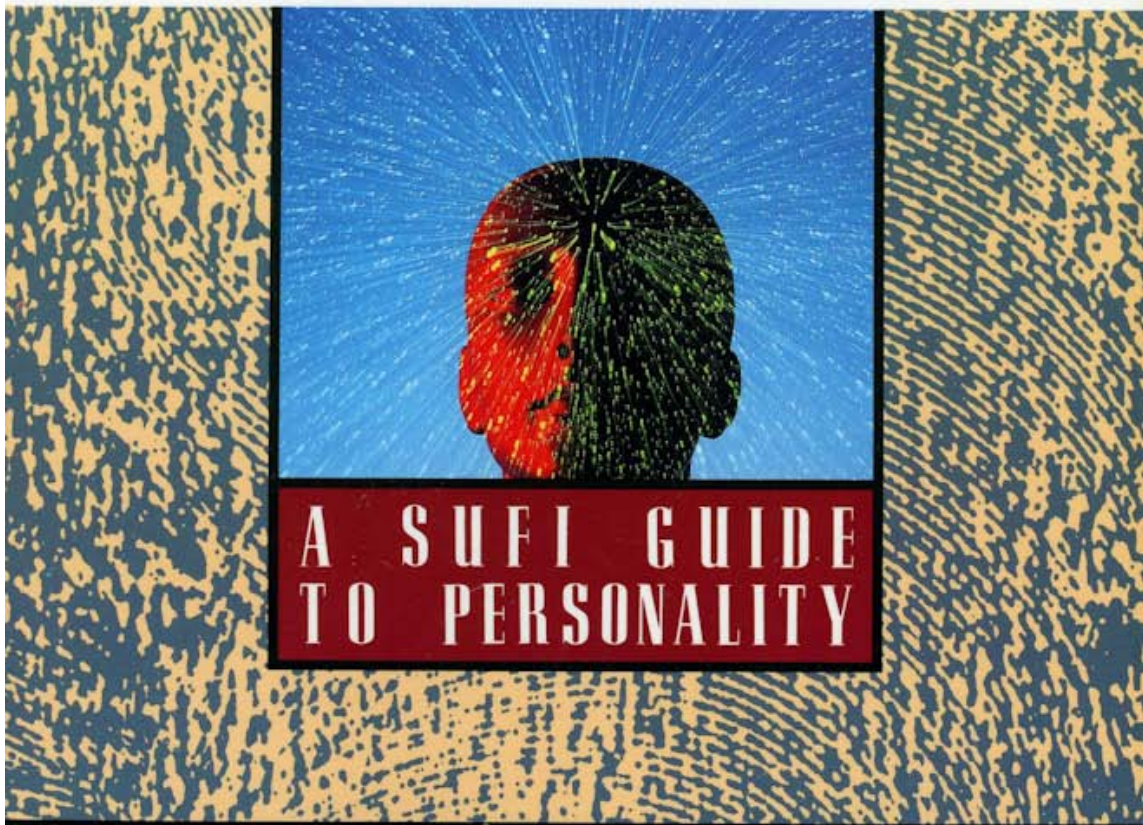


T H E

JOURNEY **OF THE** **SELF**



**A SUFI GUIDE
TO PERSONALITY**

SHAYKH FADHLALLA HAERI



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Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	i
Book Description	vii
About the Author	viii
Acknowledgements.....	ix
Foreword.....	x
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Stepping-Stones to Self-Knowledge	9
The Vortex of Creation.....	9
The One Self.....	9
The Many Profiles but One Face of Humanity.....	10
The Challenge of Opposites.....	10
Attraction and Repulsion	11
Pleasure and Pain.....	12
Change and Non-Change	12
The Quest for Freedom.....	13
Freedom of No Choice.....	13
The Need for Security.....	14
Basic Needs.....	14
The Hierarchy of Fulfillment.....	15
The Drive to Achieve and Succeed.....	15
The Roots of Greed.....	17
Peace.....	17
Health and its Hierarchy	18
Man, the Unified Being	18
For the Love of Life.....	19
The Urge for Creativity.....	20
The Drive for Knowledge	20
Two Types of Knowledge.....	21
Society, Culture, and Character	22
Travel.....	23
Language.....	24
Religions	25

