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Spirituality in Shi'i Islam: An Overview

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Abstract

In this paper, key elements of Shi'ite spirituality are outlined and contrasted with Christian spirituality. The spiritual (*ma'navi*), in Islam, is that which pertains to inner meaning, as opposed to the outward literal form; and spirituality (*ma'naviyyat*) is the quality of being inwardly meaningful, or the quality of possessing a purport to which concern is directed. The Christian becomes spiritual as the soul is sanctified through the gifts of grace brought by the Holy Spirit.

The Muslim becomes spiritual as the mirror of the soul is polished to reflect the image of God that was hidden beneath the dust that covered it. In Christianity, the soul becomes sanctified as the Spirit enters into it; while in Islam the soul becomes sanctified as it is led to enter the spiritual realm. In Shi'ite spirituality, the Imams as divine guides are especially prominent. Shi'ite spirituality is expressed in religious activities, in the arts, in the humanities, and in Sufism.

Keywords: spirituality, Imam, Sufism, mysticism, guide, spirit, exterior/interior, wayfaring.

Spirit and Meaning

None of the major
important ideas of Christianity and modern Western culture map very neatly onto those of Islam, and the notion of spirituality is no exception. This makes an introduction to Islamic spirituality a bit misleading if not prefaced by a discussion of what the term could mean given the fact that the concept has its home in a cultural milieu alien to the Muslim world.

Even among Christians, the *concept* of spirituality is difficult to pin down, for it has evolved rather rapidly from the second half of the twentieth century until present. From its earliest usages, however, we find that the "spiritual" was contrasted with the "worldly". In the Middle Ages, the term "spirituality" was

sometimes used for the Church hierarchy, in contrast to secular authorities. By the twelfth century, things of this world were considered to be corporeal, and a contrasting attention to religious values would make one spiritual. So, in Aquinas we find that spirituality (Latin, *spiritualitas*) has both a metaphysical and a moral sense that are never clearly distinguished. In the metaphysical sense, the spiritual is what is incorporeal, spiritual as opposed to material. In the moral sense, one may adopt worldly or spiritual values. Furthermore, there is a theological sense of being spiritual that derives from the Pauline Epistles, e.g. Rom 8:9: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." (Also see 1 Cor. 2:10f. and 12:13).

In the later Middle Ages the use of the term spirituality declined but was revived in seventeenth century France where it was sometimes used pejoratively for those considered to have fanatically heretical beliefs. Voltaire is reported to have used the term mockingly, and it continued to be associated with Quietism in Spain, France, and Italy, and Enthusiasm in England. However, in the nineteenth century the term "spiritual theology" became established as the study of Christian life and prayer.

Over the past fifty-years or so, discussions of "spiritual theology" have given way to more inclusive discussions of "spirituality", which is understood in a more ecumenical manner than "spiritual theology" and has even come to be used in interfaith discussions (such as ours). It is associated with religious experience (but in a much broader sense than that of "mysticism"), with depth of character, personal piety, and morality. A recent tendency among Christian theologians concerned with spirituality is to expand the notion to include all areas of human experience to the extent that they are connected with religious values, rather than focusing on prayer and the inner life. Nevertheless, there is a tendency to view spirituality as contrasting with the institutional and doctrinal aspects of religion, and to give prominence to personal religious feelings and experiences. Philip Sheldrake sums up his own review of Christian spirituality and its history with the comment:

Christian spirituality derives its specific characteristics from a fundamental belief that human beings are capable of entering into relationship with a God who is transcendent yet dwelling in all created reality. Further, this relationship is lived out within a community of believers that is brought into being by commitment to Christ and is sustained by the active presence of the Spirit of God. Put in specific terms, Christian spirituality exists in a framework that is Trinitarian, pneumatological, and ecclesial.[1]

Needless to say, if we can identify anything as Islamic spirituality, it will be neither, Trinitarian, pneumatological, nor ecclesial. Nevertheless, these features of Christian spirituality may assist us in our efforts to recognize Islamic spirituality.

The term in Arabic and Persian that is best translated into English as "spiritual" is *ma'navi* (معنوی), and "spirituality" is best translated into Persian as *ma'naviyyat* (معنویت). These are derived from the word for meaning, *ma'na*, (معنی) which in turn is derived from the root *'ana* (عنی), which means a concern. So, a meaning (*ma'na*) is literally a locus of concern, that to which concern is directed, a purport; the spiritual (*ma'navi*) is that which pertains to inner meaning, as opposed to the outward literal form; and spirituality

(*ma'naviyyat*) is the quality of being inwardly meaningful, or the quality of possessing a purport to which concern is directed.

The spiritual (*ma'navi*) is opposed to the literal (*lafzi*), and like "spiritual" in English, it can be used to mean that something is immaterial or incorporeal. (Also, the term *ma'nawiyyat* (معنويات) is used in Arabic in one sense for immaterial entities and in another sense to indicate what in English would be called "team spirit".) The most well-known use of *ma'navi* in the sense of indicating spirituality is in the title that has come to be given to the great compendium of poetry by Mawlavi Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273), the *Mathnavi Ma'navi*, or Spiritual Couplets.2

If you are thirsting for the spiritual (*ma'navi*) *ocean* (*or ocean of meaning*)

Make a breach in the island of the Mathnavi.

Make such a breach that with every breath

You will see the Mathnavi as spiritual (*ma'navi*) *only.*

The etymological differences between the English "spirituality" and the Persian *ma'naviyyat* may be understood as symbolic of a fundamental difference between Christian and Islamic spirituality. Christians understand spirituality as the work of the Holy Spirit, while Muslims understand spirituality as direction to ever deeper layers of meaning.

For the Christian, spirituality is to be found through the inward life because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; while for Muslims spirituality will be found within because the soul is a sign that indicates God. Christian spirituality is the result of inspiration-the spirit comes into one;

Muslim spirituality is the result of another kind of movement, not an external spirit coming in, but the self's delving within as it is guided to meaning. To change the direction of the metaphor, we could say that Islamic spirituality is a kind of explication or exegesis-the bringing out of inner or hidden meaning, not exclusively in the sense of interpretation of scripture, but in the broader and more literal sense of being guided to a meaning. However, it is not so much that a meaning is brought out, as that one becomes conversant with a more interior world of meaning.

Christian spirituality is the characteristic of a life that expresses the work of the spirit within, so that it is not the believer's own will, but God's that is done.

