



Divine Love and the Question of Existence -The Sufi Experience of Shaykh Abdelkader al-jilani -

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Abstract:

The question of existence is fundamentally a philosophical question, with its principle being the knowing self, the subject of the question, and the world as a speaking existence. Its inquiry through the language of love, symbols, and signs opens the door wide to a noble and pure field of knowledge: Islamic mysticism (Sufism), which offers approaches that breathe life into existence, making it an entity inhabited by divine love, its identity defined since eternity.

Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani (1077-1166 CE), a leading Sufi scholar, skillfully articulated the link between divine love and the search for meaning in existence. His intellectual system was a unique blend of sharp logic and deep spiritual insight. For him, the ultimate goal of the spiritual journey is for the soul to achieve annihilation (fana') in the Divine Self, leading to a state of permanence (baqa') in God. This journey of the soul, returning to its true origin, is the path to achieving human perfection.

Key words : *Divine love – the question of existence – mystical experience – unity of witness – unity of existence*

Résumé :

La question de l'existence est fondamentalement une question philosophique, dont le principe est le moi conscient, sujet de la question, et le monde en tant qu'existence parlante. Son exploration à travers le langage de l'amour, des symboles et des signes ouvre grand la porte à un domaine de connaissance noble

et pur : le mysticisme islamique (soufisme), qui propose des approches qui insufflent la vie à l'existence, en faisant une entité habitée par l'amour divin, dont l'identité est définie depuis l'éternité.

Cheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani (1077-1166 après J.-C.), éminent érudit soufi, a habilement articulé le lien entre l'amour divin et la recherche du sens de l'existence. Son système intellectuel était un mélange unique de logique aiguë et de profonde perspicacité spirituelle. Pour lui, le but ultime du voyage spirituel est que l'âme atteigne l'annihilation (fana') dans le Soi divin, conduisant à un état de permanence (baqa') en Dieu. Ce voyage de l'âme, qui retourne à sa véritable origine, est le chemin vers la perfection humaine.

Mots clés : *amour divin – question de l'existence – expérience mystique – unité du témoin – unité de l'existence*



Introduction:

Before the altar of Divine Love, the meanings of existence—brimming with the secret of being (al-kaynūnah)—crumble, prostrating themselves. They seek Divine pleasure (al-riḍā), yearn for salvation (al-khalāṣ), and implore the Divine Will (al-mashī'ah al-rabbānīyah) with a humble, subservient love, yet filled with resolve. They aspire to immerse themselves in the lights of transcendent meanings (al-ma'ānī al-mufāriqah) to achieve their original spiritual identity. They seek the Beloved with eagerness and brokenness.

At the apex of this existence, which plays the symphony of love and beauty with a subtle sensitivity, stands Man—or a select few of humanity. They are our special masters or the most select of the select, those with refined taste and a profound, overflowing sensibility, evidenced by the tears of divine passion (al-‘ishq). This passion elevates the Self (al-Anā) to the world of luminous, ethereal meanings (al-ashbāh), emptying existence of its material content. Existence then ceases to be (mere) existence, and the Self wanders lost in the ocean of lights and meanings. There, the literal word (al-ḥarf) falls silent, and the meaning (al-ma'nā) writhes from the intensity of ecstasy (al-wajd), searching for its own import.

At that point, the most eloquent expression before the ocean of meanings and its lights is silence and absence after presence. It is an absence from (mundane) existence to enter an existence where the Self and all 'others' (al-aghyār) dissolve, and only the One, the All-Dominating (al-Wāḥid al-Qahhār) remains. Here, the meanings of ecstasy embrace the

Lights, achieving union (al-wiṣāl). Beauty opens its arms to embrace the ardent lover, who stood hesitant, wavering between Divine Compulsion (al-qahr) and Beauty (al-jaṃāl)—approaching fearfully, then retreating. Warm breezes of affection gently pat the lover’s shoulders, assuring them and calming the terror of the moment’s beauty in both presence and absence.

The Self is an existence with axiological and spatio-temporal dimensions, inscribed within a broader existence—indeed, the Greater World (al-‘ālam al-akbar) may be contained within it. It imposes a network of relationships, constantly requiring correction by responding both to its material nature and its metaphysical depth. It is a tapestry of meanings through which civilizational action and reaction are realized.

The meanings—of profound human depth—that frame the Self’s being are susceptible to erosion. They may suffer weakness (al-wahn) and become pale, needing, from time to time, to be cast into the embrace of the ocean of lights of Divine Realities (al-ḥaqā’iq al-ilāhīyah). These Lādunī (divinely-inspired, not acquired) Realities radiate their lights only when that being dissolves into the world of Divine Lights—that is, by throwing oneself into the embrace of the World of the Divine Kingdom (‘ālam al-Malakūt).

Islamic Sufism (al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī), as a noble and cherished epistemic framework, has established the paths, methodologies, and tools that aid in the escape, liberation, and emancipation from the World of Witnessing (‘ālam al-Shahādah), effecting a direct transformation to the World of the Divine Kingdom in this worldly life—this is the paradox. This transformation is nourished by the overflow (fayḍ) of



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Divine Love, whose ultimate goal is the knowledge of God (maʿrifat Allāh) and reaching Him.

As a spiritual current, Islamic Sufism is not merely a religious practice; it is a journey in search of meaning, in search of the Divine Truth. There is no Sufi whose inner tongue does not proclaim, "I want to reach the Creator, I am searching for God..." and whose intellectual starting point is, "I love God, therefore I do not exist."

But alas, the quest is cherished (i.e., difficult to attain) and the purpose is noble. Cherished because it is a Divine Selection (iṣṭifāʿ), and noble because it requires a sound, refined heart that trembles at the slightest manifestations of existence—like a flower moved by the faintest breeze, causing dew drops, embracing the sun's rays, to enhance the light. This light fills the recesses of the Self's being, which is internally consumed by the fire of Divine Love and filled with the utmost fear of rejection.

The Love of God is a vast ocean. The being that ventures into this ocean must shed its worldly attachments—just as a snake sheds its skin. There is no room for distractions, temptations, or trivial matters—neither deeds nor 'others'—in heart and mold, in form and meaning. It is the Great Challenge, whose goal is a new, great birth—a challenge by which what was, and what will be, came to be, in God's knowledge and by God's will.

Thus, the Wavering Self, the others (al-aghyār), and the possibility (al-imkān)—including the freedom of choice—have become witnesses to a path full of challenges and obstacles that stand between the Self and its aspirations for emancipation from its earthly nature (turābiyatīhi) by

overcoming the factors of discouragement that call for immersion in worldly lusts.

In this scenario, Ecstasy (al-Wajd) takes center stage, making the World of Witnessing embrace the World of the Divine Kingdom, benefiting from its lights, which the Sufi scatters wherever he settles or travels. The true Sufi is the civilized human being in heart and mold; there is no place for social hypocrisy or civilizational pretense.

Islamic Sufism is considered one of the deepest spiritual and philosophical experiences known to human thought. It transcends mere asceticism (zuhd) and ritualistic practice to express the embrace of existence – in its highest form – with transcendent meanings. The search for these meanings takes place in the sanctuary of Divine Love.

The Sufis viewed existence not merely as a material presence, but as an existential journey toward the Divine Truth. Divine Love, then, becomes not just an emotional state, but an existential path through which annihilation of the Self (fanā' 'an al-Anā) and subsistence in God (baqā' bi Allāh) are achieved – and that is the ultimate wisdom.

This topic raises a fundamental problem (ishkāliyyah jawharīyah): How did the Sufi experience of Sīdī 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī embody an existential vision of man and existence through the reference point of Divine Love

This problem gives rise to partial questions, including: What is the reality of the Sufi experience What is the intellectual-tasteful (dhawqī) content offered by Sufi thought regarding the question of existence What is the relationship between this question and Divine Love Can the relativity of human love accommodate the absoluteness of Divine Love Does God Almighty love and is He loved in reality or metaphor What is the difference between human love and



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Divine Love And finally, What is the dialectic of the relationship between existence and love in the Sufi experience and the human experience.

1. The Sufi Experience of Shaykh Sīdī ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī:

1.1. Introduction to Shaykh Sīdī ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī: (1077-1166 CE / 470-561 AH)

The Shaykh lived during a period characterized by numerous events and political upheavals. He moved to Baghdad in 488 AH after the fall of the Shiite Buwayhid dynasty and the rise to power of the Sunni Seljuk Sultans in Baghdad. This occurred during the reign of the Abbasid Caliph al-Mustazhir bi-Allāh, who held only the title of Caliphate, as authority rested with military commanders and tribal chiefs. Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir lived under five Abbasid Caliphs: al-Mustazhir bi-Allāh (24 years of caliphate), then al-Mustarshid (17 years of caliphate, killed by the Bāṭinīs), then al-Rāshid bi-Allāh (11 months of caliphate, also killed by the Bāṭinīs after being deposed by a juristic ruling), followed by al-Muqtafī li-Amr Allāh, and finally al-Mustanjid bi-Allāh (1). All of this influenced the Shaykh's personality, causing him to distance himself, directing all his efforts toward circles of knowledge, spiritual education, and enjoining the good and forbidding the evil.