The Intended Destiny	26
Law and justice	26
Morality, Virtue and Divine Law	27
Chapter 2: The Nature and Spectrum of the Self.....	30
Definition.....	30
Classifications of the Self	32
<i>The Three Levels of Being</i>	32
<i>The Three Stations</i>	33
<i>The Three Creations</i>	33
<i>The Three Worlds</i>	33
<i>The Three Worlds of Pictures</i>	33
<i>Summary</i>	34
Classification of the Self According to Avicenna	34
<i>The Vegetal Self</i>	35
<i>The Animal Self</i>	35
<i>The Rational Self</i>	36
<i>Further Comments on the Rational Self</i>	36
Abodes of the Self.....	38
The Senses and the Self	39
<i>The Five Outer Senses</i>	39
<i>The Five Inner Senses</i>	40
The Relationship of the Senses to the Self	44
The Relationship of the Body and the Self.....	44
The Spirit and the Self	46
The Heart and the Self	48
<i>The Heart as a Battlefield</i>	49
The Intellect and the Self	50
Summary of the Self to the Spirit, Heart and Intellect.....	52
Chapter 3: The Journey of the Self.....	54
<i>Phase One: The World of Absolute Unitive Reality</i>	54
<i>Phase Two: The World of Inner Dependence</i>	57
<i>Phase Three: The World of Outer Dependence</i>	58
The Seven Factors of Influence on the Self.....	61
<i>Summary</i>	64
<i>Phase Four: The World of Interdependence</i>	65

The Holographic Paradigm.....	67
The Chart of Opposites: Grid of Eight.....	68
Varieties of Love	71
Male/Female Relationships.....	72
<i>Towards Phase Five of Inner Reliance</i>	73
The Earth and the World.....	74
Doing Without (<i>zuhd</i>)	77
Reflection and Retreat	78
Right Companionship	78
Relationship with Others	79
Models of Wayfaring.....	80
<i>The Seven Stations of the Self</i>	80
<i>Levels of Certainty</i>	84
<i>The Four Unveilings</i>	84
<i>The First Unveiling: From Creation to the Creator</i>	85
<i>The Second Unveiling: With the Creator by the Courtesy of the Creator</i>	86
<i>The Third Unveiling: From the Creator to Creation by the Permission of the Creator</i>	86
<i>The Fourth Unveiling: With Creation by the Authority of the Creator</i>	87
<i>Summary</i>	87
<i>Phase Five: The World of Inner Reliance</i>	88
The Beautiful Names of God	90
Who is the Realized Being?.....	90
Towards the Non-time Zone	91
The Next Consciousness.....	92
The Descent and Ascent of the Self according to the Qur'an.....	93
The Return of the Soul.....	96
The Agony and the Reward of the Grave	96
The Interspace between this World and the Next.....	96
The Nature of the Soul in the Next Consciousness	97
The Day of Reckoning.....	97
The Return, or the Next Creation (Consciousness)	98
Chapter 4: Treatment, Cure and Fulfillment.....	101
The Virtues and the Self	102
The Virtues and the Self according to al-Miskawayh.....	103
<i>The Bestial Self</i>	104

<i>The Predatory Self</i>	106
<i>The Rational Self</i>	107
<i>The Combined Virtues</i>	108
<i>The Tree of Virtues</i>	108
<i>Further Comments on Virtues</i>	109
<i>Further Comments on Justice</i>	110
The Treatment and Cure of the Self.....	112
The Three Major Sources of the Conditions of the Self.....	113
Conditions of the Power of Attraction.....	115
<i>Summary</i>	118
The Conditions of the Power of Repulsion.....	120
<i>Anger</i>	120
<i>Cowardice</i>	129
<i>Fear</i>	130
<i>Fear of Death</i>	131
<i>Treatment of the Fear of Death</i>	132
<i>Fear of Punishment after Death</i>	133
<i>Further Treatment of the Fear of Death</i>	135
Conditions of the Faculty of Discrimination	136
Other Conditions of the Self.....	138
<i>Grief</i>	138
<i>The Nature of Grief</i>	139
<i>Treatment of Grief</i>	139
<i>Further Comments on Grief</i>	140
<i>Sadness</i>	141
<i>Misery and Sorrow</i>	142
<i>Treatment of Misery and Sorrow</i>	142
<i>Conditions of the Heart</i>	143
<i>Treatment of the Conditions of the Heart</i>	143
<i>Safeguarding the Health of the Self</i>	144
Conclusion	146
Chapter 5: The Unified Self.....	148
Birth and Early Growth.....	149
<i>The Star at the Center</i>	149
Learning, Experiencing and Awareness	150

<i>Outer and Inner Power</i>	150
<i>Biting the Hand that Feeds</i>	151
<i>Putting our Best Foot Forward</i>	151
<i>Pleasing Others</i>	152
<i>Dressing for the Occasion</i>	153
<i>Unitive Body</i>	153
<i>Stilling the Mind</i>	154
<i>Physical and Spiritual Unification</i>	154
<i>Inner Freedom and Outer Attachment</i>	155
<i>Curious Distractions</i>	156
<i>Seeking the Supernatural</i>	156
<i>Love of the Old and the New</i>	157
<i>The Meaning of the Family Tree</i>	158
<i>Do Not Take the World for Granted</i>	158
<i>The Forty Days' Union</i>	159
<i>Sleep and Death</i>	160
<i>The Only Certainty</i>	160
Awakening and Spiritual Maturity	161
<i>Ending at the Beginning</i>	161
<i>Love of Nature</i>	162
The Journey in Life.....	163
Appendix I – Tree of Virtues.....	167
Appendix II – Table 1	168
Appendix III – Table 2	169
Appendix IV – Table 3	170
Appendix V – Table 4.....	171
Authors Quoted.....	172
eBooks By Zahra Publications.....	173
<i>General eBooks on Islam</i>	173
<i>The Qur'an & Its Teachings</i>	173
<i>Sufism & Islamic Psychology and Philosophy</i>	174
<i>Practices & Teachings of Islam</i>	176
<i>Talks & Courses</i>	177
<i>Poetry, Aphorisms & Inspirational</i>	178
<i>Autobiography</i>	179

