reveal that he can be regarded as one of Junayd's masters and that he contributed to mystical psychology in his *Kitāb al-farāgh*, which has been analyzed by Père Nwyia (W 240 ff.).

Nwyia has also brought to light Kharrāz's importance for the definition of *tauḥīd*, in which he anticipates some of Junayd's and even Ḥallāj's ideas: "Only God has the right to say 'I,' for whoever says 'I' will not reach the level of gnosis." That is why Satan was punished, for he said, "*I* am better than Adam," and that is why the angels had to prostrate themselves before Adam, for they had claimed, "*We* are higher than he." The only true subject is, in fact, God. Kharrāz goes even further by showing that this divine "I" is ontologically connected with the divine name *al-Ḥaqq*, "the Reality"—this seems to be the nucleus of Ḥallāj's famous phrase *anā'l-Ḥaqq* (W 249). From these theories we can understand how ᶜAbdullāh-i Anṣārī, the leading mystic and hagiographer of Herat in the eleventh century, could make the remark: "Abū Saᶜīd [sic] Kharrāz would have needed a trifle lameness, for nobody could walk along with him" (N 74).

Kharrāz was writing a treatise on saintship at almost the same time that Sahl at-Tustarī (d. 896) was discussing the problem of saintship and Tirmidhī was working on his book *Khatm al-auliyā'*, "The Seal of Saints." This coincidence indicates that during the last two or three decades of the ninth century the necessity for a systematization of mystical thought was being felt, and that the problem of sanctity and saintship was one of the central ones at the time.

Sahl's name stands for a certain tendency that was rejected in part by subsequent generations. It is, however, difficult to find heterodox trends in the teachings of this apparently introverted

33. Abū Bakr al-Kharrāz, *Kitāb aṣ-ṣidq, The Book of Truthfulness*, ed. and trans. A. J. Arberry (Oxford, 1937).

ascetic, who was praised by Junayd as "the proof of the Sufis" (QR 59). He had spent a couple of years in the ascetic settlement at Abbadan and was eventually exiled to Basra. His most frequently cited theory is that of the obligatory character of repentance, which should be a permanent state in the faithful. This austere outlook fits the ascetic life in which Sahl tried to combine *tawakkul* and work; for, as he thought, it would be an offense to the Prophetic tradition to avoid or condemn work as a means of gaining one's livelihood, but an offense against the faith to neglect "trust in God."[34]

Sahl tried to remain aloof from the theological discussions that had shaken the Muslim community in the preceding decades; he advocated the duty of obeying the political ruler. Instead, he retired into the sweetness of his inner life and found there the peace that the disturbed outward world could not give him. He wrote an extensive commentary on the Koran in which he discussed the fourfold meaning of each verse. His theories of saintliness are highly interesting: he spoke of a pillar of light formed from the souls of those who are predestined to become saints—it was the time in both Sufi and Shia circles that theories about the preexistent light of Muhammad were being developed, and other mystics had put forth the theory that the souls of the true lovers belong to a divine light. According to Sahl, only the saints are predestined to attain the mystery of lordliness, *sirr ar-rubūbīya*—here lies, probably, one source of Ḥallāj's similar theories, for Ḥallāj had lived with Sahl for a while.

Sahl's teaching was continued by his disciple Ibn Sālim (d. 909); hence their school was known as the Sālimiyya. The author of the first comprehensive manual of Sufism, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, belonged to this group.

Sahl's younger contemporary at-Tirmidhī developed peculiar ideas about sainthood.[35] Tirmidhī is surnamed *al-Ḥakīm*, "the philosopher," which points to the fact that through him Hellenistic philosophical ideas were penetrating Sufism. Tirmidhī died early in the tenth century in Mecca, where he lived after the study of

34. Cihad Tunc, "Sahl ibn ᶜAbdullah at-Tustarī und die Sālimīya" (Ph. D. diss., University of Bonn, 1970). Tunc is a Turkish theologian; his discussion of Sahl is not fully satisfactory.

35. Osman Yaḥyā, "L'oeuvre de Tirmiḏī, essai bibliographique," *Mélanges Louis Massignon*, 3 vols. (Damascus, 1956–57), 3:411ff.; Nicholas Heer, "Some Biographical and Bibliographical Notes on al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhī," in *The World of Islam: Studies in Honour of Philip K. Hitti*, ed. R. Bailey Winder and James C. Kritzeck (London, 1960).

Shafiite law in Balkh and a prolonged stay in Iraq. He, too, wrote a commentary on the Koran "in the light of the questions which his own experience posed to him and which he interpreted in a vocabulary enriched by the philosophical rapport and the experiences of the earlier mystics" (W 156). He thus gave the words a more profound meaning, and it is significant that the founder of the Naqshbandī order in the fourteenth century attributed to him a particular power when the disciple undergoes the process of directing his concentration toward the spirit of one of the great masters (N 119).

Tirmidhī's main contribution to the theory of Sufism is probably his "Seal of the Saints," in which he developed the terminology of sainthood that has been used since that time. The leader of the Sufi hierarchy is the *quṭb*, "pole" or "pivot," or *ghauth*, "help." The saints govern the universe, certain groups of three, seven, forty, or three hundred saints being entrusted with various duties in maintaining the world order (see Chapter 4). Like the prophets, whose seal is Muhammad, the saints have their seal, the last and culminating figure in the hierarchy.

The degrees of sainthood as sketched by Tirmidhī are related to the degree of illumination and gnosis reached by the person in question—it is not a "hierarchy of love." With him, the emphasis upon gnosis, *maᶜrifa*, becomes more explicit; he thus prepares the way for later theosophic speculation.

But while Sahl and Tirmidhī wrote about saintship and gnosis, ᶜAmr al-Makkī (d. 909) was probably the first to compose a systematic treatise on the degrees of love, intimacy, and proximity.

The undisputed master of the Sufis of Baghdad was Abū'l-Qāsim al-Junayd, who is considered the pivot in the history of early Sufism.[36] The representatives of divergent mystical schools and modes of thought could refer to him as their master, so that the initiation chains of later Sufi orders almost invariably go back to him.

Like many other mystics, Junayd came from Iran; born in Nihawand, he settled in Baghdad and studied law according to the Shafiite rite. In Sufism he was educated by his uncle Sarī as-Saqaṭī;

36. A. J. Arberry, "Junaid," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1935, p. 499; A. H. Abdel Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, Gibb Memorial Series, n.s. 22 (London, 1962). See the review of Abdel Kader's book by Joseph van Ess, *Oriens* 20 (1967). A fine analysis is given in Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism*, pp. 135 ff.

Muḥāsibī's psychological insight seems to have impressed him, and the influence of Kharrāz on his formation is apparently greater than has been proved at the moment. One of his fellow Sufis, al-Ḥaddād, is reported to have said: "If intellect (*ʿaql*) were a man, it would have the form of Junayd" (N 80), a saying that alludes to the seriousness, sobriety, and penetrating mind of the master.

Junayd—faithful to the Muḥāsibī tradition—sees in Sufism a way of constant purification and mental struggle: "We did not take Sufism from talk and words, but from hunger and renunciation of the world and cutting off the things to which we were accustomed and which we found agreeable" (Q 19). The mystical life meant, for him, the permanent striving to return to one's origin, that origin that was in God and from which everything proceeds, so that eventually the mystic should reach the state "in which he was before he was." That is the state of the primordial covenant (Sūra 7:171), when God was alone and what is created in time was not yet existent. Only then can man realize perfect *tauḥīd*; only then can he witness that God is one from eternity to eternity.

The tremendous majesty of God in His aloneness and unity permeates every thought of Junayd; he feels that majesty whose will must be accepted in every moment of life, and before whom the servant becomes nothing through constant obedience, worship, and permanent recollection of His name, until he reaches the "annihilation in the object mentioned," when the recollecting human is no longer separated from the object of his recollection, God. Unification means, for Junayd, "the separation of the Eternal from that which has been originated in time by the Covenant" (H 281); and it also means "to go out of the narrowness of temporal signs into the wide fields of eternities" (L 29). Like other mystical leaders, Junayd spoke about the different stations and stages on the Path; he praised poverty, *faqr*, which is "an ocean of affliction, yet its affliction is completely glory" (L 174). Mystical love means, to him, "that the qualities of the Beloved replace the qualities of the lover" (L 59); it is a transformation of the lover on the level of attributes.

A major aspect of Junayd's teaching is his emphasis on the state of sobriety (*ṣaḥw*) as contrasted to intoxication (*sukr*). Bāyezīd Bisṭāmī preferred mystical intoxication because it obliterates the human attributes and annihilates man completely in the object of adoration, taking him out of himself. Junayd and his followers, however, considered the "second sobriety" the highest and preferable state: after the ecstatic intoxication man becomes once more aware of himself in the "life in God," when all his attributes, transformed and spiritualized, are restored to him. *Fanā*, "annihilation," is not the ultimate goal, but *baqā*, "remaining," a new life in God.

Junayd's claim, like that of Bāyezīd, is absolute; he concentrated every thought, every love, every inclination, every admiration, every fear, and every hope on God and asked Him to annihilate everything that might exist outside this perfect concentration (A 10:282).

Junayd knew very well that mystical experience and thought cannot be rationalized and that it is dangerous to speak openly about the deepest mysteries of faith in the presence of the uninitiated (particularly since orthodox circles viewed the activities of the Sufis with growing suspicion). It was for this reason that he had rejected Ḥallāj, who was to become the model for all who are punished because they speak openly about the mysteries of love and unity. Junayd, therefore, refined the art of speaking in *ishārāt*, subtle allusion to the truth—a trend, attributed first to Kharrāz, that became characteristic of later Sufi writings. His letters and short treatises are written in a cryptic style; their language is so dense that they are difficult to understand for one not acquainted with his peculiar way of thinking and teaching. This language of exquisite beauty rather veils than unveils the true meaning.

One of Junayd's friends in Baghdad was Ruwaym (d. 915); in fact, the Baghdad Sufis were divided in their preferences between these two masters. Anṣārī admitted 150 years later that he "would prefer one hair of Ruwaym to a hundred of Junayd" (N 95).

Ruwaym is remembered by later hagiographers mainly because he did not practice the same extraordinary austerities as many of his contemporaries and did not overemphasize *tawakkul*, absolute trust in God. "He disguised himself in the attitude of a rich man" (N 95). Ibn Khafīf, the Shirazi Sufi leader, relates how Ruwaym's little daughter, prettily dressed in red, ran into her father's arms, and he caressed her and explained to his surprised visitor that he liked to care for his family and would not leave everything to *tawakkul* (X 85). For him, *tawakkul* meant trust in God's eternal promise to look after His creatures (L 52), but it did not mean to turn completely away from worldly concerns.

Two more figures of the Baghdad circle should be mentioned, both of them famous for their love. They are Abū'l-Ḥusayn an-

Nūrī (d. 907) and Sumnūn, whose sobriquet was *al-Muḥibb*, "the lover" (d. after 900).

Nūrī had been a disciple of Sarī as-Saqaṭī and was, thus, a confrère of Junayd; after having spent some years in Raqqa in northern Iraq, he had returned to the capital. He is the greatest representative of that pure love that had been introduced by Rābiʿa, a disinterested love for which God has not asked and for which He will not recompense the lover. That his love—a love that rejoices in suffering—was not only theoretical was proved when Ghulām Khalīl brought charges against the Sufis of Baghdad in 885. Accused of heresy, and likely to be sentenced to capital punishment, Nūrī offered his life to save his companions; the caliph, touched by such magnanimity, investigated the case, found the Sufis to be good Muslims, and set them free. Brotherly love was, for Nūrī, the perfect expression of truthfulness as well as of genuine spiritual poverty, which meant preferring others to himself.

