THE MALADIES OF THE NAFS AND THEIR REMEDIES: AN ANALYSIS AND TRANSLATION

by

RACHEL KEANE

(Under the Direction of Kenneth Honerkamp)

ABSTRACT

*The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies* is a 10th century treatise by Abū ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī which sheds further light on his fusion of two early movements in Islamic Spirituality: Sufism and the Malāmatiyyah Way, also known as the Path of Blame. This thesis will analyze the historical context of Sulamī’s work and demonstrate the importance of Malāmatiyyah-Sufism to the institutionalization of Sufism in Khurasān. *The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies* provides insight into the unique Malāmatī-Sufi ethic which combines mysticism, asceticism, and the interiorization of piety. *The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies* primarily addresses the Malāmatiyyah-Sufi perspective on the greatest obstacle to spiritual progress, the *nafs*, a perspective which continues to influence Sufism today.

THE MALADIES OF THE NAJIS AND THEIR REMEDIES: AN ANALYSIS AND
TRANSLATION

by

RACHEL KEANE
BA, University of Georgia, 2016

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2018
THE MALADIES OF THE NAFS AND THEIR REMEDIES: AN ANALYSIS AND TRANSLATION

by

RACHEL KEANE

Major Professor: Kenneth Honerkamp
Committee: Alan Godlas
Richard Friedman

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2018
DEDICATION

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

To my family:

My mother, my father, my sister, my brother, and my dear Sam.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to my teachers who have been so influential not only in the formation of this thesis but also in my prior education in Islam and Arabic that made this thesis possible. I have been a student of Dr. Honerkamp for six years now and I am incredibly blessed to have benefitted from his teaching, stories, and insight throughout my time at the University of Georgia. This work would not have been possible without his careful oversight and lifetime of experience in the Islamic world. I thank Dr. Godlas, from whom I have learned so much about Sufism and scholarship on Islam, and Dr. Friedman for kindly sharing his thoughts and expertise. I would also like to thank Arash Aboutourabi for generously sharing his encyclopedic knowledge of the Islamic tradition and Arabic with me time and again.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## CHAPTERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Overview of Chapters</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Shaykh: Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Developments in Islamic Spirituality</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Path of Blame</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sufism</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From the Shaykh of Instruction (taʿlīm) to the Shaykh of Training (tarbiyyah)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Institutionalization of Islamic Spirituality</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Overview of the <em>Nafs</em> in the Islamic Tradition and Islamic Literature</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The <em>Nafs</em>, Heart, Secret-heart and Spirit</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Faults of the <em>Nafs</em> in Early Islamic Writings</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Importance of <em>The Maladies of the Nafs</em> in the Shādhilī Sufi Order</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Audience and Aim of <em>The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies</em></td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies</em></td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical Edition and Manuscripts</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Translator’s Apology</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Principal Themes of *The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies* .......................................................... 52

5 Translation of *The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies* by Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī .......................................................... 59

REFERENCES .............................................................................................................................................. 92
INTRODUCTION

Fourteen hundred years ago in the 6th century CE, an unlettered orphan named Muhammad was inspired to begin a religious revolution while meditating in a desert cave. Since then, Islam spread west to Morocco into Africa and east across central Asia. As time passed, pious Muslims lamented the loss of the example of the Prophet, his companions and their followers amidst the onslaught of what they considered to be corruptions of Muhammad’s original message and way of life. In the 2nd/8th century, renunciant pietist Muslims withdrew from participation in normative community life and turned inward to attain the highest degrees of Divine knowledge through self-examination, spiritual purification, and Divine grace.1 Today they are called “Sufis” and “friends of God” (walī, pl. awliyā’),2 and their spiritual practices form the foundation of what is now known as Sufism. Centuries later, Muslims all around the world follow in their footsteps, yearning for self-knowledge, spiritual transformation and communion with God.

2 A “friend of God” is the Islamic equivalent of a saint in Christianity. Some have argued that “saint” is not an appropriate translation of walī because some Muslim saints were known for peculiar, apparently unorthodox behavior unlike renown saintly figures in Christianity like Mother Teresa. See Ahmad Sirhindi. Revealed grace: The Juristic Sufism of Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624), trans. by Arthur F. Buehler, (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2011), xix. However, I think this is an incomplete understanding of sainthood in Christianity. In Eastern Orthodoxy, there is a classification of saints called “Fools for Christ” who were known for unconventional behavior. St. Basil, one of the most revered Fools for Christ was known for perpetual nudity, whether in summer or winter. The term saint in Christianity refers to as diverse a group of individuals as walī in Islam; however, I prefer “friend of God” to saint and “God-friendship” (wilāyah) to sainthood because these translations better capture the nuances of the Arabic terms walī, awliya’ and wilāyah. The verbal form of the root letters w-l-y means “to be close to” or “to be friends.” In this way, a walī is one who is close to God or friends with God. For an in-depth discussion of Sufi perspectives on what it means to be a friend of God, see Abū al-Qāsim ʻAbd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī, Al-Qushayrī’s Epistle on Sufism, trans. Alexander D. Knysh and Muhammad Eissa, (UK: Garnet Publishing Limited, 2007), 268-273.
The inward turn of Muslim spirituality in the first Islamic centuries involved an increased focus on discipline of the *nafs.* The *nafs* is a multi-faceted term in the Islamic tradition which in Sufi discourse almost exclusively refers to one’s negative character traits, especially egotism and passions. In the Sufi worldview, spiritual progress is often hindered by egoism and attachment to worldly life, which are the results of an undisciplined *nafs.* The work of a spiritual seeker is to undergo an epic mental and physical battle against the passions and desires of the *nafs* with “knives of spiritual striving (*MS* 11).” This includes, in addition to one’s usual religious obligations, a program of constant suspicion and scrutiny of the *nafs,* fasting, night vigils, and *dhikr.* *Dhikr* entails a wide variety of practices including repeating and contemplating the name of God and reciting the Quran or litanies by oneself or in groups. When the *nafs* is under control, it submits to the authority of the heart, which orients one to God-consciousness and communion with God.

However, training the *nafs* is no easy task. Although the *nafs* can be trained and regularly purified, most people give in to the passions and capricious whims of their *nafs* most of the time. For this reason, early mystics cast an extremely negative light on the *nafs* and consider it to be

---

3 Although the *nafs* (pl. *anfus*) in Arabic refers to the physical body as well as all aspects of one’s being, including corporeal and noncorporeal elements, in Sufi Literature the *nafs* refers almost exclusively to one’s negative character traits; however, in the Quran, the *nafs* has negative, neutral, and positive connotations depending on the context. The *nafs* may incite one to iniquity or be a *nafs* at peace, which is satisfied by God and satisfies God. The negative attributes of the *nafs* are sometimes contrasted to the spirit (*rūḥ*), which is only associated with praiseworthy traits. See al-Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayrī’s Epistle on Sufism,* 109. See more on the *nafs* in the Islamic tradition and how it relates to the heart, the inner-heart and the spirit in chapter 3.

4 *MS* from here on will refer to the treatise *The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies* by Abū ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī translated in chapter 5 of this thesis. This reference, *MS,* is followed by a number that corresponds to the paragraph number found in Kohlberg’s critical edition of the original Arabic text. Abū ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī, *Jawāmiʿ ādāb al-ṣuﬁyya* and ʿUyūb al-nafs wa-mudāwātuhā, ed. Etan Kohlberg, (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Academic Press, 1976).

5 The word *nafs* is given a neutral pronoun here in spite of the noun’s feminine gender in the original Arabic. All words are gendered in Arabic and neither women nor femininity are associated with the *nafs* in the Quran. In some cases, Sufis have cautioned male followers regarding association with women because of the temptation of having illicit sexual relations which may arise as a spiritual novice in their presence. For more discussion on the unfortunate conflation of the negative attributes of the *nafs* with women in extra-Qur’anic Muslim religious writings, see Rkia Cornell, “Soul of a Woman Was Created Below”: Woman as the Lower Soul (*Nafs* in Islam,” in *Probing the Depths of Evil and Good: Multireligious Views and Case Studies,* ed. Jerald D. Gort, Henry Jansen and Hendrick M. Vroom, (Amsterdam: Brill Academic Publishers, 2007), 257-280.
one’s greatest obstacle to communion with God alongside Shaytān (Satan), shayāṭīn (satans) and attachment to the world. This internal struggle against the nafs is considered to be an even greater struggle for the sake of God (jihād) than military combat.

And our Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) said to some people who had just returned from the jihād: ‘Welcome! You have come from the lesser to the greater jihād’. ‘O Emissary of God!’ he was asked. ‘And what is the greater jihād?’ ‘The jihād against the nafs,’ he replied.6

One of the earliest writings on this rigorous tradition of spiritual purification was Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī’s (d. 325-412/937-1021) treatise The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies. This treatise provides a window into the world of spiritual seekers during a turbulent age of definition for Islamic spirituality. The work demonstrates Sulamī’s fusion of the beliefs and practices of two major spiritual streams in the 10th century, the Path of Blame of Khurasān and Iraqi Sufism,7 which has continued to influence Islamic spirituality over the centuries until today.

Overview of Chapters

In Chapter 1, I will provide an account of Sulamī’s life and education to demonstrate his importance as a scholar and his credentials as a Sufi master.

Chapter 2 includes a brief introduction to the spiritual movement of Sulamī’s hometown of Naysābūr called the Path of Blame. Following that, I will examine the origins, development and spread of Sufism to Naysābūr and how Sulamī synthesized Sufi concepts with principles of the Path of Blame. I will explore changes in the practice of Sufism that began in Sulamī’s time,

---


7 Karramustafa calls Sulamī’s understanding of Islamic spirituality a fusion of two early spiritual movements: Sufism and The Path of Blame. See Karramustafa, Sufism: The Formative Period, 64.
specifically the relationship between master and disciple and the formalization of Sufism. I will demonstrate how Sulamī’s fusion of a Malāma-Sufism was involved in the institutionalization of Sufism in Naysābūr.

Chapter 3 offers a detailed account of the *nafs* in the Quran and hadith, because it is the central term of *The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies*. I will discuss Sulamī’s placement of the terms *nafs*, heart (*qalb*), secret-heart (*sirr*), and spirit (*rūḥ*) into a spiritual hierarchy in which each term pertains to a different mystical state and level of consciousness of reality. Following that, I will present a historical overview of literature on the faults of the *nafs* in Muslim writings until Sulamī’s time which may have impacted this mystical formulation as well as his focus on the *nafs*. I will demonstrate the continued significance of al-Sulamī’s treatise, *The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies*, over time especially among Moroccan scholars of the Shādhilī Sufi Order and discuss his audience and aim in writing the work.

In Chapter 4, I will provide information about the critical edition used for this translation and a translator’s forward. Then I will present the principle themes of *The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies*.

Lastly, in Chapter 5 you will find a translation of al-Sulamī’s treatise ‘*Uyūb al-nafs wa-mudāwātuhā* entitled *The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies*. 
Abū ’Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī’s important role in formative Sufism is recognized by scholars who have worked on critical editions of his extant works. Although he wrote at least 100 treatises and books on Sufism, scholars are aware of only about 30 works in manuscript. More and more manuscripts of his “lost” writings are being unearthed from library bookshelves but lack critical editions or publication. A unique volume of 80 biographical accounts of female Sufi saints called Dhikr al-niswa al-muta‘abbidāt al-suṣīyyāt, translated as Early Sufi Women by Rkia Cornell, was found in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia as recently as 1991 and subsequently an Arabic edition of it was published in 1993. The extent of Sulamī’s influence and the scope of his writings are becoming more appreciated by Western scholars as more of his texts are found, translated and analyzed.

Sulamī was well-recognized in his day as both a mystic and a scholar. In Al-Muntakhab min al-siyāk li-tarīkh naysābūr, ‘Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī describes Abū ’Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī in the following way:

---

9 Karramustafa, Sufism: The Formative Period, 63.
10 For a full list of his works, see Jean-Jacques Thibon, L’oeuvre d’ ‘Abū ’Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī (325/937-412/1021) et la formation du soufisme, (Institut Français du Proche-orient, 2009), 561-569.
11 Sulamī’s lost hagiographical compendium Ṭarīkh al-ṣūfīyyah was reconstructed through the collection of references to it in other works. See Abū ’Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī, Ṭarīkh al-ṣūfīyyah wa-bi-dhaylihi mīḥan al-ṣūfīyyah, ed. Muḥammad Adīb al-Jādir, (Damascus: Dār al-Naynawā, 2015).
[He was] the Shaykh of the Path in his time who was granted mastery in all the sciences of spiritual realities and knowledgeable of the path of Sufism. He authored many well-known works on the sciences of the folk. He inherited Sufism from his father and grandfather and composed an unprecedented amount of works exceeding one hundred on the topic. He reported hadith for more than 40 years, dictating them to students and reading them. He recorded the hadith of Naysābūr, Marv, Iraq, and the Hijaz, and he was among the elect of the respected elders.  

Although Sulamī was not the first or only biographer of famous Sufis, his works like Ṭabaqāt al-ṣuﬁyyah (Generations of Sufis) had widespread influence and were the foundation of later biographical works, many of which were written by Sulamī’s students. In Ḥilyat al-awliyā’ wa ṭabaqāt al-αṣfiyā’ (Jewels of the Saints and The Generations of the Pure Ones), Abū Nu’aym al-İşfahānī (d. 430/1038) said of his teacher, Sulamī:

[He] was completely committed to paving the way for the school of Sufism and refined it in accordance with the example that was established by the earliest of the predecessors (al-avvā’il min al-salaf). He was steadfast on their path, following in their footsteps and separating it from what was left behind by those who were utterly lost in their ignorance and [considered themselves among the Sufis]. He criticized them because according to his view, in reality [the Sufis] were followers of the Prophet  what he taught and what he made law. He referenced [the example of the Prophet in his teaching] and affirmed its veracity.  

Al-Ghazālī’s (d. 505/1111) formulation of Sufism was highly influenced by Sulamī’s writings and he praised Sulamī’s controversial exegesis of the Qurān entitled Ḥaqāʾiq al-tafsīr (Truths of [Quranic] Exegesis). Sulamī is referenced by many other renowned Sufi scholars like Hujwīrī (d.465/1072), al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234), and Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240). Ibn ʿArabī is

---

14 An extensive list of early biographies and hagiographies of Sufi literature both lost and extant can be found in Karramustafa, Sufism: The Formative Period, 84-87. Ibn al-Aʿrābī (d.230-233/846) is mentioned in Ahmad ibn ‘Abd Allāh Abū Nuʿaym İşfahānī, Ḥilyat al-awliyā’ wa-ṭabaqāt al-αṣfiyā’, vol. 2, (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1997), 20, as a predecessor of al-Sulamī in Tabaqāt literature. From the Ḥilyat it seems that al-Sulamī based the organization of his hagiographies on that of Ibn al-Aʿrābī lost work Ṭabaqāt al-nussāk. Sulamī describes Ibn al-Aʿrābī as a Sufi scholar and places him at the head of his final generation in the Ṭabaqāt al-ṣuﬁyyah, which is a surprisingly important position considering the existence of other biographers with which Sulamī had closer personal ties like Nujayd and Nasrābādī. See Jawid A. Mojaddedi, The Biographical Tradition in Sufism, (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2001), 15, 66-67.
highly regarded by Sufis as the *Shaykh al-Akbar* (the greatest master).¹⁷ Two centuries after his death, Sulamī came to Ibn ʿArabī in a vision.

I looked closely at him and saw that it was Abū ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī whose spirit had been made corporeal for me. God has, out of mercy, sent him to me. I told him, “I see that you are [also] in this station.” He responded, “It is in this station that death seized me and I will always be there.” I made known to him my [feeling] of isolation and complained of the absence of a companion. He told me, “The exile always feels alone! After Divine Providence acceded you to this station, praise God; for to whom, my brother, is it given? Are you not satisfied that Khidr¹⁸ is your companion in this station?” […] I said to him, “O Abū ʿAbd al-Rahmān, I know not the name by which I might call this station.” He answered me, “It is called the station of Proximity [to God] *(maqām al-qurbā).*¹⁹ Know that well!”²⁰

Sulamī’s influence also continues today through the writings of his prominent students. Al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), though Sulamī was not his primary shaykh, quotes him throughout his well-known compendium of Sufism *al-Risālah* (The Treatise).²¹ Other prominent students were

---

¹⁷ There are some exceptions to the general reverence for Ibn ʿArabī in the Sufi community. Hanbali Sufis, the most famous being Ibn Taymiyyah, and some followers of the modern Wahhabi and Salafi movements ardently oppose his teachings.

¹⁸ *Al-Khīdhr,* also sometimes transliterated *al-Khaḍr,* means “the green one.” He is a folkloric figure most often associated with the mysterious, unnamed guide of Moses in the Quran [al-Kahf 18: 64]. Moses meets Khīdhr and asks if he can accompany him to learn something of the special knowledge he attained “from God’s presence”. Khīdhr acquiesces on the condition that Moses not question his actions, but Khīdhr predicts that Moses will not bear patiently with him. He then puts a hole in a man’s boat, kills a young boy and repairs a fence for no apparent reason. Moses is outraged and Khīdhr finally explains the inner meaning of his actions, saying he was working “at the command of God,” not of his own volition. Wensinck, A.J., “al-Khādir (al-Khīdhr),” in *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition,* ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on March 20, 2018, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0483.

¹⁹ According to Ibn ʿArabī, the station of proximity is the highest station of sainthood that one can attain and lies just below the spiritual rank of prophecy. The station of proximity is described by Sulamī in the following way: “He has traversed all the spiritual stations and attained permanence with God (*al-Ḥaqq*) having neither state, locale, name, form, quality, pretense, desire, sight, vision, endeavor, nor goal. He is as it has been said, ‘The servant, as though he had never been, and God, as He has never ceased to be…’ Then it is that the traveler is allowed access to the knowledge of hidden things these are among the secrets of divine reality that are only made known to the most trusted of the saints, and this is the mystic knowledge spoken of by God in the Quran. *Then they found one of our servants to whom we had shown our mercy and had taught him knowledge from our presence.* [al-Kahf 18: 66] …This is the moment wherein he is granted permission to hear the Word and discover its meanings and be gratified by the understanding of that which he hears. That hearing, that contemplation of the meanings of the Word and that witnessing of the inner significance of his hearing and cognition thereof bestows upon him intimacy (*taqrīb*) and proximity (*qurbā*).” ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī, *Darajāt al-sādiqīn,* trans. Kenneth Honerkamp in “The Principles of the Malāmatīya: Study, Critical Edition, and Translation of Two Texts by Abū ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021),” (M.A. Thesis, University of Georgia, 1995), 118-119.


²¹ Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayrī’s Epistle on Sufism.*
Abū Bakr Bayhaqī (d. 458/1065), a Shafiʿī jurist who compiled a well-known hadith collection, and al-Hākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 405/1014) who wrote biographies about transmitters of hadith who visited Naysābūr. He also authored a prominent hadith collection entitled *Al-Mustadrak.*

Who is Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī and how did he become such a prominent Sufi Master, Qurʾānic exegete, hagiographer, historian, hadith scholar and compiler of Sufi sayings and stories?

Al-Ḥusayn Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Mūsā Ibn Khālid Ibn Sālim Ibn Zāwiyya Ibn Saʿīd Ibn Qabīṣa Ibn Sarrāq al-Azdī al-Sulamī was born on 10 Jumāda II, 325 (April 4, 937) according to his disciple and scribe Muḥammad al-Khashshāb (d. 456/1054). Sulamī benefitted greatly from the spiritual and intellectual atmosphere of his home city Naysābūr, which at the time of Sulamī’s birth was known for being a center of Islamic scholarship and spiritual activity in Khurasān. Naysābūr lay at the intersection of roads to many important cities to which Sulamī would later travel in pursuit of religious knowledge. Even more significantly, he was born into a family of renowned ascetics, spiritual leaders and scholars.22

Sulamī was raised primarily by his paternal grandfather, Ibn Nujayd, who was the closest disciple of Abū ʿUthmān al-Ḥīrī, one of the founders of the indigenous Naysābūrī spiritual movement called the Path of Blame. Although Sulamī’s initial Islamic and spiritual education began with his family, he had many teachers. From a young age he learned the traditional Islamic sciences, memorizing the Quran, learning Arabic grammar, and narrating hadith as early as the age of eight from Abū Bakr al-Ṣibghī (d. 342/954). Sulamī traveled extensively, studying and transmitting hadith and Sufi sayings in important cities and Sufi centers including Naysābūr, Marv, Iraq and the Hijaz. One of his most influential teachers, Ibn Khaffīf (d. 371/982), granted

---

him permission (ijāzah) to teach and transmit hadith and Sufi sayings. He narrated hadith for over 40 years and transmitted hadith to many students. Sulamī was slandered for forging hadith but these accusations were refuted by al-Khaṭīb in Ṭārīkh madīnat al-islām who calls Sulamī an authority on hadith of high rank in his day as well as Ibn al-Jawzī who says that these allegations were motivated by jealousy.  

