

Stages of the Mystics and Stations of the Spiritual Journey – Part VII

AYATOLLAH JAWADI AMULI³⁵

Translated by Yasar Ebrahim

Abstract

This piece explores the point in the spiritual journey whereby the wayfarer towards Allah proceeds beyond submission to Allah towards the consciousness that there is no possessor or possession of anything other than Allah. The wayfarer may even come to the conclusion that there is nothing other than Allah. This process is associated with one of the stages of monotheism, which, like seeking divine pleasure, has two stages. Ultimately, it leads to complete disassociation from

³⁵ Ayatollah Jawadi Amuli is believed to be one of the most prominent Shi'ite scholars in Qur'anic exegesis, mysticism, and philosophy. Among his many works are an ongoing commentary on the Qur'an, *Tafsir-e tasnim*, and a thematic commentary, the eleventh volume of which is entitled *Ethical Stages in the Qur'an*. The third chapter of that volume deals with "Positions of Mystics and Stations of the Spiritual Journey." This article is the fifth part of the translation of that chapter; for the fourth part, see issue no. 4 of the journal.

anything other than Allah. This piece also explores ways in which the wayfarer might reach that stage. It then delves into the topic of divine unity, and explains the difference between divine unity and pantheism.

Keywords: *monotheism, mysticism, Shi'ism, annihilation (fana'), spiritual journey, unit of being*

22. Monotheism (TAWHID)

Even though the station of submission is higher than those of trust and pleasure, it is still not the end of the spiritual journey; when a person surrenders himself to Allah, he stills views himself to be an existent and as someone who possesses things. Hence, a higher station is that when a person realizes that he does not possess anything in order to entrust it with Allah. It is possible for him to reach a point where he understands very well that he is one 'who possesses neither benefit nor loss, neither life nor death, nor return for his own soul.' (Qommi, supplication after the 'Asr prayer.)

In this way, a person reaches the understanding that he controls neither benefit nor loss, nor life nor death so that he could entrust them to Allah. The one who truly owns our sight and hearing is Allah, whom the Qur'an refers to as the one 'Who controls [your] hearing and sight' (10:31).

In this verse, hearing and sight are given as examples, but in reality one's heart and mind and all other parts of the body are also the same; that is, Allah is their true owner. If it becomes clear to a person that his entire existence, moment by moment, is from Allah, then that is the

moment when the person transcends into a higher station from where he previously was.

Nobody can claim that they have complete and absolute control over any of their body parts, for it is possible that at the very moment of making a decision, the ability to act on it is negated. Man does not know if he will be able to drink the water he has in his hand, or whether his life will be taken away before he does that.

Therefore, since Allah is the true owner of existence, even though the station of submission in and of itself is perfection, ‘the good deeds of the pious are the sins of the intimate.’ (Majlisi, vol. 25, p. 205)

Complete perfection for the wayfarer is not attachment, for even in the station of submission, a person will ask for forgiveness. Others ask with respect to their sins, but a wayfarer asks with respect to perfection. He asks and wants to reach an even greater perfection.

As a result, the station of submission is not the final destination of a wayfarer towards Allah, but rather it is appropriate for him to transcend to the station of monotheism or *tawhid*. This is the station of, ‘Do not set up another god besides Allah’ (Qur’an 17:22). Here is where an individual states that, other than the essence of Allah, there is no possessor or possession of something other than Him.

Say, ‘O Allah, Master of all sovereignty! You give sovereignty to whomever You wish, and strip of sovereignty whomever You wish; You make mighty whomever You wish, and You degrade whomever You wish; all choice is in Your hands. You have power over all things.’ (3:26)

A human being understands that all power belongs to Allah; not only is He the owner of the heavens and the earth, but He is also the Lord – not only of men, but of lords, kings and influence. He gifts this influence to whomever He pleases and takes it away from whomever He pleases. At this juncture, things and people find a manifestational relationship with respect to Allah, as will become clearer later.

