

**THE OCEAN AND THE EXCURSION:
SUFISM AND PSYCHOANALYSIS
A Comparative Study**

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OKYANUS VE SEYAHAT: SUFİZM VE PSİKANALİZ

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a comparative study of Sufism/*Tasawwuf* and Psychoanalysis. It aims to point at the similarities, differences, the cross-breeding and the potential areas of interaction between these two disciplines. For this purpose, the fundamental concepts of psychoanalytic theory are examined side by side with their counterparts in Sufism.

A comparative outline of the two disciplines is followed by a comparative study of their supervising figures; namely, the psychoanalyst and the *murshid*. This is followed by a comparative study of the transference relationship and *rabita*, of the phenomena of resistance and the *nafs*, and finally of the structure of the 'I' as it is conceived by the two perspectives.

This study points at the fact that Sufism aims for an existential unification with the Supreme Reality while psychoanalysis limits itself with a perspective that prevents such an integration. It is possible to trace and deepen the connection between these two disciplines in order to reach a more comprehensive understanding for the psychic realm of the human being.

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Sufizm/*Tasavvuf* ve psikanalizin karşılaştırmalı bir incelemesidir. Amacı; bu iki disiplin arasındaki benzerliklere, farklara, etkileşimlere ve potansiyel ilişki alanlarına işaret etmektedir. Bu niyetle, psikanalitik teorideki temel kavramlar, Sufizm'deki karşılıklarıyla yan yana incelenmiştir.

Öncelikle iki disiplinin karşılaştırmalı birer özeti sunulmuş; daha sonra iki alandaki yol göstericiler, 'psikanalist' ve 'mürşid' figürleri incelenmiştir. Sonraki bölümlerde, 'transferans' ve 'rabıta' kavramları, 'direnç' olgusu ve 'nefs', ve son olarak da bu iki perspektifin 'ben'in yapısını nasıl ortaya koyduğu araştırılmıştır.

Bu çalışma şöyle bir bulguya işaret eder: Sufizm, Hakikat ile varoluşsal bir bütünleşmeyi hedefler ve yaklaşımını bu hedefe göre belirlerken, psikanaliz böyle bir bütünleşmeyi önleyen bir bakış açısıyla kendini sınırlamaktadır. Bu iki disiplin ve yaklaşım arasındaki bağlantıları izleyerek derinleştirmek, insanın ruhsal boyutunu kavramak üzere yeni keşiflere yol açabilir.

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1. INTRODUCTION

*Tasawwuf*¹ is a way of living. It is a way of life carried on by Sufis who have devoted their lives to being close to Allah; the Supreme Reality. In this quest, the question of how human intelligence can fully be actualized and the question of how the human nature can reach its highest potential hold the focus of attention. In this framework, conceptions of intelligence and consciousness derive their meaning from the struggle to reach this full human potential. Human nature is understood as a continuous, evolving manifestation of the Supreme Reality, and the full actualization of this nature demands a disciplined body, focused mind, and devoted heart. For the methods and means of this quest, the Sufis have grounded their efforts in following the footsteps of Prophet Muhammad. They have received and carried the tradition via an unbroken chain of personal transmission from the Prophet himself.

This study is an attempt for pointing at the similarities, the dissimilarities, the cross-breeding and finally the potential areas of interaction between *Tasawwuf* (Sufism) and Psychoanalysis.

At first sight, pursuing a comparative study of these two disciplines may appear to be an unusual choice. After all, the history of psychoanalysis is marked by a

¹ *Tasawwuf* is the authentic version of the term *Sufism* which has been used in the standard literature in Western languages. In this work, whenever we use the term Sufism, it implies exactly the authentic name, *Tasawwuf*.

conspicuous disdain for spirituality and a prevalent pathologizing of religion.² Psychoanalysis was born out of a secular Enlightenment agenda underscored by the sublimation of discursive reason and science. Ever since Freud critiqued religion as an illusion created to ignore one's vulnerability and helplessness in face of the terrors of the universe, psychoanalysis has either disregarded or belittled religion and spiritual experience. Psychoanalysts have approached spiritual matters with antipathy or skepticism, assuming that spirituality is a regressive pursuit of an illusory salvation, a self-centered withdrawal from the world, a form of voluntary self-hypnosis.

Consequently, psychoanalysis has come to be regarded as an atheistic science of human subjectivity. The atheism is not always mentioned, but almost taken for granted. It seems to be part of an invisible assumptive framework for viewing the psychoanalytic treatment and its place in the world.

Psychoanalysis is born of an intention for an absolute secularization of the world, as an attempt to rationalize those aspects of the human being which had formerly been considered as 'spiritual'.³ This movement had already started in the 16th Century as an ongoing struggle to become free from the dogmatic aspects of the Christian tradition. The Christian teachings insisted that the union between God and humanity was broken by 'original sin' and it could not be restored as long as the human was bound by an earthly body. This conception of an unapproachable,

² Janet L. Jacobs, Donald Capps, ed., *Religion, Society and Psychoanalysis : Readings in Contemporary Theory* (Boulder, Westview Press, 1997).

³ Adolf Grünbaum, *The Foundations of Psychoanalysis: A Philosophical Critique* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

unrecognizable, unreachable God and a fallen, sinful, despicable human became synonymous with a dichotomic Christian imagination. Therefore, the institutions, discourses and policies built upon this imagination have given rise to a chain of equally dichotomous reactions.⁴

In order to understand this chain of movements, it is useful to trace the life of ‘philosophia’ in this story. Philosophy had formerly been considered as the mother of all sciences. However, from the medieval period onwards, theology and philosophy began to be taught in universities which were created and implemented by the medieval church.⁵ Therefore, philosophy lost its status as the supreme science that it used to be, and became the servant of theology. It had to be in the service of the church, providing this institution with the conceptual, physical, and metaphysical materials it demanded. As a consequence, works of philosophy began to take root outside the university, as in the cases of Descartes, Locke, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Hume. Nevertheless, this movement, which was a reaction against medieval Scholasticism, was generated on the same ground with its opponent. Therefore, in attempting to overcome one kind of theoretical philosophical discourse, it came up with another theoretical discourse.

This chain reaction eventually gave birth to the ‘enlightenment’ project which brought an ideology of logicalism, materialism, rationalism, colonialism, authoritarianism. Psychoanalysis was born into this climate, as the child of discursive reasoning and scientism. Therefore, it bears the marks of its genealogy. We need to

⁴ S.J. Barnett, *The Enlightenment and Religion: The Myths of Modernity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

⁵ Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy As a Way Of Life: Spiritual Exercises From Socrates to Foucault*, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 126-140.

trace back these marks. What we have lost by secularization may overshadow the potential gain in self-awareness and personal responsibility. By explicitly renouncing religion, psychoanalysis has sacrificed ultimate questions which are central to human well-being such as: 'What is the purpose and meaning of human life?' ⁶ As a consequence, a self-alienating worldview filled this gap. We feel adrift, disconnected from larger frameworks which explain the universe and our place within it. This brings a sense of meaninglessness and alienation. In the last hundred years, secular movements such as positivism, materialism, consumerism, hedonism and technological utopianism failed to give meaningful answers to questions of ultimate concern; on the nature of evil, goodness, suffering, love, death, and the meaning of life.

Now, in the wake of 21st Century, many people take a critical distance from the culturally shared consciousness and values which shaped the modern world. There is a growing awareness that we live in a very different world which is sometimes termed as 'postmodern'. Postmodernism has challenged certain foundations and beliefs about knowledge, truth, reality and selves of the modernist world. It has shaken the assumptive framework which structures our world; it shed light upon various forms of oppression and the hidden exercise of power. But postmodern thought has also left its wreckage in the process. Deconstruction of the cultural and symbolic meanings which lie beneath our social and personal worlds has left us rootless, unsettled and 'homeless'. The postmodern relativization of values

⁶ Jeffrey B. Rubin, *The Good Life: Psychoanalytic Reflections on Love, Ethics, Creativity and Spirituality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 61-87.

makes it very difficult to discuss questions of morality. When there is no foundation for concepts and values, when all values are written by desire and the will to power, there comes the inevitable risk of moral ambiguity and ethical confusion.

We need a new way of approaching the questions of ultimate concern. Contemporary Western view rests on the belief that human beings and nature are separate, different and discontinuous. People have been trained to view nature and each other as territories which they can colonialize. This worldview overvalues reason and logic and examines phenomena by dissecting them into parts, without studying them whole or in their context. These unconscious habits create alienation, separating people from each other, from themselves, from their bodies, from their feelings, from their ground of being.

Tasawwuf is a way of life which builds itself upon this ground of being. It rests upon the view that nothing is separate from this ground of being, and therefore nothing is separate from anything else. The ground of being, the Supreme Truth, the Supreme Self, Allah creates all things from his Self and therefore all things depend upon Allah for their existence. Every action, every thought, every image, every attribute is contingent upon this ground of Being. The Sufi devotes his/her life to being constantly aware of this contingency. This process requires a disciplined mind, a focused mind and a devoted heart; and therefore, the Sufi has the responsibility of striving to cultivate these abilities. Self-awareness, responsibility and an ethical way of life are indispensable for this process. The life of the Sufi is an active response to the questions of ultimate concern, to the dilemmas of evil, goodness, suffering, love,

death, and the meaning of life.⁷ The aim is to become closer to Allah; and the consummation of this aim is the unification of the drop with the ocean that it has always been part of.⁸

Psychoanalysis strives to understand the drop by gazing at the waves and making an excursion on the surface of this ocean. It is a quest which includes moments of submerging into the ocean for therapeutic purposes, without the intention to acknowledge and realize the totality of its existence. If we do not have the ocean in sight, how can we make sense of our situation?

This work is an attempt to reconnect the waves with the ocean.

In each chapter, we approach a fundamental concept in psychoanalysis and follow by comparing it to its counterpart in Sufism. In the conclusion, we see a final analysis of this comparison and see the possibilities brought on by this journey.⁹

⁷ William Chittick, *The Self-disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-Arabi's Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

⁸ Titus Burckhardt, *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine* (Indiana: World Wisdom, 2008).

⁹ Throughout this text, the masculine pronoun 'he' has been used to refer to the figures of the analyst and the *murshid*; the feminine pronoun 'she' has been used to refer to the figures of the analysand and the *murid*. This choice has been made in order to eliminate the risk of overcomplicating the text. It should significantly be noted that; the analyst, the *murshid*, the analysand and the *murid* are not gender-specific figures. They can be represented by people of both genders.

2. THE JOURNEY

2.1. PSYCHOANALYSIS

For the classical definition of psychoanalysis, let's refer to Sigmund Freud, who is still considered as the 'father' of psychoanalytic theory:

“Psychoanalysis is the name (1) of a procedure for investigating mental processes which are almost inaccessible in any other way, (2) of a method (based upon that investigation) for the treatment of neurotic disorders and (3) of a collection of psychological information obtained along those lines, which is gradually being accumulated into a new scientific discipline.”¹⁰

These words were originally written for the Encyclopedia Britannica and it's still used as the standard definition by psychoanalytic training institutes.

In order to understand the psychoanalytic establishment as it stands today, we need to track back to its history. Sigmund Freud was initially trained as a medical doctor in Vienna. Soon after graduation, he began his private practice treating 'nervous disorders'. As a student and all through his life, he remained very involved with philosophy, literature and mysticism. In his lifelong work of formalizing

¹⁰ Sigmund Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1986), V:18, 234–255.

psychoanalytic theory, he was openly influenced by the major works of these disciplines. In the beginning stages of his career, Freud saw that effective therapeutic procedures for treating nervous disorders were almost nonexistent in the medical profession. The available techniques were limited to keeping the patients isolated in clinics, applying electric shock and keeping them under control with sedatives. For a couple of years, Freud experimented with hypnosis, but it turned out to give highly unpredictable results. Freud then began to work with the 'cathartic method' formerly discovered by his mentor Joseph Breuer. This method took the symptom of the patient as its beginning point. The doctor tried to have the patient remember how and when this symptom was experienced for the first time, by means of conversing with the patient. A successful outcome depended on this remembrance to occur. With this remembrance, the symptom was expected to disappear.¹¹

Freud observed the inevitability of the 'resistance' which appeared in the patient during the investigation of this causative 'primal scene'. It was as if the patient wished to keep the source of her affliction hidden. The memory that was 'repressed' in this manner involved past experiences linked with certain incidents which occurred in the early ages of childhood. The patients also had a tendency to talk about their dreams, which drew Freud's keen attention. He encouraged the patients to remember dreams. Being a firm proponent of determinism, Freud decided that dreams had a specific 'unconscious' content, a meaning that could be uncovered by the analyst.

The analysis of resistance became a foundational pillar of Freud's therapeutic

¹¹ Ernest Jones, *Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 141-172.

practice. The interpretation of dreams and the method of ‘free association’ became the other two pillars and the name ‘psychoanalysis’ was introduced by Freud in 1896.

During the next twenty years, the fundamental tenets of psychoanalytic treatment that are still valid today were already established: The patient lied down on a couch and the psychoanalyst was seated out of her sight. The patient was invited to speak without filtering what came to his/her mind. Several sessions had to take place before any substantial healing could finally occur. The treatment had to become an indispensable part of the patient’s life and the patient’s committed relationship with the analyst was the propagator of the work. The aim was to reconstitute the past and release the defenses which the patient had constructed in order to repress the conflict she felt because of her own contradictory drives.¹²

Freud was mainly a researcher more than he was a therapist. His students and successors were going to become the therapists to introduce improvements to his methods. Carl Jung and Hermine von Hug-Hellmuth were two of his disciples who extended psychoanalysis to work with psychotic patients. Carl Jung, in his later years, departed from Freud and developed his own theory to explore the boundaries and the relationship between psychoanalysis and mysticism.¹³

Melanie Klein specialized in her work with children. She was the first to develop her own theory while remaining faithful to Freud. Her work became the foundation for the Object-Relations Theory which is still a significant school of contemporary psychoanalysis. Sandor Ferenczi worked with childhood trauma and

¹² Alain de Mijolla, ed., *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (Michigan: Thomson Gale, 2005), 1362-1368.