Muslim spirituality is the characteristic of the spiritual journey of Islam from the outward to the inward-a hermeneutic trail of openings to insights and unveilings. In both cases a divine guide is required, but the nature of this divine guidance is understood somewhat differently.

Christian spirituality is found in the manifestation of signs and in the affective, indications of right guidance due to the effects of the spirit within; while Muslim spirituality is found in the understanding of

signs, which is cognitive, although having both conceptual and presentational or experiential aspects. Right guidance for the Muslim is evidenced in certainty and understanding, and by adherence to the path indicated by the guide. The Christian becomes spiritual as the soul is sanctified through the gifts of grace brought by the Holy Spirit.

The Muslim becomes spiritual as the mirror of the soul is polished to reflect the image of God that was hidden beneath the dust that covered it. In Christianity, the soul becomes sanctified as the Spirit enters into it; while in Islam the soul becomes sanctified as it is led to enter the spiritual realm.

I have exaggerated these differences between Christian and Islamic spirituality in order to make their distinctive characters clearer. In doing so, one may get the false impression that Christian and Islamic spiritualities are mutually exclusive. However, it is not too difficult to find the images typical of Islamic spirituality expressed by Christian writers or expressions of spiritual life by Muslims that seem typically Christian, or mixtures of both. In fact, the differences are more a matter of emphasis than distinction. There are cognitive and affective aspects to both Christian and Islamic spirituality; and interpretation as well as inspiration have a place in the spiritualities of both religious traditions, and yet the differences in accentuation are significant.

Let's return to Sheldrake's characterization of Christian spirituality in order to find Islamic counterparts to it. Muslims also have a fundamental belief that human beings are capable of entering into a relationship with a God who is transcendent and yet immanent. For Sheldrake, the immanence of God is found in the doctrine of the Trinity: God approaches man by becoming incarnate in Christ. For Muslims, however, the doctrine of the strict unity of God, tawhid, is no obstacle to an appreciation of the immanence of God expressed in such verses of the Qur'an as:

"wherever you turn, there is the face of Allah" (***2:115***)

and ***"We are closer to them than their jugular vein"*** (***50:16***).

However, to find God in all things requires guidance, and so Muslims live out their relation to God in a community of seekers under the guidance of those sent by God for this purpose, preeminently the Prophet Muhammad (s). For the Shi'a, the community is sustained in its relation to God through the continuing guidance of the divinely appointed Imams.

Spirit and Guide

Both Christianity and Islam are covenantal religions. In all three of the Abrahamic religions, human beings set out on the spiritual journey by entering into a covenant with God and at the invitation of God. Entering into the covenant is a kind of initiation by which God brings the person or people initiated onto the path toward Him. It is a path of return to the origin. Although the covenant takes different forms during the ages of the different prophets, acceptance of the covenant by man was prior to the earthly

sojourn of humanity:

"When your lord took from the Children of Adam from their loins, their descendents and made them bear witness over themselves, [***He asked them,***] ***'Am I not your lord?' They said, 'Yes indeed! We bear witness!'"*** (***7:172***).

The divine guide is one who can lead us back to the unseen realm from which we came, on a path whose goal is the divine encounter (*liqa* Allah).

The initiatic aspect of the religious life becomes especially prominent in Shi'i Islam. Initiation takes place on various levels and may be considered as a kind of vocation or divine appointment. Initiation normally marks the beginning of a spiritual training or wayfaring, but in the case of the prophets and Imams, the training takes place prior to the formal beginning of their mission.

At the highest level, there is the calling and appointment of the Prophet Muhammad (s). Even the Prophet is guided by God along a spiritual path. In the collections of sermons, letters and saying attributed to Imam 'Ali, Nahj al-Balagha, it is reported that in one of his sermons 'Ali said:

From the time of his (*s*) *weaning, Allah had appointed a greater angel from His angels to guide him* (*yasluku*) *along the path* (*tariq*) *of nobility* (*al-makarim*) *and excellence of moral character* (*akhlaq*), *throughout his nights and days. And I would follow him like a young camel following in the footprints of its mother.*[3]

In this report the training of the Prophet Muhammad is linked with that of Imam 'Ali. Following this passage is reference to knowledge of hidden significance:

And I heard the moan of Satan when the revelation came down upon him (*s*), *and I said, "O Apostle of Allah! What is this moan?" Then he answered, "That is Satan who despairs of being worshipped. Verily, you hear what I hear and you see what I see, except that you are not a prophet but you are a deputy and you are on* [*the path of*] *goodness.*[4]

Here we find that the Prophet is privileged in having concourse with what is not perceived by ordinary people. He is guided by an angel and he hears the moan of Satan. Imam 'Ali shares the privilege with the Prophet, but as one who follows the Prophet. He hears the moan of Satan, but the Prophet tells him its inner meaning.

Sometimes the guiding angel is identified with the Holy Spirit (ruh al-qudus). In his Shi'ite Creed, Shaykh Saduq (d. 991) writes:

And our belief concerning the prophets (*anbiya*), *the messengers* (*rusul*) *and the Imams is that there were five spirits within them: the Holy Spirit, the spirit of faith, the spirit of strength, the spirit of appetite, and of motion.*[5]

Shaykh Saduq continues that the true believers have the latter four, but the Holy Spirit is only found in the prophets and Imams. He continues:

For verily it is a creation greater than Gabriel and Michael. It always accompanies the Messenger of Allah and the angels and the Imams, and it belongs to the angelic domain (*malakut*).[6]

The Shi'ite Imams are each appointed by God, and this appointment is announced by the Prophet and then by each Imam in succession. The prophets and Imams are all able to guide others because of the guidance they have been given through which they acquire moral excellence and knowledge of the unseen (ghayb). Ordinary people only see the exterior of things or their surfaces (zahir), while the divine guides lead people to knowledge of the interior or inward aspects of things (batin). The spiritual path is one that takes the adept from the world of exterior things to an interior world, a world of hidden meanings, and traveling this path builds character.

The term Shi'i literally means partisan or adherent and is understood as indicating the adherents of Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful; and by implication the Shi'a are followers of the Imams, each of whom is designated by his predecessor according to divine direction. Sectarian differences among the Shi'a occur over disputes about the identities of those appointed. The vast majority of Shi'a are known as Twelvers (*ithna'ashari*). There are also two main branches of Isma'ili Shi'ism, found mostly in India and Pakistan; and there is the Zaydi Shi'ism of Yemen. Our discussion of expressions of Shi'ite spirituality will be confined to that of Twelver Shi'ism.