Stages of monotheism

Monotheism, just like seeking divine pleasure, has two stages. The first stage is a verbal form of monotheism. In this stage, the believer verbally testifies ‘there is no God but Allah,’ believes in it and acknowledges nothing else worthy of worship besides Allah. However, the higher stage is that of ‘unicity’; this is where the individual identifies no owner other than Allah, ‘and do[es] not invoke another god besides Allah’ (Qur’an 28:88).

If a person has the belief that other than Allah, no other existent possesses anything, then obviously he will view himself as being void of all possession; hence, he will not say, ‘It was I who submitted to the Truth.’ So if a wayfarer is heard saying ‘This borrowed life, given to Hafiz to live and die, will return to its owner, when His face identify,’ (Hafiz, Ghazal 351) it means that he still knows himself to be the owner of his own soul. However, if he comes to the understanding of ‘he who possesses no benefit or loss, nor life and death for and neither return for his own soul,’ (Qommi, supplication after the ‘Asr prayer.) it is then that the pronunciation of the statement ‘there is no god but Allah’ will find the depths as mentioned by the true friends of Allah.

When the wayfarer ascends to this superior level of monotheism, he fathoms that indeed he had not given anything to Allah, for he had nothing to give in the first place. From here is where he manifests his

absolute poverty and, as a result, there remains no place for trust anymore, as he does not possess anything in order to entrust it to Allah. The station of pleasure also dissolves, as the wayfarer has no more desire or want so as to say, 'I am satisfied with what Allah is satisfied with.' In addition, he has no body or soul with which to submit and surrender to Allah and say, 'This borrowed life, given to Hafiz to live and die, will return to its owner, when His face identify.' This is the station of true *tawhid*, when manifestation of absolute dependence occurs.

At this time, the wayfarer views the world with this worldview and sees every existent as being purely dependent. Even at times when there is apparent compliance, the wayfarer views this compliance to be the manifestation of the power of Allah. If this were not the case, then nothing would have the ability to show inability and would also be unable to announce their weakness and show servitude. It is at this moment where he becomes a true monotheist and his pronouncement of 'there is not god but Allah' will greatly differ from that of others.

It was with the intention of this level of monotheism about which Allah commanded the Holy Prophet: 'Know that there is no god except Allah, and plead [to Allah] for forgiveness of your sin and for the faithful, men and women' (47:19).

Know that there is no source besides Allah, so request forgiveness for yourself and all those who have faith, for when a wayfarer reaches this station, he discovers that the previous goodness, states and perfections were in fact flawed and lacking, so seek forgiveness for them. What is meant by 'sins' in the verse is not the usual sin, but rather the thinking and believing that an imperfection was in fact a perfection, that a fault was a form of righteousness and that weakness was strength.

Complete disassociation

As all perfected moral ethical traits are systemized according to a correct understanding of monotheism, it – that is, pure monotheism – then becomes the central element in establishing a purified soul.

In order to reach this superior station of monotheism, numerous paths have been laid out. However, Islam, in order to cement monotheism in the essence of the believing wayfarer, has established certain boundaries. These boundaries and red lines of Allah are those forbidden affairs which should not be overstepped, and these vary from person to person. For some it is sinning and breaking the divine law; for others, who are prudent with the divine laws, it is doubtful actions and circumstances, and for a third group who have gone above the first two, their boundary is the allowed (*mubah*) actions and circumstances.

Allah has created these boundaries so that the wayfarer by adhering to them can get closer to true monotheism and turn away from everything else and eventually reach the point of complete disassociation from everything and find complete dependence upon Allah. Therefore, the best path to take in order to reach this destination is the path of servitude and worship.

Being a sincere servant means that a person feels necessary attachment to Allah. He does not want anything from Him, and in this world he practices obeying Allah not in hope of a return.

‘Allah informs us of a way to escape these defects: ‘Flee toward Allah’ (Qur’an 51:50).

And He also commands the Holy Prophet to ‘celebrate the Name of your Lord and dedicate yourself to Him with total dedication’ (73:8).

In order for this total dedication and complete disassociation to occur, He has provided some preliminaries and said, 'Indeed the watch of the night is firmer in tread and more upright in respect to speech' (73:6).