¹³ Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 2006) 197-206.

developed ‘active’ techniques which aimed to decrease the time needed for analytic work. Otto Rank¹⁴ was the first to propose that human development is a work of lifelong construction, which requires continuous negotiation and renegotiation of the dual urges for individuation and connection, the will to separate and the will to unite.

Freud considered his ideas to be superstructures which were a work-in-progress. He expected that new discoveries would keep arriving from further therapeutic practice. In his theory of 1900, he offered a psychic model consisting of three agencies; the unconscious, preconscious, and conscious. In 1923, he replaced this system with another model consisting of the id, the ego, and the superego. In a lifetime’s work, Freud kept building and rebuilding the theoretical aspects of his system with new concepts which sometimes improved and many times reversed his earlier assumptions.¹⁵

After Freud, the different schools of psychoanalysis emerged essentially from two main axes. The first axis worked to explore the conflict between the life-drive (Eros) and the death-drive (Thanatos). The schools which followed this axis were the Object Relations School of Melanie Klein and the Post-Kleinian Schools of Wilfred Bion and Donald Winnicott. The British Psycho-Analytical Society flourished with their work after the Second World War.¹⁶

The second axis mainly focused on the opposition between the ego and the id. The Ego-Psychology School initiated by Heinz Hartmann, the Self-Psychology School founded by Heinz Kohut were built on the footsteps of Anna Freud and

¹⁴ Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time*, 470-489.

¹⁵ Jones, *Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, 138-296.

¹⁶ Stephen A. Mitchell and Margaret J. Black, *Freud and Beyond: "A History of Modern Psychoanalytic Thought"* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 85-112.

became hugely influential in the United States.

In France, Jacques Lacan came up with an invitation to ‘return to Freud’. He observed that the psychoanalytic establishment was becoming degenerated into false causes and assumptions. He came up with new theories that could provide better explanations for “the construction of the subject”.¹⁷ He focused on “the relationship between the subject and the unconscious”. The three levels of “the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic”; the impact of “the desire”; “jouissance”; “the object ‘a’” were some of his groundbreaking formulations in a highly impactful theory which he developed in the thirty years until 1981. His unique way of utilizing modern linguistics and structuralism enabled him to attract a keen audience from a wide range of communities, which previously had remained against the Freudian theory.

Whether or not psychoanalysis is a scientific discipline has been debated since its foundational period. Some critics pointed to the fact that the propositions offered by psychoanalytic theory could not be accepted as “scientific”, since they could not be “falsified” and therefore they could not either “be refuted.”¹⁸ According to Freud, on the other hand, the scientific status of psychoanalytic theory was unquestionable. But he was also ready to discuss the inherent weakness of this position:

“Science, as you know, is not a revelation; long after its beginnings, it still lacks the attributes of definiteness, immutability and infallibility for which human thought so deeply longs. But such as it is, it is all that

¹⁷ Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, trans. Douglas Brick, *Lacan: The Absolute Master* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 11-123.

¹⁸ Jon Mills, ed., *Psychoanalysis At The Limit: "Epistemology, Mind, And The Question Of Science"* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 161-197.

we can have.”¹⁹

Freud also did substantial work to establish psychoanalysis as an invaluable tool for studying and understanding political, social and cultural phenomena. He was well aware that psychological discoveries provided new insights for a deeper understanding of literature and visual art. It is also important to keep in mind that, studying these works of art and literature provided Freud with new insights and support for the truthfulness of his views.

The extensive popularity and acceptance of psychoanalysis has been a phenomenon of the twentieth century. Psychoanalytic theory has been inspired and propagated by that century, with its political ideologies, excesses, turmoils, its rollercoaster of ups and downs; its political, economic and cultural wars which have been manifestations of the darkest and most destructive human impulses. In several ways, psychoanalytic theory has slowly become infused into all dimensions of our daily life.

In a lifetime's work, Freud had defined the principles which provided the basis that the contemporary psychoanalytic establishment has been built upon:

“The acceptance of unconscious psychical processes, the acknowledgement of the doctrine on resistance and repression, the taking into consideration of sexuality and the Oedipus complex are the principle tenets of psychoanalysis and the bases of its theory, and whosoever is not prepared to subscribe to all of them should not count

¹⁹ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:20, 191.

himself among psychoanalysts.”²⁰

Not much can be claimed to have changed regarding these principles, in spite of the diversity of theoretical research and methods of practice, which has amplified the establishment of the global psychoanalytic movement.

2.2. SUFISM – TASAWWUF

Tasawwuf (Sufism) is the contemplative tradition within Islam. This tradition is carried on by people who have devoted their lives to the effort to be in a personal engagement with Allah, the Supreme Reality. In this quest, the question of how human intelligence can fully be actualized and the question of how the human nature can reach its highest potential hold the focus of attention. In this framework, conceptions of intelligence and consciousness derive their meaning from the struggle to reach this full human potential. Human nature is understood as a continuous, evolving manifestation of the Supreme Reality, and the full actualization of this nature demands a disciplined body, focused mind, and devoted heart.²¹

Sufi scholars have studied the *nafs* (self) and *aql* (intelligence) as a dynamic structure which holds unlimited transformative potential. For them, philosophy is not merely an investigative tool; it is a spiritual discipline with the purpose of

²⁰ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:18, 247.

²¹ William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 1-30.

illumination, awakening, and self-transformation.²² In their view, the aim of human life is the struggle to attain full self-awareness by reintegrating the human self into its divine potential. For the methods and means of this quest, the Sufis grounded their efforts in following the footsteps of Prophet Muhammad. They have received and carried on the tradition via an unbroken chain of personal transmission from the Prophet himself. In their quest to carry on and remain faithful to this transmission, they wrote countless treatises which provide a practical orientation as well as presenting complex theoretical discussions.²³

2.2.1. CONSCIOUSNESS

Before approaching the concept of consciousness in the Sufi framework, it is useful to remember that the worldview of the modern West is grounded in assumptions which are crucially different from that of the Islamic tradition. The modern worldview approaches consciousness as something to be studied in the same manner that we might study physical objects. This worldview is ready to view ‘consciousness’ as fully explicable through biological mechanisms. In this approach, it is usually forgotten that this ‘consciousness’ which is studied is the very same agent which is ‘conscious’ of this study of ‘consciousness’. It is the very same case as if the eye is trying to see itself. At this point, it is important to understand that the attempt

²² Sachiko Murata, *The Tao of Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992) 225-316.

²³ James Winston Morris, *The Wisdom of the Throne: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 6-88.

to divide the human into a fully distinct “seeing subject and a seen object” required an extensive time to take root in the modern perspective, in a process much more complex than Descartes could have imagined.

In order to understand the Sufi way of explaining “the nature of consciousness”, it is imperative to see that the Islamic literature does not provide a pair of words to match the pair of “subject and object”. This tradition is based on a non-dual understanding of existence which has close similarities with other Eastern traditions. Within these traditions, the Supreme Reality is identified with the Supreme Self. Life, consciousness and awareness are already present in the Self/Reality, and the totality of the existence is comprised of its manifestations. The Supreme Self/Reality is simultaneously Being-Consciousness-Bliss and every little thing in existence is its repercussion.²⁴ Where the subject ends and the object begins can not be detected, because the subject and the object are intimately linked with each other, one of them not being able to exist without the other. It is also useful to remember that the Medieval Christian theology, which viewed Being in terms of “the Beautiful, the True, and the Good” is not too far from this worldview. In the last five hundred years, the Western tradition slowly drifted into an interpretation of existence which deprived it of everything that is definitive, good, and beautiful. The Sufi tradition never conceived an existence separate from consciousness. It has firmly held that consciousness, reality and beauty are collectively omnipresent in everything.²⁵

²⁴ Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1983) 469-493.

²⁵ Reza Shah-Kazemi, *Paths To Transcendence: According to Shankara, Ibn Arabi, and Meister Eckhart* (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2006) 69-131.

It is crucial to understand that the wide range of Arabic words which correspond with the word ‘consciousness’ make sense only in a context which understands that the substantial part of reality is not available to ordinary perception. According to the Sufi framework, what we perceive through our senses is a sedimentation of what can be perceived through deeper levels of consciousness. What we commonly perceive in our everyday reality is nothing but the “signs” of Allah, nothing but “the signifiers of the transcendent and immanent Real (al-Haqq)”.²⁶

According to the Sufi framework, the invisible entity which animates living things is *ruh*, which is nothing but the breath of the Supreme Being; Allah. As *ruh* becomes manifested (i.e. breathed) through human beings, it is perceived as *nafs*. *Ruh* is usually translated as “spirit” where *nafs* is translated as “self ” or “soul”. Another word which is crucial in understanding human consciousness is *qalb*. *Qalb*, translated as “heart”, holds the focal point in human consciousness. When it becomes overly loaded with personal emotions and sentiments, the heart becomes “blind”. This blindness leads to an ignorance and a forgetfulness of the Supreme Reality. Therefore, the Sufi aims at achieving nearness to Allah by means of purifying the heart to the point where only pure intelligence remains.²⁷ Those who achieve this goal are mentioned in the hadith qudsi:²⁸ “My heavens and My earth cannot embrace Me, but the heart of My believing servant embraces Me.”

²⁶ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 145-191.

²⁷ William Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2007), 23-75.

²⁸ A *hadith qudsi* is a statement of Prophet Muhammad which quotes the words of Allah.

The transformation of the *nafs*/self which unfolds simultaneously with the purification of the heart defines the stages of the Sufi journey. Before this journey begins, the *nafs*/soul is at its most ignorant stage; totally unaware of the Supreme Reality. In this stage, the *nafs*/self is preoccupied with its own well-being and material attachments while being totally indifferent to other people's needs and well-being. At this level, the heart is covered with the most dense and dark sentiments such as anger, pride, lust, self-righteousness, envy, wrath, all of which can manifest themselves in the most destructive actions. This stage is defined as *al-nafs al-ammara* (the soul that commands)" in the Qur'an. (12:53)²⁹

If a recognition and remembrance of the Supreme Reality awakens in this person, she can begin the journey of transformation. At this stage, the person becomes aware of her ignorance and shortcomings. Being yet unable to overcome these urges, she begins to experience a fierce battle between the *aql*/intelligence which remembers the Supreme Reality and the *nafs*/self which is inclined to retain its preoccupations. In this battle, the *aql*/intelligence maintains the urge to open up to increasingly deeper levels of the Supreme Reality while the *nafs*/self tries to resist this urge in order to protect its previous attachments. This stage is named *al-nafs al-lawwama* (the soul that blames itself for its shortcomings)" (75:2)³⁰

If the transformation goes further, there comes a stage where the previous development is tested. On one hand, there is the urge to follow the call to open up

²⁹ The verse in the Qur'an: "I do not pretend to be blameless, for man's very soul commands him to evil unless my Lord shows mercy: He is most forgiving, most merciful."

³⁰ The verses in the Qur'an: (75:1-3): "By the Day of Resurrection and by the self-blaming soul! Does man think that We shall not put his bones back together?"

deeper into the Supreme Reality. On the other hand, there is a resistance to remain attached to the illusion of an autonomous self in control of its destiny. The battle has become more fierce, because now there is much more at stake. The *nafs/self* is battling with itself between two choices: The choice to remember and act in accordance with the realization that the *nafs/self* is an ever-changing manifestation of the Supreme Reality and the choice to resist and reject this realization in order to cling to the illusion of an autonomous self. This stage is named to be *al-nafs al-mulhama* (the inspired soul) (91:7-8)³¹

The next stage is named as *al-nafs al-mutmainna* (the soul at peace with Allah)” (89:27).³² This is a stage where the first stages of the journey has born their desired outcome. Here, the *nafs/self* can become an expression of generosity, patience, trustworthiness, hopefulness, thankfulness, gentleness, forgiveness. Because now the *nafs/self* has an established trust and love of the Supreme Reality. It has a deeply rooted awareness that the Supreme Reality is the expression of beauty, wisdom, love and compassion. When an inner and outer conflict comes up, the *nafs/self* can choose to act in line with the Supreme Reality.

In the next three levels; *al-nafs al-radhiyya* (the content soul), *al-nafs al-mardhiyya* (the gratified soul) and *al-nafs al-kamilah* (the mature soul), the *nafs/self* completes its journey of becoming a mature human being; *al-insan al-kamil*. This is the true purpose of human life and Prophet Muhammad is the most perfect expression of *al-insan al-kamil*. The chain of transmission carried on from him lays down the

³¹ The verses in the Qur'an: (91:7-8) ” ...by the soul and how He formed it and inspired it [to know] its own rebellion and piety!”

³² The verses in the Qur'an: (89:27-28) “[But] you, soul at peace; return to your Lord well pleased and well pleasing.”

path of becoming *al-insan al-kamil*. Tasawwuf/Sufism is the striving to remain faithful to and carry on this transmission.³³

2.2.2. ILM AND IRFAN

If we want to understand what ‘consciousness’ means in Sufism, we need to approach another pair of words: *ilm* and *irfan*. *Ilm* is usually translated as ‘knowledge’. As a verb, *ilm* signifies “the act of knowing”. Another word derived from the same root is *alama*, which is translated as mark, sign, trace. Knowledge is connected to distinctions, signs, and marks. The word *Alam* is also used to designate the World or the Cosmos, which is explained as “that by means of which one knows,” or “that by means of which the Creator is known”.

