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DISSERTATION / DOCTORAL THESIS

Titel der Dissertation / Title of the Doctoral Thesis

Zikir as the Applied Epistemology of Tasavvuf

Band 1 von 2 / Volume 1 of 2

verfasst von / submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doktor der Philosophie (Dr.phil.)

Wien, 2022 / Vienna, 2022

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme code as it appears on the student
record sheet:

UA 792 316

Dissertationsgebiet lt. Studienblatt /
field of study as it appears on the student record sheet:

Musikwissenschaft

Betreut von / Supervisor:

ao. Univ.-Prof. Dr. Gerhard Kubik

to my family

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor ao. Univ. Prof. Dr. phil. habil. Gerhard Kubik and my lifelong mentor Prof. Dr. Alper Maral. As Maral noted in his PhD, “whatever positive is in this study is the contribution of my professor(s)”, whose work and tireless motivation have had a cardinal impact on the development of my academic interests. Furthermore, I would like to thank Ass.-Prof. Mag. Dr. August Schmidhofer, Dr. Moya Malamusi, and Prof. Dr. Mahmud Erol Kılıç for their valuable contribution to this study at various levels. I am very grateful for our friendly and informative conversations and their support in my academic endeavours.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to friends Devrim Elbir, Erhan Altan, Ece Özdemir, Melissa Ceren Üregen, Selgün Yüceil, Alex Kreger, Vincent Schürmann, Emir Rıfat Işık, Corinna Pütz, Diana Dejakum as well as the personals of AmberMed and neunerhaus for all the wholehearted supports. And special thanks to Petra Bianca Beneš whose contribution to this study and my life simply cannot be measured.

Finally, I am deeply thankful to my family, especially to my sister Jülide Arslan, for their unconditional love, support, and trust in me, without which this study could not be completed.

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Abbreviations

ESV	The Bible. English Standard Version
KJV	The Bible. King James Version
NIV	The Bible. New International Version
NRSV	The Bible. New Revised Standard Version
PGM	Papyri Graecae Magicae / Greek Magical Papyri
TDV	Türk Diyanet Vakfı
WLC	The Old Testament. The Westminster Leningrad Codex
f.n.	Footnote

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1 Introduction

Tasavvuf is a set of theories, discourses, and practices developed to live a life in line with the *Kur'anic* commandments. Based on several established interpretative approaches that emerged within *tasavvuf*, these commandments have become the building blocks of a Muslim's life who aims for an acquaintance with God. Numerous studies¹ have demonstrated that the divergent interpretations housed by *tasavvuf* are the key determinants in constructing a *sûfî*'s worldview involving several practices devised to establish acquaintance with God, such as *zikir*. However, these interpretative differences have also caused conflicting views concerning how certain *tasavvuf* theories and practices are inherently linked to each other and particularly how these theories related to *zikir* practice are musically performed.

This study aims to identify and evaluate the epistemological aspect of *tasavvuf* through which the performance practices of the *zikir* ritual are determined. This chapter is thus designed to introduce the topic of the study by first discussing its context and background. Following the initial discussion, the main components of the study, namely, the research problem, aims, and objectives will be presented. Finally, the significance of the research project and its limitations will be evaluated.

1.1 Background

Tasavvuf studies have often followed a specific trajectory, in which the etymology of the terms *tasavvuf* and *sûfî*—the practitioner of *tasavvuf*—was instrumentalized to establish the religio-historical context and background of the *tasavvuf* complex². Such instrumentalization of the terms, however, frequently resulted in discrepancies not only in identifying the margins of *tasavvuf* as a complex set of discourses but also in specifying its place in a larger history. With respect to these discrepancies, varying definitions and descriptions of *tasavvuf* have as

¹ El-Kayserî, Dâvûd: *Risâle fi ilmi't-tasavvuf*, Bayraktar, Mehmet (trans.), Kayseri: Kayseri Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 1997, p. 111; Geels, Anton: "A Note on the Psychology of Dhikr. The Halveti-Jerrahi Order of Dervishes in İstanbul", in: *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 6/4, 1996, pp. 229–251/233; Renard, John: *The A to Z of Sufism*, Lanham / Toronto / Plymouth: The Scarecrow Press 2009, p.197; Kara, Mustafa: *Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları 1992, p. 8; Al-Ghazali: *Tahafut al- Falasifah*, Kamal, A. Sabih (trans.), Lahore: Pakistan Philosophical Congress 1963, pp. 4–5; Kılıç, E. Mahmud: *Sûfî ve Şiir. Osmanlı Tasavvuf Şiirinin Poetikası*, İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları 2004, p. 12.

² Knysh, Alexander: *Islamic Mysticism. A Short History*, Leiden / Boston / Köln: Brill 2000, p. 5; Demirli, Ekrem: "The Problem of Periodization in Sufi Studies. The Struggle of Sufism to Become a Discipline Between the Religious Sciences and Metaphysics", in: *Nazariyat Journal for the History of Islamic Philosophy and Sciences*, 2/4, 2016, pp. 1–32.

well caused challenges in classifying its discourses and practices³. While one trend in academic *tasavvuf* studies, represented mainly by Western academia, chiefly emphasizes its extra-Islamic characteristics and attributes the origin of the practice to several preceding world religions or esoteric systems⁴, another trend, favored primarily by Muslim scholars, focuses on the topic of *tasavvuf*'s sources entirely in terms of Islam. Based on the available literature, the investigations of the first group have produced a terminology to categorize *tasavvuf* in specific ways such as Sufism, Islamic mysticism, Islamic esotericism, or Islamic Gnosticism, which complicated the issue of locating *tasavvuf* within Islam and the larger history of religions. These complications have also set off reactions from the side of the Muslim and *sûfî* scholars, who seek the origins of *tasavvuf* mostly within the confines of Islam in a rather isolated manner.

Following the recent developments in social sciences, the investigations on *tasavvuf* today usually avoid generalizations and concentrate on the lives (hagiography) and the works of prominent *sûfî* individuals, who may represent a particular trend within *tasavvuf*. As these individuals are temporally and geographically distant, their works often exhibit considerable nuances, subjective opinions, and occasionally conflicting interpretations concerning what *tasavvuf* is and how it is applied.

The varying views of *sûfî* scholars are generally nourished from the ever-changing local and temporal factors, which may alter the dynamics of adhering to or performing the *tasavvuf* complex. The large-scale socio-economical events such as wars, climate change, or economic crisis and minor personal experiences are usually decisive in shaping the context and the institutions (*tarikât*) of *tasavvuf*. This manifests itself above all in the works of *sûfî* scholars. Whereas a *sûfî* of one region and period may highlight certain *tasavvuf* notions in establishing acquaintance with God that are relevant to the conditions of the day, e.g., *cihad* (battle)⁵, or personal matters, another *sûfî* may choose to stress an entirely different aspect of *tasavvuf*, e.g., love, to reach the same end. Such variations in understanding *tasavvuf*, both from the emic and etic standpoints, have consequently affected the performing ways of its practices. The *zikir* (remembrance) practice, for example, has been variously performed by *sûfî* Muslims around the

³ Nicholson, A. Reynold: *The Mystics of Islam*, London: G. Bell and Sons 1914, p. 25; Ernst, W. Carl: *The Shambala Guide to Sufism*, Boston / London: Shambala 1997, p. xvii; Knysh, Alexander: "Historiography of Sufi Studies in the West", in: Choueiri, M. Youssef (ed.), *A Companion to the History of the Middle East*, Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing 2005, p. 106; Kutluer, İlhan: "Kâtip Çelebi ve Bilimler: Keşf-üz-Zünun'un Mukaddimesinde 'el-İlm' Kavramı", in: *M. Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 18, 2000, pp. 79–99/86; Cook, David: *Mysticism in Sufi Islam*, in: *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*, 4 May 2015, <<https://oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-51>>, last accessed: 13 January 2022.

⁴ Anawati, C. Georges / Gardet, Louis: *Mystique musulmane: aspects et tendances, expériences et techniques*, Paris: Vrin 1961.

⁵ Unless otherwise stated, this and subsequent translations from Turkish to English belong to the author.

globe in their attempt to know and establish acquaintance with God. While some *tasavvuf* trends, e.g., Nakşibendî, preferred a silent and non-ritualized performance of *zikir*, some others employed flamboyant forms of it involving a diverse repertoire of acoustic and motional elements in establishing acquaintance with God through remembering.

1.2 Research Problem

As Vicente points out, both domestic and external investigations concerning the musical dimension of *zikir* practice are generally limited “to the perennial debate over music’s lawfulness”⁶ in Islam. In addition to the theological implications of performing *zikir*, several studies have addressed the technical aspects of it involving repetitive formulas, characteristic tempo fluctuations, and on occasion, an altered state of consciousness condition. Despite some of these studies speak of the inherent association between the doctrines of *tasavvuf* and the performance practices of *zikir*, they often touch briefly on the subject⁷ or maintain the focus on its structural techniques⁸. Those who establish links between the performance practices of *zikir* and the theory of *tasavvuf*⁹, however, lack a musicological investigation and a comprehensive analysis of the contexts of musicking. The musicological studies, on the other hand, while often focusing on a single *sûfî*, *tarikât*, or region, generally reserved a limited space for the religio-historical background and reproduced the established views.

The epistemological context of musicking in *zikir* events is especially demonstrative of the simultaneous employment of multiple *tasavvuf* theories and how they are performed within specified limits. Due to the absence of an epistemological association between *tasavvuf* theory and practice, which gives both content and context to *zikir* performances, the current state of research does not provide a clear view in explaining the thematic and structural parameters that are at work and form the *zikir* practice as the applied epistemology of *tasavvuf*.

⁶ Vicente, A. Victor: *The Aesthetics of Motion in Musics for the Mevlana Celal ed-Din Rumi*, Dissertation, University of Maryland, 2007, p. 195.

⁷ During, Jean: “What is Sufi Music?”, in: Lewisohn, Leonard (ed.), *The Heritage of Sufism, Vol.II: The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism (1150 – 1500)*, Oxford: Oneworld Publications 1999, pp. 277–287.

⁸ Feldman, Walter: “Manifestations of the Word: poetry and song in Turkish Sufism”, in: Danielson, Virginia, Marcus, Scott / Reynolds, Dwight (eds.), *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music: The Middle East*, Vol.6, New York: Routledge 2002, pp. 189–197.

⁹ Anawati, C. Georges / Gardet, Louis: *Mystique musulmane: aspects et tendances, expériences et techniques*, Paris: Vrin 1961; Kılıç, E. Mahmud: *Anadolu Tasavvuf Tarihine Notlar – I*, İstanbul: Sufi Kitap 2016, p. 117–142.

1.3 Research Aims, Objectives, and Questions

This study will aim to fill this gap between the historical contexts of *zikir* practice and its current theological and musical performance practices by focusing on its epistemological characteristics. The overarching purpose of this study is thus to identify the practice of *zikir* as a knowledge-granting phenomenon and test the hypothesis that *zikir* is the applied epistemology of *tasavvuf*. In order to reach this end, the research objectives are designed as follows:

- I. To reconsider the historical background of *tasavvuf*, from which the practice of *zikir* derives its contextual, thematic, and performative characteristics
- II. To analyse the link between the epistemological procedures of *tasavvuf* and the performance practices of *zikir*
- III. To identify the practice of *zikir* as the applied epistemology of *tasavvuf*

An exposition of the historical underpinnings of *tasavvuf* epistemology will reveal that its definitions and acquisition methods of knowledge were drawn from various sources mainly but not exclusively through reinterpretation¹⁰. As various culture contact theories demonstrate, “culture is not a plant sprouting from its seeds in isolation; it is a continuous process of learning guided by curiosity along with practical needs and interests”¹¹. Emerging in one of the most dynamic regions of the world where divergent mythological, religious, and philosophical worldviews had long been intermingled, *tasavvuf* was not immune to such cultural contacts. Its carriers and practitioners, who possessed different personal backgrounds and cultural profiles¹², have been continuously in touch with the carriers of approximately all these diverging worldviews¹³. Correspondingly, various conceptualizations of knowledge and its acquisition procedures, which had customarily been distilled from the available creation myths, have been shared between diverse cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups inhabiting the Middle East and neighbouring regions (e.g., the Mediterranean Basin). Among numerous transmission channels, this study primarily focuses on the concept of knowledge (or wisdom) variously de-

¹⁰ Along with reinterpretation, several other key terms coined by Herskovitz such as retention, selection, syncretism, or acculturation, may be at work in the events of culture contact. See: Herskovitz, J. Melville: *The Myth of the Negro Past*, New York: Harper & Brothers 1941.

¹¹ Burkert, Walter: *The Orientalizing Revolution. Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1992, p. 129.

¹² Kubik, Gerhard: “Culture Contact. Cognitive and Psychodynamic Aspects. Transcultural Understanding in Art History, Religion, Music and Animation”, in: *Etnografie Sonore/Sound Ethnographies*, 1/1, 2018, pp. 21–36.

¹³ Betz, D. Hans (ed.): *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation Including the Demotic Spells*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1986, p. xlvi.

fined and attained. Within the context of divine knowledge, particularly one term, *hikmet*, appears to have been shared by many groups in constructing their epistemological systems. Linking a wide range of mythological, religious, and philosophical discourses, which are today known as mysticism, esotericism, Gnosticism, and several other “-isms”, the term *hikmet*, with its broad semantic scope and consistent translative choices, has invariably been a fundamental element in these epistemological systems since its earliest appearance in written form around the third millennium BCE. In this respect, to test the second hypothesis of this study, which proposes that the *hikmet* concept, despite wide interpretative variations, constitutes a historical continuity between specific ancient Near Eastern epistemological systems and *tasavvuf*, certain correspondences between these epistemological systems, their historical contact points, and consequent reflections in *tasavvuf* within the context of *hikmet* will be addressed.

The concept of wisdom in its various forms—e.g., *gnosis*, *mârifet*, *hikmet*, *sophia*, or *sapientia*—lexically means “the ability to use one’s knowledge and experience”¹⁴. Since in different theoretical approaches and epistemological systems the terms knowledge, wisdom, or experience may be evaluated differently—e.g., from the perspective of emotions¹⁵, cultural contexts¹⁶, or cognition¹⁷—for the scope of this study they will primarily be analysed in their religious context. This religious context characteristically involves several views, themes, and constructions of (divine) wisdom that give shape and content to the encapsulating epistemology. Being a “transdisciplinary discourse”¹⁸, a comprehensive analysis of wisdom thus requires the utilization of various tools of certain academic disciplines, such as history, anthropology, psychology, philology, theology, and archaeology among many others.

With the beginning of the Islamic expansion in and around the Mediterranean Basin and the emergence of various Islamic sciences—e.g., *fikih* (jurisprudence), *kelâm* (theology), and *felsefe* (philosophy)—around the seventh and eighth centuries in the Arabian Peninsula, the long history of wisdom conceptions as well as speculations were inherited by Muslim scholars

¹⁴ “Wisdom”, <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/wisdom>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹⁵ Kunzmann, Ute / Glück, Judith: “Wisdom and emotion”, in: Sternberg, J. Robert / Glück, Judith (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Wisdom*, New York: Cambridge University Press 2019, pp. 575–601.

¹⁶ Grossmann, Igor / Oakes, Harrison / Santos, C. Henry: “Wise Reasoning Benefits from Emodiversity, Irrespective of Emotional Intensity”, in: *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 148/5, 2018, pp. 805–823; Grossmann, Igor: “Wisdom in Context”, in: *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 12/2, 2017, pp. 233–257; Baltes, B. Paul / Staudinger, M. Ursula: “Wisdom: A meta-heuristic (pragmatic) to orchestrate mind and virtue toward excellence”, in: *American Psychologist*, 55/1, 2000, pp. 122–136.

¹⁷ Peterson, Christopher / Seligman, E. P. Martin (eds.): *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004, pp. 93–196.

¹⁸ Baltes, B. Paul / Glück, Judith / Kunzmann, Ute: “Wisdom: Its Structure and Function in Regulating Successful Life Span Development”, in: Snyder, R. Charles / Lopez, J. Shane (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002, pp. 327–347/329.

into their epistemological investigations. Chiefly through reinterpretation, a selection of these wisdom conceptions was accorded to the Islamic doctrines of faith, which provide a frame for the limits of operability of theories and thus largely differ the procedures of wisdom acquisition from the other comparable systems. Additionally, several themes encapsulating the wisdom concept appear to be shared by various “isms” and religions, which were as well continuously inherited into Muslim discourses on what wisdom is and how is it acquired. During this process, *tasavvuf* was developed gradually as a “methodology”¹⁹ to derive knowledge from its divine sources and as a “moral lifestyle”²⁰ through which the theories of knowledge are systematically applied.

Amongst various institutions, discourses, and practices of *tasavvuf*, especially *zikir* with its abundant forms has become the main indicator of how the epistemological designs of *tasavvuf* are applied. “Located in between meditation and prayer”²¹, in its essence, *zikir* is “the ritual invocation of god”²², a form of Islamic “devotional act”²³, or a “ritual prayer”²⁴ performed diversely by different *tarikat* organizations and individual Muslims around the globe. Having the meanings of recollection²⁵, mentioning, *anamnesis*²⁶, or remembrance²⁷, *zikir* is the act of remembering the names and attributes of God (*esmâ-i hüsnâ*)²⁸ through which a *zâkir* (one who remembers) aims at an acquaintance with God known as *mârifet* (wisdom). Based on the commandments scattered throughout the *Kur’an*²⁹, this acquaintance acquired by means of *zikir* is the fundamental element of *tasavvuf* epistemology involving several components such as the perfection of necessary human faculties (*nefis tezkiyesi*) via forced contemplation (*tefekür*),

¹⁹ Kılıç, E. Mahmud: “Bir Metodun Metodolojisi: Dini İlimler Metodu Olarak Tasavvufa Mukayeseli Bir Bakış”, in: *Usûl*, 1/1, 2004, pp. 91–109.

²⁰ Öngören, Reşat: “Tasavvuf”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 40, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2011, pp. 119–126/119.

²¹ Elias, J. Jamal: “Sufi Dhikr Between Meditation and Prayer”, in: Eifring, Halvor (ed.), *Meditation in Judaism, Christianity and Islam: Cultural Histories*, New York: Bloomsbury 2013, pp. 189–200/189.

²² Shannon, H. Jonathan: *Among the Jasmine Trees: Music and Modernity in Contemporary Syria*, Connecticut: Wesleyan University 2006, p. 112; Algar, Hamid: “The Naqshbandî Order. A Preliminary Survey of Its History and Significance”, in: *Studia Islamica*, 44, 1976, pp. 123–152/129.

²³ Noorhaidi, Hasan: “Piety, Politics, and Post-Islamism. Dhikr Akbar in Indonesia”, in: *Al-Jami’ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 50/2, 2012, pp. 369–390/370.

²⁴ Nakamura, Kōjirō: “A Structural Analysis of Dhikr and Nembutsu”, in: *Orient*, 7, 1971, pp. 75–96/79.

²⁵ Nasr, S. Hossein: *Islamic Art and Spirituality*, Albany: SUNY 1987, p. 11; Geels 1996, p. 229.

²⁶ Waley, I. Muhammad: “Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism”, in: Lewisohn, Leonard (ed.), *The Heritage of Sufism*, Vol.1, Oxford: Oneworld, 1999, p. 507.

²⁷ Vicente, 2007, p. 190.

²⁸ *Kur’an* 17:44 (*İsrâ*), 59:24 (*Haşr*).

²⁹ *Kur’an* 2:152 (*Bakara*); *Kur’an* 3:41 (*Âl-i İmrân*); *Kur’an* 7:69 (*A’râf*); *Kur’an* 18:38 (*Kehf*); *Kur’an* 21:10 (*Enbiyâ*) etc.

self-discipline (*terbiye*), and asceticism (*zühhd* and *riyâzet*)³⁰. By reciting the names of God, the human soul (*nefs*) is believed to respond to the transforming effects of the names and acquire qualities to receive divine blessings that are often felt in a manner of ultimate happiness, salvation, annihilation, or *vecd* (trance-like altered state of mind condition). Particularly these components of *tasavvuf* epistemology have also been the cardinal constituents of several other preceding knowledge-derivation systems, which, like the Muslim scholars, instrumentalized the *hikmet* concept in its various and reinterpreted forms.

To investigate how the ritualized form of *zikir* has gradually become an application tool for *tasavvuf* epistemology, certain questions must be addressed.

1.3.1 Research Questions

- I. What are the fundamentals of *tasavvuf* epistemology?
- II. What is the role of the experience-based divine wisdom (*hikmet*) concept?
- III. Which elements of *tasavvuf* epistemology are found in *zikir*?
- IV. What structural precepts does the *zikir* ritual entail and how are they formed?
- V. How the structural, contextual, and thematic characteristics of *zikir* are developed?

1.4 Methodology

An investigation concerning the fundamentals of *tasavvuf* epistemology requires a detailed description and analysis of *tasavvuf*'s constituents. Having a hierarchical system of knowledge, at the top of which stands *mârifet*—an idiosyncratic reinterpretation of *hikmet* in a form of bestowed, intuition-like knowing God—several constituents of *tasavvuf* appear to have observable resemblances with those epistemological systems that employ the concept of *hikmet* in comparable manners. Accordingly, this study will primarily make use of the available written sources and existing data involving the *hikmet* concept. In order to gain a comprehensive insight into the varying interpretations of the concept, the history of its usages by several mythological, religious, and philosophical systems will be tracked. The interpretative differences in these systems will be highlighted through an analysis of the translative choices made by the translators, which demonstrate certain dynamics of cultural contacts between such systems. Reproducing

³⁰ Kâdî Beydâvî: *Muhtasar Beydâvî Tefsiri (Envârü't-Tenzîl ve Esrârü't-Te'vîl)*, Vol. 3, Eren, Şadi (trans.), İstanbul: Selsebil 2010, pp. 14–15.

the conventions of *tasavvuf* studies³¹, within these translations the focus will be laid upon the etymology of the term *hikmet*.

As the common denominator of several epistemological systems, the *hikmet* concept has the benefit of linking these systems in a historically continuous manner. This continuity allows this study to track *hikmet*'s migration from its earliest composition in Akkadian tablets to the emergence of *tasavvuf* and even to this day in modern Turkish language. To verify an unbroken continuity in understanding *hikmet* and its role in the epistemological systems, the historical translations will be compared with their contemporary written sources such as the scriptures (Hebrew Bible, *Septuagint*, *Targumim*, the New Testament, the *Kur'an*), literature (poems, myths, stories), heresiographies, and other theoretical treatises composed by, for example, theologians, philosophers, and historians.

To categorize key themes that encompass the *hikmet* concept and identify the patterns in employing them in epistemological investigations, certain qualitative methods, e.g., content analysis, discourse analysis, and narrative analysis will be applied. Each theme will be analysed to achieve a deeper understanding of the thematic constituents that have been eventually applied in comparable ways within *tasavvuf*. As these themes have customarily been derived from the creation theories, in which the concept *hikmet* invariably acquires a key role, an in-depth analysis will further reveal why *tasavvuf* has frequently been addressed as Islamic mysticism, Gnosticism, or esotericism and how the *hikmet* concept has been similarly interpreted by *sūfī* scholars. To avoid a false framing for *tasavvuf* under the rubric of any “ism”³², in defining its complex structure the emic standpoint of its practitioners will be predominantly favoured. On the other hand, to avoid a unilateral emic approach in isolation, various etic standpoints that evaluate *tasavvuf* primarily in terms of available culture contact theories will be investigated. Such a combination of both emic and etic perspectives³³ will enable this study to employ a comprehensive view of *tasavvuf* and consequently to identify the processes (both internal and external) in constructing its idiosyncratic epistemology.

Consequently, to determine how the epistemological theories of *tasavvuf* are put into practice via *zikir*, an ethnomusicological analysis will be implemented. Considering *zikir* ritual

³¹ Knysh, 2000, p. 5.

³² Ernst, W. Carl: “Tasawwuf”, in: Martin, C. Richard (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, New York: Macmillan Reference USA 2004, p. 684; Chittick, William: *Mysticism in Islam*, A lecture delivered at the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies: Brigham Young University, May 2003; Guénon, René: *The Essential René Guénon: Metaphysics, Tradition, and the Crisis of Modernity*, in: Herlihy, John (ed.), Bloomington: World Wisdom 2009, p. 207; Delshad, Farid: “Mystik und Sufismus, Eine Frage der Authentizität”, in: *Zeitschrift für Islamische Studien*, 5/3, 2014, pp. 41–69/42.

³³ Jardine, Nick: “Etics and Emics (Not to Mention Anemics and Emetics) in the History of the Sciences”, in: *History of Science*, 42/3, 2004, pp. 261–278.

as a “culturally conditioned”³⁴ and a “synesthetic phenomenon”³⁵, this analysis will attempt to deconstruct the acoustical, motional, and textual components of *zikir* ritual as performed by a pseudo-*tarikāt* from İstanbul, Turkey and analyse the contexts attributed to these components by means of the thematic and epistemological constituents of *tasavvuf* complex.

1.5 Significance

This study is planned to contribute to the body of knowledge on performance practices of *zikir* ritual by analysing its inherent links with the *tasavvuf* epistemology. Such an approach will shed new light on the topic and demonstrate how the current repetitive structure of *zikir*—with a marked tempo increase—is constructed. This will help to address the internal dynamics of the *zikir* ritual informed by an insider point of view and additionally locate the practice in a wider historical continuity on the basis of its metasystems’ (Islam and *tasavvuf*) historical backgrounds.

1.6 Limitations

1.6.1 Methodology

Despite the recent shifts in its construction and definition³⁶, as a branch of musicology, ethnomusicology’s main data collection method is still fieldwork, which customarily requires the researcher to travel and reside a substantial time within the community studied. Initially, the research plan was to base this dissertation on extensive field research, mainly in East Africa and the islands scattered through the Indian Ocean, where *zikir* had spread for centuries among Islamicized communities such as Ethiopia, Malawi, and Tanzania. To this end, a few years ago, the author also did field research under the direction of the Oral Literature Research Program led by Dr. Moya Malamusi as part of an excursion to the Chiyao-speaking populations in Malawi. However, this project could not be continued due to the author’s status as an *émigré* and the associated travel restrictions. Moreover, during the composition of this study between 2019 and 2022, a major pandemic outbreak of coronavirus took place. As of today in 2022, travel restrictions, quarantines, and several other social, as well as economic impacts of the pandemic,

³⁴ Avery, Kenneth: *A Psychology of Early Sufi Samāʿ*, New York: Routledge Curzon 2004, p. 141.

³⁵ Tomasello, Dario: “An Unexpected Imagery. The Hearth’s Vision and Other Synesthetic Functions of the Dhikr into the Islamic Tradition”, in: *Cinema Journal of Philosophy and the Moving Image*, 9, 2017, pp. 27–39/34.

³⁶ Arslan, Ferhat: “The Clash of Definitions. A Critical Review of Field and Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology”, in: *Alternatif Politika*, 10/1, 2018, pp. 1–21.

still prevent many researchers from conducting fieldwork and employing one of its methods to collect data, namely, participant observation. Furthermore, due to the pandemic and some other internal as well as external dynamics detailed below, the group (Halvetî-Uşşâkî-Ruhzârî) upon which the focus is laid in this study, has stopped gathering for *zikir* performances since 17 March 2020 and consequently disbanded.

While the pandemic continues to be effective, the methods employed within this study must be adapted to the new conditions. As McCollum and Hebert argue “we are not suggesting here that ethnomusicologists should no longer do fieldwork, but rather that significant parts of the field can increasingly be brought to one’s own desk via Internet”³⁷. The classical field as a “geographically discrete and knowable”³⁸ physical place where ethnography operates is now further extended to involve “the synthesis of concrete space and investigative space”³⁹. Moreover, challenging Malinowski’s model of fieldwork, “carrying out ethnography does not necessarily imply the researcher is *present* during the interactions s/he does. Ethnographies can be based on video recordings, as well as written documents”⁴⁰. Rapport correspondingly writes that fieldwork “would not be alone; anthropology still would derive efficacy from induction, deduction, comparison and historicization; from archival research, surveys, interviews and literary analysis”⁴¹. To this end, some of the established ethnographic methods are partially transferred to the virtual realm known as online ethnography⁴². As this study does not focus on the interpersonal relationships outside of the ritual context, the offline identities of the ritual participants, and how they are constructed or applied in the virtual fields fall out of the scope. On the other hand, the HUR group was not only regularly uploading their unedited *zikir* performances to various online platforms (above all YouTube) but also frequently sharing and disseminating their views on *tasavvuf* and *zikir* on the same platforms. Their increased online presence and active usage of technological tools have thus allowed this study to instrumentalize these changes in conducting ethnography. The *zikir* performances that are subject to analysis in

³⁷ Hebert, G. David / McCollum, Jonathan: “Methodologies for Historical Ethnomusicology in the Twenty-First Century”, in: McCollum, Jonathan / Hebert, G. David (eds.), *Theory and Method in Historical Ethnomusicology*, Lanham / London / New York: Lexington 2014, pp. 35–84/39.

³⁸ Madden, Raymond: *Being Ethnographic. A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Ethnography*, Second Edition, Los Angeles: Sage 2010, p. 44.

³⁹ Madden, 2010, p. 39.

⁴⁰ Dupret, Baudouin et. al. (eds.): *Ethnographies of Islam. Ritual Performances and Everyday Practices*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2012, p. 2.

⁴¹ Rapport, Nigel: *Social and Cultural Anthropology. The Key Concepts*, Third Edition, London / New York: Routledge 2014, p. 178.

⁴² Also labelled as digital ethnography, cyber-ethnography, or netnography. See, for example: Boellstorff, Tom, et. al., *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds. A Handbook of Method*, Princeton / Oxford: Princeton University Press 2012.

this study were selected among dozens of videos uploaded by the HUR group to their YouTube account. Combined with the broadcasted conversation videos, in which the leader of the HUR group responds to the questions asked by the members or online viewers, the required data is primarily derived from these materials in text, video, and image formats.

Even though initially a participant observation method was planned, due to the recent conditions imposed by the pandemic combined with the author's personal condition, the focus had to be shifted from collecting ethnographic implications of the ritual to the more theoretical aspects of it. This shift of focus further brought about fundamental changes in the research objectives and consequently alterations in the scope, selection of sources, methodology, and the research questions of the project. Expectedly, even a minor change in one of these constituents may require foundational changes in the project, a full-scale alteration of them has caused this study to be continuously re-customized. Such fluidity in dynamics, a crucial part of them will be elaborated below, then demanded a new approach to prevent starting the project over again. To this end, a combination of classical methods of ethnomusicology (derived from archaeology, ethnography, and anthropology)⁴³ and the grounded theory will be implemented in an upgraded way—e.g., observation without participation, interviews conducted via emails/online meetings, gathering data from pre-existent materials and online sources provided by the group studied.

As the comparative method is a part of both grounded theory⁴⁴ and ethnomusicology, the latter of which was initially denoted “comparative musicology”, this study will make use of comparison to identify interpretative variations. Considering ethnomusicology “an inherently interdisciplinary discipline”, Cooley and Barz argue that “ethnomusicologists are in a unique position to question established methods and goals of the social sciences, and to explore new perspectives”⁴⁵. Therefore, grounded theory as a “methodologically dynamic”⁴⁶ approach to gather data and simultaneously to develop a hypothesis to test it through empirical results appears to be the most advantageous approach to the new dynamics in re-constructing the study at hand. Through applying grounded theory and the tools of ethnomusicology, “behaviors and

⁴³ Merriam, P. Alan: “Ethnomusicology Discussion and Definition of the Field”, in: *Ethnomusicology*, 4/3, 1960, pp. 107–114/107; Schechner, Richard: *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, New York: Routledge 2003; Seeger, Anthony: “Do We Need to Remodel Ethnomusicology?”, in: *Ethnomusicology*, 31/3, 1987, pp. 491–495.

⁴⁴ Glaser, G. Barney / Strauss, L. Anselm: *The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Strategies for Qualitative Research*, New Brunswick / London: Aldine 1967, pp. 101–115.

⁴⁵ Cooley, J. Timothy / Barz, Gregory: “Casting Shadows. Fieldwork Is Dead! Long Live Fieldwork!”, in: Barz, Gregory / Cooley, J. Timothy (eds.), *Shadows in the Field. New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, Oxford / New York: Oxford University Press 2008, pp. 3–24/3.

⁴⁶ Ralph, Nicholas/ Birks, Melanie/ Chapman, Ysanne: “The Methodological Dynamism of Grounded Theory”, in: *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 14/4, 2015, pp. 1–6.

the cultural meanings human beings in a specific culture use to interpret their experiences”⁴⁷, specifically, the interrelationship between musicking (with its ritualized behavioural patterns, sound organization, and motional repertoire) and the participants’ perception of the meaning of musicking in a *zikir* event will be analysed.

In addition to these, the acoustical performance practices of *zikir* that are derived from the tone system will be investigated through transcribing the note values and intervals via the Cent system developed by Ellis⁴⁸ and the motional dimension of the ritual will be investigated via the tools of ethnochoreology.

1.6.2 Scope

With the newly imposed conditions, the scope of the study had to be as well altered. While the initial focus was laid upon the group identity (entitativity) of the HUR and how this identity was performed musically through *zikir*, the new focus, an investigation concerning the epistemology of *tasavvuf*, its historical background, and the performance of this epistemology required the inclusion of several major mythological, religious, and philosophical systems scattered through almost five millennia. Moreover, the written sources referring to the *hikmet* concept have made use of a wide range of languages such as Akkadian, Ugaritic, Phoenician, Aramaic, Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic, Persian, Greek, Latin, Turkish, English, and German. These languages contain various translations and interpretations of the term *hikmet*, which indicate its prominent role in partially shared creation theories and consequent epistemological systems. Even though *hikmet* is not the only mental concept in these systems and has considerable links with other conceptions of wisdom—e.g., *sophia*, *sapientia*, *mârifet*—to maintain the integrity of the study and avoid the risk of inclusion of irrelevant material into analysis, the focus was narrowed down to the interpretations of the *hikmet* concept in these systems and to the themes that surround it in the process of its acquisition. However, the translations of *hikmet* from Semitic languages (Hebrew, Aramaic) to Indo-European language family (Greek, Latin) demonstrate certain translative choices that imply a consistent understanding of the term’s semantic scope, no matter in what language it is used. Such consistency in the interpretations of *hikmet* thus allows this study to apply various culture contact theories to track its circulation throughout

⁴⁷ Aldiabat, Khaldoun / Le Navenec, Carol-Lynne: “Clarification of the Blurred Boundaries between Grounded Theory and Ethnography. Differences and Similarities”, in: *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry*, 2/3, 2011, pp. 1–13/2.

⁴⁸ Ellis, J. Alexander: “On the Musical Scales of Various Nations”, in: *Journal of the Society of Arts*, 33/1688, 1885, pp. 485–527.

history and how the epistemology of *tasavvuf* has been constructed by Muslim scholars based on the accumulated characteristics of the term.

1.6.3 Resources

During the composition of this study no allowance, financial aid, or research grant was sought or received, and all work was financed from the author's own budget. While this limited the potential of the study fundamentally, it also allowed the author relative freedom in the process of planning, designing, and executing the study independent of any institutional requirements. The limited budget primarily caused a modification in the methodology and data acquisition process, in which the pre-existing material was thoroughly investigated. Combined with the limitations brought by the pandemic that prevented conducting fieldwork, equipment to record, transcribe, and analyse the collected data via fieldwork method was not needed. Rather than being a customary ethnomusicological inquiry, the lack of budget and equipment has thus required this study to become a theoretical and historical investigation drawing on the accumulated data.

1.6.4 Generalizability

This study primarily focuses on a single group to investigate how the epistemological components of *tasavvuf* are performed musically. Considering the essentially varying regional and temporal factors in shaping the musicking and thus in performing the *zikir* ritual, this performance cannot be generalized. On the other hand, the *zikir* performance of the HUR group does involve at least two fundamental characteristics of the ritual—repetition and increasing tempo—that are reproduced approximately by all *tarikat* groups throughout the world. Apart from these structural building blocks, however, certain thematic characteristics that give shape and content to the knowledge acquisition procedures of the *zikir* ritual may be indicating their generalizability.

1.6.5 A Controversy: The Question of Authenticity, Representation, and Legitimacy in Ethnographic *Tasavvuf* Studies

My very first encounter with the group (HUR) subject to analysis in this study and their public *zikir* performances was in 2016. As I discussed in another paper,

“What is of interest here is *zikir*’s relatively abrupt public appearance in the nation’s political capital, following the failed coup attempt of July 2016. Various *zikir* performances took place as part of ‘democracy watches’ [a.n. *demokrasi nöbeti*], a form of civil resistance organized by the country’s leaders against the coup attempt, which eventually turned into pro-government rallies. During the democracy watches people were cheering in the streets mostly with religious and patriotic slogans. All around Turkey *salâ* and various supplications were broadcast for hours from the mosques and *Kızılay* Square, now officially named ‘July the 15th *Kızılay* National Will Square’, turned into a stage for the long-prohibited *zikir* in the name of democracy”⁴⁹

My initial reaction to these public *zikir* performances was sheer confusion on two grounds. Firstly, as introduced above shortly, the “authentic” performance of *zikir* aims for an acquaintance with God through shedding all the worldly associations (*masivâ*) and focusing (remembering) entirely on the names of God. Judging from this generally accepted perspective, I had to ask myself, in such a politically charged atmosphere of the “democracy watches”, to what extent can this goal be achieved? This question has then led to a series of other relevant questions such as how authentic are these *zikir* performances or what is the real purpose of these groups in performing *zikir* openly in public spaces? Even though I had already grown interested in *zikir*, or rituals in general, and conducted several studies on the subject, being an “outsider” —or, perhaps a very “limited insider”—of *tasavvuf*, as I have no personal association with any *tarikat* or religious organization, I have never considered myself an authority to decide these groups’ authenticity or their legitimacy to represent *tasavvuf*. To me, it seemed to be an internal dispute among those who identify themselves with *tasavvuf*. Therefore, while working on this research project, I initially tried to be as neutral and objective as possible and left the questions of the authenticity or legitimacy of these groups out of my project. This approach was also considered legitimate by my project advisor Prof. Dr. Kubik. After our recent conversation with him on the topic, we agreed that our field of study is “cultural phenomena”. He further told me, “We should not include and use these concepts of authenticity/representation in our work, but we consider everything authentic as they phenomenologically appear”⁵⁰. Whether “authentic” or not, for us, these appearances can become a matter of interest for a scientific investigation as in this dissertation project. However, when I announced that I am interested in studying these groups performing public *zikir*, I received harsh critiques from various people, some of whom came up through the ranks in *tasavvuf* tradition. The nature of these critiques was in fact common, emphasizing that the leader of the HUR group known as Fatih Nurullah Efendi (FNE)

⁴⁹ Arslan, Ferhat: “The Politicization of Tradition. The New Visibility of Zikir in Soldier Send-Off Ceremonies in Turkey”, in: *Etnografie sonore/ Sound Ethnographies*, 3/1, 2020, pp. 47–70/53–54.

⁵⁰ Personal conversation with Prof. Dr. Gerhard Kubik, 2 May 2022.

was a “fake *şeyh*”, or “imposter”, who did not receive an authentic *icâzet* (a document given by a valid *şeyh* or *mürşid* authorizing its owner to lead a *tarikât*). Nevertheless, FNE did provide two *icâzet* documents—one in Turkish and one in Ottoman Turkish language—on his group’s web page, which is currently inaccessible⁵¹.

The events of the last year (2021) have demonstrated that the critiques concerning FNE were valid. He was sentenced to ten years and five months imprisonment for sexually abusing the 12-year-old daughter of a disciple in Sakarya, Turkey and is currently in prison. In addition to this case, numerous other reports have been written concerning various mental, physical, and economic abuse cases of *tarikât* or *cemaat* adherents in Turkey. As these are judicial processes, their details and causes have rarely been referred to in academic *tasavvuf* studies. Some of the most recent cases that come to the surface and became a public matter have been scrutinized by investigative reporter Saymaz, who primarily bases his arguments on court documents and the accounts provided by victimized interviewees. He published several books on similar issues and various abuse cases that took place in *tarikât* and *cemaat* organizations in Turkey. In one of his book’s back cover texts, Saymaz summarizes the variety of child abuse cases as follows:

“Six children who died in the *Kur’an* course in Diyarbakir’s Karaağaç Village were the victims of a ‘faithless’ market sanctified by *tarikât* sheikhs, and a blind faith corrupted in this lawless market. Children of Karaağaç are followed by other orphans of the Republic of Turkey, which is expected to be a democratic, secular and social state of the law as written in its constitution: eighteen girls were lost in a natural gas explosion in Konya Taşkent; twelve girls who turned to embers in Adana Aladağ; ten boys who were raped in Karaman; twelve-year-old Nurettin, who left one arm in a meat grinder in Kütahya, and boys who were raped in a middle school boarding house in Adıyaman... As a result of the neo-liberal economic policies that started to be implemented on September 12 [1980] and were completed during the AKP governments, poverty and deprivation in Turkey have turned into a field of exploitation of *tarikât* and *cemaat* organizations. İsmail Saymaz reveals the neglect of education left to *tarikât* and *cemaat* groups, the way public officials give way to religious groups, and finally, the plight of the children of poor families. *The Republic of the Orphans* sheds light on the consequences of decriminalizing, opening, and working in illegal educational institutions to alleviate the ‘concerns’ of the *tarikât* groups. It shows the concrete complicity of the mentality that declares these children, who died, crippled, and whose lives are darkened by sexual assaults, as victims of destiny”⁵²

⁵¹ See, Appendix. Intriguingly, however, after having the document transliterated into Latin letters it became evident that neither FNE’s name nor the name of the *mürşid* who supposedly wrote the document can be seen here. Without these, the validity of this document becomes questionable.

⁵² Saymaz, İsmail: *Kimşesizler Cumhuriyeti*, İstanbul: İletişim 2018. All these events that Saymaz mentioned in his book have also been extensively discussed in the Turkish media. See, for example, Arslan, Rengin: “Karaman’da çocuklara taciz iddiaları. Ne oldu, ne olacak?”, in: *BBC Türkçe*, 29 March 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/03/160328_karaman_dava>, last accessed: 25 April 2022.

On the other hand, numerous other people and I, who are not necessarily *sûfî*, did have some suspicions about FNE as some of his speeches and actions were controversial. Among these public appearances, one can list, for example, his speeches favouring the re-establishment of the Ottoman Empire, implying the end of the “modernist republican” reforms that diminished the influence of politically active Islamism in Turkey. Moreover, in several speeches, he took an overt political stance—which is not a rarity in the history of *tasavvuf*—in favour of the leading party. In one of his speeches against the leader of the main opposition political party of Turkey, he even implicitly threatened him and a religious minor group, the Alevis, based on hearsay. In another speech, he claimed that “those who kiss my hand [a.n. a gesture of respect and high esteem in Turkey] will ascend to heaven”, which caused considerable unrest among “authentic” religious and *tarikât* groups. The HUR group led by FNE also appeared on various social media platforms with their unorthodox *zikir* performances, singing the national anthem of Turkey (*İstiklâl Marşı*) as an accompaniment to the *zikir* movements. Finally, FNE bought (or leased) an old building on the same street where the historical Uşşâkî lodge, *Pîr Seyyid Hasan Hüsameddin Uşşâkî Âsitânesi*, is located in Kasımpaşa, İstanbul. FNE operated the building he resided as his group’s central lodge, and according to the comments I received, he claimed to be associated with the historical Uşşâkî lodge on the same street. Though I was also informed by several people that the Uşşâkî organization was in fact a decentralized one, according to its official web page, this historical *âsitâne* is mentioned as the central lodge of the Uşşâkî *tarikât*⁵³. At the same web address, the Uşşâkî *tarikât* released several public announcements about FNE—the earliest dating to 5 October 2016—and declared that they have no association with him as follows:

“After this abusive person [a.n. FNE] has been presented as the ‘Leader of the Uşşâkî Tarikat’ and who has occupied the public in recent days, we felt the need to republish all the announcements and notifications we made that FNE has nothing to do with the Uşşâkî community and foundation. Our foundation has been continuing [a.n. to inform the public] for years about this person. We respectfully present to the public below the press organizations that obtained information and made statements on this matter”⁵⁴

Before FNE’s abuse cases, however, the HUR group was perhaps one of the most active and popular religious groups in Turkey and has appeared at both national and international events as a representative of *tasavvuf* tradition. For example, the HUR group, or at least some

⁵³ “*Pîr Seyyid Hasan Hüsameddin Uşşâkî Âsitânesi*”, <<http://www.ussaki.com/v2/en/>>, last accessed: 17 April 2022.

⁵⁴ “Public Announcement”, <<http://www.ussaki.com/v2/onemli-aciklama/>>, last accessed: 17 April 2022.

members of this group who participate in their *zikir*, have appeared multiple times on the state-owned TV channel, Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), with their dramatized *zikir* performances⁵⁵. They also appeared on the programs of various international “*sufi festivals*” such as in Malaysia⁵⁶ and Morocco⁵⁷. Moreover, they seem to have established connections with some religious groups and organizations in Indonesia such as *Dewan Ulama Thariqah Indonesia* (The Council of Ulema Tariqas of Indonesia, DUTI)⁵⁸. Like approximately all *tarikat* organizations in Turkey, the HUR group led by FNE operated as a foundation (*vakıf*), under the name of *Gülzari Mualla Eğitim Kültür İlim ve Araştırma Vakfı* (Gülzari Mualla Education, Culture, Science, and Research Foundation)⁵⁹, which is directly related with my initial reaction to their public *zikir* of the “democracy watches” above.

The second ground triggering my confusion was that any *tarikat* activity—including a performance of *zikir* or using *tarikat*-relevant titles such as *şeyh*, *derviş*, or *mürîd*—is illegal according to the Turkish Constitutional Law (Article 174, Par. 3). In other words, in general, holding religious services at a place unrecognized by the authorities as an area of worship is against the constitutional law. The (non-)application of this law has a long transforming history and direct relevance to the current socio-political climate in Turkey that, in the last twenty years, allowed various religious organizations to increase their activities.

In a nutshell, as part of abandoning the Ottoman past and modernizing what was left of it, secular authorities “excluded religious items and symbols from the public space”⁶⁰ and ex-

⁵⁵ For example, in TV series such as *Payitaht Abdülhamid* (Episode 49) and *Yunus Emre* (Episode 40). See: “*Payitaht Abdülhamid Zikir Sahnesi*”, <<https://www.trt1.com.tr/diziler/payitaht-abdulhamid/ekstra/zikir-sahnesi>>, last accessed: 16 April 2022.

⁵⁶ Unknown Author’s Report, “Hiburan patuh syarak”, in: *Berita Harian*, 4 August 2017, pp. b10–b11. Online source: <<https://www.pressreader.com/malaysia/berita-harian-malaysia/20170804/page/75>>, last accessed: 16 April 2022.

⁵⁷ Since the official page of the festival, *Festival de Fès de la culture soufie*, <<https://festivalculturesoufie.com/>>, does not provide information about the preceding events—including the one the HUR group appeared in 2017—, reliable sources confirming the HUR group’s participation are not available. However, a YouTube website carrying the same title as the festival, *Festival De fes De la culture Soufie*, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEDgZi3Ip3zc_OfWLR_mabA/videos>, houses several videos demonstrating a *zikir* performance of the HUR group in the festival, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8K3I2U1QFoM>>, and an interview made with FNE, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSSiQNIQWHE>>, recorded by *Agence Marocaine de Presse* (MAP). In addition to these videos, an online blog also shows several visuals of FNE and the HUR group while performing their *zikir*, McCutcheon, Sandy: “Fez Festival of Sufi Culture - Day Seven”, in: *The View from Fez*, <<http://riadzany.blogspot.com/2017/10/fez-festival-of-sufi-culture-day-seven.html>>, Friday, 20 October 2017, last accessed: 16 April 2022. Intriguingly, the HUR group appeared at the festival in Morocco under the name of Nakşibendî *tarikat*.

⁵⁸ See, Appendix.

⁵⁹ See, Appendix.

⁶⁰ Baban, Feyzi: “Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nin Kuruluşunda Vatandaşlık ve Kamusal Kimlikler”, in: Keyman, E. Fuat (ed.), *Aydınlanma, Türkiye ve Vatandaşlık*, İstanbul: Osmanlı Bankası Arşiv ve Araştırma Merkezi, 2008, pp. 70–75 quoted in: Dönmez, Ö. Rasim: “Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi: İslâmcılıktan Post Kemalist Bir Anlatıya Doğru”, in: *Doğu Batı*, 14/58, 2011, pp. 37–58/49.

cluded influential religious groups from power. The abolition of the Ottoman Sultanate in 1922 was followed by the reforms which distanced the Republic from an Islamic worldview, among them the dress code prohibiting the fez (the Hat Law, 1925), the closure of lodges (*tekke* or *zâviye*) that had important socio-economic as well as religious roles (1925), and the adoption of the Latin alphabet (1928). The nature of the conflict between the “Kemalist regime” and “Islamists” in Turkey is most clearly evident in this modernization process known as “Atatürk’s Reforms”⁶¹.

The lodges housed the *tarikât* groups where spiritual leaders gathered with their followers, and preserved and transmitted *tasavvuf* traditions, local moral and behavioural codes, fine arts including music (secular and religious), and a variety of Islamic disciplines⁶². The *tekke* institutions were education and art centres⁶³, in which the leading *zâkir* group of musicians were raised—those who perform *zikir*, sing hymns, and/or provide instrumental accompaniment⁶⁴. To think of the *tarikât* organizations in Turkey as merely mystical groups enclosed in their own rules and ways is to miss the motive and effect of the “Law on the Closure of Dervish Lodges Hospices and Shrines and Abolition and Prohibition of the Use of Certain Titles” no. 677. Along with their allegedly “out of date”⁶⁵ education system and “superstitious practices”⁶⁶, this law primarily targeted *tarikât* groups for their active influence in the socio-cultural and political fabric of everyday life⁶⁷. The Republican government had a bitter experience with the reach of that influence during the Sheikh Said Rebellion of 1925. It realized that it was not in control of the *tekke* organizations⁶⁸ and the law no. 677 inevitably followed⁶⁹. Despite the official closure of the *tekke* and similar organizations, however, the law could not prevent their lobbying activities nor their reconstitution in different forms.

⁶¹ İrem, Nazım: “Türk Muhafazakâr Modernleşmesinin Sınırları: Kültürcü Özgünlük ve Eksik Liberalizm”, in: *Doğu Batı*, 14/58, 2011, pp. 27–36/30.

⁶² Kara, Mustafa: *Din, Hayat, Sanat Açısından Tekkeler ve Zâviyeler* İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2017, p. 169.

⁶³ Öngören, Reşat: “Osmanlı Türkiye’sinde Tarikatlar”, in: Ceyhan, Semih (ed.), *Türkiye’de Tarikatlar. Tarih ve Kültür*, İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2015, pp. 55–94/57.

⁶⁴ Uludağ, Süleyman: *Tasavvuf Terimleri Sözlüğü*, İstanbul: Marifet Yayınları, 1991, p. 534.

⁶⁵ Kara, Mustafa: “Cumhuriyet Türkiye’sinde Tarikatlar”, in: Semih Ceyhan (ed.), *Türkiye’de Tarikatlar: Tarih ve Kültür*, İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2015, pp. 95–132/104.

⁶⁶ Atatürk, M. Kemal: *Nutuk*, Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınevi, 1927.

⁶⁷ See, Işın, Ekrem: *İstanbul’da Gündelik Hayat: İnsan, Kültür ve Mekân İlişkileri Üzerine Toplumsal Tarih Denemeleri*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1995.

⁶⁸ Ortaylı, İlber / Küçükkaya, İsmail: *Cumhuriyet’in İlk Yüzyılı (1923–2023)*, İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2012, p. 95.

⁶⁹ Ortaylı / Küçükkaya, 2012, pp. 111–112.

The “Kemalist conception of public space”⁷⁰, and the Reforms forced Islamists out of that space and out of the political sphere⁷¹, and this happened not gradually but abruptly. Only some sparks of the Islamist vitality somehow persisted. Neither in law no. 677 nor by other reforms had “Kemalism” aimed at a total prohibition of Islam. This was impossible in theory and practice. One of the aims was to reduce Islamic presence and influence and to exclude Islamists as much as possible from governmental institutions. It, therefore, became crucial for the state to repackaging Islam and reintroduce it to society. As a result, in Mardin’s formulation, Islam came to be “represented differently by two parties, the state and people”⁷², with the latter sustaining a parallel cultural existence away from the state-controlled centre. The sharp break between the ideals of the state and the ideals of people/folk was to shape the decades that followed. We can see that the polarization in today’s Turkey is likely rooted in the sudden ruptures that took place during the transition from Empire to Republic.

For *zikir*, following Atatürk’s Reforms and the law no. 677 (1925), public space was not a location for its expression—until now. However, throughout the last century *zikir* had continued to exist. Abolishing the *tekke* institutions, places where *zikir* performances used to be held, did not end the confraternity (*ihvan*) between adherents⁷³. Their relations, meetings, and collective *zikir* performances went on in different places and formats in order to avoid potential risks. Hidden from public visibility for fear of military intervention, *zikir* has long been performed in its varying forms primarily in private places, such as *tarikât* adherents’ houses, or a room in the rear of a grocery store owned by a *tarikât* member.

Following the extraordinary events of the coup attempt, the persistence of *zikir* practice in Turkey was explicitly revealed. This significant date corresponds with the increased activities not only of the HUR group whose *zikir* is subject to analysis in this study but also several other *tarikât*-like organizations (*cemaat*) in various segments of Turkish society. Along with forming civil organizations and associations⁷⁴, they extended their sphere of influence even to the public

⁷⁰ Kubilay, Çağla: “İslamcı Söylemde Kamusal Alan Tasavvuru: Devletle Tanımlanan Kamusal Alanın Millete Tahvili ve Kamusal Alanın Reddi”, in: *Alternatif Politika*, 1/3, 2009, pp. 325–362/336. 335.

⁷¹ Dönmez, 2011, p. 48; İrem, 2011, p. 33.

⁷² Mardin, Şerif: *Din ve İdeoloji*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005, pp. 145–146.

⁷³ Ortaylı / Küçükaya, 2012, p. 62.

⁷⁴ Köse, A. Sakine: “Faith-based organizations in Turkey as indirect political patronage tools”, in: *Palgrave Communications*, 5/88, 2019, <<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-019-0301-2>>, last accessed: 25 April 2022; Alkan-Zeybek, Hilal: “Ethics of Care, Politics of Solidarity. Islamic Charitable Organisations in Turkey”, in: Dupret, Baudouin et. al. (eds.), *Ethnographies of Islam. Ritual Performances and Everyday Practices*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2012, pp. 144–152; Göçmen, İpek: “Religion, politics and social assistance in Turkey. The rise of religiously motivated associations”, in: *Journal of European Social Policy*, 24/1, 2014, pp. 92–103.

institutions, for example, the Ministry of Health, or Education in Turkey⁷⁵. The new freedom given to these groups further allowed them to propagandize their views through corporations, foundations, or private TV channels they formed, as was done by the HUR group⁷⁶. Moreover, many of these groups have been continuously opening schools, especially for elementary and kindergarten levels, often named *medrese* (theological school) or *Kur'an kursu* (*Kur'an* training course), which is also against the Turkish constitutional law (Article 42, Par. 2).

This lack of institutional control over *tarikât* activities has led to the coup attempt of 2016, as the attempting segment of the military was in fact administered by a religious group (*cemaat*), which had been organized within the Turkish Armed Forces (*Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri*) for an unknown period. All of these can also be linked with the law no. 677. The abolition of these organizations followed the constitution of the Turkish Republic caused the dissolution of their history-old, inherent control mechanism, which has been supervising various religious and *tarikât* organizations, their branches (*kol* or *şube*), and their leaders. This mechanism was in fact already institutionalized towards the end of the Ottoman Empire under the name of *Meclis-i Meşâyih* (Council of Sheikhs) established in 1866 with the approval of *Şeyhülislâm* and *Evkâf-ı Hümâyûn Nezâreti* (Imperial Ministry of Pious Foundations). Despite Anjum discusses that “the Sufi *shaykhs* do not need any formal recognition of their spirituality from any institution”⁷⁷, the establishment of *Meclis-i Meşâyih* invalidates this argument, at least within the Ottoman realm. *Meclis-i Meşâyih* was an organization responsible for taking necessary measures and initiating administrative interventions to improve the lives of *mutasavvife*—from appointing new leaders to the branches of *tarikât* to inspecting their foundations—under the direction of a president, who was elected among the leaders (*şeyh*) of participating *tarikât* groups⁷⁸.

Reasons to establish such an institution may be various, but an assumed degeneration in the practice of *tasavvuf* and certain *tarikât* leaders, an argument which has been resonating among *tasavvuf* circles of Anatolia and other regions for a long time, was perhaps the most significant one. The issue of the degenerated “imposter *şeyh*” can be exemplified from various emic and

⁷⁵ Kaya, Ayhan: “Islamisation of Turkey under the AKP Rule. Empowering Family, Faith and Charity”, in: *South European Society and Politics*, 20/1, 2015, pp. 47–69.

⁷⁶ According to the statistics provided by the Turkish Ministry of Interior, in İstanbul alone, there are currently 2295 associations operating under the title “associations working to perform religious services”. In addition to these, numerous other faith-based communities are operating under different associational categories such as “individual teaching and social development associations” etc. See, “İllere ve Faaliyet Alanlarına Göre Dernekler”, *T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı Sivil Toplumla İlişkiler Müdürlüğü*, <<https://www.siviltoplum.gov.tr/illere-ve-faaliyet-alanlarina-gore-dernekler>>, last accessed: 26 April 2022.

⁷⁷ Anjum, Tanvir: “Sufism in History and its Relationship with Power”, in: *Islamic Studies*, 45/2, 2006, pp. 221–268/222.

⁷⁸ Kara, Mustafa: *Din, Hayat, Sanat Açısından Tekke ve Zaviyeler*, İstanbul: Dergâh 1979, pp. 226ff.

etic perspectives. Chittick, for example, quotes a prominent *mutasavvif*, Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî (1207–1273), under the title of “Fake Masters” as follows:

“A disciple who is trained by a man of God will have a pure and purified spirit. But he who is trained by an imposter and hypocrite and who learns theory from him will be just like him: despicable, weak, incapable, morose, without any exit from uncertainties, and deficient in all his senses. ‘As for the unbelievers—their protectors are idols, that bring them forth from the light into the shadows.’ [a.n. *Kur’an* 2:257]”⁷⁹

Correspondingly, Gölpınarlı, a renowned Turkish historian of *tasavvuf*, also quotes Mevlânâ several times to underline the issue of fake or imposter *şeyh*. “Mevlânâ too”, writes Gölpınarlı, “says that the true *sûfî* is less than one in a thousand; he is against those who pretend to be a *şeyh* (agedness) to rise in the ranks while being unripe; he condemns those who sell sheikhdom with drums and flags. Almost all *tasavvuf* books contain this kind of satire”⁸⁰. In the same vein, Kuşeyrî (986–1072) whose work on *tasavvuf*, *er-Risâle* (1045–1046), has become a source text, speaks of “insincere” and “imposter”⁸¹ personalities in the tradition. Since these *tarikât* groups in the Ottoman realm were “providing members with a host of relationships important in social, commercial, and sometimes political life”⁸², instrumentalizing this potential—which Pinto defines as “ritual charisma”⁸³—for personal interests has become a recurring theme within the history of *tasavvuf*⁸⁴. Sühreverdî (1145–1234) refers to these issues as follows:

“In addition to these, as for the person who is brought to the service of the poor by being given foundation goods to deliver the goods given to him to their owners or to increase the expected services; He is serving for a bounty and a share that he will get immediately. If his interest is cut off, his service will be cut off as well. Often, he employs those who [a.n. want to] serve. In this case, he, with his sensual (*nefsânî*) desire, serves (especially) those who are needed more in the assemblies and meetings that serve him, thanks to which he increases his wealth and prestige. In fact, this person

⁷⁹ Chittick C. William: *The Sufi Path of Love. The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*, Albany: SUNY Press 1983, p. 145.

⁸⁰ Gölpınarlı, Abdülbâki: *100 Soruda Tasavvuf*, İstanbul: Gerçek Yayınevi 1969b, pp. 105–106.

⁸¹ Al-Qushayrî, Abu’l-Qasim: “Al-Risala al-qushayriyya fi ‘ilm al-tasawwuf”, in: Knysh, D. Alexander (trans.), *Al-Qushayrî’s Epistle on Sufism*, Reading: Garnet Publishing 2007, p. 357.

⁸² Quataert, Donald: *The Ottoman Empire 1700–1922*, Second Edition, Cambridge / New York: Cambridge University Press 2005, p. 162.

⁸³ Pinto, G. Paulo: “Mystical bodies/unruly bodies. Experience, empowerment and subjectification in Syrian Sufism”, in: *Social Compass*, 63/2, 2016, pp. 197–212.

⁸⁴ Çağatay, Neşet / Çubukçu, Ağâh: *İslâm Mezhepleri Tarihi*, Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi 1985, pp. x–xi; Gilsenan, Michael: *Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt. An Essay in the Sociology of Religion*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1973, p. 158; Boivin, Michel: “Music and Remembrance as Meditation. Samâ’ in the Indus Valley”, in: Eifring, Halvor (ed.), *Meditation in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, London / New York: Bloomsbury 2013, pp. 213–224/218.

serves his whims, pursues worldly goods, strives to maintain his reputation day and night, seizes things that will please him and his people, and in this state, he is busy increasing his worldly wealth.

In this manner, he takes on a state and clothing other than that of dervishes and real servants. He gives himself up to achieve his sensual desires. The love of being the chief prevails in him. As his property increases, so does his demand. He turns to the poor (dervishes) and tries to obtain them with service. The poor, too, need to flatter and flatter him excessively to gain his consent and love, for fear of cutting off their share of the foundation under his control. In fact, it would be better to call such a person ‘awaiting service’ rather than a true servant”⁸⁵

Another relevant reaction that comes from within the *tasavvuf* tradition is the Melâmî trend⁸⁶, which Gölpınarlı defines as “reactionary fronts to *tasavvuf* in *tasavvuf*”⁸⁷. He further discusses that the institutionalization of early *tasavvuf* groups into *tarikat* organizations has led the Melâmî trend to part ways from these developments. From the Melâmî perspective, with this institutionalized approach to God, the *tarikat* leaders (*şeyh*, *mürşid*) have started to put more emphasis on their external (institutional) activities and even on their physical appearance, which contradicts the essential teachings of *tasavvuf* emphasizing an absolute humility. As the examples above demonstrate the issue of the fake, pretentious, or “imposter *şeyh*” profile which deviates from the central doctrines of *tasavvuf* is a part of *tasavvuf* history.

In a chapter titled “True and False Spiritual Teachers”, Guénon too refers to these frequently appearing “charlatans” in *tasavvuf*, who “claim to be spiritual guides without being at all qualified for this role [...], [a.n. and who] generally have very powerful and more or less abnormal psychic powers [...], capable of creating an illusion and imposing it on all who are insufficiently informed and consequently cannot make the essential distinctions”⁸⁸. Also characterizing these profiles as “a common imposter or a ‘deluded’ person”, Guénon further argues that “whoever presents himself as a spiritual teacher, without attaching himself to a definite traditional form, or without conforming to the rules established by the latter, cannot truly possess the qualifications he attributes to himself”⁸⁹. This, to my view, corresponds largely with the concerns expressed when I announced the *zikir* performances of the HUR group will be my study subject.

It is also my understanding that these concerns about FNE and his group involved several dimensions. As to the first, people who did not fully acknowledge my project likely con-

⁸⁵ Sühreverdî, Şihâbuddîn: *Gerçek Tasavvuf [Avârifü'l-Meârif]*, Selvi, Dilâver (trans.), İstanbul: Semerkand 2010, pp. 116–117.

⁸⁶ For Sühreverdî’s views on the Melâmî trend in *tasavvuf*, see: Sühreverdî, 2010, pp. 90ff.

⁸⁷ Gölpınarlı, 1969b, p. 110.

⁸⁸ Guénon, René: *The Essential René Guénon. Metaphysics, Tradition, and the Crisis of Modernity*, Herlihy, John (ed.), Bloomington: World Wisdom 2009, pp. 260–261.

⁸⁹ Guénon, 2009, p. 261.

sidered me one of those “insufficiently informed” ones mentioned by Guénon, despite my intention—perhaps due to my naivety—was to stay neutral and focus on the HUR group merely as an assembly of people who (claimed to) had come together to perform music around a certain idea (*tasavvuf*) every week for years and, before FNE’s abuse cases became public, they had been disseminating their musical performances (*zikir*) on various official, international, as well as online platforms. My initial intention to stay neutral and objective has proven to be seriously problematic—at least for those who came up through the ranks in *tasavvuf* tradition—as conducting PhD research on a proven “imposter” and his group’s musical activity might be crediting them, or as Teitelbaum argues, “a goal to remain neutral might not escape a certain inflexibility”⁹⁰. To me, this accreditation potential constitutes another dimension of the concerns directed towards my project, since it may serve to legitimize the views and actions of FNE and his group. As Guénon discusses above, when someone presents himself as part of *tasavvuf*, he is expected to comply with the requirements and follow the rules of this tradition. Failure to comply may lead to several degrees of warnings and ultimately ex-communication as in the case of FNE. Even though this ex-communication is in no way official, it forms a consensus about the discordant profile and his authenticity as well as legitimacy.

However, apart from their partly international recognition, the HUR group was also studied (or accredited) by both Turkish and international researchers. While, for example, Prof. Dr. Muammer Cengil devoted an entire book to the HUR group⁹¹, another researcher, Dr. Dimitris Xygalatas from the University of Connecticut, conducted field research on the HUR group's *zikir* with the question "how heartbeats align in a Muslim ritual"⁹². In addition to these, another book published by an authoritative institution, *İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi* (ISAM, Centre for Islamic Studies), a part of the quasi-official *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı* (TDV, Foundation of Religion) in Turkey, refers to FNE as part of the Uşşâkî *silsile* (lineage)⁹³. The presence of these studies above convinced me to carry on with the project, but I had to give voice also to the opposing views about FNE's and his group's authenticity, which eventually led to the composition of this chapter.

⁹⁰ Teitelbaum, R. Benjamin: “Collaborating with the Radical Right. Scholar-Informant Solidarity and the Case for an Immoral Anthropology”, in: *Current Anthropology*, 60/3, 2019, pp. 414–422/419.

⁹¹ Titled as *Tasavvufî Yaşantı: Halveti-Uşşaki Topluluğu Üzerine Psikolojik Bir Araştırma*, and in English, *Tasavvuf Experience: A Psycho-Sociological Research on the Halveti-Uşşaki Community*.

⁹² I was not able to find a published study by Xygalatas, however, in the following web page he and a colleague of him present short information about their field trip to İstanbul: Manoharan, Christopher / Xygalatas, Dimitris: “How Heartbeats Align in a Muslim Ritual”, in: *Sapiens Anthropology Magazine*, 15 August 2019, <<https://www.sapiens.org/biology/sufi-ritual-istanbul/>>, last accessed: 17 April 2022.

⁹³ Ceyhan, Semih: “Halvetiyye”, in: Ceyhan, Semih (ed.), *Türkiye’de Tarikatlar. Tarih ve Kültür*, İstanbul: ISAM 2015, pp. 695–778/764.

In the beginning, I added a footnote where FNE's name appears first in the main text and shortly described the issue as follows:

It is important to note that the leadership of Fatih Nurullah Efendi and the authenticity of his *tarikât* (HUR) have been a matter of dispute among various *tarikât* groups in Turkey. Perhaps the most relevant of these groups is the Uşşâkî *tarikât*, to which the HUR led by FNE claims adherence. This group is the official representative of the Uşşâkî *tarikât* residing in the historic lodge in İstanbul (*Hüsameddin Uşşâkî Tekkesi*). Moreover, the family of İbrahim İpek Efendi—whose authority was accepted and from whom FNE has claimed to receive *icâzet* (permission) to lead a *tarikât*—also declared that they do not acknowledge the views and practices of FNE. As this is an internal dispute, this study does not focus on the issue, nor does it position itself to judge such authenticity. For the accusations of İpek Efendi's family and Uşşâkî *tarikât*, see: Uşşâkî Âsitânesi, 08 September 2020, <<http://www.ussaki.com/v2/onetmli-aciklama/>>, last accessed: 13 March 2022.

This footnote was too perceived as considerably problematic, as I was criticized that it was “all wrong” and I should “remove it completely”. When I asked what exactly was wrong in this footnote, the reply was as follows:

“You will get very serious criticism. A very problematic personality. I wish you had asked me earlier. Neither the general Sufi community nor the Uşşaki community, in particular, did not accept this person. Someone who has been fired from many places. I know personally. It also brings harm to the scientific value of your thesis...Without giving names, I think you should say ‘according to my study of an Uşşaki group’. Never mention his name or his group. I am very disturbed that even my name is mentioned there. Moreover, Uşşaki is a decentralized *tarikât*. It has many branches. There is no single representative of it”⁹⁴

Thanks to this clear and friendly warning from a well-informed scholar and *sûfî*, I better realized the validity of the critiques directed toward my research project. Despite crediting FNE unjustly was in no way my intention or within my capacity, from the perspective of those who identify themselves with *tasavvuf*, my research project might as well serve such a purpose. However, by the time FNE's abuse cases became public, I had already finished analysing the HUR group's *zikir* ritual second by second, which was perfectly demonstrative of the theoretical part of the project. I now had several options on how to proceed with the project. Either I was going to shift the study subject to an “authentic” and “legitimate” *tarikât* group's *zikir* practice, or, following advice, mute everything that addresses FNE and his organization. Ultimately, I decided to bring the issue as much as possible to the surface in this adjunct chapter and discuss the wider implications of FNE's situation.

⁹⁴ Personal conversation.

From the perspective of various social sciences and ethnographic studies, similar issues have been referred to by several researchers who attempted to study controversial groups rather than the commonly accepted or unobjectionable ones. As Teitelbaum discusses the ethical and moral concerns of doing ethnography, “the staid impression of anthropologists as scholars of the disenfranchised and oppressed—those with whom solidarity appears morally and politically unproblematic [...]—is a mischaracterization”⁹⁵. For Teitelbaum, this means that during the process of ethnography encounters with “unaccepted” figures may be unavoidable for various reasons. The dimension of “(un-)willingly becoming a mouthpiece” of the studied people was one of the essential aspects of such ethnographic studies, as the expectations of informants, institutions, and the public partially shape the research outcomes. Titon, for example, notes in an essay that “ethnomusicology and the public interest” meet particularly when the method of fieldwork is used, which is “based on friendship between people rather than on a model involving antagonism, surveillance, the observation of physical objects, or the contemplation of abstract ideas”⁹⁶. Keeping aside the figure of “the undercover ethnographer” in the history of ethnography, Titon’s idealized model of relationship as “friendship” with the studied people is both a natural dimension of human encounters in general and fruitful in various aspects of doing ethnography and fieldwork, however, placing observation (with all its potentially negative implications) against the friendship model seems to presuppose an inability of observation to generate scientific data. Hale, aiming to find a balance between being critical toward and being friends with the studied people, argues that

“The activist research [a.n. is] a method through which we affirm a political alignment with an organized group of people in struggle and allow dialogue with them to shape each phase of the process, from conception of the research topic to data collection to verification and dissemination of the results”⁹⁷

Being well-aware of the issues attached to this style of doing ethnography, Hale then describes his view of “cultural critique”, which “is an approach to research and writing in which political alignment manifested through the content of the knowledge produced, not through the relationship established”⁹⁸. While Hale considers “the content of the knowledge produced” can

⁹⁵ Teitelbaum, 2019, p. 415.

⁹⁶ Titon, T. Jeff: “Music, Public Interest, and the Practice of Ethnomusicology”, in: *Ethnomusicology*, 36/3, 1992, pp. 315–322/321.

⁹⁷ Hale, R. Charles: “Activist Research v. Cultural Critique. Indigenous Land Rights and the Contradictions of Politically Engaged Anthropology”, in: *Cultural Anthropology*, 21/1, 2006, pp. 96–120/97.

⁹⁸ Hale, 2006, p. 98.

also be a form of political alignment, which may be the case of my project's reception, the modes of relationship with the studied people are multifarious. Despite the recent trends in anthropology and ethnomusicology (for example, activist approach, engaged anthropology, or applied ethnomusicology) revolve around specific concepts such as advocacy, reciprocity, or collaboration (and some maybe with a flavour of "white saviourism syndrome"), the objectives of these trends cannot be reduced to becoming a mouthpiece of the studied people or having a necessarily political alignment with them. Being on the side of the oppressed, in other words aligning politically with them, may be the prime objective of these approaches, but as described by Titon in a speech, the reach of these research trends goes beyond simply being an activist in the name of the studied group of people:

"Applied ethnomusicologists are involved in political action opposing sound pollution, such as noise from ocean vessels and military activities that affect whales, dolphins, and other sea creatures. We are contributing to the new discipline of eco-musicology, which is the study of music, sound, culture, and nature in a time of environmental crisis"⁹⁹

Like several research methods—e.g., the participant observation and fieldwork—of various social sciences were inherited by ethnomusicologists into their discipline, the decades-old self-criticism of anthropology and ethnography (for example, reflexivity) has also become a critical part of our studies. Though sometimes this self-reflection in social sciences may reach the limits of "virtue signalling" for the sake of the project's credibility, it also defined the ways we study and present our subjects. Due to several reasons explained above, my research project could not involve the traditional fieldwork or participant observation method, which would otherwise require me to develop "intimate relationships" with the *zikir* performers of the HUR group. This inability to employ participant observation, however, enabled me to maintain a "safe distance" from the studied subject as I have been residing miles away from İstanbul. When I first contacted the HUR group via their social media accounts and explained my interest in studying their performances, I was directed to one of the *zikir* performers, Mr. Oğuzhan Kantar, who kindly answered all my semi-formal interview questions about their *zikir* via email correspondences¹⁰⁰. Despite clarifying my intention to interview with FNE, I was politely rejected but nevertheless invited to İstanbul to participate in their *zikir* events, which may also grant me access to an interview with FNE. Since this was not possible for me, one of my side-quests in

⁹⁹ Titon, T. Jeff: "What is Applied Ethnomusicology & Why Did They Say so Many Terrible Things About it?", 2015, Video retrieved from the Library of Congress, <<https://www.loc.gov/item/webcast-8477/>>, last accessed: 22 April 2022.

¹⁰⁰ See, Appendix.

the project, namely observing interpersonal relations among *zikir* participants and the immediate effects of the administering *şeyh* in a *zikir* performance—all of which require participant observation method—was unachievable.

Combined with FNE's doubtful authenticity that eventually led to his imprisonment and my limitations to conduct traditional fieldwork, my initial design to focus on the HUR group, socio-political implications of their *zikir* performances, and the role of *zikir* in increasing the entitativity level of the group, was needed to be put on hold. Consequently, I have decided to revitalize a longstanding project, namely a comprehensive study about the association between the musical structure(s) of the *zikir* ritual and its metasytem, *tasavvuf*, which was initially planned to be started at a later time and would be based on the conclusions drawn from this dissertation project. The foremost investigation concerning the association between the musical structure of *zikir* ritual and *tasavvuf* has demonstrated that it requires an in-depth analysis of *tasavvuf* as a knowledge derivation system, whose results are summarized in the title of this study, "*zikir* as the applied epistemology of *tasavvuf*". While such an abstracted approach to *zikir* and *tasavvuf* involving an investigation of their larger background histories, which may be unknown to very people who currently perform them, distanced me from the ambiguities of human interpretation, it also allowed me, as an observer of not only people *per se* but also the interpretations of these people, to instrumentalize this ambiguity as a source of scientific data. To this end, as mentioned above, the research field of this dissertation is conceptualized on the historical and interpretative variations of wisdom (*hikmet*) concept and how they are musically performed via *zikir* practice.

In addition to the reasons explained above, my choice to analyse the *zikir* of the HUR group as an indicator of the association between *tasavvuf* theories and the performance practices of *zikir* is primarily based on pragmatic reasons, in other words, on the availability of resources. What differentiated the HUR group was their active usage of social media as a propaganda tool, where they uploaded numerous unedited weekly *zikir* performances in their entirety. While the other *tarikats* organizations in Turkey also had some videos of their *zikir* performances uploaded to various social media platforms, they are rarely complete and do not allow a comparative analysis, even within a single *tarikat* group. Thus, without the possibility to conduct fieldwork, these videos recorded and disseminated by the HUR group constituted the primary source for my analysis. The selection of this group as a "representative" of *tasavvuf* and my usage of their self-definition ways with the intention of employing an emic terminology was nevertheless problematic.

In a response to Teitelbaum, Bangstad refers to the problems of employing a full-scale emic terminology when describing the research subjects, which, to a certain extent, corresponds with my initial attempt to use the ways the HUR group define themselves. For Bangstad, this may result in, or partially recognized as, “sanitizing and whitewashing what they represent through a wholesale adoption of their own preferred emic terminology”¹⁰¹. While at first, I thought using the name “the HUR *tarikāt*” to address this group of people, as researchers are almost always obliged to use, or at least must refer to, the ways the studied people define themselves without personal intervention, judging by the critiques, a change in terminology was justly needed. Whether academic or not, research conducted on the topic of religion inevitably begets various concerns. As argued by Roberts, “religion and politics are topics about which many people (sympathetic or hostile) have strong feelings and on which they are often not open to alternative views”¹⁰². My intention to study the HUR group as they presented themselves, understandably, triggered similar reactions indicating such “strong feelings”, yet coming from the “insiders” of *tasavvuf*, they cannot be excluded if the aim is a comprehensive analysis.

In my situation, the adoption of an emic definition of the “Halvetî-Uşşâkî-Ruhzârî *tarikāt*” was without dispute problematic. Thus, I have decided to consider the HUR group as a pseudo-*tarikāt* organization, since they demonstrate approximately all the contextual and structural characteristics of being a *tarikāt*. Moreover, when we set aside FNE’s “fakeness”, there is still a considerable number of participants who attended the weekly *zikir* evenings of the HUR group and who are likely to be “authentic” *zikir* practitioners. While according to Mr. Kantar, a regular participant in the weekly HUR *zikir*, the number of their adherents is about ten thousand (only in İstanbul), we do not know “how many individuals and communities are there whom the morally devout scholar could deem righteous enough for ethnography”¹⁰³.

Despite this chapter does not solve the problems of validity, credibility, or legitimacy of the studied subject nor does it attempt to solve them, it indicates the wider implications of doing ethnography involving social, political, economic, or personal dimensions. As defined in the American Anthropological Association’s (AAA) *Statement on Ethics*, “anthropologists have an ethical obligation to consider the potential impact of both their research and the communication or dissemination of the results of their research”¹⁰⁴, in other words, “researchers

¹⁰¹ Bangstad, Sindre: “Comments”, in: *Current Anthropology*, 60/3, 2019, pp. 422–435/422.

¹⁰² Roberts, A. Keith: *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, Chicago: Dorsey 1984, p. 1.

¹⁰³ Teitelbaum, 2019, p. 422.

¹⁰⁴ “AAA Statement on Ethics”, 2012, <<https://www.americananthro.org/LearnAndTeach/Content.aspx?Item-Number=22869>>, last accessed: 23 April 2022.

must be open with funders, colleagues, persons studied, and all parties affected by research”¹⁰⁵. In my case, the concerns of certain “parties affected by research” were coming from the insiders of *tasavvuf* and therefore they justly altered the emic terminology I was planning to use. Following the advice mentioned in the *Statement on Ethics*,—“When conflicts between ethical standards or expectations arise, anthropologists need to make explicit their ethical obligations, and develop an ethical approach in consultation with those concerned”¹⁰⁶—this adjunct chapter is designed to make the concerns, issues, and obligations explicit for those who may be affected by this study.

1.7 Structural Outline

1.7.1 Volume 1

In the Introduction, the background and the context of the study have been presented. The research aims, objectives, and questions have been linked to the context, and the significance of the study introduced. The limitations of the research project have also been discussed in terms of methodology, scope, resources, and generalizability.

In Chapter Two, the available literature will be reviewed to identify approaches in studying *tasavvuf* and strategies in defining as well as placing it among other experience-based “-isms” will be discussed.

In Chapters Three, Four, and Five, three main systems that have been associated with *tasavvuf* will be analysed in detail to determine their suitability for addressing *tasavvuf*. With the employment of culture contact theories, these systems’ knowledge acquisition procedures derived from the creation theories will be reviewed.

In Chapter Six, the religion Islam as the metasytem of *tasavvuf* epistemology will be introduced. The development of Islamic sciences and the gradual constitution of *tasavvuf* as an epistemological methodology will be analysed. Subsequently, the position of *tasavvuf* among the Islamic theological sciences will be discussed.

In Chapter Seven, the thematic contents of *tasavvuf* epistemology—as well as their non-Islamic correspondences—will be introduced.

In Chapter Eight, the concept *hikmet* and its history will be investigated in detail. Its role in various epistemological procedures and corresponding semantic scope in different languages

¹⁰⁵ Fluehr-Lobban, Carolyn (ed.): *Ethics and the Profession of Anthropology*, Second Edition, Walnut Creek: Altamira 2003, p. 25.

¹⁰⁶ “AAA Statement on Ethics”, 2012.

will be analysed. With regard to the history of *hikmet* and culture contact theories, its nuanced interpretations within *tasavvuf* and its role in associating *tasavvuf* with other “-isms” mentioned in preceding Chapters will be reviewed.

In Chapter Nine, the findings of Volume 1 will be reviewed and a conclusionary discussion concerning the established approaches to the *tasavvuf* complex will be initiated.

1.7.2 Volume 2

In Chapter Ten, the *zikir* ritual and its forms will be introduced and the form subject to analysis in this study will be distinguished. Afterwards, contextual, structural, and performative components of *zikir* rituals and their epistemological indications will be identified in light of the findings of Volume 1.

In Chapter Eleven, musical characteristics of *zikir* rituals will be investigated and their derivation from the epistemology of *tasavvuf* will be ascertained.

In Chapter Twelve, a *zikir* performance of the HUR group will be analysed in detail. The anatomy of the performance will be examined and how the epistemology of *tasavvuf* is applied through this performance will be demonstrated.

In Chapter Thirteen, the aims, objectives, and research questions of this project will be reviewed in light of the collected data and research outcomes.

2 Tasavvuf

Tasavvuf can be defined as an institutionalized school of interpretation, or “methodology”¹⁰⁷, specially developed to establish acquaintance with God in Islam. It is also a “spiritual, pious, and moral lifestyle”¹⁰⁸ equipped with specific doctrines, hierarchically structured organizations, rituals, and idiosyncratic modes of expression framed by Islamic law (*şeriat*) and jurisprudence (*fikih*). At its core, *tasavvuf* is an organized attempt to know God and an effort to attain a peculiar form of wisdom (*mârifet* or *hikmet*) through certain practices such as *zikir*¹⁰⁹. Conceptualizing this divine wisdom as hidden (*bâtın*) and understanding the (spiritual) heart as the primary instrument for its attainment, a *sûfî* (or *mutasavvîf*), the practitioner of *tasavvuf*, aims at spiritual transformation by “purifying” the heart through remembrance (*zikir*). This practice of remembrance allegedly enables the practitioner to focus on the only thing that deserves to be focused on, namely *Allah*. In doing so, it brings about a particular God-given and salvific way of knowing or wisdom (*mârifet* or *hikmet*) concerning the workings of creation, the human condition in the world, and the post-mortem stages of the soul.

Throughout history there have been many written, spoken, speculated, and opposing ideas about *tasavvuf*. Thus, it is a challenging task to say something new, catch a detail that has not been studied yet, or claim a view that will not be opposed. Especially the detailed works, treatises, commentaries, poems, teachings, and theories of *sûfî* scholars like İbnü'l-Arabî (1165–1240), Sühreverdî (1154–1191), Sirhindî or İmam Rabbanî (1564–1624), Kuşeyrî (986–1072), Gazzâlî (1058–1111), and others who came up through the ranks in this tradition constitute a vast archive, such that exhausting all of them in a lifetime is out of the question.

Demirli draws attention to this “huge volume of literature and various kinds of exercises”¹¹⁰ and plausibly asserts that “in such a type of literature, classifying a movement or a

¹⁰⁷ Kılıç, E. Mahmud: “Bir Metodun Metodolojisi. Dini İlimler Metodu Olarak Tasavvufa Mukayeseli Bir Bakış”, in: *Usûl*, 1/1, 2004, pp. 91–109.

¹⁰⁸ Öngören, Reşat: “Tasavvuf”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 40, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2011, pp. 119–126/119.

¹⁰⁹ *Zikir* is written differently in different languages. Following Walter Feldman, in this study, especially for terms originating in Arabic and used in Turkish, modern Turkish orthography, e.g., *zikir*, *tasavvuf*, *tarikât*, *şehadet*, etc. will be employed. This is because such terms can cover different semantic ranges in different languages. Correspondingly, many proper names with Arabic origin are often spelled differently in different languages (Turkish, English, German, French etc.). In the main text of this study, the spelling rules of the *Türk Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (TDV) will be preferred. However, when citing sources, the writing styles of their authors will be kept. See: Feldman, Walter: “Manifestations of the Word. Poetry and Song in Turkish Sufism”, in: Danielson, Virginia / Marcus, Scott / Reynolds, Dwight (eds.), *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, Vol. 6, New York: Routledge 2002, pp. 189–197.

¹¹⁰ Demirli, Ekrem: “The Problem of Periodization in Sufi Studies. The Struggle of Sufism to Become a Discipline Between the Religious Sciences and Metaphysics”, in: *Nazariyat Journal for the History of Islamic Philosophy and Sciences*, 2/4, 2016, pp. 1–32/5.

knowledge that expressed itself in periods on the basis of objective measurements is difficult, and it is almost impossible to develop a theory”¹¹¹ that will encompass the whole. Prominent *mutasavvife*¹¹² have likewise emphasized these superabundant approaches within *tasavvuf* via a famous motto they employ:

“The paths to God are as many as the breaths of His creatures.”¹¹³

“The paths to God are as many as the stars in the sky.”¹¹⁴

On the other hand, *tasavvuf* studies have, in a way, gained a specific structure and style of their own. As Knysh confirms, the vast majority of studies on *tasavvuf* conducted by both *sûfî* and non-*sûfî* scholars usually follow a fixed pattern: “[a.n. they] open with a discussion of the etymology of this [a.n. *sûfî* or *tasavvuf*] term”¹¹⁵. Following this opening, generally *tasavvuf*’s historical underpinnings and its legitimacy according to the *Kur’an* and *hadis* (or *sünnet*)¹¹⁶ are discussed. In the next step, a series of definitions and descriptions provided by numerous people who are somehow engaged in *tasavvuf* are cited to make a case for the relevancy or irrelevancy of *tasavvuf* in a Muslim’s life. After elaborating the most important concepts and theories of *tasavvuf*, e.g., *zikir* (remembrance), *nefs* (ego, soul, or heart), *tarikât* (path, institutionalized *tasavvuf* orders), *takvâ* (God-fearing behaviour), *tevekkül* (reliance), *zühhd* (renunciation), *râbita* (bonding), *bâtın* (hidden, interior, or esoteric) etc., explanations are given on how to put these theories into practice in line with the *Kur’an*, *şeriat*, and Prophet Muhammed.

2.1 Locating *Tasavvuf*: Discussions on its Definition and the Problem of “Roots”

The emergence of the term *sûfî* has been discussed by a great number of scholars throughout history; yet there is still no consensus regarding the roots of the interrelated terms *sûfî* and *tasavvuf*. While for Demirli, “the question of origin faced by the researchers in Islamic world was inherited from the Orientalist works”¹¹⁷, in fact, numerous early Muslims and *sûfî*

¹¹¹ Demirli, 2016, p. 5.

¹¹² Plural of *mutasavvif*. The term *mutasavvif* denotes “a person who adopts *tasavvuf* path and through it attempts to reach *Allah* and divine wisdom (*ilahi hikmet*), *sufî*”. See: Ayverdi, İlhan: *Misallı Büyük Türkçe Sözlük*, İstanbul: Kubbealtı 2010, p. 857.

¹¹³ Kübrâ, Necmeddîn: “Usûlü Aşere”, in: Kara, Mustafa (ed.), *Tasavvufî Hayat*, İstanbul: Dergâh 1980, p. 33.

¹¹⁴ Es-Sülemî, Muhammed b. Hüseyin: *Tabakâtü’s-şûfiyye*, Şerîbe, Nûreddin (trans.), Qairo 1953, p. 383.

¹¹⁵ Knysh, Alexander: *Islamic Mysticism. A Short History*, Leiden / Boston / Köln: Brill 2000, p. 5.

¹¹⁶ In short, the exemplary actions and sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammed. Further details on *hadis* and *sünnet* will be provided in the following chapters.

¹¹⁷ Demirli, 2016, p. 7.

scholars such as Bîrûnî (c. 973–1050) and Sühreverdî (1154–1191) were also involved in questioning the roots, sources, or origins of *tasavvuf* in their own texts, long before the constitution of Orientalism¹¹⁸.

Along with the question of origins, definitions of *tasavvuf* have also been formulated in a variety of ways. These various definitions are usually shaped by the school of thought one pursues. Almost every scholar working on *tasavvuf*—or *mutasavvif* experiencing an altered state of consciousness (*hâl*)¹¹⁹ in order to attain wisdom (*hikmet*, *mârifet*)¹²⁰—attempted to suggest an alternative definition consistent with their personal background and understanding or experience of *tasavvuf*. Propounding that “Sufism is undefinable”, Nicholson comments on the various experience-based definitions of *tasavvuf* and writes that “those who define Sufism (...) can only attempt to express what they themselves have felt, and there is no conceivable formula that will comprise every shade of personal and intimate religious feeling”¹²¹. These attempts, however, brought about multiple definitions resulting in heated debates¹²² that complicated the process of achieving consensus on what *tasavvuf* is. Ernst highlights this complexity and writes, “people end up taking up these terms to mean whatever they wish”¹²³. Cook also comments on this complexity in line with Ernst and argues that “definitions of Sufism (and mysticism in general) suffer from incoherence and a tendency to mean all things to all people, and they feature only few commonalities”¹²⁴. Another remark confirming this complexity originates from a prominent *sûfî*, Dâvûd-i Kayserî (1260–1350), who argued that due to the multiplicity of approaches, in time “*tasavvuf* will be considered as mere poetic imaginations and personal interpretations by all”¹²⁵, eventually leading to misunderstandings and possible dissonance among

¹¹⁸ Sühreverdî, for example, identified the source of his “philosophy of illumination” (*işrâkiyye*, *hikmat-i ishrâq*)—one of the most important streams of philosophical thought in *tasavvuf* and in Islam in general—as “ancient Iranian wisdom” and defined his intention as being “to revive that philosophy”. See: Kaya, Mahmut: “İşrâkiyye”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 23, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2001, pp. 435–438/435.

¹¹⁹ The term *hâl* denotes the meaning that temporarily comes to the heart as the blessing or grace of God, without any effort or intention on behalf of the believer; the state of mystical contemplation or “ecstatic condition” of a *sûfî*. See: Gilsenan, Michael: *Recognizing Islam. An Anthropologist's Introduction*, London / New York: Routledge 1982, p. 135.

¹²⁰ Tatlılıoğlu, Durmuş: “Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlara Sosyolojik Bir Bakış”, in: *Din Bilimleri Akademik Araştırma Dergisi*, 9/1, 2009, pp. 99–128/99.

¹²¹ Nicholson, A. Reynold: *The Mystics of Islam*, London: G. Bell and Sons 1914, p. 25.

¹²² Knysh, Alexander: “Historiography of Sufi Studies in the West”, in: Choueiri, M. Youssef (ed.), *A Companion to the History of the Middle East*, Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing 2005, p. 106; Kutluer, İlhan: “Kâtip Çelebi ve Bilimler: Keşf-üz-Zünun’un Mukaddimesinde ‘el-İlm’ Kavramı”, in: *M. Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 18, 2000b, pp. 79–99/86.

¹²³ Ernst, W. Carl: *The Shambala Guide to Sufism*, Boston / London: Shambala 1997, p. xvii.

¹²⁴ Cook, David: “Mysticism in Sufi Islam”, in: *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*, 4 May 2015, <<https://oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-51>>, last accessed: 26 January 2022.

¹²⁵ El-Kayserî, Dâvûd: *Risâle fi ilmi’t-tasavvuf*, Bayraktar, Mehmet (trans.), Kayseri: Kayseri Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 1997, p. 111.

the interpreters. Kara and Nicholson, on the other hand, evaluate this multiplicity of definitions and descriptions as useful since each definition potentially highlights one specific tenet of *tasavvuf*¹²⁶.

Beyond the aspect of multiplicity of definitions, Knysh dwells particularly upon the biased Western perspectives on “sufism” which are, according to him, inevitably “conditioned by the overall intellectual climate of the age with its stereotypes, conventions, prejudices, classificatory models and other kinds of dominant intellectual assumptions”¹²⁷. Knysh here implies a situational character of Orientalist¹²⁸ approaches that have been shaped mainly by colonial interests¹²⁹, especially in the case of French military and colonial officers Octave Depont (1862–19??) and Xavier Coppolani (1866–1905) who were assigned by the governor-general of Algeria to study *tasavvuf* and its revolutionary tendencies¹³⁰. This assumed orientalist perspective usually highlights certain non-Islamic sources when describing *tasavvuf* and attributes its “ori-

¹²⁶ Kara, Mustafa: *Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları 1992, p. 6; Nicholson, 1914, p. 25.

¹²⁷ Knysh, 2005, p. 107.

¹²⁸ The instrumentalization of *tasavvuf* through romanticizing it as the representative of an assumed good Islam against a bad Islam was classified as “latent Orientalism” by Said. In the context of this latent Orientalism, Özyeşilpınar and Jabeen draw attention to the recurrent contemporary representation of the “exotic” or “oriental Other” with regard to “sufism”, which Küçük elaborates it as “[a.n. Western people’s] perception of Sufism as an alternative way of life, as well as alternative therapy, healing and psychology, all of which help them manage the difficulties of modern life”. The exotic image of *tasavvuf* in the West “is one of the arrays to represent the good face of Islam as a way to challenge the stereotype of bad Islam image”. Creating a dichotomy of “good” and “bad” Islam and attributing “sufism” to “good” and other perspectives to “bad” Islam is a frequent technique that gives shape to stereotypes manufactured not only in the orientalist writings of academia, but also in a variety of other platforms such as social media. Like the recent popularity of various *yoga* practices in European and North American societies demonstrates, in most cases, these “eastern” traditions (*yoga*, *tasavvuf* etc.) are isolated from their cultural, religious, and philosophical sources. This isolation is a process of selective appropriation. While certain useful end-products of these traditions such as breathing exercises, body postures, and certain corporeal techniques are taken at face value, the religious and philosophical contexts which gave shape and content to these end-products are largely ignored (i.e., the physical exercises of *hatha-yoga* are preferred over the more contemplative *raja-yoga* or *japa-yoga*). The same dynamics and partial isolation from the original sources apply to the Okinawan martial art *Karate*. As a sports branch, *Karate* spread quite rapidly after the Second World War and found its place in Western popular culture. The Okinawan form of *Karate-dō*, in the words of Funakoshi, “places weight upon spiritual rather than physical matters” and contains Buddhist philosophy in its core, as it was originally developed “to enable [a.n. oneself] to attain the essence of the way of Buddha”. In the reinterpreted applications of *Karate*, particularly in the Western sphere, it is generally seen as a sports branch and thus “attaining the essence of the way of Buddha” is not necessarily the primary object of practitioners. Blaming the West as a monolithic entity is indeed controversial, as one can also see an “American culture” in a variety of degrees without completely following an “American way of life”. For detailed information and sources of the quotations, see: Said, Edward: *Orientalism. Western Conceptions of the Orient*, India: Penguin Books, 1994, p. 201; Küçük, Hülya: “A Brief History of Western Sufism”, in: *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 36/2, 2008, pp. 292–320/316; Özyeşilpınar, Eda / Jabeen, Firasat: “Through the Magic Glass of Sufism. Studying Orientalism in Sufism”, in: Lloyd, Keith (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Comparative World Rhetorics*, London / New York: Routledge 2021, pp. 155–164/155–156; Funakoshi, Gichin: *Karate-dō Kyōhan. The Master Text*, Ohshima, Tsutomu (trans.), Tokyo / New York / London: Kodansha International 1973, pp. 3, 7.

¹²⁹ Ernst, Carl: *Sufism. An Essential Introduction to the Philosophy and Practice of the Mystical Tradition of Islam*, Boston, MA: Shambala Publications 1997, pp. 1–18.

¹³⁰ It is important to note that the revolutionary and disruptive tendencies of *tasavvuf* have always been subject to investigations conducted by both Muslim and non-Muslim authorities. In certain periods and regions, *tasavvuf* was considered a threat even to Muslim societies.

gins” to almost anything other than Islam. Knysh further stresses a potential distinction between the descriptions of “sufism” formulated in the West and the descriptions offered by *sūfī* masters in the Islamicate world. Within the latter group, different aspects of *tasavvuf* are not only described, but rather *experienced*. Arberry intensifies this critic and asserts that the Orientalists’ views on the foreign sources of *tasavvuf* are biased—in his words: “not so much honest scholarship as the worst form of sectarian bigotry”¹³¹—and therefore a study on *tasavvuf* should focus on its Islamic sources. This and similar claims were embraced excitedly by, above all, Muslim scholars, who almost uniformly tend to view *tasavvuf* as an exclusive product of Islam.

Defining *tasavvuf* also has its own ramifications within Islam and its various schools of interpretation, which resulted in multiple streams of thought represented by different groups. Regarding the discussion of how to approach *tasavvuf* and the large amount of “foreign” and “domestic” input on the subject, what *sūfī* authorities usually stress is that even though *tasavvuf* has diverse external forms shaped by multiple local and temporal agents, its core features, goals, and characteristics do not change and are shared by all *sūfī* practitioners throughout the world—on condition that they conform to Islamic religious law and jurisprudence. Correspondingly, Kara argues that “there is no fundamental difference between *tarikāt*¹³² groups, but with respect to certain practices, they employ different methods”¹³³. While Corbin also points to the idea that “Islamic esotericism has common roots”¹³⁴, Depont and Coppolani suggest more broadly that “mystical experience”, a central topic in *tasavvuf*, “is shared by all human beings regardless of their association with any particular religious creed or philosophical doctrine”¹³⁵. The main difficulty seems to appear when the terms belonging to different systems are substituted for each other and used interchangeably. Delshad accepts a probable inherent relation between various ancient systems with mystical inclinations, particularly with regard to Hellenistic, early Christian, Jewish, and Muslim traditions. However, he laments the fact that Orientalists and Western theologians tend to evaluate “the genesis, the conception, and the worldview” of *tasavvuf* with the same tools they use to evaluate their own mystical systems, or even “equate both

¹³¹ Arberry, J. Arthur: *An Introduction of the History of Sufism*, Oxford: Longman, Green and Co. 1942, p. 55.

¹³² A *tarikāt* (sect, religious order, or brotherhood) is an institution of *tasavvuf* that developed some time after the *zūhd* trend, from around the tenth century on. The details of *tarikāt* organizations will be provided in the following chapters.

¹³³ Kara, 1992, p. 54.

¹³⁴ Corbin, Henry: *Alone with the Alone. Creative Imagination in the Sūfism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1997.

¹³⁵ Depont, Octave / Coppolani, Xavier: *Les confréries religieuses musulmanes*, Alger: ? 1897 quoted in: Knysh, 2005, p. 111; Yüce, Abdülhakim: “Hakikata Ulaşma Metodu Olarak Tasavvuf ve Menşei”, in: *Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 1/1, 1994, pp. 43–53/46.

terms (*sūfīsmus* and *mystik/gnostik*) as identical spiritual phenomena”¹³⁶ which eventually leads to misinterpretation and misunderstanding. For instance, Silverstein considers the use of the term mysticism to translate *tasavvuf* as “technically problematic, as there is no theological ‘mystery’ in Islam analogous to that in Christianity”¹³⁷.

Both terms—Islamic mysticism and Sufism—are assumed to be foreign importations to denote *tasavvuf*. The first is considered foreign due to the alleged absence of ‘mystery’ in Islamic theology, and the latter is due to its *-ism* suffix, which, according to Ernst, “reveals that ‘Sufism’ was a part of the Enlightenment catalogue of ideologies and belief systems, and frequently it was equated with private mysticism, pantheism, and the doctrine that humanity can become divine”¹³⁸. While Chittick intentionally avoids using the term mysticism to address *tasavvuf*, he does not see a problem in applying the term Sufism, “which has the advantage of deriving from Arabic and pertaining specifically to Islam”¹³⁹. Guénon, on the other hand, criticizes the use of the term Sufism, because,

“Apart from being completely conventional, this term has the unfortunate disadvantage of inevitably suggesting by its ‘ism’ suffix, the idea of a doctrine proper to a particular school, whereas this is not the case in reality, the only schools in question being the *turuq* [a.n. plural of *tariqa*], which basically represent different methods, without there being any possibility of a fundamental difference of doctrine”¹⁴⁰.

For this reason, in this study the term *tasavvuf* will be used instead of Islamic mysticism or Sufism. This, however, does not necessarily mean that a researcher should completely ignore related terminology, descriptions, and concepts attributed to a phenomenon by its “outsiders”. At some point in their research, scholars of *tasavvuf* inevitably come across concepts and doctrines that are to a certain extent relevant, identical, or even shared with other religious, philosophical, and mythological¹⁴¹ systems.

¹³⁶ Delshad, Farid: “Mystik und Sufismus, Eine Frage der Authentizität”, in: *Zeitschrift für Islamische Studien*, 5/3, 2014, pp. 41–69/42.

¹³⁷ Silverstein, Brian: *Islam and Modernity in Turkey*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2011, p. 224. It is not unusual that a term is misused in scientific research and history, as this issue recalls the case of the term *mbira* (or even more controversially, “thumb piano”) and how it has been erroneously used to label various lamellophones (and plucked idiophones) played in different parts of Africa.

¹³⁸ Ernst, W. Carl: “Tasawwuf”, in: Martin, C. Richard (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, Vol. 2, New York: Macmillan Reference USA 2004, p. 684.

¹³⁹ Chittick, William: *Mysticism in Islam*, A lecture delivered at the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies: Brigham Young University, May 2003.

¹⁴⁰ Guénon, René: *The Essential René Guénon. Metaphysics, Tradition, and the Crisis of Modernity*, Herlihy, John (ed.), Bloomington: World Wisdom 2009, p. 207.