Sulamī learned jurisprudence from Abū Bakr al-Shādhī (d. 366/976-77), a Shāfiʿī jurist and theologian, and Ashʿarī theology from Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013). Thus, he became an authority in Shafiʿī jurisprudence and Ashʿarī theology and received permission to give fatāwá (religious rulings) and teach.

Sulamī first received the khirqah (robe of investiture), which would formally initiate him to Sufism, as well as permission to induct novices from Shāfiʿī Shaykh and Ashʿarī theologian Abū Sahl al-Ṣuʿlūkī (d. 369/980). Sulamī also received the khirqah from one of his most influential teachers, al-Naṣrābādhī (d. 367/977-78), who was a Shafiʿī scholar of hadith and a companion of al-Ṣūʿlūkī. Al-Naṣrābādhī was called “the master of the later shaykhs of

---

23 Kister addresses these accusations and argues that they come from anti-Sufi scholars who did not allow allegorical interpretations of the Quran and the hadith that Sulamī cites are found in hadith collections before him. Although not all his hadith meet the standard of criteria for hadith authentication today, many hadith in the early collections were not rigorously authenticated and he most likely did not knowingly transmit fabricated hadith. Sulamī, Kitāb adab al-ṣuḥbah, 3-5. Cf. S. Sh. Kh. Hussaini, “Abu Abd-Al-Rahman Solami,” S. Sh. Kh. Hussaini, “Abu Abd-Al-Rahman Solami,” Encyclopedia Iranica, last modified July 19, 2011. accessed March 1, 2018, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abu-abd-al-rahman-solami-mohammad-b. Al-Sulamī is also considered an unreliable hadith transmitter by anti-Sufi scholars especially of the Hanbali school and members of the Wahhabī and Salafi movements. Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328) is the most prominent figure of this group.

24 Sulamī, Kitāb ādāb al-ṣuḥbah, 14.


26 Although al-Ṣūʿlūkī was a disciple of well-known Sufi master al-Thaqafī, Karramustafa questions his credentials as a Sufi master. “[I]t is not clear that Ṣuʿlūkī trained disciples in Sufism, and Sulamī himself does not accord him any place in his Generations of Sufis.” Karramustafa, Sufism: The Formative Period, 62.
Khurāsān” by al-Hujwīrī in *Kashf al-Mahjūb.*

Al-Naṣrabādī was educated in the biographies and history of the Sufis and probably inspired Sulamī’s interest in hagiography.

Speaking about Sulamī, al-Naṣrabādī said, “If Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān is not among the abdāl (spiritual pillars of the world), then God has no friends upon this earth.”

Sulamī demonstrates his understanding of the spiritual path and abilities as a Sufi master in his works such as *The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies* among others. Sulamī’s renown as a Sufi master is attested by Abū Saʿīd Ibn Abū al-Khayr (d. 440/1049), who was sent by his teacher to receive the khirqah from Sulamī. Sulamī could not have initiated him if he were not initiated onto the Sufi path himself and given permission by a shaykh to induct novices. Through al-Naṣrabādī, Sulamī’s Sufi lineage includes prominent figures of Iraqi Sufism: Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 334/946), Abūʾl Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 295/910), Saʿrī al-Ṣaqaṭī (d. 253/867) Maʿrūf al-Karkhī (d. 200/815) and back to the Prophet through ʿAlī Ibn Abū Ṭālib. Apart from these affiliations he was also known for his relations with other eminent Sufis of the time like Ibn Khafīf and Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Bākūya of Shīrāz (d. 428/1037).

---


28 Karramustafa says that Sulamī’s initiation with Naṣrabādī was not documented. Karramustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period,* 63. Considering Sulamī’s introverted spiritual leanings, he may not have broadcast this affiliation out of humbleness; however, it is recorded in Jāmī’s (d. ~897/1492) *Nafāḥāt al-uns.* “And He was a disciple (murīd) of Abū Qāsim al-Naṣrābādī and wore the khirqah, [which he received] from him.” Jāmī also says that Sulamī initiated ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad al-Jāmī, *Nafāḥāt al-uns min haḍrāt al-quds,* trans. Tāj al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyāʾ ʿUthmānī, ed. Muḥammad Adīb al-Jādir, vol. 1, Beirut: Dar al-kotob al-ilmīyyah, 2003, 442.


30 Sulamī’s *Darajāt al-ṣādiqīn* (Stations of the Righteous) and *Zalāl al-fuqarāʾ* (The Stumblings of Those Aspiring) demonstrate Sulamī’s knowledge of the path and ability to guide novices. These works are translated into English. See Sulamī, “Stations of the Righteous and The Stumblings of Those Aspiring,” trans. Kenneth Honerkamp, in *Three Early Sufi Texts,* (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2003). Also see a study of these texts in Honerkamp, “The Principles of the Malāmaṭiyya.”


After the passing of his grandfather, Sulamī inherited a vast library from which he taught for the rest of his life in Naysābūr. After his death, it became Sufi lodge (*duwayrah*) and his grave was a destination for Sufi pilgrims.
The Path of Blame

In the 9th and 10th century, Sulamī’s hometown of Naysābūr exploded with codification of hadith, grammar, linguistic studies and historical writings in addition to the formation of different theological schools and the four accepted schools of Islamic jurisprudence in modern times: Hanafī, Shāfi ’ī, Hanbali and Mālikī. Alongside the development of these divisions, Naysābūr saw a growth of dispute and violence among these schools of law and theology, as well as between their adherents and traditionalists who opposed all divisions in favor of a literal interpretation of the Quran and hadith. It was in this milieu of antipathy that the Path of Blame emerged.

The people of the Path of Blame, the Malāmatīs, were centrally focused on constant blame and scrutiny of the nafs. The verbal form of the root letters of Malāmatī, l-w-m, means to blame, and blame was essential to attaining the elusive goal of sincerity, so often tainted by the self-serving nature of the nafs. The Malāmatīs considered the nafs to be “simultaneously corrupt and indestructible,” a psychological reality which had metaphysical implications. The Malāmatīs saw all manifestation as inherently deficient in comparison to Divine perfection.

[I]t is not possible to comprehensively enumerate her maladies. And how could it be possible while the nafs is defective with respect to all its attributes and is not free of a single defect?

33 Karramustafa, Sufism: The Formative Period, 49.
And how can one enumerate the faults of something which is entirely a defect and which God Most High has described as perpetually inciting iniquity (MS 73)?

Although the Malāmatīs were known for asceticism and piety, they did not believe that performing acts of worship, whether obligatory or voluntary, were worthy of praise. One of the early leaders of the movement, Ḥamdūn al-Qaṣṣār (d. 271/884-5), undermined the good works and ascetic practices of his students to prevent them from becoming prideful and remind them of their essential deficiency. The most a servant can do is demand sincerity of himself in his intentions. The Malāmatī themes of deficiency of the nafs in spite of pious actions are interspersed throughout The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies.

And among its maladies is that one hopes to benefit from attending spiritual gatherings (auspicious occasions) and if he realized [the true nature of his nafs], he would lose all hope for the people at the spiritual gathering attaining any benefit due to the misfortune of his presence (MS 9).

Because of their suspicion of the nafs, the Malāmatīs emphasized secreting their piety and spiritual practices to guard against the vain desire of the nafs for worldly recognition of their piety. To accomplish this, they integrated into society, sought gainful employment, and dressed in accord with the norms of their communities, decrying the exoterism and isolationism of other schools of piety like the Karrāmīs.35 “And among its maladies is donning the [outward appearance] of piety without demanding sincerity of the heart regarding the [outward appearance of] piety that one has donned (MS 42).” The Malāmatīs often met in their teacher’s homes to maintain anonymity.36 In addition, they rejected miracles as an ostentatious show of spiritual

rank that often deluded the aspirant about his progress on the spiritual path. “The subtlest of that which deceives the friends of God are miracles and succor (MS 71).”

Perhaps because of their renunciation of proselytization, the Malāmatīs refrained from writing down their teachings in a comprehensive and systematic fashion until the arrival of Sulamī, who wrote the only known treatise on the Malāmatiyyah tradition entitled Risālat al-malāmatiyyah (Treatise of the Path of Blame).37 He was a scholar and practitioner of the Path of Blame, which he inherited from his father and grandfather. Sulamī’s understanding of the Path of Blame, in addition to disdain for the nafs and secreting one’s spiritual state, emphasized compliance to the Quran and Prophetic example, submission to social propriety (adab), and disclaiming all pretensions to piety and spiritual states.38

Antinomian mystics in later centuries that took extreme measures to raise the ire of society to mask their spirituality were sometimes identified as Malāmatīs39 because of their desire to prove that they fear not the blame of any blamer [al-Mā’idah 5: 54]. However, their unconventional mode of piety is distinct from the principles of the Path of Blame of Sulamī and other Malāmatīs of 9th and 10th century Naysābūr, who stressed the importance of social conformity and following the injunctions of the Quran and the Prophetic example. “And the remedy is demanding sincerity of the nafs and maintaining the customs [of the Prophet] in one’s actions and correcting the foundation of His commandments in order to make his end sound (MS 8).” The goal of the

39 Although they were called Malāmatīs, it is not clear that these social non-conformists identified themselves as Malāmatīs and they were also known as ‘Qalandars’ and ‘darwishes’. Karramustafa, Sufism: The Formative Period, 164-165.
Malāmatī was not to break the law to ensure the disapproval of the masses, but rather to serve God without worrying about people’s approval.\(^{40}\)

Social propriety (*adab*) was a very important aspect of Sulamī’s understanding of the Path of Blame. In the earliest meaning of the term, *adab* was associated with the example of the Prophet Muhammad but expanded to include “the moral, the social and the intellectual.”\(^{41}\) For Sulamī, *adab* encompassed proper outward social behavior as well as an attitude of inward spiritual self-effacement and detachment from one’s needs and desires. Inward and outward *adab* were deeply intertwined with spiritual growth; the purpose of *adab* was to open the heart to direct experience of the Divine.\(^{42}\) Proper social conduct was simply the exterior platform of battling the *nafs* that must accompany one’s interior struggle against egoism and passions. “Sufi etiquette creates and maintains fraternity among fellow Sufis but further, helps to inculcate the emotions of awe and respect that must mark the whole of the sincere disciple’s life.”\(^{43}\)

In the 9\(^{th}\) and 10\(^{th}\) centuries in Khurāsān, *adab* was also known by the name of *futuwwah*, a code of chivalry which encouraged good conduct, pious works, and brotherhood, and was especially popular among urban artisans and merchants.\(^{44}\) Sulamī was the first to write a full-length treatise on *futuwwah*,\(^{45}\) and many of his works demonstrate the close relationship between the Path of Blame, *futuwwah*, and the Islamic tradition. The Malāmatīs of Sulamī’s time cloaked their spirituality under the guise of *futuwwah* terminology so that their inner spiritual states

---


\(^{43}\) Welle, “Ṣūfī Adab Transcending Scruples,” 116

\(^{44}\) Sviiri, “Ḥaḳīm Tirmidhī and the Malāmatī Movement in Early Sufism”, 602-606.

would remain unknown even as they outwardly behaved admirably as respected members of their communities.

The Malāmatiyyah adopted the term *futuwwah* (youthful chivalry) as a code-name for one of the stages in the mystical hierarchy, perhaps the one preceding the state of manhood called *rujūliyya*. Such terms as ‘man’(*rājul*), ‘manliness’ (*rujūliyya*), ‘men’(*rijāl*) as well as ‘perfect manliness’, ‘complete maturity; (*kamāl al-rajūliyya*) appear quite often in Sulamī’s writings.46

To Sulamī, disclaiming pretension to spiritual states meant judging oneself harshly while maintaining a positive opinion of others regardless of their faults. He focused on “commanding the good” through one’s example and actions and de-emphasized “forbidding the reprehensible” because one should not concern oneself with the faults of others. In *Maladies of the Nafs*, Sulamī encourages aspirants to have a high regard for others, assume the best about others, and remain silent about their faults.

I saw a people who had faults, so they remained silent about the faults of [other] people; therefore, God concealed their faults and those faults were removed from them. And I saw a people who did not have faults and then occupied themselves with the faults of [other] people, thus they acquired faults (*MS* 13).

Even if one attains a high spiritual state, he should not disclose that to others or look favorably upon himself because of that. A truly sincere person is often not aware of his sincerity. Awareness of one’s sincerity may be an indication of lack of sincerity. The ultimate example of this attitude is found in Sulamī’s notion of the “hidden saint,” which remains a prevalent concept in Sufism.47 After one’s ecstatic realization of the Divine, the Malāmati returns to his senses in a reconstituted, godly version of himself and either is made known to the creation as a spiritual guide or remains hidden among them. In the eyes of the people the hidden saint seems ordinary and solely occupied with mundane affairs, while inwardly he is focused on God alone and acts on His behalf. The hidden saint is highly praised by Sulamī because he does not seek worldly

authority over people. “Among her maladies is seeking authority through knowledge, pride and haughty behavior [because of his knowledge], and boasting about it, elevating himself over his peers (MS 20).”

Although Sulamī’s understanding of the Path of Blame may be a continuation of the moderate approach of Malāmatiyyah leaders like Abū ʿUthmān al-Ḥīrī (d. 298/910) and Abū Ḥafs al-Ḥaddād (d.c. 265/878-9), as opposed to the rigorous methods of al-Qaṣṣār, Sulamī’s treatise on the Path of Blame and Maladies of the Nafs demonstrates a merger of traditional Malāmatī principles like discipline of the nafs and private devotion with mystical ideas from another type of Islamic piety that emerged a century earlier in Baghdad called Sufism.

**Sufism**

Sufism today is an umbrella term for all forms of Islamic spirituality; however, the early term for Sufism, ṣūfīyyah, was first used for a mystical movement which emerged in the middle of the 9th century in Baghdad and spread to Khurāsān most likely in the same century.48 Iraqi Sufism grew out of an environment of Ahl al-Ḥadīth (People of Hadith) culture, which based right practice and belief on strict adherence to the example and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, his companions and their followers.49 The Ahl al-Ḥadīth, also called traditionalists,50 considered a literal reading of the Quran and hadith to be the ultimate authority on jurisprudence and theology and eschewed basing matters of law on the informed opinion of

---

48 Abū Bakr al-Wāsiṭ (d. after 293/903) is identified as the first Sufi from Baghdad to emigrate to Khurasān although according to Karramustafa, the earliest figure in Khurasan may have been Abū Hamza al-Khurāsānī (d. 293/903). In the fourth/tenth century scholars have noted a sharp rise in number of people with the appellation “Sufi” by the end of the century, indicating a period of rapid growth in Sufism during al-Sulami’s time. Karramustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period*, 60.


50 The name traditionalist, not to be confused with traditional, comes from a translation of the word hadith; however, both traditionalists and advocates of the use of reason utilized hadith literature in their understanding of the law.
scholars. Their disdain for the use of reason in law and theology was reflected in their rejection of the emergent theological and juridical schools in which hermeneutical tools, like analogical reasoning, were used to interpret the Quran and hadith.

The Sufi movement was an esoteric response to the prevailing emphasis on exoteric practices promoted by *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* like Ahmed b. Hanbal (d. 241/855), Ḥasan al- Başrī (d. 110/728), and Rābi‘ah al-ʿAdawiyyah (d. ca. 184/801). However, Iraqi Sufis did not abandon their *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* cultural framework. They, like the traditionalists, maintained ascetic practices, were skeptical of human reason in deciding matters of law and theology, upheld the revealed law, and connected their beliefs and methodology to the lifestyle and example of the Prophet and the early Muslims through the study of hadith. Their emphasis on the authority of early Muslims is mirrored in Sulamī’s writings like *The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies*, which is rife with references to the Prophetic example, his followers, and the Quran.

Unlike the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth*, Iraqi Sufis engaged in mystical speculation, though not to the exclusion of ascetic exercises and adherence to God’s law. The foundational concept of Islamic theology is *tawḥīd*, which means affirming the unity of God. Sufis sought to go beyond affirming God’s unity to experiencing or tasting God’s unity in this life. They wanted to experience the answer to the fundamental question: How can God be an infinite, transcendent unity in a finite universe of apparent multiplicity? How can it be that *God is One* [al-Ikhlāṣ 112: 1] while at the same time, *Wherever you turn, there is the face of God* [al-Baqarah 2: 115]? To answer this question, Sufis postulated that all aspects of creation have origins in God’s infinite reality, but

---


52 Christopher Melchert distinguishes between ascetic piety as “obedience to a transcendent God” and mystic piety as seeking “communion with an eminent God.” Melchert, “The Transition from Asceticism to Mysticism at the Middle of the Ninth Century CE,” 52.
most people are only conscious of their manifestation in the material world. Therefore, to experience the unity of the universe behind the illusion of multiplicity and to be truly aware of the presence of God in themselves and the world, they needed to attain a higher state of consciousness of reality. However, Iraqi Sufis did not have a united understanding of the path to experiencing God’s unity or the nature of that experience.

Sulamī’s Path of Blame in Khurasān most resembled the introverted, “sober” teachings of Junayd (d. 298/910)\(^53\) rather than those of “intoxicated,” extroverted individuals like al-Nūrī, a friend of Junayd who was known for public ecstatic statements about his love of God that inspired criticism from traditionalist ascetics.\(^54\) Although he was not known for public ecstatic statements, many of Junayd’s teachings are mystical in their emphasis on Divine unicity and communion with God. He taught that to partake in Divine unicity, the seeker must undergo a process of spiritual purification in which one loses self-consciousness to experience unity with the Divine. After annihilating one’s sense of selfhood (fanāʾ) through the grace of God, the seeker merges into the Divine existence and regains his previous state of unity with God. According to Junayd, fanāʾ is the recovery of one’s original state of oneness as an uncreated idea in God’s mind before creation and separation. Those whom God graces with the experience of Divine unicity return to their senses in a reconstituted version of themselves and enact God’s will on earth as friends of God and spiritual guides.\(^55\) On the other hand, intoxicated individuals in the movement like al-Nūrī emphasized the importance of the heart and love of God in a continuous process of ecstatic union and separation. For al-Nūrī, remaining in an ecstatic state of Divine unicity was itself the goal rather than the reconstituted self.

\(^{53}\) Karramustafa, Sufism: The Formative Period, 63.
\(^{54}\) However, al-Sulamī was heavily influenced by the ecstatic and extroverted mystical perspective of Biyazīd al-Bistāmī (d. 261/874–5 or 234/848–9) and he includes the controversial mystic, al-Hallāj, in his Generations of Sufis.
\(^{55}\) Karramustafa, Sufism: The Formative Period, 16-17.
Although not all Sufis agreed with him, from Sulamī’s perspective, Sufism and the Path of Blame were essentially the same path. When asked about the differences between Sufism and the Path of Blame he said, “The path of the people of blame and that of the people of love are degrees among the degrees of Sufism, and innate characteristics of its totality.” However, he placed the Malāmatīs at the highest level of the spiritual hierarchy. He considered himself both a Sufi and a Malāmatī while acknowledging that real differences existed in the approaches of the two modes of spirituality. He honors Sufis of Baghdad and Malāmatīs of Khurasān in his Generations of Sufis, especially privileging sober Sufis like Junayd and his followers. His interest in Junayd and his followers may have been influenced by his grandfather who was known to have met Junayd.

The Sufism of Junayd and the Malāmatiyyah tradition of Sulamī had much in common. They shared the same agenda of reconciling the mystical experience to the Islamic tradition and both are urban phenomena. Both rejected extreme public forms of mystical ecstasy as well as extroverted ascetic renunciation and encouraged participation in community life as a part of one’s spiritual striving. Junayd’s sober Sufis sought to defend themselves against the exoterism of the Ahl al-Ḥadīth, and the Malāmatīs also formed in opposition to extroverted asceticism, like that of the Karrāmīs.

Nevertheless al-Kharghūshī, a contemporary of Sulamī in Naysābūr, distinguished between the Path of Blame of Khurasān and the Sufism of Baghdad in the following way:

---

58 Al-Sulamī demonstrates his knowledge of the differences between the Path of Blame and Iraqi Sufis in Kitāb sulūk al-ʿārifīn (On the Wayfaring of Mystic Knowers) without pitting one against the other. Karramustafa, Sufism: The Formative Period, 64.
One of the differences between the [Malāmatīs] and the Sufis is that the principles of the Malāmatīs are built on knowledge while the principles of Sufis, on spiritual states. The Malāmatīs insist on earning a living, which they prefer, while the Sufis insist on rejecting gainful employment, which they abandon. The Malāmatīs abhor fame through [distinctive] dress and display of patched cloaks, while the Sufis have a propensity for that. And the Malāmatīs reject dance (raqs), samā’ (auditory dhikr sometimes including music and dance), and crying out loud as well as feigning/mimicking ecstasy (tawājud) [during samā’] in the manner of the Sufis.\(^{59}\)

Neither Iraqi Sufism nor the Path of Blame were monolithic, but Kharghūshī’s descriptions of both camps are useful in demonstrating how Sulamī synthesized the two traditions. Sulamī was suspicious of distinctive spiritual dress in true Malāmatiyyah fashion. Also in accord with Khargūshī’s summation of the Path of Blame, Sulamī encouraged earning a living, but took a moderate stance on the issue. Even though the aspirant should earn a living outwardly, inwardly he should not be concerned about his livelihood. “And among its maladies is concern with sustenance while God has already guaranteed that for her … And the remedy is knowing that God, the one who created him, ensured for him sufficiency in his sustenance (MS 33).”