Nūrī was considered a heretic (*zindīq*) by the orthodox because he spoke of being a lover (*ʿāshiq*) of God, a strong term that was misinterpreted by the theologians (see B 389). His love was overwhelming, and in his enthusiasm he tended to "tear the veils" (L 59) and therefore expose himself to blame and danger. He was, however, not only the representative of a love that overflows all borders and tempts man to seemingly blameworthy acts; he also composed a number of theoretical works that have only recently come to light. Like Shaqīq, he speaks of the light of God, which is the first thing to appear when God wants to guide a person on the mystical path (W 348). His *Maqāmāt al-qulūb* "The Stations of the Hearts," contains a fine analysis of the psychological stages and their "seats" in the human heart. Nwyia (W 326) has drawn the attention of scholars to Nūrī's colorful imagery, which until recently was known only from his short musical poems and some fragments of prose. But to truly appraise his power of expression, one should read Nūrī's elaborate comparison of the heart to a house in which a king, Certitude, resides, assisted by two viziers, Fear and Hope, and surrounded by ten chiefs, which are the main duties of a pious Muslim. Another description of the cleaning of this house reminds us immediately, in its consequences, of Jalāluddīn Rūmī's famous verses about the lover who is admitted to the abode of the beloved only after he has become annihilated, for "there is no room for two I's in this narrow house" (M 1:3056–63)—an echo of a basic

mystical experience through the centuries. Nūrī's description of the seven citadels, surrounded by seven ramparts and a wall, as God has built them in the heart, is somewhat reminiscent of St. Theresa's *Interior Castle*, though the Baghdad Sufi does not reach the psychological depth of the great Carmelite nun.

Nūrī's definition of the heart as a garden prefigures later Persian garden poems: the garden of the heart is either blessed or destroyed by rain—rain being, in the East, a symbol of divine activity and, generally, of divine mercy. Nūrī speaks of the two-fold rain, one of grace and mercy and one of divine wrath and revenge; the first one is revealed by thunders of majesty in the hearts of those who repent, by the lightning of desire in the hearts of the ascetics, by the showers of generosity in the hearts of the lovers, and by the breeze of appeasement in the hearts of the gnostics. But the thunderstorm of revenge sends the thunder of rupture into the hearts of the idolaters, the lightning of hatred into the hearts of the hypocrites, the rains of enmity into the hearts of the oppressors, and the wind of the veiling screen into the hearts of those who transgress the law. Nūrī was, as can be understood from these few details, indeed a forerunner of the later poets, who never tired of expressing their mystical experiences in the imagery of gardens, flowers, rains, and fruits—those poets who would symbolize the word coming to them from the beloved by the life-bestowing morning breeze, or the advent of the Prophet by a merciful rain that quickens the parched hearts of mankind.

Nūrī seems not to have been a conforming member of the Baghdad Sufi circles. There are stories that recount Junayd's criticizing him for exuberant words and startling miracles. Indeed, his way of educating his lower soul was quite peculiar: he was afraid of lions and therefore stayed in the lion-infested forests along the Tigris to conquer his fear.[37] Does he not remind us of the age-old mythological tales in which the hero goes into the forest, the symbol of his unconscious, in order to overcome the animals, which represent his lower instincts? Nūrī's death, too, occurred in a strange way: enraptured by the recitation of a verse, he ran into a nearby reedbed where the reeds had just been cut; the razor-sharp edges of the stumps hurt his feet without his being aware of the pain; soon afterward he died from the wounds.

37. Ibn al-Jauzi, *Talbīs iblīs* (Cairo, 1921–22), p. 381, dwells intensely upon this frequently told story.

Among the friends who had been tried and imprisoned with Nūrī was Sumnūn the Lover, who called himself "the Liar": "He, without fear, and completely love, he without reason and completely heart, that moth of the candle of Beauty, that man confused by the dawn of union"—that is how ʿAṭṭār introduced him in lovely rhyming sentences (T 2:82). He told touching stories about the Lover: the lamps in the mosque shattered when Sumnūn began preaching about disinterested and selfless love, and birds killed themselves while listening to his heart-rending sermons. Before ʿAṭṭār, Hujwīrī had said that Sumnūn "held a special *madhhab* in love and considered love the root and the foundation of the way towards God" (H 398). Later, Jāmī related that men and women gave up their spirits during his preaching.

Sumnūn considered love superior to gnosis (P 39)—a problem much discussed at that time among the Sufis. The solution finally depends upon the personal attitude of each traveler on the mystical path. Sumnūn knew, like Dhū'n-Nūn and all those who had experienced divine love, that it is always connected with affliction. When he was asked why, he replied: "In order that not every ordinary person may claim love, for he will run away when he sees affliction" (T 2:85). Love is the true religion of the spiritual elite, and its subtlety and depth cannot be conveyed by words. The metaphors that Sumnūn the Lover used to express the ineffable experience of this love, of which he was only a fragile vessel, are not taken from the vocabulary of worldly love. Rather, they are perfectly chaste, lucid, almost immaterial:

> I have separated my heart from this world—
> My heart and Thou are not separate.
> And when slumber closes my eyes,
> I find Thee between the eye and the lid.
>
> (A 10:310)

There is a direct line from the verses of Sumnūn to the sublime poems being written at the same time by the most famous mystic of Baghdad and of the whole early period of Sufism, al-Ḥallāj.

AL-ḤALLĀJ, MARTYR OF MYSTICAL LOVE

When Ḥallāj was in prison, he was asked: "What is love?" He answered: "You will see it today and tomorrow and the day after tomorrow." And that day they cut off his hands and feet, and the next day they

The Martyrdom of al-Ḥallāj, from a manuscript of Amīr Khosrau's Dīwān, *seventeenth-century India.*

The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore

put him on the gallows, and the third day they gave his ashes to the wind . . . .

This story, told by ʿAṭṭār (T 2:142), conveys in a nutshell the secret of Ḥallāj's life, love, and death. With the intuition of a great psychologist, ʿAṭṭār has condensed into these words the tragedy of a man who deeply influenced the development of Islamic mysticism and whose name became, in the course of time, a symbol for both suffering love and unitive experience, but also for a lover's greatest sin: to divulge the secret of his love.

European scholars have been attracted by Ḥallāj's fate since his name was first discovered in Arabic sources. After the British scholar Edward Pocock (d. 1691), it was the German protestant theologian F. A. D. Tholuck who drew attention to him whom he calls "the Sufi most famous (*inclytissimus*) by fame and fate"[38] who "removed the veil of pantheism publicly with incredible audacity." The quotation that Tholuck then gives is both wrongly spelled and wrongly interpreted so that Ḥallāj's image was seriously distorted in subsequent times.

Tholuck regarded Ḥallāj as a pantheist; that became the opinion of the nineteenth-century scholars, and it was, and to some degree still is, accepted by a number of theologians. Some have accused Ḥallāj of blasphemy, while others considered him a secret Christian. This latter view was taken up in the late nineteenth century by August Müller and lingers on in the minds of some scholars. Other orientalists, in the light of the sources at hand, tended to regard him as a neuropath or as a pure monist. Alfred von Kremer tried to locate the source of Ḥallāj's famous word *anā'l-Ḥaqq*, "I am the Absolute Truth," in Indian sources, and Max Horten drew the comparison between this mystical statement and the *aham brahmasmi* of the Upanishads, in which a number of oriental scholars have also concurred. Max Schreiner and Duncan Black Macdonald regarded Ḥallāj as a full-fledged pantheist; contrary to them, Reynold A. Nicholson stressed the strict monotheism and the very personal relation between man and God in Ḥallāj's thought. Finally, Adam Mez dwelt upon possible connections between the great Sufi and Christian theology.

Now, thanks to the lifelong work of Louis Massignon, the environment and influences on Ḥallāj have been explored so that his

38. Friedrich August Deofidus Tholuck, *Ssufismus sive theosophia persarum pantheistica* (Berlin, 1821), p. 68.

life and teachings have become better known and better understood in the West.[39] Massignon has edited the difficult rhyming prose of the *Kitāb aṭ-ṭawāsīn* and has collected Ḥallāj's scattered poems, which, in marvelous density, give utterance to the transcendence of God and His immanence in the human heart. The mystery of loving union is celebrated in verses free of any trace of the symbolism of profane love. Massignon devoted his whole life to the exploration of the spiritual world of Ḥallāj, adding more and more details, which he set forth in a monumental biography of the martyr-mystic that first appeared in 1922—just one thousand years after Ḥallāj's execution. In fact, Ḥallāj is, as Hans Heinrich Schaeder says in his review of Massignon's book, the martyr of Islam par excellence because he exemplified the deepest possibilities of personal piety to be found in Islam; he demonstrated the consequences of perfect love and the meaning of submission to the unity of the divine beloved—not with the aim of gaining any sort of private sanctity but in order to preach this mystery, to live in it and to die for it.

Who was this man who has been the object of both hatred and love, the model of suffering, the arch-heretic of orthodox writings, the ideal of enraptured Sufis?

Ibn an-Nadīm, relying upon certain inimical sources, said of him in the tenth century:

> Al-Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj was a crafty man and a conjurer who ventured into the Sufi school of thought, affecting their ways of speech. He laid claim to every science, but nevertheless [his claims] were futile. He even knew something about the science of alchemy. He was ignorant, bold, obsequious, but courageous in the presence of sultans, attempting great things and ardently desiring a change of government. Among his adherents he claimed divinity, speaking of divine union . . . .[40]

This—together with the paragraphs that follow in Ibn an-Nadīm's book—articulates the conventional reading of Ḥallāj's personality. Sober historical facts, however, though sometimes not too clear, reveal something close to the following picture of his life:

39. Louis Massignon, *La passion d'Al-Ḥosayn ibn Mansour Al-Ḥallaj, martyr mystique de l'Islam exécuté à Bagdad le 26 Mars 922*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1922); see Hans Heinrich Schaeder's review, *Der Islam* 15 (1926). Massignon, "Le *diwan* d'al-Ḥallāj, essai de reconstitution," *Journal asiatique*, 1931; new edition as separate book (Paris, 1955). Massignon and Paul Kraus, *Akhbār al-Ḥallāj, texte ancien relatif à la prédication et au supplice du mystique musulman al-Ḥosayn b. Mansour al-Ḥallaj*, 3d ed. Paris, 1957). See the Bibliography for other works by Massignon. Roger Arnaldez, *Hallaj ou la religion de la croix* (Paris, 1964).

40. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, ed. and trans. Bayard Dodge, 2 vols. (New York, 1970), 1 174.

Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj, born in the province of Fars in 858, grew up in Wasit and Tustar, where cotton was cultivated and where cotton carders (that is the meaning of *ḥallāj*) like his father could pursue their occupation. The young man attached himself to Sahl at-Tustarī and accompanied him to Basra. Later he became a disciple of ʿAmr al-Makkī in Baghdad and also of Junayd. He became estranged from ʿAmr when he married another mystic's daughter. She remained his only wife, and much information about Ḥallāj's later life is given on the authority of their son Ḥamd. After a short while, Ḥallāj's father-in-law began to regard him as a "cunning sorcerer and miserable infidel." In connection with his first pilgrimage, Ḥusayn stayed in Mecca for a year, undergoing terrible hardships in asceticism. After his return to Baghdad, Junayd foretold—according to the legends—an evil end for his former disciple. At this point the tradition contains the following anecdote:

> When he knocked at Junayd's door, the master asked: "Who is there?" and he answered: "*anā'l-Ḥaqq*, I am the Absolute [or Creative] Truth [or the True Reality]."

This sentence has become the most famous of all Sufi claims. In fact, it appears in a chapter of Ḥallāj's *Kitāb aṭ-ṭawāsīn* and was probably taken from this source very early. In this chapter Ḥallāj discusses his own claim together with that of Pharaoh and Satan, Pharaoh having asserted, according to the Koran, "I am your highest Lord" (Sūra 79:24) and Satan, "I am better than Adam" (Sūra 7:12). Ḥallāj, then, asserts his own claim, "I am the Absolute Truth." This passage led later mystics into deep speculations about the two different "I's," that of Pharaoh and that of the loving mystic; the solution is given in the divine revelation that "Pharaoh saw only himself and lost Me, and Ḥusayn saw only Me and lost himself" (N 444), so that the "I" of the Egyptian ruler was an expression of infidelity but that of Ḥallāj expressed divine grace (M 2:2522).