To describe the Shi'a in this way, however, is only to give a verbal account based on outward allegiances. There are many narrations about what it means to be a true Shi'ite. Imam Baqir ('a) is reported to have said:

The Shi'a of 'Ali are those who are giving because of their friendship for us, who are loving because of their affection for us, those who, when angry, do not oppress, and who, when satisfied, do not waste. They are a blessing to their neighbors, and peace (*or safety*) *to those with whom they associate.*[7]

In another narration, Imam Baqir ('a) is reported to have said:

Would it suffice for someone to be a Shi'a that he loves us, the Household of the Prophet? By Allah! No one is of our Shi'a unless he fears God and obeys Him, and they will not be known (*as Shi'a*) *except by their modesty and humility, keeping their trusts, profuse remembrance of God, fasting and prayer, kindness to parents, helping their neighbors, especially the poor, destitute, the indebted, and orphans, by the truth of their reports, recitation of the Qur'an, holding their tongues about people except for what is good, and they are the most trusted tribesmen of their tribes.*[8]

It is also narrated that the Prophet Muhammad (s) said:

Whoever loves 'Ali, God will fix wisdom in his heart, He will make what is right flow from his tongue, and

He will open for him the gates of mercy. And Whoever loves 'Ali, in heaven and on earth will be called the captive of God.[9]

The difference between Sunni and Shi'i Islam is often portrayed as a disagreement

over the political leadership of the Muslim community after the Prophet; and it is alleged that the Shi'a believe in something like royal succession through an inherited right to rulership. However, the issue of communal leadership is only the manner in which a more fundamental difference came to the surface. The more fundamental difference is the religious authority the Shi'a attribute to the Imams on the basis of their selection, esoteric knowledge, and precedence in virtue. So, we could say that the most fundamental characteristic of Shi'ite spirituality is the particular way in which the Shi'a view what in contemporary English is called spirituality, for what distinguishes the Shi'a is precisely the belief that the spiritual life of Islam– individually and collectively–can only be sustained through the guidance of the Imams. S. H. M. Jafri concludes his study of The Origins and Development of Shi'a Islam with this comment:

The actual disagreements between the Shi'is and the Sunnis in certain details of theology and legal practices were not as important as the "Spirit" working behind these rather minor divergences. This "Spirit", arising from the differences in the fundamental approach and interpretation of Islam. issued forth in the Shi'i concept of leadership of the community after the Prophet. It is this concept of divinely–ordained leadership which distinguishes Shi'i from Sunni within Islam…[10]

The fundamental difference of which Jafri speaks, and that is the basis for the Shi'i ideas about religious leadership (*Imamat*), is the belief that divine guidance is given to the community through the person of the Prophet as well as the revelation of the Qur'an, and continues after the Prophet by virtue of the divine selection and esoteric knowledge transmitted to the Imams. In a famous hadith it is reported that the Prophet (s) said: *"I am leaving you with two weighty things* (*thaqalayn*)*. If you take hold of them, you will not stray after me: The Book of Allah and my kindred, my household* (*Ahl al–bayt*)*."*[11] This is sometimes explained, in part, in terms of the esoteric knowledge of the proper interpretation of the Qur'an transmitted through the Imams. In the Qur'an it is written:

***"It is He who has sent down to you the Book. Parts of it are definitive verses* [*literally signs* (*ayat*)*], which are the mother of the Book, while others are metaphorical. As for those in whose hearts is deviance, they pursue what is metaphorical in it, courting temptation and courting its interpretation* (*ta'wil*)*. But no one knows its interpretation except Allah and those firmly grounded in knowledge* (*al–rasikhuna fi al–'ilm*)*; they say, 'We believe in it; all of it is from our Lord.'"* (*3:7*)**

The Shi'a interpret the phrase "those firmly grounded in knowledge" as referring to the prophets and Imams.[12] After naming the twelve Imams, Shaykh Saduq writes:

Our belief regarding them is that they are in authority (*ulu al–amr*)*. It is to them that Allah has ordained obedience, they are the witnesses for the people and they are the gates of Allah and the road to Him*

and the guides thereto, and the repositories of His knowledge and the interpreters of His revelations and the pillars of His unity. 13

The idea of the Imam as one who can lead others to a correct understanding of the Qur'an is only but one instance of the general function of the Imam as divine guide, but it is a pivotal one.14 The knowledge possessed by the Imams and by which they guide is an esoteric knowledge, not only in the sense that it involves going beyond the surface literal meaning to a deeper meaning, but in the sense that this knowledge cannot be completely communicated to anyone but the next Imam, and the guidance of the Imams must be calibrated so as to impart only as much knowledge as the follower has the capacity to receive.

In many ways the spirituality of Shi'i Islam is like the spirituality of Sufi Islam among Sunni Muslims, and for good reason. All of the Sufi Orders trace their initiatic chains to Imam 'Ali. The Sufis accept the most fundamental claim of the Shi'a, namely that divine guidance continued after the revelation of the Qur'an through the work of specially appointed divine guides. Furthermore, in Iranian culture, the influence of Sufi ideas has been pervasive for centuries, and there is a great complex history of the interactions between Sufis and Shi'ites to such an extent that on many issues it is impossible to sort out the lines along which ideas have been passed along.15

The problem of sorting is made more difficult because many prominent Shi'i *ulama* – from Khwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi (d. 1273), through Mulla Sadra (d. 1640), to Imam Khomeini (d. 1989) – have drawn heavily on Sufi teachings about the understanding and practice of Islam. The difference between Shi'i and Sufi spiritualities is largely confined to questions about the identities of these guides after Imam 'Ali, and the function of the guide. For the Shi'a, although the Imams do not bring any new book or religious law, their authority extends to all the areas of religion: interpretation of the Qur'an, interpretation of the law, theology, politics, and morals. The authority of the Imams is exegetical, doctrinal, legal, moral, and social, and all of these aspects of authority are based on divine appointment. God chooses those who will become guides and sees to it that they receive training in which they acquire wisdom and perfect their morals.