Sulamī criticized Iraqi Sufis for publicizing their spiritual states as a form of ostentation; however, Sulamī’s understanding of the Path of Blame does not reject the existence and pursuit of spiritual states. He discusses the *adab* of ecstatic outbursts and licit forms of *samā’* (a form of *dhikr* involving music and dance), both of which he defends against critics by tracing the practice back to the example of the Prophet and his companions, in a book entitled *Kitāb al-samā’*.\(^{60}\)

Sulamī’s practice of *samā’* is evidenced by an account of a meeting between Sulamī and Qushayrī in Qushayrī’s *Epistle*:

The shaykh and imam [al-Qushayrī] said, “One day, I was sitting next to the master and imam Abū ʿAlī [al-Daqqāq]. There was talk of how Shaykh Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī...

---


\(^{60}\) See Kenneth Honerkamp, “Sufi Dance: La Danse Soufie”, *Journal of the History of Sufism* 4, (2003), for a discussion of *Kitāb al-samā’* and what al-Sulamī considers licit forms of *samā’*. 
- may God have mercy on him – used to follow the custom of the [common] Sufi folk by rising up [in ecstasy] during a session of music and invocation (samâ‘). The master Abū ‘Alī exclaimed: ‘It is better to keep quiet about a person like him being in such a state!’ In the same gathering he told me, ‘Go to Sulamī. You will find him sitting in his library. On top of his books there will be a small square red volume with the poetry of al-Ḥusayn Ibn Manṣūr [al-Ḥallâj]. Take this volume, without saying anything to him, then bring it to me.’ It was midday, when the heat was strong. So I came to him, as he was sitting in his library and the volume was indeed in the place mentioned by Abū ‘Alī. When I sat down, Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī began to speak. He said: “There once was a man who used to censure one scholar for his [uncontrollable] movements during Sufi music sessions. Once that same man was seen in the privacy of his house, whirling around like a person in a state of ecstasy (mutawajid). When someone asked him about that he responded, ‘There was a problem that I was unable to resolve. Suddenly, it became clear to me. I was unable to control my joy, so I rose up and began to whirl around!’ He was told, ‘This is exactly what they [Sufis] experience!’” When I saw that everything [in the library] was exactly as the master Abū ‘Alī told me, and when Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī uttered exactly the same words that the master Abū ‘Alī had said earlier, I was completely bewildered and asked myself, “How should I behave in this situation between those two?” I mulled over this matter in my thoughts and decided, “There’s nothing left for me but the truth!” Then I told [Sulamī], “The master Abū ‘Alī described this volume to me and told me to bring it to him without asking your permission. On the one hand, I am afraid of you; on the other, I cannot disobey orders. What will you command me to do?” He brought out a six-part volume of sayings by al-Ḥusayn [Ibn Manṣūr], which included his own book titled al-Sayhūr fī naqḍ al-duḥūr and instructed me, “Take this to him [Abū ‘Alī] and tell him that I have studied this volume and quoted some poems from it in my own writings.” So I left.61

The Malāmatīs were not known for discourse on Divine oneness, which may be due to their general reticence to speak about their spiritual experiences; however, mystical concepts associated with Iraqi Sufism like Divine unicity and spiritual death (fanā‘) are themes found in The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies. Sulamī quotes Junayd twice in the short treatise. “‘By what does the servant arrive at this [detachment from all but God most high]?’ He [Junayd] said, ‘By a solitary heart in which there is pure Divine unicity (MS 14).’” For Sulamī, like Junayd, the end of the spiritual path is the reconstituted self.

It is most accurate to say that Sulamī united aspects of Iraqi Sufism and the Path of Blame that were most alike, while condemning certain extroverted aspects of Sufism that threatened spiritual growth and Godfriendship with ostentation. Although the appellation

61 Qushayrī, Al-Qushayrī’s Epistle on Sufism, 247-248.
“Sufism” seems to have overtaken all other forms of mysticism in the 11th century, the principles of the Path of Blame were not erased by the influx of Sufism to Naysābūr but rather were incorporated into it. From Sulamī’s perspective, the synthesis of a Malāma-Sufism provided a much-needed unification of inward and outward aspects of the spiritual path against a tide of extroverted expressions of spirituality, whether isolationist like the Karrāmīs, exoterically-focused like the Ahl al-Hadīth, or publicly mystical like the intoxicated Sufis.

**From the Shaykh of Instruction (Taʿlīm) to the Shaykh of Training (Tarbiyyah)**

During Sulamī’s time, other changes were brewing in Islamic spirituality. In the earliest forms of Islamic mysticism, aspirants would seek the company of an experienced mystic or often multiple mystics to learn about the path in the form of public or private lectures. It was not uncommon to have multiple teachers and spiritual striving could be done in a more or less solitary fashion. In accord with this early manifestation of Sufism, Sulamī said that it is ideal to learn about Sufi social propriety from a mentor, but also said that in lieu of a guide it is possible to be guided directly by God. However, Sulamī emphasized the importance of companionship with other spiritual seekers, attending spiritual gathering, serving pious elders and following their instructions in *The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies*.

---

Beginning in the 9th century Baghdad, mysticism became a collective rather than solitary pursuit and a gradual change occurred in the relationship between shaykh and disciple. Societies and associations of mystics developed over time around charismatic teachers, like Junayd, who much more personally invested in the spiritual growth of their disciples. Ibn ʿAbbād (d. 792/1390) coined a term for this new kind of shaykh in the 14th century, “the training shaykh (al-shaykh al-tarbiyyah),” which was distinguished from the prior shaykh of instruction (al-shaykh al-ʿilmiyyah). The training shaykh directed and criticized the aspirant’s behavior more intimately than the lecturing of the shaykh of instruction.

Following the death of these charismatic leaders, there was a growth of formalization and tradition-building among their followers who sought to capture their teachings for later generations. They wrote about Sufism itself and developed literature on Sufi pedagogy, Sufi spiritual practices and mystical interpretations of the Quran. At the same time, the position of the shaykh and the familial tie of his community was bolstered by the introduction of spiritual lineages that connected a shaykh to the Prophet Muhammad in a chain called a silsilah from which they drew spiritual authority. Sufis began to take spiritual retreats and live communally in khānaqahs, buildings specifically designed for Sufi gatherings and spiritual growth, rather than meeting in homes or mosques. In the khānaqah, a Sufi could receive hands-on spiritual training and hear lectures from the shaykh. During retreats, which could last up to 40 days, disciples would reside there as the shaykh explained the meaning of a disciple’s dream, vision or state. In this way, the growth of the training shaykh occurred alongside other developments in Sufism towards formalization such as tradition-building, spiritual lineages and the khānaqah.

---

66 Some modern scholars argue that the shift from the shaykh of instruction to the shaykh of training occurred as early as the 8th century in Naysābūr, Khurasān. Fritz Meier, “Khurasan and the End of Classical Sufism”. In Essays on Islamic Piety and Mysticism, trans. O’ Kane, (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 190.

Al-Qushayrī, one of Sulamī’s students, finalizes the transition from the shaykh of instruction to the shaykh of training.\(^{68}\) In his *Epistle*, he says that submitting oneself fully to a single shaykh is essential to the path. He likens the relationship between shaykh and disciple to the relationship between Moses and an unnamed man, traditionally called Khiḍr, described in the Quran. Moses petitions Khiḍr to teach him something of his special knowledge *from [God’s] Presence* [al-Kahf 18: 65]. Khiḍr accepts his request reluctantly on the condition that Moses not question his actions. He then goes on to put a hole in a man’s boat, kill a boy, and fix a wall without providing any explanation for his actions. Moses could not refrain from questioning him on each occasion in spite of his promise. Khiḍr finally explains the inner meaning of his actions and departs from Moses thereafter, saying *I did not do this upon my own command* [al-Kahf 18: 82]. Like Khiḍr, the shaykh is believed to have special knowledge and work at the command of God, even if in unconventional ways.

The aspirant should not make the mistake of Moses but follow the guidance of the shaykh as though the shaykh were infallible, although one is reminded that he is not, because the shaykh is familiar with the path and its pitfalls. The training shaykh is completely in control of the student’s growth, and the student is neither to perform any additional religious rituals unless prescribed by the shaykh nor to travel without permission. By imitating the shaykh, who presumably had mastered imitation of the Prophet Muhammad, the student hopes to raise his spiritual state and follow the way of Islam in the same manner of the Prophet through the spiritual intermediary of the shaykh. After the 11th century, the training master-disciple relationship became the norm of spiritual purification in Sufism.

---

\(^{68}\) Meier, “Khurasan and the End of Classical Sufism”, 209.
Yet as aforementioned, five centuries later different kinds of relationships between shaykh and disciple were still explored in the work of Ibn ʿAbbād. According to Ibn ʿAbbād, early Sufis like al-Muḥāsibī and Abū Tālib al-Makkī did not make mention of the training shaykh as a requirement of spiritual striving.⁶⁹ Those “of banal mind and rebellious nafs need a shaykh of training, but those who have an open mind and docile nafs do not require the restraints of the first type of guidance. However, everyone who walks the path needs an instructing spiritual guide.”⁷⁰ Although the training shaykh has become the norm of Sufism since the time of Qusharyī, this new relationship to the shaykh is not universally considered an essential aspect of the path.

The Institutionalization of Islamic Spirituality

What can explain the shift from the informal shaykh of instruction to the formal shaykh of training? The first communities to form around a training shaykh and frequent Sufi lodges seem to have first appeared in ⁵ᵗʰ/¹¹ᵗʰ century Khurasān, although this model spread quickly to other areas.

Practices that later came to be associated with membership in a Sufi order—such as the binding of a disciple to a master through an oath, becoming part of the master’s silsilah (spiritual chain of authority), the bestowal of the khirqah (cloak [of initiation]), and the inculcation (talqīn) of a method of dhikr (prayer)—find their first expression in the writings of Khurāsānian Sufis.⁷¹

It is likely that the Malāmatiyyah tradition in Khurasān lent itself to the cultivation of the training shaykh because of its emphasis on rigorously training the nafs. In addition, there were political factors. Some compare the relationship between the shaykh and disciple to the patron-

---

client relationship that emerged in the 4th/10th century after the fall of the Abbasid Empire in the mid-10th century. The Turkish Ghaznavid dynasty (established ca. 994-998) and the Turko-Persian Seljuqs (by 1040) settled in Naysābūr, Khurāsān.\textsuperscript{72} As a result, an administrative center was established in Naysābūr and the rulers relied heavily on the authority of scholars, who were increasingly Sufi-oriented, to govern the state independently of the caliphate.

In Iraq, traditionalist Sufis fought against adhering to the emergent theological and legal schools, but in Khurasān, Malāma-Sufism was informally attached to the Shāfiʿī school of jurisprudence as well as Ashʿarī theology.\textsuperscript{73} Although Sulamī was quasi-traditionalist in that he couched Malāma-Sufism in hadith scholarship rather than jurisprudence or theology, he and almost all his Sufi contemporaries in Naysābūr were Shāfiʿīs and proponents of Ashʿarī theology, easing the incorporation of Malāma-Sufism into the fabric of schools of jurisprudence and theology in Nasyābūr. A generation after Sulamī in Khurasān, Qusharyī formalizes the integration of Sufism into the curriculum of the Shāfiʿī school, warning novices on the path of Sufism to follow the Sufi madhhab (school of Law) in addition to the Sufi ṭarīqah (path) so as not to be led astray.\textsuperscript{74} This association with the Shāfiʿī school of law provided Malāma-Sufism itself, in addition to Sufi individuals, institutional support in Shāfiʿī schools that were patronized by the caliphate, which could be supplemented with more intimate instruction in the also state-sponsored khānaqahs. This close relationship between the rulers and Sufi-oriented religious authorities would also develop later in Bagdad and other important city centers.

In Sulamī’s time, through the institutionalization of a moderate Malāma-Sufism in the growing Shāfiʿī school of law, the popularity of Sufism overtook ascetic traditionalism in

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{73} Karramustafa attests that the “fusion between Sufism and Malāmataiyya seems to have proceeded hand in hand with the increasing presence and popularity of the Shāfiʿī legal school in Nishapur.” Karramustafa, \textit{Sufism: The Formative Period}, 61.
\textsuperscript{74} Malamud, “Sufi organizations and structures of authority in medieval Nishapur,” 429.
Khurāsān. Although more outspoken ecstatic Sufis still faced attack from traditionalist ascetics who opposed the transition of focus from the exoteric to the esoteric, the introverted, quasi-traditional form of Malāma-Sufism promulgated by Sulamī was important to the integration of Sufism into political institutions and religious instruction in Khurasān.
CHAPTER 3
OVERVIEW OF THE NAFS IN THE ISLAMIC TRADITION AND ISLAMIC LITERATURE

Glorified be the one who caused his servant to journey by night from the sacred mosque to the furthest mosque whose precincts we have blessed in order to show him some of our signs, indeed [God] is the one who hears, the one who sees [al-Isrā’ 17: 1].

Nafs, Heart, Secret-Heart and Spirit

The miʿrāj (heavenly journey) of the Prophet Muhammad from the mundane world to the Divine presence is the central motif of mystical discourse in Islam. Sufis use the miʿrāj as the archetype of detailed itineraries of the aspirant’s spiritual journey through higher levels of consciousness to unity with God. Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Aḥmad (d. 309/922), in his Sufi commentary on the verse of the miʿrāj, describes this journey in terms of different levels of consciousness achieved as one approaches the presence of God.

[Muhammad] was caused to journey by night in his self (nafs), he journeyed by night in his spirit (rūḥ), and he was dispatched in his secret-heart (sirr). The secret-heart did not know what engaged the spirit, the spirit did not know what the secret-heart witnessed, and the self had no report from either of them or from what engaged them. Each stopped at its limit, witnessing the Real, apprehending something of it without intermediary or abidance of humanity. Rather, a real became realized in his servant, making him realized. He stood him where there was no station and addressed him. He revealed to him what he revealed.75

In this way, terms like nafs, spirit and secret-heart are used by Sufis to describe the aspirant’s consciousness of different aspects of reality along the journey to God. Nafs, spirit and secret-heart are not different entities, but terms that pertain to one’s consciousness of different levels of reality. On each plane of consciousness of reality, one experiences different aspects of

the Divine. At the lowest level of consciousness, one only sees the material world, while at highest level of consciousness, one experiences the unity of God and the reality that there is nothing in the universe but God (lā ilāha illā Allāh). One of God’s 99 Names in the Quran is The Real (al-Ḥaqq) because God is the ultimate, unified reality beyond the finite, apparent multiplicity of the material world.

Unlike Ibn ʿAtāʾ’s three-part hierarchy, nafs, spirit and secret-heart, Sulamī postulated the following four-part hierarchy: nafs, heart, secret-heart, and spirit.76 At the highest level of consciousness, the spirit perceives only God. Below that is the secret-heart, which is associated with perceiving the spiritual or angelic realm. The second level, the heart, corresponds to the realm in between the material and spiritual worlds. The nafs, often associated with the body, is the lowest state of consciousness and only perceives the material world in a state of unawareness of God’s presence.77 Like Ibn ʿAtāʾ, Sulamī says that each center of consciousness cannot perceive any reality outside its domain. For example, the nafs is not aware of what the heart can perceive, nor can the heart perceive what the spirit perceives. These different levels of consciousness of reality appear throughout the works of Sulamī, so it will be important to provide a brief overview of them in the Quran and hadith literature to facilitate understanding of these technical terms.

77 Honerkamp, Sufi Dance: La Danse Soufie, 6.
The *Nafs*

The root of *nafs* (pl. *nufūs* and *anfūs*), *n-f-s*, occurs throughout the Quran in different forms, most often referring to the “self” reflexively (i.e. himself, herself, themselves). Like the self in English, the *nafs* refers to the whole or essential part of a human being, often associated with the body and consciousness. However, unlike the scientific-materialist perspective of the self which posits that selfhood and consciousness are material realities located in the brain, from the Islamic perspective the *nafs* is not a knowable, material entity limited to the physical body.

*Nafs*, when used reflexively, is not only an identifier of humans but may refer to anything from stones to animals to humans to God, even though each *nafs* may have a different type or level of consciousness. For example, Jesus tells God in the Quran, *Thou knowest what is in my self* (*nafsī*) and *I know not what is in Thy Self* (*nafsik*) [al-Māʾidah 5: 116]. God’s consciousness is omniscient while a human’s consciousness is limited. Unlike stones and animals, the human *nafs* is self-aware and therefore held accountable for its actions.

In every moment, the *nafs* persists in an unending process of self-discovery, never having a static identity or knowing what the next moment will bring, hence the oft-quoted maxim: the Sufi is the child of the moment (*al-ṣūfī ibn al-waqt*). “One of its meanings is that the true Sufi lives in the constant awareness that his self is nothing but what he is in the present moment. And since every present moment is unique, each moment of the self is unique.”

In this vein, Sulamī cautions the aspirant to be watchful of his “moment” and emphasizes the unknowability of the next moment (*MS* 61). One should not “feel secure about a single breath of

---

78 *Nafs* also refers to a human’s self as well as God’s Self in the Quran, but God’s Self is unknown to the creation. The *nafs* of Allah is also referenced in [al-Anām: 12] and [al-Anām: 55] where Allah “prescribed Mercy for Himself,” in [Al- Imrān: 28] and [Al-Imrān: 38] where Allah “warns you of Himself,” and [Ṭā Ḥā: 41] addressing Moses, “I selected thee for Myself.” *Nafs* is also used for the “self” of gods who don’t possess “for themselves” any harm or benefit [al-Furqān: 3].


his breaths (MS 59).” At every moment of earthly existence, the nafs is in a constant state of redefinition, and at any moment one’s earthly existence may come to an end.

In the case that “the nafs” occurs as a definite noun without a referent, it solely refers to a human nafs. From the Sufi perspective, the nafs has no true existence of its own and only has life because God re-creates each nafs anew in every moment. Every aspect of God’s creation, including the nafs, is His manifestation or “face.” In every moment the nafs dies and is brought to life as a new face of the Divine. All that is upon [the earth] passes away. And there remains the Face of thy Lord [al-Raḥmān 55: 26-27]. The nafs is everlasting only as the manifestation of Divine acts and attributes and has no real existence of its own except through God’s continuous act of creation. Whenever Sulamī urges the aspirant to cause the death of his nafs “from the world” or “all that is other than God,” he is reminding one of this metaphysical reality of dependence on and existence in God (MS 10).

The nafs in its definite form is often translated positively as “the soul” or negatively “the lower soul” rather than “the self.” However, soul is a problematic translation of nafs because in English soul generally has either a positive or neutral connotation, whereas the nafs is often (though not always) spoken of in a negative light in the Islamic tradition, especially among the Sufis. For example, every nafs needs purification. By the nafs and the One Who fashioned it and inspired it as to what makes it iniquitous or reverent. Indeed, he prospers who purifies it. And indeed he fails who obscures it [al-Shams 91: 7-10].

Purification of the nafs can occur in a variety of ways depending on its state. According to Sulamī, the nafs may exist in one of three different states along the unending path of spiritual perfection. The first and lowest state of the nafs, the “nafs which incites one to iniquity” (al-nafs al-ammāra bi-l-sū’), is drawn from the following Quranic verse. I absolve not my own nafs.
Surely the nafs commands to evil, save whom my Lord may show mercy. Truly my Lord is Forgiving, Merciful [Yūsuf 12: 53]. The default state of the nafs is to be self-serving and subject the commands and limits of God to his own needs and desires. One with an inciting nafs sins frequently and his sin is made to seem appealing. “[H]e is veiled from this own inadequacy and he perceives the evil of his deeds to seem fair (MS 7).” In order to advance beyond this stage, one must wage war against his needs and desires through mental and physical spiritual exercises like dhikr, night vigils and fasting.

Although the purification of the nafs ultimately depends on God’s grace as God is the source of purification, there is an expectation for humanity to make efforts towards purifying their nafs. Truly God alters not what is in a people until they alter what is in themselves [al-Ra’d 13: 11]. In addition, many verses in the Quran attest to the fact that God’s will is always in accordance with justice, so purification is not an arbitrary decision on God’s part.81 [I]t is God who purifies whomsoever He will, and they shall not be wronged so much as the thread of a date stone [al-Nisā’ 4: 40].

The second state of the nafs is the “blaming nafs” (al-nafs al-lawwāma) wherein the nafs becomes aware of its iniquity, takes itself into account for her transgressions, and seeks repentance. I swear by the Day of Resurrection. And I swear by the blaming nafs. Does man suppose that We shall not gather his bones [Al-Qiyāmah 75: 1-3]? The Day of Judgement is associated with the blaming nafs because on that day, every nafs will blame itself for past deeds and missed opportunities.82 Sulamī says that this nafs may be a sinner or a righteous person who is unhappy with God’s plan. The blaming nafs finds fault whether in “prosperity or times of trial, it is its wont to regret opportunities that passed it by (MS 3).”