Book Description

This groundbreaking and seminal work is the first to travel into the very center of that uncharted meeting-place of science and spirituality. It presents for the Western reader a concept of the self from the Islamic view, the same concept as revealed in the teachings of several world religions, in particular the Judeo-Christian traditions.

It provides a genuine spiritual psychology rooted in a profound understanding of the mystery of the human self.

“It takes a rare author to write a book like this. Shaykh Fadhlalla is a man who is completely at home in the East and the West. He is a scholar and an effective and practical Sufi teacher, an international businessman and also an international philanthropist.”

– From the Foreword by Robert Frager

About the Author

Acknowledged as a master of self-knowledge and a spiritual philosopher, Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri's role as a teacher grew naturally out of his own quest for self-fulfillment.

He travelled extensively on a spiritual quest which led to his eventual rediscovery of the pure and original Islamic heritage of his birth, and the discovery of the truth that reconciles the past with the present, the East with the West, the worldly with the spiritual – a link between the ancient wisdom teachings and our present time.

A descendant of five generations of well-known and revered spiritual leaders, Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri has taught students throughout the world for over 30 years.

He is a gifted exponent of how the self relates to the soul, humankind's link with the Divine, and how consciousness can be groomed to reflect our higher nature.

The unifying scope of his perspective emphasizes practical, actionable knowledge that leads to self-transformation, and provides a natural bridge between seemingly different Eastern and Western approaches to spirituality, as well as offering a common ground of higher knowledge for various religions, sects and secular outlooks.

He is a prolific author of more than thirty books relating to the universal principles of Islam, the Qur'an, and its core purpose of enlightenment.

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I am indebted to Allah's all-encompassing mercy, which has made us yearn for the path of true bliss through submission and surrender. I thank Allah for all the means and the processes of learning and experiencing along the path of love. I thank the many masters and teachers who have looked upon me kindly and affectionately. I thank Allah for the sincere friends, family and helpers who have made this book possible by their devotion, loyalty and tireless hours of editorial contribution. Those who have helped me are so many that I cannot mention them all. Batul Haeri worked continually on the manuscript with me for four years and without her, this book would not have been produced. I also wish to acknowledge Muna H. Bilgrami, Aga Abbas Bilgrami, Aga Haj Muhammad Ibrahim, Haj Mustafa, Jamila Kabira, Haj Ahmad, Rifat Nafisa, Dr Aliya and Maryam for their editorial participation, and Dr Stan Gooch and Christopher Flint for editing the text. Finally, special gratitude is expressed to Dr Robert Frager, who encouraged me in this endeavor and at whose center the first public talk on this subject was given. I am especially grateful to him for his contribution of the foreword to this book.

Foreword

There is a great spiritual hunger today. Many people have found that their real spiritual needs and deep inner questions have not been met by conventional religious writings or institutions. Many have looked in vain to psychology to fill the functions religion used to provide. *The Journey of the Self* provides a genuine spiritual psychology that speaks directly to this spiritual hunger. It is a psychology that is rooted in an understanding of the human soul, and the relation of the soul to the rest of the psyche. It is a psychology of self-knowledge, grounded in a practical understanding of the elements of the inner spiritual journey, and grounded also in the knowledge of Reality that is behind the world as we usually know it.

This is a very special book. It introduces an old and complex psychology taken from a variety of Islamic and Sufi sources. Much of this material has never been translated before, relatively unknown even in the Middle East. *The Journey of the Self* is of real use for both practicing Sufis and others interested in spiritual psychology.

Among men and women of faith, there has been serious doubt concerning the role of Western psychology for anyone with religious or mystical convictions. Traditional study of Western academic psychology often leads to a loss of faith, among both Western and Eastern students. This is the result of an unconscious acceptance of the unspoken tenets of Western psychology, which include positivism, materialism and a strong negative bias concerning religious and spiritual experience.

The antidote to this is the development of an alternative model of human nature, the development of a spiritual psychology. Any genuine spiritual psychology must proceed from a set of basic assumptions that are fundamentally different from those of traditional Western psychology. Some of these assumptions include the following:

1. Human experience includes both the sacred and the secular. Any spiritual (or full) psychology must deal with both. This also means that any spiritual psychology must deal with the relation of

the individual with the Divine, with the experience of Reality that is so frequently described in the world's mystical traditions.

