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The Embodiment of Gratitude (*Shukr*) in Sufi Ethics

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Introduction

It has been argued that in the tradition of Western ethics there have been two general approaches to gratitude. There is first of all a view found mostly among modern moral philosophers which treats the given virtue as a set of feelings and attitudes. The grateful person is obliged first and foremost to sincerely acknowledge the benefaction before anything else, to convey a sense of their debt. The second view, more common in the medieval and ancient world, though not absent among modern thinkers, tends to see gratitude as comprising a number responsibilities towards the benefactor which she must carry out, with the accent placed not so much on emotions as much as on actual reciprocation, at least as far as interpersonal relations are concerned. For proponents of this second view, gratitude is sometimes treated as a species or ethical subset of justice.[1] In the Islamic tradition, particularly as understood by its Sufi authorities, gratitude to God involves both approaches and more. It includes sentiments and attitudes as well as specific forms of activity. While certain thinkers might place an emphasis on one over the other, there is nevertheless a general agreement that in order for gratitude to be total and complete, it must be embodied at the three levels of the heart, tongue, and body, in much the same way that classical authors often speak of faith or *īmān*.

1 A. D. M. Walker, "Gratefulness and Gratitude," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series 81 (1980-1981), pp. 39-55, see in particular p. 39. For a general treatment of gratitude in moral philosophy, see Terrance McConnell, *Gratitude*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1993. On some recent developments in psychology on the study of gratitude as a human emotion, see Robert Emmons and Michael McCullough (eds.), *The Psychology of Gratitude*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004. While the focus in the volume is on the psychology of gratitude, some of the contributors also explore the subject from anthropological, biological and even theological vantage points. Unfortunately, Harpham's essay on "Gratitude in the History of Ideas" (19-36) entirely skips the Islamic tradition. See also the more popular work by Robert Emmons, a leading figure in the field of gratitude studies, *Thanks! How the New Science of Gratitude can make you Happier*, New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007.

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The purpose of this article is to examine these levels by drawing on the works of a range of thinkers known for their contributions to the development of the science of *taṣawwuf*, from such luminaries as Abū Saʿīd al-Kharrāz (d. 899) and al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. between 905 and 910) in the formative period to Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 1240) and Ibn ʿAbbād (d. 1309) later on.[2] To date, the nature and role of gratitude in Islam has been the subject of a number of short studies which have been rather limited in their scope.[3] By focusing on the theme of the embodiment of gratitude in the classical Sufi tradition, it is hoped that the present article will advance our knowledge of a virtue within Islamic piety which lies at the heart of Muslim scripture—a fact attested to by Toshihiko Izutsu's conclusion, on the basis of his extensive study of the Qur'ān, that "Islam as a religion is . . . an exhortation

2 The writers whose works will be examined below have been chosen because their writings address in some form or another the aforementioned levels of gratitude. The selection, far from arbitrary, is guided by an attempt to present a well-rounded and relatively comprehensive treatment of the different forms of *shukr*. Naturally, as we shall see, some writers go into greater detail than others in exploring one particular type of gratitude.

3 Mahmoud Ayoub's "Thanksgiving and Praise in the Qur'ān and Muslim Piety," *Islamochristiana* 15 (1989), pp. 1-10, is a rather general piece meant for a lay audience with a focuses on prayer. Simon van den Bergh's "Ghazālī on 'Gratitude Towards God' and its Greek Sources," *Studia Islamica* no. 7 (1957), pp. 77-98, while useful, is marred by his attempt to retrace Ghazālī's views almost entirely to Greek sources, particularly Stoicism, overlooking the Qur'ānic and ḥadīth-based foundations of the medieval thinker's analysis. More recently, Ghazālī's *Book of Patience and Gratitude* of the *Iḥyā'* has been translated by the pastor and missionary, H.T. Littlejohn, Cambridge, Islamic Texts Society, 2011. While I have worked directly with the Arabic for this article, I have made liberal use of his superb translation, which I have compared closely with the original. Alma Giese's concise entry on *shukr* ("As a religious and mystical concept") in *EI*[2] relies heavily on Ghazālī. See also Kevin Rienhart's entry which follows, as well as his treatment in *Before Revelation: The Boundaries of Muslim Moral Thought*, Albany, SUNY, 1995, pp. 107-123. We also have Roberto Totolli's "The Thanksgiving Prostration (*'sujūd al-shukr'*) in Muslim Traditions," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 61, no. 2 (1998), pp. 309-313. The well-researched article is terse, limited in its focus, and part of Totolli's broader research on prostration in Islam, and therefore of not much use to an inquiry into the meaning and significance of *shukr* in Islam. There is also Geneviève Gobillot's piece which compares patience and gratitude in Tirmidhī, "Patience (*Ṣabr*) et retribution des merits. Gratitude (*Shukr*) et aptitude au Bonheur selon al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (M. 318/930)," *Studia Islamica* 79 (1994), pp. 51-78. Perhaps the best single contribution on the subject is Ida Zilio-Grandi's "The Gratitude of Man and the Gratitude of God: Notes on *Šukr* in Traditional Islamic Thought," *Islamochristiana* 38 (2012), pp. 45-62. The article reflects the author's excellent grasp of the source material but should have been better edited by the journal as her primary language is not English. See also my recent article, "On Cultivating Gratitude in Sufi Ethics," *Journal of Sufi Studies* 4, no. 1-2 (2016), pp. 1-26.

to gratitude towards God."[4] The analysis which follows is divided into four sections. It begins with a study of gratitude of the heart, tongue and body, and concludes with an overview of the meaning and significance of the obligation of thankfulness towards others.

I Gratitude of the Heart

For Sufi authors, the foundation of gratitude, as we would naturally expect, lies in *shukr al-qalb* or "gratitude of the heart." This entails, first of all, recognizing the blessing as a blessing—not in itself an easy task considering the human tendency to overlook blessings. The usual explanation that is given is that it is the result of an inbuilt propensity towards *ghafla* or heedlessness, not just of God, but also His favors.[5] Secondly, it involves retracing the gift to its ontological origin. After all, we read in the Qur'ān, "you have no blessing (*niʿma*) except that it is from God" (Cor 16, 53).[6] It was this awareness that led Kharrāz to declare in no uncertain terms that "gratitude of the heart is that you know that blessings are from God alone and not another."[7] Likewise, Makkī (d. 996) would define this level as one that involves "witnessing the Benefactor in the blessing and the appearance of the Gift-Giver in the gift, so that you see that the blessing and the gift are from Him."[8] Similarly, Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 1350), in his commentary on Ansārī's (d. 1089) *Stations of the Travelers* (*Manāzil al-sā'irīn*), stresses the same idea when he writes, "when one recognizes a blessing, he attains through knowledge of it knowledge of the Benefactor."[9]

Our authors never tire of emphasizing that even though others might appear to be the sources of one's blessings, they are simply means (*asbāb*) through which God confers them upon us. Gratitude of the heart is to see through the means to the source, even though, as we shall soon see, the full embodiment of this virtue entails also extending one's thanks to the "intermediaries." But to

4 Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and the Man in the Koran*, 2nd ed. 1964; repr. Kuala Lampur, Kazi Publications, 2003, p. 15.

