Islamic Thought and the Art of Translation

Texts and Studies in Honor of William C. Chittick and Sachiko Murata

Edited by

Mohammed Rustom

BRILL

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The author has no share save the post of translator, and no portion but the trade of speaker.

From the preface of Jāmī, *Lawā'iḥ*, trans. William C. Chittick in Sachiko Murata, *Chinese gleams of Sufi light: Wang Tai-yü's* Great learning of the pure and real *and Liu Chih's* Displaying the concealment of the real realm, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2000, 134

Contents

CHAPTER 17

Sufism and Philosophy in the Mughal-Safavid Era: Shāh Walī Allāh and the End of Selfhood

Muhammad U. Faruque

1 Introduction: Between Persia and India

In his *The reconstruction of religious thought in Islam*, the late philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938) writes of Shāḥ Walī Allāh of Delhi (d. 1176/1762) as "the first Muslim who felt the urge of a new spirit in him" in the great task of rethinking "the whole system of Islam without completely breaking with the past."[1] Whether or not Walī Allāh was indeed the first intellectual to have felt the urge of a new spirit on the cusp of colonial modernity in 12th/18th-century India, there is no denying that he was a wide-ranging thinker who dealt with some of the major intellectual dimensions of Islam.[2] As a prolific writer, he composed over fifty works (including five collections of letters and epistles) ranging from Sufi metaphysics, philosophical theology, *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and *ʿilm al-ḥadīth*, to philosophy of self and biographical treatises, in which he sought to create a synthetic paradigm for the purposes of rejuvenating the Islamic tradition of his day.[3] The intellectual contribution of this major intellec-

1 Iqbal, Muhammad, *The reconstruction of religious thought in Islam*, ed. and annotated by Saeed Sheikh, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013, 78.

2 For Walī Allāh's autobiography, see Allāh, Shāh Walī, *Anfas al-ʿārifīn* [Urdu translation of the Persian original], ed. Sayyid Muḥammad Farūqī al-Qādirī, Lahore: al-Maʿārif, 1974 (*al-juz' al-laṭīf fī tarjamat al-ʿabd al-ḍaʿīf*); Husain, M. Hidayat, "The Persian autobiography of Shāh Walīullāh bin ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Dihlavī," in *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 14 (1912), 161–176. On his life, see al-Lakhnawī, ʿAbd al-Ḥayy b. Fakhr al-Dīn, *Nuzhat al-khawāṭir bahjat al-masāmiʿ wa-l-nawāẓir*, vi, Multan: Idārat-i Taʾlīfāt-i Ashrafiyya, 1993, 398–415; Rizvi, Sayyid A.A., *Shāh Walī-Allāh and his times: A study of eighteenth century Islām, politics and society in India*, Canberra: Maʿrifat, 1980, 203–228; Jalbani, Ghulam Hussain, *Life of Shah Waliyullah*, Lahore: Ashraf, 1978, 1–14; Allāh, Shāh Walī, *The conclusive argument from God: Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi's* Ḥujjat Allāh al-bāligha, trans. Marcia K. Hermansen, Leiden: Brill, 1996, xxiii–xxxvi, xxii–xxxiii.

3 On Walī Allāh's revivalist project, see, e.g., Brown, Jonathan A.C., *Misquoting Muhammad: The challenge and choices of interpreting the Prophet's legacy*, London: Oneworld Publications, 2014, *passim*; Nadwī, Abū l-Ḥasan ʿA., *Saviours of Islamic spirit*. IV. *Hakim-ul-islam Shah Waliullah*, Lucknow: Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, 2004, 91–114.

tual is relatively well-known in the West,[4] although in the Subcontinent itself, there is no lacuna of books written on his thought in Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, and other Indian languages.[5] He is long held as an important precursor to Islamic reformist movements such as Jamaʿāt-i Islāmī and The Muslim Brotherhood.[6]

In the present chapter I aim to probe Shāh Walī Allāh's account of selfhood and subjectivity (i.e., phenomenal experiences involving the first-person pronoun "I") through the "subtle fields of consciousness" known as the *laṭā'if*. I will begin with a brief survey of the state of philosophy and mysticism in the Mughal-Safavid era in order to situate Walī Allāh's thought in relation to the normative Islamic intellectual tradition. A large part of Walī Allāh's writings is devoted to explicating the nature of the self through the *laṭā'if* and one's spiritual journey within them. That is to say, the *laṭā'if* must be discovered, deciphered, and cultivated through the spiritual exercises, as they reveal the true nature of the self. Accordingly, I will examine the nature of ultimate selfhood and the process of its realization through one's understanding of the *laṭā'if*. In the main, I will argue that Walī Allāh develops a highly original model of the self that synthesizes elements from Stoicism, Islamic philosophy, Graeco-Islamic medical tradition, and Sufism.

Research on the nature and development of Islamic philosophy (i.e., various schools of Islamic philosophy including philosophical Sufism) in India is still in its early days, even though bio-bibliographical literature lists hundreds of names with thousands of texts, most of which consist of commentaries and glosses that are still in manuscript form.[7] Therefore, recent scholarship is right to suggest that

4 Apart from Rizvi, *Shāh Walī Allāh*, op. cit., and Baljon, Johannes M.S., *Religion and thought of Shāh Walī Allāh Dihlavi*, Leiden: Brill, 1986, there is no other scholarly monograph devoted to Walī Allāh in English. This is rather surprising in that Walī Allāh's oeuvre contains no dearth of ideas, especially in the areas of Sufi metaphysics and philosophical theology.

5 The following book edited by Chaghatai provides an overview of Walī Allāh's reception in some of these languages: Chaghatai, Muḥammad I. (ed.), *Shah Waliullah: His religious and political thought*, Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2005, *passim*.

6 For more information, see Mawdūdī, Sayyid Abū l-Aʿlā (Jamaʿāt-i Islāmī), *Tajdīd wa-iḥyā-yi dīn*, Lahore: Islamic Publisher Ltd., 1999, 89.

7 Recent scholarship has seen a boom in post-Avicennan studies after Ernest Renan's (d. 1892) infamous thesis that philosophy in the Islamic lands had disappeared after Averroes. However, it is noteworthy that just as Renan's study asserts a false myth concerning the fate of philosophy in the Islamic world after the classical period (ca. 800–1200), some contemporary scholars tend to give the impression that after Averroes (or gradually after al-Ghazālī's famous attack on *falsafa*) Islamic philosophy had *only* continued in Persia. This seems like the beginning of another myth that is flatly contradicted by the facts on the ground, as the studies of many contemporary scholars, such as Robert Wisnovsky, Khaled al-Rouayheb, Saj-

> at this stage of research … the tradition be gauged in a preliminary fashion from three related angles: socio-intellectual networks of relevant scholars; a tally of the most significant texts; and brief references to prominent debates and to the contribution of certain outstanding personalities.[8]

Thankfully, a series of pioneering articles (and a book) by Asad Ahmed now fills this desideratum in part by providing maps of the most important scholarly networks and the texts that were studied in *madrasa*s.[9]

In any event, when scholars narrate the story of Islamic philosophy in India, they usually trace its source and transmission to two Iranian scholars, namely Fatḥ Allāh al-Shīrāzī (d. 997/1589)[10] and Mīrzā Jān Ḥabīb Allāh al-Bāghnawī

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jad Rizvi, and Asad Ahmed have shown, demonstrating how philosophical activity continued in various Islamic lands such as Egypt, Ottoman Turkey, and Muslim India up to the 20th century. For a wide-ranging critique of the Orientalist view that Islamic intellectual thought was marked by stagnation in the post-classical period, and that *taqlīd* was the order of the day, see the excellent recent study by El-Rouayheb, Khaled, *Islamic intellectual history in the seventeenth century: Scholarly currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, 173 and 357–358.

8 Ahmed, Asad and Reza Pourjavady, "Islamic theology in India," in Sabine Schmidtke (ed.), *Oxford handbook of Islamic theology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, 607.

9 See Ahmed, Asad, *Palimpsests of themselves*: *Logic and commentary in postclassical Muslim South Asia*, Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2022; Ahmed, Asad, "The *Mawāqif of* ʿAḍud al-Dīn Ījī in India," in Ayman Shihadeh and Jan Thiele (eds.), *Philosophical Theology in Islam: Later Ashʿarism East and West*, Leiden: Brill, 2020, 397–412; Ahmed, Asad, "The *Sullam al-ʿulūm* of Muḥibballāh al-Bihārī," in Khaled El-Rouayheb and Sabine Schmidtke (eds.), *Oxford handbook of Islamic philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017; Ahmed, Asad, "Post-classical philosophical commentaries/glosses: Innovation in the margins," in *Oriens* 41.3–4 (2013), 317–348. See also Malik, Jamal, *Islamische Gelehrtenkultur in Nordindien: Entwicklungsgeschichte und Tendenzen am Beispiel von Lucknow*, Leiden: Brill, 1997, 70 ff.

10 Some have identified the significant role of Fatḥ Allāh al-Shīrāzī, a philosopher trained in the school of Shīrāz and a student of Mīr Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī (d. 949/1542), and an emigrant to the court of Akbar (r. 963–1013/1556–1605). Numerous works, both academic and popular, stress his role as the foremost philosopher and scientist of his time in the Persianate world, and attribute to him a series of important technological innovations and reforms of the administration, including the adoption of Persian as the official language of the Mughal chancellery. He is also regarded as the main conduit for a serious study of philosophy and theology in India, laying the foundations for the *dars-i niẓāmī* method of education, which emphasized the study of the intellectual disciplines (*maʿqūlāt*). For more information, see Ahmed and Pourjavady, "Islamic theology" 612; ʿAlī, Raḥmān, *Tuḥfat al-fuḍalāʾ fī tarājim al-kumalāʾ*, Lucknow: Nawal Kishore, 1914, 160; Bilgrāmī, Sayyid Ghulām, *Maʾāthir-i kirām*, ed. M. Lyallpūrī, Lahore: Maktaba-yi Iḥyāʾ-i ʿUlūm-i Sharqiyya, 1971, 226, 228–229; al-Lakhnawī, *Nuzhat al-khawāṭir* v, 155–156; v, 539–544; Malik, *Islamische*

(d. 995/1587).[11] Both of these scholars originally hailed from Shīrāz and studied with the two foremost philosophers of the city, namely Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī (d. 908/1502) and Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Dashtakī (d. 949/1542).[12] Bāghnawī and Fatḥ Allāh al-Shīrāzī represent the two rival intellectual lineages and perspectives of al-Dawānī and al-Dashtakī respectively, which became significant in the trajectory of philosophy in India through the mediating role of the all-too-important but the neglected figure of Mīr Zāhid al-Harawī (d. 1101/1689).[13] Al-Harawī, who was appointed as judge of the Mughal army and granted the administrative leadership (*ṣidārat*) of Kabul later in his life, studied with Mullā

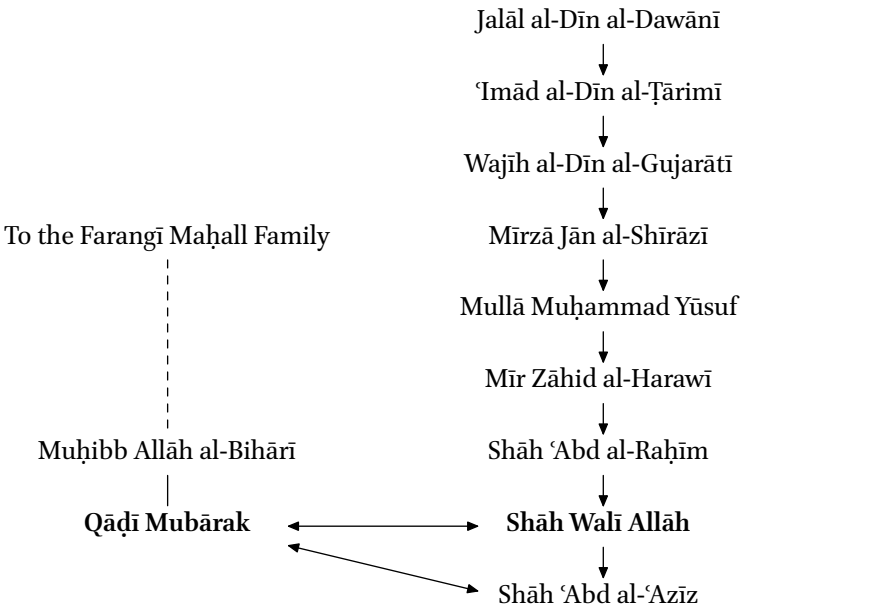
Gelehrtenkultur 86–95; Rizvi, Sajjad, "Mīr Dāmād in India: Islamic philosophical traditions and the problem of creation," in *JAOS* 131.1 (2011), 9–23, 9–10.

11 However, one should also note the intrusion of other currents of Islamic philosophy such as Suhrawardī's Illuminationism that has had a long career in India. For instance, both van Lit and Muḥammad Karīmī mention the possible connection between Suhrawardī and Walī Allāh. And Muḥammad Karīmī notes that Walī Allāh mentions the imaginal places of Jābulqā and Jābursā and the imaginal word (*ʿālam al-mithāl*) in various contexts that indicates that he might have been familiar with Suhrawardī's writings. See Zanjānī Aṣl, Muḥammad Karīmī, *Ḥikmat-i ishrāqī dar Hind*, Tehran: Intishārāt-i Iṭṭalāʿāt, 2007, 69–74; van Lit, Lambertus W.C., *The world of image in Islamic philosophy: Ibn Sīnā, Suhrawardī, Shahrazūrī, and beyond*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017, 166–167. For some pertinent literature on the penetration of the *ishrāqī* philosophy, see the aforementioned Aṣl, *Ḥikmat-i ishrāqī;* van Lit, *World of image;* and Ernst, Carl, "Fayzī's illuminationist interpretation of Vedanta: The *Shāriq al-maʿrifa*," in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 30.3 (2010), 356–364. In his article, Ernst argues that the Mogul court poet Fayẓī (954–1003/1547–1595), who composed the *Shāriq al-maʿrifa*, offers an interpretation of Indian philosophy by drawing on the light symbolism of Suhrawardī's Illuminationism.

12 On these two figures, see Kākāʾī, Qāsim, *Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manṣūr Dashtakī wa-falsafa-yi ʿirfān* (with a critical edition of *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn wa-maqāmat al-ʿārifīn*), Tehran: Intishārāt-i Farhangistān-i Hunar, 2007; Kākāʾī, Qāsim, "Āshnāyī bā maktab-i Shīrāz: Mīr Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī (1)," in *Khiradnāma-yi Ṣadrā* 5–6 (1996–1997), 83–90; Kākāʾī, Qāsim, "Āshnāyī bā maktab-i Shīrāz: Mīr Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī (2)," in *Khiradnāma-yi Ṣadrā* 7 (1997), 59–67; Kākāʾī, Qāsim, "Āshnāyī bā maktab-i Shīrāz: Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī (Sayyid-i Sanad)," in *Khiradnāma-yi Ṣadrā* 3 (1996–1997), 82–89; Pourjavady, Reza, *Philosophy in early Safavid Iran: Najm al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Nayrīzī and his writings*, Leiden: Brill, 2011, 1–44.

13 But the importance of Fatḥ Allāh al-Shīrāzī should not be underestimated, since he was the main channel for a serious philosophical undertaking in India. For this reason, historians of Islamic thought in India trace a lineage from Fatḥ Allāh al-Shīrāzī to the scholars of the Farangī Maḥall in the 12th/18th century. See Ahmed and Pourjavady, "Islamic theology" 612. For a detailed presentation of al-Harawī's life and works, see al-Harawī, Mīr Zāhid, *Sharḥ al-risāla al-maʿmūla fī l-taṣawwur wa-l-taṣdīq wa-taʿlīqātuhu*, ed. Mahdī Sharīʿatī, Qom: Maktabat al-Shahīd Sharīʿatī, 2000, 7–69; Khān, ʿAbd al-Salām, *Barr-i ṣaghīr kī ʿulamāʾ-i maʿqūlāt awr un kī taṣnīfāt*, Patna: Khudā Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, 1996, 27–31; Ahmed, *"Mawāqif of* Ījī" 4.