Staying up at night and performing vigils has a specific nuance. Speech at this time is firmer and steps are steadier, as during the day man is preoccupied with many things, 'for indeed during the day you have drawn-out engagements' (73:7).

In the evening there is tranquillity, as no obstructions exist. This tranquillity allows for matters to be better understood and for deeper communication with the Lord. It was in such an atmosphere that Allah ordered his Messenger to 'celebrate the Name of your Lord and dedicate yourself to Him with total dedication' (73:8).

These verses from Surah al-Muzzamil, which were revealed at the beginning of the prophetic mission, indicate that not only disassociation from others is what Allah desires, but rather, especially with the emphasis placed in the last verse, what Allah desires is a complete and absolute disassociation from others and complete devotion and dependence on Him. This desire of Allah has been mentioned in the Whispered Prayer of Sha'ban of Imam 'Ali (a) where he says, 'O my Lord, I ask you to grant me absolute disassociation from all that is not You!'

A person who cuts himself off from everything that is not Allah in fact does so out of his own choice and free will and is aware of what he is doing; that is, there is a presence of a doer. However, disassociation (*inqita'*) is more precise, for the presence of the doer is not easily noticed, but rather its acceptance is more apparent. Even more precise is a complete disassociation (*kamal-i inqita'*), as an individual in this form is not even aware of this disassociation. This state is available to

those who perform the night prayer and spend a part of the night in the worship of the Beloved.

Something worthy of note in the verse where Allah tells the Holy Prophet, 'for indeed during the day you have drawn-out engagements' (73:7) is that, during the day, he is preoccupied with numerous different matters and issues. It is understood that the Messenger of Allah, during the day, was continuously loaded with obligations such as guiding the masses and the propagation of Islam, in addition to the responsibilities he had as the leader of the Muslim community. So when night fell, he found an opportunity. It was then that he was able to celebrate the name of his Lord and completely disassociate from all else. If the work of the day is godly, then dust will never settle on the eye of the heart and it will not divert the senses of man away from Allah.

One of the main reasons that some have difficulty in centring their senses, especially during the daily prayers, is because majority of the work outside the prayer is not godly!

Ways of reaching absolute disassociation

In order to reach this fortified station, the wayfarer must become the apprentice of those who have reached it. He needs to inculcate within himself their guardianship, walk the path of their tradition and practice upon their teachings. They are the Immaculate and pure Ahl al-Bayt, all of Allah's messengers and intimate friends. But the wayfarer must always be wary, for the devil will be lying in wait for him on this path. Imam Baqir (a) is reported to have said to Zurarah, who was one of his close companions and students:

It was the threat of the devil when he said; 'I will surely lie in wait for them on Your straight path. Then I will come at them from their front and from their rear,

and from their right and their left, and You will not find most of them to be grateful.’ (7:16-17)

When he says that he will sit on their straight path, it is related to you Shi‘as, for he has already attracted the rest towards him, so there is no need for him to sit on their paths. As they were not on the virtuous path in the first place so that their journey needed halting. O Zurarah! Surely the devil is only lurking in ambush for you and for your companions; whereas he is indeed unconcerned with the rest. (Majlisi vol. 65, p. 94; Barqi vol. 1, p. 275)

Therefore, the danger is ever present that if a person were to become a lover and follower of the Ahl al-Bayt, the devil would stop at nothing in order to prevent him from reaching his destination.

With respect to the verse, ‘Say, “Are those who know equal to those who do not know?” Only those who possess intellect take admonition’ (Qur’an 39:9), Imam Sadiq (a) said,

This verse refers to us, our followers and our enemies. Those who know are us (the Ahl al-Bayt). Those who do not know are our enemies, and those who possess intellect are our followers and Shi‘a. They are those who can distinguish the criteria of truth and who know that the Ahl al-Bayt are the manifestations of Allah and the straight path. (Barqi , vol. 1, p. 272)

In Surah al-Hijr, Allah says, ‘Indeed the two of them are on an open highway’ (15:79). ‘The two’ are two cities which were destroyed by Allah and which were located on a highway between the cities of Mecca and Sham. In this verse a clear path or highway has been called an *imam mubin*. The Ahl al-Bayt and the Purified Imams are also called *imam mubin*, meaning that a relationship with them will allow a person to

create a complete association with Allah and disassociation from all that is not Him, as there is no other path except through their guardianship. A wayfarer on this path towards Allah will pay no attention to the 'paths' which are outside the realm of guardianship.