5 Ibn ʿAbbād, *Sharḥ al-ḥikam al-ʿaṭā'iyya*, ed. Muḥammad Riḍā, Damascus, Dār al-Farfūr, 2003, p. 403. See my extensive discussion in "On Cultivating Gratitude."

6 Ibn ʿAbbād cites this Quranic verse as the textual basis for gratitude of the heart. *Sharḥ*, 188.

7 Abū Saʿīd al-Kharrāz, *The Book of Truthfulness* (*Kitāb al-ṣidq*) [*with Arabic text*], ed. and trans. by A.J. Arberry, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1937, p. 46 (all subsequent references are to the Arabic text).

8 Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, ed. Saʿīd Nasīb Makārim, Beirut, Dār al-Ṣādir, 1995, 1:413.

9 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Madārij al-sālikīn*, Beirut, Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, n.d., 2:257 (chapter on *shukr*).

the extent that this stage involves acknowledging the true nature of the gift, it requires that one not be incognizant of its ultimate origin. In explaining this very point, Ghazālī would argue, in chorus with other authorities, that to consider that any other than God may be responsible for the bestowal is to be guilty of association (*shirk*). If a man were to receive a gift from a king, he explains, but ascribed some of the favor to the ruler's vizier, steward, or any of his servants, under the mistaken presumption that one of them was responsible for the benefaction, his feelings of indebtedness would be divided between the king and his subordinates. By such a division of affection, he would betray the right of the king (*ḥaqq al-malik*), who, by his own decision to bestow the gift, and through his own power of sovereignty, was the sole source of the gift, and in this respect, entirely deserving of the man's gratitude.[10] Moreover, such a man would no longer be a *muwaḥḥid* or "affirmer of divine unity" in so far as recognizing the sole sovereignty of the king was concerned. The favors which come our way in this world are, in Ghazālī's eyes, not much different.[11] This does not mean, as already noted, that one need not

10 Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' ʿulūm al-dīn*, 5 vols., Aleppo, Dār al-Waʿī, 1998, 4:129-130 (*kitāb al-ṣabr wa-l shukr*).

11 In his commentary on Cor 17, 3, where Noah is described by the intensive active participle, *shakūr*, Rāzī ties in true and proper gratitude, much like Ghazālī, to *tawḥīd*. He writes, "the servant is a *shakūr* if he is a *muwaḥḥid* who does not count any blessing to be other than from the bounty of God. You are the progeny of his [Noah's] people, so emulate him, on him be peace, as your fathers emulated him." *Al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* (= *Mafātiḥ al-ghayb*), Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1990, 20:124. For most other authorities, however, the *shakūr* is typically one who is grateful for blessings and trials, hardship and ease, unlike the *shākir* who is grateful simply for blessings. Hence the saying of Ibn ʿAbbās, that the *shakūr* is "he who is grateful in all of his states." Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, Riyadh, Maktabat al-ʿAbīkān, 1998, 5:112 (commentary on Cor 34, 13). Likewise, Makkī writes that the *shakūr* is "the one who is grateful for unpleasant things, tribulations, hardships and severe distresses." *Qūt*, 1:416. See also Qushayrī, *Risāla*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd b. Sharīf, Damascus, Dār al-Farfūr, 2002, p. 334. Interestingly, Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī adds that the Prophet Noah's gratitude involved sharing with others what he had himself received from God, to the point that he would offer his food to the needy before eating himself. The idea of sharing one's own gifts with the needy as part of *shukr* is also found in Ibn al-ʿArabī, who describes it as "gratitude upon gratitude." *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, Beirut, Dār Ṣadir, n.d. [reprint of Cairo 1911 edition], 2:202. For more on the relation between Rāzī and Ibn al-ʿArabī, specifically the latter's encouragement to the former to give himself more seriously the demands of the spiritual path, see Mohammed Rustom, "Ibn al-ʿArabī's Letter to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," *Oxford Journal of Islamic Studies* (2014), pp. 1-25. On Rāzī's relation to Sufism, see Ayman Shihadeh, "The Mystic and the Skeptic in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," in ibid. (ed.), *Sufism and Theology*, Edinburgh, Edinburg

be grateful to others, since the Qur'ān, as our Sufi authors frequently remind us, itself commands such thankfulness. Gratitude towards others, however, must be tempered by an awareness that there is no actor in existence besides the divine Actor—that He interacts with us as something of a Grand Puppeteer from behind the theatre of creation.

The importance that our authors place on recognizing God as the ultimate source of gifts is underscored by the fact that, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, one only gives gratitude its "right" or *ḥaqq* when she acknowledges the divine origin of the gift. This kind of gratitude, the pivot of all others, he calls *al-shukr al-ʿilmī*,[12] what we might translate as "gratitude of knowledge" or "knowing gratitude,"[13] since it deals first and foremost with cognition and awareness. The epistemic dimension of the virtue is itself rooted in the etymology of the word *shukr*, which has as one of its principle meanings to "to unveil (*kashf*) and make manifest (*iẓhār*),"[14] and entails revealing and disclosing an act of benefaction. It involves perception, awareness, and knowledge, the kind which by definition cannot be veiled or concealed from the *shākir*, the "unveiler." Ibn al-ʿArabī considers this aspect of gratitude to be its most important element. "As for *al-shukr al-ʿilmī*," he writes, "it is true gratitude (*wa huwa ḥaqq al-shukr*). It is to see that the blessing is from God. If you see that it is from God, then you have shown gratitude to Him with true gratitude (*ḥaqq al-shukr*)."[15] This "true gratitude" is the kind which God also commanded Moses, according to a famous *ḥadīth*, to observe:

> Ibn Mājah reports in his *Sunan*, from the Messenger of God, blessings and peace be upon him, that God revealed to Moses, 'O Moses, be grateful to Me with true gratitude.' Moses said, 'O Lord, who is capable of that?' He replied, 'If you see that the blessing is from Me, that you have shown gratitude to Me with true gratitude.'[16]

University Press, 2007, pp. 101-122. For a brief discussion on the difference between the *shākir* and the *shakūr* in Ibn al-ʿArabī, see my "The Interplay of Divine-Human Gratitude in the Non-dualism of Ibn al-ʿArabī," (forthcoming).