For the Sufis in the Sunni world, the guidance of the divine guides after the Prophet (s) is limited: the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence are followed on issues of Islamic law rather than the Ja'fari legal code (named after the sixth Imam), and usually no claims are made to political authority (although there have been important exceptions of politically active Sufi Orders among both Sunnis and Shi'ites, such as that of the Safavid dynasty; and generally appeal is often made to the Sufi shaykhs to arbitrate disputes among their followers).

The Sufi and Shi'ite Sayyid Haydar Amuli (d. ca. 786/1384) describes the spiritual path of Islam as consisting of three levels: *shari'at*, *tariqat*, and *haqiqat* in his Inner Secrets of the Path,16 where he reports a narration attributed to the Prophet (s): *"The shari'ah is my words, tariqah my actions, haqiqah my states."*17

Shari'at is literally the way, but it is used to refer to the exterior or legal dimension of Islam.

Tariqat also means way, but it is used to indicate a spiritual discipline, the interior way, and is commonly used for the Sufi orders.

Haqiqat is truth or reality, and Sayyid Haydar uses this term to indicate the goal of the exterior and interior ways. His book applies this threefold distinction to both doctrine and practice. Among the religious practices, for example, he first considers the hajj from the point of view of its outward rules as discussed by the jurists (*fuqaha*). Next, he considers the hajj for the people of *tariqat* as an inner journey toward the purified heart of the wayfarer. Finally, he turns to the hajj at a cosmic level in which one seeks to attain access to the heart of the "Great Man," also known as the "Universal Soul" and the *Bayt al-Ma'mur* (the House in heaven above the *Ka'bah*) or the "Guarded Tablet". In each of these three discussions the course of the performance of the rituals is reviewed but each time at a more profound level.

About a century before Haydar Amuli, Mawlavi referred to the same tripartite division in the preface to the fifth book of the Mathnavi;

This volume is the fifth of the books of the Mathnavi and the spiritual (ma'navi) exposition which declares that the shari'at is like a candle that shows the way. Without taking the candle in your hand, you cannot travel the way. When you come to the way, your traveling on it is the tariqat. When you reach the goal, that is the haqiqat. [18]

More recent Shi'ite writers have also made use of this tripartite division in order to elaborate views about Islamic spirituality, particularly to assert the harmony between Islamic spirituality and Islamic law.[19] Seyyed Hossein Nasr[20] compares this division to that of islam (submission, or as our Mennonite friends say, *Gelassenheit*), *iman* (faith), and *ihsan* (Wm. Chittick translates this as doing the beautiful, and it could also be understood as beneficence or active kindness), and the comparison can also be found in the works of Haydar Amuli.[21]Sachiko Murata and William Chittick use the themes of *Islam*, *iman*, and *ihsan* to organize an introduction to Islam that is at once profound, elementary, concise and wide-ranging.[22]

It also seems that Shi'i views are the source for much that later found its way into Sufism, although there is scholarly debate about exactly how this has taken place and also about the mechanisms of mutual influence as the traditions developed. To give just one example, we might consider early Sufi exegesis of the Qur'an, since we have already seen that the Shi'a view the Imams as interpreters of divine revelation. The sixth Shi'i Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) (d. 148/765), is reported to have referred to four levels of exegesis: an apparent level (*zahir*) for the common people, and three esoteric levels (*batin*) corresponding to the levels of the mystic, the imam, and the prophet. In practice, what is usually reported, however, are only references to the apparent and esoteric meanings generally. One of the early Sufi interpreters of the Qur'an, Sahl al- Tustari (d. 283/896) makes essentially the same

distinctions, both in theory and in practice. In his study of Tustari's exegesis, Gerhard Bowering concludes:

Although Tustari does not cite Ja'far al-Sadiq in his Tafsir, neither by name nor anonymously, he seems to follow the principles of Qur'anic interpretation employed by Ja'far al-Sadiq...the Qur'anic commentaries of both Ja'far and Tustari are characterized as mystical, Sufi interpretation of the Qur'an, independent of each other in their content, but related in their method.[23]

The ability to understand hidden meanings is not merely an aptitude for textual hermeneutics, for the Qur'an itself repeatedly enjoins its readers to think, to reason, and in other ways to ponder on the signs of God as they appear in nature, history, and all creation. Reason (*'aql*) is seen as a gift of God. One can acquire knowledge, but not reason. In an important narration, Imam Musa Kazim ('a) presents reason as a faculty for perception of divinity, insight, and a light in the heart that enables one to recognize and understand the signs of Allah.[24] The degree of reason possessed by the believer is sufficient for him to recognize that the prophets and Imams are in possession of knowledge (*'ilm*), and hence to seek guidance from them.[25]

Spirit Overflowing

Spirituality displays itself in numerous ways in Islamic cultures. Here, we might take a glance at how a more specifically Shi'ite spirituality is manifest in contemporary Iranian culture. What we are looking for is not just any expression of religious feeling, but how the major Shi'ite themes of the spiritual journey and the guide through levels of meaning are expressed. Before doing so, however, another characteristic element of Shi'i spirituality needs to be discussed: martyrdom and oppression.

All of the Shi'ite Imams (except the last, who is in occultation) were martyred, and subject to unjust treatment by those who abused religion. They are described as *shahid* (martyr) and *mazlum* (oppressed). Two of them, Imam 'Ali and Imam Husayn, were killed by swords, and the rest were poisoned. The sword that struck Imam 'Ali while he prayed was also poisoned. All of them were killed by those who outwardly professed Islam.

So, the spiritual path of the Shi'a is a dangerous one, and the danger comes from those who outwardly profess Islam while inwardly are oriented toward worldly instead of divine aims. As a result, the Imams cautioned their followers to be secretive about their true beliefs when threatened (*taqiyyah*). They also encouraged their followers to weep for those who had been martyred, especially Imam Husayn. As a result, Shi'ite spirituality is characterized by esotericism, secretiveness, and mourning.

What may be called the Shi'ite liturgical year is organized around the major Islamic holidays at the end of Ramadan and at the culmination of the hajj, the celebrations of the birthdays of the fourteen *Ma'sumin* (literally, those protected from sin, the Prophet, his daughter, Fatima, and the twelve Imams ('a), and mourning ceremonies to commemorate their martyrdoms, especially that of Husayn during the first ten

days of the lunar month of Muharram, and that of 'Ali on the 19th and 21st of Ramadan (when he was struck and died, respectively).