Whatever the reason for the statement *anā'l-Ḥaqq* may have been, Junayd uttered his verdict against his former disciple, accusing him of propagating an unsound religious claim. The antagonism of the other mystics of the Baghdad school, especially of ʿAmr al-Makkī and his group, mounted. Ḥallāj left the capital. For five years he traveled, ultimately reaching Khurasan, where he discussed religious problems with the people; it was there, his son thinks, that he was surnamed *ḥallāj al-asrār*, "the cotton carder of the innermost

hearts," since he knew all things hidden in the human heart and soul.

During a second pilgrimage to Mecca, 400 disciples accompanied him, and eventually, in 905, Ḥallāj took a boat to India. His enemies ascribed this journey to his desire to learn magic, specifically, the rope trick. But he told his family that his aim was to call the heathen to God. From Gujerat he wandered through Sind, the lower Indus valley, which had been a part of the Muslim Empire since 711. The seeds he sowed there grew in later centuries in the mystical poetry of this province. From Sind, Ḥallāj traveled to the northern borders of India, then to Khurasan, to Turkestan, and eventually to Turfan—Massignon has suggested that he may have gone with the caravans that brought brocade from his home town of Tustar to the East and returned with Chinese paper to the Islamic countries. Some sources say that his words were written down on precious paper decorated in the style of the Manichaean manuscripts from Central Asia. In the eyes of the Baghdad government these externals drew suspicion upon him. An even greater cause for suspicion was his supposed relations with the Carmathians, who ruled not only Bahrain but also northern Sind and Multan—places that the mystic had just visited. Did he not, after all, receive letters from distant Eastern lands in which he was addressed by strange names?

The *Akhbār al-Ḥallāj*, a collection of anecdotes about Ḥallāj, gives a vivid impression of his life in Baghdad before and especially after his return from this last long journey. He is described preaching and calling people to God, in intense love and excessive asceticism. But in spite of his constant preoccupation with prayer and ascetic practices, Ḥallāj was sure that he had not completely fulfilled his duties toward God. In his ascetic mood he would prefer to feed the black dog at his side, the image of his lower nature, instead of taking food himself. At the same time he claimed miraculous powers; in Mecca he produced sweetmeat from Yemen, and he sent down heavenly food in the middle of the desert.

One can understand how his behavior encouraged opposition on the part of both political and religious circles. Because of that Ḥallāj performed the pilgrimage once more, this time staying for two years in the holy city of Mecca. Then he bought a house in Baghdad, but soon Muḥammad ibn Dā'ūd, the son of the founder of the Za-

hirite school of law, denounced him, inciting other scholars to join in attacking the man who claimed to have reached real union with his divine beloved, an idea that the representatives of platonic love could not accept.

Aside from the subtle problems of mystical love, political and social problems were at stake. Ḥallāj was a friend of the chamberlain Naṣr al-Qushūrī, who favored better administration and juster taxation, dangerous ideas in a time when the caliph was almost powerless and the viziers, though all-powerful for a short period, changed frequently. The Shia groups who supported the vizier Ibn al-Furāt considered Ḥallāj as dangerous as did the Sunni orthodox wing surrounding the "pious vizier" ᶜAlī ibn ᶜIsā. All of them were afraid that the effect on the people of spiritual revival might have repercussions on the social organization and even on the political structure. The idea of converting the hearts of all Muslims and teaching them the secret of personal sanctification and not just of blind acceptance would certainly have been dangerous for a society whose religious and political leaders lived in a state of stagnation with neither the strength nor the intention to revitalize the Muslim community.

At the end of 912 Ḥallāj was apprehended while traveling near Sus; for three days he was set in a pillory, then imprisoned. Both the caliph's mother and the chamberlain Naṣr—who called him "a righteous man"—tried to make his imprisonment as comfortable as possible; but his situation grew worse during the financial crisis of 919, when the vizier Ḥāmid tried by every means to have him executed. Searching the houses of his disciples, the police found fragments of correspondence in cryptic letters, partly decorated with picturesque forms, probably calligraphic signs representing the name of ᶜAlī and some of the divine names. But years passed before the vizier could force the highest judge of Iraq to sign Ḥallāj's death sentence. On 26 March 922 he was put to death.

The story goes that Ḥallāj went dancing in his fetters to the place of execution, reciting a quatrain about mystical intoxication; then he asked his friend Shiblī to lend him his prayer mat and performed a prayer during which he once more touched the mystery of the ineffable unity and separation of man and God. When people began to throw stones at him, Shiblī—so the legend has it—threw a rose, and Ḥallāj sighed. Asked the reason for his sigh, he answered: "They do not know what they do, but he should have known it."

And the saying that "the rose, thrown by the friend, hurts more than any stone" has become a Turkish proverb.

Ḥallāj's last words were: *"ḥasb al-wājid ifrād al-wāḥid lahu*—it is enough for the lover ['who has found in ecstasy'] that he should make the One single"—i.e., that his existence should be cleared away from the path of love (H 311). That is genuine *tauḥīd*, fully interiorized, and paid for with the lover's blood.

Ḥallāj's hands and feet were cut off, and he was put on the cross or, more probably, on the gallows, then decapitated; his body was burned and the ashes thrown in the Tigris. This was the death for which his whole life had been a preparation. He had often urged the people of Baghdad to kill him so that he might be united with God and they might be recompensed for defending their simple and sincere faith. One of his most touching hymns begins with the words:

> *Uqtulūnī yā thiqātī—inna fī qatlī ḥayātī.*
> Kill me, o my trustworthy friends, for in my being killed
> is my life—

words that have been repeated by mystics throughout the ages as a basis for their meditations.

Ḥallāj's comprehensive work—of which the *Fihrist* gives a list—is preserved only in fragments. Mention has already been made of his *Kitāb aṭ-ṭawāsīn*, probably written during his imprisonment.[41] It contains eight chapters, each of them called *ṭāsīn*, after the mysterious letters at the beginning of Sūra 27, which are said to indicate divine majesty and power. This little book deals with problems of divine unity and with prophetology. It contains a discussion between God and Satan, in which the latter refuses to obey the divine order to prostrate himself before Adam and, true *muwaḥḥid* (confessor of divine unity) that he is, is caught in the dilemma between God's eternal will that nobody should worship any being save Him and His explicit order to fall down before a created being. This situation has sometimes served to explain Ḥallāj's own hopeless dilemma. Ḥallāj's satanology inspired a number of later mystics to develop these ideas (see Chapter 4).

Portions of the *Kitāb aṭ-ṭawāsīn* are beautiful hymns in honor of the Prophet. Among the traditions that he personally affirmed, Ḥal-

41. Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj, *Kitāb aṭ-ṭawāsīn, texte arabe . . . avec la version persane d'al-Baqlī*, ed. and trans. Louis Massignon (Paris, 1913).

lāj included the saying that "God has not created anything he loves more than he loves Muhammad and his family" (B 639). If there is any doubt as to whether Ḥallāj was a faithful Muslim, one need only read his description of Muhammad in the "Ṭāsīn as-sirāj" of the *Kitāb aṭ-ṭawāsīn*. These short, rhyming sentences achieve new heights in the veneration of the Prophet:

> All the lights of the Prophets proceeded from his light; he was before all, his name the first in the book of Fate; he was known before all things, all being, and will endure after the end of all. By his guidance have all eyes attained to sight . . . . All knowledge is merely a drop, all wisdom merely a handful from his stream, all time merely an hour from his life . . . .

In another chapter, Ḥallāj describes the fate of the moth that approaches the flame and eventually gets burned in it, thus realizing the Reality of Realities. He does not want the light or the heat but casts himself into the flame, never to return and never to give any information about the Reality, for he has reached perfection. Whoever has read Persian poetry knows that the poets choose this story of the moth and the candle as one of their favorite allegories to express the fate of the true lover (SD 311; an almost word-for-word Persian poetical paraphrase is found in ʿAṭṭār's *Manṭiq aṭ-ṭayr*, when the poet speaks of the seventh and last valley of the mystical journey [MT 258]). Through the medium of Persian poetry the same symbol reached Europe. Goethe's famous poem "Selige Sehnsucht," in his *West-Östlicher Divan*, reflects this very mystery of dying in love and reaching a new, higher life in union. The Goethean *Stirb und werde*, "die and become," translates very well the Prophetic tradition "die before ye die" (in order to gain new life), which formed one of the cornerstones of Sufism and, of course, of Ḥallāj's theories.[42]

Ḥallāj's poetry is a very tender and intense expression of mystical yearning. Its language is chaste; the favorite symbols are the wine cup, the crescent, the goblet of intoxicating mystical joy, the virgin, the soul bird, and similar images. He sometimes uses cabalistic word plays and relies on the secret meaning of the letters of the alphabet; alchemistic expressions are also found at times. All of his verses are weighted with deep theological and mystical meaning and filled with enigmas, but so great is their beauty that they can be enjoyed even by those who do not care for deep religious interpretation but

42. Al-Ḥallāj, "Ṭāsīn al-fahm," *Kitāb aṭ-ṭawāsīn*, pp. 16ff. Hans Heinrich Schaeder has studied the symbolism of the moth and the candle in his essay "Die persische Vorlage von Goethes Seliger Sehnsucht," in *Festschrift E. Spranger* (Berlin, 1912).

do enjoy Arabic poetry at its best—an extremely refined art with many overtones that evoke strange and fascinating echoes in the reader (see P 904). One can understand from his poems what Ḥallāj meant when he declared that God is visible in every trace of His creation, and although the common folk, the blind and dumb, animal-like creatures, do not recognize Him, the mystic drinks not a single drop of water without discovering His vision in the cup. God is He "who flows between the pericardium and the heart, just as the tears flow from the eyelids." Some of Ḥallāj's great hymns reveal abysses of loneliness, like his threnody for all things on earth that are left blind and hopeless because the witness has gone and left them alone.

A small part of Ḥallāj's theology can be reconstructed from the scattered fragments of his commentary on the Koran preserved in the *Tafsīr* of Sulamī (d. 1021), one of the leading authorities on the mystical theology of his time. The *Riwāyāt*—collected by Rūzbihān Baqlī in the late twelfth century—allow some insight into the working of Ḥallāj's mind. They consist of traditions that are not very different from, and are often verbally congruent with, the generally accepted *ḥadīth*; yet they are introduced not by a chain of human transmitters, as is the rule in *ḥadīth* transmission, but by a chain going back to cosmic and supernatural powers, to stars and sun, to angels and spirits. That is the way Ḥallāj authenticated these traditions for himself. This personal acceptance and realization of the religious truth was, perhaps, one of his most original contributions to Muslim spiritual life; it even led him to the doctrine of the *isqāṭ al-farāʾiḍ*, i.e., that certain religious duties can be exchanged for other acts that are more useful at the moment. Instead of performing the pilgrimage, he advised people to invite orphans and to feed and dress them and make them happy for the day of the Great Feast. Such ideas, of course, were not acceptable to the legalists.

Some of Ḥallāj's letters have been preserved, as have a few of his prayers and a small number of isolated sayings, which often have a dialectical form that seems to be typical of the mystical mind: "Do not let yourself be deceived by God, nor cut off your hope from Him; do not wish His love, and do not resign from loving Him." By such paradoxes the ineffable mystery of the love relation between man and God is disclosed. And this love relation is, in fact, the central theme of Ḥallāj's prayers and sermons. Love, for Ḥallāj, was certainly not sheer obedience: "Love is that you remain standing in

front of your beloved, when you are deprived of your qualities and when the qualification comes from His qualification." This love is realized through suffering—man can be united with the divine will by accepting suffering and even longing for it: "Suffering is He Himself, whereas happiness comes from Him." That is one of the decisive sayings of Ḥallāj. But this suffering is not a means of dehumanizing man and bringing him back into his first state, "as he was before he was," as was held by the followers of Junayd. Ḥallāj did not advocate destruction for the sake of destruction; he saw in suffering a positive value by means of which man might understand that *ʿishq*, "love," is the essence of the essence of God and the mystery of creation. The word *ʿishq*, with its connotation of "passionate, overflowing love," came to mean, for him, dynamic divine love; but this term was considered dangerous, if not illicit, even by moderate Sufis. In Ḥallāj's theory, the compensation for having offered God unconditional love was the beatific vision, without an intervening "I."