TABLE 17.1 Intellectual Genealogy Connecting Shāh Walī Allāh to the Persian Tradition[14]



Muḥammad Yūsuf who himself was a student of Bāghnawī.[15] One way to establish the link between Shāh Walī Allāh and the Persian tradition would be to follow the intellectual genealogy of al-Harawī, which includes Walī Allāh's own father, Shāh ʿAbd al-Raḥīm (d. 1131/1719), as he was an immediate disciple of al-Harawī (see Table 17.1 above).

Al-Harawī, the author of a number of important glosses, wrote mainly on theology and philosophy including works such as a gloss on al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī's commentary on al-Ījī's *Mawāqif*.[16] He also composed a gloss on

14 This table is largely based on the findings of Ahmed, "*Mawāqif of* Ījī" 5–7.

15 Ahmed, "*Mawāqif of* Ījī" 4–8.

16 See al-Harawī, *Sharḥ al-risāla* 28; al-Harawī, Mīr Zāhid, *Ḥawāshī ʿalā fann al-umūr al-ʿāmma min sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, MS Arab SM4154, Houghton Library, Harvard University; al-Khayrābādī, ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq, *Sharḥ ḥāshiyat Mīr Zāhid umūr ʿāmma*, Kanpur: Niẓāmī Press, 1881. For a scholarly treatment of al-Ījī's *Mawāqif*, see Dhanani, Alnoor, "*Al-Mawāqif fī ʿilm al-kalām* by ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 1355), and its commentaries," in Khaled El-Rouayheb

Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī's (d. 749/1348) commentary on *Tajrīd al-iʿtiqād* (*The purification of theology*).[17] In addition, he authored a highly influential commentary on Quṭb al-Dīn al-Taḥtānī's (d. 766/1364) *al-Risāla fī l-taṣawwur wa-l-taṣdīq* (*Treatise on conception and assent*), which generated numerous further glosses in the later tradition.[18] Furthermore, al-Harawī composed a gloss on al-Dawānī's commentary on Suhrawardī's *Hayākil al-nūr* (*The configuration of light*), and penned a commentary on the Quran, among others.[19] In his commentary on *al-Risāla fī l-taṣawwur wa-l-taṣdīq*, al-Harawī engages both with Mīr Dāmād (d. 1040/1631) and Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1640) and reserves for them honorifics such as *min al-afāḍil* (from the ranks of the virtuous) or *baʿḍ al-afāḍil* (some of the virtuous scholars).[20] This aforementioned commentary, which is a logico-epistemological work, deals with issues such as the difference between conception (*taṣawwur*) and assent (*taṣdīq*), the relation between presential and representational knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-ḥuṣūlī* and *al-ʿilm al-ḥuḍūrī*), God's knowledge of particulars, and relational existence (*al-wujūd al-rābiṭī*)—all of which were also discussed extensively in Ṣadrā's various works.[21] Apart from the Bāghnawī-Harawī intellectual chain (*silsila*), the other scholarly network which might have made Ṣadrā and his school familiar to Walī Allāh was the famous Farangī Maḥall.[22] This is because some of the leading figures of the Farangī Maḥall wrote commentaries on Ṣadrā's *Sharḥ al-hidāya* (*Commentary on the guidance*), and one of the scholars associated with the Farangī Maḥall, namely Qāḍī Mubārak Gūpāmawī (d. 1162/1749) was in Delhi when Walī Allāh was active.[23]

However, before we provide more details on this, it is necessary to say a word about Ṣadrā's influence in India concerning which much ink has been spilled in secondary literature.[24] Probably, the first person who made Mullā Ṣadrā known

and Sabine Schmidtke (eds.), *Oxford handbook of Islamic philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, 375–396.

17 Al-Harawī, *Sharḥ al-risāla* 30.

18 See al-Harawī, *Sharḥ al-risāla* 41–50. It is to be noted that a gloss on this commentary of al-Harawī by Ghulām Yaḥyā b. Najm al-Dīn al-Bihārī (d. 1180/1766) came to be of great interest for discussions of the nature of God's knowledge.

19 Al-Harawī, *Sharḥ al-risāla* 30.

20 Al-Harawī, *Sharḥ al-risāla* 92, 109, 121, 123, 138, 173, 221, 241, 252, 283, and 287.

21 Al-Harawī, *Sharḥ al-risāla* 91, 200–213.

22 On Farangī Maḥall, see Robinson, Francis, *The ʿulama of Farangi Mahall and Islamic culture in South Asia*, New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001.

23 For more information on this, see Thubūt, Akbar, *Filsūf-i Shīrāzī dar Hind*, Tehran: Hermis, 2000, 49.

24 On Mullā Ṣadrā in India, see Robinson, *ʿUlama of Farangi Mahall* 14–50, 215–218, 221, 245; Thubūt, *Filsūf-i Shīrāzī*; and Rizvi, "Mīr Dāmād" 449–474.

in India was Maḥmūd Fārūqī Jawnpūrī (d. 1072/1662), who was a student of Mīr Ḍāmād.[25] More importantly, it was Niẓām al-Dīn Sihālawī (d. 1161/1748), the fountainhead of the *dars-i niẓāmī* method of education, who wrote a commentary on Ṣadrā's *Sharḥ al-hidāya*, which was also one of the core texts that was studied and commented upon.[26] In his commentary, Niẓām al-Dīn's opinion about Ṣadrā seems to show a combination of both critical attitude and measured respect. For instance, he takes issue with Ṣadrā's famous doctrine of substantial motion (*al-ḥaraka al-jawhariyya*) and its demonstrations in the *Asfār* and the *Shawāhid* vis-à-vis the latter's *Sharḥ al-hidāya*, arguing that there are discrepancies between these accounts.[27] But in other contexts, he reverentially mentions Ṣadrā's name: "Perhaps about this matter he [i.e., Ṣadrā] possessed unsurpassable knowledge compared to everyone else including this humble man studying his works. His knowledge is like an ocean without shore."[28] He also uses the honorific *baḥr al-ʿulūm* (the ocean of knowledge) for Ṣadrā.[29] Niẓām al-Dīn's son, the celebrated ʿAbd al-ʿAlī Baḥr al-ʿUlūm (d. 1225/1810), also penned a commentary on Ṣadrā. But unlike his father, Baḥr al-ʿUlūm sometimes levels scathing remarks at Ṣadrā that in fact contains innuendoes. For instance, concerning Ṣadrā's theory of substantial motion, Baḥr al-ʿUlūm writes:

> Know that Ṣadrā accepts the occurrence of motion (*ḥaraka*) in substance (*jawhar*), and in his *Asfār* brings evidence to support this, all of which is nothing more than poetry (*shiʿr*) and sophistry (*mughālaṭa*), although he calls them demonstration (*burhān*); it is a waste (*taḍyīʿ*) of time to recount them.[30]

25 For bio-bibliographical notes on this figure, see Ahmed, Asad, "al-Jawnpūrī," in *EI³ Online*, http://dx.doi.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_27005 (last accessed: 17 October 2021); Rizvi, "Mīr Dāmād" 17; Bilgrāmī, *Subḥat* ii, 145.

26 See Wisnovsky, Robert, "The nature and scope of Arabic philosophical commentary in post-classical (ca. 1100–1900 AD) Islamic intellectual history: Some preliminary observations," in Peter Adamson, Han Baltussen and Martin W.F. Stone (eds.), *Philosophy, science, and exegesis in Greek, Arabic, and Latin commentaries*, London: Institute of Classical Studies, 2004, 177–178; For a list of its manuscripts, see Thubūt, *Fīlsūf-i Shīrāzī* 44–47.

27 Niẓām al-Dīn, *Sharḥ-i Ṣadrā* (*Sharḥ al-hidāya*), MS, cited in Thubūt, *Fīlsūf-i Shīrāzī* 41.

28 Niẓām al-Dīn, *Sharḥ-i Ṣadrā*, MS, cited in Thubūt, *Fīlsūf-i Shīrāzī* 41.

29 Niẓām al-Dīn, *Sharḥ-i Ṣadrā* (*Sharḥ al-hidāya*), MS, cited in Thubūt, *Fīlsūf-i Shīrāzī* 41.

30 Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, *Sharḥ-i Ṣadrā*, MS, cited in Thubūt, *Fīlsūf-i Shīrāzī* 119 (the translation is mine). Concerning Baḥr al-ʿUlūm's *Sharḥ-i Ṣadrā* and its manuscript locations, see Thubūt, *Fīlsūf-i Shīrāzī* 123–125.

At times Baḥr al-ʿUlūm engages Ṣadrā in a highly technical polemic. For instance, concerning Ṣadrā's ontology and the theory of secondary causation Baḥr al-ʿUlūm says:

> Ṣadrā goes on to state that existent by essence (*mawjūd bi-l-dhāt*) is being (*wujūd*), whereas quiddities, on account of their unity (*ittiḥād*) with being, are existents by accident (*mawjūdāt bi-l-ʿaraḍ*). Moreover, existent by essence accompanied by simple instauration (*jaʿl basīṭ*) is also being, while being itself is the same between what is shared in common (*mā bihi l-ishtirāk*) and what is different (*mā bihi l-imtiyāz*).[31]
>
> We say: This reasoning is devious (*makhdūsh*) because if being itself (*nafs al-wujūd*) is ascribed to something that is instaurated (*majʿūl*), then the instaurer (*jāʿil*) will be its constituent, which, consequently, will raise its rank to the degree of the reality of being (*ḥaqīqat al-wujūd*), while according to Ṣadrā, being is simple (*basīṭ*) and the property of being an instaurer lies outside of it.[32]

Interestingly, although Baḥr al-ʿUlūm disagrees with Ṣadrā on a number of philosophical issues, his views regarding the perfect human (*al-insān al-kāmil*) and God's self-disclosure (*tajallī*) are paradoxically similar to Ṣadrā. Here is a

31 Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, *Sharḥ-i Ṣadrā*, MS, cited in Thubūt, *Fīlsūf-i Shīrāzī* 120 (the translation is mine).

32 Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, *Sharḥ-i Ṣadrā*, MS, cited in Thubūt, *Fīlsūf-i Shīrāzī* 120 (the translation is mine). The word *jaʿl*, translated as "instauration," and its derivatives *jāʿil* and *majʿūl* occupy a special place in Ṣadrā's philosophical vocabulary. It signifies putting something into a specific state or condition in conformity with its essential properties. Ṣadrā divides it into two kinds: simple and composite. Simple instauration refers to the construction of something by itself—when we say, for instance, "man is man." In logic, this corresponds to essential primary predication (*al-ḥaml al-dhātī l-awwalī*). As for composite instauration, it refers to cases where the definition of a quiddity involves the convergence of both essential and accidental properties, such as when we say, "Man is a rational animal" and "Man is a writer." For Ṣadrā, what is instaured by itself (*al-majʿūl bi-l-dhāt*) is not essence, but *wujūd*, because *wujūd* does not need an external agent to make it a specific substance, whereas all essences need some cause external to them in order to exist in the external world. In this sense, essences are instaured, or produced "by accident" (*al-majʿūl bi-l-ʿaraḍ*). See al-Shīrāzī, Ṣadr al-Dīn (Mullā Ṣadrā), *al-Ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya fī l-asfār al-ʿaqliyya al-arbaʿa*, ed. Gholamreza Aavani et al., 9 vols., i, Tehran: Bunyād-i Ḥikmat-i Islāmi-yi Ṣadrā, 2001–2005, 65–66; Lāhījī, Mullā Muḥammad Jaʿfar, *Sharḥ al-mashāʿir*, ed. Sayyid Āshtiyānī, ii, Qom: Būstān-i Kitāb, 2007, 805. See also Ṣadrā's extensive analysis in *Asfār* i, 396–423, concerning conception (*taṣawwur*) and assent (*taṣdīq*) as cases of simple and composite instauration.

short example excerpted from Baḥr al-ʿUlūm's commentary on Rūmī's (d. 671/1273) *Mathnawī*:

> *Chūn bi-nālad zāri bī-shikar wa-gila / uftād andar haft gardūn ghulghula*
>
> As the perfect human laments without complaint
> Commotion stirs in the seven heavens.
>
> That is, since the perfect human (*insān-i kāmil*) yearns for pure love (*maḥḍ-i ʿishq*), it causes the earth and the sky to be agitated and ebullient. And no one, except the perfected souls, can understand this ebullience (*jūsh*) [of the earth and sky]. The cause of this lament (*nāla*) is that the Pure Self (*dhāt-i baḥt*) is free from any conditioning whatsoever, who, moreover, in His innermost reality (*kunh-i ḥaqīqat*), is beyond any witnessing (*mashhūd namī-shawad*). And one can only witness Him through the disclosure (*tajallī*) of His names that are infinite (*nahāyatī nīst*). Since the lover (*ʿāshiq*), i.e., the perfect human, witnesses the Real (*ḥaqq*) through one of His manifestations, his thirst remains unquenched. So, he fervently wants more of it, and forever remains thirsty of [His Love].[33]

This is strikingly similar to what Ṣadrā says in his *Asfār* regarding the self-disclosure (*tajallī*) and manifestation (*ẓuhūr*) of God's names and qualities and how the perfect human is able to find Him in all of His manifestations.[34] The reason why both of their views converge regarding philosophical Sufism (*ʿirfān*) is that they both draw from Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240) and his school, which can be gleaned from their explicit references to him. Apart from Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, Shāh Walī Allāh's son, Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 1239/1824) also wrote a commentary on Ṣadrā's *Sharḥ al-hidāya* (*Commentary on the guidance*), which is occasionally polemical. For example, regarding Ṣadrā's definition of "philosophy," Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz quips that the former misconstrues the meaning of the word *falsafa*, which is of Greek origin and means "love of wisdom." But according to ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, since Ṣadrā was not familiar with Greek, he explains its meaning as "becoming similar to God."[35] Nevertheless, in his *Tuḥfa-yi ithnā ʿasharīyya* (*Gift*

33 Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, *Mathnawī-yi Mawlawī bā ḥāshiya-yi chandīn muḥashshī az jumla-yi ʿAbd al-ʿAlī* i, 135, cited in Thubūt, *Fīlsūf-i Shīrāzī* 125–126 (the translation is mine).

34 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Asfār* ii, 361. Cf. Sabzawārī, Mullā Hādī, *Sharḥ al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*, Tehran: Manshūrāt-i Maktabat Baṣīratī, 1989, 518–519.

35 ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, *Sharḥ-i Ṣadrā* (Deoband) 9, cited in Thubūt, *Fīlsūf-i Shīrāzī* 149. On Shāh ʿAbd

of Twelver Shiʿism), he leans heavily on Ṣadrā's doctrine of "bodily resurrection" (*maʿād jismānī*) and accepts the latter's distinction between two kinds of bodies. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz writes:

> In his *Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya*, Ṣadrā Shīrāzī says … there are two kinds of bodies: the first kind is that which is directly controlled (*taṣarruf bi-lā wāsiṭa*) by the soul, while the second kind is that which is controlled by the soul through another body. This body is not perceived by the senses (*iḥsās*) since the senses only perceive bodies that are their receptacle (*maḥall*) such as skin. … So this body is called the body of light (*badan nūriyya*) that belongs to the afterlife, and it possesses essential life (*ḥayāt dhātī*) that never extinguishes. … This body is more spacious compared to [the outward] body that exists here and the spirit (*rūḥ*) which is known as the animal spirit (*al-rūḥ al-ḥayawānī*). This is because all of these [bodies], including [the animal spirit], which is subtler than the first, belong to this world; hence they are susceptible to change and will eventually perish. So, these bodies will not have resurrection (*ḥashr*). What we are discussing here pertains to the body of the afterlife, which will be resurrected along the soul (*nafs*). This [body] is entwined with the soul, and subsists with the latter's [i.e., the soul] subsistence (*baqāʾ*).[36]

Apart from *Sharḥ al-hidāya* commentaries, some Indian scholars also engage with or respond to Ṣadra in their other works. Muḥibb Allāh Bihārī (d. 1119/1707), the author of the famous *Sullam al-ʿulūm* (*The ladder of the sciences*) on which more than hundred commentaries have been written, mentions Ṣadrā in relation to some topics in Logic (*manṭiq*).[37] Bihārī's commentator, Qāḍī Mubārak Gūpāmawī, who was known to Shāh Walī Allāh, had a great respect for Ṣadrā's mentor Mīr Dāmād. According to ʿAbd al-Ḥayy b. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Lakhnawī (d. 1304/1886), Qāḍī Mubārak was a follower of Mīr Dāmād throughout

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al-ʿAzīz b. Shāh Walī Allāh, see Rizvi, Sajjad A.A., *Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz: Puritanism, sectarian polemics and jihad*, Canberra: Maʿrifat Publishing House, 1982, 103–173; Khān, *Barr-i ṣaghīr* 47; al-Lakhnawī, *Nuzhat al-khawāṭir* vii, 297.