The structure of society at that time can be summarized into three classes: the Rulers (the Abbasids in Baghdad, the Fatimids in Egypt, and some princes in the Levant) living in great luxury; the Scholars; and the Common People, a class that suffered from wars, poor living conditions, and rampant corruption. Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī was

among the scholars who fought corruption and strived to guide the people.

This period was very rich in scholars and shaykhs who excelled in all arts of knowledge, leading to a vast cultural movement that expressed the political and doctrinal conflict between Muslims and Christians, and between the Sunnis (the Abbasid Caliphate in Iraq) and the Shiites (the Fatimids in Egypt), in addition to jurisprudential (Fiqhī) disagreements. The resulting fanaticism and conflicts severely damaged scientific activity and the state of scholarship during that era.

In this atmosphere, the Shaykh—may God sanctify his secret—emerged, spending a large part of his life in learning, teaching, spiritual training, guidance, preaching, and admonition.

"He is 'Abd al-Qādir ibn Abī Šāliḥ Mūsā Jangī Dūst ibn Abī 'Abd Allāh ibn Yaḥyá al-Zāhid ibn Dāwūd ibn Mūsā ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Mūsā al-Jawn ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Maḥḍ, and is also nicknamed al-Majall ibn al-Ḥasan al-Muthannā ibn al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib—may God be pleased with him."

He was known by several titles: al-Imām (the Leader), Shaykh al-Islām, Muḥyī al-Dīn (Reviver of the Religion), al-Ghawth al-A'zam (the Greatest Succour), and al-Bāz al-Ashhab (the Grey Falcon), and al-Quṭb al-Ghawth (the Axis/Pole and Succour).

"The Shaykh al-Jīlī was given titles indicating his high status in Sufism... Among these titles are 'The Possessor of the Two Elucidations and the Two Tongues', 'Generous of the Two Grandfathers and the Two Sides' (i.e., paternal and maternal lineage), 'The Possessor of the Two Proofs and the Two Authorities', 'The Imām of the Two Groups and the



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Two Paths', 'The Possessor of the Two Lamps and the Two Methods', and al-Bāz al-Ashhab (the Grey Falcon). The apparent duality in these titles seems to indicate the combination of jurisprudence (Fiqh) and Sufism, or what the Sufis call the Shari'ah (Exoteric Law) and the Ḥaqīqah (Esoteric Truth)." (2)

Regarding his spiritual status, al-Shaṭanūfī mentions that the reason for compiling his book, Bahjat al-Asrār (Joy of the Secrets)—which collects the Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir's virtues—was to manifest the meaning of the Shaykh al-Jīlī's statement in one of his Baghdad sessions: "This foot of mine is upon the neck of every saint (walī)". All the prominent shaykhs of Iraq were present in that session. The author cites multiple narrations to confirm that the statement was a Divine command (amr ilāhī) to manifest the status of the "Pole/Axis and Succour (al-Quṭb al-Ghawth)".

"The most famous of Imām al-Jīlānī's titles is 'God's Grey Falcon (Bāz Allāh al-Ashhab)'. It appears the Imām preferred this title, as he titled himself with it in many poetic verses, including his saying: 'I am the nightingale of joys, filling its thicket... with delight, and in the Highest Heavens, I am a Grey Falcon.'" (3)

As for his style and works, his style combined the Shari'ah and the Ḥaqīqah. In the book Al-Ghunyah, we find a progression in his writing style. When addressing the divisions and pillars of the Shari'ah, he elaborated and chose the simplest vocabulary, progressing from discussing doctrines ('Aqā'id) to discussing worship acts ('Ibādāt), manners (Ādāb), and supererogatory deeds.

His Sufi writings can be divided into two sections: First, his sermons and discourses to his disciples (murīdūn),

characterized by a powerful, influential language, replete with allusion (ishārah), hint (talwīḥ), double entendre (tawriyah), and enticement (tashwīq). Second, his poetry and symbolic articles, rich with allegorical interpretation (ta'wīl) that allows the text to carry the meaning of the context without disrupting the core meaning. Instead, the meaning unfolds and flows, aligning with the transmitted text without artificiality. This clarifies the image for the listener in its rhetorical form (ṣīghatihā al-balāghīyah) and its supramundane spiritual content in a smooth, simple manner. However, according to some commentaries, the Shaykh was the only one who could convey Sufism as a science and a spiritual taste (dhawq) through his writing style to the general populace (al-'awām) – something most Sufis, like Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, feared.

The Imām passed away at the age of ninety-one, the Grey Falcon flying on his final journey, bidding farewell to the world. He left behind forty-nine children – twenty-seven males and the rest females – and the Qādirīyah Order (al-Tarīqah al-Qādirīyah), which is one of the most widespread Sufi orders in the Islamic world, as well as a rich scientific and spiritual heritage that his followers sought to authenticate, transcribe, and disseminate.

1.2. His Sufi Experience:

1.2.1. The Scientific Nature and Social Dimension of the Sufi Experience:

The term "Sufi experience" is applied to the select (al-khāṣṣah) and the most select of the select (khāṣṣat al-khāṣṣah), charged with spiritual meanings that call for transcendence (al-ta'ālī wa al-tasāmī). It expresses a relationship of tension between existence and the gnostic self



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(al-dhāt al-‘arīfah). Every Sufi has a unique Sufi experience, but despite this multiplicity, the Sufi experience, in its theoretical and practical context, acquires a scientific dimension.

Its scientificity is derived from the transmitted tradition (al-khalfiyah al-naqliyah) which authenticates, elevates, and affirms the scientificity of any theoretical or practical effort that brings the worshipper closer to the Worshipped, and acquaints him with the paths of spiritual ascent (ma‘rāj rūhī).

Furthermore, the multiplicity of paths (turuq) has a single goal. In this context, Shaykh Ibn ‘Arabī, Shaykh al-Jīlānī, and others assert that the paths to God Almighty are as numerous as the human souls.

In his book, *Sirr al-Asrār wa Maẓhar al-Anwār* (Secret of Secrets and Manifestation of Lights), the Grey Falcon defines knowledge (al-‘ilm) by classifying the sciences: "Knowledge is confined to four gates. The first gate is the Exoteric Sharī‘ah (Zāhir al-Sharī‘ah) concerning command, prohibition, and all other rulings. The second is its Esoteric part, which I call the Science of the Esoteric (‘Ilm al-Bāṭin) and the Path (al-Ṭarīqah). The third is the Innermost Esoteric, which I call the Science of Gnosis (‘Ilm al-Ma‘rifah). And the fourth is the Innermost of the Innermost Esoteric, which I call the Science of Reality (‘Ilm al-Ḥaqīqah)." (4)

He then quotes\ the Prophet's saying (without chain of transmission): "The Sharī‘ah is a tree, the Ṭarīqah (Path) is its branches, the Ma‘rifah (Gnosis) is its leaves, and the Ḥaqīqah (Reality) is its fruit." The Qur‘ān encompasses all of them through denotation (dalālah) and allusion (ishārah), whether by Exegesis (Tafsīr) or Allegorical Interpretation (Ta‘wīl).

Tafsīr is for the common people, and Ta'wīl is for the elite, as they are the scholars firmly rooted in knowledge.

These are four concentric circles, all susceptible to breakthrough: the circle of the Sharī'ah, whose adherent is exposed to the whispers of the ego (wasāwis al-nafs); the circle of the Ṭarīqah, whose adherent may deceitfully claim prophethood; and the circle of the Ma'rifah, whose adherent may be penetrated by hidden polytheism (al-shirk al-khafī) arising from luminous experiences, such as the claim to Lordship (like one who takes his own desire as his god). As for the circle of the Ḥaqīqah, neither Satan, the ego, nor the angels have access to it, because everything other than God is consumed by fire within it. Here, he offers an allegorical interpretation, whose reference point is Gabriel's saying, "If I were to approach one fingertip, I would be burned." In other words, the people of the circle of Ḥaqīqah are in God's company (ma'iyat Allāh); He knows their state, their ecstasy, and their bearing of the burden of meanings, whose heaviness is like the heaviness of revelation, imprinted upon the soul. Yes, it is a revelation of a different kind – not the revelation of the prophets, but like God's revelation to the bee to make its homes in the mountains and to produce from its bellies a drink wherein is healing for people – and that is the wisdom the Gnostic Shaykh conveys to the disciple.