2. The soul or deep self is an inner mystery within each of us, and also is part of the very essence of what it is to be human. Thus, the mystical quest can be understood as an essential aspect of real human development. One of the central tasks of any spiritual psychology is to study the soul and its relation with the rest of the psyche.

3. There are various possible states of human consciousness. Waking consciousness is only one type, and other states, such as mystical states, have their own special validity. Therefore, to base a psychology on only the limited experience of 'average' people during waking is to limit drastically the range of psychology.

4. The literature of mysticism frequently describes a kind of radical self-transformation. The concept of major, qualitative change during adulthood has not been examined in Western psychology, except for negative instances, such as psychosis. From the point of view of spiritual psychology, this self-transformation is an integral part of healthy adult development, fundamental in the integration of the soul with the personality.

The Journey of the Self provides a marvelous example of spiritual psychology, and reveals an understanding of the human psyche which is rooted in faith and spiritual practice. It also provides a complex model of human nature into which we can fit various concepts and theories from academic Western psychology. This book provides the best introduction I know of to this kind of model.

I have been particularly impressed by the relationship explicated between the development of the human soul and the development of the cosmos. This dramatically demonstrates that ancient spiritual wisdom can be shown to be completely compatible with the most modern scientific theories and cosmology. In addition, a wonderful combination of spirituality and practicality has been woven throughout this volume.

It takes a rare author to write a book like this. Shaykh Fadhlalla is a man who is completely at home in the East and the West. He is a scholar and an effective and practical Sufi teacher, an international businessman and also an international philanthropist.

I had the pleasure of serving as Shaykh Fadhlalla's host several years ago, when he presented a talk to a gathering here in Redwood City, California. The talk was devoted to the model of spiritual psychology that is detailed in this book. The audience included many psychologists and therapists who were fascinated by the talk. I was deeply impressed with Shaykh Fadhlalla's humor and sensitivity, and by his familiarity with the West and all the problems of seriously pursuing a spiritual discipline in the midst of Western culture. Our people here immediately responded to him and to his talk.

We are reminded in this book again and again how much we can learn from the wisdom of the Islamic teachings and the Sufi tradition. After all, over many centuries, Sufi shaykhs have served not only as spiritual guides but also as therapists and family counselors for their dervishes. There is much more 'clinical' wisdom and experience to be found in the Sufi and Islamic traditions than in the brief history of Western psychotherapy.

We are invited to self-understanding in this book, to psychology and spiritual self-knowledge. Not only are we invited, we are given examples and concrete help in making our way toward that goal.

Robert Frager, Ph.D

Founder, Institute for Transpersonal Psychology

Introduction

This book is an attempt to present the Western reader with a basic Islamic conception of the self. It is a concept that can be found within the revealed spiritual teachings of several world religions and, in particular, the Judaic, Christian and Islamic traditions. The knowledge and science of the self exists in the Islamic tradition in greater clarity and applicability because its teachings are more recent and have not been distorted, and they continue to be practiced up to the present day.

The basis of this knowledge of the self is that all humanity is one in its essence and origin. There is a primal or basic self which is the same in all human beings. We may differ biologically but the root of our motivations in life is similar. This model of the one adamic self is the pillar of all Islamic teachings and is to be found in the Qur'an, the Prophetic traditions and the teachings of the masters and saints.

We have all come from one source, and that one essential reality pervades all dual manifestations in existence. The physical world is based on duality, and everything in nature is created in pairs of opposites. All experiences, events, causal relationships and mental and intellectual appreciation are based on experiencing those opposites. We seek to understand, balance and reconcile the experienced opposite forces, driven as we are by the awareness of the essential unity within. This inner drive is unconscious and lies beyond our intellect and reason. As full appreciation of the natural law of opposites and complementarity sets in, we move beyond intellect and reason to our original unitive state, which is innate in all of us.

Man has always been searching for a fundamental law of nature which underlies the great variety of natural phenomena. Classical physicists answered many of the physical observations through the Newtonian mechanistic model of the universe. With the development of subatomic physics as well as new advances in astrophysics, we find a disappearance of the old atomic building block. The quantum theory introduced the concept of the participation of the observer, thus making invalid the idea of an objective description of nature and the separation between the observer and the observed. It put an end to the deterministic law of nature and the absolute objectivity of

scientific experimentation. In atomic physics, one cannot talk about its nature without speaking about the observer and his position.

Modern physicists are viewing the universe more and more as a unified whole which is interconnected in subtle ways. The concept of unbroken wholeness and the interdependence of mind and matter are increasingly being discussed among scientists.

It is very interesting also, to reflect upon the fact that no longer can physics talk about space without talking about time. It is curious to think that atomic particles traveling at high speeds appear to have a longer lifespan, and that at high velocities size seems to shrink. The three-dimensional world which we experience seems like only an image or a shadow of the relativistic, four-dimensional, space-time world. Doesn't this coincide with the spiritual teachings that remind us that this world is only a shadow of reality? By focusing on the shadow and being absorbed in its motion, surely we miss the reality that is causing it. The practice of meditation and sublimation seems to produce an effect of diminishing and finally disappearance of all experiential entities. This vanishing of space brings about the disappearance of time.