12 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:202.

13 Cf. Michel Chodkiewicz, "*Miʿrāj al-kalima*: From the *Risāla* Qushayrīyya to the *Futūḥāt Makkiyya*," *JMIAS* (2009), p. 13.

14 Makkī, *Qūt* 1:414. Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī provides a virtually identical definition in the *ʿAwārif al-maʿārif*, eds. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd b. al-Sharīf, Cairo, Maktabat al-Īmān, 2005, p. 477.

15 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:202.

16 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:202. The ḥadīth or a variant is cited frequently in discussions on gratitude. See Sulamī, *Ḥaqāʾiq*, commentary on Cor 14, 7; Qushayrī, *Risāla*, p. 335;

Ibn al-ʿArabī goes on to say that, within the context of gratitude, one of God's favors to the *shākir* is that he is inspired to give what he has himself received to the destitute, but in a manner which entails giving "to them through the hand of the Real (*bi yad al-ḥaqq*), not his own hand."[17] The favor includes the conferral of the knowledge that in his charitable distribution it is God Himself who is the distributer, and that his own role is no more than that of an intermediary. Moreover, if the recipients of these gifts in turn recognize the divine hand behind the human hand, that in fact the "servant is a veil over the Real,"[18] they too enter into the ranks of those who give gratitude its right and thank God with true gratitude. This state of perpetually witnessing the divinity within one's own activities, says Ibn al-ʿArabī, "is easy on the gnostics who have stripped themselves of their own attributes (*mutajarridīn ʿan awṣāfihim*) by returning matters to God."[19] Their state of self-transcendence allows them to perceive the Real behind a play of veils.

II Gratitude of the Tongue

Gratitude of the heart must give way to gratitude of the tongue. This second stage consists of expressing one's thankfulness to God through prayer and praise. Due to the powerful effect of words,[20] verbal articulation helps deepen the experience of *shukr* and more thoroughly internalize the virtue.

Abū Khalaf al-Ṭabarī (d. 1077), *Salwat al-ʿārifīn wa uns al-mushtāqīn*, eds. Gerhard Böwering and Bilal Orfali, Leiden, Brill, 2013, 168 [#269]; Abū l-Ḥasan al-Sīrjānī (d. 1077), *Kitāb al-bayāḍ wa-l sawād*, eds. Bilal Orfali and Nada Saab, Leiden, Brill, 2012, p. 302 [#660]; Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, 4:132; Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-maʿārif*, eds. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd b. al-Sharīf, Cairo, Maktabat al-Īmān, 2005, pp. 476-477; Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madārij*, 2:255. A similar dialogue between David and God is also often quoted quite often, sometimes alongside the story of Moses, where the Israelite king is confirmed in his knowledge that the ability to show gratitude for a gift is itself the result of divine grace. See Qushayrī, *Risāla*, p. 335; Qāshānī, *Sharḥ*, p. 211; Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madārij*, 2:255. In Kharrāz's version, the conversation takes place with Moses. *Kitāb al-ṣidq*, 47. In Makkī and Ghazālī, God confirms both David and Moses in their understanding that human gratitude has its origin in Him. See *Qūt*, 1:413; *Iḥyāʾ*, 4:132.

17 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:203.

18 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 4:243.

19 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:203.

20 See Sara Sviri, "Words of Power and the Power of Words: Mystical Linguistics in the Works of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 27 (2002), pp. 204-244, in particular pp. 204-209.

The process also makes one more cognizant of the blessing, since it forces one in a sense to bring a divine favor to mind which might otherwise remain hidden from sight. Gratitude of the tongue therefore intensifies one's awareness of the blessing and the divine generosity behind it, leading to even more frequent expressions of gratitude, creating, in effect, a cycle which eventually spills over into bodily gratitude.

Shukr al-lisān may be expressed through intimate private prayer, in heartfelt personal conversation with God. It may also involve sharing one's feeling of gratitude with others. This is why Kharrāz states that "gratitude of the tongue is to praise and glorify God, make known his benefits, and to recollect His kindness (*iḥsān*)."[21] Makkī draws attention to the fact the Prophet would encourage others to continuously praise God in all circumstances as a way of cultivating thankfulness. "How are you this morning (*kayfa aṣbaḥta*)?" he once asked a companion, to which the man simply replied, "I am well." The Prophet repeated the question, only to hear him respond, yet again, in similar fashion. When asked a third time, he finally understood the import behind the query. "I am well," he replied, adding, and "I praise God most High, and thank Him." "This is what I sought of you," he was informed.[22] Similarly, Makkī notes that the pious predecessors or *salaf* would often ask each other how they were faring simply to present the opportunity to recollect divine bounties. This is also why Makkī states that if one knows of an individual prone to habitual complaint, then it lies within her responsibility not to ask him of his condition, so as not to participate in his ingratitude.[23]

Both Tirmidhī and Makkī tie in the etymological relation of sh-k-r and k-sh-r, the latter of which involves parting one's lips and displaying one's teeth,[24] to

21 Kharrāz, *Kitāb al-ṣidq*, 45.

22 Makkī, *Qūt*, 1:413. Cf. Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, 4:130.

23 Makkī, *Qūt*, 1:413-414. Curiously, Samʿānī (d. 1167) considers complaint to God of God to be an expression of gratitude. "Lamenting to the Friend about the Friend," he writes, "is tawḥīd itself. Outwardly it is complaint but inwardly it is to show gratitude: 'Since I have none but You, to whom should I speak?' People imagine that the lover is complaining, but in fact his words display sincerity in love." To complain of God to other than God, of another, or to another of God, however, he sees as blameworthy. William Chittick, *Divine Love: Islamic Literature and the Path to God*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2013, p. 173.