¹⁴¹ Myth is understood in the sense defined by Faivre: “A myth is a metahistorical and foundational story concerning the origin, nature, and end of things; or as is the case here, it is story, generally initiatic, which features one or

2.2 A Terminological Issue: Islamic Mysticism, Gnosticism, or Esotericism?

Apart from the term “Sufism”, studies have employed several other terms ending with “-ism” when addressing *tasavvuf*. Among these the most frequently used (though still sporadic) ones are Islamic Esotericism¹⁴², Mystical Islam¹⁴³ or Islamic Mysticism¹⁴⁴, and Muslim Gnostics¹⁴⁵ or Islamic Gnosticism¹⁴⁶. Such a wide range of glosses of *tasavvuf* as mentioned above not only complicates the attempt to situate *tasavvuf* among those “isms”, but also may cause a false framing of *tasavvuf* within incompatible systems. The word mysticism, for example, “has been closely associated with the religions of the East”¹⁴⁷ or with almost anything that suggests a sort of mystery, as an umbrella term. Even today, these designations contain a degree of ambiguity and vagueness in terms of definitions as well as their categorizations.

Below, various aspects of these “-isms” will be investigated according to the proposition that a thorough analysis of Mysticism, Gnosticism, and Esotericism and their discourses concerning wisdom will reveal structural as well as contextual correspondences with *tasavvuf* and its epistemology. Whether such correspondences warrant the use of these “-isms” to denote *tasavvuf* will be discussed later.

more divine heroes”. Faivre, Antoine: *The Eternal Hermes. From Greek God to Alchemical Magus*, Michigan: Phanes Press 1995, p. 59.

¹⁴² Sorgenfrei, Simon: “Hidden or Forbidden, Elected or Rejected: Sufism as ‘Islamic Esotericism’?”, in: *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 29/2, 2018, pp. 145–165; Guénon, René: *Insights into Islamic Esoterism and Taoism*, New York: Sophia Perennis 2001.

¹⁴³ Baldick, Julian: *Mystical Islam. An Introduction to Sufism*, London: I. B. Tauris 2012; Schimmel, Annemarie: *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1975.

¹⁴⁴ Radtke, Bernd / O’Kane, John: *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism*, Richmond: Curzon Press 1996; Sells, Michael: *Early Islamic Mysticism. Sufi, Qur’an, Miraj, Poetic and Theological Writings*, New York: Paulist Press 1996.

¹⁴⁵ Aminrazavi, Mehdi: “Mysticism in Arabic and Islamic Philosophy”, in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2016 Edition), 7 March 2009, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arabic-islamic-mysticism/>>, last accessed: 29 January 2022.

¹⁴⁶ Awn, Peter: “Islamic Gnosticism. A Systematic Overview”, in: *History of Religions*, 23/3, 1984, pp. 280–282.

¹⁴⁷ King, Richard: “Mysticism and spirituality”, in: Hinnells, John (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, London / New York: Routledge 2005, pp. 306–322/306.

3 Mysticism

The term mysticism refers to a wide range of discourses demonstrating a degree of “semantic proximity”¹⁴⁸, such that it often “lends itself to confusion with other forms of apprehending reality, such as esotericism”¹⁴⁹, occultism, or shamanism¹⁵⁰. Mysticism, in its broadest sense, first postulates a narrative of what reality is and then develops theories to conceptualize this alternative reality and methodologies for how it can be accessed. The word mysticism and its Indo-European variants including *mystik*, *misticismo*, and *mystique* appear to be derivations from the Greek *μύω* (to shut the mouth) or its variations including *μυστικός* (*mystikós*) and *μυστήριον* (*musterion*), both of which approximately mean closed, secret, hidden, or mystery “through the idea of silence imposed by initiation into religious rites”¹⁵¹. Especially during classical antiquity, additional meanings were attached to the term mystery to address specific religious practices of the era, loading the term with particular cultural, semantic, and historical connotations. The explicit reference to initiation in Strong’s definition of mystery largely corresponds with the perspective of Dwight, who defines the word *μύστης* (*mústēs*) as “one who has been initiated (into the mysteries)”¹⁵². The notion of initiation is one of the most fundamental elements of mystical systems around the world, including *tasavvuf*, and it “almost inevitably implies secrecy”¹⁵³. Initiation denotes acquiring access to a self-appointed or externally selected group of people who gather around certain discourses interpreted in an idiosyncratic manner. Such groups separate themselves from the rest of society through their distinctive interpretations, organizational structure, jargon, ways of access to mystery, network of relations, and, occasionally, dress code. Even though initiation is found in a variety of forms throughout the world, its applications, procedures, and contents are so varied that an analysis of the differences, even merely in the initiatory practices of mystical systems, may allow the researcher to discern the points where interpretations diverge.

Furthermore, over the course of history, the meanings of mysticism have shifted emphasis from a broad range of subjective personal (religious or non-religious) experiences to systematized and institutionalized theological and philosophical ideas. This has extended the scope

¹⁴⁸ Rousse-Lacordaire, Jérôme: “Mysticism”, in: Hanegraaff, J. Wouter (ed.), *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, Leiden: Brill 2006, pp. 818–820/818.

¹⁴⁹ Rousse-Lacordaire, 2006, p. 818.

¹⁵⁰ Parsons, B. William (ed.): *Teaching Mysticism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011, p. 4.

¹⁵¹ Strong, James: *Greek Dictionary of the New Testament*, Albany: Books for the Ages 2010, p. 315.

¹⁵² Whitney, W. Dwight (ed.): “mystery”, in: *Century Encyclopedia*, Vol. 5, New York: The Century Co. 1889, p. 3924.

¹⁵³ Rouget, Gilbert, *Music and Trance. A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession*, Biebuyck, Brunhilde (trans.), Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1985, p. 46.

of mysticism to include various, above all intuitive and phenomenological, experiences that do not easily permit an encompassing definition. Especially during the post-Enlightenment era, circa the mid-nineteenth century, rapid scientific developments “resulted in a compromise in which most varieties of what had traditionally been called mysticism were dismissed as merely psychological phenomena”¹⁵⁴.

Concerning the question of what mysticism is, plentiful approaches and opinions are represented by groups of scholars who follow specific academic trends. In the meantime, several scholars focused on the experiences emerging from what is called mysticism instead of looking for a definition of the term, proposing certain criteria by which an experience may be considered “mystical”¹⁵⁵. Stace and Otto argue that the distinctive characteristics of religious experience—defined by Otto as “awe-inspiring” experiences of the “wholly-other”¹⁵⁶—are not by definition mystical¹⁵⁷ and a distinction between them should be made. Mystical experiences are in fact a sub-category of religious experiences involving “prophetic visions, psychic ascents to heaven, ecstasies, auditions, intoxications”¹⁵⁸ and several other religiously loaded feelings such as, according to Otto, religious awe and sublimity.

As a set of ideas, beliefs, and practices relating humans with supernatural beings and positioning human existence on a plane that theoretically covers not only this world but also a metaphysical realm, mystical discourse (or thought¹⁵⁹) aims at spiritual transformation and

¹⁵⁴ Merkur, Dan: “Mysticism”, in: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Online Edition, 4 December 2019, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/mysticism>>, last accessed: 29 January 2022.

¹⁵⁵ James, William: *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, New York: Routledge 2002, p. 294; Moore, Peter: “Mysticism (further considerations)”, in: Jones, Lindsay (ed.), *MacMillan Encyclopedia of Religion*, Second Edition, Vol. 9, Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale 2005, pp. 6355–6359/6356.

¹⁵⁶ In studying mystical and religious experiences Otto also joined certain other important terms including *mysterium tremendum*, *mysterium fascinans*, and *numinous* which are offering various descriptions of such experiences. For detailed information, see: Otto, Rudolf: *The Idea of the Holy*, Harvey, W. John (trans.), Oxford: Oxford University Press 1936.

¹⁵⁷ Stace, T. Walter: *Mysticism and Philosophy*, London: Macmillan & Co., 1961, pp. 47–51.

¹⁵⁸ Smart, Ninian: “Understanding Religious Experience”, in: Katz, Steven (eds.), *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, New York: Oxford University Press 1978, pp. 10–21/13.

¹⁵⁹ Faivre argues that mystical thought is one of the “forms of thought” along with other varieties such as “esoteric, scientific, theological, and utopian”. Faivre here likely refers to patterns of thinking favoring distinct parameters (or common parameters interpreted via distinct procedures) upon which decision making and action may be based. On the other hand, Faivre’s understanding of “forms of thought” has been criticized for being static and implying unchangeability. Von Stuckrad offers an alternative term, “discourse”, whether religious, mystical, or esoteric, representing “the social organization of tradition, opinion, and knowledge”. In line with this usage, he proposes the concept of “fields of discourse” in which “field” refers to “cooperation and complementarity, polemics and dialogue, exclusion and inclusion in systems and the carriers of such systems”. This study does not consider “form” to be static (in contrast to “structure”), as it denotes the appearance and materiality of things at a specific moment, subject to change. Nevertheless, Von Stuckrad’s “fields of discourse” will be preferred to Faivre’s “forms of thought”. See: Faivre, Antoine: *Western Esotericism. A Concise History*, Rhone, Christine (trans.), New York: State University of New York Press 2010, p. 3; Hanegraaff, J. Wouter: “The Study of Western Esotericism. New Approaches to Christian and Secular Culture”, in: Antes, Peter / Geertz, W. Armin / Warne, R. Randi (eds.), *New Approaches to the Study of Religion*, Vol.1, Berlin / New York: Walter de Gruyter 2004, pp. 489–519/508; Bogdan, Henrik: *Western Esotericism and the Rituals of Initiation*, Albany: State University of New York Press 2007, pp.

claims a direct, unmediated experience of supernatural beings. In doing so, it offers the possibility to gain or at least pursue, through intuitive practices, a form of knowledge, wisdom, or understanding usually conceptualized as “fundamental insight into the nature of reality”¹⁶⁰, “the ultimate truth”, or “divine wisdom”¹⁶¹, and variously named in different religious and philosophical systems as *gnosis*, *brahman* (*veda*), or *mârifet-hikmet*. According to Faivre, this wisdom (*gnosis*) should be “understood as a mode of knowledge emphasizing the ‘experiential’, the mythical, the symbolic, rather than forms of expression of a dogmatic and discursive order”¹⁶². Mystical discourse, therefore, establishes mysticism as an “effort to morally uplift the human being, to attain spiritual bliss, to grasp the truth in its essence, to make it conscious of the invisible above and beyond the visible world”¹⁶³. This effort constitutes mysticism “as a constellation of distinctive practices, discourses, texts, institutions, traditions, and experiences aimed at human transformation, variously defined”¹⁶⁴.

3.1 Research Paradigms

As in the case of *tasavvuf*, abundant approaches are available to study, define, and categorize mysticism along with its attributes, practices, and experiences. To this end, several scholars have provided lists that contain features of what is called mysticism or mystical experiences. For instance, in his seminal work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James proposed four qualities of a mystical experience, namely noetic, ineffable, transient, and passive¹⁶⁵, while Bucke’s list contained the seven following qualities: subjective light or photism, moral elevation, intellectual illumination, sense of immortality, loss of fear of death, loss of sense of sin, suddenness¹⁶⁶. These items are quite broad to define and should be evaluated in their historical and cultural contexts. Each list emphasizes selected features of mystical experiences insofar as they can be discerned. Both the dynamics of the so-called mystical experiences and their interpretations as “sense of immortality” or “moral elevation” are by their nature subjec-

12–13; Von Stuckrad, Kocku: *Western Esotericism. A Brief History of Secret Knowledge*, London: Equinox 2005, pp. 6–7.

¹⁶⁰ Kelly, F. Edward et. al.: *Irreducible Mind. Towards a Psychology for the 21st Century*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield 2007, p. 498.

¹⁶¹ Cutsinger, S. James: *The Fullness of God. Frithjof Schuon on Christianity*, Bloomington: World Wisdom 2004, p. 228.

¹⁶² Faivre, 2010, p. 3.

¹⁶³ Yılmaz, K. Hasan: *Anahatlarıyla Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*, Ensar Neşriyat: İstanbul 2004, p. 13.

¹⁶⁴ Gellman, Jerome: “Mysticism”, in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (Summer 2019 Edition), 11 November 2004, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/mysticism/>>, last accessed: 13 January 2022.

¹⁶⁵ James, 2002, p. 295.

¹⁶⁶ Bucke, M. Richard: *Cosmic Consciousness. A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind*, Boston: E. P. Dutton 1901, pp. 72–73, 79.

tive and thus may entail divergent or even conflicting expressions. Stace, however, goes further to associate these lists with Suzuki's study of *satori* in Zen Buddhism, which the latter describes as "acquiring a new viewpoint for looking into the essence of things"¹⁶⁷ and defines as "intuitive looking-into, in contradistinction to intellectual and logical understanding"¹⁶⁸. For Stace, *satori* is also a form of mystical experience demonstrating the following features: irrationality, inexplicability, incommunicability, intuitive insight, authoritativeness, affirmation (positive character), sense of the beyond, impersonal tone, feeling of exaltation, and momentariness¹⁶⁹. One can statistically analyze these lists of qualities of mystical experiences and statistically determine the most frequently appearing items to construct a new list. However, this list would merely be an exercise in classification and likely to repeat the false attributions made by its predecessors. In order to avoid such a problem, some scholars shifted emphasis once again and attempted to categorize the types of mystical experiences instead of focusing on the qualities of a mystical experience.

Zaehner, for example, identifies three different kinds of mysticism as "theistic, monistic, and panenhenic mysticism"¹⁷⁰. While the theistic type mainly involves the mystical practices of the Abrahamic religions along with specific extensions from Hinduism, the monistic type refers to reported experiences of unification within various religious systems, and panenhenic or nature mysticism covers everything that does not fit in the other two categories. Along with several scholars, Staal and Smart criticize Zaehner's categorization for "forcing non-theistic traditions into a framework"¹⁷¹ and prioritizing the theistic type due to his own religious background. Stace, however, in line with Faivre's input above, redirects the focus of his study of mysticism towards types of "mystical consciousness"¹⁷², arguing that "doctrinal differences between religious traditions are inappropriate criteria when making cross-cultural comparisons of mystical experiences"¹⁷³. He proposes two universally shared "principal classes of deep mystical states"¹⁷⁴, namely extrovertive and introvertive experience.

For Stace, the extrovertive class of mystical consciousness employs the sensual faculties toward mystical attainment of the divine wisdom of "the One". The introvertive class, on the

¹⁶⁷ Suzuki, T. Daisetsu: *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, New York, Grove Press 1964, p.88.

¹⁶⁸ Suzuki, 1964, p.88.

¹⁶⁹ Stace, 1960, p. 44; Suzuki, T. Daisetsu: *Zen Buddhism. Selected Writings of D. T. Suzuki*, Barrett, William (ed.), New York: Anchor Books & Doubleday 1996, pp. 103–108.

¹⁷⁰ Zaehner, R. Charles: *Concordant Discord. The Interdependence of Faiths*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1970, pp. 140, 337.

¹⁷¹ King, 2005, p. 315.

¹⁷² Stace, 1961, p. 62.

¹⁷³ King, 2005, p. 316.

¹⁷⁴ Kelly, F. Edward et. al, 2007, p. 504.

other hand, “turns inward, introspectively, and finds the One at the bottom of the self, the bottom of the human personality”¹⁷⁵. Stace defines the sensual faculties of the extrovertive way as “sensory apprehension of the harmony of the universe”¹⁷⁶ and “sense-perceptual, somatosensory, or introspective”¹⁷⁷ experience of the physical world. In other words, in an extrovertive experience, mystical thought perceives¹⁷⁸ participation in a kind of unity with the universe, nature, or God. Also called as “nature mysticism”¹⁷⁹, the extrovertive form of mystical experience may be triggered by exposure to most basic, observable natural events such as a snowflake, storm, or sunrise. This calls Otto’s definition of “religious awe and sublimity”, which are believed to be the feelings triggered by the majesty of God and the perfection of nature; that is, by the manifestations of God’s superior power over the human habitat. In this context, Jones evaluates the opening of William Blake’s poem, *Auguries of Innocence*, as an expression of the extrovertive experience:

“To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour”¹⁸⁰

By contrast, the “introvertive way” focuses inward (towards the self) and therefore claims to be devoid of sensory experiences informed by the outside world. King defines the introvertive way as “non-sensory awareness of the unity of all things”¹⁸¹, emphasizing the presence of the notion of unity within introvertive experiences, even though this unity is acquired by means of different dynamics and procedures than it is in the extrovertive way. Stace employs several terms, e.g., “vacuum”, “void”, and “emptiness”¹⁸², to describe an introvertive experience of God emerging from a disengagement from the senses. Based on the accounts of mystics around the world, Stace also associates the notions of “void” and “nothingness” with the concept of “the One” or “the Infinite”, namely with God. This void leads to an obliteration of all

¹⁷⁵ Stace, T. Walter: *The Teachings of the Mystics*, New York: The New American Library 1960, p. 15.

¹⁷⁶ King, 2005, p. 316.

¹⁷⁷ Gellman, “Mysticism”, 2004.

¹⁷⁸ For a detailed survey on sensory and non-sensory perception of God, see: Alston, P. William: *Perceiving God. The Epistemology of Religious Experience*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1991; Baillie, John: *The Sense Presence of God*, New York: Scribner’s 1962, p. 53.

¹⁷⁹ Jones, H. Richard: *Philosophy of Mysticism. Raids on the Ineffable*, Albany: State University of New York Press 2016, p. 13.

¹⁸⁰ Blake, William: “Auguries of Innocence”, in: Auden, H. Wystan / Pearson, H. Norman (eds.), *Poets of the English Language*, New York: Viking Press 1950; Jones, 2016, p. 13.

¹⁸¹ King, 2005, p. 316.

¹⁸² Stace, 1960, p. 86.

assumed borders, distinctions, or duality between the subject and object of the experience, forming a perception of an “undifferentiated unity”¹⁸³. This form of introvertive experience finds expression in Christianity, particularly in monastic traditions, in the form of *vacare Deo* (being void or empty for God). Schuon describes *vacare Deo* as emptiness, “in which ‘prayer’—the ‘remembrance of God’—is established, and which is filled by the victory already won by the Redeemer”¹⁸⁴. However, one crucial difference is that the state of *vacare Deo* does not necessarily entail an objective of mystical union with God. Even though there are corresponding accounts of mystics experiencing similar phenomena around the world, Katz opposes the alleged universality of such (introvertive and extrovertive) experiences since, in his words, “mystical experiences are completely determined by cultural conditionings”¹⁸⁵. The sociocultural situatedness of mystical or similar experiences thus becomes a critical parameter in studying such experiences. The authors of the relevant entry in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* correspondingly write that “when one reaches an ecstatic experience, a traditional interpretation of it already exists”¹⁸⁶. Rouget too stresses the same notion in explaining the outward diversity of states of consciousness as “the result of the variety of cultures by which it is conditioned”¹⁸⁷.

Apart from the introvertive and extrovertive types, the category of unitive experiences (or experiences of union) is further split into dualistic and monistic types. While the dualistic experiences represent a “theistic”¹⁸⁸ view that holds a strict separation between the experiencer and the experienced, and thus creates a paradox in terms of “unity”, monistic experiences allow the experiencer to have a more intimate relation with God, in which “the relation is pure identity with no difference”¹⁸⁹. According to Gellner, monistic experiences are “the extreme of unitive experiences, in that they dissolve all duality”¹⁹⁰. As such, they diverge from the dualistic notion of a creator-created dichotomy. However, this categorization has also been subjected to criticism, above all by constructivists such as Katz and Hick, with a claim that “there can be no common theistic [a.n. dualistic] or monistic experience type”¹⁹¹.

Perhaps to avoid the paradox of a dogmatic duality in their formulation of unity, scholars who investigate unitive experiences, further classify the matter according to different modes of

¹⁸³ Stace, 1960, p. 86.

¹⁸⁴ Cutsinger, 2004, p. 44.

¹⁸⁵ Kelly, F. Edward et. al., 2007, p. 512.

¹⁸⁶ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica: “Ecstasy”, in: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Online Edition, 7 October 2019, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/ecstasy-religion>>, last accessed: 29 January 2022.

¹⁸⁷ Rouget, 1985, p. 3.

¹⁸⁸ Gellman, “Mysticism”, 2004.

¹⁸⁹ Stace, 1960, p. 219.

¹⁹⁰ Gellman, “Mysticism”, 2004.

¹⁹¹ Stoeber, Michael: “Introvertive Mystical Experiences: Monistic, Theistic, and the Theo-Monistic”, in: *Religious Studies*, 29/2, 1993, pp. 169–184/169.

unification, namely unification as union, identification, or likeness. It is important to note that the practitioners of such experiences may favor specific ways of expression and employ contradicting terminologies when referring to their subjective experiences. In *tasavvuf*, for example, along with the notions of *tevhid* (oneness), *vahdet-i vücûd* (unity of existence), and *fenâ* (annihilation), some trends employ the term *kurb* (nearness) instead of the theologically problematic “union” or “identity” with God. While the incorporation of similar traditions with mystical tendencies into the discussions of mysticism increases the sample size for analysis, it also complicates the process of reaching a coherent conclusion. In the Jewish mystical (or esoteric) tradition known as *kabbalah* as well as in Buddhism, the notion of oneness does not occur, yet another term, nothingness, is often mentioned to express the intimate relation between the human and the divine being. Since certain trends with mystical inclinations are well-embedded in their encapsulating religious or cultural systems, they may hold a dualistic perspective inherited from the monist metasystem (religion) involving an undisputable ontological separation between creator and created. Merkur stresses the interpretative aspect of expressions of mystical experiences by arguing that:

“It is not that the Absolute, the Infinite, or God is One, and mystics experience and perceive this truth. Rather, the data support a psychological interpretation regarding a tendency of the mind to unify its contents in different ways, resulting in slightly different experiences on different occasions. Mystics do not experience or perceive an objectively existing unity; rather they formulate their own experiential unities in different ways.”¹⁹²

Interpretation—whether subjective and personal or strategically developed and collective—thus appears of fundamental importance in elucidating mystical experiences. Furthermore, there are also certain trends or significant trend-setting personalities who consciously employ “theologically problematic” interpretations. While these trends exceed the scope of this chapter, the notorious case of a *sûfî*, Hallâc-ı Mansûr (c. 858–922 CE) and his doctrine of *enel-hak* (I am the Truth, or I am God), may be cited.

The forms of unitive mystical experiences and their modes of expression are often heterogeneous. They can be found in certain *tasavvuf* streams as well as in other systems employing similar views such as “‘union’ with God, as in Christian mysticism”, or “the Hindu experience that Atman is Brahman (that the self/soul is identical with the eternal, absolute being), the Buddhist unconstructed experience, devoid of all multiplicity”¹⁹³. To emphasize the alleged

¹⁹² Merkur, “Mysticism”, 2019.

¹⁹³ Gellman, “Mysticism”, 2004.

universal core of both introvertive and extrovertive experiences, and exemplify various modes of union in this context, Stace refers to several cases provided by certain “pagan” scholars, i.e., the Greek philosophers, such as Plotinus (205–270 CE) and his understanding of the notion of “purification of ego”. An identical understanding of purification of the ego (or heart) resonates in various mystical trends, designating the mystic’s attempts to prepare the relevant faculty to receive divine blessing and through this blessing to achieve access to and knowledge of the hidden dimensions of reality. Specific methods of preparation to experience “an inner vision of God or one’s relation to or union with the divine” have been developed, usually composed of four steps: “(1) purgation (of bodily desire), (2) purification (of the will), (3) illumination (of the mind), and (4) unification (of one’s being or will with the divine)”¹⁹⁴. In line with Stace, Stoddart likewise refers to the “three classical stages (*maqâmât*) recognized by all mystics” as “(1) purification (or purgation), (2) perfection (or illumination), and (3) union”¹⁹⁵. While the perfection that leads to union is realized through the “imitation of Christ” in Christianity, he argues, for Muslims the model for imitation is the Prophet Muhammed and his *hadis* and *sün-net*¹⁹⁶. Stace also addresses specific renowned *sufi* personalities and their formulations of unity, such as, the “non-duality and merging into God” of Şebüsterî (1288–1340), or Gazzâlî’s (1058–1111) “unity and ascent”¹⁹⁷. Within this potpourri of doctrines of unification, Stace includes various other forms of union from Buddhism (“*sunyata*”, void or emptiness) and Christianity. Whereas Stace, with a degree of suspicion, acknowledges a common core in all these different traditions, later critics favoring a constructivist approach¹⁹⁸ opposed the theory of a universal core, and hence also the theory of perennialism¹⁹⁹.

Concerning unitive experiences, Merkur argues that recurrent references to notions such as emptiness or nothingness within human existence “frequently inspire mystics to assert a paradox”²⁰⁰, which he associates with Jung’s term, *mysterium coniunctionis* (Lat. mystery of the conjunction). Jung’s *mysterium coniunctionis* was in fact applied to address the theory of the

¹⁹⁴ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, “Ecstasy”, 2019.

¹⁹⁵ Stoddart, William: “Mysticism”, in: Soares de Azevedo, Mateus (ed.), *Ye Shall Know the Truth. Christianity and the Perennial Philosophy*, Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2005, pp. 57–69/64.

¹⁹⁶ Stoddart, 2005, p. 64.

¹⁹⁷ Stace, 1960, pp. 104–109.

¹⁹⁸ For more information, see: Hollenback, J. Byron: *Mysticism. Experience, Response, and Empowerment*, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press 1996; Katz, T. Steven (ed.): *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1983.

¹⁹⁹ Perennialism, along with related approaches such as universalism and traditionalist school (or *sophia perennis*), in philosophy holds that certain religious ideas, including mystical experiences, are shared among various religious and cultural traditions. For detailed information, see: Guénon, René: *Perspectives on Initiation*, Fohr, D. Henry (trans.), New York: Sophia Perennis, 2001; Schuon, Frithjof: *From the Divine to the Human*, Bloomington: World Wisdom, 1982; Schuon, Frithjof: *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, Wheaton: Quest Books, 1984.

²⁰⁰ Merkur, “Mysticism”, 2019; Stace, 1960, p. 68.

union of opposites (metaphysical or cosmological) in alchemy. As a pseudo-science (from the perspective of modern science) and an earlier form of modern chemistry, alchemy was frequently used in movements with mystical or esoteric inclinations, whose objective was not only a transmutation or transformation of physical substances into each other—namely lesser metals into gold—but also, simultaneously, a spiritual self-perfection. Perhaps relatedly, numerous mystical systems express their understanding of “likeness to God” (*Imago Dei*) as a given quality. By applying certain practices aimed at a spiritual perfection, one may, if bestowed, enhance the likeness to God—though only approximately, due to the God’s transcendental quality²⁰¹.

3.2 Four Qualities of Mystical Experience

In defining mysticism, James was one of the first scholars who emphasized mystical experiences. In his influential work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), he proposes four qualities to define any experience as mystical (or transcendent): ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, and passivity²⁰².

From the perspective(s) of mysticism, what all humans perceive as reality, i.e., our observable universe with all its constituents, is only an extension of a larger reality. This metaphysically constructed larger reality contains hidden dimensions, perception of or engagement with which require extra sensual capabilities. Rousse-Lacordaire argues that “mysticism and esotericism are both linked to experiences of a dimension of reality that escapes natural and common understanding by the senses and by reason”²⁰³. For James, the term ineffability refers to the unexplainable or indescribable nature of mystical experiences emerging through engagement with these hidden dimensions. Such ineffability derives from the proposition that the instruments devised by human rationality are incompetent to provide access to or knowledge of the hidden dimension. James underlines the common narrative of people who claim to have a mystical experience whose outcomes cannot be expressed in words and thus “must be directly experienced”²⁰⁴. This “experiential nature”²⁰⁵ situates mysticism beyond scientific and rational discursivity and expands the potential sources and acquisition methods of knowledge away

²⁰¹ Jung, C. Gustav: *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970; Merkur, “Mysticism”, 2019.

²⁰² James, 2002, p. 295.

²⁰³ Rousse-Lacordaire, 2006, p. 818.

²⁰⁴ James, 2002, p. 295.

²⁰⁵ Faivre, 2010, p. 3; Rousse-Lacordaire, 2006, p. 819.

from the preserve of modern epistemology²⁰⁶. As Merkur emphasizes, this is because “the physical world disclosed by sense perception does not exhaust reality as mystics understand it”²⁰⁷.

The notion of ineffability finds abundant expressions in various traditions around the globe. A popular example that frequently appears in studies of mysticism with universalistic claims is the collection of Vedic religious teachings and texts in Hinduism known as *Mandukya Upanishad*, which contains a reference to a higher state of consciousness named *turiya*, meaning “beyond the senses, beyond the understanding, beyond all expression”²⁰⁸. A similar conception was also present in certain currents of early Christianity, represented by, for example, Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–395 CE) and Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE), who held that God was unknowable and therefore indescribable²⁰⁹.

The ineffability of the divine is often associated with apophatic (negative) theology²¹⁰, or *via negativa*, a Christian theological perspective that deploys an “apophatic (unsaying) language”²¹¹ to define God²¹². Contrary to cataphatic theology, apophatic theology holds that nothing positive or affirmable can be expressed about God. As God is understood as transcendent (even this formulation, God *is* X, conflicts with apophatic theology), words formulated by the human mind are inadequate to address God’s being, attributes, or mystical experiences relating to God. King underlines the historicity of this concept, associating it with the notion of ineffability in the context of Pseudo-Dionysius’ (c. sixth century CE) understanding of “mystical theology”. He writes that, for Dionysius, “as one ascends the celestial hierarchy towards God, words fall away, whilst at lower levels words become more and more effective in their representation of reality”²¹³. On the other hand, for Oesterreich, the experiences resulting from unexplainable or indescribable conditions have in fact a psychological explanation. He writes that “we are dealing in part with states that entail more or less total post facto amnesia, so that,

²⁰⁶ This does not mean however that mystical practices are completely devoid of rationality or scientific methods. For detailed discussions, see: Staal, Frits: *Exploring Mysticism*, London: Penguin 1975; Jantzen, M. Grace: *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995.

²⁰⁷ Merkur, “Mysticism”, 2019.

²⁰⁸ Smullyan, M. Raymond: *Who Knows? A Study of Religious Consciousness*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2003, p. 128.

²⁰⁹ McGinn, Bernard: “Hidden God and hidden self. The emergence of apophatic anthropology in Christian mysticism”, in: DeConick, D. April / Adamson, Grant (eds.), *Histories of the Hidden God. Concealment and Revelation in Western Gnostic, Esoteric, and Mystical Traditions*, New York: Routledge 2014, pp. 87–100.

²¹⁰ Belzen, A. Jacob / Geels, Anton: *Mysticism. A Variety of Psychological Perspectives*, Amsterdam: Rodopi 2003, pp. 84–87.

²¹¹ Moore, 2005, p. 6357.

²¹² An example of *via negativa* within a Gnostic (Sethian trend) context can be seen in: Turner, D. John / Meyer, Marvin (trans.): “The Secret Book of John”, in: Meyer, Marvin (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, New York: HarperOne 2007, pp. 103–132/108.

²¹³ King, 2005, p. 308.

generally speaking, the majority of those who are possessed are in no position to describe their condition”²¹⁴.

On occasion, however, specific strategies could serve in attempts to overcome the condition of ineffability. As the experience of the subject is allegedly beyond human explanation, the attempt to describe or communicate it usually overburdens human capacities. Since language “can never convey the whole content of an experience”²¹⁵, the subjects of a mystical experience may draw upon metaphor and employ codes, symbols, or allegorical interpretations to (partially) express their mystical experience. Merkur also associates the use of “coded language” with ineffability and supplies his argument with several examples from different traditions around the world that employ such language. According to Merkur, descriptions of the enigmatic nature of mystical experiences and the matter of ineffability are part of “shamans’ use of archaic words and metaphors; coded language used by Daoists; Plato’s *Seventh Letter*; Babylonian Talmud; the *symbolae* (symbols) of the Pythagoreans; the ciphers of Western alchemists; the *ta’wil* (allegorical interpretation) of Sufi mystics; and the Kabbalists’ exegetical technique of *sod* (secret)”²¹⁶. A case study to investigate the methods developed by mystics to overcome the ineffable nature of their experience can thus prove fruitful in analyzing how the phenomenon is conceptualized within each mystical discourse.

The second feature of mystical experiences according to James’ definition is the noetic quality, which denotes the epistemological aspect of mystical experiences and resembles Bucke’s description of a similar phenomenon as “intellectual illumination”²¹⁷. Mystical experiences allegedly enable the experiencer to become the beneficiary of a “mode of knowledge” that is believed to be “unplumbed by the discursive intellect”²¹⁸. In many traditions with mystical or esoteric inclinations, including *tasavvuf*, such experiences allow the practitioner to obtain a form of knowledge (or wisdom) beyond the comprehension of human intelligence operated by the brain. It is rather a knowledge of the heart—“the seat of religious [a.n. or divine] knowledge”²¹⁹ or “the predestined seat of immanent Wisdom”²²⁰—which may induce a consciousness of identity or union with a higher spiritual being, usually God, as the end-product of mystical experience. The concept of heart both in its biological and spiritual referents will be analyzed in detail with regards to its application in *tasavvuf*.

²¹⁴ Oesterreich, 1927, pp. 23–24, quoted by Rouget, 1985, p. 9.

²¹⁵ Merkur, “Mysticism”, 2019.

²¹⁶ Merkur, “Mysticism”, 2019.

²¹⁷ Bucke, 1901, pp. 9–10.

²¹⁸ James, 2002, p. 295.

²¹⁹ Avery, Kenneth: *A Psychology of Early Sufi Samāʿ*, New York: Routledge Curzon 2004, p. 79.

²²⁰ Cutsinger, 2004, p. 137.

The quality of transiency in James' formulation refers to the temporal aspect of mystical experiences, claiming that they are often short, temporary, and of a "fleeting"²²¹ manner. Faivre distinguishes mysticism and esotericism in terms of transiency²²², which he denotes as "intermediary realities". He writes that: "[a.n. it is] a domain where the esotericist tend to linger, whereas it is a mere stage to pass through and leave behind for the mystic"²²³.

The fourth and the final quality in James' classification is passivity, which denotes the subject's passive condition and refers to the mystical state as a virtue bestowed by a higher power. This feature distinguishes mystical experiences from certain meditative practices of Buddhism and Hinduism (*samadhi*), for example, since the latter require the subject's active agency to refine the mind and properly engage the "intellect, emotion, and imagination in the systematic exploration of a doctrinal theme or devotional focus"²²⁴.

To summarize, one can employ a combination of approaches, theories, and classifications mentioned above to study mysticism and its practices and experiences. However, all of these frameworks are partial and subject to further inquiry and revision, as none of them can cover all mystical practices around the globe. Furthermore, since the term mysticism itself is somewhat vague, loaded with multifarious meanings, speculations, and expressions incorporated from various sources, offering an encompassing definition of mysticism is challenging. One of the least contested definitions is offered by Gellner, who defines mystical experience in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* as:

"a (purportedly) super- or sub sense-perceptual experience granting acquaintance of realities or states of affairs that are of a kind not accessible by way of sense perception, somatosensory modalities, or standard introspection."²²⁵

According to this definition, the involvement of various extrasensory (super- or subsensory) perceptual processes in an experience allows to classify it as mystical. Even though Gellner's technical definition may be more embracing than other "vague, vast, and sentimental"²²⁶ or, conversely, parochial definitions, it excludes the accounts of the experiencers or

²²¹ Lane, E. William: *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, London: Williams and Norgate 1984, pp. 1863–1893.

²²² Rousse-Lacordaire, 2006, p. 819.

²²³ Von Stuckrad, Kocku: "Afterword: Mysticism, Gnosticism, and Esotericism as Entangled Discourses", in: De-Conick, D. April / Adamson, Grant (eds.), *Histories of the Hidden God. Concealment and Revelation in Western Gnostic, Esoteric, and Mystical Traditions*, New York: Routledge 2014, pp. 312–319/314–315; Rousse-Lacordaire, 2006, p. 819; Faivre, Antoine: *Accès de l'ésotérisme occidental*, Paris: Gallimard 1996.

²²⁴ Moore, Peter: "Mysticism (further considerations)", in: Jones, Lindsay (ed.), *MacMillan Encyclopedia of Religion*, Second Edition, Vol. 9, Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale 2005, pp. 6355–6359/6357.

²²⁵ Gellner, 2019.

²²⁶ James, 2002, p. 294.

insiders²²⁷. The subjects (personal or collective) of mystical experience insistently emphasize the culturally and historically specific moral, contextual, and socio-cultural facets of their experiences of “inner transformation”, “the quest for unity”²²⁸, or whatever “mystics hope to achieve”²²⁹. Perhaps this is the reason why Stace draws a “distinction between a mystical experience itself and the conceptual interpretations which may be put upon it”²³⁰.

3.3 Is Mystical Experience an Altered State of Consciousness?

The exponential developments in modern science have enabled researchers to apply novel combinations of theoretical, empirical, and contextual approaches to the study of mystical experiences. This has also allowed scholars to advance their methods and adopt new terminologies in describing mystical experiences. Specific terms have been devised to refer to divergent states of consciousness such as trance, ecstasy, or rapture, and these terms had been applied to address a variety of mystical states that are phenomenally different from each other and from the “normal” or wakeful state, and therefore cannot be applied as substitutes for one other. Rouget, for example, outlines the major differences between trance and ecstasy as follows:

Ecstasy	Trance
immobility	movement
silence	noise
solitude	in company
no crisis	crisis
sensory deprivation	sensory overstimulation
recollection	amnesia
hallucinations	no hallucinations ²³¹

Considering the sum of “culturally conditioned” and subjective expressions relating to these “psychophysiological states”²³², “mystical experience” as a category developed to label such states appears too all-embracing and overburdened. In addition, the fact that what has been thought as mystical in preceding centuries does not anymore refer to any mystery, either because what is called mystery is something different today, or because humans developed new empirical tools to approach mystical experiences and note that perhaps not necessarily anything

²²⁷ Parsons, 2011, p. 4.

²²⁸ Rouse-Lacordaire, 2006, p. 819.

²²⁹ Merkur, “Mysticism”, 2019.

²³⁰ Stace, 1960, p. 31.

²³¹ Rouget, 1985, p. 11.

²³² Tart, T. Charles (ed.): *Altered States of Consciousness*, New York: John Wiley & Sons 1969, pp. 485–517.

mystical, but rather observable neural, hormonal, and emotional factors along with many other variables having fundamental roles for inducing or enabling such mystified experiences. During the mid-sixties, the term alternative or altered states of consciousness²³³ (ASC) was coined in the literature and since then it has been resonating in different disciplines from cognitive science to the newly emerging research areas including neurotheology. As the opposite or extension of the normal or wakeful state of human consciousness, ASC denotes a particular shift from a normally functioning neural and psychophysiological state of being to an altered one²³⁴. Like in Gellner's technical definition of mystical states, from its initial usage on, the descriptions, production agents, and the characteristics of ASC have been invariably evaluated through empirical and observable factors leading to kindred jargon, yet without neglecting the culturally conditioned or appropriated and subjective expressions of ASC. Jilek correspondingly reports that "the difference between variously labelled states depend on the situational and sociocultural context"²³⁵. From culturally loaded expression ways, induction procedures, or context-relevant situatedness in a "societal organization" to the more neurobiological and psychophysiological characteristics, depending on which methodological tools are employed, different facets of the ASC phenomenon can be empirically analyzed. Recently developed devices and methods, e.g., "multichannel electroencephalography (EEG) and magnetoencephalography (MEG), neuroelectric and neuromagnetic source imaging, positron emission tomography (PET), and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI)"²³⁶ have enabled researchers to investigate the phenomenon with an extra toolkit.

Due to its shifted emphasis from an external divine force to the biological structure of the brain and its neurochemical as well as metabolic processes including the related phenomena (perception, consciousness, emotion etc.), the term ASC was not a mere neologism. However, it still could not initially solve the problem of determining the common elements in similar or dissimilar experiences such as ecstasy, trance, *vecd*, or *ndöp*. While the term indeed allowed scholars to adopt new classifications and categorizations, abundant techniques for inducing ASCs and varied end-products resulting from these techniques still necessitate detailed case studies and monographs focusing on each form of ASC independently. On the other hand, undeniable differences between, for example, trance and ecstasy does not allow to establish a

²³³ Ludwig, M. Arnold: "Altered States of Consciousness", in: *Arch Gen Psychiatry*, 15/3, 1966, pp. 225–234; Tart, 1969.

²³⁴ Ludwig, 1966, p. 225.

²³⁵ Jilek, G. Wolfgang: "Altered States of Consciousness in North American Indian Ceremonials", in: *Ethos*, 10/4, 1982, pp. 326–343/326.

²³⁶ Vaitl, Dieter / Birbaumer, Niels / Gruzelier, John et al.: "Psychobiology of Altered States of Consciousness", in: *Psychological Bulletin*, 131/1, 2005, pp. 98–127/99.

precise separation between various ASCs, since, according to Rouget, even though various ASCs may be practiced within the same sociocultural system customized to serve differing objectives, trance and ecstasy “must be regarded as constituting the opposite poles of a continuum, which are linked by an uninterrupted series of possible intermediary states”²³⁷. Martindale and Lewis-Williams also argue that various states of consciousness are not separate states, but they are rather different ends of a “continuum” or a “spectrum”²³⁸ of consciousness allowing a degree of transitivity and transformation between them.

From a psychophysiological perspective, in Winkelman’s view, the alterations in human consciousness leading to similar experiences or states are related “to the basic structure and physiology of the brain”²³⁹. Thus, due to the biological structure of the human brain conscious employment or unintentional emergence of ASCs, whatever form they have, is believed to be a worldwide phenomenon. Parsons correspondingly writes that “the emergence of a new understanding of the Divine as existing within human beings, a universal dimension of the deepest recesses of the mind hidden beneath the variety of religious traditions and their doctrines”²⁴⁰ may be a platform to discuss a universality among them. According to a cross-cultural study conducted by Bourguignon and Evascu, “of the 488 societies” selected from Murdock’s *Ethnographic Atlas*²⁴¹, “437 or approximately 90% were found to have”²⁴², two major forms of ASC, trance and possession trance, with varying ways of inducing, maintaining, and stamping out.

Regarding the production of ASCs and conditions required for their surfacing, specific variables seem to stimulate them to varying degrees. Depending on the combination of variables along with socio-cultural situatedness or interpretation of ASCs, the nature of ASC experience displays idiosyncratic characteristics. According to Ludwig, five major factors are at work in inducing ASCs, which are “(a) reduction of exteroceptive stimulation (ES) or motor activity (MA), (b) increase of ES, or MA, or emotion, (c) increased alertness or mental involvement, (d) decreased alertness or relaxation of critical faculties, and (e) somatopsychological factors”²⁴³. Reports demonstrate that each factor listed above contains several external and internal stimulators causing a kaleidoscope of multisensorial ASC experiences embedded in the human

²³⁷ Rouget, 1985, p. 11.

²³⁸ Lewis-Williams, David: *The Mind in the Cave. Consciousness and the Origins of Art*, London: Thames & Hudson 2002, p. 129; Martindale, Colin: *Cognition and Consciousness*, Illinois: Dorsey Press 1981.

²³⁹ Winkelman, Michael: “Trance States. A Theoretical Model and Cross-Cultural Analysis”, in: *Ethos*, 14/2, 1986, pp. 174–203/174.

²⁴⁰ Parsons, 2011, p. 3.

²⁴¹ Murdock, P. George: *Ethnographic Atlas*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press 1967.

²⁴² Bourguignon, Erika / Evascu, L. Thomas: “Altered States of Consciousness within a General Evolutionary Perspective. A Holocultural Analysis”, in: *Behavior Science Research*, 12/3, 1977, pp. 197–216/198–199.

²⁴³ Ludwig, 1966, pp. 226–227.

cognitive repertoire. In a more recent study conducted by Vaitl et al., ASCs are similarly classified according to “their origin”, which are “spontaneous, induced, or pathological”²⁴⁴. In addition to determining the elements of inducing ASCs, Ludwig also lays the groundwork for the general characteristics of them containing various phenomena such as “alteration in thinking, disturbed sense of time, loss of control, change in emotional expression, change in body image, perceptual distortions, change in meaning or significance, sense of the ineffable, feelings of rejuvenation, and hypersuggestibility”²⁴⁵. At this point, the question of how to measure each of these characteristics becomes crucial. As several scholars suggested, at least within the context of ethnography, “the object of our search is the outward manifestation of states of mind, resulting behaviors, actions, physical signs and ecstatic sayings, which are a legitimate source of information”²⁴⁶.

While some of the mystics’ accounts concerning their mystical experiences may largely or partially correspond with the categorizations offered, some others are likely part of several classifications simultaneously. In terms of Ludwig’s categorization of ASC inductors, this can be exemplified via the *zikir* ritual of *tasavvuf*, whose one of the end-products is an occasional ASC condition called *vecd*. Ludwig’s description of (a) reduction of ES or MA leading to specific ASCs underlines that “constant exposure to repetitive, monotonous stimulation”²⁴⁷ is one of the primary factors in triggering ASC. In the meantime, his category (b) increase of ES, MA, or emotion, is defined as “sensory overload or bombardment, which may or may not be accompanied by strenuous physical activity or exertion”²⁴⁸. The category (c) increased alertness or mental involvement is constructed according to the mental states emerging from “focused or selective hyperalertness over a sustained period of time”²⁴⁹, such as “total mental involvement in listening to a dynamic or charismatic speaker”²⁵⁰. Each separate characteristic listed above is simultaneously present in approximately all *zikir* events around the globe; yet, despite the presence of a cocktail of ASC triggering factors, the emergence of *vecd* is only occasional. This over-compatibility of various ASCs, including the ones produced by *zikir*-related procedures, forms several categorizations but also complicates the attempts for a clarifying division between them. Therefore, the explanations, methods, and models developed to investigate ASCs are often inadequate to embrace diverse ASC phenomena. As Rouget argues, “each has some truth

²⁴⁴ Vaitl et. al., 2005, p. 99.

²⁴⁵ Ludwig, 1966, pp. 227–230.

²⁴⁶ Avery, 2004, p. 8.

²⁴⁷ Ludwig, 1966, p. 226.

²⁴⁸ Ludwig, 1966, p. 226.

²⁴⁹ Ludwig, 1966, p. 226.

²⁵⁰ Ludwig, 1966, p. 226.

to it; yet none is completely satisfactory. The truth is that the facts are so varied and so complex they evade any single explanation”²⁵¹. For this reason, nearly all ASCs require case studies focusing on various aspects of it.

An inability to apply the term mysticism in its full scope to various mystical traditions around the globe has been addressed by several scholars focusing on different mysticisms. Ernst, for example, emphasizes communal characteristics of *tasavvuf*, namely its “political and social aspects” as well as “military and economic activities”²⁵², which require a specific definition of mysticism, if necessary, different from, for instance, the mysticism of solitary and isolated Christian hermits. The emphasis laid upon the “shared life of the community”²⁵³ within *tasavvuf* must be evaluated in terms of its metasystem, Islam. Likewise, the importance put upon isolation by the Christian hermits must be taken into consideration with regards to Christianity and its transforming influence on various mysticisms it houses. Similarly, Gimello argues that forcing a general definition of mysticism to Buddhist mystical practices would inevitably end up with significant controversies as “it is difficult to apply any of the widely accepted definitions or descriptions of mysticism to Buddhist praxis without the most serious reservations”²⁵⁴. The same issue also covers the consideration of *tasavvuf* as Islamic mysticism.

²⁵¹ Rouget, 1985, p. xviii.

²⁵² Ernst, Carl: “Between Orientalism and Fundamentalism. Problematizing the Teaching of Sufism”, in: Wheeler, M. Brannon (ed.), *Teaching Islam*, New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003, pp. 108–123/121.

²⁵³ Parsons, 2011, p. 4.

²⁵⁴ Gimello, Robert: “Mysticism and Meditation”, in: Katz, Steven (eds.), *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, New York: Oxford University Press 1978, pp. 170–199/173.

4 Gnosticism

Like in the case of mysticism, defining Gnosticism, *gnosis*, or Gnostic theology and determining the range of their inclusion of different phenomena precisely is a challenging task. Gnosticism is an umbrella term encompassing various views, opinions, and speculations about the human condition in relation to God, theodicy, i.e., the matter of evil in the world, the problem of suffering, and the question of God's justice. The topics which Gnostics primarily focused on in this context were creation, salvation including the ways to achieve it, nature of God and Jesus along with several others. Gnosticism therefore can be defined as a set of theological ideas shared by certain groups during the first three centuries of the common era, especially concerning the first passages of the creation story in *Genesis*. These groups, known as Gnostics today, commonly applied Greek philosophical theories and relevant terminology to specific theological opinions, yet with significant discrepancies. According to the scholars favouring this line of thought, Gnosticism emerged from within Christianity, which was by then a small but a developing Jewish sect flourishing on the fringes of the Roman Empire²⁵⁵. Gnostics often position themselves against certain doctrines accepted by specific groups of Christians, especially those who constituted the “orthodoxy”²⁵⁶ of the forthcoming centuries. Valantasis stresses that during

²⁵⁵ Benko, Stephen: *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1984, pp. 22ff.; Cory, A. Catherine / Hollerich, J. Michael (eds.): *The Christian Theological Tradition*, London / New York: Routledge 2016, p. 20.

²⁵⁶ The application of the term “orthodox” is a much-disputed issue when addressing certain religious groups. It demonstrates both semantic and contextual discrepancies in the usages of Christian denominations (Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant) and Jewish contexts. Derived from the Greek language (*ὀρθή δόξα*, *orthí doxa*), in Catholic Christianity, the term orthodox denotes right or middle opinions as acknowledged creeds settled by certain ecumenical councils. In Catholic application, it has the meaning of ‘right belief’ concerning religious doctrines (the nature of Jesus, trinity concept etc.) determined by a centralized teaching institution such as *magisterium*, *ecclesia*, or church. Regarding Judaism, the application of orthodoxy is a relatively recent phenomenon, which was formed as a response to specific reformist inclinations (*haskala*, enlightenment) that occurred among the Ashkenazi Jews around the eighteenth century in Europe. In this Jewish context, orthodoxy defends an uncompromising adherence to *halakha* (Jewish law) as transmitted by traditional methods. In Islam, on the other hand, the term orthodox appears to be utterly problematic because of the absence of a centralized and authoritative teaching institution that may correspond to, for example, a *magisterium* or an accredited assembly of officials who may debate and rule concerning religious doctrines. This, however, does not mean that Islam is completely free from standardization efforts. Possibly the closest expression of orthodoxy in Islam is the term *ehl-i sünnet ve'l-cemâat*, meaning “those who adopt the path of the Prophet Muhammad and the companions in fundamental matters of religion”. In other words, within indigenous Islamic terminology and semantic range, the right opinion is to follow the prophetic model (*sünnet*) and the consensus of the community (*cemâat*). Despite the expression “consensus of the community” allows a dynamism, plurivocality, and relative freedom of interpretation, it is framed by the condition of adherence to one of the four main *sünnî* schools (*mezhep*), *Hanefî*, *Şâfiî*, *Mâlikî*, or *Hanbelî*, of Islamic jurisprudence (*fıkıh*). One important detail here is that this definition covers only the *sünnî* schools (*ehl-i sünnet*) and is not applicable to the *şîî* Islam that contains other jurisprudential schools (such as *Caferî*, *Zeydî*, *İsmâilî*). In this study, the term *ehl-i sünnet* will be preferred to refer to a rather central position as the more recent Islamic movements and relevant terms such as fundamentalism, literalism, Islamism, Wahhabism, or Salafism are not applicable, for example, to the pre-eighteenth century diverse Islamic traditions. On the authoritativeness of the common

the early development periods, there was not only one Christianity but multiple Christianities including “Gnostic, Sethian, Valentinian, Marcionite, and Encratite churches thrived alongside orthodox churches”²⁵⁷. Whereas Gnostic challenges to the partially established interpretations of the scripture(s) were believed by the majority to be rooted in these early Christianities, some scholars argue that “a pattern of religion we should call ‘gnosis’ or ‘Gnosticism’”²⁵⁸, in fact, predates the constitution of Christianity finding earliest expressions among certain Jewish groups. Correspondingly, Jacobs and Blau assert that “since the second century B.C. gnostic thought was bound up with Judaism, which had accepted Babylonian and Syrian doctrines”²⁵⁹.

The matter of Gnosticism’s origins occupied several scholars without reaching a consensus. Mosheim, for example, defines *gnosis* as “Eastern philosophy” involving elements from Judaism, which was developed from several religious, mythological, and philosophical traditions originating both in Greece and Mesopotamia (Chaldea)²⁶⁰. While some scholars understand Gnosticism to be rooted primarily in Jewish and Judeo-Christian traditions²⁶¹, some others, representing a scholarly trend known as *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, sought to find the origins of Gnosticism in pre-Christian traditions²⁶², above all, in Persian, i.e., Zoroastrian “syncretism”²⁶³. Another model developed by Harnack, known as the *Kirchengeschichtliches Ursprungsmodell*, evaluated Gnosticism as a development of a mingling of Christian teachings

consensus, see: Hallaq, B. Wael: “On the Authoritativeness of Sunni Consensus”, in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 18/4, 1986, pp. 427–454. For the quotation, see: Yavuz, Ş. Yusuf: “Ehl-i Sünnet”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 10, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1994, pp. 525–530/525.

²⁵⁷ Valantasis, Richard: *Gnosticism and Other Vanished Christianities*, New York: Doubleday / Three Leaves Press 2006, p. xx.

²⁵⁸ Williams, A. Michael: *Rethinking “Gnosticism”. An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1996, p. 31.

²⁵⁹ Jacobs, Joseph / Blau, Ludwig: “Gnosticism”, in: Singer, Isidore (ed.), *The Jewish Encyclopedia. A descriptive record of the history, religion, literature, and customs of the Jewish people from the earliest times*, Vol. 5, New York: KTAV 1906, pp. 681–686/681; Harnack, Adolf: *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius*, Leipzig: Hinrichs 1904, p. 144.

²⁶⁰ Albrille, Ezio: “Gnosticism. History of Study”, in: Jones, Lindsay (ed.), *MacMillan Encyclopedia of Religion*, Second Edition, Vol. 5, Farmington: Thomson Gale 2005, pp. 3531–3537/3531.

²⁶¹ The study of the relations between Gnosticism and Judaism contains divergent perspectives. Graetz, for example, assumes a Gnostic influence on Judaism; Friedländer, on the other hand, stresses an influence of Judaism on Gnosticism. See: Albrille, 2005, p. 3531; Graetz, Heinrich: *Gnostizismus und Judentum*, Krotoschin: B. L. Monasch und Sohn 1846; Friedländer, Moritz: *Der vorchristliche jüdische Gnosticismus*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1898; Scholem, G. Gershom: *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition*, New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America 1960.

²⁶² Reitzenstein, Richard: *Das iranische Erlösungsmysterium. Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, Bonn: Marcus & Weber 1921. For further information about various other origin theories in Gnosticism, see: Green, A. Henry: *The Economic and Social Origins of Gnosticism*, Atlanta: Scholars Press 1985; Kosack, Wolfgang: *Geschichte der Gnosis in Antike, Uhrchristentum und Islam*, Basel: Christoph Brunner Verlag 2014; Yamauchi, M. Edwin: *Pre-Christian Gnosticism. A Survey on the Proposed Evidences*, London: Tyndale 1973.

²⁶³ Reitzenstein, Richard / Schaefer, H. Heinrich: *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus aus Iran und Griechenland*, Leipzig: Teubner 1926.

with Greek philosophy²⁶⁴, in his words, an “acute Hellenization of Christianity”²⁶⁵. Robinson too emphasizes the date of production of Gnostic texts at hand that were not written before the rise of Christianity²⁶⁶ and asserts Gnosticism to be primarily associated with the Christian religion. Today, one can still come across additional models proposed to locate the potential origins of Gnosticism²⁶⁷. However, the evidence acquired from a collection of various Gnostic texts, the Nag Hammadi Library, demonstrates that abundant Greek philosophical ideas were explicitly instrumentalized by various Gnostic groups.

As early as the second and third centuries CE, when divergent Christianities were still competing to have an authoritative voice, certain Christian theologians, though significantly biased, provided valuable information regarding how Gnostics inserted Greek philosophical discourses into both Jewish and Christian theological speculations. Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170–235 CE), for example, argues in his work against Gnosticism, *Refutation of All Heresies* (*Refutatio Omnium Haeresium*), that Gnostics borrowed their ideas from Greek philosophy and astrology²⁶⁸. Primarily intending to verify their heresy, many Christian scholars and theologians referred to such a relationship between the Gnostics’ arguments and Greek philosophy. The inclusion of “pagan” (Greek philosophical) discourses by Gnostics in interpreting the Jewish and Christian scriptures called for numerous theologians’ attention, which eventually transformed into an early form of witch-hunt due to the negative perception of Gnostics as heretics and led to a long-lasting anti-Gnostic movement within Christianity. The attacks on the Gnostic groups during the early centuries of the common era and harsh refutations of Gnostic arguments accorded with these anti-Gnostic theologians’ standardization purposes of Christianity and the Bible. By creating an enemy or an unwanted other, Gnostics in this case, early Christian theologians took a position from which they could denounce and reject the incompatible, thus dangerous, Gnostic interpretations. To legitimize their perspective of how to understand and prac-

²⁶⁴ Harnack, Adolf: *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* Freiburg: Mohr 1888.

²⁶⁵ Harnack, Adolf: *History of Dogma*, Vol. 1, New York: Dover Publishing, 1961, p. 226; Meijering, P. Eginhard: *Die Hellenisierung des Christentums im Urteil Adolf von Harnacks*, Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company 1985; Scheffczyk, Leo: “Die Frage nach der Hellenisierung des Christentums unter modernem Problemaspekt”, in: *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift*, 33/3, 1982, pp. 195–205.

²⁶⁶ Robinson, M. James: “Sethians and Johannine Thought. The Trimorphic Protennoia and the Prologue of the Gospel of John”, in: Layton, Bentley (ed.), *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, Vol. 2, Leiden: E.J. Brill 1981, p. 643–662/662.

²⁶⁷ Haardt, Robert: *Die Gnosis. Wesen und Zeugnisse*, Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag 1967, pp. 17–29; Kaiser, U. Ulrike: “Neuere Gnosisforschung”, in: *Verkündigung und Forschung*, 48/2, 2003, pp. 44–64; Lahe, Jaan: “Ist die Gnosis aus dem Christentum ableitbar? Eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit einem Ursprungsmodell der Gnosis”, in: *Trames*, 10/3, 2006, pp. 220–231.

²⁶⁸ Van den Broek, Roelof: “Gnosticism I. Gnostic Religion”, in: Hanegraaff, J. Wouter (ed.), *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, Leiden: Brill 2006, pp. 403–416/412.

tice religion, they labelled most Gnostic streams heretic and presented them to demonstrate how not to understand and practice Christianity.

4.1 Characteristics and Christian Correspondences

Since Gnosticism, if one can apply this category²⁶⁹, is neither a single set of beliefs, nor a systematized religion, or a formal group with a leader, its treatment necessitates considering it rather in pluralistic terms such as Gnostic currents, trends, or discourses. Nevertheless, certain features of what the majority of scholars believed to be the common characteristics of these Gnostic trends can still be highlighted. Concentrating fundamentally on renouncing the material world, which was, according to Van den Broek, also the central theme in Hellenistic philosophy²⁷⁰, the essence of Gnostic discourse can be summarized as an assemblage of various religious views loaded with the ammunition of Greek philosophy. A significant majority of Gnostic trends rejected the *Genesis* mythology, which constitutes the base for three main tenets of Christian theology: (1) the world is good, (2) God created it, and (3) humans corrupted it with their sin. By means of reinterpretation, Gnostics generated an alternative origin story in the language and mindset of Greek philosophers, especially of Plato's²⁷¹. While they claimed to have solved several disputed controversies inherited from Jewish and Christian theological problems, their solution for the problem of evil and the notion of pain and suffering in the world, for example, was different from the others, and from the "orthodox" Christianity that relies on, though not exclusively, the literal interpretation of the story of *Genesis*.

The Greek noun *gnosis* (γνῶσις, *gnōsis*) refers to a form of knowledge as "seeking to know, a judicial inquiry or investigation"²⁷². Its adjective form *gnostikos* means "leading to knowledge"²⁷³ or "men that claimed to have a deeper wisdom"²⁷⁴. The semantic range of the term, in most of its religious applications, appears to exclude knowledge in the sense of information. Rather, it is a more profound mode of knowledge allegedly covering the secrets (or the real nature) of the universe, deep religious and mystical phenomena along with "insight based on revelation"²⁷⁵. Paige notes that the term can be translated as "insight", since *gnosis* implies

²⁶⁹ For a detailed discussion on the issues of using the term "Gnosticism", see: Williams, 1996, pp. 29–53.

²⁷⁰ Van den Broek, 2006, p. 405.

²⁷¹ Pearson, A. Birger: "Gnosticism as Platonism. With Special Reference to Marsanes (NHC 10,1)", in: *The Harvard Theological Review*, 77/1, 1984, pp. 55–72.

²⁷² Liddell, G. Henry / Scott, Robert: *Greek-English Lexicon*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1883, p. 314.

²⁷³ Williams, Michael: "Gnosticism", in: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Online Edition, 6 October 2021, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/gnosticism>>, last accessed: 13 January 2022.

²⁷⁴ Liddell / Scott, 1883, p. 314.

²⁷⁵ Van den Broek 2006, p. 403.

an intuitive knowing of both the self, and through it, the universe, and the creator²⁷⁶. By means of particularly this form of knowledge, Gnostics believed, Jesus offered salvation. Gnostics also claimed that only they possessed this “salvific” knowledge²⁷⁷, which, they believed, differed them from the other Christians, and from the rest of religious perspectives in general²⁷⁸. According to Williams, Plato was the first philosopher who used the term *gnosis* “to describe the cognitive or intellectual dimension of learning, as opposed to the practical”²⁷⁹ aspects of it. However, Plato’s application of the term, *gnosis* or *gnostikos* (γνωστικήν), in, for example, *Statesmen* 258e, does not refer to an esotericised or mystified hidden meaning of knowledge. In the usage of Aristotle too—even though he does not give an established definition of *gnosis*—the term was employed with multiple and divergent meanings, which various scholars translated into English either as knowledge or cognition²⁸⁰ with reference to “a wide range of cognitive states, from our perceptual awareness of sensible particulars to our intellectual grasp (i.e., nous) of the necessary and eternal principles”²⁸¹. Eventually, the term *gnosis* acquired a mystified meaning²⁸² around the first centuries of the common era and came to address certain Greek mystery cults or, as in the usage of the New Testament, it began to refer to a particularly esoteric form of knowledge.

The Messina Conference, *colloquium di Messina*, was held in 1966 to discuss various aspects of Gnosticism. The publication following the conference contains a *documento finale* written in four languages with a “proposal for a terminological and conceptual agreement with regard to the theme of the colloquium”²⁸³. This “final document” distinguishes *gnosis* and Gnosticism, defining the first as “knowledge of the divine mysteries reserved for an élite”²⁸⁴ and the latter as:

²⁷⁶ Pagels, Elaine: *The Gnostic Gospels*, New York: Vintage Books 1989, p. xix.

²⁷⁷ Valantasis, 2006, p. 13.

²⁷⁸ Wolfson, R. Elliot: “Becoming Invisible. Rending the Veil and the Hermeneutic of Secrecy in the Gospel of Philip”, in: DeConick, D. April / Shaw, Gregory / Turney, D. John (eds.), *Practicing Gnosis. Ritual, Magic, Theurgy and Liturgy in Nag Hammadi, Manichaean, and Other Ancient Literature*, Leiden / Boston: Brill 2013, p. 113.

²⁷⁹ Williams, “Gnosticism”, 2021.

²⁸⁰ Fine, Gail: *The Possibility of Inquiry. Meno’s Paradox from Socrates to Sextus*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2014; LaBarge, Scott: “Aristotle on Empeiria”, in: *Ancient Philosophy*, 26, 2006, pp. 23–44/38.

²⁸¹ Bronstein, David: *Aristotle on Knowledge and Learning. The Posterior Analytics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2016, pp. 16–17.

²⁸² For detailed information about the meanings of *gnosis* and Gnostic, see: Jonas, Hans: *The Gnostic Religion*, Boston: Beacon Press 2001, pp. 31–46.

²⁸³ Bianchi, Ugo (ed.): *The Origins of Gnosticism / Le origini dello gnosticismo*, Leiden: E.J. Brill 1967, pp. xx–xxxii.

²⁸⁴ Bianchi, 1967, p. xxvi.

“Certain group of systems [...], sects [a.n. that] involve a coherent series of characteristics that can be summarized in the idea of a divine spark in man, deriving from the divine realm, fallen into this world of fate, birth, and death, and needing to be awakened by the divine counterpart of the self in order to be finally reintegrated.”²⁸⁵

Though the Messina Conference aimed to bring an inclusive definition “to avoid an undifferentiated use of the terms”²⁸⁶, Williams criticizes this definition and argues that the main problem is not about the characteristics of Gnosticism, but about how it is categorized²⁸⁷. He further notes that Gnostic trends of the second century CE, in fact, radically diverged from another on certain topics resulting in a wide range of perspectives. This, he argues, would raise questions concerning the suitability of the term “Gnosticism” to refer to them all.

During the early centuries of the common era, the politically and religiously turbulent environment surrounding the discussions of *gnosis* enabled theologians—who had divergent backgrounds and affiliations with manifold religious and philosophical groups—to treat the subject through different lenses. The term *gnosis*, therefore, was widely used in the first centuries of the common era with variant references. While for some—especially those who constituted the heresiography literature—it denotes a pejorative meaning²⁸⁸, Gnostics used *gnosis* for self-definition. In fact, the author(s) of one of the epistles of the New Testament, *First Epistle to Timothy*, and some Christian theologians known for their uncompromising opposition to Gnostics, occasionally mentioned the importance of *gnosis*. In the *First Epistle to Timothy*, its author warns against a “false gnosis”²⁸⁹, implying the presence of true *gnosis*. Clement of Alexandria (150–215 CE) defines what he understands as Gnostic as the ideal Christian and true worshipper of God²⁹⁰. In other words, the ideal Christian has a real understanding of the teachings of Jesus Christ. Certain other Christians, on the other hand, who were considered heretics by Clement of Alexandria and Irenaeus of Lyon (130–202 CE), have also claimed to be “ideal Christians” in terms of what Jesus taught. Valantasis underlines this competition between different Christian groups in the early centuries of the common era with a commentary that “many

²⁸⁵ Bianchi, 1967, p. xxvi.

²⁸⁶ Bianchi, 1967, p. xxvi.

²⁸⁷ Williams, 1996, p. 28.

²⁸⁸ Brakke notes that during antiquity, and the period when Irenaeus wrote *Against Heresies* (c. 180 CE), *gnōsis* and *gnōstikos* were positive terms. It seems possible that even some opposers of Gnosticism might have as well used these terms occasionally with positive meanings. See: Brakke, David: *The Gnostics. Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity*, Cambridge / London: Harvard University Press 2010, p. 30.

²⁸⁹ *1 Timothy* 6:20, in: *The Holy Bible*, New International Version [NIV], Michigan: Zondervan 2001, p. 661.

²⁹⁰ Clement of Alexandria: “The Stromata, or Miscellanies”, in: Hort, A. J. Fenton / Mayor, B. Joseph (eds.), *Clement of Alexandria. Miscellanies Book VII*, London: MacMillan and Co. 1902, pp. 2–9.

of them Christian in name but startlingly different from what we think of as Christianity today”²⁹¹.

The theological disputes between Gnostics and Christians seem to arise from a differing understanding concerning the mode of salvation, creation, and the nature of God, Jesus, and the universe. While in the Gnostic perspective the notion of salvation was equated with “revelation that reawakens knowledge”²⁹², namely *gnosis*, the opposing Christians believed a “redemption through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ”²⁹³. Pojman summarizes this opposition as “salvation by faith” *versus* “salvation by knowledge”²⁹⁴, and Strauss as “obedient love” *versus* “autonomous understanding”²⁹⁵. Diverging from the common Christian perspective, Gnostics distinctively held a position in that they denied the material world (and their body) and opted for an ascetic²⁹⁶ way of life in order to reach salvation.

Such differing formulations produced by different groups of people often stem from their variant interpretations of the available scriptures. The first group, Gnostics, appropriated Jesus’ teachings to their narrative and understood the creation story as a consciously constructed “myth”²⁹⁷ containing various symbolic meanings as well as a deeper psychological narrative. For them, Jesus was not made of the materials from this world (the human body) and was a symbol of the divine manifestation of God’s wisdom. For the latter—favouring a literal interpretation of scriptures—Jesus was born like all the other human beings, but he was incarnated, and resurrected after his crucifixion and death. However, concerning the body of Jesus Christ, Ehrman highlights additional interpretations developed by different trends within Christianity, which were the products of early Christianities’ broad range of ideas and speculations that began to be distilled over the centuries through canonization attempts. In Ehrman’s approach four main interpretations are represented by (1) the Ebionites (adoptionists) who believed that Jesus was a human being and adopted by God, (2) the Marcionites (docetists) saw Jesus not as a

²⁹¹ Valantasis, 2006, p. xvii.

²⁹² Williams, “Gnosticism”, 2021.

²⁹³ Williams, “Gnosticism”, 2021. For details concerning the topic of salvation in Gnostic context, see: Van den Broek, Roelof: *Gnostic Religion in Antiquity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013, pp. 184–205.

²⁹⁴ Pojman, P. Louis: “Gnosticism”, in: Audi, Robert (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Third Edition, New York: Cambridge University Press 2015, p. 419.

²⁹⁵ Strauss, Leo: “Progress or Return? The Contemporary Crisis in Western Civilization”, in: Giddin: Hilail (ed.), *An Introduction to Political Philosophy. Ten Essays by Leo Strauss*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press 1989, p. 273. This view reminds Augustine of Hippo’s aphorism *crede ut intellegas*, “believe that thou mayest understand”, usually known in the form *credo ut intelligam* rendered by Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033–1109) in his *Proslogion* 1. See: Gibb, John (trans.): “Homilies on the Gospel of John”, in: Schaff, Philip (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series I*, Vol. 7, New York: The Christian Literature Company 1888, pp. 7–452/184.

²⁹⁶ Williams, 1996; Jacobs / Blau, “Gnosticism”, 1906; Harnack, 1961, p. 219; Ehrman, D. Bart: *The New Testament. A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 177.

²⁹⁷ Van den Broek, 2006, p. 405.

human being but as God and his human form as an illusion, (3) the Gnostics (separatists) considered Jesus an *aeon*²⁹⁸ that took a human form, and (4) Proto-orthodox (hypostatic) view held the idea that Jesus possessed two concurrent features, godly and humanly²⁹⁹. Ehrman argues that the theological arguments developed within the last group—the “proto-orthodox” Christians—constituted a blueprint for the canonization of the New Testament.

Before the stepwise standardization of the New Testament, several early church leaders and “ecclesiastical writers”³⁰⁰, such as Irenaeus of Lyon, Origen of Alexandria (c. 184–253 CE) and Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260–340 CE), attempted to solve the questions of which books were acceptable and what was the right way to worship. Through the attempts of these bishops and theologians that lasted for some centuries, the New Testament was gradually fixed after a selection process among the available scripts and canonized through, among others, “the first ecumenical council”³⁰¹—the Council of Nicaea (325 CE)—assembled by the first Christian Roman emperor Constantine I (c. 272–337 CE). These early serious standardization efforts of Jesus’ teachings, initiated by the bishops of “proto-orthodox” group, have produced the *Nicene Creed* (Gr. Σύμβολον τῆς Νικαίας), written after the Council of Nicaea as a conclusionary declaration of the Christian belief:

“[We believe] in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten that is *of the substance of the Father*, [...] by whom *all things were made, both those heaven and those on earth*; [Jesus] for our salvation came down and was *incarnated, was made Man*, Suffered [...]”³⁰²

The italicized parts of the *Nicene Creed* above are the main topics derived from the *Genesis* chapter and they were what Gnostics had different views about. The Council of Nicaea was not the only attempt to bring a single definition to what Christianity is and how to perform it. The Synods of Antioch (264–268 CE), *Letter of Athanasius* (367 CE), the Council of Rome (382 CE), the Synod of Hippo (393 CE), the Councils of Carthage that took place in 397 and

²⁹⁸ In most Gnostic discourses concerning creation in the form of emanation and some Greek philosophers’ theories, *aeons* are intermediary beings between the material world and a metaphysical realm, which are emanated from the One, *Monad*, or God and have variety of functions and roles. In Christianity too, *aeons* have been referred to occasionally. According to Van den Broek, “the earliest Christian literature often talks about ‘aeons’ in connection with God, though it is not entirely clear what this means. Thus 1 Timothy 1:17 calls God the ‘King of the aeons [*tōn aiōnōn*; NRSV: ‘ages’]’, Hebrews 1:2 says that God ‘created the aeons [*tous aiōnas*; NRSV: ‘worlds’]’ through his Son, and Clement of Rome (c. 95) talks about God as the ‘Creator and Father of the aeons [*tōn aiōnōn*]’ in his *Letter to the Corinthians* 35, 3”. Van den Broek, 2013, p. 159.

²⁹⁹ Ehrman, 2000, pp. 2–7.

³⁰⁰ Reid, G. Joseph: “Canon of the New Testament”, in: *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3, New York: Robert Appleton Company 1908, p. 234–238/236.

³⁰¹ Valantasis, 2006, p. xxii.

³⁰² Burn, E. Andrew: *The Nicene Creed*, London: Rivingstones 1909, pp. 2–3.

419 CE³⁰³ along with other meetings, councils, and treatises, all aimed at a monolithic religion with defined doctrines and fixed authority, which was to begin with refuting and singling out the heretics. This is a recurring pattern in the history of religious discourses, namely, as Von Stuckrad argues, “religious communities require a contrasting ‘other’ in order to define themselves”³⁰⁴.

4.2 The Nature of God

Though partially, the hermeneutics of the *Book of Genesis* in the *Torah*, as employed by most Gnostics, and the Sethian *Apocryphon of John* along with several other Gnostic texts, correspond with each other concerning the topics of creation, salvation, the nature of God, Jesus Christ, and the universe. One of the most distinctive characteristics of the Gnostic theological discourse is the formulation of God’s nature, which is understood principally transcendent. Therefore, God is believed to be immaterial, i.e., like the formulations of apophatic (negative) theology. God does not have a body and does not exist in the same sense that humans exist. Unlike Jewish formulations, in the Gnostic perspective God is not anthropomorphic or human-like and human features—using hands, walking on feet, or having “human qualities, such as jealousy or anger”³⁰⁵—cannot be attributed to God. Gnostics believed that their opposing parties were misled by the Jewish scripture containing an angry God, which cannot be the true nature of God. In the Hebrew Old Testament—though God is understood as omniscient, omnipotent, eternal, and transcendent in line with Gnostics—there are multiple passages referring to God as if God had a corporeal body—“a *tselem* and a *demut*”³⁰⁶—with hands, mouth, and ears³⁰⁷. As Bremer argues, this formulation influenced not only Christian theology, but also Islamic conceptions of God³⁰⁸.

³⁰³ The eventual completion of the New Testament around the late fourth and the early fifth centuries was based on these selected councils. However, the disputes over the fixation of the New Testament were as well part of numerous other councils, meetings, letter correspondences, and treatises. For detailed information, see: Schröder, W. Julius: “3. History of New Testament Canon”, in: *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Second Edition, Vol. 3, Detroit: Gale 2003, pp. 27–33; Reid, 1908.

³⁰⁴ Von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 8.

³⁰⁵ Williams, “Gnosticism”, 2021.

³⁰⁶ DeConick, D. April: “Introduction. In search of the hidden God”, in: DeConick, D. April / Adamson, Grant (eds.), *Histories of the Hidden God. Concealment and Revelation in Western Gnostic, Esoteric, and Mystical Traditions*, New York: Routledge 2014, pp. 1–12/1.

³⁰⁷ See, for example, *Genesis* 1:3–5,8; 3:21; 8:21; *Exodus* 24:10; *Isaiah* 66:2 etc.

³⁰⁸ Bremer, S. Thomas: *Formed from This Soil. An Introduction to the Diverse History of Religion in America*, Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell 2015, pp. 19–20.

In line with the speculations concerning the nature of God, several Gnostic trends³⁰⁹ developed additional models to interpret Biblical passages. These models reflected Gnostics' purposeful attempts to divert "orthodox"³¹⁰ or "proto-orthodox" interpretations of the Scripture. As mentioned, Gnostics radically opposed to the "strong embodied tradition (in the OT)"³¹¹, leading to a set of controversies between certain Gnostic trends, Jewish groups, and Christians, particularly those who are known as the Church Fathers. These controversies lasted for a considerable amount of time and eventually resulted with a sustained suppression of all Gnostic trends and destruction of most of their texts.

While the understanding of God in Judaism (and in Islam) rejects any form of dualism or trinity to avoid polytheism, in Gnostic cosmogony two separate deities are employed. The first is the absolute, transcendent *Monad* and has almost nothing to do with the creation. The other, known as *Demiurge* (or *Ialdabaoth*), is an imperfect copy of the real God. It is a lesser or even an evil deity, who, through a series of events, *caused* the material and flawed creation. The Gnostic understanding reinterpreted the available conceptions of God (as assumed by Jewish, Christian, Greek, and perhaps also ancient Near Eastern religious traditions) in a dualist manner. This dualism might be the result of an arithmetic mean of the number of Jewish and Christian gods³¹². Based on their interpretation of God, the process (or the moment) of creation was another topic which Gnostics formulated differently than the monist Jews and the trinitarian Christians. Gnostics further applied the dualist perspective to several other topics including an idiosyncratic understanding of creation, which Jonas describes as "radical dualism that governs the relation of God and world, and correspondingly that of man and world"³¹³.

Keeping the potential variations in mind, the symbolic creation myth developed and re-interpreted by Gnostics can be briefly schematized as follows:

³⁰⁹ As there are many Gnostic trends emerged in the different parts of the ancient Mediterranean and Mesopotamian regions, they share a few common beliefs, often with divergences in the details. Some of the recorded Gnostic streams are Sethians, Valentinians, Basilideans, Simonians, Marcionists, Barborites, Manichaeans, Mandaeans, Naassenes, Ophites, Carpocratians, Cainites, Thomasine traditions, Hermeticism along with some others.

³¹⁰ Pagels, 1989, p. xviii.

³¹¹ DeConick, 2014, p. 2.

³¹² The trinity comprising the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit of Christianity plus the one God from Judaism divided by the number two is equal to two gods.

³¹³ Jonas, 2001, p. 42.

Transcendent God (*Monad*, the source of *Pleroma*)

↓ EMANATION I

Aeon (offspring of God)

↓ EMANATION II

[*Sophia* (one of the *aeons*)]

↓

[*Ialdabaoth* or *Demiurge*]

↓

The material world

Various Gnostic systems providing details to the schema above may use different terminology, ordering, or task for each element shown above. However, it roughly demonstrates the Gnostic creation in the process of diverging from the Abrahamic religions. *Sophia* and *Demiurge* are placed in square brackets, because in several formulations both are part of the *aeons*, and thus may be omitted from the schema. Furthermore, theologians of their time, such as Irenaeus, Origen, or Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170–235 CE), and many scholars who have been examining the topic for over eighteen hundred years, have brought additional explanations to the Gnostics' varied creation theories. Consequently, the details of the creation theories, even merely in the Gnostic systems, cannot be exhausted within this chapter. Two illustrations depicting the Valentinian perspective of creation and how they formulate two Gnostic concepts, *pleroma* and emanation, can demonstrate how complex the narrative can be even only within one Gnostic trend:

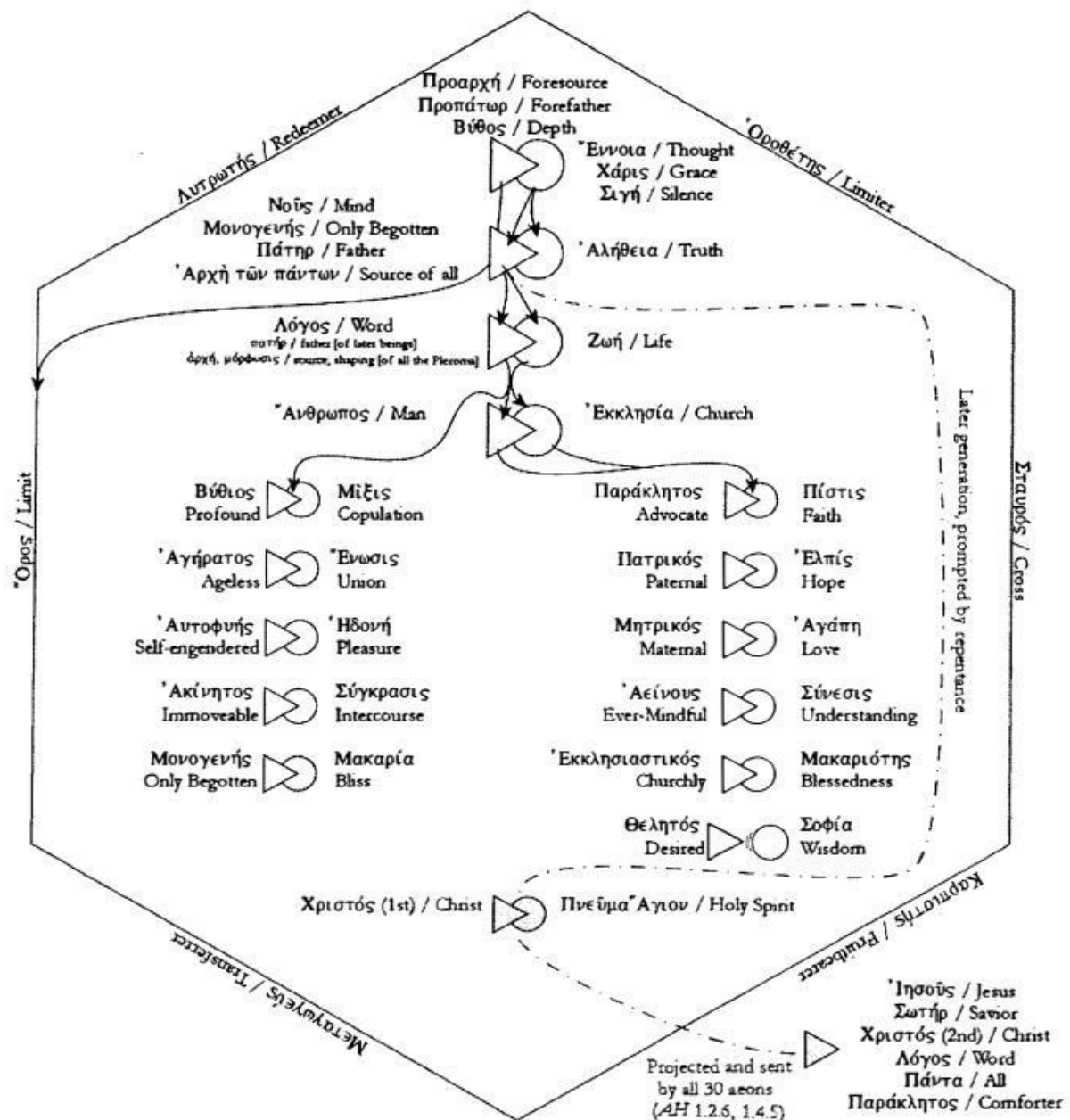


Figure 1: "Valentinian Pleroma", illustrated by Kalvesmaki according to Irenaeus' *Against Heresies* 1.1-9³¹⁴.

In the figure above, the Valentinian conception of *pleroma* is illustrated. *Pleroma* is usually understood as primordial divine integrity (or unity, "fullness"³¹⁵), which contains everything that can be thought or unthinkable. It is a metaphysical divine realm. The transcendent God is the source of the *pleroma*, who has been occasionally addressed as the One, the Abso-

³¹⁴ Kalvesmaki, Joel: *Formation of the Early Christian Theology of Arithmetic Number Symbolism in the Late Second and Early Third Century*, Dissertation, Washington: The Catholic University of America 2006, p. 17.

³¹⁵ Van den Broek, 2013, pp. 108, 159, 162.

lute, “the unknown and unknowable”³¹⁶, or at other times as the *Monad*³¹⁷, “supreme Godhead”, genderless, perfect being that exists eternally. Below is an illustration of the Valentinian understanding of the emanation concept, which is one of the characteristic Gnostic formulations of how creation took place and how plurality is derived from singularity:

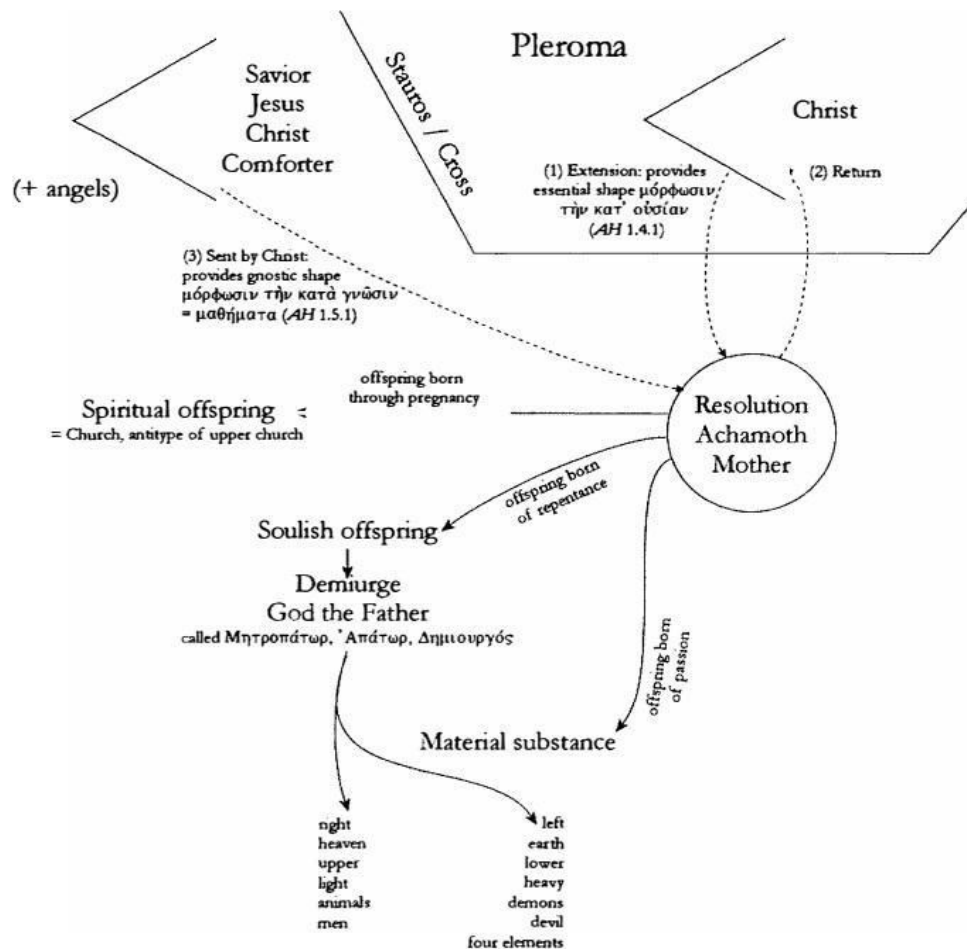


Figure 2: “Valentinian emanation”, illustrated by Kalvesmaki according to Irenaeus’ *Against Heresies* 1.1-9³¹⁸. Note the Hebrew word Achamoth derived from *hkm* root and its participation to the creation (emanation) process.

4.3 Platonic Perspectives (of God)

According to Van der Horst, ancient Greek philosophical conceptions of God were not monolithic and over the course of history (from the sixth and the fifth centuries BCE onwards)

³¹⁶ Ehrman, 2000, p. 174.

³¹⁷ According to Hippolytus’ account in his *Refutation of All Heresies*, Valentinus incorporated his understanding of *Monad* from Platonic and Pythagorean systems, who is “ingenerable, imperishable, incomprehensible, inconceptible, the creator and the cause of the generation of all things that are generated”. See: Mead, R. George: “Pistis Sophia”, in: *Lucifer*, 6/33, 1890, pp. 230–239/230. Furthermore, in the gnostic treatise, *Apocryphon of John*, the One is addressed as *Monad*. See: Turner / Meyer, 2007, p. 108/f.n. 7.

³¹⁸ Kalvesmaki, 2006, p. 21.

“a long process of spiritualization of the traditional notions of god”³¹⁹ took place. Van der Horst argues that this dynamic change led to a new understanding of a “transcendent (henotheistic) and unknowable”³²⁰ God—a process akin to the Israelite break from their neighboring Near Eastern polytheism. Most Gnostic conceptions of God were unequally constructed blends of Greek and Jewish gods. Like Philo of Alexandria attempted in formulating the Gnostic God, majority of Gnostics instrumentalized certain aspects of each tradition’s theories with varying densities. The *Apocryphon (Secret Book) of John*, for example, is a known Gnostic (Sethian) treatise containing both Jewish and Greek narratives of theogony and cosmogony³²¹. Waldstein provides a general view on how the Sethian understanding of God in the *Apocryphon of John* applies Platonic conceptions to the Jewish God and writes that this treatise,

“(and the traditions behind it) ‘split’ the inherited Hellenistic-Jewish God into a good and merciful upper God who is personally identified as the Middle-Platonic transcendent deity but retains central features of the God of Israel, and an evil lower God who is personally identified as the God of Israel and the devil but also possesses features of the Platonic demiurge”³²².

What is additionally of interest in the quotation above is *Demiurge* or *dēmiurgós* (*δημιουργός*) in Plato’s *Timaeus* (28a) is not an evil deity, as it was depicted in most Gnostic texts. In Plato’s usage, *Demiurge* appears to be a higher being, “who works for the people, a skilled workman, handicraftsman”³²³. Therefore, he considers universe (or *cosmos*, *κόσμος*³²⁴) “as the fairest of all that has come into existence”³²⁵ and the making of it by *Demiurge* as “the product of rational, purposive, and beneficent agency”³²⁶. Even though in his *Republic*, through the well-known allegory of the cave (Book VII, Chapter 514a-520a), Plato differentiates two

³¹⁹ Van der Horst, W. Pieter: “GOD (II) Θεός”, in: van der Toorn, Karel / Beeking, Bob / van der Horst, W. Pieter (eds.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, Leiden: Brill 1999, pp. 365–369/367.

³²⁰ Van der Horst, 1999, p. 367.

³²¹ Turner / Meyer, 2007, p. 105.

³²² Waldstein, Michael: “The Primal Triad in the *Apocryphon of John*”, in: Turner, D. John / McGuire, Anne (eds.), *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years*, Leiden: Brill 1997, pp. 154–187/154.

³²³ Liddell, H. George / Scott, Robert: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, New York: Harper & Brothers 1889, p. 183.

³²⁴ The term *cosmos*, like all the other terms of Greek philosophy, was used with various meanings by different philosophers. From Pythagoras, who was believed to use the term for the first time, to Plato and later philosophers *cosmos* came to mean climate, world, heaven, or order. When *cosmos* is understood as order, as opposed to *chaos* (disorder), both Greek and Gnostic perspectives correspond with each other concerning the creation as not in a manner of *ex nihilo*, but rather in a manner of constituting order in what was before chaotic and meaningless. For a detailed survey on *cosmos*, see: Finkelberg, Aryeh: “On the History of the Greek *κόσμος*”, in: *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 98, 1998, pp. 103–136.

³²⁵ Plato: “*Timaeus*”, in: Bury, R. Gregg (trans.), *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 9, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1981, p. 53.

³²⁶ Zeyl, Donald / Sattler, Barbara: “Plato’s *Timaeus*”, in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2019 Edition), 25 October 2005, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/plato-timaeus/>>, last accessed: 13 January 2022.

realms as our intelligible world being a mere imitation or a shadow of the perfect world of Forms or Ideas, he does not necessarily see the world he was living in as bad or evil³²⁷. The *cosmos* is good because its production, according to *Timaeus* 28a-29a, follows an eternal model (*παράδειγμα*, paradigm) materialized by the good *Demiurge* (*Timaeus*, 29a). Plato summarizes his “creation myth” (*Timaeus*, 30a) as follows:

“For God desired that, so far as possible, all things should be good and nothing evil; wherefore, when He took over all that was visible, seeing that it was not in a state of rest but in a state of discordant and disorderly motion, He brought it into order out of disorder, deeming that the former state is in all ways better than the latter.”³²⁸

In Plato’s design in *Timaeus*, human soul, as in all later Gnostic trends, shares a kind of divine essence with the made universe (or with its maker). The material body that surrounds the human soul, in some way, limits the capacity of this essence and “gravely impair the soul’s cognitive functioning; [a.n. and] only with appropriate nurture and education can its original motions be reestablished and proper cognitive functioning be restored”³²⁹. What distinctively separated Gnostics from their rival groups was, among several other points, their prioritization of *gnosis*, understood as a form of knowledge to gain through what Plato refers to as “soul’s cognitive functioning” combined with Gnostic condition to reach salvation. While in Plato’s cave allegory, the physical universe or “the world of sense perception”³³⁰ in which we are living in is placed against a world of Forms (*Republic*, *Phaedrus* 109a-111c, 247c) and understood as unreal in comparison to the Forms, in most Gnostic conceptions the same dichotomic approach is also present, yet differs from that of Plato’s in that the material world is an evil place, since it was made by the evil version of *Demiurge*, not by Plato’s good *Demiurge*. Both Plato’s cave and Gnostic perception of the material world referred to the physical world in which we live as unreal, and reality (Forms) can only be comprehended through proper care, upbringing, and cultivation of human soul so that it can align with the universe or the supreme being and attain its knowledge, truth, or wisdom. In *Republic* 7.518b-d, Plato writes:

“[...] the soul of every man does possess the power of learning the truth and the organ to see with it [...] the entire *soul must be turned away from the changing* [a.n. physical] *world*, until its eye can bear to *contemplate reality* and that *supreme splendour* which we have called the Good. Hence there

³²⁷ However, Plato does also believe that there is evil and it “will never cease on earth”. Strauss, 1989, p. 280.

³²⁸ Plato: “*Timaeus*”, 1981, p. 55.

³²⁹ Zeyl / Sattler, “Plato’s *Timaeus*”, 2005.

³³⁰ Plato: “*Republic*”, in: Shorey, Paul (trans.), *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 6, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1980, p. 118.

may well be an *art* whose aim would be to effect this very thing, the *conversion of the soul*, in the readiest way [...] It looks, then, as though *wisdom were different from those ordinary virtues*, as they are called, which are not far removed from bodily qualities, in that they *can be produced by habituation and exercise* in a soul which has not possessed them from the first. Wisdom, it seems, is certainly the *virtue of some diviner faculty*, which never loses its power [...]"³³¹

The italicized parts in the quotation above can be evaluated as the parallels or correspondences between Plato's thought and Gnostic understanding of the human condition in the created world. In both approaches, the physical world and material body are obstacles for the human soul (or divine spark). For Plato, to be able to transcend the limits of the material world and experience the *reality of supreme splendour*, the soul (not body) is advised to go through *conversion* by means of *art* (likely including some mental and contemplative practices) to attain a divine faculty that generates wisdom (*gnosis*). Almost all Gnostic trends, insofar as is known to the author, would agree with Plato's account without dispute.

Throughout *Republic* and his other dialogues, Plato employs varying terminology (*φρόνησις*, *σοφία*, *νοῦς*, or *διάνοια*) with reference to wisdom or "virtue"³³². For instance, while wisdom (or virtue) in the passage above is *φρόνησις* (*phronesis*), when Socrates (Plato's voice in most of his works) replies to Meno's question, whether virtue can be thought, in *Meno* (70a-b), Socrates uses the term *σοφία* to provide the answer and goes on to explain it in terms of virtue. Whatever the term may be used, for Plato, as he discussed in *Timaeus* and *Republic*, the magnitude of wisdom "from the lowest state of unenlightenment to knowledge of God"³³³ always corresponds to the nature of its object. Both Gnostics and Plato generated hierarchical systems of knowledge (or wisdom) in which different ways of knowing are graded in terms of the capacity that they grant to those who possess the knowledge. While Gnostics formulated a transcendent, unknowable supreme being through their reinterpretation of Jewish and Christian gods and defined *gnosis* as a divine spark or revelation that bestows salvation, in Plato's system the highest form of wisdom was the knowledge of the perfect and unchanging Forms or the Good. However, even though Plato's usage of different terms complicates the issue, he also discerned a form of knowledge or wisdom given to the souls as a gift, sometimes by means of insight and other times as intuition, but always by the "grace of God"³³⁴. Another intriguing correspondence between the Platonic and Gnostic conceptions is their understanding of the hu-

³³¹ Plato: "Republic", in: Cornford, M. Francis (trans.), *The Republic of Plato*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1944, p. 227.

³³² Plato, "Republic", 1980, p. 118.

³³³ Plato, "Republic", 1944, p. 222.

³³⁴ Plato: "Republic", 1980, p. 118.

man body. Both systems employ a dualist conception of the body and argue that the “body is a prison-house, to which soul is condemned”³³⁵ and Gnostic (or philosophers), in the “quest for wisdom”³³⁶, must overcome the obstacles set by the body’s limitations (sensational, cognitional etc.). However, Plato has a relatively more positive view of the body, differing his understanding from that of the Gnostics, which he believes that even though limited, without the capacities of the body one could not even have the idea of a higher reality, namely the Forms. Thus, the body is for Gnostics something to despise and fight against and for Plato, it is conversely “at the same time, source both of slavery and freedom”³³⁷.

All things considered, Gnostics seem to expand on Platonic conceptions of transcendent and perfect Forms and through their own idiosyncratic reinterpretation, fueled with Christian speculations that lacked in Plato, they developed various models of God, creation, and even an ascetic lifestyle designed in line with their formulations of theogony and cosmogony.

4.4 The Gnostic Creation

The simple schema demonstrating the Gnostic creation theory provided above can be summarized as follows: (In the beginning³³⁸) there was only transcendent “First Father”³³⁹, or *Monad*. According to Hippolytus’ accounts in his *Refutation to all Heresies*, the concept of *Monad* (*monada* or *monas*, *μονάς*) was inherited, for example, by the Valentinian Gnostics from Plato and Pythagoreans³⁴⁰. In chapter 6.23.1, titled *Generation Through Number*, Hippolytus writes that “Pythagoras, then, announced that the first principle of the universe is the unborn monad. The dyad and all the other numbers are generated”³⁴¹ from this primordial *Monad*. While *Monad* is similar to the transcendent God of the Abrahamic religions, various Hellenistic philosophical speculations on God assumed additional actors to have intermediary roles in con-

³³⁵ Plato, “Republic”, 1944, p. 222.

³³⁶ Strauss, 1989, p. 260.

³³⁷ Lan, C. Eggers: “Body and Soul in Plato’s Anthropology”, in: *Kernos*, 8, 1995, pp. 107–112/112.

³³⁸ For the creation mythologies based on Greek philosophy, the expression “in the beginning” may not be adequate. In Greek philosophical conceptions, before the universe or *cosmos* was made by a *demiurge* through ordering what was already existed previously, there was at least a higher dimension of the universe called *chaos* (*χάος*, *kháos*), though unordered, that stretched out infinitely and eternally, in both time and space. Various philosophers employed the term *chaos* as emptiness, chasm, void, or gap to denote the pre-creation state of disorder. In contrast to Greek conceptions, in the *Book of Genesis*, and therefore in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the author sets a certain moment with the expression “in the beginning” and understands creation in the manner of *ex nihilo*.

³³⁹ Irenaeus, “Against Heresies”, in: Keble, John (trans.), *Five Books of S. Irenaeus*, London: Rivingstons 1872, p. 8.

³⁴⁰ Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 6.21.1: “The heresy of Valentinus has a Pythagorean and Platonic basis”. See: Hippolytus of Rome: *Refutation of All Heresies*, Litwa, M. David (trans.), Atlanta: SBL Press 2016, p. 393.

³⁴¹ Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 2016, p. 395.

necting the divine, transcendent *Monad* and spiritual realm (*pleroma*, πλήρωμα) with the flawed material world. According to various Gnostic accounts, “at some point in eternity past, this divine spirit produced offspring”³⁴², who were as well divine beings and called by some as *aeon*³⁴³ (αἰών), and by the others as *archon*³⁴⁴ (ἄρχων). The *aeons* were part of—or for some trends “they constitute”³⁴⁵—the metaphysical realm known as *pleroma*. In a Gnostic trend influenced by the Valentinian system of creation that produced the manuscript named *Tripartite Tractate*, these offspring *aeons* were described as “thought of the Father”³⁴⁶, implying, as in the most religious traditions, creation or ordering the universe was a mental act or process³⁴⁷. It is likely for this reason that Jesus was also sometimes equated with *aeon* and some other times with *logos*³⁴⁸ (λόγος), which is understood as God’s creative act in certain Gnostic and non-Gnostic trends. Irenaeus, when commenting on Valentinian Gnostics, recounts their description of Jesus and writes that “a most perfect *Emanation* to the honour and glory of Him who is the Deep, the beauty and *star of their Pleroma*, even their perfect fruit, Jesus”³⁴⁹. In the Sethian *Apocryphon of John*, however, it is *Barbēlō* (Βαρβηλώ), “the divine mother”³⁵⁰ that came into existence by means of God’s mental action (as the thought of God becomes reality) and she was “the perfect glory among the aeons, the glory of revelation”³⁵¹, but not Jesus.

³⁴² Ehrman, 2000, p. 174.

³⁴³ Ehrman, 2000, p. 174.

³⁴⁴ Jonas, 2001, p. 43.

³⁴⁵ Kalvesmaki, 2006, p. 18.

³⁴⁶ Dillon, M. John: “Pleroma and Noetic Cosmos. A Comparative Study”, in: Wallis, T. Richard (ed.), *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, Albany: State University of New York Press 1992, pp. 99–110/101.

³⁴⁷ The variety of mental acts and the concepts developed to address them in ancient Greek philosophy is so wide that it is almost impossible to develop a single theory of mind, even merely for Greek philosophy. One of the most frequently employed terms to denote mental faculties is called *nous* (νοῦς, *noûs*), which comes to mean mind, intellect, thought, reason, intuition, wisdom, understanding, good sense, perception, or awareness depending on the context of its application. Both in the pre-Socratic and subsequent periods of Greek philosophy, several philosophers, such as Parmenides and Plato, correspondingly claimed that the information acquired through sense-perceptual means is only opinions and thus inadequate to understand what real is. It is the *nous* which enables humans to perceive reality or divine truth. Furthermore, in line with the pre-Socratic philosopher Anaxagoras’ understanding of the term, Plato, in his *Phaedo* (97–99), associated *nous* with the creation (or ordering) of the *cosmos* and thus attributed a spiritual dimension to the concept, but, according to Strauss, *nous* was “never divorced from sense perception and reasoning”. Strauss, 1989, p. 292. For more information about *nous*, see: Liddell / Scott, 1889, p. 224; Aristotle: “De Anima”, in: Lawson-Tancred, Hugh (trans.), *De Anima (On the Soul)*, Harmondsworth: Penguin 1986; Plato: “Phaedo”, in: Gallop, David (ed.), *Clarendon Plato Series. Phaedo*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1975; Plato: “Timaeus”, in: Kalkavage, Peter (trans.), *Plato’s Timaeus*, Newburyport: Focus Publications 2001, pp. 141–156.