Thus, Sufism and the Shaykh's Sufi experience should be viewed through the metrics of the Sixth Century Hijrī. Consequently, it is possible to construct an epistemological statement (qawl ibistimūlūjī) about Sufism and the Sufi experience, as proposed in some studies. However, the Sufi text cannot be burdened with the errors of the positivist mind, twisting it to comply with this or that epistemological premise: a premise that made Plato – the author of the



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Theory of Forms and the term 'Nirvana' or 'unveiling' (kashf) – a Sufi; another that elevated Plotinus to the level of a prophet; and a premise that focused on the psychological and trans-psychological dimension; another that relied on the social dimension; and yet another that delves into the debris of mythology and anthropology to analyze spiritual worlds that bear no relation to the reality of the authentic Sufi experience. All this occurs under the guise of Comparative Religion or Comparative Sufism. Indeed, some studies equate the pagan Buddhist and his ritualistic practices with the Sufi seeker who follows the guidance of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. I believe these studies lack scientific rigor, because the Sufi text has its contexts and its spiritual, cognitive, doctrinal, and devotional atmosphere. To extract it from its context is a falsification of its realities and a failure to grasp its essence, core, and specificity.

The essence of all Sufi experiences is Oneness of Heart (al-Tawḥīd al-Qalbī) and Sincerity (al-Ikhlās) as the principle of a path that combines worship and conduct (al-'ibādah wa al-sulūk) – that is, the perpetual struggle against the ego (al-mujāhadah) through asceticism, renunciation, and righteous deeds, proceeding in this according to the guidance of the Scriptural Text (al-Naṣṣ al-Shar'ī) and its regulations, which protect the disciple from doctrinal deviation and reprehensible extremism that pollutes the purity of the spiritual experience. This experience is essentially detached from all connection to material pleasures and lusts, without neglecting the social dimension.

The Sufi experience is meaningless if its practitioner fails to interact positively with society and influence it, because the principle of the experience is the Sufi's metaphysical

depth, and its goal is God Almighty. Between the principle and the goal lies the 'others' (al-aghyār), or the society (al-mujtama'), which is the field where the Sufi must sow the treasures of wisdom and insights he gained on his journey to God Almighty. This lofty spiritual experience is not accessible to all people; it is a Divine Selection and exclusive to those who have been granted Wisdom—"and he who is granted Wisdom has indeed been granted a great good." (Qur'ān 2:269). Hence, although the Sufi is required to be annihilated from the 'others', he is also required to lead the 'others' to the goodness and understanding of the truth of the relationship between the servant and the Worshipped, which God bestowed upon him. The Sufi is a spiritual educator (murabbī) first and foremost, because the fruit of his self-struggle enabled him to know himself truly, to know its paths, pitfalls, and whispers. He is also aware of the devil's whispers and tricks that are plotted within the soul. Consequently, the Sufi experience is transferable through the relationship between the Shaykh and the disciple, or through the relationship between the Shaykh and society.

1.2.2. The Difficulty of Presenting a Comprehensive and Exclusive Definition of Sufism:

The literature of Sufi thought abounds with a conceptual apparatus whose terms multiply with the multiplicity of Sufi experiences. These terms may not encompass the meanings that the Sufi lives through in his individual spiritual journey, opening the door to symbols, allusions, and sometimes silence and absence from existence...

Here, certain contents command our attention: Station (Maqām), State (Hāl), Self-Struggle (Mujāhadah), Unity of Being (Waḥdat al-Wujūd), Unity of Witnessing (Waḥdat al-



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Shuhūd), Unveiling (Kashf), Intimacy (Uns), Taste/Gnosis (Dhawq), Ecstasy (Wajd), Divine Passion ('Ishq)...

The spiritual experience and its suffering—the suffering of a soul separating from the body—aim to open the eye of insight (baṣīrah) so that the sight becomes sharp. This state is gradual, and the meaning of a single term multiplies according to the State and the Station of the same seeker. The individuality of the experience and its depth that transcends the human Logos—all of this makes the term "Sufism" logically impossible to define with precise criteria, because the life of Sufism and the life of the Sufi evade rigid logical molds. It is a life of "here and there" — a presence that pays attention to the Exoteric (al-Zāhir) only to the extent dictated by the Esoteric (al-Bāṭin). If the Exoteric is governed by logic, the Esoteric is the world of Truth, and its logic is unique. On this basis, all the terms circulated within the scope of Sufi practice, or Sufism as a container for it, seem resistant to precise terminological definition.

This is a detailed academic text on Sufism, specifically the teachings of Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (known as Al-Baz al-Ashhab - "The Grey Falcon," may God sanctify his secret).

2. The Sufi Path and Divine Love in the Teachings of 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani

2.1. The Four Letters of *Tasawwuf* (Sufism)

Al-Baz al-Ashhab (The Grey Falcon), may God sanctify his secret, says: "The word *Tasawwuf* (Sufism) has four letters: *Tā'* (ت), *Sād* (ص), *Wāw* (و), and *Fā'* (ف).

- **Tā' (ت):** Stands for *Tawbah* (Repentance), which is of two kinds: outward repentance and inward repentance.
- **Sād (ص):** Stands for *Safā'* (Purity/Sincerity), which is also of two kinds: purity of the heart and purity of the *Sirr* (innermost being or secret). The purity of the heart is to cleanse it of all human imperfections (*kudurāt bashariyya*)... As for the purity of the *Sirr*, it is achieved by abstaining from everything other than God Almighty, and loving Him through the continuous recitation of the Names of Unity (*Asmā' al-Tawhīd*) with the tongue of the *Sirr* in one's innermost being.
- **Wāw (و):** Stands for *Walāyah* (Sainthood/Guardianship), which is achieved through the process of purification (*tasfiyyah*)... The result of *Walāyah* is to acquire the attributes of God, blessed and exalted is He...
- **Fā' (ف):** Stands for *Fanā' fī Allāh* (Annihilation in God, exalted is His Majesty). When the attributes of humanity (*sifāt al-bashariyya*) are annihilated, the attributes of Absolute Oneness (*sifāt al-Aḥadiyya*) remain. He, glory be to Him, neither perishes nor ceases to exist. Thus, the transient servant (*al-'abd al-fānī*) remains with the Everlasting Lord (*al-Rabb al-bāqī*)..." [5]

This summarizes the trajectory of the Sufi experience and the spiritual *aḥwāl* (states) and *maqāmāt* (stations) that encompass it.



2.2. The Foundations of the Sufi Experience According to Sīdī 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani

Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani mentions these foundations in several places in his authenticated books, particularly and clearly in his book "*Al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq 'Azza wa Jall*" (Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of the Truth, the Mighty and Sublime, [on Islamic Morals, Sufism, and Etiquette]).

The contents of the book illustrate how a Muslim's life should be in their acts of worship and dealings. It charts a philosophy of life that unites the heavens and the earth, the body and the soul, the intellect and the heart. It interprets the Qur'an and the noble *Hadith* with a reading that sometimes adheres to the literal text and at other times offers a spiritual interpretation (*ta'wīl*). The book can be described, in my personal estimation, as a "**Divine Identity for the Believing Muslim and its Requirements.**"

In the fifth section, titled "Sufism," he defines Sufism and differentiates between the *Mutasawwif* (one who strives to be a Sufi) and the *Ṣūfī* (the accomplished Sufi). He then lists "**the chapter on Mujāhada (Spiritual Struggle), Tawakkul (Trust in God), good character (Ḥusn al-Khuluq), Shukr (Gratitude), Ṣabr (Patience), Riḍā (Contentment), and Ṣidq (Truthfulness).**" He states that these seven elements are "**the foundation of this path, and all of them are good.**"

This section clearly elucidates the foundations of Sufism and its practical contents, which reconcile the **Sharī'ah** (Exoteric Law) and the **Ḥaqīqah** (Ultimate Reality) in a way that removes disagreement, by highlighting the truths of the Sufi states (*aḥwāl*) and stations (*maqāmāt*) and their

implications for the traversing seeker (*sālik murīd*). The path referred to here is the **Qādiriyya Order**.