When Sufi scholars discuss the word *ilm*, they propose that it cannot be defined. Any attempt for explanation is “the act of knowing trying to know itself, like vision trying to see itself”. Therefore, “in order to understand knowledge, one needs to know the knowing self, and in order to know the knowing self, one must awaken to the full power of intelligence which lies dormant in oneself.”³⁴ For this, it is not sufficient to remain at the level of intellectual learning. Intellectual learning, although it may be a necessary step on the way to true knowledge, is not self-knowledge or self-consciousness. True self-knowledge can only come through knowing the

³³ Leonard Lewisohn, ed., *The Heritage of Sufism. Volume 1-111* (Oxford: One World Publications, 1999)

³⁴ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 145-170.

conscious self without the intermediate agency of the senses, imagination, conceptualization, and theorizing. It is achieved when knower, the knowing and the known are united as one. This kind of unified knowledge is the conscious knowledge that the Sufi is striving to achieve. The path of achieving this unified knowledge is, at the same time, the quest of becoming fully human; in other words, of becoming *al-insan al-kamil*.³⁵

Sufi authors define the direct consciousness of the Self as *marifa*. The root word is *irfan*. When compared with the word *ilm*, *irfan* signifies direct recognizing rather than mere knowing. A most important reference for understanding this word is the hadith qudsi of the Prophet, “He who recognizes his own self recognizes his Lord.” (*Man arafa nafsahu fa kad arafa Rabbahu.*) This can as well be translated as, “He who becomes conscious of himself becomes conscious of his Lord.” At this point, the knowing Subject (Self) and the known Object are merged. The hadith qudsi of the Prophet is realized: “When I love My servant, I am the ear with which he hears, the eye with which he sees, the foot with which he walks, and the hand with which he grasps.”³⁶

From this perspective, human consciousness as a separate consciousness is essentially an illusion. Because there is no consciousness but the consciousness of Allah and there is no intelligence but the intelligence of Allah. To say that human consciousness is an illusion does not mean that it has no reality or existence. It simply means that it is dependent upon and it is derivative from the Supreme Self-

³⁵ Chittick, *The Self-disclosure of God*, 201-237.

³⁶ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 333-380.

Knowledge. If we do not acknowledge this derivativeness and this relativity of human consciousness, we do not recognize the Real and ourselves as what we are.³⁷

2.2.3. CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE TRUE SELF

The Qur'an tells that Allah created mankind to be his servants (51:56).³⁸ In the Sufi perspective, this verse is explained in line with the hadith qudsi: "I was a Hidden Treasure, and I loved to be recognized, therefore I created the Cosmos." Among all created things, only human beings have the ability to know 'all the names of Allah,' to become conscious in the full sense, to be the self whose externalized counterpart is the cosmos in its entirety.

The great majority of the human beings are forgetful of the primordial agreement that they have with Allah to act as his vicegerents. Therefore, the act of the prophets is to remind them of their own nature, and the appropriate response of the human being is to remember who he/she is and to follow the prophetic guidance. The purpose is to serve Allah and the task for attaining this purpose is to recognize him, love him, and become conscious of him.³⁹

Islamic practice is conceived as a road that leads to Allah. By following this path, seekers of Allah can become free of their negative character traits and manifest

³⁷ Chittick, *The Self-disclosure of God*, 269-302.

³⁸ The verses in the Qur'an: 51: 56-58) "I created jinn and mankind only to serve Me. I want no provision from them, nor do I want them to feed Me. Allah is the Provider, the Lord of Power, the Ever Mighty."

³⁹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Practice of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition* (New York: HarperOne, 2007) 3-59.

their innate positive traits, which are actually the embodiment of divine names and attributes.^{40 41} The path to Allah is also described with the two words *fana* (annihilation) and *baqa* (subsistence). Annihilation is an expression of the commitment to the statement of *tawhid* “There is no Allah but Allah,” which can as well be read as “There is no Self but Self,” or just as well; “There is no Real but Real.” Any sense of self other than the Self is an illusion and therefore becomes annihilated. Subsistence is what remains after the disintegration of the illusory self. Therefore, the path to Allah is a process through which the soul is absorbed back into its divine prototype. As the human being attains more nearness to Allah, his/her character traits as well as his/her knowledge and consciousness become transmuted. Sufis interpret this as the death of the lower soul, that is, of ignorance and heedlessness, and the birth of true understanding and consciousness. In other words, they see *fana* as the annihilation of self-centeredness. Death to ignorance is simultaneous with rebirth in knowledge; it is *baqa*, the “subsistence” of Allah; consciousness.⁴²

In studying the writings of the Muslim philosophers, it should not be forgotten that the final object of investigation is the Primal Consciousness and the root of awareness. From this perspective, we find the fullness of consciousness and existence when we find Allah by losing ourselves. The annihilation of egocentric limitations brings the subsistence of the Supreme Reality.

⁴⁰ Al-Ghazali, *On the Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 2007).

⁴¹ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 31-59.

⁴² William Chittick, *The Heart of Islamic Philosophy: "The Quest for Self-Knowledge in the Teachings of Afdal ad-din Kashani"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 169-233.

From this perspective, we as humans cannot claim to have existence simply because we are here; our true existence is our true consciousness, and our true consciousness is our consciousness of the Real (*al-Haqq*). This consciousness gradually emerges as we emerge from the limitations of our ignorant and clouded selfhoods; as we come out of our encapsulated drops to become “oceans without shores”.⁴³

⁴³ Michel Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean Without Shore: Ibn Arabi, The Book, And The Law* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992) 1-131.

3. THE GUIDE

3.1. THE PSYCHOANALYST

“The acceptance of unconscious psychical processes, the acknowledgement of the doctrine on resistance and repression, the taking into consideration of sexuality and the Oedipus complex are the principle tenets of psychoanalysis and the bases of its theory, and whosoever is not prepared to subscribe to all of them should not count himself among psychoanalysts”.⁴⁴

These were the defining words of Freud in the foundational years of psychoanalysis. Since then, there have been endless discussions in various psychoanalytic institutions over the question of how an aspiring psychoanalyst should be trained and evaluated. To this day, there is no established consensus over the methods of training and evaluation.⁴⁵ Freud had announced his own recommendation as:

“It is reasonable to expect of an analyst, as part of his qualifications, a considerable degree of mental normality and correctness. In addition,

⁴⁴ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:18, 247.

⁴⁵ de Mijolla, ed., *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, 1368.

he must possess some kind of superiority, so that in certain analytic situations he can act as a model for his patient and in others as a teacher. And finally we must not forget that the analytic relationship is based on a love of truth—that is, on a recognition of reality—and that it precludes any kind of sham or deceit”.⁴⁶

A fundamental aspect of psychoanalysis is that the analyst listens to the patient. One of Freud’s first major assumptions was that the patient’s words, no matter how fragmented, incoherent or irrelevant they appear on the surface, conceal a hidden and important meaning, and that meaning can be deciphered by paying close attention to what is said and how it is said. Whether this assumption is right or wrong, whether the analyst ever understands the patient’s real meaning, whether the deciphering is correct or mistaken, whether it even makes sense to speak of a ‘real’ meaning is an issue which raises an infinite series of discussions. It is generally accepted, however, that the analyst’s attentive and patient listening is a central feature of the psychoanalytic setting. The meanings discovered by psychoanalytic inquiry may be therapeutic, but the experience of being listened to by an attentive, concerned guide in the search for meaning is accepted to be even more therapeutic in most cases.

The second principle of psychoanalysis is that, in addition to listening attentively and patiently, the analyst must be interested and curious without being critical or judgmental. Developing a nonjudgmental interest may be even more

⁴⁶ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:23, 248.

difficult than listening attentively, because of our innate tendency to make judgments about behavior and to hold people responsible for what they do. It is well known, however, that such an attitude towards a patient seriously compromises psychoanalysis. The unconscious is the seat of powerful forces which shape behavior and which are at the same time both within the patient and outside her awareness. This observation supports the paradoxical but fundamental principle that the patient should not be judged or held guilty.⁴⁷

In many respects, the work of psychoanalyst is similar to the work of the patient. Above all, he should be committed to the relationship and to the meticulous analysis of his own motivations for being in this relationship. He must be committed to interpretive listening, not only to observe the patient's resistance, but also to realize his own defenses. An ability to sustain an inner balance is crucial. During the sessions, a focused, unwavering attention must be retained during the powerful processes evoked by the highly-charged relationship of the psychoanalytic setting.

Freud drew attention to the fact that the main characteristic of a psychoanalyst should be commitment to the practice, which "cannot be handled like a pair of glasses that one puts on for reading and takes off when one goes for a walk. As a rule, psychoanalysis possesses a doctor either entirely or not at all".⁴⁸ He voiced his regret that "the analysts in their own personalities have not invariably come up to the standard of psychical normality to which they wish to educate their patients".⁴⁹ He

⁴⁷ Robert Oelsner, ed., *Transference and Countertransference Today* (London: Routledge, 2013), 269-289.

⁴⁸ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:22, 153.

⁴⁹ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:23, 247.

commented that psychoanalysis was among the three “impossible” professions in which the practitioner was always doomed to be achieving unsatisfying results. The other two, in his opinion, were education and government.⁵⁰

Jacques Lacan, in his famous seminars, devoted significant attention to the theoretical and ethical position of the psychoanalyst. Lacan was in active disagreement with the school of ‘ego psychology’ which was hugely influential at the time in America. Lacan introduced the idea that “the ego is an object rather than a subject”. In other words, the ego, despite the contrary assumptions, is not a locus of autonomous agency; it is not the seat of a free ‘I’ determining its own fate.⁵¹ This idea of the ego-as-object was at the focus of Lacan's lifelong opposition to the Anglo-American Ego Psychology in which the therapists were trying to strengthen their patients' egos by collaborating with these supposedly autonomous psychological agents. Against this approach, Lacan viewed the ego as totally compromised and inherently neurotic down to its very core. In his view, the ego was constructed as a passionate defense built in order to sustain a fundamental ignorance of the unconscious.⁵²

Lacan proposed that the inability to sustain a sense of being whole produces a perpetual feeling of ‘lack’ in the human being. “It is not the lack of this or that, but lack of being whereby the being exists.”⁵³ This inevitable ‘lack’ produces an insatiable ‘desire’. For Lacan, the aim of psychoanalysis is “to lead the analysand to

⁵⁰ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:23, 248.

⁵¹ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar. Book I. Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953–54*, trans. John Forrester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 59-63.

⁵² Jacques Lacan, *Écrits. A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock Publications, 1977) 120-129.

⁵³ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar. Book II. The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954–55*, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 223.

recognize her desire” and (in this process) “to uncover the truth about her desire”. However, this is possible only if desire is articulated in speech. The desire cannot be fully articulated in speech because of a fundamental “incompatibility between the actual desire and speech”.⁵⁴ ‘Desire’ is always insatiable, in just the same way as ‘lack’ is interminable. Lacan, therefore vehemently warned the psychoanalyst against giving the analysand a false promise of happiness to be achieved as an outcome the psychoanalytic treatment.

He drew attention to the fact that the desire of the analysand is manifested as a demand for love. The analysand deals with her demand for love by transferring it to the analyst. In this case, the analyst has to vigorously maintain the space within which the subject can confront the truth of his/her desire. The analyst gives the gift of love in his commitment to keeping an attentive distance with the analysand; so that the analysand can freely and willingly face her own being and embrace her experience in its totality.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Lacan, *The Seminar. Book II.*, 244.

⁵⁵ Lacan, *Écrits. A Selection*, 271-276.

3.2. THE *MURSHID*

The *murshid* on the path fulfills the position of the analyst in psychoanalytic treatment. However, this function is only a fraction of his responsibility in the context of Sufism. Let's try to understand how this fraction is a necessary but insufficient function in the relationship between the *murshid* and the *murid*; in other words, between the master and the disciple.

Before we begin this discussion, it is crucial to understand that this master and disciple polarity ultimately stands in opposite meaning to the master and slave polarity in Hegel's system. In the Sufi perspective, the true *murshid* is *al-insan al-kamil*.⁵⁶ That is, he is a human being who has completed the journey of realizing the true Self. Through rigorous striving and through divine grace, he has not only attained true recognition of the Ultimate Reality, but also he is a living embodiment of that Reality because he has experienced the annihilation of his false self and therefore lives in continuous immersion within the true Self. He has become free of assuming the selfhood of an isolated drop and realized his Selfhood as an ocean without a shore.⁵⁷

In becoming free of his limiting selfhood, the *murshid* has become a loving, willing and devoted servant of the Self. Therefore, his life is an expression of serving all created beings which are nothing but various, ever-changing manifestations of the Self. Since the Self wishes to be known and wishes to guide human beings on their

⁵⁶ Éric Geoffroy, *Introduction to Sufism: The Inner Path of Islam*, trans. Roger Gaetani (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2010) 142-153.

⁵⁷ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 356-381.

path toward perfection (towards recognizing the true Self), the *murshid* guides human beings on their path toward perfection.

The Prophet Muhammad is the ultimate *murshid*, and a true *murshid* is connected to him in two ways: First, he is connected by transmission through generations of *murshids* which ultimately lead to the transmission and teaching of the Prophet himself. Secondly, since he has attained the stage of perfection with the recognition of the Self, he is now the embodiment of the same Self.⁵⁸

The course of the path of realization, that is, the long inward journey leading the human from being the captive of her ego toward the potential state of perfection that she already holds, is a path which can only be walked with a guide. Anyone who wants to walk this path without a *murshid* is considered as being similar to a terminally ill patient who wants to make a surgical operation on herself.⁵⁹ The limited sense of self which the human has before he begins to walk the path endows her with extremely limited faculties of knowing, seeing and being. In order to transcend these limits, she needs intervention and support. The path consists of a series of operations: Each operation is the stripping of a layer of attachments which the disciple strongly holds onto. These layers are false identifications of the self which prevent access to the recognition of the Self. The *murshid* in this case, is a doctor of souls, a mediator between Allah and human beings, and a support for the disciple's dedication, commitment and love for the path.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 309-321.