³⁴⁸ In strict association with the variety of mental acts enabling humans to conduct a desirable and a good life, the forms of knowledge in ancient Greek philosophy had been approached with multifarious lenses. Almost every philosopher has designed what they understood as knowledge (or wisdom) contradistinctively and often correlated it with certain other qualities including virtue, morals, and ethics.

³⁴⁹ Irenaeus, “Against Heresies”, 1872, p. 8.

³⁵⁰ Turner / Meyer, “The Secret Book of John”, 2007, p. 110/f.n. 17.

³⁵¹ Turner / Meyer, 2007, p. 110.

4.5 Hypostasis (Personification) and Its Semitic Background

The expression “thought of the Father” mentioned in the *Tripartite Tractate* implies an important common phenomenon present in various philosophical and religious discourses, which is denoted in the modern scholarship as personification and ancient Greek philosophy as *hypostasis* (ὑπόστασις)³⁵², translated by Liddell as “substance, the real nature of a thing, essence”³⁵³. The term is often applied to the materialization³⁵⁴ of an idea, a doctrine, a mental concept, or “metaphysical reality”³⁵⁵. In various studies of the history of religion, *hypostasis* usually refers to “mythic objectifications or personifications of divine qualities, gifts, or attributes or of abstract concepts or aspects of human existence, whereby such entities assume an identity of their own”³⁵⁶.

Among the other personified beings, deities, and mental concepts, the notion of wisdom is the primary focus of this study. Close monitoring of the concept of wisdom, beginning with the Semitic, e.g., Akkadian, Hebrew, and Arabic, root *hkm* and in its various reinterpreted forms allows us to determine (1) why the Greek term *sophia* was offered as the etymological root for the Arabic terms *sūfī* and *tasavvuf*, (2) how valid the nomenclatures such as Islamic mysticism

³⁵² There is another term, *ousia* (οὐσία), meaning reality, being, or substance, and used as a synonym for *hypostasis*. In fact, Plato and Aristotle, though they had slightly different views, employed *ousia* in their works, but not *hypostasis*. However, during a seven-century long period, *ousia* and *hypostasis* were both in use in a vast variety of philosophical and religious speculations referring to the essence of God, the universe, and Jesus. Concerning a shared essence between God and Jesus, the theological discussions were centred around, for example, *John* 10:30, “I and the Father are one”, *Hebrews* 1:3, “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word [...]” in the New Testament [NIV]. As Carmody highlights, in the First Council of Nicaea (325 CE), both terms were used synonymously and apparently, they were a crucial topic in the Christian (and Gnostic) theology of that time as the council concludes: “If anyone says ... that the Son of God is from a different hypostasis, or ousia [than the Father], ... him the Catholic Church anathematizes”. See: Carmody, J. M.: “Hypostasis”, in: *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Second Edition, Vol. 7, Detroit: Gale 2003, pp. 263–264/263; Denzinger, Heinrich / Hünermann, Peter: *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press 2012.

³⁵³ Liddell / Scott, 1889, p. 847.

³⁵⁴ It is important to make a distinction between “materializing” and “treating as if it were matter”. In other words, the hypostatization or substantification of a concept, for example, mental concepts or simply the human nature, does not mean seeing it as merely material but treating it as something that stands alone in the vacuum of space, isolated from the complex relationships, contexts, and necessary connections that define it. The notion of personification is not a forgotten ancient strategy. In our modern, de-mystified world personification appears perhaps not in the context of religion or divine beings, but it was expanded to all levels of the social structure. For instance, considering the social relations of the producers and manufacturers of various goods not as the relations between the producers among themselves, but as an “imaginary” relation between the products of labour (i.e., objects, commodities), substantiates the products in question. Thinking of commodities as not part of totality with its human actors and detaching them from the whole structure to which they belong, gives them a mystical character, as in religious experience. As a result of such mystification, objects that are the product of human labour are compared with objects, leaving aside those interacting with real people.

³⁵⁵ Bowker, John: “Hypostasis”, in: Bowker, John (ed.), *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000, p. 260.

³⁵⁶ Pearson, A. Birger: “Hypostasis”, in: Jones, Lindsay (ed.), *MacMillan Encyclopedia of Religion*, Second Edition, Vol. 6, Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale 2005, pp. 4239–4243/4243.

or Islamic Gnosticism to address *tasavvuf* and whether they can be linked, and (3) why the *zikir* ritual of Halvetî Uşşâkî Ruhzârî (HUR) group, and the majority of other *zikir* rituals performed throughout the world, is often structured in a certain repetitive form.

The Akkadian root *hkm* has been employed to denote wisdom with a wide range of relevant meanings from ancient Near Eastern mythological traditions to the Hebrew Old Testament, and through the intermediary of Greek-speaking Jewish communities settled in Alexandria, it was transferred to various stages of Greek philosophy, particularly to Middle-Platonism (c. 90 BCE–third century CE) and Neoplatonism (c. third–seventh centuries) and found expression as *sophia*. With this form, it then passed to several early Christianities including Gnostics and the Desert Fathers of Syria and eventually to *tasavvuf* to denote *hikmet*. As Renn confirms, “sophia is a dynamic equivalent for *hokmāh*, consistently translated ‘wisdom’ throughout its 50 or so occurrences”³⁵⁷. The notion of personification, *hypostasis*, has been one of the channels between these different traditions, languages, schools of thought, religions, and mythologies that allowed Akkadian and Hebrew *hkm* roots to be the object of reinterpretation.

As mentioned above, Jesus was the *logos* (λόγος) of God. In other words, Jesus was a *hypostasis* of a thought of God³⁵⁸. This idea, however, was not a theme exclusively belonging to Christian theology. Relating mental concepts, above all wisdom, with deities, demigods, and supernatural beings was a recurring application in various societies throughout history. In the Hebrew Old Testament, especially in the canonical *Proverbs* 1:20–33, 8:22–30, along with its official translations, i.e., the *Septuagint*, and in certain deuterocanonical books based on the Hebrew Old Testament, i.e., the *Book of Sirach* (*Ben Sira* or *Ecclesiasticus*) 24:28–29, 51:13–30 and the *Book of Wisdom* (*Wisdom of Solomon*)³⁵⁹, the word wisdom, derived from the Semitic root *hkm*—*hokmā*, *hokmôt*³⁶⁰, *khocma*, or *hokmah*³⁶¹—is employed as an attribute of God³⁶². This attribute is not exclusively formulated as an abstract virtue, it is occasionally also personified (hypostasized) as a feminine figure, known as Lady Wisdom, whose

³⁵⁷ Renn, D. Stephen (ed.): *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, Massachusetts: Hendrickson 2005, p. 1051.

³⁵⁸ Confusion and disputes are also a part of this topic. According to the tradition, Jesus can be God’s manifestation on earth and thus the personification of the transcendent God but not God’s thought, or Jesus can also be *sophia* of God instead of *logos*.

³⁵⁹ For a detailed discussion about the concept of wisdom and its relation to personification in the Dead Sea Scrolls literature, see: Harrington, J. Daniel: *Wisdom Texts from Qumran*, London / New York: Routledge 1996.

³⁶⁰ Lang, Bernhard: “Wisdom”, in: van der Toorn, Karel / Becking, Bob / van der Horst, W. Pieter (eds.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, Leiden: Brill 1999, pp. 900–905/900.

³⁶¹ Kornblatt, D. Judith: *Divine Sophia. The Wisdom Writings of Vladimir Solovyov*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press 2009, p. 201.

³⁶² Correspondingly, the term *hakīm* with the meaning “judgement (*hüküm*) and possessor of wisdom (*hikmet*)”, is one of the attributes of God in the Islamic conception. Topaloğlu, Bekir: “Hakīm”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 15, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1997, pp. 181–182/181.

“hypostasis in biblical religion (Prov. 8:22–31; Ben Sira 24:1–22), and her manifestation as Sophia in Greek-speaking Judaism (Wisdom of Solomon; the works of Philo Judaeus) is of great importance for the development of early Christian Christology as well as early Gnostic mythology”³⁶³

The Old Testament in general employs two divergent forms of wisdom. Whereas the first one is the virtue or attribute of God and comes with a broad range of relevant translation possibilities (and occasionally as a substitute for one other) including prudence, skill, insight, knowledge, or shrewdness³⁶⁴; the latter refers to wisdom as a personified female figure and thus emphasizes her personhood with human qualities. Concerning wisdom as an attribute of God, the Old Testament makes a clear belief-oriented epistemological claim, which was to be followed by the Jews, the audience of the text. According to its author(s), by means of wisdom-related concepts, useful insight can be found in the scripture, which allows believers to build up significant abilities, morality, and a good attitude to live a successful, virtuous, and good life in God’s dominion. *Proverbs* 1:7 designates the primary condition for all these possibilities:

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction”³⁶⁵

A visible confusion in translation appears when substituting mental concepts that belong to different languages with one other, which is often due to their various semantic ranges in the given language do not, or partially, correspond with the terms of another language. The same passage above is translated by Cook as follows:

“Beginning of wisdom is fear of God,
and understanding is good for all those who practice it,
and piety unto God is the beginning of perception;
the impious, however, will despise wisdom and discipline”³⁶⁶

Certain concepts above, wisdom, understanding, practice (practical wisdom, *phronesis*), perception, and discipline, have been employed so diversely in philosophical and religious systems that such vastness complicates any translation attempt with precision. The same challenge occupied not only the scholars and translators of our time, but also, as will be shown below in

³⁶³ Pearson, 2005, p. 4243.

³⁶⁴ This set of terms is taken from *Proverbs* 1:2-7, which are used along with wisdom (*hkm*).

³⁶⁵ *Proverbs* 1:7, in: Ridling, Zaine (ed.): *The Hebrew Bible. With the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*, New Revised Standard Version [NRSV], 1989, p. 1234.

³⁶⁶ Cook, Johann (trans.): “Proverbs”, in: Pietersma, Albert / Wright, G. Benjamin (eds.), *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, New York: Oxford University Press 2007, p. 624.

detail, the ancient ones, and numerous others in between. It also challenges the author of this study, since reaching a conclusion with such a claim as, for example, “Hebrew root *hkm* is the equivalent of Greek *sophia*” always excludes the other translation possibilities that may be relevant. One option is to base the theory on the most frequent translations offered in a period covering at least two millennia, as is done in this study, which will still leave certain corners in dark. In order not to force a frame on the concept, one is ought to be attentive to alternative translations, descriptions, or altered semantic ranges, which generally point to other directions. If this direction leads the researcher to a variation with relevant but not significantly different meanings, a short reference to inform the reader may be useful, but if the researcher attains a completely new path by following the alternatives, the initial theory may need to be reformulated. Fortunately, the translative case of the Semitic root *hkm* along with its variations appeared during roughly five millennia of the translation process demonstrates a traceable continuity as well as consistency in its handling, particularly when it is approached in terms of Kubik’s “cognitive bridge” theory.

The original Hebrew version of the *Book of Proverbs* 1:7, shown below, contains a derivation of the Akkadian and Hebrew *hkm* root, חֵכְמָה (hokmah, chokma etc.), which is usually translated into English as wisdom:

”וְהָאֵלֹהִים יִהְיֶה רָאשִׁית דָּעָתָם חֵכְמָה וְיִמּוּדָם בְּיָוֶז׃”³⁶⁷

In the Greek translation of the same passage dating to the second century BCE, the translators of the *Septuagint* cognate the Hebrew term for wisdom, *hokmah* חֵכְמָה, with the Greek *sophia* (σοφίας), demonstrating the metamorphosis of the Hebrew (originally Akkadian) *hkm* root into the Greek *σοφία* and thus allowing this study to establish a link between a Semitic and an Indo-European language family, which will eventually, around the seventh century CE, return back to the same region, yet this time to another Semitic language, Arabic. The Greek translation of *Proverbs* 1:7 containing *hkm* and *σοφία* equation is as follows:

“ἀρχὴ σοφίας φόβος θεοῦ (?) σύνεσις δὲ ἀγαθὴ πᾶσι τοῖς ποιοῦσιν αὐτήν
εὐσέβεια δὲ εἰς θεὸν ἀρχὴ αἰσθήσεως
σοφίαν δὲ καὶ παιδείαν ἀσεβεῖς ἐξουθενήσουσιν”³⁶⁸

³⁶⁷ *Proverbs* 1:7, in: *The Westminster Leningrad Codex* [WLC], The Westminster Hebrew Institute, 2005, p. 709.

³⁶⁸ *Proverbs* 1:7, in: *The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament*, London: Samuel Bagster and Sons 1879, p. 788.

Following this passage, the tone of the *Book of Proverbs* starts to change. At first, between the chapters 8-19, it turns into a warning and advising manual, but then, from the chapter 20 to the end of the book, a dramatic introduction of a personified wisdom shouting at people vengefully can be identified:

“20 Wisdom cries out in the street; in the squares she raises her voice.
21 At the busiest corner she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:
22 ‘How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge?’”³⁶⁹

Though Cook’s translation softens the narrative in comparison to that of NRSV’s, in both translations, the personified Lady Wisdom accuses people who have not listened to her God-given wise counselling and describes their evil fate if they continued to ignore her. Translated as wisdom into English, the original Hebrew composition of the passage containing *hkm* is as follows:

“20 חֲכָמוֹת בְּתוֹרַת תְּלָמִיד, בְּרִחְבּוֹת תַּתֵּן קוֹלָהּ;
21 בְּרֹאשׁ הַמַּיּוֹת תִּקְרָא בְּפִתְחוֹ שְׁעָרִים בְּעִיר אֲמַרְיָהּ תֹאמַר:
22 עַד-מָתַי פְּתִים תִּאָּהָבוּ פְתִי וְלִצְיִים לְצוֹן תִּמְדּוּ לָהֶם וְכִסְיֵיהֶם יִשָּׁאוּ-עֵצָה.”³⁷⁰

In this passage too, a derivation of the root *hkm* [חֲכָמוֹת] is employed to refer to Lady Wisdom, who “is the goddess of knowledge, shrewdness (both implied in the semantic range of *hokmâ*), statecraft, and the scribal profession”³⁷¹. When we inquire how the personified Hebrew *hkm* root was translated into Greek, it appears that the personified form of the term, along with wisdom as a virtue or attribute of God, was also consistently translated as *sophia* (Σοφία):

“20 Σοφία ἐν ἐξόδοις ὑμνεῖται,
ἐν δὲ πλατείαις παρρησίαν ἄγει,
21 ἐπ’ ἄκρων δὲ τειχέων κηρύσσεται,
ἐπὶ δὲ πύλαις δυναστῶν παρεδρεύει,
ἐπὶ δὲ πύλαις πόλεως θαρροῦσα λέγει
22 Ὅσον ἂν χρόνον ἄκακοι ἔχωνται τῆς δικαιοσύνης, οὐκ αἰσχυνθήσονται·
οἱ δὲ ἄφρονες, τῆς ὕβρεως ὄντες ἐπιθυμηταί,
ἀσεβεῖς γενόμενοι ἐμίσησαν αἴσθησιν”³⁷²

³⁶⁹ *Proverbs* 1:20-22, in: NRSV, 1989, pp. 1234–1235.

³⁷⁰ *Proverbs* 1:20-22, in: WLC, 2005, p. 709.

³⁷¹ Lang, 1999, p. 900.

³⁷² *Proverbs* 1:20-22, in: *The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament*, 1879, p. 788.

Even if *ḥokmāh* is personified vividly in the *Book of Proverbs*, some theologians interpreted it as merely a “literary personification”³⁷³ and thus as an attribute of God employed in the creation of the universe. According to this view, wisdom is depicted as female simply because the Hebrew noun for wisdom, *ḥokmāh*, is a feminine noun³⁷⁴; there is no Lady Wisdom in the form of a female deity. Therefore, *ḥokmāh* in the Hebrew Old Testament, who “was there, when He established the heavens”³⁷⁵ and who “was beside Him, like a master worker”³⁷⁶ during the creation, is considered a “mediatrix”³⁷⁷ between God and the universe, or God’s mode of interaction with the universe through the imperceptible force of wisdom, similar to the workings of electromagnetic fields or gravitational force. The relevant verse affirms this as “it [a.n. wisdom] cannot be found in the land of the living [...] it is hidden from the eyes of every living thing”³⁷⁸, which is inherent in the universe as part of the creation that can influence individuals and shape their lives. *Proverbs* 8:22 correspondingly establishes wisdom to be God’s first act in the creation with the following lines:

“The Lord created me as the beginning of his ways [a.n. or, ‘as the first of his works’³⁷⁹], for the sake of his works”³⁸⁰

On the other hand, when we consider this passage under the light of *Genesis* 1:26, “Let *us* make mankind in *our* image, in *our* likeness, so that they may rule (...)”³⁸¹ over the created beings in the world, it appears that the author uses plural pronouns (*italicized*) implying that God was not alone in the act of creation. This passage has been a topic of numerous speculations and discussions due to its implications for both the phenomenon of *imago Dei* and another (perhaps even more) agent(s) taking part in the creation, which, combined with Lady Wisdom, was inherited by the New Testament³⁸². The author of the *Colossians* correspondingly writes that Jesus “is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation”³⁸³ and further Jesus is referred to in the *Hebrews* as “the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his

³⁷³ Lang, 1999, p. 900.

³⁷⁴ Jobes, H. Karen: “Sophia Christology. The Way of Wisdom?”, in: Packer, I. James / Soderlund, K. Sven (eds.), *The Way of Wisdom. Essays in Honor of Bruce K. Waltke*, Michigan: Zondervan 2000, pp. 79–103/82.

³⁷⁵ *Proverbs* 8:27, in: NRSV, 1989, p. 1247.

³⁷⁶ *Proverbs* 8:30, in: NRSV, 1989, p. 1248.

³⁷⁷ Waltke, Bruce: “Lady Wisdom as Mediatrix”, in: Zuck, B. Roy (ed.), *Learning from the Sages. Selected Studies on the Book of Proverbs*, Michigan: Baker Book House 1995, pp. 191–204.

³⁷⁸ *Job* 28:12–28, in: NIV, 2001, p. 291.

³⁷⁹ *Proverbs* 8:22, in: NIV, 2001, p. 351.

³⁸⁰ Cook, 2007, p. 629.

³⁸¹ *Genesis* 1:26, in: NIV, 2001, p. 1.

³⁸² Jobes, 2000, p. 81.

³⁸³ *Colossians* 1:15, in: NIV, 2001, p. 653.

being”³⁸⁴. In addition to Jesus’ incarnation as *imago Dei*, the object of the first creation of God was shifted from *hokmah*, Lady Wisdom, to Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

In Christian theology and Christology, the issue was elaborated further and throughout the New Testament, the idea of a personified wisdom as a female figure was reflected onto Jesus Christ. According to the general opinion, to uncover God’s presence or wisdom to people, Jesus took human form made of flesh and blood. A reference to this was given by the author of the *Gospel of John*, first, when Thomas asks Jesus about “the way” in *John* 14:6, Jesus answers “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”³⁸⁵ and then later, when Philip asks Jesus to show “the Father” in 14:9, Jesus replies: “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father”³⁸⁶. According to Stoddart, this is an expression of the personification of God, in other words, the Word of God, *logos*, which is “a bridge” between the created creatures (human) and uncreated God³⁸⁷. Stoddart further argues that this mode of personification through *logos* is also present in certain other religious systems, especially in the examples of “the Founder” of each religion, such as the Prophet Muhammed (“He that hath seen me, hath seen God”³⁸⁸) and the Buddha (“He who sees the *Dharma* sees me, and he who sees me sees the *Dharma*”³⁸⁹). The prologue of the *Gospel of John* confirms Stoddart’s first argument, asserting *logos* to be the personification of Jesus, with the following opening lines:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”³⁹⁰

The direct ontological link between the Word of God (Jesus) and God established in the equation “the Word was God” is one of the most explicit demonstrations of the notion of personification within the New Testament. In terms of terminology, or borrowing from Myrdal, “diplomacy by terminology”³⁹¹, the original Greek composition of the passage above diverges from the Hebrew tradition in that it employs the term *λογος* (*logos*) to address the creative personification, “Word of God”, instead of *sophia*, whose prior equivalent was God’s creative force, Lady Wisdom (*hokmah*), in the Old Testament:

³⁸⁴ *Hebrews* 1:3, in: NIV, 2001, p. 666.

³⁸⁵ *John* 14:6, in: NIV, 2001, p. 597.

³⁸⁶ *John* 14:9, in: NIV, 2001, p. 597.

³⁸⁷ Stoddart, 2005, p. 63.

³⁸⁸ Stoddart, 2005, p. 64; Arberry, A. John: *Sufism. An Account of the Mystics of Islam*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1968, p. 28.

³⁸⁹ Stoddart, 2005, p. 64.

³⁹⁰ *John* 1:1, in: NIV, 2001, p. 587.

³⁹¹ Myrdal, Gunnar: *Asian Drama. An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations*, Vol. 1, London: The Penguin Press 1968, pp. 1839–1842.

“ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος”³⁹²

The preference for the Greek masculine word *logos* over the feminine *sophia* illustrates the Christian adoption and reinterpretation of the concept of creative and personified wisdom³⁹³. Furthermore, in the Greek *Septuagint* translation of *Proverbs* 1:23, the employment of *λόγον* (*lógon*)³⁹⁴ to address *the statements* of Lady Wisdom (*sophia*) can be identified. Their (*logos* and *sophia*) simultaneous usage in the *Septuagint* demonstrates that the Hebrew root *hkm* is consistently translated into Greek as *sophia*. While the Lady Wisdom in the Hebrew version of *Proverbs* 1:20 is rendered as חִמָּה (ḥā·k̄mō·wṭ) and its translation is Σοφία (*sofía*) in the *Septuagint*, it is rather her words or utterances which had been translated into Greek as *λόγον*. How *λόγον* eventually became acknowledged as the personification of God’s creative mental action in the form of Jesus is not entirely clear. The term *λόγος* apparently has been interpreted variously by several known philosophers, theologians, and scholars in certain ways that it also occasionally carried homogeneous meanings with *hokmah*. The transition from the female personification of *hokmah* to a male *logos* in the form of Jesus was seemingly completed during the composition of the *Gospel of John* (c. 60–100 CE) as the chapter 1:14 asserts:

“the Word became flesh and made *his* dwelling among us”³⁹⁵

“καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκηνώσεν ἐν ἡμῖν”³⁹⁶

In this passage, what is embodied or personified is not wisdom (*hokmah*) of God anymore, but *logos* with its own various semantic ranges, connotations, and idiosyncratic features. However, in certain chapters throughout the New Testament, explicit references to a personified female wisdom as *sophia* can still be found, such as in *Matthew* 11:19:

³⁹² *John* 1:1, in: Estienne, Robert: *Tes Kaines Diathekes hapanta. Novum Testamentum. Ex Bibliotheca regia, Lutetiae: Ex officina Roberti Stephani* 1549, p. 317.

³⁹³ Anderson, Gary: “The Interpretation of Genesis 1:1 in the Targums”, in: *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 52/1, 1990, pp. 21–29/28.

³⁹⁴ The term *λόγον* is the accusative singular form of *λόγος* (*lógos*), usually translated into English as word, utterance, or “speech, definition, rational faculty” and by Liddell as “the word or that by which the inward thought is expressed”. Peters, F. Edward: *Greek Philosophical Terms. A Historical Lexicon*, New York: New York University Press 1967, p. 110; Liddell / Scott, 1889, pp. 476–477.

³⁹⁵ *John* 1:14, in: NIV, 2001, p. 587.

³⁹⁶ *John* 1:14, in: Estienne, *Tes Kaines Diathekes hapanta*, 1549, p. 318.

“but wisdom [a.n. σοφία] proved right by her actions”³⁹⁷

and *Luke* 7:35:

“but wisdom [a.n. σοφία] proved right by all her children”³⁹⁸

Furthermore, in *1 Corinthians* 1:24:

“but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God”³⁹⁹

and in *1 Corinthians* 1:30 there is a combination of *sophia* and Jesus, in which Jesus becomes the *sophia* (wisdom) of God (θεοῦ σοφίαν):

“It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption”⁴⁰⁰

While *sophia* continued to maintain her position as a “divine attribute of God”⁴⁰¹, for example, in chapters, *Luke* 11:49, *Romans* 11:33, *1 Corinthians* 1:21, and *Ephesians* 3:10, it appears that with Christianity it was reinterpreted and acquired a secondary place in comparison to *logos*.

4.6 The Development of Gnostic Perspectives

In most Gnostic formulations, such as the one in *Pistis Sophia* (c. fourth century CE), the relation between Christ (as an emanation, first *aeon*, from the *Monad*) and *Sophia* (last emanation from the *Monad*, lowest *aeon*) is further elaborated and embedded in their creation narratives. In the *Pistis Sophia*, Christ has a duty to elevate *Sophia* back into the *pleroma*, from where she fell and caused the creation of the material world. In *Sophia*’s rescue operation Christ used wisdom or knowledge (*gnosis*) to be able to carry out the operation. After being successful, he was then sent to the material world, where “the Word became flesh”, and he took the form of human Jesus to transmit *gnosis* to people so that they can gain access to the divine realm

³⁹⁷ *Matthew* 11:19, in: NIV, 2001, p. 539.

³⁹⁸ *Luke* 7:35, in: NIV, 2001, p. 572.

³⁹⁹ *1 Corinthians* 1:24, in: NIV, 2001, p. 632.

⁴⁰⁰ *1 Corinthians* 1:30, in: NIV, 2001, p. 632.

⁴⁰¹ Renn, 2005, p. 1051.

pleroma, a process which is usually interpreted as salvation. In the Valentinian *Tripartite Tractate*, on the other hand, the narrative and the role of agents transform fundamentally, where “Sophia has been replaced with a male aeon, the Logos”⁴⁰². Along with certain other Gnostic and non-Gnostic manuscripts, Valentinian *Gospel of Truth* also prioritized *logos* over *sophia*, as the opening lines read: “The Gospel of Truth is a joy for those who have received the grace from the Father of Truth to know him through the power of the Word”⁴⁰³, namely *logos*.

Some interpretations of *logos* evaluate it as the equivalent of mind⁴⁰⁴ (or reason⁴⁰⁵) containing meanings, as a derivation of the root *leg-* and *λέγω*, such as counting, gathering, and ability to acquire knowledge. The idea of logic which organizes and regulates the diversity of the universe likely stems from this equation. Hence, the philosophical discourse on reason and mind seems to be inseparable from the discourse on existence. The pre-Socratic thinkers, above all Heraclitus (c. 535–475 BCE), often aimed to reveal the same universal truth for everyone through *logos*. This is perhaps why they searched for the founding cause of all phenomena to comprehend the coherence of the universe, in a coherent discourse. For Heraclitus—who was believed to use the term *logos* extensively for the first time and raised “*logos* to the level of principle”⁴⁰⁶—it has a meaning that encompasses multiple aspects such as thinking, reason, proportion, and measure. *Logos* is both the principle of order essential for the formation of the universe⁴⁰⁷ and the underlying tenet of knowledge that determines the comprehension of the universe as an order. Heraclitus was also one of the first philosophers who employed the term *logos* with combination of *sophia* to address the Greek god *Zeus*, with an implication to *hypostasis* as follows:

“Ἐν τὸ σοφὸν μόνον λέγεσθαι οὐκ ἐθέλει καὶ ἐθέλει Ζηνὸς ὄνομα”⁴⁰⁸

Brann, in line with other translations, translates the passage above as “One is the Wise, alone; and it does not want and does want to be called Zeus by the name”⁴⁰⁹. Here, a derivation of the term *λέγω* (*λέγεσθαι*) is related to *logos* but it is employed as “to be called, said, or spo-

⁴⁰² Van den Broek, 2013, p. 178.

⁴⁰³ Van den Broek, 2013, pp. 98–99.

⁴⁰⁴ The translation of *Proverbs* 1:23 by <<https://www.newadvent.org/bible/pro001.htm>> uses the expression of “speaking out the mind” to address the Hebrew term *דְבַר* (word). The word, expression, or the utterance of Lady Wisdom.

⁴⁰⁵ Van den Broek, 2013, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁶ Graham, W. Daniel: “Logos”, in: Borchert, M. Donald (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Second Edition, Vol. 5, Detroit: Gale 2006, pp. 567–570/568.

⁴⁰⁷ Peters, 1967, p. 111.

⁴⁰⁸ Haxton, Brooks (trans.): *Fragments. The Collected Wisdom of Heraclitus*, New York: Viking 2001, p. 40.

⁴⁰⁹ Brann, Eva: *The Logos of Heraclitus*, Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books 2011, p. 50.

ken”, hence, if we are to discuss personification, it seems more plausible to link the term *σοφὸν* (*sofōn*) with the god *Zeus*. On the other hand, Bollack argues that this expression “no longer has the predicative significance of revealing the fundamental ambivalence of any hypostasized power”⁴¹⁰.

In its later usages, the initial *chaos* was brought to an ordered state (*cosmos*) through activating *logos*, the Word of God. Heraclitus’ understanding of *logos* as being available to all, but “ignored”⁴¹¹ by the majority (due to the lack of capable mental faculties) has intriguing correspondences with the Gnostic conception of *gnosis* and Lady Wisdom’s accusations in the *Book of Proverbs*. If the theory of “cognitive bridge” is employed for this issue, with a claim that this relatedness may be the result of similar cognitive processes of the human mind shared by everybody, Gnostics seem to have selectively combined these related views and developed a hybrid theory about the forms of knowledge (or wisdom), which largely correspond with their particular “Gnostic cognition”.

In various stages of Greek philosophy, several terms have been employed to address different principles about the *cosmos*, including its ordering, constitutive elements, and the human relation to it. What seems to be common is “the widespread commitment to some view whereby reason [a.n. *logos*] is imbedded in the cosmos”⁴¹² as the building block. The Stoic philosophers treated the concept of *logos* almost in the same manner as Heraclitus did and used related terms such as *logos spermatikos* (λόγος σπερματικός), “seminal logos”⁴¹³ or “seed force”⁴¹⁴, to define the “generative principle”⁴¹⁵ of *cosmos*. According to Tripolitis, Stoics further equated *logos* with “Divine Reason, or God” and paved the way for the author of the *Gospel of John*⁴¹⁶. The Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BCE–50 CE) was another source for the opening lines of the *Gospel of John*, who added Judaism to the combination of Heraclitan, Platonian, and Stoic interpretations of *logos* and applied this combination to illustrate his understanding of the Bible. Highlighting an important break from the older Jewish traditions represented by Aristobulus of Paneas (fl. second century BCE) and the trend of translation fa-

⁴¹⁰ Bollack, Jean: *The Art of Reading. From Homer to Paul Celan*, Washington: Center for Hellenic Studies 2016, pp. 228–230.

⁴¹¹ Graham, 2006, p. 568.

⁴¹² Graham, 2006, p. 570.

⁴¹³ Graham, 2006, p. 569.

⁴¹⁴ Hillar, Marian: *From Logos to Trinity. The Evolution of Religious Beliefs from Pythagoras to Tertullian*, New York: Cambridge University Press 2012, p. 145.

⁴¹⁵ Jeffrey, L. David: *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1992, p. 459; Peters, 1967, p. 110.

⁴¹⁶ Tripolitis, Antonía: *Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman Age*, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2002, pp. 37–39.

voured by the translators of the *Septuagint* in the second century BCE in Alexandria⁴¹⁷, the “philosophical re-interpretations”⁴¹⁸ of Philo replaced the Hebrew feminine wisdom *hokmah* with the Greek masculine *logos*, and linked it with Jesus, as the Word of God⁴¹⁹. Possibly through the influence of Judaism, “the Logos is for Philo definitely inferior to God and [...] therefore not identical with the dogma of the Logos as maintained in Christian theology”⁴²⁰. According to Gershenson, Philo’s *logos* “is a copy (Gr. *eikon*) of God through which the world was made, and human intelligence is a copy of it”⁴²¹, implying both personification of *logos* and the concept of *imago Dei*. Later, e.g., in Neoplatonic, streams of Greek philosophy, *logos* continued to be associated with “regulative and formative forces, derived from the intelligible and operative in the sensible universe”⁴²². The renowned Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus (c. 204–270 CE) likely inherited the concept from the Stoics and considered the universe “was ordered according to a rational principle (*kata logon*)”⁴²³ and this *logos* draws “its hypostasis from Intellect”⁴²⁴, also known as in Plotinus’ organization, *nous*, divine mind, or reason as the first emanation from the One. Even though these mental concepts, *logos*, *sophia*, *gnosis*, *nous*, and *hokmah*, have been at times strictly separated from one other and other times used as substitutes, in all their handlings they seem to refer to similar productions of human cognition connected by multiple cognitive bridges. Gershenson, on the other hand, distinguishes two different underlying aspects of *logos* in Greek philosophy and in the Bible. Whereas the first one emphasizes natural philosophy, the latter puts a distinct emphasis on morality⁴²⁵. However, Stoics did have a sense of morals and had given considerable importance to moral well-being, usually in close association with virtue and *logos*⁴²⁶.

⁴¹⁷ Long before Philo of Alexandria, the theological works of Aristobulus were believed to “unite the Jewish reflections on wisdom with Hellenistic ideas about the Logos” and make use of “Platonic idea of God as well as Pythagorean doctrine of numbers”. Even though Aristobulus of Paneas (c. second century BCE), also known as Aristobulus the Peripatetic, was aware of the term *logos* and its varied applications developed by Plato and Aristotle, he followed the tradition of his contemporary translation, the *Septuagint*, and employed the Greek term *sophia* to translate the Hebrew Lady Wisdom. For detailed information and the sources of the quotations, in that order, see: Collins, A. Yarbyo: “Aristobulus”, in: Charlesworth, H. James (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 2, Massachusetts: Hendrickson 1983, pp. 831–842/834; Gottheil, Richard / Wendland, Paul: “Aristobulus of Paneas”, in: Singer, Isidore (ed.), *The Jewish Encyclopedia. A descriptive record of the history, religion, literature, and customs of the Jewish people from the earliest times*, Vol. 2, New York: KTAV 1906, pp. 97–98/98.

⁴¹⁸ Lang, 1999, p. 903.

⁴¹⁹ Harris, L. Stephen: *Understanding the Bible*, New York: McGraw-Hill 2011, p. 223.

⁴²⁰ Copleston, Frederick: *History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1, New York: Doubleday 1993, p. 459.

⁴²¹ Gershenson, E. Daniel, “Logos”, in: Berenbaum, Michael / Skolnik, Fred (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 13, 2nd Edition, xxx: Gale 2007, pp. 174–175/174.

⁴²² Liddell, H. George / Scott, Robert: *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Vol. 2, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1940, p.1058.

⁴²³ Plotinus, *Ennead* 4.3.10, quoted from: Graham, 2006, p. 569.

⁴²⁴ Plotinus: “Third Ennead”, in: Kalligas, Paul (ed.), *The Enneads of Plotinus*, Vol. 1, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2014, p. 449.

⁴²⁵ Gershenson, 2007, p. 174.

⁴²⁶ Tripolitis, 2002, pp. 37–39.

The wisdom tradition of Gnostics employs personification at different levels. While it is occasionally a personification of a mental concept, at other times divine beings are personified—who are, in fact, also mental concepts. Drawing on various handlings of personification, Gnostics understood the nature of Jesus and his teachings as guides to follow, leading to a higher form of wisdom or knowing about the reality of the universe, through which the soul, mind, or *nous* (all addressing similar mental faculties to attain wisdom) can as well be identified (personified) with the divine spirit and then elevated to the divine realm⁴²⁷.

4.7 Creation: *ex nihilo* or *ex nihilo nihil fit*?

As there are various creation theories that both correspond and conflict with one other on occasions, what is understood by the expression of “creation” in Gnosticism is not the creation from nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*), but it is a metaphysical process of emanation or radiation from the *Monad*. In Gnostic discourse, creation is understood as taking place in a manner of radiation, overflow, or expansion. In contrast to the theory of *creatio ex nihilo*, the concept of emanation approximates closely the theory of “nothing comes from nothing”⁴²⁸ (*ex nihilo nihil fit*), in other words, the idea that in the course of creation there must be a “primordial matter” to be formed (in a way, *chaos* to *cosmos*) by a capable deity. However, considering the simultaneous application of both theories in, for example, the *Kur'an* and the Hebrew Old Testament, a strict separation between two theories does not seem possible, since both scriptures “at times may call upon one aspect or another of creation to make its point, and it may phrase it in different ways, more or less mythologically”⁴²⁹. In the same vein, Gregory also stresses inconsistencies between certain chapters of the Bible and ambiguities regarding the nature of creation⁴³⁰. For Gregory, the *Genesis* account in the Hebrew Old Testament contains both the theory of *creatio ex nihilo* and *ex nihilo nihil fit*. While *Genesis* 1:1 favours the first theory with the assertion that “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”, *Genesis* 1:2 leans toward the second theory by claiming that “the earth was without form, and void”. As there is a range of interpretations of these passages, it is in fact logical from the perspective of the scriptures’ author(s) that when God created the world it was “without form”, but then, in the follow-

⁴²⁷ Perkins, Pheme: “Gnosticism. Gnosticism as a Christian heresy”, in: Jones, Lindsay (ed.), *MacMillan Encyclopedia of Religion*, Second Edition, Vol. 5, Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale 2005, pp. 3529–3531/3530.

⁴²⁸ Pruss, Alexander: “Ex nihilo nihil fit. Arguments New and Old for the Principle of Sufficient Reason”, in: Campbell, J. Keim et. al. (eds.), *Causation and Explanation*, Cambridge: MIT Press 2007, p. 291.

⁴²⁹ Berlin, Adele: “Cosmology and Creation”, in: Grossman, Maxine (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*, New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011, p. 188.

⁴³⁰ Gregory, Andrew: *Ancient Greek Cosmogony*, London: Bristol Classical Press 2011, p. 20.

ing six days of the creation process, it might have been given a form, which makes Gregory's argument invalid⁴³¹. However, as in the case of several other topics mentioned in this study, it is a matter of translation and thus often depends on the readers' interpretation, making multiple readings of a text or an idea possible.

The creation myths of the ancient world, especially ancient Near Eastern traditions, and the creation theories of the Abrahamic religions, particularly Judaism, share not only certain themes but also their ordering of events during the creation⁴³². One commonly recurring motif is the separation of the earth and the sky, or, in relation to the flood myths, as the Hebrew Old Testament writes in the *Book of Genesis*, the "division of waters from the waters"⁴³³. Considering the Sumerian story of the *Huluppu-Tree* as a creation myth, Wolkstein writes that "the division of the oneness of the world"⁴³⁴ is expressed by the author of the *Huluppu-Tree* as "when heaven had moved away from earth; and earth had separated from heaven"⁴³⁵. In another Sumerian creation story, the sea goddess *Nammu*, also known as the personification of primaeval waters or primordial ocean of chaos⁴³⁶, creates (or gives birth to) two gods, *An* (sky) and *Ki* (earth), who will be separated by the god *Enlil*⁴³⁷. Seidenberg highlights that the separation of the earth and sky is not a merely Near Eastern narrative but also finds expression in the Greek tragedian Euripides (c. 480–406 BCE) when he quotes from his mother's story of "how sky and earth were one form; and when they had been separated apart from each other they bring forth all things"⁴³⁸.

Creation in the form of *ex nihilo nihil fit* is present in the Sumerian narrative as clay is considered to be the pre-existent matter to form humans. In the following passages of the story of the *Huluppu-Tree*, the female deity *Nammu*, with the help of her son *Enki*, who is also the god of wisdom in Sumerian mythology, mixes "the heart of the clay that is over abyss"⁴³⁹ to create humans. The *Kur'an* employs a similar view on the creation (or forming) of humans in

⁴³¹ Gregory, 2011, pp. 203–206.

⁴³² For a detailed comparison, see: Heidel, Alexander: *The Babylonian Genesis. The Story of Creation*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1972, pp. 88ff.

⁴³³ *Genesis* 1:6-8. In certain passages, the *Kur'an* also asserts that "the heavens and the earth were a solid mass [a.n. one piece], then We separated them", *Kur'an* 21:30 (*Enbiyâ*), in: Fakhry, Majid (trans.): *An Interpretation of the Qur'an. English Translation of the Meanings*, Reading: Garnet 2000, p. 323.

⁴³⁴ Wolkstein, Diana / Kramer, S. Noah: *Inanna. Queen of Heaven and Earth. Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer*, New York: Harper & Row 1983, p. 138.

⁴³⁵ Wolkstein / Kramer, 1983, p. 4.

⁴³⁶ Andrews, Tamra: *Dictionary of Nature Myths. Legends of the Earth, Sea, and Sky*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000, pp. 36, 48.

⁴³⁷ Kramer, S. Noah: *Sumerian Mythology*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1972, p. 41

⁴³⁸ Seidenberg, A.: "The Separation of Sky and Earth at Creation (II)", *Folklore*, 80/3, 1969, pp. 188–196/188.

⁴³⁹ Kramer, 1972, p. 70.

certain chapters, in which it explains that humans are made of dust or clay⁴⁴⁰. In both the *Kur'an* and the Old Testament, God forms humans from dust and clay and breathes His divine spirit (or as Gnostics named “divine spark”) into human soul⁴⁴¹. In various ancient Near Eastern mythologies, upon which the *Genesis* chapter of the Hebrew Old Testament draws, the world is made from a “pre-existing formless matter”⁴⁴². In some others, such as the Babylonian *Enûma Eliš* (c. fourteenth – seventh century BCE)⁴⁴³, this pre-existent matter is in fact the primordial ocean of chaos named *Nammu*, who is represented here by two different deities *Apsu* (freshwater) and *Tiamat* (salty water), from which *Marduk* (also the god of wisdom) created the heaven and earth⁴⁴⁴.

In both Near Eastern and Greek creation mythologies, along with the separation theme, water is a motif employed similarly in the creation in its various forms (Figure 3). It is at certain times used to create the parts of the world or humans⁴⁴⁵, and at other times, as in the opening lines of *Genesis*⁴⁴⁶, water becomes a chaotic ocean to be formed, an event that pre-dates the creation and thus implies the theory of *ex nihilo nihil fit*. According to some traditions, this ocean (or waters) is a layer upon which God’s throne⁴⁴⁷ or the world stands⁴⁴⁸. Furthermore, while in the Israelite narrative the earth “floats on water”, in a Greek version it is “surrounded by the river ocean”⁴⁴⁹. In Homer’s (c. 800–700 BCE) *Iliad* (14.200, 14.246, and 14.301) there is an explicit reference to a personified river circling the world called *Okeanos* (Ὠκεανόν), who is “the progenitor of the gods”⁴⁵⁰ and the rest of the world. Similarly, Hesiod (c. 750–650 BCE), who believed chaos to be the origin of the world, mentions in his *Theogony* (130–133)⁴⁵¹ *Okeanos* as a personified deity and later from Aristotle (1. 983b) we learn that Thales of Miletus (c. 624–545 BCE) refers to water as the source of everything⁴⁵². Gregory, in the context of

⁴⁴⁰ See, for example, *Kur'an* 38:21 (*Sâd*), 15:28 (*Hicr*), 32:7-9 (*Secde*), 22:5 (*Hac*), 55:14 (*Rahmân*) etc.

⁴⁴¹ *Genesis* 2:7; *Kur'an* 15:29 (*Hicr*), 32:9 (*Secde*). The same narrative, creation from the clay and completing the process with breath, is also present in the context of Prometheus in Phaedrus’s fable *De Veritas et Mendacio*, written in the first century CE. According to Idel, Phaedrus’ Prometheus myth was cited from ancient Jewish sources. Idel, Moshe: *Golem. Jewish Magical and Mystical Traditions on the Artificial Anthropoid*, Albany: State University of New York Press 1990, pp. 4–5.

⁴⁴² Berlin, 2011, p. 188.

⁴⁴³ Heidel, 1972, pp. 13–14.

⁴⁴⁴ Wasilewska, Eva: *Creation Stories of the Middle East*, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers 2000, pp. 45–56.

⁴⁴⁵ *Kur'an* 32:8 (*Secde*).

⁴⁴⁶ Mabie, J. Frederick: “Chaos and Death”, in: Longman, Tremper / Enns, Peter (eds.), *Dictionary of the Old Testament. Wisdom, Poetry, and Writings*, Nottingham: InterVarsity Press 2008, pp. 41–54/47–48.

⁴⁴⁷ *Kur'an* 11:7 (*Hûd*); *Genesis* 1:2.

⁴⁴⁸ Berlin, 2011, p. 189.

⁴⁴⁹ Aune, E. David: *The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric*, Louisville / London: Westminster John Knox Press 2003, p. 119.

⁴⁵⁰ Homer: “*Iliad*”, in: Leaf, Walter (ed.), *The Iliad*, Vol. 2, London: Macmillan and Co. 1900, pp. 80, 83, 88.

⁴⁵¹ Banks, D. James: *The Works of Hesiod, Callimachus, and Theognis*, London: H. G. Bohn 1856, p. 8.

⁴⁵² Aristotle: “*Metaphysics*”, in: Tredennick, Hugh (trans.), *Aristotle. The Metaphysics Books I-IX*, Vol. 1, London: William Heinemann 1933, pp. 19–20.

Egyptian and Babylonian traditions, links different creation myths that contain either a flood or a theme based on water and writes that “like the Egyptians with the Nile, the Babylonians had the flooding and receding of the Tigris and Euphrates”⁴⁵³. The influences of large-scale climatic events in combination with destructive geological phenomena (earthquakes, volcanic events etc.) were considered to be the origins of several mythological stories that contain a narration of such events. To research the potential relevancy further, the term geomythology was coined by the geologist Vitaliano in 1968⁴⁵⁴, however, a comprehensive discussion of the theory is beyond the scope of this study.



Figure 3: Babylonian Map of the World (c. sixth century BCE). The circle surrounding the smaller shapes, showing the location of Babylon etc., at the center of the tablet is called “Bitter River”. In this depiction, the earth is placed inside the ring of river and thus reminiscent of ancient Greek perspectives.⁴⁵⁵

Before it was singularized as “orthodoxy” (the right opinion, creed) through the efforts of the Church Fathers around the fourth and the fifth centuries, early Christian views on creation were multilateral. Since Christianity was in its development process heavily based on the scriptures written in Greek⁴⁵⁶, the philosophical terminology of the ancient Greeks was an unavoid-

⁴⁵³ Gregory, 2011, p. 20.

⁴⁵⁴ Vitaliano, B. Dorothy: “Geomythology. The Impact of Geologic Events on History and Legend with Special Reference to Atlantis”, in: *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, 5/1, 1968, pp. 5–30; Vitaliano, B. Dorothy: *Legends of the Earth. Their Geologic Origins*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1973.

⁴⁵⁵ Source: <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1882-0714-509>, last accessed: 28 February 2022. For detailed information, see: Horowitz, Wayne: “The Babylonian Map of the World”, in: *Iraq*, 50, 1988, pp. 147–165.

⁴⁵⁶ Johnson, F. Scott: *Languages and Cultures of Eastern Christianity. Greek*, Aldershot: Ashgate 2015; Gignac, F. Thomas / Dressler, Hermigild: “Greek Language, Early Christian and Byzantine”, in: *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Second Edition, Vol. 6, Detroit: Gale 2003, pp. 438–439.

able instrument to express the early Christian religious discourses. Fueled by the attacks of their contemporary Gnostics, the early “proto-orthodox” Christians usually found themselves in conflict with the Greek philosophical speculations. Perhaps due to the multiplicity of opinions about the creation, the ambiguity of the Hebrew Old Testament appears to be incorporated into the early Christian scriptures. According to Wolfson, the apocryphal *2 Maccabees* 7:28 places the Christian doctrine of *ex nihilo* in opposition to Aristotelian “theory of the eternity of the world” and the Platonian “theory of creation of the world from a preëxistent matter”⁴⁵⁷. The passage in *2 Maccabees* asserts:

“Look at the heaven and the earth and see everything that is in them, and recognize that God did not make them out of things that existed”⁴⁵⁸

Another apocryphal scripture, the *Book of Wisdom* (or *Wisdom of Solomon*), however, contravenes the creation theory of *2 Maccabees* 7:28 in one of its passages (11:17) and approximates its narrative to the Platonic conception of creation from a pre-existent matter:

“For your all-powerful hand, which created the world out of formless matter”⁴⁵⁹

Gregory correspondingly argues that while specific passages of the New Testament refer to the creation without crediting a pre-existing matter, but at the same time not denying the presence of it, other passages give clues about God’s creation (making or ordering) of the world (*cosmos*) from a primordial matter, “but none of which state that this matter has always existed and has not been earlier created *ex nihilo*”⁴⁶⁰ as argued by both Plato and Aristotle, who formulated the matter (the Forms or Ideas) as “co-eternal with God”⁴⁶¹.

4.8 Towards a Christian Orthodoxy of Creation

The patristic era denotes a period within the history of Christian theology during which foundational religious discourses were developed by the early Christian Fathers. The patristic

⁴⁵⁷ Wolfson, A. Harry: “The Meaning of Ex Nihilo in the Church Fathers, Arabic and Hebrew Philosophy, and St. Thomas”, in: Holmes, J. Urban / Denomy, J. Alex (eds.), *Mediaeval Studies in Honor of Jeremiah Denis Matthias Ford*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1948, pp. 355–370/355.

⁴⁵⁸ Coogan, D. Michael (ed.): *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Fourth Edition, Oxford / New York: Oxford University Press 2010, p. 1614.

⁴⁵⁹ Coogan, 2010, p. 1442.

⁴⁶⁰ Gregory, 2011, p. 204.

⁴⁶¹ Wolfson, 1948, p. 355.

era can be divided into two main episodes. The first is the pre-Nicaean period represented by, above all, Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 130–202 CE), Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215 CE), Origen of Alexandria (c. 184–253 CE), and Justin Martyr (c. 100–165 CE), while the most influential theologians of the latter, the post-Nicaean period, were Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 300–373 CE), Gregory of Nyssa (c. 332–395 CE), Augustine of Hippo (c. 354–430 CE), and Cyril of Alexandria (c. 376–444 CE). The pre-Nicaean period was often distinguished by the Christian theologians’ positioning against the pagan beliefs (Greek philosophy) and their efforts to justify Christian perspectives of God, humans, and the workings of the world in strict opposition to the pagans and Gnostics. As Frank argues, in their understanding of creation, early Church Fathers who favored the theory of *creatio ex nihilo* regarded “religious faith and revelation” above the “intellectual reasoning”⁴⁶², which was the prime instrument in Greek philosophy to comprehend the realities of the universe, including the creation. This opposition was likely based on a passage from the *Hebrews* 11:3:

“By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible”⁴⁶³

For some of the pre-Nicaean Church Fathers such as Hippolytus of Rome and Pope Alexander I of Alexandria (c. 250–326 CE), there were two principal aspects of creation, *creatio ex nihilo* of the matter and the world, and the emanation of the Word from the Father. The formulation of Hippolytus in his *Refutation of All Heresies* demonstrates how intrinsic were the Greek philosophical creation theories within early Christian theological discourses. Regarding the *ex-nihilo* aspect of creation Hippolytus writes (10.32.2):

“He first fashioned four different principles for future beings, namely, fire, spirit, water, and earth”⁴⁶⁴. From these four principles, he made his diverse creation”⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶² Frank, Erich: *Philosophical Understanding and Religious Truth*, London: Oxford University Press 1945, p. 59.

⁴⁶³ *Hebrews* 11:3, in: NIV, 2001, p. 670. Other translations of this passage employ different verbs to address the act of creation. Whereas NRSV translation asserts that the world was “prepared by the word of God”, ESV uses the expression that the world “created by the word of God”, and KJV formulates it as the world was “framed by the word of God”. Each translation has its own formulation of the same content and thus can be interpreted in broad range of perspectives.

⁴⁶⁴ It is intriguing how Islamic formulation of the Devil, *Şeytan* or *İblis*, attributes fire element as its substance, while, as mentioned above, humans are made of clay, mud, and dust, namely the earth element. *Şeytan*, in line with Plotinus, claims that due to his superior substance over humans’ substance, he is ontologically superior to them, and he thus refuses God’s command to bow humans. See: *Kur’an* 17:61 (*İsrâ*); 2:34 (*Bakara*); 38:71 (*Sâd*) etc.

⁴⁶⁵ Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 2016, p. 747.

The understanding of the classical elements (earth, water, air, and fire) listed by Hippolytus as the foundations of matter and the universe goes back to Empedocles (c. 494–434 BCE) who conceptualized the four elements as “the roots” (*ρίζωματα*, *rhizōmata*). However, a similar concept of “the first principle” (*arche*) was also a part of Anaximander's (C. 610–546 BCE) views almost a century before Empedocles. In explaining the nature of the universe, the properties of these base elements have been classified diversely by philosophers throughout history. Almost every system treated these elements in line with their creation theories and attributed them to a variety of phenomena, including *hypostasis*. Russell provides a list of philosophers who had differing opinions about the “primitive element” from which the universe was made: Heraclitus (fire), Thales (water), Anaximenes (air), Xenophanes (earth and water)⁴⁶⁶. To this list, Aristotle adds a fifth element, *aether* or *aither* (*αἰθήρ*) and relates it with “heavenly bodies” including the stars and the planets⁴⁶⁷. While Pythagoras considered numbers to be the universe's constitutive elements, Plotinus places the fire element, on the condition that it must be “pure fire” and unmixed with the other elements, “in the higher reaches of the universe”⁴⁶⁸, from which the qualities of the world and the universe emanate.

Shortly after the passage quoted above, Hippolytus employs the emanation theory to the concept of the Word of God and writes (10.33.2):

“At the very moment that the Word was emanated from his Father, he became his firstborn”⁴⁶⁹

To underline his position in employing the emanation theory different from the pagan Greeks and “heretic” Gnostics, Hippolytus paraphrases a passage from the New Testament, *Romans* 1:25, and writes (10.32.5):

“The Greeks who did not recognize these causes glorified the constituents of creation with boastful rhetoric in ignorance of the Creator. From these philosophers, the leading heretics took their starting points. With the use of similar terminology, the heretics gave a new makeover to the aforementioned philosophical teachings and concocted ridiculous heresies”⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁶ Russell, Bertrand: *History of Western Philosophy*, London / New York: Routledge 2004, pp. 68, 71.

⁴⁶⁷ Lloyd, G. E. Richard: *Aristotle. The Growth and Structure of His Thought*, London: Cambridge University Press 1968, p. 134; Aristotle: “On Generation and Corruption”, in: Ross, W. David (ed.) / Joachim, H. Harold (trans.), *The Works of Aristotle*, Vol. 2, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1930, pp. 281–369.

⁴⁶⁸ Plotinus: “Second Ennead”, in: Kalligas, Paul (ed.), *The Enneads of Plotinus*, Vol. 1, Princeton / Oxford: Princeton University Press 2015, p. 265.

⁴⁶⁹ Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 2016, p. 751.

⁴⁷⁰ Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 2016, p. 749.

More than a century before Hippolytus, the same discourse was in fact favoured by Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BCE–50 CE), who opposes the theory of eternal *cosmos* as claimed by Aristotle and writes:

“There are some people who, having more admiration for the cosmos than for its maker, declared the former both ungenerated and eternal, while falsely and impurely attributing to God much idleness”⁴⁷¹

Over the course of the patristic periods, the theory of *creatio ex nihilo* has been approached from multiple angles. In some instances, attempts were made to reconcile certain philosophical theories with Christian theology. The theologians of the post-Nicaean period, for example, significantly focused on explaining Christian doctrines with Platonic, Neoplatonic, Stoic, and Neopythagorean theories, and as a result, complex, ambiguous, and conflicting texts have been produced. Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE), like Hippolytus of Rome, formulated an episodic creation process, within which the first event was the (*ex nihilo*) creation of the matter by God, and then the generation of the world from this shapeless matter⁴⁷². Pope Benedict XVI (b. 1927) establishes the ongoing importance of Augustine’s contributions to later Christian theology and writes that “all the roads of the Latin Christian literature led to Hippo”⁴⁷³. Demonstrating the influence of Augustine concerning creation, he further argues in his *On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis* (4.13) that:

“The matter is first called by the name of the universe, that is, of heaven and earth, for the sake of which it was made from absolutely nothing. Secondly, its formlessness is conveyed by the mention of the unformed earth and the abyss, because among all the elements earth is more formless and less bright than the rest. Thirdly, by the name, water⁴⁷⁴, there is signified matter that is subject to the work of the maker, for water can be moved more easily than earth”⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷¹ Philo of Alexandria: “On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses”, Runia, T. David (ed.), Leiden: Brill 2001, p. 48.

⁴⁷² The question of how active God in this second episode was, is another topic of dispute among the theologians who favour this view.

⁴⁷³ Pope Benedict XVI, Saint Augustine of Hippo (1), 9 January 2008, <http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20080109.html>, last accessed: 19 December 2021.

⁴⁷⁴ The source of influence for Augustine’s understanding of water as the constitutive element of the world may be Thales and Aristotle.

⁴⁷⁵ Augustine of Hippo: “On Genesis”, in: Teske, J. Roland (trans.), *On Genesis. Two Books on Genesis Against the Manichees and On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis. An Unfinished Book*, Washington: The Catholic University of America Press 1991, p. 153.

4.9 Plotinus and Neoplatonic Correspondences

Augustine's formulations contain intriguing similarities with the Neoplatonic narrative of creation, particularly with those asserted by Plotinus (205–270 CE), who was believed to have given the theory of emanation its final shape and was in opposition to the *creatio ex nihilo*. Plotinus might have derived his emanation concept (*aporrhoia*, *Enneads* 2.3.2)⁴⁷⁶ from various sources, including the works of Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, Gnostics, Valentinus (c. 100–160 CE), Basilides (c. 85–145 CE), and several deuterocanonical and apocryphal scriptures. Furthermore, according to Porphyry of Tyre (c. 234–305 CE), a student of Plotinus, additional sources that Plotinus used were Persian, Indian, and Egyptian wisdom traditions⁴⁷⁷. Concerning deuterocanonical and apocryphal scriptures, the *Wisdom of Solomon*, composed in Greek, refers to the emanation of *sophia* in passages 7:24-25 as follows:

“For wisdom [a.n. σοφία] is more mobile than any motion; because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things. For she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure *emanation* of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her”⁴⁷⁸

In the NRSV version above, what is translated as an emanation is the Greek term *aporroia* (ἀπόρροια), meaning outflow, effluence, or efflux⁴⁷⁹. Plotinus, with his application of *aporroia*, reflects the nature of Wisdom's (*sofia*, *hokmah*) coming into existence upon the Platonic and Aristotelian theories of creation, cosmos, and the human body. Both Plato (*Phaedo*, *Republic*) and Aristotle (*On Generation and Corruption*) claim that the universe around us is in constant flow or dynamic flux and through the mix of the classical elements (fire, water, earth, air) in various degrees universe transforms itself perpetually. Only Plato's “Forms” or Aristotle's “Unmovable Mover”⁴⁸⁰ (12.1072a) is permanent and unchanging. Plotinus refers to the initial cause and the continuation of this dynamic change in terms of his emanation theory and argued that everything is continuously overflowing from a source, the transcendent One (ἐν, *hen*)⁴⁸¹. The essential principles of Plotinus' emanation theory are in opposition to the cre-

⁴⁷⁶ Plotinus: “Second Ennead”, in: Kalligas, Paul (ed.), *The Enneads of Plotinus*, Vol. 1, Oxford / Princeton: Princeton University Press 2015, pp. 253, 258, 261.

⁴⁷⁷ Porphyry: “On the Life of Plotinus and the Order of his Books”, in: Armstrong, H. Arthur (trans.), *Plotinus in Seven Volumes*, Vol. 1, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1988, pp. 3–90/8.

⁴⁷⁸ Coogan, 2010, p. 1437.

⁴⁷⁹ Liddell / Scott, 1889, p. 106.

⁴⁸⁰ Aristotle: “Metaphysics”, in: Tredennick, Hugh (trans.), *Aristotle. The Metaphysics Books X-XIV*, Vol. 2, London: William Heinemann 1935, pp. 143ff.

⁴⁸¹ There is, however, an important difference between the conception of the One by Plotinus and the other conceptions of a supreme being in Greek philosophy. Plotinus' transcendent One is neither outside the universe as understood by Plato and Aristotle, nor within the universe as in the Stoic thought. For Plotinus, all is from the One.

ation *ex nihilo* of the early Christian perspective. According to Plotinus, through the process of emanation, the source (the One) brings about (emanates) first the Intelligence (or Intellect⁴⁸², νοῦς, *nous*) and then the Soul (or World Soul, ψυχή, *psyche*) in that order. Plotinus understands the One, the Intellect, and the Soul as “the three primal hypostases”⁴⁸³, implying that all derive from the One and therefore all share a substance of it, which might have had some influence on the canonization of the trinity concept as accepted in the First Nicaean Council. However, a century before Plotinus the same view was in fact defended by a convert to Christianity, Dionysius the Areopagite (c. first century), who claimed the notion of *ex essentia Dei* to be the mode of creation rather than *ex nihilo*⁴⁸⁴. Thus, the concept of *ex essentia Dei* contains an earlier formulation of various beings sharing the same essence with God⁴⁸⁵ and might be a blueprint for the Christian trinity.

The metaphysical system developed by Plotinus contains (1) a higher-level dimension which is perfect, real, unchanging⁴⁸⁶ and beyond the world we dwell in, which is imperfect, less real, and subject to perpetual change, (2) the ineffable⁴⁸⁷ One (*Enneads* 5.9.4), and (3) the mode of creation as an emanation from the One, yet through the stages of intermediary levels: The

This may be related with the various stages of Greek philosophy, which began in a form of metaphysical survey in ancient Greece, later transforming into a moral compass during the Hellenistic period, and following the emergence of Christianity, philosophy became a salvific tool for the souls, especially after Plotinus.

⁴⁸² According to the trend that employs the term, it can also mean logos, reason, thought or, as in Plotinus, divine mind. Plotinus, in *Enneads* 5.1.8, relates his understanding of the Intellect with Plato’s *demiurge* (δημιουργός) as the “maker of this world”.

⁴⁸³ O’Brien, S. J. Elmer (trans.): *The Essential Plotinus. Representative Treatises from the Enneads*, Indianapolis: Hackett 1964, p. 90.

⁴⁸⁴ Dionysius the Areopagite: “On the Divine Names”, in: Rolt, C. Edwin (trans.), *Dionysius the Areopagite on the Divine Names and the Mystical Theology*, London: Richard Clay & Sons 1920, pp. 138–141.

⁴⁸⁵ The understanding of creation and in relation to that the concept of trinity as Father-Son-Holy Spirit sharing the same substance or being coessential (ὁμοούσιον, *homoousion*), was not instantly accepted. In the First Nicaean Council, the nature of the Son (Jesus) was elucidated as having the same essence with the Father, but there was no clear mention to the Holy Spirit in this context. The Holy Spirit was officially added to this formulation with the First Council of Constantinople, in 384 CE and the trinity began to be understood as “one being three persons”. However, there have been similar formulations of the trinity as early as the time of Tertullian (c. 155–240 CE), an early Church Father, who also understood the concept as “three in one”. On the other hand, Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 130–202 CE) and Theophilus of Antioch (d. 183 CE) expressed their understanding of the trinity as “God-Word (*Logos*)-Wisdom (*Sophia*)” demonstrating the ongoing influence of Hebrew theological wisdom tradition and Greek philosophy. According to Grant, Theophilus’ trinity is not “precisely the Trinity” as accepted in later periods, since for Theophilus, humans can also be added to his formulation as the fourth member. One important difference between the Christian theologians and Plotinus was that the latter employs the term ὁμοούσιον without any significant theological meaning, but his usage is still open to a theological interpretation. See: Torrance, F. Thomas: *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons*, London: T&T Clark 2016; Roberts, Alexander / Donaldson, James (eds.): *The Ante-Nicene Fathers. Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, Vol. 3, Buffalo: The Christian Literature Publishing Company 1887, p. 599; Robinson, Armitage (ed.): *St. Irenaeus. The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, New York: MacMillan 1920, p. 74; Theophilus of Antioch: *Ad Autolycum*, Grant, M. Robert (trans.), Oxford: Clarendon Press 1970, p. 53.

⁴⁸⁶ As in Plato and Parmenides.

⁴⁸⁷ As in Plato, possibly led to the theory of *via negativa* in Christian theology.

One emanates the Divine Mind⁴⁸⁸, which emanates the World Soul⁴⁸⁹, and the next level is the derivation of the material world and human bodies. In Plotinus' system, the One is "essentially creative", and it spills over without any effort and without losing any capacity, strength, or essence, a process which Plotinus employs the light and sun metaphor to explain in his *Ennead* 5.6.4:

"The First [a.n. the One], then, should be compared to light, the next, to the sun, and the third, to the celestial body of the moon, which gets its light from the sun"⁴⁹⁰

The general aspect of Plotinus' metaphysics, and specifically his formulation of creation in the manner of emanation expands upon Platonic and Aristotelian formulations of the One and additionally contains Neopythagorean and Stoic⁴⁹¹ quasi-mystical influences. Developed from his emanation theory, Plotinus does not only solve, to his own satisfaction, the problem of evil in the world⁴⁹² but also offers a methodology for salvation, in other words, navigation for the soul to remember its divine essence (*ousia*) and to attain the One through an intuitive form of knowledge⁴⁹³. Plotinus also seems to have matured his theories through personal experiences, involving a long-term ascetic lifestyle, self-mastery, and a special approach to the mind, which must be cleared from the emotions, thoughts, sensual experiences, and reason (*logos*) in order to attain and eventually to unify (*henosis*) with the One (*Enneads* 6.9.7).

Stressing another ineffable aspect of the One, for Plotinus, the experience of unification, as in the "mystical experiences" mentioned above, cannot be explained or transmitted to the others who have not had a similar experience. Derived from all these discourses, Plotinus structures his salvation theory in line with his understanding of the human condition in the world and his pre-acceptance of the possibility to attain the One in a manner of unification. His sal-

⁴⁸⁸ Plotinus' understanding of "divine mind" seems to be associated with Plato's "Forms", which is expressed in Christianity and Gnosticism as the thoughts of God.

⁴⁸⁹ As in Plato and the Stoics.

⁴⁹⁰ Plotinus: "Enneads V", in: Armstrong, H. Arthur (trans.), *Plotinus in Seven Volumes*, Vol. 5, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1988, p. 211.

⁴⁹¹ It is important to note that Plotinus disagrees frequently with the Stoics and other philosophical trends on certain matters. For instance, he opposed the Stoics for disrupting the hierarchy between the sensory world and the divine realm by accepting God and the human soul merely as different types of matter. It was unacceptable for Plotinus that the transcendent One was reduced to a less perfect realm as a sensory being by the Stoics. Furthermore, the absolute obedience to destiny (or fate) exercised by the Stoics as the highest good, was for Plotinus incorrect. Like Plato, he believed that the highest good is the acquisition of access to the transcendent and divine One.

⁴⁹² In short, Plotinus claimed that evil in the world results from matter, which is the last level in his emanation structure and due to its remoteness from the transcendent One, it is the least perfect among the other offspring (*aeon*). Perhaps with the intermediary of Augustine of Hippo, this view is also present in the Christian perspective, though with nuances, asserting that God is the absolute good and humans are evil by birth because of the "original sin". Both Plotinus and Christian views aim at isolating God or the One from any evil or deficiency.

⁴⁹³ Stearns, N. Wallace: "Plotinus and the Ecstatic State", in: *The Open Court*, 34, 1920, pp. 356–361/358–359.

vation theory has a dualist⁴⁹⁴ content that follows the process of denouncing the material world and human body, though not necessarily in a form of self-mutilation or similar extreme practices as seen in certain subsequent esotericised traditions. His system aims at escaping the material world via contemplation⁴⁹⁵, intuition, and asceticism. While his experience of a transcendental ecstasy of unification (*henosis*) was the short-cut to the divine realm, the ordinary way for him was a form of reincarnation, denoted as *metempsychosis* (μετεμψύχωσις) by Plato and Pythagoras, and as *metensomatosis* (μετενσωματώσεις) by Plotinus (*Enneads* 2.9.6; 4.3.9). As the vehicle to attain the One, Plotinus' soul is subject to infinite numbers of rebirths and therefore immortal⁴⁹⁶. Representing the general view of Neoplatonism on the immortality of the soul⁴⁹⁷ and relating it with Plato, Plotinus writes (*Enneads* 2.9.6):

“The immortality of the soul, the intelligible universe, the first god, the necessity for the soul to shun fellowship with the body, the separation from the body, the escape from becoming to being”⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁴ Plotinus' moral and ethical theory is based on the dual nature of the soul. For Plotinus, the soul possesses higher and lower virtues, while the higher virtues are associated with wisdom and dialectic and enable the soul to comprehend the realities beyond this world, the lower virtues are more engaged with the material world and ordinary sensual perception as well as bodily desires and passions (*Enneads* 1.3.6). Perhaps under the influence of the Stoics, Plotinus views the events taking place in this world as a play and our bodies as mere costumes (*Enneads* 3.2.15). Corresponding formulations can be seen in the works of Muslim philosophers such as Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā.

⁴⁹⁵ The term for contemplation both in ancient Greek philosophy and in the usage of Plotinus is *theoria* (θεωρία), which comes to mean “looking at”, or “contemplation and speculation”. According to Johnston, before the term *mystica* was introduced around the sixth century to denote various mystical practices known as mysticism today, the Latin word *contemplatio* was in use, which was the translation of *theoria*. Plotinus understands *theoria* or contemplation as the power that unifies “the three primary hypostases”; therefore, the human soul ought to imitate it to acquire the knowledge of its own existence and its substantive relation with the One (*Enneads*, 3.8.7). In other words, Plotinus, like innumerable other Gnostic and mystified trends, designs contemplation as an epistemological tool to attain the One, whose knowledge requires the soul to transcend the sensual capabilities of human perception. To stress the importance of contemplation, Plotinus writes “all things come from contemplation and are contemplation” (*Enneads*, 3.8.7). In Plotinus' understanding of ethics, happiness, unification, and salvation, contemplation is a prerequisite as in various Christian denominations, e.g., Eastern Orthodox Church. The theme of unification in both Christian views and Plotinus is thus occasionally sharing similarities in terms of contemplation as the primary act leading to it. In the Christian understanding, the terms employed to refer to unification with the One have been elaborated further and often used interchangeably. In the Eastern Orthodox Church, for example, various terms that evoke Plotinus' terminology are *nepsis* (νήσις, wakefulness), *(apo)theosis* (ἀποθέωσις, deification), *katharsis* (purification), and *theoria* (contemplation) along with others, e.g., *hesychasm*. Even though their handling may differ from one trend to another, all these terms are inherently related. Often, one leads to another, and a structured combination of them in an ascetic manner brings about salvation and unification with the One. For the quotations, see: Liddell / Scott, 1889, p. 364; Johnston, William: *The Inner Eye of Love. Mysticism and Religion*, New York: Fordham University Press 1997, p. 24; Plotinus: “*Enneads* III”, in: Armstrong, H. Arthur (trans.), *Plotinus in Seven Volumes*, Vol. 3, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1988, p. 381.

⁴⁹⁶ Plotinus, *Enneads* 4.7, “On the immortality of the Soul”, Vol. 3, 1988, pp. 337–423.

⁴⁹⁷ The views of the post-Plotinus Neoplatonists on transmigration or reincarnation differ from Plotinus. For Plotinus, the incarnation of the soul in animals and plants is possible since the souls of all living beings share the same essence with the One. This is also why Plotinus is believed to be a vegetarian. Later Neoplatonists viewed this ontology differently and placed the human soul at the top of the hierarchical structure, with the belief that it is, by nature, superior to the animal soul.

⁴⁹⁸ Plotinus: “*Enneads* II”, in: Armstrong, H. Arthur (trans.), *Plotinus in Seven Volumes*, Vol. 2, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1988, p. 247.

In Plotinus' system (*Enneads* 3.6.5), through each repetition of *metensomatosi*s, the soul goes into a stage of separation from the body and a process⁴⁹⁹ of *katharsis* (κάθαρσις, purification), and *teleiōsis* (τελείωσις, completion or perfection; *Enneads* 6.7.40). From the Orphic beliefs to Pythagoras' early form of mysticism, and from Plato's discourses to Plotinus' theologically inclined theories⁵⁰⁰, this view had been understood almost uniformly in various stages of Greek philosophy, with minor alterations leading to major changes in the whole picture⁵⁰¹.

The variety of approaches to the creation within Christianity can be elaborated further, especially following the discussions that took place between Neoplatonists and Christians from the second century on, leading to a more serious treatment of the *ex-nihilo* concept⁵⁰². Gregory, for instance, highlights another trend regarding creation within the canonical scriptures of the New Testament (*1 Corinthians* 8:6, 11:12; *Romans* 11:36) and argues that the philosophical works of Plotinus were the primary source for the Christian theologians in interpreting these biblical passages to support their argument that "god created the *kosmos* from himself, and not *ex nihilo* or from matter"⁵⁰³.

4.10 A Summary of Gnostic Creation

Even though it demonstrates significant variations in each trend, the general frame of creation in the form of emanation within the Gnostic discourse is a process that begins with the first being, God or *Monad*, from which, through overflowing or a kind of radiation, a set of *aeons*⁵⁰⁴ come into existence and constitute the spiritual realm known as the *pleroma*. In this sequenced hierarchical system, every being formed as a result of emanation is to a degree lower than the previous one and further away from the first One, and this is why it is less perfect and less real. Whereas in certain hierarchically structured Gnostic cosmogonies, especially in the

⁴⁹⁹ Since Plotinus understands the whole emanation process taking place instantly, it is likely that this process of purification is also occurring rather in a short period of time.

⁵⁰⁰ Barnes, E. Hazel: "Katharsis in the *Enneades* of Plotinus", in: *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 73, 1942, pp. 358–382/358.

⁵⁰¹ For example, Iamblichus (c. 245–325 CE), the main representative of late Neoplatonism and a student of Plotinus' student Porphyry (c. 234–305 CE), interprets the concept of contemplation differently than Christians and Plotinus. In Iamblichus' system, various phenomena (*theoria*, *katharsis* etc.) take the form of *theurgy* involving ritual practices, invocations, and magic (inherited from a second-century Neoplatonist text known as the *Chaldean Oracles*), which are designed to enable its performers to "create a connection between the mortal and the immortal worlds". Once the connection is established, "assimilation", purification (*katharsis*), and unification (*henosis*) can take place. See: Edmonds, G. Radcliffe: *Drawing Down the Moon. Magic in the Ancient Greco-Roman World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2019, p. 315; Shaw, Gregory: *Theurgy and the Soul. The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press 1995.

⁵⁰² May, Gerhard: *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1994, pp. xi–xiii.

⁵⁰³ Gregory, 2011, p. 211.

⁵⁰⁴ In different trends *Monad* may be seen as one of the *aeons*, rather than the source of them.

Sethian *Apocryphon of John*, the first emanation is named *Barbēlō*, in others, for example, in the Valentinian⁵⁰⁵ *Gospel of Truth*, Jesus becomes the first emanation of God⁵⁰⁶ and “the closest *aeon* to the Father, who is sent to retrieve the souls into the heavenly Pleroma”⁵⁰⁷. The lowest level, thus the farthest from the first being, is *Sophia* (wisdom), or in some trends, derived from the Hebrew *ḥkm* root, *Achamoth*⁵⁰⁸. According to the narrative, in her desire and attempt to “comprehend the whole of the divine realm”⁵⁰⁹, she falls⁵¹⁰ into a lower level below the divine *pleroma* conditionally resulting in the personification (*hypostasis*) of *Sophia*’s negative emotions (“ignorance, grief”⁵¹¹, angriness, sadness etc.)⁵¹² in the form of *Demiurge* (the maker) or *Ialdabaoth* (*Yaldabaoth*)⁵¹³. This *Demiurge* was not the authority of creation but rather caused the forming of the material world⁵¹⁴. Since the material world and human body are made by this lower, evil, and far less capable deity, they are considered to be evil by nature and need to be denounced. In strict relation with this formulation, likely inherited from Plato’s understanding of the metaphysical world as *ὄντως ὄν* “the really real” or “that which really is”⁵¹⁵, Gnostics also believed that the created world and our material bodies in it cannot be real⁵¹⁶. The epistemological position of Gnostics asserts that the closest thing to reality is hidden from humanity, and it can only be revealed by means of denouncement of the (material, unreal) world and disentanglement of the self from the limitations (desires, senses) of the body. Since the creation caused by *Demiurge* is believed by Gnostics to be an imperfect manifestation of the real and

⁵⁰⁵ Since the *Gospel of Truth* does not contain “the fall of Sophia” myth as the accidental cause of the creation, calling this treatise Valentinian may seem doubtful, but Thomassen stresses at least some Valentinian influences are present in it. See: Thomassen, Einar / Meyer, Marvin (trans.): “The Gospel of Truth”, in: Meyer, Marvin (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, New York: HarperOne 2007, pp. 31–48/33–34.

⁵⁰⁶ Thomassen / Meyer, 2007, p. 32.

⁵⁰⁷ Pojman, P. Louis: “Valentinus”, in: Audi, Robert (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Third Edition, New York: Cambridge University Press 2015, p. 1100.

⁵⁰⁸ Macrae, W. George: “Gnosticism”, in: *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Second Edition, Vol. 6, Detroit: Gale 2003, pp. 255–261/258; Van den Broek, 2013, p. 180: “It is important to observe that, according to the Valentinians, the *Demiurge* is not entirely evil, but occupies an intermediate position between *Achamoth* and the devil”.

⁵⁰⁹ Ehrman, 2000, p. 174.

⁵¹⁰ The fall of *Sophia* causing an imperfect creation of lower beings, the material world, and the human body, is a commonly narrated creation myth in several Gnostic trends, including the Valentinian and the Sethian discourses. For a Sethian example containing a narration of the “four luminaries” as *aeons*, which differs them from the other Gnostic trends, see: Turner / Meyer, 2007, pp. 105ff.

⁵¹¹ Irenaeus, “Against Heresies”, 1872, p. 7.

⁵¹² Ehrman, 2000, p. 175.

⁵¹³ *Ialdabaoth* refers to the God of the Hebrew Old Testament (*Yahweh*) and is not believed to be the Supreme God (the One) as claimed in the Old Testament.

⁵¹⁴ Van den Broek underlines that *Demiurge* also caused the creation of Eve in an unsuccessful effort to give a spirit to Adam. See: Van den Broek, 2013, p. 176.

⁵¹⁵ Kotzia, Paraskevi: “Philosophical Vocabulary”, in: Christidis, Anastassios-Fivos (ed.), *A History of Ancient Greek*, New York: Cambridge University Press 2007, pp. 1089–1103/1091.

⁵¹⁶ Valantasis highlights that reality has been a recurring topic since ancient Greece up to our time and gives references for the handling of the concept of reality from various trends, including popular Hollywood productions such as *The Matrix* and the *Truman Show*. Valantasis, 2006, p. 12.

our bodies to be mere traps extinguishing our divine spirit (or spark)⁵¹⁷, one needs to transcend the physical cages created by the *Demiurge*. Only after this, then, revelation occurs. Through this revelation *gnosis* can be attained, which leads to salvation, in other words, a unification and return to the divine realm, *pleroma*.

4.11 Asceticism

This is the point where asceticism comes into prominence as a Gnostic ethical, moral, and religious lifestyle and as an aspect of their methodology to attain salvation. Initially, the term *áskesis* (ἄσκησις) did not have explicit religious connotations as known today and often referred to bodily practices and physical trainings performed by warriors or athletes preparing for the Olympics⁵¹⁸ in ancient Greece. In this earlier understanding of *áskesis*, a deliberate practice of self-denial, as was the case in almost all subsequent religious traditions including Gnosticism, was not the case. Through the interpretations of, above all, Pythagoras, Diogenes, Plato, and Aristotle, it was additionally linked with certain human qualities including virtue, moral, and ethics. In many religious and philosophical traditions, the ascetic ideal is designed to maintain control over various desires (and even needs) by abstaining from sensual pleasures (especially in Stoics). According to Vööbus, asceticism is “the practice of the denial of physical or psychological desires in order to attain a spiritual ideal or goal”⁵¹⁹. Correspondingly, when analysing whether Paul the Apostle in the New Testament⁵²⁰ was an ascetic or not, Roetzel also defines asceticism as “a symbolic act of self-denial [...] that provides a coherent worldview and a guide to behavior”⁵²¹, emphasizing the notion of self-denial as a common characteristic of the practice. In its religious applications, and Gnostic trends, *áskesis* was performed to conduct a life according to what is expected from the believer by God and thus it was salvific by its nature. Although the majority of philosophical approaches lack this religious narrative (pleasing God), performing *áskesis* was also considered a battle with the self in Greek philosophy, but not automatically always in a manner of self-denial. Upon successful execution, *áskesis* embodies

⁵¹⁷ Ehrman, D. Bart, 2000, p. 175: “Within them is a spark of the divine, entrapped by alien beings who are committed to keeping it imprisoned for their own purposes. True Gnostics know that they do not belong in this material world; heaven is their home”.

⁵¹⁸ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, “Asceticism”, Online Edition, 20 June 2013, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/asceticism>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022; For detailed information, see: Miller, G. Stephen: *Arete. Greek Sports from Ancient Sources*, Berkeley: University of California Press 2004.

⁵¹⁹ Vööbus, Arthur: “Asceticism”, in: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Fifteenth Edition, Vol. 2, Chicago: University of Chicago 1974, pp. 135–137/135.

⁵²⁰ Especially a passage in *1 Corinthians* 9:27 in the New Testament implies an ascetic aspect of Paul the Apostle as follows: “But I discipline (punish) my body and keep (enslave) it under control”.

⁵²¹ Roetzel, J. Calvin: *Paul. The Man and the Myth*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1999, p. 137.

virtue, well-being, and happiness in the performer. As shown above in the example of Plato, over the course of Greek philosophy the initial body-oriented *askesis* to win competitions (military or sport) “was converted to that of attaining wisdom or mental prowess by developing and training intellectual faculties”⁵²². This means that not a perfectly fit body, but an enriched soul equipped with various abstract virtues and mental faculties can enable humans to attain happiness, a good life, or the knowledge of the transcendent God.

Depending on the context in which *askesis* is performed, its application methods, object of focus, and content may show discrepancies. To designate an ideal way of living, Aristotle, for example, employs the term *eudaimonia* (εὐδαιμονία), which was translated as “happiness, righteousness”⁵²³, “flourishing”⁵²⁴, or “blessedness”⁵²⁵. For Aristotle, *eudaimonia* is gained through acquisition of rationality and ethical virtues, which, like *askesis*, promises a perfection of the available human (corporeal or incorporeal) capacities. To attain truth and happiness, Aristotle emphasizes the necessity of an alliance between virtues, i.e., “goodness and excellence (ἀρετή, *arete*)”⁵²⁶ and the “intellectual parts of the soul”⁵²⁷ in a complementary manner, in which its constitutive elements incorporate “art or technical skill (τέχνη, *techne*), scientific knowledge (ἐπιστήμη, *episteme*), prudence (φρόνησις, *phronesis*), wisdom (σοφία, *sophia*), and intelligence (νοῦς, *nous*)”⁵²⁸. However, as Miller underlines, such terminology was approached by different philosophers with different lenses, which eventually led to disagreements and subjective application of the terms that sometimes corresponded to one other, yet at other times they seriously conflicted. Developed from this multiplicity of approaches, the ancient Greeks were not in agreement about how to educate the young citizens, “whether the goals should be arete or the good life, nor is it clear whether studies should be directed toward the development of intellect or of character”⁵²⁹. As Diogenes Laërtius (180–240 CE) correspondingly mentions, “Plato often uses different words for the same concept”⁵³⁰. Furthermore, the analyses of modern scholars, have also brought additional ambiguity and vagueness to the meanings of philosophical terms, which were constructed to address various mental concepts. Not only Plato and Aristotle had divergent understandings of the same concepts, but also their recent interpretations

⁵²² The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, “Asceticism”, 2013.

⁵²³ Aristotle: “Eudemian Ethics”, in: Rackham, Harris (trans.), *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, Vol. 20, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1981, Book I, 1214a.

⁵²⁴ Robinson, N. Daniel: *Aristotle's Psychology*, New York: Columbia University Press 1989, p. 111.

⁵²⁵ Critchley, Simon: *Tragedy, the Greeks, and Us*, New York: Penguin Random House 2019, p. 140.

⁵²⁶ Liddell / Scott, 1889, p. 115.

⁵²⁷ Aristotle: “Nicomachean Ethics”, in: Rackham, Harris (trans.), *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, Vol. 19, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1934, p. 331.

⁵²⁸ Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics”, 1934, p. 333.

⁵²⁹ Miller, 2004, p. 150.

⁵³⁰ Kotzia, 2007, p. 1095.

suggest that these terms should be used rather carefully. The virtue ethics developed by Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and by Stoics contained divergent elements shaped by the interpretation and understanding of human purposes in life, which took a new direction with the inclusion of Christianity and influenced Gnostics differently than the ancient Greek philosophers.

Similar to these philosophical perspectives emphasizing disciplined and cultivated mental qualities in the quest for the right way of living and happiness, asceticism as performed by Gnostics also aimed at ultimate well-being, yet with a nuance of transmundane happiness which was primarily furnished with wisdom (*gnosis*). From simple fasting to sustained sleep deprivation and to the extreme forms of body-rejecting practices⁵³¹, in the final analysis, Gnostic asceticism is a virtue oriented epistemological method. At this point, another question appears: did Gnostics develop their systems of cosmogony and theogony directly from Plato and Aristotle, since they inhabited the world minimum of three to four centuries apart from each other, or did they have another option to get acquainted with ancient Greek philosophy? If we consider Gnostics' immediate contemporaries, it seems more likely that Platonic influence on Gnosticism took place primarily through the intermediary of Neoplatonists. As the prefix "neo" in the nomenclature of this group of philosophers indicates, Gnostics were in touch with a reinterpreted and modernized version of the Platonic philosophy. This, however, does not mean that the Gnostic and Neoplatonic perspectives were in complete harmony. Even though they, including the Christians, have been engaging with similar phenomena, employed similar terms, and borrowed ideas from each other, they were also in a long-lasting conflict to be the authority, since theological problems usually, and naturally, transform into a question of authority. Given that the controversies must be resolved, and they can only be resolved by appeals to authority, the question of who represents, for example, true Christianity, becomes unavoidable. The Gnostic opposition escalated the Christian effort to solve the problem of the authority to decide what is true Christianity. As one of the consequences, various available Christian views have been selected and defended in developing a model of apostolic authority and apostolic scripture.

Whereas the Neoplatonist Plotinus was in strict opposition to Gnostics, his student Porphyry almost fanatically refuted Christian views, demonstrating the variety of positionings within merely a single trend. On the other front, the production of the whole literature of here-

⁵³¹ From the Orphic vegetarian diets to the cult of Dionysus' and Pythagoreans' ascetic practices in Greece and later to Christian monasticism to Iranian Manichaeism, various forms of asceticism, especially in the religious context, can be listed as: celibacy, abstention from earthly goods and desires, fasting, sleep deprivation, seclusion in cells including reduction of movements and awkward bodily postures generating pain, flagellation, self-mortification among many other creative methods such as the example of Syrian Simeon Stylites (c. 390–459 CE) whose asceticism took the shape of living on a pillar for more than thirty years.

siography by the Christian theologians exemplifies their structured defences and aims against the pagan philosophers as well as the heretic Gnostics. In addition to these opposing sides, each tradition had also its own marginals deviating from the commonly accepted views and opening a new front. As can be seen in the example of Philo of Alexandria, who attempted at accommodating profoundly different—Jewish and Greek—understandings of God, there were also convergence points between even the opposing views. Philo tried to merge the strongly embodied and emotional Jewish God with the passive and rather abstract Greek God⁵³², which provided a platform for these different trends to interpret their doctrines with the tools of another one and even for Christianity to incorporate the same tools in later periods⁵³³. Strauss evaluates the disagreements between Greek philosophy and Jewish religion, which was highlighted in this study as an episode under the rubric of Gnosticism, as the building blocks of Western civilization and argues: “Western civilization consists of two elements, has two roots, which are in radical disagreement with each other. We may call these elements Jerusalem, and Athens or, to speak in non-metaphorical language, the Bible and Greek philosophy”⁵³⁴.

It appears that the understanding of God, or in other words, “a wisdom modelled after the transcendent God”⁵³⁵, whatever form or name it possesses, is the primary decisive element in constructing the encapsulating theology, philosophy, and epistemology around it. From the theories of the creation of the universe to the human condition in it, and the related salvific quest of humans, all “emanate” from the conception of God.

⁵³² Van der Horst, 1999, p. 367.

⁵³³ DeConick, 2014, p. 2.

⁵³⁴ Strauss, 1989, p. 272.

⁵³⁵ Puech, Henri-Charles: “Numénus d’Apamée et les théologies orientales”, in: *Mélanges Bidez*, 2, 1934, pp. 745–778/767 quoted by Hanegraaff, J. Wouter: *Esotericism and the Academy. Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2012, p. 14/f.n. 26.

5 Esotericism

The term esotericism, being a recent input into the scholarly studies, does not allow a clear-cut definition as it contains, like in the case of mysticism and Gnosticism, a degree of ambiguity regarding its definitions, practices, and socio-religious implications. Von Stuckrad, for instance, highlights this ambiguity and the interchangeability of certain terms in a Christian context and writes that “a series of labels were given to these deviant currents: One spoke of ‘Platonic-Hermetic Christianity’, of ‘Gnosis’ or even of ‘mysticism’”⁵³⁶. On the other hand, the notion of “esotericising” the knowledge and the actions resulting from it is inherently present not only in these relevant trends but nearly in all religious systems that are subject to this study. Therefore, one may perhaps understand the term esoteric as a glue binding together various religious or philosophical trends that imply any kind of duality—interior and exterior—between various modes of knowledge or wisdom. In relation to this, rather than being an “autonomous tradition”⁵³⁷ or a system on its own, as suggested by Yates in the context of Hermeticism in the Renaissance⁵³⁸, esotericism is a “scholarly construct”⁵³⁹. Correspondingly, Von Stuckrad argues that due to the complexities of traditions, discourses, and opinions which relate to esoteric trends, one can hardly classify them all as esotericism; that is why “it is often better to talk about the *esoteric* rather than *esotericism*”⁵⁴⁰. While the term esotericism implies a “coherent doctrine or a clearly identified body of tradition”, Von Stuckrad claims that esoteric is a mere “element of cultural process”, and thus, less problematic. In various trends which may be categorized as esoteric, characteristically different modes of knowledge are defined and grouped in a hierarchical structure, and contextualized in line, if present, with the creation theories as well as the subsequent events that design the fate of humans. As shown above, in the case of Gnosticism and mysticism, the common epistemological dimension of various theories of salvation usually employs dichotomic, i.e., esoteric vs. exoteric, forms of knowledge and places esoteric knowledge, though not exclusively, as the prime instrument to attain the good, happiness, or the One.

Without any dispute, nearly all scholars studying the topic agree that the Greek word *ἐσωτερικός* (*esōterikós*), with its several other variations, is the root of the modern English term

⁵³⁶ Von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 2.

⁵³⁷ Hanegraaff, J. Wouter: *Western Esotericism. A Guide for the Perplexed*, London: Bloomsbury Press 2013, p. 3.

⁵³⁸ Yates, A. Frances: *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1964.

⁵³⁹ Bogdan, 2007, p. 6.

⁵⁴⁰ Von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 10.

esoteric⁵⁴¹. Both in its ancient Greek and current English usage it generally conveys “inner, intimate, and initiated”⁵⁴² and depending on the system in which it is employed, esoteric may refer to views (about the universe and human condition in it) acknowledging an inner or hidden dimension of reality and consequently, bilaterally structured nature of things. In line with this perspective Faivre suggests six meanings of esotericism:

“(1) a disparate grouping, (2) teachings or facts that are ‘secret’ because they are deliberately hidden, (3) a mystery is inherent in things themselves, (4) ‘gnosis’, understood as a mode of knowledge emphasizing the ‘experiential’, the mythical, the symbolic, rather than forms of expression of a dogmatic and discursive order, (5) the quest for the ‘primordial tradition’, and (6) a group of specific historical currents”⁵⁴³

As Faivre emphasizes, trends with esoteric inclinations demonstrate certain features in terms of their organizational structure. They aspire to access the hidden dimensions of nature through some secretive methods and processes and use the knowledge acquired from the hidden dimensions as a source of power. Esoteric discourse thus brings religious beliefs, philosophical speculations, and scientific methods together in its secreted repertoire of practices. Throughout history, several scientists who contributed substantially to positivist science allegedly had intrinsic relations and even adherence to esoteric groups. Some trends practicing, for instance, alchemy, have produced figures who have led contemporary scientific developments, as notably exemplified by Isaac Newton. Newton was known to practice alchemy, which led Keynes to describe him as “not the first [a.n. scientist] of the age of reason [...], [a.n. but] the last of the magicians, the last of the Babylonians and Sumerians”⁵⁴⁴.

In all esoteric systems, there is a general principle that their alleged secret wisdom must not fall into the hands of anyone who is not worthy of it. Those who want to acquire the secreted wisdom or knowledge are obliged to guarantee that their will, disposition, and capacities are fit to grasp the wisdom of hidden dimensions of reality and to keep it secret. The strategic secrecy of esoteric systems is built to prevent misuse with the belief that if those who acquired the secret wisdom were malicious, they would abuse the power they have obtained. Therefore, to keep the knowledge secret and away from potential abusers, several measures have been devised.

⁵⁴¹ Eddy, Glenys: “The Ritual Dimension of Western Esotericism. The Rebirth Motif and the Transformation of Human Consciousness”, in: *Sydney Studies in Religion*, 2004, pp. 213–233/213.

⁵⁴² Liddell, H. George / Scott, Robert: *A Lexicon Chiefly for the Use of Schools Abridged from The Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1843, p. 287.

⁵⁴³ Faivre, 2010, pp. 1–7.

⁵⁴⁴ Keynes, M. John: “Newton, the Man”, in: Johnson, Elizabeth / Moggridge, Donald (eds.), *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes*, Vol.10, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2012, pp. 363–374/363–364.

These measures often include the development of separate or secreted societies, initiation, coded language employing metaphors and symbols along with occult practices. This, however, does not mean that every adherent who is initiated into an esoteric organization gains full access to the whole of the teaching. In other words, in nearly all esoteric systems, there appears a natural hierarchical order of degrees in which the level of access to the secret determines the rank of the possessor within the group. Another frequently occurring pattern within various esoteric systems, as Faivre argues, is the attribution of a kind of internal meaning to all things. The concept of intrinsic meaning divides every word, act, and thought into two dimensions. It qualifies what is for the uninitiated as external, in other words, exoteric, and for the initiates of the group as internal, that is esoteric. This distinction often trivializes the external and immediate meanings that can be accessed through rational thought processes or studying, while prioritizing the transcendent dimensions of meaning through instrumentalizing a secret, or *gnosis*. In most esotericised discourses, wisdom, provided by intuition, therefore gains specific importance in comparison to mere “information” obtained by reason and experimentation.

Broadly speaking, esotericism covers a wide range of trends including “hermeticism, Christian Kabbalah, Rosicrucianism, spiritual alchemy, astrology, magic, theosophy, and occultism”⁵⁴⁵. However, it is important to note that these trends are grouped in defining what is called the “Western esotericism”. Thus, such grouping expectedly does not cover, if there is any, a “universal esotericism”⁵⁴⁶, but merely a temporal and regional part of it. According to Strube, this strategical avoidance of universalist claims by delimiting the topic with both ideological and geographical “West” might otherwise be related to the perennialist perspective⁵⁴⁷. When several scholars, especially Faivre, evaluated the topics relating to esotericism in terms of their relations with the “doctrinal faith” of Christianity and “pure rationality” of Greek philosophy⁵⁴⁸, which are seen as the building blocks or the “pillars” of the Western culture, the study had to be limited within the framework of “Western”. Conceivably, the relations of each esoteric trend with these “pillars” have been radically different in the Western sphere and the other parts of the world. However, the pre-history of Western esotericism (c. the third century BCE to the seventh century CE) can be nonetheless understood as the common historical basis

⁵⁴⁵ Bogdan, 2007, p.10.

⁵⁴⁶ Bogdan, 2007, p.10

⁵⁴⁷ Strube, Julian: “Towards the Study of Esotericism without the ‘Western’”. Esotericism from the Perspective of a Global Religious History”, in: Asprem, Egil / Strube, Julian (eds.), *New Approaches to the Study of Esotericism*, Leiden / Boston: Brill 2021, pp. 45–66/47.

⁵⁴⁸ Bogdan, 2007, p. 7; Van den Broek, Roel / Hanegraaff, J. Wouter: *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times*, Albany: State University New York Press 1998, p. vii.

for both the so-called Western esotericism and the alleged esotericism of Islam, namely *tasavvuf*. Thus, it is crucial to refer to studies that focus on this formative period.

5.1 Research Paradigms

In studying Western esotericism, two main approaches come into prominence. The insider (emic) approach, adopted from Pike's coinage, is the study of any aspect of esotericism from within the tradition practiced, usually executed by its own performers. This perspective is constructed through the experiences of the performers and the specific terminology resulting in performers' attempts to describe these experiences. The etic perspective, on the other hand, takes an empirical approach to the subject from the standpoint of an outsider and aims at objectifying the otherwise subjective experiences, opinions, and resulting terminology from the emic standpoint. These emic and etic perspectives, however, are not exclusive and often cause a need to support each other for coherent analysis. As Jardine accentuates, "etics without emics is empty, emics without etics is blind"⁵⁴⁹. In his analysis of esotericism (and mysticism), Versluis, combining emic and etic perspectives, suggests another approach that is "some degree of imaginative participation in what one is studying"⁵⁵⁰, which largely resembles Hanegraaff's emphasis on empathy to "exclude personal biases"⁵⁵¹ when approaching a topic of esotericism for a scholarly investigation—though Hanegraaff employed it in surveying only the emic perspective.

Along with emic and etic approaches, scholars devised and favoured additional models to study esotericism. Hanegraaff distinguishes five main categories in the study of "Western esotericism" represented by certain scholars as follows: (1) perennialists or traditionalists, (2) religionists [a.n. Mircea Eliade, Joseph Campbell], (3) historians of science and philosophy [a.n. Frances A. Yates, Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke], (4) specialists on specific currents, and (5) generalists⁵⁵². The perennialist perspective of René Guénon, Frithjof Schuon, and others, which is now being criticized in the academic spheres, recognizes the major religions of the world as different interpretations or "outer manifestations"⁵⁵³ of the same doctrinal essence or a shared

⁵⁴⁹ Jardine, Nick: "Etics and Emics (Not to Mention Anemics and Emetics) in the History of the Sciences", in: *History of Science*, 42/3, 2004, pp. 261–278/275.

⁵⁵⁰ Versluis, Arthur: "Methods in the Study of Esotericism, Part II. Mysticism and the Study of Esotericism", in: *Esoterica*, 5, 2003, pp. 27–40/31–32.

⁵⁵¹ Hanegraaff, J. Wouter: *New Age Religion and Western Culture. Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, Leiden: Brill 1996, p. 6.

⁵⁵² Hanegraaff, 2004, p. 500.

⁵⁵³ Bogdan, 2007, p. 7.

esoteric dimension. From this perspective, perennialism focuses on a comparative method, as, for instance, exemplified by Kılıç in his studies on *tasavvuf*. The historical-critical approach, in its most current form, evaluates Western esotericism as one of the results of a combination of historical, cultural, and religious trends which are brought together largely by modern scholars rather than by the figures being studied. The historical-critical view maintains that numerous philosophers, theologians, and pseudo-scientists who constituted Western esotericism were the consequence of an extended chain of historical and cultural processes which may not be known by the actors inflicting them. Therefore, it is only possible to understand Western esotericism from an etic standpoint utilizing the full capacity of academic inquiry. Other categories were also proven to be inadequate to cover different esoteric practices. Hence, Eddy adjoins another model to this list, namely an approach that emphasizes “a common initiatory ritual structure which facilitates the transmutation of human consciousness into the realization of its own divine nature”⁵⁵⁴. The keywords in Eddy’s model are initiatory, transmutation, realization, and own divine nature, which have been interpreted and incorporated in their varied forms by all systems with esoteric tendencies. However, ritual, depending on how it is defined, is exercised only by certain esoteric groups, and cannot be found in most esotericised philosophical discourses (except Iamblichus’ theurgy), neither in antiquity nor today. Eddy nevertheless highlights a sociological perspective that may be fruitful in the studies of esotericism. This sociological perspective is represented by Hugh Urban with a claim that “social and political implications of secrecy and esotericism are directly related to the esoteric/exoteric dichotomy, the creation of internal body of knowledge which confers special status upon the knower”⁵⁵⁵. In the same vein, Von Stuckrad stresses the importance of socio-political events in shaping various creative phenomena including the esotericised practices. He argues that the emergence of alternative philosophical, spiritual, and religious interpretations is not necessarily derived merely from intellectual, philosophical, or religious negotiations, but is rather predominantly related to “the social and political changes of the first centuries CE, which created a new spiritual and intellectual climate”⁵⁵⁶.

Another approach in the study of esotericism is the structural method focusing on the proposition that all (Western) esoteric currents share common fundamental traits and concepts. Faivre, who conceptualizes Western esotericism as a “form of thought”⁵⁵⁷ or a “pattern of

⁵⁵⁴ Eddy, 2004, pp. 213–214.

⁵⁵⁵ Eddy, 2004, p. 215.

⁵⁵⁶ Von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 17.

⁵⁵⁷ Faivre, Antoine / Voss, Karen-Claire: “Western Esotericism and the Science of Religions”, in: *Numen*, 42/1, 1995, pp. 48–77/48, 60, 68.

thought”⁵⁵⁸ (*forme de pensée*), lists six (four fundamental and two relative) concepts designed to demonstrate and compare general characteristics of Western esotericism: (1) the idea of *correspondences* assumes transcendental links (symbolic and physical) between all things in the universe. Over the course of history, this idea has manifested itself in various esoteric trends in diverse forms. Particularly the trends that employ specific practices such as “magic, alchemy, and astrology”⁵⁵⁹ sought correspondences between macrocosm and microcosm, human fate, and the planets’ position in the sky, or between the material substances. The *Emerald Tablet* or *Tabula Smaragdina* (c. eighth or ninth centuries), a renowned Hermetic text that became a primary source for both the European and Muslim alchemists, contains a line in its Arabic composition, usually translated as “that which is above is from that which is below, and that which is below is from that which is above”⁵⁶⁰. This line summarizes the essential core of the esoteric idea of correspondences referring to assumed correlations between macrocosm and microcosm in general, and, between, for instance, the planets and the metals (moon usually was linked to silver) in particular. The second characteristic in Faivre’s model, (2) *living nature*, refers to the universe as an active living being rather than a stationary matter indifferent to human abstract notions. In this perspective, the living universe inherently possesses multiple interconnected dimensions constituting a network of meanings which are accessible through a special (esoteric) kind of knowledge and can be utilized by means of magic, alchemy, or other similar practices. The third characteristic, (3) *imagination and mediation*, refer to imaginations as “the organs of soul enabling access to different levels of reality”⁵⁶¹ and various hidden dimensions beyond the physical realm⁵⁶². Following Faivre’s footsteps, several scholars argue that imagination is a prerequisite for the proper execution of various esoteric practices including magic⁵⁶³, rituals, “symbolic images, mandalas, and intermediary spirits”⁵⁶⁴. (4) *The experience of transmutation*

⁵⁵⁸ Von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 3.