36 ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, *Tuḥfa-yi ithnā ʿasharīyya* 239, cited in Thubūt, *Fīlsūf-i Shīrāzī* 163–164 (the translation is mine).

37 Mubārak, Qāḍī, *Kitāb Sullam al-ʿulūm wa-ḥāshiyatihi l-mashhūra bi-l-Qāḍī maʿa munhiyātihi*, Kazan: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Malakiyya, 1887, 281. The *Sullam* was a culmination of engagements with such concerns that had exercised earlier logicians writing in the Islamic tradition. What distinguishes it from earlier textbooks is that paradoxes that emerge from the possibility of a broader range of conceptualized subject terms are a characteristic feature of the work. For further notes on the *Sullam*, see Ahmed, "*Sullam al-ʿulūm*" 488–508.

his life.[38] This is partly evidenced in his commentary on the *Sullam*, which incorporates elements from Dāmād's *Ufuq al-mubīn* (*Clear horizons*) concerning God's knowledge of particulars. Qāḍī Mubārak reserves such glorious titles for Mīr Dāmād as *al-sayyid al-bāqir*, and *al-muʿallim al-awwal li-l-ḥikma al-yamāniyya*.[39] He also refers to Ṣadrā's *Asfār* in the commentary, e.g., "This is what Mīr Dāmad verified in some of his writings and his student followed suit in his *Asfār*."[40] The commentary of Qāḍī Mubārak on the *Sullam* along with his self-commentary (entitled *al-Munhiyāt*) contains discussions on logic and epistemology that one also finds in Ṣadrā's various works. Among some of the notable topics one can mention the famous distinction between presential and representational knowledge,[41] self-knowledge, knowledge of God, and, most of all, Ṣadrā's famous doctrine of the identity of the subject of intellect and the intelligible (*ittiḥād al-ʿāqil wa-l-maʿqūl*). The following text shows Qāḍī Mubārak's views concerning the doctrine of the identity of the intellect and what is intellected:

> So inevitably, He manifests Himself in His Essence, so He is the intellect, the subject of intellect, and the intelligible [all at once] …; a thing which is sanctified from matter, when it exists by itself, is the intellect, the subject of intellect, and the intelligible (*fa-l-shayʾ al-muqaddas ʿan al-mādda idhā kāna mawjūd^{an} bi-nafsihi kāna ʿaql^{an} wa-ʿāqil^{an} wa-maʿqūl^{an}*).[42]

Apart from Qāḍī Mubārak, there were others who either dealt with Ṣadrā (e.g., ʿAbd al-Ḥayy or Barakāt Aḥmad Ṭūkī, d. 1347/1929) or took into account his *Sharḥ al-hidāya* while discussing topics in natural philosophy (*ṭabīʿiyyāt*) such

38 Lakhnawī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Dijī* 224–225, cited in Thubūt, *Fīlsūf-i Shīrāzī* 50.

39 See Mubārak, *Kitāb Sullam al-ʿulūm* 2, 25, 54, 83, 93–94, 100, 104–105, 125–126, 134, 157. Cf. Thubūt, *Fīlsūf-i Shīrāzī* 50.

40 Mubārak, *Kitāb Sullam al-ʿulūm* 214.

41 However, it should be noted that unlike Ṣadrā, Qāḍī Mubārak places the *ḥudūrī-ḥuṣūlī* distinction under the category of "knowledge by means of essence" (*al-ʿilm bi-kunhihi*), which itself is a counterpart of "knowledge of essence" (*al-ʿilm bi-l-kunh*). As Ahmed rightly notes, the distinction between *bi-l-kunh* and *bi-kunhihi* is specific to the Indian philosophical and logical traditions, since in other contexts these two expressions appear to have the same meaning. The distinction between *bi-l-kunh* and *bi-kunhihi* is introduced in the discussion of human ability to know God. Mubārak asserts that both knowledge of God's Essence and knowledge by means of His Essence are unattainable for humans. However, such a distinction, in turn, leads to the aporia of how knowledge of extramental entities is possible at all, which generated a great deal of discussion in the subsequent tradition. For a sophisticated treatment of this issue, see Ahmed, "Post-classical" 328–329.

42 Mubārak, *Kitāb Sullam al-ʿulūm* 8 (the translation is mine).

as motion or space (e.g., Faḍl-i Ḥaqq al-Khayrābādī, d. 1277/1861).[43] One significant but understudied early 20th-century work that draws on Ṣadrā's works is Barakāt Aḥmad's massive *al-Ḥujja al-bāzigha* (*The shining argument*).[44] A contemporary of Iqbal, Barakāt Aḥmad studied *Sharḥ al-hidāya* with ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Khayrābādī, and in turn, taught this work along with Ṣadrā's *Asfār*.[45] In his magnum opus *al-Ḥujja al-bāzigha*, Barakāt Aḥmad explains various Sadrian doctrines from Ṣadrā's *Asfār*, commentary of the *Shifāʾ*, *Sharḥ al-hidāya*, and his glosses on *Sharh ḥikmat al-ishrāq* of Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 710/1311).[46] He often acts as an adjudicator between Ṣadrā and his opponents such as Āqā Ḥusayn Khwānsārī (d. 1099/1688), Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, and ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq Khayrābādī (d. 1318/1900).[47] Although he follows Khwānsārī in referring to Ṣadrā as *al-fāḍil al-Ṣadr al-Shīrāzī*, or *al-fāḍil Ṣadr al-afāḍil*, at times he uses abrasive language to express his disagreement with Ṣadrā.[48] In any event, he also chooses to defend Ṣadrā regarding the latter's theory of substantial motion against other philosophers by affirming motion in substance. For example, he says, "In contrast to what others have said, there is motion in substance (*jawhar*)."[49]

More can be said of Ṣadrā's influence in India, e.g., Akbar Thubūt's informative study lists seventy independent and more than twenty indirect commentaries and glosses on *Sharḥ al-hidāya*.[50] He also provides manuscript sources

43 See, e.g., Ahmed, Asad and Jon McGinnis, "Faḍl-i Ḥaqq Khayrābādī's (d. 1861), *al-Hadiyya al-saʿīdiyya*," in Khaled El-Rouayheb and Sabine Schmidtke (eds.), *Oxford handbook of Islamic philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, 546.

44 See Aḥmad, Barakāt, *al-Ḥujja al-bāzigha fī sharḥ al-ḥikmat al-bāligha*, lithographed ed., Decan: ʿUthmān Baryasī, 1916. See also Aḥmad, Barakāt, *Imām al-kalām fī taḥqīq ḥaqīqat al-ajsām*, lithographed ed., Kanpur: al-Maṭbaʿ al-Anẓāmī, 1915; Aḥmad, Barakāt, *Itqān al-ʿirfān fī taḥqīq māhiyyat al-zamān*, lithographed ed., Lucknow: Shāhī Pirīs, 1919.

45 Khān, *Barr-i ṣaghīr* 67–69.

46 Aḥmad, *al-Ḥujja al-bāzigha* 15–31, 34–38, 42–46, 59–63, 87–91, 96–100, 192–195, and 250–253.

47 Aḥmad, *al-Ḥujja al-bāzigha* 18, 20, 97, 250. On Khwānsārī's opposition to Sadrian philosophy that seems to have had an influence in India, see Moazzen, Maryam, *Formation of a religious landscape: Shiʿi higher learning in Safavid Iran*, Leiden: Brill, 2018, 141–144, 222.

48 Aḥmad, *al-Ḥujja al-bāzigha* 18, 20, 97, 322.

49 Aḥmad, *al-Ḥujja al-bāzigha* 287.

50 Thubūt, *Fīlsūf-i Shīrāzī* 4. Some of the notable commentators of Ṣadrā are as follows: Ḥamdallāh b. Shākir Allāh al-Sandīlwī (d. 1160/1747), Muḥammad Amjad al-Qannūjī (ca. 1112/1718), Muḥammad Ḥasan b. Ghulām Muṣṭafā al-Sihālawī, Sayyid Dildār ʿAlī Naqwī Naṣīrābādī (d. 1235/1820), ʿImād al-Dīn al-ʿUthmānī al-Labkanī (ca. 13th/19th century), Turāb al-ʿAlī b. Shajāʿat ʿAlī al-Lakhnawī (d. 1281/1864), Muḥammad Aʿlam b. al-Sandīlwī, Muḥammad ʿAẓmat Kifāyatallāh al-Fārūqī Gūpamawī, and ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Khayrābādī.

for most of these commentaries and glosses.[51] On the whole, given the state of current research, I would like to make a few brief comments about the penetration of Ṣadrā's philosophy among Indian scholars. First of all, I think that one needs to be careful in using the word "influence," since it can be notoriously vague in some contexts. For instance, if one claims that Ṣadrā was influential in India, does it mean he was as influential as, for instance, Ibn ʿArabī? That is to say, the question of "influence" is a relative one. Moreover, if one claims that Ṣadrā was influential in India, does this also mean his writings had a "positive" influence on Indian scholars? This is crucial to note because if the influence of a philosopher is mostly "negative," it might simply be that his ideas did not gain much traction among the groups concerned, which in turn might suggest that others who engaged him did so mostly to refute his ideas or curb his influence in which case it may not properly be called "influence." To be precise, the purpose of this survey is not to determine Ṣadrā's overall influence in India (positive or negative), since this would require a project of its own. But since one of my aims is to gauge how or whether at all Ṣadrā's philosophy played a role in Walī Allāh's thought, especially because there is much in secondary scholarship that tends to inflate Ṣadrā's influence, it is necessary to say a few words concerning how one should understand his influence in India. So, to come back to the issue of "influence" being relative, it may be useful to compare Ṣadrā with Ibn ʿArabī, since we know much more about the latter's reception in India.[52] All the evidence so far suggests that Ibn ʿArabī was far more influential than Ṣadrā in India, so much so that even scholars who are usually cast as philosophers/theologians such as Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, explicitly

51 Thubūt, *Fīlsūf-i Shīrāzī*, *passim*.

52 See, inter alia, Chittick, William C., "Notes on Ibn al-ʿArabī's influence in the Subcontinent," in *MW* 82.3–4 (1992), 18–41; Chittick, William C., "*Waḥdat al-wujūd* in India," in *Ishraq: Islamic Philosophy Yearbook* 3 (2012), 29–40; Rizvi, Sayyid A.A., *A history of Sufism in India*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1978–1983 Knysh, Alexander, *Ibn ʿArabi in the later Islamic tradition: The making of a polemical image in medieval Islam*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999, 271–278; Lipton, Gregory, "Muḥibb Allāh Ilāhābādī: South Asian heir to Ibn ʿArabī," in *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabi Society* 45 (2009), 89–119, Faruque, Muhammad U., "Sufism *contra* shariah? Shāh Walī Allāh's metaphysics of *waḥdat al-wujūd*," in *Journal of Sufi Studies* 5.1 (2016), 27–57; Faruque, Muhammad U., "Eternity made temporal: Ashraf ʿAlī Thānavī, a twentieth-century Indian thinker and the revival of classical Sufi thought," in *Brill Journal of Sufi Studies* 9.2 (2020), 215–246; Nair, Shankar, "Muḥibb Allāh Ilāhābādī on ontology: Debates over the nature of being," in Jonardon Ganeri (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of Indian philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, 657–692; Nair, Shankar, *Translating wisdom: Hindu-Muslim intellectual interactions in early modern South Asia*, Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2020, chapter 4.

acknowledge their debt to Ibn ʿArabī, whereas in the case of Ṣadrā it is usually in the context of a specific philosophical debate that such scholars would feel obliged to respond.[53] Moreover, in contrast to Ibn ʿArabī whose influence was usually "positive,"[54] Mullā Ṣadrā's thought had generated a mixed result. Nonetheless, the fact that some of the influential Indian philosophers such as Muḥibb Allāh Bihārī, Qāḍī Mubārak, Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Sihālawī (d. 1199 or 1209/1784 or 1794), Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, and ʿAbd al-Ḥayy Lakhnawī mentioned or discussed him in various capacities shows that Ṣadrā's name was well-known, along with his mentor Mīr Dāmād. Moreover, Ṣadrā's main works such as the *Asfār* (*Four journeys*), the *Shawāhid* (*The witnesses*), *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* (*Keys to the unseen*), commentary on the *Shifāʾ* (*The healing*), and many other treatises were available in various Indian libraries including but not limited to Rampur Raza Library, Khudābakhsh Library (Bankipore), Asiatic Society (Kolkata) Calcutta Madrasa Collection, Mawlānā Āzād Library Aligarh, and Dār al-ʿUlūm Deoband Library.[55]

Given our analysis above, it is perhaps not a great surprise that Shāh Walī Allāh does not mention Ṣadrā in his works, although he must have been familiar with his name. However, there may be a number of reasons for this. First, although Walī Allāh was thoroughly familiar with the technical vocabulary of the philosophers and the physicians, whose terminologies he employs throughout his oeuvre, he refrained from identifying himself as a philosopher or a theologian, as he primarily saw himself as a Sufi metaphysician and did not shy away from expressing where his intellectual and spiritual sympathies lie.[56] Moreover, he hardly mentions any philosopher by name; instead he uses the generic *falāsifa* or *ḥukamāʾ* when referring to the philosophers. Furthermore,

53 Dahnhardt, Thomas W., "The doctrine of the unicity of existence in the light of an eighteenth century Indian Ṣūfī treatise: The *Waḥdat al-wujūd* by Baḥr al-ʿUlūm ʿAbd al-ʿAlī Ansārī al-Lakhnawī," in *Oriente Moderno* 92.2 (2012), 323–360.

54 On Sirhindī's views on *waḥdat al-wujūd*, see Friedmann, Yohanan, *Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi: An outline of his thought and a study of his image in the eyes of posterity*, Montreal: McGill University Press, 1971, 59–67; Sirhindī, Aḥmad, "Maktūbāt Imām Rabbānī," in Arthur Buehler (trans.), *Revealed grace: The juristic Sufism of Ahmad Sirhindi*, Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2011, 106 and 125. It is true that more recent scholarship on Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī appears to have tackled such views as evidenced in Buehler, Arthur, "Ahmad Sirhindi: A 21st-century update," in *Der Islam* 86.1 (2009), 122–141 and Damrel, David, "The 'Naqshbandi Reaction' reconsidered," in David Gilmartin and Bruce Lawrence (eds.), *Beyond Turk and Hindu*, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000, 176–198.

55 See, e.g., Ẓafīr al-Dīn, Muḥammad, *Taʿāruf-i makhṭūṭāt Kitābkhāna-yi Dār al-ʿUlūm Deoband*, ii, Deoband: Dār al-ʿUlūm, 1973, 138.

56 See, e.g., Allāh, Shāh Walī, *Alṭāf al-quds*, Gujranwala: Madrasa Nuṣrat al-ʿUlūm, 1964, 133.

he is at times highly critical of the philosophers, and this might explain in part why his son, who was influenced by him, also engages in a polemic against Ṣadrā.