24 It has been suggested that the root of *shukr* derives from k-sh-r (*maqlūb ʿan al-kashr*) through a shifting of radicals, which refers to an act of "uncovering, or exposing to view." Hence the expression *kashara ʿan asnānihi*, "*He displayed his teeth*, or *grinned.*" Lane, s.v., "k-sh-r." For more on this relation, see Isfahānī, *Mufradāt alfāẓ al-qur'ān*, ed. Najīb al-Majidī, Beirut, Al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 2006, p. 283; al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī,

giving voice to gratitude.[25] This involves not only unveiling something to oneself, so that one is cognizant of it, but also disclosing to others the favors that one has received by openly praising God for them. The authorities sometimes use Cor 93, 11—"proclaim the bounties of your Lord"—as a basis for this form of thankfulness. While Ibn al-Qayyim notes that the verse has also been interpreted as a command to the Prophet to openly preach his revelations, it may also point to sharing one's gratitude with others by recalling before them one's favors through such as expressions as "God has blessed me with such-and-such."[26] Part of the intention behind this is to encourage others to express thanks for their own gifts. Naturally, one has to exercise some degree of caution and prudence in such matters. It would betray the purpose of such a strategy to speak of favors to those who may themselves be deprived of them, because it might make them more cognizant of what is missing in their own lives, or worse, arouse in them ingratitude for blessings already in their possession. One would also not wish induce such corrosive vices as envy and jealousy. *Shukr al-lisān* must, in this light, be regulated not only by a sensitivity to the plight of others and the effects of one's words, but also, as Tirmidhī suggests, an introspective examination into one's own motives for voicing one's gratitude openly, lest one not be moved by a concealed and hidden desire to gloat, boast and put oneself above others.[27]

Within the context of their inquiries into *shukr*, our authors sometimes will discuss the relation between gratitude and *ḥamd* or verbal praise.[28] The relation is highlighted in a tradition in which the Prophet is reported to have said, "Praise is the summit (*ra's*) of gratitude. He who does not praise God has not thanked him."[29] One authority notes that gratitude is a response (*jazā'*) to an act of benefaction, while praise is general, and not necessarily precipitated by a specific divine favor.[30] Ibn al-Qayyim explains the distinction as follows:

'Ilm al-awliyā', ed. Sāmī Naṣr, Cairo, 'Ain Shams University, 1981, p. 157; idem., *al- Furūq wa man' al-tarāduf*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Juyūshī, Cairo, Maktabat al-Īmān, 2005, p. 117; Makkī, *Qūt*, 1:414; Suhrawardī, *'Awārif*, p. 477.

25 Makkī, *Qūt*, 1:414; Tirmidhī, *Furūq*, p. 117.

26 Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madārij*, 2:258.

27 Tirmidhī, *Furūq*, p. 117.

28 Cf. Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 337. For the role of prayers in thanksgiving in the world's religions, see Philip and Carol Zaleski, *Prayer: A History*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 2005, pp. 6, 83, 233-240, 248.

29 Cited in Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madārij*, 2:252.

30 Ṭabarī (d. 1077), *Salwat*, p. 168 [#269].

> The difference between the two is that 'gratitude' is more general (*aʿamm*) with respect to its types (*anwāʿihi*) and causes (*asbābihi*), but more specific (*akhaṣṣ*) with respect to those things to which it is attached, while 'praise' is more general with respect to those things to which it is attached, but more specific with respect to its causes (*asbāb*).[31]

What he means is simply that there are more ways of expressing gratitude than there are of praise, because gratitude may appear within the heart, on the tongue, and in one's actions. Praise, on the other hand, is confined only to the first two. Moreover, gratitude is narrower and more restricted with respect to those things to which it might be attached, since it is a unique response to divine favor and benevolence, while praise may be inspired by virtually anything, including the contemplation of divine grandeur. This is why he also states that praise is attached to everything that might also induce gratitude, while the opposite is not so. Conversely, gratitude can be expressed in every manner in which praise might also be expressed, while the opposite is not necessarily the case, since one does embody praise through one's actions. So gratitude is broader than praise in some respects and narrower in others, and vice-versa.[32] Needless to say, both are essential elements of the spiritual life.

III Gratitude of the Body

Finally, our authorities speak of *shukr al-badan*, (also *shukr al-jawāriḥ*, "gratitude of the limbs"[33]), the consequence of an inner state which wells up within the heart, flows out into the tongue, and then extends into and permeates the limbs. The underlying idea behind it is that the favor be employed for the ultimate purpose for which it was given, namely, as a means of drawing closer to the divine Benefactor. In the most elemental sense, it implies that the gift be used appropriately, which means, in conformity to the dictates of revelation. The idea is perhaps most famously encapsulated in a story from the life of Junayd (d. 910) when he was a mere lad of seven. His uncle and teacher, the great Sarī al-Saqaṭī (d. 867), asked him in a gathering to explain the meaning of thankfulness. His response—a foreshadowing of the eloquent concision for which he would later become known—was "it is that you not disobey God

31 Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madārij*, 2:256.

32 Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madārij*, 2:256-257.

33 Cf. Makkī, *Qūt*, 1:415.

through a blessing."[34] Kharrāz briefly explains this point when he states that gratitude of the body is "that you not use any limb which God has made sound and whose form God has beautified to sin, and instead, that you obey God most High through it. This is also with respect to everything that He has conferred upon you and given you possession of from the world, that you use it as an aid in your obedience to Him . . . and that you not squander it in waste."[35] Likewise, Makkī writes that it is "not to sin against Him through His blessings, and to make use of His blessings in His obedience."[36] Along similar lines, Maybudī (d. 1126) observes that gratitude is "recognizing God's blessings on you and putting them to work in obedience to Him."[37] One of the more explicit Qur'ānic foundations for this form of *shukr* appears in 34, 13, "work, O family of David, in gratitude." A number of authorities also use the Prophet's words to ʿĀ'isha, "shall I not be a grateful servant?" in response to her query about his prolonged night vigils as an example of *shukr al-badan* from the *sunnah*.[38]

Ghazālī provides a helpful analogy to illustrate why gratitude of the body is not only an essential element of *shukr*, but of Islamic piety in general. Imagine a king who with nothing to gain invited a man in a faraway land to assume residence in his royal palace so that he might enjoy his friendship and the comforts of the court. And suppose if in addition he also generously dispatched a riding beast, clothing, and money to the man to alleviate the hardships of his journey. Now, were the man to use what he received to travel to the king, such an act would be one of thankfulness, because the manner in which the gifts were employed would conform to the desire of the ruler. On the other hand, were he to remain where he was, or worse,

34 Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 335; Ibn ʿAbbād, *Sharḥ*, p. 190. For a slight variant, see Khargūshī (d. 1015 or 1016 CE), *Tahdhīb al-asrār*, ed. Syed Muhammad ʿAlī, Beirut, Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, p. 490 [section 12]; Ṭabarī, *Salwat*, p. 165 [#266]; Sīrjānī (d. 1077), *Kitāb al-bayāḍ wa-l sawād*, p. 300 [#656]; Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madārij*, 2:255. Makkī and Suhrawardī cite a near equivalent but without mentioning Junayd by name. See *Qūt*, 1:415; *ʿAwārif*, p. 477 (also p. 466, where the idea is tied to *tawba*).