⁵⁵⁹ Bogdan, 2007, p. 11.

⁵⁶⁰ Holmyard, E. John: “The Emerald Table”, in: *Nature*, 112, 1923, pp. 525–526/526. The same formulation is also present in a collection of texts attributed to prophet Solomon, *Odes of Solomon* 34.4-5, which demonstrates features of Valentinian Gnosticism and Jewish apocalyptic thought”. Its date of production is a matter of dispute, but consensus dates it to the second century CE. For more information, see: Charlesworth, H. James: *The Odes of Solomon*, Montana: Scholars Press 1977; Rendel, J. Harris: *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1911.

⁵⁶¹ Faivre / Voss, 1995, p. 61.

⁵⁶² Goodrick-Clarke quotes Corbin who defines the esoteric concept of imagination “as an autonomous world of intermediaries, the *mundus imaginalis*”, in the context of *tasavvuf*. Even though in Faivre’s model imagination is an organ of the human soul, in Corbin’s formulation imagination becomes incompatibly the organ of *mundus imaginalis*. See: Goodrick-Clarke, Nicholas: *The Western Esoteric Traditions. A Historical Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008, p. 3; Corbin, Henry: *Alone with the Alone. Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabi*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997, p. 4.

⁵⁶³ Bogdan, 2007, p. 11.

⁵⁶⁴ Faivre / Voss, 1995, p. 61.

is likely one of the most frequently recurring theories of esotericised discourses. Rather than being merely intellectual, most streams of Western esotericism aim for an inner metamorphosis of not only the objects at hand (as in “exoteric” alchemy) but also a spiritual transformation and elevation in nature (or disposition) of the performers through mystical and supernatural means. Bogdan relates the notion of transmutation with the initiatory practices (an important aspect of numerous esoteric systems) that “the initiate is often viewed as going through a process of transmutation as he passes through the various rites of initiation”⁵⁶⁵. (5) The *praxis of concordance* in Faivre’s model refers to various strands of esoteric discourse as unified by a deeper fundamental truth “in hopes of obtaining a gnosis of superior quality”⁵⁶⁶. The praxis of concordance approximates the perennialist view in terms of its focus on a shared commonality among various esoteric and religious systems such as Zoroastrianism, Hermeticism, Judaism, and certain strands of Greek philosophy. The last (6) characteristic of esotericism according to Faivre is *transmission*, which alludes to the alleged knowledge of hidden meanings that can only be transmitted between individuals or generations through predetermined modes, including master-disciple relationships or initiation into a secret society in which various grades of initiation reveals the linked secrets.

Faivre’s model summarized above has been criticized by several scholars for being “exclusive”⁵⁶⁷, i.e., limiting itself, both temporally and geographically, with the constructions and interpretations of esoteric currents of a specific period between post-Renaissance and pre-Enlightenment Europe⁵⁶⁸. The other critic of Faivre’s model argues that his model forces an “ideal-type”⁵⁶⁹ of esotericism and does not acknowledge changes in the traditions⁵⁷⁰.

5.2 Western Esotericism

Depending on the perspective, the gradual emergence and the establishment of what is called Western esotericism date approximately either to the third century BCE or to the first centuries of the common era. Perhaps as an academic trend, the latter date is considered the historical origin of modern esotericism in several academic studies⁵⁷¹ to base the arguments

⁵⁶⁵ Bogdan, 2007, p. 11.

⁵⁶⁶ Faivre / Voss, 1995, p. 62.

⁵⁶⁷ Von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 4.

⁵⁶⁸ Hanegraaff, 2004, p. 508.

⁵⁶⁹ Von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 4.

⁵⁷⁰ Bogdan, 2007, pp. 12–13.

⁵⁷¹ Eddy, 2004, p. 213; Faivre, 2010, p. 5; Goodrick-Clarke, 2008, p. 3; Hanegraaff, 2013, p. 18.

about esotericism as a Western product, “exported to the rest of the world”⁵⁷². The scholars favouring the first date, a period covering the third century BCE, take cognizance of Egyptian and Jewish religious as well as mythological traditions that had been developed hand in hand with various other ancient Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cultural and religious groups. In the following chapters, this prehistory of Gnosticism, mysticism, and esotericism encompassing the ancient Middle East will be elaborated further in the context of wisdom (*hikmet*) and its manifestations throughout history. While Von Stuckrad correspondingly states that “the textual foundations of modern esotericism dates from the first centuries BCE”⁵⁷³—which are composed of mythological, astrological, and pre-Christian religious discourses that gave shape and content to various currents, e.g., Gnosticism and Neoplatonism—Goodrick-Clarke links the prehistory of Western esotericism to the religious and philosophical streams of the first centuries CE⁵⁷⁴. Most of these streams, e.g., Gnosticism, Hermeticism, and Neoplatonism, in fact, demonstrate how philosophical, religious, and socio-political discourses had been extensively intermingled in the previously Hellenized Eastern Roman world. Faivre and Voss refer to “forms of Hellenistic philosophy and religiosity (e.g., Stoicism, Gnosticism, Hermetism, Neo-pythagoreanism) and the Abrahamic religious traditions”⁵⁷⁵ as the principal constituents of esotericism. More than a millennium later, these structural elements and religio-philosophical perspectives were thoroughly studied and reinterpreted by the Renaissance scholars in their attempts to discover common traits among them and develop a theory of *philosophia perennis* or *prisca theologia*. Today several scholars, in line with Renaissance intellectuals, argue that certain practices such as astrology, magic, and alchemy share a common esoteric discourse and thus one can trace an interpretative continuity amongst them. Nevertheless, applications of these practices involve a wide variety of socio-cultural groups and cover a period “from the late ancient world through Byzantine and Islamic culture into medieval Latin West”⁵⁷⁶ that the structural and contextual differences resulting from ever-changing socio-political dynamics—particularly between the perception (and execution) of esoteric practices in the late antiquity and Renaissance in their historical context—should be highlighted. However, since esotericism of the European Renaissance is beyond the scope of this study, the focus has been and will be placed upon the practices of the ancient Middle Eastern traditions and their reinterpreted forms within various trends of the Hellenized Mediterranean region.

⁵⁷² Strube, 2021, p. 45.

⁵⁷³ Von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 12.

⁵⁷⁴ Goodrick-Clarke, 2008, p. 3.

⁵⁷⁵ Faivre / Voss, 1995, p. 50.

⁵⁷⁶ Goodrick-Clarke, 2008, p. 7.

The controversy with the term “Western” esotericism is recently highlighted by Strube, who suggests that we should move beyond this “geographical and ideological demarcation”⁵⁷⁷. He argues that religious, philosophical, or esoteric discourses of late antiquity did not appear *ex nihilo* nor in isolated socio-cultural groups or environments. Their emergence was influenced by diverse dynamics occurring “within a complex of multilateral exchanges that are best grasped from a global perspective”⁵⁷⁸. Similarly, Bogdan and Djurdjevic survey “occultism in a global perspective”—a phenomenon often collocated with esotericism—and analyse its variations in their differing “cultural, political and social contexts”⁵⁷⁹. Strube develops his argument further through the lenses of “global (religious) history”⁵⁸⁰ and postcolonial studies, with an aim to avoid a universalist and a “neo-perennialist” approach to the subject. He asserts that the global perspective does not imply the universality of esotericism, nor does it attempt to link all esoteric practices of the world. For Strube, the term global “implies an awareness of global interconnections and structural conditions, focusing on interactions, mobility, and fluidity”⁵⁸¹. As discussed above in the context of mysticism, Gnosticism, and their relationship with, for example, early Christian authorities, none of these concepts are fixed and they are continuously negotiated, repositioned, reinterpreted, and optimized as necessitated by the surrounding events or personal choice. From this point of view, Strube’s approach to esotericism appears to be more plausible compared to the other models and paradigms, even though each of these models may still bring valuable contributions to certain aspects of similar phenomena.

5.3 Further Theoretical and Methodological Tools

Hanegraaff and Von Stuckrad, despite their focus on Western esotericism, are two scholars whose studies on esotericism can be beneficial for the aims of this study. Von Stuckrad offers the term discourse in his discussion about the perennialist understanding of the “shared core” of the established religions and argues that, from a historical perspective, this core, or at least interpretations of it, is subject to “contemporary questioning and thereby [a.n. it is] significantly transformed”⁵⁸². The transformational quality of the shared core brings about what he called the religious discourse. In Von Stuckrad’s organization, discourse, whether religious, scientific, philosophical, or esoteric, is continuously negotiated and appropriated to the present

⁵⁷⁷ Strube, 2021, pp. 45–66.

⁵⁷⁸ Strube, 2021, p. 46.

⁵⁷⁹ Bogdan, Henrik / Djurdjevic, Gordan: *Occultism in a Global Perspective*, London: Routledge 2015, p. 5.

⁵⁸⁰ Conrad, Sebastian: *What is Global History?*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2016.

⁵⁸¹ Strube, 2021, p. 58.

⁵⁸² Von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 6.

situation. It is a construction to which further layers, opinions, and speculations can be added or outdated aspects can be removed in relation to consequential historical, political, and even climatic circumstances. For instance, Von Stuckrad emphasizes a recurring pattern among the Muslim *ṣiṭ*, Jewish, and Christian salvation doctrines, namely an astrological event being linked to specific apocalyptic and eschatological narratives, whose “social and political implications” are called the “fields of discourse”⁵⁸³. The changing nature of “discourse” is also attached to the concept of “fields of discourse” by Von Stuckrad, through which he sheds light on the “plurality of religious identities [...] which were formed according to fields of discourse, biographical narratives, and a tension between the self and other”⁵⁸⁴.

Instead of formulating history as a mere collection of consecutive events, Von Stuckrad employs his model in historical research to situate the concept of discourse within the historical study of esotericism. This model uniquely accentuates a “history of cultural memory”, namely a remembered and hence a selectively constructed version of history based on memory as well as the importance of historical events; since remembered and forgotten memories are often linked with subjective importance and relevancy of such events. Coined in the literature by the Egyptologist Assmann, cultural memory implies a form of “hermeneutics” of the past. In other words, cultural memory is “the individual storage of texts, images, and rites that are meant for reuse related to various societies and epochs”⁵⁸⁵. For Assmann, cultural memory nurtures itself from these storages, constructs a self-conception, and transmits it to individuals producing a “collectively shared knowledge”⁵⁸⁶. Reflecting the individual characteristic of memory concept to the collective forms of it (*la mémoire collective*)⁵⁸⁷, Halbwachs too hinted at the social aspect of memory and collectively constructed identities. Drawing a similar theory from the example of how George Washington was remembered differently by Americans before and after 1865, Schwartz argues that the present configures our perception of the past and history, while the past gives content and effects our present conduct⁵⁸⁸. Chaney additionally underlines the changing perceptions of the past through his example of “cultural memorials”, which are specific objects—such as sculptures, photographs, or souvenirs that contain memories—and conse-

⁵⁸³ Von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 7.

⁵⁸⁴ Von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 7.

⁵⁸⁵ Assmann, Jan: *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, München: C. H. Beck Verlag 1992 quoted by Ißler, A. Roland: “Cultural Memory”, in: Kühnhardt, Ludger / Mayer, Tilman (eds.), *The Bonn Handbook of Globality*, Vol. 2, Cham: Springer International 2019, pp. 807–819/808–809.

⁵⁸⁶ Ißler, 2019, p. 809.

⁵⁸⁷ Halbwachs, Maurice: *La mémoire collective*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1950.

⁵⁸⁸ Schwartz, Barry: “Social Change and Collective Memory. The Democratization of George Washington”, in: *American Sociological Review*, 56/2, 1991, pp. 221–236.

quently argues that the attributed meanings and contexts to these objects change according to the present conditions⁵⁸⁹. At this point, Hobsbawm and Ranger's coinage, the "invented tradition"⁵⁹⁰, comes into prominence, which refers to intentionally and strategically constructed symbols, rituals, and practices serving to capitalize on the elements of the past to give context to present actions and re-situate them to the present in building, for example, national or religious identities, cultural heritage, or in claiming an authenticity.

Such potential for changeability and multiplicity of meaning and context is present in almost all constructed traditions, trends, and discourses, especially in those mentioned within this study. This is demonstrated by Kubik in his survey of "individual cultural profiles", which are learned, negotiated, acted upon, and selected from a repertoire of the available "cultural bulk" developed by the surrounding societies. From this perspective, Kubik argues that:

"Our cultural profiles change, sometimes slowly, sometimes rapidly; and so do our ideas about culturally accepted behaviour. A scale of values can thus be reversed within a generation, and we may switch from wearing tuxedo to adopting worn-out jeans as the appropriate attire for a reception"⁵⁹¹

Both theories, the "cultural profiles" of Kubik and the "discourse" of Von Stuckrad, emphasize the plurality of contexts, histories, negotiated meanings, and "the multi-layered nature of (religious) identities"⁵⁹², which Von Stuckrad applies to explain what esoteric discourse is, or "what makes a discourse esoteric". Corresponding with the perspective of this study, his answer to the latter question is "the rhetoric of a hidden truth, which can be unveiled in a specific way"⁵⁹³. The vast variety of interpretations concerning this "specific way" approximately corresponds with the diversity of not only esoteric discourses, but furthermore philosophical, scientific, and religious discourses. Especially, when "the way" is interpreted in line with creation theories, the narrative of creation gives shape and content to all relevant salvational assumptions (soteriology) and diverse views on the "postmortem conditions of souls"⁵⁹⁴, and other relevant eschatological theories. Moving from this perspective, Von Stuckrad emphasizes

⁵⁸⁹ Chaney, Edward: "Egypt in England and America. The Cultural Memorials of Religion, Royalty, and Revolution", in: Ascari, Maurizio / Corrado, Adriana (eds.), *Sites of Exchange. European Crossroads and Faultlines*, Amsterdam / New York: Rodopi 2006, pp. 39–74.

⁵⁹⁰ Hobsbawm, J. Eric / Ranger, O. Terence: *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983.

⁵⁹¹ Kubik, Gerhard: "Culture Contact. Cognitive and Psychodynamic Aspects. Transcultural Understanding in Art History, Religion, Music and Animation", in: *Etnografie Sonore/Sound Ethnographies*, 1/1, 2018, pp. 21–36/24.

⁵⁹² Von Stuckrad, 2005, pp. 7–8.

⁵⁹³ Von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 10.

⁵⁹⁴ Turner, D. John: "The Sethian School of Gnostic Thought", in: Meyer, Marvin (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, New York: HarperOne 2007, pp. 784–789/789.

that the history of Western esotericism goes back to the period preceding the common era and has fundamental associations with ancient Greek (Orphic practices, Pythagoreanism), Egyptian, and Middle Eastern wisdom traditions such as Hermeticism, alchemy, astrology, the Chaldean Oracles, and Neoplatonism. When the history of esotericism stretches back to cover such a wide variety of discourses, the inclusion of certain ancient Middle Eastern traditions in the discussion becomes inevitable. As shown above, the Mediterranean region during the classical antiquity (c. eighth century BCE – sixth century CE) housed an abundant number of discourses, cultural profiles, and unceasingly negotiated opinions about how to experience religion. These often originated from diverse speculative philosophers, magicians, pagan priests, and trendsetting religious (above all Christian and Jewish) refuters, apologists, and theologians. The esoteric discourse, with its varieties and sub-streams, has been merely one of the dimensions of this network of relations and it has been devised, developed, and incorporated into different systems by distinct profiles in their own disparate terms.

Moving from Von Stuckrad's point of view, perhaps Hanegraaff's main contribution to this study is his analysis of esotericism through its inherent associations with certain religious and philosophical streams of antiquity. Through linking diverse traditions in terms of their wisdom-related esoteric discourses, Hanegraaff's historical approach contributes to this study in looking further into certain relevant Middle Eastern systems for the purpose of tracking the etymological root of the Arabic term *sūfī*.

Hanegraaff argues that what is known as the Western esotericism today emerged during the Renaissance as a consequence of the intellectual rediscovery of classical antiquity, which led the thinkers of this era to discuss "the sources of true knowledge and wisdom"⁵⁹⁵. This perspective then led to the earliest formulations of *philosophia perennis* and *prisca theologia*⁵⁹⁶, both of which refer to ancient wisdom attributed to certain historical personalities including "Moses, Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus, Plato, and Orpheus"⁵⁹⁷ along with others. However, Hanegraaff also emphasizes that as early as the first century of the common era several Chris-

⁵⁹⁵ Hanegraaff, 2012, p. 5.

⁵⁹⁶ Hanegraaff adds a third form of interpreting the ancient wisdom and its mode of continuity, which he calls *pia philosophia*. This form refers to certain historical personalities (Moses, Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus, Pythagoras, Plato, Jesus) and the wisdom revealed to them as a prototype of Christianity foretelling the coming of Jesus Christ and his religion. Differing from the perspectives of *prisca theologia* and *philosophia perennis*, *pia philosophia* emphasizes "progress" in transmitting the wisdom and understands Christianity as the last and perfected discipline of it. While *prisca theologia* understands the mode of the continuity of ancient wisdom in terms of decline and rediscovery, *philosophia perennis* enunciates a universal and unified form of wisdom transmitted continuously without any decline. See: Hanegraaff, 2012, pp. 6–11; Goodrick-Clarke, 2008, p. 7; Schmitt, B. Charles: "Prisca Theologia e Philosophia Perennis. Due temi del Rinascimento italiano e la loro fortuna", in: Tarugi, Giovannangiola (ed.), *Il pensiero italiano del Rinascimento e il tempo nostro*, Firenze: Olschki 1970, pp. 212–213.

⁵⁹⁷ Goodrick-Clarke, 2008, p. 7.

tian theologians and certain Platonic philosophers hinted at the idea of *philosophia perennis* or *prisca theologia* long before the Renaissance.

5.4 Esotericised Philosophy

What Dillon calls the “Underworld of Platonism”⁵⁹⁸, Hanegraaff, borrowing from Walbridge⁵⁹⁹, refers to as “Platonic Orientalism”, which denotes a religious interpretation of Platonic philosophical discourses produced by the Middle- and Neoplatonist schools⁶⁰⁰. Thilly evaluates this religiosity as one of the consequences of Greek philosophy’s natural process, merging metaphysical investigations with an epistemology of human knowledge and eventually leading to the theological question of the human relation to God⁶⁰¹. As briefly shown in the example of Plotinus and Iamblichus above, the central discourse of this interpretation reproduces the Gnostic perspective of wisdom (*gnosis*) as the instrument freeing the human soul from the material body and leading to salvation in the form of unification with the divine. Such formulation of wisdom allows its interpreters to relate it with divine and transcendental beings or realms, which are understood, by their nature, hidden, esoteric, or concealed. This quality of hiddenness then becomes a phenomenon that can only be revealed to and accessed by a select (by the original generator of wisdom, the One, or by prophetic historical figures) and an elite group of people. Even though there are major contextual and performative differences regarding how to access the hidden, the fundamental structure of esoteric wisdom was incorporated by “gnostic, hermetic, and theurgical currents of late antiquity”⁶⁰². Hanegraaff highlights certain philosophers and Christian apologists from the late antiquity, who, in their search for the origins of divine wisdom, connect Greek philosophical discourses of wisdom (*sophia*, *phronesis*, *logos* etc.) with an ancient chain of wisdom containing Persian, Babylonian, Egyptian, Jewish, Greek, and Christian protagonists such as Moses, Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus, Pythagoras, Plato, and Jesus. The construction of this chain of wisdom is evaluated by several scholars as one of the consequences of syncretism, a primal characteristic of late antiquity, where a variety of religious, philosophical, and mythological discourses meet and shape each other. Whereas all

⁵⁹⁸ Dillon, John: *The Middle Platonists. A Study of Platonism 80 B.C. to A.D. 200*, London: Duckworth 1977, p. 384.

⁵⁹⁹ Walbridge, John: *The Wisdom of the Mystic East. Suhrawardī and Platonic Orientalism*, Albany: State University of New York Press 2001.

⁶⁰⁰ Brown, Peter: *The World of Late Antiquity. From Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad*, London: Thames & Hudson 1971, p. 73.

⁶⁰¹ Thilly, Frank: *A History of Philosophy*, New York: Holt 1959, p. 16.

⁶⁰² Hanegraaff, 2012, p. 12.

selected examples in Hanegraaff's list of prominent figures allegedly possessed ancient, God-given wisdom, the sequence and the content of this chain of wise protagonists may show differences depending on the interpreter's standpoint. Pythagoras, on the other hand, whose esotericised philosophical discourses have been broadly adopted and interpreted by diverse esoteric schools, often appears as a key figure representing a bridge between Greek philosophy and "Eastern" wisdom traditions, thanks to his alleged travels to various Eastern regions⁶⁰³.

5.4.1 Pythagoras' Ancient Wisdom

The Neopythagorean philosopher Numenius of Apamea (c. the second century CE) links the wisdom narrative of Plato with that of Pythagoras, and through Pythagoras associates Greek philosophical notions with the ancient wisdom of the "Brahmans, the Jews, the *Magi*, and the Egyptians"⁶⁰⁴. Numenius' linkage implies an assumed continuity between various discourses developed in significantly diverse traditions. The most frequently mentioned civilizations—as the original holders of esoteric and divine wisdom on account of their astrological, scientific, and religious progress—were Egypt, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Chaldea. However, having no consensus on whose wisdom was worthy of adoption led to a variety of clashing opinions. As early as the fifth century BCE, the problem of wisdom's original source was questioned by different Greek figures such as Isocrates (c. 436–338 BCE), who argued that the Egyptians "introduced philosophy's training"⁶⁰⁵ to humanity. In this manner, he considered Egypt the source of ancient wisdom and believed that Greek philosophy was derived from this Egyptian tradition. Perhaps more influential than Isocrates, Hanegraaff refers to Plato's works that address the "*magian* lore of Zoroaster"⁶⁰⁶ in an affirming and appreciating manner. Furthermore, Hanegraaff also mentions Plato's student Aristotle and his "genealogy of wisdom, transmitted from the Persian *Magi* to Egypt, and from there to the most ancient Greek 'theologians'"⁶⁰⁷. Both philosophers, especially Plato, seem to constitute a basis for the ancient wisdom-related discourses, which were further developed by the subsequent philosophers and theologians, above all, by Neopythagoreans, Neoplatonists and the Christians of the early centuries CE.

⁶⁰³ Fowden, Garth: *The Egyptian Hermes. A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1986, pp. 30, 56, 213.

⁶⁰⁴ Quoted by Hanegraaff, 2012, p. 14.

⁶⁰⁵ Isocrates: "Busiris", in: Van Hook, Laure (trans.), *Isocrates in Three Volumes*, Vol. 3, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1945, p. 115.

⁶⁰⁶ Plato: *Alcibiades*, Denyer, Nicholas (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001, p. 180.

⁶⁰⁷ Hanegraaff, 2012, p. 15/f.n. 34.

The prominent biographer Diogenes Laërtius (180–240 CE) opposed the idea of ancient wisdom beginning with the “barbaric philosophy”⁶⁰⁸. He claimed that Greeks were not only the originators of philosophy but even of all civilized humanity. However, the importance of Laërtius’ input is his mention of the day’s popular, what Hanegraaff calls “utterly typical”⁶⁰⁹, view on the origins of wisdom, in which, ancient wisdom, no matter where it comes from, was understood superior compared to the knowledge of the present day⁶¹⁰. In his prologue, Laërtius explicitly opposes the view favouring “Persians (Magi), Babylonians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Indians (Gymnospohists)”⁶¹¹ as the holders of ancient wisdom. Nevertheless, following the day’s trend, Laërtius does link Pythagoras—and in general, a channel within Greek philosophy that follows Pythagoras’ views—with the Chaldeans, Egyptians, and *Magi*. He writes that “[a.n. Pythagoras] entered the Egyptian sanctuaries and was told their secret lore concerning the gods”⁶¹². This narrative has been retold frequently throughout Hellenized antiquity. Around the same period as Laërtius, certain Neoplatonist philosophers considered Pythagoras as a crucial link between Eastern, usually esoteric⁶¹³, forms of wisdom and contemporary religio-philosophical views of their time. With his attentiveness to numbers and their alleged mystical associations with the universe, Pythagoras has often been mentioned in numerous religious, esoteric, alchemical, magical manuscripts, and historiographies, which were characteristically demonstrating syncretistic traits of the early centuries of the common era⁶¹⁴. The Neoplatonist philosopher Porphyry of Tyre—a student of Plotinus, editor of *Enneads*, and known for his opposition to Christianity—regarded Pythagoras as an initiate of several esoteric sciences and wisdom of the Eastern “barbarian” traditions:

“As to his knowledge, it is said that he learned the mathematical sciences from the Egyptians, Chaldeans and Phoenicians; for of old the Egyptians excelled, in geometry, the Phoenicians in numbers

⁶⁰⁸ Various ancient Greek figures as early as Homer (*Iliad* 2.867) and later Greek-speaking Christian theologians used the term “barbarian” to refer not only to Eastern nations composed of non-Greek-speaking populations but also to certain Greeks in a pejorative way. Most likely following the Greco-Persian Wars of the fifth century BCE, the term “barbarian” was often used pejoratively in reference to Persians. However, occasionally, the term has also been used as “barbarian wisdom” to refer to an ancient, respected wisdom tradition. See, Kotzia, Paraskevi: “The speech of the ‘barbarians’ in ancient Greek literature”, in: Christidis, Anastassios-Fivos (ed.), *A History of Ancient Greek*, New York: Cambridge University Press 2007, pp. 1408–1415/1408; Turner, D. John: *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition*, Paris: Éditions Peeters 2001, p. 13; Hanegraaff, 2012, pp. 14ff.

⁶⁰⁹ Hanegraaff, 2012, p. 14.

⁶¹⁰ Hanegraaff, 2012, p. 17.

⁶¹¹ Laërtius, Diogenes: “Book I: Prologue”, in: Hicks, R. Drew (trans.), *Lives of Eminent Philosophers in Two Volumes*, Vol. 1, London: William Heinemann 1925, p. 3.

⁶¹² Laërtius, Diogenes: “Pythagoras”, in: Hicks, R. Drew (trans.), *Lives of Eminent Philosophers in Two Volumes*, Vol. 2, London: William Heinemann 1925, p. 323.

⁶¹³ Von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 15.

⁶¹⁴ Burkert, Walter: *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1972, pp. 109ff.

and proportions, and the Chaldeans of astronomical theorems, divine rites, and worship of the Gods; other secrets concerning the course of life he received and learned from the Magi”⁶¹⁵

For Porphyry, the class of *magi* were “wise in divine concerns, and worship divinity”⁶¹⁶. This wisdom of *magi* is articulated by Porphyry with the Greek word *σοφοι*⁶¹⁷, implying the term *sophia* was used to address this Persian form of divine wisdom, which has often been correlated with the Babylonian, Chaldean, and Egyptian wisdom traditions among nearly all esoteric circles.

Although concerning the concept of *metempsychosis* (reincarnation, transmigration) and the application of theurgy as a ritualized religious philosophy the Syrian Iamblichus disagree with both of his teachers Plotinus and Porphyry⁶¹⁸, he acknowledges the importance laid upon Pythagoras by them and hails him for acquiring both the Egyptian and Babylonian wisdom traditions⁶¹⁹. This initially Middle Platonic perception of Pythagoras as “the quintessential Sage of old, the prototype of divine man”⁶²⁰, and as the possessor of the ancient secret wisdom was transmitted through, for example, Plutarch (c. 46–119 CE), to Neoplatonism. Especially at the hands of these Neoplatonic philosophers and of certain other scholars of the time “the intrinsic philosophical and religious characteristics of esoteric spirituality”⁶²¹ personified by Pythagoras have become an important matter of interest.

Zeller in his renowned study acknowledges the structured community of Pythagoras as a form of cult or religious sect in which esotericised concepts of greater complexity were revealed by degrees to initiates, and Pythagoras himself as an initiatory leader instructing his adepts⁶²² in “political virtues, act for the good of the state [...] moral training including self-control and subdue passions to harmonize the soul”⁶²³. In Pythagoras’ organization, a congregation of adepts were brought together under determined (even dogmatic) philosophical con-

⁶¹⁵ Porphyry: “The Life of Pythagoras”, in: Guthrie, S. Kenneth (ed.), *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library: An Anthology of Ancient Writings Which Relate to Pythagoras and Pythagorean Philosophy*, Michigan: Phanes Press 1987, pp. 123–136/124.

⁶¹⁶ Porphyry: “On Abstinence from Animal Food”, in: Taylor, Thomas (ed.), *Select Works of Porphyry*, London: J. Moyes 1823, pp. 1–170/153.

⁶¹⁷ Porphyry: *Περὶ ἀποχῆς ἐμψύχων*, Utrecht: A. Paddenburg 1867, p. 348.

⁶¹⁸ Sorabji, Richard: *Animal Minds and Human Morals. The Origins of the Western Debate*, New York: Cornell University Press 1993, pp. 188–194.

⁶¹⁹ Guthrie, S. Kenneth (ed.): *The Life of Pythagoras by Iamblichus of Syrian Chacis*, Alpine: Platonist Press 1919, pp. 7–10.

⁶²⁰ Macris, Constantinos: “Porphyry’s *Life of Pythagoras*”, in: Huffman, A. Carl (ed.), *A History of Pythagoreanism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2014, pp. 381–398/389.

⁶²¹ Goodrick-Clarke, 2008, p. 4.

⁶²² Zeller, Eduard: *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, Vol. 1, Leipzig: Reisland 1892, p. 325.

⁶²³ Thilly, 1959, p. 28.

cepts. A lifestyle emerging from the interpretation of these concepts was a salient feature of Pythagoras' ideal society. During both his time and later periods, Pythagoras' organization took the interest of diverse religious and philosophical groups with similar interests. Thirlwall, therefore, expands the variety of characteristics attributed to the Pythagorean community and writes that "it was at once a philosophical school, a religious brotherhood, and a political association"⁶²⁴. For Kahn, two aspects of the Pythagorean community, namely silence and initiation, might have been a model for numerous subsequent religious and philosophical groups with esoteric inclinations⁶²⁵. Here, silence appears to refer to one of the ways of protecting the esotericised and secret teachings of Pythagoras by not speaking of them to anyone uninitiated. Corresponding with Faivre's model of esotericism, this silence is further supported by the usage of symbols or cyphers, code names, cryptic communication means, and strict master-disciple relationships to maintain absolute control of the discourse. Thilly—with reference to the connections established by Iamblichus, Porphyry, and Laërtius—understands the esoteric aspect of the Pythagorean community to be nourished primarily from the ancient Greek Dionysian and Orphic cults. His argument is based on the structural and contextual associations between the Pythagorean and Dionysian-Orphic practices, particularly in terms of their mystical and esoteric rituals requiring a specific initiation for access, a particular understanding of the concept of transmigration or reincarnation of the soul, and "striving for immortality through identification with the god"⁶²⁶. Russell also acknowledges the mystical elements in Pythagoras' philosophy to be inherited from the Orphic cults and demonstrates how these elements "entered into the philosophy of Plato, and from Plato into most later philosophy that was in any degree religious"⁶²⁷ during the subsequent centuries.

⁶²⁴ Thirlwall, Connop: *A History of Greece*, Vol. 2, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1836, p. 148.

⁶²⁵ Kahn, H. Charles: *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans. A Brief History*, Indianapolis / Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company 2001, p. 8.

⁶²⁶ Thilly, 1959, pp. 15–16. One of the clearest examples of a self-identification with the god in ancient Greek philosophy was demonstrated by Empedocles (c. 494–434 BCE), who claimed that "I, an immortal God, no longer mortal, wander among you". Quoted from: Reyes, E. Christopher: *In His Name*, Vol. 4B, Bloomington: Trafford 2014, p. 131.

⁶²⁷ Russell, 2004, p. 45.

Known as the first historical figure to introduce the term philosophy⁶²⁸, φιλοσοφία, in the sense of “love of wisdom”⁶²⁹ or “lover (worshipper) of Sophia”⁶³⁰, Pythagoras attempted to bring an explanation to the nature of the universe and devised a model of creation by employing his theory of numbers. In doing so, “he divined the importance of number as an aid to the construction of any representation of the conditions involved in the order of nature”⁶³¹. In line with Faivre’s argument of correspondences, according to Aristotle’s account in *Metaphysics*, V.986a⁶³², Pythagoreans believed “the whole heaven is *harmonia* and number”⁶³³ and noticed proportional relations between musical notes (*harmonia*) and their numerical representations. This view led Pythagoreans to reflect on these relations to seek correspondences between numbers, certain opposing pairs of forces, and the observable universe including the stars, the Moon, and the Sun⁶³⁴. Like many other views of Pythagoras, his numerical theory of the cosmos as the ordered universe was adopted by several subsequent theoreticians. Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BCE–50 CE) and Aristobulus the Peripatetic (c. 181–124 BCE) employed his number theory to interpret the biblical creation model in a Jewish setting⁶³⁵. Some centuries later, the influence of Pythagorean numerology can also be found in the esotericised Jewish *kabbalah* tradition. In a Christian context, Augustine was as well “exceptionally fond of the allegorical interpretation of Biblical numbers by reference to Pythagorean ideas”⁶³⁶. The attempts of both philosophers and theologians indicate how Pythagoras influenced certain theological discourses. The famous Pythagorean mathematical theorem, $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$, was believed to be Pythagoras’ discovery following his search for correspondences, which, in fact, had already been in use among the Bab-

⁶²⁸ This is still a disputed view, however, numerous scholars and historians referred to Pythagoras as the first philosopher who used the term philosophy in his views. For more information and detailed discussions, see: Cicero, M. Tullius: “Tusculan Disputations”, in: Yonge, D. Charles (trans.), *Cicero’s Tusculan Disputations. Also, Treatises on the Nature of the Gods, and on the Commonwealth*, New York: Harper and Brothers 1877, p. 166; Laërtius, Diogenes: “Book I: Prologue”, in: Hicks, R. Drew (trans.), *Lives of Eminent Philosophers in Two Volumes*, Vol. 1, London: William Heinemann 1925, p. 13; Zhmud, Leonid: *Wissenschaft, Philosophie und Religion im frühen Pythagoreanismus*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag 1997, pp. 290–292; Kalogerakos, G. Ioannis: *Seele und Unsterblichkeit. Untersuchungen zur Vorsokratik bis Empedokles*, Stuttgart / Leipzig: B. G. Teubner 1996, pp. 140–141; Burkert, Walter: “Platon oder Pythagoras? Zum Ursprung des Wortes ‘Philosophie’”, in: *Hermes*, 88, 1960, pp. 159–177.

⁶²⁹ Kotzia, 2007, p. 1093.

⁶³⁰ Livingstone, David: *The Dying God. The Hidden History of Western Civilization*, New York: Writers Club Press 2002, p. 132.

⁶³¹ Whitehead, N. Alfred: *Science and the Modern World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1932, p. 35.

⁶³² Ross, D. William: *Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, Vol. 1, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1924, p. 143.

⁶³³ Quoted from: Rocconi, Eleonora: “Music and the Soul”, in: Wolfsdorf, C. David (ed.), *Early Greek Ethics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2020, p. 617.

⁶³⁴ Vamvacas, J. Constantin: *The Founders of Western Thought. The Presocratics*, Dordrecht: Springer 2009, pp. 70–72.

⁶³⁵ Collins, 1983, p. 834

⁶³⁶ Kahn, 2001, p. 9.

ylonians and Indians long before Pythagoras' time⁶³⁷. Considering his alleged travels⁶³⁸ and a long period of stay in Egypt and Babylonia, where he was believed to have received his education, several scholars assumed that he learned this formula in Egypt⁶³⁹.

The other group of opinions within the Pythagorean discourse that finds expressions in various esoteric systems is the (immortal) nature of the soul, its relation to the body, and its corporeal as well as incorporeal capabilities. Understanding the soul immortal enables it to possess a transcendental nature and hence, in Pythagorean view, the ability to migrate between material and mortal beings. This journey of the soul is usually denoted as transmigration, *metempsychosis* (μετεμψύχωσις), or reincarnation. In the Pythagorean discourse, the soul's migration is not only limited to human bodies as it can migrate into all living beings⁶⁴⁰. In relation to this, another frequently resonating Pythagorean perspective among the subsequent traditions was the understanding of this immortal soul to be imprisoned and limited by the material body, which was then associated with the idea of the soul losing its primordial purity simply by existing in a body. In the Pythagorean formulation of *metempsychosis*⁶⁴¹, the impure soul is supposed to undergo a series of knowledge-granting reincarnations for purification, enlightenment, and immortality⁶⁴², a paradigm that manifests itself, as shown above, in Gnostic and esoteric streams in a variety of forms.

5.4.2 Parmenides' Theory of "All is One"

Pythagoras' understanding of "all things are numbers" and the soul's ability to migrate into all living beings has intriguing parallels with his contemporary philosopher Parmenides'

⁶³⁷ Burkert, 1972, pp. 429, 462; Riedweg, Christoph: *Pythagoras. His Life, Teachings, and Influence*, New York: Cornell University Press 2005, p. 27.

⁶³⁸ Fowden, 1986, p. 213.

⁶³⁹ Gregory, Andrew: "The Pythagoreans. Number and Numerology", in: Lawrence, Snezana / McCartney, Mark (eds.), *Mathematicians and their Gods. Interactions between Mathematics and Religious Beliefs*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2015, pp. 21–50/22–23; Riedweg, 2005, pp. 7–8.

⁶⁴⁰ This is also because it is believed that Pythagoras and his followers conducted a vegetarian lifestyle. How strictly, is still a matter of dispute. See: Kahn, 2001, p. 9.

⁶⁴¹ Attribution of *metempsychosis* to Pythagoras is still open to debate. Some authors argued that it was Pherekydes of Syros (c. 580–520 BCE) who first dealt with the concept. However, evidence at hand suggests that Pythagoras provided important views on the condition of the soul after death which had associations with the concept of *metempsychosis*. For more information, see: Schibli, S. Hermann: *Pherekydes of Syros*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2001; Huffman, Carl: "Pythagoras", in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2018 Edition), 23 February 2005, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/pythagoras/>>, last accessed 13 January 2022; Gregory, 2015, pp. 24–25.

⁶⁴² Gökdoğan, D. Melek: "Pisagor", in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 34, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2007, pp. 292–293/292.

(c. 515 BCE, fl. 475 BCE) discourses and his monist⁶⁴³ formulation of “all together, one, indivisible” (ἐπεὶ νῦν ἐστὶν ὁμοῦ πάν ἓν, συνεχές)⁶⁴⁴. Parmenides’ views have been resonating in diverse religious and philosophical discourses⁶⁴⁵. Both Parmenides and Pythagoras have been studied thoroughly, through intermediaries’ interpretations, by nearly all Gnostic, esoteric, and alchemical circles. A popular motto, “all is one” or “one is all” (ἐν τὸ πάν, *hen to pān*) was presumably derived from Parmenides’ and Pythagoras’ philosophical discourses as it directly refers to the core of their doctrines. Furthermore, in a passage from Parmenides’ fragmentary poem, *On Nature*—opposing Heraclitus’ (c. 535–475 BCE) famous river analogy—he writes that “it is indifference to me whence I begin, for to that place I shall come back again”⁶⁴⁶. This passage has also been repeatedly reinterpreted in various relevant esoteric circles. The famous symbol or emblem of *ouroboros* (οὐροβόρος), a snake, serpent, or dragon devouring its own tail for rebirth, has been used for multiple millennia to express Parmenides’ understanding of “all is one”⁶⁴⁷. According to Jung, who analyses the *ouroboros* symbol through his concept of

⁶⁴³ The monism of Parmenides has been subject to different opinions. While Guthrie argued a “strict monism” in Parmenides’ discourses, Curd suggested that they are in fact “predicational monism”. For detailed information, see: Guthrie, K. C. William: *A History of Greek Philosophy*, Vol. 2, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1965, pp. 15–16; Curd, K. Patricia: *The Legacy of Parmenides. Eleatic Monism and Later Socratic Thought*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1998, p. 66.

⁶⁴⁴ Coxon, H. Allan / McKirahan, D. Richard (eds.): *The Fragments of Parmenides*, Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing 2009, pp. 66–67.

⁶⁴⁵ Parmenides was also believed to be an adept of the Pythagorean school. His discussion, *On Nature*, especially in its section *Way of Truth* (*aletheia*, ἀλήθεια), about “what is, is” (real, truth) and “what is not, is not” (illusory, opinion) may have been used as a blueprint, for example, by Plato for his theory of Forms or the conception of the *Monad* (the One). Here, Parmenides makes a distinction between the appearance and the actuality of things. For him, the appearance of things is perceived through our senses leading only to opinion and therefore deceptive and misleading; the actuality of things (and events), however, requires additional qualities beyond human senses. This distinction was to be made by Parmenides because experiences that are thought to be actual may in fact or potentially be merely the appearances of something else. In Parmenides’ conception, the actuality of things is comprehended via reason (*logos*) which led to further distinction between the mind and the body. An identical system placing “the fundamental truth of reality beyond the senses” adopted not only almost all Gnostic, mystical, and esoteric discourses, but also found contemporary expressions in modern constructions such as the simulation hypothesis. Especially a passage from *On Nature* seems to have parallels with Plato’s perspective on the One, which reads “And let not habit do violence to you on the empirical way of exercising an unseeing eye and a noisy ear and tongue, but decide by discourse [a.n. or reason, since the Greek term used at this point is λόγος, a derivation of *logos*] the controversial test enjoined by me. Only one story of the way is still left: that a thing is. On this way there are very many signs: that Being is ungenerated and imperishable, entire, unique, unmoved and perfect [...] all together, one, indivisible”. See: Smith, William (ed.): *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, Vol. 3, London: Taylor, Walton, and Maberly Publishing 1849, p. 124; Coxon / McKirahan, 2009, pp. 62–67.

⁶⁴⁶ Coxon / McKirahan, 2009, pp. 54–55.

⁶⁴⁷ Even though it is not directly related to this study, the French composer Guillaume de Machaut’s (1300–1377) palindromic poem and composition *Ma fin est mon commencement* (*My end is my beginning*) demonstrates a remarkable artistic expression of this idea. Possessing features of “cryptic writing”, “a union of contrary things”, simultaneous concealment and revelation of meaning, and the structural form both of its text and musical composition, Machaut’s work implies intriguing correspondences with the esoteric aspects of Parmenides’ discourses mentioned above. Moreover, a depiction of a kind of circling dragon in the margins of the piece’s notation (Manuscript A, fr. 1584, 480r) strengthens Machaut’s purposeful reference to *ouroboros*. See: Toulet-Cerquiglini, Jacqueline: “‘Ma fin est mon commencement’. The Essence of Poetry and Song in Guillaume de Machaut”, in: McGrady, Deborah / Bain, Jennifer (eds.), *A Companion to Guillaume de Machaut*, Leiden / Boston: Brill 2012,

archetypes, “in the age-old image of uroboros lies the thought of devouring oneself and turning oneself into a circulatory process, for it was clear to the more astute alchemists that *prima materia* of the art was man himself”⁶⁴⁸. At this point, Jung’s references to alchemy and *prima materia* require further explanation as their implications are strictly relevant to fundamental esoteric discourses.

5.5 Alchemy

Based on the idea of a possibility of transformation or transmutation between certain materials, alchemy as a pseudo- or a protoscience⁶⁴⁹ incorporates a combination of religious and philosophical discourses⁶⁵⁰. While its initial application areas were chiefly technical such as medicine to find cures for diseases, discovering *elixirs* to prolong life, and metallurgy—namely, attempts to transmute base metals into precious ones—throughout time alchemy took the shape of an applied esoteric discourse aiming at a spiritual transformation through specific practices, collectively called “creative activity (*opus*)”⁶⁵¹. In this respect, the act of creating the alchemical substance known as the philosopher’s stone (Lat. *lapis philosophorum*) from a quintessential “catalyst”⁶⁵², *prima materia*, is known as *magnum opus* (the great work) in alchemy. Alchemists reflected the idea of spiritual transformation in the process of creating the philosopher’s stone. In fact, this stone is merely a symbolic expression used to denote self-perfection by means of transmutation. Just like the stone is believed to turn base metals into gold, symbolically it, or the conducted procedures to acquire it (*magnum opus*), perfects the soul of the performer. During this alchemical process of transformation, Holmyard argues, “it is the only

pp. 69–78/73–74; Bain, Jennifer: “‘...et mon commencement ma fin’. Genre and Machaut’s Musical Language in His Secular Songs”, in: McGrady, Deborah / Bain, Jennifer (eds.), *A Companion to Guillaume de Machaut*, Leiden / Boston: Brill 2012, pp. 79–101/80–82.

⁶⁴⁸ Jung, C. Gustav: “Rex and Regina”, in: Adler, Gerhard / Hull, F. C. Richard (eds.), *Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, Vol. 14, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1970, pp. 258–381/365.

⁶⁴⁹ Pagel, Walter: *The Smiling Spleen. Paracelsianism in Storm and Stress*, Basel: Karger 1984, pp. 97–142; Hanen, P. Marsha / Osler, J. Margaret / Weyant, G. Robert (eds.): *Science, Pseudo-science and Society*, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press 1980.

⁶⁵⁰ Aristotelian physics and Empedoclean theory of four roots, *rhizōmata*, (fire, air, water, earth), for example, seem to reverberate in alchemy. Aristotle’s understanding of the four qualities (coldness, hotness, dryness, moistness) of metals is adopted by alchemists, who attempted to produce a perfect metal by balancing these qualities. Principe additionally highlights Plato’s and the Stoics’ influence on certain alchemists such as Bolos, Olympiodoros and Stephanos of Alexandria. See: Lindsay, Jack: *The Origins of Alchemy in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, London: Muller 1970, pp. 16–17, 22–23; Principe, M. Lawrence: *The Secrets of Alchemy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2013, pp. 24–25; Bogdan, 2007, p. 114.

⁶⁵¹ Pereira, Michela: “Alchemy”, in: Craig, Edward (ed.), *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, London / New York: Routledge 2005, pp. 11–12/11.

⁶⁵² Read, 1995, p. 6.

‘form’ that alters, the prime matter of which the elements are made never changes, however diverse and numerous the changes of form may be”⁶⁵³.

Scholars agree that before the composition of the earliest alchemical manuscripts in Greco-Roman Egypt around the first centuries CE, there had been expertise in different areas relevant to alchemy⁶⁵⁴. In time, merely scientific or technological efforts to transform matters into each other must have been reinterpreted and metaphorically applied to humans, turning alchemy into a salvific process of purifying the human soul from diseases caused by the matter or “transform[ing] sinful man into [a] perfect being through prayer”⁶⁵⁵. What the Hellenistic Egypt, where the practice gained its initial recognition, or scholars thereof did, was to provide a philosophical and natural scientific background, in other words, a theory and a metaphysical perspective to a pre-existent practice nourished from the discourses of the day. Along with the practices such as astrology, divination, fortune-telling, and magic, alchemists were fundamentally concerned with assumed correspondences between humans and the universe as well as the ways to manipulate them for different ends.

The etymology of the term alchemy itself demonstrates a close approximation of various trends encountered in “cosmopolitan Hellenistic culture”⁶⁵⁶ of Egypt and even beyond, housing a combination of Greek, Arabic, and Egyptian-Coptic elements. The first two letters of the word alchemy are believed to be relatively a recent neologism or addition of the Arabic definite article (*al-*) to the practice of “*chemy*” (chemistry) through a process of Arabization⁶⁵⁷. The latter part might have been derived either from the Greek *cheō* or *khēmeia* (χημεία)⁶⁵⁸ meaning “to melt or fuse”⁶⁵⁹, the Egyptian term *kēme* or chem “black soil”⁶⁶⁰, or from the Coptic word *khēme*⁶⁶¹. Apart from the diverse possibilities for its etymology, the origins of alchemy are similarly still a matter of dispute. Several regions including Mesopotamia, India, and China have been mentioned in the literature as the potential origins of the practice. Whereas Read argues that alchemy originated in “Mesopotamia, whence it spread westwards to Egypt and Greece, and eastwards along the caravan routes to India and China”⁶⁶², Principe points to

⁶⁵³ Holmyard, E. John: *Alchemy*, Middlesex: Penguin Books 1957, p. 20.

⁶⁵⁴ Principe, 2013, p. 9; Holmyard, 1957, pp. 17–18.

⁶⁵⁵ Holmyard, 1957, p. 14.

⁶⁵⁶ Goodrick-Clarke, 2008, p. 13.

⁶⁵⁷ Lindsay, 1970, p. 68.

⁶⁵⁸ Ross, M. Hugh: “Alchemy”, in: Chisholm, Hugh (ed.), *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. 1, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1911, p. 519.

⁶⁵⁹ Principe, 2013, pp. 23–24.

⁶⁶⁰ Holmyard, 1957, p. 17.

⁶⁶¹ Principe, 2013, p. 23; Lindsay, 1970, pp. 68–89.

⁶⁶² Read, John: *From Alchemy to Chemistry*, New York: Dover Publications 1995, p. 12.

Greece as the origin of the practice⁶⁶³. Together with its origin theories referring to multiple regions, the later forms alchemy took, especially in Alexandria, and its inclusion of specific discourses from “Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, and Christianity”⁶⁶⁴, indicate alchemy’s complex syncretistic structure and diverse content. As we learn from Zosimus of Panopolis (c. 300 CE), also known as Zosimus the Alchemist, the practice of alchemy has often been associated with Babylonian (or Chaldean) astrology⁶⁶⁵ and magic (*magoi*)⁶⁶⁶, but also with *gnosis* regarding its recognition as “inner revelation or enlightenment [...] in Hellenistic and western practices”⁶⁶⁷. The important point is that each of these associated practices and discourses possessed its own syncretistic features that a magician or an astrologer was never merely performing magic or observing planets in isolation. They strategically combined relevant religious, philosophical, and scientific theories available along with elements from “folklore, mythology, [...] and other wide fields of human imagination and experience”⁶⁶⁸, whose definitional divisions in the ancient Mesopotamia and Mediterranean antiquity possibly had not been as clear as today.

According to Holmyard, mathematical and geometrical structures that are inherently present in astrological investigations entailed “the use of mystic numbers such as magic squares”⁶⁶⁹ in interpreting planetary relations in the macrocosm and their correspondences in the microcosm, giving rise to an “esoteric numerology”. As discussed above, this esotericised interpretation of astrology and numbers had been adopted by the subsequent astrologers, magicians, and alchemists of the classical and late antiquity through primarily Pythagoras. Such encounters possibly had taken place in and around Egypt, largely following the foundation of the city of Alexandria by Alexander III “the Great” (356–323 BCE) in c. 331 BCE. The Hellenic dynamism created by the growth of Alexandria attracted an abundant number of wisdom-seekers from all disciplines and regions. The farther Alexander’s invasion routes expanded in his obsessive pursuit of the Achaemenid King of Persia, Darius III (c. 380–330 BCE), the more composite Alexandria had become as masses of people flowed into this flourishing city from the lands Alexander had invaded.

⁶⁶³ Principe, 2013, p. 24.

⁶⁶⁴ Linden, J. Stanton: *Darke Hieroglyphicks. Alchemy in English Literature from Chaucer to the Restoration*, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky 1996, p. 8.

⁶⁶⁵ Holmyard, 1957, p. 18; Lindsay, 1970, pp. 32, 54.

⁶⁶⁶ Dufault, Olivier: *Early Greek Alchemy, Patronage and Innovation in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley: California Classical Studies 2019.

⁶⁶⁷ Sheppard, J. Harry: “European Alchemy in the Context of a Universal Definition”, in: Meinel, Christoph (ed.), *Die Alchemie in der europäischen Kultur- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz 1986, pp. 13–18/16–17.

⁶⁶⁸ Read, 1995, p. 14.

⁶⁶⁹ Holmyard, 1957, p. 18.

Read, however, extends the history of alchemy as old as the sixth century BCE and shifts attention to another region as the possible origin of the practice. Harran as a historical city lies at the border of modern Turkey and Syria, where “there was a great intermingling of the natural philosophy of Persia, Syria, and Greece”⁶⁷⁰. The inhabitants of the city were particularly qualified in diverse alchemy-related practices including metallurgy, early chemistry, astrology, talisman-making, and magic as part of their divine services⁶⁷¹. Evidence at hand demonstrates that following Alexander’s conquest of the region, the city of Harran became a colony of Greek and Roman administrations⁶⁷² and turned into an important centre of knowledge drawing on both ancient Mesopotamian and recently introduced Greek discourses from Alexandria. The specific role Harran played in the continuity of wisdom-related discourses between Greek and Arabic conceptions will be further elaborated in the following chapters.

5.6 Hermes Trismegistus

The alchemy of the common era contained a mythological dimension in which Hermes Trismegistus has gradually become the most prominent figure over time. Being a combination of the Egyptian god *Thoth*—“patron of magic”⁶⁷³ and “initiator into the mysteries of the divine science and wisdom”⁶⁷⁴—with the Greek equivalent *Hermes*⁶⁷⁵, this unifying figure has been acknowledged by numerous esoteric traditions for his prophetic attributes and his assumed possession of divine wisdom. In the context of *Hermetica*, a collection of manuscripts written in Greek in Alexandria whose authorship often attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, Fowden points to the presence of a “cultural continuity”⁶⁷⁶ among Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman applications of relevant practices including alchemy, magic, and astrology. Faivre too refers to “an esoteric literature in Greek, particularly astrological, ascribed to Hermes”⁶⁷⁷ as early as the third century BCE in Egypt. From around the same period, the name Hermes Trismegistus (or *Thoth*) appeared on the Rosetta Stone (196 BCE), a decree written in three different scripts (hieroglyphic, Demotic, and ancient Greek) as “great, great, great” (thrice great, *trismegistus*),

⁶⁷⁰ Read, 1995, p. 13.

⁶⁷¹ Gündüz, Şinasi: “Harrânîler”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 16, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1997, pp. 240–242/241.

⁶⁷² Green, M. Tamara: *The City of the Moon God. Religious Traditions of Harran*, Leiden: Brill 1992, pp. 44–93.

⁶⁷³ Fowden, 1986, pp. 65–66.

⁶⁷⁴ Faivre, 1995, p. 16.

⁶⁷⁵ For a detailed survey of the Greek and Egyptian backgrounds of Hermes Trismegistus, see: Bull, H. Christian: *The Tradition of Hermes Trismegistus. The Egyptian Priestly Figure as a Teacher of Hellenized Wisdom*, Leiden: Brill 2018, pp. 33–96.

⁶⁷⁶ Fowden, 1986, pp. 65–68.

⁶⁷⁷ Faivre, 1995, p. 60.

an epithet used to address both *Hermes* and *Thoth*. According to Von Stuckrad, all the texts ascribed to Hermes (including the *Corpus Hermeticum*) “share the assumption of *sympathy*”⁶⁷⁸, a concept employed to point out the alleged philosophical and alchemical correspondences between macrocosm and microcosm. Among the syncretistic constituents of the Hermetic texts that were discovered in the Nag Hammadi Library, especially *Poimandres* and *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth*, a strong Gnostic stream within this form of Hermeticism is clearly traceable.

The Gnostic narrative in *Poimandres* contains specific themes including negative views on the material human body, the importance of salvific knowledge leading to spiritual illumination, the soul possessing a divine essence or spark, and the soul’s fall and return to the divine realm⁶⁷⁹. The cyclic process the soul must undergo to reach its divine essence in the Gnostic and Neoplatonic narratives has considerable correspondences with certain esoteric and alchemical discourses. According to these discourses, there is a shared essence of all beings (“all is one”); its hidden knowledge can only be revealed through religio-philosophical mental practices and only to an elite group of seekers after diverse initiatory stages. One specific symbol, *ouroboros*, has been employed by diverse esoteric, philosophical, religious, and alchemical groups favouring an understanding of the human soul can be freed from the body (self or ego). The body attaches the soul to the material realm through desires. Only by freeing the self from the body (or self from the self), as *ouroboros* symbolizes in a manner of self-devouring, the soul can transfigure itself and migrate to the divine realm. Jung summarizes all these correlations between esoteric, alchemical, and religious discourses under the rubric of *prima materia* and writes that “in the physiological and psychological drama of return to the *prima materia*, the death that must be undergone if a man is to get back to the original condition of the simple elements and attain the incorrupt nature of the pre-worldly paradise”⁶⁸⁰.

5.7 Ouroboros

The *ouroboros* was originally an Egyptian symbol and its earliest depiction at hand was discovered in Tutankhamun’s (c. 1342–1325 BCE) tomb, determining its date of production to the fourteenth century BCE (Figure 4). According to Reemes, in the Egyptian conception, it

⁶⁷⁸ Von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 19.

⁶⁷⁹ Fowden, 1986, pp. 104–106; Mahé, Jean-Pierre / Meyer, Marvin: “The Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth”, in: Meyer, Marvin (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, New York: HarperOne 2007, pp. 409–418/410–412.

⁶⁸⁰ Jung, C. Gustav: “The Personification of the Opposites”, in: Adler, Gerhard / Hull, F. C. Richard (eds.), *Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, Vol. 14, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1970, pp. 88–257/99.

symbolizes “the recurrent solar year”⁶⁸¹ and only after a process of *interpretatio græca* this Egyptian application transform into Greek *ouroboros*⁶⁸². The Greek versions of this symbol, possibly through the intermediary of Pythagoras⁶⁸³ and Plato⁶⁸⁴, were then adopted by the later Gnostic, Hermetic, magical, and alchemical systems mainly with reference to the cycle of life, the transfiguration of the self, and transmigration of souls. On the other hand, Schweizer defined the Egyptian *ouroboros* as a protective being against chaos⁶⁸⁵ and both the Egyptian and Greek *ouroboros* as “a symbol of regeneration”⁶⁸⁶. Assmann also correspondingly believed *ouroboros* to “refer to the mystery of cyclical time, which runs back in itself”⁶⁸⁷.



Figure 4: Ouroboros encircling Tutankhamun. The Egyptian Museum, Cairo⁶⁸⁸.

One of the most popularly known depictions of the *ouroboros*, which intriguingly has the motto “*ἓν τὸ πᾶν*” (all is one) at the very centre (Figure 5), appears in an alchemical work

⁶⁸¹ Reemes, D. Michael: *The Egyptian Ouroboros. An Iconological and Theological Study*, Dissertation, University of California, 2015, p. ii.

⁶⁸² Reemes, 2015, p. 4.

⁶⁸³ Kahn, 2001, p. 4.

⁶⁸⁴ Plato, *Timaeus*, 33b-d.

⁶⁸⁵ Even though there are striking parallels, according to Assmann, the idea of chaos in Egyptian and Greek perceptions is different. He writes, “unlike most other cosmogonic myths, the Egyptian myth of the origin of the world does not conceive of chaos as a preexistent state to be replaced by cosmos. There is no idea of a cosmogonic fight like in Babylonian mythology and many other creation myths, of overcoming the powers of chaos by the powers of order”. See: Assmann, Jan: “Ouroboros. The Ancient Egyptian Myth of the Journey of the Sun”, in: *Aegyptiaca*, 4, 2019, pp. 19–32/21.

⁶⁸⁶ Schweizer, Andreas: *The Sungod's Journey through the Netherworld. Reading the Ancient Egyptian Amduat*, Ithaca / London: Cornell University Press 1994, p. 218.

⁶⁸⁷ Assmann, Jan: “Ouroboros. Der altägyptische Mythos vom Sonnenlauf”, in: Beil, Ralf (ed.), *Never ending stories. Der Loop in Kunst, Film, Architektur, Musik, Literatur und Kunstgeschichte*, Berlin: Hatje Cantz 2017, pp. 58–63/61.

⁶⁸⁸ Taken from Assmann, 2019, p. 25.

called *Chrysopoeia*⁶⁸⁹ and attributed to Cleopatra the Alchemist (c. the third century CE). According to Principe, this motto “directs us toward ancient Greek philosophical notions about a single material that serves as the underlying substrate for all substances”⁶⁹⁰ and its alchemical interpretations in the upcoming centuries are the practical and applied aspects of the theory. Often formulated as *prima materia* or *materia prima*, this substance was believed to be derived from Aristotle’s *prōton hylē*⁶⁹¹ (*prōte hulē*)⁶⁹². As mentioned above, the initial production of this idea dates even back to former pre-Socratic philosophers’ discourses on the “first principle” (*arche*), or the primitive element about which Heraclitus, Thales, Anaximenes, and Xenophanes had differing opinions. Von Lippmann correlates this unifying principle of all things with *logoi spermatikoi* (λόγοι σπερματικοί), “seminal logos”⁶⁹³, or “seed force”⁶⁹⁴, introduced by the Stoics to define the “generative principle”⁶⁹⁵ of *cosmos*⁶⁹⁶. Von Stuckrad additionally refers to how the idea of *prima materia* was reinterpreted in the Protestant setting of the seventeenth century Europe as *ultima materia* generating the philosopher’s stone, which “was equated with Christ as the archetype of a ‘purified’ life principle being resurrected from death”⁶⁹⁷.

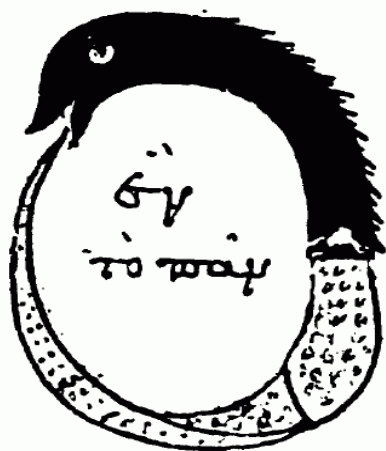


Figure 5: Ouroboros as depicted in *Chrysopoeia* and reproduced in Codex Marcianus 299⁶⁹⁸.

⁶⁸⁹ The term *chrysopoeia* (χρυσοποιία) is widely used in alchemy. It refers to a process of, allegedly, transmuting base metals into gold.

⁶⁹⁰ Principe, 2013, p. 26.

⁶⁹¹ Principe, 2013, pp. 14, 109; Lindsay, 1970, p. 16.

⁶⁹² Dufault, Olivier: “Transmutation Theory in the Greek Alchemical Corpus”, in: *Ambix*, 62/3, 2015, pp. 215–244/218.

⁶⁹³ Graham, 2006, p. 569.

⁶⁹⁴ Hillar, Marian: *From Logos to Trinity. The Evolution of Religious Beliefs from Pythagoras to Tertullian*, New York: Cambridge University Press 2012, p. 145.

⁶⁹⁵ Jeffrey, L. David: *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1992, p. 459; Peters, 1967, p. 110.

⁶⁹⁶ Von Lippmann, O. Edmund: *Entstehung und Ausbreitung der Alchemie*, Berlin: Springer 1919, p. 324.

⁶⁹⁷ Von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 95.

⁶⁹⁸ Reemes, 2015, p. 415, Figure 125.

5.8 Magic

Along with the production of Hermes Trismegistus and the symbol of the *ouroboros*, another manifestation of the *interpretatio græca* is a collection of texts known as the *Greek Magical Papyri*, (Lat. *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, PGM). Its composition covers a long period (sometime between the second century BCE to the fifth century CE) and the multiple authors of it were believed to have resided in the Graeco-Roman Egypt, presumably in Alexandria. Accommodating a wide variety of “magical processes, exorcisms, invocations, and methods of securing control over supernatural forces”⁶⁹⁹—along with incantations, rituals, and esoteric formulae written in ancient Greek, Coptic, and Demotic languages—the contents of the PGM display a combination of discourses, which Betz defines as “syncretism, [a.n. which] is more than a mixture of diverse elements from Egyptian, Greek, Babylonian, and Jewish religion, with a few sprinkles of Christianity”⁷⁰⁰. Due to the repressions orchestrated by the Roman and Christian authorities, the authors of the PGM often warn the reader to maintain secrecy about the contents of the text. A passage from the PGM, IV.850-895, demonstrates not only a clear request for secrecy, but also both an imitation of the biblical figure King Solomon’s acquisition of wisdom and a “syncretism” of Greek, Egyptian, and Hebrew traditions in the persona of Hermes Trismegistus:

“I beseech you by the holy gods and the heavenly gods not to tell anyone the methods of Solomon [...] Hear me, my holy voice, because I invoke your holy names, and reveal to me, what I wish for [...] because I say your names, which the three times greatest Hermès wrote with hieroglyphic letters in Heliopolis”⁷⁰¹

King Solomon is esteemed in the Hebrew Old Testament, especially in terms of the wisdom bestowed to him by God. In a passage of *1 Kings* 3:12, God grants what King Solomon had wished in the following words:

“I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart”⁷⁰²

⁶⁹⁹ Nock, D. Arthur: “Greek Magical Papyri”, in: *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 15/3-4, 1929, pp. 219–235/219.

⁷⁰⁰ Betz, D. Hans (ed.): *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation Including the Demotic Spells*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1986, p. xlv.

⁷⁰¹ Preisendanz, Karl / Henrichs, Albert (trans.): *Papyri Graecae Magicae. Die Griechischen Zauberpapyri*, München / Leipzig: Saur 2001, p. 103.

⁷⁰² *1 Kings* 3:12, in: NIV, 2001, p. 185.

“דַּע, עֲשֵׂיתִי כְדַכְרֵיךָ הַגְּדֹלָה נִתְּנִי לְךָ לֵב חָכָם”⁷⁰³

“ἰδοὺ πεποίηκα τὸ ῥῆμά σου· ἰδοὺ δέδωκά σοι καρδίαν φρονίμην καὶ σοφίην”⁷⁰⁴

As seen in the passages above, the authors (or the magicians) of the PGM replicate a chapter of this biblical story. However, a nuance that the subject of invocations in the passage from the PGM is not the Judaic biblical God *Yahweh*, but the Egyptian god *Osiris*. Another important correlation between the Old Testament and the PGM relevant to this study reveals itself in the word “wise” quoted above. In the Biblical passage, the word wisdom is derived from the Hebrew root *hkm* and is composed as חָכָם (*hă-kam*). As this study proposes, the root *hkm* had been repeatedly translated, speculated, and reinterpreted by innumerable theologians, philosophers, scientists, and magicians of classical and late antiquity, including the authors of the PGM, who possessed a broad variety of backgrounds. Nevertheless, all these different profiles regularly employed the Greek philosophical term *sophia*, with its derivations, for the translation of the Hebrew root *hkm*. Even though in the passage quoted from the PGM the word wisdom does not appear and therefore does not allow us to draw a direct association, in a German version translated by Preisendanz and Henrichs, the word for wisdom, *Weisheit*, appears twice. In both instances the original Coptic PGM version *Coφία*, obviously, a derivation of *sophia*, was employed for its translation⁷⁰⁵. In both contexts where *Coφία* was written, it referred to the wisdom of an absolute deity. At least in one of these references, the deity was *Iao*⁷⁰⁶ (or *Iao*), who was “originally derived from the name of the Hebrew god YHWH”⁷⁰⁷ and was frequently addressed in the magic manuscripts. This demonstrates not only a large scale of incorporation of Jewish practices and discourses but also, when necessary, employment of their God in esotericised magical practices.

5.9 Recognition of Moses

Another influential figure assimilated from the Hebrew world into the relevant esoteric discourses of the common era was the Abrahamic prophet, Moses. As Droge writes, the authors

⁷⁰³ *1 Kings* 3:12, in: WLC, 2005, p. 281.

⁷⁰⁴ Since the authors of the *Septuagint* edited, translated, and organized certain manuscripts differently, *1 Kings* (מלכים א) of the Hebrew Old Testament, for example, became ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΩΝ Γ (3 *Basileiōn*, 3 *Kings*) in the *Septuagint* translation. The source of the quote: Swete, H. Barclay (ed.): *The Old Testament in Greek According to the Septuagint*, Vol. 1, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1887, p. 679.

⁷⁰⁵ Preisendanz / Henrichs, 2001, pp. 12–13, 112–113.

⁷⁰⁶ Preisendanz / Henrichs, 2001, pp. 112–113.

⁷⁰⁷ Betz, 1986, p. 335.

of the Hellenistic era “sought to demonstrate the superiority of their own cultural tradition by asserting its chronological priority”⁷⁰⁸. Hanegraaff and Droge underline that this was a crucial problem to solve for the newly emerging Christianity. In an environment where “legitimacy conferred by Tradition”⁷⁰⁹, Christian apologists relied on the available Hebrew tradition and its wise figure, Moses. Considering Christianity was initially a sect of Judaism, this strategy must have seemed appropriate.

Eventually, the discussions developed around the ancient wisdom and its possessors shaped the list of historical wise sages provided above by Hanegraaff. Several philosophers and theologians of the Hellenistic period refuted each other concerning their claims for ancient wisdom and its possessors. While Hecataeus of Abdera (fl. fourth century BCE), Celsus (fl. 175 CE), Numenius of Apamea, and Porphyry were on the side of the pagan philosophers, Justin Martyr (c. 100–165 CE), Clement of Alexandria, and Origen were on the opposing side of the Christian apologists. All these figures defended their views on the relation of Moses with the genealogy of the wisdom tradition in varying densities. According to Jaeger, Hecataeus was the first Greek philosopher to refer to Moses as the possessor of ancient, godly wisdom⁷¹⁰, whose input was then adopted by numerous subsequent philosophers and theologians as far as they are concerned with the genealogy of the ancient wisdom. Celsus, who orchestrated “the first systematic pagan attack on Christianity”⁷¹¹, counted Egyptian, Syrian, Indian, and Persian sages in his genealogy, but standing at odds with his contemporaries, did not recognize Moses as wise, but rather held Moses guilty for “corrupting”⁷¹² the ancient wisdom. The Christian apologists utilized the Greek genealogy of wisdom to reach Moses, but with differing opinions. Justin Martyr, in his *First Apology on Behalf of Christians*, 59.1-6, connected Plato’s wisdom about the creation that the world was made from a “formless matter” with that of Moses’ divine wisdom and the creation narrative in the Hebrew Old Testament⁷¹³. According to Justin, Jesus was the last member of this genealogy, who reinstated the neglected ancient wisdom. The same view was reframed by Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE), who, in his *Retractationes*, argued:

⁷⁰⁸ Droge, J. Arthur: *Homer or Moses? Early Christian Interpretations of the History of Culture*, Dissertation, University of Chicago 1984, 2015, p. 6. According to Idel’s account, the same attitude was also present among the Jewish groups that inhabited Spain before their expulsion by the Alhambra Decree in 1492, which demonstrates the ongoing discussions about superiority. Idel, 1990, p. 165.

⁷⁰⁹ Hanegraaff, 2012, p. 18.

⁷¹⁰ Jaeger, Werner: “Greeks and Jews. The First Greek Records of Jewish Religion and Civilization”, in: *The Journal of Religion*, 18/2, 1938, pp. 127–143/136ff.

⁷¹¹ Hanegraaff, 2012, p. 22.

⁷¹² Hanegraaff, 2012, p. 23.

⁷¹³ Minns, Denis / Parvis, Paul (eds.): *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr. Apologies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009, p. 233.

“For the truth itself, which is now named the Christian religion, existed and was not missing among the ancients from the beginning of the human race, until Christ ‘came in the flesh’, from whom the true religion, which already existed, began to be called Christian”⁷¹⁴

Augustine’s argument above accords with Justin’s view about certain ancient pagan philosophers⁷¹⁵ and “barbarians” of the east possessing the divine wisdom⁷¹⁶. This view in turn made these possessors of wisdom “unconscious Christians”⁷¹⁷ since all wisdom allegedly came from the same original source. The inclusion of the genealogy of wisdom along with the Jewish prophet Moses into the Christian theological discourse provided Christian apologists with a religious and historical basis for their claims for authenticity. However, opinions about this inclusion from different traditions were diverse. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215 CE) maintained a significantly negative attitude toward the inclusion of the pagan Greek philosophers into the Christian wisdom tradition. Clement even accused Greek philosophers of stealing the wisdom of Moses and other ancient sages (Egyptians, Indians, Chaldeans, and Magi), while his contemporary Origen of Alexandria held a milder view and wrote that “the pagans may also have been inspired by God directly”⁷¹⁸. Though there was no consensus among philosophers and theologians of the Hellenistic era, their efforts to discover ancient wisdom and to develop ways to acquire it enabled them to produce the earliest examples of theoretical discourses of *prisca theologia*, *philosophia perennis*, and *pia philosophia*. These were then rediscovered by the Renaissance intellectuals and given their last form to serve their arguments. What primarily concerns this study is no matter what content had the philosophers’ and theologians’ genealogy of wisdom, they often ended up either with Moses or Hermes Trismegistus as the first divinely wise figure. Later, numerous Gnostic, esoteric, and magician groups with various backgrounds incorporated this genealogy of wisdom and attributed specific meanings to its members. At this point how the wisdom of Moses was conceptualized and perceived in the (religious) Hebrew wisdom tradition calls for further investigation to analyse its correspondences with the Greek

⁷¹⁴ Eller, F. Meredith: *The Retractationes of Saint Augustine*, Dissertation, Boston University, 1946, pp. 87–88.

⁷¹⁵ Minns / Parvis, 2009, p. 201.

⁷¹⁶ The point that takes attention here, as discussed above, is the Greek word employed by Justin Martyr to address this divine wisdom. He uses the masculine Greek noun *logos* (λόγος) instead of the feminine *sophia*, which is interpreted by modern scholars as a consequence of the efforts made by the early Christian theologians to associate the divine wisdom of Jesus, who was male, with a masculine word. This divine wisdom was often referred to in the Hebrew Old Testament with the feminine noun, *hokmāh*, which, from *Septuagint* to the Gnostic Nag Hammadi Library, especially the manuscript named the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*, has been consistently translated into Greek as *sophia*. With the coming of Jesus into the scene as a prophetic figure, a need to address his divine wisdom with a masculine term might have appeared. For a detailed discussion, see: Jobes, 2000, pp. 79–103; Waltke, 1995, pp. 191–204.

⁷¹⁷ Hanegraaff, 2012, pp. 21–22.

⁷¹⁸ Hanegraaff, 2012, p. 24.

philosophical and Christian theological wisdom conceptions. Moreover, following the end of late antiquity, numerous Muslim philosophers, thinkers, alchemists, and most importantly the scholars as well as the performers of *tasavvuf* have also been investigating a divine *hikmet* (*hkm*) derived from the Hebrew religious discourses. *Mutasavvife* sought the ways to acquire *hikmet* on their own terms with significant parallels to philosophical and theological discourses of the preceding traditions.

Such a continuity between diverse discourses and traditions based on the concept of wisdom implies that there has been significant contact between their carriers. From its earliest production around the third millennia BCE up to its most contemporary perceptions and applications today, the concept *hikmet* has been interpreted and reinterpreted unceasingly. An investigation of the history of *hikmet* hence requires the unavoidable inclusion of a wide range of discourses that emerged throughout history and their reinterpreted versions in large quantities. When addressing these contacts, even merely an episode of it, e.g., late antiquity in the Mediterranean region, the complex interrelations between them force us to employ a careful usage of the terms. Numerous scholars of history, religion, and philosophy asserted that the works produced during the classical and late antiquity in the Mediterranean region, whether religious, philosophical, or scientific, show significant characteristics of different socio-cultural backgrounds which some call syncretism and others cultural pluralism⁷¹⁹. Different actors of the period, who were at the same time functioning as fertilizers of syncretic discourses, often had encounters with each other and shared their perspectives. Bortolani correspondingly argues that the Hellenistic Mediterranean was a stage for numerous encounters producing religious, philosophical, and magical discourses, which “often appear to display a gradual rise in the incorporation of ‘foreign’ elements, i.e., elements of different cultural origin, whether limited to ‘foreign’ magical words or including ‘foreign’ deities, mythological references, ritual allusions, etc.”⁷²⁰. The actors of these exchanges, however, conceivably employed a selective method when incorporating elements from other traditions, which, by nature, are based on a personal

⁷¹⁹ The terminological lexicon of social sciences referring to the dynamics of cultural contact has been continuously criticized and restored. The variety of employed terms such as “melting pot”, “cultural appropriation”, “acculturation”, “pizza effect” etc. demonstrates that this legitimate criticism usually results in disagreements and neologism. The compound networks and dynamics of culture contact taking place in a form of pragmatic fragmentary incorporation of certain elements or discourses hence have been addressed variously by different academic trends and scholars. While Betz refers to the cultural encounters producing the PGM as syncretism, Bortolani et. al. “use the heuristic term ‘plurality’ complemented by the term ‘fusion’ [which can be applied] from phenomena such as simple borrowing, through advanced adaptation, up to complete assimilation or even distortion of origin and meaning”. Within this study, a selection of these terms is employed with regard to their relevancy and appropriateness. Bortolani, M. Ljuba et. al. (eds.): *Cultural Plurality in Ancient Magical Texts and Practices*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2019, pp. 2–3.

⁷²⁰ Bortolani et. al., 2019, p. 1.

interpretation. Indeed, to a certain extent, this interpretation was shaped by the traditions to which the actors claimed adherence or antipathy. As Kubik stresses, no one profile can represent the totality of their hosting cultural background and in relation to that such encounters of profiles with different backgrounds frequently allow the participants to share their perspectives only to a certain extent, leaving the recipient an enormous space for a selective interpretation. The authors or the performers of the PGM, for example, were a group of these actors of cultural exchange in antiquity who, in their efforts to manipulate natural and divine forces, were inevitably establishing contacts with both contemporary and historical discourses present in the Mediterranean basin. Some of these magicians were, in the words of Betz:

“A different type of magician, a type we know from the Greek religious milieu. This type of wandering craftsman seems keen to adopt and adapt every religious tradition that appeared useful to him, while the knowledge and understanding of what he adopted was characterized by a certain superficiality. This type of magician no longer understood the old languages, although he used remnants of them in transcription. He recited and used what must at one time have been metrically composed hymns; but he no longer recognized the meter, and he spoiled it when he inserted his own material. In the hands of magicians of this type, the gods from the various cults gradually merged, and as their natures became blurred, they often changed into completely different deities. For these magicians, there was no longer any cultural difference between the Egyptian and the Greek gods, or between them and the Jewish god and the Jewish angels; and even Jesus was occasionally assimilated into this truly ‘ecumenical’ religious syncretism of the Hellenistic world culture”⁷²¹

The importance of this magician class and their incorporation into the Christian religious narrative is most evidently present in the *Gospel of Matthew*, which tells us a story of three esteemed magicians addressed as the “wise men from the East” coming to visit Jesus in his cradle. Corresponding with Betz’s views above, Bohak argues that “in the Gospels’ world, as in that other contemporary Jews, the Persian Magi were the carriers of a hoary oriental wisdom”⁷²². Such inclusion of “foreign” characters into religious discourses was not a startling matter neither in the early centuries of the common era nor in the minds of Renaissance intellectuals with esoteric inclinations. Besides, numerous narratives produced by the authors of the canonical scriptures also contained several folkloric and mythological stories as well as their protagonists accorded to the religious doctrines in a reinterpreted form. Idel, for example, refers to a work written by a Jewish rabbi and kabbalist Yohanan Alemanno (c. 1435–1504) featuring Moses as a “*sefirotic* magician”⁷²³, who, in the words of Alemanno,

⁷²¹ Betz, 1986, p. xlvi.

⁷²² Bohak, Gideon: *Ancient Jewish Magic. A History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008, p. 80.

⁷²³ Idel, 1990, p. 170.

“Had precise knowledge of the spiritual world which is called the world of the *sefirot*, and divine names, or the world of letters. Moses knew how to direct his thoughts and prayers, so as to improve the divine efflux...By means of that efflux, he created anything he wished, just as God created the world by various emanations. Whenever he wanted to perform signs and wonders, Moses would pray and utter divine names, words and meditations...The emanations then descended into the world and created new supernatural things”⁷²⁴

5.10 Kabbalah

Moses, with his God-given wisdom, “magic treatises [...], chemical works”⁷²⁵, and prophetic features, “was the most sublime mystic. He encountered God ‘face to face’ and longed to experience God as no one ever had”⁷²⁶. Therefore, he has also been regarded highly in Jewish *Cabala* or *Kabbalah* (קַבְּבָלָה), a Hebrew term literally meaning “received tradition” and pointing out an “esoteric or mystic doctrine concerning God and the universe”⁷²⁷. The term Kabbalah usually refers to a rise of Jewish religious trend orbiting around several manuscripts composed during the late Middle Ages and Renaissance in southwestern Europe (Spain and France). Scholars differentiate three aspects of Kabbalah as theosophical/theurgic tradition of theoretical Kabbalah, the meditative tradition of ecstatic Kabbalah focusing on the mystical union, and magico-talismanic practical Kabbalah⁷²⁸. Demonstrating its syncretistic construction, at least in its written forms following the twelfth century, this multi-layered structure of Kabbalah with practical, theoretical, and religious bifurcations, incorporates various concepts and paradigms from various relevant sources.

In its essence, Kabbalah is a product of Judaism, yet it also demonstrates non-Jewish philosophical, scientific, and occasionally magical characteristics. It houses both theoretical (or speculative⁷²⁹) and practical components such as “ritualistic, mystical, and ascetic elements”⁷³⁰, which were believed to share their content with other esotericised discourses. Especially the practical Kabbalah refers to the inclusion of theurgy, (white) magic, alchemy, amulets, divina-

⁷²⁴ Quoted by: Idel, 1990, p. 170.

⁷²⁵ Patai, Raphael: *The Jewish Alchemists. A History and Source Book*, Princeton / New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1994, p. 12.

⁷²⁶ Verman, Mark: *The Books of Contemplation. Medieval Jewish Mystical Sources*, Albany: SUNY Press 1992, p. 5.

⁷²⁷ Kaufmann, Kohler / Ginzberg, Louis: “Cabala”, in: Singer, Isidore (ed.), *The Jewish Encyclopedia. A descriptive record of the history, religion, literature, and customs of the Jewish people from the earliest times*, Vol. 3, New York: KTAV 1906, pp. 456–479/456.

⁷²⁸ Idel, Moshe: *Hasidism. Between Ecstasy and Magic*, Albany: SUNY Press 1995, p. 31.

⁷²⁹ Parpola, Simo: “The Assyrian Tree of Life. Tracing the Origins of Jewish Monotheism and Greek Philosophy”, in: *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 52/3, 1993, pp. 161–208/171/f.n. 44.

⁷³⁰ Jacobs, Joseph / Blau, Ludwig: “Gnosticism”, in: Singer, Isidore (ed.), *The Jewish Encyclopedia. A descriptive record of the history, religion, literature, and customs of the Jewish people from the earliest times*, Vol. 5, New York: KTAV 1906, pp. 681–686/682 quoted from: Harnack, 1904, p. 219.

tion, and talisman-making into Jewish religious discourses. The kabbalists habitually approach the scriptures as having a deeper dimension to be revealed through an esoteric interpretation (exegesis) called *sod* (סוד). Proper performance of the practical Kabbalah is therefore invariably required harvesting theoretical wisdom (with divine characteristics) from an esoteric interpretation. This form of wisdom is only valid as long as it conforms with religious doctrines and does not lead to the prohibited acts by (religious) law including black magic. As in the case of virtually all esotericised systems, the legitimation of such wisdom can merely be maintained by linking it with ancient sages and prophets.

Though Kabbalah and its primary textual sources—*Sefer Zohar* (*Book of Splendour*)⁷³¹, *Sefer Yetzirah* (*Book of Creation*)⁷³², and *Sefer HaBahir* (*Book of Illumination*)⁷³³—were developed as a written tradition rather late, from around the twelfth century on, several scholars and kabbalists argue that its earliest appearance dates to a period before the common era and thus its tradition is centuries older than its later development in Europe. According to this view, the secreted knowledge of Kabbalah, along with the *Ten Commandments*⁷³⁴ (*Exodus* 20:2-17 and *Deuteronomy* 5:6-21), was revealed to Moses on the biblical Mount Sinai and transmitted orally between generations. On the other hand, some other scholars, including Scholem, do not recognize Kabbalah as the last form of an unbroken tradition of Jewish mysticism. Since the characteristics of the thirteenth century Kabbalah “are so different from any earlier forms, and in particular from the Jewish gnosis of Merkabah mysticism”⁷³⁵, Scholem argues, we cannot assume a continuity between them. The kabbalists of the thirteenth century, however, suggested the opposite as they “claimed to be the legitimate successor of these ancient esoteric doctrines of the Creation and the Merkabah”⁷³⁶. As Patai underlines, the same attitude was also present

⁷³¹ The composition of *Sefer Zohar* has been dated to the thirteenth century. Produced in Spain, mostly in Aramaic language, the book discusses the esoteric dimension of biblical texts, particularly about the secrets of creation, the problem of evil etc. found in the first chapters of the *Torah*.

⁷³² Though the composition date of *Sefer Yetzirah* is unknown, different studies suggested various periods dating from the second century CE to the third and up to the sixth centuries. See: Reitzenstein, Richard: *Poimandres. Studien zur griechisch-ägyptischen und frühchristlichen Literatur*, Leipzig: Teubner 1904, p. 291; Jacobs, Louis: *The Jewish Religion. A Companion*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1995, p. 449; Kalisch, Isidor (trans.): *Sefer Yetzirah. A Book on Creation of The Jewish Metaphysics of Remote Antiquity*, New York: L. H. Frank & CO. 1877, pp. 3–4.

⁷³³ According to Kaplan *Sefer HaBahir* was composed in Provence/France in 1176. The book contains predominantly esoteric interpretations of the Old Testament and symbolic implications of the Hebrew alphabet. The major importance of *Sefer HaBahir* lies in its introduction of the concept of transmigration of souls, *gilgul neshamot* (גלגול הנשמות), into Kabbalistic discourses along with its views on the *Tree of Life* (Figure 6). See: Kaplan, 1979, pp. xix–xx.

⁷³⁴ According to the kabbalistic tradition, while the *Ten Commandments* were the written material for the core of legal Judaism and constituted the exoteric dimension of religion, the esoteric wisdom given to Moses was not written down but transmitted orally.

⁷³⁵ Scholem, 1987, p. 7.

⁷³⁶ Scholem, 1987, p. 18.

in alchemical traditions of both the ancient Mediterranean and European Middle Ages, particularly regarding the Christian alchemists' views on Jewish alchemy, which led to "the attribution of alchemical activity to biblical characters, kings, and prophets"⁷³⁷ to associate the practice with legitimate and highly esteemed ancestors. In order to verify their authenticity, alchemists who regarded Jewish scriptures as their source material, for example, "interpreted Solomon's praise of wisdom as referring to alchemical knowledge"⁷³⁸. Concerning this much disputed historical background of Kabbalah and its potential associations with ancient Jewish religious doctrines, Verman proposes a fourfold division of the history of early Jewish mysticism—until the textual productions of the European Middle Ages. In terms of its relations with the Hebrew Old Testament, the history of Kabbalah spans from "the visionary experiences of Ezekiel, and Zechariah, namely eighth to sixth century B.C.E."⁷³⁹ to the mysticism of the Apocalyptic literature (c. 530 to 100 BCE), followed by the early Rabbinic literature (c. 100 BCE to 100 CE), and finally to the esoteric *Hekhalot* literature (c. 100 CE up to the 900 CE)⁷⁴⁰.

Apart from their claim for authenticity, the wisdom-centred and esotericised Jewish traditions of both the ancient world and Renaissance demonstrate specific characteristics common to other esoteric trends in terms of secrecy, initiation, and attribution of an augmented meaning as well as symbolism to the biblical narrative. Beyond these shared elements, parallels can be drawn between their, for example, inherited creation theories reflecting the nature of the creator, the relative condition of the created, and a structured lifestyle originating from the understanding of the mode of creation. In this sense, both the *Halakhah* (religious legal system) and the *Haggadah* (a collection of texts concerning non-legal issues) advised the adherents of Judaism to conduct their life in accordance with the canonical laws. What the kabbalists and practitioners of early Jewish mysticism (*Merkava* or *Merkabah*) did, was to bring an esoteric interpretation to the canonical scriptures and the laws they contained.

Indeed, the practice of esotericising was not only maintained by a specific group of people (initiates) within Judaism, but it has also been an inherent part of the general civil and criminal laws known as *Mishnah* (one of the two components of the *Talmud*). The *Mishnah* refers to a collection of texts composed of six orders, *zeraim* (seeds), *moed* (festival), *nashim* (women), *nezikin* (damages), *kodashim* (holy things), and *tohorot* (purities). Among these texts, the last tractate of the *moed*, known as *ḥagigah* or *chagigah*, written around the late second

⁷³⁷ Patai, 1994, pp. 10–11.

⁷³⁸ Patai, 1994, p. 26.

⁷³⁹ Verman, 1992, p. 8.

⁷⁴⁰ Verman, 1992, p. 8.

century or early third century CE, demonstrates the core of Jewish esotericism concerning the religious discourses, which writes in 2:11b-6:

“One does not explain sexual aberrations to three {persons}, nor the Creation to two, nor the Chariot to one unless he was wise and understood by himself. Anybody trying to investigate four things it would have been better for him not to have come into the world: what is above and what is below, what is before and what is after. And anybody not caring for the glory of his Creator would have been better off not to come into the world”⁷⁴¹

This passage from the *ḥagigah* helps us to dwell on the Jewish esoteric discourses associated with relevant traditions as it strictly forbids teaching the esoteric meanings of the scripture to those who do not possess wisdom. The phrase “what is above and what is below” implies an association with the alchemical idiom “that which is above is from that which is below, and that which is below is from that which is above” written in the *Tabula Smaragdina*. While in the quotation above the word “wise” is composed in its original Hebrew as חָכָם (*hkm*), Jacobs and Blau argue that the phrase containing the word wise, *hakam u-mebin mida'ato*, “corresponds to the Greek designations [a.n. of] γνῶσις (*gnosis*) and γνωστικοί (*gnostikoi*)”⁷⁴². According to Scholem, the throne-chariot concept in *ḥagigah* refers to Jewish *Merkabah* mysticism⁷⁴³. The narrative of God’s chariot depicted in *Ezekiel* (chapters 1, 8, 10) and in *Isaiah* 6, “became an object of visionary contemplation for early Jewish mystics in Palestine around the first century CE”⁷⁴⁴. The hidden wisdom about this divine chariot is only given to certain initiates (*tzenu'im*) who possess a suitable disposition and morality to carry it. According to Gruenwald, traces of *Merkabah* mysticism are present in “apocalyptic literature and in some of the texts discovered at Qumran”, and it is fully developed in the esoteric “Hekhalot literature of the Ge’onic period (circa 200–700 CE)”⁷⁴⁵. In Scholem’s view, the throne-chariot narrative of *Merkabah* displays intrinsic associations with the Greek Gnostic discourses:

“Here the throne of God is, in Jewish terminology, the home of the soul; it is there that the ascent of the ecstatic is completed. The world of the *Merkabah* into which he ‘descends’ is closely related to the world of the pleroma of the Greek gnostic texts. However, in place of abstract concepts personified as aeons, we find the entities of the throne-world as they have entered into this tradition from

⁷⁴¹ Guggenheimer, W. Heinrich (ed.): *The Jerusalem Talmud. Second Order Mo'ed. Tractates Ta'anot, Megillah, Ḥagigah, Mo'ed Qaṭan (Mašqin)*, Berlin / Boston: Walter de Gruyter 2015, p. 415.

⁷⁴² Jacobs / Blau, 1906, p. 682. For the usage of the term *gnostic* in the relevant biblical passages, see: *1 Timothy* 6:20 and *1 Corinthians* 8:1-3.

⁷⁴³ Scholem, 1987, p. 19.

⁷⁴⁴ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, “Merkava (Jewish mysticism)”, Online Edition, 20 February 2020, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Merkava-Jewish-mysticism>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

⁷⁴⁵ Gruenwald, Ithamar: *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, Leiden: Brill 2014, p. 3.

the book of Ezekiel [...] The boundaries, at least regarding Judaism, were not as well defined as those drawn by many recent authors writing on Gnosticism who were bent on differentiating between Christian Gnosticism and the syncretistic magic under discussion”⁷⁴⁶

Whether understood esoteric or exoteric, these laws, in their reinterpreted forms, have been transmitted between generations by the possessors of wisdom *hakhamim* (wise men), who “are regarded as moral authorities and stand at the top of a hierarchy based on knowledge of the Torah”⁷⁴⁷. In other words, derived from the Hebrew (or Semitic) triliteral root *hkm*, the *hakham*, *chakam*, or *hacham*, comes to mean sage or “a cultured and learned person”⁷⁴⁸ in both divine (*Proverbs* 3:19) and worldly matters (*Daniel* 1:17). The importance of this term is, as will be discussed in the related chapters below, that it has been associated by both contemporary and early scholars with specific wisdom-oriented systems from ancient Babylonia to Hellenistic Greece, up to the present-day Islamic variations. Hezser, for instance, highlights a traceable continuity between the Hebrew and Greek wisdom traditions and argues that this *hakhamim* class of people refers to the same thing as the Greek *sophos* does⁷⁴⁹, a term that has frequently been offered as the etymological root for the Arabic term *sūfī*. Even today, various cognates of the triliteral root *hkm* are used in the daily language of several Muslim regions to address the religious leader of the Jewish community in that region. In contemporary Turkey, for instance, ever since the Ottoman Empire, the term *hahambaşı* (*hakhambashi*, حاخامباشی) has been employed to refer to the chief rabbi of the Jewish community in the country⁷⁵⁰.

In Kabbalah too, the *hakhamim* class of people has important roles in preserving and transmitting the wisdom they possess. From the Kabbalistic perspective, their wisdom (*hikmet*), though it also covers worldly matters, is more related to the esoteric dimensions of life including the workings of creation, the nature of the creator, and the proper ways to excel in knowledge-granting faith. As in similar wisdom-oriented traditions, the way this form of wisdom is conceptualized brings about a relevant way of living shaped and contextualized according to the understanding of the creation.

⁷⁴⁶ Scholem, 1987, pp. 22–23.

⁷⁴⁷ Hezser, Catherine: “Hakhamim”, in: Betz, H. Dieter (ed.), *Religion Past & Present*, Vol. 5, Leiden: Brill 2009.

⁷⁴⁸ Welton, M. Daniel: “The Old Testament Wisdom (Chokma)”, in: *The Biblical World*, 10/3, 1987, pp. 183–189/183.

⁷⁴⁹ Hezser, Catherine: “Rabbis as Intellectuals in the Context of Graeco-Roman and Byzantine Christian Scholasticism”, in: Adams, A. Sean (ed.), *Scholastic Culture in the Hellenistic and Roman Eras. Greek, Latin, and Jewish*, Berlin / Boston: Walter de Gruyter 2019, pp. 169–185/169.

⁷⁵⁰ Berenbaum, Michael / Skolnik, Fred (eds.): “Hakham”, in: *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 8, Detroit: Macmillan Reference & Keter 2007, p. 245.

5.11 The Kabbalistic Creation

Comparable with certain other similar discourses, multiple streams of Kabbalah were developed to bring an explanation to the nature of the divine and transcendent God (*Ein* or *En Sof*, *אין סוף*, the infinite), creation, and the condition of humans in this equation. In this manner, Kabbalah is understood as “Jewish mysticism”⁷⁵¹ and a theosophical speculative discourse, whose principal feature is, as the employment of the name *Ein Sof* demonstrates, to focus on God’s “absolute essence”⁷⁵² or its primordial state before the creation⁷⁵³, rather than its post-creation manifestations through created beings. In Kabbalah, these manifestations or attributes of God are named *sefirot* or *sephiroth* (סְפִירוֹת) and are intriguingly akin to the Gnostic and Neoplatonic concepts of emanation and *aeon*. In the Kabbalistic discourse, *Ein Sof* is the hidden and unknowable God and the ten *sefirah* are the emanations from the *Ein Sof* constituting the kabbalistic *Tree of Life*⁷⁵⁴ (Figure 6). The first emanation from the *Ein Sof* is called *keter* (כֶּתֶר) or *keter elyon* (supreme crown), which gives birth to the second emanation, *hokmah* (חֻכְמָה, wisdom) and this sequence continues until the tenth emanation. According to the author of *Sefer Zohar*, one of the fundamental texts of Kabbalah, through this ten *sefirah*, *Ein Sof* “might guide the secret worlds that are not revealed, and the worlds that are revealed”⁷⁵⁵. As opposed to an apathetic and indifferent God, this formulation implies that the creator is still actively engaging, through wisdom (*hokmah*), with its creation, namely the world and the people.

The formulation of the ten *sefirah* is originally found in *Sefer Yetzirah* and seems to be incorporated into various texts including *Sefer HaBahir*. The conceptualization of ten *sefirah* as emanations took its last form in *Sefer HaBahir*, while in *Sefer Yetzirah* they were not divine emanations, but principles “standing for the numerical infrastructure of cosmos”⁷⁵⁶, through which, along with the combinations of letters from the Hebrew alphabet, the creation itself is produced.

⁷⁵¹ Scholem, G. Gershom: *Origins of Kabbalah*, Arkush, Allan (trans.), Princeton: Princeton University Press 1987, p. 3.

⁷⁵² Scholem, 1987, p. 267.

⁷⁵³ Kaufmann, Kohler / Broyd , Isaac: “En Sof”, in: Singer, Isidore (ed.), *The Jewish Encyclopedia. A descriptive record of the history, religion, literature, and customs of the Jewish people from the earliest times*, Vol. 5, New York: KTAV 1906, pp. 155–156/155.

⁷⁵⁴ Scholem, Gershom: *Kabbalah*, New York: Jewish Publication Society 1974, pp. 88ff; Murphy, E. Roland: *The Tree of Life. An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1996, p. 1.

⁷⁵⁵ Quoted by: Cohn-Sherbok, Dan (ed.): *The Wisdom of Kabbalah*, Oxford: One World 2002, p. 30.

⁷⁵⁶ Idel, 1990, p. 9.

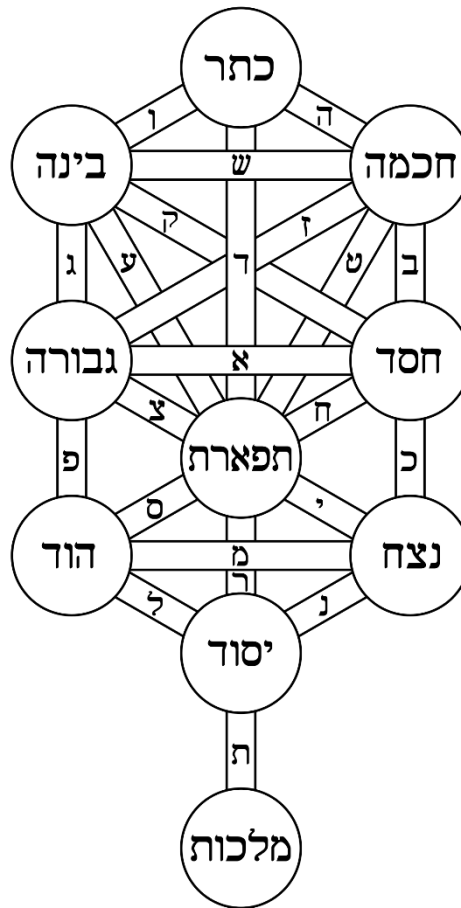


Figure 6: The Kabbalistic Tree of Life⁷⁵⁷

The diagram above demonstrates the kabbalistic creation⁷⁵⁸ process in the manner of emanation of the ten *sefirot* from *Ein Sof*. While the first emanation, *keter* (כתר), is placed at the centre top, the second emanation, *hokmah* (חכמה), stands at the top-right column of the diagram. The nature and features of each *sefirot* expectedly show slight deviations in different kabbalistic streams. The *sefirot* named *hokmah* (wisdom) in this tree is often formulated as the essential element in the process of creation and refers to the creator's creative wisdom. The passage in *Psalms* 104:24 confirms this as the author of it writes: "How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom, you made them all"⁷⁵⁹. The term wisdom in this passage is rendered as בְּחָכְמָה⁷⁶⁰, a derivation from the root *hkm*. According to the author of *Sefer HaBahir*, this crea-

⁷⁵⁷ Kaplan, Aryeh (trans.): *The Bahir*, Boston: Weiser Books 1979, p. 155.

⁷⁵⁸ The understanding of creation shows discrepancies between various kabbalistic streams and from the Jewish scriptural narrative. The Lurianic Kabbalah, for instance, employs a term, *tzimtzum* (צמצום) meaning contraction, to explain an episode of the whole creation process, which denotes God's allowance of space from its own all-embracing presence named *Ohr Ein Sof* (infinite light), in which creation can take place. The concept of *Ohr Ein Sof* was occasionally employed as a substitute for the first *sefirot* *keter*.

⁷⁵⁹ *Psalms* 104:24, in: NIV, 2001, p. 332.

⁷⁶⁰ *Psalms* 104:24, in: WLC, 2005, p. 646.

tive wisdom employed by the Jewish God was also brought down to the human realm through Solomon:

“The word ‘beginning’ (*Reshit*) is nothing other than Wisdom. It is thus written (*Psalms 111:10*), ‘The beginning is wisdom, the fear of God’. Wisdom is a blessing. It is thus written, ‘And God blessed Solomon’. It is furthermore written (*1 Kings 5:26*), ‘And God gave Wisdom to Solomon’”⁷⁶¹

The same formulation, wisdom (*hokmah*) as the beginning (*reshit*), was also a part of a renowned Italian Jewish rabbi and kabbalist Yohanan Alemanno’s (c. 1435–1504) views, who was keenly influential on certain philosophers and thinkers of the Italian Renaissance including Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494). According to Ogren, Alemanno speculated Aristotelian and other specific Greek philosophical notions such as *hyle*, prime matter, and the four elements and included them into Jewish creation models via kabbalistic exegetical tools. Alemanno writes that:

“Wisdom, i.e., *Hokmah* is like the hyle, which clothes itself with the four elements, and none of these are rejected by it. And it is the median of existence, between that which is actual and that which is potential. And it is the beginning and first of all existents, and all of that which is below *Keter Elyon* only exists from the truth of its existence (i.e., of the existence of *Hokmah*), and it is the beginning of existence”⁷⁶²

The understanding of wisdom as the beginning and as a constructive element of creation was not merely a kabbalistic view of the Renaissance. Whereas in its original composition *Genesis* 1:1 does not contain the word wisdom (*hkm*), in its Aramaic translations—*Palestinian Targum* and *Targum Neofiti* composed sometime between the first and the seventh centuries CE⁷⁶³—*hkm* was interpolated in *Genesis* 1:1. This addition demonstrates that reinterpretation can take place in various densities, which occasionally brings about add-ons and expansions when needed, even concerning the canonical scriptures. Indeed, such a dauntless move did not appear out of thin air belonging exclusively to translators. Specific passages from the Old Testament including *Proverbs* 3:19, 8:23, and *Wisdom of Solomon* 7:21, allude to the role of wisdom in creation evidently reinforce this idea.

⁷⁶¹ Kaplan, 1979, p. 2.

⁷⁶² Ogren, Brian: *The Beginning of the World in Renaissance Jewish Thought. Ma'aseh bereshit in Italian Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah, 1492-1535*, Leiden / Boston: Brill 2016, pp. 27–28.

⁷⁶³ Miller, P. Merrill: “Targum, Midrash and the Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament”, in: *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period*, 2/1, 1971, pp. 29–82; McNamara, Martin / Flesher, V. M. Paul: “Targum”, in: *Biblical Studies*, 29 September 2014, <<https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195393361/obo-9780195393361-0187.xml>>, last accessed: 27 February 2022.