---

Although the Malāmatīs consider blame an important aspect of their spiritual program, the type of blame epitomized in the blaming nafs is not the goal of the Path of Blame. Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 751/1350) in al-Rūḥ distinguishes between two different types of blame: blameworthy and praiseworthy.

Self-reproach (lawwāma) is of two types: self-reproach that is blameworthy (malūma), by which is meant the nafs that is ignorant (jāhila) and tyrannical (ẓālima) and which has been censured by God and His angels. [The second type is] self-reproach that is not blameworthy (ghayr malūma), which is the nafs that continues to reproach its owner regarding his deficiencies in God’s obedience despite his best efforts; [in this sense] this is self-reproach that is not blameworthy (lawwāma ghayr malūma).  

In the manner of al-Jawziyyah’s understanding of praiseworthy blame, the Malāmatiyyah understanding of self-blame involves recognition of one’s ontological deficiency in relation to the Creator in spite of meeting one’s obligations, performing night vigils, voluntary fasting, and constant dhikr among other spiritual exercises. The purpose of blaming the nafs is to remind one that no matter how far one travels the path, no one can match the perfection of the Creator. Blaming the nafs is a means to purification but not the end-goal of the Path of Blame because the perfection of God should be at the center of one’s thoughts. Regard of one’s nafs (ru’yatuhā), rather than regard of God, is considered to be a fault of the nafs.

And among its maladies is self-regard and taking pity on itself. And the remedy is regarding the grace of God Most High upon him in all moments and states, so that self-regard falls away from him. I heard Abū Bakr al-Rāzī saying I heard al-Wāṣitī, may God have mercy on him, saying, “The nearest thing to God’s disdain is the self-regard of the nafs and her own actions.” (MS 15).”

Although the Malāmatī should recognize himself as worthy of blame, he should see the perfection of God in every aspect of creation and be at peace with what was ordained for him. The highest state of the nafs is the “nafs at peace” (al-nafs al-muṭma’innah). O thou nafs at

84 Mystics like Tirmidhī, Junayd and Nūrī criticized ʿUthmān al-Ḥīrī for focusing on the nafs rather than God alone. Sulamī may be clarifying this matter. See Karramustafa Sufism: The Formative Period, 50-51.
peace! Return unto thy Lord, satisfied, satisfying [God]. Enter among My servants. Enter My Garden [al-Fajr 89: 27-30]. The nafs at peace is obedient to God, affirms God’s promise of salvation and punishment, and accepts the Divine command with gratitude, “whether the good or iniquity thereof, or the beneficial or harmful. It is the one God addresses saying, Return to thy Lord, satisfied— meaning with God— satisfying [al-Fajr 89: 28], meaning satisfying to God by its pious acts and its certainty of the truth of God’s promise (MS 3).”

The Heart (Qalb)

The heart is the receptacle of guidance and the locus of belief. Quranic revelation was sent down to the heart of the Prophet Muhammad, and the heart of a believer also receives guidance from God [al-Taghābun 64: 11]. When asked about piety, the Prophet is reported to have said, “Ask your heart regarding it. Piety is that which contents the nafs and comforts the heart, and sin is that which causes doubts and perturbs the heart, even if people pronounce it lawful and give you verdicts on such matters again and again.”

The nafs is often viewed in opposition to the heart in Sufi discourse. If the nafs has authority over the heart, one becomes ruled by desires and egoism; however, if the heart subdues the nafs, the heart opens to the reception of Divine wisdom and drives one to obedience.

And the remedy is fasting (tawjī’). For when [the nafs] is hungry, that will deprive it of its share, and when its share is diminished, it becomes weak. And when it becomes weak, the heart will overcome it and if the heart overcomes it, [the heart] will impose obedience upon it and cause lassitude to fall away from it (MS 19).

---

Ultimately, a person will be judged on the Day of Resurrection by the purity of his heart and intentions. Therefore, one should focus on one’s inward state rather than worry about how he appears to others.

And he knows that his inward is what God most high regards and it is worthier of being rectified than the outward [appearance] which is in the sight of people. God the Blessed and Most High said, *Truly God is a watcher over you* [al-Nisā’ 4: 1]. And the Prophet ☪ said, “Indeed, God regards neither your appearance nor your good deeds but rather he regards your hearts and intentions (*MS* 32).”

The Secret-Heart (*Sirr*)

In the Quran, secret (*sirr* pl. *asrār*) occurs in relation to anything unknown or hidden. Say, “*He has sent it down Who knows what is secret in the heavens and on the earth*” [al-Furqān 25: 6]. The *sirr* in Sufi discourse, translated here as secret-heart, is a deeper level of the heart that is mentioned frequently in *Maladies of the Nafs*, sometimes alongside the heart. “And the remedy is abandoning outward displays of humility except to the extent of the inner humility that one sees in his heart and secret-heart (*MS* 42).” For Sulamī, the secret-heart is the spiritual state below the spirit, but other Sufis like al-Qushayrī deem the secret-heart the highest state.

The Spirit (*Rūḥ*)

Some Muslim lexicologists say that the *nafs* and the spirit (*rūḥ*) are one in the same entity only differentiated by grammatical gender, the *nafs* being feminine and the spirit masculine. Others like Ibn ʿAbbās said that “Every human being has two *nafs*: one is the *nafs* that is

86 Find this notion in [al-Baqarah 2: 225]. “Actions are judged by intentions, so each man will have what he intended. Thus, he whose migration (*hijrah*) is to Allah and His Messenger, his migration is to Allah and His messenger, but he whose migration was for some worldly thing he might gain, or for a wife he might marry, his migration is to that for which he migrated. Yahyā Ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī, *al-Arbaʿūn al-nawawiyah*, (Mecca: Maktabah al-iqtiṣād, 2009), 4 (Hadith 1).

distinguished by intellect (ʿaql), and the other is the nafs of the spirit by which it has life."\(^{88}\)

Others associate the nafs with one’s negative traits and the spirit with one’s positive traits.

Much has been said respecting the soul (nafs) and the spirit (rūḥ); whether they be one, or different: but the truth is, that there is a difference between them, since they are not always interchangeable…the difference between them depends upon the consideration of relation and this is indicated by a tradition in which it is said that God created Adam and put into him a soul and a spirit; and from the latter was his quality of abstaining from unlawful and indecorous things, and his understanding, and his clemency, or forbearance, and his liberality, and his fidelity; and from the former, [which is also called the soul that commands to evil] his appetite, and his unsteadiness, and his hastiness of disposition, and his anger: therefore one should not say that the soul is the same as the spirit absolutely, without restriction, nor the spirit the same as soul.\(^{89}\)

The Quran states explicitly, you have not been given knowledge, save a little of the spirit. [al-Isrā’ 17: 85] The term spirit appears in four contexts in the Qur’an—creation, revelation, death and Resurrection—all contexts which involve navigation between the spiritual and material worlds.\(^{90}\) The term spirit is used for the Archangel Gabriel who is attributed with bringing revelation to Muhammad, impregnating Mary, and empowering Jesus’s spiritual abilities. Jesus alone among the Prophets is called a spirit (rūḥ) from God [al-Nisā’ 4:171]. The spirit may also be a reference to the Quran, or a general reference to the Divine command since the spirit is said to be at the command of God in many places in the Quran.

The spirit, unlike the nafs, is never spoken of in a negative light and does not have different states or types. It is God’s pure spirit that is blown into humanity at the moment of creation. Behold! I am creating a human from clay. When I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My Spirit (rūḥī), fall down before him prostrating [Ṣād 38: 71-72]. In Darajāt al-ṣādiqīn (Stations of the Righteous), In addition, the angels, which are often associated with the

---

\(^{88}\) Muḥammad ibn Makram ibn Manẓūr, Lisān al-ʿarab.


\(^{90}\) Michael Sells, “Spirit”, in: Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān, General Editor: Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Georgetown University, Washington DC. Consulted online on 31 March 2018 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1875-3922_q3_EQCOM_00193
spirit or considered to be spirits, are sinless beings who do nothing but worship God and act on His behalf.

Sulamī’s placement of the spirit at the highest level of consciousness of reality may be related to the fact that the Quran characterizes the spirit as an entirely pure entity often associated with the Divine. He draws upon the motif of the breath of life to describe the state of realization of God’s unity. “Thus the breath of life (rowḥ) brings deliverance to their inner mysteries from [the distractions of] creation, through intimacy with its Creator.”91 He does not mention the term spirit in Maladies of the Nafs, perhaps indicating that this text pertains mainly to traversing the first three levels of the consciousness, nafs, heart and secret-heart.

Although Sulamī does not make this connection himself, it is tempting to formulate a relationship between the three levels of the nafs with the first three levels of Sulamī’s 4-part hierarchy: nafs, heart, and secret-heart. The nafs that incites to iniquity would correspond to the nafs, the blaming nafs with the heart, and the nafs at peace with the secret-heart. The fourth level, union with God, would involve the loss of one’s self-consciousness altogether thus transcending all three levels of the nafs. This level beyond the nafs would then be associated with the 4th level of Sulamī’s hierarchy in which one attains unity with God: the spirit.

Nafs is a key term in Maladies of the Nafs and mastering one’s nafs is the crux of spiritual purification throughout Sufi literature. Sufis, like Sulamī, were especially known to extrapolate upon the nafs, the heart, the secret-heart and the spirit, which they saw in connection to the perception of different aspects of reality along the path to union with God, much like the spiritual journey of Muhammad in his miʿrāj.

---

The Faults of The Nafs in Early Islamic Writings

Sulamī’s use of terms like nafs, heart, secret-heart and spirit to describe the path to God is an extension of prior discussions of these terms in Islamic discourse, especially regarding the nafs. One of the earliest to focus on training the nafs was Ḥasan al- Başrī (d. 110/728), the best-known leader of an early ascetic movement known as the Basran School.92 Much of his discourse about the iniquity of the nafs is reflected in Sulamī’s Maladies of the Nafs. Ḥasan al- Başrī describes the nafs in the following way: “An unruly riding beast is in no greater need of a strong bridle than is your nafs.”93

One of the earliest Shia Quranic commentators, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, (d. 765/1363-1364) a well-known influence on later Sufi writers and a source of Sulamī’s mystical Quranic exegesis Ḥaqāʾiq al-tafsīr, also cast the nafs in a negative light. Like Sulamī, he thought of the nafs, the heart, and the spirit as the same entity with different names that corresponded to people with different levels of piety and places the spirit at the top of his spiritual hierarchy. The nafs was associated with the tyrants (ẓālim) the heart with moderately pious people (muqtasid), and the spirit with extremely pious people (sābiq). According to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, the nafs belongs to the tyrant who loves God for selfish reasons, the moderately pious one has a heart who loves God for God’s sake, and the spirit is reserved for the most pious one who annihilates his will in the Will of God.94

---
92 Although extreme asceticism in Baṣra is often associated with a well-known figure named Ḥasan al- Başrī, Picken argues that the ascetic trend in Islam has origins in one of the Prophet’s companions named Abū Mūsā [ʿAbd Allāh b. Qays] al- Ash’arī (d. 44/665) and a group of pious Muslims called the “people of the bench (ahl al-ṣuffā).” They, like Ḥasan al- Başrī, were known for fiery sermons, recitation of the Quran and weeping. The scholars who followed and expanded upon the teachings of al- Ash’arī came to be known as the First Basran School and Ḥasan al- Başrī would later become a major player of the Second Basran School. They were characterized by cutting themselves off from the world completely, engaging in spiritual retreat, studying the Quran and hadith or otherwise living lives of poverty as preachers and social activists. See Picken, Spiritual Purification in Islam, 24.
93 Ghazzālī, On Disciplining the Soul, 57.
94 Annemarie Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions of Islam, 41.
Mental and spiritual illness were thoroughly explored subjects in the Medieval Islamic world and included the study and treatment of the nafs (ʿilāj al-nafs), healing the spirit (ṭibb al-rūḥānī) and healing the heart (ṭibb al-qalb).\(^95\) Abū Zayd Ahmed Saḥl Al-Balkhī (d. 934/1527-1528) was the first to introduce the concept of ṭibb al-rūḥānī and ṭibb al-qalb to Islamic medicine in his Masāliḥ al-abdan wa al-anfūs (Sustenance of the Bodies and Souls)\(^96\) and demonstrated the mutually dependent relationship between the health of the body and the health of the nafs. In the 9th century, Ibn Saḥl Rabbān al-Tabarī (d. 870/1465-1466) wrote the first study on ʿilāj al-nafs in which he explored the importance of counseling for the mental health of patients. The earliest major contributor to the field of ṭibb al-rūḥānī was Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyah al-Rāzī (d. 865/1460-1461) who wrote two well-known works on mental illness called al-Masūrī and al-Hawī in the 10th century and oversaw one of the first psychiatric wards in the world.\(^97\) The work Tibb al-rūḥānī (Healing the Spirit)\(^98\) is attributed to al-Rāzī and closely resembles Sulamī’s The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies in its identification of negative attributes of the nafs.

Methods of restraining the nafs became the central component of Sufi literature like that of Ḥārith al-Muḥāṣibī (d. 243/857), an early Sufi of Baghdad originally from Basra who combined Ḥasan al-Baṣrī’s rigorous asceticism with Sufi contemplation and mysticism. He was among the earliest Sufis to develop a complex system of psychology which focused intensely on

---


examining and disciplining the *nafs*. In fact his namesake *muḥāsabah* means he who calculates his actions. Sulamī’s *The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies* has been compared to al-Muḥāsībī’s *Naṣāʾīh*, in which Muḥāsībī also wrote about the faults of the *nafs* and “her deception, her illusions, [and] her evil deeds.” Methods of restraining the *nafs* such as “remaining silent instead of indulging in vain talk… avoiding backbiting; the avoidance of indulging in sins and excesses, as well as contemplation and remembrance of God” are found in both texts. Like Sulamī, Muḥāsībī taught that the desires and needs of the *nafs* obstructed the proper function of the heart, which is the center of Divine presence and consciousness. Once one knows the faults of his *nafs* and meditates on the Quran and example of the Prophet, his heart will turn to God and be open to spiritual advancement.

Centuries later, the necessity of dealing with the faults of the *nafs* remains a key aspect of the Sufi path. *The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies* in particular has re-emerged in the Shādhilī Sufi Order in Morocco until today.

**The Importance of *The Maladies of The Nafs And Their Remedies* in The Shādhilī Sufi Order**

*The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies* has stood the test of time and space, emerging hundreds of years after its original composition in Khurāsān in the Westernmost extremity of Islamic influence: Morocco. A venerable Moroccan Shādhilī shaykh of the 14th

---

century named Ibn ʿAbbād wrote a famous commentary on Ibn Atāʾ Allāh’s *Kitāb al-ḥikam*, a central text in the Shādhilī order, in which he recommended *The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies*. “Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī authored a treatise on the maladies of the *nafs* and the means of effecting their cures, which though small in size is great in benefits; So let the aspirant look therein.”¹⁰³ He also advised his companion and disciple Yaḥyā in a letter to read the works of Sulamī among other prominent authors. “If the seeker does not find such a [training] guide, or has a hard time doing so, he should rely on the writings of the Sufi authorities, especially books of Muḥāsibī, Sulamī, Qushayrī, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī, and Suhrawardī’s *The Benefits of Intimate Knowledge.*”¹⁰⁴ Ibn ʿAbbād’s living example and understanding of Sufism has been likened to the Path of Blame because of his emphasis on constant suspicion of the *nafs* and secreting his spiritual practice. This connection is strengthened by his frequent citation of Sulamī in his writings.¹⁰⁵

*The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies* resurfaced in the Shādhilī order about a century after Ibn ʿAbbād through Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Zarrūq al-Burnuṣī’s (d. 899/1493) versification of it in the 15th century called *ʿUyūb al-nafs wa dawāʾ uhā*.¹⁰⁶ Zarrūq was a renowned Moroccan Shādhilī Sufi shaykh and scholar of the traditional sciences given the title “Renewer” (*mujaddid*) of the religion” and “Regulator of the scholars and friends of God” (*muḥtasib al-ʿulamaʿ wa al-awliya*). A commentary on this

¹⁰³ Maḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbbād, *Sharḥ kitāb al-ḥikam* (Cairo: Matbaʿ wādī al-Nīl al-Miṣrīya, 1277), 44.
¹⁰⁵ Welle, “Ṣūfī Adab Transcending Scruples,” 126
versification of Zarrūq’s was written by his disciple, al-Kharrūbī, entitled Al-Uns fī sharḥ ʿuyūb al-nafs.  

It is unsurprising that a short text like The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies would be so popular in the Shādhilī order as many principles of the Shādhilī order resemble the socially conformist, yet mystical understanding of Malāma-Sufism espoused by Sulamī. Shaykh Abū al-Hasan al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1256), the founder of the order, encouraged training the nafs and the Shādhilī are well known for dressing in accord with societal norms. As a result, the Shādhilī order, like the Path of Blame, was largely an urban phenomenon comprised of artisans and merchants from the middle and upper classes. In addition, Sulamī taught that renouncing one’s self-direction in acceptance of God’s Will was necessary before spiritual realization, a teaching which is a central tenant of the Shādhilī order.  

All praise is God’s alone, who made His chosen ones conscious of the maladies (ʿuyūb) inherent to their nafs and ennobled them by apprising them of its deceptive nature, making

---

109 The nafs (pl. anfus) in refers to the physical body as well as all aspects of one’s being including corporeal and noncorporeal elements; however, in Sufi Literature the nafs is most often associated with one’s negative character traits, especially egotism and passions. In the Quran, the nafs has negative, neutral, and positive connotations depending on the context. For example, the nafs may incite one to iniquity or be a “nafs at peace,” which is satisfied by God and satisfies God. The negative attributes of the nafs are sometimes contrasted to the spirit (rūḥ), which is only associated with praiseworthy traits. (Qushayrī, AL-Qushayrī’s Epistle on Sufism, 109). For a more in-depth overview of the nafs in the Islamic tradition see Chapter 3. The word nafs is given a female gender pronoun here in accordance with the noun’s gender in the original Arabic and the female personification of the nafs in Sufi and philosophical literature. For more discussion on translation of gendered Arabic pronouns into gendered or non-gendered English pronouns see Michael Sells’s work Approaching the Quran: The Early Revelations, 178-179, 183. There Sells distinguishes between the translation of “personified” objects (with corresponding pronouns he or she) and “non-personified” objects (with the corresponding pronoun it). Although the nafs is grammatically feminine, neither women nor femininity are associated with evil in the Quran. In some cases, Sufis have cautioned male followers regarding association with women because of the temptation of having illicit sexual relations which may arise as a spiritual novice in their presence. For more discussion on the unfortunate conflation of the negative attributes of the nafs with women in extra-Quranic Muslim religious writings, see see “Soul of a Woman was Created Below: Woman as the Lower Soul (Nafs) in Islam” by Rkia Cornell.
them a wakeful people, attentive to the origins from which the states \( (ahwāl) \)\(^{110} \) arise in the \( nafs \), and according them success in treating its maladies and hidden wickedness by a remedy \( (adwīyah) \) hidden to all but the attentive \( (MS \ 1) \).

Although purification of the \( nafs \) today is mainly discussed in Sufi circles, the necessity of purifying the \( nafs \) was a widespread concept in early Islamic societies. The works of Sulamī like \( Maladies \ of \ the \ Nafs \) would have been applicable to a variety of Muslim audiences from the average Muslim to Sufi elites.

**Audience and Aim of The Maladies of The Nafs and Their Remedies**

Due to his extensive education in the traditional Islamic sciences and Sufism, Sulamī was equipped to write on a wide variety of subjects. Western scholars have divided Sulamī’s work into three genres: treatises on \( adab \), Sufi hagiography, and Sufi Quranic commentary.\(^{111} \) *The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies* falls into the category of \( adab \) literature because it tackles issues of social propriety. Another work by Sulamī that has been translated into English and belongs to this category is *Jawāmiʿ ādāb al-ṣūfiyyah* (Compendium of Sufi Propriety).\(^{112} \)

Sulamī had three different audiences in mind when writing on Sufism: a general audience, Sufi initiates and an erudite Sufi community. In many cases, certain works may fall into more than one category. *Maladies of the Nafs* would have appealed to a general Muslim audience and would also have been useful for a Sufi initiate.\(^{113} \) This treatise demonstrates Sulamī’s knowledge of the Quran and Prophetic sayings, which would draw a general audience

---

\(^{110} \) The [mystical] state \( (hāl) \) is not earned but is a gift from God that is bestowed with no connection to one’s effort or desire for it. A state may be an emotional state of “joy, grief, expansion, contraction, passionate longing, vexation, awe or need.” Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayrī’s Epistle on Sufism*, 78-79.


\(^{113} \) Sulamī, *Jawāmiʿ ādāb al-ṣūfiyya* and *Uyūb al-nafs wa-mudāwātuhā*, 17.
with the addition of Sufi stories, poems and sayings which would attract Sufi novices. Like other adab literature, it lacks the esoteric terminology that would limit it to an erudite Sufi community.