⁵⁹ Robert Frager and James Fadiman, *Essential Sufism* (New Jersey: Castle Books, 1998) 127-130.

⁶⁰ Robert Frager, *Heart, Self & Soul: The Sufi Psychology of Growth, Balance, and Harmony* (Wheaton, Quest Books, 1999) 187-206.

In truth, the outer master is only the mirror of the “inner master,” of the Self which has manifested the false self and which is now assimilating this false self through a journey of re-cognition of the Self.

When the disciple encounters the *murshid* and recognizes her own Self manifested through him, two things happen: First; she realizes the illusory nature of her former conception of reality, of her selfhood. And second; slowly but surely, she falls in love with the *murshid*, who is the embodiment of the true Self. This love bears two fruits which are the sustenance of the path: The fruit of enchantment which is felt as the thrill and trembling before the uncanny and unknown depths of the Self. And the other; the fruit of trust which loosens the tight grasp upon the attachments of the false self and leads to a willing submission.⁶¹

What needs to be submitted are all the habits accumulated in the past; the habits and assumptions which arise from believing in an autonomous, righteous, separate self; namely, pride, arrogance, deceit, anger, greed, envy, sloth, vengeance and wrath. The first and foremost prerequisite for walking the path is the commitment to be absolutely aware of these very real inner urges. The aim of this struggle is to be awake; to see these urges before they fully manifest and not to fall prey to them. As the disciple slowly advances on the path, she gains the ability to spontaneously detach from false attachments. As the false layers of self begin to fall, the non-grasping soul begins to emerge; with its innate tendency for love, patience, grace, joy and clarity.

This path of transformation is the ultimate challenge of the human being and

⁶¹ William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983) 35-36.

it is not possible to progress without the guidance of the *murshid*. The *murshid* consciously acts as the conduit for wisdom, love, support and assurance. If we visualize the path as a tightrope stretching along the walk of life, the connection with the *murshid* provides the disciple with the concentration, strength, awareness, and balance needed to remain on track.

Muhyiddin Ibn al-Arabi, the venerable and extremely prolific Sufi of the 13th Century speaks of an experience he had in his youth:

One day, while he was in great confusion and distress at the sight of men who were in total disobedience with Allah, he ran across Abu Abbas, who was a Murshid of the path. Abu Abbas said to him: “Occupy yourself with Allah.” A while later, still in the same state of confusion, he ran into Abu Imran, who was another Murshid of the path. Abu Imran told him: “Occupy yourself with your soul.” The youthful Ibn Arabi replied: “Master, I am bewildered; Sheikh Abu Abbas tells me to occupy myself with Allah and you tell me to occupy myself with my soul. And you are both Murshids.” Abu Imran replied to him; “My friend, I hope that Allah will make me reach the spiritual state of Abu Abbas. Listen to him. That will be better for you and for me.” Ibn Arabi returned to Abu Abbas and told him what happened. Abu Abbas replied to him; “Listen to Abu Imran, for he has pointed out to you the path. I have pointed out to you the Companion. Act in accordance with what he has told you and act in accordance with what I have told you.”⁶²

⁶² Frager and Fadiman, *Essential Sufism*, 129-130.

4. THE CONNECTION

4.1. THE TRANSFERENCE RELATIONSHIP

“Transference” constitutes the pipeline of the relationship between the psychoanalyst and the patient. When we use the term transference in psychoanalytic theory, it signifies a transfer of feelings, desires, fears and fantasies by the analysand onto the psychoanalyst. These feelings are actually the habits of relating formerly structured in the analysand’s past, organized in connection with the people in the analysand’s past whom the analysand was highly invested in.

Transference in psychoanalysis involves transferring emotional investment from previous significant others to the form and the personality of the psychoanalyst. In the actual human experience, outside the setting of psychoanalytic treatment, transference always occurs in all relationships. What we consciously and unconsciously do is to relive the same relationship scenarios that we carry on from the past with all the people we encounter. The phenomena of transference implies the transmission of particular relational forms and loyalty to past relationship patterns preserved in the unconscious.⁶³

⁶³ de Mijolla, ed., *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, 1776-1777.

In contemporary psychoanalytic theory, the term has come to designate all the transference phenomena which take place in the psychoanalytic setting. It is important to understand that the psychoanalytic setting does not create transference, but simply and deliberately reveals the unconscious transference into consciousness. The content of a past wish emerges in the patient's consciousness unattended by the memories of the original event which accompanied the wish in the past. This wish is transferred to the analyst, with whom the patient is consciously related. Therefore, the transference does not only reflect the patient's love for the analyst but also the structure of a past relationship.⁶⁴

The repetition in the transference becomes the means through which the analysand becomes conscious of forgotten, unconscious mental attitudes.⁶⁵ A part of the analysand's emotional life which she cannot remember is re-experienced in the analytic setting in the relationship with the analyst. In this analytic setting, the aim is to give the symptoms of the neurotic disorder a new transference meaning and to replace the previous neurosis by a 'transference neurosis' of which she can recover from by the therapeutic work. The newly formed analytic transference involves all the features of the previous neurotic disorder; but it represents a new disorder which is accessible to conscious intervention.⁶⁶

Therefore, transference is in many ways the engine of the psychoanalytic treatment. The analytic transference introduces a new element into the analysand's mental realm, a new channel of real experience. The transference is a necessary

⁶⁴ Oelsner, ed., *Transference and Countertransference Today*, 196-214.

⁶⁵ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:11, 5-55.

⁶⁶ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:15, 145-156.

precondition for the analysand's acceptance of new interpretations for her experience. The time for these new interpretations to unfold is dependent upon the unique circumstances of each specific case. In other words, it is not predictable. The intensity of the transferred affects supplies the force needed to remove the analysand's resistance to therapeutic change; therefore a powerful transference is crucial for the outcome.⁶⁷

Freud observed that the transference relationship worked as follows: In transference, the purpose is to create new editions of the old conflicts. In this new edition, the analysand will want to behave in the same way as she did in the past. The task of the analyst is to gather and use every means and every force at his hand in order to compel the analysand to behave in a fresh way with a spontaneous new decision. Therefore, the transference becomes a battlefield on which all the dynamically striving forces come to meet and confront each other. Freud observed that there are two forms of transference; negative and positive. Positive transference includes all tendencies to have an attachment to, and confidence in the analyst. This positive transference is crucial for a therapeutic outcome. Negative transference involves hostile emotions which have the potential to cause the patient to leave the therapeutic relationship. In extreme cases, an analysand who does not have the capability to form any kind of transference is unsusceptible to treatment in the psychoanalytic setting.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:12, 97-108.

⁶⁸ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:15, 16-17.

The transference relationship has the capacity to evolve and this capacity is what makes it a therapeutic tool. In the ordinary interpersonal relationships, transferences tend to stagnate into mostly unconscious compromises. In the transference relationship, the attitude of the analyst creates the difference: He does not respond to the analysand's emotional demands; instead, he strives to relate them to their original roots and expose the various agents of the transference, corresponding to different periods of the analysand's life. The analyst does not allow himself to be boxed into a specific relational mode; he behaves as an object, drawing the analysand toward him, while he simultaneously behaves as an anti-object, by reflecting the analysand's transference so that the transference can unfold and make itself deciphered.⁶⁹

Freud commented that the position of the analyst is similar to the function of the mechanical rabbit in a greyhound coursing: It continually moves out of reach and therefore assures the continuation of the race. If a real rabbit were thrown among the dogs, it would immediately be devoured and the race would be terminated.⁷⁰

The term 'transference love' has a specific significance in psychoanalytic theory. It designates a transference relationship of which the desired object is the analyst. The task of the analyst in this circumstance is to trace the relationship back, without satisfying or smothering it, to its original roots. Psychoanalysis does not cure by love, but love and the analyst play a significant mediating role in the healing. The set of inner problems generated by the initiation of transference love eventually frees

⁶⁹ Alain de Mijolla, ed., *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, 1789.

⁷⁰ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:12, 145-146.

love from repression. Therefore, the intermediary role of transference love is to make the emergence of love possible. The transference relationship involves all the various and ever-changing expressions of love: Adoration, infatuation, hate, anger, fear, hope, yearning, jealousy, frustration, threatening, loyalty... It causes the patient to become committed to the outcome of the treatment as well as to the person of the analyst.⁷¹

Even in its forms as resistance, transference love is a prerequisite for the therapeutic outcome. What is repeated in transference love is frustration, a demand not heard, not reciprocated, which leads the analysand to reassume the position of a child facing the analyst. The analyst's position in confronting this transference love is that of the interpreter. For both technical and ethical reasons, the analyst is prohibited from gratifying the demands of transference love. Like the doctor held by the Hippocratic covenant, he has to refrain from drawing personal profit from the analytic situation while never losing sight of the fact that the analysand is suffering from a limited capacity to love. The ultimate purpose of analytic treatment is to restore the analysand's capability to love, through whatever means possible within the limits of the psychoanalytic setting.

Heinz Kohut, the father of the Self Psychology school, introduced the term "narcissistic transference" into psychoanalytic theory.. In *The Analysis of the Self* (1971), Kohut described several aspects of such transferences. "Mirror transferences" designate a conception of an idealized grandiose self and make the following demand with respect to other people: "I am perfect and I need you to confirm it." A mirror transference spontaneously gives rise to a feeling of boredom or impatience in the

⁷¹ de Mijolla, ed., *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, 1785-1786.

other person (in the analyst), whose otherness it does not recognize. Such transferences are observed to be of three types: The primary transference is the “merger transference” in which the analysand struggles for an omnipotent and tyrannical control over the analyst, who is seen as an extension of the grandiose self. In an ‘alter-ego transference’ the other is experienced as being very similar to the grandiose self; as an equivalent. Lastly, in the case of a straight mirror transference, the analyst is experienced as a function serving the analysand’s needs. If the analysand feels recognized, she will experience sensations of well-being associated with the restoration of her narcissism. In other cases, an “idealizing transference” is defined by Kohut as the arrangement of an idealized and all-powerful parent image and it is summarized in the sentence “You are perfect, but I am part of you”. This attitude is associated with a struggle against feelings of emptiness, uselessness and powerlessness.⁷²

⁷² Heinz Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1971) 114-116.

4.2. **RABITA: BETWEEN THE *MURID* AND THE *MURSHID***

When the *murid* meets the *murshid*, there is an immediate recognition. The inner Self instantly recognizes the Self in the *murshid*. This is the moment of falling in love. This love is going to be the substance, the means and the path for the transformation of the disciple.⁷³

This love demands the death of self-centeredness and the rebirth in the Self; the ultimate Beloved. This is the ultimate task for the human being and this is the fundamental yearning of the soul. Any form of love, from the most ordinary to the most exalted, is in its essence the expression of this love for the Beloved. In this case, hell is the state of being unaware and forgetful of this simple fact. In this state of ignorance, the human being is caught up in false assumptions of selfhood, with firm attachments to irrelevant, temporary phenomena. And by contrast, paradise is the conscious awareness and experience of true love and the closeness to Beloved.⁷⁴

In the encounter with the *murshid*, the disciple experiences a glimpse of this truth. And this spark is enough to ignite the fire of love: The love that will slowly burn and demolish all false assumptions and false attachments of selfhood.

If we translate this into psychoanalytic terminology; the illness is diagnosed as the distance from the Beloved. This distance is constituted by the layers of false selfhood. This is the cause of all the neurotic disorder. And the symptoms manifest themselves as self righteousness, anger, greed, lust, jealousy, pride, fear and anxiety.

⁷³ Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, *Sufism: The Transformation of the Heart* (Point Reyes: Golden Sufi Center, 1995) 91-93.

⁷⁴ Efdal Emre, *Niyazi-i Mısri Divanı ve Şerhi: Tanrı Erinin Sırları* (İstanbul: Gelenek, 2014) 27-68.

The therapeutic process is initiated by the covenant between the *murid* and the *murshid*. And the therapeutic means will appear through the bond of love between the two.

The bond in this relationship is named *rabita*. *Ribat* and *murataba*, which come from the same root with *rabita*, is translated as observing the borders, keeping guard, accurately fulfilling an order. This is why the *murshid* is described as the 'keeper of the gates of grace'. Without this relationship, there is no process of transformation. Through this relationship, the disciple receives the love and guidance without which the journey is not possible.⁷⁵

The *murshid* is a channel for pure and unconditional love which is not obscured by the personal problems which dominate ordinary relationships. Because the *murshid*, while still functioning as a human being, has been emptied from a false selfhood through the grace of his own *murshid*. He has become featureless and formless; without a face, without a name. Therefore his love is unconditional and is present as it is, right from the beginning. The love of the *murshid* cannot increase or decrease. For him, the beginning and the end of the journey is the same point; this is a closed circle. The *murid* is unaware of this fact; she has to complete the whole circle in order to realize that. As she progresses on the path, she feels the *murshid* to become closer and closer. But the *murshid* in fact has not become closer; he has always been near, but she was unaware of this truth.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Ian Richard Netton, *Sufi Ritual: The Parallel Universe* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000) 149-168.

⁷⁶ Vaughan-Lee, *Sufism: The Transformation of the Heart*, 91-99.