In the narrative of nearly all kabbalistic manuscripts, for instance, *Ma'yan ha-Hokhmah* (*Fountain of Wisdom*) whose author and composition date are still a matter of dispute⁷⁶⁴, this creative wisdom, given to Solomon in *Sefer HaBahir*, was in fact first bestowed to Moses and “represents the mystical secrets transmitted by the mysterious angel, Pe’eli, to Moses”⁷⁶⁵. The mystification of wisdom by the kabbalists was not their discovery or interpretation, since the canonical passages from the Old Testament support this notion in, for example, *Job* 11:6 (“mysteries of wisdom”). The kabbalists, in their efforts to comprehend the life in its full scope, aim for this secreted form of prophetic wisdom⁷⁶⁶, *hokhmah nistarah* (the hidden wisdom⁷⁶⁷), through which one knows “the infinite, invisible God who is above our intellectual power”⁷⁶⁸, the workings of creation, and created beings. According to Parpola, this mystified wisdom in Judaism had its preceding applications throughout the Middle East as it is “recalling various designations of the Mesopotamian esoteric lore *nēmequ*, ‘wisdom’”⁷⁶⁹.



Figure 7: A scheme corresponding with the kabbalistic Tree of Life produced by Asher in *Ma'yan ha-Hokhmah*⁷⁷⁰

⁷⁶⁴ While Verman claims that the writer of *Ma'yan ha-Hokhmah* is unknown and dates its composition to the early 1200s, the authors of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* attribute a book with the same title to the seventeenth-century kabbalist Jacob Abraham ben Aryeh Loeb Kalmankes Asher. See: Verman, 1992, p. 3; Ginzberg, Louis / Deutsch, Gotthard: “Asher, Jacob Abraham ben Aryeh Loeb Kalmankes”, in: Singer, Isidore (ed.), *The Jewish Encyclopedia. A descriptive record of the history, religion, literature, and customs of the Jewish people from the earliest times*, Vol. 2, New York: KTAV 1906, p. 182.

⁷⁶⁵ Verman, 1992, p. 3.

⁷⁶⁶ Concerning this prophetic and hidden wisdom, Alemanno (c. 1435–1504) believed that “only prophets can understand the words of other prophets because these were not addressed to the vulgus, but to those who are similar to the prophets in the degree of their: ‘wisdom, understanding and knowledge of every operation’”. See: Idel, 1990, p. 41.

⁷⁶⁷ Kaufmann / Ginzberg, 1906, p. 456.

⁷⁶⁸ Reed, Brian (trans.): *The Religious Thought of the Chasidim*. Paul Philip Levertoff, Missouri: Vine of David 2017, p. 4.

⁷⁶⁹ Parpola, 1993, p. 171/f.n. 42.

⁷⁷⁰ Kalmankes, Asher Ya'akov Avraham: *Mayan ha-hokhmah. mi-kitve Yitshak Lurya*, Korets: Drukeray fon Yohan Anton Kriger 1784, p. 4.

Even though the content of the *Tree of Life*, as formulated by the kabbalists of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, seems to be developed not only from Jewish religious doctrines but also from Gnostic and Neoplatonic discourses—demonstrating the later philosophical and religious add-ons—the basic scheme of the tree in its various forms has a much older history going further back to the fourth millennium BCE in Mesopotamia. According to Parpola, “by the second millennium B.C., [a.n. it was] found everywhere within the orbit of the ancient Near Eastern oikumene, including Egypt, Greece, and the Indus civilization”⁷⁷¹. As in the Jewish Kabbalah, Assyrians too attached extra meanings and network of relations to numbers as well as to letters (Gematria) that are often associated with certain deities. The symbolism of this tree, formerly used as an imperial symbol in the Assyrian context⁷⁷² and represented “the divine world order maintained by the king as the representative of the god Aššur”⁷⁷³, contains several themes that are also present in most esoteric, Gnostic, and mysticism-oriented discourses of the subsequent millennia. These themes are, possibly the earliest formulations of the concept of *Imago Dei*, the perfect(ed) human, orally transmitted “esoteric lore” available exclusively to a limited number of initiates, and a “mystical exegesis of religious symbolism”⁷⁷⁴.

Depending on how concepts such as esotericism are contextualized, they may include or exclude specific elements, or one specific element may have multiple constituents laden with varied meanings and thus open to interpretation. When certain elements or their interpretations demonstrate logical parallels with other concepts and relevant phenomena, associations as well as comparisons can be made serving cross purposes, i.e., from the legitimization of discourses to refuting the others and to the universalist claims. In other words, when certain concepts are defined, it is not done in an isolated manner; in the process, their common grounds, dissimilarities, and an additional network of relations among them are also constructed. As briefly shown above, the concept of esotericism appears to be referring to an extended dimension of specific discourses dealing with the question of what reality is. Similarly, for Hanegraaff, esotericism comes to mean “inner traditions concerned with a universal spiritual dimension of reality, as opposed to the merely external (exoteric) religious institutions and dogmatic systems of established religions”⁷⁷⁵. The universalist claim in Hanegraaff’s account indicates the tendency of esoteric discourses to transgress conventional borders of sociocultural profiles on the general

⁷⁷¹ Parpola, 1993, p. 161.

⁷⁷² Porter, N. Barbara: “Sacred Trees, Date Palms, and the Royal Persona of Ashurnasirpal II”, in: *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 52/2, 1993, pp. 129–139/138–139; Baker, Robin: *Hollow Men, Strange Women. Riddles, Codes and Otherness in the Book of Judges*, Leiden / Boston: Brill 2016, p. 259.

⁷⁷³ Parpola, 1993, p. 167.

⁷⁷⁴ Parpola, 1993, p. 169.

⁷⁷⁵ Hanegraaff, 2013, pp. 10–12.

historical level and the cultural context of esotericism. Apart from the historicity, on the more specific theoretical level, esotericism concerns with the employment of both introspection and extrospection, which often yield idiosyncratic self-assertion. This theoretical aspect brings about another level within esotericism enabling it to acquire extra “universal” characteristics. Its epistemological system, insofar as it is based on “a claim to gnosis, or direct spiritual insight into cosmology or metaphysics”⁷⁷⁶, not only tends to overcome the conventional boundaries between religion and science, but also between disciplines and their heterogeneous fields of discourse. In this manner, from an esotericised perspective, “knowledge of the self, corresponds with the knowledge about nature, and thereby about God”⁷⁷⁷. With this view, the epistemology of esotericism forms a partial universalism, or as Strube puts it “globalism”⁷⁷⁸, based on a duality of microcosm and macrocosm, which adds up to trans-cultural as well as trans-religious aspects of esoteric discourse. Starting from this point, esotericism and relevant other systems mentioned in this study—such as mysticism, Gnosticism, Neoplatonism and associated philosophical or religious streams including Pythagoreans, Hermeticism, alchemy, kabbalah⁷⁷⁹, and as will be shown below *tasavvuf*—can be analysed collectively in terms of their esotericised epistemology, namely, their generated answers pertaining to the questions what knowledge is and how to acquire it. Even though each of these discourses’ objectives are essentially different, nearly all of them correspondingly strive for an esotericised form of knowledge or wisdom that can only be acquired by means of specific methods or practices requiring extrasensory qualities and strictly devised procedures. In this context, Versluis summarizes both the shared aspect—search for a “direct spiritual insight”—and its varying application areas between different discourses as follows:

“Alchemists search for direct spiritual insight into nature and seek to transmute certain substances thereby; astrologers seek direct spiritual insight into the cosmos and use it to analyze events; magicians seek direct spiritual insight and use to affect the course of events; theosophers seek direct spiritual insight in order to realize their own ‘angelical nature’”⁷⁸⁰

According to Von Stuckrad, this esotericising attitude concerning the correspondences often took the form of microcosm and macrocosm dichotomy in the history of esotericism from

⁷⁷⁶ Versluis, Arthur: *Magic and Mysticism. An Introduction to Western Esotericism*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 2007, p. 1.

⁷⁷⁷ Bogdan, 2007, p. 1.

⁷⁷⁸ Strube, 2021, p. 46.

⁷⁷⁹ Faivre, 2010, pp. 25–27.

⁷⁸⁰ Versluis, 2007, p. 1.

“the Babylonian cults of the third and second millennia BCE, [a.n. to] Pythagoras, the Stoics, and Hellenistic Egypt”⁷⁸¹.

The sociocultural developments in Alexandria, regardless their subsequent interactions, paved the way for earlier esotericised principles to influence later discourses and belief systems under the rubric of Neoplatonism, especially towards the third century CE, through thinkers such as Ammonius Saccas (175–242 CE) and his student Plotinus (c. 205–270 CE). The religion Islam comes to the scene only a couple of centuries after all these developments, when their influence was crippled yet still present “in the air”⁷⁸². As it happened with the Persian conquests of Anatolia and North Egypt during the fifth century BCE and with Alexander’s expansion routes linking the margins of the ancient world, when Islam spread to North Africa, it also propagated various esoteric discourses developed in the ancient Egypt as far as to the Iberian Peninsula.

Even though it is not exactly known when and how the constitution of esoteric systems first appeared, the esotericised discourses and practices, which were thoroughly mixed with the previous and neighbouring systems, evolved into complex syntheses in Alexandria. From the beginning of the Muslim conquest of Egypt between 639 and 646 CE on, these syntheses were transferred to Islam and thoroughly studied by the adherents of the new Abrahamic religion. The ancient Egyptian esotericism—which was deeply intertwined with the Hellenistic culture, Judaism, and took different shapes under the Roman rule—had first completely surrendered to religion through Christianity. This admixture led to the constitution of Neoplatonism with esoteric inclinations and then through the Islamic conquest, it might have been carried to *tasavvuf*. Following chapters are designed to investigate the potential sources for *tasavvuf*’s knowledge derivation methods and the development of its *zikir* practice as an applied and ritualized method of its idiosyncratic epistemology.

⁷⁸¹ Von Stuckrad, 2005, pp. 12–13.

⁷⁸² Schimmel, 1975, p. 43.

6 *Tasavvuf* and the History of its Speculated Network of Relations

At their core, different religious trends revolving around a mystified or esotericised discourse of a given period and region may demonstrate commonalities, especially in terms of their systematized ontological, epistemological, eschatological, and soteriological theories. On the other hand, according to the constructivist approach to mysticism, “the ideas, symbols, and practices”⁷⁸³, namely the mentality and even the linguistic features of the community in which the discourse is developed shape its ways of expression fundamentally. Another approach to mysticism focuses primarily on the “shared core” of mystical experiences. A common yet variously interpreted practice among various systems, i.e., “a meditative interiorization of consciousness”, is considered, for example, by Khalil and Sheikh, as “the hallmark of Sufi and perhaps all introspective religious piety, which might have led to similar (if not identical) experiences and corresponding conclusions about the nature of ultimate reality”⁷⁸⁴. As mentioned in the preceding chapters, Stace accordingly argues that “there is a definite type of mystical experience, the same in all these [a.n. Christian, Islamic, Jewish, Mahayana Buddhist, and Hindu] cultures, religions, periods, and social conditions”⁷⁸⁵, whereas Zaehner opposingly “insisted on a hierarchy of substantially distinct types of mystical experience”⁷⁸⁶. Each religious system (and its sub-streams) has both an authoritative interpretation (leading the constitution of the canon law, *şeriat* etc.) and several alternative interpretations of what they understand as the “right opinion” (orthodox), ultimate reality, or universal truth, which is conceptualized and, on occasion, adjusted according to the needs of the given society. While the needs of societies and related solutions are subject to change and alterations, Soares de Azevedo argues that the same universal truth has been revived repeatedly by historically and geographically distinct yet connected mystics of various religions⁷⁸⁷. Several other scholars from various disciplines also stressed a similar mystical experience or “the common core”⁷⁸⁸ across religious systems with

⁷⁸³ Moore, 2005, p. 6356.

⁷⁸⁴ Khalil, Atif / Sheikh, Shiraz: “Editorial Introduction. Sufism in the Western Scholarship, A Brief Overview”, in: *Studies in Religion / Sciences Religieuses*, 43/3, 2014, pp. 355–370/359.

⁷⁸⁵ Stace, 1961, p. 110.

⁷⁸⁶ Moore, 2005, p. 6356; Zaehner, R. Charles: *Mysticism Sacred and Profane*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1957.

⁷⁸⁷ Soares de Azevedo, Mateus: “Sages and Saints of Our Epoch in the Light of the Perennial Philosophy”, in: Soares de Azevedo, Mateus (ed.), *Ye Shall Know the Truth. Christianity and the Perennial Philosophy*, Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2005, pp. 266–278.

⁷⁸⁸ Hood, W. Ralph: “The Common Core Thesis in the Study of Mysticism”, in: McNamara, Patrick (ed.), *Where God and Science Meet*, Vol. 3, Westport CN: Praeger, 2006, pp. 119–138; Huxley, Aldous: *The Perennial Philosophy*, New York: Harper & Brothers 1945, p. 6.

only interpretative differences⁷⁸⁹. Merkur, when commenting on the concept of “mystical union”, underlines these interpretative differences as a feature of mysticism in general and writes that mystics do not “experience and perceive” the same truth concerning the One or God, “rather, the data support a *psychological interpretation* regarding a tendency of the mind to unify its contents in different ways, resulting in slightly different experiences on different occasions”⁷⁹⁰. Bucke correspondingly analyses the “unanimity” of mystical experiences, which he denotes as “cosmic consciousness” and explains it as follows:

“Just in the same way do the reports of those who have had cosmic consciousness correspond in all essentials, though in detail they doubtless more or less diverge (but these divergences are fully as much in our misunderstanding of the reports as in the reports themselves). So there is no instance of a person who has been illumined denying or disputing the teaching of another who has passed through the same experience”⁷⁹¹

Based on these views, the controversy and differences seem to stem from mainly variant interpretations of a similar set of experiences leading to multiple mystical trends⁷⁹². Here in this study, interpretation is primarily understood in the sense defined by Stace: “anything which the conceptual intellect adds the experience for the purpose of understanding it, whether what is added is only classificatory concepts, or a logical inference, or an explanatory hypothesis”⁷⁹³.

One important shared feature of mystical discourse in a religious context is that it usually formulates a dichotomy between two alleged dimensions, esoteric (inner, *bâtin*) and exoteric (outer, *zâhir*), of knowledge, existence, or meaning along with a hierarchical positioning of various forms of knowledge (or wisdom). Stoddart’s evaluation of mysticism is almost identical to the alleged *şeriat-tarikat* relationship established within *tasavvuf* which will be elaborated on below. He distinguishes general accessibility to what is known as exoteric and limited accessibility (initiativ) to the esoteric with an argument that “mysticism constitutes the inward or spiritual dimension of every religion; mysticism is esoterism, while the outward religious

⁷⁸⁹ For more information, see: Stace, 1961; Smart, Ninian: “Interpretation and Mystical Experience”, in: *Religious Studies*, 1/1, 1965, pp. 75–87.

⁷⁹⁰ Merkur, “Mysticism”, 2019.

⁷⁹¹ Bucke, 1901, p. 71. Kelly et. al., on the other hand, criticize Bucke’s view for being limited to the males of a certain age and for “overlooking the obvious and problematic fact that unanimous judgements are sometimes uniformly wrong”. See: Kelly, F. Edward et. al., 2007, p. 501.

⁷⁹² Yüce, 1994, pp. 46–47.

⁷⁹³ Stace, 1960, p. 37. However, it should be noted that Stace relates mysticism with the perceptual processes rather than interpretation and argues that the mystical experiences are first perceived and then interpreted; yet he still holds the opinion that the differences emerge from the second episode, interpretation, of mystical experiences. For a detailed survey, see: Stace, 1960, pp. 44–80.

framework is the respective exoterism. The exoterism is for all”⁷⁹⁴. Whereas in this formulation, the outward represents mainly the external and visible aspects—e.g., of human (body, deeds), the world (natural and physical realm), or of texts (first, literal meaning)—the inner conversely refers to internal and concealed aspects of things—e.g., of human (soul, motives of actions), world (metaphysical realm), or texts (a deeper meaning based on esoteric interpretation, a form of exegesis, and a metaphorical or symbolic dimension, *te’vil*⁷⁹⁵). The fundamental difference regarding this dichotomy in different mystical and esotericised traditions rises from variously envisaged interrelations between the constructed inner and outer dimensions. The interaction and the level of permeability among these dimensions are constructed by each religious system in accordance with their interpretation of doctrines, concepts, and the prescribed (mainly moral) rules.

Concerning the distinction between the inner and outer dimensions, contrary to the mentioned Orientalist tendency above and perhaps as a reaction to it in the recent literature, the majority of Muslim scholars and theologians aim to isolate the origin of *tasavvuf* as a system with esoteric features, exclusively within Islam, i.e., the *Kur’an* and Prophet Muhammed. This is because the *Kur’an* itself indicates two simultaneous attributes of God, “the outward and the inward”⁷⁹⁶, which is viewed by Muslim theologians and *sûfî* scholars as the proof of the universally valid and independently Islamic two-dimensional nature of things: the apparent and evident *versus* the hidden and secret. With close association, the *Kur’an* also refers to two dimensions of human beings: “He is the One who created you from clay”⁷⁹⁷, and “He breathed (His Spirit) into him (Adam)”⁷⁹⁸. Thus, the *Kur’an* draws attention to the convergence of two dimensions in the structure of a human being—the body is the mortal dimension and the soul is the immortal one. This *Kur’anic* formulation of the two-dimensional feature of human beings and God constitutes the essence of the dualistic understanding of various phenomena in *tasavvuf*, which are therefore believed to be unrelated to the other esotericised systems. The examples regarding the inner-outer aspects and certain other *Kur’anic* chapters containing esoteric insights (or prone to an esoteric interpretation) will be elaborated on in the following chapters⁷⁹⁹.

⁷⁹⁴ Stoddart, 2005, p. 58.

⁷⁹⁵ Geels, Anton: “A Note on the Psychology of Dhikr. The Halveti-Jerrahi Order of Dervishes in İstanbul”, in: *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 6/4, 1996, pp. 229–251/ 233.

⁷⁹⁶ *Kur’an* 57:3 (*Hadîd*).

⁷⁹⁷ *Kur’an* 6:2 (*En’âm*), 15:28 (*Hicr*), 38:71 (*Sâd*). An identical creation narrative is also present in the Hebrew Old Testament, *Genesis* 2:7, “God made man out of the dust of the earth” and based on *Genesis* 1:26, Hippolytus refers to the “twofold manner of the creation of human by God in his *Refutation of All Heresies* (6.9.5-7), “according to the image and according to the likeness”. See: Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 2016, p. 373.

⁷⁹⁸ *Kur’an* 15:29 (*Hicr*).

⁷⁹⁹ See, for example, *Kur’an* 3:7 (*Âl-i İmrân*), 24: 35 (*Nûr*), 2: 269 (*Bakara*).

A preliminary look reveals that the views mentioned above on the shared aspects of various esotericised systems and *tasavvuf*, even though several early scholars have already indicated a possibility, do not find broad acceptance in *tasavvuf* studies in the Islamicate world. In general, a question concerning the potential foreign influences on *tasavvuf* may either be considered an Orientalist perspective with a possible hidden agenda of repudiating Islam's ability to create a highly developed esoteric and philosophical system⁸⁰⁰—or approached with an inconvincible suspicion. Even the wording of some scholars indicates an attitude and positioning with regard to the discussion of the origins of *tasavvuf*. Eraydın, for example, reversed the Orientalist narrative on *tasavvuf* by writing “[...] instead of looking for a *tasavvuf*'s origin, we can think of an understanding of *tasavvuf* that derives from each religion's own body”⁸⁰¹. Eraydın here suggests *tasavvuf* as the common denominator of the world's mystical and esotericised systems. A similar attitude is present in Guénon's works on *tasavvuf*, who converted to Islam and became an adherent of *Şâzeliye tarikat*. Guénon argues that “taşavvuf can be applied to any esoteric and initiatic doctrine, regardless of the traditional form to which it belongs”⁸⁰². However, whether from an Orientalist or anti-Orientalist perspective, such an isolated application of *tasavvuf* is mostly not objective and serves only to complicate the issue. Commenting on the exchange of ideas between the Greek and ancient Near Eastern religions (or mythologies) and an early form of philosophy, Burkert argues that “culture is not a plant sprouting from its seeds in isolation; it is a continuous process of learning guided by curiosity along with practical needs and interests. It grows especially through a willingness to learn from what is ‘other’, what is strange and foreign”⁸⁰³, which corresponds largely with Kubik's assertion of culture as a learned phenomenon⁸⁰⁴.

As mentioned in the very beginning, various approaches are available in defining what *tasavvuf* is and how it can be situated within Islam and among the other systems with mystical, esoteric, or Gnostic tendencies. While an assumed Orientalist view allegedly aims to attribute *tasavvuf* to non-Islamic, e.g., Hellenistic, Christian, or Indian, systems; Islamic interpretation(s) of *tasavvuf* focuses solely on a *Kur'anic* origin. Nicholson, for example, suggests that we “must recognise it [a.n. *tasavvuf*] to be a product of the union between Greek thought and Oriental

⁸⁰⁰ Schimmel, 1975, p. 9.

⁸⁰¹ Eraydın, Selçuk: *Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*, İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları 1994, p. 29.

⁸⁰² Guénon, 2009, p. 388.

⁸⁰³ Burkert, Walter: *The Orientalizing Revolution. Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1992, p. 129.

⁸⁰⁴ Kubik, Gerhard: *Afrikanische Musik I-II* and *Afroamerikanische Musikformen*, Lectures at the University of Vienna, 2010–2022.

religion, and in particular of Neo-Platonism, Christianity, and Gnosticism”⁸⁰⁵. Kılıç, as a *sûfî*, opposingly does not consider *tasavvuf* a “product” of former systems. He rather highlights commonalities between certain cultural, mythological, philosophical, and religious systems and Abrahamic religions with reference to almost identical verses in the *Kur’an*, the Bible, the Old and the New Testaments. To expand the sample size, he additionally refers to the usage of Aristotelian methods in certain Arabic philology schools (especially Basra and Kufa) or to the application of Persian and other military tactics by Prophet Muhammed. Furthermore, Kılıç underlines certain commonalities between the philosophies of Muhyiddin İbnü’l-Arabî (1165–1240), Lao Tzu (c. sixth century BCE) and Jewish philosopher Maimonides’ attempt to introduce certain *tasavvuf* practices (and Aristotelian philosophy⁸⁰⁶) into Jewish prayer forms. An identical approach is intriguingly present in Giovanni Pico della Mirandola’s (1463–1494) works, a philosopher of the Italian Renaissance. He claimed that “truth, instead of residing in two traditions only, resides in many” and proposed that “some aspects of *prisci theologi* are to be found in Averroes [a.n. İbn Rüşd], the *Koran*, the Cabala [...] and in many other places”⁸⁰⁷. Classifying *tasavvuf* both as “a school of interpretation peculiar to Islam”⁸⁰⁸ and as “a universal model”⁸⁰⁹, Kılıç argues that the resemblances between *tasavvuf* and certain other “traditional⁸¹⁰, initiatic, perennial, mystical, esoteric, and ancient philosophical”⁸¹¹ schools of interpretation, are “universal facts that give the same results everywhere”⁸¹². According to Kılıç, due to this inherent universality, the relation of *tasavvuf* with other esotericised systems cannot be called plagiarism or a simple process of borrowing between different systems. Affirming Depont and Coppolani’s perennialist and universalist views on the “mystical experience”⁸¹³ and Stace’s “common core” theory—namely mystical discourse as a feature of all humans—Kılıç describes the universally shared features of various systems as follows:

⁸⁰⁵ Nicholson, A. Reynold, “A Historical Enquiry concerning the Origin and Development of Sufism”, in: *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 38/2, 1906, pp. 303–348/ 320.

⁸⁰⁶ Strauss, 1989, p. 258.

⁸⁰⁷ Schmitt, B. Charles: “Perennial Philosophy. From Agostino Steuco to Leibniz”, in: *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 27/4, 1966, pp. 505–532/513.

⁸⁰⁸ Kılıç, E. Mahmud: *Sûfî ve Şiir. Osmanlı Tasavvuf Şiirinin Poetikası*, İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları 2004, p. 12.

⁸⁰⁹ Kılıç, E. Mahmud: *Anadolunun Ruhu. Tasavvuf, Felsefe, Siyaset Konuşmaları*, İstanbul: Sufi Kitap, 2001, pp. 113–120.

⁸¹⁰ The term traditional here is used by Kılıç in the sense of “continuity of metaphysical principles”, Kılıç, 2004, p. 15/f.n. 4a.

⁸¹¹ Kılıç, 2004, p. 12.

⁸¹² Kılıç, 2001, pp. 54–56.

⁸¹³ Depont, Octave / Coppolani, Xavier: *Les confréries religieuses musulmanes*, Alger: 1897 quoted in: Knysh, 2005, p. 111; Yüce, Abdülhakim: “Hakikata Ulaşma Metodu Olarak Tasavvuf ve Menşei”, in: *Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 1/1, 1994, pp. 43–53/46.

“We can look at *tasavvuf* as one of the models to make sense of the basic principles of religion and one of the efforts to interpret religion. It is a human effort, just like other models. It is a vision of reality. Others may develop other models and may come up with other visions, as they did. While interpreting the principles of the religion in question, in all religions we always see that similar schools have been formed. Because thoughts with similar starting points reach similar conclusions. Therefore, it is universal in a way. The name of this style of approach in the specific field of the religion of Islam is *tasavvuf*”⁸¹⁴.

This inclusive view—in some way a combination of perennialist and pluralist⁸¹⁵ perspectives with the flavour of the doctrine of *prisca theologia*⁸¹⁶—understands the discourses of mysticism as a paramount dimension of several Hellenistic, Christian, Jewish, and Islamic religious and philosophical systems, since their first emergence over the course of the human history⁸¹⁷. According to this view, throughout history⁸¹⁸, this shared mystical discourse has been distilled from various yet probably related (pre-)historical discourses and eventually gave shape and rise to several “-isms”⁸¹⁹ in the Eastern Mediterranean region. Even though the perennial view has been lately in decline⁸²⁰ within the academic spheres, one important detail is that from the perspective of perennialism, none of these traditions mentioned above is considered as the “origin” or “root” for the others⁸²¹. It is now mostly replaced with a more recent “contextualist” approach, which emphasizes the historical and socio-cultural contexts in studying religions and their undercurrents, and “takes full account of the intellectual, practical, and institutional con-

⁸¹⁴ Kılıç, Mahmud Erol: “Tasavvuf İhtiyacı”, Interview by *Altınoluk Röportaj*, 21.09.2018, <<https://semazen.net/mahmud-erol-kilic-tasavvuf-ihtiyaci/>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

⁸¹⁵ Religious pluralism argues that many religions are “shaped by their distinctive historical-cultural contexts” and therefore they can only have a fragmentary or incomplete understanding of divine truth or reality, or God. Quote from: Livingston, C. James: “Religious Pluralism and the Question of Religious Truth in Wilfred C. Smith”, in: *The Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory*, 4/3, 2003, pp. 58–65/59.

⁸¹⁶ Hanegraaff relates *prisca theologia* (old or ancient theology) with certain other terms when addressing a shared truth or wisdom among various religions, e.g., “*prisca theologia*, *prisca sapientia*, *pia philosophia*, (philo)sophia *perennis*, perennial philosophy, perennial wisdom, ‘the wisdom of the ancients’ that have been used to refer to the idea that there exists an enduring tradition of superior spiritual wisdom, available to humanity since the earliest periods of history [...]”. The term *prisca theologia* acquired its current meaning during the Renaissance, especially following the rediscovery of ancient philosophical works discussing even earlier wisdom traditions. This link was highlighted, for instance, by an Italian Renaissance philosopher, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), as follows: “many principles taken from the ancient theology [a.n. *prisca theologia* in original Latin text] of Hermes Trismegistus, many more drawn from the teachings of the Chaldeans and Pythagoras, and many others deriving from the more secret mysteries of the Hebrews”. Hanegraaff, J. Wouter: “Tradition”, in: Hanegraaff, J. Wouter (ed.), *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, Leiden: Brill 2006b, pp. 1125–1135/1125; Borghesi, Francesco / Papio, Michael / Riva, Massimo (eds.): *Pico della Mirandola. Oration on the Dignity of Man*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2012, p. 217.

⁸¹⁷ This perspective also includes several other religious systems from different parts of the world, however, the focus in this study is primarily put on the Eastern Mediterranean region.

⁸¹⁸ Specifically, during the Classic (c. eighth century BCE and sixth century CE) and the Late Antiquity (c. third century and eighth century CE).

⁸¹⁹ For example, Esotericism, Mysticism, Monasticism, Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, Hermeticism etc.

⁸²⁰ McMahan, L. David: *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008, p. 269.

⁸²¹ Guénon, 2009, p. 390.

texts within which mystical experience arises”⁸²². However, the *Kur’an* provides a perspective in verse 5:48 (*Mâide*) that one may relate to the perennial perspective rather than the contextualist, constructivist, or “purist” views:

“And We have revealed to you the Book in truth, confirming the scriptures that preceded it and superceding it. Judge between them, then, according to what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their illusory desires, diverging from what came to you of the Truth. To each of you, We have laid down an ordinance and a clear path; and had Allah pleased, He would have made you one nation, but [He wanted] to test you concerning what He gave to you. Be, then, forward in good deeds. To Allah is the ultimate return of all of you, that He may instruct you regarding that on which you differed”⁸²³

Various creation theories developed by religious and philosophical systems may provide a platform to speculate the presence of potential parallels or correspondences between them⁸²⁴. These parallels should in no way be understood as suggesting a discussion of universality or origins of the relevant topics, e.g., the theories and doctrines developed via the instruments of religious epistemology, eschatology, and soteriology based on the scriptures. Since none of these systems is monolithic and housed numerous divergent interpretations, terminologies, and applications, an investigation concerning the interpretative variations might prove more productive than an attempt to establish a universally valid theory. Even though a historical survey of the creation and relevant other theories may easily lead to noticing thought-provoking similarities between un-/related phenomena, the primary focus of this study is laid upon the interpretative variations (both similarities and divergences) of such phenomena within different traditions. To this end, the questions formulated in addressing the nature of creation and the provided answers referring to a peculiar terminology, interpretation, and ways of expression are considered crucial sources to examine whether the terms “Islamic Mysticism”, “Islamic Gnosticism”, or “Islamic Esotericism”, are accurate to denote *tasavvuf*. While the primary objective of the following chapter is to demonstrate the extent of *tasavvuf*’s relevancy with other similar discourses, its successful completion required a thorough analysis of each of these discourses separately and their mutually transforming relations with numerous other variables. Such an undertaking has also demonstrated that the discourses constituting the theory of *tasavvuf* evidently display intriguing similarities with the discourses of what is called mysticism, Gnosti-

⁸²² Moore, 2005, p. 6357.

⁸²³ Fakhry, 2000, p. 116.

⁸²⁴ See, for example, Gazzâlî’s view on the relations between epistemological methods and creation: Al-Ghazzali, Mohammed: *The Alchemy of Happiness*, Homes, A. Henry (trans.), Albany: J. Munsell 1873, p. 14.

cism, and esotericism, particularly in terms of their interpretation of specific concepts including a divine form of wisdom.

6.1 Varieties of Wisdom

Before dwelling on a comprehensive definition of wisdom in the form of *hikmet*, one problematic issue must be addressed, namely the distinction between knowledge and wisdom. These notions have been so variedly interpreted that any attempt to provide a single definition for each inevitably results in amputating their semantic ranges and limiting the application areas fundamentally. Their understanding in different regions and periods, on the other hand, display idiosyncratic ways of handling wisdom and knowledge that are often distinct, yet occasionally almost identical to each other. The commonality between the two terms can be traced in the English usage with a certain degree of ambiguity, but when the translations are included in the equation, as attempted in this study, the investigation concerning such mental processes becomes an exceptionally complex issue. At this point, it is crucial to point out not only varying definitions of these terms in each language but also to address vast translative, namely interpretative, choices in translating mental concepts between languages. As this study is composed in English and investigates the conception of wisdom covering a timespan longer than five millennia in several languages, i.e., Ugarit, Akkadian, Phoenician, Aramaic, Hebrew, Syriac, Greek, Coptic, Latin, Arabic, Turkish, exhausting all definitional and translative choices comes to be a challenging task. Staudinger and Glück also confirm this challenge when writing that “the notion of wisdom has such a rich ideational history and carries so many religious and philosophical associations that it almost seems to defy any attempt at empirical study”⁸²⁵. On the other hand, numerous scholars provided theories that can enable this study to track the variety of conceptions of wisdom. Beginning with English, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines wisdom as:

“(1) capacity of judging rightly in matters relation to life and conduct; soundness of judgement in the choice of means and end, (2) *knowledge* (esp. of a high or abstruse kind); enlightenment, learning, erudition; in early use often=philosophy, science. Also, practical knowledge or understanding, expertness in an art”⁸²⁶

⁸²⁵ Staudinger, M. Ursula / Glück, Judith: “Psychological Wisdom Research. Commonalities and Differences in a Growing Field”, in: *The Annual Review of Psychology*, 62/1, 2011, pp. 215–241/216.

⁸²⁶ Murray, James et. al. (eds.): *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. 12, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1913, pp. 191–192.

As can be seen in the second definition of wisdom, the authors of the dictionary equate it with knowledge, along with the other relevant terms, e.g., enlightenment, learning, and philosophy. This ambiguous link between the terms wisdom and knowledge has been further investigated and expanded upon by various disciplines, particularly by those who consider wisdom primarily a “psychological construct”. While, for example, Baltes and Smith argue that wisdom is an “expert knowledge system dealing with the conduct and understanding of life”⁸²⁷, for Bangen et. al., “knowledge (of life)”⁸²⁸ constitutes one of the subcomponents of wisdom. In addition to these, recent studies essentially focused on the concept’s contextual determinants, which are composed of “experiential, situational, and cultural factors”⁸²⁹. Depending on the research model proposed, these factors indicate different aspects of wisdom as a psychological construct. The *Berlin wisdom paradigm*, for example, maintains that wisdom “is an expert knowledge system concerning the fundamental pragmatics of life”⁸³⁰. This model specifies five different criteria for defining wisdom, “rich factual and procedural knowledge, lifespan contextualism, relativism of values and life priorities, and recognition and management of uncertainty”⁸³¹. The *balance theory*, on the other hand, defines wisdom “as the application of intelligence, creativity, and knowledge”⁸³² or “of tacit knowledge as mediated by values toward the achievement of a common good through a balance”⁸³³ of interests, environments, as well as time. The *three-dimensional wisdom scale* proposed by Ardel is based on the understanding of wisdom as having “cognitive, reflective, and affective”⁸³⁴ dimensions. These three wisdom models have been developed to measure various components of wisdom in order to engender an empirical approach to defining, categorizing, and comparing different wisdom forms.

The form of wisdom emphasized in nearly all esotericised philosophical and religious systems has also been evaluated in terms of wisdom types positioned in accordance with the doctrines of their metasytem. Various types of wisdom in these esotericised systems are often

⁸²⁷ Baltes, B. Paul / Smith, Jacqui: “The Fascination of Wisdom. Its Nature, Ontogeny, and Function”, in: *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 3/1, 2008, pp. 56–64/58.

⁸²⁸ Bangen, J. Katherine / Meeks, W. Thomas / Jeste, V. Dilip: “Defining and Assessing Wisdom. A Review of the Literature”, in: *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 21/12, 2013, pp. 1254–1266/1255.

⁸²⁹ Grossmann, Igor: “Wisdom in Context”, in: *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 12/2, 2017, pp. 233–257.

⁸³⁰ Baltes, B. Paul / Staudinger, M. Ursula: “Wisdom. A Metaheuristic (Pragmatic) to Orchestrate Mind and Virtue Toward Excellence”, in: *American Psychologist*, 55/1, 2000, pp. 122–136/122.

⁸³¹ Baltes / Staudinger, 2000, p. 122.

⁸³² Sternberg, J. Robert / Kaufman, C. James / Roberts, M. Anne: “The Relation of Creativity to Intelligence and Wisdom”, in: Kaufman, C. James / Sternberg, J. Robert (eds.), *Cambridge Handbook of Creativity*, New York: Cambridge University Press 2019, pp. 237–353/254.

⁸³³ Sternberg, J. Robert: “A Balance Theory of Wisdom”, in: *Review of General Psychology*, 2/4, 1998, pp. 347–365/347.

⁸³⁴ Ardel, Monika: “Empirical Assessment of a Three-Dimensional Wisdom Scale”, in: *Research on Aging*, 25/3, 2003, pp. 275–354.

structured in a hierarchical manner, at the top of which customarily stands the wisdom of God. This metaphysical wisdom brings a corresponding, typically ritualized, epistemology with it. As the several theories of wisdom demonstrate, the conception of knowledge, understood as the “intellectual acquaintance with or perception of, fact or truth”⁸³⁵, appears to be a component of wisdom, whose proper application and “good administration”⁸³⁶ leads to giving wise decisions and thus may be labelled as wisdom.

Especially the two aspects of wisdom emphasized by Ardel, *reflective dimension*, and by Sternberg, *tacit knowledge*, correspond largely to the wisdom conceptualized in esotericised systems. The reflective dimension of wisdom is described as:

“A deeper understanding of life is only possible if one can perceive reality as it is without any major distortions. To do this, one needs to engage in reflective thinking by looking at phenomena and events from many different perspectives to develop self-awareness and self-insight”⁸³⁷

Although in Ardel’s formulation, the reflective dimension of wisdom is supposed to lead to “reducing one’s self-centeredness”⁸³⁸ and considered “a personality character rather than a performance-based characteristic”⁸³⁹ as opposed to the ritualized performativity of wisdom in several esotericised systems, it does imply commonalities with the esotericised epistemologies mentioned in this study. The claim for “a deeper understanding” concerning “reality as it is”, which begins with self-introspection or reflectivity, is perhaps the most frequently occurring motif in esotericised systems.

Another approach developed by recent scholarship indicates divergent points between “implicit” and “explicit” wisdom theories. Whereas the implicit theories refer to “the search for an understanding of people’s folk conceptions of what wisdom is”⁸⁴⁰, the latter is about more theoretical and scientific constructions of wisdom, which are usually first developed from the implicit theories of “lay beliefs”⁸⁴¹ and later conceptualized empirically.

Differing from the codified and transferable explicit knowledge form, the term implicit knowledge has often been related to the notion of tacit knowledge. Coined by Polanyi in the

⁸³⁵ Murray, James et. al. (eds.): *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. 5, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1913, pp. 747–749/748.

⁸³⁶ Rosenthal, Franz: *Knowledge Triumphant. The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam*, Leiden Boston: Brill 2007, pp. 35–36.

⁸³⁷ Ardel, 2003, p. 278.

⁸³⁸ Ardel, 2003, p. 278.

⁸³⁹ Ardel, 2003, p. 279.

⁸⁴⁰ Sternberg, J. Robert: *Wisdom, Intelligence, and Creativity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003, p. 148.

⁸⁴¹ Grossmann, 2017, p. 234.

1960's, tacit knowledge refers to a type of “communicatively unresponsive”⁸⁴² knowing which is not formally taught by or systematically learned from an external source (mentor, books etc.), but acquired via subjective experiences. In other words, the tacit kind of knowledge “encompasses skills or abilities that are learned in practice, by doing”⁸⁴³, which involves culturally conditioned practices, embodied cognition, behaviour models, and “social regulation, stored without awareness”⁸⁴⁴. The question of what precisely signifies tacit knowledge has been replied to with various examples. While Polanyi initially bases his argument of tacit knowledge on “the fact that we can know more than we can tell”⁸⁴⁵, he exemplifies this argument through human's face recognition ability (physiognomy) and discusses that although there are several markers to help us to recognize previously known faces among hundreds of people, we cannot explicitly explain how we successfully do it without even actively executing a cognitive focus. In the same vein, Davies employs Chomsky's view on the concept of generative grammar to exemplify how the application of grammatical rules while speaking a native language can be considered tacit knowledge⁸⁴⁶. In Chomsky's words,

“Every speaker of a language has mastered and internalized a generative grammar that expresses his knowledge of his language. This is not to say that he is aware of the rules of the grammar or even that he can become aware of them, or that his statements about his intuitive knowledge of the language are necessarily accurate”⁸⁴⁷

What Chomsky refers to as “intuitive knowledge” corresponds to several aspects of tacit knowledge, and, on the other hand, to certain conceptualizations of mystified and esotericised forms of religious knowledge (*gnosis*) and wisdom narratives, including the concept of *hikmet* and *mârifet* in *tasavvuf*.

The notion of intuitive knowledge has also been investigated by several other influential scholars of philosophy, both in our modern days and in ancient times. The face recognition ability shown as an example of tacit knowing by Polanyi also corresponds with, for example, Russell's understanding of knowledge acquired by an acquaintance. Russell describes this pro-

⁸⁴² McIver, Derrick / Lengnick-Hall, A. Cynthia / Ramachandran, Indu: “Tacit Knowledge, Psychology of”, in: Wright, D. James (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, London: Elsevier 2015, pp. 15431–15435/15431.

⁸⁴³ Prentice, Rachel: “Tacit Knowledge”, in: Callan, Hilary (ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, Oxford: John Wiley & Sons 2019, pp. 1–5.

⁸⁴⁴ Kellerman, Henry: *Dictionary of Psychopathology*, New York: Columbia University Press 2009, p. 249.

⁸⁴⁵ Polanyi, Michael: *The Tacit Dimension*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1966, p. 4.

⁸⁴⁶ Davies, Martin: “Knowledge (Explicit, Implicit and Tacit). Philosophical Aspects”, in: Wright, D. James (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, London: Elsevier 2015, pp. 74–90.

⁸⁴⁷ Chomsky, Noam: *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, Cambridge: MIT Press 1965, p. 8.

cess as follows: “I say that I am acquainted with an object when I have a direct cognitive relation to that object, i.e. when I am directly aware of the object itself”⁸⁴⁸. Therefore, for Russell, acquaintance encompasses what he calls “knowledge of things”, which is different from “knowledge of truths”.

Although in Russell’s epistemological model the knowledge of truths is conceptualized as opposed to the knowledge of things, in nearly all esotericised religious systems there seems to be no such distinction, since “the thing” (object) is almost always equated with God (absolute truth), which turns the object of acquaintance into an ontological truth *per se*. For example, within the Islamic philosophical narrative, *Allah* is simultaneously the intellect (*akıl*) itself, and both the subject (*âkıl*) as well as the object (*ma’kûl*) of its own intellect⁸⁴⁹, which fundamentally alters the relevant epistemology. In other words, for an esotericised discourse, the knowledge gained by an acquaintance (of God) is not merely “knowledge of things” as argued by Russell, but it is even a higher form of knowledge involving both the knowledge of things and truth. Russell’s distinction here therefore cannot be applied to esotericised systems without alteration, requiring dissecting Russell’s system of knowledge, and re-apply it to esotericised systems.

Russell argues that the knowledge of truths is of two distinct types: (1) direct, intuitive, certain, and infallible; (2) indirect, derivative, uncertain, and open to error⁸⁵⁰. Considering the forms of knowledge (or wisdom) in esotericised systems, the first type in Russell’s system appears to correspond largely with the conceptions of esoteric knowledge (*gnosis*, *mârifet*, *sophia*, *brahman*, or *veda*) concerning God. The term *mârifet*, for example, is defined in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (*Encyclopedia of Islam*) as a “recognition of only what is known to exist”⁸⁵¹ and implies certainty (of the existence) and directness of the recognition without any intermediaries. Since the intuitive aspect of knowing is implicitly present in Polanyi’s formulation of tacit knowing, this directness of recognition can be confirmed with regard to the notion of infallibility as part of noetic mystical experiences producing similar epistemological procedures centred around impeccable wisdom concepts such as *gnosis* or *mârifet*.

Because tacit knowledge is about the skills developed from personal experiences, such a form of knowledge can be perfected through, for example, repetition. Just like the bodybuild-

⁸⁴⁸ Russell, Bertrand: “Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description”, in: *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 11/1, 1911, pp. 108–128/108.

⁸⁴⁹ Kaya, Mahmut: “Sudûr”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 37, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2009, pp. 467–468/467.

⁸⁵⁰ Irvine, A. David: “Bertrand Russell”, in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2021 Edition), 7 December 1995, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/russell/>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

⁸⁵¹ Taylan, Necip: “Bilgi”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 6, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1992, pp. 157–161/158.

ers shape the mass of their body by means of repetitive weightlifting, a surgeon gains experience through repeating similar operations, or a chef perfects their cooking abilities by repeating similar procedures, the tacit knowledge, at least partially, can also be formed through repetition. The commonality in these different examples is that the sole theoretical knowledge concerning bodybuilding, medical surgery, or cooking is not adequate to carry out the related operations successfully. This is perhaps the primary reason why in recruitment processes the job applicant is usually expected to have some years of work experience, indicating that merely theoretical knowledge learned by explicit knowledge methods, i.e., university degree, must be supported by a tacit form of knowledge gained by personal experience.

Summarily, as shown above, the acquisition of tacit knowledge (of truth) can be linked with various phenomena such as experience, acquaintance, directness, certainty, and intuition. These links constitute a complex network of relations⁸⁵², which enable this study to consider the epistemology of the tacit knowledge in terms of experiential knowledge in mysticism, the concealed and intuitive knowledge in esotericism, and the idiosyncratic ways of knowing God in *tasavvuf*, especially *yakīn* (certainty)⁸⁵³ and *mârifet* (knowledge of⁸⁵⁴ or acquaintance with⁸⁵⁵ God; God's knowledge "possessed by man"⁸⁵⁶). A corresponding approach to the ways of knowing God is clearly represented by the renowned Muslim theologian and *sûfî* Ebû Hâmid el-Gazzâlî (1058–1111), who, after excelling at Islamic and non-Islamic epistemologies, concluded that senses and human reason are not capable to enable an "acquaintance with God" (*mârifet*) for being fallible, therefore, according to Gazzâlî, a noetic relation with God can only be accomplished by means of specially devised *tasavvuf* practices, namely a direct experience whose description contains innumerable expressions including, but not limited to, tasting (*dhawq*), discovery (*keşf*), *mârifet*, drunkenness (*sekr*), ecstasy (*vecd*), or inspiration (*ilham*)⁸⁵⁷. According to Taylan, these elements constituting *tasavvuf* terminology indicate a specific form of knowing, in which knowledge acquisition is "not a result of an intellectual effort, but a moral

⁸⁵² Davies, 2015, pp. 81ff.

⁸⁵³ *Kur'an* 2:4, 2:118 (*Bakara*); 5:50 (*Mâide*). One of the cardinal principles of Islamic epistemology is the organization of knowledge hierarchically and according to its proximity to reality or certainty (*yakīn*). The notion of epistemological proximity to certainty in Islam produces specific procedures and constructions of knowing such as *vuslat* (meeting, coming together, re-/union) or *keşf* (discovery, invention, inspiration).

⁸⁵⁴ Daiber, Hans: "Abû Bakr al-Râzî", in: Rudolph, Ulrich / Hansberger, Rotraud / Adamson, Peter (eds.), *Philosophy in the Islamic World*, Vol. 1, Leiden / Boston: Brill 2017, pp. 381–420/408.

⁸⁵⁵ Uludağ, Süleyman: "Mârifet", in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 28, Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2003b, pp. 54–56/54; el-Kelâbâzî, Muhammed b. İbrâhim: *Kitâbü 't-Ta'arruf li-mezhebi ehli 't-taşavvuf*, Kahire: Abdülhalîm Mahmûd - Tâhâ Abdülbâkî Sürûr 1960, p. 63.

⁸⁵⁶ Chittick, C. William: *The Sufi Path of Knowledge. Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination*, Albany: SUNY Press 1989, p. 458.

⁸⁵⁷ Çağrı, Mustafa: "Zevk", in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 44, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2013b, pp. 308–310/309.

purification and divine blessing”⁸⁵⁸. Gazzâlî understands this knowledge to be intuitive and bestowed by God. Like the tacit knowledge, when acquired, this intuitive knowledge cannot be transmitted entirely to those who did not have the same experience due to its experience-based qualities. As the famous saying that often resonates in *sûfî* circles summarizes:

“Those who have not tasted do not know, and those who have not attained cannot comprehend”⁸⁵⁹

For Gazzâlî, who inherited his final epistemology from *tasavvuf* and thus reproduces it here, the only way to share the noetic experience of God is to show the method (*usûl*) that may enable the seeker (*sâlik*) to reach the desired experience. Throughout the history of *tasavvuf*, from the earliest representatives such as Hasan-ı Basrî (642–728) to our day, a specifically designed method to attain the knowledge of God has been developed and incorporated by nearly all *tarikât* (various schools of *tasavvuf*, order). Known as *seyrüsülûk*, this method of *tasavvuf* may show discrepancies from one *tarikât* to another, yet its common features—e.g., initiation (*sülûk*), recollection (*zikir*), or purification of the ego (*nefis tezkiyesi*)—have been continuously practiced by all different *tarikât* organizations around the globe. Corresponding largely with the definitions of tacit knowledge, *seyrüsülûk* equips seekers of knowledge with relevant parameters that may qualify them for an acquaintance with God. Since this acquaintance allegedly originates from the divine realm (*ledünnî*) and is only bestowed to the seeker by the will of God in the form of, for example, inspiration, its acquisition cannot be formulated as research-oriented learning⁸⁶⁰. As Gazzâlî argues, “*sûfî* knowledge is the enlightenment of the heart with the light of *Allah*, and it is the grace of *Allah*, not the *sûfî*’s gain”⁸⁶¹. In consequence, to receive the “grace of *Allah*” the seeker needs to purify the relevant faculty (*nefs*, heart⁸⁶², ego) from the transient engagements of the material world (desires, craving for status etc., *mâsivâ*), and focus solely on God. The primary epistemological tool in *tasavvuf* to help the seeker to purify the heart is the remembrance of God (*zikir*). As in the formulation of the tacit knowledge, the repetitive structure of *zikir* rituals, for example, is constructed in such a way to develop and eventually bring perfection to the acquaintance with *Allah*.

⁸⁵⁸ Taylan, 1992, p. 160.

⁸⁵⁹ Gazzâlî, Ebû Hâmid: *Mî‘yâru’l-İlm*, Durusoy, Ali / Hacak, Hasan (trans.), İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı 2013, p. 260.

⁸⁶⁰ Kutluer, İlhan: “İlim”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 22, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2000a, pp. 109–114/112.

⁸⁶¹ Gazzâlî, *İhyâü Ulûmi’-d-Dîn*, III: 19, quoted by: Taylan, 1992, p. 160.

⁸⁶² As in many religious traditions, the heart is known as the locus of God’s knowledge and blessing.

6.2 The Development of Islamic Sciences

The religion Islam places a great emphasis on the notions of knowledge and being wise. This is evidently reported in the *Kur'an* innumerable times. The term *ilim*, one of the several terms applied in the *Kur'an* to refer to knowledge or knowing, for example, is mentioned in its various forms roughly seven hundred and fifty times⁸⁶³. Chittick confirms this significance of knowledge within Islamic discourse with an argument that “few concerns are as central to Islam as the search for knowledge”⁸⁶⁴ and exemplifies it via God’s instruction to Prophet Muhammed in the *Kur'an*: “say, my Lord, increase me in knowledge”⁸⁶⁵. Another verse from the *Kur'an* features the Prophet *İbrahim* (Abraham), the common starting point of three major Abrahamic religions, in the same manner, who in search of knowledge (or wisdom) requests it from God as follows: “My Lord! Grant me wisdom and join me with the righteous”⁸⁶⁶. In their original Arabic composition, each of these verses employs different nomenclatures for knowledge. Whereas in the case of Prophet Muhammed what he asked for was *ilim*, *İbrahim*’s invocation was about *hikmet*. Consequently, the same question posited by preceding ancient philosophers, thinkers, and theologians also occupied their Muslim counterparts when reading their holy scripture, namely what kind of knowledge they were supposed to search for, or knowledge of what? Any answer to this question brings about additional questions addressing the nature of knowledge, where the source of that knowledge is, how to derive it from the source, and how to apply it (*amel*) in worldly and religious topics, all of which form a particular epistemology shaped by several dynamic, quasi-constant variables based on interpretation. These variables primarily consist of ever-changing reinterpretations, polemics, and refutations concerning the question of what knowledge is. Some of these interpretations may eventually become codified laws or dogmas and lead to the emergence of systematized schools of thought (*mezhep*, *ehl-i sünnet*) or orthodoxy. As Kılıç writes: “it should not be forgotten that every attempt to classify sciences or knowledge is dependent on the scientist in question, who is connected to a particular worldview and an intellectual paradigm of the time”⁸⁶⁷, indicating that the cultural background and the intellectual climate in which the scholars develop their theories diffuse into and shape the conceptions as well as the applications of knowledge fundamentally.

⁸⁶³ Rosenthal, 2007, p. 20; Chittick, 1989, p. 147.

⁸⁶⁴ Chittick, 1989, p. 147

⁸⁶⁵ *Kur'an* 20:114 (*Tâhâ*).

⁸⁶⁶ *Kur'an* 26:83 (*Şuarâ*).

⁸⁶⁷ Kılıç, 2004, p. 100.

During the early development period of Islamic sciences after the death of the Prophet Muhammed, certain schools of thought have emerged. The loss of Prophet Muhammed (571–632 CE), God’s viceregent on earth and thus the sole authority of knowledge among the created beings, caused both religious and political turmoil among the early Muslims, chiefly concerning how to understand (*ilim*) and practice (*amel*) religion, and how to position the self or even the whole Muslim community (*ümmet*) in the face of new socio-political developments of the time. Before his death, Prophet Muhammed was the principal instrument between God and *ümmet* since God’s revelations (*vahiy*) were given to him through the intermediary of the archangel *Cebrail* or *Cibril* (Gabriel). Being God’s selected communicator and the carrier of His message, early Muslims often consulted Prophet Muhammed to ask for further explanations concerning the revealed commands. While the revelations were irregularly written down by the followers (*sahâbe*) of Prophet Muhammed, they were initially memorized and transmitted orally among the first Muslims⁸⁶⁸. When there was an interpretative discrepancy, Prophet Muhammed was needed to comment on the issue and clear the meaning (*mâna*) of the revealed message, which led his deeds (*sünnet*) and additional explanations or sayings (*hadis*)⁸⁶⁹ to become principal sources to seek advice and gain understanding in interpreting the *Kur’an*.

As it also happened in preceding religions, the death of Prophet Muhammed brought about the question of authority, leading to the first major bifurcations (e.g., *sünnî – şîî*)⁸⁷⁰ within the Muslim *ümmet*. Having no standardized *Kur’an* at hand and losing numerous *sahâbe*—who memorized the revealed message in its entirety—at battles, forced the successors (*halife*) of Prophet Muhammed, Ebû Bekir (573–634 CE) and Ömer (581–644), to assemble (*cem*) and compile (*tedvin*) all scattered *Kur’anic* chapters into one canonized volume (*mushaf*) in 634

⁸⁶⁸ The compilation of the revealed messages in a book form (*mushaf*) took place around a decade after Prophet Muhammed’s death. This also brought about discussions concerning the authenticity of the collected material.

⁸⁶⁹ In the Turkish context the term *sünnet* is sometimes used as the synonym of *hadis*. While some legal theorists consider that *hadis* and *sünnet* are the same, in other words, they both refer to sayings, actions and unmentioned permissions or disapprovals of Prophet Muhammed; other theological trends regard *hadis* and *sünnet* as slightly different terms. According to this perspective, *sünnet* is the Prophet’s way of life and all the things he did on a regular basis as a model to be followed and a model to be transferred in a community from one generation to the next, for example, how he eats, sleep, behaves poor people etc.; but *hadis* is the Prophet’s reaction, verbal or behavioural, to a particular one-time event. In *Encyclopedia Britannica* the relation between *hadis* and *sünnet* is explained as follows: “Hadith as the biographical ground of law and Sunnah as the system of obligation derived from it”. There are as well some trends rejecting *sünnet* as a source of *şeriat* and questioning the authenticity of *hadis*. However, a detailed analysis of these terms is beyond the scope of this study. Cragg, Albert Kenneth: “Hadith”, in: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Online Edition, 5 August 2020, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hadith>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

⁸⁷⁰ Briefly, beginning with the martyrdom of the *halife* Osman in 656 CE, the religio-political turmoil divided Muslims with respect to the application of religious laws in the *Cemel* Incident (656) and the question of authority in the *Sıffin* Incident (657). These internal conflicts, on one hand, gave rise to the major political polarization within Islam between the *sünnî*, *şîî*, and *hâricî* parties, and on the other, shaped the subsequent theological and political establishments of the Islamic world.

CE. The same standardization issue was also concerned early Muslims about the authenticity of the reported sayings (*hadis*) and actions (*sünnet*) of Prophet Muhammed, giving rise to several Islamic sciences including *tefsir* (commentary, explanation, or critical interpretation of the *Kur'an*; exegesis), *kelâm* (study of the main principles and doctrines of Islam), *fıkıh* (study of Islamic jurisprudence), and *hadis*-related sub-categories.

The multidimensional structure of Islamic conception of knowledge has also led to the emergence of both an Islamic philosophy⁸⁷¹ (*felsefe*) and *tasavvuf*. The latter has often been referred to as an epistemological “methodology”, “theosophy”, or “science” that combines and further expands the investigations concerning knowledge to a metaphysical realm. This was summarized by Taylan as follows:

“The intertwined perception of physics and metaphysics in Islamic thought, the close relationship of knowledge and belief, the joint evaluation of the authority of the divine message with the act of knowing, led to the problem of knowledge to gain both theological, philosophical and psychological contents”⁸⁷²

6.2.1 *Fıkıh*

The *fıkıh* scholars concern themselves with the human interpretation of Islamic law (*şeriat*) derived from two principal sources, namely the *Kur'an* and the Prophet Muhammed's applied commentaries on it (*sünnet* and *hadis*). The *fıkıh* system as a body of rules has been developed to determine the canonical norms of both divine and worldly matters including ritual observance, ethics and morals, social life, politics, and legislation. In their attempts to ascertain what *Allah* classified as, for example, *haram* (sinful), *mekruh* (disapproved), *mubah* (neutral), *vâcip* (required), or *farz* (obligatory) in a Muslim's life, *fıkıh* jurists have developed an *ethos*, in other words a system of moral values known as *ef'âl-i mükellefîn*. Expectedly, when the notion of human interpretation is concerned, opinions are often not unison. This applies to *fıkıh* as well. Depending on how these moral codes, obligations, and prohibitions are interpreted four major *fıkıh* schools known as *mezhep* emerged in *sünnî*⁸⁷³ Islam, each named after the *fıkıh* jurist who set the rules of interpretation and thus become the founding father of the school. These are *Hanefî*, *Şâfiî*, *Mâlikî*, and *Hanbelî*. Whereas all *fıkıh* schools correspond with each

⁸⁷¹ It is crucial to note that what is meant with “Islamic philosophy” is not a field that merely Muslims are involved in. There have also been Christian and Jewish philosophers who contributed fundamentally to the field, which enable us to consider the notion Islamic philosophy as collective philosophical activities carried out within the Islamicate world.

⁸⁷² Taylan, 1992, pp. 158–159.

⁸⁷³ *Ehl-i sünnet*, those Muslims who follow the *sünnet* of Prophet Muhammed.

other concerning the essentials of Islamic faith and rules, the point of divergence is usually their nuanced interpretations. While, for example, dogs may be classified as *necis* (unclean) in some of these schools and touching them therefore requires a procedural ritual cleaning (*abdest*) to avoid *mekruh* (disapproved) or *haram* (sinful) codes, in others, the ablution or ritual cleansing may not be necessary. The details can easily be multiplied even solely with the question of dogs, whether the dog was wet or dry, whether the dog was a pet or a wild one, or whether the saliva of the dog was included or not, may alter the application of the code. As the Latin etymological root of the term jurisprudence, *juris* (law) + *prudentia* (wisdom), signifies, the Islamic term *fikih* also means the judicial knowledge or wisdom, whose differing characteristic has been derived from the legal system revealed in the *Kur'an*. The importance of *fikih* is that it also frames the actions (rituals, prayer forms etc.) of *sūfi* Muslims, thus directly relevant in the performance of *zikir*.

6.2.2 *Kelâm*

Beginning as a branch of *fikih*, *kelâm* is an Islamic theological “science of discourse”⁸⁷⁴ with philosophical inclinations. It is a “speculative theology”⁸⁷⁵ derived from the *sahih* (valid, legitimate) doctrines of the *Kur'an* and Prophet Muhammed, collectively known as *nass*⁸⁷⁶. The term *kelâm* means word, utterance, or speech. From this definition of *kelâm*, van den Bergh argued that the scholars of Islamic speculative theology (*mütekellim*)—especially those who belong to the *Mu'tezile* school—were dialecticians in the same sense of the Greek Stoics who called themselves *διαλεκτικοί* (*dialektikoi*) and writes that “their theory of the rationality of religion was taken from the Stoics”⁸⁷⁷.

The *kelâm* scholars of Islam aim to theorize and substantiate the existence, unity, and the attributes of God through logic, reason, or “rational dialectic”⁸⁷⁸. Also known as *ilm-i kelâm* (the science of *kelâm*), in terms of its application of Aristotelian theories of universe, the *kelâm* system displays features similar to post-patristic period of Christian scholasticism in the Middle

⁸⁷⁴ Winter, J. Tim: “Introduction”, in: Winter, J. Tim (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008, p. 2.

⁸⁷⁵ Haleem, M. Abdel: “Early kalām”, in: Nasr, S. Hossein / Leaman, Oliver (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, London / New York: Routledge 1996, pp. 71–88/71.

⁸⁷⁶ A clear and definite decree of the *Kur'an* or *hadis* that does not require further explanation or interpretation.

⁸⁷⁷ Van den Bergh, Simon (trans.): *Averroes' Tahafut Al-Tahafut (The Incoherence of the Incoherence)*, Cambridge: EJW Gibb Memorial Trust 1987, p. ix.

⁸⁷⁸ Corbin, Henry: *History of Islamic Philosophy*, London / New York: Kegan Paul International 1993, p. 105; Leaman, Oliver, “The developed *kalam* tradition. Sunnism”, in: Winter, J. Tim (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008, pp. 77–90/78.

Ages. In both systems, theologians attempted to employ available philosophical reasoning methods and theories of knowledge (epistemology) to defend as well as explicate the religious or belief-oriented conceptions of knowledge. The main topics covered in the context of *kelâm* are Islamic belief (*akāide* or *itikad*) with its components including *tevhid* (oneness of God), *esmâ-i hüsnâ* (ninety-nine names or attributes of God), prophethood, fate, the immortality of the soul, creation (cosmogony), salvation (soteriology), the end of the world (eschatology), *âhiret* (hereafter), and post-mortem resurrection in the next world. In their attempts to defend the *Kur'anic* doctrines⁸⁷⁹, which are accepted as *kelâmulah* (word of God)⁸⁸⁰, *kelâm* scholars relied primarily on *nass* as the source and to explicate the content of the *Kur'an*. They employed various resources that are at work in obtaining knowledge, involving the senses, discursive thought, and conscience⁸⁸¹. However, *kelâm* does not consist of a unified theological view as there are several schools of interpretation placing unequal importance to each knowledge derivation method. The *Mu'tezile*, *Mâtürîdiyye*, and *Eş'ariyye* schools of *kelâm* therefore held different views on regarding, for example, good and evil in the world, which are, according to the *Mu'tezile* interpretation, “not conventional or arbitrary concepts whose validity is rooted in the dictates of God, as the Traditionists and later the Ash'arites held, but are rational categories which can be established through unaided reason”⁸⁸². One of the major differences between *kelâm* schools thus appears to be the volume or amount of reason and revelation⁸⁸³ included to the combination of resources that produce knowledge about the truth (*hakikat*) of, for instance, what is good and what is bad⁸⁸⁴. While the *Mu'tezile* perspective was favored by certain rulers (*halife*) of both the Umayyad (*Hişam b. Abdülmelik*, *Yezid III b. Velid*) and Abbasid (*el-Me'mûn*) Caliphates, the *Eş'ariyye* school has eventually become the standard *kelâm* discourse in interpreting *sünnî* faith of Islam.

⁸⁷⁹ For instance, the notion of *tevhid* (oneness) of God was the principal Islamic doctrine to defend against, for example, the duality of the Zoroastrians in Iraq and Iran, or the trinity concept of the Christians in and around Syria.

⁸⁸⁰ *Kur'an* 2:75 (*Bakara*), 9:6 (*Tevbe*), 48:15 (*Fetih*).

⁸⁸¹ Hanefî, Hasan: “Geleneksel İslam Düşüncesindeki Otoriteriyenliğin Epistemolojik, Ontolojik, Ahlaki, Siyasi ve Tarihi Kökenleri Üzerine”, in: *İslamiyât*. 2/2, 1999, pp. 25–37/29.

⁸⁸² Fakhry, Majid: *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, New York: Columbia University Press 1983, p. 47.

⁸⁸³ It is important to note that in the Islamic tradition, as Gutas argues, “there was no confrontation between what Western scholars call ‘reason’ and ‘faith’ [...] reason was not something championed exclusively by the scholars in favor of Greek sciences as opposed to the ‘faith’ of the benighted Muslims (this dichotomy is a distinctly Western theologoumenon that has nothing to do with Islamic realities)”. See: Gutas, Dimitri: *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture. The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsīd Society*, London / New York: Routledge 1998, p. 158.

⁸⁸⁴ Martin, C. Richard / Woodward, Mark / Atmaja, S. Dwi: *Defenders of Reason in Islam. Mu'tazilism from Medieval School to Modern Symbol*, London: Oneworld Publications 1997, p. 187.

“He is the One who has revealed to you the Book. A number of its verses are Muhkamat (of established meaning) -and those are the principal verses of the Book- and others, Mutashabihat (whose definite meanings are unknown). Now those who have crookedness in their hearts go after such part of it as is mutashabih seeking (to create) discord and searching for its interpretation while no one knows its interpretation except Allah. And those well-grounded in knowledge say: ‘We believe therein; all is from our Lord.’ And only the men of understanding do observe the advice”⁸⁸⁹

In the verse above the *Kur'an* declares its possession of both *muhkem* (clear, firm, or not open to interpretation) and *müteşâbih* (unclear, metaphorical, or allegorical) passages that require a specific approach and interpretation to derive their meanings and knowledge of how to execute God’s commandments and obligatory duties. While *tefsir* (commentary, exegesis) is an embracing term covering all attempts of explanation and commentary on the *Kur’anic* verses, it consists of several sources and methodologies such as (1) *rivayet* is traditional sources, i.e., the *Kur'an*, *sünnet*, and *nakil* (transmission) of Prophet Muhammed’s commentaries through *sahâbe*, (2) *dirâyet* refers to opinion, reasoning, or critical reading, (3) *lugavî* (philological), and (4) *işârî* is the meaning derived from the hidden signs placed in *müteşabih* verses through specific blessings, e.g., *ilham* (inspiration) or *keşf* (discovery). The last *tefsir* attitude, *işârî*, expanded itself to contain (or produce) complex methodologies giving rise to characteristics of *tasavvuf* epistemology. The term *te’vil*, which is usually translated as allegorical, esotericised interpretation, has become the primary tool for the *işârî* school and *tasavvuf* in approaching the *Kur'an*. In search for *hikmet* (“the hidden cause”⁸⁹⁰) of the verses, *tasavvuf* scholars employed not only the tools of *tefsir* and *te’vil*, but also developed their own methods as well as a lexicon of epistemological terms.

Before dwelling on the epistemology of *tasavvuf*, another knowledge derivation system that emerged among the Islamic sciences should be mentioned, namely *felsefe* (philosophy).

6.2.3 Felsefe

The influence of Greek philosophy did not only give shape to Christianity, Gnosticism, and various other religious systems in and around the Mediterranean region, it was also felt

⁸⁸⁹ *Kur'an* 3:7 (*Âl-i İmrân*); also see 11:1 (*Hûd*) and 39:23 (*Zümer*).

⁸⁹⁰ Aktabur, Arzu: “Exploring *tercüman* as a culture-bound concept in Islamic mysticism”, in: Gürçağlar, T. Şehnaz / Paker, Saliha / Milton, John (eds.): *Tradition, Tension, and Translation in Turkey*, Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins 2015, pp. 53–72/61; Eraslan, Kemal (ed.): *Dîvân-ı hikmet’ten Seçmeler*, Ankara: Türkiye Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı 1983, pp. 39–40.

profoundly in the Islamic world, both before and after the revelation of the *Kur'an* to Prophet Muhammed⁸⁹¹.

To start with, *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, one of the authoritative works on Islam written in Turkish, establishes *hikmet* as the translation of the Greek term *sofia* as used in the combined word philosophy (*φιλοσοφία*) and accordingly offers the translation “*hikmet* lovers”⁸⁹² for the latter. The Arabic word *al-falsafa* (الفلسفة) is clearly a loanword from the Greek *φιλοσοφία* and “had its roots in the Greek intellectual world and more specifically in the philosophical thought of Aristotle as he was interpreted by later Peripatetic and Neoplatonic commentators”⁸⁹³.

Whereas some scholars agreed that Greek philosophy was a platform upon which the Islamic philosophy was built, D’Ancona points out a rather conservative view emerged within Islam arguing that “*falsafa* stemmed from the Qur’anic *hikma* (‘wisdom’)”⁸⁹⁴. Similarly, Nasr too equates “*hikmah*” with philosophy⁸⁹⁵, while Fakrhy and Corbin point to the sameness of the Qur’anic “*hikma*” and Greek *sophia*⁸⁹⁶. In any case, whether it was derived from Greek philosophy or the *Kur'an*, the concept of *hikmet* appears to be at the very centre of Islamic philosophical discourse.

Although the Graeco-Arabic intellectual encounters had already begun more than a century before, one of the primary impetuses for accelerating Greek influence into the Islamic world was the foundation of the library of Baghdad, *Beytü’l-hikme* (House of Wisdom), in 830 CE⁸⁹⁷. Functioned as an education centre, where translation activities and new research about, for example, alchemy, philology, and astronomy⁸⁹⁸ were done, *Beytü’l-hikme* was a gradual production of *Mu‘tezile*-favouring Abbasid caliphs *Mansûr* (714–775), *Reşid* (c. 763–809), and *Me’mûn* (786–833). During the time of *Me’mûn*, the speculative rationalist theology of *Mu‘te-*

⁸⁹¹ D’Ancona, Christina: “Greek Sources in Arabic and Islamic Philosophy”, in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2019 Edition), 23 February 2009, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/arabic-islamic-greek/>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

⁸⁹² Kaya, Mahmut: “Felsefe”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 12, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1995b, pp. 311–319/311.

⁸⁹³ McGinnis, Jon: “Arabic and Islamic Natural Philosophy and Natural Science”, in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2018 Edition), 19 December 2006, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/arabic-islamic-natural/>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

⁸⁹⁴ D’Ancona, “Greek Sources in Arabic and Islamic Philosophy”, 2009.

⁸⁹⁵ Nasr, S. Hossein (ed.): *Islamic Spirituality. Foundations*, New York: Crossroad 1997, p. 414.

⁸⁹⁶ Fakhry, Majid: “Philosophy and the Qur’ân”, in: McAuliffe, D. Jane (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Qur’ân*, Vol. 4, Leiden: Brill 2006, pp. 68–90/68; Corbin, 1993, p. xv.

⁸⁹⁷ Watt, W. Montgomery: *Muslim Intellectual. A Study of al-Ghazali*, Chicago: Aldine Publishing 1963, pp. 25–26.

⁸⁹⁸ Several scholars, however, opposed this view and argued that *Beytü’l-hikme* was not an institutionalized scientific centre and was likely a mere library to house collected material. For a detailed discussion about the activities of *Beytü’l-hikme*, see: Gutas, 1998, pp. 58–60; Balty-Guesdon, Marie-Geneviève: “Le Bayt al-ḥikma de Baghdad”, in: *Arabica*, 39/2, 1992, pp. 131–150; Al-Khalili, Jim: *The House of Wisdom. How Arabic Science Saved Ancient Knowledge and Gave Us the Renaissance*, New York: Penguin Press 2011; Lyons, Jonathan: *The House of Wisdom. How the Arabs Transformed Western Science*, New York: Bloomsbury Press 2009.

zile had even become the official view of the Abbasid Caliphate around the year 827 until another Abbasid caliph, who is known for his piety, *Mütevekkil* (822–861) abandoned this view⁸⁹⁹. During the reign of *Me'mûn*, the Graeco-Arabic translation movement reached its peak marking the ninth century as the focal point of the “Islamic Golden Age”, which has produced a great number of translations covering vast topics including:

“Astrology and alchemy and the rest of the occult sciences; the subjects of the quadrivium: arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and theory of music; the entire field of Aristotelian philosophy throughout its history: metaphysics, ethics, physics, zoology, botany, and especially logic - the *Organon*; all the health sciences: medicine, pharmacology, and veterinary science; and various other marginal genres of writings, such as Byzantine handbooks on military science (the *tactica*), popular collections of wisdom sayings, and even books on falconry - all these subjects passed through the hands of the translators”⁹⁰⁰

Such capitalization of preceding wisdom traditions and other non-Islamic resources became possible following the acquisition of the Hellenized⁹⁰¹ regions such as Syria, Harran, Edessa, Nisibis, and Alexandria of Egypt during the seventh-century Islamic conquests⁹⁰². Combined with the determined efforts of the Abbasid caliphs to collect all the scattered knowledge in the ancient world⁹⁰³, nearly every conquered region added fundamentally to the

⁸⁹⁹ Besides its political undercurrents, *Mütevekkil*'s command to release the imprisoned and tortured founder of *Hanbelî mezhep* of *fikih*, *Ahmed b. Hanbel* (780–855), was the primary sign of the paradigm shift within the Abbasid theological standpoint from the rationalist *Mu'tezile* to a more conservative one. Known for his hostility towards *Mu'tezile* school, traditionalist and *kelâm*-opposing *Ahmed b. Hanbel* favoured a literal reading of the *Kur'an* and established the holy scripture and Prophet Muhammed (including the opinions of his first circle and the following generation, namely *sahâbe* and *tâbiîn*) as the sole sources to derive all forms of knowledge. Along with the question of good and evil in the world, the other main issue creating an irreconcilable dispute among the *Mu'tezile* and *Hanbelî* as well as *Eş'arî* schools of *fikih* was the question of the *Kur'an*'s createdness. While the *Mu'tezile* view held that the *Kur'an* was created by God (*mahluk*) and therefore not eternal, the *Hanbelîs* favoured a position that the *Kur'an*, as the word of God, was uncreated and eternal (*kadîm*); the *Eş'arîs*, on the other hand, took a middle position between the *Mu'tezile* and the *Hanbelî* perspectives. Initiated by the caliph *Me'mûn* against those who did not accept the *Mu'tezile* view of the createdness of the *Kur'an*, the process of interrogation equipped with torture and subsequent “religious persecution” is called *mihne*. See: Gutas, 1998, p. 161; Fakhry, 2006, pp. 88–89.

⁹⁰⁰ Gutas, 1998, p. 1. For additional detailed studies focusing on Graeco-Arabic translations, see: Steinschneider, Moritz: *Die arabischen Übersetzungen aus dem griechischen*, Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz 1893.

⁹⁰¹ Rosenthal, Franz: *The Classical Heritage in Islam. Arabic Thought and Culture*, London / New York: Routledge 1992, p. 2.

⁹⁰² To this list Gutas further adds Qinnasrîn, Ġundîsâbûr, Merv, and Palestine. See: Gutas, 1998, pp. 14–17; Watt, 1963, p. 27.

⁹⁰³ The renowned Muslim biographer *Nedîm*, for example, provides a valuable account of how the caliph *Me'mûn*'s one of the methods of acquiring books functioned. He writes, “(The caliph) *Me'mûn* and the Byzantine emperor exchanged letters. *Me'mûn* was victorious over him. *Me'mûn* wrote a letter to the emperor and asked that any of the old books preserved and collected in the Greek country be allowed to be sent. After protesting first, the emperor granted his request. For this work, *Me'mûn* appointed a committee that included *Haccâc b. Matar*, *İbnü'l-Butrîk*, and the head of *Beytülhikme*, *Selm*, and some other people. They chose among the books they found and took them to *Me'mûn*, and he asked them to be translated, and they were translated”. See: En-Nedîm, Muhammed B. İshak: *El-Fihrist*, Şeşen, Ramazan (trans.), İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı 2019, p. 790.

newly developing Islamic sciences. In the ancient Mediterranean region—as a result of Alexander the Great’s idealism to disseminate Greek civilization throughout his expansion routes⁹⁰⁴—these cities had become the centres of not only Greek philosophy⁹⁰⁵, but, thanks to their geopolitical locations, they also became education posts where Persian, Chaldean, and ancient Babylonian wisdom traditions were taught, especially among the Zoroastrians, Mandaeans, Manichaeans, Sabians and “among Syriac-speaking Jacobites and Nestorians”⁹⁰⁶ of the region (Figure 9).

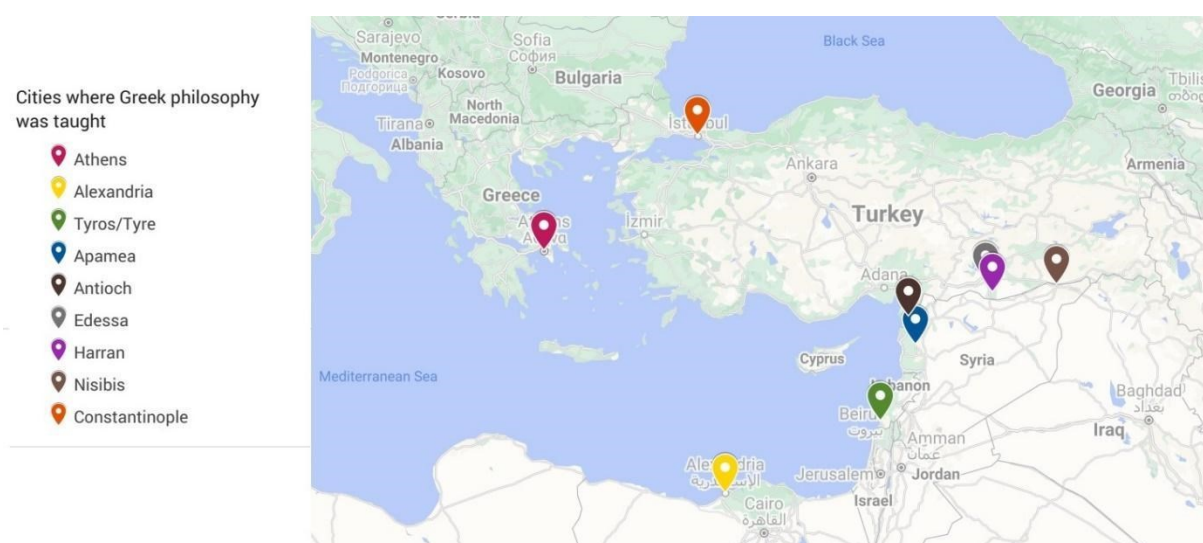


Figure 9: The centres of Greek philosophy during the Late Antiquity (c. 2nd and 6th centuries)

Primarily the Jacobites’ and Nestorians’ employment of Greek logic to defend their theological views resulted in a systematic translation of Greek philosophical sources, especially Aristotle’s peripatetic philosophy, into the Syriac language⁹⁰⁷. It was these Syriac-speaking Christians such as Huneyn b. ʾIshak (c. 809–870), Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I of Seleucia-Ctesiphon (c. 740–823), and Sabian Sâbit b. Kurre (c. 826–901) who were assigned by Muslim caliphs to participate in Graeco-Arabic translations. This led Syriac to become an intermediary

⁹⁰⁴ However, as Gutas points out, Alexander did not merely impose Greek culture on the conquered regions; he also collected the wisdom traditions everywhere he went and “had them all (the books of Zoroaster, -potentially-containing philosophical sciences) translated into Greek languages and burnt the original languages”. See: Gutas, 1998, p. 37.

⁹⁰⁵ Brock, P. Sebastian: “Syriac and Greek”, in: Christidis, Anastasios-Phoivos (ed.), *A History of Ancient Greek. From the Beginnings to Late Antiquity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007, p. 819.

⁹⁰⁶ Fakhry, 2006, p. 74.

⁹⁰⁷ Kaya, Mahmut: “Meşşâiyye”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 29, Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2004, pp. 393–396/394; Brock, Sebastian: “From Antagonism to Assimilation: Syriac Attitudes to Greek Learning”, in: Garsoïan, G. Nina / Mathews, F. Thomas / Thomson, W. Robert (eds.), *East of Byzantium. Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period*, Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Publishing 1982, pp. 17–34; Watt, 1963, p. 26.

between the Greek, Arabic, and Persian worlds⁹⁰⁸. With the caliph *Me'mûn*'s reign, the Greek peripatetic (*meşşâi*) works, as translated by the Syriac-speaking Christians and their Neoplatonic reinterpretations⁹⁰⁹, had been continuously introduced to Muslim theologians and thinkers including Kindî (c. 801–873), Fârâbî (872–951), İbn Sînâ (Avicenna, 980–1037), and İbn Rüşd (Averroes, 1126–1198), who became well-known representatives of philosophy in Islam⁹¹⁰. Such multiplied intermediaries between Greek, Christian, and Muslim philosophers consequently brought about Islamic philosophy as a complex system shaped partially also by these intermediary agents. While some of the Muslim philosophers attempted to reconcile pagan Greek philosophy with their religious background as was done by Jewish Philo of Alexandria, Christian Clement of Alexandria, Origen of Alexandria, and Dionysius the Areopagite centuries ago; some others, especially with the influence of Neopythagoreanism and Neoplatonism, commented on Aristotle in line with the syncretistic trends of the Late Antiquity and brought additional dimensions to Aristotelian metaphysics⁹¹¹. Muslim theologians and philosophers often studied the ancient Greek philosophy of Aristotle and Plato through these mediators, which enabled them to acquire a comprehensive view of a perpetually mutating system of discourses at the hands of its commentators. However, being comprehensive does not mean what Muslim philosophers encountered as Greek philosophy was a monolithic system. The matter of interpretative differences appears to be present also in Muslim adoption of “pagan” philosophy, namely what they inherited was merely a patchwork of ideas containing only specific contents and often in their reinterpreted forms⁹¹².

A translation of a manuscript called the *Theology of Aristotle* (أثولوجيا أرسطو, *Athulujiya Aristu*) into Arabic was first done by the Syriac speaking Christian Ibn Na'ima al-Himsi (c. ninth century) and revised by “the first Muslim philosopher”⁹¹³ Kindî (c. 801–873 CE). Being a paraphrase⁹¹⁴ and not a word-for-word translation, this work clearly demonstrates the partial

⁹⁰⁸ Gutas, 1998, pp. 3, 44.

⁹⁰⁹ Kaya, 1995b, p. 314.

⁹¹⁰ D'Ancona, “Greek Sources in Arabic and Islamic Philosophy”, 2009.

⁹¹¹ Walzer, Richard: *Greek into Arabic. Essays on Islamic Philosophy*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1962, pp. 3–6.

⁹¹² See, for example, Endress, Gerhard: “Platonizing Aristotle. The Concept of ‘Spiritual’ (rūḥānī) as a Keyword of the Neoplatonic Strand in Early Arabic Aristotelianism”, in: *Studia graeco-arabica*, 2, 2012, pp. 265–279.

⁹¹³ D'Ancona, Christina: “Platonic and Neoplatonic Terminology for Being in Arabic Translation”, in: *Studia graeco-arabica*, 1, 2011b, pp. 23–45/26; Fakhry, 2006, p. 76.

⁹¹⁴ Somma, Bethany: *Models of Desire in Graeco-Arabic Philosophy. From Plotinus to Ibn Ṭufayl*, Leiden / Boston: Brill 2021, p. 69. For a detailed analysis of “the nature of the paraphrase”, see: Adamson, S. Peter: *The Arabic Plotinus. A Study of the ‘Theology of Aristotle’ and Related Texts*, Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2000, pp. 14–19.

incorporation of strands of Greek philosophy, particularly Neoplatonic discourses, into Arabic in a reinterpreted form. Apart from a paraphrase, in the translations, there were additionally,

“Frequent interpolations, with passages (sometimes as long as a whole paragraph) appearing in the midst of the text with no direct basis in the Greek. These interpolations, and in many cases the way the Greek original is translated or paraphrased, bring new philosophical ideas and concerns into the text”⁹¹⁵

Falsely attributed to Aristotle, the *Theology of Aristotle* was in fact composed of certain chapters, the books IV-VI⁹¹⁶, from Plotinus’ *Enneads*. Through the agency of this work Muslim philosophers rigorously investigated the theological formulations of Plotinus. On the grounds of the *Theology of Aristotle*’s substantial influence⁹¹⁷, Plotinus was formerly known as “Aṣ-Ṣayḥ al-Yûnânî”⁹¹⁸, the Greek Sage, or “*hikmet ehli*” (familiar with *hikmet*)⁹¹⁹ among the early Muslim intellectual groups, especially within the circle of *Kindî*. The spurious attribution of this work to Aristotle promoted the proliferation of Neoplatonic theories of creation, the One, and all the relevant dynamics of Plotinian metaphysics, as expressed in the *Enneads* IV-V-VI, “as an aspect of Islamic peripateticism, as represented by such authors as al-Kindî, al-Fārābî, and Ibn Sînā (Avicenna)”⁹²⁰.

Apart from Aristotle, Plato, and unknowingly Plotinus, some other renowned thinkers, theologians, and philosophers whose works and commentaries had been translated into Arabic were Pythagoras, Euclid, Hippocrates, Nichomachus of Gerasa, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Proclus, Themistius, Simplicius, John Philopus, Olympiodoros, Hippolytus of Rome, Galen, and Porphyry, along with anonymous treatises covering topics about alchemical and hermetical

⁹¹⁵ Adamson, Peter: “The Theology of Aristotle”, in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2021 Edition), 5 June 2008, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/theology-aristotle/>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

⁹¹⁶ According to Rosenthal, the parts forming the Plotinus’ translations into Arabic were *Enneads* 5.1.6, 5.1.7, 5.1.22, 5.2.1, 5.4.1, 5.6.4; 6.9.6, 6.3.6, and 6.7.18. See: Rosenthal, 1952, pp. 475ff.

⁹¹⁷ Along with the *Letter on Divine Science* and the *Sayings of the Greek Sage*, the *Theology of Aristotle* constitutes the collection known as *Plotiniana Arabica*. For a detailed study concerning the influence of Plotinus on Islamic philosophy, see: Badawî, ‘Abdurrahman: *Aflûṭîn ‘inda’l-‘arab. Plotinus apud Arabes. Theologia Aristotelis et Fragmenta Quae Supersunt*, Cairo: Dâr al-nahdat al-misrîya 1955; Schwyzer, Hans-Rudolf / Henry, Paul (eds.): *Plotini Opera. Enneades IV-V*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer 1959; Rosenthal, Franz: “Plotinus in Islam. The Power of Anonymity”, in: Rosenthal, Franz, *Greek Philosophy in the Arab World. A Collection of Essays*, London: Variorum Reprints 1990, pp. 437–446.

⁹¹⁸ Rosenthal, Franz: “Aṣ-Ṣayḥ al-Yûnânî and the Arabic Plotinus Source”, in: *Orientalia*, 21, 1952, pp. 461–492; Adamson, 2000, p. 9; D’Ancona, Christina: “Plotinus, Arabic”, in: Lagerlund, Henrik (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy between 500 and 1500*, Dordrecht: Springer 2011a, pp. 1030–1038.

⁹¹⁹ Karakaya, M. Mehmet: “Yunanlı Şeyh’e Göre Bir, Akıl ve Nefs”, in: *Eskiyeşi*, 33, 2016, pp. 79–89/80.

⁹²⁰ Adamson, Peter: “Aristotelianism and the Soul in the Arabic Plotinus”, in: *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 62/2, 2001, pp. 211–232/211.

writings⁹²¹. Furthermore, in addition to the Greek sources, the Abbasid mission to include all the legitimate knowledge into their repertoire also covered Pahlavi, Sanskrit, and some other languages as well as traditions (Sassanian and Babylonian), which were adopted not always merely on a scientific or intellectual basis, but often with the intention to “legitimize the rule of their dynasty”⁹²².

In the development period of Islamic philosophy, the same theological questions that occupied various factions of *kelâm* schools were also inherited by the Muslim philosophers, who visibly increased the assimilation of Greek philosophical discourses concerning ontology, creation, fate etc. into the Islamic repertoire of interpretation. Both the early and late Muslim philosophers such as Kindî (801–873), Fârâbî (872–951), İbn Sînâ (980–1037), or İbn Rüşd (1126–1198) had been in conversation with ancient thinkers, theologians, and philosophers, above all with Aristotle. As in the case of the other philosophical inquiries, Muslim philosophers attempted to ascertain the mode of creation with its components and the relation between God and the created beings. Whereas the traditional Orientalist view often argued that the Muslim philosophers merely translated and adopted Greek philosophical doctrines, the recent scholarship opposingly maintains the primary source for an Islamic philosophy to be the *Kur’an*⁹²³. The opinions produced by the pagan Greeks were thus employed as tools or instruments to systematically explain the *Kur’anic* doctrines pertaining to creation, God’s role during and after the creation, and the human condition in the world, though only as far as they conform to the *Kur’anic* narrative. Most of the philosophical and theological discussions in the Islamicate world revolved around accommodating revelation (*Kur’an*) and reason, usually with the aim to demonstrate the primacy of revealed doctrines of the *Kur’an* over the truths derived through the speculative reasoning within the capacities of the human mind.

Aristotle’s focus on metaphysics, or what he calls “the first philosophy”⁹²⁴, is dominated by several notions including “being qua being” and the concept *sophia* (wisdom) as the study of “primary causes (*aitia*) and the starting-points (or principles, *archai*)”⁹²⁵. In the same vein,

⁹²¹ D’Ancona, “Greek Sources in Arabic and Islamic Philosophy”, 2009; Walzer, 1962, pp. 5–8; Gutas, 1998, pp. 182–183; Endress, Gerhard: “Die Wissenschaftliche Literatur”, in: Gätje, Helmut (ed.), *Grundriß der arabischen Philologie*, Vol. 2, Wiesbaden: Reichert 1987, pp. 400–506/429–433, and various issues of the journal *Studia graeco-arabica*.

⁹²² Gutas, 1998, p. 29.

⁹²³ Nasr, S. Hossein: “The Qur’ân and Hadîth as Source and Inspiration of Islamic Philosophy”, in: Nasr, S. Hossein / Leaman, Oliver (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, London / New York: Routledge 1996b, pp. 27–39; Fakhry, 2006, pp. 68–90.

⁹²⁴ Fakhry, 2006, p. 69.

⁹²⁵ Cohen, S. March / Reeve, C. D. Charles: “Aristotle’s Metaphysics”, in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2020 Edition), 8 October 2000, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/aristotle-metaphysics/>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

Kindî's description of philosophy as "the highest form of human intellectual activity and of human knowledge"⁹²⁶, which seeks the knowledge of the truth (*hakk*) or "the true nature of things"⁹²⁷, approximates closely the Aristotelian view. What precisely demonstrates the Aristotelian influence on the first Muslim philosopher concerning the knowledge of the truth can be derived from Kindî's own words at the beginning of his treatise *On First Philosophy*:

"We do not find the truth we are seeking without finding the cause; the cause of existence and continuance of everything is the True One, in that each thing has being has truth [...] knowledge of the First Truth Who is the cause of all truth"⁹²⁸

According to both Aristotle and Kindî, philosophy concerns itself with the knowledge of the causes of everything (including the creation, or good and evil in the world), which implies a first cause that starts the whole mechanism of the universe. Whereas in Aristotle's metaphysics the first cause is the Unmovable Mover, derived from the Platonic conception of Forms⁹²⁹, Kindî similarly equates it with a transcendent metaphysical being, namely the Creator, *Allah*⁹³⁰. It is, however, important to note that within the tradition of Islamic philosophy, the reception and application of Aristotelian, or in general Greek philosophical, discourses took place in varying densities. In other words, the Aristotelianism of Kindî or İbn Sînâ was different from that of İbn Rüşd. Each of these Muslim philosophers received pagan philosophy from different sources in a reinterpreted form and uniquely applied them to the interpretation of the *Kur'anic* doctrines. Therefore, critical nuances between their theories appeared, which enabled them to place emphasis on alternating topics or methodologies. Especially, within the *şîî* Ismailism and the *Ikhwan al-Safa* trends, in addition to Aristotelianism, features of Platonic, Pythagorean, Hermetic, and Gnostic discourses can be observed, which differentiate such groups profoundly from their counterparts sharing the same religion. Depending on how much space is occupied by the incorporated philosophical trends, the intellectual product takes a shape that is only partially similar to the others.

⁹²⁶ Bakar, Osman: "Science", in: Nasr, S. Hossein / Leaman, Oliver (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, London / New York: Routledge 1996, pp. 926–946/928.

⁹²⁷ Ivry, L. Alfred (trans.): *Al-Kindi's Metaphysics*, Albany: SUNY 1974, p. 55.

⁹²⁸ Ivry, 1974, pp. 55–56.

⁹²⁹ D'Ancona, 2011b, p. 25.

⁹³⁰ El-Ehwany, F. Ahmed: "Al-Kindi", in: Sharif, M. Muhammad (ed.), *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz 1963, pp. 421–434/424.

6.3 Neoplatonism in Islam

References to the first cause were also provided by the author(s) or the translators of the *Plotiniana Arabica*. While the author of the *Theology of Aristotle* states to discuss “the First Divinity...and that it is the Cause of Causes”⁹³¹, or “the Creator, the Maker”⁹³², the author of the *Sayings of the Greek Sage* too referred to the Plotinian conception of the One as the first cause⁹³³. After establishing what the first cause is, both texts of the *Plotiniana Arabica* discuss the dynamics and the mode of creation by proposing the theory of emanation. At the beginning of the last book (*The First Cause and the Things that Originate from It*) of the *Theology of Aristotle*, 10.1-23, one can find how the Neoplatonic theory of emanation was translated into Arabic:

“The absolute One is the cause of all things [...] all things are in it and it is not in any of the things, for all things gush forth from it; in it is their sustenance and support and to it is their returning. If anyone says: How is it possible for the things to be from the simple One, in which there is no duality or plurality in any respect? We reply: Because it is One, absolute and simple, containing none of the things, and it being pure One all things gush forth from it. For while it has no identity, identity gushes forth from it”⁹³⁴

Likely as one of the consequences of the Abbasid translation activities, this emanationist stream of Greek philosophy was most thoroughly investigated by Fârâbî and İbn Sînâ, “who built their cosmology and metaphysics around the pivotal concept of ‘the one’ or ‘the first’ [...] the first cause of all existing entities, is free from all imperfection and is entirely distant from everything else”⁹³⁵. However, the influence of the *Theology of Aristotle* among Muslim philosophers and thinkers was not limited to the Kindî circle or the early development years of Islamic philosophy represented by Fârâbî and İbn Sînâ. Adamson argues that the Neoplatonic features brought by the *Theology of Aristotle* were later expanded upon by certain other prominent Muslim thinkers including Sicistânî (fl. 971), Şehristânî (c. 1086–1153), and Sühreverdî (1155–1191), each of whom brought an individual interpretation to the work and constructed their own philosophy to explain the *Kur’anic* doctrines with slight nuances.

⁹³¹ Quoted by: Adamson, Peter: “Before Essence and Existence. Al-Kindi’s Conception of Being”, in: *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 40/3, 2002, pp. 297–312/298.

⁹³² Quoted by: D’Ancona, 2011b, p. 36.

⁹³³ Rosenthal, 1952, p. 475.

⁹³⁴ Quoted by: Foltz, Bruce (ed.): *Medieval Philosophy. A Multicultural Reader*, London: Bloomsbury 2019, p. 538.

⁹³⁵ Fakhry, 2006, p. 80.

Considering the eclectic structure of the discourses of Neoplatonism and the syncretistic dynamics surrounding it where it had been developed (Alexandria), its incorporation of various views and opinions from Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Pythagoras, and Philo of Alexandria has already been established by recent scholarship. Apart from these obvious names, there may have been additional theological and philosophical sources available for Muslim philosophers to derive the theory of emanation. A Christian Neoplatonist, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (c. fifth and sixth century)—who also dealt with the mode of creation in the form of emanation and expanded upon the Plotinian notion of divine love with ecstatic inclinations—combined the abstract philosophical One with the Christian God and wrote in his *On the Divine Names* (Gr. *Peri theion onomaton*; Lat. *De Divinis Nominibus*):

“We must dare to say even this on behalf of the truth that the cause of all things himself, by his beautiful and good love for all things, through an overflowing of loving goodness, becomes outside of himself (*exo heautou ginetai*) by his providential care for all beings and is as it were, charmed (*thelgetai*) by goodness, affection (*agapesis*), and love (*eros*), and is led down (*katagetai*) from his place above all and transcendent of all to dwell in all things in accordance with his ecstatic superessential power which does not depart from itself”⁹³⁶

One essential difference in Pseudo-Dionysius’ formulation is that even though he plainly refers to the emanation, he applies the concept not to the ontological dimension of God but rather to the creative loving action, which was to be one of the most central themes within the creation narrative, epistemology, and theological philosophy of *tasavvuf*. Aminrazavi acknowledges this view and argues that “for the mystics of Islam, Sufis, creation is not a mechanical process, but an act of love; and God’s involvement with creation is a love affair”⁹³⁷.

6.4 Elements of Islamic Creation: Theological and Philosophical Interpretations

The creation in the *Kur’an* is referred to via two terms, *halk* and *ibdâ‘* in its various passages scattered throughout the scripture. While in chapters 11:7 (*Hûd*) and 25:59 (*Furkân*), as in other Abrahamic religions’ creation narratives, it is reported that “the heavens and the

⁹³⁶ Quoted by: Corrigan, Kevin / Harrington, L. Michael: “Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite”, in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2019 Edition), 6 September 2004, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/pseudo-dionysius-areopagite/>>, last accessed: 13 January 2022. For a slightly different translation of the same passage, which lacks a clear reference to the emanation concept, see: Rolt, C. Edwin: *Dionysius the Areopagite. On the Divine Names and the Mystical Theology*, Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library 1920, p. 106.

⁹³⁷ Aminrazavi, Mehdi: “God, Creation, and the Image of the Human Person in Islam”, in: Koslowski, Peter (ed.), *The Concept of God, the Origin of the World, and the Image of Human in the World Religions*, Boston / London: Kluwer Academic Publishers 2001, pp. 95–111/102.

earth and whatever is between them” were created in six days; in several other passages, 22:47 (*Hac*) and 32:5 (*Secde*), the *Kur’an* explains “a day whose length is a thousand years by your counting”⁹³⁸. Therefore, the duration of six days is understood in terms of a metaphysical time scale measured by a metaphysical chronograph.

One another recurring theme in several creation theories of, for example, Augustine of Hippo⁹³⁹, the *Book of Genesis* of the Old Testament⁹⁴⁰, the Babylonian myth of *Enûma Eliš*⁹⁴¹, Hesiod⁹⁴², Thales’ views of creation⁹⁴³, and the *Kur’an* is the consideration of water as a kind of primordial matter, from which all living beings were derived. In the *Kur’anic* verses 21:30 (*Enbiyâ*), 25:54 (*Furkân*), and 24:45 (*Nûr*), the role of water in the creation process is addressed explicitly:

“Have not those who disbelieve known that the heavens and the earth were of one piece, then We parted them, and We made every living thing of water? Will they not then believe?”⁹⁴⁴

Along with water being the essence, or the building block of life, the verse above additionally implies another commonality between the *Kur’anic* narration and certain preceding creation theories. The section, “the heavens and the earth were of one piece, then We parted them” gives an account of the separation theme that had been present in, for example, the *Book of Genesis* (1:6-8), Sumerian creation myths of *Huluppu Tree*⁹⁴⁵ and *Nammu*⁹⁴⁶, Babylonian *Enûma Eliš*⁹⁴⁷, as well as in the story told by the Greek tragedian Euripides’ mother⁹⁴⁸. A third theme containing the water motif in certain creation narratives and the *Kur’an* is the account of the Creator’s throne standing upon the primordial waters. In verse 11:7 (*Hûd*), the *Kur’an* declares that “His Throne was upon the waters”. Combined with the Prophet Muhammed’s fol-

⁹³⁸ On the other hand, in chapter 70:4 (*Meâric*), a day is equated with “fifty thousand years”. This difference in measuring a day in different passages might be related to the fact that in 70:4 it is the day of resurrection in the *Kur’anic* sense, while in other chapters a day refers to a time scale adjusted for creation.

⁹³⁹ Augustine of Hippo: “On Genesis”, in: Teske, J. Roland (trans.), *On Genesis. Two Books on Genesis Against the Manichees and On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis. An Unfinished Book*, Washington: The Catholic University of America Press 1991, p. 153.

⁹⁴⁰ Mabie, 2008, pp. 47–48.

⁹⁴¹ Wasilewska, 2000, pp. 45–56.

⁹⁴² Banks, D. James: *The Works of Hesiod, Callimachus, and Theognis*, London: H. G. Bohn 1856, p. 8.

⁹⁴³ Aristotle: “Metaphysics”, Vol. 1, 1933, pp. 19–20.

⁹⁴⁴ *Kur’an* 21:30 (*Enbiyâ*), in: Fakhry, 2000, p. 323.

⁹⁴⁵ Wolkstein / Kramer, 1983, p. 4.

⁹⁴⁶ Andrews, Tamra: *Dictionary of Nature Myths. Legends of the Earth, Sea, and Sky*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000, pp. 36, 48; Kramer, 1972, p. 41.

⁹⁴⁷ Wasilewska, 2000, pp. 45–56.

⁹⁴⁸ Seidenberg, 1969, p. 188.

lowing *hadis* narrated by Bukhari (3191) the notion of *creatio ex nihilo* appears to be the essential creation doctrine of Islam :

“First of all, there was nothing but Allah, and (then He created His Throne). His Throne was over the water, and He wrote everything in the Book (in the heaven) and created the heavens and the earth.”⁹⁴⁹

While Muslim scholars, according to Çağrıçı, “accepted this *hadis* as clear evidence for creation out of nothing”⁹⁵⁰—since the passage “there was nothing but Allah” establishes this notion undoubtedly—there have been varying opinions about the question of what was created the first⁹⁵¹. Without going into detail, Çağrıçı quotes several *tefsir*, *hadis*, and *kelâm* scholars who almost unanimously supported the view that the throne and waters had been created *ex nihilo* before even the “heavens and the earth” and all the other living beings were created. The theory of *creatio ex nihilo* found support in additional verses from the *Kur’an* such as 2:117 (*Bakara*), 15:85 (*Hicr*), 25:59 (*Furkân*). However, when this view is considered along with certain other chapters and the water-related verses above, an area of speculation opens in which one can derive additional creation theories from the *Kur’anic* narrative. In the verses 38:71 (*Sâd*), 15:28 (*Hicr*), 30:20 (*Rûm*), and 35:11 (*Fâtır*), the *Kur’an* introduces a perspective of creation and asserts that God made humans out of mud (earth, clay, or dust) which may be interpreted in terms of *ex nihilo nihil fit* (nothing comes from nothing). As discussed above in the context of several creation theories, the concept *ex nihilo nihil fit* immediately recalls a primordial matter or a *prima materia*, from which all living beings and the universe were derived. The *Kur’an* mentions three different matters employed to form humans, the living universe, and *İblis* (Satan); while humans were made from mud or clay, other living beings from water, and *İblis* from fire⁹⁵². These classical elements, with the addition of air, and their specific mixture in varying densities usually imply a pre-existent matter from which the universe was formed and constitute a crucial tenet of various creation theories of, for example, Anaximander (*arche*), Empedocles (*rhizōmata*), Plato⁹⁵³, Aristotle (Gr. *hyle*, Ar. *heyûlâ*), the author of the

⁹⁴⁹ Al-Bukhârî, Muhammad: *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahîh Al-Bukhârî*, Khan, M. Muhsin (trans.), Vol. 4., Riyadh: Darussalam Publishers 1997, p. 264

⁹⁵⁰ Çağrıçı, Mustafa: “Yaratma”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 43, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2013a, pp. 324–329/327.