In explaining the following verse, 'those who have faith and are Godwary. For them is good news in the life of this world and in the Hereafter' (10:63-64), a tradition has been reported from Imam Baqir (a) who said, 'This verse is related to you, our Shi'a. In this world, you are in a state of awaiting death, while in the hereafter you are promised the glad tidings and good news of the Ahl al-Bayt.' (Huwayzi, vol. 2, p. 312)

So if absolute disassociation is not achieved but a connection to those who have reached a perfect form of it is established, then no independence for anything other than Allah can be imagined. Verses of the Holy Qur'an, traditions from the Ahl al-Bayt and anecdotes from the great divine ethical scholars are all established upon the principle of *tawhid*.

The Holy Qur'an mentions a group of godly individuals who have reached the station of monotheism and who ask for both goodness in this world and in the Hereafter from Allah by saying, 'Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter' (Qur'an 2:201).

The Holy Qur'an then counts the good of this world and says that those who protect the sanctity of religion will be granted 'one of the two good things' (9:52) – that is, either martyrdom or defeating the enemy.

The fighters in the battlefield of the greater jihad also encounter this concept. Numerous traditions indicate that if a person understands the grandeur, truthfulness and way of life of the Ahl al-Bayt, practices upon it and awaits the re-appearance of the Twelfth Imam, he will be granted

one of the two good things: either he will be blessed to witness the re-appearance of the Imam and physically visit him or, if he is unable to witness the re-appearance, he will be given the position of one who fought in his army alongside the Imam.

Imam Sadiq (a) has also said,

My father used to say, 'Indeed our followers have been created from our light, and we have been created from the light of the Holy Prophet, who was created from the light of Allah.' (Majlisi, vol. 65, p. 30; Barqi, vol.1, p. 291)

Imam Baqir (a) is reported to have said,

A person who awaits the re-appearance of the Twelfth Imam and is aware of his right will be given the reward and status of one who fought alongside the Imam; nay, he will be counted amongst those who fought alongside the Messenger of Allah; nay, he will be counted amongst those who gained martyrdom fighting on the side of the Holy Prophet. (Majlisi, vol. 24, p. 38)

This station is related to the helpers and awaiters of the Twelfth Imam who in their awareness, belief and awaiting are all at different levels.

The above relate to the good of this world and are a basis for the acquisition of complete monotheism, which is a result of purification of the soul, which is the foundation of this type of monotheism. In this way the effect of the guardianship of the intimate friends of Allah in the purification of the soul becomes clear. The following of the traditions and way of life of those who have absolutely disassociated themselves from everything other than Allah will enable the individual

to reach the same and as a result allow him to return to his perfect origin.

The Qur'an mentions concerning this,

“Say, ‘I do not ask you any reward for it except the love of [my] relatives.’ Whoever performs a good deed, We shall enhance its goodness for him” (42:23).

This verse indicates that the guardianship of the Ahl al-Bayt is from the good of this world. The complete referent of the verse is love for the Ahl al-Bayt which can only be attained in this world and not in the Hereafter; for the Hereafter is the place of judgment and not of action. Hence, in the Hereafter the results of this love will only be manifested.

Gatherings which mention the virtues, verdicts, words, praises and agonies of the Ahl al-Bayt (a) and through which people become more acquainted and have stronger conviction in their tradition and way of life are from the goodness of this world, just like gatherings of learning, admonition and supplication.

It has been reported from the Prophet, ‘Hasten to the gardens of Paradise!’ He was then asked what these gardens of Paradise were and he replied, ‘Gatherings of remembrance’ – that is, gatherings and meetings in which the name of Allah, His messenger, His laws and commands are mentioned. (Majlisi, vol. 2, p. 202)

Imam ‘Ali (a) is reported to have said,

Allah’s mercy be on that person who hears wisdom and protects it. He is called towards righteousness, so he obeys and follows. He clings onto the shoulder of a guide and is saved. (*Nahj al-Balagha*, sermon 76)

May Allah bless that person who grabs onto the
shoulder of a guide.