2 A Note on the Texts Used

A word needs to be said concerning the texts I will be using in my analysis of Walī Allāh's theory of the self. The main texts that I will be using in my analysis are *Alṭāf al-quds fī maʿrifat laṭāʾif al-nafs* (written in Persian), *al-Tafhīmāt al-ilāhiyya* (*Divine understandings*), and *al-Budūr al-bāzigha* (*Resplendent full moon*). In addition, I will be drawing upon other texts such as *Ḥujjat Allāh al-bāligha* (*The conclusive argument from God*), *al-Khayr al-kathīr* (*Blessings*), etc. My purpose is to provide a comprehensive account of the self in Walī Allāh's various writings. However, it should be noted that among these treatises some e.g., *Alṭāf al-quds* (*The sacred subtleties*) belong to what we might call Walī Allāh's middle period (i.e., 1735–1745), while others e.g. *al-Tafhīmāt al-ilāhiyya* and *al-Budūr al-bāzigha* are late works, or, in the case of the *Tafhīmāt*, a late compilation (with revision) of earlier treatises.[57] So, I take into account the developments in Walī Allāh's conception of the *laṭāʾif* that one observes between his middle and late period. The advantage of reading Walī Allāh's earlier and later works simultaneously allows one to be cognizant of the developments that one observes in his writings. But this does not mean one would encounter two radically different pictures of the self between *Alṭāf al-quds* and the *Tafhīmāt*. So, it remains the case that *Alṭāf al-quds* is Walī Allāh's most sustained and most sophisticated treatment of the *laṭāʾif* among his corpus. Hence a considerable portion of our analysis is based on this treatise. We also frequently refer to other works either to compare or point out revision concerning a particular issue.

2.1 *Previous Scholarship on the Subtle Bodies*

With the above historical backdrop in place, let me now turn to the treatment of the *laṭāʾif* in Walī Allāh's scholarship. First, it should be noted that although aspects of Walī Allāh's psychology (i.e., the *laṭāʾif*) have been analyzed, his theory of selfhood based on the *laṭāʾif* has never received any sustained scholarly treatment. This is despite the fact that the self has been central to his overall

57 For an extensive chronology of Walī Allāh's works, see Baljon, *Religion* 10–14 and Allāh, Shāh Walī, *al-Tafhīmāt al-ilāhiyya*, i, Hyderabad and Sindh: Shāh Walī Allāh Academy, 1967, 15–38.

metaphysics. In particular, existing scholarship has ignored Walī Allāh's conception of self-knowledge and first-person subjectivity, which the latter analyzes through "presential knowledge" (*al-ʿilm al-ḥuḍūrī*), showing his debt to the Islamic philosophers.[58] One reason why scholars have generally neglected selfhood in Walī Allāh's thought is that the self is often taken to be synonymous with the concept of "soul" or as a constellation of various *laṭāʾif*, rather than as a multidimensional entity.[59] Both Baljon's and Hermansen's treatment of Walī Allāh's psychology suffer from such a conceptual stumbling-block.[60]

In his rather dated study on Walī Allāh's religious thought, Baljon mistakenly suggests that the *laṭāʾif* are composed of *pneuma* (*nasama*), rational soul (*nafs nāṭiqa*), and celestial spirit (*rūḥ-i samāwī*).[61] He also leaves it unexplained how the *laṭāʾif* and *nasama* are symbiotically connected. In addition, his study suffers from a number of translation errors.[62] Nevertheless, Baljon correctly identifies that the *laṭāʾif* represent the inner progress of the wayfarer (*sālik*) from the outermost plane of his self to its inmost core.[63] Hermansen improves on Baljon's study of Walī Allāh's theory of the *laṭāʾif* by providing a better historical context and a conceptual frame to understand them as a sort of subtle body.[64] She correctly explains that although some of the *laṭāʾif* have names

58 For an extensive treatment of Walī Allāh's views on self-knowledge and first-person subjectivity, see Faruque, Muhammad U., *Sculpting the self: Islam, selfhood, and human flourishing*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2021, 80–84.

59 See Faruque, *Sculpting* 49–56.

60 Baljon, *Religion*; Hermansen, Marcia K., "Shāh Walī Allāh's theory of the subtle spiritual centers (*laṭāʾif*): A Sufi theory of personhood and self-transformation," in *JNES* 47.1 (1988), 1–25.

61 Baljon, *Religion* 64–66.

62 Baljon, *Religion* 68, 71, 73–74. For instance, he renders *ḥusn al-ẓann* as "think well of God," which should be "having a positive opinion of somebody/something;" *kashf* as "mystical revelation," which should be "unveiling;" *tajallī* as "radiance," which should be "manifestation/self-disclosure;" *warāʿ as* "abstemiousness," which should be "heightened piety;" and so on.

63 Baljon, *Religion* 67.

64 Hermansen, "Shāh Walī Allāh's theory" 2. Shāh Walī Allāh goes further than his predecessors in presenting sacred history as the realization or even expansion of potentials inherent in the *laṭāʾif*. In this he correlates the development of the *laṭāʾif* with phases of progress in human spiritual history. In his *Tafhīmāt*, Walī Allāh offers a novel suggestion concerning the *laṭāʾif* by explaining that they have a macrocosmic historical manifestation. So, the development of the *laṭāʾif* began with Adam when there were three *laṭāʾif*: the heart (*qalb*), the intellect (*ʿaql*) and the *nafs*. In Prophet Muhammad's time, the higher *laṭāʾif* of the spirit (*rūḥ*) and secret (*sirr*) were awakened in the ideal human form. At the time of Ibn ʿArabī the potential of the arcanum was available to the human species. Finally, Walī Allāh was chosen by God to reveal two additional *laṭāʾif*, namely the philosopher's stone (*ḥajar-i baḥt*) and selfhood (*anāniyya*). See Hermansen, "Shāh Walī Allāh's theory"

corresponding to body parts or faculties or are sometimes described as being located in specific areas of the body (liver, heart, or brain), they are not to be understood as identical with the organs located there. Rather, the *laṭā'if* should be understood as local manifestations of identically named parts of a higher realm of the cosmological universe that stands vertically above the physical world.[65] I also agree with her translation of the term *nasama* as *pneuma*, since it refers to the spirit formed from the most subtle humors and is related to the term *pneuma* in the Greek medical tradition. Moreover, she agrees with Baljon in describing the *laṭā'if* as a paradigm for facilitating the wayfarer's spiritual progress from the physical realm to the higher spiritual realms.[66]

Despite these merits, her study is compromised by a number of serious shortcomings. To begin with, her account of Walī Allāh's description of the *laṭā'if* is largely interpreted through the Mujaddidī paradigm, which has its own elaborate theory of the *laṭā'if*.[67] As a result, she asserts that the function of *nasama* or *pneuma* is limited to the lowest set of the *laṭā'if*, namely *nafs*.[68] As will be seen, this is contradicted by the textual evidence I have presented in this study. One reason why the proper relation between *nasama* and the *laṭā'if* is not well understood in her study is that like Baljon, her analysis fails to account for the development of these concepts from Walī Allāh's middle-period treatise *Alṭāf al-quds* to his late works such as *al-Budūr al-bāzigha*. More importantly, her argument that through an account of *nasama* as a subtle body Walī Allāh was able to reconcile the theological conception of the spirit (*rūḥ*) as something material and created in time with the philosophical notion that

24. The *ḥajar-i baḥt* was also mentioned by Ibn ʿArabī as an essential point in the heart emanating a marvelous and perplexing light. See Nyberg (ed.), *Kleinere Schriften* 216–217, cited in Hermansen, "Shāh Walī Allāh's theory" 15.

65 Hermansen, "Shāh Walī Allāh's theory" 2. So far *laṭīfa* has been variously translated as "subtlety," "tenuous body," "subtle point," "subtle essence," "subtle field," "subtle substance," "subtle entity," "subtle organ," and "subtle spiritual center." For a critical evaluation of some of these translations, see Buehler, Arthur, *Sufi heirs of the prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the rise of the mediating Sufi Shaykh*, Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1998, 103. The term *laṭīfa* is derived from the Arabic word *laṭīf* meaning "gentle," "sensitive," or "subtle." In Sufi literature, the word *laṭīfa* refers to a nonphysical component of the person which can be awakened through spiritual practices. The expression *laṭīfa* may originate in the concept of a subtle body (*jism laṭīf*), which is not Quranic but seems to have arisen in the third Islamic century. The Sufi concept of *laṭīfa* became increasingly refined and complex and was used to explain psychological and spiritual progress of the spiritual aspirant toward annihilation (*fanā'*) or subsistence (*baqā'*) in the Divine Essence. See Hermansen, "Shāh Walī Allāh's theory" 1–2.

66 Hermansen, "Shāh Walī Allāh's theory" 6.

67 Buehler, *Sufi heirs* 105–130.

68 Hermansen, "Shāh Walī Allāh's theory" 11.

considered it an immaterial, eternal, spiritual soul, is unfortunately incorrect.[69] This is because Walī Allāh proves the immateriality of the self through first-person experiences, as I have explained elsewhere.[70] Moreover, philosophers consider the self (*nafs*) to be immaterial, while their views on the spirit (*rūḥ*) are variegated.[71] Furthermore, unlike Hermansen's account, Walī Allāh in fact claims that *pneuma* acts as a mediator between the immaterial soul and the material body.[72]

In any event, Walī Allāh's own conception of the *laṭā'if* presumes that they can only be known through *dhawq*, and not through the senses.[73] Moreover, in his view, the knowledge of the *laṭā'if* or subtle fields of consciousness is a great scale of balance (*mīzānī ast ʿaẓīm*) that God has bestowed on later day Sufis (*muta'akhkhirān-i ṣūfiyya*). So, the better one is acquainted with the subtle fields of consciousness, the better one is able to purify them.[74] To illustrate the difference between someone who possesses the knowledge of the *laṭā'if* and those people who may have devoted their whole life to Sufism without ever gaining this knowledge, Walī Allāh likens the former to the physician (*ṭabīb*) who is skilled in the diagnosis of various types of illnesses, who knows their causes (*asbāb*), symptoms (*ʿalāmāt*), methods of their treatment (*muʿālajāt*), and all the rules which ancient physicians developed through long, protracted experience, and the latter to someone who is like an unqualified physician who can merely prescribe some medicine on the strength of his own defective experience and incomplete understanding. He further adds that whoever is acquainted with the *laṭā'if* is like a leader (*rahbar*) who has spent a lifetime wandering in the wilderness and has learnt each hill and dale, each path across it, whether it be well-worn or as yet untrodden.[75] After mentioning that the

69 Hermansen says: "By explaining the spirit in this three-tiered way, Shāh Walī Allāh is able to reconcile traditional theological opinions with the concepts of the philosophers influenced by Hellenistic thought concerning the spirit (*rūḥ*). The orthodox position was generally that it was material and created in time, while the philosophers identified it with an immaterial, eternal, spiritual soul. In his description of the three levels, the lowest level of spirit, the *Pneuma*, fulfills the role of the created spirit while aspects of the rational soul and the heavenly spirit accord with the philosophers' concepts." See Hermansen, "Shāh Walī Allāh's theory" 10–11.

70 See Faruque, *Sculpting* 81–83.

71 See Faruque, Muhammad U., *The labyrinth of subjectivity: Constructions of the self from Mullā Ṣadrā to Muhammad Iqbal*, Berkeley, CA (unpublished PhD Diss.): University of California, 2018, 59–76.

72 Faruque, *Labyrinth* 156–163.

73 Faruque, *Labyrinth* 138–143.

74 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 14–15.

75 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 15.

exposition of the true nature and properties of the *laṭā'if* depends in turn on an understanding of the true nature of the self (*ḥaqīqat-i rūḥ*),[76] he expresses hesitation as to whether or not he should really talk about them.[77] But he eventually decides to disclose the secrets of the *laṭā'if* due to the particular circumstances of his day. Also, according to Walī Allāh, "the science of the *laṭā'if* is based on the [question of the real nature of the self], so a real necessity arises, and, as is well known, necessity can render lawful that which would otherwise be unlawful (*al-ḍarūra tabīḥ al-maḥdhūrāt*)."[78]

3 The Vocabulary of the *laṭā'if*

Given that Walī Allāḥ's conception of the self is based on a robust theory of the five microcosmic *laṭā'if*, viz., *nafs, rūḥ, qalb, ʿaql*, and *sirr*, and other macrocosmic *laṭā'if* such as *khāfī* and *akhfā*, it would be useful to lay out how he defines these terms before moving on to the core of his theory of the self. Walī Allāh begins by stating that there is a lot of loose talk in Sufi discourse concerning these terms.[79] It is instructive to note that the inconsistent use of these terms, namely *nafs*, *qalb*, *rūḥ*, and *ʿaql* in the Sufi tradition was observed by al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) nearly seven hundred years before Walī Allāh when the former was writing his *Iḥyā' ʿulūm al-dīn* (*Revival of the religious sciences*), with which Walī Allāh was intimately familiar.[80] Before delving into Walī Allāh's demystification of these terms, I would like to show what al-Ghazālī says about this. Al-Ghazālī writes:

> But few of the leading scholars have a comprehensive knowledge of these terms (i.e., *nafs*, *rūḥ*, *qalb* and *ʿaql*) and their different meanings. … Most of the mistakes regarding them originate in ignorance of the meaning of these names, and of the way in which they are applied to different objects. … One of these is the term heart (*qalb*), and it is used with two meanings. One of them is the cone-shaped organ of flesh that is located at the left side of the chest. It is a particular sort of flesh within which there is a cavity, and in this cavity there is black blood that is the source and seat of the spirit (*rūḥ*). … Whenever we use the term heart in this book, we do

76 Inconsistent use of *rūḥ* but it means "self" here.
77 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 22.
78 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 23.
79 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 74.
80 For a brief history of the *laṭā'if*, see Faruque, *Sculpting* 174 ff.

not mean this sort of heart. … The second meaning of the heart is a "spiritual lordly *laṭīfa*" (*laṭīfa rabbāniyya rūḥāniyya*), which is connected with the physical heart. This *laṭīfa* is the real essence of human. This heart is the part of the human being that perceives, knows and experiences; it is addressed, punished, rebuked, and held responsible, and it has some connection with the physical heart. … Whenever we use the term heart in this book, we mean by it this *laṭīfa*. … The second term is spirit (*rūḥ*), and it is also used with two meanings relevant to our purpose. One of these meanings refers to a subtle body (*jism laṭīf*) whose source is the cavity of the physical heart, and which spreads by means of the pulsative arteries to all the other parts of the body. … Whenever physicians use the term spirit (*rūḥ*) they have in mind this meaning, which is a subtle vapor (*bukhār laṭīf*) produced by the heat of the heart … The second meaning of [*rūḥ*] is that *laṭīfa* in human which knows and perceives, which we have already explained in one of the meanings of the heart. It is the meaning intended by God, the Exalted, in His statement, "Say: the spirit is my Lord's affair" (17:85) … The third term *nafs* (soul/self), partakes of many meanings, two of which pertain to our purpose. By one is denoted that meaning which includes both the faculty of anger (*ghaḍab*) and of appetence (*shahwa*) in human, which we will explain later. This meaning is prevalent among the Sufis (*ahl al-taṣawwuf*), for they mean by *nafs* that principle in human which includes his blameworthy characters (*ṣifāṭ madhmūma*). … The second meaning is that *laṭīfa* which we have mentioned, which is the real human nature (*ḥaqīqat al-insān*). It is the essence of the human and his self (*hiya nafs al-insān wa-dhātuhu*). But it is described by different descriptions according to its different states. … But the *nafs* according to the second definition is praiseworthy, for it is the human's very self or his essence and real nature, which knows God, the Exalted, and all other knowable things. The fourth term, which is intellect (*ʿaql*), also partakes of various meanings that we have mentioned in the *Book of knowledge*. Of these, two are relevant to our purpose. Intellect may be used with the force of knowledge of real nature of things, and is thus an expression for the quality of knowledge whose seat is the heart. Second, intellect may be used to denote that which perceives knowledge, or the heart in the sense of the *laṭīfa*. … So intellect may be used as meaning the quality of the knower, and it may be used to mean the seat of perception, the mind which perceives. So it is now made clear that to you that there exist the following meanings of these terms: the corporeal heart, the corporeal spirit, the appetitive soul, and noetics (*al-ʿulūm*). These are four meanings that are denoted by four terms. There is also a fifth meaning, which pertains to