Sulamī’s writings meet two goals. Firstly, he sought to demonstrate the felicity of Malāma-Sufism to the earliest forms of Islam through repeated citation of Quran and hadith. One example of this type of work is Kitāb al-arbaʿīn fīl-taṣawwuf (The Book of 40 [Hadith] on Sufism) which contains 40 hadith traditions about Sufism with complete chains of transmission to the Prophet Muhammad. He also demonstrates this connection in his adab literature, including The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies. Throughout the work, he interlaces Sufi sayings and concepts with scriptural references and Prophetic sayings. Secondly, he wanted to provide the public and Sufis with knowledge of Sufism as combined with the Malāmatiyyah perspective. He sought to define the boundaries of a normative Malāma-Sufism, like in the aforementioned works on the Path of Blame (Risālat malāmatiyyah) and the proper etiquette of samāʾ (Kitāb al-samāʾ), by criticizing and perfecting Sufi practices and concepts through the prism of Malāmatiyyah principles.

CONCLUSION

The Malāmatīs are not well known for their beliefs about spiritual states and most likely did not discuss them to avoid spiritual ostentation, but according to Sulamī’s understanding, they share many of the mystical beliefs of the Sufis. Like the Sufis, Sulamī utilized different terms to speak about different levels of perception of reality, namely nafs, heart, secret-heart and spirit. Given Sulamī’s hierarchy, it seems that The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies deals

---

mainly with overcoming the *nafs*, which is the term that corresponds to the lowest level of consciousness: the *nafs*. The Malāmatī-Sufi focus on the *nafs* and interiorization of piety continued to resonate for later Sufis as evidenced by the re-emergence of *The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies* time and again in the Shādhilī order.
CHAPTER 4

THE MALADIES OF THE NAFS AND THEIR REMEDIES

Critical Edition and Manuscripts

Etan Kohlberg’s critical edition was chosen as the preferred source of this translation because it is the only critical edition of the text. Kohlberg draws on three manuscripts. The Berlin\textsuperscript{115} manuscript entitled *Kitāb ‘uyūb al-nafs wa mudāwātuḥā tasnīfu al-shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Sulamī qaddasa Allahu rūḥihi* was collated with another version of the same work. Differences between the two are noted and the scribe indicated which reading of the questionable passages he believed to be the correct one. The second manuscript from the British Museum’s Library,\textsuperscript{116} *Kitāb fī ‘uyūb al-nafs wa dawāʾuhā li-l-shakh al-fāḍil Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Mūsā al-naysābūrī radī Allah ‘anhu*, was copied in the 12\textsuperscript{th}/18\textsuperscript{th} century in naskh script. Mistakes in the text are crossed out and corrected and in some cases the scribe indicated his completion of an omission. The last manuscript entitled *Kitāb ‘uyūb al-nafs wa mudāwātuḥā taʿlīf al-shaykh al-imām al-ʿārif Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī qaddasa Allah sirrihi* was found in the Köprülü Library in Turkey.\textsuperscript{117} It was copied in 739/1338 by Abū al-Qāsim Ibn Muhammad al-ʿAbbāsī in naskh script. This manuscript includes Quranic references not mentioned in the other two

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{115} MS Berlin 3081 = Sprenger 851, ff58b-73b, 15x10.6cm.  \\
\textsuperscript{116} MS Br. Mus. Or. 3122, ffla-10a.  \\
\textsuperscript{117} MS Köprülü 1603/8, ff192a-210b
\end{flushleft}
I am in possession of two other editions of this text. The first entitled 'Uyūb al-nafs wa mudāwātuhā li-Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Sulamī al-Azdī al-Naysābūrī was printed in Cairo, Egypt. This edition relies on a manuscript that was collated with other works from the Taymūr Archive in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah in Cairo. Sulamī’s work occupies pages 1 Ẓ to page 16 Ẓ of number 74 Sufism-Taymūr. Although this edition relies only on that manuscript, it comments on the existence of two other manuscripts of the same work. The first is an undated manuscript in a collection of writings from page 28 Ẓ to page 36 Ẓ, and the collection is in an archive of books of Berlin number 3131. The other is in the British Library number 228.

The second edition is called 'Uyūb al-nafs li-imām Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī. It is located in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah. This version includes titles before each pair of malady and remedy, and its passages are shorter than the Kohlberg edition. The number of the source manuscript is 1504 Microfilm 3704 in mutawasīt script and at the end is a poem of unknown authorship. In the margins were some corrections to the text which the editors tried to follow.

Another manuscript of the work was found among a collection of Sufi treatises in the possession of a bookseller named Muṣṭafā Nājī in Rabat, Morocco. It was translated into French by Abdul Karim Zein under the title, Les Maladies De L’ame et Leur Remedes: Traite De Psychologie Soufie. The manuscript used by Zein bears a remarkable resemblance to one of

---

Kohlberg’s source manuscripts from the British Library, but it is shorter than that manuscript in many sections. Zein believes his manuscript was copied in the 11th/17th century and predates Kohlberg’s because of the mujawhar style of the script and condition of the paper. Zein says that an edition of the Arabic text was published in Tantan in 1987, but he most likely means Ṭanṭā, referring to the aforementioned second edition found in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah edited by Majdī Fathī al-Sayyid.

**Translator’s Apology**

Inevitably, there is some treachery involved in translation (*traductor traitore*). The clay of one language, with all its cultural baggage and eccentricities, is not so easily molded into another. Much of the beauty and complexity of the original Arabic is discarded as words with multi-faceted meanings are transformed into poor English substitutes or ungainly English phrases.

The central term of *The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Maladies*, the *nafs*, stubbornly evades a simple word-for-word translation. If *nafs* is translated “soul”, then speaking of the soul in terms of disease and fault may confuse English speakers who primarily perceive the soul as a positive or neutral entity. Ego and psyche seem Freudian and anachronistic. Compound words like ego-self, ego-soul, and lower-soul are inelegant. Because the term *nafs* encompasses such a wide variety of meanings and is central to the text, I have decided to leave it in its original Arabic form.
Then, whether to retain or discard the gender of words in their referential pronouns can be vexing. In this translation, the *nafs* is given the gender-neutral pronoun “it” in spite of the word’s feminine gender in the original Arabic in order to avoid the conflation of negative descriptions of the *nafs* with disparaging attitudes towards women and femininity.

In addition to language barriers, there is a barrier of time and space. Modern Western readers immersed in a secular-materialistic worldview may have difficulty understanding the God-centered world of *The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies*. Even religious people in the West struggle to value the sacred worldview and rituals are viewed as archaic impositions on one’s life that are no longer relevant in the Modern world. To such a person, the ascetic, self-abasing methodology of the Malāmatī-Sufi must seem excessive or puritanical. But in a God-centered universe, living a blessed life in pursuit of communion with the Divine is the most noble existence to which one may aspire. From the secular-materialistic perspective, honorific phrases like *ṣallá Allahu ʿalayhi wa sallim* (peace and blessings of God be upon him) seem unnecessary and cumbersome. But from the perspective of a spiritual aspirant, these phrases are essential to stopping the reader and inspiring regular remembrance of God or respect for a godly individual. Sending peace and blessings of God upon the Prophet is even a Quranic injunction and doing so blesses oneself tenfold. “Whoever sends blessings upon me once, Allah will send blessings upon him tenfold and will erase from him ten misdeeds and raise him ten degrees in

---

121 For more discussion on translation of gendered Arabic pronouns into gendered or non-gendered English pronouns see the chapter “Sound, Spirit and Gender in the Quran” in Michael Sells, *Approaching the Qur’ân: The Early Revelations*, (Ashland, OR: White Cloud Press, 2007), 199-223.  
124 *Truly God and His angels invoke blessings upon the Prophet. O you who believe! Invoke blessings upon him, and greetings of peace* [al-Ahzâb: 56]!
status.” For this reason, honorific phrases have been retained in full or in symbol form when possible.

At times, one may wonder whether any justice has been served to a text in translation; however, there is something truly remarkable about translation as well. Somehow, an American woman in the 21st century can step into the world of a 10th century Sufi Shaykh and attempt to tell you about what she saw, albeit with great difficulty and constant recourse to her dear, patient teachers: Dr. Honerkamp, Arash Aboutorabi and Hans Wehr. And it is a truly amazing world, complete with tales of perilous spiritual journeys, witty mystics, wise shaykhs, seeing the unseen, knowing the unknowable, and friendship with God! What a world! What would it be to live in that world as that member of Sulamī’s community, perhaps a disciple or companion, who asked him to “compile some passages regarding the maladies of the nafs, denoting the causes behind them (MS 2).” Reading these spiritual texts gives us a taste of that world.

That is not to say that this spiritual world no longer exists or that the Sufi path has been forgotten. Islamic spirituality is very much alive today as attested by enormous modern transnational Sufi orders like that of the Shādhilī. This spiritual world awaits at every moment, as Rābiʿah al-ʿAdawiyah reminds us, just waiting for us to open the door.126

126 “Rābiʿah al-ʿAdawiyah passed by the gathering of Sāliḥ al-Murūḥ as he was saying, “[For] whoever diligently knocks on the door, it is about to be opened for him.” So Rābiʿah said, “The door, O ignorant one, is open but you are fleeing from it. How will you reach your destination when you have erred in the first step along the path (MS 4)?”
Principal Themes of *The Maladies of The Nafs and Their Remedies*

In *The Maladies of The Nafs and Their Remedies* Sulamī deals with two aspects of Islamic ethics: duty and virtue.¹²⁷ The former is a matter of exoteric knowledge, in Sulamī’s words *ẓāhir al-ʿilm*, involving respecting revelation and following the example of the Prophet Muhammad. According to Sulamī, seeking and applying exoteric knowledge is integral to gaining esoteric knowledge and progressing on the spiritual path. However, beyond prescriptions and proscriptions lies the question of virtue: “What kind of person is it most appropriate to be?”¹²⁸ This issue is addressed directly by *adab* Sufi literature like *The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies*, which is not simply a book of dos and don’ts for the average Muslim but a rigorous guide to living a blessed life centered on the interiorization of piety of the Malāmatī-Sufis.¹²⁹ The following addresses Sulamī’s response to this question and provides a wholistic picture of the ideals of ethical conduct and virtue in Malāma-Sufism as presented in *The Maladies of the Nafs and Their Remedies*.

Sincerity

Sincerity is essential to spiritual realization and the purpose of subjecting the *nafs* to constant blame. In *Maladies of the Nafs*, sincerity means the unification of one’s outward conduct with one’s inward spiritual state. Emphasis is placed on perfecting one’s inner state before preoccupying oneself with one’s outward appearance, because God does not judge one’s appearance and actions but rather one’s character and intentions (*MS* 16, 42, 32). The sincere

---

¹²⁸ Welle, “Ṣūfī Adab Transcending Scruples”, 121.
¹²⁹ A. Kevin Reinhart argues that most Muslims look to jurisprudence to answer ethical questions with the exception of the Sufis. However, Reinhart’s supposition does not address the multifaceted nature of ethics. Jurisprudence provides answers about “what ought to be done?” but fails to deal with the question of “What kind of a person is it most appropriate to be?” As a response to this, Frederick S. Carney divides ethics into three components: duty/obligation, virtue/character, and value. Welle, “Ṣūfī Adab Transcending Scruples”, 121.
Malāmatī-Sufi keeps his piety a private affair by not publicizing his acts of worship (MS 26) or wearing distinguishing dress (MS 42) to guard against the desire of the nafs for social recognition of his piety. He focuses on remembrance of God rather than being engrossed in worldly affairs (MS 49). He is preoccupied solely with God’s opinion of him, not the opinion of other people (MS 26) and performs every act for the sake of God selflessly without expecting Divine recompense (MS 17) or worldly benefit.

Surrender to Divine Wisdom and Decrees

Surrender to God entails satisfaction with His preordained apportioning and unchangeable decree throughout the vicissitudes of life (MS 3, 23, 24, 50). The ideal Malāmatī-Sufi sees the wisdom of God underlying every aspect of creation and is content with God’s plan for him whether it benefits him or not (MS 3). He recognizes that God is the only true Actor in the universe, and so benefit and harm come only from God, not humanity (MS 6, 26). Even when a person provides something for someone else, he is simply an intermediary between God and the receiver, so he should not be haughty for providing for others. “[H]e brought them their provision but indeed the Provider and the giver in reality is God Most High and he is just an intermediary between the servants and God, and do not be haughty for bringing someone what God carried out in reality (MS 64).”

Gratitude

The nafs at peace sees “God’s blessings under all circumstances (MS 68).” All of one’s experiences are considered opportunities to draw nearer to God, whether one perceives them to be beneficial or harmful, and the Malāmatī-Sufi is grateful for them (MS 7, 68). Acts of worship
are a means to closeness with God. God is not benefitted or harmed by the performance or negligence of acts of worship; rather religious obligations are gifts to humanity that help one experience the Divine presence in one’s everyday life. *Whoever strives only strives for [the benefit] of himself. Indeed Allah is free from need of the worlds* [Al-Akabūt 29: 6].

Social Relations

The Malāmatī-Sufis were simultaneously proponents of integration to society and asceticism, necessitating an approach to social integration that maintained an inward state of spiritual focus on God in spite of one’s regular contact with the world (*MS* 13). Sulamī resolved the issue of social relations at length in *Maladies of the Nafs* by defining the proper attitude the Malāmatī-Sufi should have towards others and relationships in general and encouraging pious companionship.

The Malāmatī-Sufi’s opinion of others is always higher than one’s opinion of oneself (*MS* 7, 46, 66). He is not concerned about people’s opinions (*MS* 25, 26), is wary of flattery, and refrains from backbiting and preoccupying himself with the private affairs or faults of others (*MS* 22). “Among the best ways a person can practice Islam is to avoid what does not concern him (Hadith qtd. in *MS* 25).” When someone learns about the faults of another person, he should not divulge that to others but “cover over” them and make excuses for him (*MS* 13, 44). In line with the Malāmatī-Sufi stance against proselytization, one should not be concerned about the religious practices of another person at all. Those who wish to admonish others for their faults should focus on their own faults and appeal to people through their living example, not through their words (*MS* 35).
One should always treat others in a chivalrous manner, but excessive concern for one’s social relationships is a source of attachment to the world and underlies many maladies of the nafs such as ostentatious displays of one’s religiosity ($MS\ 8,\ 26$) and knowledge ($MS\ 20$), people-pleasing ($MS\ 12,\ 20,\ 21$), and excessive ($MS\ 21$) or reprehensible speech ($MS\ 45$). Although Malāmatī-Sufis integrate into society, part of the way they maintain an inner asceticism is by remembering that all social connections are ultimately ephemeral aspects of worldly life. “Any companion he has [will be] separated [from him] and social relations are [ultimately] cut off ($MS\ 38$).” Spiritual independence from one’s relationships is exemplified by Abraham’s famous intended sacrifice of his son. “And the remedy is to abandon her for her Lord-sustainer completely, and for this the Friend [Abraham]\textsuperscript{130} was ordered to sacrifice his son. 

But when they had submitted and Abraham had laid him upon his forehead [al-Sāfāt 37: 103] it was said to him, thou has been true to the vision [al-Sāfāt 37: 105], then He ransomed him with a great sacrifice ($MS\ 11$).”

In spite of maintaining caution concerning social relations, maintaining companionship with pious people is essential to spiritual growth because, the reader is told, people resemble those with whom they spend their time ($MS\ 60$). Although the Malāmatī-Sufi should attend spiritual gatherings ($MS\ 34$), he should not be haughty about attending them ($MS\ 9$). He should ask God’s friends for prayers ($MS\ 7$) and follow the spiritual instructions of pious elders ($MS\ 13$).

\textsuperscript{130} “The Friend” is an epithet for Abraham in the Islamic tradition
Spiritual Poverty

The Malāmatī-Sufis believed in actively seeking gainful employment and so needed to define the appropriate attitude one should have towards wealth. The material world, as opposed to the Hereafter, is described as an inconsequential waystation and “the prison of the believer,” because it is not a place of comfort but a trial (MS 36). One should not focus on worldly comfort in seeking employment but maintain a state of inner faqr, spiritual poverty.

The spiritual aspirant is called a faqīr (pl. fuqarā’), a dependent one, because he submits his will to God in recognition of his dependency on Him. The Quran describes the fuqarā’ as those who “are constrained in the way of God… The ignorant one supposes them to be wealthy because of their restraint. Thou knowest them by their mark” of humility and self-effacement [al-Baqarah 2: 273]. Like this verse, Sulamī says that the faqīr appears to be wealthy to people because of his “demonstrating sufficiency in spite of having little (MS 65),” but one may be a faqīr with or without wealth (MS 27). “People were entering Sufism rich and became poor while appearing rich to people. And at the same time the poor were entering Sufism and becoming rich while appearing poor to people (MS 65).”

A faqīr should seek gainful employment, but he should not be overly concerned about building up wealth (MS 27, 28, 52) or losing wealth (MS 52), because these things are ordained by God. Preoccupation with worldly things like wealth deceive one (MS 52) into turning one’s focus away from God (MS 49, 51). Instead of focusing on the world, one should practice constant remembrance of God (MS 7, 12, 14, 18, 21, 25, 34, 49), focus on the Hereafter, “that to which you are headed (MS 28),” and remember the shortness of life (MS 33, 53, 59). “Whoever does not feel secure about a single breath of his breaths, his accumulation for that is a delusion (MS 59).”
Spiritual Death (*Fanāʾ*)

Transcending self-consciousness and maintaining consciousness of God’s presence in every moment is described in terms of “spiritual death” (*fanāʾ*) from worldly affairs. The term *fanāʾ* is derived from the Quranic verse: *All that is upon (the earth) passes away (fān). And there will remain the face of your Lord, Owner of Majesty and Honor* [al-Raḥmān 55: 26-27]. *Fanāʾ* (spiritual death) entails abandonment of desire and need for all but God, and a loss of a sense of independence and selfhood for the sake of unity with God (*MS* 14).

And among its maladies is that you will not bring it to life until you cause its death and destroy it, meaning that you do not bring it to life for the hereafter until you cause its death from the world, and you do not live for God until you die from all that is other than God (*MS* 10).

In another work, *Darajāt al-ṣādiqīn* (Stations of the Righteous), Sulamī quotes the phrase “He who knows himself, knows his lord” and explains that it means that one cannot know one’s Lord without losing his self in Divine unicity.¹³¹ At the highest level of reality, there is only God, and experiencing this truth is the means and goal of spiritual striving. In order to reach this goal, one must slay the desires, needs and self-awareness of his *nafs* with “the knives of spiritual striving (*MS* 11).”

Constant Wariness of the *Nafs*

The *nafs* is never fully destroyed but rather requires constant observance (*MS* 12, 61) and rectification in a never-ending process of purification. Sulamī warns that one should not be lenient with the *nafs* but reprimand it immediately, even for trivial passing thoughts (*MS* 12, 61), because of the ability of thoughts to be transformed into ingrained transgressions. The *nafs* is prone to be self-serving, lazy and comfort-seeking (*MS* 5, 36, 39), so one should be wary of that.

---

by avoiding uncertain matters and religious dispensations (MS 69). Over time, an abundance of sin can weaken the heart (MS 19), render the heart impenitent (MS 18), and prevent one from advancing on the spiritual path.

The opposite of the Malāmatī-Sufi ideal is one who is hypocritical, ostentatious, and overly concerned about social approval. He rectifies his outer appearance but is unconcerned about his inner character. Although he may dress like a pious person, he lacks the morals and religious practices of a pious person. He is ungrateful and indignant with what God has ordained for him. In the fulfillment of his religious obligations he is lazy and procrastinating. He is so preoccupied with the faults of others that he forgets his own. He speaks ill of others, yet he is angry and vengeful when others speak ill of him. He seeks knowledge to have authority over people and argues with them about worldly affairs. He is preoccupied with his comfort and sustenance, concerns himself with building up wealth and covets the wealth of others.
CHAPTER 5

TRANSLATION OF THE MALADIES OF THE NAFS AND THEIR REMEDIES BY ABŪ ʿABD AL-RAḤMĀN AL-SULAMĪ

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

[1] From the beginning and ultimately, all praise is God’s alone, and may God bless Muhammad, inwardly and outwardly, and his family in abundance endlessly. All praise is God’s alone, who made His chosen ones conscious of the maladies (ʿuyūb) inherent to their nafs132 and ennobled them by apprising them of its133 deceptive nature, making them a wakeful people, attentive to the origins from which the states (aḥwāl)134 arise in the nafs, and according them success in treating its maladies and hidden wickedness by a remedy (adwīyah) hidden to all but the attentive. This is due to their knowledge of its ailments and their engaging themselves in seeking the requisite remedies; therein He rendered easy the arduous [task] by His bounty and beneficence.