Encountering the presence of the *murshid*, the disciple enters the presence of unconditional love. But she does not realize that, because she doesn't yet have the ability to consciously recognize what is being given. She still remains within the prison of her own projections, past conditionings and assumptions, which inevitably become projected into the personality of with the *murshid*. The love of the disciple reflects all of her positive and negative projections. The extent of her love serves to increase the power of her projections; the unrealized parts of her soul crave for attention. The unconditional love given by the *murshid* inevitably provokes a minefield of unexpected projections scattered upon a huge terrain of unmet needs.⁷⁷

The disciple has to confront all of these unwanted and forgotten faces, previously repressed in her soul, but now urgently needing to be seen and recognized. Once the initial period of intoxication is over, a difficult but inevitable process awaits the disciple. The disciple's unconscious problems regarding authority will begin to come up, creating a confusion which may obscure the true nature of the relationship which is pure and unconditional love. The disciple can only progress through this love. When her ability to love falters, the *murshid* serves to evoke love in her heart.⁷⁸

The relationship of the disciple with the *murshid* is extremely paradoxical in its nature. It is an extremely intimate, and at the same time, totally impersonal relationship. It is extremely intimate because it is a relationship of pure love, and yet it is totally impersonal because it has nothing to do with the personality, or with the person who appears in the position of the *murshid*. For the *murshid*, this love is the

⁷⁷ Vaughan-Lee, *Sufism: The Transformation of the Heart*, 99-104.

⁷⁸ Frager, *Heart, Self & Soul*, 187-205.

essence of the path through which the *murid* is purified of her fixations and false assumptions, so that she can experience her immanent nature, her inherent closeness to Allah. While she confronts the obstacles that her own assumptions, the *murshid* does the real work which softens and prepares the heart for the eventual awakening of consciousness. Much of the work on the path is a purification to prepare the heart of the disciple so that it becomes able to contain this consciousness, free of the fixations and attachments of the false self.⁷⁹

When the disciple becomes ready, the consciousness of the heart is awakened through the grace of the *murshid*. This transmission of pure love is the gift of *sirr*; a gift of the grace of Allah, given from the generosity and the mercy of Allah, instead of being received through the acquisition and action of the disciple. The word “*sirr*” means secret; *sirr* is hidden from the world because it belongs to the mystery of pure love. It is the essence of the relationship of lover and Beloved: “He loves them and they love Him.” Without *sirr*, there can be no recognition of the Supreme Reality. This is the most valuable, most precious bestowal for the human being and it can only come through the grace of the *murshid*.⁸⁰

This is a stage of maturity for the disciple. At this stage, the soul has achieved the ability to remain fully awake to the vices of forgetfulness and ignorance with the ability of not falling prey to them. Through the grace of the *murshid*, the disciple gradually awakens to the consciousness of the Supreme Self. But for several years on the path, this consciousness remains hidden from the disciple while she faces the

⁷⁹ Emre, *Niyazi-i Mısri Divanı ve Şerhi: Tanrı Erinin Sırları*, 297-314.

⁸⁰ Vaughan-Lee, *Sufism: The Transformation of the Heart*, 141-151.

confusion and the limitations of the false self. Then, she is only able to see the *murshid* through the veils of duality and through the distortions of projections. She keeps trying to carry this relationship from its impersonal level into the personal level of the false self. This is why this covenant of love so difficult to follow and why its thread is so delicate and fragile.⁸¹

But if the disciple follows it with enough sincerity, devotion, perseverance and trust, she awakens to the real nature of this bewildering relationship and comes to know how the heart of the *murshid* reflects the love of the Supreme Self.

⁸¹ Vaughan-Lee, *Sufism: The Transformation of the Heart*, 146-155.

5. THE THREAT, THE OBSTACLE AND THE MEANS

5.1. RESISTANCE AND REPRESSION

Psychoanalytic theory defines resistance as something which prevents the progression of analytic work during treatment. In the Freudian approach, this concept refers to the psychic intervention brought by the analysand in order to prevent the appearance of certain unwanted representations in her consciousness.⁸²

Freud formulated psychoanalysis as an interpretative art which consists of “making conscious what used to be unconscious”. The analyst’s task is therefore defined as leading the patient into recognizing her resistance in order to deal with it. Analysis of the resistance is a cornerstone of the analytic technique and the analysis of the transference is intimately linked with it.⁸³

Freud observed that transference, a fundamental agent among the agents contributing to therapeutic success, is also the most powerful source of resistance. His analytic practice convinced him that nothing in analysis is more difficult than overcoming resistances. However, resistance is inevitable and indispensable for the therapeutic outcome, because it is the only route to uncover the analysand’s forgotten

⁸² de Mijolla, ed., *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, 1488-89.

⁸³ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:12, 97-108.

and repressed ability to love. By endowing the analysand with a sense of immediacy and urgency, the resistance facilitates the recognition of her innate propensity to love.

In resistance, instead of remembering previous traumatic experiences, the analysand reproduces attitudes from her present life, which, through the transference, is used as a means of opposition against the treatment and against the therapist. In this moment, it is as if her intention to confuse the analyst, to make him feel powerless and to triumph over him, becomes more powerful than her intention to bring an end to her illness.

Analytic technique is based on recognizing the resistances and communicating them to the analysand. However, Freud observed that merely naming the resistance did not make it disappear. The analysand's committed and ongoing work on her own resistances was necessary and indispensable for the lasting therapeutic impact. Freud insisted that this work alone carried the possibility for real and lasting change in the analysand's psyche.⁸⁴

As a general rule, the greater the resistance is, the more extensive will be the acting out (the repetition) of old patterns. This propensity for repetition can only be overcome by working through the resistance over time. After the point at which the analysand becomes conscious of her resistance, the analyst has to allow her time to become more skillful in conversing with this resistance, to work through it, to overcome it, by continuing, in defiance of it, the analytic work.

Freud emphasized the fact that resistances are "extremely protean by nature"; that is, they constantly change their form according to the circumstances surrounding

⁸⁴ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:12, 145-156.

the repressed material. During treatment, phenomena such as lapses of memory, distancing, an overly abundant eruption of dreams, inability to make free associations, avoidance of causal links, suspicion about the significance of thoughts that come to mind or even being excessively attached to the outcome of the treatment may all be expressions of resistance.

After the foundational work of Freud, the concept of resistance came to play an increasingly important part in psychoanalytic theory in the effort to understand the factors which stood in the way of therapeutic success. In America, the proponents of Ego Psychology assigned increasing importance on overcoming the patient's resistance. Lacan became very critical of this attitude, arguing that it leads to an "inquisitorial" manner of psychoanalysis which considers resistance to be based on the fundamental unwillingness of the patient.⁸⁵ Lacan argued that this attitude disregarded the structural nature of resistance and reduced the analysis to "an imaginary dualistic relationship".⁸⁶ In Lacan's view, resistance is not an outcome of the ill will of the analysand; resistance is structural, and it is inherent in the dynamics of the analytic process. This resistance is caused by a structural "incompatibility between desire and speech"⁸⁷. Therefore, there is an irreducible level of resistance which can never be overcome: After the process of reducing the resistance, there is a residue which may be what is essential for the therapeutic outcome. This irreducible "residue of resistance" is essential because it is the respect for this residue that

⁸⁵ Lacan, *The Seminar. Book I. Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953–54*, 30.

⁸⁶ Lacan, *Écrits. A Selection*, 78.

⁸⁷ JLacan, *Écrits. A Selection*, 275.

distinguishes psychoanalysis from forced intervention.⁸⁸

Psychoanalysis respects the right of the patient to resist forced intervention and values this resistance. However, Lacan observed that while the analyst is not able to, and should not try to, overcome all resistance, he can reduce it, or he can at least avoid intensifying it. He can do this by understanding his own part in the analysand's resistance, because "there is no other resistance to analysis than that of the analyst himself."⁸⁹

This can be interpreted in two ways:⁹⁰

1. The resistance of the analysand can only manage to block the treatment if it responds to and/or creates a resistance in the analyst. Therefore, the analyst has to strictly adhere to the rule of neutrality and not be tempted into the traps set for him by the analysand.

2. It is the analyst who provokes resistance by pushing the analysand. According to Lacan, 'resistance' is the present state of an interpretation of the subject. It is the manner in which the subject interprets the state he is in. It simply means that the analysand cannot move any faster by himself. Lacan proposes that, by not forcing the analysand, resistance is reduced to its irreducible minimum. Therefore, the analyst has to decline from any form of forced intervention.⁹¹

Lacan proposes that the source of resistance lies in the ego. "The resistances

⁸⁸ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar. Book II. The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, 1954–55, 321.

⁸⁹ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits. A Selection*, 235.

⁹⁰ Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1996) 168.

⁹¹ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar. Book II. The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, 1954–55, 228.

of the ego are imaginary lures, which the analyst must be wary of being deceived by.” Therefore, the purpose of analysis should never be to “strengthen the ego”, as ego-psychology claims, because this would only cause the amplification of the resistance.

For a better understanding of the phenomena of resistance, it is necessary to look into another basic concept of psychoanalytic theory, which is repression.

Repression in psychoanalysis refers to the process by which certain ideas or memories are driven out of consciousness and are locked into the unconscious.⁹² Freud made a distinction between primal repression and secondary repression. He defined primary repression as a “mythical forgetting of something which was never conscious in the first place”. He defined this as “an originary psychical act” by which the unconscious is structurally constituted. On the other hand, he defined the case of secondary repression as definite acts of repression by which some idea that was once conscious is driven out of consciousness. Repression does not disintegrate the ideas or memories at its disposal, but simply stores them in the unconscious. Therefore, the repressed material is expected to return in somewhat distorted forms, in symptoms, dreams, slips of the tongue and fantasies.⁹³

When Lacan speaks of repression, he argues that “it is always a signifier which is repressed, instead of a signified.”⁹⁴ This view stands in a parallel line with Freud’s view that what is repressed is not the “affect” but the “representative” of the drive.

⁹² de Mijolla, ed., *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, 1481-84.

⁹³ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:14, 141-158.

⁹⁴ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar. Book XI. The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 1964, 218.

Lacan also adopts Freud's distinction between "primal repression" and "secondary repression". In his view, primal repression is "the alienation of desire when need is articulated in demand".⁹⁵ Primary repression acts as "the repression of the first signifier". Lacan argues that "from the moment the subject speaks, from that precise moment and not before, there is repression". Lacan does not see primary repression as a psychical action which stands at a point in time, but as a constitutive feature of language itself. Primary repression is the inherent incompleteness of language, it is the impossibility of ever saying "the truth about truth".

Lacan defines secondary repression as "a psychical act by which a signifier is eliminated from the signifying chain". Secondary repression manifests in "the return of the repressed", where the repressed signifier reappears as disguised in various metaphors of the unconscious in symptoms, dreams, fantasies or jokes.

5.2. *NAFS*: THE AGENT OF SEPARATION

In order to understand the phenomena of resistance in Sufism, it's imperative that we have a better understanding of *nafs*; the sense of separate self in the human being.

Sufism conceives of the human situation in terms of 'origin' and 'return' as put forward in the Qur'anic verse: "He originates creation and then He makes it

⁹⁵ Lacan, *Écrits. A Selection*, 286.

return.” (10:4) This origin and return are pictured as a descending arc and an ascending arc which together form the circle of existence, which begins and ends in Allah. By tracing this circle consciously, the human being fulfills his/her divine potential and becomes *al-insan al-kamil*.⁹⁶

The universe is “everything other than Allah,” and it consists of “a descending arc moving away from Allah and an ascending arc moving back to Allah”. It can be conceived as being divided into three worlds which are named in the Qur’an as “the heavens, the earth, and what is between the two.” These are also, respectively, “the world of spirits, the world of bodies and the world of images”. The world of images is an intermediate realm which allows the consciousness of spiritual beings to interact with the darkness of bodies. On the descending arc, spirits become embodied through the world of images, and on the ascending arc, bodies become spiritualized. These three levels of existence are manifested in the human as the spirit (*ruh*), the soul (*nafs*) and the body (*jism*). The soul acts as the realm of images, the *barzakh*, between the spirit and the body, allowing the two dimensions to interrelate.⁹⁷

Allah created mankind, as the Qur’an tells, “to serve Me” (51:56) and “to become conscious of Me” as explained in the hadith qudsi: “I was a Hidden Treasure, and I desired to be known, so I created the creatures that they might know Me.” Among all created beings, only human beings have the ability to recognize Him fully, in respect of his Self and all of His names which are His attributes. Other creatures

⁹⁶ Morris, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 60-89.

⁹⁷ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 77-96.

are created as the signs and marks of these divine names. This diversity of creatures are the manifestations of the infinite Hidden Treasure.