> the abovementioned *laṭīfa* in the human that knows and perceives, and all four of these names are successively applied to it.[81] There are then five meanings and four terms, and each term is used with two meanings.[82]

Little remains to be said after such a lucid account. As we shall soon see, Walī Allāh draws significantly from al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ* regarding the meanings of the four abovementioned terms, but at the same time, unlike al-Ghazālī, he provides a consistent physical basis for the theory of selfhood through an account of *nasama* (*pneuma*) and the *laṭāʾif*. In any event, after acknowledging that words such as *nafs* and *rūḥ* are used in a variety of different ways, Walī Allāh goes on to explain that sometimes the *nafs* is used to mean the principle of life (*mabdaʾ-i ḥayāt*), in which case it is synonymous with the *rūḥ*. But Walī Allāh also maintains that sometimes people use the word "*nafs* to refer to (base) human nature (*ṭabīʿat-i basharīyya*), with its need for food and drink, while on other occasions it denotes the appetitive self (*nafs-i shahwānī*). ..."[83] Moreover, he goes on to suggest that *nafs* is the sum total of all the vices (*radhāʾil*) that result from one's carnal desires when they rule the heart and the intellect and enslave both of them.[84] So, we can see that Walī Allāḥ fully agrees with al-Ghazālī regarding the first meaning of *nafs*, which is "the principle in human that includes his blameworthy characters (*ṣifāṭ-i madhmūma*)" such as appetite and anger. Henceforth, we shall translate *nafs* as the "lower self" whenever it is used in relation to base desires. However, for Walī Allāh, *nafs* can also have a plain sense in which it does not have any associated moral or ethical bearings. In such a case, it will simply be translated as "self," which, for both al-Ghazālī and Walī Allāh, refers to the reality of human nature. Similarly, Walī Allāh states that people use the word *rūḥ* (spirit) to mean the principle of life (*mabdaʾ-i ḥayāt*), and also, the fine air (*nasīm-i ṭayyib*) which percolates

81 Although this subtle tenuous substance is connected with and used by the rest of the body as well, yet this connection is by means of the heart, which is why its primary connection is with the heart. Therefore, the Sufi Sahl al-Tustarī has likened the heart to the throne and the breast to the seat. For fundamental texts concerning the nature and function of the "heart" in Sufi psychology, see Murata, Sachiko, *The Tao of Islam: A sourcebook of gender relationships in Islamic thought*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992, ch. 10. For the "heart" in Ibn ʿArabī's thought in general, see Morris, James, *The reflective heart: Discovering spiritual intelligence in Ibn ʿArabī's Meccan illuminations*, Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2005, 31–140.

82 Al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn, viii, Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Thaqāfī, 1937, 1343–1346; translation modified from Skellie, Walter J. (trans.), *Kitāb Sharḥ ʿajāʾib al-qalb = The marvels of the heart: Book 21 of* the Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn, *the Revival of the religious sciences*, Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2010, 5–10.

83 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 73–74.

84 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 74.

throughout the body.[85] And at other times they use it to refer to the angelic spirit (*rūḥ-i malakūt*), which was created thousands of years before the creation of human.[86] But he informs the reader that he is using the word *rūḥ* to mean "the heart (*qalb*) after it has abandoned its base instincts (*aḥkām-i suflāniyya*), and when its kinship with the angelic and rational souls (*rūḥ-i malakūt wa-nafs-i nāṭiqa*) becomes predominant" (Fig. 17.1).[87] However, unfortunately, as we will have numerous occasions to observe, he does not always follow his own advice, and often uses *rūḥ* synonymously with *nafs* to mean "self" (i.e., the second meaning of *nafs*).

Moreover, taking leads from al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'*, he notes that when people mention the heart (*qalb*), they sometimes refer to the cone-shaped lump of flesh, while at other times they intend to convey the idea of a mental faculty (*laṭīfa-yi darrāka*), synonymous with the intellect (*'aql*). Again, much like al-Ghazālī, he defines *qalb* to mean "the spirits of the heart (*arwāḥ-i qalbiyya*) that possess such mental attributes (*ṣifāt-i nafsāniyya*) as anger and shame (*ḥayā'*)."[88] Next, Walī Allāh mentions that the word intellect (*'aql*) sometimes refers to knowing (*dānistan*) or the faculty which gives rise to knowing. In this sense, intellect becomes merely an accidental corporeal property (*'araḍī*), and not a self-subsistent substance (*jawhar qā'im bi-nafsihi*). Elsewhere, he observes that people use the term *'aql* to mean the substance of the self (*jawhar-i rūḥ*), since some of its functions include understanding (*idrāk*).[89] Then he goes on to assert that intellect for him denotes

> the perceptive faculty which conceptualizes and gives assent to things, so that the heart (*qalb*) and the lower self (*nafs*) may follow its lead, and a coordinating function may arise in the constitution of the perceptive faculty to which the heart and the lower self (*nafs*) lend their support.[90]

He further comments that "these three *laṭā'if* (i.e., *nafs*, *qalb*, and *'aql*) permeate the whole body, although the heart is located in the physical heart, the

85 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 75. Cf. Allāh, Shāh Walī, *Ḥujjat Allāh al-bāligha*, ed. Muḥammad Hāshim, i, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1995, 38, which also says the *rūḥ* is the source of life in the animal, which is alive due to the breathing of the *rūḥ* into it and dies when it is separated from it.

86 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 75.

87 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 75.

88 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 74.

89 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 74.

90 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 74.

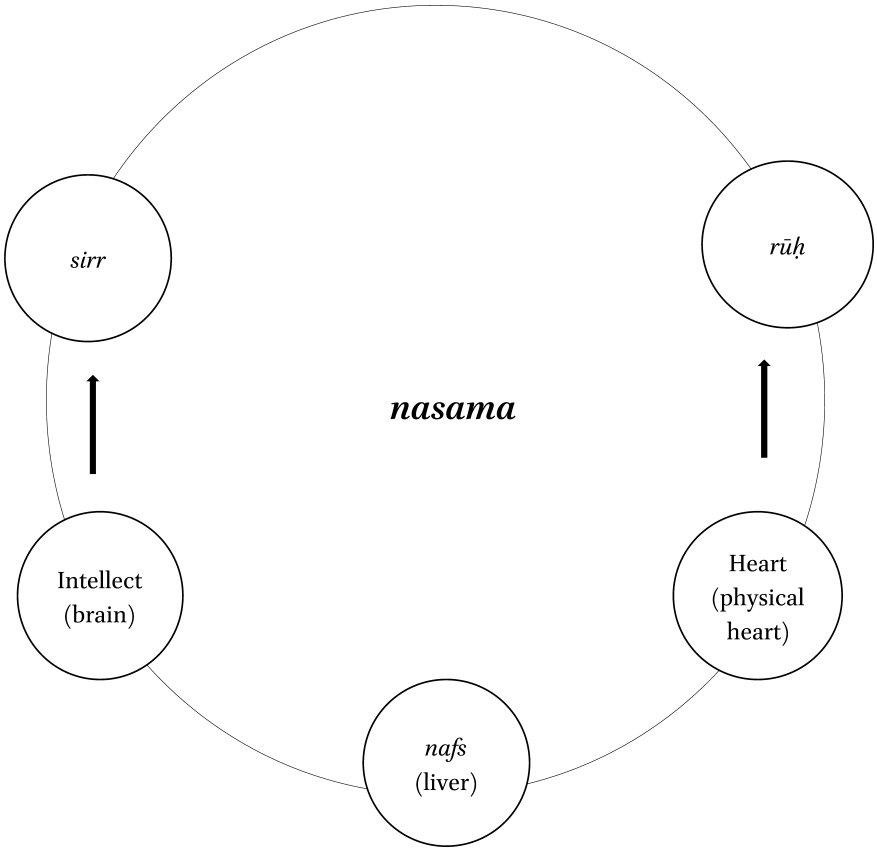

FIGURE 17.1 The branches of *nasama*

self (*nafs*) in the liver, and the intellect in the brain" (Fig. 17.1).[91] Likewise, the word *sirr*, as Walī Allāh explains, indicates concealment. But he quickly follows up by saying that each one of the *laṭā'if* is concealed, which is why people sometimes refer to the intellect (*'aql*) and sometimes to the spirit (*rūḥ*) as *sirr*.[92] According to Walī Allāh, however, "*sirr* is the intellect (*'aql*) after it has given up earthly inclinations and is governed by the impulses of the sublime world, thereby attaining vision of the supreme manifestation (*tajallī-yi a'ẓam*) (Fig. 17.1)."[93] Finally, the word *rūḥ*, when used as one of the *laṭā'if*, means the higher aspect of the heart (*qalb*), when it is purified of its passional

91 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 74–75.
92 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 75.
93 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 75.

elements.[94] It would also be useful to remember that, although both *rūḥ* and *sirr* have a physical locus, they are incorporeal.[95]

4 An Inward Turn through the Subtle Bodies

With all these preliminaries, we should ask now what exactly lies at the basis of the *laṭā'if*? In a nutshell, the answer would be *nasama* or *pneuma*. But this only begs the further question, what is *pneuma* in Walī Allāh's theory of the self? Again, one can answer it with a word: the rational soul, which is the self. However, to unpack all this step by step, let me first begin with the following quote:

> What I find in my self (*mā wajadtuhu fī dhātī*) regarding human nature, its eyes, hands and feet is that the human being is not an [entity] that comes into existence all at once (*anna l-insān laysa bi-mawjūd marra wāḥida*). Rather in him lie many dimensions (*bal fīhi ṭabaqāt kathīra*) and levels, and each of these levels has an appointed time from its inception until its end. Whoever looks at only his particular level and does not consider other levels thinks human knowledge is confined thus. So the visible level (*al-ṭabaqa al-ẓāhira*) or dimension is the body (*al-badan*), which is the lowest dimension … It is followed by the level of the *laṭīfa* called *pneuma* … The human in reality is this *pneuma* (*fa-l-insān fī l-ḥaqīqa huwa hādhihi l-nasama*), while his body is like an envelope above that protects him. When the body is severed [at death], the *pneuma* endures with its states, and attaches itself to the moral qualities (*al-akhlāq*) and the externa and internal senses (*al-iḥsās al-ẓāhir wa-l-bāṭin*).[96]

In this very important passage, Walī Allāh outlines the framework for his theory of the self in relation to the *laṭā'if*. He asserts that the self is a *multidimensional* reality, having many levels, each having an appointed time from its beginning

94 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 75–76.

95 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 75–76.

96 Walī Allāh, *al-Tafhīmāt al-ilāhiyya* i, 229. The multidimensionality of the self is affirmed in *al-Khayr al-kathīr* as well: "Know that the self (*al-nafs*) has various modes of being (*nasha'āt*), and each one of these modes has a particular name. If the self clothes itself with the imagination (*al-khayāl*), estimation (*al-wahm*) and perception (*al-idrāk*), then it is named *nasama* and the *nafs* according to the common usage (*iṣṭilāḥ al-qawm*). If it is considered free from matter (*tajarraduhu*), along with spiritual training, it is called *nafs* in the terminology of the philosophers (*iṣṭilāḥ al-falsafa*) and *rūḥ* according to common usage." Allāh, Shāh Walī, *al-Khayr al-kathīr*, Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, 1974, 61.

until its end. In my recent book, I argue that the multidimensionality of the self is best captured through the notion of "spectrum" from which one can derive both its descriptive and normative dimensions. The descriptive self can be further analyzed in terms of its bio-physiological, socio-cultural, and cognito-experiential dimensions, while the normative in terms of its ethical and spiritual dimensions.[97] This can be seen by Walī Allāh's statement that "the human being is not an [entity] that comes into existence all at once," implying that there is a developmental aspect to the reality of the self. Moreover, the lowest dimension of human nature is the body, which is followed by the dimension or level of *pneuma* that underlies the human self. For Walī Allāh, *pneuma*, much like the Stoics, survives death of the body with all the external and internal senses (*al-iḥsās al-ẓāhir wa-l-bāṭin*). But this still leaves the question of the nature of *pneuma* as such. We are told that it is something other than the visible body, but does it mean it is completely immaterial or something between the material and the immaterial? Moreover, what is the precise relationship between this *pneuma* and the self (or the rational soul), which for Walī Allāh is decidedly immaterial? The text below seeks to provide a response to these inquiries:

> Know that the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqa*) is the individuating form (*al-ṣūra al-shakhṣiyya*) through which every human acquires his individuality. This [individuality] depends on a subtle body (*jism laṭīf*) produced from the vapor (*bukhār*) of the humors (*al-akhlāṭ*). This is because the nature of the forms is to be dependent on suitable matter (*al-hayūlā al-munāsaba*) possessing a prepared configuration (*al-hay'a al-mustaʿidda*) that will be conferred on it. Since the self (*al-nafs*) is the most subtle, most pure, and most solid of all the forms, it cannot but be dependent on a body which is the most subtle of all bodies (*alṭaf al-ajsām*), maturing at the finest degree of subtlety and equilibrium (*iʿtidāl*) .... We will call this subtle body (*jism laṭīf*) *pneuma* (*nasama*), which pervades (*al-sārī*) the dense body (*al-badan al-kathīf*) in order to manifest the perfections of the self (*kamālāt al-nafs*) in it.[98]

In this seminal text, one can see how the synthesis of the Graeco-Arabic medical tradition, Platonizing Aristotelianism, and Stoicism comes into play in Walī

97 Faruque, *Sculpting*.

98 Allāh, Shāh Walī, *al-Budūr al-bāzigha*, Hyderabad and Sindh: Shāh Walī Allāh Academy, 1970, 38. Cf. Walī Allāḥ, *Ḥujjat Allāh* i, 65, which states that *pneuma* pervade the entire body as a substratum.

Allāh's theory of the self.[99] So the rational soul is the individuating form by which every human acquires his individuality or his specific I-ness.[100] This is more or less standard Aristotelianism. However, Walī Allāh goes on to note that the individuality or the I-ness of every human in turn depends on a on a subtle body (*jism laṭīf*) produced from the vapor (*bukhār*) of the humors (*al-akhlāṭ*).[101] And this is a complex synthesis of Stoicism and the Galenic tradition, with some notable differences. Next, Walī Allāh argues that the self, unlike the version in Stoicism or Galenism, being immaterial and the most subtle of all the forms, cannot but be dependent on a *body* which is also the most subtle of all bodies maturing at the finest degree of subtlety and equilibrium. And Walī Allāh calls this "subtle body" *nasama* or *pneuma*, which is an intermediary between the self (immaterial) and the body (material), and whose function is to manifest the perfections of the self in the body.