⁹⁵¹ Yıldırım, Zeki: “Erzurumlu Müfessir Lütfullah Efendi’de Nazarî Sufî Tefsir Örneği”, in: *Atatürk Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 40, 2013, pp. 1–40/20.

⁹⁵² *Kur’an* 7:12 (*A’râf*), 38:76 (*Sâd*).

⁹⁵³ Wolfson, 1948, p. 355.

Book of Wisdom (11:17), Hippolytus of Rome⁹⁵⁴, and Plotinus (fire)⁹⁵⁵. Nevertheless, based on the *Kur’anic* verses 2:117, 15:85, 25:59, and 35:1, Çağrıcı argues that:

“The *Kur’anic* accounts implying a pre-existent matter do not necessarily mean that the beings were created from an eternal matter (*arche, hyle*) as in Greek philosophy. [...] As a matter of fact, there are numerous verses that mentions absolute creation [a.n. *ex nihilo*] such as 2:29 (*el-Bakara*), 6:101-102 (*el-En’âm*), 25:2 (*el-Furkân*), 39:62 (*ez-Zümer*), 3:47 (*Âl-i İmrân*), 24:45 (*en-Nûr*), 28:68 (*el-Kasas*)”⁹⁵⁶

In certain verses referred to by Çağrıcı above and in numerous other Islamic sources, God’s creative action is described through several terms—such as *kün, ibda’, halk, “ber’, zer’, fatr, sun’, inşâ’, ihdâs, îcâd, tasvîr, tekvîn, ihtirâ’, ca’l’*⁹⁵⁷. Especially the verses containing the verb *kün* (be) have often been considered the prime indicators of *creatio ex nihilo* theory within the *Kur’anic* account and are accepted as a doctrine by most Muslims:

“The Originator of the heavens and the earth! When He decreeth a thing, He saith unto it only: Be! and it is”⁹⁵⁸

“Mary said: My Lord! How can I have a child when no mortal has touched me? He said: So (it will be). Allah creates what He will. If He decrees a thing, He saith unto it only: Be! and it is”⁹⁵⁹

Such a variety of perspectives within the scripture allowed Muslim thinkers to employ divergent creation theories and led to the emergence of associated schools of interpretation. As in the preceding mythological, religious, and philosophical traditions, the understanding of creation, its mode, dynamics as well as the position of its actors, namely the creator-created dichotomy, profoundly influenced the understanding of the religious duties and the way of life as ordered by the Creator. Furthermore, as in the preceding traditions, alternative creation theories appeared following a non-literalist or usually allegorical interpretative approach to the scripture. In strict relation to their understanding of the creation narrative of the *Kur’an*, the *Mu’tezile* school, for example, favoured a position that puts emphasis on allegorical reading of the *Kur’an* along with the application of reason (*akıl*) to interpret it and argued that the *Kur’an* was created (*mahlûk*), therefore not co-eternal with God. On the other hand, a more traditionalist

⁹⁵⁴ Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 2016, p. 747.

⁹⁵⁵ Plotinus: “Second Ennead”, in: Kalligas, Paul (ed.), *The Enneads of Plotinus*, Vol. 1, Princeton / Oxford: Princeton University Press 2015, p. 265.

⁹⁵⁶ Çağrıcı, 2013a, p. 326.

⁹⁵⁷ Çağrıcı, 2013a, p. 325.

⁹⁵⁸ *Kur’an* 2:117 (*Bakara*).

⁹⁵⁹ *Kur’an* 3:47 (*Âl-i İmrân*).

and scripturalist (*Hanbelî*, majority of *sünnî*) view held precisely opposing views and asserted a strictly literal reading of the *Kur'an* and believed that the *Kur'an* is uncreated and co-eternal with God.

One another creation theory known as *sudûr* (emanation, procession) or *feyz* (overflow, emanation), explicitly demonstrates the Neoplatonic and perhaps Gnostic influences in Islamic philosophy and cosmogony. The term *sudûr* (الصدور) is an infinitive verb employed by Muslim philosophers—above all by Fârâbî and Ibn Sînâ—to explain several logical problems they encountered concerning God's act of creation and the following events. These logical problems roughly cover the topics of the duality created by the existence of the world as a separate entity from God, “how multiplicity came from unity and how corporality emanated from an incorporeal God, as well as explaining the ascending and descending order of beings”⁹⁶⁰, and a potential *şirk* (polytheism) caused by the indirect existence of the world from God. Concerning the creation, *sudûr* refers to a hierarchical scheme of existence developed to interpret the emergence of the universe, which was fashioned in a manner different from the *creatio ex nihilo*. Valantasis' account of Gnostic creation theory in the form of emanation can also be applied, with slight alterations, to the Islamic *sudûr* concept. He describes the manner of emanation in Gnosticism as “a level of existence overflowed into the succeeding lower and more physical levels of creation, extending downward from the most spiritual to the most physical”⁹⁶¹. A version of this idea used by Muslim philosophers was taken directly from Plotinus, which had already been a widespread school of interpretation under the rubric of Neoplatonism in the first centuries CE. According to this interpretation, as explained above, every being is derived from an “absolute one” and is in motion towards it and will become it again. As in the Gnostic and Neoplatonic descriptions of the One, according to the *sudûr*/emanation theory, the world was created through a kind of *feyz* (overflow) from God, and this act does not lead to a decrease in God's essence, power, or cause a separation from God.

6.4.1 The Cosmogony of Fârâbî

With the fundamental influence of the *Theology of Aristotle*, Fârâbî's metaphysics and the explanation he brought to the mode of creation contains a deliberate application of Platonic

⁹⁶⁰ Aminrazavi, Mehdi: “Mysticism in Arabic and Islamic Philosophy”, in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2016 Edition), 7 March 2009, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arabic-islamic-mysticism/>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

⁹⁶¹ Valantasis, 2006, p. 148.

and certain Aristotelian theories (especially his “metaphysics of causation”⁹⁶²) combined with Neoplatonic, chiefly Plotinian, perspectives⁹⁶³. Fakhry, along with several other scholars, goes further on to describe Fârâbî as “the founder of Muslim Neoplatonism”⁹⁶⁴, who incorporated the emanation theory as developed within the Alexandrian syncretic traditions⁹⁶⁵ and aimed at applying it in a syncretic⁹⁶⁶ (or eclectic)⁹⁶⁷ manner that integrates Ptolemy’s geocentric model of the universe⁹⁶⁸ (Figure 10), “Platonism, Aristotelianism, and Şūfism”⁹⁶⁹, and the creation narrative of the *Kur’an*. After having studied the accounts provided by Porphyry, Fârâbî was well-aware of the conditions in Alexandria and how Greek philosophy was treated, denounced, or incorporated into various interpretations⁹⁷⁰, as, following Kindî’s path, he was as well trying to reconcile not only Plato and Aristotle—particularly in his work *el-Cem‘ beyne re’yeyi’l-ḥakîmeyn Eflâtûn el-Îlâhî ve Aristotâlis, Reconciliation of the Views of the Two Sages, Plato the Divine and Aristotle*—but, with an argument implying *philosophia perennis, prisca theolo-*

⁹⁶² Reisman, C. David: “Al-Fârâbî and the philosophical curriculum”, in: Adamson, Peter / Taylor, C. Richard (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005, pp. 52–71/56. However, Black argues that Fârâbî’s handling of the Aristotelian metaphysics of causation “represents a radical departure from Aristotle, for whom God was not an efficient cause of the very existence of all other beings, but only the first cause of motion in the universe”. See: Black, L. Deborah: “Al-Fârâbî”, in: Nasr, S. Hossein / Leaman, Oliver (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, London / New York: Routledge 1996, pp. 178–197/189.

⁹⁶³ Rahman, Fazlur / Mahdi, S. Muhsin / Schimmel, Annemarie: “Islam”, in: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Online Edition, 30 September 1998, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Islam>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

⁹⁶⁴ Fakhry, 2006, p. 80.

⁹⁶⁵ Along with Gnostic (Valentinian and Basilidian), Christian, and Jewish (Philo) influences, based on the information provided by Porphyry in the preface of the *Enneads*, Plotinus was said to capitalize Persian, Indian, and Egyptian wisdom traditions. See: Porphyry: “On the Life of Plotinus and the Order of his Books”, in: Armstrong, H. Arthur (trans.), *Plotinus in Seven Volumes*, Vol. 1, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1988, pp. 3–90/8.

⁹⁶⁶ Adıvar, A. Adnan: “Preface”, in: *Farabî. İhsâ’ul-Ulûm (İlimlerin Sayımı)*, Ateş, Ahmet (trans.), İstanbul: MEB Yayınları 1990, p. 38.

⁹⁶⁷ Kaya, Mahmut: “Fârâbî”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 12, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1995a, pp. 145–162/147–148.

⁹⁶⁸ McGinnis, Jon / Reisman, C. David (eds.): *Classical Arabic Philosophy. An Anthology of Sources*, Indianapolis / Cambridge: Hackett Publishing 2005, p. 54; Madkour, Ibrahim: “Al-Fârâbî”, in: Sharif, M. Mohammad (ed.), *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Vol. 2, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1966, p. 458.

⁹⁶⁹ Sarton, George: *Introduction to the History of Science*, Vol. 1, Baltimore: The Williams & Wilkins 1927, p. 628.

⁹⁷⁰ Fârâbî, in his *Appearance of Philosophy*, criticizes the Church Fathers’ attitude towards philosophy and summarizes the transmission of philosophy as follows: “Philosophy as an academic subject became widespread in the days of the [Ptolemaic] kings of the Greeks after the death of Aristotle in Alexandria until the end of the woman’s [i.e., Cleopatra’s] reign. The teaching [of it] continued unchanged in Alexandria after the death of Aristotle through the reign of thirteen kings... Thus it went until the coming of Christianity. Then the teaching came to an end in Rome while it continued in Alexandria until the king of the Christians looked into the matter. The bishops assembled and took counsel together on which [parts] of [Aristotle’s] teaching were to be left in place and which were to be discontinued. They formed the opinion that the books on logic were to be taught up to the end of the assertoric figures [Prior Analytics, I.7] but not what comes after it, since they thought that would harm Christianity. [Teaching the] rest [of the logical works] remained private until the coming of Islam [when] the teaching was transferred from Alexandria to Antioch. There it remained for a long time [until] only one teacher was left. Two men learned from him, and they left, taking the books with them. One of them was from Ḥarrân, the other from Marw. As for the man from Marw, two men learned from him..., Ibrâhîm al-Marwazî and Yuḥannâ ibn Ḥaylân.”. Quoted by: Reisman, 2005, p. 55.

gia, or *pia philosophia* (oneness of ancient wisdom), he also aimed at attuning philosophy and religion⁹⁷¹.

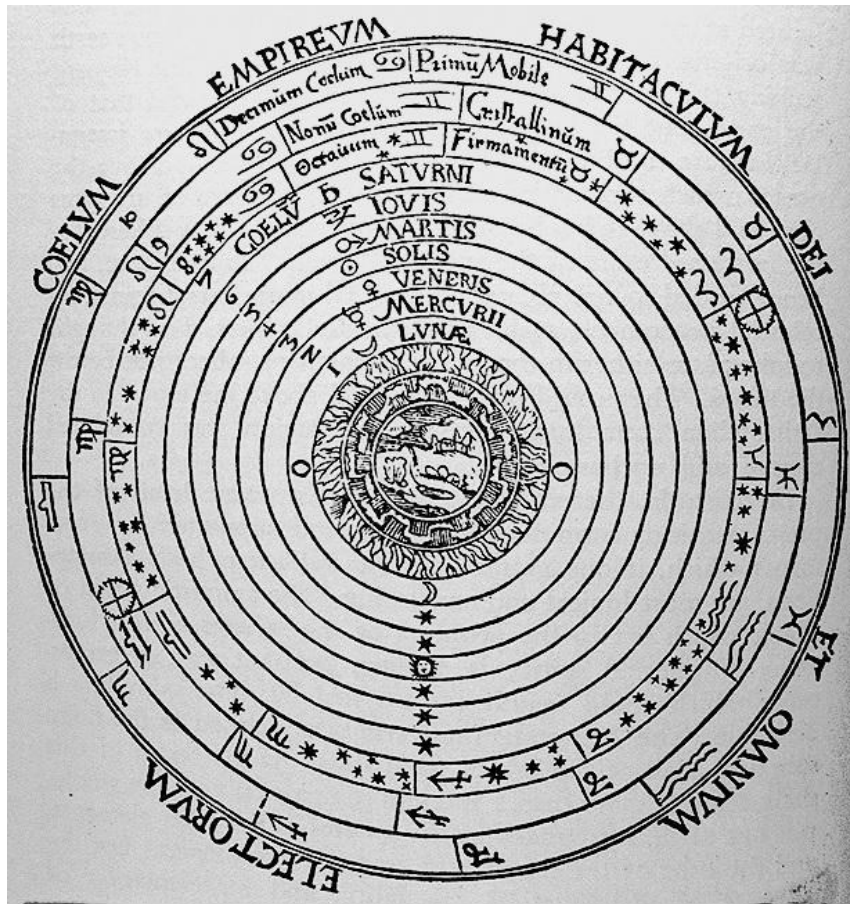


Figure 10: Ptolemy's geocentric model of the universe as reproduced by Peter Apian⁹⁷².

Like Plotinus, to be able to maintain the unity, absoluteness, and perfectness of God, Fârâbî filled the gap between the divine Creator and the created (or emanated) material bodies with a number of incorporeal intermediary beings. As in Plotinian conception, at the top of the emanation system stands the One, absolute God as the First Cause⁹⁷³, who is indivisible, ineffable⁹⁷⁴, eternal, and uncreated, and from whom all the other beings had been derived⁹⁷⁵. In Fârâbî's system, the One is followed by the ten heavenly or celestial minds⁹⁷⁶ or intellect (*akıl*,

⁹⁷¹ Fakhry, Majid: "Al-Farabi and the Reconciliation of Plato and Aristotle", in: *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 26/4, 1965, pp. 469–478; Reisman, 2005, pp. 52–71; Mahdi, Muhsin (trans.): *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, New York: Cornell University Press 1962, p. 43.

⁹⁷² Apian, Peter: *Cosmographia*, Antverpiae: Apud Ioannem VVithagium 1524, Folio.3.

⁹⁷³ Al-Fârâbî, Abū Naṣr: *Mabādi' arā' ahl al-Madīna al-Fādila*, Walzer, Richard (trans.), Oxford: Clarendon Press 1985, pp. 57ff.

⁹⁷⁴ Walzer, on the other hand, argues that Fârâbî's *via negativa* "is not as uncompromising [...] as in Neo-platonists". See: Al-Fârâbî, *Mabādi' arā' ahl al-Madīna al-Fādila*, 1985, p. 12.

⁹⁷⁵ Al-Fârâbî, *Mabādi' arā' ahl al-Madīna al-Fādila*, 1985, pp. 89ff.

⁹⁷⁶ Al-Fârâbî, *Mabādi' arā' ahl al-Madīna al-Fādila*, 1985, pp.119ff.

nous), while at the bottom of the hierarchy stands the formless substance or the prime matter (*heyûlâ, hyle*)⁹⁷⁷, which is ontologically the most distant from God and thus the least perfect. Corresponding to the *aeons* in Gnostic cosmogony, the celestial minds in the Islamic emanation system offered by Fârâbî act as intermediaries between God and the material universe⁹⁷⁸. One important feature of Fârâbî's (and Ibn Sînâ's)⁹⁷⁹ emanation theory is that he substitutes the celestial minds (intellect) with the planets in Ptolemy's model of the universe⁹⁸⁰ and with the angels in the *Kur'an*'s narrative. In doing so, he combines the available philosophical and scientific developments with Islamic theology as well as metaphysics.

Fârâbî's metaphysical design was composed of six ontological principles: The One (First Cause, "al-sabab al-awwal")⁹⁸¹, the Secondary Cause (the first nine intelligences), the Agent Intellect (*al-'aql al-fa' 'âl*), the soul (*nefs*), form (*sûret*), and matter (*madde*)⁹⁸². In this system, the One (the First or Prime Mover)⁹⁸³, by contemplating itself (as there is nothing else to contemplate), initially emanates the first intellect and the subsequent incorporeal secondary causes or intelligences in descending order⁹⁸⁴ which are nine in number and associated with the Ptolemaic assortment of the planets. Following this headmost event (the One's self-contemplation), each of the secondary intelligences reproduces the act and by contemplating both the One and themselves⁹⁸⁵ they emanate each other (according to the number of the Ptolemaic planets); or they emanate "(1) a further intellect and (2) a heavenly body"⁹⁸⁶ until the production of the tenth agent or the Active Intellect (*faal akîl*), which belongs to the lunar sphere and "governs the sublunar realm"⁹⁸⁷ where the material world and its components exist⁹⁸⁸ (Figure 11).

⁹⁷⁷ Madkour, 1966, p. 459.

⁹⁷⁸ Kaya, 2009, p. 467.

⁹⁷⁹ Ülken, H. Ziya: "İbn Sina'nın Din Felsefesi", *A. Ü. İlâhiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 4/1-2, 1955, pp. 81–94/83.

⁹⁸⁰ Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon.

⁹⁸¹ Rudolph, Ulrich: "Abû Naşr al-Fârâbî", in: Rudolph, Ulrich / Hansberger, Rotraud / Adamson, Peter (eds.), *Philosophy in the Islamic World*, Vol. 1, Leiden / Boston: Brill 2017, pp. 526–654/615–616.

⁹⁸² Druart, Thérèse-Anne: "Fârâbî III. Metaphysics", in: *Encyclopædia Iranica*, 15 December 1999, <<https://iranicaonline.org/articles/farabi-iii>>, last accessed: 11 March 2022.

⁹⁸³ Reisman, 2005, pp. 56–57.

⁹⁸⁴ Al-Fârâbî, *Mabâdî' ârâ' ahl al-Madîna al-Fâdila*, 1985, pp. 101–105.

⁹⁸⁵ This is the exact point where multiplicity is derived from singularity according to Fârâbî's and Ibn Sînâ's systems of emanation. When the first emanation (the first of the nine second intelligences) contemplates (*tefekkiir*) both the First Cause and itself (two simultaneous attributes). Since it is both a necessary (*vâcib*) and a possible (*mümkün*) being, this act creates a multiplicity. Since within Islamic conception God's oneness (*tevhid*) is of utmost importance and cannot be opposed, this attribute had to be kept intact. Therefore, in Fârâbî's system, "the ability to reproduce in the first mind does not originate from the absolute One, but from its own essence, so that there is no defect in the oneness of Allah". See: Kaya, 2009, p. 467; Cevizci, Ahmet: *Felsefe Tarihi*, Vol. 2, İstanbul: Say Yayınları 2016, pp. 296–297.

⁹⁸⁶ Rudolph, 2017, p. 617.

⁹⁸⁷ Reisman, 2005, pp. 56–57.

⁹⁸⁸ Black, 1996, p. 189.

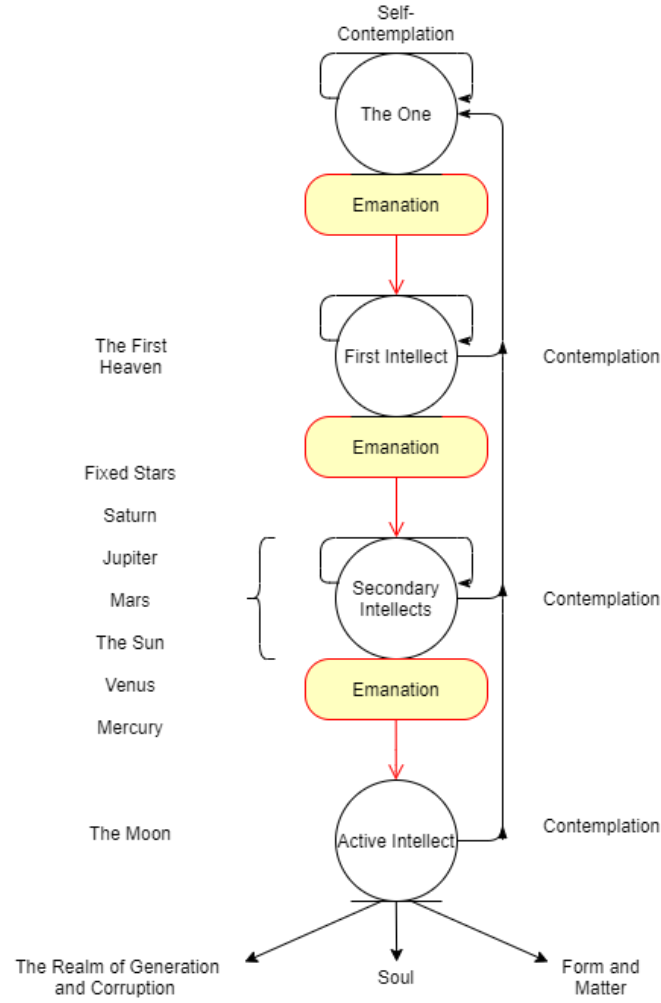


Figure 11: Fârâbî's Sudûr System.

Fârâbî's metaphysical system contains additional features needing to be mentioned, as they will be, though partially, adopted by certain Islamic schools of interpretation, above all by *tasavvuf* scholars and refuted by certain theologians, especially by Gazzâlî. In order to maintain the *modus operandi* of this cosmological system and the mode of the universe's fabrication in a hierarchical manner, Fârâbî had to design his epistemology and ontology (of both God and humans) in a specific way.

For both Fârâbî and İbn Sînâ, beings can be classified according to their essences (*cevher*) as *vâcib* (necessary, absolute) and *mümkün* (possible, dependent)⁹⁸⁹. Necessary being (*vâcib 'ül-vücud*) means that it does not require any cause or a creator to exist⁹⁹⁰; its existence is by its own nature necessary and eternal⁹⁹¹; all the other beings are thus classified as possible

⁹⁸⁹ Kaya, Mahmut (ed.): *İslam Filozoflarından Felsefe Metinleri*, İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları 2003a, p. 307.

⁹⁹⁰ Farabi: *İhsâ'ül-Ulûm (İlimlerin Sayımı)*, Ateş, Ahmet (trans.), İstanbul: MEB Yayınları 1990b, p. 122. Following Fârâbî's commentaries, the same view was adopted by certain subsequent philosophers including İbn Sînâ (980–1037), İbn Rüşd (1126–1198), and Jewish philosopher Maimonides (1138–1204). See: Adıvar, 1990, p. 39.

⁹⁹¹ Farabi: *El-Medînetü'l Fâzıla*, Danışman, Nazif (trans.), Ankara: MEB Yayınları 1990b, p. 15.

(*mümkün*) whose existence is conditionally caused by a necessary being, that is *Allah*. Likely based on Plotinus' view in his *Enneads* (5.1.6), which argues that the One “necessarily produces”⁹⁹² other beings and does this eternally, Fârâbî developed his theory of causation within emanative creation along the lines of Plotinus' conception. For Fârâbî, God's self-contemplation (*tefekür*), “intellectual activity”⁹⁹³, or “self-knowledge”⁹⁹⁴ is a creative act that led to the series of emanative events. As being the First Cause or Prime Mover, God's necessary being inevitably caused *mümkün* (possible) beings. Even though Fârâbî establishes the cause of the initial creative moment as a contemplative operation of God, this causation, due to God's absolute being, takes place by necessity but not by intention, since, for both Plotinus and Fârâbî, it uncontrollably overflows the existence to possible beings⁹⁹⁵. This implies an eternally occurring creation out of God's active control and will. Whereas God's will in creation appears to be limited in Fârâbî's *sudûr* system, nearly all (mental and physical) activity concerning human relation with the divine is attached, as the name clearly suggests, to the Active Intellect.

Concerning the Active Intellect (*ruh'ül emin, ruh'ül kudüs*; or *Cebrail / Gabriel* as the angelic correspondent)⁹⁹⁶, Fârâbî, along with other Muslim philosophers including İbn Sînâ and İbn Rüşd, reproduces the Aristotelian perspective as mentioned in his *De Anima* (III.5.430a18) that argues “how the human intellect passes from its original state, in which it does not think, to a subsequent state, in which it does”⁹⁹⁷. According to Fârâbî's emanation system, the Active Intellect is a bridge connecting the metaphysical realm with the sub-lunar physical one and activates all the potential mental as well as physical processes within this domain. For instance, as the last station of incorporeal emanations in Fârâbî's system, the Active Intellect, also known as “the Giver of Forms (*wahib al-suwar, dator formarum*)”⁹⁹⁸, generates *heyûlâ* (substance or matter, *hyle*), which is the main principle of all material beings and gives *heyûlâ* both its matter (*madde*) and form (*sûret*)⁹⁹⁹, a process followed by the generation of the four classical elements (air, water, fire, earth)¹⁰⁰⁰ and through the combination of them, the rest of the material realm.

⁹⁹² Nikulin, Dmitri: “The One and the Many in Plotinus”, in: *Hermes*, 126/3, 1998, pp. 326–340/327–328.

⁹⁹³ Black, 1996, p. 189.

⁹⁹⁴ Madkour, 1966, p. 458.

⁹⁹⁵ In fact, this problem was solved by both Fârâbî and İbn Sînâ by equating God's will and knowing. See: Kaya, 2009, p. 467; Al-Fârâbî, *Mabâdî' ârâ' ahl al-Madîna al-Fâdila*, 1985, p. 346.

⁹⁹⁶ Gürer, Dilaver, “Sûfî İbn Sînâ (ö. 428/1037) ve Makâmâtü'l-Ârifin'i”, in: *Tasavvuf İlmi ve Akademik Araştırma Dergisi*, 2/6, 2001, pp. 119–158/144.

⁹⁹⁷ Davidson, A. Herbert: *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect. Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, & Theories of Human Intellect*, New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press 1992, p. 1.

⁹⁹⁸ Corbin, 1993, p. 162.

⁹⁹⁹ Reisman, 2005, p. 60.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Adıvar, 1990, p. 40; Kaya, 2009, p. 467; Farabi, 1990b, pp. 35ff; Al-Fârâbî, *Mabâdî' ârâ' ahl al-Madîna al-Fâdila*, 1985, p. 12.

In addition to the Active Intellect, Fârâbî formulates three further forms of intellect present in the human soul, “the potential intellect (*al-’aql bi’l-quwwa* [a.n. “*heyûlânî*”])¹⁰⁰¹, actual intellect (*al-’aql bi’l-fi’l*) and acquired intellect (*al-’aql-mustafad*)”¹⁰⁰². From this formulation, he also develops his characteristic epistemology, through which Fârâbî, following Kindî, explains the stages and the hierarchy of knowing as well as a form of salvific knowledge at the top of the hierarchy that enables its holder to acquire moral virtues, happiness¹⁰⁰³, and communion (with the metaphysical begins). While the potential intellect has the means to think, it stays inactive until it is activated by the Active Intellect (*faal akıl*) and becomes the actual intellect. According to Taylan, within the epistemologies of Fârâbî and İbn Sînâ, this interaction with the Active Intellect allows the human mind (*akıl*) to perform its function to obtain information and knowledge¹⁰⁰⁴. Before reaching the level of the acquired intellect (*müstefâd*) in the hierarchy, which stands at the top and concerns both philosophers and prophets, Fârâbî, as Plotinus does to explain the One’s undiminishing perfectness in the process of emanation (*Enneads*, 5.6.4), employs the analogy of the sun and light in explaining the role of the Active Intellect:

“The relation of the Active Intellect to man is like that of the sun to vision. Sun gives to vision light, and by the light acquired from the sun, vision actually sees, when before it had only the potential to see. By that light, vision sees the sun itself, which is the cause for it actually seeing, and furthermore actually sees the colors which previously were [only] potentially the objects of vision. The vision that was potential thereby becomes actual. In the same manner, the Active Intellect provides man with something that it imprints in his rational faculty. The relation of that thing to the rational soul is that of light to vision. Through that thing the rational soul intellects the Active Intellect. Through it, the things that are potentially intelligible become actually intelligible. And through it, man, who is potentially intellect, becomes actually and perfectly an intellect, until it all but reaches the level of the Active Intellect. So [man] becomes an intellect *per se* after he was not, and an intelligible *per se* after he was not, and becomes a divine [substance] after being a material one. This is what the Active Intellect does”¹⁰⁰⁵

In Fârâbî’s system, the potential intellect is shared by all human beings (sense perception). It functions to enable humans, with the influence of the Active Intellect, to develop their

¹⁰⁰¹ Kaya, Mahmut: “el-Medînetü’l-Fâzıla”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 28, Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2003b, pp. 318–320/319.

¹⁰⁰² Black, 1996, p. 186.

¹⁰⁰³ Alfarabi: “The Attainment of Happiness”, in: Mahdi, Muhsin (trans.), *Alfarabi’s Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, New York: Cornell University Press 1962, pp. 13–50.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Taylan, 1992, p. 160.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Quoted by Reisman, 2005, p. 62.

level of cognition from a mere perception (pure potentiality)¹⁰⁰⁶ to a higher form of abstraction and self-comprehension (actual intellect). In relation to this, the highest form of knowing (acquired intellect) allows the human soul to go beyond the material realm and comprehend abstract concepts as well as engage with the metaphysical beings, and even become like them¹⁰⁰⁷. For Fârâbî, this hierarchical development is determined and thus it must take place in the given order towards a perfection¹⁰⁰⁸. This perfection is described by Fârâbî as a desire of the human soul¹⁰⁰⁹, which brings about the human will (*irade*) and must be fed with intellectual activities inherited from the Active Intellect. Combined with the human effort and knowledge bestowed by the higher realm, perfected human intellection (acquired intellect) comes to mean ultimate¹⁰¹⁰ or “supra-terrestrial”¹⁰¹¹ happiness and salvation. As in Plotinus (*Enneads*, 2.9.6; 6.7.40), such perfection causes human soul to shed its deterrent links with the body and the material world¹⁰¹². As in esotericised philosophical and religious traditions, Fârâbî argues that the acquired intellect (*müstefad akıl*) of the soul, which has the ability to know the truth (*hakk*) as it is, can only be attained by a few devoted or select people. In the same vein, İbn Sînâ reproduces Fârâbî’s theory of the acquired intellect and differs the processes of acquisition for the devoted and selected as follows: “whereas the prophets have this power from birth, the gnostics (*arif*) and saints (*veli*) gain this power after going through a long spiritual cleansing exercise, that is, ascetic (*zühd*) experiences”¹⁰¹³. As in nearly all esotericised systems, this form of privileged knowing brings its holders to a stage of comprehension “where the hidden is unveiled and come in direct communion with the world of the separate intelligences”¹⁰¹⁴. As

¹⁰⁰⁶ İbn Sînâ, like Fârâbî, related this potent condition of the mind with the concept of “*tabula rasa*”, which will be filled with knowledge (or become activated) by means of human intellectual effort so that it can engage with abstract concepts (metaphysical beings). This view stands in opposition to the Platonic theory of birth with knowledge and consequent remembrance. See: Rizvi, H. Sajjad: “Avicenna (Ibn Sina)”, in: *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <<https://iep.utm.edu/avicenna-ibn-sina/>>, last accessed: 11 March 2022.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Black, 1996, p. 186.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Mahdi, 1962, p. 76.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Madkour, 1966, pp. 458–459; Corbin, 1993, p. 159.

¹⁰¹⁰ Farabi, *El-Medinetü'l Fâzıla*, 1990b, pp. 65–66.

¹⁰¹¹ Corbin, 1993, p. 164.

¹⁰¹² From this perspective, which corresponds largely with that of Plotinus’ (*Enneads*, 4.7.2, “On the Immortality of the Soul”), Fârâbî also conceptualizes the human soul as immortal. On the other hand, Adamson argues that the author of the *Theology of Aristotle* fails to mention Plotinus’ concept of *metempsychosis* (transmigration of soul) and therefore we cannot find an agreeing commentary on this issue from the side of Fârâbî. In Fârâbî’s and general Islamic understanding, the soul leaves the body after death, but it cannot get into another material body as in Neoplatonic conception (except Iamblichus). The notion of *metempsychosis*, however, finds expression as *tenâsüh* in certain other Islamic interpretative trends including the *şîi* Ismailî and Ikhwan al-Safa schools. See: Adamson, 2000, p. 44; Sorabji, 1993, p. 189/f.n. 167-168; Kahn, 2001, p. 148; D’Ancona, 2011b, p. 29; Kaya, 2009, p. 468; Savage-Smith, Emilie (ed.): *Magic and Divination in Early Islam*, New York: Routledge 2017.

¹⁰¹³ Ülken, 1955, p. 92.

¹⁰¹⁴ Madkour, 1966, p. 461.

Corbin confirms¹⁰¹⁵, this process of acquiring the truth or unveiling the mysteries is thus often described via epistemological concepts and methods incorporated from *tasavvuf* terminology, e.g., discovery (*keşf*), inspiration (*ilham*)¹⁰¹⁶, intuition, or illumination¹⁰¹⁷.

In strict relation to his epistemological organization and under the influence of “Aristotle, pseudo-Alexander of Aphrodisias, and Plotinus”¹⁰¹⁸, Fârâbî designs four faculties of the human soul as nutritive (appetitive), sensitive, imaginative, and rational. Each of these faculties perform different tasks and provide varying forms of information to the human soul. They are also interrelated and permeable among each other. The nutritive faculty acts upon “desire or dislike”, enables “the will to arise”¹⁰¹⁹, and governs the human body accordingly. The sensitive faculty feeds the soul with the information provided by the five senses, which are to be controlled and judged by the imaginative faculty (or the faculty of representation), whereas the rational faculty “extends its rule over the other faculties”¹⁰²⁰.

According to Fârâbî, “knowledge of something may be brought about by the rational faculty and by the faculty of representation (imagination) or by sense-perception”¹⁰²¹. The imaginative faculty, whose characteristic quality is a “reproductive imitation” (*mimesis*)¹⁰²², has a special place in Fârâbî’s organization as it is related with prophecy and prophetic knowledge based on revelation or divine inspiration. According to Fârâbî’s account, in its perpetual imitation of the other faculties, the imaginative faculty is limited by the capacity of those faculties. On the other hand, when it is freed from the effects of the senses and corporeal desire while, for example, asleep, it begins to dream. For Fârâbî, “true visions will arise from the particulars which the Active Intellect gives to the faculty of representation [a.n. imagination, *tahayyül*] in dreams”¹⁰²³. As Kaya emphasizes, in Fârâbî’s system it is also possible to receive and comprehend the metaphysical truths while awake, but this is limited to specific people only, namely to the prophets, who reached the level of the acquired (*müstefad*) intellect¹⁰²⁴ by their given nature and without any active intellectual effort. This corresponds perfectly with the *Kur’anic* narrative about Prophet Muhammed’s encounter with the archangel *Cebrail* / Gabriel (Active Intellect) and his reception of divine inspiration (*ilham*), prophecy (“supernatural awareness”)¹⁰²⁵,

¹⁰¹⁵ Corbin, 1993, p. 159.

¹⁰¹⁶ Kaya, 2009, p. 468.

¹⁰¹⁷ Corbin, 1993, p. 162.

¹⁰¹⁸ Reisman, 2005, p. 60.

¹⁰¹⁹ Al-Fârâbî, *Mabâdi’ ârâ’ ahl al-Madîna al-Fâdila*, 1985, p. 167.

¹⁰²⁰ Al-Fârâbî, *Mabâdi’ ârâ’ ahl al-Madîna al-Fâdila*, 1985, p. 169.

¹⁰²¹ Al-Fârâbî, *Mabâdi’ ârâ’ ahl al-Madîna al-Fâdila*, 1985, pp. 171–173.

¹⁰²² Al-Fârâbî, *Mabâdi’ ârâ’ ahl al-Madîna al-Fâdila*, 1985, p. 211.

¹⁰²³ Al-Fârâbî, *Mabâdi’ ârâ’ ahl al-Madîna al-Fâdila*, 1985, p. 221.

¹⁰²⁴ Kaya, 2003b, p. 319.

¹⁰²⁵ Al-Fârâbî, *Mabâdi’ ârâ’ ahl al-Madîna al-Fâdila*, 1985, p. 225.

and revelation (*vahiy*) from *Allah* through the intermediary of the angel while awake¹⁰²⁶. Whereas, based on the properties of the imaginative faculty, prophecy is an acquired attribute concerning the truths of the metaphysical realm, the philosopher nourishes itself from the rational faculty. By means of its contemplative (*tefekür*) relationship with the Active Intellect, the philosopher also possesses the quality of engaging with the metaphysical truths. For Fârâbî, when these two are combined, it leads to “felicity”¹⁰²⁷ as well as to “the highest rank of perfection”¹⁰²⁸. In other words, for Fârâbî, İbn Sînâ, and İbn Rüşd, in its relationship with the Active Intellect (*ittisal*, union or convergence)¹⁰²⁹, human soul (or intellect) can produce both theoretical and revelational knowledge¹⁰³⁰. This highest form of knowledge (or wisdom)—whether theoretical, intuitive, or revelation-based—is “achieved through illumination, dream, or vision giving explanation of the inner structure of natural and divine things”¹⁰³¹. Thus, it refers to an esotericised noetic quality. Considering the Arabic term used to denote philosophers, *hâkim* (sage)¹⁰³², it may be possible to deduce from this term that the knowledge (or wisdom) acquired by this class of people should be *hikmet*, as, according to the Arabic linguistic features, they are both derived from the *hkm* root to address the subject (*hâkim*) and its object (*hikmet*)¹⁰³³.

Fârâbî’s hierarchically organized stages of knowledge cover both the physical and metaphysical realms and appear to possess intriguing similarities with Plotinus’ epistemology. Equipped with noetic (knowledge-granting) quality, Plotinus’ emanation system allows humans to attain union (*henosis*) with the One (*Enneads*, 6.9.7) through an ecstatic experience¹⁰³⁴. For Plotinus, and Fârâbî to a certain degree, the human soul is in “desire and religious aspiration to move towards the First Cause in order to find peace of mind in the unity with God”¹⁰³⁵. However, Fârâbî’s idea of union does not correspond to that of Plotinus’, as for Fârâbî it is not a

¹⁰²⁶ According to Ülken, the same view is also present in İbn Sînâ’s theological epistemology. He summarizes İbn Sînâ’s design as follows: “The prophet has the superior ability, a divine intuitive power that scholars (*alim*) do not have. This allows the prophet to come into contact with the Active Intellect. The prophet comprehends the truths (*hakikat*), which the others cannot do due to their [a.n. rational] mind, through this intuitive power. At this supreme level (*marifet*, *gnosis*), the human mind becomes a divine mind. Revelation consists of giving this divine power to some exceptional people [a.n. prophets]. The angel is the power in this radiant state (*feyezân*) through which one comes into contact with higher truths. The prophet receives these truths with the help of the angel”. See: Ülken, 1955, pp. 91–92.

¹⁰²⁷ Al-Fârâbî, *Mabâdî’ ârâ’ ahl al-Madîna al-Fâdila*, 1985, p. 209.

¹⁰²⁸ Al-Fârâbî, *Mabâdî’ ârâ’ ahl al-Madîna al-Fâdila*, 1985, p. 225.

¹⁰²⁹ Taylan, 1992, p. 160.

¹⁰³⁰ Kaya, 2009, p. 468.

¹⁰³¹ Rahman / Mahdi / Schimmel, “Islam. The new wisdom. Synthesis of philosophy and mysticism”, 1998.

¹⁰³² Taylan, 1992, p. 160; Al-Fârâbî, *Mabâdî’ ârâ’ ahl al-Madîna al-Fâdila*, 1985, p. 347.

¹⁰³³ Nicholson, 1906, p. 311; Rudolph / Hansberger / Adamson, 2017, p. 788; En-Nedîm, 2019, p. 1103; Nasr, 1997, p. 414.

¹⁰³⁴ Stearns, 1920, pp. 358–359.

¹⁰³⁵ Şenel, Cahid: “Yeni Eflâtunculuk”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 43, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2013, pp. 423–427/424.

union with the One, but a union (*ittisal*) with the Active Intellect. Perhaps one of the most important notions within Fârâbî's epistemology is the link he established between morality, ethics, governance, happiness, and the condition of being “perfectly” wise¹⁰³⁶. The togetherness of all these elements, namely a convergence of practical and theoretical philosophy in the soul means for both Fârâbî and Plotinus perfection, a condition in which, following the Aristotelian model, “knowing something, the intellect becomes that thing”¹⁰³⁷.

According to both Fârâbî's and İbn Sînâ's *sudûr* conceptions based on the Aristotelian view of “God as thought thinking itself”¹⁰³⁸ (*voẽĩ ó voũç*)¹⁰³⁹, *Allah* is simultaneously the intellect (*akıl*) itself, and both the subject (*âkıl*) as well as the object (*ma'kûl*) of its own intellect¹⁰⁴⁰. The perfection is therefore understood as acquiring a likeness¹⁰⁴¹ or the same quality with the One, First Cause, or *Allah*. Correspondingly, in a treatise attributed to Fârâbî, *Risâle fîmâ yen-bağî en yukaddeme kable te'allûmi'l-felsefe* (*Topics to Know Before Studying Philosophy*), the author argues that “what the philosopher has to do is to resemble God to the extent of his own power”¹⁰⁴² with an implication, as Kaya stresses,

“Besides spiritual and moral purification, the philosopher should be enlightened intellectually and have universal knowledge of his own existence like God; on the other hand [a.n. for Fârâbî], a person who is content only with the theoretical knowledge yet not concerned with purifying his soul and morality can only be a fake philosopher”¹⁰⁴³

Macit, however, diagnoses an ambiguity in attributing this work to Fârâbî and claims that regarding the content and ordering of topics, this treatise appears to be a translation of the Neoplatonist philosopher Ammonius' (c. 435–517 CE) introduction (*prolegomena*) to his com-

¹⁰³⁶ From this encompassing usage of wisdom concept, Biesterfeldt et. al. correlate Platonic philosopher-king with that of Fârâbî's and imply a similar approach to the condition of being perfectly wise in two philosophers. See: Biesterfeldt, H. Hinrich / Wakelnig, Elvira / Endress, Gerhard / Ferrari, Cleophea: “The Beginnings of Islamic Philosophy in the Tradition of al-Kindî”, in: Rudolph, Ulrich /Hansberger, Rotraud / Adamson, Peter (eds.): *Philosophy in the Islamic World*, Vol. 1, Leiden / Boston: Brill 2017, pp. 221–380/299.

¹⁰³⁷ Reisman, 2005, p. 63.

¹⁰³⁸ De Koninck, Thomas: “Aristotle on God as Thought Thinking Itself”, in: *The Review of Metaphysics*, 47/3, 1994, pp. 471–515.

¹⁰³⁹ Aristotle, “Metaphysics”, 12.1072b, Vol. 2, 1935, p. 148.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Kaya, 2009, p. 467.

¹⁰⁴¹ According to Kutluer, Plato as well defines *philosophia* as “likeness to God”, through which the performer of philosophy can theoretically acquire similar qualities with that of God's. See: Kutluer, İlhan: “Hikmet”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 17, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1998, pp. 503–511/506.

¹⁰⁴² Kaya, 1995a, p. 148.

¹⁰⁴³ Kaya, 1995a, p. 148.

mentary, *On Aristotle Categories*¹⁰⁴⁴. Ammonius' account, except certain differing translative interpretations in its Arabic version, corresponds largely with the passage attributed to Fârâbî:

“To ascend to the common principle (*arkhê*) of all things and to be aware that this is the one goodness itself, incorporeal, indivisible, uncircumscribed, infinite and of infinite potentiality”¹⁰⁴⁵

According to the editors of Ammonius' text, this passage expands upon the Aristotelian theory and refers to the Neoplatonic conception of the One as well as the possibility for human soul to attain “a mystical union with the One”¹⁰⁴⁶. Although the Arabic version of the treatise does not seem to belong to Fârâbî, the fact that it was translated into Arabic suggests a degree of its influence in certain streams of Islamic philosophy.

In view of these Muslim philosophers' attempts to reconcile religion and philosophy, the formulation of the Active Intellect as the source of both philosophy (theoretical knowledge) and religion (revelationary knowledge) implies an equalization of the philosopher and prophet, which was fiercely opposed and refuted by the renowned *Eş'arî* theologian and *sûfî* Gazzâlî. Even though Fârâbî's and İbn Sînâ's cosmogonies brought explanations concerning how multiplicity was derived from singularity, how matter was created from incorporeal beings, and how human intellect is connected to the Active Intellect (*faal akıl*), Gazzâlî's ground-breaking refutations in his *Tahâfut al-Falâsifah (Incoherence of the Philosophers)* had fundamentally limited these philosophers' sphere of influence within the Islamic world¹⁰⁴⁷. Among the philosophical arguments refuted by Gazzâlî, “seventeen are condemned as heretical innovations [a.n. *bid'at*], three as totally opposed to the Islamic belief, and those upholding them as outright infidels [a.n. *kâfir*]”¹⁰⁴⁸.

6.5 The Clash of Epistemologies: Gazzâlî vs. Philosophers

Gazzâlî, known as *hüccet'ül-Islam* (the guarantor of Islam)¹⁰⁴⁹, occupies a prominent place in the intellectual history of Islam. His in-depth studies covered a vast range of Islamic

¹⁰⁴⁴ Macit, Muhittin: “Fârâbî'ye Nispet Edilen İki Risâle”, in: *M.Ü. İlâhiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 26/1, 2004, pp. 5–21.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Ammonius, *On Aristotle Categories*, Cohen, S. Marc / Matthews, B. Gareth (trans.), London: Bloomsbury 1991, p. 14.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Ammonius, 1991, p. 14/f.n. 9.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Güner, 2001, p. 138.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Marmura, A. Michael: “Translators Introduction”, in: Al-Ghazâlî, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, Marmura, A. Michael (trans.), Utah: Brigham Young University Press 2000, pp. xv–xxvii/xv.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Corbin, 1993, p. 180.

and non-Islamic sciences that he was simultaneously “a renowned Islamic lawyer (*faqīh*), speculative theologian (*mutakallim*), but above all an Islamic mystic (*ṣūfī*)”¹⁰⁵⁰. Having been appointed as the headteacher (*müderres*) of law (particularly *Şâfiî* jurisprudence) in the main theological school (*nizamiye*, *medrese*) of Baghdad, his early treatises provide clues about Gazzâlî’s long-lasting polemical and critical attitude towards inconsistencies in knowledge derivation tools and methods used by theologians (*mütekellim*), philosophers, or *İsmailî* esoterics (*bâtîniyye*)¹⁰⁵¹. According to Gazzâlî, these groups who seek the truth (*hakikat*) have different epistemological methods. While theologians primarily use opinion (*rey*) and deduction (*istidlâl*), philosophers employ logic (*mantık*) and evidence (*bürhan*), for esoterics, instruction or training (*tâlim*) should be prioritized, and *mutasaffiye* favour their own methodology including observation (*müşâhede*) and discovery (*keşf*)¹⁰⁵². In this polemical style, Gazzâlî composed his *Fedâihu’l-Bâtîniyye* (*The Scandal of Esoterics*) under the command of the Abbasid caliph *el-Müstazhir-Billâh* (1078–1118) to defend the (*sünnî*) Abbasid doctrinal standpoint against the increased religious and political influences of the *şîî* Fatimid Caliphate established in Cairo¹⁰⁵³. What differentiated Gazzâlî from being a mere mouthpiece of the Abbasid political ideology was his characteristic approach to sciences and personal efforts in his search for the truth (*hakik*). In his own words:

“I poked into every dark recess and made an assault on every problem, I plunged into every abyss. I scrutinized the creed of every sect and I fathomed the mysteries of each doctrine. All this I did that I might distinguish between the true and the false. There was not a philosopher whose system I did not acquaint myself with, nor a theologian whose doctrines I did not examine. If I ever met a Sufi, I coveted to probe into his secrets; if an ascetic, I investigated into the basis of his austerities; if one of the atheistic *zindīqs*, I groped into the causes of his bold atheism”¹⁰⁵⁴

Though Gazzâlî has been viewed as the eradicator of Islamic philosophy and thus the Islamic Golden Age, which still resonates today in the statements of popular scientists such as the astrophysicist Neil de Grasse Tyson and theoretical physicist Steven Weinberg, several scholars opposed the view that Gazzâlî suppressed the Islamic scientific development single-

¹⁰⁵⁰ Marmura, E. Michael: “Al-Ghazālī”, in: Adamson, Peter / Taylor, C. Richard (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005, pp. 137–154/137.

¹⁰⁵¹ Gazali: *El-Munkizu Min-ad-Dalâl*, Güngör, Hilmi (trans.), Ankara: Maarif Basımevi 1960, pp. 15–16; Çağrıçı, Mustafa: “El-Münkız mine’ d-Dalâl”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 32, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2006, pp. 16–17/16.

¹⁰⁵² Gazali, *El-Munkizu Min-ad-Dalâl*, 1960, p. 22.

¹⁰⁵³ Campanini, Massimo: “Al-Ghazālī”, in: Nasr, S. Hossein / Leaman, Oliver (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, London / New York: Routledge 1996, pp. 258–276/260–262; Marmura, 2005, p. 138.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Sheikh, M. Saeed: “Al-Ghazālī”, in: Sharif, M. Mohammad (ed.), *A History of Muslim Philosophy* Vol. 2, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1966, pp. 581–642/588; Gazali, *El-Munkizu Min-ad-Dalâl*, 1960, p. 15.

handedly¹⁰⁵⁵. Marmura, for example, argues that Gazzâlî in fact “rendered philosophical ideas accessible to nonphilosophers. Inadvertently, so to speak, the *Tahāfut* helped spread philosophical ideas, as it also set a new tradition in *kalām*”¹⁰⁵⁶. In the same vein, Wisnovsky expands upon Marmura’s view claiming that “al-Ġazzâlî’s role in the ‘philosophizing’ of Sunnī theology [a.n. *kelām*] was not a lonely struggle by a single genius, but part of a broader trend”¹⁰⁵⁷. The difference between Marmura and Wisnovsky is, while for Marmura various philosophical arguments diffused into theology through Gazzâlî, for Wisnovsky, it would be more accurate to consider the process of intermingling philosophy and theology as a natural transformation of Islamic philosophy, which began or increased with Ibn Sînâ and thus allows us to see the course of Islamic sciences as continuity rather than a fragmented structure. As the quotation from Gazzâlî above demonstrates, he was in no way against philosophy or non-Islamic sciences. His primary aim was to control or set the limits for the application of philosophy in theological matters. Many scholars reversed the Orientalist narrative about Gazzâlî as an uncompromised opposer of the sciences and started to re-evaluate his role in introducing, for example, logic (*mantik*) into the curriculum of the theology schools (*medrese*)¹⁰⁵⁸. Throughout the Islamic theological developments, there were indeed strong critics, directed by certain theologians (*mütekellim*), against the application of logic and even philosophy in its entirety¹⁰⁵⁹, however, Gazzâlî did not completely oppose non-Islamic sciences and considered a study, at least some of the aspects, to be fruitful for a Muslim in certain, non-metaphysical, matters. The issue was summarized clearly by Ibn Haldûn as follows:

“It should be known that the early Muslims and the early speculative theologians greatly disapproved of the study of this discipline [a.n. logic]. They vehemently attacked it and warned against it. They forbade the study and teaching of it. Later on, ever since al-Ghazzâlî and the Imam al-Khaṭīb, scholars have been somewhat more lenient in this respect”¹⁰⁶⁰

¹⁰⁵⁵ Sheikh, 1966, pp. 622–623.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Marmura, 2000, p. xv.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Wisnovsky, Robert: “One Aspect of the Avicennian Turn in Sunnī Theology”, in: *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 14/1, 2004, pp. 65–100/65.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Street, Tony / Germann, Nadja: “Arabic and Islamic Philosophy of Language and Logic”, in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2021 Edition), 23 July 2008, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/arabic-islamic-language/>>, last accessed: 13 January 2022.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Goldziher, Ignaz: “The Attitude of Orthodox Islam toward the ‘Ancient Sciences’”, in: Swartz, L. Merlin (ed.), *Studies on Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1981, pp. 185–215/205–206.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Ibn Khaldûn: *The Muqaddimah. An Introduction to History*, Vol. 3, Rosenthal, Franz (trans.), London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1958, p. 143.

6.6 Gazzâlî's Refutation of Philosophers

The three philosophical doctrines flagged as heresy (*küfür*) by Gazzâlî in his *Tahâfut al-Falâsifah* were the narrative of the (pre-)eternity of the world, spiritual resurrection, and God's knowledge concerning the universals and particulars¹⁰⁶¹. Since all these topics were derived from a certain perspective with regard to the nature of God and the mode of creation, Gazzâlî primarily employed the *Kur'anic* doctrines to explicate these topics. The Muslim Aristotelians (Peripatetics, *meşşâî*) and Neoplatonists, e.g., Fârâbî and İbn Sînâ, reproduced the Aristotelian theory of the eternity of the universe and applied it to their cosmogonies (the eternity of emanation). This application has led to serious disputes among, most famously, Gazzâlî and certain Muslim philosophers who understood creation in a manner of emanation. The emanation theory, as designed by Muslim philosophers, purports the presence of additional eternal beings (the second intellects or the universe) other than God. From the perspective of the philosophers, "the post-eternity of the world was a consequence either of the eternity of prime matter and time (as Aristotle held) or the eternal procession of the universe from the one (as Plotinus held)"¹⁰⁶². From the *Kur'anic* perspective, however, this view cannot be accepted since God is narrated as the only eternal being¹⁰⁶³.

As explained above, according to the *Kur'anic* narrative, God created the world *ex nihilo* (from nothing), and the time, matter, and form were created along with it in the same manner. This perspective holds that all these elements had a beginning (the moment of creation) and therefore they cannot be eternal. In Schimmel's words, "the idea of continuous emanation in contrast to the unique divine act of creation was considered, by both Muslim and Christian mystics, to be incompatible with the Biblico-Koranic idea of a *creatio ex nihilo*"¹⁰⁶⁴. Gazzâlî, in the first discussion of his *Tahâfut al-Falâsifah*, employs this *Kur'anic* view of creation to base his arguments against the philosophers' doctrine of the eternity of the world¹⁰⁶⁵. However, he enlarges the discussion and additionally refutes Fârâbî's and İbn Sînâ's views on creation taking place by necessity. For Gazzâlî, creation cannot be a "necessary consequence of the

¹⁰⁶¹ Gazali, *El-Munkizu Min-ad-Dalâl*, 1960, p. 36; Sheikh, 1966, pp. 596ff; Fakhry, 2006, p. 75.

¹⁰⁶² Fakhry, 2006, p. 83.

¹⁰⁶³ It is important to note that while the Peripatetics held that the world is eternal in terms of time, concerning its essence or entity it was de facto created later (not pre-eternal). See: Kaya, Mahmut: "Tehâfütü'l-Felâsife", in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 40, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2011, pp. 313–314/313.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Schimmel, 1975, p. 5.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Al-Ghazali: *Tahafut Al-Falasifah*, Kamal, S. Ahmad (trans.), Lahore: Pakistan Philosophical Congress 1963, pp. 13–53; Marmura, 2000, pp. 12–46.

divine essence”¹⁰⁶⁶ in the form of emanation as it implies passivity of God and thus does not correspond with the volitional attribute of God described in the *Kur’an*¹⁰⁶⁷.

The thirteenth discussion of Gazzâlî is directed to the understanding that God “knows only universals, or, rather, particulars ‘in a universal way’”¹⁰⁶⁸. In other words, within the emanative creation system of philosophers, God’s knowing act is limited to His own essence, whereas the intellects emanated from God know both God and their own existence. This “means that the knowledge of the emanated minds is greater and more comprehensive than the knowledge of God and therefore incompatible with the concept of divinity and God’s absolute perfection”¹⁰⁶⁹. Gazzâlî opposes this philosophical view with an argument based on the *Kur’anic* verses 10:61 (*Yûnus*) and 34:3 (*Sebe’*):

“(He is) the Knower of the Unseen. Not an atom’s weight, or less than that or greater, escapeth Him in the heavens or in the earth”¹⁰⁷⁰

For Gazzâlî, this verse is a clear demonstration of God’s knowledge of everything, whether they are apparent, hidden, or relating to universals or particulars. Even though İbn Sînâ did argue that the “Necessary Existent conceives everything in a universal way”¹⁰⁷¹, he, in fact, did not claim God’s knowledge to be limited only to the universals¹⁰⁷². Employing the same verse from the *Kur’an* as Gazzâlî, İbn Sînâ claimed that “nothing particular in the earth and in the heavens, even an atom’s weight remains hidden from him”¹⁰⁷³. It is unlikely that Gazzâlî missed this point in İbn Sînâ’s account, yet it is beyond the scope of this work to specify Gazzâlî’s intentions in this case¹⁰⁷⁴.

In Islamic philosophy, especially within the strands of Neoplatonism, the theme of return to *pleroma* is narrated as the life after death in heaven¹⁰⁷⁵, which is conditioned to a trial based on the actions of the created beings and the motives as well as sincerity (*ihlâs*) behind

¹⁰⁶⁶ Marmura, 2000, p. xv.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Marmura, “Seventeenth Discussion”, 2000, pp. 166–178; Fakhry, 2006, p. 75.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Marmura, 2000, p. xx.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Kaya, 2009, p. 468.

¹⁰⁷⁰ *Kur’an* 34:3 (*Sebe’*).

¹⁰⁷¹ Marmura, E. Michael: “Some Aspects of Avicenna’s Theory of God’s Knowledge of Universals”, in: *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 82/3, 1962, pp. 299–312/300.

¹⁰⁷² Ülken, 1955, p. 87.

¹⁰⁷³ İbn Sînâ: *Kitâbu’ş-Şifâ, Metafizik 2*, Demirli, Ekrem / Türker, Ömer (trans.), İstanbul: Litera 2005, pp. 105–106; Sheikh, 1966, p. 608.

¹⁰⁷⁴ For a detailed inquiry, see: Erdoğan, Ö. Faruk: “Gazâlî Üç Meselesinde İbn Sînâ’ya Karşı Ne Kadar Tutarlı?”, in: *Diyanet İlmî Dergi*, 50/1, 2014, pp. 87–110; Sheikh, 1966, p. 608.

¹⁰⁷⁵ As Madkour argues, “Islam categorically assert that heaven is the qiblah [a.n. the direction towards Mecca which Muslims face to pray] of prayer, the source of revelation, the destination of the ‘ascension’. Everything in heaven is pure and purifying”. See: Madkour, 1966, p. 458.

those actions. Concerning resurrection, Gazzâlî argued that the philosophers made a correct choice in supporting the spiritual resurrection, but by denying the bodily resurrection, they acted contrary to the basic Islamic creed. For Gazzâlî, the reward and punishment in the afterlife will be both corporeal and spiritual. Even though both Fârâbî and Ibn Sînâ adhered to the essential principles of Islam, namely the oneness of God (*tevhid*), prophecy (*nübüvvet*), and the afterlife (*meâd*), their interpretation of the afterlife, which was a foregone conclusion of their emanation system, was for Gazzâlî a heresy (*küfr*).

Following his successful refutations¹⁰⁷⁶ and numerous other treatises on Islamic theology Gazzâlî gained a wide recognition as *hüccet 'ül-Islam*. This, however, according to his own account, drove him through an intellectual crisis with spiritual undercurrents and eventually to the decision of leaving his settled life in Baghdad for about eleven years¹⁰⁷⁷. Being dissatisfied with the incapability of senses and reason to derive certain knowledge (*yakîn*) of the divine, he went on a long-lasting journey seeking the knowledge at almost every corner of the Islamicate world¹⁰⁷⁸. Based on his autobiographical accounts, “he finally found this certainty in direct mystical experience, *dhawq*, a technical Şûfî term that literally means ‘taste’”¹⁰⁷⁹ and judging by the views he asserted in *İhyâü Ulûmî'd-Dîn* (*The Revival of the Religious Sciences*) and *El-Munkızu Min-ad-Dalâl* (*Deliverance from Error*), which he composed during his journeys, Gazzâlî was satisfied with the conclusion he arrived and became a *sûfî* while maintaining his *Eş'arî* theological standpoint. He expressed his satisfaction and acquisition of certainty, or “the idea of the superiority of suprasensory, intuitive mystical ‘unveiling’ over all other types of cognition”¹⁰⁸⁰, through *tasavvuf* as follows:

“I understood without doubt (or with certainty) that the sufi practitioners (*mutasavvıf*) are on the path of *Allah*. Their course [a.n. toward *Allah*] is the best one, and their characters (or morals) are the purest ones. If the intelligence (*akıl*) of all the intelligent people in the world, the wisdom (*hikmet*) of the philosophers (*hakîm*), and the knowledge (*ilim*) of the scholars (*âlim*), who are aware of the mystery (*esrar*) of the *şeriat* come together, they still could not match *tasavvuf*”¹⁰⁸¹

¹⁰⁷⁶ Despite Gazzâlî's considerable contributions to today's rather established views of *ehl-i sünnet*, İbn Rüşd's critics in his *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* (*Incoherence of the Incoherence*) may contradict evaluating him successful.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Gazali, *El-Munkızu Min-ad-Dalâl*, 1960, pp. 59–63.

¹⁰⁷⁸ For a detailed study about journey as part of scientific method in Islam, see: Touati, Houari: *Islam et voyage au Moyen Âge. Historie et anthropologie d'une pratique lettrée*, Paris: Éds. du Seuil 2000.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Gazzâlî describes this discovery as follows: “What remained for me was not to be attained by oral instruction and study but only by immediate experience [a.n. taste] and by walking in the mystic way”. See: Marmura, 2005, p. 137; Al-Ghazâlî: “Al-Munqidh min ad-Dalâl”, in: Watt, W. Montgomery (trans.), *The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghazâlî*, London: Allen and Unwin 1953, p. 55; Gazali, *El-Munkızu Min-ad-Dalâl*, 1960, pp. 58, 63–64.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Knysh, Alexander: *Islam in Historical Perspective*, New York: Routledge 2011a, p. 224.

¹⁰⁸¹ Gazali, *El-Munkızu Min-ad-Dalâl*, 1960, pp. 63–64.

His transition from a model theologian to *tasavvuf* expressed above was considered a main event for the legalization of *tasavvuf* as a knowledge derivation system in *sünnî* Islam. In addition to his sheer theoretical studies, Gazzâlî applied the conclusions he had arrived (*ilim*) in practice (*amel*) as per the generally accepted *tasavvuf* instructions¹⁰⁸². In his words:

“I spent nearly two years and devoted myself to retreat and ascetic (*riyâzet*) practices in order to clean my soul (*nefs*) from evil, cultivate my character, and purify my heart for the constant recollection (*zikir*) of *Allah*, as I learnt from the books of *tasavvuf*”¹⁰⁸³

This applied epistemology is an idiosyncratic feature of *tasavvuf* which is performed by means of various practices including, but not limited to, *zikir* (remembrance), *riyâzet* (ascetism), *tövbe* (repentance), *vera'*, *takvâ*, or *zühd* (piety, devotion, God-fearing behavior), *fakr* (spiritual poverty), *sabır* (patience), *rızâ* (consent), *tevekkül* (trust in God), *murakabe* (introspection), *râbita* (to bond), *şükür* (gratitude), *çile* (suffering), *fenâ* (annihilation), or *bekâ* (permanence)¹⁰⁸⁴. Additional terms that Gazzâlî possibly inherited from *tasavvuf* lexicon and used in his works are, “*dhawq* (taste), *mârifet* (gnosis), *fenâ* (annihilation), *kurb* (closeness or proximity)”¹⁰⁸⁵, “*nefs* (soul, ego, or self), *kalp* (as the spiritual center and the location of *mârifet* as well as *zikir*), *mâsivâ* (anything other than God), *sülûk* (spiritual journey towards *Allah*), *keşf* (discovery), *müşâhede* (observation), *hâl* (state)”¹⁰⁸⁶, and *tefek্কür* (contemplation). All these terms refer to a *tasavvuf* practice designed to bring the performer to a purified state or condition, through which a form of noetic encounter with *Allah* may be accomplished.

Gazzâlî's particular importance for this study derives not only from his intellectual level or the autobiographical information he provided on his transition from dry intellectuality to emotionally charged, intuitive, and experience-based *tasavvuf* epistemology, but it mainly derives from one treatise, *Kimyâ-yı Sa'âdet* (*The Alchemy of Happiness*), in which Gazzâlî assembles the *Kur'an*, *hadis*, *tasavvuf*, and alchemy together to finalize his epistemological

¹⁰⁸² Gazali, *El-Munkızu Min-ad-Dalâl*, 1960, p. 57.

¹⁰⁸³ Gazali, *El-Munkızu Min-ad-Dalâl*, 1960, p. 62; Al-Ghazâlî, “Al-Munqidh min ad-Ḍalāl”, 1953, p. 59.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Depending on the *tasavvuf* trend (*tarikât*), the number, nomenclature, content, or meaning of these items may change. In *Kübreviyye tarikât*, for example, among the listed items above, ten principles known as *el-Uşûlü'l-aşere* are selected and prioritized in their spiritual navigation (*seyrüsülûk*) on the path (*tarik*) towards *Allah*. See: Algar, Hamid: “Necmeddîn-i Kübrâ”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 32, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2006b, pp. 498–500/500; Serrâc, Ebû Nasr: *El-Lüma'*. *İslâm Tasavvufu*, Yılmaz, H. Kâmil (trans.), İstanbul: Altınoluk 1996, pp. 43–68; Kara, 1992, pp. 25–26; Renard, John: *The A to Z of Sufism*, Lanham / Toronto / Plymouth: The Scarecrow Press 2009.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Marmura, 2005, pp. 140–143; Marmura, 2000, pp. xviii–xix.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Gazali, *El-Munkızu Min-ad-Dalâl*, 1960, pp. 57–66.

model¹⁰⁸⁷. Gazzâlî summarizes the core of his theory at the opening of his treatise, titled “On knowledge of the soul, and how knowledge of the soul is the key to the knowledge of God”¹⁰⁸⁸, as follows:

“O seeker after the divine mysteries! Know thou that the door to the knowledge of God will be opened to a man first of all, when he knows his own soul, and understands the truth about his own spirit, according as it has been revealed, ‘he who knows himself knows his Lord also’. And God proclaims in his holy book: ‘We will display our miracles in the different countries of the world, till it shall be demonstrated to them that the Koran is the truth’¹⁰⁸⁹, that is, let us show men in the visible world, and in their own souls, the wonderfulness of our works and the perfection of our power”¹⁰⁹⁰

As in nearly all esotericised trends mentioned in this study, Gazzâlî here draws a continuity between the knowledge of the self and knowledge of God. However, he derives this conclusion, as he referred to in the quotation above, entirely from Islamic sources (the *Kur’an* and *hadis*). Nevertheless, as the word alchemy in the title indicates, such a continuity established by Gazzâlî signals intriguing resemblances to the knowledge-based associations made by the alchemists in their attempts to purify metals into gold and their souls into perfection via a hidden knowledge. Considering the “syncretistic” nature of alchemy, namely its inclusion of not only “Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, and Christianity”¹⁰⁹¹, but also the Babylonian (or Chaldean) astrology¹⁰⁹² and magic (*magoi*)¹⁰⁹³, along with the common wisdom narrative shared by all these religious, technical, and philosophical discourses, Gazzâlî’s association of *tasavvuf*-oriented epistemology and alchemy may have some extra-Islamic contents. Furthermore, taking into account that in the Islamicate world the practice of alchemy, with its various forms, had already reached its peak¹⁰⁹⁴ approximately three centuries before Gazzâlî’s birth in 1058, his association between *tasavvuf* and alchemy may not be authentic and might have been inherited from certain other predating Muslim, *sûfî*, or non-Muslim sources¹⁰⁹⁵. Gazzâlî’s interpretation, on the other

¹⁰⁸⁷ For Gazzâlî’s evaluation of “the dry intellectuality” of the theologians (*mütekellim*) and *mutasavvife*’s differing nature in their ways of knowing, see: Al-Ghazzali, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, 1873, p. 34.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Al-Ghazzali, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, 1873, p. 13.

¹⁰⁸⁹ *Kur’an*, 41:53 (*Fussilet*).

¹⁰⁹⁰ Al-Ghazzali, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, 1873, p. 13.

¹⁰⁹¹ Linden, 1996, p. 8.

¹⁰⁹² Holmyard, 1957, p. 18; Lindsay, 1970, pp. 32, 54.

¹⁰⁹³ Dufault, Olivier: *Early Greek Alchemy, Patronage and Innovation in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley: California Classical Studies 2019.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Especially with the works of the caliph’s son Hâlid b. Yezîd (c. 668–704), *mutasavvif* Ca’fer es-Sâdık (702–765), and the alchemist Câbir b. Hayyân (c. 721–813). See: Aydın, K. Ayten: “Simya”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 37, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2009, pp. 218–220/218.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Beginning with “*Bâbilli Hermes el-Hâkim*” (Hermes the Wise Babylonian; Hermes Trismegistus), a list of alchemists who were active in the Islamicate world and their abundant number of works can be found in: En-Nedîm, 2019, pp. 1094–1121.

hand, allows this study to track a continuity between various wisdom traditions employing a similar mode of epistemology in search of a hidden knowledge, which was summarized by him in the preface of his treatise:

“Just as the alchemy that makes copper and brass red gold is hard to come by, the alchemy of struggle (*mücâhede*), which purifies human essence from animal fuzziness and attains the purity of angels, is also hard to obtain. The purpose of this book is to explain the compounds and preparation of the medicine of truth (*hakikat*) to its readers. That is why we named this book Alchemy of Happiness [...]. This chemistry (alchemy) is superior to other chemistry [...]. Because the value and reputation of chemistry is to protect copper and brass from rusting and give them some purity in a temporary life. Alchemy is itself the cause of great blessings and eternal life. Because it is the alchemy that transforms animalistic attributes into human attributes, and spiritual states into the divinity (*ruhbâniyet*), and it is the alchemy that is the nexus of eternal happiness and the means of eternal bliss (*saadet*)”¹⁰⁹⁶

A further link Gazzâlî establishes in his treatise and relevant to this study is the equation of happiness or bliss (*saadet*) with salvation. Reflecting on earlier philosophical interpretations, *tasavvuf* moral codes (*âdâb*), and their knowledge derivation methods, for Gazzâlî the ultimate happiness is conditioned to the purification of the heart, whose “especial attribute is to know God and to enjoy the vision of the beauty of the Lord God”¹⁰⁹⁷. Unless the heart is disciplined through specially devised *tasavvuf* practices mentioned above, e.g., *zikir*, neither the knowledge of it (self) that leads to knowledge of God nor the eternal bliss, in other words, salvation, is possible. As Rosenthal quotes a *hadis* “‘hearts get rusty, just as iron does. Therefore, polish them with the memory [a.n. or remembrance] of God”¹⁰⁹⁸. Following Kılıç’s footsteps, who defines *tasavvuf* as a methodology¹⁰⁹⁹, the *raison d’être* of *tasavvuf* then can be defined as equipping a seeker (*sâlik*) with the necessary means to find *Allah* and discover the purpose as well as hidden causes (*hikmet*) of creation. As mentioned above, the formulation of the mode, process, and elements of creation determines the epistemology of its knowledge. In all trends, traditions, and discourses referred to in this study the same contact between creation and epistemology is evidently reproduced. In Gazzâlî’s words:

“The knowledge you need to possess is, to know what you are; how you are created; whence you are; for what you are here; whither you are going; in what your happiness consists, and what you must do to secure it; in what your misery consists, and what you must do to avoid it”¹¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁹⁶ Gazzâlî, *Kimyâ-yı Saâdet*, Arslan, Ali (trans.), İstanbul: Merve Yayınları 1992, p. 10.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Al-Ghazzali, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, 1873, pp. 15–16.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Rosenthal, Franz: *A History of Muslim Historiography*, Leiden: Brill 1968, p. 324.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Kılıç, 2004, pp. 91–109.

¹¹⁰⁰ Al-Ghazzali, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, 1873, p. 14.

Gazzâlî's methodical studies covering theological interpretations of creation-relevant concepts and his systematic exposition of the philosophical theories concerning the nature of God, mode of creation, and several other relevant topics have led him to "integrate theology, philosophy, and mysticism into a new kind of philosophy called wisdom (*hikmah*)"¹¹⁰¹. As in Fârâbî, Plotinus, and various systems of thought influenced by them, for Gazzâlî, the attainment of happiness or salvation is a complex process of noetic self-perfection, which requires mainly ascetic practices shaped and contextualized by the doctrines of the metasytem framing the degree of interpretation¹¹⁰². This commonality amongst different systems reproduces similar patterns of applied epistemology and asks similar questions as in Gazzâlî's quotation, yet the answers provided are often demonstrative of their divergent idiosyncratic approaches.

Whether Muslim philosophers predating Gazzâlî were inclined to esotericised aspects of philosophy and religion, from which Gazzâlî might have had inherited his views is still an open debate¹¹⁰³. Concerning Fârâbî, for example, scholars asserted a variety of views to determine any presence of mystification, which might suggest potential commonalities between Fârâbî's philosophy and, for example, certain *tasavvuf* streams. Whereas for Aminrazavi and Madkour, Fârâbî "paved the way for mysticism to enter Islamic philosophy"¹¹⁰⁴, and "was in favour of esoteric teaching"¹¹⁰⁵, Walzer emphasizes "Farabi's negative attitude to unification, mystical union with the divine"¹¹⁰⁶, and Corbin mentions that "Paul Kraus' opinion was that al-Farabi's attitude was basically anti-mystical"¹¹⁰⁷. On the side favouring Fârâbî's mysticism, Adivar argues that his "*Kitâb-ü füsûs-il-hikem* contains wisdom (*hikmet*) of *tasavvuf* and describes the stages (*makam*) and knowledge that the great Sufis attained through training their ego (*nefs*)"¹¹⁰⁸. In certain treatises, Fârâbî did develop theories that may have correspondences with Gazzâlî's views and *tasavvuf*. In his *Fusus al-hikma*, for example, Fârâbî describes a way of knowing and connecting with the metaphysical realm through a mirror analogy. The human soul in Fârâbî's conception is an entity that has the ability to remove foreign contaminations or attachments from the meaning (*mâna*) or truth (*hak*) by means of the power of imagination

¹¹⁰¹ Rahman / Mahdi / Schimmel, "Islam. Traditionalism and the new wisdom", 1998.

¹¹⁰² Corbin, 1993, p. 164.

¹¹⁰³ A discussion concerning Ibn Sînâ's position, see: Güreer, 2001, pp. 135–141.

¹¹⁰⁴ Aminrazavi, Mehdi: "Mysticism in Arabic and Islamic Philosophy", in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2016 Edition), 7 March 2009, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arabic-islamic-mysticism/>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹¹⁰⁵ Madkour, 1966, p. 453.

¹¹⁰⁶ Al-Fârâbî, *Mabâdi' ârâ' ahl al-Madîna al-Fâdila*, 1985, p. 12.

¹¹⁰⁷ Corbin, 1993, p. 159.

¹¹⁰⁸ Adivar, 1990, p. 33.

(*tasavvur*) and rational (theoretical) mind (*nazarî akıl*). Like in Gazzâlî's conception¹¹⁰⁹, the soul is thus often thought like a mirror and the theoretical mind is like a polishing material applied to the mirror to clean it—a frequent metaphor used to explain the God-human relationship, especially within *tasavvuf*. As long as this bestowed polish stays uncorrupted, namely not mixed with lust, anger, or senses, and has access to the human soul, it allows the divine effulgence (*feyz*, emanation) to reflect in the polished mirror. If the soul turns away from these earthly phenomena and instead contemplates (*tefek্কür*) the spiritual realm, it can attain the highest, supernatural pleasure¹¹¹⁰. These corresponding associations inevitably lead us to ascertain how *tasavvuf* is located within such a complex network of relations.

6.7 The Position of *Tasavvuf* among Islamic Sciences

Along with *felsefe* and *kelâm*, *tasavvuf* constitutes another major epistemological school in Islam. While *kelâm* scholars questioned “the possibility of knowledge and the source of it”¹¹¹¹, Muslim philosophers such as Fârâbî and İbn Sînâ developed an epistemological model covering a metaphysical realm, “*ilm'ün-nefs* (rational psychology)”¹¹¹². The *sûfî* practitioners, on the other hand, placed a great emphasis on or even prioritized, a form of intuitive knowledge in their epistemological system which has been variously named “*ilm-i ledün*”¹¹¹³ (bestowed knowledge concerning the metaphysical realm of God and divine secrets), *ilm-i bâtın* (esoteric knowledge or wisdom), *mârifet*, *hikmet*, *yakîn* (certain knowledge), *ilm-i esrar* (knowledge of mystery), *ilm-i hâl* (knowledge of state), *ilm-i makam* (knowledge of stage), *ilm-i fenâ-bekâ* (knowledge of annihilation, permanency), or *ilm-i mükâşefe-müşâhede* (knowledge of revelation, observation)¹¹¹⁴. Drawing a strict line between three major Islamic epistemological schools may be possible, however, it is important to bear in mind that these schools also share plenty of views and methods that enable us to consider them as interpretative nuances emphasizing different aspects of the fundamentals of theology and epistemology. Rosenthal underlines this with an argument that “both theology and mysticism came into being at the same time [...], the dividing line between theologians and mystics was all but non-existent in the early

¹¹⁰⁹ Al-Ghazzali, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, 1873, p. 23.

¹¹¹⁰ Alfârâbî: “*Fusus al-hikma*. Die Petschafte der Weisheitslehre”, in: Dieterici, Friedrich (trans.), *Alfârâbî's Philosophische Abhandlungen*, Leiden: E. J. Brill 1892, pp. 108–138/123.

¹¹¹¹ Taylan, 1992, p. 159.

¹¹¹² Taylan, 1992, p. 160.

¹¹¹³ Taylan, 1992, p. 159.

¹¹¹⁴ Uludağ, 2003b, p. 54; Kutluer, 1998, p. 511; Kara, Mustafa, “Hikmet: Tasavvuf”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 17, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1998, pp. 518–519.

Muslim community”¹¹¹⁵. According to Yavuz, in interpreting the nature *kelâm* scholars “adopted the principle of adhering to *nass* in terms of method”¹¹¹⁶ and essentially diverged from the scholars of *felsefe*, who prioritized the discursive mind and reason to explain various aspects of the nature and human (both physical and metaphysical). Nevertheless, in describing the multidimensional structure of Islamic theology, Leaman includes additional disciplines to this list and writes that “there often exists no clear distinction between Islamic theology, in the sense of *kalâm*, and the other Islamic and not so Islamic sciences, such as grammar, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), philosophy (*falsafa/hikma*), Sufism”¹¹¹⁷. This permeability between sciences can be exemplified through prominent scholars who were, on the one hand, *fâkih* (*fikih* scholar, jurist), *mütekellim* (*kelâm* scholar, theologian) as in the case of Gazzâlî and, on the other hand, they were philosophers who, like Fârâbî and İbn Sînâ, had intrinsic relations with the early models (*zühhd*) of *tasavvuf*. Gazzâlî confirms this close engagement of the sciences and correspondingly asserts that “all the words of philosophers concerning morality (*ahlâk*), the nature of the soul (*nefs*) and the struggle (*mücahede*) to correct” its earthly attachments were “inherited from the words of *sufi* practitioners (*mutasavvif*)”¹¹¹⁸.

Keeping in the mind that by the time of İbn Sînâ and Gazzâlî, earlier forms of *tasavvuf* known as *zühhd* had already been around and produced its earliest renowned practitioners such as Hasan-ı Basrî (642–728), Ma’rûf-i Kerhî (750–?), Serî es-Sakatî (772–?), Zünnûn el-Mısırî (796–859), Hallâc-ı Mansûr (858–922), Cüneyd-i Bağdâdî (830–910), and Kuşeyrî (986–1072). All these personalities had also intrinsic links with the traditional sciences. Perhaps the clearest examples of a transition from Islamic scholarly disciplines to *tasavvuf* are demonstrated by İbn Sînâ¹¹¹⁹ and Gazzâlî.

6.8 İbn Sînâ

İbn Sînâ was commonly believed to “shape philosophy into a powerful force that gradually penetrated Islamic theology and mysticism”¹¹²⁰. Like Fârâbî, Gazzâlî, and several *mutas-*

¹¹¹⁵ Rosenthal, 2007, p. 166.

¹¹¹⁶ Yavuz, Ş. Yunus: “Kelâm”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 25, Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2002, pp. 196–203/197.

¹¹¹⁷ Leaman, 2008, p. 77.

¹¹¹⁸ Gazali, *El-Munkizu Min-ad-Dalâl*, 1960, p. 37.

¹¹¹⁹ For detailed studies focusing on the elements of *tasavvuf* (or mysticism) in İbn Sînâ’s philosophy, see: İnati, C. Shams: *Ibn Sînâ and Mysticism. Remarks and Admonitions*, London / New York: Kegan Paul International 1996; Hawi, S. Sami: “İbn Sînâ and Mysticism”, in: *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 15/1, 1998, pp. 91–106.

¹¹²⁰ Rahman / Mahdi / Schimmel, “Islam. The ‘Oriental Philosophy’”, 1998.

affive, İbn Sînâ used the mirror analogy in his *Makâmâtü'l-Ârifin* (*The Stations of the Knowers*)¹¹²¹ to explicate the process of acquiring God's knowledge-granting (noetic) blessing. This process was formulated as the manifestation (*tecellî*)¹¹²² of God's names and attributes in a metaphorical mirror (*ayna*) located in the *nefs* (soul, heart). For İbn Sînâ and numerous *tasavvuf* streams that employ the mirror analogy, to be able to receive God's blessing, the contaminations (desires, ego, earthly interests) must be removed (*cilâ*, *katharsis*, purification, polish) from the mirror which is often conditioned to ascetic lifestyle (*zühhd* or *riyâzet*)¹¹²³, with all its demands shaped by the relevant religious doctrines. Largely corresponding with Platonic, Gnostic, and Plotinian conceptions of the soul's journey towards perfection, İbn Sînâ designs the journey of the soul as follows:

“Virtually stripped of their bodies to be able to access the divine realm, *ârifler* (knowers) possess characteristic stations (*makam*) and grades, which enable them to acquire clandestine dispositions [a.n. differ them from the others]. One who turns away from the blessings and beauties of the world gets the name *zâhid*. A person who intensely concentrates his thoughts on the divine (*ceberût*) realm so that the light (*nûr*) of God may arise in his body is called *ârif*”¹¹²⁴

“*riyâzet* (asceticism) has three purposes:

1. to remove everything but the Truth (*hakk*) from the path of preference [a.n. of earthly desires; *isâr*]
2. to subdue the commanding soul (*nefs-i emmâre*) to the satisfied soul (*nefs-i mutmainne*) so that the powers of imagination (*tahayyül*) and delusion (*vehim*) are cleared from thoughts suitable for inferior goals and instead drawn to thoughts in accordance with sacred goals.
3. Modulating the relevant spiritual faculty (*sır*)¹¹²⁵ to wake up”¹¹²⁶

From this point, İbn Sînâ continues to describe further stages of spiritual ascension towards perfectness, or “rising from fake realm to the holy one”¹¹²⁷, a process that contains various

¹¹²¹ İbn Sînâ: *el-İşârât ve 't-Tenbihât*, Macit, Muhittin / Durusoy, Ali / Demirli, Ekrem (trans.), İstanbul: Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü 2011, pp. 182–190.

¹¹²² İbn Sînâ: “*Makâmâtü'l-Ârifin*”, Gürer, Dilaver (trans.), “Sûfi İbn Sînâ (ö. 428/1037) ve *Makâmâtü'l-Ârifin*’i”, in: *Tasavvuf İlmî ve Akademik Araştırma Dergisi*, 2/6, 2001, pp. 119–158/145.

¹¹²³ Having similarities with certain other *tasavvuf* terms including “*zühhd*, *mücahede*, *mücadele*, *tahallî*, *nefs tezkiyesi*”, this *sûfî* asceticism in the form of *riyâzet* can be defined as a devotee’s (*sâlik* or *mürîd*) controlled abstaining from food, drinks, sleep, or the desires of the soul to train the soul (*nefs*) and acquire higher degrees of morals and turning his mind and thoughts away from anything but *Allah* (*mâsivâ*). Uludağ, Süleyman: “*Riyâzet*”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 35, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2008, pp. 143–144/143; Uludağ, Süleyman: *Tasavvuf Terimleri Sözlüğü*, İstanbul: Marifet Yayınları 1991b, p. 400.

¹¹²⁴ İbn Sînâ, 2001, p. 144.

¹¹²⁵ In addition to its primary meaning (secret), the term *sır* here denotes “one of the spiritual faculties in humans to perceive (*idrak*) and observe (*müşahede*) the divine truths”. For Kuşeyrî, it is “the innermost self”. See: Ayverdi, 2010, p. 1103; Al-Qushayrî, Abu'l-Qasım: “*Al-Risala al-qushayriyya fi 'ilm al-tasawwuf*”, in: Knysh, D. Alexander (trans.), *Al-Qushayrî's Epistle on Sufism*, Reading: Garnet Publishing 2007, p. 110.

¹¹²⁶ İbn Sînâ, 2001, p. 147.

¹¹²⁷ İbn Sînâ, 2001, p. 149.

forms of altered state of consciousness events including “ecstatic conditions”¹¹²⁸ (*hâl*) and experiences (*vecd*)¹¹²⁹. After exceeding a certain threshold within this staged process of purification, İbn Sînâ employs the mirror analogy to describe the acquired purification and the event of God’s manifestation (*tecellî*)¹¹³⁰ in the heart, where “the spiritual faculty (*sır*) becomes a ‘polished mirror’ through which devotee turns his face toward God and sublime flavours multiply”¹¹³¹. Perhaps the most intriguing treatise composed by İbn Sînâ allowing us to specify his potential association with the epistemology of *tasavvuf* is known as *el-Hass ale’z-Zikr* (*Encouragement to Zikir*). In this short treatise, İbn Sînâ summarizes the role of *zikir* (remembrance) in acquiring *mârifet* (wisdom of God, acquaintance with God) that leads to happiness, absolute good, and eventually to salvation along the following lines:

“Those who want to reach the level of those who have attained the Truth should follow the path of making the *zikir* of almighty *Allah*, which is a weapon against the evils that come to mind and warns the heart against the path of the heedless. For those who intend *zikir*, let Him increase the inspiration for *zikir*, which is one of the customs of those who struggle on the path of reunion (*vuslat*) in a sincere manner (*ihlâs*) [...] the shortest way to forget everything but *Allah* (*mâsivâ*) is to be submerged into *zikir* (remembrance) of *Allah*.

However, *zikir* is not pure if the feelings are in lust or connected to the inner evils of the soul. It is necessary to protect *zikir* from such things. In addition, it is necessary not to embellish the secret (*sır*) and *zikir* with elements that tend to anything but God, and to keep this state under supervision (*murakabe*). Otherwise, the blessing of *zikir* will be deprived.

If certain conditions are present during *zikir*, after a certain period, the secret is reached via *zikir* (remembrance) and channels open to the heart. Thus, the heart becomes acquainted with the unseen and reaps the fruits of this wisdom (*mârifet*). This station (*makam*) is the authority of competence, it is the degree of obedience and assistance. Such a servant leaves the protection of someone else and enters under the protection of *Allah*. In accordance with the verse (*Ankebut*, 29:69), ‘Indeed, *Allah* is with the benevolent’, *Allah* will protect him from rebellion and evil.

During *zikir*, divine manifestations (*tecellî*) of the One who is remembered are attained”¹¹³²

Even though İbn Sînâ did not seem to practice *tasavvuf* or had any reported adherence to a *tasavvuf* group or institution (*tarikât*), his theoretical position and application of *tasavvuf*

¹¹²⁸ Gilsenan, 1982, p. 135; Massignon, Louis: *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane*, Paris: Paul Geuthner 1922, pp. 169, 189, 275; Avery, 2004, p. 69; Kuşeyrî: *Tasavvuf’un İlkeleri* (*Risale-i Kuşeyrî*), Vol. 1, Yazıcı, Tahsin (trans.), İstanbul: Tercüman 1978, p. 127.

¹¹²⁹ Avery, 2004, p. 16, 26, 65; Rouget, 1985, pp. 258ff.

¹¹³⁰ It is of utmost importance to mention that this manifestation does not take place in the form of ontological manifestation. What manifested in the spiritual mirror are God’s names and attributes (*esma’ül hüsnâ*).

¹¹³¹ İbn Sînâ, 2001, p.149.

¹¹³² İbn Sînâ: “el-Hass ale’z-Zikr”, Gürer, Dilaver (trans.), “Sûfi İbn Sînâ (ö. 428/1037) ve Makâmâtü’l-Ârifin’i”, in: *Tasavvuf İlmi ve Akademik Araştırma Dergisi*, 2/6, 2001, pp. 119–158/125–126.

terminology demonstrates a permeability among certain dimensions of Islamic philosophy, sciences including theology, *tasavvuf*, and their relevant epistemologies.

7 Non-Islamic and Greek Philosophical Correspondences: The Common Themes

As mentioned above, theories concerning the human condition and duties in the world are strictly related to the understanding of the mode of creation. The creation narrative of various mythological, religious, and philosophical traditions—whether formulated as *creatio ex nihilo*, *ex nihilo nihil fit*, *aporrhoia*, or *sudûr*—may indicate substantial correspondences. Nevertheless, combined with the regional and temporal interpretative variations, each tradition (and their subs-streams) emphasized and expressed the processes of creation and associated human condition differently. Chittick explicates the Islamic perspective concerning the human condition and writes that “Quranic theology, rooted in words, names, and remembrance, allows Muslim sages to understand the human role in the cosmos largely in terms of the achievement of true knowledge of God”¹¹³³. The most frequently appearing themes that have been expressed along the lines of the creation narrative in different systems are love, ineffability and symbolism, light, wisdom, purification, the return (to the divine realm), remembrance, perfection, and ancient wisdom.

7.1 Love

In describing the process of acquiring the knowledge of God, one of the most attention-grabbing correspondences in a large number of esotericised traditions is the theme of (divine) love. The notion of love employed to explain the relationship between God and humans has become a recurrent motif in various religio-mystical discourses including *tasavvuf*. According to Stoddart, one can evaluate “Christian, Islamic and Hindu mysticism” as a “way of love”¹¹³⁴, which demands the subject of love (lover) to make great efforts to reunite (*vuslat*) with the object of love (beloved)¹¹³⁵.

¹¹³³ Chittick, William: “On the Cosmology of Dhikr”, in: Cutsinger, S. James (ed.), *Paths to the Heart. Sufism and the Christian East*, Bloomington: World Wisdom 2002, pp. 48–63/57.

¹¹³⁴ Stoddart, 2005, p. 60. To Stoddart’s list, Rosenthal adds a Jewish perspective through Moses Maimonides, whose theological work *Mishne Tôrâh* contains chapters mentioning “the necessity of loving God that can be achieved only through knowledge”. Rosenthal, 2007, p. 96.

¹¹³⁵ Akarpınar, R. Bahar: “Sûfî Kültüründe Sembollerin Yeri ve Önemi Hakkında Bir Deneme”, in: *Türkbilg*, 7, 2004, pp. 3–19/10.

Considering the etymology of the Arabic words Islam and Muslim meaning obedience or submission¹¹³⁶, it appears to be a natural process for certain Islamic philosophical and esotericised trends to establish an analogy between a *mutasavvıf*'s relation with *Allah* and the disposition (*fitrat*) of a lover (*âşık*). In this relation, the lover, supposedly, often acts by means of emotive impulses or a form of intuition rather than reason or logic and thus submits the self to the beloved (*mâ'şuk*)¹¹³⁷. As Aslan emphasizes, in their relationship with God:

“ [a.n. and their] attempts to reach oneness (*tevhid*), and the relevant principles of belief, Sufis attach importance to personal experiences such as inspiration (*ilham*) and discovery (*keşf*) instead of dialectical methods (*cedel*), opinion or speculation (*nazar*), and deduction (*istidlâl*)”¹¹³⁸

Understanding such a relationship as divine love (*ilâhi aşk*) by necessity brings about a desire for *vuslat* (to come together, to meet, ultimate union) with the object of desire, *Allah*. The search for the salvific knowledge (*gnosis*) in Gnosticism finds expression in *tasavvuf* as a life surrendered to God to acquire *mârifet* and *hikmet*. The same formulation of desire was also expressed by Plotinus when commenting on the soul's “eager longing for the One”¹¹³⁹. Rosenthal confirms this by writing that “at the peak of human gnosis, man's knowledge of God may appear associated with the love of God [...]” and quotes Daylamî, who, in his treatise on mystical love¹¹⁴⁰, reproduces certain *sûfî* perspectives on the subject as “love is *ma'rifah* and *ma'rifah* occurs after the full realization of love”¹¹⁴¹. Armstrong correspondingly argues that the concept of union (*henosis*) between the human soul and the One (*ἓν, hen*) in Plotinus' mind was best exemplified by the analogy of “the union of lovers”¹¹⁴². The analogy of love has often been used also by various *sûfî* poets¹¹⁴³ in their attempts to describe the intimate relationship with God¹¹⁴⁴, usually causing a form of ASC (*vecd*) in the experiencer. Nicholson points out that the motif of love, “the cup of love handed to the lover of God”, in Zünnûn el-Mısrî's poetry

¹¹³⁶ Gardet, Louis / Jomier, Jacques: “İslâm”, in: Bearman, J. Peri et.al. (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Second Edition, 2012, <https://referenceworks-brillonline-com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/islam-COM_0387>, last accessed: 11 March 2022.

¹¹³⁷ Kılıç, 2014, p. 158.

¹¹³⁸ Aslan, Abdülgaffar: “IV / X. Yüzyılda Kelam-Tasavvuf İlişkisi – İbn Fûrek Örneği”, in: *Dini Araştırmalar*, 5/14, 2002, pp. 61–75/66.

¹¹³⁹ Plotinus: *Enneads*, 5.3.17, Vol. 5, 1988, p. 133.

¹¹⁴⁰ For more information and translation of the work, see: Al-Daylamî: “A Treatise on Mystical Love”, in: Bell, N. Josephy / Al Shafie, M. Hassan (trans.), Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2005.

¹¹⁴¹ Rosenthal, 2007, p. 139.

¹¹⁴² Armstrong, H. Arthur (ed.): *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1967, p. 263; Plotinus: *Enneads*, 3.5, “On Love”, Vol. 3, 1988, pp. 167ff; 6.7.34, pp. 191–192.

¹¹⁴³ For a detailed analysis of *sûfî* poetry, see: Kılıç, *Sûfî ve Şiir*, 2014.

¹¹⁴⁴ Akarpınar, 2004, p. 10.

is “one of the earliest instances of the Bacchanalian symbolism in which Sufi poets delight”¹¹⁴⁵. As the authors above underline, references to the concept of divine (or transcendent) love are abundant in various stages of Greek philosophy. Empedocles, for example, evaluates love as a uniting and ordering force¹¹⁴⁶. His theory of divine elevation of the soul (*apotheosis*) is conditioned to an experience of love, which led Empedocles to claim an extreme form of a union as was seen in Hallâc-ı Mansûr’s claim of *enelhak* (I am the Truth)¹¹⁴⁷ as follows: “All hail! I go about among you an immortal god, no more a mortal”¹¹⁴⁸. Similarly, Ülken argues that the Eleusinian mystery cults “are regarded as the forerunners of the idea of divine love in (mystical) *vecd* (*extase*)”¹¹⁴⁹ and they likely provided blueprints for Platonic and Plotinian conceptions. Possibly relevant to the theme of love, Türker discusses intriguing commonalities between Christian and Islamic traditions concerning their mystified interpretations of beauty concept and argues that while Christian conception of beauty “embraced Greek” tradition, Islamic understanding of beauty was “inspired by Hellenistic heritage”¹¹⁵⁰.

Plato in his *Phaedrus* (249e–250e) refers to “recollecting the Forms of beauty, the madness caused by *erōs* (love) that offers the soul the opportunity to accelerate its movement upwards [...]”¹¹⁵¹. Furthermore, Plato describes a “pure soul in the company of the gods [a.n. where] he attained his primordial glimpse of the Form of beauty”¹¹⁵². Both Fârâbî’s and İbn Sînâ’s views on a knowledge-granting—or at least epistemologically constructed—concept of love and Muslim philosophers’ understanding of God as being simultaneously lover (*aşık*), beloved (*maşuk*), as well as the love (*aşk*)¹¹⁵³ itself, led Gürer and Bayrakdar to associate this view with the meanings (both psychological and ontological) attributed to the concept of love by Plato and Plotinus (*Enneads*, 3.5.2; 6.7.28; 6.8.15), who “finds a divinity in love and conceptu-

¹¹⁴⁵ Nicholson, 1906, p. 310.

¹¹⁴⁶ Kingsley, K. Scarlett / Parry, Richard: “Empedocles”, in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2020 Edition), 26 September 2019, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/empedocles/>>, last accessed: 13 January 2022.

¹¹⁴⁷ Since the term *Hakk* is one of the ninety-nine names of *Allah*, Mansûr’s claim to be the Truth was interpreted as if he was implying to be *Allah* which was and still is intolerable from the *ehl-i sünnet ve’l-cemâat* perspective.

¹¹⁴⁸ Laërtius, Diogenes: “Book VIII: Empedocles”, in: Hicks, R. Drew (trans.), *Lives of Eminent Philosophers in Two Volumes*, Vol. 2, London: Harvard University Press 1925, p. 38; Kingsley, Peter: *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic. Empedocles and Pythagorean Tradition*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1995.

¹¹⁴⁹ Ülken, H. Ziya: “Preface”, in: Ateş, Ahmed (trans.), *İbn Sînâ, Aşkın Mahiyeti Hakkında-Risâle fî Mâhiyeti’l-Işk*, İstanbul: Büyüyen Ay 2017, pp. 49–56.

¹¹⁵⁰ Türker, Habib: “Beauty and its Projection in Christian and Islamic Tradition”, in: Tymieniecka, Anna-Teresa (ed.), *Sharing Poetic Expressions. Beauty, Sublime, Mysticism in Islamic and Occidental Culture*, Dordrecht / Heidelberg / London: Springer 2011, pp. 69–79/69.

¹¹⁵¹ Plato: *Phaedrus*, Yunis, Harvey (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2011, p. 129.

¹¹⁵² Plato, *Phaedrus*, 2011, p. 129.

¹¹⁵³ Gürer, 2001, pp. 133–134.

alizes it as creative”¹¹⁵⁴. As in the formulations of Plato (*eros* and *agape*) and Plotinus, in İbn Sînâ’s theory too love is correspondingly a creative force (of God as well as humans) and understood as a means to bring the lover to a form of unification (*ittihad*) with *Allah*.

Concerning this divine love, Ülken broadens the scope of potential relations between religious and philosophical traditions beyond the rubric of Greek philosophy, e.g., the influence of *Kabbala* on certain *mutasavvıf* such as Hakim Tirmizi, yet eventually reproduces the standard view and links the Islamic conception of (divine) love exclusively to the *Kur’an*:

“Regarding the mystical notion of love, which is viewed as the universal principle of existence; we can find this concept in Brahmanism, in the Upanishads-Bhagavat Gita, which had an impact on Islamic thought; in early Christianity, which penetrated Syria and Mesopotamia even before the spread of Islam (5th-6th centuries); and finally at the birth of Islam, in the verses of the Qur’an that speak of divine love. As a matter of fact, the first Muslim Sufis like Cüneydi Baghdadi, Bayezid Bistami, Hasan Basri, etc., who were not yet aware of Hellenistic philosophy, spoke of divine love as the principle of existence”¹¹⁵⁵

The priority given to the concept of love by various *mutasavvıf* and philosophers appears to be a natural result of the mode of relationship they attempted to establish with a transcendent and divine God. According to the accounts provided by these figures, the excessive dynamics of an encounter with the divine are by nature ineffable that can only be expressed via specific linguistic tools that enable the speaker to surpass the limits of daily language and enter a realm of metaphoric and symbolic expression. The concept of love may therefore be an inevitable outcome of an experience-based relationship with the divine through the efforts of making sense of the content of the experience, which brought about a rich literary archive of symbolism.

7.2 Ineffability and Symbolism

Concerning the notion of ineffability in various esotericised systems, in the works of numerous *mutasavvıf* from different regions such as Muhyiddin İbnü’l-Arabî (1165–1240), Ebu Nasr Serrâc, and Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî (1207–1273), one can come across a particular emphasis on the indescribable nature of *vecd*, a form of altered state of mind experience in *tasavvuf* initiated through an experience of *Allah*, and the impossibility to transmit the “taste”

¹¹⁵⁴ Bayrakdar, Mehmet: “İbn Sina’da Varlık, Varoluşun Sebebi ve Varlığın Delili Olarak Aşk”, in: *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 27, 1986, pp. 299–306/299–300.

¹¹⁵⁵ Ülken, “Preface”, 2017, pp. 49–56.

(*dhawq*)¹¹⁵⁶ of encounters with *Allah* via words¹¹⁵⁷. Serrâc, for example, writes in his famous compilation of treatises on *tasavvuf*, *El-Lüma'*, that “the essence of ecstasy and of other mystical states is incommunicable, and is better described by silence than by speech”¹¹⁵⁸. He further notes that “how can one describe something which has no description other than itself, and to which no witness can stand other than itself”¹¹⁵⁹. Mevlânâ also, as a *sûfî* poet whose real effort was to “record meanings that do not fit into verse or rhyme, words, or even letters”¹¹⁶⁰, has been giving references to his dilemma concerning ineffability. While he craved for means to explain what he has been going through in his mystical journey toward God, he was also aware that any form of engagement with the Divine cannot be put in words adequately uttered by limited human faculties. He writes:

“What is a letter so that you think about it
What is letter? Fence wall of the vineyard
Let me smash the letter, voice, and word
And talk to You without these three, ah...”¹¹⁶¹

As mentioned in the preceding chapters, the notion of ineffability was associated with a specific perspective of theological discourse in Christianity called apophatic theology or *via negativa*. In Mevlânâ’s quatrain above one can extract an approximation to apophatic theology as he significantly acknowledges the impossibility to transfer the content of his relationship with God via major constituents of human expression tools, namely the letter, voice, and word. In King’s study on the Neoplatonic Christian perspective of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, whose “mystical theology” partially involves apophatic language, one can find correspondences with Mevlânâ’s viewpoint. In describing the human relationship with God, he analogously argued that “as one ascends the celestial hierarchy towards God, words fall away”¹¹⁶². The Muslim peripatetic (*meşşâî*) philosopher with Neoplatonist inclinations Sicistânî even advances the concept of negation in describing God’s transcendence and argues that

¹¹⁵⁶ Serrâc, *El-Lüma'*, 1996, p. 305.