132 The nafs (pl. anfūs) in the Islamic tradition refers to the physical body as well as all aspects of one’s being including corporeal and noncorporeal elements; however, in Sufi Literature the nafs is most often associated with one’s negative character traits, especially egotism and passions. In the Quran, the nafs has negative, neutral, and positive connotations depending on the context. For example, the nafs may incite one to iniquity or be a “nafs at peace,” which is satisfied by God and satisfies God. The negative attributes of the nafs are sometimes contrasted to the spirit (rūḥ), which is only associated with praiseworthy traits (Qushayrī, Al-Qushayrī’s Epistle on Sufism, 109). For a more in-depth overview of the nafs in the Islamic tradition see Chapter 3 of this thesis.

133 The word nafs is given a neutral gender pronoun here in spite of the noun’s feminine gender in the original Arabic to avoid the conflation of negative descriptions of the nafs with disparaging attitudes towards women and femininity. For more discussion on the unfortunate association of the negative attributes of the nafs with women in extra-Quranic Muslim religious writings see Rkia Cornell, “‘Soul of a Woman was Created Below’: Woman as the Lower Soul (Nafs) in Islam.”

134 The [mystical] state (ḥāl) is not earned but is a gift from God that is bestowed with no connection to one’s effort or desire for it. A state may be an emotional state of “joy, grief, expansion, contraction, passionate longing, vexation, awe or need.” Qushayrī, Al-Qushayrī’s Epistle on Sufism, 78-79.
[2] Now to begin: One of our elders—may God ennoble them through obedience to Him—requested that I compile for him some passages on the maladies of the *nafs* that would indicate that which lies beyond these [passages]. So I complied with his request and compiled these chapters for him, asking God Most High that He not deprive us of their blessings. Prior to all this, I sought God’s guidance (*istakhartu*) in this matter and His accord in complying with the petitioner. He is my sufficiency and the best of those who render support. May God bless Muhammad and his family and grant them abundant peace and wellbeing.

[3] So I say: Know well that the *nafs* is of three types: the *nafs* that incites to iniquity (*nafs ammārah*), the blaming *nafs* (*nafs lawwāmah*), and the *nafs* at peace (*nafs muṭmaʾinnah*). As for the *nafs* at peace, it has realized with certainty that God is its Lord-sustainer. It has found peace in that which God has promised and upholds the veracity of God’s speech [in the Quran]. It is the believing *nafs* whose countenance God Most High illuminates (*yubayyiḍ Allāh taʿālá wajḥaha*) and hands its book in its right hand, that it be purified, finding satisfaction in God’s decrees and preordained apportioning (*qadrihi*), whether the good or iniquity thereof, or

---

135 This is a reference to a passage in the Quran which distinguishes between those who have the light of faith and those who turn away from faith after having believed. “And be not like those who became divided and differed after the clear proofs had come to them. And it is they who shall have a great punishment on the Day when faces whiten and faces blacken. As for those whose faces blacken, “Did you disbelieve after having believed? Then taste the punishment for having disbelieved.” As for those whose faces whiten, they will be in the Mercy of God, abiding therein [Āl ‘Imrān 3: 105-107].” “Whitening” and “blacking” here have nothing to do with actual skin color and so “whose face God whitens” here is rendered “whose countenance God Most High illuminates” to avoid such a correlation. The “whitening” of a face is an idiomatic phrase in Arabic which refers to a state of joy and relief connected to the light of faith; conversely, the “blackening” of a face denotes stress, shame or grief associated with lack of faith.

136 One’s “book” is the record of his or her deeds. Whoever receives their book in the right hand on the day of Judgment will enter Paradise. The “right” symbolizes righteousness, blessedness, and general goodness and is often associated with light. “Companions of the right” will sit on the right side of the God’s Throne, will receive a record of their book in their right hand, and will have “light spreading before them on their right” [al-Ḥadīd 57: 12]. The left has a negative connotation and is associated with evil and darkness. “As for one who is given his book in his right hand, he will be reckoned with an easy reckoning and will return to his people joyful. But as for one who is given his book from behind his back, he will cry out for destruction, and will enter a Blaze [al-Inshiqāq 84: 7-12].”

137 Al-Ghazālī distinguishes between Divine decree and preordained apportioning (*qadāʾ wa-qadar*) in *al-Maqsad al-asnā fī sharḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*. The decree (*qadāʾ*) is God’s planning of the universe and universal causes: “the seven heavens, the stars and celestial bodies, with their harmonious and constant movements which neither
the beneficial or harmful. It is the one God addresses saying, *Return to thy Lord, satisfied*—meaning with God—*satisfying* [al-Fājr 89: 28], meaning satisfying to God by its pious acts and its certainty of the truth of God’s promise.

As for the second type, it is the blaming *nafs*, that ceases not finding fault whether in good (*al-khayr*) or iniquity (*al-sharr*), it has no patience in either prosperity or times of trial, it is its wont to regret opportunities that passed by, reproaching itself saying, “If only I had done such and such or not done such and such.” It is an impious blameworthy *nafs*. It takes not one single breath, whether pious or profligate, that it is not finding [cause] for blame. If it accomplished some good it declares, “If only I had done more,” and if it acted with iniquity it declares, “Woe is me! If I only had not done so.” It even blames itself in the Hereafter for the opportunities that it squandered in worldly life. It is the one God Most High swore by in His words, *And I swear by the blaming nafs* [al-Qiyāmah 75: 2].

As for the inciting *nafs*, it is what God Most High spoke of when speaking of Joseph, such that He states, *Surely the nafs commands to evil* [Yūsuf 12: 53]. And as God Mighty and Majestic said, *[A]nd forbid the nafs from capricious whims (hawā)*. And He the Praised and Most High said, *Hast thou considered one who takes his capricious whims as his god* [al-Jāthiah 45: 23], among other verses that demonstrate the iniquitous nature of the *nafs* and its lack of inclination to accomplish the good. On the authority of Abū Hurayrah,138 may God be pleased with him, the Prophet ﷺ said, “Tribulation, capricious whims and passion (*shahwah*) have been change or corrupt.” Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazzali, *The ninety-nine beautiful names of God*, trans. D. Adīb, and K.M Coughlin, (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1995), 86. Preordained apportioning is the constant application of the plans via specific instruments “with their ordained and measured movements to their effects, numbered and defined, according to a determined measure which neither increases nor decreases. And for that reason, nothing escapes His decree and preordained apportioning.” In this way decree is distinguished from preordained apportioning or command: *Then He decreed that they be seven heavens in two days and revealed to each heaven its command* [Hā-mīm 41: 12].

138 It was related to us on the authority of Ibn ‘Umar, [who heard it from ‘Abd al-Jabbar b. Sūn who said he heard it from Ahmad b. al-Husayn b. Abān, who heard it from Abū ‘Āṣim who heard it from Shu’bah and Sufyān from Salmah b. Kuhayl from Abī Salmah.
kneaded into the clay of the progeny of Adam ﷺ.” God Most High said, *And strive in [the way of] God as one should truly strive* [Al-Ḥajj 22: 78], meaning here striving against the *nafs* and forbidding it from pursuing its capricious whims.

[4] Among the maladies of the *nafs* is imagining that one is standing at the door of his salvation, knocking, through a variety of invocations and pious deeds, and the door is open; however, he locked the door of return for his *nafs* due to his numerous transgressions. As al-Husayn Ibn Yaḥyá informed me that he heard Jaʿfar Ibn Muhammad say he heard Masrūq say, “Rābiʿah al-ʿAdawiyyah139 passed by the gathering of Sāliḥ al-Murrī as he was saying, “[For] whoever diligently knocks on the door, it is about to be opened for him.” So Rābiʿah said, “The door, O ignorant one, is open but you are fleeing from it. How will you reach your destination when you have erred in the first step along the path? And how will the servant be saved from the maladies of the *nafs* while he imposes no constraints on its passions? And how will one be saved from following capricious whims who is not restrained from transgression?” I heard Muhammad Ibn Āḥmad Ibn Hamdan say he heard Muhammad Ibn Ishāq al-Ṭhaqafī say he heard Ibn Abū al-Dunyā say, “Some of the sages said, ‘Do not hope to be [fully] awake while there is a malady in you, and do not hope to be saved while you are burdened by a single sin.’” And the treatment of this condition is, as Sarī al-Saqṭī said, “traveling the path of guidance, pure [licitly attained] nourishment, and perfection of reverence of God.”

[5] And among its maladies is that when one cries, he is relieved from grief and seeks comfort. And the remedy is constancy of grief with tears so that one is not occupied exclusively with seeking relief. He should cry in sorrow and not because of sorrow, for indeed whoever cries

---

139 “Rābiʿah al-ʿAdawiyyah, daughter of Ismāʿīl (d. 185 [801/2]). The most famous woman Sufi. It is said that she was stolen as a child and sold into slavery but was released on account of her piety. She lived for a time in the desert, where she was fed miraculously by God. She later moved to Basra, where she taught Sufyān al-Thawrī and Shaqīq al-Balkhī, emphasizing the importance of divine love. She left a number of fine prayers.” Ghazālī, *On Disciplining the Soul*, 220.
because of sorrow seeks comfort from the tears, and whoever cries in sorrow, the tears increase his grief and sorrow!

[6] And among its maladies is perceiving harm [as deriving] from one who has no authority over it, hoping for benefit from one who has no power over it, and being concerned about one’s sustenance, which has already been provided for him. And the remedy is returning to sound belief in what God made known in His book. Among His words Mighty and Majestic, And if God should touch thee with affliction, none can remove it save He; and if He desired some good for thee, none can hold back His Bounty [Yunus 10: 107]. And His words Most High, There is no creature that crawls upon the earth but that its provision lies with God. And He knows its dwelling place and its repository [Hūd 11: 6]. It was said to al-Aḥnaf Ibn Qays, “By what are [the shortcomings of] your people expiated, are you not the eldest of them?” So he said, “I did not curtail what was demanded of me nor did I strive to attain what was provided for me.” Of God’s words, Worship Him, and trust in Him [Hūd 11: 123]. And this state will be strengthened for him when he regards the frailty and deficiency of the creation. Then he will know that whoever is in need himself has no power over fulfilling the needs of others. And whosoever is himself deficient cannot augment the livelihood (asbāb) of another, so he is preserved from this error and he returns entirely to his Lord-sustainer.

[7] And among its maladies is becoming lax in duties (ḥuqūq) that one used to accomplish before. And at greater fault than this is one who is not concerned with his shortcoming and laziness, and even more at fault is one who fails to see his laziness and shortcoming. Then even greater at fault is one who thinks that he has fulfilled [his obligations] in spite of his laziness and shortcoming, and this is due to a lack of gratitude at a time when he has been afforded [the

---

140 — “The book” and “His book” are references to the Quran.
opportunity] to fulfill these duties. When his gratitude is diminished, he is removed from the station\textsuperscript{141} of fulfillment to the station of shortcoming and he is veiled from this own inadequacy and he perceives the evil of his deeds to seem fair. God Most High said, *And what of one, the evil of whose deeds has been made to seem fair to him* [Fāṭir 35: 8]. And the words of He Most High, *And they reckon that they are virtuous in their works* [Kahf 18: 104]. *Thus we have made the deeds of every community seem fair unto them* [Anʿām 6: 108]. And His words, Most High, *Each party exulting in what it had* [al-Muʿminūn 23: 53]. And His words, may He be praised (ṣubḥānihi), *We shall lead them on little by little, whence they know not* [al-Aʿrāf 7: 182]. And deliverance from that is in constant recourse to God Most High and steadfast remembrance (dhikr)\textsuperscript{142} of Him and recitation of His book and investigating its meaning and holding the Muslims in high regard and asking God’s friends to pray for him to return him to his earlier state. It may be that God, the Mighty the Majestic, blesses him by opening to him the path of service and obedience to Him.

[8] And among its maladies is that one obeys but does not find pleasure in his obedience, and that is due to the contamination of his obedience with ostentation and lack of sincerity in it or leaving [the performance of] one of the customs of the Prophet. And the remedy is demanding sincerity of the nafs and maintaining the customs [of the Prophet] in one’s actions and correcting the foundation of His commandments in order to make his end sound.

---

\textsuperscript{141} A [mystical] station (maqām), as opposed to a [mystical] state (hāl), is earned through the effort and desire of the spiritual seeker. A station is a milestone on the mystical path which must be mastered sequentially; one cannot attain a station without the mastery of the previous station(s). The number and nature of stations along the path differ according to different mystics. Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayrī’s Epistle on Sufism*, 77.

\textsuperscript{142} "Dhikr" may mean mention, remember, recollect, speak of or tell. In the case of God, it means to remember or mention the name of God as an act of worship and a type of prayer. In some cases, “dhikr” may entail saying the 99 names of God or repetition of certain phrases like “I seek forgiveness from God” and “There is no God but God” among other litanies and invocations. The centrality of dhikr to Muslim practice stems from the essential fault of man: forgetfulness. In fact, the root letters of the verb “forget”, n-s-y, are the same root letters of the word for human: insān. The cure of this forgetfulness is to remember God with frequent remembrance, and glorify Him morning and evening [al-Aḥzāb 33: 41-42].
[9] And among its maladies is that one hopes to benefit from attending spiritual gatherings (auspicious occasions) and if he realized [the true nature of his nafs], he would lose all hope for the people at the spiritual gathering [attaining any benefit] due to the misfortune of his presence. As was said to some of the pious predecessors, “How did you regard the people on the day of standing at ‘Arafat’? He said, “I saw a people that if I weren’t among them then I would hope that God would forgive them.” This is the way the people of wakefulness regarded their nafs [with suspicion]. And the remedy is knowing that even if God forgives him for his sins, He has observed him committing errors and transgressions and so he is ashamed of that and regards his nafs with suspicion. As Fuḍayl Ibn ‘Iyāḍ said, “Shame on you, even if you are forgiven.” That was due to his realization of God’s knowledge of him and His regard of him.

[10] And among its maladies is that you will not bring it to life until you cause its death and lose it, meaning that you do not bring it to life for the hereafter until you cause its death from the world, and you do not live for God until you die from all that is other than God. And Yaḥyá Ibn Muʿādh al-Rāzí said, “Whosoever draws near to God through the loss of his nafs, God will preserve his nafs,” and that means to forbid it from its passions and compel it to what it finds loathsome [but which God demands of it]. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Paradise is surrounded by adversity and the fire is surrounded by temptations.” And the remedy is night vigils, hunger and thirst [fasting], undertaking the opposition of one’s natural inclination and nafs, and forbidding it from the objects of its passions. I heard Muhammad Ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Faḍl saying

---

143 Standing on Mount ‘Arafat is the last of the ḥāj rituals which is essential to the completion of the ḥāj. According to tradition, Adam and Eve met on Arafat and humanity proliferated from that location.


145 The “night vigil” is spending the night in solitude, silence and prayer. The prayer in the last third of the night, tahajjud, is an especially important practice in Islamic spirituality. Although it is not one of the five obligatory prayers the Prophet was known to pray it regularly and encourage others to do so. The night vigil is mentioned frequently in the Quran.
he heard Muhammad Ibn al-Rūmī saying Yahyá Ibn Mu‘āth al-Rāzī said, “Hunger is the nourishment by which God strengthens the bodies of the truthful.”

[11] And among its maladies is that it never grows accustomed to the truth ever and obedience is contrary to its character traits and natural disposition and the greater part of that derives from following its capricious whims and passions and whosoever does not sacrifice it with knives of spiritual striving will not be brought to life. God Most High said to a group of the sons of Israel, *So repent unto your Maker and slay yourselves* [al-Baqarah 2: 54]. And the remedy is to abandon it for its Lord-sustainer completely, and for this the Friend [Abraham] was ordered to sacrifice his son. *But when they had submitted and Abraham had laid him upon his forehead* [al-Ṣāffāt 37: 103] it was said to him *thou has been true to the vision* [al-Ṣāffāt 37: 105], then He ransomed him with a great sacrifice. And Junayd said, “God has forbidden paradise for one who holds fast to relationships.” And the ultimate cure is leaving them entirely for their Lord-sustainer. I heard Muhammad Ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Rāzī say he heard Abū al-Qāsim al-Miṣrī in Baghdad say, “Ibn Yazdānyār was asked about the servant when he leaves all for God, on what basis does he do so. He said, ‘On the basis that he will not return to what he left, and he preserves his nafs from considering what he has left.’ So it was said to him, ‘This is applicable to one who leaves [a state of] existing [sin] (*wujūd*), so what of a person who leaves [a state] without [sin] (*ʿadam*)?’ So he said, ‘Finding sweetness in the latter is recompense for the bitterness that came before.’”

[12] And among its maladies is that one is accustomed to trivial passing thoughts so that transgressions become ingrained. And the remedy is responding to those passing thoughts in the beginning lest the transgression become ingrained and that is [accomplished] by constant *dhikr*,

---

146 Moses told the children of Israel to slay themselves because of their worshipping a gold calf during his forty-day isolation on Mount Sinai.

147 “The Friend” is an epithet for Abraham in the Islamic tradition
and remaining steadfast in fear [of God], and knowing that God knows what is in your secret-heart\textsuperscript{148} just as well as people (\textit{al-khalq}) know what you make public, so feel ashamed that you rectify for people whatever is in their sight and fail to rectify what is in the sight of God (\textit{al-Ḫaqq}). And the Prophet ﷺ said, “Indeed God Most High does not regard your [outer] appearances nor your good deeds, but rather he regards your hearts.”\textsuperscript{149} I heard Abū Bakr al-Rāzī say he heard Abū al-Husayn al-ʿAlawī, the companion of Ibrāhim al-Khawwās, say he heard Ibrāhīm al-Khawwās, may God have mercy on him say, “The first part of sin is a passing thought, and if one does meet it with disgust it will become emboldened. Then if it is not met with denial it will become a temptation (\textit{waswasah}) and if it is not met with striving against it, passion and following [one’s] capricious whims will be ignited, thus obscuring intellect, knowledge and clarity.” In this way it was narrated in the tradition that “capricious whims and passion overcome knowledge, intellect and clarity.”

[13] And among its maladies is preoccupying oneself with [other] people’s faults and one’s blindness to one’s [own] faults. And the remedy is perceiving the fault of his \textit{nafs}, knowledge of it, and his realization of its cunning. And he treats it by embarking on long journeys, isolation [from people], frequenting the pious and carrying out their instructions. And the least one can do, if he does not undertake the treatment of the maladies of his \textit{nafs}, is to remain silent about the maladies of [other] people and find excuses for them and cover over their faults in hopes that God will rectify his faults for doing so. For indeed the Prophet, ﷺ said, “Whoever covers the

\textsuperscript{148} One’s secret-heart (\textit{sirr}) is their most hidden aspect. The secret-heart is the third rung of the Malāmatiyyah mystical hierarchy of consciousness of reality: \textit{nafs}, heart, secret-heart, and spirit.

\textsuperscript{149} There are two almost identical hadith in \textit{Sahīh Muslim}. The first states “God does not regard your bodies (\textit{ajsādikum}) nor your outward appearances but rather regards your hearts.” Muslim, \textit{English Translation of Sahīh Muslim}, vol. 6, 432 (Hadith 6542). The second states: “God does not regard your outward appearances and wealth but rather regards your hearts and works.” Muslim, \textit{English Translation of Sahīh Muslim}, vol. 6, 432 (Hadith 6543). This second version is also found in Ibn Mājah’s collection. Muhammad Ibn Yazīd Ibn Ibn Mājah, \textit{English Translation of Sunan Ibn Mājah}, trans. Nasiruddin al-Khattab, (Darussalam, 2007), vol. 5, 310 (Hadith 4143).
private matters of his Muslim brother, God will cover his private matters. And the Prophet, ﷺ said, “And whoever concerns himself with the private matters of his Muslim brother, God will look into his private matters, and then He will expose him even if he were in the privacy of his home.”

I heard Muhammad Ibn ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Shāthān who heard Ibn Yazdān al-Madāʾinī say, “I saw a people who had faults, so they remained silent about the faults of [other] people; therefore, God concealed their faults and those faults were removed from them. And I saw a people who did not have faults and then occupied themselves with the faults of [other] people, thus they acquired faults.”

150 This hadith is very similar to a narration in Ibn Mājah’s collection that goes as follows: “Whoever conceals the (hidden) fault of his Muslim brother, Allah will conceal his faults on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever exposes the fault of his Muslim brother, Allah will expose his faults, until He shames him, due to it, in his (own) house.” Ibn Mājah, English Translation of Sunan Ibn Mājah, vol. 3, 458 (Hadith 2546).

151 Amal is hope in case of worldly or impious things as opposed to rajāʿ which may be hope for positive or negative things.
falls away from him. I heard Abū Bakr al-Rāzī saying I heard al-Wāṣitī, may God have mercy on him, saying, “The nearest thing to God’s disdain is the self-regard of the nafs and its own actions.”

[16] And among its maladies is preoccupation with enhancing [outward] appearances, making a display of humility without [inward] humility, and carrying out acts of worship without presence. And the remedy is preoccupation with the protection of inner secrets so that his inner lights enhance his [outer] appearance and he is made beautiful without ostentatious beauty, without seeking honor, without tribal affiliation. On that [subject], the Prophet ﷺ said, “For whomever rectifies his secret-heart, God will rectify what he makes public.”