Mourning is expressed by the wearing of black, by breast-beating (and self-flagellation during Muharram), and by the recitation of poetry and stories about the sufferings of the martyrs and their families. At some point in such gatherings the lights are turned down and people weep.

The spiritual journey is symbolized through pilgrimages (*ziyarat*, literally visitations) to the shrines of the *Ma'sumin* and members of their families or other notable descendents.[26] There people seek the intercession of the divine guides, read devotions, and picnic and watch children run around. The shrines also serve as places where mourning ceremonies are held and holidays are publicly celebrated. The shrines are sacred spaces, but the spirit one finds at them is less one of solemnity and more one of an unburdening of need expressed through formal and informal supplications.

Supplications play an important role in public and personal devotions and may be purely inward or expressed verbally. True supplication requires attention of the heart, whether or not accompanied by spoken words. When supplication takes place with the attention of the heart, its effect on the heart is to produce a spiritual state (*hal*). The recitation of special supplications attributed to the *Ma'sumin* is especially valued;[27] and such supplications serve as models by which to learn the proper etiquette of prayer and intimate conversation with God. Supplication encourages the supplicant to turn his attention inward, to recognize his own sinfulness, to seek refuge in God, and to ask for his own forgiveness and for the forgiveness of others. One also prays that the prayers of others will be answered.

In the visual arts, geometrical figures indicate intellectual abstraction, and the mirroring of patterns in carpets, architecture and calligraphy reflects the soul's mirroring of divinity. Floral themes with birds symbolize the flight of the mystic toward divine beauty. A central underlying theme expressed in many variations can symbolize divine unity and its manifestations. Often a phrase of the Qur'an, a Name of God, or an appellation of one of the *Ma'sumin* is hidden in brickwork, or in calligraphy, in such a way that it can only be deciphered after some study; and this, too, reflects the spiritual quest and the esoteric truth.

Allusions to the spiritual journey are also very common in Iranian film, poetry, and stories. On television one often sees a movie or serial in which something is lost or misplaced. Help is needed to find it. A guide is sought, and what is found is surprisingly much more than was imagined having been lost. As story is told in which someone tells another story, and sometimes this goes on for several levels to give an indication of the levels of meaning that are traversed on the spiritual path. These are just a couple examples of the many ways in which spiritual themes appear in Iranian media, literature and art.

In this regard the long and rich tradition of Sufi poetry in Farsi provides an invaluable treasury of imagery, motifs, and ideas that are elaborated in constantly changing variations. Classical Persian poetry is often set to music and becomes popular entertainment. Many Iranians also memorize impressive

quantities of poetry and are easily prompted to recite at social gatherings. Although there are important Sufi poets who wrote in Arabic, the bulk of the corpus of Sufi poetry is in Persian. Although many of these poets followed a Sunni school of jurisprudence, due to the concordance of Sufi and Shi'i spirituality, they are understood as giving voice to central spiritual themes and values for the Shi'a, too.

The spirituality of Shi'ite society is so pervasive that one even finds it in sports. In a traditional Iranian sports center, called a *zur khaneh* (literally, house of strength), exercises are performed to the recitation of poetry, and the coach also plays the role of spiritual guide. The entrance to the *zur khaneh* is intentionally made low so that those entering must humble themselves. Virtue is encouraged as much as strength, and the model of the champions is Imam 'Ali, whose spiritual chivalry (*futuwwat*) is taken as an ideal. Even in sports that are not traditional in Iran, such as karate, one often finds that the trainer acts as a guide to moral character as well as technique, and sessions are begun or ended with salutations of the Prophet and his family: O Allah, peace be with Muhammad and with the folk of Muhammad.

Spiritual virtues are especially prized among Iranian Muslims. Humility and asceticism are especially praiseworthy, as are generosity, clemency, and prayerfulness. Conversely, arrogance, conceitedness, wastefulness, extravagance, hard heartedness and vengefulness are particularly loathed vices. One of the works dubiously attributed to Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) that interweaves spirituality and ethics and continues to be popular is *Misbah al-Shari'ah* (The Lantern of the Path).28 It features discussions of the spiritual merits of some of the Islamic rules of behavior interwoven with brief articles on such virtues and vices as truthfulness, humility, generosity, repentance, greed, hypocrisy, avarice, patience and wisdom.

On the relation between the spiritual path and ethics, Shahid Mutahhari wrote a very important yet concise introduction to *'irfan* in which he compares Sufism and ethics.29 Before reviewing his comparison, however, a terminological point is in order. The term "Sufism" (*tasawwuf*) is often associated with the institutionalized spirituality of the various Sufi Orders; and so, many Shi'ite authors prefer the use of the term *'irfan* (gnosis). Sometimes Sufism is used for the practical instructions for spiritual wayfaring, while *'irfan* is used for the theory; other authors use the terms interchangeably. I will use the term Sufism in the broadest way as synonymous for *'irfan* and having both practical and theoretical branches. Using "Sufism" in a similar way, Seyyed Hossein Nasr points out, "Islamic spirituality...has revealed itself in Islamic history most of all in Sufism";30 nevertheless, it is important to recognize that spirituality pervades Islamic society and is by no means confined to those who self-consciously concern themselves with what is generally understood as *'irfan* or *tasawwuf*.

Sufism, even in its most general sense, is a particular way in which spirituality refined in Shi'i society. As Shahid Mutahhari points out, there have always been Sufis among the Shi'a, many of whom do not designate themselves as such or distinguish themselves in any outwardly recognizable way, e.g., by association with a particular Sufi hospice or khanaqah, or by some particular manner of dress, and yet they are deeply involved in spiritual wayfaring (*sayr o suluk*) and the study of Sufi texts.31

Practical Sufism is similar to a system of religious ethics in that both are oriented toward the agent's

relationship with God, and the obligations and virtues that ensue from this relationship. However, as Mutahhari points out, Sufism is dynamic, while ethics is static. Sufism considers the origin and destination of man, and numerous stages along the way that must be traversed in succession. The Sufi sees the human spirit as a living organism to be nurtured in accordance with a particular order of development. In ethics, on the other hand, we find descriptions of the virtues and obligations, their interrelations and consideration of how they are to be applied, but scant detailed discussion of what practical steps can be taken to acquire them.