35 Kharrāz, *Kitāb al-ṣidq*, p. 86.

36 Makkī, *Qūt*, 1:415.

37 Cited in Chittick, *Divine Love*, p. 168.

38 See for example Kharrāz, *Kitāb al-ṣidq*, 44; Makkī, *Qūt*, 1:415; Ibn ʿAbbād, *Sharḥ*, p. 189. Outside the Islamic tradition, we may note the position articulated by Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica*, where he distinguishes between two kinds of ingratitude, with the first and broader kind including what our Sufi authors have in mind: "[i]n every sin there is material ingratitude to God, inasmuch as a man does something that may pertain to ingratitude. But formal ingratitude is when a favor is actually condemned, and this is a special sin." (Questions 106-107).

use the provisions to journey even further away than he already was, then his actions would constitute *kufr al-niʿma* or ingratitude of blessings. This is because the gifts were generously conferred for a purpose, namely to help him make his way to the kingdom so that he might enjoy the delights of the royal palace and its ruler, in comparison to which the joys of his own land were no more than mere shadowy pleasures. For Ghazālī, the analogy illustrates how all the blessings which have been conferred on the human being in this world from the time of his birth to death, extending from health to wealth and everything in between, have been conferred with one end in mind: to help draw him close to God and experience the only real and lasting felicity possible. He can also understand how when these gifts are made use of for the realization of this end, one is grateful. When, on the other hand, they are used to keep one alienated from God, to prevent one from realizing the very purpose for which he was created and sent into the world, they are not only squandered, but worse, transformed into instruments for the perpetuation of his own exile and ultimate destruction.[39] Makkī, from whose meditations Ghazālī drew many of his own insights, saw this as the kind of transmutation (*tabdīl*) of blessings of which the Qurʾān describes in 14:28, "Have you seen those who transmuted blessings in ingratitude (*kufr*^{an})."[40]

The logic of Ghazālī's reasoning is further explained by him from a slightly different vantage point, but with teleology still very much at the center and with a more pronounced Aristotelian undertone. Everything he says has a purpose, a wisdom or *ḥikma* behind its creation, which in some cases is clear and transparent and in others subtle and less perceptible. For a human being to use anything in a manner which conforms to its *raison d'être* constitutes *shukr*, while to do otherwise comprises *kufr*.[41] Take, for example, a hand. If it is used to unjustly strike another, argues Ghazālī, then such an act is one of ingratitude, because the hand has a purpose, to protect an individual from what harms him and to lawfully acquire what benefits him. Similarly, if the branch of a tree is broken off for no justifiable reason, then such an act also reflects a state of ingratitude because the branch also has a purpose, namely, to bear fruit and benefit others. The same can be said of the hoarding of gold and silver as well as the use of utensils crafted out of them, because these metals have a purpose, and this is to serve (as far as humans are concerned) as currency for trade and economic transactions. For one to amass them with the aim of satisfying extravagant tastes and make a show of one's own riches

39 Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, 4:136-137.

40 Makkī, *Qūt*, 1:415.

41 Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, 4:139-140.

before others is to betray the purpose for which they were created. It is also to contribute to imbalances in the economy of the land.[42] One may also extend this kind of ingratitude to include the gross accumulation of wealth in a way which prevents the destitute and needy from accessing the basic amenities of life and which generates stark disparities between the rich and poor. To be a miser, to be uncharitable, to be stingy with one's possessions are all to be included within the broader scope of *kufr al-niʿma*. On the other hand, to put one's faith into practice with a desire for God alone, to abide by one's knowledge and impart it to others, and to live in moderation and share from one's own wealth, all of these would be respective examples of the *shukr al-niʿma* of faith, knowledge and wealth. In short, all acts that are praised by religion have, as Ghazālī sees it, the goal of facilitating the ends for which everything was brought into existence. Gratitude is therefore inseparable from being just towards God's creation, giving all beings their rights, and comporting oneself in relation to them in a manner which facilitates the attainment of their final ends. *Shukr* is to use what one has received from God, or what He has given one power over, wholesomely and beautifully. It is to employ divine favors in a manner which conforms to what God loves, and what He loves, says Ghazālī, is to see everything reach its teleological end. To stand as an obstacle to this attainment, however, lies at the heart of ingratitude.[43] A genuine state of *shukr* therefore involves a deeper appreciation of the wisdom behind the dictates of revelation along with courtesy and propriety towards God's creation. Only then can one grasp the significance of *shukr al-badan* as outlined in Junayd's terse definition above.

With these considerations in mind, we are in a better position to understand why in the Qur'ānic account (Cor 7, 17) Iblīs vows to lurk on the "straight path" to induce ingratitude among human beings. For Ghazālī and others, the gravity of his oath can only be grasped when one realizes that *kufr al-niʿma* is not simply heedlessness of life's gifts or mere discontentment with one's lot, but a more encompassing and embodied condition which involves the abuse and denial of divine favors. This is why he writes that "one will not understand the meaning of this verse who does not understand the entire matter,"[44] with the "entire matter" being the full scope of what *shukr* entails. In this light, we can see why gratitude may be construed as virtually synonymous with Islam itself, as faith and practice, a point explained by ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī (d. 1330) when he writes, "as for God giving *islām* and *īmān* the name of

42 Cf. Van Den Bergh, "Ghazālī on 'Gratitude Towards God'," pp. 85-86.

43 Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, 4:146-148.