[17] And among its maladies is seeking recompense for good deeds. And the remedy is perceiving his shortcoming in his works and his lack of sincerity therein. Indeed, one who is sagacious, is averse to seeking recompense for his good deeds out of propriety, and he is wary of it with grace (ẓarf-an), knowing that God ﷺ has ordained for him a portion, and that which was ordained for him will come in this world and the next, and the only thing that is incumbent upon him, without a doubt, is sincerity.

[18] And among its maladies is the loss of the sweetness of obedience and that is from the illness of the heart and treachery of the nafs. And the remedy is eating permissible food, continual dhikr, serving the pious ones and drawing near to them and humbly seeking that from God so that God Most High may bless him and render his heart whole through removing the darkness of illnesses, thereby finding the sweetness of obedience.

[19] And among its maladies is lassitude and that is the legacy of satiety. For the nafs grows stronger when it is satiated, and when it grows stronger it takes its share, and if it takes its share it overcomes the heart in attaining it. And the remedy is fasting (tawjī’). For when it is hungry,
that will deprive it of its share, and when its share is diminished, it becomes weak. And when it
becomes weak, the heart will overcome it and if the heart overcomes it, [the heart] will impose
obedience upon it and cause lassitude to fall away from it. In this way the Prophet ﷺ said, “The
worst vessel that [any] child of Adam fills is his stomach. Food that suffices the children of
Adam is what maintains them. And should it be necessary, a third for food, a third for drink, and
a third for breath.”

[20] Among its maladies is seeking authority through knowledge, pride and haughty behavior
[because of one’s knowledge], and boasting about it, elevating oneself over one’s peers. And the
remedy is seeing the favor that God Most High bestowed upon him making him a vessel of His
decrees (aḥkām). And perceiving the deficiency of his gratitude for God Most High bestowing
knowledge and wisdom upon him, holding steadfast to humility and contrition, compassion for
[God’s] created beings and providing them with council. For indeed it was related that the
Prophet ﷺ said, “Whosoever seeks knowledge to vie with scholars or make a show before the
foolhardily or to direct people’s faces towards him, let him prepare a seat in the fire for
himself.”

[21] And among its maladies is abundance of speech, and that is born of two things: for the
sake of seeking authority [over people] by which one wants people to see one’s knowledge and

---

153 An almost identical hadith can be found in Ibn Majah’s collection except the ending reads “God will admit him to hell (jahannam)” rather than “let him prepare a seat in the fire for himself.” Ibn Mājah, English Translation of Sunan Ibn Mājah, vol. 1, 243 (Hadith 260).
eloquence, or for lack of knowledge of what brings one to speak. And the remedy is the realization that he will be accountable for what he spoke about and that it is written against him [in his book of deeds] and he is responsible for it because God Most High says, *And yet truly over you there are guardians [angels], noble, writing* [al-Insīṭār 82: 10-11]. And God Most High says, *No word does he utter without a ready watcher beside him* [Qāf 50: 18]. And the Prophet of God ﷺ said, “Whosoever believes in God and the Last Day, let him speak well [of people] or let him be silent.” And the Prophet ﷺ said “Tribulations are directly derived from speech.” And the Prophet ﷺ said, “Are people thrown prostrate in the fire on their faces except for what they reaped of their tongues?” And the Prophet ﷺ said, “The progeny of Adam are accountable for all of their speech except enjoining the good *(maʿrūf)* and forbidding the reprehensible *(munkar)* and dhikr of God.” And this is taken from the words of God, Mighty and Majestic, *There is no good in most of their secret converse, save for him who enjoins charity or kindness or reconciliation among men* [al-Nisāʾ 4: 114].

[22] And among its maladies is that when it is satisfied, it praises the one [who] satisfies [it] beyond the limit, but when it is angry it condemns [the one who angered it] beyond the limit. And the remedy is training the nafs to honesty and truth until it is no longer accustomed to

---


155 This is the last line of a hadith found in al-Tirmidhī’s collection. Al-Tirmidhī, *English Translation of Jāmiʿ at-Tirmidhī*, vol. 5, 28 (Hadith 2616). Al-Nawawī, *al-Arbaʿūn al-nawawīyyah*, 21 (Hadith 29).

156 *Maʿrūf* does not necessarily mean “good” but rather what is socially recognized as good. It comes from the root ‘a-r-f which means to know, and so *maʿrūf* is “what is known” to be good or acceptable. For a nice discussion of the *maʿrūf*-munkar dichotomy, see Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Quran*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 213.

157 As the antithesis of *maʿrūf*, munkar likewise does not mean “evil” per se as much as it refers to what is generally regarded reprehensible by society. It comes from the root *n-k-r* which means to be ignorant or to deny. One of the angels who will test the faith of a nafs after death is named “Munkar” and the other is “Nakīr,” both words derived from the same root *n-k-r*. For a nice discussion of the *maʿrūf*-munkar dichotomy, see Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Quran*, 213.

praising one who is pleased with one and there is no disparagement of whosoever is discontented with one, for indeed most of that springs from little regard of prescriptions and proscriptions. God Most High said, *And pursue not that whereof you have no knowledge. Truly hearing, and sight, and the heart—all of these will be called to account* [Isrā’ 17: 36]. And the Prophet ﷺ said, “Scatter dust in the face of flatterers.”

[23] And among its maladies is that one asks God Most High to choose what is best for him in his actions and then is resentful when He chooses what is best for him. And the remedy is knowing that he knows [only] the [outer] appearances of things but God knows the hidden [aspects] of them and the realities of them, and indeed the good choice of God Most High for him is better than his choice for himself. [Any] situation a servant chooses for himself will only be enveloped by misfortune, so he knows that he is the determined and not the Determiner, and that his resentment towards the one who made the decree will not change the decree. So let the nafs be steadfast on the path of contentment with the Divine decree and at ease. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Everyone’s sustenance will come to them. Whoever is content with his sustenance, he will be blessed therein and it will be sufficient for him, and whoever is not content with it will not be blessed therein and it will not be sufficient.” And some of the prophets, David or others said, “My God (ilāhī), who is iniquitous among your servants?” So the Majestic the Lofty said, “Whoever asked Me to choose what is best for him, and when I decided [what was best] for him, he blamed Me and was not content with My decree.”

[24] And among its maladies is an abundance of wishing (tamannī), for wishing is opposition to God Most High in His decrees and preordained apportioning. And the remedy is knowing that he does not know what ensues from wishing. Does it lead to good or to iniquity, to that which

159 Muslim, *English Translation of Sahīh Muslim*, vol. 7, 398 (Hadith 7505) and 398-399 (Hadith 7506); Ibn Mājah, *English Translation of Sunan Ibn Mājah*, vol. 5, 52 (Hadith 3742); Al-Tirmidhī, *English Translation of Jāmiʿ at-Tirmidhī*, vol. 4, 411 (Hadith 2393).
pleases him or causes him anguish? For if he were certain of the dubious nature of the outcome of his wishes, [the desire for] it would fall away from him and he would return to satisfaction, surrender [to God] and be at rest [with himself]. To that point, the Prophet ﷺ said, “If one of you wishes for something, then let him contemplate what he wishes for indeed none of you know what is destined for him regarding his wishes.”\(^{160}\) And the Prophet ﷺ said, “Let none of you wish for death because of a harm that befell him. Let him say instead, ‘Oh God, bring me to life. Keep me alive so long as life is better for me and take my life when death is better for me.’”\(^{161}\)

[25] And among its maladies is becoming engrossed in worldly affairs (\textit{asbāb}) and people’s talk. And the remedy is occupying oneself with constant \textit{dhikr} at all moments so that occupies him from \textit{dhikr} of the world and its people and being engrossed in what they are [engrossed]. And he comes to knows it is among those things that do not concern him, thus he pays it no attention (\textit{yatrukuhu}) because the Prophet ﷺ said, “Among the best ways a person can practice Islam is to avoid what does not concern him.”\(^{162}\)

[26] And among its maladies is publicizing its acts of obedience and love [of God] so that people know that and see it, thereby enhancing others’ opinion of it. And the remedy is knowing that no benefit or harm derives from the creation and striving to demand sincerity of the \textit{nafs} in its deeds so that this fault may be removed because God Most High said, \textit{They were not commanded but to worship God, devoting religion entirely to Him, as hanifs} [al-Bayyinah 98: 5]. And the Prophet ﷺ said, relating from his Lord-sustainer Mighty and Majestic, “Whosoever

\(^{160}\) A similar hadith with slightly different wording can be found in Bukhārī’s \textit{al-Adab al-mufrad}. “If one of you wishes for something, then let him contemplate what he wishes, for he does not know what he will be given.” Muhammad Ibn Isma’il al-Bukhārī, \textit{Manners in Islam: Al-Adab al-Mufrad}, trans. Rafiq Abdur Rahman, (Beirut: Dar al-kotob al-ilmiyah, 1971), 531 (Hadith 794).

\(^{161}\) Al-Bukhārī, \textit{The Translation of the Meanings of Sahīh al-Bukharī}, vol. 8, 202 (Hadith 3651).

accomplishes any good deed and makes a partner in it other than Me, I am quit of it and [the
good deed] is for the one who was made a partner.”

[27] And among its maladies is coveting. And the remedy is knowing that coveting
beckons one into the world and causes one to forget the sweetness of worship, and it makes one a
servant of other servants after God created him free of their servitude. The Prophet took refuge
[in God] from coveting saying, “I seek refuge in You from coveting, which leads to the sealing
[of hearts], and from coveting what cannot be attained.” And that is the [kind of] covetousness by
which the heart is sealed, and which makes him desirous of the world and turns him away from the Hereafter. One of the pious predecessors, may God be pleased with them, related that,
“Coveting is true poverty and the wealthy one who covets is poor, and a poor person who is
content with his state is wealthy, for coveting is what severs necks (yaqṭa’u al-rijāb).” God,
Blessed and Most High said, “I would have never put one of my creation under the charge of
another, except that they hoped for something from them, but if they had hoped for nothing but
Me, I would not ever have put one under the charge of another.” A poet said:

“Are you coveting Layla? May you know well then,
Covetousness is that which cuts the throats of men.”

And also:

“I obeyed my desire and it made a slave of me.

163 In the Islamic worldview, good deeds should be done for the sake of God alone, not for personal or worldly gain. This exact hadith is found in Ibn Mājah’s collection. Ibn Mājah, English Translation of Sunan Ibn Mājah, vol. 5, 339 (Hadith 4202). The last line of a hadith in Muslim’s collection has very similar wording and the same meaning. “I am the least in need of a partner. Whoever does any deed in which he associates someone else with Me, I will reject him and his deed.” Muslim, English Translation of Sahih Muslim, vol. 7, 387 (Hadith 7475).

164 In the Quran tama’a, may be translated as hope or desire in different contexts. As “hope” it is often used in connection to the hope for salvation or forgiveness of evildoers (see al-A’rāf: 7:46; 26:51; 26:82; 70:38). Tama’a as hope is often juxtaposed to fear (khawf). (See al-A’rāf 7:56; al-Ra’d 13:12; al-Rūm 30:24; al-Sajdah 32:16). As “desire” tama’a may refer to illicit sexual desire (al-Ahzāb 33:32) or an insatiable, greedy desire (al-Muddaththir 74:15) and overall seems to have a negative connotation, much like “covet” in the English language.

165 Ataṭma’u fī laylá wa ta’lamu annamā‘ taqaṭa’u a’nāqa al-rijāli al-matāmi’u
If only I were satisfied I would have been free.”

[28] And among its maladies is the pursuit of building up [wealth] in the world and multiplying it. And the remedy is knowing that the world is not one’s permanent abode and that the hereafter is the everlasting abode, and the person of intellect is one who works for the abode that is lasting and not for the waystations along his journey. For indeed the waystations come to an end and residing in the final abode is everlasting, so he works for that to which he finally returns. God Most High said, *The life of this world is but play, diversion, ornament, mutual boasting among you, and vying for increase in property and children* [Al-Ḥadīd 57: 20]. And God Most High says, *While the Hereafter is better and more enduring* [al-A‘lā 87: 17]. And God says, *Better indeed is the Abode of the Hereafter for those who are reverent* [al-An‘ām 6: 32].

[29] And among its maladies is looking favorably upon the affairs it carried out and looking unfavorably on the actions of those who differ with it. And the remedy is accusing the *nafs* because it commands to iniquity and thinking well of others because the outcome of events is unknown.

[30] And among its maladies is taking pity on it and undertaking promises made to it. And the remedy is turning away from it and paying little heed to it. In this way I heard my grandfather saying, “He whose *nafs* bestows honor on him, his religion is of little consequence to him.”

[31] And among its maladies is avenging oneself and quarrelling and becoming angry for its own sake. And the remedy is seeing the *nafs* as one’s enemy, enmity for it, and love of

---

166 أطعتُ مطامعي فاستعبدتُني/ ولو أنني قنعتُ لكنتُ حرّا
Aṭaʿtu maṭāmaʿī fa ṣastaʿbudatnī/ wa law annī qanaʿitu la kuntu ḥurrā

167 Ultimately all of humanity will return to God. This idea is drawn from the following verse: *Those who, when affliction befalls them, say, “Truly we are God’s and unto Him we return. They are those upon whom come the blessings from their Lord, and compassion, and they are those who are rightly guided* [al-Baqarah 2: 156].

168 Sulamī’s grandfather was Abū ʿAmrū Ibn Nujayd.
avenging the religion, and anger with whomever commits the prohibited. It was related about the Prophet \(ﷺ\) that he never avenged himself ever unless what God Most High made holy was violated, for he was avenging God Most High.\(^{170}\)

[32] And among its maladies is occupying oneself with rectifying the outward [appearance] for the sight of people and paying little attention to rectifying the inward which is in the sight of God Mighty and Majestic and it is most worthy of being rectified. And the remedy is knowing for certain that people will only hold him in high regard to the degree that God put that in their hearts. And he knows that his inward is what God most high regards and it is more worthy of being rectified than the outward [appearance] which is in the sight of people. God the Blessed and Most High said, *Truly God is a watcher over you* [al-Nisā’ 4: 1]. And the Prophet \(ﷺ\) said, “Indeed, God regards neither your appearance nor your good deeds but rather he regards your hearts and intentions.”\(^{171}\)

[33] And among its maladies is concern with sustenance while God has already guaranteed that for it, and lack of concern for the deeds that God made obligatory for it that no one else would undertake for it. And the remedy is knowing that God, the one who created him, ensured for him sufficiency in his sustenance. So He said, *God it is Who created you, then sustained you* [al-Rūm 30: 40]. Therefore, as no one doubts the creation, doubt not [your attainment of] sustenance. I heard Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd Allāh saying he heard that Hātim al-Aṣamm said,

\(^{169}\) Avenge here more also has the meaning “uphold.”
\(^{170}\) “God’s messenger never took revenge over anybody for his own sake unless what God Most High made holy was violated, for he was avenging God Most High.” Al-Bukhārī, *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 8, 87 (Hadith 6126). Also found in Al-Bukhārī, *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 8, 409 (Hadith 6786).
\(^{171}\) See footnote for the same hadith in passage 12.
“What do you eat today and what do you wear and where do you reside? So I say, taste death, wear [your] burial shroud (kafin)\textsuperscript{172} and live [in] your grave.”

[34] And among its maladies is an abundance of sins and transgressions to the point that the heart is hardened (rendered impenitent). And the remedy is repeatedly asking God for forgiveness, turning to God in repentance with every breath, perseverance in fasting and night vigils, holding the people of goodwill (ahl al-khayr) in high esteem (hurmah), and attending gatherings of pious people and those practicing dhikr. A man complained to the Prophetﷺ about the hardness of his heart. So he said to him, “Dwell in dhikr and increase [the number of times you] ask God for forgiveness for I ask God for forgiveness 70 times throughout the day.” And he saidﷺ “When the servant [of God] sins, a black spot appears on his heart.\textsuperscript{173} If he turns to God in repentance and seeks forgiveness from God [the black spot] disappears and when he sins a second time another black spot appears on his heart until the heart reaches a point where it cannot distinguish between the good and the reprehensible.’ Then the Prophetﷺ recited [from the Quran], Nay! But that which they used to earn has covered their hearts with rust [al-Muṭaffifin 83: 14].”

[35] And among its maladies is love of speaking about people and investigation into the minutia of the sciences to entrap the hearts of the gullible and turn the faces of people to him through the excellence of his words. And the remedy is to practice what he preaches and to council people through his actions, not through his words. It is said that God Most High revealed to Jesus, son of Mary, “If you want to preach to people, [first] preach to yourself. [Only] if you

\textsuperscript{172} Unlike the funerary box in English known as the “coffin,” the kafin is the white cloth in which a Muslim is wrapped before burial in the ground.

\textsuperscript{173} This black spot is mentioned in the following hadith. “When the believer commits a sin, a black spot appears on his heart. If he repents and gives up that sin and seeks forgiveness, his heart will be polished. But if (the sin) increases, (the black spot) increases. That is the Rān that God mentions His Book: Nay! But that which they used to earn has covered their hearts with rust [al-Muṭaffifin 83: 14].” Ibn Mājah, English Translation of Sunan Ibn Mājah, vol. 5, 360-361 (Hadith 4244). Al-Tirmidhī, English Translation of Jāmiʿ at-Tirmidhī, vol. 6, 68 (Hadith 3334).
let yourself be admonished, then preach to people. Otherwise have humility before me.” So the Prophet ﷺ said, “On the night of my ascension (miʿrāj), I passed by a people whose lips were being slashed by scissors of fire, so I asked, ‘Who are they, O my brother Gabriel?’ He said, ‘They are the preachers of your community who commanded people to piety and forgot themselves even though they were people who recited the Quran (al-kitāb).’”

[36] And among its maladies is happiness, exultation and seeking comfort and these qualities are the outcome of heedlessness. And the remedy is to wake up to what awaits it and its knowledge of its shortcomings in what was ordained [by God] for it and it committing what was forbidden it and that this abode [the world] for one is a prison and there is no happiness or comfort in prison. Indeed the Prophet ﷺ said, “The world is the prison of the believer and the paradise of the denier.” One’s life in [the world] must be the life of a prisoner, not a life of comfort. It was related on the authority of Dāwūd al-Ṭāʾī that he said, “Mention (dhikr) of one of two eternal abodes breaks the hearts of the knowers [of God].” A man said to Bashar al-Ḥāfi, “Why do I see you anxious and preoccupied?” So he said, “Because I am sought after [by the Hereafter].”

[37] And among its maladies is following its capricious whims and accordance with its pleasure and carrying out its goals. And the remedy is what God Most High prescribed for it in His words, *[And forbid the nafs from caprice, truly the Garden is the refuge]* [al-Nāziʿāt 79: 40-]

---

174 The Prophet’s ascension (miʿraj), also known as the night journey (isrāʾ) occurred sometime near the end of the Meccan period before the great migration (hijrah) of the Muslims from Mecca to Medina. The Prophet was transported by night from the Kaʿbah to the mosque in Jerusalem through the help of the angel Gabriel and an animal called a Buraq. From Jerusalem, Muhammad ascended through the seven heavens meeting earlier prophets along the way and finally reaching the lote tree of the furthest boundary beyond which no created being can pass. Three important occurrences happened there: the fixing of the five prayers, the Prophet’s sight of heaven and hell, and the promise of paradise for all believers who do not commit major sins.


176 The two eternal abodes are Heaven (jannah) and Hell (nār).
Surely the nafs commands to evil [Yūsuf 12: 53]. It was related from Muḍar al-Qārīʾ that he said, “Carving out the mountains with one’s fingernails is easier than opposing desire when it takes root in the nafs.”

[38] And among its maladies is one’s inclination to interact socially with one’s peers and companionship. And the remedy is knowing that any companion he has [will be] separated [from him] and social relations are [ultimately] cut off. It was narrated about the Prophet ﷺ that Gabriel ﷺ said, “No matter how you live, ultimately you will die; And no matter whom you love, ultimately you will part from him; and no matter what you do, you will be called to account for it. And know that the honor of the believer is in performing the night vigil and his esteem is in his independence from people.” And Abū Qasim al-Hakīm said, “Friendship is enmity unless you are sincere, and accumulating wealth is loss unless you give away your possessions in charity, and mingling [with people] is deceptive unless you are vigilant.”

[39] And among its maladies is finding comfort in one’s acts of obedience and the perception of one’s excellence. And the remedy is knowing that his actions, even if they were sincere are defective, and that his actions are not devoid of deficiencies, and he knows that his works will only be sincere when he ceases to perceive the excellence of his deeds.

[40] And among its maladies is causing one’s own death by following one’s passions, for indeed if the nafs becomes firmly established in that, it dies to [accomplishing] acts of obedience and accordance with God’s will. And the remedy is preventing it from its goals and compelling it to loathsome things, and opposing it in that which it demands, for that is what causes it to die to its passions. It was said to Abū Ḥafs, “By what means is a healthy nafs attained?” He said, “By opposing it, for it is site of every peril.”
[41] And among its maladies is feeling secure from the ploys of Satan and his seduction, his temptations and his deceptions. And the remedy is strengthening one’s commitment to servanthood with all its incumbent conditions and to beseech God Most High that He bestow that upon him, for God Most High said [to Satan], *As for my servants, truly thou hast no authority over them* [al-Ḥijr 15: 42].