The practice is that if the identifiable self – the subjective you and I – is taken away, the concept of time and space will also be sublimated. Then the original reality (of one self), which was there before, now remains without a shadow to veil it.

Nowadays contemporary physicists, as well as other scientists, are looking for an all-embracing order and unifying factor upon which physical reality is founded. More and more, cosmologists are faced with the questions of how, when and why did everything begin. There is a general consensus to answer the first two questions: 10 to 20 billion years ago the universe came into being from a non-bounded state; and, after its full expansion and the big crunch, will return once more to its original, non-bounded state. Within this cosmic overlapping a number of modes of thought and theories have been put forth, to varying degrees of accuracy, to describe it. But the ongoing pre-creational state, being non-space-time related, lies beyond the realm of contemporary science and verges on the mystical or religious type of belief or experience.

The third question, why was the universe created, also lies beyond the grasp of science. It was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad that the essence of all creation is the greatest hidden treasure, and that it loved to be known; so it created, in order that it might be known. The Islamic viewpoint is that man, being the highest of all creation, is able to qualify for that knowledge, otherwise he will remain chasing the shadow of the images within the limitation of time and space in this world, without ever achieving freedom, true contentment or satisfaction.

The path to this experiential awakening is by understanding, inner abandonment and purification. The science of the self is indispensable for the preparation of attaining inner freedom.

This life, then, is a training-ground for us to witness how perfect are the universal laws of nature which in fact drive us towards seeking that limitless source of unity. We are born with an inner tendency which constantly motivates us towards our unitive origins. Our purpose in this life is to discover and know the basic nature of the self and the spiritual foundation which underlies it. We will only attain contentment when our potential as a spiritual being is fulfilled. No matter what we do in this world, it will never be totally satisfying. In other words, no matter how hard we try to attain fulfillment, harmony and peace, in the physical, emotional or intellectual sense, we will never be satisfied.

Our conception of the self shows that life is a journey of unfolding discovery towards self-knowledge, and that knowledge begins with physical and material consciousness at birth and evolves into emotional, mental and intellectual consciousness, then culminates at maturity with higher spiritual consciousness, or pure awareness.

It is by reason of this progression that we try to obtain fulfillment, first by seeking contentment physically and materially, then emotionally, mentally and intellectually, and then spiritually; and ultimately, simply in pure contentment, which is contentment for and by itself.

Any activity that leads us towards realizing our inner potential and essential nature we will find to be nourishing, enriching and conducive to fulfillment; and any other activity will be palliative, detractive to growth, and even destructive.

According to our conception of the self, then, conditions of imbalance or disturbance in the self are symptoms of something that has gone wrong in the natural progression of self-unfoldment or because of our not moving forward along the intended journey of self-discovery.

From this point of view, many who are considered in need of care could be individuals who are highly sensitive and possess greater spiritual potential than others. They may be persons who primarily need spiritual remedies and should be treated and corrected in this way, because they find the physical world does not fully answer their questions or fill their needs.

Any suffering from the world, then, could be considered as a positive experience; for it is a reminder that one is misdirecting one's energies, and could lead one back to the intended path of self-knowledge. It is for one to take corrective action – not to disconnect from one's experiential wholeness by being given chemical pills or analysis, neither of which reaches the root of the problem – which is to discover the true nature of the self.

The fact that such a large percentage of the population is currently under care, especially in highly technologized societies, is itself a positive indication that there is hope for humanity. The remedy called for is based on self-knowledge rather than the symptomatically-oriented forms of treatment which are prevalent at this time. Many people, in fact, may only be helped if they are allowed to be taught to understand this basic conception of the self and to see it manifest and working in themselves. With understanding, guidance from an awakened teacher, and a sense of humor, many may be able to overcome most of the obstacles that cause confusion or depression and an inability to cope with the world.

In Chapter One we lay down stepping-stones from which we introduce our conception of the self. Our approach touches upon a progression of life experiences, beginning at birth. Questions are posed to ask what are the basic motivations underlying all creation that make us behave as we do, and what aspects in life are by their nature common to all of us.

Chapter Two discusses the nature and spectrum of the self. We define what is meant by the self, and put forth a description of its real and basic nature.

In Chapter Three we trace the journey of the self through its five phases of development in this life towards higher consciousness, and its return to its origin. This journey is based on a pattern that charts a parallel progression of the outer (biological) and inner (conscious) development of the human being. But although the focus is on the human being (the microcosm), the phases of development are echoed in the macrocosm of the universe. These phases are meant to be seen as a general description of the flow of human development and, as such, there will necessarily be some overlapping between phases. Aspects of earlier phases remain active to varying degrees of intensity throughout one's life, even as one progresses in the journey.