44 Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, 4:147-148.

gratitude (*shukr*), it is because gratitude has come in the Qur'ān as the counterpart of *kufr*."[45] This very same point was also made by Izutsu when, as we saw earlier, he observed that "Islam as a religion is . . . an exhortation to gratitude towards God."[46]

IV Gratitude to Others

Our discussion of the embodiment of gratitude would be incomplete without some final remarks about the obligation of thanking others. We should begin by noting that it would be a mistake to suppose that this kind of gratitude somehow stands in contrast to gratitude to God, or that the latter is even more important than the former (as one author, for example, has suggested about gratitude in the medieval West[47]). To do so would be to misconstrue their relation as distinct and perhaps even competitive, when in fact the latter integrates and sanctifies the former. In other words, to be grateful to God requires of one to be grateful to others. The underlying idea here is very much in keeping with the theocentric vision of Islamic and by extension of Sufi ethics which grounds all of human virtue in one's relationship with God. "He has not shown gratitude to God," the Prophet is reported to have said, "who has not shown gratitude to people."[48] And in another *ḥadīth* we read, "those who are most grateful to God are most grateful to people."[49] Both traditions reflect the juridical notion that the "rights of the servants (of God)" (*ḥuqūq al-ʿibād*) are to be subsumed within the "rights of God" (*ḥuqūq Allāh*)—that to infringe on the rights of creation is in the final analysis to violate the responsibilities one has towards one's Creator.[50]

Within the obligations of *shukr* at the level of human relations, parents in particular are singled out. While the Islamic tradition is certainly not unique in its emphasis on the obligations children owe parents—indeed, Hume

45 Qāshānī, *Sharḥ manāzil al-sā'irīn*, ed. Muḥsin Bīdārfar, Qum, Intishārāt-i Bīdār, 1971, p. 212.

46 Izutsu, *God and the Man in the Koran*, p. 15.

47 Harpham, "Gratitude in the History of Ideas," p. 26.

48 Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, cited in Ibn ʿAbbād, *Sharḥ*, p. 189.

49 Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, cited in Ibn ʿAbbād, *Sharḥ*, p. 189.

50 This particular view may be contrasted to some degree with that of Thomas Aquinas who distinguishes between the gratitude one owes to God and to others, faintly echoing perhaps the Gospel formula of rendering unto God and Caesar what is respectively theirs. *Summa Theologica: Vol. 3, part 2, 2nd section*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, New York, Cosimo Books, 2007, pp. 1642-1649 (Q 106-107, "Of Thankfulness or Gratitude," "Of Ingratitude").

remarked that "[o]f all crimes that creatures are universally capable of committing, the most horrid and unnatural is ingratitude, especially when it is committed against parents . . . [t]his is acknowledge'd by all mankind"[51]—it is nevertheless a curious feature of the Qur'ān that only the mother and father are singled out as objects of thankfulness. "Give gratitude to Me and to your parents," we read in 31:14. In his commentary on the verse in the *Subtle Allusions*, Qushayrī draws a parallel between the thankfulness that is due to both. Just as it is not enough to pay lip service in one's gratitude to God, similarly, it is not enough simply to thank one's parents through words: one must obey them as one also obeys God.[52] Implicit within his brief exegesis is that gratitude towards one's parents must be embodied at the three levels of the heart, tongue and body, just as it is with God. Qushayrī also specifies that part of the responsibilities of thankfulness towards parents is that one generously provide for them (*bi-l infāq wa-l tawfīr*) since they were a source of sustenance in early life.[53]

The mother in particular is accorded a privileged position in the Qur'ān and broader Islamic tradition. While Cor 31, 14 highlights the importance of thankfulness to both parents (*wālidayn*), it only describes the hardships endured by women: "His mother bore him by bearing strain upon strain," the verse states, "and his utter dependence on her lasted two years." And Cor 46, 15, which calls attention once again to the sacrifices of parents, only singles out the mother for special mention: "In pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth."[54] Unsurprisingly, these verses would lead a number of exegetes to explicitly prioritize the obligation of gratitude one has towards one's mother. The Andalusian scholar Ibn Juzayy al-Gharnāṭī, for example, affirms in his commentary that of the two parents, "her right is greater than that of the father."[55] And Qurṭubī, on the basis of his own examination of the structure of the verse concludes that the father's rank is only a quarter of that of her.[56] Ibn al-ʿArabī offers a brief explanation of Cor 31, 14 by drawing attention to a

51 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Book III, *Of Morals*), in ibid., *Philosophical Works*, eds. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose, Germany, Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1964, 4:243.

52 The obvious qualification being here, of course, that obedience to parents must not entail disobedience to God, as the following verse explicates.

53 Qushayrī, *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt*, ed. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2000, 3:18 (commentary on Cor 31, 14).

54 The translation is that of M. Asad. See also Cor 17, 23-24.

55 Ibn Juzayy al-Kalbī al-Gharnāṭī, *Tashīl li-l ʿulūm al-tanzūl*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh al-Khālidī, Beirut, Dār al-Arqam, n.d., (Cor 31, 14).

56 Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi ʿli aḥkām al-qur'ān*, tafsir.com (commentary on Cor 31, 14). His conclusion is also drawn by comparing the verse to the *ḥadīth* cited by Ibn al-ʿArabī below, which for him complements and explains the verse.

well-known *ḥadīth*, leaving no ambiguity in his short commentary which follows of who is to given priority among the two parents:

> And He said, 'Be grateful to Me and your parents.' He preferred and gave priority to being beautiful and kind to the mother over your father. It has been established that a man came to the Messenger of God and asked him, 'To whom should I be most kind and affectionate?' He replied, 'Your mother.' He then asked him again, 'to whom I shall I be most kind and affectionate?' He replied, 'Your mother,' (and he did this) three times. He then asked him a fourth time, 'to whom shall I be most kind and affectionate?' (Finally) he replied, 'Your mother, then your father.' And so he put the mother over the father in being kind and affectionate towards, and that is *iḥsān* [acting beautifully], just as he put the neighbor who is near over the one who is more distant, and each one has its right. If you do not have a mother but have a maternal aunt, be kind and affectionate towards her, for she stands in the rank of your mother. The Prophet counseled that one should be kind and affectionate to the aunt.[57]

Indeed, it is striking that in the absence of a mother, Ibn al-ʿArabī skips the father altogether and has the mother's sister stand next in line in order of preference, preferring the matrilineal line. In another section of the *Meccan Revelations*, Ibn al-ʿArabī is even more explicit about the priority of kinship which the mother enjoys. He draws attention to the Prophetic custom which instructs the living to address the deceased person upon being lowered in the grave, "O servant of God, O son of the handmaid (*ama*) of God." The reason "he is attributed to his mother," writes our mystic, is "because she has a greater right over him due to her role in bringing out his configuration and the existence of his entity (*wujūd ʿaynihi*). He is to his father the 'son of the bed' (*ibn firāsh*), while in reality he is the son of his mother."[58]

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57 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 8:281-282.