¹¹⁵⁷ Gazali, *El-Munkızu Min-ad-Dalâl*, 1960, p. 58.

¹¹⁵⁸ Al-Sarrâj Al-Tusi, Abû Nasr 'abdallah B. 'Ali: “Kitâb Al-luma' Fi'l-Tasawwuf”, Nicholson, A. Reynold (ed.), *The Kitâb Al-luma' Fi'l-Tasawwuf of Abû Nasr 'abdallah B. 'Ali Al-Sarrâj Al-Tusi*, Leyden: E. J. Brill 1914, p. 81.

¹¹⁵⁹ Quoted by: Avery, 2004, p. 55.

¹¹⁶⁰ Gölpınarlı, Abdülbaki: “Önsöz”, in: Meriçboyu, A. Kadir (ed.), *Bugünün Diliyle Mevlânâ*, İstanbul: İstanbul Matbaası, 1966, p. 6.

¹¹⁶¹ This excerpt in Turkish is taken from: Kılıç, 2014, p. 72.

¹¹⁶² King, 2005, p. 308.

“The highest [a.n. God] is neither being nor substance, nor cause, nor essence; but neither is it non-being, non-substance, non-cause, non-essence. Each attribute of the Godhead is to be denied, while at the same time its denial is to be denied, too: the only way to approach God is that of double negation”¹¹⁶³

As the *Kur'an* verifies God's indescribable nature in verse 6:100 (*En'âm*)—"Allah is beyond all that they describe [of Him]", which Aminrazavi links with Rudolf Otto's concept "*mysterium tremendum*"¹¹⁶⁴—not only *mutasavvife* but also philosophers, as well as jurists, unanimously accepted this given fact. However, in their pedagogically designed education complex (*seyrüsülûk*), *mutasavvife* had to particularly prioritize a symbolic language rather than logical deduction or concrete examples to convey the meaning of the transcendental experiences with God, confirm those experiences' ineffable nature, and the stages of spiritual maturation towards perfectness. The epistemological system of *tasavvuf*, which has determined moral education and the process of self-perfection as its main area of interest, thus puts a great emphasis on its methodological use of symbolic expressions, both in the manuals composed for the initiates (*âdâb*) and in the poetry of "experienced" *mutasavvife* since the earliest literary productions.

Concerning ineffability, for Plotinus, the human soul's experience of union (*henosis*) with the One "is strictly indescribable and unique, not to be neatly categorized or reported in logically consistent terms"¹¹⁶⁵. Plotinus discusses that in an event of unification with the One, "the soul runs over all truths, and all the same shuns the truths we know if someone tries to express them in words and discursive thought"¹¹⁶⁶. Differing from Plato's abstract notion of God and likely inherited from Philo's milder understanding of ineffability that formulates God "both absolutely unknowable yet very close to mankind"¹¹⁶⁷, Plotinus conceptualizes God and allows a possibility of an engagement with the One. However, in such an engagement, whose contents cannot be adequately transmitted, yet can be found in various esotericised systems, certain conditions must be met. In Plotinus' words,

"Our thought cannot grasp the One as long as any other image remains active in the soul. To this end, you must set free your soul from all outward things and turn wholly within yourself, with no

¹¹⁶³ Gutas, Dimitri / Kotzia, Paraskevi / Orthmann, Eva / De Smet, Daniel: "The Dissemination of Philosophical Thought", in: Rudolph, Ulrich / Hansberger, Rotraud / Adamson, Peter (eds.), *Philosophy in the Islamic World*, Vol. 1, Leiden / Boston: Brill 2017, pp. 655–786/745.

¹¹⁶⁴ Aminrazavi, 2001, p. 95.

¹¹⁶⁵ Gregory, John: *The Neoplatonists. A Reader*, London / New York: Routledge 1999, p. 124.

¹¹⁶⁶ Plotinus, *Enneads* 5.3.17, Vol. 5, 1988, p. 133.

¹¹⁶⁷ Lévy, Carlos: "Philo of Alexandria", in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2018 Edition), 5 February 2018, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/philo/>>, last accessed: 13 January 2022.

more leaning to what lies outside, and lay your mind bare of ideal forms, as before of the objects of sense, and forget even yourself, and so come within sight of that One”¹¹⁶⁸

Reproducing Plato’s “recollection of Forms” concept which leads to madness through love (*eros*), the expressions above uttered by Plotinus concerning the ecstatic experience of the One demonstrate further correspondences with various esotericised and *tasavvuf* systems in terms of his application of remembrance, obliteration of the borders between the lover and beloved, and an experience of annihilation of the self as follows:

“If he remembers who he became when he merged with the One, he will bear its image in himself. He was himself one, with no diversity in himself or his outward relations; for no movement was in him, no passion, no desire for another, once the ascent was accomplished. Nor indeed was there any reason or thought, nor, if we dare say it, any trace of himself”¹¹⁶⁹

The issue of the ineffability of the experience, however, did not prevent the experiencers to seek ways to express their altered condition. To overcome the limits of expressions, one of the most frequently consulted resources was the metaphorical language involving symbols, allegory, and coded communication means. A known Persian *mutasavvif* Bistâmî (804–874), for example, writes about his unitive experience with God, which, according to Perlo, can be interpreted as having an influence of shamanism¹¹⁷⁰, as follows:

“Then I became a bird, whose body was of Oneness and whose wings were of Everlastingness, and I continued to fly in the air of the Absolute (*huwiyyat*), until I passed into the sphere of Purification (*tanzih*), and gazed upon the field of Eternity (*azalliyat*) and beheld there the tree of Oneness.”¹¹⁷¹

The “fantastic”¹¹⁷² and “mystical”¹¹⁷³ language Bistâmî employs here is understood by Stace as a method allowing him to express his mystical experience that takes place in a form of union, “fading away, [a.n. or] dissolution in God”¹¹⁷⁴. There are, in fact, additional references to this language mode in *tasavvuf*, particularly in the works of Ibnü’l-Arabî, who distinguishes

¹¹⁶⁸ Plotinus, *Enneads*, 6.9.7 quoted from: Gregory, 1999, p. 125.

¹¹⁶⁹ Plotinus, *Enneads*, 6.9.11 quoted from: Gregory, 1999, p. 129.

¹¹⁷⁰ Perlo, W. Katherine: *Kinship and Killing. The Animal in World Religions*, New York: Columbia University Press 2009, p. 184.

¹¹⁷¹ Al-Hujwiri: “The Kashf Al-Mahjûb”, in: Nicholson, A. Reynold (trans.), *The Kashf Al-Mahjûb. The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sûfism*, Leyden: E. J. Brill 1911, p. 238; Stace, 1960, p. 56.

¹¹⁷² Stace, 1960, p. 56.

¹¹⁷³ Avery, 2004, p. 57.

¹¹⁷⁴ Stace, 1960, p. 57.

between three degrees of knowledge, namely the science of mind (*akıl ilmi*), the science of state (*hâl ilmi*), and the science of secrets (*sırlar ilmi*) as follows:

“The science of secrets (*sırlar ilmi*) is a type of knowledge that is beyond and above the realm of the mind and belongs to the prophets and saints. Contrary to the science of mind (*akıl ilmi*), when the knowledge of secrets is put into words, the meaning becomes inextricably complex and problematic. For this reason, people with a weak mind and fanatic objection to these sciences consider them useless. Those who are aware of the science of secrets, therefore, turn to symbols and poems”¹¹⁷⁵

The “fantastic” language, different from the ordinary one, according to Ibnü’l-Arabî, is attached to the altered state of mind emerging through the intimate relationship with God, and thus it is named *hâl dili* (the language of state or condition). Conceptualizing a similar principle of proportionality, Plato (and the Gnostics) correspondingly generated hierarchical systems of knowledge (or wisdom) in which different ways of knowing are graded in terms of the capacity that they grant to those who possess them. Whatever the term may be used, for Plato, as he discussed in *Timaeus* and *Republic*, the magnitude of wisdom “from the lowest state of unenlightenment to knowledge of God”¹¹⁷⁶ always corresponds to the nature of its object. For Ibnü’l-Arabî, too, a person who acquires some form of knowledge by means of the science of states (*hâl ilmi*) is obliged to use a different or altered jargon in connection with this altered state. In Ibnü’l-Arabî’s words:

“The science of state (*hâl ilmi*) is a type of knowledge that is perceived and obtained only by pleasure, not by reason.”¹¹⁷⁷

Ibnü’l-Arabî additionally uses analogies of “the sweetness of honey, the scent of rose, and the course of love” to describe the experience and associates the contents of mystical states as if they could only be known by means of tasting rather than conventional communication means. The analogy is not necessarily based on the sweetness *per se*, but on the indispensable outcome of experiencing the sweetness which uplifts the otherwise unstimulated senses. Mevlânâ understands the scent of wine along the similar lines to Ibnü’l-Arabî, namely, it can only be known after an experiential encounter with the wine: “He (that spirit) knows the scent

¹¹⁷⁵ İbn Arabî, 2007, Vol. 1, pp. 74ff.

¹¹⁷⁶ Plato, “Republic”, 1944, p. 222.

¹¹⁷⁷ İbn Arabî, Muhyiddin: *Fütûhât-ı Mekkiye*, Vol. 1, Demirli, Ekrem (trans.), İstanbul: Litera Yayıncılık 2007, p. 74.

of the wine because he drank it (before); when he has not drunk it, he cannot scent it”¹¹⁷⁸. Like Ibnü'l-Arabî, Plotinus employed specific metaphors relating to human senses to describe a mystical experience including “seeing, touching, assimilation and conjoining, with the implication that the ‘two become one’ remain separate entities”¹¹⁷⁹.

While Plotinus paid extra attention to maintaining the separateness between the One and individual, Ibnü'l-Arabî and all *mutasavvîf* were also aware not only of the urge for verbalizing excessive, euphoric experiences, but also its potential dangers in transmitting them to others, e.g., possibility of “persecution by the public and authorities as in the case of al-Hallaj and Shihabuddin Suhreverdî”¹¹⁸⁰. Usually “objectionable from the orthodox viewpoint”¹¹⁸¹, the language and the terms employed by *mutasavvîfe* to describe their subjective ASC experiences have invariably created tensions between the experiencers and those who lacked the relevant experience. According to Kılıç, to avoid oppression *mutasavvîfe* developed certain criteria and limited the usage of potentially controversial symbols to specific individuals:

“If these symbols are in the hands of a perfect knower (*ârif-i kâmil*), there is nothing to be afraid of, he knows how to use them in their correct semantic meanings. But if these symbols are not employed by a *kâmil* person, then there is a danger”¹¹⁸²

Kılıç exemplifies this criterion by quoting Mevlânâ’s poetry and Ibn Fârîz’s statements concerning the usage of the wine symbol as follows:

“Shut up, do not mention the name of the wine in the presence of the raw person for his mind goes to bad wine” (Mevlânâ)

“When we’re drunk
no grapes were created yet”¹¹⁸³ (Ibn Fârîz)

As maintained by the seventeenth-century Turkish *sûfî* poet and the founder of the Mısırî branch of the Halvetî *tarikât*, Niyâzî-i Mısırî (1618–1694), *mutasavvîfe* employed particularly controversial terms that are forbidden (*haram*) or accepted as disapproved (*mekruh*) by *şeriat* and transformed them in symbolically relevant components of their epistemology:

¹¹⁷⁸ Rûmî, Jalâl al-Dîn: *The Mathnawî of Jalalu’ddin Rumi*, Nicholson, A. Reynold (ed.), Gibb Memorial Trust, 1926, p. 307.

¹¹⁷⁹ Gregory, 1999, p. 124.

¹¹⁸⁰ Geels, 1996, p. 233.

¹¹⁸¹ Schimmel, Annemarie: “Sufism”, in: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Online Edition, 20 November 2019, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sufism>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹¹⁸² Kılıç, 2014, p. 150.

¹¹⁸³ Kılıç, 2014, p. 150.

“*Mutasavvife* have passed from imitation of faith to authentic faith. For this reason, they have passed from the outward appearance (*zâhir*) of the things to their interior (*bâtın*), and from its exterior form to its meaning. They saw and knew everything as it actually is. For this reason, most of their words come from the spiritual realm. What they mean by saying wine is the acquaintance with *Allah* (*ma-rifetullah*). The end of this goes to the love of *Allah* (*muhabbetullah*). That is wisdom and love”¹¹⁸⁴

Employing the Cognitive Linguistic Approach to analyze Ibnü'l-Arabî's “figurative language”, Binmayaba argues that the symbolic expressions used to “reveal the relationship between the Sufîs' thought about God, secular language of love, and the idea of divine love [...], interfaces with cognitive, cultural, and spiritual experience”¹¹⁸⁵. Since these components of the altered language are based on subjective experiences unique to *tasavvuf*—such as “*sekr*, *vecd*, *cezbe*, *galebe*, *inbisat*, *istiğrak*, *cem* ‘, *fenâ* and *tevhîd-i zâtî*”¹¹⁸⁶—their transmission, according to Kuşeyrî and Hücûvî¹¹⁸⁷, required a proportional understanding, namely a common terminology, “an accepted Sufî code”¹¹⁸⁸, or a standardized jargon to avoid controversies, which led to the constitution of a literary genre known as *şatahat* or *şathiyat*. Ayverdi defines the term *şathiyat* as the collection of “excessive words and poems uttered in the peak of spiritual enthusiasm, which seem to be contrary to the *şeriat*, although they are based on the understanding of *vahdet-i vücud* [a.n. unity of being]”¹¹⁸⁹. Schimmel too identifies the condition of *mutasavvîf* who “felt the necessity of developing a symbolic language which says everything to the initiated but nothing to the common man”¹¹⁹⁰. This controlled secrecy has always been a necessity in esotericised systems for a variety of reasons. In the context of *tasavvuf*, according to Geels, the *şathiyat* genre appears to be formed for two main reasons: to maintain the assumed secrecy within an elite group of individuals who share the same understanding of symbolic language and to “facilitate doctrinal defense when attacked by, for example, representatives of orthodoxy”¹¹⁹¹. While discerning the differences between the “ecstatic utterances” caused by *semâ* and the unitive expressions of, for example, Bistâmî and Hallâc, Avery too acknowledges

¹¹⁸⁴ Mîsrî, Niyâzî: *El-Es'iletü Vel-Ecûbe (Sualler ve Cevaplar)*, Akkoyun, Nazım (ed.), İstanbul: Rahmet Yayınları 1966, pp. 21–23, quoted by: Kılıç, 2014, pp. 151–152.

¹¹⁸⁵ Binmayaba, T. M. Muhammad: “Sufî Symbol as Gap, Metaphor as Clue”, in: *Journal of Sufi Studies*, 8/2, 2020, pp. 176–197/176.

¹¹⁸⁶ Uludağ, Süleyman: “Şathiyat”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 38, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2010b, pp. 370–371/370.

¹¹⁸⁷ Ceyhan, Semih: “Remiz: Tasavvuf”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 34, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2007, pp. 558–560/559.

¹¹⁸⁸ Bell, L. Gertrude: “Translator's Preface”, in: Bell, L. Gertrude (trans.), *Hafiz – The Diwan*, London: Portable Poetry 2020, p. 19.

¹¹⁸⁹ Ayverdi, 2010, p. 1157.

¹¹⁹⁰ Schimmel, 1987, p. 87.

¹¹⁹¹ Geels, 1996, p. 233.

şathiyat to “have an important doctrinal and theological role to play, as well as having legal implications in questions of heresy and infidelity”¹¹⁹².

Akarpınar, on the other hand, proposes another perspective concerning the usage of symbols in *tasavvuf* literature. She argues that the use of symbols in *tasavvuf* can be related to *mutasavvıf*’s attempts to “transform esoteric [a.n. *bâtın*] meaning into apparent [a.n. *zâhir*] one”¹¹⁹³. By means of reinterpretation, Akarpınar further asserts, symbols “enable *mustasavvıf* to employ them as knowledge transmission tools and transmit the knowledge of experience-based extra-sensual phenomena”¹¹⁹⁴.

Tasavvuf’s rich lexicon of symbols has usually capitalized and incorporated local expression means from various regions. From its initial spread, especially following the Umayyad and Abbasid periods, Islam was adopted by different socio-cultural groups scattered throughout broad geography causing locals to interpret their new religion with the linguistic tools in their hands. This led Islam (and *tasavvuf*) to incorporate various expression means from several sources that enriched its verbiage and the repertoire of symbols. For Bilkan, “with the translation of Persian works, the symbolism of ancient Iranian beliefs has played an important role for *tasavvuf* to employ increasingly difficult and ambiguous language”¹¹⁹⁵, which contains symbols such as wine (*şarap*, *mey*, *bade*, *müdâm*), cupbearer (*sâkî*), drunkenness, nightingale, rose, or love (with strong implications to carnal love) as the most frequently recurrent themes. According to Kılıç’s interpretation, “be it Turkish, Arabic or Persian literature, the most widely used *tasavvuf* symbol is wine”¹¹⁹⁶. These symbolically loaded terms are the expressions of a divine love between God (beloved) and individual (lover) causing in the lover various emotional and mental responses such as drunkenness and ecstasy due to the excessive force of the beloved.

Mevlânâ, whose primary language was Persian, for example, employs approximately all these themes in his poetry. He writes in his renowned work *Mesnevî*,

“Choose the love of that Living One who is everlasting, who gives thee to drink of the wine that increases life”¹¹⁹⁷

¹¹⁹² Avery, 2004, p. 105.

¹¹⁹³ Akarpınar, 2004, p. 5.

¹¹⁹⁴ Akarpınar, 2004, p. 5.

¹¹⁹⁵ Bilkan, A. Fuat: *Osmanlı Zihniyetinin Oluşumu. Kuruluş Döneminde Telif ve Tercüme*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları 2018, p. 225.

¹¹⁹⁶ Kılıç, 2014, p. 149.

¹¹⁹⁷ Rûmî, 1926, p. 15.

“Wine became intoxicated with us, not we with it; the body came into being from us, not we from it”¹¹⁹⁸

“(He) causes the intelligence to taste myriads of wines in such wise that eyes and ears are unaware”¹¹⁹⁹

The poetry of prominent *sūfi*, Hâfiz, is another Persian source from which the most recurrent symbolic *tasavvuf* imagery can be extracted:

“What drunkenness is this that brings me hope
Who was the Cup-bearer, and whence the wine?
That minstrel singing with full voice divine”¹²⁰⁰

Here Hâfiz refers to a feeling of arousal caused by the idea of the divine as drunkenness, which is a common symbol employed by various *mutasavvife* to refer to their ASC experiences. Bell argues that in the quotation above Hâfiz reproduces the “ecstatic utterances” of *tasavvuf* terminology and describes how he “found consolation in the ecstatic drunkenness of the Sufis, in the minstrel’s song, or divine message, which brought him a word from God”¹²⁰¹. These expressions of divine love and desire for union (*vuslat*) symbolically reflect *tasavvuf* discourses on knowledge, God, human relation to God, and the mode of this relation. Like Bilkan, Avery and Heath-Stubbs, while acknowledging Neoplatonic and Platonian associations, focus on the Persian background of *tasavvuf* symbolism. They argue that the Muslim conquest of Persia, where “Zoroastrian or Magian worship, Nestorian Christianity, Greek Neoplatonism, and Indian Buddhism”¹²⁰² have already been prevalent for centuries, allowed *mutasavvife* to benefit from the rich Persian literary traditions and employ a set of symbolic associations—e.g., wine, drunkenness, and cupbearer in explaining their own ASC experiences. They draw further parallels between *tasavvuf* epistemology, how wine symbol is continued to be linked with “esoteric knowledge” in *tasavvuf* reinterpretation, and the Persian backgrounds of symbolic terminology of *tasavvuf* as follows:

¹¹⁹⁸ Rūmī, 1926, p. 99.

¹¹⁹⁹ Rūmī, 1926, p. 203.

¹²⁰⁰ Hâfiz: *Hafiz – The Diwan*, Bell, L. Gertrude (trans.), London: Portable Poetry 2020, p. 35.

¹²⁰¹ Bell, L. Gertrude: “Notes”, in: Bell, L. Gertrude (trans.), *Hafiz – The Diwan*, London: Portable Poetry 2020, p. 63.

¹²⁰² Avery, Peter / Heath-Stubbs, John (trans.): *Hafiz of Shiraz. Thirty Poems*, London: John Murray Publishers 1952, p. 6.

“It is well known that orthodox Muhammadanism forbids the use of wine or any other intoxicants. Wine has the property of loosening the unconscious forces within ourselves, and in certain states of drunkenness it is possible to experience something bordering on ecstasy, in which we appear to have knowledge of a reality beyond the personal. From early times intoxicants have been used (as in the Greek Dionysiac cult) to produce artificially a state of religious ecstasy—as have other narcotics, notably, in the Near East, hashish. The use of wine has, furthermore, religious associations of another kind. The ancient Zoroastrian religion made use of an intoxicating liquor, Hayyuma, in its sacrificial rites, and wine is also used sacramentally by Christians.

It was, therefore, natural that for the Sufi poets wine should stand as the symbol of esoteric knowledge. As it was forbidden to orthodox Muslims, its sale passed largely into the hands of representatives of the older religions. The term ‘Magian’, therefore, became synonymous with wine-seller—though in practice these were often Christians or Jews, as well as Zoroastrians. The wine-shop becomes a ‘Magian temple’—and indeed such a place might well be the rendezvous of an esoteric circle or of a proscribed religion, in which intellectual intercourse between Muslims and non-Muslims would be possible. The Tavern-keeper is the ‘Magian Elder’, the archetypal Ancient Sage, dispenser of secrets, and the Sufi poet represents himself as his initiate and pupil. The cup which he holds in his hand is the magic cup of Jamshid, the mythical king and culture-hero of the Golden Age of Iranic legend, to whom the invention of wine was ascribed. His cup reflects the whole world in its depths, and confers all knowledge on him who drinks of it.”¹²⁰³

Along with Mevlânâ and Hâfız, perhaps one of the most prominent representatives of symbolic *sûfî* poetry is Ferîdüddin Attâr (1146–1221), whose renowned work *Manţıku’-t-tayr* (*The Conference of the Birds*) symbolically narrates the concept of the unity of being (*vahdet-i vücud*)¹²⁰⁴ through a journey of birds toward the mythical bird *Simurg* (Figure 12). Summarily, while the birds in the poem represent the disciples (*mürîd*) or initiates (*sâlik*) of *tasavvuf*, their leader and guide bird hoopoe (*hüdühüd*) represent the mentor (*şeyh*) of *mürîd* known as *mürşîd*, and *Simurg*, the destination, stands for God’s manifestation¹²⁰⁵. This journey illustrates the spiritual perfection process of *tasavvuf* (*seyrüsülûk*) entirely with symbols. The seven valleys that must be traversed by the birds¹²⁰⁶ to find *Simurg* and acquire its wisdom represent “seventy thousand veils of light and darkness intervening between the individual soul and the Reality they obscure”¹²⁰⁷. This corresponds with the formulation of seven degrees of the human soul or ego (*nefs*) in *tasavvuf* (*atvâr-ı seb’â*), whose perfection process is also frequently described as a journey (*seyrüsülûk*). The degrees of the *nefs* are *nefs-i emmâre* (the unregenerate soul), *nefs-*

¹²⁰³ Avery / Heath-Stubbs, 1952, pp. 6–7.

¹²⁰⁴ Sevgi, H. Ahmet: “Manţıku’-t-Tayr”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 28, Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2003, pp. 29–30/29.

¹²⁰⁵ Şahinoğlu, M. Nazif: “Attâr, Ferîdüddin”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 4, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1991, pp. 95–98/97.

¹²⁰⁶ These valleys are named as search or quest (*talep*), love (*aşk*), mystic apprehension (*mârifet*), detachment (*istiğna*), unity (*tevhid*), bewilderment (*hayret*), and annihilation (*fenâ*). See: Sevgi, 2003, p. 29; Trimmingham, J. Spencer: *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, Oxford: Clarendon 1971, p. 154.

¹²⁰⁷ Trimmingham, 1971, p. 154.

i levvâme (blameworthy soul), *mülhime* (inspired), *mutmainne* (tranquil), *râziye* (contented), *merziye* (approved), and *kâmile* (perfect)¹²⁰⁸. Through purifying each degree of the *nefs* with specific *zikir* formulas—e.g., *lâ ilâhe illallah*, *Allah*, *hû*, *hak*, *hay*, *kayyûm*, *kaḥḥâr*¹²⁰⁹—a *mürîd* undergoes a spiritual development from the lowest state of *emmâre* to the highest degree of perfection (*kâmile*). As Eraydın asserts, upon successful completion of *seyrüsülûk* the initiated (*sâlik*) is freed from the *nefs* and becomes able to uncover (*mükâşefe*)¹²¹⁰ all seventy thousand veils that prevent individuals from seeing the Reality as it is. Another analogy Attâr establishes between his symbolic poem and *tasavvuf* is the narrative of discovering the divine, *Simurg* in the story, or the knowledge thereof, within the self. Attâr reproduces this prominent notion of esotericised traditions and emphasizes that the reality, truth, or God is to be found within the self. Like the birds discover themselves to be *Simurg* (or divine) at the end of *Manṭıku't-ṭayr*, Attâr describes finding and establishing acquaintance with God (*mârifet*) as a journey to one's inner self.

¹²⁰⁸ Eraydın, 1994, pp. 392–393; Trimingham, 1971, pp. 155–157.

¹²⁰⁹ Frishkopf, Michael: *Sufism, Ritual, and Modernity in Egypt. Language Performance as an Adaptive Strategy*, Dissertation University of California 1999, p. 320.

¹²¹⁰ Eraydın, 1994, p. 392.



The symbolic and metaphoric language of *tasavvuf* is further reflected in the definitions of it provided by various *mutasavvife*. In the official online dictionary of the Turkish Language Association (*Türk Dil Kurumu*, TDK), the word *tasavvuf* is defined in two different ways. The first given definition formulates it as a “religious and philosophical movement that explains the quality of God and the formation of the universe with an understanding of the ‘unity of

¹²¹¹ “The Concourse of the Birds”, Folio 11r, <<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/451725>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

being' (*vahdet-i vücud*) concept"¹²¹². While this definition efficiently summarizes what *tasavvuf* is, stylistically, however, it bears only a little resemblance to the traditional *tasavvuf* descriptions provided largely by *tarikât* leaders, *sûfî* scholars, or some high-profile mystics. These in some ways impressionist descriptions are commonly laden with a wide range of metaphorical imagery and symbols. Above all things, such symbols and metaphors are used in poetry, along with stories and parables, which has become a rich literary tradition and the prime instrument, for example, to transmit *tasavvuf* doctrines, explicate ambiguous theories, and maintain its assumed secrets¹²¹³. Douglas-Klotz diagnoses the functionality of *tasavvuf* poetry as “educational and therapeutic”, since they “often convey the truths that the subconscious mind recognizes, even if the conscious mind does not understand them”¹²¹⁴.

The usage of symbolic language and metaphorical expressions is not limited to *tasavvuf*. They are prevalent in almost all religions, belief systems, and various literary genres aiming to ease a connection with the spiritual realm. Especially in esotericised traditions around the globe, as in the case of *tasavvuf*, people tried to express their (religious) emotions, thought processes, and subjective mystical experiences with symbols, metaphors, and allegories where our daily language was inadequate. However, at the point of transmitting the knowledge that is acquired via personal experiences, some serious misunderstandings and misinterpretations could not be avoided. The employment of symbols and metaphors nevertheless helps its recipients by converting complex, e.g., ontological, eschatological, or epistemological, theories into more accessible narrations.

7.3 Light

Plotinus' system of salvation establishes a route for the soul to follow in order to acquire an inherently present divine wisdom by means of remembrance, purification, and asceticism. In this system, everything comes into being through emanations from the One. As seen in Fârâbî's and İbn Sînâ's conceptions of the undiminishing essence of God, a significant feature

¹²¹² “Tasavvuf”, <<https://sozluk.gov.tr/?kelime=tasavvuf>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹²¹³ Elias, J. Jamal: “Sufi Dhikr Between Meditation and Prayer”, in: Eifring, Halvor (ed.), *Meditation in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Cultural Histories*, New York: Bloomsbury 2013, pp. 189–200/196; Boivin, Michel: “Music and Remembrance as Meditation. Samâ' in the Indus Valley”, in: Eifring, Halvor (ed.), *Meditation in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, London / New York: Bloomsbury 2013, pp. 213–224/216; Michon, Jean-Louis: “The Spiritual Practices of Sufism”, in: Nasr, S. Hossein (ed.), *Islamic Spirituality. Foundations*, New York: Crossroad 1997, pp. 265–293/280.

¹²¹⁴ Douglas-Klotz, Neil: “The Key in the Dark. Self and Soul Transformation in the Sufi Tradition”, in: Mijares, G. Sharon (ed.), *Modern Psychology and Ancient Wisdom. An Anthology of Healing Practices from the World's Religious Traditions*, New York: Hawthorn Press 2000, pp. 113–135/113.

in Plotinus' emanation theory is the ontological absoluteness of the One that does not diminish or lose any attribute through emanation¹²¹⁵. To illustrate his complex and speculative theory of emanation from the One, Plotinus employs a light-sun-moon analogy in his *Enneads* 5.6.4, arguing that the One and the first two emanations from the One, namely the Intellect and the (World) Soul, can be compared to light, the sun, and the moon in that order¹²¹⁶. While the One "should be compared to light" writes Plotinus, "the next, to the sun, and the third, to the celestial body of the moon, which gets its light from the sun"¹²¹⁷. Just like his several other theories, Plotinus' analogy of light too demonstrates significant Platonic influences. In the *Republic* (508a-509b), Plato considers the sun to be the source of good in the world and from this point associates the illumination (or the knowledge) concerning the Forms with the sun's light:

"As goodness stands in the intelligible realm to intelligence and the things we know, so the sun stands in the visible realm to sight and the things we see"¹²¹⁸

Since, in addressing God, the identical analogy has also been employed by the early Christian theologians, it might as well be the source for Plotinus' light analogy concerning the whole process of his creation in the form of emanation and the relevant ontological qualities of its participants. As Rosenthal emphasizes, "light was a common symbol in Biblical thought, and throughout later Judaism and Christianity"¹²¹⁹. For instance, Theophilus of Antioch (fl. 169–182 CE) writes that:

"Just as the sun always remains full and does not wane, so God always remains perfect and is full of all power, intelligence, wisdom, immortality, and all good things"¹²²⁰

His contemporary, Tatian the Assyrian (120–180 CE), similarly employs a non-lessening light analogy concerning God and following the trend of his time, Tatian further associates the light with wisdom yet via a masculine term, *logos*:

¹²¹⁵ O'Brien, 1964, p. 84; Karakaya, 2016, p. 81.

¹²¹⁶ Rosenthal, 1952, p. 481.

¹²¹⁷ Plotinus: "Enneads V", in: Armstrong, H. Arthur (trans.), *Plotinus in Seven Volumes*, Vol. 5, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1988, p. 211.

¹²¹⁸ Plato: "Republic", in: *Plato. Republic*, Waterfield, Robin (trans.), Oxford: Oxford University Press 1993, p. 235.

¹²¹⁹ Rosenthal, 2007, p. 155.

¹²²⁰ Theophilus of Antioch: *Ad Autolycum*, Grant, M. Robert (trans.), Oxford: Clarendon Press 1970, p. 53.

“Just as from one torch many fires are lighted, but the light of the first torch is not lessened by the kindling of many torches, so the Logos, coming forth from the Logos-power of the Father, has not divested of the Logos-power Him who begot Him”¹²²¹

The analogy of light has also been employed in certain other relevant systems including Gnosticism. As Rosenthal discusses, “the gnostic concept ‘pistis sophia’ was identified with light, its primal abode”¹²²², which is likely to have a direct association with Platonic, Christian, and Plotinian conceptions. In the Gnostic *Tripartite Tractate*, for example, both God and Jesus (as having the same essence with God) are narrated to be spiritual lights with certain features including perfection, undiminishing essence, noetic quality, and perhaps *imago Dei*:

“[...] in fact, which came into being after the image of the light is perfect itself, since it is an image of the single light that is, [...] it nevertheless possesses its indivisibility because it is a countenance of the indivisible light [...] The spiritual kind is like light from light and like spirit from spirit. When its head appeared, it immediately rushed to it. At once it became a body for its head. It received knowledge straightaway from the revelation”¹²²³

A matching account with a narrative of *imago Dei*, perfection, knowledge, and light can be found both in the preceding periods, the Old Testament, and in the subsequent traditions as in the *Kur'an*:

“For she [a.n. *hikmet*] is the breath of the power of God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty: therefore, can no defiled thing fall into her. For she is the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness”¹²²⁴

“*Allah* is the Light of the heavens and the earth. His Light is like a niche in which there is a lamp, the lamp is in a glass, the glass is like a glittering star. It is kindled from a blessed olive tree, neither of the East nor the West. Its oil will almost shine, even if no fire has touched it. Light upon light, *Allah* guides to His Light whomever He pleases and gives examples to mankind. *Allah* has knowledge of everything”¹²²⁵

Rosenthal devotes a whole chapter to the theme of light and its epistemological expressions, in which he refers to ancient Greeks (Heraclitus, Plato, Aristotle), Neoplatonists, Gnostics, *mutasavvife* (Serrâc, Sühreverdî, Mîsrî), and certain other dualistic systems that employ a

¹²²¹ Tatian: “Address to the Greeks V”, in: Roberts, Alexander / Donaldson, James (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing 1956, p. 67; Gregory, 2011, p. 209.

¹²²² Rosenthal, 2007, p. 156.

¹²²³ Thomassen, Einar: “The Tripartite Tractate”, in: Meyer, Marvin (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, New York: HarperOne 2007, pp. 57–102/81–82, 93.

¹²²⁴ *Wisdom* 7:25-27.

¹²²⁵ *Kur'an* 24:35 (*Nûr*), in: Fakhry, 2000, p. 353.

light-darkness dualism (Manichaeans, Zoroastrians)¹²²⁶. This commonality of the light theme may exhibit intriguing relations between these systems, yet, exhausting all the examples in their details is beyond the scope of this study.

7.4 Wisdom, Purification, and The Return

Even though prominent Muslim philosophers explicitly incorporated Hellenic opinions into their discourses of creation, the *Kur'an* in fact gives a precise explanation of the creation of all humans, including Jesus, who was believed to possess several noetic qualities within various Christian and associated philosophical trends. In the *Kur'anic* verse, *Âl-i Īmrân* (3:59), these qualities are partially reproduced as follows:

“Jesus in *Allah*’s Sight is like Adam; He created him from dust, then He said to him: ‘Be’, and there he was”¹²²⁷

On the other hand, the same verse (*Âl-i Īmrân*) mentions Jesus in two other places, 3:39 and 3:45, along with 4:171 (*Nisâ*) and 19:34 (*Meryem*), as “the Word” (*kalima*) of God, which was denoted as *logos* in Greek-influenced Christian and Jewish traditions, and announces the word was: “be” (*kûn*). The *Kur'an* 43:61 (*Zuhruf*), further states that Jesus is the knowledge (*ilm*) of the hour (the day of judgement or resurrection). However, in verse 43:63 (*Zuhruf*), Jesus says “I have brought you wisdom” or “I have come to you with the Wisdom”¹²²⁸, as in the Gnostic formulations, and this wisdom in the *Kur'an* is *hikmet*. Certain other passages of the *Kur'an*, e.g., *Âl-i Īmrân* (3:48) and *Mâide* (5:110), enable this study to link all these different traditions and to trace a continuity between them in terms of how they formulated the concept of wisdom and their particular (both religious and philosophical) epistemology to acquire it:

“And He (*Allah*) will teach him [*‘Iesa* (Jesus)] the Book and Al-Hikmah (i.e. the Sunnah, the faultless speech of the Prophets, wisdom, etc.), (and) the Taurat (Torah) and the Injeel (Gospel)”¹²²⁹

¹²²⁶ Rosenthal, 2007, pp. 155–193.

¹²²⁷ Fakhry, 2000, p. 61.

¹²²⁸ Fakhry, 2000, p. 498.

¹²²⁹ *Kur'an* 3:48 (*Âl-i Īmrân*), in: Al-Hilâlî, M. Taqî-ud-Dîn / Khân, M. Muhsin (eds.), *Translation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language*, Madinah: King Fahd Complex 1998, p. 75.

As seen in the quotation above, for the word wisdom of God¹²³⁰, the Akkadian, Aramaic, and Hebrew root *hkm* is employed with a meaning of wisdom bestowed by God. In order to be one of the few selected beings, namely, to be God-given wisdom holders, Muslim philosophers, *mutasavvif*, Hermetics, Gnostics, Plato, as well as Plotinus believed this prophetic and salvific wisdom can only be acquired through denouncing the matter (body and the world). It is because the mental faculties available to us are inadequate to receive the wisdom of God and therefore supranatural faculties must be employed. However, the employment of these faculties requires specific operations and maintenance to be activated. Approximately all traditions concerning salvific wisdom that allows the holder to return to the divine realm often referred to these operations as purification from the earthly desires. In the *Kur'an* 3:55 (*Âl-i Imrân*), for example, Jesus is narrated to be “elevated to God and purified”, which finds its correspondence in Gnostic formulations concerning the death of Jesus. As it is confirmed by the *Kur'an*, from the Gnostic perspective too Jesus was sent to the world to share his wisdom (*hikmet*) and in order to return to *pleroma* or the divine realm of God, as all humans existed in the world, he needed to be purified. Furthermore, Jesus’ crucifixion is narrated in the *Kur'an* (4:158) as an illusion seen by the executioners, but in fact God elevated Jesus to the divine realm through His *hüküm* and *hikmet*. It is now clear that the way God is conceptualized and the relation of God’s created things (universe, humans, love) with God, defines the manners in which we relate ourselves with these concepts and orchestrate our lives accordingly.

In relation to these, Ülken analyses Fârâbî’s epistemological application of divine love in his renowned work *Fusûsü'l-Hikem* as a “gnoseological method”, which “purifies the soul and thus transforms the disposition (*fitrat*) to acquire the intelligible (*makulat*)”¹²³¹. Ülken also translates İbn Sînâ’s treatise, *Makâmâtü'l-Ârifîn* (*The Stations of the Knowers*), into French as *degrés des gnostiques*¹²³², with an implication of Gnostic extensions in İbn Sînâ’s philosophy. Considering the Neoplatonic reception in Islamic philosophy and the inherent relation between Neoplatonism and Gnosticism mentioned in the previous chapters, Ülken may have reached the gnostic-*ârif* equation by means of such Neoplatonic correspondences in Islam. The Arabic terms for wisdom holders used to address philosophers, theologians, or *tasavvuf* scholars are another source that demonstrates a deep and complex intermingling of Islamic and non-Islamic wisdom traditions. In addition to the titles *âlim* (scholar) and *filozof/hâkim* (philosopher), *ârif*

¹²³⁰ The vagueness of this expression in English requires further explanation. Since “wisdom of God” can mean either, “wisdom belonging to God”, or “wisdom about God”. See: Rosenthal, 2007, pp. 129ff.

¹²³¹ Ülken, “Preface”, 2017, pp. 49–56.

¹²³² Ülken, “Preface”, 2017, pp. 49–56.

is a term that refers to the holders of a special kind of wisdom (*mârifet*) embedded in Islamic scholarly traditions under the influence of *tasavvuf*. The identity of *ârif* was developed in parallel with the philosophical advancements in the Islamicate world and has also been adopted partially by philosophers. Along with the *sûfî-âlim* or *mütekellim-hâkim* types of scholars seen in the other areas of Islamic wisdom traditions, a philosopher-*ârif* identity as a polymath was also present within Islamic philosophy.

In numerous Gnostic, *sûfî*, and Neoplatonic streams, the understanding of a transcendent God as omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient demands the development of a set of practices from the wisdom-seekers to establish a profitable affinity with God. Plotinus, for example, acknowledges the world as a mere stage and our bodies as costumes or even as a prison to break off and explains the soul's departure from the body (costume) geared toward the achievement of "identity with the One, with no distinction of seer and seen, a perfect image into archetype"¹²³³. In Plotinus' system, the desired (or inevitable) affinity with the One takes the form of ecstasy of the unitive experience that "takes place in the complete impermanence of the subject and object"¹²³⁴. Indeed, the notion of a mystified union (*henosis*) with the One has differing dynamics in Plotinus' metaphysics and other systems, yet he employs certain terms such as *katharsis* (purification) and *ekstasis* (state of being outside of oneself or body) to point out the different levels of mystical experience that have been consistently used almost uniformly by numerous trends with mystical inclinations. To acquire salvation, Plotinus' model seeks a relationship with the One through a form of intuitive and divine knowledge¹²³⁵ and follows a process of denouncing the world, disciplining the soul, establishing a moral practice, and sensing a divine love by experiencing a *katharsis* developed by means of a contemplative, ascetic lifestyle. According to Jabre, Plotinus' theories concerning the encounter with the One "had a great influence on Gazzalî's last works, especially *Miṣkat*"¹²³⁶ and if we combine Jabre's view with the greater network of Islamic epistemologies from which Gazzâlî adopted intensely to finalize his system, a continuity or at least a Plotinian confirmation utilized in developing Islamic philosophy becomes apparent.

As Barnes underlines, the concept of *katharsis* in Greek philosophy was often used as "a means of separating Man's soul from the body"¹²³⁷ and purgation of the soul from "its ex-

¹²³³ Gregory, 1999, p. 124.

¹²³⁴ Jabre, Farid: "Plotin'in Vecdi ve Gazzalî'nin Fenası", Çubukçu, A. İbrahim (trans.), in: *İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 8, 1960, pp. 135–147/137.

¹²³⁵ Jabre, 1960, p. 136.

¹²³⁶ Jabre, 1960, p. 137.

¹²³⁷ Barnes, 1942, p. 358.

cessive passions”¹²³⁸. The differences between the discourses that employ *katharsis* generally emerge from the question of how to achieve it. While in Plotinus’ view purification can be attained through either *metempsychosis/metensomatosi*s (reincarnation, transmigration)¹²³⁹ or a transcendental ecstasy of unification (*henosis*), most mystical trends retain only the narrative of ecstatic unification instead of the transmigration of the souls. For Plotinus, purification means clearing the remnants of the material world from the soul (*Enneads*, 3.6.5):

“But what could the ‘purification’ [a.n. *κάθαρσις*, *katharsis*] of the soul be, if it had not been stained at all, or what its ‘separation’ from the body? The purification would be leaving it alone, and not with others, or not looking at something else or, again, having opinions which do not belong to it- whatever is the character of the opinions, or the affections, as has been said- and not seeing the images nor constructing affections out of them. But if there is turning in the other direction, to the things above, away from those below, it is surely (is it not?) purification, and separation too, when it is the act of a soul which is no longer in body as if it belonged to it, and is being like a light which is not in turbid obscurity”¹²⁴⁰

This explicit need for the soul’s purification to be able to attain the divine is a common narrative in nearly all mystical and esoteric trends including *tasavvuf*. According to Kahn, transmigration of a soul by necessity gives the soul an immortal and divine quality allowing it to break free from the captivity imposed by the material body. “This Pythagorean view of the soul”, Kahn argues, “is most systematically developed in Plato’s *Phaedo*, but it also appears in the doctrine of recollection in other dialogues and in the Platonic myths of judgment and preexistence in the *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*”¹²⁴¹.

7.5 Remembrance

At this point, additional intriguing correspondences between Plato, Plotinus, Islamic philosophy, and *tasavvuf* emerge, especially concerning how Plotinus understands the human condition in relation to the three hypostases. He asserts that all three have a portion in the human soul, yet people tend to forget this divine aspect inherent in their souls and must remember their

¹²³⁸ Lucas, L. Frank: *Tragedy. In Relation to Aristotle’s Poetics*, London: Hogarth Press 1927, p. 24.

¹²³⁹ See: *Enneads* 2.9.6 and 4.3.9.

¹²⁴⁰ Plotinus: “*Enneads III*”, in: Armstrong, H. Arthur (trans.), *Plotinus in Seven Volumes*, Vol. 3, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1988, p. 231.

¹²⁴¹ Kahn, 2001, p. 4.

true origin through contemplative practices¹²⁴² for salvation¹²⁴³, above all through *henosis*¹²⁴⁴. Plotinus writes in his *Enneads* 6.9.7:

“the soul must let go of all outward things and turn altogether to what is within, and not be inclined to any outward thing, but ignoring all things (as it did formerly in sense-perception, but then in the realm of Forms), and even ignoring itself, come to be in contemplation of that One, and having been in its company and had, so to put it, sufficient converse with it, come and announce, if it could, to another that transcendent union”¹²⁴⁵

This account corresponds almost perfectly with Stace’s formulation of introvertive mystical experiences, through which the knowledge of the divine was sought within the self by means of introspection (*murakabe*). Plotinus’ descriptions of the ecstatic experience of union with the One in terms of remembrance and annihilation of the self, bear a striking resemblance to *zikir*-related epistemology and metaphysics of *tasavvuf*. Plotinus goes on to elaborate on the nature of union further in 6.9.11 and writes that:

“If he remembers who he became when he was united with that, he will have an image of that in himself. He was one himself, with no distinction in himself either in relation to himself or to other things- for there was no movement in him and he had no emotion, no desire for anything else when he had made the ascent-but there was not even any reason or thought, and he himself was not there”¹²⁴⁶

The notion of remembrance in the quotation above, as Kahn argues, has explicit Platonic references. According to Von Stuckrad too, the salvific objective of the soul and its condition in the human body “as an exile” in Plotinus’ system, along with the understanding of “remembrance as true knowledge”¹²⁴⁷, exhibit a clear Platonic influence. Plotinus reinterprets the Platonic theories and develops them further as necessitated by the socio-political and theological developments surrounding him. With Plotinus, the term *ekstasis* as part of a metaphysical epis-

¹²⁴² O’Brien, 1964, p. 90.

¹²⁴³ Stearns, 1920, pp. 358–359.

¹²⁴⁴ Also, in the works of Iamblichus (*he arretos henosis*): Pearson, A. Birger: “Theurgic Tendencies in Gnosticism and Iamblichus’ Conception of Theurgy”, in: Wallis, T. Richard (ed.), *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, Albany: State University of New York Press 1992, pp. 253–276/260. In *Corpus Hermeticum* too, “Hermes goes so far as to assert, in C.H. XIII, that mysteries of spirit ‘are not thought, but we are reminded of them by God, when he wishes”, quoted from: Fowden, 1986, p. 104.

¹²⁴⁵ Plotinus: “Enneads VI”, in: Armstrong, H. Arthur (trans.), *Plotinus in Seven Volumes*, Vol. 6, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1988, p. 329.

¹²⁴⁶ Plotinus, “Enneads VI”, Vol. 6, 1988, pp. 341–342.

¹²⁴⁷ Von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 14/f.n. 4.

temology fully acquired a meaning of “form of understanding”¹²⁴⁸ concerning the One, creation, and the workings of the world. Through Plotinus, this view might have been included in numerous epistemologies of varying mystified and esotericised discourses. His emanation theory containing a structured hierarchy of beings was not merely a source to utilize by the Christian theosophical philosophy, but, as Kaya argues, it was also “an opportunity for some Muslim philosophers such as Fârâbî (872–950 CE) and İbn Sînâ (980–1037 CE), who wanted to reconcile religion [a.n. Islam] and philosophy”¹²⁴⁹.

Along with *Phaedo* (72e), *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*, in the Socratic dialogue *Meno*, Plato speaks through Socrates and explains his characteristic evaluation of remembrance or recollection (*ἀναμνησθῆναι*, *anamnisthînai*) concept as an epistemological tool employed by certain “wise” (*σοφῶν*, *sofôn*) people. One important detail is that Plato believes these wise people to be inspired or gifted by divine forces, which implies a divine dimension of the concept of *sophia* as a form of wisdom held by the wise (*sofôn*). In fact, Plato’s accounts in his *Phaedrus* 239b–278d4–6, *Lysis* 218a–b, and *Symposium* 203c–204c demonstrate clearly that in Plato’s sense *φιλοσοφία* (philosophy) is a divine “pursuit of knowledge of true reality”¹²⁵⁰ and *φιλόσοφος* (philosopher) is “one who desires, and therefore seeks to acquire [...] the perfect wisdom that belongs to gods”¹²⁵¹. In Plato’s formulation, learning or the process of acquiring knowledge and wisdom is a form of remembering, a theory developed from the understanding of the soul’s divine condition as immortal and the ability to undergo multiple reincarnations. In Plato’s words:

“Seeing then that the soul is immortal and has been born many times and has beheld all things both in this world and in the nether realms, she has acquired knowledge of all and everything; so that it is no wonder that she should be able to recollect all that she knew before about virtue and other things. For as (81b) all nature is akin, and the soul has learned all things, there is no reason why we should not, by remembering but one single thing—an act which men call learning—discover everything else, if we have courage and faint not in the search; since, it would seem, research and learning are wholly recollection (81d)”¹²⁵²

According to Plato’s epistemology in *Meno*, humans inherently possess the knowledge of *ιδέαι* (absolute and abstract models or paradigms for the creation of the material world) and

¹²⁴⁸ Thiel, Elisabeth: “Die Ekstasis als Erkenntnisform bei Plotin”, in: *Archive für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 26/1, 1913, pp. 48–55.

¹²⁴⁹ Kaya, 2009, p. 468.

¹²⁵⁰ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 2011, p. 116.

¹²⁵¹ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 2011, p. 241.

¹²⁵² Plato, “Meno”, in: *Laches. Protagoras. Meno. Euthydemus*, Lamb, R. Walter (trans.), Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2014, p. 303.

for happiness, salvation, or access to the divine realm it only requires to be rediscovered through remembrance ἀνάμνησις (*anamnesis*)¹²⁵³. Known as “philosophical midwifery”¹²⁵⁴ (μαϊευτικός, *maieutikós*), this Socratic method of “mental pregnancy”¹²⁵⁵ aims at re-/discovering the false beliefs or reality of things by pursuing questions in a dialectic manner. The term midwifery appears to be employed deliberately (first in Plato’s *Theaetetus*) as Socrates’ method brings about or helps the subject to “give birth” to the ideas, right opinions (ὀρθὴ δόξα, *orthí doxa*, orthodox), or knowledge (ἐπιστήμη, *epistímē*) hidden within the human mind. The same method is applied in Plato’s *Meno* (82b-85b), through which Socrates (or Plato) assists a slave to solve a geometrical problem in a manner of helping the slave to remember the implicit knowledge he already had. Thus, one can assert that the doctrine of *anamnesis* in Plato’s *Meno* and *Phaedrus* refers to the human soul as possessing the knowledge of the events that took place prior to its current existence. One important point here is that a “particular faculty of the soul that enables it to remember”¹²⁵⁶, namely its feature to acquire and house knowledge gives it a key role in the epistemologies of not only Plato but also numerous other philosophical and religious systems. Like the introvertive mystical experience implies, Plato argues that we are born with the knowledge that is already present in our soul, which we are supposed to remember rather than learn by means of external sources. Plato’s view on reincarnation explains why the soul ought to remember. For him, reincarnation causes the soul to forget its previous transmigrations and its activities in the divine realm of Ideas or Forms¹²⁵⁷. In *Phaedrus* (249b-d), Plato stresses another important notion, namely the soul’s travel with a company of a divine being (*Demiurge* or God), and he designs the soul’s occupation in the material world to be returning to the company of this divine being through recollection:

“For a human being must understand a general conception formed by collecting into a *unity* by means of the reason the many perceptions of the senses; and this is a recollection of those things which our soul once beheld, when it journeyed with God and, lifting its vision above the things which we now say exist, rose up into real being. And therefore it is just that the mind of the philosopher only has wings, for he is always, so far as he is able, in communion through memory with those things the communion with which causes God to be divine. Now a man who employs such memories rightly is always being initiated into perfect mysteries and he alone becomes truly perfect;

¹²⁵³ Kotzia, 2007, p. 1097.

¹²⁵⁴ Grimes, Richard / Uliana, L. Regina: *Philosophical Midwifery. A New Paradigm for Understanding Human Problems with its Validation*, California: Hyparxis Press 1998.

¹²⁵⁵ Rawson, Glenn: “Platonic Recollection and Mental Pregnancy”, in: *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 44/2, 2006, pp. 137–155.

¹²⁵⁶ Köpping, Klaus-Peter: “Anamnesis”, in: Jones, Lindsay (ed.), *MacMillan Encyclopedia of Religion*, Second Edition, Vol. 1, Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale 2005, pp. 309–317/309.

¹²⁵⁷ Aminrazavi further links this notion with “the fall” narrative: “the fall of man (separation) from the unity with God, brings about forgetfulness”, Aminrazavi, 2001, p. 103.

but since he separates himself from human interests and turns his attention toward the divine, he is rebuked by the vulgar, who consider him mad and do not know that he is inspired.”¹²⁵⁸

7.6 Moral and Spiritual Perfection

Along with the notions of unity, recollection, and being in the company of God before the creation was initiated, the passage above from Plato contains additional correspondences with the Islamic conception of God in general and various *tasavvuf* perspectives concerning the nature of God, creation, and the human condition in the world. Since the creation has been variously interpreted both in Islam and in other traditions, its constitutive elements and the dynamics between them were as well conceptualized differently by each tradition. When the passage from *Phaedrus* (249b-d) above is read together with relevant other passages in the same work, further remarkable similarities come into prominence between not only Plato and Plotinus but also between their quasi-religious discourses and the metaphysics of *tasavvuf* that gave shape and content to the performance of *zikir* (remembrance) rituals. In Plato’s sense, the recollection of Forms is not a mere abstract philosophical tool, but a method of acquisition of the soul’s prior knowledge linked with specific notions such as purification, perfection, salvation, and leading a virtuous life, which have been the key elements in the epistemology of numerous esoteric and religious discourses including *tasavvuf*. In various Greek philosophical streams too, the notion of the soul’s purification (*katharsis*) was a recurrent theme as part of the investigations of poets and philosophers. From the pre-Socratic period, as in Empedocles’ poem *Katharmoi*, which attaches a moral and a religious¹²⁵⁹ dimension to the concept of purification, up to the influential works of Plotinus and his Neoplatonist students (Porphyry and Iamblichus) *katharsis* had been a central factor of the desired perfectness.

The purification mentioned in certain chapters of *Phaedrus* was in fact employed as an episode within a larger ritual system of several ancient Greek mystery cults. As Yunis argues, the Eleusinian mystery cult, for example, offered access to an esotericised conception of the world and allowed its adherents to experience an “ecstatic spiritual salvation”¹²⁶⁰, which required before all else a carefully executed *katharsis*. According to Yunis, Plato, in *Phaedrus* 244d6-c5, 250a6, and b4-c5, draws upon a similar purification concept and writes that “the purification rendered by the [a.n. Eleusinian] rite (ὁργιάζομεν, 250c1) corresponds to the pure

¹²⁵⁸ Plato: “Phaedrus”, in: *Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus*, Lamb, R. Walter (trans.), Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2014, pp. 407–579/481–482.

¹²⁵⁹ Osborne, Catherine: “Empedocles Recycled”, in: *The Classical Quarterly*, 37/1, 1987, pp. 24–50; Plato, *Phaedrus*, 2011, p. 124.

¹²⁶⁰ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 2011, p. 149.

state of the soul devoid of the body (250c1-5)”¹²⁶¹. From Plato’s accounts, one can deduce that his views—on the human body as a prison for the soul, its unreality in comparison to the absolute reality of Forms, soul’s salvific ascent to the divine realm (of Forms) after freeing itself from the impurity of the body via *katharsis*, and all these necessitating proper conduct of “virtuous life” (243e-257b) as well as a specific ecstatic altered state of consciousness experiences, *μανία* (244a-c), for “accelerating the soul’s movement upwards”¹²⁶²—forms a schema in which various acquisition methods of knowledge of the divine are linked with remembrance (*Meno* 81a-c and *Phaedrus* 249b-d). The formulation of madness (*μανία*) as a knowledge-granting (or reminding) ecstatic experience “gifted by the gods” (*Phaedrus*, 244a) and “among the noblest arts” (244c), places remembrance at the very centre of Plato’s epistemology concerning happiness, salvation, and unification. To what extent Plato’s *μανία* corresponds with various manifestations of ASC orchestrated by various trends with esoteric or mystical inclinations requires further inquiries. However, in general terms, the schema (re-)designed by Plato appears to be exercised, with inevitable nuances, by nearly all trends mentioned in this study. Plato’s views on remembrance and efforts to link *μανία* as a knowledge-granting experience, with the flavour of reincarnation, allow us to evaluate him in terms of an esotericising discourse. As Köpping argues, for Plato, “the true knowledge of the things seen by the soul between different incarnations or materializations in consecutive bodies is never quite lost; it is hidden but still latently there, and it can be regained, recovered, brought to consciousness”¹²⁶³. Furthermore, Plato’s formulation of madness as a “divine beneficial” and “telestic”¹²⁶⁴ madness (244e-245a) might have eased the adoption process of mystical experiences for several upcoming belief-oriented trends. For instance, the same narrative concerning the procedures that the soul must undergo for salvation occurs recurrently in Hermetic texts—e.g., *Corpus Hermeticum*, *Asclepius*, *The Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth*—dating from the second century CE to the Middle Ages. The disciple’s process of initiation in the *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth* is described by Mahé in such a manner that it concurs entirely with Plato’s description in *Phaedrus* 249b-d quoted above. According to Mahé’s commentary:

“The disciple needs to pass through the last *stage* of *spiritual perfection*, which does not consist merely of *learning* but demands full personal involvement. In fact, he has to undergo an *initiation*

¹²⁶¹ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 2011, p. 149.

¹²⁶² Plato, *Phaedrus*, 2011, p. 129.

¹²⁶³ Köpping, 2005, p. 309.

¹²⁶⁴ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 2011, p. 133.

into the divine mysteries of the Eighth and the Ninth, so that he may be born again and become a new person, directly inspired by God's mind"¹²⁶⁵

7.7 The Chain of Ancient Wisdom

The italicized parts above are the common themes present in both Platonic and Hermetic discourses. These explicit references—i.e., reincarnation, a staged process of “spiritual perfection” requiring “an initiation into divine mysteries”, learning divine realities as part of salvific epistemology, as well as a possibility of a “direct inspiration by God”—have been variously reinterpreted and expanded upon by Gnostics, Neoplatonists, alchemists, Muslim philosophers, and other schools of discourses with esoteric tendencies including *tasavvuf*. Considering Plato's frequent appearance in the chain of the ancient, “true knowledge and wisdom”¹²⁶⁶ (*philosophia perennis* or *prisca theologia*)¹²⁶⁷—or as Celsus puts it *archaios logos* (ancient doctrine)—that contains certain prominent wisdom-holders including Pythagoras¹²⁶⁸, “Hermes Trismegistus, Moses, Zoroaster, Orpheus, Plato”¹²⁶⁹, and occasionally Jesus¹²⁷⁰, one may speculate his direct or indirect influence on these esotericised trends. Despite broad interpretative differences with regard to notions of wisdom or knowledge termed as *sophia*, *gnosis*, *mârifet*, or *hikmet*¹²⁷¹ and their varying applications, the theory of ancient wisdom appears to be treated similarly by all these trends, enabling this study to pursue at least a continuity among them. Beyond the channel of wisdom, Gutas diagnoses an inherent inclination within “Arab Muslims” to draw lines between their views and those produced by certain previous traditions with an argument that “they (Arab Muslims) viewed the study of all the sciences as a continuation of the indigenous tradition as well as of the policies of glorious emperors of previous ages”¹²⁷². This continuity, which has often been interpreted as universality, is based on not the answers they provide, only perhaps to a degree, but based on the common questions they ask. The questions are similarly formulated concerning the origins of the universe, the condition as well as the occupation of humans in the world, and the speculative investigations of prenatal as well as post-mortem state of con-

¹²⁶⁵ Mahé / Meyer, 2007, p. 409.

¹²⁶⁶ Hanegraaff, 2012, p. 5.

¹²⁶⁷ Alfarabi, “The Attainment of Happiness”, 1962, p. 43.

¹²⁶⁸ Von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 15; Laërtius, Diogenes: “Pythagoras”, in: Hicks, R. Drew (trans.), *Lives of Eminent Philosophers in Two Volumes*, Vol. 2, London: William Heinemann 1925, p. 323.

¹²⁶⁹ Goodrick-Clarke, 2008, p. 7.

¹²⁷⁰ Hanegraaff, 2012, p. 12.

¹²⁷¹ Kelly, F. Edward et. al., 2007, p. 498; Cutsinger, 2004, p. 228; Yilmaz, 2004, p. 13; Suzuki, 1964, p.88; Pagels, 1989, p. xix; Plato, “Republic”, 1980, p. 118; Jabre, 1960, pp. 135–147/13; Frishkopf, 1999, pp. 63–64; Lightfoot, J. B.: *St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon*, London: MacMillan & Co. 1875, p. 240; Elias, 2013, p. 197; Schimmel, 1975, p. 43; Corbin, 1993, p. 62.

¹²⁷² Gutas, 1998, p. 43.

sciousness (or, the self). All these questions were addressed and answered, to their own satisfaction, in various degrees in the creation narratives of, for example, ancient Mesopotamian mythologies, Greek philosophy, Abrahamic religions, and the Gnostics. The alchemists, magicians, and astrologers of the ancient Mediterranean and Mesopotamian regions have also developed their professions in strict association with the speculations produced with respect to the questions above. Furthermore, Plato was believed to have travelled to Egypt¹²⁷³ after the death of his teacher Socrates, where he was allegedly initiated into Egyptian mysteries, the *Isis* cult, to which Pythagoras was also supposedly initiated, yet with a higher degree than that of Plato's¹²⁷⁴. This implies that the universal nature of Plato's questions (and some of his answers) might have been inherited through encounters with other relevant traditions.

Before concluding, there are still intriguing resemblances and informative discrepancies to mention between all these philosophical, religious, and esotericised systems. One problem, attributing Plato's discourses concerning remembrance as a model or a schema to be adopted by the subsequent traditions, comes into prominence when we appeal to Laërtius, who argues that:

“Plato has employed a variety of terms in order to make his system less intelligible to the ignorant. But in a special sense, he considers wisdom (*σοφίαν*) to be the science of those things which are objects of thought and really existent, the science which, he says, is concerned with God and the soul as separate from the body. And especially by wisdom he means philosophy (*φιλοσοφίαν*), which is a yearning for divine wisdom. And in a general sense all experience is also termed by him wisdom, e.g. when he calls a craftsman wise. And he applies the same terms with very different meanings [...], often uses different terms to express the same thing, [or] contrary expressions for the same thing”¹²⁷⁵

Rawson as well stresses the inconveniences within Plato's theories due to his unstable views on the same topic. Rawson argues that while Plato introduces his doctrine of recollection in *Meno* (81a-b) through Socrates, he also “discounts it as questionable”. Similarly, in *Phaedrus* too Plato argues that “recollection is the centerpiece of a fantastic rhetorical display that begins with teasing disclaimers (242b-44a) and is later straightforwardly disowned as playful and potentially misleading (262d, 265d)”¹²⁷⁶. Even though Laërtius' account prevents establishing a direct association between Plato and other similar discourses concerning the “doctrine about

¹²⁷³ Grant, Edward: *A History of Natural Philosophy. From the Ancient World to the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2012, p. 22.

¹²⁷⁴ Schuré, Edouard: *Hermes and Plato*, London: William Rider & Son 1919, pp. 83–84.

¹²⁷⁵ Laërtius, Diogenes: “Plato”, in: Hicks, R. Drew (trans.), *Lives of Eminent Philosophers in Two Volumes*, Vol. 1, London: William Heinemann 1925, p. 333.

¹²⁷⁶ Rawson, 2006, p. 138.

the nature of the soul and its connection to the notion of the realm of ideal forms”¹²⁷⁷, due to Plato’s flexible treatment of terms, his wording and style explicitly demonstrate Plato’s robust reflections in the subsequent religious or belief-oriented traditions. Furthermore, considering “authors who wrote in Greek so widely apart in time and on a such widely different intellectual levels differed markedly in their linguistic usage”¹²⁷⁸, it is possible that certain subsequent Greek-speaking systems might have ignored or reinterpreted Plato’s inconsistencies into a meaningful complex.

From this perspective, it becomes clear that asking the same questions inevitably leads to the occasional same answers. As mentioned above, this was in fact the reasoning belonging to Kılıç, a Turkish *sûfî* and scholar. Kılıç argued in one interview when describing *tasavvuf* that “since thoughts with similar starting points reach similar conclusions, they are universal in a way”¹²⁷⁹. Similarly, Aminrazavi underlines “the perennial nature of the Islamic revelation”, with an argument that

“Islam does not see itself as a new religion, but as a continuation of monotheism, which began with God and ends with God; and since reality is none other than God, then that which was revealed to Noah, Ibrahim, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and thousands other lesser significant prophets (Nabis) must have emanated from the same Source”¹²⁸⁰

A recurring pattern concerning the ancient wisdom-holders is present not only in Islamic sciences (as represented by Fârâbî, İbn Sînâ, Gazzâlî, Sühreverdî, and nearly all *tasavvuf* streams), but also in several non-Islamic esotericised trends such as Hermeticism, Alchemy, Gnosticism, Plotinus, or Philo of Alexandria. This ancient wisdom is usually formulated as a different mode of (intuitive) knowing allegedly covering hidden, metaphysical, ultimate, or divine truths (or wisdom). The main correspondence of the chain of ancient wisdom in İbn Sînâ’s philosophy that led some scholars to consider him as one of the transition points between Greek philosophy to Islamic philosophy and *tasavvuf*¹²⁸¹ is a treatise, though its attribution to İbn Sînâ may be spurious, called *al-hikma al-mašriqiyya* (Oriental or Eastern philosophy)¹²⁸², in which, Nasr argues,

¹²⁷⁷ Köpping, 2005, p. 309.

¹²⁷⁸ Rosenthal, 2007, p. 202.

¹²⁷⁹ Kılıç, “Tasavvuf İhtiyacı”, 2018.

¹²⁸⁰ Aminrazavi, 2001, p. 96.

¹²⁸¹ Ülken, 1955, pp. 81–94.

¹²⁸² Gutas, Dimitri: “Avicenna’s Eastern (‘Oriental’) Philosophy, Nature, Contents, Transmission”, in: *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 10, 2000, pp. 159–180.

“Cosmology became not a theoretical scheme but a plan to enable traveler upon the path of spiritual perfection to journey through the cosmic crypt, to be liberated from all limitation, and thereby to gain spiritual freedom”¹²⁸³

İbn Sînâ's theory of spiritual perfection is an expression of the ascension (or return) to the divine realm, which is rendered possible by means of a noetic “power of illumination [a.n. *işrak*]¹²⁸⁴ embedded in humans”¹²⁸⁵. The “Eastern Philosophy” of İbn Sînâ was believed to be incorporated by the Persian philosopher Sühreverdî (1154–1191) into his theory of *hekmât-e eshrâq* (حکمت اشراق, the philosophy or wisdom of the light)¹²⁸⁶. While according to the authors of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* İbn Sînâ's “philosophic views were those of the ancient sages of Greece (including the genuine views of Plato and Aristotle)”¹²⁸⁷, Corbin expands the sources with an argument that in Sühreverdî's organization, the “‘Oriental theosophy’ [*Hikmat al-Ishraq*] conceived as a deliberate resurrection of the wisdom of ancient Persia. The great figures presiding over this doctrine are Hermes, Plato, and Zoroaster-Zarathustra”¹²⁸⁸. Correspondingly Gürer asserts that Sühreverdî's illumination-oriented philosophy was primarily derived from ancient Persian wisdom traditions with some influences from “Neoplatonism, tasavvuf, and Mazdeism [a.n. Zoroastrianism]”¹²⁸⁹. Even though Gürer is reluctant to consider Sühreverdî's philosophy a form of *tasavvuf*, he points at the common epistemological terminology such as *keşf* (discovery), *ilham* (inspiration), and *sezgi* (intuition) that are employed by both *tasavvuf* practitioners and Sühreverdî in their systems¹²⁹⁰.

7.8 Towards *Tasavvuf*

Beyond terminological and ideological correspondences, perhaps the most conspicuous link allowing this study to question a commonality between *tasavvuf* and other esotericised trends is the narrative of the ecstatic communion with a transcendent being by means of an act of knowing or remembering. This noetic experience of communion (likeness, or union) has

¹²⁸³ Nasr, S. Hossein: “The Cosmos and the Natural Order”, in: Nasr, S. Hossein (ed.), *Islamic Spirituality. Foundations*, New York: Crossroad 1997, pp. 345–357/353.

¹²⁸⁴ The philosophy of illumination (*işrâkîlik*) extends theological arguments beyond the scope of the rational and discursive epistemologies and establishes the primary method for the acquisition of “wisdom (*hikmet*), philosophy, and philosophical knowledge on discovery (*keşif*), pleasure (*zevk*), and inspiration (*ilham*)”. Knowledge or wisdom in this system is granted by *Allah* through a light (*işrak* or *nûr*) placed in the heart. See: Ayverdi, 2010, p. 585.

¹²⁸⁵ Ülken, 1955, p. 81.

¹²⁸⁶ Aminrazavi, Mehdi: “How Ibn Sînian is Suhrawardî's Theory of Knowledge?”, in: *Philosophy East and West*, 53/2, 2003, pp. 203–214.

¹²⁸⁷ Rahman / Mahdi / Schimmel, “Islam. The ‘Oriental Philosophy’”, 1998.

¹²⁸⁸ Corbin, 1993, p. 206.

¹²⁸⁹ Gürer, 2001, p. 138/f.n. 73.

¹²⁹⁰ Gürer, 2001, p. 138/f.n. 73.

been predictably interpreted and expressed variedly within approximately all traditions. Keeping such discrepancies in mind, Plato's narrative about the soul's pretemporal journey with God in a primordial realm, which must be remembered in order to be "initiated into perfect mysteries", "become truly perfect" (*insan-ı kâmil*), and acquire "the communion with which causes God to be divine", was reproduced by various *mutasavvife* almost verbatim. Listed amongst the most prominent *mutasavvife*, Cüneyd-i Bağdâdî (830–810), according to the accounts of Kuşeyrî and Serrâc¹²⁹¹, considered the principle of communion or oneness (*tevhid*) as:

"The means that the servant appears before God – praise be to Him – as a soulless body (*shabah*) that is moved by nothing except the workings of His predetermination (*tadbir*), which flow through the channels of the divine decrees (*ahkam*) emanating from His power (*qudra*), which [in turn] emerges from the depths of His oneness; [as a consequence] he [the servant] is annihilated – in the proximity to God – from his own self, from the call of this world to him, and from his response [to this call] through the realities of divine existence and unicity (*wahdaniyya*) and [loses] his own sensations and actions"¹²⁹²

For Uludağ, Bağdâdî here refers to a *Kur'anic* verse (*A'râf*, 7:172) where a sacred covenant, known as *bezm-i elest* (or *kālû belâ*), between God and the uncreated souls was settled in a primordial and divine realm¹²⁹³. This *Kur'anic* event predating the creation of the world has been expanded upon so variedly by *mutasavvife* that exhausting all interpretations within this study is not possible. However, a commonly agreed interpretation evaluates the covenant by means of its epistemological implications. This pre-creation unity (or company) with God is one of the fundamental discourses within Islam, which implies a gradual process of creation: first, the souls along with a spiritual realm where they dwell were created, and then the material universe¹²⁹⁴. According to a passage in the *Kur'an* 7:172 (*A'râf*), before the creation of the universe and the material world, *Allah* assembled the incorporeal souls in the spiritual realm¹²⁹⁵ and asked them: "*elesti bi rabbikum?*" (Am I not your Lord?) and, according to the verse, all souls replied, "*kālû belâ*" (Yes, [we witness that] You are our Lord). This agreement confirming God's lordship over the created beings allowed them to be born Muslims. Derived from the Semitic root *slm*, the word *Muslim* (مُسْلِم) in Arabic comes to mean "one who surrenders" (to

¹²⁹¹ Al-Sarrâj, 1914, p. 9.

¹²⁹² Al-Qushayrî, *Al-Risala*, 2007, pp. 308–309.

¹²⁹³ Uludağ, Süleyman: "Tevhid: Tasavvuf", in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 41, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2012, pp. 21–22/21.

¹²⁹⁴ However, there are as well different comments on this primordial accompany of God. Some believe that the direct encounter with God took place simultaneously with the creation.

¹²⁹⁵ The timing, location, and nature of this covenant are matters of dispute and thus open to various interpretations.

God), whereas *Islam* (إسلام) accordingly stands for “submission” (to God)¹²⁹⁶. It is commonly believed that this divine covenant (*bezm-i elest*) took place between God and the human souls but following the creation, humans forgot the agreement and deviated from following the requirements of being a Muslim, namely performing total submission to God’s commands. This state of forgetfulness (*nisyan*)¹²⁹⁷ therefore necessitates a remembrance (*zikir*) of the covenant to be able to return to the divine realm. While according to the literalist interpretation (*tefsir*) of creation, to fulfil their pledge of allegiance and keep their side of the covenant, Muslims ought to exercise the exoteric and explicit commands of God as listed in the *Kur’an*; the allegorical and esoteric interpretation (*te’vil*), favored by *mutasavvife*, maintains that Muslims are supposed to overcome the condition of forgetfulness (*nisyan*) caused by the creation in the material body and therefore, in their efforts to acquire communion with *Allah*, they particularly put emphasis on the notion of remembrance (*zikir*) with regard to the divine covenant. However, the importance attached to *zikir* does not exclusively belong to the esoteric interpretation of the *Kur’an*, since the literalists, based on the *Kur’anic* accounts, also exercise *zikir*, yet not necessarily as ritualized as *mutasavvife* do. For both the literalist and *mutasavvif*, reading the *Kur’an*, performing *namaz* (*salat*), or following God’s commands sincerely (*ihlâs*) are also *zikir*. This is, in essence, the remembrance of the first half of *şehâdet* (testimony), one of the five pillars of Islam, asserting that “there is no deity but *Allah*” (*lâ ilâhe illallah*)¹²⁹⁸. As the etymology of the terms Islam and Muslim demonstrates, this first half of *şehâdet* implies accepting *Allah* as the sole authority of rule and worthy of worship, which, corresponding with the divine covenant, brings about a total submission to His will. According to Uludağ, “*mutasavvife* accepted this covenant as a pledge to acknowledge that God is the Lord and agreed to be bound by this commitment *pacta sunt servanda* (*ahde vefa*)”¹²⁹⁹. Several similar covenants between God and humans or all creatures are also reported in the Hebrew Old Testament and New Testament¹³⁰⁰. The *Kur’an* refers to these covenants in its several passages (2:63; 2:83-84; 2:93; 3:81 [*hikmet* given to prophets as part of the covenant]; 4:154-155; 5:14; 5:70; 33:7 etc.) and elucidates that

¹²⁹⁶ Gardet / Jomier, “İslâm”, 2012.

¹²⁹⁷ *Kur’an* 9:67 (*Tevbe*); 59:19 (*Haşr*).

¹²⁹⁸ Termed as *kelime-i şehâdet* (the declaration or testimony of faith), it is the testimony of the oneness of *Allah* and Prophet Muhammed’s position as the messenger (*resûl*) of *Allah*. According to Kılıç, “both the form and content of Islamic knowledge are epitomized by *şehadet*, the ‘witnessing’ that defines *tevhid*, ‘there is no deity but *Allah*’. Knowledge concerns itself first with God.”. See: Kılıç, 2004, p. 107.

¹²⁹⁹ Uludağ, Süleyman: “Ahid”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 1, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1988, pp. 533–534/534.

¹³⁰⁰ For instance, in the Old Testament, *Genesis* 1:28-30; 9:1-17; 12-17; *Exodus* 19-24, and in the New Testament, the *Gospel of John*.

due to the forgetfulness (*nisyan*) caused by the material world, especially Jews and Christians have failed to observe the commands as given in the covenant.

For a *zâkir* (one who remembers) to acquire *mârifet* (wisdom, acquaintance) of *mezkûr* (one who is remembered, *Allah*), the principle of *tevhid*¹³⁰¹, which is instrumentalized and employed in nearly all ritualized and non-ritualized *zikir* occasions as a medium to remember, explicitly alludes to this noetic covenant between the souls and *Allah*. Chittick too identifies the noetic quality of the covenant and argues that “although people do have an innate intuition of *tawhîd*, they do not necessarily find it ready to mind”, owing to the fact that this world brings about “forgetfulness (*nisyan*) and heedlessness (*gaflet*)”¹³⁰², which must be overcome by means of remembrance (*zikir*)¹³⁰³. Based on this formulation, Chittick further establishes “the first function of the prophets as to ‘remind’ people of their own divinely given reality”¹³⁰⁴.

¹³⁰¹ From the perspective of *ehl-i sünnet*, *tevhid* concept in fact concerns only God’s oneness and there can be no ontological oneness between God and created beings. The *sûfî* interpretations largely accept the doctrine of God’s oneness and their separateness from God, however, as in the case of Hallac-ı Mansur, there may be certain *batınî* (esoteric) views claiming an ontological or existential unification (*vahdet-i vücud*) with God. According to Bayrakdar, İbn Sînâ may have influenced the constitution of *vahdet-i vücud* theory due to his understanding of creation taking place as a result of an act of love and its manifestations (*tecellî*). In time, the theory of emanative creation might have been developed further and paved the way for the concept *vahdet-i vücud* (unity of existence) of İbnü’l-Arabî, and additionally for the conception of *enel hakk*. As such, it is the basic element in the rational explanation of *sûfî* thought. See: Bayrakdar, 1986, pp. 303–304; Güner, 2001, pp. 133, 147. For some variety of interpretations of *tevhid* concept in *tasavvuf*, see: Uludağ, 2012, pp. 21–22; Kara, 1992, pp. 45–49; Tosun, Necdet: “İmâm-ı Rabbânî’ye göre Vahdet-i Vücûd ve Vahdet-i Şühûd”, in: *İlmî ve Akademik Araştırma Dergisi*, 23, 2009a, pp. 181–192; Uluç, Tahir: “İbn Arabî’de Mistik Sembolizm”, in: *İlmî ve Akademik Araştırma Dergisi*, 16, 2007, pp. 151–190.

¹³⁰² Chittick, 2002, pp. 48–49.

¹³⁰³ Öztürk, N. Yaşar: *Kur’an’ın Temel Kavramları*, Vol. 2, İstanbul: Yeni Boyut 2012, p. 434.

¹³⁰⁴ Chittick, 2002, p. 49.

8 Epistemology of *Tasavvuf* and Its Conceptions of Wisdom

8.1 *Hikmet* in the *Kur'an*

The Arabic and Turkish words for *hikmet* were inherited from the Hebrew or Aramaic *hkm* root (*hokhmah*)¹³⁰⁵, which “convey the idea of wisdom in other Semitic languages since a long time” and “all the derivations of it seem to imply wisdom owe their existence to foreign influence”¹³⁰⁶. Corresponding with this definition and certain applications of wisdom in various epistemological systems, the *Kur'an* mentions that “God grants wisdom (*hikmet*) to whomever He wills”¹³⁰⁷ and throughout its verses, in addition to Prophet Muhammed, certain other pre-Islamic prophets, e.g., Jesus¹³⁰⁸, David¹³⁰⁹, or Joseph¹³¹⁰, are referred to as the receivers of *hikmet* and authority. Thus, in the *Kur'anic* usage of the term and its religious context, *hikmet* is not to gain through a personal endeavour or by means of learning, but rather it is granted by God, who is believed to be the source and the possessor of all forms of knowledge and wisdom (*Alīm* and *Hakīm*; omniscient)¹³¹¹. In the Old Testament, *Proverbs* 2:6 (*hākmāh*, חֵכְמָה), *Exodus* 31:3 (*bahākamāh*, בְּחָכְמָה) as well as in the New Testament, *James* 3:17 (*sofia*, σοφία) wisdom is similarly formulated as a quality bestowed by God and thus loaded the terms with a religious context. Intriguingly, Aristotle’s formulation of knowledge or wisdom as the “gift of the Creator”¹³¹² implies the same view of the scriptures.

One important aspect of this religious wisdom is the attributed differences between the godly and humanly forms of it. From the perspective of major religions, knowing the reality of things and creating them perfectly is unique to God. What constitutes the wisdom for humans is to know the created things, beginning with themselves. According to Grindheim, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* attributed to Paul the Apostle (c. 5–67 AD) addresses such dichotomy and makes a distinction between human and divine wisdom (or wisdom of God)¹³¹³:

¹³⁰⁵ Kutluer, 1998, p. 503.

¹³⁰⁶ Rosenthal, 2007, p. 37.

¹³⁰⁷ *Kur'an* 2:269 (*Bakara*).

¹³⁰⁸ *Kur'an* 5:110 (*Mâide*).

¹³⁰⁹ *Kur'an* 2:251 (*Bakara*).

¹³¹⁰ *Kur'an* 12:22 (*Yûsuf*).

¹³¹¹ It is also crucial to note that within Islamic discourse, while all forms of wisdom inevitably come from God, *Kur'an* 2:134, 140 (*Bakara*), the wisdom (*hikmet*) given to the mentioned prophets is specifically designed and exclusively for the prophets. See: *Kur'an* 7:64, 71 (*A'râf*).

¹³¹² Quoted by Rosenthal, 2007, p. 40.

¹³¹³ Grindheim, Sigurd: “Wisdom for the Perfect: Paul’s Challenge to the Corinthian Church (1 Corinthians 2:6–16)”, in: *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 121/4, 2002, pp. 689–709/695.

“This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom (*σοφίας*) but in words (*λόγοις*) taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words”¹³¹⁴

Analogous to the verse above, the *Kur'an* also frequently emphasizes the importance of God-given *hikmet* in its various chapters. In verses 6:68 (*En'âm*) and 17:39 (*Îsrâ*), God commands both Prophet Muhammed and humans to acquire *hikmet* through the book (*Kur'an*), namely “words that are taught by the Spirit”, and act accordingly.

Possibly among many, another intriguing commonality between Jewish and Muslim *hikmet* conceptions is the expression “fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”¹³¹⁵. In both Jewish (*Proverbs* 9:10) and Muslim (*hadis*)¹³¹⁶ versions of this expression, the term *hikmet* is used for wisdom, implying a connectedness of (religious) wisdom, fear, and faith. This network of relations attached to wisdom is inherently present in the *Kur'an*, where the word *hikmet*, with its several derivations, is employed significantly often, and more than half of its usage refers to God as all-mighty and all-wise¹³¹⁷, through which God unceasingly maintains the order of the universe and created beings. Differing from the abstract and inactive philosophical formulations of God, in the Islamic conception based on the *Kur'anic* accounts, *Allah* actively engages with His creations through His specific attributes. These attributes (*sıfat*) of *Allah* are collectively known as *esmâ-i hüsnâ* (ninety-nine or beautiful names of *Allah*) in Islam and refer to a variety of qualities, each representing a specific engagement mode of God with the created beings, e.g., *Hak* (truth, reality)¹³¹⁸, *Hakîm* (wise, judge)¹³¹⁹, and *Hakem* (judge, authority)¹³²⁰. Along with being God's attribute and prophetic wisdom, the term *hikmet* in the *Kur'anic* usage is usually referred to as a specific type of wisdom originating from the unseen and metaphysical (*gayb*)¹³²¹ realm of God (*ledûn*)¹³²². To address an esotericised mode of knowledge relating to God and His metaphysical realm, which is the objective and destination to return, *mutasavvife* have often employed these terms (*gayb* and *ledûn*) in classical *tasavvuf* literature.

In Judaic, Islamic, and specifically *tasavvuf* epistemology, *hikmet* is the “knowledge of divine secrets and truths, understanding the purpose of existence, discovering the role of divine

¹³¹⁴ *I Corinthians* 2:13, in: NIV, 2001, p. 632.

¹³¹⁵ Yılmaz, K. Hasan: “Hikmetinden Sual Etmek”, in: *Diyanet Dergi*, 253, 2012, pp. 62–65; Henry-Blakemore, G. Virginia: “The Blessed State of Fear. Reflections from Islam and Christianity”, in: Cornell, J. Vincent (ed.), *Voices of Islam. Voices of the Spirit*, Westport: Praeger 2007, pp. 139–142/139.

¹³¹⁶ Pasmaz, Durak: “Bütün İyiliklerin Kaynağı Allah Korkusu”, in: *Diyanet Dergi*, 92, 1998, pp. 20–23/22.

¹³¹⁷ See, for example: 2:209 (*Bakara*), 3:6 (*Âl-i İmrân*), 15:21 (*Hicr*), 42:51 (*Şuara*) etc.

¹³¹⁸ *Kur'an* 6:62 (*En'âm*), 22:6 (*Hac*), 23:116 (*Mü'minûn*), 24:25 (*Nûr*).

¹³¹⁹ *Kur'an* 31:27 (*Lokmân*), 46:2 (*Ahkâf*), 57:1 (*Hadîd*), 66:2 (*Tahrîm*).

¹³²⁰ *Kur'an* 22:69 (*Hac*).

¹³²¹ *Kur'an* 64:18 (*Tegâbûn*).

¹³²² *Kur'an* 27:6 (*Neml*).

will in the relations between causes and their consequences”¹³²³. The transforming mechanism of creation¹³²⁴ was designed actively through God’s attribute of *hikmet*, along with certain other attributes. Listed among the prominent Baghdad Aristotelians (Peripatetics) and one of the teachers of Fârâbî, a Syriac Christian philosopher and translator Yahyâ b. Adî (893–974) also argues that the creation took place through certain attributes, “goodness (*ḡūd*, ἀγαθότης), power (*qudra*, δύναμις), and wisdom (*ḥikma*, γνῶσις or σοφία)”¹³²⁵, of God. According to Endress, the historical underpinnings of Adî’s argument “can be traced back to Proclus, his Christian adept Pseudo-Dionysius Aeropagita”¹³²⁶ and to Church Father Irenaeus.

While *hikmet* is considered rather a divine quality in both Abrahamic religions, its acquisition was also compulsory for humans due to its involvement in moral, ethical, as well as wisdom-related matters¹³²⁷. A *hadis* of Prophet Muhammed confirms a variety of connotations of this compulsory *hikmet*: “the acquisition of *hikmah* is incumbent upon you and the good resides in *hikmah*”¹³²⁸. Apart from providing good for humans, according to the *Kur’anic* perspective, the acquisition of *hikmet* allows its holders to see the unseen (*gayb*) as a subjective experience that cannot be transferred to others by means of traditional communication methods. In *tasavvuf* epistemology, components of *hikmet* are often described as intuition (*sezgi*), insight (*iç görü*), and foresight (*basîret*). The association of *hikmet* with intuition consequently defines its acquisition by means of unconventional and strategically structured techniques. The *tasavvuf* methods or paths (*tarikât*) designed for the acquisition of *hikmet*, if not directly given by God, have been developed to prepare and bring relevant human faculties of knowing to perfection. The most important, and perhaps the only, faculty that acquires *hikmet*, or knowledge of the divine, is the heart, which thus also has a role in “prophecy and divination”¹³²⁹.

A variety of terms derived from *hikmet* are used in Arabic and Turkish, also as belonging to the human realm both with and without their religious contexts¹³³⁰. While, in Turkish, *hâkim* comes to mean judge as to the public officer who administers the law, *hekim* a medical doctor, and *hakem* a referee (as in sports and discussions). Despite their worldly connotations, these terms still retain their wisdom-oriented meanings, since neither *hâkim*, *hekim*, or *hakem* without

¹³²³ Kara, 1998, pp. 518–519.

¹³²⁴ *Kur’an* 6:73 (*En’âm*); 30:27 (*Rûm*); Rosenthal, 2007, p. 39.

¹³²⁵ Endress, Gerhard: “The Baghdad Aristotelians. Yahyâ Ibn ‘Adî”, in: Rudolph, Ulrich / Hansberger, Rotraud / Adamson, Peter (eds.), *Philosophy in the Islamic World*, Vol. 1, Leiden / Boston: Brill 2017, pp. 434–468/453.

¹³²⁶ Endress, 2017, p. 463.

¹³²⁷ Biesterfeldt, U. Hans: “Eine Arabische Klassifikation der Wissenschaften aus dem 4./5. Jahrhundert H.”, in: *Studia graeco-arabica*, 10, 2020, pp. 261–270/263; Kutluer, 1998, pp. 505–506.

¹³²⁸ Quoted by: Nasr, S. Hossein: “The Meaning and Concept of Philosophy in Islam”, in: Nasr, S. Hossein / Leaman, Oliver (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, London / New York: Routledge 1996a, pp. 21–26/21.

¹³²⁹ Black, 1996, p. 185; Al-Fârâbî, *Mabâdi’ ârâ’ ahl al-Madîna al-Fâdila*, 1985, pp. 169, 171.

¹³³⁰ Rosenthal, 2007, p. 37.

their distinctive wisdom and knowledge in relevant topics can acquire the *hikmet*-based title. In its English translations too, along with its religious contexts, *hikmet* covers several meanings including “wisdom; sagacity; philosophy; maxim; rationale, underlying reason”¹³³¹.

This multi-layered construction of *hikmet* is laden with various meanings and allows versatile interpretations. Depending on the interpreter’s standpoint, background, and objective, the term may address religious, philosophical, and daily matters separately or in a combined manner. Throughout history, the term *hikmet* acquired nuanced meanings within the Islamic sciences. Kara, for instance, emphasizes non-Islamic influences on the usage of the term and argues that “*hikmet* was philosophized with the influence of Greek philosophy”¹³³², which had been gradually introduced to Near Eastern religious epistemologies primarily via the pre-Islamic and subsequent translation activities. Throughout this period, *hikmet* had been approached by numerous scholars with complex religious and socio-cultural backgrounds that gave the term a vast definitional scope. An application of the cognitive bridge theory here may allow us to determine which aspects of *hikmet*, within its broad semantic range, were treated similarly by the scholars of Islamic sciences.

For eṣ-Şâfiî (767–820), whose theological views constituted the base for the *şâfiî* jurisprudence (*fikih*) of *sünnî* Islam, “*ḥikma* is the *sunna* of the Prophet”¹³³³, the perfect example for Muslims. Numerous Muslim *tefsir* (commentary, hermeneutics) scholars (*müfessir*) from different periods, such as Taberî, Kurtubî, Şevkânî, or Âlûsî, also treated *hikmet* like eṣ-Şâfiî and uniformly linked the concept with the *Kur’an* and Prophet Muhammed. Âlûsî, an early nineteenth-century *müfessir*, for example, aimed at discerning this Islamic *hikmet* from the non-Islamic interpretations of it and argued that *hikmet* “does not mean the views of philosophers such as Democritus, Plato, Aristotle and Galen or those who follow them”¹³³⁴. According to *şîî* and *İsmâilî* theologian Kirmânî, “wisdom (*ḥikma*) comprehends the inner meaning (*bâṭin*) of revelation”¹³³⁵, the *Kur’an*; thus, *hikmet* as an instrument to access a hidden dimension of the *Kur’anic* meanings can be “obtained by interpreting (*ta’wîl*) the tenets that are mediated by the literal meaning of revelation and divine law”¹³³⁶.

¹³³¹ Wehr, Hans / Cowan, J. Milton (ed.): *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, New York: Spoken Language Services Ltd. 1976, p. 196.

¹³³² Kara, 1998, p. 519.

¹³³³ Schacht, Joseph: *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1950, p. 16.

¹³³⁴ Kutluer 1998, p. 504.

¹³³⁵ De Smet, Daniel: “The Religious Application of Philosophical Ideas”, in: Rudolph, Ulrich / Hansberger, Rostaud / Adamson, Peter (eds.), *Philosophy in the Islamic World*, Vol. 1, Leiden / Boston: Brill 2017, pp. 733–759/740.

¹³³⁶ De Smet, 2017, p. 739.

The *zâhir* (apparent, external) and *bâtın* (hidden, interior) dichotomy referred to by Kirmânî has also been consistently narrated by nearly all *mutasavvif*¹³³⁷, yet with a vital shift of emphasis and preference from *zâhir* to *bâtın* dimension of meanings¹³³⁸. Reflecting the essential principle of approximately all esotericised systems mentioned in this study, *mutasavvif* “carry the field of discourse to the exoteric (*zâhir*) - esoteric (*bâtın*) dichotomy”¹³³⁹ and conduct their moral, intellectual, and religious life according to the *bâtın* meanings that they derive from relevant scriptural and authoritative sources. The distinguishing characteristic of *mutasavvife* is their esotericised interpretation (*tevil*) which must be framed by the *zâhir* commands of the *Kur'an* and Prophet Muhammed, the two primary sources that constitute the frame, namely Islamic law and jurisprudence. Due to the issues experienced by the representatives of early *tasavvuf* and *zühd* that correspond largely with the clashes between literal and allegoric readings of earlier non-Islamic religious and esotericised traditions, early *tasavvuf* scholars with diverse backgrounds, e.g., Serrâc, Kelâbâzî, Mekkî, Gazzâlî, Hücûvîrî, and Kuşeyrî, uniformly aimed at validating *tasavvuf* as a science or methodology to access the *bâtın* dimension of Islam¹³⁴⁰. Serrâc, for example, in his attempt to legitimate *tasavvuf* as a discipline among other Islamic sciences and demonstrate its suitability to the *zâhir* frame of Islam, argues that the *bâtın* dimension is a natural extension, or a complementary feature of *zâhir* and jurisprudential provisions (*fikhî ahkâm*)¹³⁴¹. Basing his argument on the *Kur'anic* verse (*Tevbe*, 9:122), Serrâc refers to the expression of “religious understanding” in this verse to cover both *zâhir* and *bâtın* provisions (*ahkâm*) of religious knowledge¹³⁴². Placing it at the top of the Islamic epistemological methods, Serrâc re-introduces *tasavvuf*, which consists of “spiritual signs, inspirations and benevolence originating from the sea of the grace of *Allah* that can only be comprehended by qualified people”¹³⁴³, as the last station for other sciences (*kelâm*, *tefsir*, *fıkah* etc.) to arrive at.

Muslim philosopher Cürcânî (1340–1413 CE), in his *et-Ta'arifât*, uses the term *al-hikmah* in the sense of “theoretical wisdom”¹³⁴⁴ and describes it as a science that aims to know things as what the human power is capable of, what their nature is in existence, and in this

¹³³⁷ For a short exposition concerning *zâhir* and *bâtın* concepts, see: Serrâc, *El-Lüma'*, 1996, p. 23.

¹³³⁸ Uludağ, Süleyman: “Bâtın İlmi”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 5, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1992a, pp. 188–189/188.

¹³³⁹ Kartal, Abdullah: “Tasavvufun Bir İlim Olarak İnşâ Süreci. Şer'î ve Metafizik Bir İlim Olarak Tasavvuf”, in: *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 24, 2015, pp. 149–175/155–156.

¹³⁴⁰ Elias, J. Jamal: “Zikr-i Dervişâne'den Divân Musikisine Kadar. Osmanlılar Devrinde Semâ'ya Bir Bakış”, in: *Cogito*, 19, 1999, pp. 216–224/217; Kartal, 2015, pp. 155–156.

¹³⁴¹ Serrâc, *El-Lüma'*, 1996, pp. 16ff.

¹³⁴² Serrâc, *El-Lüma'*, 1996, p. 19.

¹³⁴³ Serrâc, *El-Lüma'*, 1996, p. 20.

¹³⁴⁴ Cürcânî: “Tarifat”, in: Erkan, Arif (trans.), *Arapça-Türkçe Terimler Sözlüğü*, İstanbul: Bahar Yayınları 1997, p. 89.

respect to reach the knowledge of the truth¹³⁴⁵. However, in the *Kur'anic* usage, the term *hikmet* has a more specific meaning than theoretical wisdom and refers to “prophecy and guidance that educate and mature people through inspiring the desire to seek the way of truth and rehabilitate the soul”¹³⁴⁶. Particularly this notion of educating, maturing, and rehabilitating the human soul in the sense of acquiring perfection is a characteristic feature of all major religions including their esotericised sub-streams.

An important dimension in Kirmânî's view, as correspondingly argued by numerous Muslim philosophers, theologians, and *mutasavvife*, is his association of the two readings of the *Kur'an*, external (*zâhir*) and inner (*bâtın*), with a divine epistemological system that leads to perfection. Similarly, Sicistânî (fl. 971), an *İsmâilî* philosopher, linked *hikmet* with the inner or esotericised interpretation (*bâtinî*) of the *Kur'an* and defined a possessor of *hikmet* (*hakîm*) “as a pure human being who is supported by the emanation of the spirit of holiness”¹³⁴⁷. As exemplified above, such formulation of *hikmet* as the instrument for spiritual perfection has always been the essential interpretation of numerous esotericised philosophical and religious epistemologies. With the application of cognitive bridge theory to determine the commonalities, it appears that from Plato's views on the soul's perfection (*Phaedrus*, 249b-d) to Plotinus' metaphysics (*Enneads*, 2.9.6; 3.6.5; 6.7.40), from Hermetical treatises (*Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth*) or alchemical experiments to the works of various Muslim philosophers such as Fârâbî¹³⁴⁸, İbn Sînâ, and Gazzâlî (*Kimyâ-yı Sa'âdet, The Alchemy of Happiness*), the perfection acquired through wisdom or a mode of knowing that relates to intellectual activity based on intuitive qualities (*hikmet*) and leads to happiness, eternal bliss, or salvation, had become a central theme.

8.2 *Hikmet* in the Heart

In common esotericised understanding, the heart plays a central role as “the apprehender of divine knowledge”¹³⁴⁹ and as the battlefield of the soul and body. In old Arabic, the word heart is equipped with mental features and correspondingly refers to the “ability to grasp, know,

¹³⁴⁵ El-Amin, M. El-Tigani: *Kitâb Al-Ta'rifât of Al-Jurjânî. An Annotated English Translation and Evaluation Study*, Dissertation, International Islamic University, Malaysia 2005, p. 171.

¹³⁴⁶ Karaman, Hayreddin et. al. (ed.): *Kur'an Yolu Türkçe Meâl ve Tefsir*, Vol. 1, Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları 2017, pp. 423–425.

¹³⁴⁷ De Smet, 2017, p. 740.

¹³⁴⁸ Al-Fârâbî, *Mabâdî' ârâ' ahl al-Madîna al-Fâdila*, 1985, p. 225; Mahdi, 1962, p. 76; Madkour, 1966, pp. 458–459; Corbin, 1993, p. 159.

¹³⁴⁹ Avery, 2004, p. 79.

and perceive to make healthy judgements”¹³⁵⁰ and consequently beyond merely being allegedly an organ of emotions, “the term ‘heart’ has multifaceted features in the Islamic tradition”¹³⁵¹ as well as *tasavvuf*, in which it usually refers to “the seat of the knowledge of divine things”¹³⁵². The esotericised discourse essentially situates the human body and soul opposite to each other, yet without ignoring a continuity and a reciprocal relationship between them. In this regard, the human soul is understood to be limited by the body and blinded by the material world and earthly desires. Gilgamesh too, a mythological figure from the ancient Near East, “wants to escape human limitations to get answers to questions”¹³⁵³. A similar dichotomy is also present in the structure of the heart for having two dimensions, corporeal and spiritual, and therefore containing both esoteric and exoteric capabilities. The heart as the biological organ is a concern only due to its association with the spiritual heart in esotericised traditions, whereas the spiritual heart “can comprehend (divine wisdom)”¹³⁵⁴, and thus becomes the main instrument for the salvation of the soul. The heart can grasp a form of knowledge or wisdom, i.e., *hikmet*, which is believed to be unavailable to the brain and what it represents (mind, reason, logic, deduction etc.). According to Nicholson, “whereas the intellect cannot gain real knowledge of God, the *qalb* [a.n. the heart] is capable of knowing the essences of all things [a.n. *hikmet*], and when illuminated by faith and knowledge [a.n. it] reflects the whole content of the divine mind”¹³⁵⁵. Furthermore, the spiritual heart is the only place among the created things where the omnipotent and omnipresent God can fit as the abundantly recited statement in *tasavvuf* circles refers: “My heavens and My earth cannot contain Me but the heart of My believing servant contains Me”¹³⁵⁶. Intriguingly, this narrative is present in several philosophical and religious traditions that emerged in the different parts of the world. Eliade, for example, highlights how the concept of *ātman* (soul, inner self) is understood within Hinduism and seen as “a captive in matter”¹³⁵⁷.

¹³⁵⁰ Karaman, Vol. 2, 2014, p. 629.

¹³⁵¹ Tomasello, Dario: “An Unexpected Imagery. The Heart’s Vision and Other Synesthetic Functions of the Dhikr into the Islamic Tradition”, in: *Cinema Journal of Philosophy and the Moving Image*, 9, 2017, pp. 27–39/29.

¹³⁵² Geels, 1996, p. 231.

¹³⁵³ Devinney, Margaret / Thury, Eva (eds.): *Introduction to Mythology. Contemporary Approaches to Classical and World Myths*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005, p. 147.

¹³⁵⁴ *Kur’an* 7: 179 (*A’râf*), 22: 46 (*Hac*).

¹³⁵⁵ Nicholson, 1914, p. 68.

¹³⁵⁶ Addas, Claude: “The Paradox of the Duty of Perfection in the Doctrine of Ibn al-‘Arabī”, Twinch, Cecilia (trans.), in: *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society*, 15, 1994, pp. 37–49/38. God’s transcendence beyond the heavens is identically narrated in the Hebrew Old Testament, *1 Kings* 8:27: “But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!”, in: NIV, 2001, p. 189.

¹³⁵⁷ Eliade, Mircea: *A History of Religious Ideas*, Vol. 1, Trask, R. Willard (trans.), Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1978, p. 243.

Furthermore, the heart's position and capacity to contain both microcosm and macrocosm is elaborated as follows:

“But he [a.n. *Brahman*] is at the same time ‘my *ātman* in the heart, smaller than a grain of barley, than a mustard seed,’ and yet ‘greater than the earth, greater than atmosphere, greater than these worlds’”¹³⁵⁸

A parable from the *Upanishads*, a part of the sacred texts of Hinduism, summarizes the position of the heart:

“In the body there is a little shrine.
In that shrine there is a lotus.
In that lotus there is a little space.
What is it that lives in that little space?
The whole universe is in that little space,
Because the creator,
The source of it all,
Is in the heart of each one of us”¹³⁵⁹

In several canonical books as well as Gnostic gospels found among the Nag Hammadi codices, a corresponding perception of the heart having spiritual qualities and as the seat of the divine can be found. In the New Testament, *Epistle to the Ephesians* 3:17, for example, we read “so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith”. Similarly, in the *Gospel of Truth*, it says “in their heart the living book of the living was revealed”¹³⁶⁰. The same positioning of the heart in relation to wisdom was not a feature exclusively belonging to the Gnostic streams of early Christianity or certain other religious systems of the world. It continued to be expressed even today within certain Christian communions, such as, in the words of a theologian and member of the Episcopal Church in the USA:

“It is evident that in all teachings of wisdom, wisdom includes the universe and wisdom passes through the heart. Wisdom is knowledge and awareness and experience of the whole that touches the heart. Many traditions honour the special place where heart and universe, microcosm and macrocosm, meet”¹³⁶¹

¹³⁵⁸ Eliade, 1978, p. 242.