Furthermore, from al-Ghazālī's long text quoted earlier, we witnessed that "the second meaning of the heart (*qalb*) is a spiritual lordly *laṭīfa* (*laṭīfa rabbāniyya rūḥāniyya*), which is connected with the physical heart." And al-Ghazālī affirms that this *laṭīfa* is "the real essence of the human and the heart (*qalb*) is that which perceives, knows, and experiences."[102] But al-Ghazālī does not provide any details of the physical constitution of the *laṭīfa*, which is responsible for knowledge and perception, even though he does intimate that the *laṭīfa* of the heart rules all the parts of the body. Al-Ghazālī says:

> Know that the seat of knowledge (*ʿilm*) is the heart, by which I mean the *laṭīfa* that rules all the parts of the body and is obeyed and served by all its members. In its relationship to the real nature of known objects (*maʿlūmāt*), it is like a mirror in its relationship to the forms (*ṣuwar*) of changing appearances. … The knower is an expression for the heart in which there exists the image of the specific natures of things. Knowledge is an expression for the representation of the image in the mirror. Even as the act of grasping, for example, requires that which grasps, such as the

99 For more information on the Galenic and Stoic background, see Faruque, *Sculpting* 170–178.

100 Cf. Aristotle, *De anima* 412a27.

101 In the *Ḥujjat*, Walī Allāh notes that there is a subtle vapor (*bukhār laṭīf*) in the body, which is produced in the heart from a quintessence of the humors (*khulāṣat al-akhlāṭ*). It carries the faculties of perception, movement, and the distribution of food according to the dictates of medicine. The various states of this vapor, whether fine or thick or pure or turbid has a particular effect on the faculties and the functions that proceed from these faculties. Walī Allāḥ, *Ḥujjat Allāh* i, 38.

102 See Faruque, *Labyrinth* 131–132.

> hand, and that which is grasped, such as the sword in the hand, which is called the act of grasping, so also the coming of the image of the known object into the heart is called knowledge.[103]

Shāh Walī Allāh retains part of al-Ghazālī's model by incorporating the heart (*qalb*) as one of the *laṭā'if*, as opposed to making it "the" *laṭīfa*. However, what's more important in Walī Allāh's theory is that he fills the "physiological" gaps of the *laṭā'if* theory through an original synthesis of Stoic-Galenic-Islamic traditions, which, as far as I am aware, is original with him. However, unlike the Stoics, the *pneuma*, for Walī Allāh, is not the self as such; rather it is the *corporal basis* (i.e., matter) of the immaterial self (i.e., form).[104] Nevertheless, to a large extent like the Stoics, Walī Allāh's *nasama* penetrates all the faculties of perception.

To further clarify the nature of *pneuma*, Walī Allāh states that it has three branches.[105] According to his classification, the first branch corresponds to what is called *nafs* in the language of the Sufis (*fī kalām al-ṣūfiyya*), which is like an aperture through which Satan inspires it to incline toward evil (*sharr*), wickedness (*khabth*) and bestiality (*waḥsha*). He further notes that the same term, i.e., *nafs*, is called *al-nafs al-shahwiyya* (the appetitive self) by the philosophers (*al-falāsifa*). The second branch is called *qalb* in the language of the Sufis, while it is called *al-nafs al-sabʿiyya* (the animalistic self) by the philosophers. Similarly, the third branch of *pneuma* is known as *ʿaql* (intellect), which is the same in both Sufis and philosophers' terminology. Walī Allāh then goes on to claim that all of these branches of *nasama*, i.e., the *laṭā'if*, are accepted by the Sufis, philosophers, and the folk of the transmitted sciences:

> These are the three *laṭā'if* in all humans which are affirmed by the philosophers, the folk of the transmitted sciences, and the folk of inner intuition [i.e., the Sufis] (*fa-hādhihi thalāth laṭā'if fī kulli insān ittafaqa ʿalā ithbātihā l-falāsifa wa-ahl al-naql wa-ahl al-wijdān*).[106]

At this point, it would be pertinent to show the contrast between this developed model of the *laṭā'if* and the early model, which is found in Walī Allāh's middle-period work *Alṭāf al-quds*. In *Alṭāf al-quds*, Walī Allāh uses a slightly different

103 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' ʿulūm al-dīn* viii, 1360, trans. (modified) Skellie, *The marvels of the heart* 35.
104 See Walī Allāḥ, *Ḥujjat Allāh* i, 66.
105 Walī Allāh, *al-Tafhīmāt al-ilāhiyya* i, 229–231.
106 Walī Allāh, *al-Tafhīmāt al-ilāhiyya* i, 232.

scheme to elucidate the basic structure of the self. Also, one observes that he struggles to find the right vocabulary to express the relationship between the self and the *laṭā'if*. First, he states that the self (*rūḥ*) is composed of three parts (*az sih juz' ast*): *nasama* or the airy soul (*rūḥ-i hawā'ī*), the rational soul (*nafs-i nāṭiqa*) and the angelic spirit (*rūḥ-i malakūt*). However, his bio-physiological description of the *nasama* there differs slightly from the account given in his late works such as the *Budūr* and the *Tafhīmāt* in terms of its refinement:

> First, there is the fine air (*nasīm-i ṭayyib*) arising from the subtle vapors (*bukhār-i laṭīf*) of the various elements in digested food. It possesses the capacity for nutrition (*taghdhiyya*), growth (*tanmiyya*), and sense perception (*idrāk*). This is called *pneuma* (*nasama*), the natural soul (*rūḥ-i ṭabī'ī*) or the airy body (*badan-i hawā'ī*). It permeates flesh and bones like the fire in charcoal or the perfume in a rose. It is by virtue of the airy soul (*rūḥ-i hawā'ī*) that the soul is connected with the body. Just as the body tastes death when severed from the soul, the latter suffers a similar death-like pain (*maqāsāt*) when separated from the body. The original source of this subtle vapor lies in the heart, brain, and liver. It arises from the boiling of the blood in the heart which is confirmed by the method and observation of the physicians. That is, when they observe blood turning thick or thin, pure or impure, increasing or decreasing.[107]

As one can see, terms such as *rūḥ-i hawā'ī* or *badan-i hawā'ī* do not occur in the late works. Instead, we have more refined terms such as subtle air (*hawā' laṭīf*) that are heuristically more useful, since the word *rūḥ* has so many overlapping meanings with the word *nafs*. More importantly, *pneuma* (*nasama*) is not one of the parts of the self, as the late works make it plain, rather it is its corporal basis. This becomes clearer as we move on to his explanation of the second branch of the self in this early model, namely the rational soul. Concerning the rational soul, Walī Allāh gives the analogy of a date-stone (*nawāt*) and its biological life-cycles (e.g., growth and disintegration) to make the point that if a single date-stone can control its own independent growth, alongside the fact that every tree has its own distinct order (*niẓām*), then reason is compelled to acknowledge the existence of a self (*nafs*) possessing the requisite faculties (*quwā*) in humans, which is called the rational soul (*nafs-i nāṭiqa*).[108] Similarly, the third part is the angelic spirit (*rūḥ-i malakūt*), whose distinctive property is that it remains in the presence of the sacred spirit (*rūḥ al-qudus*), which is

107 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 24.
108 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 25–26.

anchored in the heavenly fold (*ḥaẓīrat al-quds*). The angelic spirit maintains this link at all times (*ittiṣāl paydā mī kunad*) and is firmly established in the highest assembly (*malaʾ al-aʿlā*), where it is able to converse with the angels according to its preparedness (*istiʿdād*).[109]

Now one can see why there are certain inconsistencies in this particular schema. On the one hand, if we conceive of *rūḥ* as spirit, instead of self, which consists of three parts, we run into a mereological fallacy, since the third part of the *rūḥ* is definitely a sort of spirit, namely the angelic spirit. So "spirit" cannot itself be another "spirit," especially since we are not talking about "spirit" and its various kinds such as the natural spirit (*rūḥ-i ṭabīʿī*) and the animal spirit (*rūḥ-i ḥayawānī*). This is because the second part of this *rūḥ* is not called *rūḥ-i nāṭiqa*, instead of *nafs-i nāṭiqa*. Moreover, in numerous other contexts, *nafs-i nāṭiqa* is described as a substance and a non-physical entity that can only be understood as self (not its part), as I have shown in the preceding sections. Therefore, terminological inconsistencies remain in the early model, whether one understands the *rūḥ* to be a spirit or self. Still, one can perhaps hope to reconcile this early model (see Fig. 17.2) with the more matured model (see Fig. 17.3) by a charitable hermeneutical move (see the next section).

After explaining a basic structure of the self (i.e., *rūḥ*), Walī Allāh goes on to discuss the functions and attributes of various parts of the self (*rūḥ*). He acknowledges that every part of the self (*rūḥ*) has its own separate properties. Moreover, each combination of parts has further distinct properties of their own. More significantly, he notes that the airy soul (i.e., *pneuma*) has affinity with the lower soul (*nafs*),[110] while the rational soul with the heart (*qalb*) and the angelic spirit with the intellect (*ʿaql*).[111] Thus we come back three main *laṭāʾif*, which comprises the self whose bodily basis is *nasama*. And there is good textual evidence to support this interpretation, since Walī Allāh maintains that the five *laṭāʾif* (i.e., including *sirr* and *rūḥ*) are generated from a combination of *pneuma*, the rational soul and the angelic spirit, thereby suggesting here the rational soul and the angelic spirit can be understood in the sense of a *laṭīfa* as well.[112] Moreover, in keeping with late works, he attributes various external and internal senses such as the common sense, the imagination, memory etc., to *pneuma*.[113]

109 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 31.

110 I.e., with the appetitive soul (*nafs-i shahwī*), which is an aspect of the lower soul.

111 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 34–25.

112 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 34.

113 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 34. Airy soul (*nafs-i hawāʾī*) or *nasama* contains three parts: *nafs*, *qalb*, and *ʿaql*. See Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 35.

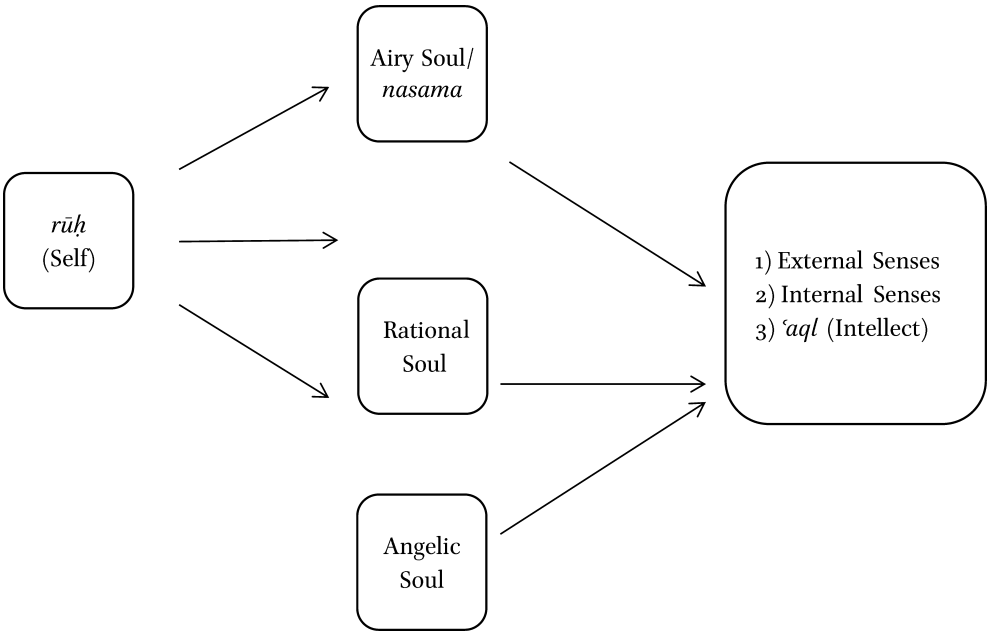

FIGURE 17.2 Early model of the Self

Be that as it may, to give a better *overall* psycho-spiritual sense of the *laṭāʾif* and why it makes more sense to conceive of them as "subtle fields of consciousness," let us consider how Walī Allāh describes their functions. In his account, the *laṭīfa* of the *nafs* is characterized by its ability to form the intention to carry out a particular action, entertain feelings of love and hatred, regulate the carnal desires, and pursue pleasures. In addition, it has to maintain the constitution of the body in accordance with the latter's requirements and has to discharge what the body naturally discharges. Furthermore, basic physical needs such as hunger and thirst, fatigue and pain, and sexual urge that are necessary for the continuation of life are all connected with the lower self (*nafs*).[114] Next, the *laṭīfa* of the *qalb* has to do with emotions such as showing courage or cowardice (*jubn*), anger (*ghaḍab*), shame (*khajālat*), fear (*khawf*), courage (*jurʾat*), generosity (*sakhāwat*), avarice (*shuḥḥ*), love (*ḥubb*), and hatred (*bughḍ*). Walī Allāh illustrates this by arguing that "every person undoubtedly recognizes how he dislikes a thing," why his heart burns with a desire to repel it, why his spirits (*arwāḥ*) seem almost on the point of leaving his body, and why his veins dilate, and his skin turns red. Similarly, in times of fear, he knows why his heart trembles, making his spirits recede into his body, and why his face

114 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 38–39.

becomes pale and his mouth goes dry.[115] That is to say, the natural sensations and feelings that one goes through due to the stirring of his emotions and passions, are to be attributed to the *laṭīfa* of the heart. Likewise, the functions of the *laṭīfa* of the intellect (*ʿaql*) are comprehension (*fahm*), knowledge (*maʿrifat*), and the capacity to execute decisions. Moreover, the intellect has the feature of recollecting things of the past and making plans for the future.[116]

One notices how the above description systematically attributes both agency-related capacities such as the ability to make decisions and perceptual capacities such as the ability to experience various emotions and make judgements about their moral content to the self, which is difficult to imagine without some form of "consciousness" in the background (see Fig. 17.4). To wit, it is not possible to attribute "agency-related" actions or states to human beings, while not admitting some sort of consciousness. That is the reason I find it most suitable to render the *laṭāʾif* as subtle fields of consciousness. They are "subtle" because they have a subtle bodily basis, while it is more plausible to think of them as "fields" rather than "points," since they "pervade the whole body" and interpenetrate each other. But as Walī Allāh stresses frequently, although there are "seven" such subtle fields of consciousness, it does not entail that there are "seven selves" sitting behind them.[117] This is why the idea of the "multidimensionality" of the self, explicitly asserted by Walī Allāh, can be so crucial in delineating a theory of the self. Walī Allāh writes:

> Every person always experiences these realities. In one sense, these three categories [i.e., the *laṭāʾif*] are separate from each other, while in another sense they are united together.[118]
>
> We have already discussed the cause of their differentiation; the cause of their unity (*wajh-i ittiḥād*) lies in the fact that, although the rational soul directs these various faculties and functions (*shaʿb*), it is itself fundamentally a single entity (*yakī ast*), and fundamentally, its constitution (*mizāj*) is one.[119]

That is to say, *the self is one at the level of its substance-hood or as an immaterial entity, but multiple at the level of its functions, states, and actions*. For this

115 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 39–40.
116 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 40.
117 See, e.g., Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 35–36 and 146.
118 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 40.
119 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 41.

reason, a spectrum model of selfhood containing multiple dimensions can be heuristically helpful, as it offers a way of reading the *apparently disconnected* reflections on the self in a *coherent* and *unified* way.

Moreover, the self is both a spectrum and an aspirational concept. That is, part of the self is given (i.e., the bio-physiological dimension) but part of it exists only as a potential that one aspires to achieve.[120] Considered thus, the nature of the self constituted by the subtle fields of consciousness (*laṭā'if*) must be cultivated and purified in order to attain ultimate selfhood (*anāniyya kubrā*). Also, since the *laṭā'if* form the matrix of one's given subjectivity, it would be helpful to use the metaphor of taking an "inward turn" or journeying within these fields, as they lead to the ultimate destination of the self, which is identity with the divine as we shall see in the next section.

In his *Alṭāf al-quds*, Walī Allāh suggests that in Sufi terminology (*dar iṣṭilāḥ-i ṣūfiyya*), the purification of the lower self, the heart, and the intellect (*tahdhīb-i nafs*, *qalb wa-ʿaql*) is known as the way (*ṭarīqat*), while that of the spirit and the secret (*tahdhīb-i rūḥ wa-sirr*) is termed gnosis (*maʿrifat*).[121] That is to say, what is known as *ṭarīqat* or the practice of the Sufi way in common Sufi parlance is nothing other than purifying all the *laṭā'if* of the self. As Walī Allāh explains:

> The whole point of engaging oneself in spiritual activities and exercises is that every *laṭīfa* should be cultivated (*parwarish*) and that due consideration should be given to every stage.[122]

Also, Walī Allāh claims that the real nature and the effects of these *laṭā'if* are unfamiliar to most minds, and most people do not benefit from being informed of them. Nonetheless, there are two types of people who might benefit from hearing about these things. The first is someone who has already come close to perfecting them completely, and who has acquired the preparedness to purify them. If such a person turns his attention to this present discussion, the conception of the forms of these things will be the correct one, and it will open the door to success. The second type is someone who has been blessed with a

120 Faruque, *Sculpting* 44–48.

121 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 73.