The fifth section on Sufism was the "Crowning Conclusion" (*Misk al-Khitām*) of the book. In it, he clarifies several issues related to this unique spiritual phenomenon, including the meaning of Sufism and the difference between the *Mutasawwif* and the *Ṣūfī*. He says:

"The **Mutasawwif** is the one who strives to become a *Ṣūfī* and exerts effort to achieve this state. The **Ṣūfī** is derived from *al-Muṣāfāh* (Pure Relationship), meaning a servant whom God Almighty has purified. For this reason, it was said: the *Ṣūfī* is the one who is pure from the blights of the ego (*āfāt al-nafs*), free from its blameworthy traits, traversing praiseworthy paths, adhering to realities (*ḥaqā'iq*), and whose heart does not find rest with any of creation..." [6]

He mentions many attributes to distinguish between the *Ṣūfī* and the *Mutasawwif*, the most important being that the *Mutasawwif* is the beginner on the path to union (*waṣl*), while the *Ṣūfī* is the one who has completed the path—he is the *Shaykh*, whereas the *Mutasawwif* is the *Murīd* (disciple). The *Ṣūfī* is one whose ego has dissolved, whose desires have vanished, and whose will has been obliterated, thus becoming pure (*ṣāfi*), hence he is called a *Ṣūfī*. The *Mutasawwif* is still struggling with his internal diseases.

3. Divine Love (*Al-Ḥubb al-Ilāhī*) According to Al-Baz al-Ashhab

"Sources and references agree that Rābi'ah al-'Adawiyya (d. 801 CE) was the first to openly present a 'theory' of Divine Love..." [7] This shifted the course of Sufism from the fear of God to the love of God. The argument used by those who promoted the possibility of the servant loving God and



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God loving the servant—to the extent that the human element (*nāsūt*) dissolves in the divine element (*lāhūt*) and vice versa—was based on scriptural texts from the Qur'an and Sunnah.

In his book, "**Sirr al-Asrār wa Mazhar al-Anwār**" (The Secret of Secrets and the Manifestation of Lights), may God sanctify his secret, the Shaykh first refers to the common definitions of Sufism, noting that some ascribed the title to them because they wore wool (*ṣūf*), or because they purified their hearts from worldly impurities, or purified their hearts from everything other than God, or because they will stand in the first row on the Day of Resurrection in the realm of proximity (*'ālam al-qurbah*)...

Secondly, he classifies the **Worlds** (*'Awālim*), the **Sciences** (*'Ulūm*), the **Spirits** (*Arwāḥ*), the **Theophanies** (*Tajalliyāt*), and the **Intellect** (*'Aql*) into four categories, based on which the meaning of Divine Love in the Shaykh's intellectual framework can be understood:

- **The Four Worlds:** The World of **Dominion** (*Mulk*), the World of **Sovereignty** (*Malakūt*), the World of **Power** (*Jabarūt*), and the World of **Divinity** (*Lāhūt*), which is the World of Reality (*'ālam al-Haqīqah*).
- **The Four Sciences:** The Science of **Sharī'ah**, the Science of the **Path** (*Ṭarīqah*), the Science of **Gnosis** (*Ma'rifah*), and the Science of **Reality** (*Ḥaqīqah*) - "Sufism."
- **The Four Spirits:** The **Corporeal Spirit** (*Rūḥ Jismānī*), the **Luminous Spirit** (*Rūḥ Nūrānī*), the **Sultani** (Sovereign) Spirit (*Rūḥ Sulṭānī*), and the **Holy Spirit** (*Rūḥ Qudsī*).

- **The Four Theophanies:** The Theophany of **Traces** (*Tajallī al-Āthār*), the Theophany of **Acts** (*Tajallī al-Af'āl*), the Theophany of **Attributes** (*Tajallī al-Ṣifāt*), and the Theophany of the **Essence** (*Tajallī al-Dhāt*).
- **The Four Intellects:** The Intellect of **Livelihood** ('*Aql al-Ma'āsh*), the Intellect of the **Hereafter** ('*Aql al-Ma'ād*), the **Spiritual** Intellect (*al-'Aql al-Rūḥānī*), and the **Total** Intellect ('*Aql al-Kull*).

Based on this classification, people are categorized by the standard of Divine Love, from the closest to the furthest, with the *Khāṣṣat al-Khāṣṣah* (the elect of the elect) being the last, those who are described as "Flee unto God" (Qur'an 51:50).

Some people are bound by the first Science, the first Spirit, the first Theophany, the first Intellect, and the first World—these are in the First Paradise, the **Garden of Shelter** (*Jannat al-Ma'wā*). Some are bound by the second, and are in the Second Paradise, the **Garden of Bliss** (*Jannat al-Na'im*). Some are bound by the third, and are in the Third Paradise, the **Garden of Paradise** (*Jannat al-Firdaws*). But the People of Truth (*Ahl al-Ḥaqq*) among the Gnostic Poor (*Fuqarā' al-Ārifin*) have fled from all of these and reached **Reality** (*al-Ḥaqīqah*) and **Proximity** (*al-Qurbah*), being bound by nothing save God Almighty.

He then cites the verse "**Flee unto God**" (Qur'an 51:50), followed by a *hadith* without a chain of transmission, which is the saying of the Messenger, upon whom be the most perfect prayers and peace: "**The world and the hereafter are forbidden to the People of God**"—meaning they have forbidden themselves from seeking them or being attached to their love, because they are created things (*ḥādīth*). How can the created seek the created and be heedless of the



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Everlasting, Eternal Creator (*al-Muḥdith al-Qadīm al-Azalī al-Bāqī*)

In this context, he mentions *aḥādīth* such as the Divine Utterance (*Hadīth Qudsī*): **"My love is the love of the poor (*Fuqarā'*)"** and the Prophet's saying: **"Poverty (*Fa'qr*) is my pride, and I boast of it."** He then defines *Fa'qr* as *Iftiqār* (absolute need and reliance) on God Almighty, and the renunciation of everything else, from the delights of this world and the hereafter, so that nothing remains in one's inner being except God as the sole preoccupation. This is known as **Annihilation in God** (*Fanā' fī Allāh*), where nothing remains in the soul for the soul itself. The *Hadīth Qudsī* clarifies this: God Almighty says: **"Neither My earth nor My heavens can contain Me, but the heart of My believing servant can contain Me."** The meaning of the "believing servant" is one whose heart is purified of human attributes and empty of all others (*al-aghyār*).

He also quotes Abu Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī: "If the Throne and what surrounds it were cast into a corner of the Gnostic's heart, he would not perceive it." He states: **"Whoever loves these lovers [of God] will be with them in the Hereafter, and the sign of their love is the love of their companionship and the yearning for God Almighty and for meeting Him."** God Almighty says in the *Hadīth Qudsī*: **"The righteous have a long yearning for meeting Me, and I have a stronger yearning for them."**

The People of Proximity (*Ahl al-Qurbah*) are in a prison, a state of alienation, grief, agony, trial, and hardship in this world, for as the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: **"The world is the believer's prison."** And in another place: **"Calamity is appointed for the Prophets and the saints**

(*Awliyā'*), and then for the best among men, and then for the next best..." Thus, the *Mutasawwif*, who is poor before his Lord, remains one of the People of God (*Ahl Allāh*), with God as his constant goal and Beloved, in whose love he is annihilated (*fanā'*) and passionately devoted (*tafānā'*). The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: **"Whoever has no ecstasy (*Wajd*) has no life."** The ecstasy intended here is the spiritual ecstasy (*al-Wajd al-Rūḥānī*) that is strengthened by the power of the Divine Attraction (*al-Jadhbah*), such as through the recitation of the Qur'an, metrical poetry, or impactful *dhikr* (remembrance), as well as the voices of lovers, birds, melodies, and meanings. At such a time, the body loses power and choice, because the recitation of verses, poems, wisdom, love, passion, and sorrowful sounds contain a luminous power for the soul.

Divine Love is the essential characteristic of the Sufis; they are the people of Divine Love, people of High Resolve (*Himma*), people of Intimacy (*Uns*), people of Ecstasy (*Wajd*).

Al-Qushayrī enumerates several definitions of Divine Love. It has been defined as **the perpetual inclination of the bewildered heart** (losing cohesion out of wonder and confusion); as **the preference of the Beloved over all companions**, which is the station of Singularity (*Tafarrud*) and Annihilation (*Fanā'*); or as **conforming with the Beloved in presence and in absence**; and also as **the heart's agreement with the will of the Lord**.

Sahl ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Tustarī (d. 283 AH) defined Divine Love as **embracing obedience and shunning disobedience**. For him, love means **giving your totality to the one you love, so that nothing of yourself remains for yourself**.

Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 334 AH) believed that love (*Maḥabbah*) is derived from *al-Maḥw* (effacement), meaning **it**



effaces from the heart everything other than the Beloved.