Phase One is the world of Absolute Unitive Reality. It is the realm of the absolute void – timeless, eternal, infinite, unmanifest. It is the world of pure consciousness, of reality before physical creation.

Creation begins with the transition to Phase Two, Inner Dependence. Conception, pregnancy, the cosmos unfolding – this phase outlines the earliest stages of creation. In Phase Three, that of Outer Dependence, creation explodes into a discernible universe, and this is reflected in the microcosm in the birth of the human being. Here, the newborn is totally dependent outwardly.

As Phase Three moves into Phase Four, there is a gradual shift from extreme outer dependence to Interdependence with other elements. It is this phase of Interdependence which charts our growth to full physical, emotional, intellectual and cognitive maturity, and there is the greatest level of outer activity and interrelationships. It is here that we introduce grids and models that will help us to understand the basic patterns and relationships in the macrocosm of creation and in the microcosm of human behavior.

In the transition from Phase Four to Phase Five (Inner Reliance), maturation as a rational being draws one away from the appetites and distractions of physical existence to an awakening of the inner life. In Phase Five, there is an increased awakening and reliance on inner experiences, and we can attain the highest possible station of fulfillment. While we are still live, we will always be to some degree interdependent upon other beings in this world. Movement towards the spiritual life does not imply renunciation of this world, nor is the physical world a mere illusion. Its very transience impels us to see beyond it. Our experience of the next consciousness (after death) is

determined by our actions and experiences in this life. In reality, the Fire of Hell and the Garden of Paradise are states of consciousness, so both can be experienced in this life before physical death. Finally, the journey in this life is completed with the return of the self to its origin.

The outline of the journey of the self in five phases has been synthesized by the author for illustration and analysis, whilst within the phases themselves teachings by other writers and masters have been included and quoted.

In Chapter Four we examine the major symptoms and conditions of the self as well as their root causes, and discuss the nature of their treatment and cure. Here we shall also examine the virtues of the self.

Finally, in Chapter Five, we illustrate the inherent unified nature of the self by examining situations that show how the self throughout its life manifests characteristics and tendencies towards its unific origin. The examples illustrate how the self is connected at all times to the unific factor that underlies it. By the variety of examples given, the reader will be able to see from personal experiences and observations the predominance of the unified nature of the self. No doubt the reader can add to our small sampling many more cases and observations.

Within this model of the self, aspects of ancient Eastern spiritual teachings as well as Middle Eastern religions or Western philosophies can be found to exist. Islam, being the primal adamic code, predates all of these teachings, although it was unveiled in its totality only fourteen centuries ago. Orientalists, for example, have referred to aspects of the Islamic teachings on the self as neoplatonic. The truth is that Plato's writings are an aspect of the adamic teachings and in themselves are incomplete.

One of the reasons that the Islamic cosmology of the self and higher consciousness is not more widely known in the West could lie in its multidimensional nature, and the difficulty of unraveling one strand from its total wholeness. The Qur'an, for example, talks about man's outer code of social responsibility and his path of inner purification in the same breath. It speaks about higher consciousness and Islamic law in parallel. It talks about this world and the next in complete harmony and relatedness. For a reader who has not accepted revealed laws in this

world, it will be a greater challenge to accept or understand the Qur'an as it relates to the self and higher awareness.

The reader needs to approach this work with an open heart and without prejudice in order to benefit. These teachings can only be useful if accepted and applied; they are of little benefit for purposes of discussion, debate or similar academic pursuits.

Our conception of the self is intended for use by the layman and expert alike, as a basic foundation or blueprint for any system of self-knowledge or the psychological sciences. Irrespective of whether or not one believes in or accepts the unific reality that underpins the self and all of creation, one will still find that this conception can be applied to any system as a blueprint that explains human behavior and provides for it remedies and cures.

The sole intention of our present work is to provide a basic model of the self, which others may then wish to take and develop further by building upon it. Usable and successful techniques that have been developed in the West over the past may be added and integrated. A review of contemporary theories and techniques can be made, and those parts which fit within this conception will be useful and will last, and those which do not fit within this conception will eventually be found not to stand the test of time and will be discarded. Others may wish to apply their knowledge and field experience to this blueprint of self-knowledge in order to develop it further towards greater applicability. This book is only a first step towards developing and evolving a comprehensive and pragmatic model of the self in this field.

Although we attempt in this work to describe all aspects of the self and its journey towards enlightenment, the achievement of this is rarely possible without a realized teacher. The enlightened person will guide others in a wise and inspired way towards the ultimate goal, whereas a treatise such as this is a mere description of the basic field of activity. In fact, a deep criticism of this work is that by our merely presenting it, it may lead the individual seeker to assume that the cure is in sight; however, having a simple, analytical knowledge of a situation is very different from actually arriving at the results.