Therefore, human beings have the unique status of being created as a microcosm of the totality. At the spiritual level they have angelic qualities of consciousness, at the bodily level they have all the characteristics of bodies, and at the intermediate *nafs* level, they are “neither spiritual nor bodily, neither knowing nor ignorant”. Therefore, the situation of the human being is “always in-between”: The human self is an imaginal reality, at once the “image of spirit and the image of body”.⁹⁸

The Origin and the Return are inherent in the principle of *tawhid*, Oneness: There is no reality and no being but Allah, therefore anything other than Allah is contingent on His reality and His being, both in its origin and in its return. The return is compulsory, for everything coming back from Him goes back to Him. In their unique status, human beings have a certain degree of freedom because of their self-awareness. They have the freedom to choose to accept or reject the call of the prophets. Like all creatures, they are compelled to return to Allah; but they have the option of engaging in a voluntary return. The guidance of the prophets brings the path that leads to recognizing and becoming conscious of the Hidden Treasure. On this path, the human being actualizes the latent divine character traits and only through this path, he/she can live and act appropriately in the world; in full consciousness and conformity with the divine reality. Furthermore, and most significantly, only the *nafs* which completes this voluntary journey of return while in the bodily realm attains the

⁹⁸ Chittick, *The Self-disclosure of God*, 269-302.

sirr, the ultimate desire of the soul: The company of the Beloved in full consciousness. This consciousness does not dissipate with bodily death and is retained in the soul after the compulsory return, when it becomes disconnected from the physical body.⁹⁹

At the beginning of this journey of voluntary return, the *nafs* is completely trapped in the bodily and psychical multiplicity; it is totally identified with a separate sense of self. It has the urge to act as an autonomous self, separate from everything perceived as 'other' than this self. In order to make the journey of the Return, the *nafs* needs to be detached from its false identifications and slowly become merged with the true Self. In other words, it needs to be unified by intensifying its consciousness of the One. Its latent divine traits need to come out, become actualized and integrated. Every step toward the One intensifies consciousness and brings further actualization of innate attributes. The voluntary return, therefore, aims at and depends upon the awakening of the *nafs* to its divine core.¹⁰⁰

When the human being is called upon this path of awakening, the *nafs* will be in a state of most intense resistance. It will do everything to divert the mind from its decision to follow this path. At this stage, *al-nafs al-ammara* is tyrannical in its efforts to follow its own habits and patterns. It has a powerful tendency for material comforts, for greed, selfishness and deceit. All of its efforts are focused on sustaining a single false belief: That the self is an autonomous, separate identity. Overcoming the tyrannical basic resistance of the *nafs* is a tremendous task which demands

⁹⁹ Chittick, *The Self-disclosure of God*, 47-90.

¹⁰⁰ Abu 'l-Qasim al-Qushayri, *Al-Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism: Al-risala Al-qushayriyya Fi 'ilm Al-tasawwuf*, trans. Alexander D. Knysh (Reading: Garnett Publishing, 2007) 75-110.

immense trust, patience and perseverance. The only thing which helps the traveller focus on the journey is her love and trust in the guide, the *murshid*. For this reason, there is a period of testing, trials and preparation required before a traveller finally becomes ready to be in a sincere commitment and a powerful connection with the murshid. There is no hope of change until she sincerely acknowledges that her life is controlled by the tyrannical nafs and she has become a slave of her addiction to of self-adoration.¹⁰¹

Overcoming the urges of the tyrannical nafs may require several years of work on the path. The disciple learns to remain watchful of her states; to know when she becomes defensive, irritated, angry, impatient or resentful. Overcoming these emotions and habitual reactions are the pavement to freedom: Through recognizing and not falling prey to these urges, she can slowly become liberated. In the Sufi terminology, the resistances of the nafs are described as the veils. They are the veils which filter the full consciousness of the true Self. They still reflect the light of consciousness, but only in a distorted and stained manner, such that its true source remains hidden. As the disciple learns to recognize, understand and release her resistances, the veils grow thinner and the nature of the *nafs* begins to change.¹⁰²

An important practice for the disciple is ‘to accept what is given and not to ask for what is not given’. This is a very effective tool for remaining neutral to changes, for recognizing false attachments and developing the patience to endure inner resistance.

¹⁰¹ Frager, *Heart, Self & Soul*, 23-29.

¹⁰² Javad Nurbakhsh, *The Psychology of Sufism* (London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993), 14-49.

Another basic practice for the disciple is to strive to act with compassion and generosity toward others. This is an especially important tool for transforming tyrannical self-serving habits and fixations. As the disciple learns to willingly give instead of always trying to take and accumulate, the natural dynamic of relationships begin to flow more freely. This becomes the path which leads the disciple from being a slave of self-adoration toward being a grateful, willing servant of life.¹⁰³

According to the Sufi experience, the tyrannical urges of the nafs can never be overcome by force or violence. A forced intervention only serves to increase the resistance. ‘Do not fight the thief with its own weapon,’ tells the Sufi master; ‘Just turn on the light so that he will run away.’ A constant source of light in the disciple’s life is the *murshid*. When her own willingness, patience and courage tends to weaken, the awareness and the love of the *murshid* is the lighthouse which keeps the thief under surveillance.

As the disciple progresses on the path, the intensity and force of inner resistance weakens, but never dissipates. It operates in increasingly subtle forms; changing its tools and methods in a manner that reflects the change in the disciple’s character and behavior. The increasing intensity of consciousness brings a sharper intelligence and a greater ability to love, although on the other hand it provokes more clever and subtle forms of resistance against progress. In other words, the nafs will never stop resisting the progression on the path. As long as the sense of separate self exists in the psyche, there is the inevitable resistance against being submerged in the

¹⁰³ Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, *The Secret of Secrets*, trans. Tosun Bayrak (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1997) 13-20.

true Self. This resistance itself is the thread which forms the path of transformation for the disciple. Over time, the focus and sharpness of the consciousness increases, such that it becomes ever more able to recognize and dissipate inner resistance.¹⁰⁴

The disciple is tested by her desire. Where there is a desire for progress, there is resistance. There has to be a balance between perseverance and trust. Without one, the other is insufficient by itself. A trust in the immense love and power of the Self has to be coupled with a relentless but dispassionate perseverance for remaining conscious of the inner resistance which stands upon the path of becoming closer to the Self.

As the objects of desire change, the temptations and the pitfalls also change. One's experience and knowledge can become the greatest hindrance if it becomes manipulated to enhance the sense of separate self. Pride and self-importance can disguise themselves in ever more subtle forms. Therefore, serving and caring for others without expecting any return has to be the relentless pursuit of the disciple.¹⁰⁵

For the Sufi, all rituals of worship (*ibadah*) are ways to overcome the resistance of the sense of separate self. Prayer is the conscious remembrance, reverence and gratitude for the Self. Fasting diminishes the tendency for pride, arrogance and self-righteousness. Serving other people who are in need expands and dissolves the imaginary boundaries of the separate self. Pilgrimage is being on the path of overcoming resistances and approaching the Self.¹⁰⁶ Gradually, every

¹⁰⁴ Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, *The Secret of Secrets*, 48-55.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 65-73.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 73-88.

conscious action on the path becomes a form of worship which brings the self closer to the Self.¹⁰⁷

The conscious work on the path serves to reduce the sense of separateness and to unify the various tendencies and identifications developed in the past. It takes years of work to harmonize and integrate all the voices in the psyche. Before they become integrated in this manner, they all serve to clash with and eliminate each other, so intensely that all the time and energy of the psyche becomes wasted for the sake of minor, temporary whims and desires. The one pointed attention which aims nothing but being closer to the Self intensifies through several years of progress on the path.

After years of work and through the divine grace of the Self, the sense of separate self can diminish to such a degree that it creates no resistance before the Self. At this stage, a constant remembrance and recognition of the Self has emerged. There is a continuous gratitude and wakefulness before the ever-changing manifestations of the Self, whether they may be painful, joyous, ecstatic or peaceful. There is no more struggle between material desires and divine inspiration.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Schuon, *Roots Of The Human Condition*, 80-84.

¹⁰⁸ Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, *The Secret of Secrets*, 89-92.

6. THE STRUCTURE OF THE ‘I’

6.1. THE UNCONSCIOUS, THE EGO, THE SUPEREGO AND THE ID

“The division of the psychical phenomena into what is conscious and what is unconscious is the fundamental premise of psychoanalysis.”¹⁰⁹ The ‘unconscious’ in psychoanalytic theory designates localized formations, processes and agencies in a state of repression. The concept of the unconscious implies that psychical life is in a state of conflict, that memory exists without any intention, that the structure of psychic phenomena is determined beyond consciousness and that finally, there is significant material in the psyche which is inaccessible to consciousness.¹¹⁰

Freud defined psychoanalysis as “the science of the unconscious-soul” (“unbewusst-seelisch”). Through the analysis of neurotic symptoms, he discovered that the dream was constructed in a similar way to the structure of the unconscious. He observed that it contains unconscious and indestructible wishes and repressed potential energy. In his view, the conflict between repressed instinctual motives and the urge to censure these motives creates the dream. The phenomena of the unconscious reveals itself in other forms such as joking, in forgetting words and other

¹⁰⁹ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V.3, 19.

¹¹⁰ de Mijolla, ed., *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, 1818.

symptomatic processes. According to psychoanalytic theory, it is primal repression which creates the unconscious. Freud said that “the nucleus of the unconscious consists of instinctual representatives which seek to discharge their cathexis; that is to say, it consists of wishful impulses”¹¹¹

There is no psychoanalytic notion that does not have some connection to the unconscious. In addition to being a deposit of memory traces and fixations, the unconscious is also assumed to sustain an instinctual foundation, as well as “inherited psychic formations and traces of human history”. In 1938 Freud commented:

“What is unsatisfactory in this picture is due to our complete ignorance of the dynamic nature of the mental processes. We tell ourselves that what distinguishes a conscious idea from a preconscious one, and the latter from an unconscious one, can only be a modification, or perhaps a different distribution, of psychical energy. We talk of cathexes and hypercathexes, but beyond this we are without any knowledge on the subject or even any starting-point for a serviceable working hypothesis.”¹¹²

¹¹¹ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:14, 186.

¹¹² Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:23, 97.

6.1.1. THE EGO

The concept of das Ich (the ‘I’) was present in Freud’s theory since the earliest period of psychoanalysis, but over time, it has been subject to significant modification.¹¹³

The German word ‘das Ich’ was used ambiguously in Freud’s writing. Its translation into other languages gave birth to a chain of problems and debates. The word “‘ego’” was selected by the translators of the Standard Edition of Freud’s writing and this choice has long been significantly challenged. Bruno Bettelheim pointed out that; to translate ‘das Ich’ as ‘the ego’ is to transform it into a jargon that does not convey the personal commitment we make when we say ‘I’ or ‘me’; which is a serious problem because this word lies in the heart of the whole psychoanalytic theory.¹¹⁴

Freud defined ‘das Ich’ as “an agency of the mental apparatus with a mediating and regulatory function” face to face with the id, the superego, and external reality. In certain places in his writing, however, he used it to designate the self-conscious person as a whole. Throughout his writing, he allowed a certain ambiguity between these two meanings. Only after his death, the two meanings became disentangled and used separately in distinction from one another. The proponents of

¹¹³ de Mijolla, ed., *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, 461.

¹¹⁴ Bruno Bettelheim, *Freud And Man’s Soul* (New York: Knopf, 1983)

Ego Psychology gave special significance to the ego's adaptive functions; therefore the 'ego' became overshadowed by the 'self,' the 'I,' or the 'subject.'¹¹⁵

Anna Freud was the first to reevaluate and expand upon her father's hypotheses. In America, she published a series of studies centered on the psychology of the ego. Following her lead, Heinz Hartmann laid the groundwork of ego psychology¹¹⁶ with support from Rudolph Loewenstein, Ernst Kris, Paul Federn, David Rapaport and others. Ego psychology became so dominant in United States that for a long time this approach seemed to represent the most comprehensive expression of Freudian thought.

In reality, Heinz Hartmann's idea regarding the "autonomy of the ego" was in a fundamental contradiction with Freud's views on the origins of this mental agency, which for him had no chance but being conflicted, caught in the relations between instinctual demands and the requirements of external reality. The notion of a gradual development of the ego and its object relationships later became the focus of theoretical discussion, especially among the analysts who followed the footsteps of Melanie Klein. According to their view, the ego and its object relationships existed as a structure from birth, as seen in the early split between good and bad objects, as well as in the mechanisms of projection and projective identification, which manifested in the infant's psyche right from the beginning.¹¹⁷

Melanie Klein's use of the term 'self' later became adopted by her followers in their attempt to distance themselves from the mechanistic understanding of the ego

¹¹⁵ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:19, 1-66.

¹¹⁶ Heinz Hartmann, *Essays On Ego Psychology* (New York: International Universities Press, 1964).

¹¹⁷ de Mijolla, ed., *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, 461-467.

promoted by the Ego Psychology in America. However, the meaning of the term became complicated when the American analysts also began to adopt the concept of the self. Heinz Kohut developed a theory based on the self, which became the foundation of the Self Psychology school in America.¹¹⁸

On another line of development, the significance given to ‘object relationships’ by certain analysts diverted the theoretical and clinical interest from the state of an ego in requirement of a cure. These analysts preferred to focus on the early patterns of relating established by the subject which were to be repeated later in life.

Jacques Lacan was famously unforgiving for the adherents of Ego Psychology. He firmly insisted that the ego was an imaginary construct, ever subject to shifts, changes and transformations.

Contemporary psychoanalytic theory is focused on synthetic perspectives and methods to understand the individual and her relationship to others, rather than being focused on the ego as the fundamental agency to which Freud assigned such significance. On the other hand, the significance given to the adaptive functions of the ego has led to an exploitation of psychoanalysis for manipulative psychotherapeutic techniques and even for political purposes. These movements clearly ran in the opposite direction to the liberation that Freud’s discoveries were intended for.

¹¹⁸ Fred Pine, *Drive, Ego, Object, and Self* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).

6.1.2. THE SUPEREGO

The superego is one of the three agencies (the ego, the superego, the id) making up the psychic mechanism in Freud's structural theory. It is defined as an agency of the psyche, formed by the "internalization of parental authority". Right from the beginning, as psychoanalytic theory discovered the defensive conflict which emerged from a repressed unconscious, it needed to define a repressing agency, a censoring agent related to self-esteem.