The sentence *anāʾl-Ḥaqq*, "I am the Absolute Truth," or, as it was translated later, "I am God," led many mystics to believe that Ḥallāj was a pantheist, conscious of the unity of being. Ḥallāj's theory, however, maintains the absolute transcendence of God beyond the dimensions of created things, his *qidam*, the preeternity that separates Him forever from the *ḥadath*, "what is created in time." However, in rare moments of ecstasy the uncreated spirit may be united with the created human spirit, and the mystic then becomes the living personal witness of God and may declare *anāʾl-Ḥaqq*. We must remember that, according to Ḥallāj, God's nature contains human nature within it. This human nature was reflected in the creation of Adam, and Adam became *huwa huwa*, "exactly He." This theory has led many critics to the assumption that the Christian dogma of the incarnation influenced Ḥallāj, an assumption seemingly supported by his use of the Christian terms *lāhūt*, "divine nature," and *nāsūt*, "human nature." But his theories are too complicated to be reducible to this or that influence. Indeed, they so intimately reflect the uniqueness of Ḥallāj's thought that it is useless to trace each one back to its source.

Ḥallāj was willing to suffer for himself and for others. The mystery of his death is aptly described in Émile Dermenghem's words about the true Muslim saint:

> The saint is he who takes upon him the sins and the pain of the world; the unjust death is, for him, one of his means of accomplishments. He is the "great Help" and the consolation of the people. He is a living accusation for the world: his existence insults the tyrants, his death makes tremble his executioners, his canonisation is a victory of faith, of love, and of hope.[43]

This is the spirit in which Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj went to the gallows. Since he was put to death by the government—or the establishment—his influence became even stronger after his execution than it had been during his lifetime.[44] About the year 1000 the Syrian poet Maʿarrī wrote that in his day people still stood on the banks of the Tigris awaiting Ḥallāj's return.

Persian poetical tradition has praised Ḥallāj; the founders of the mystical fraternities as well as the theoreticians of Sufism frequently referred to him—sometimes in terms of pity, sometimes in admiration, and sometimes rejecting him or declaring him to be merely a beginner on the mystical Path. The fact that he proclaimed the secret of love openly made him appear to more sober mystics as one who had not reached his goal: for them he resembled the kettle that sings as long as the water is not yet boiling; when the water boils and evaporates, the kettle becomes silent. Other mystics have accused him of believing that the human and divine natures can be united, resulting in the heretical doctrine of *ḥulūl*, "incarnation." Even Hujwīrī, in a book written in the mid-eleventh century—unfortunately no longer extant—in spite of all his admiration for Ḥallāj, felt obliged to declare him "not firmly settled."

A great number of Sufi poets, however, have shown their predilec-

43. Émile Dermenghem, *Le culte des saints dans l'Islam maghrebin* (Paris, 1954), p. 94.

44. Louis Massignon, "La survie d'al-Ḥallāj," *Bulletin d'études arabes Damas* 11 (1945–46); Massignon, "La legende de Hallacé Mansur en pays turcs," *Revue des études islamiques*, 1941–46; Massignon, "L'oeuvre Hallagienne d'Attār," *Revue des études islamiques*, 1941–46; Massignon, "Qiṣṣat Ḥusayn al-Ḥallāj," *Donum Natalicum H. S. Nyberg*, ed. E. Gren et al. (Uppsala, 1954). Annemarie Schimmel, ed. and trans., *Al-Halladsch, Märtyrer der Gottesliebe* (Cologne, 1969), an anthology compiled from Ḥallāj's writings and from poetry and prose by Muslim authors from different countries; Schimmel, "The Martyr-Mystic Ḥallāj in Sindhi Folk-Poetry," *Numen* 9 (1962): 3; Abdulghafur Rawan Farhadi, "Le majlis de al-Ḥallāj, de Shams-i Tabrezi et du Molla de Roum," *Revue des études islamiques*, 1954, a Persian passion play, *taʿziya*; Salih Zeki Aktay, *Hallac-ı Mansur* (Istanbul, 1942), a Turkish tragedy; M. Salih Bhatti, *Manṣūr Ḥallāj* (Hyderabad, Sind, 1952); Ṣalāḥ ʿAbduʾṣ-Ṣabūr, *Maʾsāt al-Ḥallāj* (Beirut, 1964), trans. K. J. Semaan as *Murder in Baghdad* (Leiden, 1972). Almost every collection of modern Arabic poetry contains some poems in honor of al-Ḥallāj, for example, the works of Adonis and al-Bayātī.

tion for Ḥallāj, and the Persian tradition largely follows the example set by Ibn Khafīf of Shiraz, who had visited him in prison and defended him, even to the extent of calling him an *ʿālim rabbānī*, "a divinely inspired master." Some of Ḥallāj's disciples sought shelter in Iran during the critical years of Ḥallāj's persecution, and there they secretly transmitted his ideas. We owe the preservation of the most important Ḥallājian texts to Rūzbihān Baqlī, the mystic of Shiraz who stands in the Ibn Khafīf tradition; Rūzbihān's commentaries on the *Kitāb aṭ-ṭawāsīn* and on many other sayings of the master are the most valuable source for our understanding of large parts of Ḥallāj's theology. Another leading representative of the Ḥallājian tradition in Iran—though from a different point of view—is Farīduddīn ʿAṭṭār, the poet (d. 1220 in Nishapur). He had accepted Ḥallāj as his spiritual guide in a vision, and Ḥallāj's name recurs often in ʿAṭṭār's lyrical and epic poetry. ʿAṭṭār's description of Ḥallāj's suffering, found in his hagiographical work *Tadhkirat al-auliyāʾ*, has deeply influenced almost all later mystics who wrote about the martyr-mystic in the Persian-speaking lands—Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and India. The details of his account of Ḥallāj's execution are repeated in nearly every subsequent book; they have been poetically elaborated in many languages—Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Sindhi, Panjabi, and Pashto—but in substance they remained unchanged.

The work of the greatest of the mystical poets to write in Persian, Jalāluddīn Rūmī, contains numerous allusions to the fate of Manṣūr, "the victorious," as Ḥallāj is often called after his father; some of his utterances and verses have been embellished by Rūmī in an entirely ingenious way. Turkish Sufi tradition also shows a strong penchant for Manṣūr. In the Bektashi order, his name is connected with the central place of initiation, which is called *dār-e Manṣūr*, "the gallows of Manṣūr"; Bektashi poets from the fourteenth century onward have often imitated the "unitive cry," *anāʾl-Ḥaqq*, and have heard echoes of these words everywhere. And one ought not fail to mention Nesīmī, the Ḥurūfī poet (executed in 1417) who considered himself "a new Manṣūr" and reenacted in his own life the passion and death of Ḥallāj.

Most recently Turkish literature has borne witness to the abiding inspiration of Ḥallāj with the appearance of a play called *Manṣūr-e Ḥallāj*; its author tries to establish his hero as an heir to Zoroastrian ideas. The date of the play is especially significant: it was written in 1940, at a time when Islamic religious instruction was banned from Turkish schools and laicism had reached its apex.

In Iran, the name of the martyr-mystic has become a commonplace in the verses of almost all poets; they allude to the gallows and the sad fate of the lover, sometimes even likening the tresses of their beloved to the rope of Manṣūr's gallows. They see the red rose on its bough as a symbol of Ḥallāj on the gallows tree, and they find the word *anāʾl-Ḥaqq* manifest in the heart of every atom and every drop of water. Even among the *taʿziyas*, the plays written in commemoration of Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī's martyrdom at Kerbela on the tenth of Muharram 680, Enrico Cerulli has discovered one piece that deals with the fate of Ḥallāj, who is here in strange juxtaposition with Maulānā Rūmī and his mystical preceptor and beloved Shams-i Tabrīz (the combination of Ḥallāj and Shams is also known from Indo-Muslim folk poetry). The tragic figure of Manṣūr occurs in modern Persian drama, too.

The poets in Iran and Afghanistan were outdone in their devotion to the Ḥallājian tradition by the Indian poets writing in Persian who made use of the figure of Ḥallāj from the eleventh century on. The images and forms they used are almost identical with those found in classical Persian poetry. An even stronger predilection for Manṣūr is to be found in the mystical folk songs composed in the vernaculars of Muslim India and adjacent areas. The Pathans knew the name of the martyr of love (who is even mentioned in their proverbs), as did the Panjabis. His name occurs in most of the mystical Panjabi songs as the representative of love, contrasted with the dry asceticism of the theologians and the bookishness of the mollahs. Ḥallāj is mentioned just as frequently in Sindhi poetry: one can scarcely find any book of mystical verses in Sindhi or its northern dialect, Siraiki, that does not contain allusions to him or his fate. He is the great lover; he plays "the drum of unity" (a modern Turkish poet, Asaf Halet Çelebi, has also written a fine poem on the "drum of Manṣūr"); his goblet is filled with the primordial wine of unity; and he is one of those who must suffer because of their overflowing passion and because God loves them too much. He is the model for every loving soul who will gladly suffer and die for the sake of his love; but he is also in constant danger because it is not permitted to proclaim the word of love openly—

The secret that is hidden in the breast is not a sermon;
you cannot utter it in the pulpit, but on the gallows.

That is—since the days of Sanā'ī—one of the central ideas in Persian and Indo-Muslim poetry, which has found its finest expression in the verse just quoted by Ghālib (d. 1869). Or is the poet, perhaps, declaring that death is the only legitimate way to express the secret of loving union? And does he aver that the ultimate experience is communicable through the silent language of martyrdom, for in the martyr (*shahīd*) God has His true witness (*shāhid*)?

There is nothing more touching than to hear the plaintive Sindhi folk songs in a remote corner of the Indus valley through which the great mystic had wandered in order to call the people to God a thousand years ago:

When you want to know the way of love,
ask those who are like Manṣūr.

In our day, there is renewed interest throughout the Islamic world in the figure of Ḥallāj, thanks, in large part, to Massignon's comprehensive work. Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938), who in his youth described the great mystic as a pantheist—as he had seen him through hundreds of Persian, Urdu, and Panjabi poems—later recognized Ḥallāj's strong personal religious commitment and saw in him one of the few who had attained to an experience of the divine higher than that of ordinary people. He recognized that Ḥallāj had called the slumbering Muslims to a personal realization of the truth, thus coming into conflict with the religious authorities who were afraid of any ardent witness for the living God. In the scene in Jupiter-Heaven in the *Jāwīdnāme* that depicts his spiritual journey through the spheres, Iqbal has even treated Ḥallāj as a sort of medieval forerunner of himself and has emphasized his dynamic concept of love and faith as an ideal for every free Muslim.

Even in the Arab lands, in which Ḥallāj was less renowned than in those areas influenced by the Persian mystical tradition, he has gained fame recently: the philosopher ʿAbdu'r-Raḥmān Badawī has likened Manṣūr's experience to that of Kierkegaard, seeing in him a true existentialist. Poets like Adonis in Lebanon and ʿAbdu'l Wahhāb al-Bayātī in Iraq have written sensitively of the secret of his personality; and a young socialist writer from Egypt, Ṣalāḥ ʿAbdu'ṣ-Ṣabūr, has composed a *Tragedy of Ḥallāj*. Its form shows

influences of Eliot's dramatic technique. The interesting aspect of the work is the intensity with which the author highlights the social side of Ḥallāj's message.

Ḥallāj's name has found its way into the remotest corners of the Islamic world. It can be discovered in the folklore of East Bengal and the Malayan archipelago; it has been used by some Sufi fraternities in their celebrations, and a Tunisian order has an entire litany in honor of the martyr-mystic. Manṣūr's suffering through "gallows and rope" has become a symbol for the modern progressive writers in India and Pakistan who underwent imprisonment and torture for their ideals like "the victorious" of old.

In Ṣalāh ʿAbdu'ṣ-Ṣabūr's tragedy the members of the chorus sing about the words of Ḥallāj:

—And we will go, to scatter in the plough furrows of the peasants what we have stored up from his words . . . .
—And we will preserve them among the merchants' goods.
—And we will give them to the wind that wanders o'er the waves.
—And we will hide them in the mouths of singing camel-drivers who traverse the desert.
—And we will note them down on papers, to be kept in the folds of the frock.
—And we will make them into verses and poems.