So once the appropriate recipe for life is found, the next step is to be amongst the experts who have applied it and, thereby, have been transformed by it. There is a vast difference between reading a menu and deriving nourishment from a meal; but the sincere seeker of wisdom will end up by being amongst the wise.

Chapter 1: Stepping-Stones to Self-Knowledge

We must build a bridge if we are to reach the intended shore. In this first chapter, we will outline the assumptions and pose questions that will orient the reader to the knowledges of the self. Each stepping-stone on the way shares with the reader an aspect of the human situation as we observe it; that is, of the basic realities and facts of the life in which we find ourselves, of the personal, social and moral factors which influence us, and of the prime motives, basic needs and impulses of the self that drive us hither and thither.

The many stepping-stones of the human situation described in the following pages form a pathway which will give us access to an understanding of the self.

The Vortex of Creation

Humanity is caught in the dynamics of life. We are driven either to satisfy our desires and impulses – be they rational or irrational – or to avoid unpleasant disturbances and conflicts. At times, we are successful in this challenge, and at other times we fail.

It can be observed that we share a great many experiences in common, as well as many differences. We will look at how this situation arises. We will also consider the meaning of the one self, the drive for knowledge, and the quest for freedom when we know we are bound, and we will examine these points and many others so that we may attain a clear understanding of the dynamics of the self and its basic essence. For until the basic fundamental nature of all humanity is fully understood, there cannot be a proper understanding of individual or collective behavior.

The One Self

There is a primal or basic self – which can be described as patterns of expectations, desires, fears, needs and values – which is the same in all human beings. We may be different biologically and in our outer behavior, but the root of our motivations in life is the same. This model of the one adamic self is the pillar of all Islamic teachings and is to be found in the Qur'an, the Prophetic traditions and the teachings of the masters and saints.

The Qur'an says that you were created from one self. Each individual self has a higher nature and a lower nature. We function on a spectrum which at one end resembles the lowest of animalistic impulses and thoughtless responses, and at the other end, a sublime, patient, considerate and independent yet loving and compassionate nature. We can at times behave worse than the lowest of animals, and at other times with a selflessness and nobility that cannot be surpassed. Whether we reflect our higher self or our lower self, there remains within us an unchanging, steady state of the one self, which is the same foundation in each person. When we are least subject to the changeable impulses of the self, we gain greater access to that constant one self within.

The Many Profiles but One Face of Humanity

A great diversity in character traits can be observed within the one individual – childishness, innocence, aggression, domesticity, materialism, spirituality, adventurousness, reflectiveness, impulsiveness, and so on. All of these traits and many others are harbored within one bosom. Each individual being is like a new stream produced by fresh rain. Many such streams pour forth into the ocean of humanity from which they originated. Although individuals have their own unique characteristics, biologically and environmentally related, ultimately one unchanging essence underlies all the outer complexities and differences, especially amongst various societies and cultures, in humanity.

The Challenge of Opposites

From childbirth onwards we are exposed to the dynamic flux of opposites, and must make choices concerning them. Some will give us satisfaction and contentment, and others will cause us suffering and pain. We are constantly placed in this position of continually having to make choices, in order to allow for the growth of our faculty of reasoning.

Animals are not given this challenge. The cat, for example, does not have to cover itself with a blanket in order to keep itself warm in winter. We, on the other hand, must constantly strive to find the means of satisfying our basic needs of clothing, food and shelter, as well as an ever-growing number of other needs and desires.

The satisfaction of our needs, and the choices by which we attain that satisfaction, constitute our prime motivation. Together they spur the development of our faculty of reasoning and the understanding of cause and effect, and bring about our technological advancement. So nature, from the outset, drives us towards the development of our discriminatory capabilities through the necessity of having to make choices.

Wherever we look we are faced with opposites and we must make choices with regard to them.

One of the verses in the Qur'an describes the self as having been brought forth and, inspired, given the innate knowledge of what is virtuous and wholesome, and what is corrupt and decadent. The Qur'an indicates that the individual self is given the freedom to choose to follow the path of wholesomeness. The wise person actually has no choice but to accept the path of unity.

Attraction and Repulsion

The basic fundamental motivation behind all of our actions and behavior is based on either the power of attraction or the power of repulsion. At all times, we find that our actions are based on attracting what we perceive will bring about harmony and equilibrium, whilst repulsing whatever we perceive to be the cause of disharmony and disequilibrium.

This constant flux of attraction and repulsion, of push and pull, is the essential dynamism upon which everything in this existence depends and is balanced. Even at a cellular level, an amoeba will move toward nourishment and away from a toxic solution.

At the physical level, our biological survival depends on our ability to pull in fresh air and push out stale air, and the same dynamism holds true at the emotional, intellectual and higher levels. On the emotional and psychological levels, we desire peace and tranquility and repel anxiety and fear, whilst on the intellectual level we desire enlightenment through the attainment of knowledge and the repulsion of ignorance. Love and fear are two manifestations of the powers of attraction and repulsion. It is by love that we are propelled towards contentment and fulfillment and by fear that we avoid disturbances and undesirable things. The steady stream of life which,

propelled by attraction and repulsion, is constantly balanced between harmony and peace and conflict and opposition.