Alone I tried to climb the mountain of love

With no guide I placed all my effort, but to no avail.

Shaykh Ibn Maytham Bahrani in his exposition of this sentence writes, 'It alludes to those who partake in wayfaring without a spiritual guide and teacher. They will not achieve anything, and the truth is with those who say that a journey on this path can only be achieved with a rightful guide.' (Ibn Maytham, vol. 2, p. 208)

Our Shi'a cling to us, just as we cling to the Messenger of Allah, as he is attached to the Almighty. This chain of Allah being the primary and initiating source exists within the system of natural law and legislative law; in the system of natural law grace from Him is received by the Perfect Man (*insan kamil*), then given to his legitimate successors, and their followers seek it through them. However, in the system of legislative law, a person must seek attachment with the Ahl al-Bayt if he wishes to acquire knowledge and understanding and the means by which to achieve salvation and bliss. Because they were taught this knowledge by the Holy Prophet, who in turn was blessed with it by Allah, 'There is no living being but He holds it by its forelock. Indeed my Lord is on a straight path' (11:56).

The reins of all living creatures are in the hands of Allah and He will guide them all along their straight path. We also request from Allah during the daily prayers that he take our reins into his hands and not to let it fall into that of others. 'Guide us on the straight path' (1:6).

In addition, in certain supplications the following phrases appear:

O my Lord! Never entrust me to myself even for a blinking of an eye. (Majlisi, vol. 14, p. 384)

Do not entrust us to anyone other than Yourself, and do not withhold from us Your bounties. (Ibid, vol. 95, p. 393)

If a person is not included amongst those who receive Allah's bounties and blessings, he will be left to be and will become misguided.

'So what is there after the truth except error?' (10:32)

However, completely leaving and placing a contingent existent on its own is impossible; otherwise it would result in the essential transformation and would make an absolute dependent being independent. What is meant here is that Allah will prevent His special grace from reaching this person and will not deny him his 'freedoms'.

23) Unity (ITTIHAD)

Higher than the station of monotheism is the station of unity. Here 'unity' does not mean the merging of the servant and the master so that they become 'one', for this is a deviated meaning, a meaning which is impossible and even the thought of it is baseless. It also does not mean what the Christians and Jews hold it means, i.e. the incarnation of Allah into human form, as in: "The Jews say, "Ezra is the son of Allah," and the Christians say, "Christ is the son of Allah"" (Qur'an 9:30).

Because this meaning is also blasphemous and polytheistic. Rather, what is meant by unity is an intuitive unity and not an existential one. This means that the wayfarer sees everything around him in the physical realm to be a sign and manifestation of the essence of Allah. He negates real existence from all others and hears His sounds and sees His signs wherever he goes.

When Prophet Moses (a) heard from the tree, ‘Indeed I am Allah—there is no god except Me (20:14), it did not mean that the tree was Allah, but rather it was the negating of the ‘I’ from oneself and establishing the divinity of the Truth. Meaning that the tree was essentially not seen, nor did it speak by itself, nor was it the speaker, but instead the tree was a manifestation of the speech and words of Allah. Just like visible pictures have a mirror image, so do audible sounds, fragrant smells and softness.

Physical mirrors can only be used to reflect visible objects, but spiritual mirrors are able to not only present these but also, sounds, smells, tastes, textures, imaginations, emotions, concepts and above all mystical intuitions. The tree was only a mirror for the words of the Lord, whereas in fact it was Allah who said, ‘Indeed I am Allah’, but Prophet Moses heard it through the mirror of the tree, not that the tree said those words. Now if a person is like Prophet Moses, the one spoken to by Allah, these whispered words will be heard from every tree:

There is no Moses to hear “I am the Truth”
Else, no tree is void of this whisper

Being a mirror for the words of Truth is not limited to the tree, in all corners of the world there are divine monotheistic calls.