[8]

In this context, it must be emphasized that **"Love is the origin of all stations and states; it is the origin of trust in God (*Tawakkul*), gratitude (*Shukr*), patience (*Ṣabr*), and contentment (*Riḍā*), as well as the origin of yearning (*Shawq*), fear (*Khawf*), and hope (*Rajā*)."** However, **true attainment of Divine Love is exclusive to the Master of all Creation, Muhammad (peace be upon him); he is the Beloved of God Almighty without dispute, and the original possessor of the station of Love.** Everyone who adopted the means of love after him is dependent upon him, and he is their role model in it. God Almighty said concerning him: **"Say, [O Muhammad], 'If you should love Allāh, then follow me, [so] Allāh will love you and forgive you your sins.'" (Qur'an 3:31).** And God Almighty said: **"He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allāh."**

"The Prophet's share of God's lights was immense; He described him as **'A Luminous Lamp'** (*Sirāj Munīr*) and **'The Mercy sent [to the worlds].'** In this sense, the path to God transcends the intellect and methods of logical inference. Its means are the **light of insight** (*Nūr al-Baṣīra*) and **Love**, which resides in the heart. All Sufi paths, in reality, derive their light from our Master Muhammad (peace be upon him), the Master of Lovers and their Guide to the path."

May God sanctify his secret, the Shaykh believes that Divine Love has **conditions**:

1. **Attaining Sincerity (*Ikhḷāṣ*):** In acts of worship, dealings, and all kinds of obedience, both manifest and hidden.

2. **The Lover's Heart Must Not Turn to Other Than the Beloved.**
3. **Shunning Sleepiness (*Mujāfāt al-Nawm*).**
4. **The Lover Must Not Be Content with Anything Other Than Meeting His Beloved.**
5. **The Lover Has No Will of His Own alongside the Will of His Beloved.**
6. **The Condition of Non-Possession:** The lover owns no wealth or property, but is in the companionship (*Ma'iyyah*) of his Beloved.
7. **Adherence to Acts of Obedience (*Tā'āt*).**
8. **The Condition of Unity (*Tawhīd*) and Avoiding Shirk in Love:** A special kind of *Tawhīd* that encompasses the heart, the tongue, the thoughts, the intellect, and all limbs simultaneously.

A necessary attribute of Love that is attached to it is **Jealousy (*al-Ghayrah*)**. [9]

Each of these conditions necessitates an extended analytical discussion in the Shaykh's books, leading to a single conclusion: the realization of the **True Station of Servitude (*al-'Ubūdiyyah al-Ḥaqqā*)**, whose pillars are three: **Islam, Iman, and Iḥsān**. The latter, according to the *Hadith Qudsī*, is "to worship God as if you see Him, and if you do not see Him, [know that] He sees you." This is the ultimate goal of the Sufi journey (*Sulūk*), which is nourished by sincerity (*Ikhlāṣ*) and truthfulness (*Ṣidq*), so that nothing remains in the heart but a love that is nurtured within the folds of Divine Providence (*al-'Ināyah al-Rabbāniyya*). The stronger this love grows, the closer the seeker gets to the Beloved, and the more this love increases, the purer the affection becomes, and the darkness and veils disappear. This is clearly reflected in the poetry of the Sufis, including



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the Shaykh's poetry in Persian and Arabic, and his sermons and chanting that express **Union** (*Wiṣāl*), **Meeting** (*Liqā'*), **Separation** (*Hajr*), **Rejection** (*Ṣadd*), **Coldness** (*Jafwah*), and **Denial** (*Man'*), concepts whose outer appearance is torment, but whose inner reality is an unparalleled pleasure. This is because the Desired One is precious, the path is thorny, the feet are bare, and the sighs and blood of the seeker are a ransom. It is a sea of meanings, rich in signs and symbols, for which words fall short of encompassing its lights and sighs.

Divine Love is a **selection and a divine gift** (*iṣṭifā' wa mawhibah rabbāniyya*), and a seed cast into the servant's heart without any will on his part. According to the Shaykh, the lovers of God are the **Elect** (*al-Khawāṣṣ*) whom God has favored with love over others, and whom He has created anew. These beloved lovers are those whose names were registered in their ancient ledger—since eternity. Love is a divine decree written in the Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawḥ al-Mahfūz*). These are the ones whose spirits were captivated by the Divine Beauty in their former time, since eternity. In some of his writings, however, he links love to the effort exerted by the servant, such as perseverance in *dhikr*, staying on guard (*Murābaṭah*), reflecting on the Creator's magnificence, and contemplating His blessings. This indicates that **Gnosis** (*Ma'rifah*) is a **condition for Love**, as previously noted.

4. The Question of Existence and Divine Love:

4.1. The Philosophical Approach:

Ostensibly, philosophy and love seem to be at odds. **Logical rigor** and the **rationalism** deeply embedded in the

art of argumentation and rational deductive methods do not readily converge with **love** as an emotion fueled by quiet passion, which centers on a person, an object, or an idea in which existence is encapsulated. It is an emotion that roams freely in the realms of imagination, potentially turning the hell of reality into paradise. It expresses an intoxication, a magical means of escape, or a gateway to humanity that the lover seeks, searching for their eroded humanity along the path of existence. It is a life that resists the obliteration of death. This human love, ladies and gentlemen, is one of the **mysteries of human existence**. By its nature, it is rebellious, acknowledging neither reason nor rationality, neither logic nor time, neither law nor boundaries. It is an existence of unknown identity, which the philosophical intellect—though it has been able to produce philosophical discourse about it—has failed to define in its true essence.

The **theory of values (Axiology)**, as formulated by the Socratic thinkers, contained only the values of **Goodness, Truth, and Beauty**. Love did not emerge as a value in philosophical systems until the modern period with the "Philosophy of Values," which sought to treat the civilizational ailments of the era through sentiment, love, and emotion.

"There is a prevailing idea that philosophy and love do not meet! Each resides in a separate room, at least since the modern ages. Love is that delightful feeling among all others, resilient in the face of the frustrations that engulf the world... Perhaps we had to wait for **Kierkegaard** for love to become, once again, a method of understanding life. Despite love being the fateful condition for happiness for the majority of people, and the perpetual element in all forms of literary drama, philosophers have addressed it with a



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reservation akin to someone entering a lion's cage and fearing being eaten alive..." [10]

Thus, it appears that philosophers spoke **about** love but did not speak **in** love. They spoke of the agreeable woes of love, the melancholy of abandonment, jealousy, and emotional sorrow. Some of them were great novelists. For **Schopenhauer**, love is complete submission, while **Rousseau** sees it as absolute transcendence. **Voltaire**, meanwhile, directs us to *The Symposium*, where one discovers the white magic of love on one hand, and its black magic on the other. In his essay "Love" in his *Philosophical Dictionary*, he says:

"Whoever wishes to test 'that philosophical material a little' must contemplate **Plato's Symposium**, where Socrates spoke about the 'metaphysics of love,' while others of a less sensitive temperament tended towards **Lucretius**, who spoke of love as a physicist does..."

Therefore, there is a pale, miserable, and trivial face of love based on the senses, i.e., the sexual aspect, and there is a love that takes a **metaphysical dimension**, elevating man into the **World of Forms**, as envisioned by Plato.

Post-modern philosophy attempted to treat the maladies of modern philosophy with the **metaphysics of love, tolerance, and recognition**. This is because contemporary society has reduced love to **nihilism**. In this context, **Theodor Adorno** sees the trivial, miserable face of love as the victorious one, which has rendered modern man sick. He says:

"This separation, which mechanized pleasure and distorted emotion as a deception, is likely to strike love at its

vital center... Thus, love has become a purely physiological matter, a 'relation of fluids,' as **Paul Valéry** said..." [11]

Post-modern philosophy has opened the door wide for **Sufism** as a vital spiritual and cognitive domain that helps treat the ailments of the age. If the **ultimate goal** for philosophers is the achievement of happiness, Sufis believe:

"that all happiness hoped for as a result of attachment to any beloved other than God Almighty is an illusory image of the true happiness, which is not subject to change or demise, and that is the happiness accompanying the contemplation of **Absolute Beauty**, the beauty of the manifestations of the Divine Presence..." [12]

Knowledge is a prerequisite for Divine Love. In **Mourad Wahba's *Philosophical Dictionary***, Divine Love is defined as:

"Pure love, which is the love of God in Himself, without fear and without hope. Intellectual love for God according to **Spinoza**, by which he means that the true love of God is the **knowledge of God**, and the knowledge of God is derived from our true knowledge of things." [13]

This affirms the **organic unity** between the concept of **Existence** and **Divine Love**.

Ancient Greek philosophy offers several conceptions in this area. The early Naturalists debated the **origin of existence**. Among those who made **Love** a fundamental principle of existence was **Empedocles**, who lived in the middle of the fifth century BC. The Socratic thinkers then shifted the discussion from the level of material origin to the **transcendent origin**. **Plato** envisioned a Creator who uses eternal models, the "World of Forms." **Aristotle** conceived of God as an **Unmoved Mover**, separate from the world. Then came the **Christian theological proposal**. For **Augustine**



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and **Anselm**, God is integrated—a creator, participant, and active in the cosmos—which opens the door wide for the attribute of **Love** as an essential characteristic in the relationship between the Absolute, Perfect God and the changing world.