According to Mutahhari, while Sufism sees the soul as an organism to be cultivated, ethics sees it as a house to be furnished. Another difference between Sufism and ethics mentioned by Mutahhari is that Sufism pays particular attention to the heart, what is understood by the heart, and the heart's states. A full understanding of this requires experience on the path, while the discussions of moral psychology found in ethics tend to focus on questions of conscience and moral conflict that are comparatively commonplace. Consequently, the recognition of the need for a guide is much more pronounced in Sufism than it is in ethics. Both ethics and practical Sufism, however, are concerned with human excellence.

The methods of practical Sufism are not only employed by members of Sufi orders; there are also teachers of practical Sufism both among the Shi'ite clergy and laity, and their students are drawn from various segments of society. Most are fairly orthodox, as far as the doctrines and practices of Shi'ite Islam are concerned, although it is not difficult to find individuals and groups that hold beliefs or condone practices that fall outside of what most Shi'a would consider acceptable, such as the *ghullat* (extremists), who claim that Imam 'Ali was divine, or those who claim that when one reaches a certain stage on the path, that obligatory prayer and fasting may be abandoned. Here we confine our discussion to what is common among the forms of practical Sufism that do not conflict in theory or practice with Shi'ism as taught in the seminaries.

Practical Sufism requires one to pay attention to the heart. The heart is understood as the locus of spiritual understanding, in accord with the verse of the Qur'an:

"Know that Allah intervenes between a man and his heart" (***8:24***).

There is also a narration, according to which Imam Sajjad ('a) said: *"There are four eyes for a servant: two eyes with which to see his other worldly affairs, and two eyes with which to see his worldly affairs. So, when Allah, the Mighty and Magnificent, wills good for a servant, He opens the two eyes in his heart, and then he sees faults by them."*[32]

According to this and many other verses and narrations, the heart is the receptacle for divine grace. God grants his grace to the human heart through guidance by which the heart finds its way, understands its wrong turns, and "sees" the right direction. In order for the heart to function properly, however, one must cleanse it, or polish it, or chop away the debris that covers it, and this is accomplished by wielding the

double-edged sword of *dhikr* (remembrance) and *fikr* (contemplation). In Shi'i spirituality, it is not uncommon for military imagery to be taken to symbolize various facets of the inner journey: so, the sword of Imam 'Ali, *Dhu al-Faqar*, is taken to indicate remembrance of God and contemplation of Him in the heart, and the struggle against the base elements of the soul is called the greatest *jihad*.[33]

Another feature of practical Shi'ite spirituality is *intizar*, which means waiting or expectation, and is associated with the belief that the Mahdi, the twelfth Shi'ite Imam, is alive but in occultation. The Shi'a are encouraged to await the appearance of the hidden Imam, and in the practical Sufism of the Shi'a, this means not only to expect the outward appearance of the hidden Imam, but also to prepare oneself by seeking the grace to be a worthy companion of the Imam, with consciousness that he may be hidden in the appearance of the least among us.

As the seeker awaits the companionship of the Imam, he should also develop companionship with others who are involved in the spiritual journey, and should attune his interests to the personalities of those more advanced on the path, especially the Prophet and his folk (s), who are known as the fourteen impeccable ones (*ma'sumin*).

Observing the customs of one's society, proper etiquette and morals is seen at one level as a prerequisite for following the spiritual path under the guidance of the divinely appointed guide. One conforms one's behavior to the principles of morality and Islamic law because without doing so, there can be no progress on the spiritual path. However, as one travels the path, further motivation is found for worship and love of God and respect and kindness to His creatures. As the heart becomes illuminated through the guidance of those appointed by God for this purpose, virtues appear as outward signs of steady travel on the path. In order for this to happen, the wayfarer (*salik*) must be continually engaged in the examination of conscience and in taking care that base motives do not get the upper hand.

As an aid in wayfaring, it is highly recommended to visit cemeteries and to ponder death. The intended effect of this is to instill the idea of the transience of worldly goods and strengthen the wayfarer's remembrance of God.

There are many other sorts of instructions for spiritual wayfaring, for example, regarding humility and a disdain for ostentation, repentance, how to keep proper attention during worship, recitation of the Qur'an, maintaining ritual purity, and other acts that go beyond the requirements of religious law. Many of these instructions are contained in manuals for spiritual wayfaring, such as the frequently reprinted *Zad al-Salik* (Provisions of the Wayfarer) by Muhsin Fayd Kashani (d. 1680).[34] A more recent example is that of Ayatullah Ibrahim Amini's Self- Building: An Islamic guide for Spiritual Migration towards God.[35]

There is some disagreement about instructions for spiritual wayfaring, both with regard to who gives the instructions and what instructions are to be given. Some believe that instructions for wayfaring can only be taken directly from the Prophet or an Imam, and that when none is available for consultation (as in the current age of *ghaybat al-kubra* (major occultation)), we must confine ourselves to what can be

found in the books of narrations attributed to them. Traveling on the spiritual path requires the performance of works that are recommended but are not religiously obligatory, such as reading supplications and fasting on particular days.

These sorts of instructions are most popularly found in the book *Mafatih al-Jinan*. However, instructions found in other manuals (such as those of Kashani and Amini, mentioned above) combine instructions for supererogatory works with attention to moral considerations and the spiritual states appropriate to these works at a particular stage of the spiritual path, somewhat along the lines of the division of *shari'at*, *tariqat*, and *haqiqat* (although not necessarily making this threefold distinction explicit). Others hold that particular instructions personally suited for the individual should be given by an *ustad* (teacher). There is also some difference of opinion about the sorts of instructions that it would be suitable for an *ustad* to give. For example, some hold that the *ustad* should restrict instructions to those that can be found in narrations, while others hold that he could issue other instructions, e.g., to abstain from meat for some period, or to remain in a certain city for some time.