As Freud began to analyze the dynamics of groups, he described a general form of identification in which people identified their egos by creating a common ideal, manifested in the personality and the image of a leader. He later developed the concept of superego as a mental agency which accounted for the recognition that the greater portion of the ego was unconscious. Within the psychic mechanism, the superego has the function of stabilizing the effects of the infant's dependence on primary objects. The complete integration of the superego into the ego is not possible, just as the complete integration of the id and its instinctual impulses into the ego is not possible. The term superego implies that the superego has domination over the ego; and the tension between these two agencies manifests itself as moral anxiety.¹¹⁹

According to Freud, the superego is responsible for representing the constraints that the culture exerts over the individual. Furthermore, it is responsible for imposing "the necessary sacrifices of instinct demanded by civilization". It is also

¹¹⁹ de Mijolla, ed., *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, 1690-92.

the transmitter of a cultural past that each individual has to adapt to. To do this, the individual has to master common processes of idealization and also, the sublimation of instincts. The way the superego is transmitted, becomes established and further developed implies that the Freudian superego is an intersubjective and intergenerational agency.¹²⁰

When Freud began to speak about a collective cultural superego, he revisited his earlier ideas about the origins of civilization. There, referring to the myth of “the primal horde”, he had related “the killing of the primal father” with the prohibition of incest. His theory of the “primal horde” is built upon the similar concept of “primitive horde” used by Charles Darwin. It refers to the simplest form of a social group of mammals. In Freud’s work, the primal horde defines “a primitive group of Homo Sapiens in which the most powerful male ruled tyrannically over the rest of the clan”. Due to his physical superiority, only this ruler had access to sexual gratification, as well as to other privileges. His male descendants were compelled to conform to the primal father or to confront him. At some point in time, the primal father was killed by the sons in order to take his privilege and possessions. According to Freud, the internalized feelings of guilt and remorse after this action formed the essence of the superego and conscience.¹²¹

Following this scheme, the identifications of the superego owe their dominating power over the ego, to the child’s initial dependence on its environment. In the psyche of the child, what is bad is defined as what causes her to be threatened

¹²⁰ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:19, 1-66.

¹²¹ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:21, 57-145.

with the loss of love. Establishing the superego through a chain of identifications goes much further than childhood; because “the relationship of the ego to the superego reproduces the relationship of the child to the parents”. The child’s anxiety related to the parents is transformed into moral anxiety resulting from the tension between the ego and a superego. In other words, the superego initially appears as the product of a defensive regressive process which gives permanence to a world determined by parental protection and parental desire. Freud claimed that religious belief is the result of an outward projection of the child’s superego. According to his detailed description of the birth and development of the superego, the superego begins to take shape very early, and this formation is a process of continuous rearrangements of identifications which become less narcissistic and more symbolic over time.¹²²

Therefore, there is distinction between a “primitive realm” and a “postoedipal realm” of the superego. The primitive realm is shaped by archaic mechanisms; namely, “identification with the aggressor and the law of ‘taking an eye for an eye’”. By contrast, in the postoedipal realm of the superego, the superego consists of both the paternal and maternal identifications which are in harmonious cooperation with each other. A healthy development of the superego is indicated by the person’s acquisitions of culture and by the person’s ability to metabolize instinctive desires and to achieve autonomy. This progression tends to gradually transform the superego into a more symbolic agency.

¹²² Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:22, 1-182.

Describing the superego as a mental agency was one of Freud's solutions to the difficult problems brought by certain kinds of resistance, such as a desire for punishment and moral masochism, which were various expressions of unconscious guilt. Freud observed that the superego had "a propensity for cruelty and severity". He observed that unconscious guilt was a case of turning such instinctual destructiveness back against oneself. This explained the paradoxical fact that the superego becomes more powerful in proportion to the extent of prohibitions which it imposes and that the anxiety becomes greater even by mistakes never done.

By contrast, the healthy functioning of the posttoedipal superego is based on a relationship of conflict between the ego and the superego, in a balanced combination of love and discipline which can metabolize the instincts. In this picture, the mature superego allows a tempered guilt which is capable of sustaining a sense of responsibility in the person.

6.1.3. THE 'ID'

In Freud's structural theory, the id (das Es: the It) is the third counterpart to the ego and the superego. It is "the mental agency which answers to the instincts and to the majority of the unconscious processes."¹²³ In German, an idea designated with 'das Es' is associated with being indefinite, impersonal, universal, ambiguous and even contradictory.

¹²³ de Mijolla, ed., *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, 776.

Freud introduced the idea of 'the id' when he confronted the ego and its unconscious resistance. He defined the id as a mental agency which is alien to the ego. He described the id as 'the other part of the mind,' universal and unconscious, which includes the repressed processes and the forces by which we 'are lived'. This is an extensive realm to the whole of which the ego resists.¹²⁴ Freud described the individual as a psychical id which is essentially unknown and unconscious. He claimed that the ego rests upon the surface of the id, as a mental agency which is developed from the nucleus of this id.¹²⁵

Freud observed that, the resistance of the ego had a global aspect which manifested exactly at the point where it was confronted by something alien to it. Here, the introduction of the concept of the id brought a new clarity to his structural theory. Now he was able to describe the mental personality in three counterparts; as the id, the ego, and the superego.

In this theory, the 'whole person' is taken as an interpretant of the id. Psychoanalysis is described by Freud as a 'psychology of the id and of its effects on the ego'.¹²⁶ In his view, logic and negation do not exist for the id. Contradictory instinctual impulses are ever present within it. It works through mechanisms of displacement and condensation. Here, there is dispersal and disorganization. Freud's 'id' is an agency which runs after the satisfaction of instincts, in total blindness and disregard for anything else. Freud claimed that, if the id did not have the ego as its protective shield and as its guide, then it could not escape destruction. And because

¹²⁴ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:19, 1-66.

¹²⁵ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:19: 189-209.

¹²⁶ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:19: 209.

the id is the motor of the psyche, this would imply the destruction of the individual. The id is not only a motor; it is also the passive locus of this motor. It is a reservoir. It is the original source of life and death instincts which motivate and nourish the ego and the superego. It is also a storehouse for memory traces, which make it indifferent to time. Freud claimed that all the wishful impulses which have never passed beyond the id, as well as all the impressions which have been buried into the id by repression, keep existing there, regardless of time.

The id embraces the repressed and the unconscious. It also stores the human history. Freud claimed that the repeated experiences of the ego in many individuals in successive generations eventually become transmuted as experiences of the id. He claimed that the impressions of these experiences thus become preserved by heredity.¹²⁷

The division of the mental personality into id, ego, and superego also brought some clarity to the question of anxiety. Anxiety had previously been seen as arising from repression. It was now recognized to be intrinsic to the psyche; it was a fundamental factor in the construction of these three agencies. Freud observed that the id cannot have anxiety, because it has no organization and it cannot make judgments about situations of danger. Anxiety is a faculty of the ego. In this system, the processes that take place in the id provoke the ego to produce anxiety. But one cannot flee from oneself; flight brings no use against internal dangers. Therefore, the defensive mechanisms of the ego are doomed to distort one's internal perception and to give an imperfect and distorted picture of the id.

¹²⁷ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:19: 38.

Freud described the dynamics of analysis as a continuous movement backwards and forwards. The therapeutic work progresses like a pendulum between a portion of id analysis and a portion of ego analysis. In the first part, something emerges from the id; something formerly unconscious becomes conscious. In the second part, something is corrected and healed in the ego. The therapeutic effect depends on making conscious what was formerly repressed in the id.¹²⁸ He claimed that the intention of the analysis is to strengthen the ego and make it more independent of the superego. This would serve to widen its field of perception and to develop its effectiveness in order to deal with further parts of the id. In the famous words of Freud; “Where id was, there ego shall be. It is a work of culture.”¹²⁹

Lacan described the id as “the unconscious origin of speech, the symbolic ‘it’ beyond the imaginary ego.”¹³⁰ Georg Groddeck had previously said that “The affirmation ‘I live’ is only conditionally correct, it expresses only a small and superficial part of the fundamental principle ‘Man is lived by the It’.”¹³¹ Lacan’s view was quite similar; he replaced the word ‘live’ by the verb ‘speak’: “The affirmation ‘I speak’ is only a small part of the basic principle ‘Man is spoken by it’.” Therefore, Lacan frequently used the word ‘it’ when he referred to the id: ‘It speaks’.¹³²

Lacan had a significantly different reading for Freud’s famous statement “Wo Es war, soll Ich werden”. This statement was translated in the Standard Edition as

¹²⁸ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:23: 209-253.

¹²⁹ Freud, *SE: The Standard Edition* V:22, 80.

¹³⁰ Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, 81.

¹³¹ Georg Groddeck, *The Book of the It* (London: Vision Press, 1949) 5.

¹³² Lacan, *The Seminar. Book VII. The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959–60*, trans. Dennis Porter (London: Routledge, 1992) 206.

“Where id was, there ego shall be.” A common reading of this statement understands that; the task of psychoanalytic treatment is to enlarge the field of consciousness; and as a consequence of this work, the ego shall replace the id. Lacan is totally against such a reading. He instead claims that the word ‘soll’ has to be understood as an ethical imperative, so that the purpose of the analysis is for the ego “to submit to the autonomy of the symbolic order”. Therefore, Lacan translates Freud’s original statement as “Where it was, it is my duty that there I should come into being”.¹³³ The end of the analysis, therefore, brings an “existential recognition” of the symbolic determinants of one’s being, a recognition of the fact that “You are this.” (“You are this symbolic chain, and nothing more.”)¹³⁴

6.2. THE UNCONSCIOUS; THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE NAFS

In order to understand the Sufi framework for the transformation of the nafs, we have to broaden our concept of the unconscious.

In this framework, there is a higher unconscious and a middle unconscious as well as a lower unconscious. In order to develop a better insight of this system, we can visualize it in the form of a vertical elliptical sphere. (In other words; an egg-

¹³³ Lacan, *Écrits. A Selection*, 129.

¹³⁴ Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, 82.

shaped sphere.) This egg consists of three layers from top to bottom; namely, the higher unconscious, the middle unconscious and the lower unconscious.¹³⁵

The 'I' is located at the center of the middle unconscious. This 'I' is the center of our awareness; it is our limited sense of who we are. Around the 'I', there is a field of immediate awareness. The 'I' has the ability to expand or contract its field of immediate awareness. The middle unconscious consists of memories and information all of which are not currently conscious, but are easily retrievable. (Such as 'my birthdate' or any other kind of retrievable data.) For now, let's keep in mind that the aim of the transformational journey is the gradual conscious expansion of the field of 'I'.

Under this layer of the middle unconscious, there is the lower unconscious. This part has a close correspondence with Freud's definition of the unconscious. It is filled with repressed memories and powerful but unacceptable impulses. There is a repression barrier which separates this part from the ordinary field of awareness. However, the impulses of the lower unconscious find their way to pass this barrier and often manifest themselves as anger, anxiety, pain, lust or greed.

Over the level of middle unconscious, there is the level of higher unconscious. Deeply spiritual, mystical, transcendental experiences emerge from this level of the unconscious. Profound experiences of compassion, love and beauty come from the awareness of this level.

Let's begin to trace the transformation of the *nafs*, beginning from its lowest stage. In its most basic stage (*al-nafs al-ammara*), a powerful barrier exists between

¹³⁵ Frager, *Heart, Self & Soul*, 63-88.

conscious awareness and the higher unconscious. Life is alienated from any true sense of love, meaning or joy. Only sudden peak experiences occasionally bring glimpses of the higher unconscious. The 'I' mistakenly perceives itself as being the center of the psyche. In actual fact, the true center of the whole psyche is located at the top of the egg-shaped sphere. This center is the *ruh*, the spirit. The *ruh* is directly connected to the Supreme Self, to the Supreme Reality, even if the individual is not conscious of this connection. The *ruh* is the source of wisdom and guidance and it operates beyond the control of the conscious personality.¹³⁶

At its lowest stage, before any process of transformation, the 'I' is unaware of the impulses of the lower unconscious. Nevertheless, it is completely controlled by those impulses. The individual is totally possessed by self-centeredness, personal attachments and addictions. At this stage, she does not realize the harm she does to herself or to others, because she sees no other way of being.¹³⁷

At the second stage, *al-nafs al-lawwama*, the first glimpse of awakening to the higher unconscious has emerged. As a consequence, the individual begins to understand the negative effects of a habitually self-centered approach to life, even though she does not have the ability to change this attitude.¹³⁸ This stage is a fierce battle between the wish to change and the inability to break old addictions; between the calling of the higher unconscious and the powerful impulses of the lower

¹³⁶ Frager, *Heart, Self & Soul*, 52-66.

¹³⁷ Erzurumlu İbrahim Hakkı (K.S.), *Marifetname* (İstanbul: Alem, 2012), 568-572.

¹³⁸ Frager, *Heart, Self & Soul*, 66-69.

unconscious. In this struggle, the person is still ruled by self-centeredness and hypocrisy.¹³⁹

At the third stage, *al-nafs al-mulhama*, the individual begins to experience genuine love and care for others, as well as having an experiential understanding of the deeper reality which underlies everything. There is generosity, compassion, patience and humility. There is true responsiveness to the inspirations of the higher unconscious. Still, the impulses of the lower unconscious are strongly at work. The difference of this stage is that; now, when the individual becomes aware that she has done wrong, she can see it without making excuses and sincerely make a commitment not to repeat the same behavior. As a consequence, old addictions begin to diminish or disappear. Instead of the self-blame and regret of the previous stage, the individual is now able to take responsibility and trust the Supreme Being at the same time.¹⁴⁰

In this stage, the individual begins to hear the voice of guidance. This is inspiration. It involves not only the inner voice of our conscience, but the guidance of the *murshid*, provided that the individual has developed the right attunement with the *murshid*. This stage of inspiration is a critical stage, because the lower unconscious is still strongly at work and the 'I' still sees itself to the center of the psyche. This may trap the *nafs* into illusions of self-importance and self-sufficiency. Many people fall into this trap and go into a destructive attitude of self-inflation. Therefore, it is crucial to be aware that all inspiration is a bestowal of the Supreme Being, and never to imagine that the limited personality is a source of this inspiration. Only through this

¹³⁹ Erzurumlu İbrahim Hakkı (K.S.), *Marifetname*, 568-594.