Undoubtedly, this relationship raises several issues that must be justified when it concerns man, such as the evil in the world, suffering, human free will and freedom, good and evil, beauty and ugliness, and Divine Providence. However, **Divine Love** is an **axiom** when it concerns **material existence**, an axiom pronounced by existence in all circumstances. The order, beauty, and harmony known to material existence have made the intellect madly question the **Originator** and the **mystery of existence**. Philosophical approaches in this field have thus multiplied. Accordingly, **Existence** became the primary source of knowledge. Muslim philosophers viewed it as a **second book** parallel to the Holy Qur'an, dividing existence into "**Necessary Existence**" (God Almighty, the Absolute, Pure Goodness, the One and Only) and "**Contingent Existence**" (the world, including man, who is characterized by change and relativity and combines good and evil).

Several issues have been addressed in this context; what concerns us is **Divine Love and its relation to Existence**. Although this problem is organically related to the rest of the issues, we find that some Islamic sects of **Theologians (Mutakallimūn)** and **Jurists (Fuqahā')** denied that God truly loves and is loved, according to their understanding of the meaning of Divinity and the connection between God and His servants:

"that God does not love, because love has consequences that are not befitting the Divine Majesty, such as longing and intimacy... and other attributes of creatures from which He must be declared transcendent. The utmost they went to in interpretation by way of metaphor is that what is meant by the servant's love for God is his obedience and constant service, and that what is meant by God's love for the servant is His protection and mercy." [14]

In light of this data, there is logically no possibility of union between the limited and the unlimited. The transcendent God cannot descend to the level of human beings. The bond of love, according to this analysis, presupposes **similarity** and **resemblance** between God Almighty and the servant.

However, the **Sufis** considered the relationship of mutual love between God and His servants to be a **real**, not a metaphorical, relationship, as the Jurists and Theologians claimed, because they knew this relationship, experienced it, and felt its pleasure:

"God longs for the servant and seeks his proximity just as the servant longs for Him and seeks His proximity... and other attributes and consequences of love. As for obedience to God and persistence in His worship, it is not synonymous with love, as the Jurists and Theologians held, but rather is a **branch of love** according to the Sufis."

Contemplation and meditation on the wonders of Divine Beauty and Perfection through **Existence**—with man as its greatest sign—gives rise to the love that **Ibn al-Dabbāgh** (d. 696 AH / 1296 CE) defines as: "a **joy** that occurs to the soul from the conception of a **Presence**..."

And what if this Presence is Divine in identity Undoubtedly, the joy will be immense, causing its owner to



become absent from existence. It is the intoxicating **wine of Divine Love** that makes the Gnostic soar in a luminous existential space whose delight the pen is unable to describe.

Most Muslim thinkers were guided to the idea that **Love is a general principle of cosmic existence**, not merely human existence. It is the **origin of existence**. Living creation is nations like us. The rock falls out of fear of God, and everything glorifies its Lord with His praise, even if we do not understand its glorification. Living and inanimate beings exist as if Divine Love is the **blood that flows through existence**, granting it life.

Ibn al-Dabbāgh divides love into **accidental** and **essential**. The former is related to something other than the essence of the beloved, such as the love of His beneficence, the seeking of His benefits, and the warding off of His harm. The latter is related to the essence of the beloved. Love is a *Maqām* (spiritual station) that necessitates progress, and thus its *Aḥwāl* (states) are changing. These ideas appeared among predecessors like **al-Bāz al-Ashhab**. The lover remains, in all circumstances, in one of two states: "in the state of **Collection (*Jam'*)** or in the state of **Separation (*Tafriqah*)**."

"The first is the state in which he is **annihilated from himself**, existing by the existence of his beloved, because if he is annihilated from himself, he is annihilated from the entire world... The lover sees his beloved in everything and hears his speech from everything... The indication here is the **Unity of Existence (*Waḥdat al-Wujūd*)**. As for the second, the state of separation, the lover is looking at himself, meaning he is outside the boundaries of the arena of annihilation, which is the state of **New Existence**..."

The term **New Existence** was coined by Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī to express the "**Unity of Witnessing (Waḥdat al-Shuhūd)**." In this context, I present a philosophical approach to these concepts through **Ali Harb**, who offered a wonderful analysis of the stages of annihilation, relying on **Al-Qushayri's Risāla**:

"Thus, there are **three stages** through which the lover of the Divine Essence passes: his **annihilation from himself and his attributes** and his **subsistence in the attributes of the Divine**, then his **annihilation from the attributes of the Divine** and his **subsistence in the Witnessing of the Divine**, and finally, his **annihilation from the Witnessing of the Divine**, i.e., from annihilation, and his **complete consumption in the Divine**." [15]

Therefore, the Sufi seeks **Annihilation (Fanā')** for the sake of **Subsistence with God (Baqā' bi-Allah)**. This implies that he perishes for his own sake, not for God's sake, which led the Sufis to speak of a **fourth stage** that transcends the annihilation of annihilation, or **Collection of Collection (Jam' al-Jam')**, expressed by **Al-Ḥallāj's** famous saying, "**I am the Truth**," or **Al-Bisṭāmī's** saying, "**Glory be to me! How great is my stature!**" This stage removes the suspicion of the Unity of Existence, which would remove the Sufi from his humanity, thereby establishing the **difference** between God and man. This stage is called "**Sobriety after Collection (Ṣaḥw al-Jam')**." Its content includes the meaning of the Sufi **recovering his self** in another way and **practicing his existence** in a divine manner, through which he believes he possesses existence in its entirety. According to **Ali Harb**:

"The true lover is indeed one who perishes in his beloved. But annihilation is not a **coincidence between two selves** so much as it is the **annihilation of one self for another**, and its



effort to erase its traces and meanings. **Difference** (*Farq*) is will and longing, while **Collection** (*Jam'*) is merely the dissipation of will and desire. From this, it can be said that the Sufi experience allows for **two interpretations or readings**: a **theological reading** in which man dissolves into God and becomes His mirror, and a **humanistic reading** (*Nāsūtīyyah*) in which God dissolves into man and becomes his mirror.

In this sense, and according to **Ali Harb's** analyses, love remains a **human phenomenon** rooted in the human self, with its meanings varying: love of the world, love of woman, love of God... but the **essence is one**. Therefore, the symbols, signs, and connotations of the Sufi, as expressions of the state of divine passion—such as **ecstasy** (*Wajd*), **longing** (*Shawq*), **ardor** (*Lahfah*), **infatuation** (*Walah*), **passion** (*'Ishq*), and **absence** (*Ghaybah*)—derive their rhetorical content from the relationship of love between man and woman, and the cup of wine. It is as if Ali Harb intends to say that the ecstasy, love, and passion that a man holds for a woman are of the **same identity** as Divine Love, by way of analogy, not identification. In other words, the content of the meanings of passion, infatuation, and love—and the suffering of these meanings—are of the same **genus** as the Gnostic's suffering, even if the degrees and goals differ.

This seems apparent through his inclusion, during his analyses, of **tales of lovers** that do not stop at the limits of the miserable face of love, which is the sexual aspect, but rather transcend it to the **realm of the spirit**: that wild emotion, impervious to interpretation or analysis, expressed by **Platonic love** (*Ḥubb 'Udhri*) or **spiritual love**.

It is true that the **metaphysical depth** is difficult to grasp, but philosophical approaches have attempted to penetrate its paths. The philosopher is a human who loves and hates, and undoubtedly, his talk about love is ultimately nothing but an expression of a **personal experience** with all its woes and joys.

However, I confess that **love and reason do not meet**. If this were the case, we would find the field of philosophy teeming with female philosophers, and the history of philosophy denies this. And so as not to offend women, **love remains stronger than reason** because it is the **secret of existence** and the **guide to conduct**. The real challenge in civilizational orientation is to sweep away the filth and rubbish left behind by **Positive Reason** in the name of **material science** and **materialistic positive philosophy**, which have distorted the features of man and humanity in the course of a civilization searching for its beauty and human identity.

The Sufi Approach of Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī

The Sufi approach of Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, may God sanctify his secret, can be examined through the concept of **Tajallī** (Divine Manifestation), which is restricted to the **Four Manifestations (al-Tajalliyāt al-Arba'a)**: *Tajallī al-Āthār* (Manifestation of Effects/Traces), *Tajallī al-Af'āl* (Manifestation of Acts), *Tajallī al-Sifāt* (Manifestation of Attributes), and *Tajallī al-Dhāt* (Manifestation of the Essence)... In addition to this, a distinction is made between "**Waḥdat al-Wujūd**" (Unity of Being/Existence) as a controversial term and the term "**Waḥdat al-Shuhūd**" (Unity of Witnessing).