[42] And among its maladies is donning the [outward appearance] of piety without demanding sincerity of the heart regarding the [outward appearance of] piety that it has donned. And the remedy is abandoning outward displays of humility except to the extent of the inner humility that one sees in his heart and secret-heart. For the Prophet ☪ said, “He who affects goodly qualities which were not bestowed upon him is like one who wears two pieces of clothing appropriated from someone else (*thawbay zūr*).”

[43] And among its maladies is lack of insight when one sees God grant it respite in [the punishment of] its sins. And the remedy is constant fear [of God] and knowing that His respite is not due to [His] negligence and that God Most High will question him about it and chastise him unless He has mercy on him. For insight is the domain of the people of awe [of God], because God Most High said, *Truly in that is an insight for the people of awe* [al-Nāziʿāt 79: 26]. And one said,

“The respite of her creator has deceived her.

Think not respite means [He has] not perceived [her].”

[44] And among its maladies is love of divulging the faults of one’s brothers and companions. And the remedy is returning in that to his nafs so that he loves for people what he

---


178 Qad gharrahā ithmālu khāliqiḥālahā/ lā tuḥsibunna imhālaha ihmāla
loves for himself. As was related from the Prophet ﷺ, “The Muslim is one who desires for his brother what he desires for himself.”\(^\text{179}\) And [it was also related] from him ﷺ, “For whosoever covers over the private affairs of his brother Muslim, God will cover over his private affairs.”\(^\text{180}\)

[45] And among its maladies is no longer demanding more of oneself in one’s deeds and speech and one’s satisfaction with what one has already accomplished. And the remedy is seeking an increase in [pious] actions and speech through following well the example of the pious predecessors. For ʿAlī, may God be pleased with him said, “Whosoever is not increasing is in loss.”

[46] And among its maladies is regarding Muslims with contempt and elevating [oneself] arrogantly above them. And the remedy is returning to humbling oneself and holding Muslims in high regard. For God Most High said to his Prophet ﷺ, *So pardon them, ask forgiveness for them, and consult them in affairs* [Āl-ʿImrān 3: 159]. And know that pride is what brought the curse upon Iblīs\(^\text{181}\) and caused his downfall when he said, *I am better than him. Thou has created me from fire, while thou hast created him from clay* [al-ʿAʿrāf 7: 12]. And the Prophet ﷺ beheld the Kaʿbah\(^\text{182}\) saying, “How great you are and how great is your esteem. And the believer is greater than you in the eyes of God. God Most High has made only one thing forbidden to you and the believer three: his blood, his wealth, and his good repute.”\(^\text{183}\)

---


\(^\text{181}\) Iblīs is another name for Satan in the Quran.

\(^\text{182}\) Kaʿbah means literally “cube.” It was a Pre-Islamic shrine and pilgrimage site built by Abraham and Ishmael. Muslims make a pilgrimage (*hāj*) to this site at least once in their lifetime if they are physically and financially capable and this pilgrimage is one of the five pillars of Islamic ritual.

\(^\text{183}\) A very similar hadith can be found in Ibn Mājah’s collection. “I saw the Messenger of God circumambulating the Kaʿbah and saying, “How good you are and how great is your sanctity. By the One in whose hand is the *nafs* of
[47] And among its maladies is lassitude and refraining from the prescriptions. And the remedy is knowing that he is ordered by God Most High. Let the joy of that prompt him to enthusiasm in carrying out the prescriptions. Similarly, I heard my grandfather saying, “Some of them said, ‘Negligence in [fulfilling] the prescription results from having little knowledge of the Prescriber.’”

[48] And among its maladies is donning the robes of the righteous and carrying out the work of the people of corruption. And the remedy is no longer enhancing one’s outer [appearance] until after returning one’s inward state to the right condition so that when you wear the clothing of those who strive [in the way of God], that you are in accordance with their morals and actions, whether in totality or partiality. For it was narrated in a tradition, “It suffices an iniquitous man that people think he fears God while his heart is profligate.” And Abū Uthmān said, “Outward fear [of God] with a profligate heart leads to [unrepentant] persistence [in sin].”

[49] And among its maladies is wasting one’s time in preoccupation with what does not concern him regarding the affairs of the world and being engrossed therein with its people. And the remedy is knowing that his time is the most precious of things, so he should occupy it with the most precious of things and they are dhikr of God Almighty and Majestic, perseverance in obedience [to Him], and demanding sincerity of his nafs. For it was narrated from the Prophet ﷺ “Leave that which makes you doubt for that which does not make you doubt.” And the Prophet said ﷺ, “Among the acts of excellence in Islam is leaving that which does not concern you.”

Muhammad, the sanctity of the believer is greater before God than your sanctity, his blood, and his wealth, and to think anything but well of him.” Ibn Mājah, English Translation of Sunan Ibn Mājah, vol. 5, 167 (Hadith 3932).


185 Al-Nawawī, al-‘Arba‘īn al-nawawīyyah, 10 (Hadith 12); al-Tirmidhī, English Translation of Jāmi‘ at-Tirmidhī, vol. 4, 352-353 (Hadith 2317).
him. Ḥusayn Ibn Mansūr said, “Beware of your nafs, if you do not keep it occupied it will occupy you.”

[50] And among its maladies is anger. And the remedy is prompting the nafs to contentment with the Divine decree, for indeed anger is a firebrand of Satan. A man came to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and said, “Advise [me].” So he said, “Do not get angry.” And he repeated that a second time and a third time.¹⁸⁶ Then he said, “Do not get angry because anger expels the servant to the brink of destruction when he is no longer accompanied by hindrance and restraint from God Most High.”

[51] And among its maladies is lying. And the remedy is prompting the nafs to truthfulness and no longer being preoccupied with the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of people. That which incites the liar to lie is seeking the pleasure of people and enhancing himself and seeking status in their eyes. It was narrated from the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, “Truthfulness leads to righteousness and righteousness leads to paradise, and lying leads to profligation and profligation leads to the fire.”¹⁸⁷

[52] And among its maladies is stinginess and miserliness and the two are consequences of loving the world. And the remedy is knowing that the world is trifling and transitory and its permissible things are accountable, and its forbidden things are punishable. As was narrated by the Prophet ﷺ, “Love of the world is the source of all error.” And God Most High related of [the world] that it is the enjoyment of delusion (matā‘ al-ghurūr)¹⁸⁸ so do not be miserly with it and

¹⁸⁷ Al-Bukhārī, The Translation of the Meanings of Sahīh al-Bukharī, vol. 8, 74 (Hadith 6094); Muslim, English Translation of Sahīh Muslim, vol. 6, 469 (Hadith 6637); al-Tirmidhī, English Translation of Jāmi‘ at-Tirmidhī, vol. 4, 72-73 (Hadith 1971).
¹⁸⁸ Every nafs shall taste death, and you will indeed be paid your reward in full on the Day of Resurrection. And whosoever is distanced from the Fire and made to enter the garden has certainly triumphed. And the life of this world is naught but the enjoyment of delusion (matā‘ al-ghurūr) [Āl ’Imrān 3: 185].
tight-fisted and strive to spend of it freely and only hold on to it to the extent necessary to protect yourself from harm. Indeed the Prophet ﷺ said, “Give O Bilāl and fear not that the Owner of the throne will diminish [your wealth].” 189

[53] And among its maladies is extending one’s expectations (amal). And the remedy is envisaging one’s appointed time [of death] as near, and knowing that some of the pious predecessors said, “What is most loved by God is that one not feel secure in any state, so be wary of Him in all states.”

[54] And among its maladies is being deluded by false praise. And the remedy is that the words of people do not deceive him given what he knows about himself. For the reality of the matter is made clear to him in spite of them, and that their praise of him is at odds with what God Most High knows about him. And he knows about himself that he will not be saved from the shame of the consequences of his actions.

[55] And among its maladies is avarice (ḥirṣ). And the remedy is knowing that he will not procure through his avarice more than what God has already ordained for his sustenance. As was narrated by Ibn Masʿūd, may God be pleased with him, from the Prophet ﷺ who said, “Indeed God Most High said to the angel, ‘Write for him his sustenance, his works, his lifespan, and whether he will be damned or saved (saʿīd).’” 190 And God Most High said, With me, the word is not changed, and I do not wrong my servants [Qāf 50: 29].

[56] And among its maladies is envy. And the remedy is knowing that the envious one is the enemy of the blessing of God Most High. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Do not envy one another or

190 al-Nawawī, al-Arbaʿūn al-nawawīyyah, 6-7 (Hadith 4); al-Bukhārī, The Translation of the Meanings of Sahīh al-Bukhārī, vol. 4, 276 (Hadith 3208); Ibn Mājah, English Translation of Sunan Ibn Mājah, vol. 1, 126-127 (Hadith 76).
detest one another, but be servants of God as brothers.” And the outcome of envy comes from lack of compassion for Muslims.

[57] And among its maladies is [unrepentant] persistence in sin with the expectation of pardon and the hope of mercy. And the remedy is knowing that God Most High enjoined mercy for those who do not persist in sin [unrepentantly] when He said, *and who do not knowingly persist in what they have done* [Āl ‘Imran 3: 135]. And Abū Ḥafs said, “Persistence in transgression comes from taking lightly the omnipotence of God Most High.” [And its remedy] is knowing that God made mercy incumbent upon the virtuous, so He said, *Surely the mercy of God is ever nigh unto the virtuous* [al-Aʿrāf 7: 56]. And He made pardon incumbent upon those who turn to Him in repentance when He said, *And seek forgiveness from your Lord; then turn unto Him in repentance. Truly my Lord is Merciful, Loving* [Hūd 11: 90].

[58] And among its maladies is that it does not willingly respond to [preforming] acts of obedience. And the remedy is training [the nafs] with hunger and thirst and cutting oneself off [by embarking on] journeys, and prompting it to do [what it considers] loathsome. I heard Manṣūr Ibn Ṭabarîzân saying he heard it from his uncle al-Bisṭāmī who heard his father saying, “A man said to Abū Yazīd, may God sanctify his spirit, ‘What is the most difficult [situation] you met the path of God?’ He said, ‘I cannot describe it.’ So he said, ‘What is the easiest [situation] you met on the path to God.’ He said, ‘I cannot qualify it.’ He said, ‘What is the most difficult [situation] your nafs met from you on the path to God?’ He said, ‘I cannot describe it.’ So he said, ‘What is the easiest [situation] your nafs met from you on the path of God.’ He said,

---

191 This hadith with a minor addition is found in Muslim’s collection. “Do not envy one another, do not hate one another, do not turn away from one another and be servants of God as brothers.” Muslim, *English Translation of Sahih Muslim*, vol. 6, 430 (Hadith 6536). Many other variations with similar wording are found on 430-431. The hadith with the minor addition is also found in Bukhārī’s collection. Al-Bukhārī, *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 8, 60 (Hadith 6064). Other variations are found on 60-61. A similar hadith is also found in al-Nawawi’s collection. “Do not envy one another, and do not inflate prices for one another, and do not hate one another, and do not turn away from one another, and do not undercut one another in trade, but rather be servants of God and brothers.” Al-Nawawi, *al-Arba’ ʿin al-nawawiyyah*, 23-24 (Hadith 35).
‘As for this, yes. I called upon it to perform some acts of obedience and it did not respond willingly so I deprived it of water for a year.’”

[59] And among its maladies is its greed to accumulate and withhold. And the remedy is knowing that one is not secure from the termination of his life and the nearness of his appointed time [of death]. So he accumulates to the extent that he is certain of his lifespan and withholds to the extent that he [expects] to live; but in reality, whoever does not feel secure about a single breath of his breaths, his accumulation for that is a delusion. And his withholding it for others, with the consequence it will have on his nafs, is ignorance. Given what was narrated from the Prophet ﷺ that he said, “‘Is there one of you who finds the wealth of his heir preferable to his own wealth?’ They said, ‘There is not one among us for whom the wealth of his heir is more beloved than his own wealth.’ So he said, ‘Your wealth is what you have put forward [before your death] and the wealth of your heirs is what you have postponed [giving until your death].’”192

[60] And among its maladies is companionship with those who deviate and are in opposition to the truth. And the remedy is returning to companionship with those who affirm and turn towards the truth. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Whosoever resembles a people, he is from them.”193 And he ﷺ said “Whosoever increases the number of a people [by joining them], he is one of them.” Some of the pious predecessor said, “Frequenting the iniquitous gives rise to negative assumptions about the virtuous.” And some of them said, “Indeed when hearts distance [themselves] from God Most High, they come to loathe those who are established in the truth of God Most High.”

---

[61] And among its maladies is heedlessness. And the remedy is knowing that He is not heedless of him, for indeed God Most High said, And God is not heedless of what you do [al-Baqarah 2: 74] and knowing that he is accountable for [every] passing thought and aspiration. And whoever affirms this will be watchful of his moments and guards his states, and then heedlessness will pass away from him.

[62] And among its maladies is abandoning seeking one’s livelihood and abstaining from it to appear to people that he abstains [from work] relying [on God] and then looking expectantly for sustenance and becoming resentful if sustenance does not come. And the remedy is holding fast to seeking a livelihood as was related about the Prophet ﷺ who said, “Indeed the best of what a man eats is from his own effort.” And that his earning a livelihood is outwardly apparent and his trust in God inward, so that he becomes one who earns a livelihood among people outwardly while trusting in God inwardly; and this [state] is among the degrees of the virtuous and the path of the sincere.”

[63] And among its maladies is fleeing from the clear mandates (ẓāhir) that knowledge makes obligatory on him to false claims and spiritual states. And the remedy is holding fast to knowledge. For indeed God says, And if you differ among yourselves concerning any matter, refer it to God and the Messenger [Nisā’ 4: 59] and He Most High said, O you who believe! Obey God and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you [Nisā’ 4: 59]. And the Prophet ﷺ said, “Seek knowledge even unto China.” And he said ﷺ, “Seeking knowledge is incumbent upon every male and female Muslim.”

---

194 Knowledge (ʿilm) indicates the basic precepts of the religion.
195 A similar hadith is found in al-Nasāʾī. “Seeking knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim, and he who imparts knowledge to those who do not deserve it is like one who puts a necklace of jewels, pearls and gold around the neck of swine.” al-Nisāʾī, English Translation of Sunan al-Nasāʾī, vol. 1, 222 (Hadith 224).
[64] And among its maladies is aggrandizing what one gives and spends and indebted whoever accepts it to him. And the remedy is knowing that he is a means to their receiving sustenance but that in reality the Provider and the Giver is God Most High [alone], and he is just an intermediary between the servants and God. Do not be self-aggrandizing for being the means through which people receive their [ordained] due.

[65] And among its maladies is to make a show of poverty in spite of sufficiency. And the remedy is demonstrating sufficiency in spite of having little. I heard my grandfather say, “[In early times] people were entering Sufism wealthy and became poor while outwardly appearing wealthy to people. And in these times, the poor are entering Sufism and becoming wealthy while outwardly appearing poor [and in need] to people.”

[66] And among its maladies is regarding oneself as superior [faḍl] to one’s peers. And the remedy is knowledge of one’s nafs, for no one knows it better than he, and thinking the best about one’s peers so that prompts him to have a low opinion of himself while seeing the superiority of his brothers and peers. And he can only attain this after he looks at people with high regard and looks at his nafs with low regard. In the same vein, I heard my grandfather saying that he heard Abū ʿAbdullah al-Sijzi saying, “You have superiority to the extent that you do not see [your superiority], and when you see your superiority then you have none.”

[67] And among its maladies is encouraging the nafs to what brings it exultation. And the remedy is knowing that God detests the exultant. God Most High said, Surely God loves not the exultant [al-Qaṣas 28: 76]. In a description of the Prophet ﷺ it was said that he was always sad

\[196\] In this verse, an ancient Israelite named Korah gloats about his wealth and rebels against Moses. His people reprimand him, telling him to “exult not” for his wealth but work for success in the afterlife. This verse is a reminder that success in worldly life is meaningless; the focus of one’s life should be working towards success in the Hereafter.
and constantly in thought. And he said, “Indeed God loves every sad heart.” And Mālik Ibn Dīnār said, “Indeed a heart in which there is no sadness is ruined (kharaba) just as a house is ruined if no one lives in it.”

[68] And among its maladies is that it is in a state [that obliges] gratitude while it supposes that it is in a station [that requires] patience. And the remedy is seeing God’s blessings under all circumstances. I heard Saʿīd Ibn Abd Allāh saying he heard his uncle say he heard Abū ʿUthmān say, “All of the creation is with God in a station [that obliges] gratitude while they think they are with Him in a station [that requires] patience.”

[69] And among its maladies is availing oneself of dispensations [in acts of worship] based on [specific] interpretations. And the remedy is avoiding doubtful matters because they may lead to what is forbidden according to the text. Have you not considered that the Prophet said, “The lawful is clear and the unlawful is clear and between them are doubtful matters. Thus, it is sounder for one’s religion and dignity to avoid them, and whosoever falls into them may fall into what is forbidden, like the shepherd [grazing] on the edge of a protected precinct may easily cross over into the protected precinct. Know well that every king has a sanctum. Know well that the sanctum of God is His prohibitions.”

[70] And among its maladies is overlooking the nafs in the event of a slip or lapse. And the remedy is meeting that slip quickly with rejection and repentance lest the nafs become habituated to that slip and the like. On this topic, I heard ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Muhammad al-Rāzī say he heard Abū ʿUthmān say, “The greatest peril of the generality of spiritual seekers (murīdīn) is due to

---

198 This describes a situation that one finds difficult or harmful and so one thinks that one should bear it patiently, when in reality the situation deserves one’s gratitude.
199 Al-Nawawī, al-Arbaʿūn al-nawawiyyah, 7-8 (Hadith 6); Muslim, English Translation of Sahīḥ Muslim, vol. 4, 320 (Hadith 4094); Abū Dāwūd, English Translation of Sunan Abu Dawud, vol 4, 61 (Hadith 3329).
their overlooking a slip or inadvertent mistake that befalls them and not treating it immediately until the *nafs* grows accustomed to that and they fall from the rank of aspiration.”

[71] And among its maladies is becoming deluded by miracles (*karāmāt*). And the remedy is knowing that most of them are delusions and temptations that lead to destruction (*istidrāj*). And God Most High says, *We shall lead them on little by little, whence they know not* [al-ʿrāf 7: 182]. And some of the pious predecessors said, “The subtlest of that which deceives the friends of God are miracles and succor.”

[72] And among its maladies is loving to sit with the wealthy, proclivity for them, drawing near to them and holding them in high esteem. And the remedy is sitting with the poor and knowing that nothing will come to him of what is in their hands [the wealthy] except the amount that God ordained for him and this will protect him from coveting their [wealth]. Thus the love of [the wealthy] and proclivity for them passes away from him. And he knows that God Most High reproved his Prophet ﷺ for sitting with the wealthy and turning away from the poor.200 God Most High said, *As for him who sees himself beyond need, to him dost thou attend, though thou art not answerable, should he not be purified. But as for him who came to thee striving earnestly while fearful, from him thou art diverted* [ʿAbasa 80: 5-10]. And the Prophet ﷺ said after that, “My life is your life and [my] death is your death.”201 And he ﷺ said to the poor, “God Most High, may He be praised, ordered me to bear patiently with you [your tribulations].”202 And he ﷺ said, “God give me life as a poor man and cause me to die a poor man and assemble me on the

---

200 This is a reference to an occasion when the Prophet was trying to convince the leaders of his adversaries about the veracity of his message. A blind man approached the Prophet asking for guidance, repeating the phrase “O Messenger of God, guide me” in the middle of this conversation. The Prophet avoided him, continuing his attempt to persuade his adversaries and God rebuked him for that in this verse.

201 This hadith could also be translated “I will live with you and die with you.” Muslim, *English Translation of Sahih Muslim*, vol. 5, 84-86 (Hadith 4624).

Day of Assembly among the poor.” And the Prophetﷺ said to ‘Alī or to another, “Love of the poor and drawing near to them is incumbent upon you.”

[73] I have clarified in these passages some of the maladies of the *nafs* so that one of intellect may take guidance from that about what lies beyond them and whosoever God aids with success and guidance might free themselves of them, while admitting that it is not possible to comprehensively enumerate its maladies. And how could it be possible while the *nafs* is defective with respect to all its attributes and is not free of a single defect? And how can one enumerate the faults of something which is entirely a defect and which God Most High has described as perpetually inciting iniquity? Except perhaps the servant rectifies something of his faults by the means of some of these remedies and a fault among his faults is made to fall away from him in this way.

And may God bring us success in following guidance and cause the sources of heedlessness and passions to fall away from us and put us under His protection, His custody, His security and His guardianship, for indeed He is powerful over [these things] and the Bestower of them by His mercy and favor. May God bless Muhammad and his pure family and grant them peace and wellbeing.

---

REFERENCES


__, On Disciplining the Soul (Kitāb riyādat al-nafs) & On


Sells, Michael. “Spirit”, in: *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, General Editor: Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Georgetown University, Washington DC. Consulted online on 31 March 2018 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1875-3922_q3_EQCOM_00193