All of them:
Tell me—what would become of his words,
if he were not martyred?

THE PERIOD OF CONSOLIDATION: FROM SHIBLĪ TO GHAZZĀLĪ

Ḥallāj represents the culminating point of early Sufism; but the mystical impetus of the early Baghdad school continued in a number of Sufis who lived shortly after him and represented, again, different aspects of Sufism. Ḥallāj's most faithful friend, Ibn ʿAṭā'—with whom he had exchanged some beautiful poetical letters—was killed in connection with Ḥallāj's execution and, thus, paid for his friendship with his life. Another friend, Abū Bakr ash-Shiblī, survived Ḥallāj by twenty-three years.

Shiblī had been a high governmental official before his conver-

sion to the mystical life. When he died in 945 at the age of eighty-six, he left behind a considerable number of sayings and paradoxes upon which following generations often pondered. His strange behavior resulted from time to time in his confinement in an asylum; thus he was spared, according to his own statement, the fate of Ḥallāj, for he tried to express some of Ḥallāj's lofty ideas in more comprehensible language. In one poem he compares himself to a frog:

> Now praised be God, that like a frog am I
> Whose sustenance the watery deeps supply.
> It opens its mouth, and straightway it is filled.
> It holds its peace, and must in sorrow die.

Shiblī's contemporaries and later Sufis are divided in their feelings about him—Junayd called him "the crown of these people" (N 180), whereas others, acknowledging his strong mystical "state," yet held that he was not a proper interpreter of *tauḥīd* (N 145). The sayings and short, delicately expressed verses attributed to him[45] show his overwhelming feeling of God's unity and of the love that removes from the heart all but the beloved or consumes all but the will of the beloved (Q 190). "To love Him for His acts of grace means to be a polytheist" (A 10:369), for, in the tradition of Rābiᶜa, God has to be the only goal for the lover who not only loves Him with his heart but all of whose limbs "are hearts pointing to Thee" (L 91). Similarly, "the best recollection is to forget recollection in vision" (L 220). God, the ever living and everlasting, should be the only object of love: "Shiblī saw somebody weeping because his beloved had died and blamed him: 'O fool, why do you love someone who can die?' " (T 2:172). God's face, i.e., His essence, is the proof for the lover on the day "when proofs are required" (L 209).

Like Nūrī, Shiblī sometimes used the kind of imagery that became commonplace in later Persian poetry. Thus he describes the "gnostics," those who know God by intuitive knowledge and are, therefore, the nearest perfect of men:

> They are comparable to springtime: thunder clashes and the clouds pour rain, the lightning flashes and the wind blows, the buds open and the birds sing—such is the state of the gnostic: his eye weeps, his mouth smiles, his heart burns, he gives away his head, he mentions the name of the Beloved and walks around His door. (T 2:177)

Such a description could have come from any of the later Persian

45. Abū Bakr Shiblī, *Dīwān*, ed. Kāmil M. ash-Shaybī (Cairo, 1967).

mystics, who so often compared their condition to clouds and lightning; they knew that the weeping of the cloud is indispensable for the growth of a flower out of a heart that should be like soil.

When mentioning Muhammad's name in the call to prayer, Shiblī is reported to have said: "If Thou hadst not ordered it, I would not mention another name besides Thee" (Q 17). He therefore regarded as infidel and polytheist anyone who might think of the angels Michael and Gabriel—for, according to the Prophetic tradition, in the moment of closest proximity there is no room even for Gabriel, who is pure spirit; lover and beloved are alone, without separation (B 413).

Rūzbihān Baqlī preserved many of Shiblī's paradoxes, which foreshadow trends that became explicit in later mysticism. When he told his disciples to go away and to know that wherever they were they were under his protection and he would be with them, he points to the power of *himma*, that "high spiritual ambition," or "power," that is strong enough to keep safe those who believe in the master. Being united in perfect *tauḥīd* with God, he can protect his disciples wherever they may wander about (B 322), since he himself works and walks through God. The claim of the sheikh to possess this strong *himma* is reflected in many legends about saints of later times.

Another story told about Shiblī is typical of the so-called *munāqara*, "quarrel," of saints: He threw one of his fellow mystics into the Tigris, saying, "If he is sincere, he will be saved, like Moses; if not, he will be drowned, like Pharaoh." A few days later he was challenged by that very person to take live charcoals from an oven without being hurt (B 494). It seems that this kind of contest was not uncommon among the early Sufis; later sheikhs used to settle questions of priority in a similar way.

Baqlī explains Shiblī's exclamation that "fire of Hell will not touch me, and I can easily extinguish it," when he says, faithfully interpreting the genuine mystical experience, that "in the world those who have been drawn close to God are burnt by the fire of pre-eternal love so that it is for them that God ordered the fire to be 'cool and pleasant' [Sūra 21:69], as He did for Abraham" (B 460). In another saying, Shiblī claimed that hellfire could not burn even a single hair on his body. Baqlī sees here a manifestation of what he calls *iltibās*, the envelopment of the human being in the light of preeternity: the divine uncreated light is incomparably

stronger than the created fire of Hell. For, according to a *ḥadīth* of which the Sufis were particularly fond, Hell addresses the true believer with the words: "Thy light has extinguished my flames" (B 452). The mystic who has been surrounded by the primordial and everlasting divine light is no longer subject to the change of mystical states, to death, Paradise, and Hell. Such a person may leave the early station of renunciation and abstinence and become a perfect lover; by love he becomes "like a lion in the forest of affliction" (B 154).

Shiblī's daring paradoxes find a counterpart in the less often quoted but extremely interesting sayings of his contemporary Abū Bakr al-Wāsiṭī, who came from Farghana, settled for a while in Baghdad, and then returned to Khurasan. He too belonged to the group of Junayd and Nūrī, but his sayings bear the stamp of a very independent personality. "He would have needed a trifle of mercy" (N 74), says Anṣārī, who praises him as the "leader of *tauḥīd*" and "the master of the East in the science of subtle allusions" (N 175). Complete isolation and absolute concentration upon Him who is recollected are expressed in his sentences. According to him, the utterance of the formula *Allāhu Akbar*, "God is greater" (than everything), during the act of ritual prayer is "as if one said 'Thou art too mighty to be joined by prayer, or to be separated from by omitting to pray': for separation and union are not personal notions, they follow a course preordained in eternity" (K 144).

The overwhelming greatness of God, who teaches man how to pray and who addresses him before man dares to address Him, is visible through every word written by Niffarī.[46] This Iraqian mystic, who died in 965, left writings, called *Mawāqif* and *Mukhāṭabāt*, that seem to have been studied carefully by later Sufis. Even Ibn ᶜArabī may have been inspired by the daring ideas of this mystical thinker. Niffarī spoke of the state of *waqfa*, "standing," during which he was addressed by God, who inspired him to write down His words either during or after this experience. Niffarī's whole work, thus, is presented as a replica of Muhammad's experience, a dialogue in which man becomes the confidant of God (W 358),

46. Muḥammad ibn ᶜAbdi³l-Jabbār an-Niffarī, *The "Mawāqif" and "Mukhāṭabāt" of Muḥammad ibn ᶜAbdi³l-Jabbār al-Niffarī with Other Fragments*, ed. A. J. Arberry, Gibb Memorial Series, n.s. 9 (London, 1935). Of special importance are the texts recently discovered and edited by Père Nwyia: Paul Nwyia, *Trois oeuvres inédites de mystiques musulmans: Šaqīq al-Balḫi, Ibn ᶜAṭā, Niffarī* (Beirut, 1973).

as it is described by Père Nwyia (whose study on Niffarī opens previously undiscovered perspectives in the experiences of the mystic). Such a dialogue between God and the mystic is not alien to later Sufis, who not infrequently claimed that God spoke to them, and a comparison between Niffarī's experiences as set forth in his books with those of the eighteenth-century Indo-Muslim mystic Mīr Dard (contained in his *ᶜIlm ul-kitāb*) would yield significant similarities.

Niffarī's sayings are full of paradoxes. They show the perfect passing away of the mystic, who has passed beyond all the veils between the human and the divine; at the same time they make clear the impossiblity of expressing mystical experience at all. The center of Niffarī's experience is that of prayer; over and over he is taught by God to recollect Him, and then again the impossibility of this task is put before him: "Thoughts are contained in letters, and fancies in thoughts; the sincere recollection of Me is beyond letter and thoughts, and My name is beyond recollection."[47] God wants His servant to rest in His recollection, but: "Do not speak, for he that reaches unto Me does not speak."[48] How, then, is recollection to be performed? And what meaning does it have? "My recollection is the electest thing I have manifested, and My recollection is a veil."[49] For this recollection is contained in letters, and Niffarī "unmasked the idolatry of the letter" (W 370) at a time when Muslim orthodoxy was going more and more by the letter and becoming increasingly intellectualized. It was he who spoke of the *ḥijāb al-maᶜrifa*, "the veil of gnosis" (W 380), which, tender and subtle as it may be, can constitute the greatest barrier between man and God.

Niffarī clearly formulated the theory—probably known to mystics before him—that prayer is a divine gift: "To Me belongs the giving: if I had not answered thy prayer I should not have made thee seeking it."[50] It is an idea well known in Christian tradition, where it found its most famous expression in the words of Pascal: "You would not seek Me if you had not found Me." Much earlier, it became a cornerstone of the Muslim theology of prayer and was most poetically expressed by Jalāluddīn Rūmī (see Chapter 3).

47. *Maw.*, no. 55/20.
48. *Mukh.*, no. 22/5.
49. *Maw.*, no. 49/2.
50. *Mukh.*, no. 42/10.

Niffarī also expressed the feeling of the persistent love with which God follows man in a divine address that can be compared, as his modern commentator has in fact done, to Francis Thompson's *Hound of Heaven*.[51]

In certain aspects the late tenth century was the period of organization and consolidation for Sufism. It was the time during which, on the political level, the influence of different Shia groups grew in every part of the Muslim Empire. Since 945—the year of Shiblī's death—Baghdad had been under the control of the Iranian Buwaihids, a Shia dynasty; Northern Syria was ruled by the Ḥamdanite dynasty, which was also Shia—Aleppo for a short time rivaling Baghdad as a gathering place for poets, philosophers, and musicians. Central Arabia had been conquered, in 930, by the Carmathians, an extreme Shia group whose capital was located in Bahrain and whose branches extended to the Indus valley; there, at Multan, Ḥallāj had been in touch with them, according to the tradition. In North Africa, the Shiite Fatimid dynasty was gaining in power; in 969 they conquered Egypt, there to establish a splendid rule that was to last for two centuries.

It is a well-known fact that many of the Sufis—and many of the pious Sunnites in general—felt a kind of sentimental allegiance to the family of the Prophet without believing in Shia doctrines. The veneration of ᶜAlī was widespread among the Muslims, and he was often regarded as an important link in the spiritual chain leading the Sufi masters back to the Prophet. Widespread, too, was the veneration of the *sayyids*, Muhammad's descendants through ᶜAlī and Fāṭima. Even in our day some of the *sayyid* families in countries like Muslim India or Pakistan consider themselves exalted above the common Muslim, surrounded by a sanctity or transmitting a *baraka* (spiritual power, blessing) that gives them a peculiar status. This veneration shown to the *ahl al-bayt*, the Prophet's family, constitutes in later times a very important aspect of popular Sufism.

The relationship between Shia thought as it crystallized in the ninth and tenth centuries and the theories of Sufism that emerged at about the same time has not yet been completely elucidated;[52]

51. *Maw.*, no. 11/16.