Awareness of the meanings embedded within these concepts sheds light on the nature of the relationship



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between Divine Love—whose ultimate goal is eternal bliss and *Fanā'* (annihilation) for the sake of *Baqā'* (subsistence/permanence)—and Existence (*al-Wujūd*) as a material given that is intellectually graded until it becomes a mere abstract, accidental meaning whose essence is the Divine Will (*al-Irāda al-Ilāhiyya*). Hence, knowledge of existence is not knowledge for the sake of knowledge, as Socrates held, but rather **knowledge is synonymous with worship** (*al-'Ibāda*).

Regarding humanity, "He who does not know how to worship Him Knowledge is only attained by removing the veil of the ego (*al-Nafs*) from the mirror of the heart, as God Almighty said in the Sacred Ḥadīth: 'I was a hidden treasure, and I loved to be known, so I created creation that they might know Me.' For this reason, it becomes clear that God Almighty created man for His knowledge, and knowledge is of two kinds: knowledge of God's Attributes (*Sifāt*) and knowledge of His Essence (*Dhāt*). Knowledge of the Attributes is the share of the body in the two abodes [this world and the hereafter], and knowledge of the Essence is the share of the Holy Spirit (*Rūḥ al-Quds*) in the Hereafter, as He Almighty said: 'And We supported him with the Holy Spirit...' These two forms of knowledge are only attained through two sciences: the science of the outward (*'Ilm al-Zāhir*), which is the Sharī'a (Divine Law), and the science of the inward (*'Ilm al-Bāṭin*), which is Sufism (*al-Taṣawwuf*), as the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'Knowledge by the tongue, and that is God's argument against His servants, and knowledge by the heart (*al-Jinān*), and that is the beneficial knowledge.

The human Holy Spirit, according to his interpretation, is what is deposited in the core of the heart, which he also describes as the '**Child of Meanings**' (*Tifl al-Ma'ānī*). It does not appear except through repentance (*al-Tawba*), spiritual instruction (*al-Talqīn*), and constant adherence to the testimony (*Shahāda*) "There is no god but God..." which begins first with the tongue, then moves to the heart (*al-Jinān*), injecting life into it, so the veils (*al-Hujub*) are lifted, and the seeker sees what he sees of the worlds with the **Eye of Insight** (*'Ayn al-Baṣīra*). It is the **Tree of Unification** (*Shajarat al-Tawhīd*), the good word whose root is firm and whose branch is in the sky. The Holy Spirit is activated to ascend its branches in the **World of the Kingdom** (*'Ālam al-Malakūt*) and witness what it witnesses of God's grandeur, "Light upon light; God guides to His light whom He wills..." The Holy Spirit is born from the heart, just as a child is born from the mother, and the father raises and cares for it until it matures, and then separates from him. This is the relationship of the Shaykh to the *Murīd* (disciple).

Achieving the Holy Spirit, which is considered the '**Best of Stature**' (*Aḥsan Taqwīm*), and liberating it through the act of spiritual instruction and strenuous self-discipline (*al-Mujāhada*) to return to the *true human being* who has a relationship (*nisba*) with God Almighty, is considered the **essential function of the Shaykh with the Murīd**.

The People of God (*Ahl Allāh*) possess an identity that differs radically from the personal identity; what is individualized is merely a vanishing accident (*'araḍ zā'il*), and what remains is the true essence (*jawhar*) of man—a spiritual identity that is both familiar and unifying (*ta'laf wa tu'allif*) in the sphere of Love. They are a people who know one another even if they have not met physically, because their true reality



transcends the material reality; it is a spiritual reality where souls meet, recognize one another, and communicate intimately – it is the **Reality of the Muḥammadan Presence** (*al-Ḥaḍra al-Muḥammadiyya*) and the **Divine Presence** (*al-Ḥaḍra al-Rabbāniyya*)...

"Love, for the Shaykh, is a confusing feeling (*iḥsās multabis*) experienced and tasted by everyone who has undergone it... It cannot be measured by intellect (*al-'Aql*) or wisdom (*al-Ḥikma*) and its tools, because it is a spiritual intoxication (*sukr*) that is not followed by sobriety (*ṣaḥw*)... It is an absolute bestowal (*'aṭā' muṭlaq*) and a complete turning toward the Beloved with the spirit, heart, and limbs, in secret and in public.

The contents of this definition bring us to the shores of the term *Fanā'* (annihilation), which incorporates the concepts of both *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* and *Waḥdat al-Shuhūd*, keeping in mind that *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* emerged in its clear form approximately one hundred years after Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī.

Waḥdat al-Wujūd is a "Sufi theory that appeared relatively late in the history of Islamic Sufism, and it was embodied in its clear and articulated form by Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638 AH) and those who followed him. The foundation of this theory rests on the premise that: **there is no existent in reality except God Almighty**; He is the Sole Existent in this universe, and everything other than Him represents, in its reality, merely possible existents (*a'yān mumkinat al-wujūd*) by virtue of dependence. Hence, Existence comprises: God Almighty, or the Absolute Truth (*al-Ḥaqq*), on the one hand, which is the True Existence (*al-Wujūd al-Ḥaqqīqī*), and everything other than God, or creation (*al-Khalq*), on the other, which

represents the possible existence (*al-Wujūd al-Mumkin*). This does not imply a dualism of reality; the existential reality is one, and the multiplicity apparent to the eye is merely manifestations and determinations (*ta'ayyunāt*) within that single reality... [3]." This theory of existence has a complex, theoretical philosophical dimension, often subject to controversy and suspicion. The consensus is that it is understood as a manifestation (*tajallī*) of a **spiritual, heartfelt perception** that comes as a fruit of Divine Love...

As for **Waḥdat al-Shuhūd**, it "means the vision of the Truth (*al-Ḥaqq*) by the Truth, and in other words, it means: the vision of things through the evidences of Unification (*Tawḥīd*). It may also be applied to the reality of certainty (*Ḥaqīqat al-Yaqīn*) without doubt. Therefore, with *Waḥdat al-Shuhūd*, or the spiritual state (*ḥāl*) of contemplation (*al-Mushāhada*), we move away from theorizing and intellectual constructs and enter the practical domain and **Tasting Knowledge** (*al-Ma'rifa al-Dhawqiyya*). Specifically, we operate within the sphere of the Sufi spiritual states (*al-Aḥwāl al-Ṣūfiyya*)... [16].

The essential difference between the two terms is that *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* (summarized as: '**I saw nothing but God**') is a philosophical theory perceived spiritually and affectively as a fruit of Divine Love, while *Waḥdat al-Shuhūd* (summarized as: '**I saw nothing except that I saw God in it**') is a practical proposition expressing a *ḥāl* (state) that reflects Divine Love. In this state, the Sufi witnesses God *in* existence, meaning he sees the **Act of God** (*Fi'l Allāh*) in existence, because God's Essence (*Dhāt*) is transcendent above existence. "*Waḥdat al-Shuhūd*, or the state of contemplation, is a conscious state (*ḥāla shu'ūriyya*) attained by the *Murīd* at the conclusion of his spiritual struggles and



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exercises. It is neither a theory nor a dogma nor a philosophical claim that can be proven... Therefore, the one who possesses *Shuhūd* does not say that all is God, as might be understood from the proponent of 'Waḥdat al-Wujūd,' but rather he says: '**There is no truly witnessed thing (*mashhūd*) except God Almighty, and he—the one who possesses contemplation—sees nothing except that he sees God with it...**' [5]."

Several synonymous meanings have been expressed by Sufis for the term *Waḥdat al-Shuhūd*, such as **True Unification** (*al-Tawḥīd al-Ḥaqq*), **The Reality of Unification** (*Ḥaqīqat al-Tawḥīd*), or **Absolute Divinity** (*al-Ulūhiyya al-Muṭlaqa*). All these concepts express, to a certain extent, **Existential Annihilation** (*al-Fanā' al-Wujūdī*), which is only realized after the realization of all the Sufi states and stations (*al-Maqāmāt*). Only then can it be described as Annihilation of Witnessing (*al-Fanā' al-Shuhūdī*), True Unification, or Unity of Witnessing.

The methodology of Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī embodies, as a practice, *Waḥdat al-Shuhūd*—a term that has an outer aspect (**Sharī'a**) and an inner aspect (**Ḥaqīqa**, Reality). All his sermons and speeches heavily emphasize that arrival and union (*al-Wuṣūl wa al-Wiṣāl*) require strenuous self-discipline and spiritual exercises through which the *Murīd* obliterates his existence—i.e., *Fanā'* (annihilates) from his ego and his own desires—so that he exists only for his Lord and his Lord's command.