122 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 87. In Walī Allāh's view, when the wayfarer is released from the influence of the lower self (*nafs*), he should focus his attention on the other *laṭā'if*, namely *qalb* and *ʿaql*. At this point, his heart becomes his spirit (*rūḥ*) and his intellect becomes his *sirr*. See Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 35. Moreover, when the seeker has completed the purification of the self, the heart, and the intellect, and has gained the benefits accruing from this, the next requirement is the purification yet again of the self, but this time in conjunction with the spirit and the secret faculty. See Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 98.

general knowledge of the *laṭā'if* but lacks the capacity to understand them in detail. If such a person reads this discussion, Walī Allāh says, his general knowledge will be transformed into a detailed one.[123] Moreover, Walī Allāh notes that since there are so many variations in the types of human selves (*nufūs-i banī ādam*), the means of purification for each of them will also differ, thereby making its scope vast.[124]

However, one may wonder why is there a need to purify one's self or the *laṭā'if* that comprise it? To answer this Walī Allāh argues that without such a purification, one would not be able to know the real nature of the self and how this differs from what we ordinarily perceive, think, and treat the self to be.[125] Since the *laṭā'if* also manifest various emotions, Walī Allāh broaches the heart (*qalb*) that plays a crucial role in the purification of the self:

> The heart rules over the bodily organs, and by virtue of its love modify their patterns of behavior. When this quality becomes innate in the heart and is maintained for a long time in close association with continuous worshipping, then a stage is created between these two attributes. … As a result, [the disciple's] bodily organs become submissive (*khāshiʿ*), and he begins to show courtesy and deference in speech and treat all those who are related to the Beloved (*maḥbūb*) as his own respected friends.[126]

Among many spiritual exercises that Walī Allāh suggests are self-examination (*muḥāsiba-yi nafs*), which is attending to the self moment by moment and remaining constantly aware of its state (*yaʿnī har zamānī waqif-i ḥāl-i khūd bāshad*) to see whether its time is being wasted in negligence (*ghaflat*) and sin, or it is spent in acts of devotion (*ṭāʿat*). If the desired objective is achieved, Walī Allāh continues, we should thank God, and think hard of ways to continue this trend and enhance this practice. But if it is the reverse, we should repent.[127] After mentioning self-examination, Walī Allāh elucidates four cardinal virtues that the self (*nafs*) should cultivate in order to purify itself from the temptations of the lower self. The first of these cardinal virtues is purity (*ṭahārat*) through which the self is related to angels, while the second is humility (*khuḍūʿ*) through which the self acquires an affinity with the highest assembly (*malaʾ al-aʿlā*). The third is generosity (*samāḥat*), by means of which the self obliterates stains left

123 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 112.
124 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 47.
125 Cf. Walī Allāh, *al-Budūr al-bāzigha* 154.
126 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 90.
127 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 81–82; cf. Walī Allāh, *al-Budūr al-bāzigha* 154.

by base human nature such as animal-like behavior (*afʿāl-i sabʿiyya*) and lust (*shahwiyya*). The fourth is justice (*ʿadālat*) through which the self may appear pleasing to the highest assembly, may gain favor with it, and receive its mercy and blessings.[128]

Finally, Walī Allāh recommends a host of Sufi spiritual practices, some of which are associated with the Naqshbandī order. Among these practices, he suggests the invocation (*dhikr*), beating one's chest, breath-control (*ḥabs-i nafas*),[129] the secret lesson (*sabq-i bāṭinī*) which is a legacy of the masters of the Naqshbandi school, listening to spiritual music (*samāʿ*), and contemplating aesthetically pleasing patterns (*naqsh-hā-yi shawq-angīz*).[130] In Walī Allāh's view, all of these spiritual exercises excite longing in the heart and bring it to life. Moreover, the observance of purity at all times (*dawām-i ṭahārat*), the serene light of Quranic recitation, Sufi *wird*, and the cultivation (*parwarish*) of the Uwaysi relationship with the spirits of the saints, all provide nourishment to the self (*nafs*). In the same way, he continues, contemplating attributes of God and meditating on His names (*fikr-i tadabbur-i asmāʾ*) transport the intellect to the seat of splendor. Lastly, in order to awaken higher *laṭāʾif* such as *sirr*, one should practice "pure remembrance," which is the Naqshbandī practice of soundlessly and wordlessly remembering God (*yād dāsht-i ṣirf bī-ṣawt wa-ḥarf kih maʿmūl-i naqshbandiyya ast*).[131]

4.1 *The End of Selfhood*

So far, we have learned that the there are five subtle fields of consciousness (*laṭāʾif*) that constitute the individual self, and that one can journey through them—in the sense of discovering them within oneself—in order to reach ultimate selfhood. The next question that arises is what is the nature of ultimate selfhood and how does one attain it? Moreover, how does such a transformed

128 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 52–53.

129 Faruque, *Labyrinth* 195–201.

130 See also, Walī Allāh, *Ḥujjat Allāh* i, 104–105, for a detailed treatment of the Sufi virtues that are essential to purification.

131 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 108. Continuous worshipping (*dawām-i ʿubūdiyyat*) falls into two categories. The first category is concerned with the limbs and organs of the body and the tongue. This entails spending one's life in prayer and reading the Quran with one's thoughts collected and one's heart concentrated. Walī Allāh asserts that this is one of the fundamental principles of Sufism, which has been explained in such books as Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī's *Qūt al-qulūb*, al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, Jilānī's *Ghunyat al-ṭālibīn*, and Suhrawardī's *ʿAwārif al-maʿārif*. The second category relates to the heart and the intellect. Here the heart is occupied with the love of the Beloved and close attachment to the Beloved. The intellect is occupied with remembrance and awareness while suspending breath (*ḥabs-i nafas*). See Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 86–87.

state of the self look like? Is the individual self dissolved in such a state, or is there still some form of individuality that is retained? Moreover, what does the *sharīʿa* say about such transcendent states? In other words, where does normative Islam stand in all this? Let us, then, proceed to answer all these questions in sequence, and in doing so, bring Walī Allāh's conception of the self to a culmination.

Being an authority on legal matters (i.e., matters pertaining to the *sharīʿa*), in addition to being a Sufi, Walī Allāh seems mindful of the fact that many of his abstruse reflections on the nature of ultimate selfhood might appear unsettling to the uninitiated or the ordinary believer. Thus he begins by asserting that the purpose of the *sharīʿa* is to deliver the self from the punishment of the grave and the Day of Judgment, rather than enabling it to attain the mystical states of annihilation and subsistence:

> If you want to understand the true nature of the *sharīʿa*, then know that human beings are trapped in the grip of the evil-inciting self [i.e., the lower self] .... And the remedy of this situation is provided in view of the entire species [i.e., humanity as a whole], hence it [i.e., the remedy] pertains to the species as a whole, and not to the specific potential that some individual [selves] possess. So, the final purpose of this [i.e., the *sharīʿa*] is to save the [individual] from being devastated in the world, alongside the punishment of the grave and the Day of Judgment. Its purpose is not to enable the self to attain the station of annihilation and permanence for each of the *laṭāʾif*, nor the rank of absolute permanence and perfect settlement (*ḥaqīqat-i sharīʿat agar khwāhī kih bi-fahmī bi-dān kih banī ādam dar qayd-i nafs-i ammāra giriftār shudah būdand .... wa-iltifāt darīn iʿlāj bi-ṣūrat-i nawʿiyya wa-khwāṣṣ-i kulliyya-yi ān nawʿ ast nah bi-istiʿdādāt-i khāṣṣa bar juzwi-yī fardī wa ʿillat-i ghāyat-i ān ikhlāṣ az tazālum dar dunyā mubtalā shudan bi-ʿadhāb-i qabr wa-rūz-i ḥashr ast nah wuṣul-i fanāʾ wa-baqāʾ-yi har laṭīfa wa-ḥuṣūl-i martaba-yi baqāʾ-yi muṭlaq wa-tamkīn-i tāmm*).[132]

After mentioning the above, Walī Allāh adds that whoever thinks otherwise has not understood the Prophet's aims (*maqāṣid*), beneficial strategies (*maṣāliḥ*), commands (*awāmir*), and prohibitions (*nawāhī*). That is to say, the commands and prohibitions of the *sharīʿa* are sufficient to save the self from the punishment of hell or enjoy the blessedness of paradise. But these commands and

132 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 48–49.

prohibitions of the *sharīʿa* are generic in the sense that they do not take into account "individual potentials" (*istiʿdādāt-i fardī*) that contain the possibilities of realizing the higher states of being through *fanā'* and *baqā'*. For Walī Allāh, the self has modes of being above and beyond the ordinary teachings of the *sharīʿa*, and, as we shall soon see, he goes to great lengths to elucidate the higher states of the self, some of which might appear rather antinomian from the outward *sharīʿa* perspective. It is also important to note that these passages where Walī Allāh expounds on the higher reality of the self would challenge the existing scholarship, which seeks to present an uncontested, reform-minded image of Shāh Walī Allāh.

In any event, in Walī Allāh's metaphysical anthropology, the nature of the self is bound up with its ontological origin, i.e., the Universal Soul (*nafs-i kulliyya*). Walī Allāh mentions that the goal of "the rational soul (*nafs-i nāṭiqa*) in relation to its origin (*aṣl*) is to be melted in the Universal Soul, which enables it to receive the impulse (*dāʿiya*) of ultimate selfhood."[133] I shall explain the attributes of ultimate selfhood in a moment, but it is crucial to note that for Walī Allāh, the ultimate destination of the self is not the Universal Soul, even though the above citation seems to suggest so. So he sets out to narrate that there is a state in which a divine impulse (*dāʿiya-yi ilāhiyya*) is transmitted, either from the supreme manifestation (*tajallī-yi aʿẓam*) or from the Universal Soul, or from a place where there is no differentiation whatsoever into the supreme manifestation and the Universal Soul—"a place where all is oneness in oneness, simplicity in simplicity (*waḥdat dar waḥdat wa-bisāṭat dar bisāṭat*)" (Fig. 17.4).[134] This divine impulse pours down from one of these sublime regions, attaches itself to the individual selfhood (*anāniyyat-i khāṣṣ*), and mingles with the substance (*jawhar*) of this bubble.[135] In referring to the place which is beyond the degree of the Universal Soul and which is characterized by its utter simplicity, Walī Allāh has in mind the Divine Self, which he sometimes calls the Supreme Self (*dhāt-i baḥt*) or the First of the First (*awwal al-awā'il*):

> There are others who have passed beyond the Universal Soul and understood the Supreme Self as the First of the First, and the Universal Soul as the first emanation (*ṣādir-i awwal*) and deployed being (*wujūd munbasiṭ*) upon the temples of existents.[136]

133 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 34.
134 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 129.
135 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 129.
136 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 155.

One question that might arise in this context is how is the perfect human, which is usually conceived as the highest realizable self, related to the Universal Soul? The following text casts light on such concerns:

> The perfect human (*insān-i kāmil*) is a distinct species (*nawʿ-i ʿalāḥida*) among the various kinds of humans, just as human is a distinct species (*nawʿ-i ʿalāḥida*) within its own genus. Just as the human is deemed superior to animals by virtue of his universal outlook (*kullī wa-tafṣīl*), so too is the perfect human vis-à-vis other humans by virtue of the development of his (*laṭā'if*), which is realized when the Universal Soul manifests itself in his particular selfhood (*anāniyyat-i khāṣṣ*) and made the latter a subservient to its will. The perfect human has many such characteristics, a full account of which would take too long to accomplish. In short, the perfect human is the nearest of all the individual selves to the Universal Soul (*bi-l-jumla insān-i kāmil aqrab-i nufūs-i juz'iyya ast bi-nafs-i kulliyya*).[137]

It is to be noted that in Walī Allāh's metaphysics of the self, the doctrine of the perfect human does not make much appearance, although he seems to have accepted its general function, as the above passage points out. Nonetheless, Walī Allāh's innovative vocabularies such as *anāniyya kubrā* or *anāniyya muṭlaq* do seem to capture the essential features of the perfect human as the highest attainable self. One innovative move in Walī Allāh's account of the perfect human, however, is that the self attains to the degree of the perfect human through the development of its *laṭā'if* or the subtle fields of consciousness. This brings us back to Fig. 17.3 (below), in which Walī Allāh illustrates how the self progresses from the microcosmic *laṭā'if* such as *nafs*, *qalb* and *ʿaql* to the macrocosmic *laṭā'if*. Now the crucial point to note is that there are two ways one may reach absolute selfhood (*anāniyya muṭlaq*): 1) the path of ultimate sainthood (*al-wilāya al-kubrā*) and 2) the path of prophetic inheritance (*al-wirātha al-nubuwwa*) [indicated by the black pointed arcs in the diagram]. However, as Walī Allāh underlines, "whatever the path may be, Prophetic inheritance or ultimate sainthood, it makes little difference," since what matters is the destination.[138]

As was mentioned earlier, one can reach the pinnacle of selfhood through two distinct routes. First, one should note that the rational soul or the self is the junction (*mawḍiʿ*) between the microcosmic and the macrocosmic *laṭā'if*.

137 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 116.

138 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 123–124. Cf. the black arcs in Fig. 17.3.

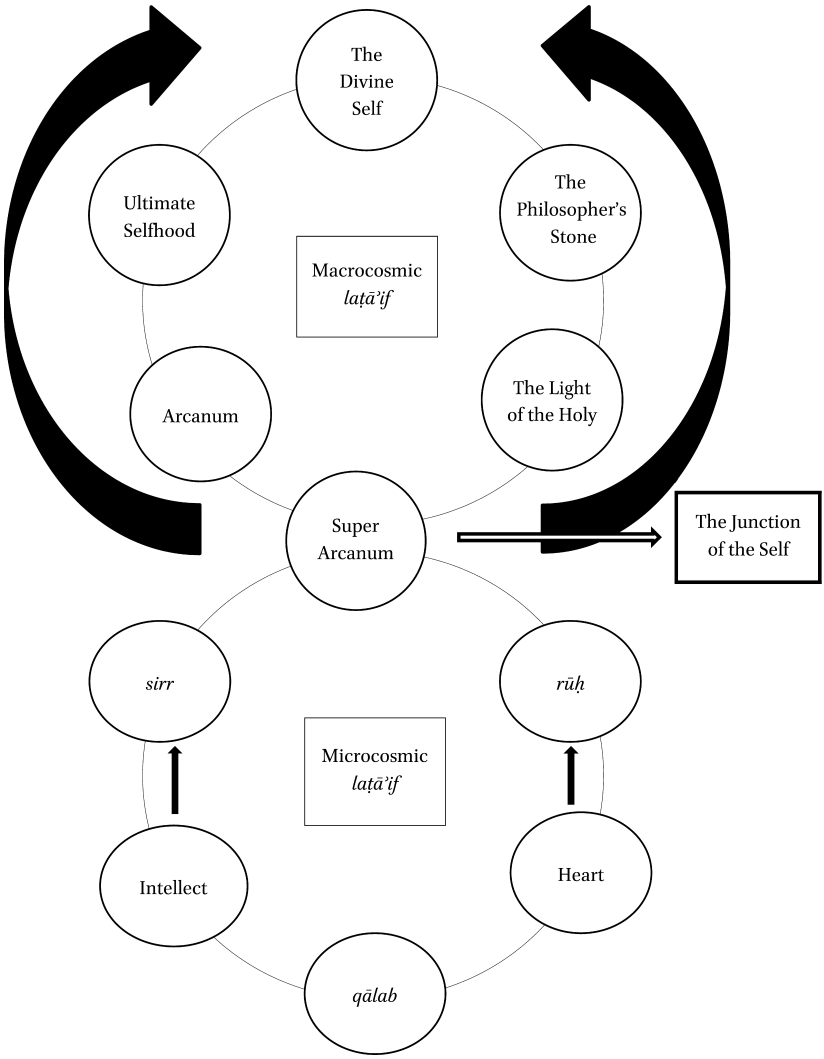

FIGURE 17.3 The *laṭā'if* and selfhood
Note: Based on Walī Allāh's own diagram with some modification; see Walī Allāh, *al-Tafhīmāt al-ilāhiyya* i, 244. In his own commentary on this diagram, Walī Allāh explicitly mentions the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqa*) or the self as the junction between the microcosmic and the macrocosmic *laṭā'if*. He states that the rational soul has four frames of reference (*anẓār*), two of which are branched into *rūḥ* and *sirr* below it, while two of them are branched into *khafī* and *nūr al-quds* above it. But the rational soul itself is stationed at the junction of *akhfā* (super arcanum) (*wa-kāna al-nafs al-nāṭiqa innamā hiya fī mawḍiʿ al-akhfā*). See Walī Allāh, *al-Tafhīmāt al-ilāhiyya* i, 244.
BASED ON WALĪ ALLĀH'S OWN DIAGRAM

This junction is also identified with the subtle field *akhfā*, as in Fig. 17.3 From the junction of *akhfā* or the rational soul (which is yet to realize its macrocosmic states), the self can either reach the Supreme Self through the *laṭā'if* of the arcanum (*khafī*) and ultimate selfhood, or it can traverse the *laṭā'if* of the light of the holy (*nūr al-quds*) and the philosopher's stone (*ḥajar-i baḥt*)[139] to reach Divinity, and become annihilated in and subsisted through It.