52. Kāmil M. ash-Shaybī, *As-ṣila bayn at-taṣawwuf waʾt-tashayyuᶜ* (Cairo, ca. 1967). See Seyyed H. Nasr, "Shiᶜism and Sufism," in *Sufi Essais* (London, 1972).

but some of the Sufi teachings about the primordial light of Muhammad and the theories of saintship seem to correspond very closely in their hierarchical structure to Shiite theories about the imamate and the gradual initiation of adepts into the deeper realms of faith, into new levels of spiritual interpretation. The role played by Jaᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq's commentary on the Koran in the formation of some Sufi ideas has already been mentioned. In later times, the connections between these two forms of Muslim spirituality became visible once more in the development of the Sufi fraternity located in Ardebil in Northwestern Iran—from a regular Sufi order it turned into the cell of Shia propaganda in Iran. The activities of this group resulted eventually in the victory of Shah Ismail the Safawid in 1501, and at that time Shiism became the official creed of Iran. It seems symptomatic that both in Arabic and in early European sources the Safawid ruler is often called "Sufi" or the "Grand Sophi." Yet from that time onward Sufism and the Shia creed were rarely combined, and only a few Shia orders exist today. In spite of the relatively close relationship between the two movements in the period of formation, the Sufi congregations usually supported the Sunni case and often became defenders of the official Sunnite creed under the later Abbasid caliphs (MM 86).

During the Abbasid period the need was felt to formulate some of the main lines, a *Leitbild*, of moderate Sufism. The case of Ḥallāj had confronted the Sufis with the danger of persecution, and even without his tragic death one might well have felt that the Path had to be made accessible to people who could never reach the abysses of mystical experience Ḥallāj had reached, or who could not be compared in sobriety to Junayd, in burning love to Nūrī, or in paradoxical speech to Shiblī. It was left to men like Ibn Khafīf of Shiraz (d. 982, at about 100 years of age)[53] and similar mystics to teach the Path, to make it understandable—at least in part—to the intellectuals, and to set an example to larger groups of the faithful.

It would, however, be wrong to speak of a real "reconciliation" between Sufism and orthodoxy. For the Sufis were, on the whole,

53. ᶜAlī ibn Aḥmad ad-Dailamī, *Sīrat-i Ibn al-Ḫafīf ash-Shīrāzī*, ed. Annemarie Schimmel (Ankara, 1955). See Annemarie Schimmel, "Zur Biographie des Abu ᶜAbdallāh ibn Chafīf aš-Šīrāzī," *Die Welt des Orients*, 1955; and Schimmel, "Ibn Khafīf, an Early Representative of Sufism," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, 1959. ʿAṭṭār mentions that the famous poet Saᶜdī (d. 1292) lived close to Ibn Khafīf's tomb which is now in a rather dark quarter of Shiraz, close to the charcoal sellers).

as good Muslims as the rest of the community in Baghdad, Nishapur, or Egypt. They did not reject the religious law but rather added to it—additions that made more exacting demands on their personal lives. The genuine mystical practices, like the performance of the *dhikr*, the constant recollection of God, occupied only part of their time. Many Sufis followed normal professions to earn their livelihoods. The surnames of some of them point to these professions: *saqaṭī*, "huckster"; *ḥallāj*, "cotton carder"; *nassāj*, "weaver"; *warrāq*, "bookseller" or "copyist"; *qawārīrī*, "glassmaker"; *ḥaddād*, "blacksmith" were among them. Some would work regularly and use a trifle of their gain for themselves, distributing the main part to the Sufis, so that it could be said, for example, that a person "veiled his saintliness under the modest shape of a cupper" (N 572). Some left their original professions after they had gained fame as mystical leaders and attracted a few disciples. Others were trained as theologians, traditionalists, or jurists in one of the four schools of law. Still, it was considered important to prove to the world the perfect orthodoxy of Sufi tenets, and therefore a number of books were composed almost simultaneously in the last quarter of the tenth century.

The oldest authority is Abū Naṣr as-Sarrāj, from Tus in eastern Iran (d. 988), whose *Kitāb al-lumaᶜ fīʾt-taṣawwuf* is an excellent exposition of the doctrines of the Sufis, with numerous quotations from the sources. The matters at stake are lucidly laid before the reader.[54] Sarrāj, who was for a while a disciple of Ibn Khafīf, is close enough to the great masters of the Path to understand and interpret their sayings and their way of life. His definitions of the different states and stations, his long quotations from Sufi prayers and letters, his words about the behavior of the Sufis at home and on their journeys, and his explanations of difficult expressions are of great value to the student of Sufism, though his book apparently has not been as widely read as other handbooks. Sarrāj himself had reached a high rank in practical Sufism; according to one story, he was discussing some mystical problems with his friends on a cold winter day, "and the sheikh got into a 'state' and put his face on the fireplace and prostrated himself before God in the midst of the fire without being hurt" (N 283).

54. *Kitāb al-lumaᶜ fīʾt-taṣawwuf*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson, Gibb Memorial Series, no. 22 (Leiden and London, 1914); A. J. Arberry, ed., *Pages from the "Kitāb al-lumaᶜ"* (London, 1947).

A near contemporary of Sarrāj, al-Kalābādhī, who died in Bukhara about 990, wrote his *Kitāb at-taᶜarruf* in an effort to find a middle ground between orthodoxy and Sufism.[55] His book is, on the whole, the somewhat dry exposition of a Hanafi jurist and not as enjoyable as Sarrāj's study. Yet the work contains valuable material for the study of early Sufism; it was widely read, along with a commentary, in medieval Muslim India. A commentary of 222 Prophetic traditions is also ascribed to Kalābādhī. The study of Muhammad's sayings was regarded as essential by the Sufis, who tried to follow their beloved Prophet's example as closely as possible.

The third book written during this period was Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī's comprehensive *Qūt al-qulūb*, "The Food of the Hearts."[56] Though Makkī (d. 996 in Baghdad) was considered a follower of the Sālimiyya school, his book had a pronounced influence on later Sufi writings. Ghazzālī relied heavily upon this work, and quotations in later sources—in Rūmī's *Mathnawī* and in medieval Indian books—show how widely it was used.

Shortly after the composition of these three theoretical books on the tenets and doctrines of Sufism, two attempts were made to deal with the Sufis in the same way as Arab historians had dealt with scholars, heroes, philologists, and other groups: by dividing them into "classes" belonging to succeeding periods. Sulamī (d. 1021) called his work simply *Ṭabaqāt aṣ-ṣūfiyya*, "The Classes of the Sufis." Abū Nuᶜaym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1037) chose for his ten-volume work the more romantic title *Ḥilyat al-auliyāʾ*, "The Ornament of the Saints."[57] Beginning with the Prophet and his companions, Abū Nuᶜaym brought together every available bit of information about the pious and their deeds; his book is a storehouse of information, which, however, must be used with caution. Yet even in its present edition, which is not free from mistakes, the book is indispensable for the study of the biographies of early Sufis.

Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt* has constituted a source for later hagiographers.[58] Half a century after his death, the book was expanded and

55. Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Kalābādhī, *At-taᶜarruf li-madhhab ahl at-taṣawwuf*, ed. A. J. Arberry (Cairo, 1934), trans. A. J. Arberry as *The Doctrine of the Sufis* (Cambridge, 1935).

56. Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb fī muᶜāmalāt al-maḥbūb*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1310 h./1892–93).

57. Abū Nuᶜaym al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-auliyāʾ*, 10 vols. (Cairo, 1932–38).

58. ᶜAbdur-Raḥmān as-Sulamī, *Kitāb ṭabaqāt as-Ṣūfiyya*, ed. Johannes Pedersen (Leiden, 1960), has an extensive introduction; Sulamī's *Kitāb* has also been edited by Nūraddīn Sharība (Cairo, 1953). For other editions see the Bibliography under

translated into Persian by ʿAbdullāh-i Anṣārī, the patron saint of Herat; his translation, in turn, was revised and brought up to date in the late fifteenth century by Jāmī, also in Herat, in his *Nafaḥāt al-uns*.

Sulamī dealt not only with the biographies of the mystics, but also with the different strands of Sufism as they had developed by his time. He thus concerned himself with the group of the Malāmatiyya, to whom he devoted a special treatise.[59] He distinguishes between the orthodox people, the *ahl al-maʿrifa*, "gnostics," i.e., the true Sufis, and the *malāmatiyya*, "those who draw blame (*malāma*) upon themselves."

The ideal of the Malāmatiyya developed out of a stress on *ikhlāṣ*, "perfect sincerity"; Anṣārī sometimes praises a person for his "perfect *malāma* and sincerity" (N 340). Muḥāsibī had taught that even the slightest tendency to show one's piety or one's religious behavior was ostentation. Thus the Malāmatīs deliberately tried to draw the contempt of the world upon themselves by committing unseemly, even unlawful, actions, but they preserved perfect purity of heart and loved God without second thought. Typical is the story told by Jāmī: "One of them was hailed by a large crowd when he entered a town; they tried to accompany the great saint; but on the road he publicly started urinating in an unlawful way so that all of them left him and no longer believed in his high spiritual rank" (N 264). These pious relied upon the Koranic words, "and they do not fear the blame of a blaming person" (Sūra 5:59), and probably also thought of the *nafs lawwāma*, "the blaming soul," the conscience that warned them at every step in the religious life (Sūra 75:2). But the attitude itself is not novel—Marijan Molé (MM 72–74) has shown that, particularly among the early Syrian Christians, there was a similar trend to hide one's virtuous actions; stories about some of these Christian saints, who would rather live as actors or rope-dancers than show their deep religious concern, at once call to mind anecdotes about the Malāmatiyya.

Sulamī. Süleyman Ateş, *Sülemi ve tasavvufi tefsiri* (Istanbul, 1969), is a Turkish study of the famous commentary on the Koran by Sulamī, a work that still awaits a critical edition.

59. Richard Hartmann, "As-Sulamī's 'Risālat al-Malāmatīya,'" *Der Islam* 8 (1918), is a fine analysis of Sulamī's treatise. For the whole problem see Abdülbâki Gölpınarlı, *Melâmilik ve Melâmiler* (Istanbul, 1931); Abū'l-ʿAlā' Affifi, *Al-malāmātiyya wa'ṣ-ṣūfiyya wa ahl al-futuwwa* (Cairo, 1945); Morris S. Seale, "The Ethics of Malāmātīya Sufism and the Sermon of the Mount," *Moslem World* 58 (1968): 1; and the discussion in Nwyia, *Ibn ʿAṭā' Allāh*, p. 244.

Al-malāma tark as-salāma, "blame is to give up well-being," says Ḥamdūn al-Qaṣṣār, one of the first among the Khurasanian Sufis to adopt this way of life (H 67). Sulamī sees them as veiled from the vulgar by God's jealousy: He has granted them all kinds of spiritual graces, but does not expose them to the view of the common people; their outward behavior is that of people who live in separation from God, but inwardly they dwell in the sweetness of divine union. They thus prefigure the lover in Persian poetry, who was to describe himself in terms of a detestable creature, calling the hatred of the "others" upon himself, but never revealing the secret of his intense love.

Hujwīrī, half a century after Sulamī, is more critical of the *malāmatī* attitude, for even in the actions of those who want to attract blame upon themselves he sees a trace of subtle hypocrisy: "The ostentatious men purposely act in such a way as to win popularity, while the *malāmatī* purposely acts in such a way that people reject him. Both have their thought fixed on mankind and do not pass beyond that sphere" (H 6). That may sound hard, but from the viewpoint of a perfect mystic every interest in people's reaction—be it positive or negative—is a sign of selfishness, and therefore of imperfection.

Jāmī regarded the *malāmatī* as sincere, *mukhliṣ*, whereas the true Sufi is *mukhlaṣ*, made sincere by God (N 10), not by an act that can be attributed to himself. But Jāmī, writing in the mid-fifteenth century, saw the problem that was involved in the whole *malāmatī* attitude more clearly than his predecesssors had. The problem had arisen when people affiliated themselves with the Malāmatiyya or claimed to be one of them without accepting the difficult burden of genuine *malāmatī* practices: "Now a group has brought forth licentiousness and treating lightly of the Divine law and heresy and lack of etiquette and respectlessness—but *malāmat* was not, that somebody would act by showing no respect to the law: it was, that they did not care for the people in their service of God." Thus complains Anṣārī as early as the eleventh century, not long after Sulamī, in a discussion of the life of Ḥamdūn al-Qaṣṣār (N 61). Jāmī accepted Anṣārī's assessment and went on to contrast the *malāmatī*, who adheres to the duties and performs many supererogatory acts of piety in secret, and the *qalandar*, the wandering dervish who performs only the absolute minimum in religious duties. The *qalandar*, in his description, is the less rigorous mystic, who enjoys his unfettered

life. The *qalandar* is chiefly known in the West as a kind of free thinker—even a charlatan—without deeper religious concern; but this, Jāmī asserts, is not true of the genuine *qalandar* (N 15).