58 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:277. Ibn al-ʿArabī's remark forms part of a broader discussion in which, at risk of simplification, he argues that any claim of greatness, grandiosity or lordship (*rubūbiyya*) on the part of the human being will have grave consequences in the posthumous state. The safest course is therefore to remain attached to one's nearest ontological root (*aṣl*), which is that of weakness, nothingness and servitude (*ʿubūdiyya*) before God. Now since in the world one's own closest root stems from the mother, there stands an extricable and somewhat analogous relation between remaining bound to one's servitude, on the one hand, and close to the mother, on the other. Both are means of safety. Conversely, Ibn al-ʿArabī also asserts that the mother is herself protected through her relation with offspring. Hence the practice of the *sunnah* with respect to burial,

In privileging the mother as far as debts of gratitude concerned, we may discern a significant departure from much of classical and medieval Western writing. Aquinas, for example, who devotes a brief section to the subject in the *Summa Theologica*, stipulates that after God, the "principle of all our goods," one's greatest debt of gratitude lies to the father, after whom he singles out "the person that excels in dignity, from whom general favors proceed," concluding the list with the benefactor "from whom we have received particular and private favors, on account of which we are under particular obligation to him."[59] There is no explicit mention of the mother. The father's importance rests in his being "the proximate principle of our begetting and upbringing"—a clear reflection of the mistaken Aristotelian view which ascribes to the male the procreative power responsible for the generation of offspring, and which reduces the role of the female to little more than a provider of passive, inert material upon which the life giving force of the father acts. The process is likened by the Stagirite to a carpenter who carves a bed out of wood, with the carpenter in the analogy representing the active father, the wood the passive mother, and the bed the child who is formed out of the activity of one upon the other.[60]

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where "his lineage is traced to his mother as a protective covering (*sitr*) from God over her (*ʿalayhā*)"—the allusion being to a ḥadīth which speaks of the security a mother gains upon death, through a *ḥijāb* or covering from God, for having endured the loss of children in life. I am grateful to Dr. Winkel for bringing these insights to my attention as well as sharing his unpublished translation of the chapter with me. See also William Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-ʿArabī's Cosmology*, Albany, SUNY, 1998, pp. 318-322 (on p. 322 *ʿalayhā* is mistakenly read *ʿalayhi*).

59 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1642-1649 (Q 106-107).

60 Hence while the matter of the child is born of the inferior mother, the form is in turn retraced almost entirely to the superior generative, procreative, and rational force of the father. The analogy is just one reason why Maryanne Horowitz argues that "Aristotle went about as far as one can in attributing fertility exclusively to the male sex." "Aristotle and Women," *Journal of the History of Biology*, 9, no. 2 (1976). pp. 183-213, especially pp. 193, 196. Cf. Johannes Morsink, "Was Aristotle's Biology Sexist," *Journal of the History of Biology*, 12, no. 1 (1979), 83-112. For an attempt to rescue Aristotle from at least *some* of the charges of sexism leveled against him, see Devin M. Henry, "How Sexist is Aristotle's Developmental Biology," *Phronesis* 52 (2007), pp. 251-269, and the relevant sections in Morsink, ibid. On Aristotle's influence on Aquinas's views of gender, see Colleen McCluskey, "An Unequal Relationship Between Equals: Thomas Aquinas on Marriage," *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 24, no. 1 (2007), pp. 1-4. It is important to note in this context that medieval thought was sometimes most egalitarian when it was least Aristotelian. On the question of female virtue, for example, István P. Bejczy argues that "[a]lthough it is sometimes believed that medieval Christendom and Aristotelianism reinforced each other in portraying women as morally inferior, Christiandom actually introduced the idea of the

The same tendency to prioritize gratitude to the father is also found in the classical tradition. The Socrates of Xenophon (as opposed to Plato), however, remains at least one notable exception: in encouraging his son to show proper gratitude to his mother, we encounter, in the words of Joseph Hewitt, "a note perhaps oftener sounded in modern literature."[61] Clearly, Hewitt—the author of a number of articles on the subject[62]—was unfamiliar with the views of our medieval Muslim thinkers.

Where our authorities would likely agree with Aquinas would be in his stipulation that gratitude towards others entails recognizing the favor, verbally expressing appreciation, and repaying the gift within the measure of one's capacity at an appropriate time and place.[63] Each of these degrees loosely corresponds to gratitude of the heart, tongue and limbs, but in a fashion which inverts the virtue by turning it towards creation (as we just saw above with Qushayrī). While it is true that our authors do not use this three-fold classification to describe gratitude to anyone but God, the schema nevertheless faithfully captures the degrees of *shukr* within interpersonal relations. The first level would be to recognize the gift-givers as channels of divine benefaction; the second would be to express one's thanks through heartfelt "praise" (*thanā'*) for their acts of kindness and to pray for their well-being; and the third might involve more tangible and concrete forms of requital. While this final more material form of reciprocation is not typically stressed by our authors except in the case of parents, this aspect of human-to-human gratitude is nevertheless contained within the lexical sense of the term. In Ibn Manẓūr's famous lexicon, for example, we read that "gratitude must come from the hand, while praise may come from the hand or otherwise."[64]

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moral equality of the sexes in the West, as a result of its understanding of virtue as a gift extending to male as well as female believers. The recovery of Aristotelian moral and political thought in the thirteenth century implied a setback in medieval culture for the recognition of women as moral subjects on part with men." *The Cardinal Virtues in the Middle Ages: A Study in Moral Thought from the Fourth to the Fourteenth Century*, Leiden, Brill, 2011, p. 270; for a broader discussion of virtue and gender, see pp. 262-280.

61 Joseph Hewitt, "Gratitude to Parents in Greek and Roman Literature," *American Journal of Philology*, 52, no. 1 (1931), p. 35.

62 See for example, "Some Aspects of the Treatment of Ingratitude in Greek and English Literature," Transactions of the Proceedings of the American Philological Association, 48 (1917), pp. 37-48; "The Gratitude of the Gods," *Classical Weekly* 18, no. 19 (1925), pp. 148-151.

63 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1642-1649 (Q 106-107).

64 *al-shukr lā yakūn illā ʿan yad wa-l-ḥamd yakūn ʿan yad wa ʿan ghayr yad*. Thaʿlab (d. 904), cited in Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisāb al-ʿarab*, "sh-k-r." Note the difference with Ibn Qayyim's definitions in relation to God above. See also Zilio-Grandi's brief remarks in "Gratitude," p. 47.