A related issue that emerges from the journey through the *laṭā'if* and degrees of annihilation that marks every waystation of the *laṭā'if* is what we stated at the beginning of this section, namely how is reality perceived in such transformed states of the self? Is the individual self dissolved in such a state, or is the state of individuality still retained? The passage below answers this by first asserting that there is a level of selfhood beyond the degree of the Universal Soul:

> Either the individual selfhood (*anāniyyat-i khāṣṣ*) subsists through absolute selfhood (*anāniyyat-i muṭlaq*) or [the gnostic regards] individual selfhood as absolute selfhood, or else, he becomes oblivious to his individual selfhood (*anāniyyat-i khāṣṣ*), neither affirming nor denying it. He neither puts absolute selfhood in place of his individual selfhood nor does he recall it as a separate entity. In the terminology of the folk of wayfaring, this is called the self-disclosure of the Self (*tajallī-yi dhāt*). The ultimate vision of the gnostic in this state is the Universal Soul (*nafs-i kulliyya*). From there he ascends (*ṣu'ūd mī-kunad*) to the Supreme Self (*dhāt-i baḥt*) and gains something from It (*chīzī az ān bi-dastash āyad*) but does not know how to describe it (*nadānad kih barā-yi ān chih 'ibārat gūyad*) … or how to express that which lies beyond the beyond (*warā' al-warā'*).[140]

Before commenting on this crucial passage, let me also quote the text, in which Walī Allāh explains the nature of the Divine Essence or, to use his own term, the Supreme Self (*dhāt-i baḥt*):

> The distinctive feature of the Supreme Self (*dhāt-i baḥt*) is that on the one hand it remains engrossed in the simplitude of Its Self-Identity (*bi-ṣirāfati huwiyyat-i khūd*), while, on the other, despite its simplitude (*baḥtiyyat*),

139 The "philosopher's stone" is used with reference to this *laṭīfa* because of its marvelous and perplexing nature. Originally, the *ḥajar-i baḥt* indicated a mysterious substance which used to be presented as a gift to the princes and nobles, and was not classifiable as being vegetal, mineral, and so on.

140 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 123.

> it descends (*tanazzul farmāyad*) or projects outward. However, in the course of its descent it loses none of its simplitude—unlike other things the simplitude of which opposes such a descent. Or, it could be said that when the gnostic turns his gaze upon himself (*naẓar-i khūd bi-khūd uftad*) and plunges deep into the contemplation of the ultimate source of his origin (*aṣl-i uṣūl-i khūdash khawḍ namāyad*), then the utmost limit of his vision is that essential shining point (*muntahī-yi naẓarash nuqṭa-yi shaʿshaʿāniyya-yi dhātiyya būd*). He conceives of this point as the center of his own self (*dar miyān-i rūḥ-i way ast*) whereas it dwells, in its unalloyed simplitude (*bisāṭat-i khūd*), in an eminent place.[141]

Since these two passages represent the culmination of Walī Allāh's theory of selfhood, let me elaborate on them in relation to what has been discussed so far. Walī Allāh calls attention to the fact that the individual selfhood (*anāniyyat-i khāṣṣ*) of every self is subsisted through the absolute selfhood (*anāniyya muṭlaq*) of God. In other words, in Walī Allāh's multidimensional theory of selfhood, God, who is the Supreme Self, stands at the apex. Then, as Walī Allāh maintains elsewhere, the first emanation of the Divine Self is the self-unfolding existence (*al-wujūd al-munbasiṭ*) or the Universal Soul.[142] So when the self reaches the station of the Universal Soul, it either regards its individual selfhood (*anāniyyat-i khāṣṣ*) as absolute selfhood, or it becomes oblivious to its individual selfhood, neither affirming nor denying it. In other words, the self, at that level, is both "I" and not "I." However, the degree of the Universal Soul is still not the quintessence of Divine Reality, which is Supreme Selfhood. Now the Supreme Selfhood of divinity is a state of utter simplitude that is devoid of any duality. In other words, it is a state of absolute oneness. In contrast to many Sufis and theologians who argue that the human self can never attain the Supreme Self of God because of Its utter transcendence, Walī Allāh asserts that when the gnostic turns its gaze upon himself, and plunges deep into the contemplation of his ultimate origin, he comes to recognize the immanent divinity within himself, which is like a shining point that resides at the center of his own self. It is noteworthy that Walī Allāh chooses the metaphor of "point," which is a mathematical abstraction having no one-to-one correspondence in external reality. That is to say, to describe such a reality or the experience of it, which is ineffable or lies beyond the beyond (*warāʾ al-warāʾ*), one reaches the bounds of language.[143] The passage, nonetheless, does not fail to underscore that the

141 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 119.

142 See Faruque, "Sufism *contra* shariah."

143 As Walī Allāh says: "From the Supreme Self he attains something, which is beyond descrip-

very heart of the Divine Self lies at the deepest core of one's selfhood, which is beyond words, yet attainable through annihilation (*fanāʾ*). But does this experience of the Divine Self as one's deepest core make one God? It seems, for Walī Allāh, the answer is in the negative:

> The inner intuition (*al-wijdān*) explicitly affirms that the servant remains the servant when he progresses [toward God] and the Lord remains the Lord when He descends (*al-ṣarīḥ yaḥkum bi-anna al-ʿabd ʿabd wa-in taraqqā, wa-l-rabb rabb wa-in tanazzala*), and the servant can never take on either the attributes of necessity (*wujūb*) or the attributes emanating from it. He does not know the unseen except which is imprinted on the tablet of his breast (*fī lawḥ ṣadrihi*).[144]

That is, the individual self remains an individual despite the realization of its identity with the Divine Self. The best way to account for this paradoxical situation, where one simultaneously affirms and denies any point of contact with the divine, would be to use the heuristic of "identity and difference." That is, although the identity of every individual "I" is clear and distinct and can be affirmed through presential knowledge, the identity of the same "I" can be ambiguous at the point of its contact with the divine "I," for at that level, the "I" is also "not I." It can be simultaneously affirmed and negated. It is thus a situation of "identity and difference," which, as Walī Allāh admits, only arouses bewilderment (*ḥayra*). For this reason, he says that "there is no point in saying more than this. All in all, we should better be advised to take a step back from this abyss (*waraṭa*)."[145] But since as scholars, we have to carry on our hermeneutical task, I would say that for Walī Allāh, the "end" (in the sense of termination) of selfhood is the end of individual selfhood, but at the same time, the 'end' (in the sense of *telos*) to which it aspires, as it opens unto the realm of meta-individual selfhood.

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tion and interpretation. If it is called witnessing, it is not really witnessing, or if it is called union, it is actually beyond the category of union. It is like a dream that one soon forgets. However, he knows for certain that "It" is something (i.e., Its existence is affirmed), although Its nature cannot be explained in words." (*Chīzī az dhāt-i baḥt bi-dast āyad kih az ān taʿbīr natawān kard. Agar mushāhida gūyad ān khūd mushāhida nīst wa-agar wuṣūl nāmad ān rā khūd az maqūla-yi wuṣūl natawān guft, khwābī ast farāmūsh. Īnqadr mīdānad kih chīzī hast wa-sharḥ-i ān natawān kard*). See Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 122.

144 Walī Allāh, *al-Tafhīmāt al-ilāhiyya* i, 245.

145 Walī Allāh, *Alṭāf al-quds* 132.

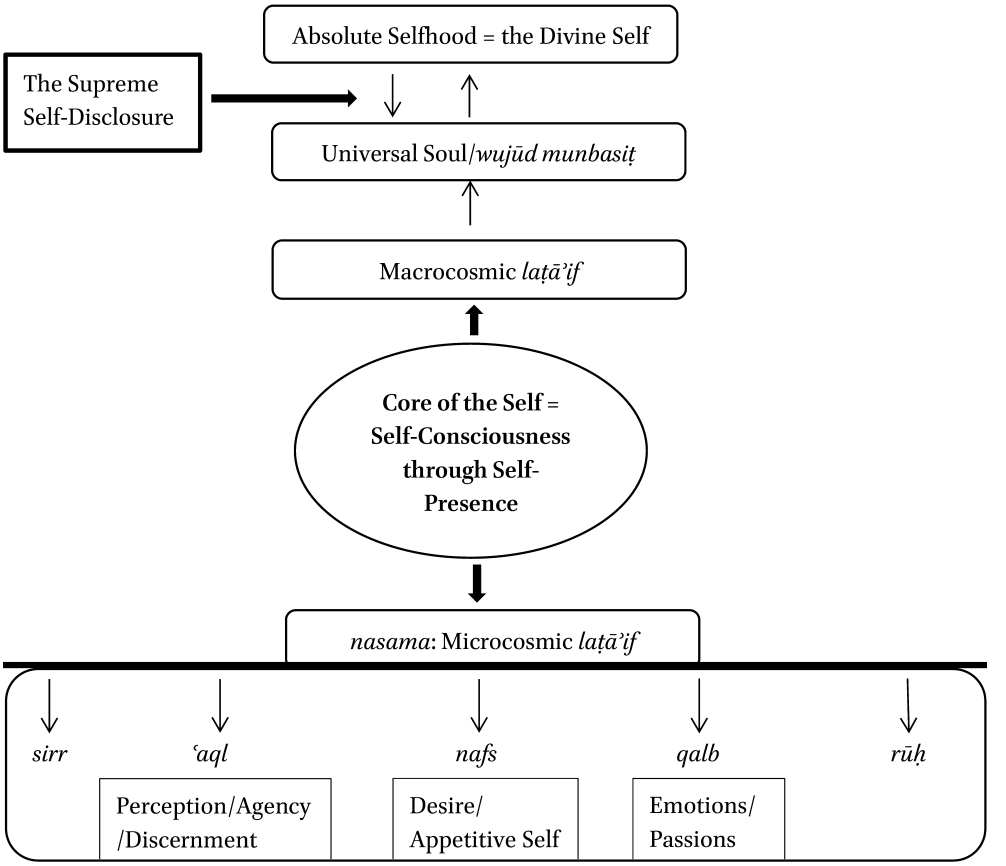

FIGURE 17.4 Shāh Walī Allāh's model of the Self

5 Conclusion

This study explored Shāh Walī Allāh's conception of the self from multiple vantage points. In the end, the feature that stands out in Walī Allāh's philosophy of the self is his penchant for developing original syntheses. It was mentioned earlier that Walī Allāh draws on a panoply of sources ranging over Stoicism, Islamic Neoplatonism, Graeco-Islamic-Indian medical traditions, and Sufism. However, the idea of the self found in some of these intellectual currents stands opposed to one another. For instance, the Stoic self (i.e., *pneuma*) is a material (or quasi-material) entity, which is antithetical to the Avicennan self because of its immateriality. So Walī Allāh argues that the self, being immaterial and the most subtle of all the forms, cannot but be dependent on a *body* which is also

the most subtle of all bodies (*alṭaf al-ajsām*) maturing at the finest degree of subtlety and equilibrium. Walī Allāh calls this subtle body *nasama* or *pneuma*, which is an intermediary between the self (immaterial) and the body (material). In this way he was able to resolve the tension between the material *nasama* (*pneuma*) and the immaterial self by reinterpreting Aristotelian hylomorphism so that *pneuma* becomes the "matter" for the "form" of the immaterial self. What is more, by making skillful use of medical knowledge, Walī Allāh was able to synthesize a conception of the self that is based on the physiology of the humoral theory of *pneuma*. Thus, unlike his Sufi predecessors such as al-Ghazālī, he was able to fill the physiological gaps of the *laṭā'if* theory through a novel synthesis of the Galenic-Islamic medical tradition by mooring the *laṭā'if* on a corporal base.

At any rate, the many novelties in Walī Allāh's account of selfhood should not cause us to think that he was driven by a "reformist ideology" while constructing such a notion of the self. According to Hermansen, Walī Allāh's theory of the *laṭā'if* evokes "a mood of reform and heightened individual responsibility."[146] In my reading of Walī Allāh this is far from the case. In fact, Walī Allāh's extensive borrowing from his predecessors and endorsing of their key ideas such as *fanā'* and *baqā'*, *'ilm al-ḥuḍūrī*, *laṭā'if*, *al-nafs al-nāṭiqa*, *al-nafs al-kullī*, *tajallī*, *waḥdat al-wujūd*, *al-wujūd al-munbasiṭ* etc., show that he had little motivation to "reform" conceptions of selfhood in Sufism. If being "original" and "creative" are considered synonymous with being a "reformist," then names such as al-Ghazālī, Ibn ʿArabī, and Mullā Ṣadrā should count first among the foremost reformers of Islam. So a better way to characterize Walī Allāh's thought would be to say that he was a creative thinker, much like Ṣadrā before him, who was able to synthesize elements from different traditions in an original manner.

In the end, it would be fair to claim that Walī Allāh presents a complex, multidimensional understanding of the self that cannot be pinned down to a set of fixed, unchanging features. This means, unlike previous scholarship, one should not just analyze the self in terms of the *laṭā'if*, even though they may be an important part of it. As Fig. 17.4 summarizes, the center of Walī Allāh's self is defined by self-consciousness, which is known *directly* through self-presence. That is to say, the self, on this account, is present to itself, hence known *directly* (i.e., not as an object). After this one may point to its "spectrum" features (the arrow pointing below) such as the decision making power or agency and various cognitive and emotional capacities. Yet the self can manifest aspirational

146 Hermansen, "Shāh Walī Allāh's theory" 24.

ideals when it undergoes a spiritual journey within the macrocosmic *laṭā'if*, which are but the self's higher states of consciousness. And, as was explained, at the end of this inward journey lies the Divine Self, which is, paradoxically, nothing other than the individual self that "initiated" the journey from an individual standpoint. It is at that level, through the mystical states of *fanā'* and *baqā'*, that the identity of the self becomes apophatic in that it simultaneously becomes the "I" and the "not-I," defying any either/or categories (as its reality opens unto the infinite). Thus, one may say that the "end" of selfhood is also its "beginning."

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