¹⁴⁰ Frager, *Heart, Self & Soul*, 70-75.

awareness, the individual can use the inspiration for right action; to purify the *nafs* from the illusion of self-sufficiency.¹⁴¹

At the fourth level, *al-nafs al-mutmainna*, the individual has become relatively safe from the major distortions of the lower unconscious. These urges can still affect her, but only temporarily and not with a lasting impact. The individual is liberated from the state of heedlessness. The attributes of the lower stages are genuinely felt as repulsive; there is no more desire to follow them.¹⁴²

The foundation of this stage is the opening of the heart. The light (the wisdom and love) of the heart counteracts the negative, delusional inclinations of the lower stages of the *nafs*.¹⁴³

In the Qur'an, the *ruh* (the spirit) is defined as the sun, while the *qalb* (the heart) is defined as the moon. In the lowest stage of the *nafs*, the heart is completely turned toward the lower unconscious, toward darkness. The moon is in complete darkness. Therefore, the individual lives with the dark side of the moon. As the *nafs* becomes transformed, the heart turns toward the higher unconscious, toward the light of the spirit (the *ruh*). In other words, the moon turns toward the sun. Finally, at the stage of *al-insan al-kamil*, the heart becomes the full moon; it reflects the sun with its whole being. The mature human being, *al-insan al-kamil* is fully alive, facing the full daylight of the sun. In this stage, the whole bodily realm (the earth) is illuminated by the sun.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Erzurumlu İbrahim Hakkı (K.S.), *Marifetname*, 597-619.

¹⁴² Frager, *Heart, Self & Soul*, 76-79.

¹⁴³ Erzurumlu İbrahim Hakkı (K.S.), *Marifetname*, 619-624.

¹⁴⁴ Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi (K.S.), *Tefsir-i Kebir Te'vilat* (İstanbul, Kitsan, 2008)V:2, 1455-56.

In this transformational system, the heart has to be the intermediary between the body and the spirit, just as the moon has to be the intermediary between the earth and the sun. The heart is the location for understanding and it needs both the darkness and the light in order to retain and store information. The spirit is pure light; therefore it cannot reflect darkness and cannot be the location for understanding.

In this system, the *nafs*, the *qalb* and the *ruh* are the agents and manifestations of the one Supreme Reality. They serve the same fundamental purpose (the recognition of the Self), even though they perform different functions.

The Qur'an refers to this system in several verses, such as these verses of the surah *al-Shams* (the Sun):

“Consider the sun and its radiant brightness, and the moon as it reflects the sun. Consider the day as it reveals the world, and the night as it veils it darkly. Consider the sky and its wondrous make, and the earth and all its expanse. Consider the *nafs* and how it is formed in accordance with what it is meant to be, and how it is imbued with moral failings as well as with consciousness of Allah. Happy is he who causes this [*nafs*] to be purified and truly lost is he who buries it [in darkness].” (91:1-10) ¹⁴⁵

At the fourth level of *al-nafs al-mutmainna*, the ‘I’ is no longer seen as the center of the psyche. The individual is much more in tune with the infinite and eternal perspective of the spirit. She is consciously in tune with the callings of the higher

¹⁴⁵ Muhammad Asad, trans., *The Message of the Qur'an* (London: The Book Foundation, 2008) 938-39.

unconscious, as well as being aware of impulses of the lower unconscious and not falling prey to them.

At the fifth level, *al-nafs al-radhiyya*, the individual is referred to in the Qur'an: "O the *nafs* that has attained inner peace! Return to your Sustainer, well-pleased and pleasing (Him)." (89: 27-30).

At this stage, she is not only content with her life, but she is content with even the difficulties and the trials of life. There is the constant awareness of being surrounded by divine mercy and compassion. The sense of gratitude and love has grown to such an extent that even the bitter and the sour tastes sweet. Nonattachment naturally occurs because there is no attraction to temporary and material things. At this level, there is constant awareness of (the previously unconscious) aspects of both the lower and the higher unconscious.¹⁴⁶ There is a certain level of constant remembrance and self-knowledge. The connection between the 'I' and the *ruh* has grown deeper and now the 'I' is consciously aware of what has previously been unconscious.¹⁴⁷

At the sixth stage, *al-nafs al-mardhiyya* (the gratified soul), the inner marriage of the *nafs* and *ruh* has become manifested. In the Sufi literature, the soul (*nafs*) is the feminine aspect and the spirit (*ruh*) is the masculine aspect of this union. This marriage gives birth to the child of the heart. This is referred to as the second birth of the human being. In this marriage, the spirit inspires the soul to uplift itself and the heart follows this union. The turmoil of inner conflicts and multiplicity has

¹⁴⁶ Frager, *Heart, Self & Soul*, 80-81.

¹⁴⁷ Erzurumlu İbrahim Hakkı (K.S.), *Marifetname*, 626-633.

disappeared. At this stage, the individual is not torn between material attachments and higher callings; she experiences the world as whole and integrated.¹⁴⁸ There is a deep recognition that all power comes from the Supreme Self, the Supreme Being; *al-Haqq*. All actions, all attributes, any perception of an 'I' truly belong to Him. The 'I' is returned to its rightful owner. Still, there is a sense of 'I' which is in gratitude and awe of the Supreme Self; there is still a longing for the dissolution of a sense of separate 'I'. The world appears to be a multiplicity, just as the pieces of a broken mirror reflects the various aspects of the same image. As the human being becomes whole, the mirror gradually becomes unbroken, on the way to reflect a single image.¹⁴⁹

At the final level, *al-nafs al-kamilah* (the mature soul), the separate sense of 'I' is completely transcended. There is no more trace of a separate self; there is complete union with the Supreme Being.¹⁵⁰ Those at this stage live in constant prayer and they have no individual will left. Having recognized the presence of the infinitely wise and infinitely powerful *al-Haqq*, they have submitted themselves fully to the Supreme Being and dedicated themselves completely to serving the Supreme Self in complete trust, love and devotion.¹⁵¹

We have traced the stages from the lowest to the highest stage of the *nafs*. Here, it's crucial to remember that; simply being able to have an understanding of these stages does not imply that we experientially know these stages. An individual

¹⁴⁸ Frager, *Heart, Self & Soul*, 82-84.

¹⁴⁹ Erzurumlu İbrahim Hakkı (K.S.), *Marifetname*, 632-38.

¹⁵⁰ Frager, *Heart, Self & Soul*, 85-88.

¹⁵¹ Erzurumlu İbrahim Hakkı (K.S.), *Marifetname*, 639-642.

has the ability to experientially know only those stages which she has walked in life. The benefit of understanding these stages is to have in our hands a map of the journey of transformation. In this way, we can assess our current situation and act accordingly, knowing the direction we can turn to.¹⁵²

Let us now clarify the transformation of the picture we have drawn at the beginning of this chapter: We had an egg-shaped sphere. This sphere consisted of three layers from top to bottom; the higher unconscious, the middle unconscious and the lower unconscious. The 'I' was located at the center of the middle unconscious as the center of our awareness. Initially, this 'I' covered an extremely limited area; we had an extremely limited sense of who we are. We were completely unaware of our impulses coming from both the lower unconscious and the higher unconscious. Moreover, we were completely unaware of the true center of our whole psyche; which is the *ruh*, the spirit located at the top of the sphere. On the path of awakening, the field of 'I' at the center of the sphere has grown wider and wider.¹⁵³

At each stage of transformation, the field of 'I' grows wider and greater, such that at the end of the transformation, the field of 'I' covers the whole of the sphere. Here in *al-nafs al-kamilah*, there is no more unconscious trace in the sphere; the drop has completely become unified with the ocean.

¹⁵² Erzurumlu İbrahim Hakkı (K.S.), *Marifetname*, 642-644.

¹⁵³ Frager, *Heart, Self & Soul*, 47-93.

7. CONCLUSION

This work has been grounded on a pursuit to provide a comparative study of psychoanalytic theory and *Tasawwuf*. For this purpose, the comparative outlines of the two disciplines, including their perspectives, their purpose, their fundamental concepts, their principles and their methods have been examined.

We have seen that *Tasawwuf*/Sufism is the quest of becoming consciously unified with Allah; the Supreme Being. This quest is based on the principle that we have never been separate from the Supreme Being; but in order to consciously live with this awareness, we have to consciously realize and embody this truth. In other words; if we picture Being as an ocean, we have to wake up from the illusion that we are merely an isolated drop and realize the ocean that we are. For the Sufi, this is a quest which takes one's whole life and beyond.

By comparison, psychoanalysis may be viewed as a quest which includes moments of submerging into this ocean for therapeutic purposes, without the intention to acknowledge and realize the totality of the ocean.

Sufism and psychoanalysis both acknowledge that there is a vast unconscious dimension in the human being. However, the two approaches present different conceptions of this unconscious realm. The 'unconscious' of psychoanalytic theory refers only to the lower dimension of the 'unconscious' of Sufism. This dimension is

the source of the unconscious impulses which result from seeing oneself as an isolated, autonomous being who exists separately from the rest of existence. In Sufism, this is the lowest stage in which the human begins his/her transformational journey. Becoming liberated from this limited conception of oneself is only possible through opening up to the higher dimensions of the unconscious. Contemporary psychoanalytic theory does not offer a comprehension for this higher dimension of the unconscious.

In both approaches, the liberation of the human is achieved through a journey which necessitates a progressive and gradual releasing of one's attachments to false identifications. In psychoanalysis, the journey ends when the treatment is terminated; and the proper time for the termination of the treatment is determined when the analysand is observed to be able to live as a functional, autonomous individual in the world, seemingly free from his/her neurotic disorders. For the Sufi, the journey does not become terminated until the moment of leaving the world. Because for the Sufi, the transformation of the human is a never-ending journey towards becoming closer to Allah; the Supreme Self.

Sufism and psychoanalysis agree on the necessity of a supervising guide for the journey; respectively, the *murshid* and the psychoanalyst. We have seen that the psychoanalyst is a practitioner who has gone through a psychoanalytic treatment and training with another psychoanalyst. The *murshid* has completed his journey through the guidance of another *murshid*. The difference is crucial; the *murshid* is a human being who has completed the journey of realizing the true Self. He has not only attained true recognition of the Ultimate Reality, but also he is a living embodiment

of that Reality because he has experienced the complete annihilation of his false self and therefore constantly lives as a conscious expression of the true Self. He has become free of assuming the selfhood of an isolated drop and realized his Selfhood as an ocean.

Psychoanalysis rests on the transference relationship between the analyst and the analysand. Sufism necessitates the same relationship, which is termed as *rabita*, between the *murshid* and the *murid*. The currency of this relationship is love. The analysand's love for the analyst carries the load of his/her former habits of relating with significant others. The analyst's love has to be completely empty of personal agendas and manipulative urges. It has to be an uncontaminated, unconditional, impersonal love. Only in this case, the analyst's love can provide a pure channel for therapeutic, healing, real experience. In the relationship of *rabita*, the *murshid* holds the perfect ability to provide this pure, clear channel of healing experience. Having become consciously purified of personal attachments, the *murshid* has become a conscious channel of the pure love of the true Self. For this reason, the *rabita* between the *murshid* and the *murid* provides a channel of transmission for the pure love, the pure wisdom and the pure compassion of the true Self.

Both Sufism and Psychoanalysis aim to make conscious what used to be unconscious. Psychoanalysis observes that this pursuit is constantly challenged by the resistance of the analysand. The analyst's task is to lead the patient into recognizing his/her resistance in order to deal with it. Resistance is indispensable for the therapeutic outcome, because it is the only route to uncover the analysand's forgotten and repressed ability to love. In this process, simply naming the resistance does not

make it disappear. The analysand's committed and ongoing work on her own resistance is necessary for a lasting therapeutic impact.

Sufism names this resistance as the *nafs*. *Nafs* is an agent of separation which is based on the false assumption that the human being has an autonomous, separate self which is independent of the true Self. The purpose of human life is to recognize and let go of this false assumption; to completely realize that anything and everything in existence is nothing but the manifestations of the one true Self. For the Sufi, every experience in life is an opportunity to realize one's own resistance and to overcome this false assumption of having an autonomous self. In this quest, the consciousness and awareness of the human becomes transmuted; therefore the nature and content of the resistance constantly changes its appearance. The task of the Sufi is to be awake to these shifts and changes, and to remain loyal to his/her commitment to be conscious of the true Self. This whole journey is a quest of love; as the story unfolds, the pure love of the Supreme Self becomes ever more luminous and irresistible; for the totality of existence is nothing but the expression of the Supreme Lover.

This work is a modest proposal to begin to trace the connecting lines between the framework of psychoanalytic theory and the approach of Sufism. The connections, similarities and continuities which have been traced in this study are only a fraction of the actual connections, but for the moment they can be sufficient to provide some groundwork. Psychoanalysis can open up to new pathways and new dimensions if it becomes willing to consider the nature of these connecting lines. It is fully possible for a psychoanalyst to respect the premises of Sufism and be willing to discover what these premises can offer to his/her psychoanalytic practice.

As for the Sufi, the pathways which lead to Allah, the Supreme Reality are as numerous as the counts of breaths in existence. The phenomenal world is a realm of infinite possibilities to rediscover the One through the many. We remain ignorant only if we mistake our perspective as the bird's-eye view and if we see our interpretations as the ultimate truth. We need to become aware of the dogmatic convictions which prevent us from realizing the greater truth. Only in this way, we can be safe from being trapped into prisons of our own making.

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