The Qur’an says:

‘There is not a thing but celebrates His praise, but you do not understand their glorification’ (17:44).

Every existent says, ‘Glory be to Allah’ and ‘Praise be to Allah’, and because glorification and praising are not separate from the belief in the oneness of the Almighty, there is no existent which does not profess to ‘there is no God but Allah’ and ‘Allah is the greatest’. Hence the four

glorifications are the supplication of all existents and can be heard by a person who is benefited with the hearing of the sounds of truth.

The grace of the Holy Spirit helps again
Others would do that which Jesus did

The addressees of 'but you do not understand their glorification' in the above verse is the general population, not specific ones among them; as it is the general population who are unable to hear the glorification of other existents, whereas only a few have been blessed with the ability to hear it.

Just like the Holy Prophet and the Ahl al-Bayt were able to hear these sounds, the intimate friends of Allah, in following the path of these immaculate personalities, are also able to hear the glorification and praises of existents. However, every individual will be able to hear to the extent of his capacity to guardianship, and as the whole world sings and celebrates the praises of Allah, every single existent negates the ego and the 'I' from itself and others. Hence every existent professes, 'I am not independent, nor are you, rather something else exists and we are just merely a reflection of that existence.' If a mirror could talk, this is what it would be saying, that I have nothing in and of myself and all I am able to do is reflect the image of my owner. If a person were able to fathom true meaning and hear the voice of the mirror he would know that all the movements that are seen within the mirror are merely a reflection of the efforts of the one who possesses the image.

Therefore, in this station a wayfarer negates the 'I' and ego from himself and others and only sees one. This occurs without there being any deficiency, substitute or addition to the world, divine law and responsibilities. However, the worldview of the mystic has changed; he now sees that everything around him is alive, protected and responsible,

but they are all just a reflection of the beauty and majesty of the will of Allah.

24) Oneness (WAHDAT)

In the station of monotheism, the wayfarer does not do anything new, but merely continues with what he was previously doing. Once he transcends this station and arrives at the station of unity – that is, when he goes from, ‘Do not set up another god besides Allah’ (17:22) to ‘Do not invoke another god besides Allah’ (28:88) – his attention shifts towards intuitive oneness – not existential oneness. The mystic at this time does not see any other existent, nor hear any sound from them, but only directly hears the speech of his Lord. He believes that nothing other than Allah compounds existence, not that he sees multiplicity and comprehends them as being a mirror and reflection of His splendour and beauty.

In this station, everything still remains in its place and nothing is destroyed. It is however the mystical wayfarer who has reached such a place where he sees nothing but Allah

The endlessness of intuitive oneness

The station of submission was the ending point of the practical stations, but the stations of monotheism, unity and, above them, oneness are part of the intuitive stations which have no defined ending. As in this station the wayfarer is journeying amongst the names of Allah and therefore it has no borders and is endless. The journey from creation to the Truth is defined, as the objective is the Truth. The same can be said about the journey from the Truth to creation, as the destination is the creation. However, when it comes to the journey within the Truth, i.e. from Truth towards the Truth with the Truth, it

is limitless. Because as stated above, it is a journey within the names and perfections of Allah which are eternal and infinite.

Oneness, although a higher station than unity, still gives off a whiff of multiplicity, as the wayfarer amongst the various objects only sees one and realizes that everything else is destructible. It is here where he makes the judgment of the destruction of everything that is not Allah and that only the Face of his Lord will remain referring to the following verses,

‘Everything is to perish except His Face’ (55:26),

and

‘Everyone on it is ephemeral, yet lasting is the Face of your Lord, majestic and munificent’ (55:27).

The wayfarer has an esoteric and intuitive sense of the world around him. This negation of the entire imaginative multiplicity and establishment of Allah indicates two separate things. In this way, even if the wayfarer manages to reach the station of oneness, he still has the potential of viewing multiplicity within him and even the statement of ‘there is no god but Him,’ is a sign of multiplicity. Hence, the contents of it are the negation of all else and the belief and confession in the unicity of the Truth.

So, the station of oneness is not the final resting place of the spiritual wayfarer, but rather the station of annihilation (*fana*) awaits him.