While the authorities tend not to delve into the particulars of how one should go about expressing gratitude to others, focusing their analyses almost entirely on gratitude to God, they still recognize its binding nature. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, for example, is reported to have said, "be grateful to those who help you, and help those who are grateful to you; a favor thanked for will never be exhausted, while if you are ungrateful, it will not last; gratitude increases goodness and keeps at bay the vicissitudes of fate."[65] Makkī also speaks of the necessity of "gratitude towards creation, by praying for them and praising them beautifully because they are the vessels for gifts, and the means (by which) the Giver (confers blessings)."[66] Thankfulness to others, for Makkī, is part of a process of "taking on the attributes of God," of becoming, for lack of a better term, as "divine-like" as possible by stripping oneself of baser human qualities—ingratitude being one of the worst of them. Makkī's theological reasoning has its origin in the structural parallel that governs divine and human gratitude: just as God has *shukr* towards human beings for a piety and devotion that has its ontological origin in His own creative fiat and grace, similarly, humans must have *shukr* towards others for benefactions that also have their point of departure *in divinis*. The idea would be elaborated more metaphysically by Ibn al-ʿArabī in his claim that when one is grateful to another, one is in fact grateful to God, because the servant is no more than a "veiled form over the real." Similarly, Ruzbihān Baqlī (d. 1209) would argue that to show gratitude to another is simply to show gratitude to the acts of God, and since one cannot show gratitude to His acts without being grateful to His attributes, and one cannot, in turn, show gratitude to his attributes without being grateful to His Essence, there is, in the final order of things, no way to escape thanking God, because there is no real "other."[67]

Like Makkī before him, Ibn ʿAbbād also speaks of the necessity of gratitude towards others as part of his brief explanation of *shukr al-lisān* towards God, where he emphasizes the need to praise benefactors and pray for them because of their role as intermediaries or *wasāʾiṭ*. While the emphasis we find among our authorities on the need to supplicate for them might appear to short-change benefactors, such petitionary prayers may be counted, for them, among the most valuable gifts-of-return, especially if they are sincere and heartfelt and arise from the heart of a deeply pious soul, or an individual who has been helped in a time of great duress. The story of Abū al-Ḥārith al-Awlāsī's

65 Cited in Zilio-Grandi, "Gratitude," p. 59.

66 Makkī, *Qūt*, 1:428.

67 Ruzbihan Baqlī, *ʿArāʾis al-bayān fī ḥaqāʾiq al-qurʾān*, tafsir.com (commentary on Cor 46, 15).

(9th-10th century)[68] conversion to the Way fittingly illustrates the power that was believed to be attached to such prayers of gratitude. He relates an account from his youth when he was steeped in a state of heedlessness. One day he happened to stumble across a sick, homeless man lying on the road. "I lowered myself before him," he says, "and asked, 'would you like anything?" The destitute man requested a pomegranate, which Awlāsī promptly fetched. On placing the fruit in his hands, the man lifted his head towards his benefactor and prayed, "May God turn towards you (in mercy)." "Nightfall did not approach," Awlāsi recalls, "until my heart was transformed with respect to all of the vanity in which I was immersed. I then set out desiring to perform the major pilgrimage."[69] A similar story is told of Sarī al-Saqaṭī. One day he happened to give Ḥabīb al-Rā'ī a crust of bread as alms as he was passing by his shop. Al-Rā'ī responded with a prayer, "May God reward you." "From the day when I heard this prayer," Sarī would later recall, "my worldly affairs never prospered again."[70] The worldly loss turned out to be a spiritual boon because through it his earthly attachments were severed, and he was able to dedicate himself entirely to a life of prayer and contemplation.

Conclusion

We began this article by noting how within the Western tradition of ethics there have been two general approaches to gratitude, with one approach placing the accent on feelings of indebtedness which are owed to the benefactor, and the other on concrete, practical measures which are to be carried

68 His *shaykh* was a contemporary of Abū Sa'īd al-Kharrāz (d. 899). Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*, trans. Reynold A. Nicholson, 1911; repr., Lahore, Islamic Book Service, 1992, p. 374. According to one account, he set out to visit Dhū'l-Nūn (d. 861) in Egypt to find an answer to a particular question, but arrived on the day following his death. Overcome by sleep after a prayer over his gravesite, he beholds him in a dream, whereupon the Egyptian Sufi answers his query. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad al-Jāmī, ed. Muḥammad 'Adīb, *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2003, 1:64. There is no biographical entry on Awlāsī in Sulamī's *Tabaqāt*, Hujwīrī's *Kashf*, and Qushayrī's *Risāla*. While Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī also does not have an entry on him, he none the less includes a few anecdotes about him and Ibrāhīm b. Sa'd in an entry on the latter. *Ḥilyat al-awliyā' wa ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyā'*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2002, 10:163-165.

69 Ibn Qudāma, *Kitāb al-tawwābīn*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Arnā'ūṭ, Damascus, Dār al-Bayān, 1969, p. 230.

70 Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, pp. 110-111.

out by the beneficiary as a way of repaying the gift. In the context of gratitude to God, the Islamic and by extension Sufi tradition combines both within the tripartite scheme of gratitude of the heart, tongue and body, adding as a fourth component the necessity of expressing thanks to those through whom divine favors are received. Gratitude of the heart, we saw, requires both recognizing the favor as a favor, as well as acknowledging its origin in God. Gratitude of the tongue entails verbally acknowledging the gift through prayer and praise, both privately and publically, with the purpose of the latter being to encourage others to call to mind their own blessings. As for gratitude of the body, it requires using all of one's gifts to draw closer to the divine benefactor, since the underlying reason they were conferred was to aid the human being realize her own teleological end, which is to return to God. To employ blessings for any other purpose is to express ingratitude to the ultimate gift-giver and fall into the trap of *kufr al-niʿma*, the seriousness of which is underscored by the fact that it forms a lesser form of infidelity (*kufr* proper). Finally, our Sufi authors stress the importance of thanking others, in line with the famous ḥadīth, "he has not shown gratitude to God who has not shown gratitude to people." Among those towards whom obligations of gratitude are due, parents in general, and the mother in particular, are singled out. While Sufi authors typically stress the importance of praying for benefactors as a way of repaying debts of gratitude, implicit within many classical inquiries is the necessity of thanking others comprehensively in a fashion which mirrors the tripartite division of thanking God. From the preceding analysis, we can see why the comprehensive manner in which gratitude is to be embodied places it at the heart of Sufi virtue ethics. Far from being a peripheral virtue, it stands near the center of the human being's relationship with God.