The state of *Shuhūd* has ranks:

1. The rank of **Intimacy** (*al-Uns*)...
2. The rank of **Unification** (*al-Tawḥīd*), in which the servant is, with his innermost being (*Sirr*), his

spiritual finding (*Wajd*), and his heart, as if standing before God Almighty...

3. The rank of **Singularity** (*al-Fardāniyya*), where the individual loses his identity and is annihilated from his ego, his attributes, his power, his will, his worldly desires, and his Hereafter.

At this point, the **New Existence** (*al-Wujūd al-Jadīd*) is realized. According to the Grey Falcon (*al-Bāz al-Ashhab*), this is finally realized through the station of **Subsistence in God** (*al-Baqā' fī Allāh*), meaning he is firmly established in the state of contemplation (*Hāl al-Mushāhada*), which is the culmination of the Sufi states.

"The **Witnessing** (*al-Shuhūd*) for Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir means the vision of the Truth by the Truth, i.e., seeing Him Almighty by His Power and His Will, not by the servant's capacity and his will, as the reality of the Truth cannot be bounded by any limits or perceived by sight. Therefore, contemplation (*al-Mushāhada*) is a **boon and a grace** (*minna wa faḍl*) from the category of Divine Miraculous Gifts (*al-Karāmāt al-Ilāhiyya*) that the Lord Almighty showers upon the hearts of His lovers... [17].

The culmination of all this is the **Certain Knowledge** (*al-'Ilm al-Yaqīnī*) that combines theory and practice. Clarifying this, the Shaykh says: "When the dawn of the light of Unification appears upon the hearts from the horizon of the rising (*'Wa al-Ṣubḥ idhā tanaffas'* / And by the morning when it breathes), and the suns of the Eye of Certainty (*'Ayn al-Yaqīn*) stand upon the orbits of the celestial spheres (*'Wa al-Shams tajrī li-mustaqarrin lahā'* / And the sun runs to its resting place), the darkness of human existence is concealed in the gleaming light (*'Nūruhum yas'ā bayna aydīhim'* / Their light



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will run before them), and the secret ('*Yūlij al-Layla fī al-Nahār*'/He causes the night to enter the day) appears.

The first verse means reaching the state of contemplation. The second verse means acquiring contemplation to the degree of **Certainty of Knowledge** ('*Ilm al-Yaqīn*'). The third verse means reaching the station of **Existential Annihilation**. Finally, the fourth verse means the realization of the New Existence, in which the new Divine Attributes (*Ṣifāt Rabbāniyya*) emerge. This is the meaning of Purity (*al-Ṣafā'*) and **True Sufism** (*al-Taṣawwuf 'alā al-Ḥaqīqa*) according to Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir, may God sanctify his secret.

If purity is realized for the heart of the *Murīd*, the **Manifestation (Tajallī)** is realized, which was previously referred to as having four divisions: Manifestation of Names (*Asmā'*), Manifestation of Attributes (*Ṣifāt*), Manifestation of Essence (*Dhāt*), and Manifestation of Acts (*Af'āl*). In the concept of *Tajallī*, the correspondence between existence and Divine Love is realized through **Existential Annihilation** or **Witnessing**. Every part of this existence has a share of this *Tajallī* and its secrets of lights. Depending on this share, the being approaches or moves away from the great reality of Existence.

The most beautiful thing said in the context of **Transcendence (Tanzīh)**, to my knowledge, is the saying of the Shaykh, may God sanctify his secret: "Praise be to God who qualified the 'How' (*kayyaf al-kayf*) and is far exalted above 'How-ness' (*al-kayfiyya*); who situated the 'Where' (*ayyana al-ayn*) and is far majestic above 'Where-ness' (*al-ayniyya*); who is found in everything and is sanctified beyond 'Circumstance' (*al-zarfiyya*); and who is present with everything and is exalted above 'With-ness' (*al-'indiyya*). He

is the first of everything and has no finality (*ākhirīyya*) [8]." The content of this sublime description accurately reflects the meanings of *Tajallī* that motivate the servant to seek God in existence and in his own self, after abandoning his ego and the world of otherness ('*Ālam al-Aghyār*) and soaring from the **World of Witnessing** ('*Ālam al-Shahāda*) to the **World of the Kingdom** ('*Ālam al-Malakūt*), where *Waḥdat al-Shuhūd* is realized, and the servant is annihilated from all else besides God, plunging into the sea of lights, thereby achieving **Human Perfection** (*al-Kamāl al-Insānī*) by freeing the Holy Spirit (*Rūḥ al-Quds*), the Child of Meanings, from the prison of matter.

Conclusion:

What we can infer is that **Divine Love is the essence of both worship and existence**. Worship is a concept intrinsically embedded in the work of the Creator. Existence as a whole is a love poem whose phrases and meanings are woven by pure Love. These are verses that articulate the unity of the One and Only God, glorifying Him and expressing the manifestations of this grandeur and might, as well as the signs of beauty that seep into existence, whispering of oneness and uniqueness.

Thus, the universe is captivated by God's beauty and might; it praises Him continuously, without cease or fatigue, compelled, not given a choice. This is also the case for humanity, as an existence at the head of the cosmic kingdom, captivated by His beauty and might. However, man is distinguished from the rest of existence by his **will, freedom, and choices**. These choices can become a veil if



they are not disciplined by **knowledge and spiritual refinement** (*dhawq*) that reinforces his metaphysical depth and conquers the emptying desire lacking the transcendent orientation that liberates the self from the stains and density of matter, which pull it towards the earth and screen it from the lights of heaven.

The **ark of salvation** in the sea of God's love is "**Lā 'ilāha 'illā Allāh**" (There is no god but God), the vessel of Love from which whoever sips a draught finds the beauty of existence trivial and goes forth seeking the **Beautiful One** who created this beauty. This is because the attributes, names, and actions of God are diffused throughout existence, urging man's hearing, sight, and heart to pay heed to the **manifestation of the Transcendent Self** and to work on discovering it within himself. This can only be achieved by flying with the wings of *Sharī'ah* (Divine Law) and *Ḥaqīqah* (Ultimate Truth) through the realms of existence, where "whichever way you turn, there is the Face of God, the One, the Only."

Therefore, the **Sufi experience of Sidi Abdul Qadir al-Jilani** is rich with meanings and secrets that he was able to present to the reader in a captivating, simple style, clothed in eloquence. Its core is **Divine Love** and the means of ascending its ranks in this vast existence. I believe that the intellectual and spiritual content (*dhawqī*) contributed by Sufi thought in general, and the mystical intellectual system of Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani in particular, is **more powerful in its proposition** when it comes to answering the question of existence, compared to philosophical approaches that have emptied existence and man of their metaphysical content. These approaches, on the one hand, declared the

"death of God" and, on the other, enslaved man and declared war on him under the pretext of "proving existence," leading to the **crisis of the defeated human**, searching for safety and tranquility in an insecure world full of conflicts and illusory challenges. Experiences have proven that security and tranquility will only be achieved if man **returns to the embrace of metaphysics**. Consequently, **Postmodern philosophy** advocates for this orientation that digs deep into the self for self-discovery; it is a philosophy that attempts to tame difference and spread the values of love, tolerance, and recognition among people.

According to the Sufis, God **truly loves and is loved**, not merely metaphorically. Philosophical thought, however, rejects this, claiming that the relativity of human love cannot comprehend the absolute nature of Divine Love. While the philosopher, jurist, or theologian may be able to present arguments for their refuting statement, the Sufi has **no proof except for the spiritual states** (*aḥwāl*) he lives through, some of which are communicable, but most of which the tongue and expression fail to articulate. Man's love for God remains a **human love**, for expressing its pangs and woes, the Sufis employed **symbols** such as **wine** to denote spiritual intoxication and absence from existence due to overwhelming rapture (*wajd*), and the **symbol of the beloved woman** with whom the lover is utterly infatuated until he annihilates his own existence and affirms hers, as depicted in the stories of lovers.

As for **God's Love for man and existence**, it is a term that cannot be conceptualized except through the **spiritual insights** (*taṣawwurāt dhawqiyya*) contributed by Sufi thought. It is said, "He who tastes, knows," and Love is knowledge. If the Sufi experience is a **human, individual, and personal**



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experience, the philosopher also presents a human, individual, and personal experience. Hence, we cannot divest the Sufi experience of its human dimension, even if the Sufi considers himself the center of the universe. Both seek the **Perfect Man** (*al-Insān al-Kāmil*), one through the **language of the heart** and the other through the **language of the mind**. The **reference point of Divine Love** remains a solid foundation and starting point for every scientific, philosophical, or religious endeavor to achieve the full **humanity of man**.

Based on this: How can a person in this age interact with these Sufi concepts in a practical and spiritual way to change his defeated reality, despite the tremendous scientific advancement And is that possible?

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