According to Sayyid Husayni Tehrani, the *salik* should have two *ustads*, a general one who is not specially appointed, but has more experience and is able to help the *salik* through the first stages of spiritual wayfaring, and a special *ustad*, who is the Twelfth Imam, with whom the *salik* is to develop a lifelong relation by traveling "within the planes of the Imam's luminosity."[36]

Although there are differences of opinion about the identities of those from whom it is appropriate to seek instructions for wayfaring, and about the extent of the instructions it is appropriate for a spiritual advisor to give, the agreement about the general contours of the spiritual path is much more extensive than the area of disagreement. Instructions can be found in manuals of the sort mentioned, but also in more specific works about particular types of worship, such as fasting[37] and prayer,[38] and in commentaries on parts of the Qur'an[39] or on narrations attributed to or describing the lives of the *Ma'sumin*.[40]

If practical Sufism is comparable to ethics, theoretical Sufism is comparable to metaphysics, for the subject of both is existence. Theoretical Sufism today as studied in Iran is dominated by the school of the Shaykh al-Akbar (the greatest master) Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240). Theoretical Sufism (*'irfan nazari*) is also like metaphysics in that it is an academic field of study in which degrees are granted at universities and research is conducted at the many research centers in Iran. Texts in this field are also studied in the Islamic seminaries, from Ibn 'Arabi's Bezels of Wisdom[41] to Ayatullah Javadi Amuli's commentary on a treatise by Ibn Turkah (d. 1432).[42]

Sufi theory is complex, and a common error is to label it as pantheism.[43] Suffice it to say that according to Sufi theory, God is existence, but existence is to be understood neither as the collection of all existing things nor as a universal whose instances are individual existents. Instead, the relation between individual things and God is understood as a relationship between sign and signified. All creatures signify God and have no existence of their own.

Sufi theory is criticized by Muslim philosophers and theologians. This is not the place to go into the charges and replies. However, Shi'ite spirituality, in the broad sense that has been elaborated here, is pursued on various sides to debates about Sufi theory. There are Shi'a philosophers, jurists and theologians with a very intense spiritual life who find Sufi theory implausible, based on their own study.44

No matter how much the jurists, theologians, and philosophers may disagree with the proponents of Sufi theory, all of them have in common the spirituality of religious study. The study of religious texts–preeminently the Qur'an, then hadiths, but also texts in jurisprudence, its principles, philosophy and theology, and the great commentary literature–is itself an enterprise taken up with devotion. The study of the "Islamic sciences," especially as traditionally undertaken, is also a facet of Islamic spirituality. To dedicate oneself to the study of the Islamic sciences is not only to strive to attain mastery of a scholarly discipline but is to live a kind of life informed and transformed by one's studies. Study is carried out as a form of complying with the divine imperatives found in the Qur'an and the narrations of the *Ma'sumin*. To teach the Islamic sciences is not just a form of employment; rather, ideally, it is a way of living in which one has daily proceedings with the sacred.

The fruits of the spiritual life of Shi'ite Islam should be evident in all the pursuits of the believer. We fall far short but pray that God may grant us His spiritual gifts to share with our Mennonite friends.

1. Philip Sheldrake, "Spirituality and Theology," in Companion Encyclopedia of Theology, ed. Peter Byrne and Leslie Houlden (London: Routledge, 1995), 514–535, 521. Much of the historical information given above about the term "spirituality" is drawn from this article.
2. In the text of Rumi's Mathnavi the term ma'navi occurs twenty–five times, in several of which he refers to his couplets (mathnavi) as being ma'navi, e.g., in the prefaces to the fifth and sixth books. and in the following two couplets, VI:67–68.
3. Nahj al–Balagha, ed., Subhi al–Salih, (Qom: Dar al–Hijrah, 1412/1991), 300.
https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-1-sermons [1]
4. Nahj al–Balagha, 301.
5. Shaykh as–Saduq, tr. Asaf A. A. Fyzee, A Shi'ite Creed (Tehran: WOFIS, 1982), 48.
https://www.al-islam.org/a-shiite-creed-shaykh-saduq [2]
A similar narration is reported in Al–Kafi to which reference is made in Fayd Kashani's Kalimat–e Maknuneh (Ch. 30): "Among the references to this is that which has been narrated in al–Kafi from the Commander of the Faithful ('a): 'The prophets and the foremost [al–sabiqin, i.e., the Imams, in accordance with the Shi'i interpretation of (56:10)] have five spirits: the Holy Spirit, the spirit of faith, the spirit of strength, the spirit of desire and the spirit of motion.' He said that it is by the Holy Spirit that the prophets are commissioned and by it that they know the things, and by the spirit of faith they worship Allah and do not associate anything as a partner to Him; and by the spirit of strength they struggled against their enemies and they earned their livings; and by the spirit of desire they are inclined toward delicious food and they marry those who are permitted (halal) of the young women; and by the spirit of motion they creep and walk." Then he said, 'The believers who are the companion of the right hand possess the first four, and the infidels and companions of the left hand have the last three of them, such as the animals,' or words to this effect." Muhsin Fayd Kashani, Kalimat Maknuneh, (Tehran: 1981).
6. Shaykh as–Saduq, tr. Asaf A. A. Fyzee, A Shi'ite Creed (Tehran: WOFIS, 1982), 48.
7. Hassan ibn Fazl ibn Hassan Tabarsi, Mishkat al–Anwar (Qom: Ansariyan, 2002), narration 296. My translation.
8. Shaykh Saduq, Sifat al–Shi'ah, in Al–Mawaaizh, Sifat al–Shi'ah & Fadhaail al–Shi'ah (Qom: Ansariyan, 2001), narration 22. My translation.
9. Shaykh Saduq, Fadhaail al–Shi'ah in Al–Mawaaizh, Sifat al–Shi'ah & Fadhaail al–Shi'ah (Qom: Ansariyan, 2001), narration 1. My translation.

10. S. H. M. Jafri, The Origins and Development of Shi'a Islam (Qom: Ansariyan, 1409/1989), 312. https://www.al-islam.org/the-origins-and-early-development-of-shia-islam... [3]

11. Tajsir al-Safi, Vol. 1, 473, after the verse (5:67).

12. For the dispute about the interpretation of this verse, see Mahmoud M. Ayoub, The Qur'an and Its Interpreters, Vol. II, The House of Imran (Albany: SUNY, 1992), 39-46.

13. A Shi'ite Creed, 85, op.cit.

14. According to Martin J. McDermott, the difference between the Shi'ite view of imamate (as detailed in the works of Shaykh Mufid (d. 1022) and the Mu'tazilite view is that the Shi'a view the Imam as educator and guide for mankind. For the Mu'tazilie 'Abd al-Jabbar, the Imam is merely one who holds authority in administrative, military and judicial affairs. It is the authority to guide and teach that is the key to an understanding of the rest of Shi'ite theological claims about Imamate, such as the doctrine that the Imams are protected from sin and error, and that all people need to have a living Imam. See Martin J. McDermott, The Theology of Al-Shaikh al-Mufid (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1986), 105.