Pleasure and Pain

At all times, we want to increase our experience of pleasure and contentment, and, conversely, reduce our experience of suffering and pain. Are experiences of joy and pleasure in this life representative of what is possible in the next consciousness or the hereafter? These experiences seem to act as tiny windows or glimpses into the inner state of pure bliss in another consciousness or life, that will be ours if we are properly prepared for it.

The same applies to our experiences of pain and wretchedness. These too are samples of what may occur by our own misdeeds if we do not follow the intended course of submission, surrender and responsible freedom during the training stage of this life.

From this point of view, every instance of pleasure or pain motivates us to move along a path which ultimately leads to a state where only infinite joy and no sorrow exists! Is this not the state in which Adam was originally created? Is this not reaching back to the real root of the matter?

Change and Non-Change

We emanated originally from a permanent or unchanging state, that prior to the act of creation. Change begins to take place at the point of conception. At birth, a child finds anything that changes outwardly to be disagreeable. The emergence from the womb itself is disagreeably shocking – hence the cry of the newborn which helps it to adjust.

As the child grows, it begins to think of change as something that is possible instantaneously, and it wants its desires to be satisfied, at once. As one matures further, one realizes that outer satisfactions have no end and that the physical world offers little stability, whereas knowledge and wisdom are unending and provide a reliable, stable base. This process of awareness and change continues to the end of one's life, until the body is attracted back to its original source – the earth – and the self returns to its origin in an unknown dimension – the unseen.

The Quest for Freedom

Among the greatest dichotomies to which we are constantly exposed is our quest for freedom whilst simultaneously experiencing restriction. We know that whatever action we take, its outcome will be limited, be it in the sphere of material achievement, moral progress or any other arena. For example, although the athlete has the basic potential and relative freedom to achieve new levels or to set new records, his incremental achievement seems to get smaller with each successive attempt and appears to be approaching a point in which the upper limit cannot be stretched any further.

Whatever freedom an individual may think he has, it is still nevertheless bound within limits. Our life is confined within the limits of birth and death, and although we may enjoy a degree of flexibility, outer freedom is ultimately limited in this world.

Yet we are constantly seeking freedom by pushing to the furthest limits of our bounds. It is as though we are hearing an echo from deep within which reminds us of a boundless and limitless inner freedom which can only exist within our consciousness.

Freedom of No Choice

We are all bound by physically and materially limiting factors in this life. The human frame has its limiting capacities. Emotional and intellectual freedoms also have their limitations. Absolute freedom we all know is impossible, for even if we free our self from outer shocks and disturbances, we are not free from death. So how do we explain this drive towards freedom, and the underlying recognition and relativity of freedom? Also, how can we arrive at the knowledge and understanding of this ultimate freedom whilst being bound within the framework of human reference? Is this not the freedom of no choice? Is it not true that we are continually searching for absolute freedom?

To embark upon the voyage of discovery in an ocean with no boundaries, we need the most reliable and best-designed of vessels. Recognizing and knowing the limitations of our systems is the first step towards the journey of self-discovery. We have no choice but to seek ultimate freedom. This is only possible through self-awakening – from the limited to the limitless.

The Need for Security

As we have mentioned, we are all subject to opposites. We enjoy the experience of a jump or a free fall, but only if there is a secure base. We enjoy the dangers of a hunt – but only if there is a reliable home to which we may return, for hunting would be incomplete were it not for the base to which the prize could be brought back. Conversely, uninterrupted security would be unbearably dull. The security of a rock is not what we ultimately seek.

So at the physical level, we need the security of a healthy body, protective clothing and shelter. At the intellectual level, we need the security of knowledge. We need to be sure of the permanence of what we know. We want to be able to predict and be prepared. We shun disharmonious surprises. Even when we seek change, we wish to relate this change to a reliable base of known parameters.

Yet, even though we know full well that there is no absolute material or emotional security, we still strive after these unattainables. What is there within us that causes this paradox?

Basic Needs

At the outset of our journey in this life, we find that we share with our fellow human beings the desire for a sustained state of equilibrium – or as near to it as possible – in order to attain a state of contentment; and the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter have to be fulfilled before we can move on to attempt to satisfy our more subtle needs.

This is the reason why we are moved to sympathize with others who are afflicted with unfulfilled basic needs and the lack of basic essentials. This sympathy is a spontaneous acknowledgement and understanding of the basic position of discomfort or turmoil. This is why any appeal for aid to children or the aged, the helpless or the homeless, is generally responded to by every one of us. We all share this basic common denominator – there is no difference among us when it comes to the question of basic human needs, be they physical or emotional.

It can, therefore, be said that as long as there are people whose basic needs are not fulfilled, there will exist disequilibrium and what we often consider as injustice. As long as there is injustice,

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