Sulamī influenced successive generations mainly as teacher and biographer. Through his disciple, Naṣrābādī, the mystical chain reaches Abū Saʿīd ibn Abīʾl-Khair, to whom the first Persian mystical quatrains are, erroneously, ascribed and who was the first to draw up a simple monastic rule for his Sufi community (see Chapter 5). The spiritual chain from Sulamī also leads to al-Qushayrī (d. 1074) through his father-in-law Abū ʿAlī ad-Daqqāq. Qushayrī took up once more the task of writing a treatise on Sufism.[60] His *Risāla* describes Sufi teachings and practices from the viewpoint of a full-fledged Ashʿarite theologian; this school—to which Ibn Khafīf had belonged as well—flourished in Iran and elsewhere under the Seljukids. Qushayrī's *Risāla*—written in 1046—is probably the most widely read summary of early Sufism; it was analyzed in the West prior to most other books on Sufism. It is comparable, in some ways, to Sarrāj's *Kitāb al-lumaʿ*, beginning with short biographies of the Sufis and containing detailed chapters on Sufi terminology and expressions. Some of the author's shorter treatises give a good insight into his own spiritual experiences, especially into his prayer life.[61]

One of Qushayrī's colleagues, who had attended his meetings and had visited almost every leading Sufi of his time, was Hujwīrī from Ghazna. He later came to Lahore, the capital of the Ghaznawids in India, and he died there in 1071. His shrine, called that of Data Ganj Bakhsh, is still a popular place of pilgrimage in Lahore.[62] Hujwīrī's important innovation is that he wrote his *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, "Unveiling of the Hidden," in Persian and thus ushered in a new period in mystical literature. A monument of early Persian and noteworthy for its expressiveness, the *Kashf*, "which belongs to the valid and famous books" (N 316), contains much interesting information rarely found in other sources. Although the author's

60. Abūʾl-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Ar-risāla fī ʿilm at-taṣawwuf* (Cairo, 1330 h./1911–12). Richard Hartmann, *Al-Kuschairis Darstellung des Sufitums* (Berlin, 1914), is a very useful analysis of the *Risāla*.

61. Abūʾl-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Ar-rasāʾil al-qushayriyya*, ed. and trans. F. M. Hasan (Karachi, 1964). The most important treatise was edited and analyzed by Fritz Meier, "Qušayris Tartīb as-sulūk," *Oriens* 16 (1963).

62. ʿAlī ibn ʿUthmān al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, ed. V. A. Žukovskij (Leningrad, 1926; reprint ed., Tehran, 1336 sh./1957); al-Hujwīrī, *The "Kashf al-Maḥjūb," The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism by al-Hujwīrī*, trans. Reynold A. Nicholson, Gibb Memorial Series, no. 17 (1911; reprint ed., London, 1959).

inclination toward systematization sometimes goes too far, it is singularly valuable in its approach and its balanced discussion.

The eastern provinces of Iran have always been proud to be a fertile soil for mystically inclined souls. A contemporary of Qushayrī and Hujwīrī was ʿAbdullāh-i Anṣārī (1006–89), whose work, like that of Hujwīrī, was written in part in his Persian mother tongue.[63] It proves the breadth of spirit of Sufism that two masters so totally different in their outlook as Qushayrī and Anṣārī could live at close proximity during the same politically restless period. While Qushayrī followed the Ashʿarite creed of the ruling Seljukids, Anṣārī belonged to the stern Hanbalite school of law. The traditional idea that Hanbalite rigorism and mystical emotion are mutually exclusive can no longer be maintained—not only was Anṣārī an energetic representative of this school, but ʿAbduʾl-Qādir Gīlānī, the founder of the most widespread mystical fraternity, also belonged to this *madhhab*. Perhaps it was precisely the strict adherence to the outward letter of the God-given law and the deep respect for the divine word that enabled Anṣārī and his fellow Hanbalites to reach a deeper understanding of the secrets of the revelation.

Anṣārī's father had been a mystic, too; when the boy was still small, his father had left his family to join friends in Balkh. The young scholar pursued his studies in Herat and Nishapur. He tried several times to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca but was detained because of confused political circumstances in the eastern provinces occasioned by the untimely death in 1030 of Maḥmūd of Ghazna, the conqueror of northwestern India and supporter of the caliph and of Muslim orthodoxy.

Although young Anṣārī did not reach Mecca, his life was changed by his meeting with the distinguished mystic Kharaqānī in 1034, shortly before the master died at the age of eighty. Kharaqānī's sayings, preserved in the *Tadhkirat al-auliyā* and elsewhere, show tremendous force, but are devoid alike of any learnedness or theological systematization. This illiterate peasant, who could not pronounce Arabic correctly (N 336, 353), was a typical *uwaysī*, initiated not by a living master but by the powerful spirit of Bāyezīd Bisṭāmi. Legends dwell on the spiritual relation between these two men: it is said that the scent of Kharaqānī reached Bāyezīd long before his

63. Serge de Laugier de Beaureceuil, *Khwadja Abdullah Ansari, mystique hanbalite* (Beirut, 1965), is a fine study of Anṣārī and his work. Père Beaurecceuil has also edited some of Anṣārī's works with their commentaries.

spiritual disciple was born (M 4:1802–50) and that Kharaqānī used to pray every evening in Kharaqān, then mysteriously be transported to Bistam—a typical miracle of "rolling up space"—pray there, and then perform the morning prayer back in his own village (T 2:201).

Kharaqānī's prayers burn with intense love and yearning, as when he swore that he would not give his soul to the angel of death, for he had received it from God, and only to Him would he return it (T 2:212). Longing for God made him melt away, but the Lord told him, in one of his rare dreams after long periods of sleeplessness, that the longing he had endured for sixty years was nothing, "for We have loved thee already in the pre-eternity of eternities" (T 2:253). And he was sure that he would be resurrected among the martyrs, "for I have been killed by the sword of longing for Thee" (T 2:229), as he asserts.

This enthusiastic and demanding master caused a spiritual change in ʿAbdullāh-i Anṣārī, with the result that Anṣārī began to write his commentary on the Koran, which was, unhappily, never finished. The advent of the Seljuks in eastern Iran in 1041 brought affliction on Anṣārī; he was persecuted, spent years in destitution, and endured much suffering at the hands of the authorities in their defense of Ashʿarite theology. The grand vizier Niẓāmulmulk even exiled him from Herat in 1066, but he was soon called back. Shortly afterward the caliph himself honored the famous orator and mighty preacher whose fame had spread around Herat. Eventually Anṣārī lost his sight and spent the last eight years of his life in darkness and under the threat of another expulsion. He died in Herat on 8 March 1089.

Anṣārī's productivity is amazing in light of the difficulties he had to face during his career. Among the great number of books written in both Arabic and Persian, the *Manāzil as-sāʾirīn*, "The Stations on the Way," has had several commentators.[64] The mystic of Herat also translated Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt* into the Persian vernacular of his region. But in spite of his many works in theoretical Sufism, his smallest book has won him the greatest admiration: the *Munājāt*, "Orisons," a prayer book in rhyming Persian prose, interspersed with some verses, in which he pours out his love, his longing, and his

64. Hellmut Ritter, "Philologika VIII: Anṣārī Herewi.—Senāʾī Ġaznewī," *Der Islam* 22 (1934); Vladimir Ivanow, "Ṭabaqāt of Anṣārī in the Old Language of Herat," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, January–July 1923.

advice.[65] Its simple and melodious Persian prose makes this small book a true vade mecum for anyone who needs a devotional aid for meditation in lonely hours.

Nothing shows better the change in emphasis and style, in Sufi outlook and expression, than a comparison of Anṣārī's *Munājāt* with another small book written in the same mixture of poetry and prose in the same city of Herat 400 years later, by the author who reworked Anṣārī's hagiographical book and relied heavily upon him, namely the *Lawāʾiḥ*, by Maulānā Jāmī. This book has become one of the most widely used manuals of later Sufi teachings—but how far is its intellectual and rational approach to the divine truth, its high-flown technical expression about absolute existence and relative being, from the intense earnestness and simplicity of Anṣārī's orisons!

At the same time that Anṣārī was being persecuted by the Seljuk government, another mystic was cooperating with that regime and lending it support through his writings. That was Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī, Ashʿarite theologian and, later, mystic, who has often been called the greatest Muslim after Muhammad. An anecdote told by Jāmī illustrates how highly esteemed he was in most moderate Sufi circles: "The North African Sufi leader Abūʾl-Ḥasan ash-Shādhilī (d. 1258) saw in a dream vision that the Prophet of Islam was extolling himself with Ghazzālī before Moses and Jesus . . . and he had ordered the punishment of some who had denied him, and the marks of the whip remained visible on their bodies until they died" (N 373).

Ghazzālī was born in Tus, near present-day Meshed, in 1058, three years after the Seljuks had taken over the rule in Baghdad. His life was closely connected with the fate of this dynasty, whose power grew in the ensuing years to extend over all of Iran and parts of eastern Anatolia. Abū Ḥāmid, along with his younger brother Aḥmad, followed the usual course of theological studies; the teacher to whom he owed most and with whom he worked closely was al-Juwainī, surnamed the *imām al-ḥaramayn* (d. 1083). Niẓāmulmulk, the vizier, appointed Ghazzālī professor at the Niẓāmiyya *madrasa* in Baghdad. With the zeal of an ardent adherent of Ashʿarite theology, the vizier had founded colleges (*madrasa*) all over the Seljuk

65. ʿAbdullāh-i Anṣārī, *Munājāt ū naṣāʾiḥ* (Berlin, 1924); this little book has been reprinted many times. Anṣārī, *The Invocations of Shaikh Abdullah Ansari*, trans. Sir Jogendra Singh, 3d ed. (London, 1959); Singh's translation lacks the rhyming patterns, which are essential, and the poetic flavor.

territories. They served as training institutions for theologians and proved to be models for later colleges in the Muslim world.

The school at Baghdad, the seat of the caliphate, was without doubt the most important among the institutions founded by Niẓāmulmulk. It therefore caused great amazement when the successful professor Ghazzālī, after a breakdown in 1095, left his teaching position to enter the spiritual life. After long journeys that led him to Syria, Jerusalem, and perhaps Egypt, Abū Ḥāmid returned to his home and family and once more taught in his hometown of Tus. There he died in December 1111.[66]

Ghazzālī's literary activity was as great as that of any of his colleagues; his books cover different branches of learning, but mainly theology and its confrontation with philosophy. We are fortunate enough to possess his spiritual autobiography, written after his "conversion." It is called *Al-munqidh min aḍ-ḍalāl*, "The Deliverer from Error," and has often been translated;[67] it has even been compared to Augustine's *Confessions*, though it conveys nothing of the author's earlier external life. Rather it shows his attempts at coping with the various elements of Islamic intellectual life that confronted him in the course of his studies and his teaching. He had studied the works of the philosophers who, inspired by Greek thought, had developed the logical tools required for scholarly discussion, but who had nevertheless remained, in the opinion of the faithful, outside the pale of orthodox Islam. Ghazzālī's works refuting the philosophical doctrines were in turn refuted by Averroes (d. 1198), the

66. The literature about Ghazzālī is almost inexhaustible; some major works and translations are: Duncan Black Macdonald, "The Life of al-Ghazzālī," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 20 (1899); Arend Jan Wensinck, *La pensée de Ghazzālī* (Paris, 1940); W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of Al-Ghazali* (Edinburg, 1963). The first independent study on Ghazzālī appeared in Berlin in 1858: Reinhard Gosche, *Über Ghazzalis Leben und Werke*; later, the Spanish scholar Asín Palacios devoted a number of books and articles to him. Philosophical investigations of problems of Ghazzālī's thought and faith were introduced by Julius Obermann, *Der religiöse und philosophische Subjektivismus Gazzālīs* (Leipzig, 1921), a book the main thesis of which can no longer be accepted. Père Farid Jabre has devoted several important books to Ghazzālī's theology. A good introduction into particular problems of Ghazzālī's theological approach is Fadlou Shehadi, *Ghazālī's Unique Unknowable God* (Leiden, 1964); *The Ethical Philosophy of al-Ghazzālī* has been studied by Muhammad Umaruddin (Aligarh, 1951). The Dutch scholar Arend Theodor van Leeuwen sees Ghazzālī, correctly, as apologist: *Ghazālī as apologeet van den Islam* (Leiden, 1947).

67. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī, *Al-munqidh min aḍ-ḍalāl*, ed. A. Maḥmūd (Cairo, 1952); translated by W. Montgomery Watt as *The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghazali* (London, 1953); other translations have been done by Claud H. Field (London, 1910); J. H. Kramers (Amsterdam, 1951); and Barbier de Meynard, in *Journal asiatique*, 1877.

greatest Arabic commentator on Aristotle; some of them served medieval Christian theologians in their fight against the Averroist school.

The main source of danger for the Seljuks was, in Niẓāmulmulk's and in Ghazzālī's view, the Ismaili movement, a branch of Shia thought that had gained a firm footing in various parts of the Middle East. Egypt was still ruled by the Fatimid caliphs. During Ghazzālī's lifetime, in 1094, the Persian Ismaili leader Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ took the side of the younger son of the Fatimid caliph during the struggle for succession, with the result that an Ismaili spiritual estate was built up around this Nizar on the mountain castle Alamūt near Kazvin. From there the Ismailis threatened orthodox Muslims and, later, the Crusaders; Niẓāmulmulk fell victim to one of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's disciples, known as the Assassins. Ghazzālī wrote several treatises against these *bāṭiniyya*, "the people of esoteric meaning," and in his autobiography tried once more to explain the dangers inherent in the Ismaili system, especially in the doctrine of the necessity of the guidance of an infallible imām, which seemed to him particularly dangerous to the Sunnite community.

Another group with which the medieval scholar concerned himself was his own colleagues, the theologians and lawyer divines—that class of learned men who practically ruled the life of the Muslims by their interpretation of the divine law. Their concern with the outward details of the law had always been a point of criticism for the pious, and particularly for the Sufis. Their worldliness and their many connections with the government aroused those who, acutely conscious of the danger of fossilization of the revealed word under the crust of legal formalism, strove after the interiorization of religion. Ghazzālī wrote: "Those who are so learned about rare forms of divorce can tell you nothing about the simpler things of the spiritual life, such as the meaning of sincerity towards God or trust in Him."[68] Acquainted with all aspects of Muslim intellectual life, and having proved his philosophical and logical adroitness in many defenses of orthodox Islam, Ghazzālī eventually turned to mysticism. Perhaps this was a response to his long-standing skepticism; perhaps a sudden conversion led him to the mystical quest. Whatever the reason, it was typical of Ghazzālī that he approached the mystical Path first from the intellectual side. As he says: "Knowledge was easier for me than activity. I began by reading their books

68. Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, p. 113.

. . . and obtained a thorough intellectual understanding of their principles. Then I realized that what is most distinctive of them can be attained only by personal experience, ecstasy, and a change of character."[69] We may understand this change to "gnosis because of agnosticism" and agree with W. H. Temple Gairdner's fine remark: "What saved *God* for him from his obliterating agnosticism was the experience of the mystic leap, his own personal *miʿrāj*."[70] And there it does not matter very much that we do not know who his mystical guide was nor to whom his chain of initiation goes back. We only know that out of his experience came his greatest work, the *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm ad-dīn*, "Revival of the Religious Sciences," a comprehensive work of forty chapters—forty being the number of patience and trial, the number of days of seclusion that the adept undergoes at the beginning of the Path. The number forty is often identical with "multitude" and is thought to comprise an almost infinite number of items; therefore collections of forty *ḥadīth* (*arbaʿīn*) or of forty pious sentences are very common in the Muslim world. It seems to me typical of Ghazzālī's way of thought that the center of the book, the twentieth chapter, is devoted to the central figure in Islam, the Prophet Muhammad.[71]

The first quarter of the *Iḥyāʾ* is entitled *ʿIbādāt*, "Matters of Worship and Service"; it begins with a chapter on knowledge but deals, in general, with ritual questions like purity, prayers, and devotional acts. Each prescription is preceded by Koranic verses and Prophetic traditions and is explained by the practice of the early faithful and Sufis. The second part of the book deals with the "Customs," and corresponds, to an extent, to the teachings as laid down in the *adab*-books: how to eat and drink, how to lead a married life, and the like

69. Ibid., p. 135.

70. W. H. Temple Gairdner, *The Niche for Lights* (London, 1915), p. 51.

71. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm ad-dīn*, 4 vols. (Bulaq, Egypt, 1289 h./1872); commentary by the Indian-born scholar Sayyid Murtaḍā az-Zabīdī, *Itḥāf as-sādat al-muttaqīn*, 10 vols. (Cairo, 1311 h./1893–94). The *Iḥyāʾ* has been analyzed in G. H. Bousquet's useful book *"Ihʾyā ʿouloum ad-dīn" ou vivification des sciences de la foi* (Paris, 1955), which contains summaries of all forty chapters. Part translations are: Hans Bauer, *Islamische Ethik*, 4 vols. (Halle, 1916); Hans Wehr, *Al-Ghazālī's Buch vom Gottvertrauen* (Halle, 1940); Herman Henry Dingemans, *Al-Ghazālī's boek der liefde* (Leiden, 1938), not fully satisfactory; Leon Bercher and G. H. Bousquet, *Le livre des bon usages en matière de mariage* (Paris, 1953); Susanna Wilzer, "Untersuchungen zu Ġazzālī's *'kitāb at-tauba,'*" *Der Islam* 32–33 (1955–57); William McKane, *Al-Ghazālī's Book of Fear and Hope* (Leiden, 1962); Nabih A. Faris, *The Book of Knowledge* (Lahore, 1962); Leon Zolondek, *Book XX of al-Gazālī's "Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm ad-Dīn"* (Leiden, 1963); Heinz Kindermann, *Über die guten Sitten beim Essen und Trinken* (Leiden, 1964); Nabih A. Faris, *The Mysteries of Almsgiving* (Beirut, 1966).

—problems that the modern Western reader does not readily relate to religion but that are, in the Islamic (as in the Jewish) view, as much subject to religious rules as is the act of worship. For man should feel every moment that he is in the presence of God, even when occupied by the most worldly activities, and he should be prepared to meet his Lord at any moment of his life.

After the central chapter on the Prophet and his exalted qualities, the third section of the book deals with "Things Leading to Destruction" and the last one with "Things Leading to Salvation." This final part is closest to what we would expect from a mystical writer: it discusses the different stations and states of the wayfarer, like poverty and renunciation, patience and gratitude, love and longing. Here we find some of the finest passages of the whole book, all of which is written in a lucid style with simple, logical arguments. In the chapter on "Love and Longing," Ghazzālī has expressed some of his personal experiences of the Path to God, which never ends but leads to ever new depths.

The whole *Iḥyāʾ* may be called a preparation for death: its last chapter is devoted to death in its terrible and its lovable aspects: terrible, because it brings man into the presence of the stern judge at Doomsday, which may be the beginning of everlasting punishment; lovable, since it brings the lover into the presence of his eternal beloved and thus fulfills the longing of the soul, which has finally found eternal peace. All that Ghazzālī teaches in the preceding thirty-nine chapters is only to help man to live a life in accordance with the sacred law, not by clinging exclusively to its letter but by an understanding of its deeper meaning, by a sanctification of the whole life, so that he is ready for the meeting with his Lord at any moment.

This teaching—a marriage between mysticism and law—has made Ghazzālī the most influential theologian of medieval Islam.[72] To fully appreciate his achievement one must remember that during

72. Of Ghazzālī's other works the following translations have been published: Margaret Smith, "Al-Ghazzālī, ar-risāla al-ladunnīya," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1938; Hellmut Ritter, *Das Elixir der Glückseligkeit, aus den persischen und arabischen Quellen in Auswahl übertragen* (Jena, 1923); Mohammed Brugsch, *Die kostbare Perle im Wissen des Jenseits* (Hannover, 1924), an eschatological treatise; Ernst Bannerth, *Der Pfad der Gottesdiener* (Salzburg, 1964), the spurious *Minhāj al-ʿābidīn*; R. R. C. Bagley, *Ghazālī's Book of Counsel for Kings* (*naṣīḥat al-mulūk*) (Oxford, 1964), a politico-ethical treatise; Franz-Elmar Wilms, *Al-Ghazālīs Schrift wider die Gottheit Jesu* (Leiden, 1966), a translation of *Ar-radd al-jamīl*, a polemic work against Christian theology. Others who have edited or translated some of Ghazzālī's

his lifetime the first signs of Sufi theosophy became visible; certain mystics were more interested in gnostic knowledge than in the practical way of life as taught by the early Sufis. Since Ghazzālī was apprehensive of the dangers of esoteric and gnostic currents inside Islam (as he had shown in his struggle against Ismaili theories) and at the same time scorned the rigidity and pedantry of the scholars and jurists, he undertook in his book to "live through the verities of faith and test those verities through the Sufi experimental method."[73]

It is the life of the heart that matters, and Ghazzālī's method of combining the life of the heart in strict accord with the law and with a theologically sound attitude made even orthodox theologians take the Sufi movement seriously. The moderate Sufi outlook began to color the life of most average Muslims. On the other hand, Ghazzālī's struggle against Hellenistic influences and a more or less Neoplatonic philosophy was probably instrumental in repudiating these currents for a while. During that time, however, they crystallized anew and came back as Sufi theosophy, a new development destined to take shape in the century after Ghazzālī's death.

One of the most puzzling questions among the many unsolved problems for the scholar is where to place Ghazzālī's *Mishkāt al-anwār*, "The Niche for Lights," in the whole body of his writings. It may be regarded as an expression of that set of opinions that the perfected mystic "believes in secret between himself and Allah, and never mentions except to an inner circle of his students."[74] In this book he reaches heights of mystical speculation that are almost "gnostic" when he interprets the Light verse of the Koran (Sūra 24:35) and the tradition about the seventy thousand veils of light and darkness that separate man from God: in his fourfold classification he does not hesitate to put most of the pious orthodox behind the "veils mixed of darkness and light," whereas even certain philosophers are "veiled by pure light." The *Mishkāt al-anwār* shows a highly developed light metaphysics—God is the Light—and many later mystics have relied upon this book rather than upon his *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm ad-dīn*.

works are Ignaz Goldziher, Otto Pretzl, Samuel van den Berghe, Heinrich Frick, and Duncan Black Macdonald. There is a good bibliography in Peter Antes, *Das Prophetenwunder in der frühen Ašʿarīya bis al-Ġazālī* (Freiburg, 1970).

73. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (London, 1966), p. 144.

74. Gairdner, *Niche for Lights*, p. 19; see Arend Jan Wensinck, "Ghazālī's *Mishkāt al-anwār*," *Semietische Studien*, 1941.

No thinker of medieval Islam has attracted the interest of Western scholars more than Ghazzālī. Numerous translations of his works are available in Western languages. Discussions about Ghazzālī's true character have been going on for decades. Was he a subjectivist, or a faithful member of the Muslim community who accepted the given religious fact? How can the divergent viewpoints on the several issues of philosophy and theology be explained? To what extent was he sincere in his conversion? Many aspects of his thought have been studied in recent years, but much remains to be done.

Will the admiration reflected in Shādhilī's dream continue? Many a Western scholar, though in milder words, would subscribe to it. Or will Père Anawati's criticism prove right: "Though so brilliant, his contribution did not succeed in preventing the anchylosis that two or three centuries later was to congeal Muslim religious thought"?[75] Or was his greatness itself the reason for the congealing of moderate Islam?

75. G.-C. Anawati and Louis Gardet, *Mystique musulmane* (Paris, 1961), p. 51.