The station of annihilation

After passing through the previous stations the wayfarer will reach the stage of annihilation in Allah (*fana’ fi Allah*). This is the final station and destination of the spiritual travellers who now do not only negate

everything other than Allah, but rather notice absolutely nothing else even themselves in order to negate them. For the negation of the negated and the establishing of the established are in fact two things, and this duality or even multiplicity is not coherent with true intuitive oneness.

When the wayfarer achieves this state, he is annihilated into the intuition of Allah and nothing else. Not only does he not fathom himself, but his monotheism and annihilation also escape his comprehension and all he sees is the Absolute Identity of Allah. It is here when he testifies, 'There is no he but He,' for in reality every common and oft-recited supplication (*dhikr*) indicates towards a station location on the journey towards Allah. When the discussion reaches the station of annihilation, it ceases because at this station there is no room for discussion, nor does it come to an end.

However, it is possible for a state of consciousness to form within the wayfarer, where, after reaching this station, he returns again to the realm of multiplicity with the outlook of oneness, for if this is not so then all his activity will be habitual and automatic without the person even realizing. They can be compared to a group of angels known as the *muhayyam* who are so infatuated with the Glory of Allah that they are astounded to the point that they are completely unaware that anything other than Allah has been created in the world. Confirmation of this matter can be found in some narrations, but it must be mentioned that this astonishment is one which is praiseworthy, not condemned. It is for those who have reached their destination, not the type shown by those who have lost the untraveled path.

This is although the apparent meaning of the Qur'an indicates that all the angels prostrated in front of Adam ('Then the angels prostrated, all of them together', 15:30). While the *al-* before 'angels' here along with

the two words of emphasis here indicates generality, some narrations have made an exception regarding the *mubayyam* angels.³⁶

This state is not exclusive to these angels. Rather, a perfect man is also able to reach it, as the Holy Qur'an states, 'Indeed those who are [stationed] near your Lord do not disdain to worship Him' (7:206). This includes both the *mubayyam* angels and a group of sincere and pure wayfarers, i.e. the messengers and intimate friends of Allah. They are not only unconcerned with this world, but also no notice is given to themselves, their monotheism and knowledge. They only see the Known, i.e. neither the mystic nor mysticism is seen, because any witnessing or intuition that is outside of Allah is not comprehensible with intuitive oneness, pure infatuation and utter astonishment.

Concluding remarks

We conclude with the following beneficial points though possibly they were previously alluded to:

1) The transcending of the wayfarer towards the peak of perfection is reliant on the agent principle, the receptive source and the final destination all tied together with the stations of ascension which is the 'straight path'. The agent principle is *huwa al-awwal* (He, i.e. Allah, is the beginning of everything); the final destination is *huwa al-akhir* (He is the last), that it is this very Lord from which all effects, acts, characteristics and essences of all things and individuals originate and end and the actualization of such a reality is an established fact. Finally, the receptive principle, which is the human soul, will be discussed in respect to its capability in receiving this type of grace in discourses

³⁶ Meaning that this group of angels was so infatuated with the light of Allah, they did not even notice Adam, let alone prostrate in front of him. [Translator's note]

related to the study of the soul and explaining its theoretical and practical faculties, in addition to expounding on their levels and stages which can be counted as being from its very essence.

The last philosophical work that discusses the rational soul and its stages of perfection belongs to Mulla Hadi Sabzawari in his *Sharh Manzumah* where he writes:

Religiosity, Purification, and Beautification
Then Annihilation, are the elevated stations.
In essence, attributes and action is it arranged;
(Sabziwari , pp. 313-314)

In the above stanzas, the three stages of obliteration (*mabw*) have been explained. However, the expounding and exposition of their levels and path towards perfection is discussed in the science of ethics, which the author discusses at the end of the book. In this section, Mulla Hadi poeticizes the station of annihilation, which he terms submission and counts higher than stations of pleasure and trust in the following way:

To the Ancient will return all we have
Everything is His and is in submission to Him
Superior to pleasure and trust is submission
For when in the Lord is the trust placed
Ownership of the placer comes to be
Insolence be not far from this
Without submitting but with all that's is done pleased
Acting the Truth upon the whims is not succinct
But no desire or want does he possess here [i.e.
submission]
All his trusts to the rightful owner returned. (Ibid, p
358)

However, the station of annihilation can only be considered to be the same as the station of submission in ethics when the wayfarer not only entrusts all his desires and what results from them in Allah, and counts all those material, spiritual and essential entrustments as being from Allah, but also returns all that which is other than Allah to Allah and not to attribute any action with its apparent agent, any characteristic with its character, nor any existence with the being existed with. If he is also able to abstain from witnessing and having intuition other than Allah, then it can be said that in this state, ethical submission will be the same as the station of annihilation.

2) Because the responsibility of activating the faculties of the soul lies with the individual's powers of perception, if their activation is motivated by the practical intellect – 'By means of it is Allah worshipped and Paradise earned' (Kulayni, vol. 1, p. 11) – then it will be governed by the theoretical intellect. However, if their activation are motivated by lust and anger it will lead to them being governed by either fantasy (*khiyal*) or imagination (*wahm*).

Therefore, the most important agent in the cleansing of the soul is the purification of its knowledge so that intuition of other than Allah does not occur. This results in a state where the accomplished wayfarer, firstly, does not perform any action that is governed by the faculties of fantasy or imagination; secondly, nothing is performed for anything other than Allah. Thirdly, he comprehends that all virtuous actions performed by him and others are all annihilated in the work of Allah; fourthly, he expects no reward for these actions performed by him or others, because he knows that the agent principle of all goodness and virtue is only Allah, in the same way he knows that there is no being and existent other than Him. Lastly, he will not only reach a stage when he sees none but Allah, but those that are not Allah will not even be

comprehended, i.e. an annihilation of his position. It is possible to call this the state of complete and absolute disassociation, which is mentioned as the destination in the Whispered Prayer of Sha‘ban. As this form of disassociation is not only superior to the severing of one’s likes that are other than Allah, it is superior to mere disassociation as well, which in itself is higher than severance, as mere disassociation is not the outcome which is desired by the mystic.

3) Even if the concept of annihilation that is under discussion is an academic understanding with respect to intuition, with respect to objective reality, it is a kind of everlastingness. Thus viewing of the matter from various angles, which enables the solving of some conflicts, is not a kind of numerousness that is formed because of the differences created by subjectivity and objectivity. For in this discussion there is objective annihilation and everlastingness because what is meant by this intuition and witnessing is external and based on knowledge by presence. Not only is this type of knowledge superior to knowledge of certainty (*‘ilm al-yaqin*), but it will also be loftier than essence of certainty (*‘ayn al-yaqin*). The accomplished mystic has however achieved reality of certainty (*haqq al-yaqin*) and in this way his annihilation is a reality and not just academic or theoretical. So if this annihilation, which is that very everlastingness, is negated then it will only be able to merge with everlastingness and not result in a contradiction.

Therefore, the differentiating of the angles which shows logical consistency between the two titles of annihilation and everlastingness is to say the annihilation of the accomplished mystic and negation of the specifications are attributed to him, but his everlastingness is attached to the existence of Allah and attributed to Him.

References

The Quran

Nahj al-Balagha

Bahrani, Ibn Maytham .1420AH. *Sbarh Nahj al-Balagha*. Beirut: Dar al-Tha'layn.

Barqi, Ahmad b. Muhammad. 1330 sh. *Al-Mahasin*. Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah.

Hafiz, Ghazal 351, trans. Shariar Shahriari.

Huwayzi, 'Abd 'Ali b. Jum'a. 1390 sh. *Nur al-Thaqalayn*. Qom: Nashr Navid Islam.

Kulayni, Muhammad ibn Ya'qub. 1407AH. *Al-Kafi*. Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah.

Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir. 1403 AH. *Bihar al-Anwar*. Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi.

Qommi, A. *Mafatih al-Jinan*, supplication after the 'Asr prayer.

Sabziwari, Mulla Hadi. 1372 sh. *Sbarh Manzumah*, Qom: Luqman.