15. See Carl W. Ernst, The Shambhala Guide to Sufism (Boston & London: Shambhala, 1997), 138.

16. Sayyid Haydar Amuli, Inner Secrets of the Path, Asadullah ad-Dhaakir Yate, tr. (Dorset: Element Books, 1989). https://www.al-islam.org/inner-secrets-of-the-path-sayyid-haydar-amuli [4]

17. Scholars of hadiths generally consider this one to be apocryphal.

18. Mathnavi, Bk. V, preface, my translation.

19. See Martyr Murtada Mutahhari, An Introduction to 'Irfan, tr. 'Ali Quli Qara'i, Al-Tawhid, 4:1 (1407/198?): https://www.al-islam.org/al-tawhid/vol4-n1/introduction-irfan-ayatullah-... [5]

20. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The Interior Life in Islam" Al-Serat, Vol. III, Nos. 2 and 3, URL= https://www.al-islam.org/al-serat/vol-3-no-2-3/interior-life-islam-seyye... [6]

21. Sayyid Haydar Amuli, Jami' al-Asrar wa Manbi' al-Anwar (Tehran: Intisharat 'Ilmi wa Farhangi, 989), 343ff., 586ff. In this work, Haydar Amuli makes the distinction between islam, iman, and iqan (certainty); but he identifies ihsan with the highest stage of iman (faith), in accordance with the famous narration: "Ihsan is to worship Allah as if you see Him; and if you do not see Him, then verily, He sees you." (597).

22. Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, The Vision of Islam (New York: Paragon House, 1994).

23. Gerhard Bowering, The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam: The Qur'anic Hermeneutics of Sahl At-Tustari (d. 283/896) (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 141-142.

24. See Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 9. The narration is reported as the twelfth narration of the first part of Kulayni's Usul al-Kafi.

25. See Andrew J. Newman, The Formative Period of Twelver Shi'ism (Richmond: Curzon, 2000), 94-112. Newman argues that Kulayni's position was actually taken in opposition to the rationalism of the Baghdadi Shi'i scholars.

26. There are also books of religious instruction on how to make a visit to a shrine that discuss this activity with regard to what is and is not proper to do according to shari'at, also discuss the virtues associated with such visits, and give a few hints at the deeper significance of visiting the shrines in the lives of believers today. See, for example, Decorum for Visiting the Shrine of Imam Rida ('a), prepared by the Islamic Research Foundation of Astan Quds Radavi (Mashhad: Astan Quds, 2002).

27. Such as those in the collection attributed to the fourth Imam ('a), Al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah, translated by William C. Chittick as The Psalms of Islam (London: Muhammadi Trust, 1987). https://www.al-islam.org/sahifa-al-kamilah-sajjadiyya-imam-zain-ul-abideen [7]

28. The work is in Arabic, and has been published with a Persian commentary and translation by Hasan Mustafavi as Misbah ash-Shari'ah wa Miftah al-Haqiqah (Tehran: Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1981), another Persian translation is by Zayn al-'Abedin Kazemi Khalkhali, Misbah al- Shari'ah (Tehran: Hijr, Lantern of the Path, Muna Bilgrami, tr. (Dorset: Element, 1989), available on the internet at: http://al-islam.org/lantern-of-the- [8] path/.

29. Martyr Murtada Mutahhari, An Introduction to 'Irfan, tr. 'Ali Quli Qara'i, Al-Tawhid, 4:1 (1407/198?). See: https://www.al-islam.org/al-tawhid/vol4-n1/introduction-irfan-ayatullah-... [5]

30. See the introduction by Seyyed Hossein Nasr to Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations (New York: Crossroad, 1997), xv.

31. For more on the mutual influences of Shi'ism and Sufism see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Shi'ism and Sufism: their

Relationship in Essence and in History," in his Sufi Essays (Albany: SUNY, 1991), 104– 120; for a Sufi pronouncement of the inner identity of Islam with Shi'ism and of Shi'ism with Sufism, see Majdhub 'Alishah, "Shi'ism, Sufism and Gnosticism," in The Sufi Path, ed., Shahram Pazouki (Tehran: Haqiqat, 2002), 23–45.

32. Shaykh Saduq, Al–Tawhid, Bab 60, narration 4.

33. See Imam Ruhollah Khomeini, The Greatest Jihad: Combat with the Self, URL = https://www.al–islam.org/jihad–al–akbar–the–greatest–jihad–combat–with–t... [9]

34. A translation of this work can be found in the Journal of Shi'ite Islamic Studies, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2006, 68–80.

35. Available online at: https://www.al–islam.org/self–building–ayatullah–ibrahim–amini [10]

36. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Husayni Tihrani, Kernel of the Kernel (Albany: SUNY, 2003), 109.

37. See, for example, Mirza Javad Agha Maliki Tabrizi, Spiritual Journey of the Mystics (Suluk–i Arifan): Etiquette of the Holy Month of Ramadhan, online at: https://www.al–islam.org/suluk–al–arifan–spiritual–journey–of–the–mystics [11]

38. For example, Imam Ruhollah Khomeini, Adab al–Salat: The Disciplines of the Prayer (Tehran: The Institute for the Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 2002). https://www.al–islam.org/adab–as–salat–disciplines–of–prayer–second–revi... [12]

39. For an example of a modern Shi'ite Sufi work of this genre, see Fadhlalla Haeri, Beams of Illumination from the Divine Revelation (Blanco: Zahra, 1985).

40. See Muhammad Legenhausen, "A Mystic's Insights on the Words of the Shi'i Imams: A Selection of Narrations from the First Chapter of Al–Tawhid of Shaykh Saduq and Commentary by Qadi Sa'id Qummi (d. 1696)."

41. Ibn al–'Arabi, The Bezels of Wisdom, tr., R. W. J. Austin (Lahore: Suhail, 1988).

42. Javadi Amuli, Tahrir Tamhid al–Qawa'id (Qom: Zahra, 1993).

43. The best introduction in English is the pair of volumes by William Chittick, The Sufi Path of Knowledge (Albany: SUNY, 1989), and The Self–Disclosure of God (Albany: SUNY, 1998).

44. As an example of the sort of criticism of Sufi theory raised from the perspective of Islamic philosophy, see Ayatullah Misbah Yazdi, Philosophical Instructions (Binghamton: Global Publications, 1999), 247f.

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