¹³⁵⁹ Silf, Margaret: *The Way of Wisdom*, Oxford: Lion Books 2006, p. 29.

¹³⁶⁰ Thomassen / Meyer, 2007, p. 38.

¹³⁶¹ Fox, Matthew: *One River, Many Wells. Wisdom Springing from Global Faiths*, New York: Tarcher 2000, p. 155.

As seen in various traditions, the heart is the place of faith, the manifestation of the divine attributes, and all blessings as well as the centre of spiritual feelings. In other denominations of Christianity too there has been an esotericised approach to the heart. For example, as Brock writes, “Syriac tradition inherits the biblical understanding of the heart as the spiritual center of the human person: it is the focal point of the intellect as well as of the feelings”¹³⁶². As narrated in various Bible editions, including the Old Testament, the heart occasionally represents the faculty of an inner comprehension of things placed against a superficial understanding. In *1 Samuel* 16:7, when God speaks to Samuel, an explicit reference to the heart as a human’s inner dimension is given:

“The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”¹³⁶³

Indeed, in this narration, God does not look at the heart like a cardiologist does. Here the heart has the feature of containing a kind of information or knowledge, at which God looks to see the inner reality (against the outward appearance) of the heart’s possessor. This was formulated in a Gnostic context as “for God examines what is within and searches the depths of the heart to find out who is worthy of salvation”¹³⁶⁴. Important to note that, as explained in certain Gnostic texts, “God does not need to test anyone. He knows all things even before they happen, and he knows the hidden things of the heart”¹³⁶⁵.

Corresponding with the esotericised formulations, in *tasavvuf* too, the material aspect of human being covers only a little part of the question of what human is. The major characteristic of human beings in Islam is that humans possess God’s breath/soul as the main constituent of their existence¹³⁶⁶. All training, practices, and education programs employed in esoteric and Gnostic trends aim to obliterate the borders of the body, biological heart, and material world and thus provide a redemptive victory for the soul (carrier of the spiritual heart) over the body. While the context is almost identical (with unavoidable nuances) in all esoteric traditions, the composition and orchestration of practices leading to salvation vary significantly. In *tasavvuf*, for example, the essential practice to attain divine wisdom is purifying the heart, but how much

¹³⁶² Brock, Sebastian: *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life*, Michigan: Cistercian Publications 1987, pp. xxv–xxvi.

¹³⁶³ *1 Samuel* 16:7, in: NIV, 2001, p. 157.

¹³⁶⁴ Scopello, Madeleine / Meyer, Marvin (trans.): “Exegesis on the Soul”, in: Meyer, Marvin (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, New York: HarperOne 2007, pp. 223–234/233.

¹³⁶⁵ Pearson, A. Birger (trans.): “The Teachings of Silvanus”, in: Meyer, Marvin (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, New York: HarperOne 2007, pp. 499–522/529.

¹³⁶⁶ *Kur’an* 15:29 (*Hicr*), 38:72 (*Sâd*).

of it depends on the *tasavvuf* school being followed, or its leader's personal choices. When describing *vecd*— a form of ASC experience accessed through certain practices such as *semâ*, *tefekkül*, or *zikir*— Gazzâlî states that it “produces purity of the heart and the purity is a cause of revealing”¹³⁶⁷. The understanding of a purified heart as the provider, or necessity, for the acquisition of divine knowledge or as an access point for direct contact with the divine, is also present in Syriac Christian traditions. In *Demonstration IV, on Prayer* of Aphrahat (c.280–345 AD)¹³⁶⁸ and in *Letter to Cyriacus* of Babai (551–628 AD)¹³⁶⁹, both placed great importance on the purity of heart as the condition for a sincere relationship with God.

In the majority of esotericised traditions, the desires of the corporeal heart can be tamed through asceticism and the renouncement of the world. The fundamental difference of *tasavvuf*, framed by Islamic jurisprudence, is that in *tasavvuf* the objective is not to renounce the material world (or the body) entirely, but to liberate the spiritual heart from its desires and “even though surrounded by worldly goods, being not inclined towards them to maintain the focus solely on God”¹³⁷⁰ through remembrance. When successfully done, Kılıç asserts, a *mutasavvif* becomes able to acquire “high metaphysical knowledge through discovery (*keşf*) and manifestation (*tecellî*)”, which takes place in the manner of “appearance of the light (*nûr*) of the unseen realm (*gayb âlemi*) in the heart of the devotee and the manifestation of divine emanation (*feyz*) in the heart of the believer”¹³⁷¹.

Considering such interpretative vastness in translating and understanding the concepts employed in different language groups, i.e., Indo-European Greek and Semitic Hebrew, Syriac, or Arabic, it is worthwhile to refer to the history of *hikmet*, the knowledge of the heart, and investigate its application areas beginning with its earliest written forms in the ancient Near East up to the most contemporary usages in today.

8.3 The Written History of *Hikmet*: From Ancient Near East to *Tasavvuf*

The concept of wisdom in its various forms and languages, e.g., *gnosis*, *mârifet*, *hikmet*, *sophia*, *sapientia*, or *veda*, is lexically understood as “the ability to use one's knowledge and

¹³⁶⁷ Gazzâlî, *Kitab âdab al-samâ'î wa al-wajd*, quoted in: Rouget, 1985, p. 258.

¹³⁶⁸ Brock, 1987, p. 56.

¹³⁶⁹ Brock, 1987, p. 138.

¹³⁷⁰ Nagel, Tilman: *Geschichte der Islamischen Theologie. von Muhammed bis zur Gegenwart*, Munich: Beck 1994, p. 215; Eraydın, 1994, p. 40; Şaşa, Mehmet: “Kelam ve Tasavvuf Terminolojisinde Bilgi”, in: *Assam*, 1/2, 2014, pp. 70–92/77.

¹³⁷¹ Kılıç, 2004, p. 103.

experience”¹³⁷². For the scope of this study, knowledge and experience are evaluated primarily in their religious context. Indeed, as the number of new research on the topic increase, the definitions of wisdom and its constitutive elements may change according to the preferred approach. The perception and definitions of wisdom thus show discrepancies in different theoretical perspectives. While some disciplines, such as empirical studies, recently started to focus on the aspect of emotions in shaping wisdom¹³⁷³, some others investigate the culture-related contextual productions¹³⁷⁴, or the cognitive aspects¹³⁷⁵ of it. In this regard, expectedly, the perception of wisdom during the late antiquity in Egypt or during the period of *asr-ı saadet* in the Arabian Peninsula, will, too, show nuances. This study proposes that a survey on the concept of wisdom employed in neighbouring mythological, religious, and philosophical systems, particularly how it is formed, understood, shared, translated, and attained, in other words, their characteristic epistemology, may allow us to approach to the topic of *tasavvuf* and its potential relations to other esotericised trends under a new light. A detailed study on wisdom-related theories concerning, for instance, cosmogony, epistemology, and soteriology of religious, mythological, and philosophical systems, particularly from the late third millennium BCE onwards, can be useful to establish a traceable continuity between various constructions of wisdom. However, as Baltes et. al. argue, the conception of wisdom is “becoming a center of trans-disciplinary discourse”¹³⁷⁶ and thus, an in-depth analysis requires informed scholars from a wide range of disciplines including history, anthropology, psychology, philology, theology, or archaeology among many others. In this chapter, certain perceptual commonalities of the concept of wisdom in selected systems with their historical contact points and how they are eventually reflected in *tasavvuf* will be addressed.

As mentioned above, the *Kur'an* declares that a form of wisdom named *hikmet* was not only granted to its Messenger, Prophet Muhammed but also to the prior prophets, e.g., *Yahyâ*

¹³⁷² “Wisdom”, <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/wisdom>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹³⁷³ Kunzmann, Ute / Glück, Judith: “Wisdom and emotion”, in: Sternberg, J. Robert / Glück, Judith (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Wisdom*, New York: Cambridge University Press 2019, pp. 575–601.

¹³⁷⁴ Grossmann, Igor / Oakes, Harrison / Santos, C. Henry: “Wise Reasoning Benefits from Emodiversity, Irrespective of Emotional Intensity”, in: *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 148/5, 2018, pp. 805–823; Grossmann, Igor: “Wisdom in Context”, in: *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 12/2, 2017, pp. 233–257; Baltes / Staudinger, 2000, pp. 122–136.

¹³⁷⁵ Peterson, Christopher / Seligman, E. P. Martin (eds.): *Character Strengths and Virtues. A Handbook and Classification*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004, pp. 93–196.

¹³⁷⁶ Baltes, B. Paul / Glück, Judith / Kunzmann, Ute: “Wisdom. Its Structure and Function in Regulating Successful Life Span Development”, in: Snyder, R. Charles / Lopez, J. Shane (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002, pp. 327–347/329.

(John the Baptist)¹³⁷⁷, *Îsâ* (Jesus)¹³⁷⁸, *Yûsuf* (Joseph)¹³⁷⁹, *Lût* (Lot)¹³⁸⁰, *Lokman* (Luqman)¹³⁸¹, and *Dâvûd* (David)¹³⁸². This allows this study to assert that the *Kur'an* approves of the presence of a *hikmet* before and outside Islam¹³⁸³, and thus to make a comparative investigation of wisdom in different religious and philosophical traditions. Even though detailed and complete archaeology of the term cannot be done within the allocated scope for this study, in the interest of supporting the hypothesis that the *hikmet* concept constitutes a continuity between the ancient Near Eastern perceptions and the *tasavvuf* system, certain cornerstones from various religious, mythological, and philosophical systems that correspondingly employed the concept must be specified.

Concerning the earliest employment of *hikmet*, one of the oldest written data at hand was composed in the ancient Near East, where, over time, a literature genre called wisdom literature developed. This genre—with its sages and proverbs containing teachings and local lore leading to wisdom—most likely constituted a prototype for the latter *Books of Wisdom* in the Hebrew Old Testament. Also known as the Poetic or Sapiential Books, the Books of Wisdom were “in their present form produced after the [a.n. Jewish] exile”¹³⁸⁴ in Babylon and they allude to a group of books in the Hebrew Bible (*Ketuvim*), e.g., *Psalms*, *Proverbs*, *Job*, *Song of Songs*, *Ecclesiastes*, along with deuterocanonical *Books of Wisdom* (Solomon and Sirach).

The root *hkm*, from which the *Kur'anic* term *hikmet* was derived through multiple intermediary languages, can be linked to the Akkadian verb “*hakāmu(m)*”¹³⁸⁵ meaning “to know, understand, inform (about a situation), explain (medical symptoms, written characters, a constellation), or prescribe (a medical treatment, rituals)”¹³⁸⁶. Later, in the neighbouring region (today's northern Syria) of the Sumerian, Akkadian, and Babylonian Kingdoms (Figure 13), a language containing the term *hikmet*, Ugaritic, was developed, which belongs to the Northwest

¹³⁷⁷ *Kur'an* 19: 12 (*Meryem*).

¹³⁷⁸ *Kur'an* 5: 110 (*Mâide*).

¹³⁷⁹ *Kur'an* 12: 22 (*Yûsuf*).

¹³⁸⁰ *Kur'an* 21: 74 (*Enbiyâ*).

¹³⁸¹ *Kur'an* 31: 12 (*Lokmân*).

¹³⁸² *Kur'an* 2: 251 (*Bakara*).

¹³⁸³ However, it should be noted that the expression “outside Islam” does not accord with the Islamic perspective. From this point of view, as in the case of Christianity, these earlier prophets and prominent figures have always been considered Muslims (or Christians in Christian view), yet before the emergence of Islam as a systematized religion. This is due to the universalist claims of major world religions.

¹³⁸⁴ Rylaarsdam, J. Coert et.al.: “Biblical Literature. Proverbs”, in: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Online Edition, 26 February 2021, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/biblical-literature/Proverbs>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹³⁸⁵ Black, Jeremy / George, Andrew / Postgate, Nicholas (eds.): *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*, Second Edition, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2000, p. 101.

¹³⁸⁶ Botterweck, G. Johannes / Ringgren, Helmer (eds.): *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Vol. 4, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing 1980, pp. 364–367.

Semitic language group and employs a kind of cuneiform alphabet used around the sixteenth and the twelfth centuries BCE.

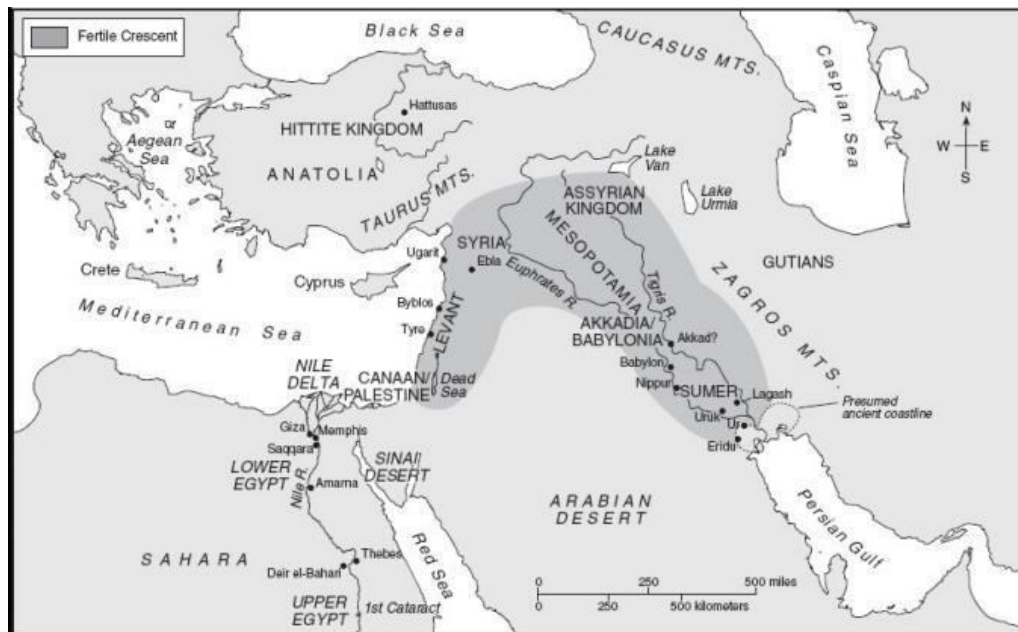


Figure 13: A map of the Ancient Near Eastern region showing the important centres from c. 4000 to 1000 BCE¹³⁸⁷.

In the *Baal Cycle* or the *Epic of Baal*, a part of the Ugaritic cycle of stories, written in Ugaritic cuneiform¹³⁸⁸, the root *ḥkm* with its variations was employed generally to refer to various forms of wisdom, “an attribute of gods in general”¹³⁸⁹, and “associated with the high god El in all its occurrences”¹³⁹⁰. In *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit*¹³⁹¹, and its translations in English, certain passages, e.g., 1.3:V.30, 1.4:IV.41, and 1.4:V.3, explicitly refer to the god *El* as “wise” and address this wisdom of *El* via the root *ḥkmt*¹³⁹²:

<i>ṯḥmk il ḥkm</i> ¹³⁹³	“Your decree [word], [O] El, is wise,
<i>ḥkmt ʿm ʿlm</i>	You are wise for eternity [everlastingly]” ¹³⁹⁴

¹³⁸⁷ “The Ancient Near East, 4000-1000 B.C.E.” <<https://web.cocc.edu/cagatucci/classes/hum213/Maps/Maps2HistoryAncient.htm>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹³⁸⁸ It should also be noted that the written form of the root *ḥkm* in the *Baal Cycle* or other texts of the region might have been based on an older oral tradition and thus might indicate anterior employment.

¹³⁸⁹ Pope, H. Marvin: *El in the Ugaritic Texts*, Leiden: Brill 1955, p.42.

¹³⁹⁰ Botterweck / Ringgren, 1980, p. 366.

¹³⁹¹ Dietrich, Manfred / Loretz, Oswald / Sanmartín, Joaquín (eds.): *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit*, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag 1976.

¹³⁹² Smith, S. Mark (ed.): *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, Vol. 1, Leiden: Brill 1994, p. 44.

¹³⁹³ Pope, 1955, p. 43.

¹³⁹⁴ Wyatt, Nicolas: *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, Second Edition, Cornwall: Sheffield Academic Press 2002, pp. 87, 100; Smith, S. Mark / Pitard, T. Wayne (eds.): *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, Vol. 2, Leiden: Brill 2009, p. 80.

Correspondingly, in a Babylonian (or Akkadian) poem, *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* (*I will praise the Lord of Wisdom*), written about 1300 BCE by Šubši-mašrā-Šakkan, the author addresses *Marduk*, an ancient Mesopotamian god and the head of the Babylonian pantheon, as the lord of wisdom¹³⁹⁵. In some sources¹³⁹⁶, the word *nēmeqi* in the title of the poem was associated with the Akkadian verb *emēqu(m)*, meaning “be wise” or “manifold wisdom of men and gods”, and considered to be cognate with the Hebrew root *ḥkm* found in the Old Testament with its variations such as *chākhām* חָכָם, *chākhām* חָכָם, *chokhmāh* חֻכְמָה, *chokhmôth* חֻכְמוֹת¹³⁹⁷ or in the form of *hokmāh* חֻכְמָה, *hākām* חָכָם, and *hākam* חָכָם¹³⁹⁸. In the Babylonian genesis story *Enūma Eliš* (c. fourteenth–seventh century BCE), *Marduk* was again referred to as “the wisest of the gods”¹³⁹⁹ and in relation to it, as if wisdom were something to be inherited¹⁴⁰⁰, *Marduk*’s son (or scribe/officer) *Nabu* was too known as the god of wisdom¹⁴⁰¹. Another supportive remark is that *Marduk* was the son of the Sumero-Akkadian god *Enki* or *Ea*, who was praised as the lord or god of wisdom in the Akkadian myth *Descent of Ishtar/Inanna to the Underworld* (c. 911–612 BCE)¹⁴⁰².

Similarly, the *ḥkm* root, in the form of *bḥkmti*, is correlated with the god *El* in the bilingual (Phoenician and Hieroglyphic Luwian) inscription, dating back to the eighth century BCE, found in Karatepe (southern Turkey)¹⁴⁰³. The Phoenician language, particularly its script or alphabet, diversified into various alphabets such as Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek and through these intermediary languages into Cyrillic, Latin, and Arabic. Even though we do not possess any evidence for the usage of *ḥkm* root with the meaning wisdom in Greek languages (Koine, Mycenaean etc.), we do have numerous sources allowing us to track the continuity of the root with identical meanings from the ancient Semitic languages into Aramaic, Syriac, Hebrew, and Ar-

¹³⁹⁵ For detailed information, see: Lenzi, Alan / Annus, Amar: “A Six-Column Babylonian Tablet of Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi and the Reconstruction of Tablet IV”, in: *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 70/2, 2011, pp. 181–205; Wiseman, J. Donald: “A New Text of the Babylonian Poem of the Righteous Sufferer”, in: *Anatolian Studies*, 30, 1980, pp. 101–107.

¹³⁹⁶ Botterweck / Ringgren, 1980, p. 367; Lambert, G. Wilfred: *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, Indiana: Eisenbrauns 1996, pp. 1, 32–33.

¹³⁹⁷ Botterweck / Ringgren, 1980, p. 364.

¹³⁹⁸ Renn, 2005, pp. 1050–1051.

¹³⁹⁹ Heidel, 1972, p. 5.

¹⁴⁰⁰ A similar handling of wisdom as an inherited feature is also hinted in *Proverbs* 5:1.

¹⁴⁰¹ Bertman, Stephen: *Handbook to Life in Ancient Mesopotamia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 122; Tudeau, Johanna: “Nabu (god)”, in: *Ancient Mesopotamian Gods and Goddesses*, Oracc and the UK Higher Education Academy, 2013, <<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/amgg/listofdeities/nabu/>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹⁴⁰² Middleton, J. Richard: *The Liberating Image. The Imago Dei in Genesis 1*, Michigan: Brazos Press 2005, p. 97.

¹⁴⁰³ Botterweck / Ringgren, 1980, p. 366.

abic. Perhaps the closest possibility would be the ancient Greek goddess *Hekate* since her potential relation to a personified form of wisdom, Lady Wisdom, in the Near Eastern mythology and its Hebraic interpretations have already been referred to elsewhere¹⁴⁰⁴. There had been, however, other channels between the ancient Semitic traditions and Greek mythology allowing them to exchange their lore, mythologies, and ever-changing discourses. For instance, Mesopotamian deities *Enki* and *El* were “implicitly identified in later times by the substitution of [a.n. the Greek god] *Kronos*¹⁴⁰⁵ (i.e., *El*) for *Ea*”¹⁴⁰⁶. Especially in a work of the Babylonian priest Berossus, which was written in Koine Greek language around the third century BCE, such associations can be traced historically. Kramer and Maier evaluate this exchange between Mesopotamian and Greek systems as a “continuity”¹⁴⁰⁷, which may provide one of the many platforms to speculate whether *El*’s (*Enki* or *Ea*) *ḥkm* was also transferred to Greek mythology, at least, as a concept semantically covering a similar scope concerning wisdom.

However, before dwelling on the Greek employment of the concept of wisdom, certain applications and the Near Eastern systems’ handling of it should be mentioned.

When Israelites developed new ways to interpret the human and world’s existence, “they broke away from the religious and cultic culture of the Ancient Near East”¹⁴⁰⁸ and suspended the mythological characteristics in their tradition, since they do not indicate a biography or a theogony of their God in their religious scripts. In the Hebrew narrative, the stress is on human dignity¹⁴⁰⁹ created in the divine image (*imago Dei*), which lacks in the perception of their Near Eastern neighbours, where there was only “a kind of feudal relationship in which the gods were the lords of the estate and the people, whose sole purpose was to tend the land, were their serfs”¹⁴¹⁰. With this new Israelite interpretation, the pantheons of many gods were reduced (or expanded) to a single divine power, which had absolute control over human life, the world, and the events surrounding them. In the Israelite conception, in contrast with the ancient Near East-

¹⁴⁰⁴ Lang, 1999, pp. 901–904.

¹⁴⁰⁵ In some other sources, however, *Kronos* (or *Chronos*) is referred to as potentially having its correspondences in the Magi of ancient Iran. For more information see: Duchesne-Guillemin, Jacques: “Greece III. Persian influence on Greek Thought”, in: *Encyclopædia Iranica*, 15 December 2002, <<https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/greece-iii>>, last accessed 11 March 2022.

¹⁴⁰⁶ Pope, 1955, p. 43.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Kramer, S. Noah / Maier, John: *Myths of Enki, The Crafty God*, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers 2020, p. 10.

¹⁴⁰⁸ Hayes, Christine: *Introduction to the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible)*, Yale Courses: Lecture 1 Transcript. <<http://openmedia.yale.edu/projects/iphone/departments/r1st/r1st145/transcript01.html>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹⁴⁰⁹ Barilan, Y. Michael: “From Imago Dei in the Jewish-Christian Traditions to Human Dignity in Contemporary Jewish Law”, in: *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, 19/3, 2009, pp. 231–259.

¹⁴¹⁰ Ouro, Roberto: “Similarities and Differences between the Old Testament and the Ancient Near Eastern Texts”, in: *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 49/1, 2011, pp. 5–32/12.

ern mythology in which deities were often associated with natural phenomena, this single God was “outside of and above nature and was not known through nature and natural phenomena”¹⁴¹¹. Rosenthal treats such alterations in the conceptions as “signifiers (of) a fundamental change or a major break in the structure of the civilization in which it happens”¹⁴¹². The new positioning of an absolute God by the Israelites entailed new forms of knowledge and the relationship between God and humankind. Therefore, an alteration in the applications of the wisdom concept and its semantic domains in the Israelite understanding can be expected. This manifested itself in the several chapters of the Hebrew Old Testament, especially in the *Books of Wisdom*, yet without “exhibiting rigid uniformity in their uses of חֵכְמָה [a.n. *hikmet*] even if they all concern the topic of wisdom”¹⁴¹³. In its various usages, Crenshaw distinguishes three different types of wisdom “in terms of relationship with things (nature), people (juridical and practical), and the Creator (theological)”¹⁴¹⁴. Crenshaw’s tripartite classification of wisdom partially corresponds with several different arrangements of wisdom types asserted by Jesus Christ, Prophet Muhammed, and by the authors of the certain chapters (*Proverbs*, *Job* etc.) of the Hebrew Old Testament. A similar treatment of wisdom (or knowledge) is also present in the works of *sūfi* scholar İbnü’l-Arabî and various other investigations of *mutasavvîf*. While in the Old Testament three different types of wisdom are grouped as follows:

(1) Family or clan	[<i>Proverbs</i> 15:17; 20:14; 26:14; 25:25]
(2) Court	[<i>Proverbs</i> 24:27; 21:23; 11:14; 12:1]
(3) Pseudo-philosophical	[<i>Job</i>] ¹⁴¹⁵

In Christianity, i.e., according to the formulation of Jesus Christ, Rosenthal argues, “three kinds of knowers” can be discerned (even though Rosenthal employs the term knowledge instead of wisdom):

- (1) A knower of God

¹⁴¹¹ Hayes, Christine: *Introduction to the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible)*, Yale Courses: Lecture 1 Transcript. <<http://openmedia.yale.edu/projects/iphone/departments/rlst/rlst145/transcript01.html>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹⁴¹² Rosenthal, 2007, p. 1.

¹⁴¹³ Higginbotham, Lance: *Hokmah and the Buildings of the Tabernacle in Exodus 25–40. A Text-Linguistic, Semantic and Theological Study*, Dissertation, Dallas Baptist University, 2003, p. 9.

¹⁴¹⁴ Crenshaw, L. James: “Method in Determining Wisdom Influence Upon Historical Literature”, in: *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 88/2, 1969, pp. 129–142/130.

¹⁴¹⁵ Hayes, Christine: *Introduction to the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible)*, Yale Courses: Lecture 20 Responses to Suffering and Evil: Lamentations and Wisdom Literature. <<http://openmedia.yale.edu/projects/iphone/departments/rlst/rlst145/transcript20.html>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

- (2) A knower of the command of God
- (3) A knower of both the command of God and of God”¹⁴¹⁶

Prophet Muhammed’s understanding of the concept displays a similar formulation to that of Jesus Christ’s God-oriented wisdom, yet the categorizations are shaped in a way peculiar to Islamic notions. For Prophet Muhammed, “knowledge consists of three things:

- (1) A clear verse (of the *Qur’ân*)
- (2) A well-established *sunnah*
- (3) A fair religious duty”¹⁴¹⁷

Throughout history, various types of wisdom (and knowledge) have been classified, conceptualized, and positioned differently in the hierarchical systems (of wisdom) by abundant religious as well as philosophical systems. Furthermore, their semantic ranges were expanded (or contracted) in time to include several other relevant notions in the definition of wisdom. As Rosenthal argues, “terms to express mental activity were gained not only through the process of specialization of primary roots, but, in addition, basic concepts were also often expressed by secondary modifications of primary roots”¹⁴¹⁸. In other words, the terms and concepts that are employed to address specific mental activities may be altered following various stages of cultural contact processes and may consequently acquire characteristics that are not to be found in either host language. Though such concepts leave traces of their prior handling ways, it indicates varying methods of handling wisdom interpreted by many different groups over multiple millennia.

As mentioned above, the Israelite wisdom writings were not isolated texts, but they bear significant structural and contextual resemblances to the ancient Near Eastern, Mesopotamian, and Egyptian wisdom traditions, the collections of which are usually named the Wisdom Literature. For instance, an Egyptian work known as the *Instruction of Amenemope*¹⁴¹⁹, whose composition dates to the third or second millennium BCE, and the *Babylonian Counsels of Wisdom*¹⁴²⁰ written in the Akkadian language, were believed to be related to the *Book of Proverbs* in the Old Testament. Several scholars have already pointed out¹⁴²¹ that certain chapters of the

¹⁴¹⁶ Rosenthal, 2007, p. 179.

¹⁴¹⁷ Rosenthal, 2007, p. 179.

¹⁴¹⁸ Rosenthal, 2007, p. 7.

¹⁴¹⁹ Lichtheim, Miriam: *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Vol. 2, Berkeley / Los Angeles / London: University of California Press 1976, pp. 146–149.

¹⁴²⁰ Whybray, R. Norman: *Wisdom in Proverbs. The Concept of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9*, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers 2009, p. 51.

¹⁴²¹ Heidel, 1951, p. 82.

Hebrew Old Testament, above all the *Book of Genesis*, draw upon the Babylonian epic *Enûma Eliš*. Correspondingly, the story of Adam and Eve in the *Book of Genesis* contains intriguing resemblances with the Babylonian (or Assyrian) *Gilgameš Epic* (c. 2150–1400 BC)¹⁴²². Furthermore, the *Gilgameš Epic* also contains a frequently reproduced flood myth¹⁴²³ which reverberates strongly in Noah’s story in the Hebrew Bible¹⁴²⁴. Thus, even though the Israelites diverged away from their neighbours concerning their creation narrative, they nevertheless employed these neighbours’ discourses, concepts, and perspectives in their new interpretations. Several scholars also argued that the Hebrew wisdom “owed much to its neighbours”¹⁴²⁵ and “the Aramaic-speaking scribes shared the cult of Wisdom with their Hebrew-speaking colleagues”¹⁴²⁶, which may indicate a direct continuity between the Aramaic *hkm* of the ancient Near East and the subsequent Hebraic employment of it.

Concerning the transmission of *hikmet* in its variety of forms, among the languages that functioned as intermediary instruments between cultural groups, particularly Aramaic language among others comes into prominence. Being also the language spoken by Jesus¹⁴²⁷, Aramaic had become a *lingua franca* in the Near East (in the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Empires¹⁴²⁸) and therefore it was most likely the primary instrument bridging the ancient employment of the *hkm* root with Hebrew, e.g., the Biblical *Books of Ezra*¹⁴²⁹ and *Daniel*¹⁴³⁰, as well as with the Arabic language.

The story of *Ahikar*, written either in Aramaic or Hebrew around the fifth century BCE, was a prominent tale shared throughout the ancient Near East and even beyond, as there are Greek, Armenian, Ethiopic, and old Turkish versions available. In fact, as Conybeare et. al. emphasized, “the diffusion of the story of Aḫīkar is so wide, that it requires somewhat more than an average linguistic equipment to treat the whole of the forms and versions”¹⁴³¹. However,

¹⁴²² Keller, Werner: *The Bible as History*, New York: William Morrow and Company 1956, p. 32; Sandars, K. Nancy: *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, London: Penguin Books 1964, p. 9.

¹⁴²³ The flood story in the *Gilgameš Epic* was also believed to be taken from an older one, the Akkadian *Atra-Hasis* (c. eighteenth century BCE).

¹⁴²⁴ O’Brien, J. Randall: “Flood Stories of the Ancient Near East”, in: *Biblical Illustrator*, 13/1, 1986, pp. 60–65/61.

¹⁴²⁵ Rylaarsdam, J. Coert et.al., “Biblical Literature. Proverbs”, 2021.

¹⁴²⁶ Lang, 1999, p. 901.

¹⁴²⁷ Kutscher, E. Yechezkel: “Das zur Zeit Jesu gesprochene Aramäisch”, in: *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 51, 1960, pp. 46–54.

¹⁴²⁸ Porten, Bezazel / Yardeni, Ada (eds. and trans.): *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt*, Vol. 1, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns 1986, p. v.

¹⁴²⁹ For example, *Ezra* 7:25, (חֵכְמָה) “wisdom of your God”, in: NIV, 2001, p. 263.

¹⁴³⁰ For example, *Daniel* 5:11 “wisdom of the gods”, 2:30 “wisdom of men”, in: NIV, 2001, pp. 487, 489.

¹⁴³¹ Conybeare, C. Frederick / Harris, J. Rendel / Lewis, S. Agnes: *The Story of Aḫīkar From the Aramaic, Syriac, Arabic, Armenian, Ethiopic, Old Turkish, Greek and Slavonic Versions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1913, p. xxi.

this story is perhaps the earliest written Aramaic material at hand that allows linking the usage of Aramaic *hkm* root (ܚܚܡ) with the use of different cultural groups in a linear historical flow. Multiple sources confirm that the story of *Ahikar* in time transformed into the Greek *Aesop* (c. 620–564 BCE) legends¹⁴³² and partially transferred to the Jewish work, the *Book of Tobit* (c. the third century BCE), written in the Greek language.

In the story of *Ahikar* he was portrayed as a sage known for his distinguished wisdom. Fragmentary passages from *Ahikar* contain several lines in which various forms of *hkm* root were employed¹⁴³³:

[ܡܢ] ܝܗ ܫܡܝܐ ܝܢܐ ܥܡܡܐ ܚܚܡ ܡܬ ܐܗ ܡܢ ܐܠܗܝܐ¹⁴³⁴

[from] heaven [or “by heaven”] the peoples are [fa]vored,
[W]isdom [is] [of] the gods.¹⁴³⁵

Even though a conclusion cannot yet be drawn from the analysis of a single line, different translations of this line connect various terms employed to address wisdom in several religious and esotericised systems of the upcoming centuries. In certain chapters of the Greek *Aesop*’s legends that are corresponding to *Ahikar*’s story, the terms *φιλόσοφος* (*filósofos*) and *σοφίαν* (*sofian*)¹⁴³⁶ are used to address *Aesop*’s wisdom, which was rendered in the original as *hkm*. In Smith’s *Thesaurus Syriacus*, the Syriac (and Aramaic) root for *hkm* (ܚܚܡ) is translated into Arabic as *حَكَم* (*hkm*), into Hebrew as *חָכַם* (*hkm*), into Chaldean as *ܚܚܡ* (*hkm*), and into Latin, first, as *scivit* (*scío* or *sciō*) with the meaning “to know” or “to have certain knowledge of”¹⁴³⁷, and then, with additional diacritic markers on the Syriac root *hkm*, as *sapientem fecit* referring to “wisdom” and the “state of being wise”¹⁴³⁸. Finally, after all the translations between these different languages are provided, the Greek *σοφίσαι* (*sofísai*) and its variations are offered as the corresponding terms for the *hkm* root in Greek.¹⁴³⁹ In Brockelmann’s sourcebook *Lexicon*

¹⁴³² Meissner, Bruno: “Quellenuntersuchungen zur Haikârgeschichte”, in: *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 48, 1894, pp. 172–197; Cohen, Beth (ed.): *Not the Classical Ideal. Athens and the Construction of the Other in Greek Art*, Leiden: Brill 2000, p. 133.

¹⁴³³ Lang, 1999, p. 900.

¹⁴³⁴ Lindenberger, M. James: ““Wisdom is of the Gods’ An Aramaic Antecedent to Proverbs. 8 (Or: ‘The Case of the Vanishing Evidence!’)”, in: Botta, J. Alejandro (ed.), *In the Shadow of Bezazel. Aramaic, Biblical, and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Bezazel Porten*, Leiden: Brill 2013, pp. 265–275/270.

¹⁴³⁵ Lindenberger, 2013, p. 270.

¹⁴³⁶ Eberhard, Alfredi (ed.): *Fabulae Romanenses Graece Conscriptae*, Leipzig: B. G. Teubner 1872, p. 285; Conybeare et. al., 1913, p. 163.

¹⁴³⁷ Glare, G. W. Peter (ed.): *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1968, p. 1705.

¹⁴³⁸ Glare, 1968, p. 1690.

¹⁴³⁹ Smith, R. Payne (ed.): *Thesaurus Syriacus*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1879, pp. 1265–1266.

Syriacum, the Syriac word for wisdom is also translated into Greek as σοφία (*sofia*) and into Latin as *sapientia*¹⁴⁴⁰. Considering Syriac or Syrian Aramaic, the language used by the Aramaic-speaking Christians in Syria as well as its neighbouring regions around the first century CE—e.g., it “was the local Aramaic dialect of Edessa (Urfa, south-eastern Turkey)”¹⁴⁴¹—they might have functioned as mediators in transferring the *hkm* concept not only to the Greek mythology and philosophy but also to the Christianity and perhaps, as Ray argues, even to the Egyptian language¹⁴⁴².

All the translations above linking the Hebrew and Aramaic root *hkm* with Greek *sofia* are offered by the scholars of the recent centuries. We have yet another source, an official Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament known as the *Septuagint* or *LXX* dating around the third and second centuries BCE. The different Bibles that were translated, edited, and compiled throughout history have been used by different communities, including the Greek-speaking Jewish community in Egypt. One of these translations of the Hebrew Bible was the *Septuagint* written in Koine Greek, the common language of the Mediterranean region at that time. A large number of Jews across the ancient world and early Christian communities often used the Greek language and texts for their religious activities. Though *Septuagint* contains the entire Hebrew Bible with additional scriptures translated into Greek, it diverges from the Hebrew Bible and other Greek translations—the translations of Aquila of Sinope, Symmachus, and Theodotion—in certain ways such as the ordering of the books and absence or presence of certain passages. While, for example, the Hebrew Bible is made of three main chapters: *Torah* (law), *Nevi'im* (prophets), and *Ketuvim* (writings), the *Septuagint* was made of four parts: law, history, poetry, and prophets¹⁴⁴³.

The name *Septuagint* may have referred to more than a single text, possibly a collection of manuscripts unified by various Greek translations of the Hebrew scriptures. In other words, it “may cover different contents when it refers to particular manuscripts”¹⁴⁴⁴. Correspondingly, Estes underlines that in the process of translation, the translators altered some Hebrew terms to transfer their understanding of the Hebrew scripture into Greek¹⁴⁴⁵. Concerning the *Septuagint*

¹⁴⁴⁰ Brockelmann, Carl: *Lexicon Syriacum*, Berlin: Reuther & Reichard 1895, p. 234.

¹⁴⁴¹ Brock, 2007, p. 819.

¹⁴⁴² Ray, John: “Greek, Egyptian, and Coptic”, in: Christidis, Anastasios-Phoivos (ed.), *A History of Ancient Greek. From the Beginnings to Late Antiquity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007, p. 812.

¹⁴⁴³ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, “Septuagint”, in: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Online Edition, 12 May 2020, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Septuagint>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹⁴⁴⁴ Dines, Jennifer: *The Septuagint*, London: T & T Clark 2005, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴⁵ Estes, Daniel: *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic 2005, pp. 142–143.

translation of the Hebrew concept *ḥkm*, among deuterocanonical and apocryphal books¹⁴⁴⁶ in the *Septuagint*, the *Book of Wisdom* (*Wisdom of Solomon*) and *Sirach* (*Wisdom of Sirach*) are particularly important as they employ the term wisdom both in their titles and in the main body of the text¹⁴⁴⁷. The *Wisdom of Solomon*, which was not a translation, but composed originally in the Greek language in Alexandria around the first century BCE¹⁴⁴⁸, employs the term wisdom in its title as *Σοφία Σαλομῶντος* (*Sofia Salomōntos*), and in the main text, e.g., 1:4, as *σοφία*¹⁴⁴⁹. The latter, *Wisdom of Sirach*, was written originally in Hebrew (*Hokmat ben Sira*) around 180 BCE in Palestine¹⁴⁵⁰ and translated into Greek in Alexandria—by the author’s grandson around 117 BCE¹⁴⁵¹. Like *Solomon*, the *Wisdom of Sirach* employs the term wisdom in its title, *Σοφία Ἰησοῦ Σειράχ* (*Sofia Iēsou Seirach*)¹⁴⁵², and in its main text, e.g., 1:3, *σοφία*. Furthermore, in the canonical books too, such as *Proverbs* 1:7, of the *Septuagint* the Hebrew *ḥkm*, with its variations, is translated into Greek as *σοφία*. In the Hebrew Old Testament, *Proverbs* 1:7 reads as follows¹⁴⁵³:

חֲכָמָה רַחֲמָנוּ לְעוֹלָם כְּמוֹ יְהוָה יְהוָה יִצְחָק בְּרַחֲמָיו יִשְׁעֵת דָּעַת חֲכָמָה

The same passage and the term wisdom (חֲכָמָה) is written in its Greek *Septuagint* translation as:

Ἀρχὴ σοφίας φόβος θεοῦ,
 σύνεσις δὲ ἀγαθὴ πᾶσι τοῖς ποιοῦσιν αὐτήν·
 εὐσέβεια δὲ εἰς θεὸν ἀρχὴ αἰσθήσεως,

¹⁴⁴⁶ Meaning noncanonical for Jews and Protestants but accepted into the Roman (Catholic and Orthodox) canon.

¹⁴⁴⁷ Even though the semantic range of wisdom in the *Book of Solomon* covers a wide range of “encyclopedic, cosmological, metaphysical [...], practical [...], political as well as moral and eschatological” meanings, it also alludes to wisdom belonging to the Supreme and to be inherited from this source. See: Cutsinger, 2004, p. 138.

¹⁴⁴⁸ Aitken, K. James: “Wisdom of Solomon”, in: Aitken, K. James (ed.), *T & T Clark companion to the Septuagint*, London / New York: T & T Clark 2015, pp. 401–402, 405.

¹⁴⁴⁹ Deutsche Bibel Gesellschaft, *Septuaginta. Wisdom of Solomon* (ΣΟΦΙΑ ΣΑΛΩΜΩΝΟΣΩΙΣ), Online Edition, <<https://www.academic-bible.com/en/online-bibles/septuagint-lxx/read-the-bible-text/bibel/text/lesen/stelle/41/10001/19999/ch/5a38f5b9d38f6deed587b3fb7885f4dd/>>, last accessed 28 February 2022.

¹⁴⁵⁰ Wright, G. Benjamin: “Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)”, in: Aitken, K. James (ed.), *T & T Clark companion to the Septuagint*, London / New York: T & T Clark 2015, p. 412.

¹⁴⁵¹ Wright, 2015, p. 413.

¹⁴⁵² Toy, H. Crawford / Lévi, Israel: “Sirach, The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of”, in: Singer, Isidore (ed.), *The Jewish Encyclopedia. A descriptive record of the history, religion, literature, and customs of the Jewish people from the earliest times*, Vol. 11, New York: KTAV 1906, pp. 388–397/388.

¹⁴⁵³ Elliger, Karl / Rudolph, Wilhelm (eds.): *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft 1997, p. 1275.

σοφίαν δὲ καὶ παιδείαν ἀσεβεῖς ἐξουθενήσουσιν¹⁴⁵⁴

The translations of these passages above into English then would be:

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction”¹⁴⁵⁵

In another canonical book, the *Book of Job*, 28:28, a variant of the Hebrew *hkm* root can be identified:

עָרַךְ אֶת־הַחָכְמָה וְיָצַק אֶת־הַיָּדָעַת כִּי־אֵין מִצָּדֶק / אֵין מִיָּדָעָה¹⁴⁵⁶

The same passage is rendered in its Greek translation as follows:

εἶπεν δὲ ἄνθρωπος Ἴδού ἡ θεοσεβεία ἐστὶν σοφία,
τὸ δὲ ἀπέχεσθαι ἀπὸ κακῶν ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμη.¹⁴⁵⁷

The English translation of the chapter above is: “And he said to man, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding’”¹⁴⁵⁸, which indicates that the Hebrew term for wisdom, *hkm*, is consistently translated into the Greek *Septuagint* as σοφία (*sofia*). In a wider perspective, the *Septuagint* demonstrates not only *hkm* root’s travel from “Semitic sacred texts into an Indo-European language”¹⁴⁵⁹ in the form of σοφία, but it further constitutes one of the “specific points where the major influence of Hebrew on Greek occurred”¹⁴⁶⁰ during almost a millennium-old Aramaic/Hebrew-Greek language contacts¹⁴⁶¹. The author of the *Wisdom of Solomon*, who, “seems to have been a Greek-speaking Jew with

¹⁴⁵⁴ Deutsche Bibel Gesellschaft, *Septuaginta. Proverbs (ΠΑΡΟΙΜΙΑΙ)*, Online Edition, <<https://www.academic-bible.com/en/online-bibles/septuagint-lxx/read-the-bible-text/bibel/text/lesen/stelle/20/10001/19999/ch/5ba24a8f8b7416f4b365c4899df94963/>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹⁴⁵⁵ MacArthur, John (ed.): *The MacArthur Study Bible, English Standard Version (ESV)*, Illinois: Crossway 2010, p. 2537.

¹⁴⁵⁶ Elliger / Rudolph, 1997, p. 1256.

¹⁴⁵⁷ Deutsche Bibel Gesellschaft, *Septuaginta. Job (ΙΩΒ)*, Online Edition, <<https://www.academic-bible.com/en/online-bibles/septuagint-lxx/read-the-bible-text/bibel/text/lesen/stelle/18/280001/289999/ch/66bf242087ba0a96022a44e6e35ff026/>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹⁴⁵⁸ MacArthur, 2010, p. 2036.

¹⁴⁵⁹ Dines, 2005, p. 1.

¹⁴⁶⁰ De Lange, Nicholas: “Greek influence on Hebrew”, in: Christidis, Anastasios-Phoivos (ed.), *A History of Ancient Greek. From the Beginnings to Late Antiquity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007, p. 805.

¹⁴⁶¹ Brock, 2007, p. 819.

some knowledge of Greek rhetoric and philosophy”¹⁴⁶², “fuses Judaism and Hellenism both in style and thought”¹⁴⁶³, and employs a “Hellenistic philosophical vocabulary”¹⁴⁶⁴. The authors of the *Septuagint* too employed similar techniques in their translation, which may have been one of the reasons for the employment of *σοφία* as the translation of *ḥkm*. However, it is crucial to note that there were also inconsistencies concerning wisdom both in the translation of sacred texts and in their current interpretations. While, for example, in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* “the concept of ‘wisdom’ as an active emanation from God [...] closely approximates the Stoic concept of the universal logos”¹⁴⁶⁵, in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* it is contrarily argued that the author of *Wisdom of Sirach* “contests” the Stoic’s opinions¹⁴⁶⁶. In composing or translating sacred texts, authors or translators of different manuscripts may favour certain philosophical trends over others and reflect those trends in their literary works. Even though there may be inconsistencies in identifying which trends are at work in a manuscript, various channels of transmission constitute a lexicon commonly used by Greek philosophy and Semitic sacred texts, in which the *ḥkm* (חֵכֶם) - *sofía* (*σοφία*) equation is merely a part or an episode of it. Since this equation is the main research subject of this chapter, the focus will be limited to it.

Another remark on the equation of *ḥkm* and *σοφία*, or in a broader context, on the relations between Greek and Semitic wisdom-oriented traditions, can be demonstrated through two influential works—the *Babyloniaca* of the Babylonian priest Berossus and the *Hexapla* of ascetic Christian scholar Origen of Alexandria (c. 184–253 CE).

The *Babyloniaca* was written by Berossus (or Berossos), who “identified himself as a priest of Bel of Chaldean origin and a contemporary of Alexander the Great”¹⁴⁶⁷. The original manuscript of *Babyloniaca* (c. 281¹⁴⁶⁸ or 275¹⁴⁶⁹ BCE) and its full text are lost. Certain works written in later centuries remarked that Berossus composed *Babyloniaca* bilingually and jointly employed Greek as well as (cuneiform) Akkadian languages. The authors who referred to the

¹⁴⁶² Harrington, J. Daniel: “Wisdom of Solomon”, in: *Biblical Studies*, 13 September 2010, <<https://www.oxford-bibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195393361/obo-9780195393361-0129.xml>>, last accessed: 27 February 2022.

¹⁴⁶³ Rylaarsdam, J. Coert et.al.: “Biblical Literature. Intertestamental literature. The Wisdom of Solomon”, in: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Online Edition, 26 February 2021, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/biblical-literature/The-Wisdom-of-Solomon>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹⁴⁶⁴ Knibb, A. Michael (trans.): “Wisdom of Solomon”, in: Pietersma, Albert / Wright, G. Benjamin et. al. (eds.), *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, Oxford / New York: Oxford University Press 2007, p. 698.

¹⁴⁶⁵ The Editors of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, “Ecclesiasticus”, in: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Online Edition, 20 July 1998, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ecclesiasticus>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹⁴⁶⁶ Toy / Lévi, 106, p. 390.

¹⁴⁶⁷ Burstein, M. Stanley: *The Babyloniaca of Berossus, Sources from the Ancient Near East*, Vol. 1, Fasc. 5, Malibu: Undena Publication 1978, p. 5.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Burstein, 1978, p. 4

¹⁴⁶⁹ Heidel, 1951, p. 77

Babyloniaca used its abridgement made in the first century BCE by Greco-Roman scholar Lucius Cornelius Alexander Polyhistor (c. 105–35 BCE), whose original work is also lost¹⁴⁷⁰. Another abridgement of Polyhistor’s text’s Babylonian section was made in the fourth century by Christian historian and bishop Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260–340 CE) in his *Chronica*¹⁴⁷¹. In *Chronica*’s Latin translation, made sometime later by Jerome of Stridon (c. 342–420 CE), the word *σοφοί* and its translation as *sapient*¹⁴⁷² are identifiable. Eusebius’ *Chronica* also contains excerpts reproduced from Polyhistor’s work, which were quoted by Josephus (the first century CE) and Abydenus (the second century CE)¹⁴⁷³. In the work of Josephus, an excerpt containing the word *sophia*, *Χαλδαίοις φιλοσοφονμένων*¹⁴⁷⁴, translated as “Chaldean philosophers”, can be found. Abydenus correspondingly “notes on beginning his account of the Kings of Babylon, i.e., the material in the book two of *Babyloniaca*, that he has finished with the ‘wisdom’ (*sophias*) of the Chaldaeans”¹⁴⁷⁵. From Berossus’s original manuscript, which was composed around the third century BCE, to its translations up to Eusebius and Stridon (the fourth century CE), *Babyloniaca*’s interpretations cover a period longer than seven centuries, throughout which wisdom was equated with the term *σοφία* consistently.

In their analysis of *Babyloniaca*, Haubold¹⁴⁷⁶ and Heidel¹⁴⁷⁷ translate an excerpt (BNJ 680-F1b), which describes the creation initiated by the chief deity, *Bēl*, and in relation to that, how humans possess a divine “understanding”, as *phronesis* (*φρόνησις*). In this translative choice, the preference for *phronesis* over *sophia* is noticeable. The same excerpt was also translated by Stevens, yet in her translation, she employs the term (divine) “wisdom”¹⁴⁷⁸ instead of “understanding” as was the case in Haubold and Heidel’s translations. On the other hand, throughout her study, Stevens employs the term *phronesis* for the rendering of wisdom in the Greek language. Since the original manuscript of *Babyloniaca* is not available, whether Berossus employed any Akkadian term, i.e., *emēqu(m)*, that might be related to *hkm* root cannot be confirmed. Even though translating wisdom as *phronesis* instead of *sophia* complicates the is-

¹⁴⁷⁰ Burstein 1978, p. 6.

¹⁴⁷¹ Burstein 1978, p. 6.

¹⁴⁷² Schoene, Alfred (ed.): *Evsebi – Chronicorum Libri Duo*, Berolini (Berlin): Weidmannos (Weidmann) 1866–1875, p.7.

¹⁴⁷³ Schnabel, Paul: *Berosos und die babylonisch-hellenistische Literatur*, Leipzig: Teubner 1923, pp. 164–167.

¹⁴⁷⁴ Schnabel, 1923, p. 21.

¹⁴⁷⁵ Burstein, 1978, p. 7; Schnabel, 1923, p. 263.

¹⁴⁷⁶ Haubold, Johannes: “‘The Wisdom of the Chaldaeans’. Reading Berossos, *Babyloniaca* Book 1”, in: Haubold, Johannes et. al. (eds.), *The World of Berossos. Proceedings of the 4th International Colloquium on The Ancient Near East between Classical and Ancient Oriental Traditions*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2013, p. 37.

¹⁴⁷⁷ Heidel, 1972, p. 78.

¹⁴⁷⁸ Stevens, Kathryn: *Between Greece and Babylon. Hellenistic Intellectual History in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2019, p. 104.

sue, perhaps due to several translations and reinterpretation attempts, it can still be argued that by the time the *Babyloniaca* was written in the ancient Near East, a conception of a “divine wisdom” was, according to the texts above, frequently equated with the term *sophia* in its Greek counterpart. In addition to Stevens’ preference for *phronesis*, there may as well be further different translative possibilities favoured by certain scholars. However, it is important to note that the terms referring to mental processes were not treated uniformly within philosophy, for example, as Zhmud argues, before and after Plato the understanding of *σοφία* was different in Greek philosophy¹⁴⁷⁹. Correspondingly, the term *φιλοσοφία* (*philosophia*) was interpreted in various ways that may diverge from one another. It is therefore inevitable to come across variant applications of these terms in different works. Inwood and Woolf, for instance, render the term *sophia* in their translation of Aristotle’s *Eudemian Ethics* as “expertise”, while they offer *phronēsis* for the translation of “wisdom”¹⁴⁸⁰, which, according to Lorenz’s review, contradicts Aristotle’s intention since, for Aristotle, “there are more divine beings than humans, *sophia* could not be knowledge of merely human things, but has to concern those things that are by nature most valuable (NE 6.7, EE 5.7, 1141a28-b3)”¹⁴⁸¹. Such formulation of *sophia* as referring to the “most valuable things” turns it into the most valuable form of knowledge over others (*phronesis*, *technē* etc.). The importance laid upon the term by Aristotle, who was perhaps one of the most quoted Greek philosophers in Islamic philosophical investigations, is further elaborated by Lorenz with the implications that can also be found in various Islamic sciences:

“At 1142a16-18 (EE 5.8 = NE6.8) Aristotle means to explain the apparent fact that a young person can be a mathematician but cannot be a *sophos* (a person of *sophia*), or a natural philosopher. It is, he says, because the objects of mathematics are abstractions, whereas the principles of both *sophia* and natural philosophy derive from experience. However, it is nonsense to claim that a young person can be a mathematician, but cannot be an expert, as being a mathematician is of course a way of being an expert. What Aristotle means by *sophia* here is not expertise, or theoretical expertise, but wisdom, the goal of philosophy itself”¹⁴⁸²

The hierarchical structure of various ways of knowing and the meanings attributed to *sophia* and *sophos* above as being the highest form of knowing and having an experiential character are also present in *tasavvuf* epistemology—in the form of *hikmet* or *mârifet*. Concerning

¹⁴⁷⁹ Zhmud, 1997, p. 291.

¹⁴⁸⁰ Aristotle: *Eudemian Ethics*, Inwood, Brad / Woolf, Raphael (eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013.

¹⁴⁸¹ Lorenz, Hendrik: “Aristotle. Eudemian Ethics”, in: *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, 1 October 2013, <<https://ndpr.nd.edu/reviews/aristotle-eudemian-ethics>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹⁴⁸² Lorenz, “Aristotle. Eudemian Ethics”, 2013.

the relation between *σοφία* (*sophia*) and *φρόνησις* (*phronesis*), various approaches and definitions are available. For instance, according to Lightfoot and Thayer,

“While *Σοφία* is mental excellence in its highest and fullest sense (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 6.7), [...] both *σύνεσις* (*synesei*, intelligence) and *φρόνησις* (*phronesis*, prudence) are both derivative and special [...] applications of *σοφία* to details: *σύνεσις*, critical, apprehending the bearing of things, *φρόνησις*, practical, suggesting lines of action”¹⁴⁸³.

Lightfoot, in the following chapters, additionally addresses another distinction between *σοφία* and *γνῶσις* (*gnosis*) and links the Hebrew root *ḥkm* with both terms as follows: “חכמה [a.n. *ḥkmh*] is represented by *σοφία* and גִּנּוּסִים by *γνῶσις*. While *γνῶσις* is simply *intuitive*, *σοφία* is *ratiocinative*”¹⁴⁸⁴. Jaeger as well refers to Aristotle’s understanding of *sophia* and, despite he does not mention the *ḥkm* root *per se*, he emphasizes an important dimension in Aristotle’s view of an “oriental philosophy”, which:

“Combines both Greek philosophy and oriental religious systems like that of the Zoroastrians, the Magi, under the common denomination of wisdom (Gr. *sophia*), which sometimes designates in Aristotle the metaphysical knowledge of the highest principles, or theology”¹⁴⁸⁵

In the usage of the New Testament, primarily religious and divine characteristics *sophia* are emphasized. Among the fragments of various canonical and non-canonical manuscripts and in their translations, e.g., *1 Corinthians* 1:24; *Ephesians* 1:8; *Colossians* 2:3, “*sophia* generally designates wisdom as a gift of God, given to specific individuals in order to equip them to live godly lives”¹⁴⁸⁶. Possibly due to such semantic correspondence between *sophia* and *hikmet* as divine wisdom bestowed by God, Thayer equates “*σοφία* with חֵכְמָה”¹⁴⁸⁷. Despite these clear associations, as Rosenthal argues “every term translated is a term distorted”¹⁴⁸⁸. Thus, in every translation attempt translator’s personal interpretation can be expected, which usually results in additional associations for the terms at hand. Moreover, the history of the unsettled Greek speculations and theories on wisdom, knowledge, or prudence and their conceptual associations designed differently by approximately all philosophers have caused additional ambiguity in the translations of such terms. On examining these terms and their translations, one almost always

¹⁴⁸³ Thayer, J. Henry (trans.): *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, New York: Harper & Brothers 1889, p. 582 quoted from: Lightfoot, 1875, p. 138.

¹⁴⁸⁴ Lightfoot, 1875, p. 174.

¹⁴⁸⁵ Jaeger, 1938, p. 129.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Renn, 2005, pp. 1050–1051.

¹⁴⁸⁷ Thayer, 1889, p. 581.

¹⁴⁸⁸ Rosenthal, 2007, p. 3.

has multiple choices and alternative approaches. Choosing either of them might end up with essentially different results as even the slightest nuances lead the interpreters to load their interpretations with manifold meanings nourished from a wide range of cultural, philosophical, or religious sources. The primary attempt here is to emphasize consistency in translating and therefore in interpreting the *hkm* root in various religious and philosophical usages. The analysis of numerous sources only approximates this study to the differing handlings of wisdom. Each translation attempt, as Rosenthal emphasizes, brings new perspectives to the term, or causes it to lose its previous associations. Therefore, each source taken into consideration here requires an in-depth analysis.

One common feature of all these religious texts mentioned above is their relevancy to the Hebrew Old Testament. This is expressed clearly in Levine's summary below:

“What unites them all [a.n. different versions of the Bible] is not their sharing a common theology, but the fact that they are all participating in a ‘conversation’ with a common text. They differ in their target languages, frameworks of meaning, theological presuppositions, categories and modes of discourse, but whether they be primarily jurists, philosophers, poets or mystics, they are all involved in a dialectical relationship with the Hebrew Bible”¹⁴⁸⁹

While Levine's input is reliable within the context of the available Bible versions, the Hebrew Old Testament was as well “in conversation” with the prior Akkadian, Sumerian, and Babylonian sources as shown above. To what extent the later Bible versions referred to these older written materials with their characteristic wisdom literature remains unknown but at the very least the *hkm* channel links all these mentioned traditions with each other and additionally with the subsequent religio-philosophical traditions.

The next manuscript, Origen's *Hexapla*, in which multiple translations of the Hebrew Old Testament were compiled, displays the translation of the *hkm* root into Greek. Bringing several Greek translations of the Hebrew Old Testament together in a single edition—including the *Septuagint* and the translations of Aquila, Theodotion, and Symmachus—the *Hexapla* is an important source originating from the early centuries of the common era. Even though it (Figure 14) survived only fragmentary, its pieces at hand still demonstrate that during the translation processes some of the original Hebrew documents were altered¹⁴⁹⁰. On the other hand, Skehan argues that “Origen was heir to a continuing process of revision carried on in Jewish circles in

¹⁴⁸⁹ Levine, Etan: *The Aramaic Version of the Bible*, Berlin / New York: De Gruyter 1988, p. 6.

¹⁴⁹⁰ Grafton, Anthony: *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2006, pp. 87–88.

Palestine, both in Hebrew and in Greek, during the first century B.C. and the first and early second Christian centuries”¹⁴⁹¹, which evinces that though there had been variant interpretations of the scriptures, as *Hexapla* demonstrates, from certain aspects, a continuity between them is still traceable.

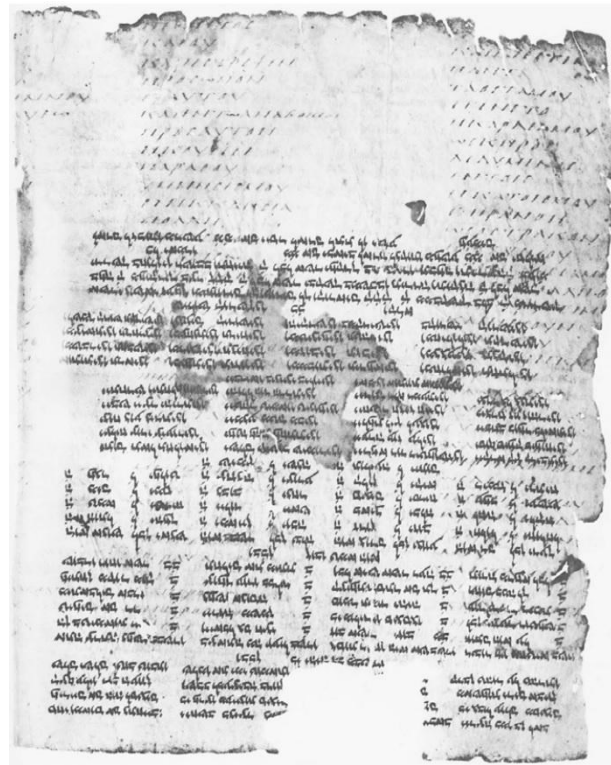


Figure 14: Fragment of the Hexapla from the Cairo Geniza¹⁴⁹²

Although the original manuscript of *Hexapla* is lost and the text at hand is fragmentary, in Field's edition, the Hebrew **חָכְם** (*ḥkm*) appears to be translated into Greek as *σοφία* (*sofia*), at least in two places:

2 Samuel 14:20	חָכְם בְּחָכְמָה	<i>σοφός καθὼς σοφία</i> ¹⁴⁹³
1 Kings 4:30	חָכְמָה	<i>σοφία</i> ¹⁴⁹⁴

The altered versions of the Hebrew Old Testament expectedly resulted in disputes among the authorities, which eventually led to the emergence of factions between the groups

¹⁴⁹¹ Skehan, W. Patrick: "Hexapla", in: *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Second Edition, Vol. 6, Detroit: Gale 2003, p. 816.

¹⁴⁹² Grafton, 2006, p. 97.

¹⁴⁹³ Field, Frederick (ed.): *Origenis Hexaplorum. quae supersunt. sive veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta*, Oxonii (Oxford): E Typographeo Clarendoniano (Clarendon Press) 1875, p. 567.

¹⁴⁹⁴ Field, 1875, p. 600.

accepting the authenticity of one version, while criticizing the canonicity of the others. In relation to this matter, the reason for such a compilation made by Origen was speculated by different scholars. Whereas some views claimed that it served to help Christians when debating with Jews concerning the incompatible translations of the Hebrew Bible or to alert readers about the inconsistencies in different versions, other views focused on it as mere teaching material for Christian scholars learning Hebrew¹⁴⁹⁵. No matter what the reason was to produce *Hexapla*, its supportive role in linking *hkm* with *σοφία* is crucial for this study and similar investigations.

The recently discovered ancient Jewish religious texts known as the Dead Sea Scrolls of Qumran, among which the earliest manuscripts of the *Septuagint* were found, provide additional evidence for the employment of the root *hkm* with the meaning of (divine) wisdom. Various dated from the third century BCE to the first century CE, the Dead Sea Scrolls were (mostly) composed in Hebrew and Aramaic. In the fragments of the *Genesis Apocryphon* (1Q20), Col. XX, not only the usage of the Aramaic root *hkm*, but also, throughout the text, abundant employment of “rhetorical and poetic elements”¹⁴⁹⁶ characteristic to Aramaic language can be distinguished:

hkm° *šgy*° *mh*°
wdl ydyh° *y*°

she has much wisdom,
 and her handiwork is fine¹⁴⁹⁷

As seen in the quotation above, the wisdom here does not imply a godly or divine relevance. Crenshaw highlights this vast definitional scope of wisdom and argues that it is either defined as “too broad or too narrow”¹⁴⁹⁸. According to Greenfield, the term wisdom in the quotation above refers to a “practical sagacity” and with this meaning, it is also used in the *Exodus* 35:25, *חכמה*, *chkmth*¹⁴⁹⁹. Expectedly, the wisdom concept covers a broader semantic field than being a mere denominator of knowledge of divine things, a pure scholarly interest, or an “abstract virtue”¹⁵⁰⁰. In various translations of the *hkm* root—such as the Syriac manuscript of the New Testament known as *Peshitta*, or the Hebrew, Latin, and Greek versions, of, for example,

¹⁴⁹⁵ Kantor, Benjamin: *The Oldest Fragment of Origen's Hexapla. T-S 12.182*, Genizah Research Unit, Fragment of the Month, March 2019, <<https://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/departments/taylor-schechter-genizah-research-unit/fragment-month/fotm-2019/fragment-1>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹⁴⁹⁶ Greenfield, C. Jonas: “Early Aramaic Poetry”, in: *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*, 11/1, 1979, pp. 45–51/48.

¹⁴⁹⁷ Greenfield, 1979, p. 49.

¹⁴⁹⁸ Crenshaw, 1969, p. 131.

¹⁴⁹⁹ Greenfield, 1979, p. 50.

¹⁵⁰⁰ Whybray, R. Norman: *Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1990, p. 104.

1 Corinthians 3:10 and *Matthew* 7:24—one can identify ܚܟܝܡ *hkym* (Syriac)¹⁵⁰¹, חכמה *hkym* (Hebrew)¹⁵⁰², *sapiens* (Latin)¹⁵⁰³, σοφος (Greek)¹⁵⁰⁴, in their various forms and derivations¹⁵⁰⁵, which are used to address wisdom (prudence, or skill) that is not necessarily divine. This non-divine wisdom, however, is still important to acquire wealth, success, and political power allowing individuals to administer their lives to overcome daily problems.

All these different derivations usually refer to several meanings or aspects of wisdom. For instance, the Hebrew *chākhām* or Aramaic *ḥakkām*¹⁵⁰⁶ refers to “a state of being wise”¹⁵⁰⁷ (*Proverbs* 9:12, *Zechariah* 9:2) or “wise men, who were in fact pagan magicians or astrologers” (*Daniel* 2:14ff.)¹⁵⁰⁸. Whereas in certain passages of the Old Testament *ḥokmāh* (and *ḥākām*) comes to mean “skill” or “ability” (*Exodus* 28:3, *1 Kings* 7:14)¹⁵⁰⁹, in others it may mean “‘knowledge of plants and animals’ (*1 Kings* 4:33), ‘ethical living’ (*Deuteronomy* 4:6), ‘expertise in sailing’ (*Psalms* 107:27), ‘administration of justice’ (*1 Kings* 3:28), ‘craftsmanship’ (*Exodus* 28:3, 31:3,6)”¹⁵¹⁰, or “knowledge of God which leads to living godly lives in conformity with the divine character”¹⁵¹¹ (*Proverbs* 1:2, *Deuteronomy* 4:6, *2 Samuel* 20:22). The same issue, *ḥkm* possessing multiple meanings and thus covering a broad semantic scope, is also present in its Arabic and Turkish usages even today. Ermiş correspondingly argues that “of the Arabic roots in the Turkish vocabulary, the most frequently used one is *ḥkm*”¹⁵¹² with about twenty-three occurrences. Some of the words that were derived from the Arabized forms of *ḥkm* and are still actively used in Turkish are, for instance, *hikmet* (hidden cause, real meaning, or wisdom), *hakem* (referee), *hakim* (judge), *hekim* (medical doctor), *hükmen* (legally, by default), *hüküm* (verdict), *muhkem* (firm, steadfast), *tahkim* (arbitration), *hükümet* (government, administration), *ahkâm* (judgement), *hükümdar* (ruler, sovereign), *istihkâm* (fortification), *mahkeme*

¹⁵⁰¹ *Khabouris Codex*, C.391, retrieved from: <<https://www.dukhrana.com/peshitta/index.php>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹⁵⁰² Delitzsch, Franz (trans.): *The New Testament 11th Edition*, Middlesex: Society for Distributing Hebrew Scriptures 1966.

¹⁵⁰³ *Clementine Vulgate*, *1 Corinthios* 3:10, retrieved from: <<http://vulsearch.sourceforge.net/html/1Cor.html>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹⁵⁰⁴ Westcott, F. Brooke / Hort, A. J. Fenton (trans.): *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1881/2010.

¹⁵⁰⁵ Different derivations of the root *hkm*, such as *dHkym*, *Hkym*, *dHkymyn*, *Hkym*, *wHkym*, can still refer to the divine (*Acts* 6:3, *Luke* 2:40, *Romans* 16:26, *Ephesians* 1:17, *Colossians* 1:9, *James* 3:17 etc.), semi-divine (*Matthew* 23:34, *Romans* 11:33, *2 Timothy* 2:7 etc.), and non-divine (*Matthew* 7:24 etc.) forms of wisdom.

¹⁵⁰⁶ Renn, 2005, p. 1051.

¹⁵⁰⁷ Botterweck / Ringgren, 1980, p. 370.

¹⁵⁰⁸ Renn, 2005, p. 1051.

¹⁵⁰⁹ Renn, 2005, p. 1050.

¹⁵¹⁰ Higginbotham, 2003, p. 10

¹⁵¹¹ Renn, 2005, p. 1050.

¹⁵¹² Ermiş, Hamza: “Türkçe Söz Varlığı İçinde Türetme Gücü En Yüksek Yirmi Arapça Kök Üzerine Morfolojik Bir İnceleme”, in: *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 8/8, 2013, pp. 607–634/609.

(law court), *mahkûm* (convict, prisoner), *muhakeme* (reasoning, discernment, or judgement), *tahakkûm* (domination) among several others. As morphological characteristics of the Arabic word derivation system (*iştikak*) based on inflexion seen in the Turkish terms above demonstrates, these Turkish forms of *hikmet* are direct borrowings from their Arabized versions of the *hkm* root. Furthermore, when the attributed meanings to these words are investigated, it appears that not only the morphological characteristics of these words but also their meanings were inherited both into Ottoman¹⁵¹³ and modern Turkish. Despite the grammatical differences, occurrence of regional dialects, variations, or nuances, and potentially extended semantic ranges of such terms in the Turkish application¹⁵¹⁴, there seems to be an unbroken continuity amongst the Turkish, Arabic, and Hebraic perceptions of *hikmet* concept. This vast semantic coverage of חֵכֶם leads Murphy to define wisdom as “the ‘know-how’ whatever may be the particular area”¹⁵¹⁵. In its religious context (both Judaic and Islamic)¹⁵¹⁶, however, a unifying conception of wisdom is inherent to the concept, namely the root *hkm* and its derivations usually refer to wisdom granted only by God as the common feature (*Psalms* 111:10, *Proverbs* 1:7; 9:10). Among the various definitions of the Biblical *hkm*, Crenshaw’s formulation appears to be the most suitable one for tracing a common perception or a cognitive bridge of the concept from ancient times to the development of *tasavvuf* as an epistemological method. For Crenshaw, wisdom (*hkm*) “may be defined as the quest for self-understanding in terms of relationships with things, people, and the Creator”¹⁵¹⁷. Based on this definition of *hikmet*, the correlations made by the ancient thinkers and translators between the Hebrew *hkm* and Greek *sophia*, and their innumerable manifestations in both philosophical and religious systems of the ancient Mediterranean region during the late antiquity, it becomes possible to link the wisdom narrative of the Old Testament, which was partly inherited from the ancient Near Eastern wisdom traditions, with all the esotericised systems (Gnosticism, Hermeticism, Neoplatonism, alchemy, *tasavvuf* etc.) revolving around a wisdom concept mentioned in this study.

As there are intriguing commonalities in handling wisdom in the form of *hikmet*, which is perhaps due to the common etymological origin, it is crucial to remind again that there are also vast interpretative differences in applying it. This interpretation usually manifests itself in

¹⁵¹³ Meniński, Franciszek a Mesgnien: *Thesaurus Linguarum Orientalium Turcicae, Arabicae, Persicae, Praecipuas earum opes a Turcis peculiariter usurpatas continens* [...], Viennae: Franciscus a Mesgnien Meniński 1680, p. 1711.

¹⁵¹⁴ Eyüboğlu, for example, argues that “the differences result from the spelling changes of the same root word”. See: Eyüboğlu, Z. İsmet: *Türk Dilinin Etimoloji Sözlüğü*, İstanbul: Sosyal Yayınlar 1988, p. 161.

¹⁵¹⁵ Murphy, E. Roland: “What and Where Is Wisdom?”, in: *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 4, 1977, p. 283–287/283; Higginbotham, 2003, p. 10.

¹⁵¹⁶ Rosenthal, 2007, p. 37.

¹⁵¹⁷ Crenshaw, 1969, p. 132.

the translations, especially, but not exclusively, between different language families such as the Semitic and Indo-European.

The differences between the Bible versions and their translations are also not limited to the variant interpretations of a single term found in the Hebrew Old Testament. In some translations and commentaries, one can even identify certain add-ons that were not present in the older versions, or expanded passages containing narratives, concepts, and terms that are incorporated from other relevant chapters of the Old Testament. The Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Old Testament¹⁵¹⁸, *Targum* (meaning translation or interpretation)¹⁵¹⁹, demonstrate such expansions in its several passages. Almost all *Targumim*¹⁵²⁰—*Targum Onkelos*, *Targum Neofiti*, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*—were created during the Rabbinic period (corresponding between the first and seventh centuries CE)¹⁵²¹. Since there were several Jewish communities settled in and around the Eastern Mediterranean region, the languages adopted by them were different. While Jews residing in Greek and Roman territories, e.g., Alexandria, used the Greek language colloquially, Palestinian and Babylonian Jews, on the other hand, adopted the *lingua franca* of that region, Aramaic, especially during and after the Babylonian Exile¹⁵²². As in the case of other translations and versions of the Hebrew Bible, some of the *Targumim* were considered authoritative by certain groups, while the others were not evaluated as such. The opening chapter of the *Book of Genesis*, 1:1, in different *Targumim*, concerns us more than the other additions due to its employment of wisdom, *ḥkm*, as an add-on. It is important to note that not all *Targumim* employ this addition. Whereas *Targum Onkelos* on the *Torah* and *Targum Jona-*

¹⁵¹⁸ Except the books of *Daniel* 2:4b-7 and *Ezra-Nehemiah* 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26, which were to a certain extent composed in Aramaic language.

¹⁵¹⁹ In the etymology of the word *targum*, a continuity between the ancient Near Eastern, Semitic, languages, e.g., Akkadian, through the intermediary of Aramaic/Syriac and Hebrew Arabic and even today's Turkish language can be tracked. The Akkadian root *trgm* and its derivation *targummanu* refer to "translator" in English. The same root was adopted with the same meaning in Aramaic and Syriac languages in the form of *targēmānā* (ܬܪܓܡܢܐ). According to Alexander, "The synagogue Bible translator [a.n. from Hebrew to Aramaic] was known as the *mētūrgēmān*, *tūrgēmān*, or simply as *hammētūrgēm* (he who translates)", which demonstrates the affinity and the continuity between these languages. Borrowing much from the earlier languages mentioned above, Arabic language as well employs the same root (*trcm*) in various forms such as *mutarjim* (مترجم) and *tarjuman* (ترجمان), both come to mean "translator" in English. Turkish language, as spoken in Turkey, also borrows the same term from Arabic and employs it as *tercüme* meaning "translation" and *mütercim* or *tercüman*, "translator" in English. For more information see: Alexander, S. Philip: "Targum, Targumim", in: Freedman, D. Noel (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 6, New York: Doubleday 1992, p. 320–331; Nişanyan, Sevan: *Sözlerin Soyağacı. Çağdaş Türkçenin Etimolojik Sözlüğü*, Istanbul: Adam Yayınları 2007, pp. 611, 865.

¹⁵²⁰ Plural of *Targum*, translations.

¹⁵²¹ Miller, P. Merrill: "Targum, Midrash and the Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament", *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period*, 2/1, 1971, pp. 29–82; McNamara / Flesher, "Targum", 2014.

¹⁵²² Schühlein, Franz: "Targum", in: Herbermann, G. Charles et. al. (eds.), *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 14, New York: Robert Appleton Company 1912, pp. 454–457/454.

than on the *Nevi'im* did not include *ḥkm* in their *Genesis* 1:1 translation, *Targum Neofiti*¹⁵²³ and *Targum Yerushalmi* did include it¹⁵²⁴:

Targum Neofiti, Genesis 1:1

¹⁵²⁵ מִלְּקֶדְמִין בְּחֻכְמָהּ [בְּחֻכְמָתָא] בְּרָא (ד') יְיָ שְׂכֵלְל [וְשִׁכְלָל] יַת שְׁמִיָּא וְיַת אַרְעָא

millēqadmīn bēḥokmā bēṛā' [mēmṛā] dYYY wēsaklāl yat šēmayyā' wēyat ʿarʿā'

“From the beginning, with wisdom, the word of the Lord created and perfected the heavens and the earth”¹⁵²⁶

Fragmentary *Targum (Yerushalmi), Genesis 1:1*

brʿšyt: bēḥokmā (marginal gloss: min lēqadmīn) bēṛā' YYY wēsaklāl yat šēmayyā' wēyat ʿarʿā'

“with wisdom [from the beginning] the Lord created and perfected the heavens and the earth”¹⁵²⁷

The add-ons containing the *ḥkm* root shown above, however, cannot be found in the various editions of the Masoretic Text, e.g., in the *Leningrad Codex*, one of the earliest complete manuscripts of the Hebrew Old Testament dating 1008 CE:

¹⁵²⁸ בְּרָאִישִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”¹⁵²⁹

These expansions containing the word wisdom as the creative attribute of God in the *Targumim* were, therefore, most likely quoted from the other verses of the scripture such as:

Jeremiah 10:12 “But God made the earth by his power;
he founded the world by his wisdom [בְּתִקְוָתוֹ]
and stretched out the heavens by his understanding”¹⁵³⁰

¹⁵²³ Golomb, David M: *A Grammar of Targum Neofiti*, California: Scholars Press 1985, p. 83.

¹⁵²⁴ Anderson, Gary: “The Interpretation of *Genesis* 1:1 in the Targums”, in: *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 52/1, 1990, pp. 21–29/27.

¹⁵²⁵ The Vatican Manuscript of the *Targum Neofiti*, retrieved from: <https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Neofiti.1> and <https://sefaria.org/Targum_Neofiti.1.1?lang=bi>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹⁵²⁶ Anderson, 1990, p. 23; McNamara, Martin (trans.): *Targum Neofiti 1. Genesis*, Minnesota: Liturgical Press 1992, p. 52.

¹⁵²⁷ Anderson, 1990, p. 23.

¹⁵²⁸ *Genesis* 1:1, in: WLC, 2005, p. 1.

¹⁵²⁹ Margolis, L. Max (ed.): *The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text. A New Translation*, Chicago: Lakeside Press 1917, p. 1.

¹⁵³⁰ Shepherd, B. Michael: “Targums, The New Testament, and Biblical Theology of the Messiah”, in: *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 51/1, 2008, pp. 45–58/51; *Jeremiah* 10:12, in: NIV, 2001, p. 421.

Psalm 104:24 “How many are your works, LORD!
 In wisdom [חָכְמָה] you made them all;
 The earth is full of your creatures”¹⁵³¹

Such a vast radius of interpretive action containing even add-ons in translating and compiling a sacred text indicates a potentially wider interpretative area or even appropriation for a non-strict interpretation concerning traditions, ideas, and concepts.

The large flow of discourses and mutually transforming relations between Semitic and Greek traditions—including “the transmission of Mesopotamian astronomy and astrology to the Greek world and subsequent transformation of many of the constituent elements”¹⁵³²—distilled to a *ḥkm* and *σοφία* correspondence, appears to be directly relevant to the question why the *σοφία* was used to refer to Arabic *sūfi* and *tasavvuf*. The survey above aimed to demonstrate that *σοφία* had already been applied to various kinds of Mesopotamian wisdom including the divine forms of it, most likely, as the translation of *ḥkm* root, long before the advent of Islam and later formation of *tasavvuf*.

Like all the other systems focusing on these mental concepts for their mythological, philosophical, or religious narratives, the performers of *tasavvuf* as well defined and employed these concepts in their idiosyncratic way, which was framed by the Islamic doctrines of the faith. While at certain points these various systems approximate each other with regard to their perception and application of wisdom, it is the Islamic core of *tasavvuf* that distinguishes it to a great degree from the other systems; and again, this Islamic aspect of handling wisdom or epistemology in its various forms such as *hikmet* or *mârifet* that gives shape, content, and proper application methods to the performing ways of wisdom, above all the *zikir* ritual as the applied epistemology.

8.4 Elements of *Tasavvuf* Epistemology

In addition to *hikmet*, the *Kur'an* refers to one another noetic attribute of *Allah*, *Alîm* (all-knower, all-wise), derived from a different Arabic root ‘-l-m. The term *alîm* is related to *ilim* (knowledge, science) and when applied to humans it often refers to theoretical knowledge and science¹⁵³³, covering a similar semantic range to the terms mentioned above derived from the *ḥkm* root. Yılmaz and Öztürk, however, emphasize important distinctions between various

¹⁵³¹ *Psalm* 104:24, in: NIV, 2001, p. 332.

¹⁵³² Stevens, 2019, p. 94.

¹⁵³³ Rudolph / Hansberger / Adamson, 2017, p. 789.

kinds of knowledge and relevant terms incorporated from Arabic into Turkish¹⁵³⁴. The term *mârifet* covers meanings akin to other forms of knowing such as to recognize, acknowledge¹⁵³⁵, and profess¹⁵³⁶ through experience and used—e.g., by Fârâbî¹⁵³⁷ and İbn Sînâ¹⁵³⁸—on occasion synonymously with *ilim*¹⁵³⁹ and *hikmet*¹⁵⁴⁰. However, while *ilim* in Yılmaz’s classification—corresponding largely with *tasavvuf* and general Islamic epistemological views—refers to knowledge of general things, *mârifet* indicates a more special and detailed form of knowing¹⁵⁴¹. Scholars usually compare *ilim* and *mârifet* to underline their difference with an argument that the “counterpart of *ilim* is ignorance (*cehl*) and *mârifet* is denial”¹⁵⁴². According to the *TDV*, even though the term *mârifet* is also used as a substitute for *ilim*, it rather possesses a meaning of “to get to know” or “to be acquainted with”¹⁵⁴³. *Mutasavvife* primarily employ the term *mârifet* with this meaning to refer to getting acquainted with God via specific epistemological procedures developed in *tasavvuf*. Hence, the term *ilim* cannot accurately supplant *mârifet*, the prioritized mode of knowing in *tasavvuf*. Both terms cover the notion of knowing, yet *mârifet* alludes to wisdom and recognition that is experienced through cognitive and intuitive faculties while *ilim* covers a more extensive territory, a wide range of information that can be acquired through observation and deduction¹⁵⁴⁴.

On the other hand, while the term *mârifet*, or any derivation from the same root, is never used in the *Kur’an*¹⁵⁴⁵, and compared to *hikmet*, the frequency of *ilim* is significantly greater¹⁵⁴⁶, the priority given to *mârifet*—understood as direct acquaintance with God and placed at the top of the epistemology—is an idiosyncratic interpretation and a neologism. Despite *ilim* often acquiring divine quality expressed as “revealed knowledge” in several verses of the *Kur’an*¹⁵⁴⁷, for *mutasavvife*, *ilim* alone has never been a central concept in their metaphysical and experi-

¹⁵³⁴ Yılmaz, 2004, p. 223; Öztürk, Vol. 1, 2012, p. 454.

¹⁵³⁵ Uludağ, 2003b, p. 54.

¹⁵³⁶ Yılmaz, 2004, p. 223.

¹⁵³⁷ Taylan, 1992, p. 158.

¹⁵³⁸ Rosenthal, 2007, p. 118.

¹⁵³⁹ Taylan, 1992, p. 15; Rosenthal, 2007, p. 4.

¹⁵⁴⁰ Kara, 1998, p. 519.

¹⁵⁴¹ Yılmaz, 2004, p. 223; Taylan, 1992, p. 158.

¹⁵⁴² Şaşa, 2014, p. 74; Kutluer, 2000a, p. 109; Rosenthal, 2007, p. 10.

¹⁵⁴³ Uludağ, 2003b, p. 54.

¹⁵⁴⁴ Öztürk, Vol. 1, 2012, p. 454; Nasr / Leaman, 1996, p. 1204.

¹⁵⁴⁵ Rosenthal, 2007, p. 28; Chittick, 1989, p. 148.

¹⁵⁴⁶ While according to Rosenthal the number is seven hundred fifty, Şaşa correspondingly suggests seven hundred sixty occurrences of the root ‘-l-m and its derivations in the *Kur’an*. See: Rosenthal, 2007, p. 20; Şaşa, 2014, p. 74.

¹⁵⁴⁷ See, for example, *Kur’an* 2:120, 145 (*Bakara*); 3:19 (*Âl-i İmrân*); 6:108, 119, 144 (*En’âm*); 22:3 (*Hac*); 30:29 (*Rûm*) etc.

ential epistemology¹⁵⁴⁸, though there may be exclusions. In terms of its strategically designed qualities as salvific, intuitive, ineffable, infallible, ascetic, bestowed (by God in the form of bliss or inspiration), and directness, *mârifet*, in its various applications (*ârif*, *irfan* etc.), has become the prime point of interest for those who call themselves *sûfî*. The application of the term thus demonstrates a notable transition from *ilim* and *hikmet* to *mârifet* within *tasavvuf* epistemology. According to Kartal, this transition was a necessary consequence for *tasavvuf* in specifying its field of discourse as *bâtın* (internal) extension of the *zâhir* (external) sciences of *fikih* (jurisprudence) and *kelâm* (speculative theology):

“Whereas *fikih* was only concerned with the embodiment and formal applications of religious obligations, *kelâm*, likewise representing the field of belief in religion, was limited with the speculative discussions about the existence of God, and His attributes [a.n. *esmâ-i hüsnâ*]. For the *sûfî*, however, religion was not limited to these areas and housed a dimension of reality (*hakikat*)”¹⁵⁴⁹

As mentioned, successful attainment of this alternative or extended reality requires a specific epistemological perspective which correspondingly employs an alternative definition, source, and derivation methods for knowledge. Whereas *kelâm* scholars prioritized reason (*akıl*), deduction (*istidlâl*), and syllogism (*kıyas*) to generate religious knowledge (*ilim*), *tasavvuf* additionally credits pleasure (*zevk*), inspiration (*ilham*), and discovery (*keşf*), and in the final analysis, argues that the true (*hakîki*) and direct knowledge (*irfan*) of God can only be reached through intuition and discovery¹⁵⁵⁰.

The scholars of *tasavvuf* have been considerably productive to design and expand a functioning system of knowledge. Thanks to this productivity, a vast literary archive has been generated containing innumerable theories, speculations, methods, and their inexhaustible re-interpretations. What may be distilled from this extensive source concerning its epistemology is to specify its constructive components including subject matter, the field of discourse, objective, method, and terminology. The transition from theological (*ilim*) and philosophical (*hikmet*) knowledge systems to, borrowing from Corbin, a theosophical system based on an acquaintance (*mârifet*) with God¹⁵⁵¹, explicitly illustrates the components of *tasavvuf* epistemology. While Güler argues that the subject matter of *tasavvuf* is the “devotional, spiritual, and inner life of an

¹⁵⁴⁸ This, however, does not mean *mutasavvife* paid no attention to the concept. In most classical *tasavvuf* literature produced by, for example, Gazzâlî (*İhyâü Ulûmi'd-Dîn*), İbnü'l-Arabî (*El-Fütûhâtü'l-Mekkiye*), Sühreverdi (*Avârifü'l-Maârif*), and Hücverî (*Keşfü'l-Mahcûb*), the term *ilim* was studied in depth. See: Şaşa, 2014, p. 77.

¹⁵⁴⁹ Kartal, 2015, p. 151.

¹⁵⁵⁰ Şaşa, 2014, p. 73.

¹⁵⁵¹ Corbin, 1993, p. 105.

individual”¹⁵⁵², Kartal refers to more specific terminology, e.g., “*ma’rifet*, *bâtın ilmi* (esoteric knowledge), *vecd* (noetic ASC), *ilahî ahlak ilmi* (knowledge of spiritual moral), *kemâl* (perfection), and *hakikat* (reality, truth)”¹⁵⁵³. Similarly, expanding itself towards “thousands of *ilim*, *hâl*, and *hikmet* belonging to the spiritual and divine realm”, the subject matter of *tasavvuf* for Çiçek is “divine discipline (*terbiye*), decency (*edep*), and morals (*ahlâk*) that are necessary for an individual to love Allah and accordingly to be loved by Allah”¹⁵⁵⁴. In general terms, the subject matter of *tasavvuf* can then be summarized as *Allah*, humans, and the ontological relationship between the two. Such expressions simultaneously refer to the objective of *tasavvuf* as to attain a sincere (*ihlâs*) and intimate acquaintance with *Allah* (*mârifet*). Gürer, with an implication of *imago Dei*, additionally describes the objective of *tasavvuf* as “(1) to gain the attributes of *Allah*, (2) to be moralized with the moral of *Allah*, and (3) to unite with *Allah*”¹⁵⁵⁵, which brings about the epistemological method of *tasavvuf* as a complex set of moral, devotional, and intellectual investigations to discipline, mature, and eventually to perfect the relevant faculty (the heart) that enables the acquaintance with *Allah*. Positioning the locus of knowing or acquaintance to the heart (instead of the brains as argued by Galen), *mutasavvife* were compelled to equip it with necessary means¹⁵⁵⁶. Since such knowledge, whether intuitive (*hikmet*) or through acquaintance (*mârifet*), primarily concerns with an expansion or hidden dimension (*bâ-tın*) of sensory reality—namely with the metaphysical (*gayb*) realm of *Allah* (*ledün*)—its acquisition, which manifests itself in specific forms such as discovery (*keşf*), observation (*müşahede*), tasting (*dhawq*), drunkenness (*sekr*), ecstasy (*vecd*), or inspiration (*ilham*)¹⁵⁵⁷, depends not necessarily on the sensory and intellectual efforts from the side of *mutasavvif*, but principally on divine blessing given by God¹⁵⁵⁸. The chief task for a *mutasavvif* who seeks acquisition with *Allah* then becomes to prepare the heart for a noetic divine blessing to manifest (*tecellî*)¹⁵⁵⁹. It is this preparation that constitutes the methodology of *tasavvuf* known as *sey-rüsülûk*, which has been “used in *tasavvuf* in the sense of attitude, deed, worship, action, and

¹⁵⁵² Gürer, 2001, p. 129.

¹⁵⁵³ Kartal, 2015, p. 152.

¹⁵⁵⁴ Çiçek, Yakup: “Tasavvufun Kaynağı”, in: Çiçek, Yakup / Selvi, Dilaver (trans.), *Ebû Tâlib El-Mekkî: Sevgiliye Giden Yolda Kalplerin Ağız/Kûtu’l-Kulûb*, Vol. 1, Istanbul: Semerkand 2003, pp. 13–30/16.

¹⁵⁵⁵ Gürer, 2001, p. 138.

¹⁵⁵⁶ Consideration of the heart, along with the eye and the ear, as an organ to understand as well as house and deploy knowledge, is in fact verified by the *Kur’an* 7:179 (*A’râf*): “They have hearts, but do not understand; and they have eyes, but do not see; and they have ears, but do not hear. Those are like cattle, or rather are even more misguided. Those are the heedless ones”. Fakhry, 2000, p. 172; Rosenthal, 2007, p. 30.

¹⁵⁵⁷ Çağrı, 2013b, p. 309; Kartal, 2004, p. 153. For a detailed exposition of these terms, see: Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risala*, 2007, pp. 75ff.

¹⁵⁵⁸ Taylan, 1992, p. 160.

¹⁵⁵⁹ Gazzâlî, *İhyâü Ulûmi’d-Dîn*, III: 19, quoted by: Taylan, 1992, p. 160.

behavior that lead people to the Truth”¹⁵⁶⁰. Despite the presence of numerous *sülûk* procedures developed by different *tarikât*¹⁵⁶¹, the most frequently applied techniques within this system are recollection (*zikir*) and purification of the heart or ego (*nefis tezkiyesi*).

Summarily, the epistemology of *tasavvuf* designs a dichotomy between our sensual world and extended reality. This dichotomy is further reflected on the human body and soul (or spiritual heart, *nefs*) resulting in dualism and accordingly a desire to overcome duality to be able to reach oneness or unity. While the body is linked with the sensual reality, the soul is believed to possess qualities to acquire knowledge, access the extended reality, and, for some *mutasavvîf*, experience unity with *Allah*. The knowledge of the extended or hidden dimension of reality is usually understood as divine, intuitive, and granted, whose acquisition necessitates moral and spiritual purification via ascetic practices¹⁵⁶². When it is acquired, it means that it is, in fact, “mystically” experienced and frequently described as salvation, illumination, eternal bliss, happiness, communion, or unification. The noetic unification narrative expressed by different *tarikât* is multifarious and customarily contains symbolic, metaphoric, and figurative language to describe the nature and dynamics of unification as, for example, discovery, inspiration, ecstasy, or observation. The process and desire for unification are expressed by certain *mutasavvîf* as a love affair. For the others, it is total submission to *Allah* to the level of annihilation of the self. Another *tarikât* or *mutasavvîf* may indeed combine these two views into their perspective and describe it as an affair of love that leads to the annihilation of the self in *Allah*. Intriguingly, all these themes and components of *tasavvuf* epistemology are also present, with nuances, in Plotinus’ system.

The definitions and descriptions provided by early *mutasavvîfe* may serve to clarify and expand this specific epistemological system, or at least certain aspects of it. Several works attributed the first definition of *tasavvuf* to a renowned *mutasavvîf* Ma’rûf-i Kerhî (c. 750–815)¹⁵⁶³, a convert to Islam with Christian and Mandaean¹⁵⁶⁴ parents, who defines *tasavvuf* as “seizing realities [a.n. *hakikat*] and renouncing that which is between the hands of the created beings”¹⁵⁶⁵. In Kerhî’s definition, two essential features of *tasavvuf* epistemology, extended reality and a mild asceticism, are identifiable. Cerîrî (d. 933), emphasizing the morality aspect

¹⁵⁶⁰ Uludağ, Süleyman: “Sülûk”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 38, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2010a, pp. 127–128/127.

¹⁵⁶¹ Such as, among many others, *riyâzet* (asceticism), *tövbe* (repentance), *vera*, *takvâ*, or *zühed* (piety, devotion, God-fearing behaviour), *fakr* (spiritual poverty), *sabır* (patience), *rızâ* (consent), *tevekkül* (trust in God), *murakabe* (introspection), *râbita* (to bond), *şükür* (gratitude), *çile* (suffering), *fenâ* (annihilation), or *bekâ* (permanence).

¹⁵⁶² For the moral aspect of *tasavvuf*, see: Yılmaz, 2004, pp. 32–34.

¹⁵⁶³ Nicholson, 1906, p. 306; Michon, 1997, p. 269.

¹⁵⁶⁴ Nicholson, 1906, p. 306, Yılmaz, 2004, p. 103.

¹⁵⁶⁵ Quoted by Michon, 1997, p. 269.

of *tasavvuf*, asserts that “it (*tasavvuf*) means being purified of bad habits and acquire good habits” and “to introspect (*murakabe*) the spiritual stations (*hâl*) and embrace good manners (*edep*)”¹⁵⁶⁶. Kuşeyrî further quotes several early *mutasavvife*, each of whom shed light on a different aspect of *tasavvuf* and its epistemology as below:

“Al-Junayd was asked about it, he responded: ‘It means that God causes you to die for yourself, while endowing you with a life in Him’

Muhammad b. ‘Ali al-Qassab said: ‘Sufism means a noble moral character trait that a noble person shows in a noble moment in time (*waqt*) in the presence of a noble company’

Ruwaym b. Ahmad al-Baghdadi say: ‘Sufism rests on three characteristics: sticking to poverty and being in need of God [alone]; achieving perfection in generosity and altruism (*ithar*); relinquishing resistance [to divine decrees] and [your] free choice’

Al-Junayd said: ‘Sufism is the recollection of God at a gathering [of like-minded people], ecstasy at the hearing [of this recollection], and action in compliance with the Divine Law”¹⁵⁶⁷

Holding a prominent place as a student of Kerhî and teacher of Cüneyd-i Bağdadî (830–910), Serî es-Sakatî (772–865) sums up the ever-existing issues of *tasavvuf* in his description. These long-lasting issues involve the question of the legitimacy of *tasavvuf* as an Islamic knowledge derivation system, the validity of the alleged supremacy of *mârifet* over other knowledge forms, continuity of *zâhir* obligations (avoidance of *haram* etc.) for those *mutasavvif* who claimed to have acquired *mârifet*, secrecy or limits of expressions concerning the encounter with *Allah* that takes place in the manner of mystified experiences (*hâl*, *makam*, *vecd* etc.). Sakatî, covering all these topics, argues that the following elements of *tasavvuf* should be maintained to remain within the limits of Islam:

“Tasawwuf is a name including three ideas. The Sufi is he whose light [a.n. *nûr*] of divine knowledge (gnosis) [*marifet*] does not extinguish the light of his piety [*verâ*]; he does not utter esoteric doctrine [*bâtın ilmi*] which is contradicted by the exterior sense [*zâhir*] of the Koran and the Sunna; and the miracles [*kerâmet*] vouchsafed to him do not cause him to violate the holy ordinances [*sır*] of God”¹⁵⁶⁸

¹⁵⁶⁶ Kara, Mustafa: “Ebû Muhammed el-Cerîrî”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 10, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1994, p. 190; Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risala*, 2007, pp. 289, 291; Eraydın, 1994, p. 37.

¹⁵⁶⁷ Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risala*, 2007, pp. 289–290.

¹⁵⁶⁸ Nicholson, 1906, p. 332.

Sakatî's mention and acknowledgement¹⁵⁶⁹ of these issues demonstrate a continuum not only within Islam but intriguingly also displays a set of resemblances between the relationship of *tasavvuf* with its metasytem (Islam) and approximately all esotericised trends' relation with their own encapsulating metasytems. Like the Gnostics were labelled a heretic by authoritative Christian theologians, certain *mutasavvif*, who allegedly crossed the limits of *zâhir* frame, have been similarly accused of heresy (*küfür, kâfir*) by Muslim *mütekellim* (theologian) and *fakih* (jurisprudent). Deriving from these and numerous other corresponding descriptions, Eraydın points to three essential features of *tasavvuf* that have been recurrently expressed by *mutasavvif* to evince *tasavvuf*'s coherence with Islam as follows: “(1) submission (*teslimiyet*) to divine orders and prohibitions, (2) embellishing the self with the morals of *Allah* and His Messenger, and, (3) receding sincerely from everything but God (*mâsivallah*)”¹⁵⁷⁰. Concerning the last unit in his categorization, Eraydın further emphasizes a crucial distinction between *tasavvuf* and several other esotericised systems favouring what Weber calls “world-rejecting asceticism”¹⁵⁷¹ with an argument that ascetic behaviours of *tasavvuf* are “not radically withdrawing from the world, but not committing to it at heart even though being surrounded by its perks”¹⁵⁷². As mentioned above, such distinctions between esotericised traditions are often based on the metasytem in which its various streams and trends are given shape, content, and radius of action¹⁵⁷³.

Though within this study the term *hikmet* was selected to demonstrate a cognitive continuity between various esotericised and non-esotericised traditions over a period of several millennia, considering knowledge derivation methods of *tasavvuf* (e.g., *seyrüsülük, zikir*) had essentially been developed to acquire *mârifet* rather than *hikmet*, an analysis of *sûfî* construction of wisdom and its immediate impact on the ritual structure of *zikir* as well as associated musical grammar (see, Volume 2) compels this study to locate this concept henceforth within Islamic epistemology. According to Yılmaz, *hikmet, ilim*, and *mârifet* are constitutive elements of both Islamic and *tasavvuf* epistemology. The absence of any element results in an incomplete knowing, either as dry theology or ungrounded mystification. *Tasavvuf* as a methodology, compounds both aspects into a whole through expanding the scope of theological *ilim* and rather philosophical, yet still partially esotericised, *hikmet* to the metaphysical dimension of *mârifet*. In explaining their joint operation to acquire perfect knowing, Yılmaz reproduces the attitude

¹⁵⁶⁹ Uludağ, however, attributes this quotation to another prominent *sûfî* named Zünnûn el-Misrî (796–859). See, Uludağ, 2003b, p. 56.

¹⁵⁷⁰ Eraydın, 1994, p. 40.

¹⁵⁷¹ Weber, Max: *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Los Angeles / London: University of California Press, 1978, p. 542.

¹⁵⁷² Eraydın, 1994, p. 40.

¹⁵⁷³ Nicholson, 1914, pp. 2–3.

of numerous *mutasavvife*, who often employ a symbolic language to describe their noetic experiences, as below:

“The first-born light to the heavens of the heart is the star of *hikmet*
Then the moon of *ilim* and the sun of *mârifet* rise
With the light of the star of *hikmet*, the truth of things (*eşyânın hakîkati*) is observed (*müşâhede*)
With the loss of the moon of *ilim*, the realm of meaning (*mânâ*) is observed
With the light of the sun of *mârifet*, *Allah* is observed”¹⁵⁷⁴

When the intrinsic relations or even the equation¹⁵⁷⁵ between the meanings of *hikmet* and *mârifet* is considered, the generation of *mârifet* as wisdom relating to *Allah* in a specific way appears to be an idiosyncratic reinterpretation of *hikmet*. This argument can partially be validated via two corresponding expressions concerning noetic asceticism in *tasavvuf*, each employing a different Arabic term for wisdom:

“*Sûfî* has found the sources of *hikmet* in hunger”¹⁵⁷⁶

“I have found *mârifet* in hunger (empty stomach)”¹⁵⁷⁷

Despite their explicit reference to each concept in Arabic original and Turkish translations, in their English rendering the expressions above cannot transmit the meaning of the employed concepts as can be seen in Knysh’s translations of the same content. While the term *mârifet* is rendered into English by Knysh as “knowledge [of God]”¹⁵⁷⁸, *hikmet* simply as “wisdom”¹⁵⁷⁹. When various descriptions of *hikmet* and *mârifet* are considered, both within and outside the Islamic definitional scope, additional analogies between them appear, which likely allowed *mutasavvif* and non-Muslim scholars to employ these terms often along similar lines. Briefly, within the Islamic scope, *hikmet* and *mârifet* are concerned with alleged “divine secrets”¹⁵⁸⁰, “*bâtın*”¹⁵⁸¹, “esoteric”¹⁵⁸², or “mystical”¹⁵⁸³ dimensions of reality. “The (spiritual) heart”¹⁵⁸⁴ is simultaneously the instrument and the location of knowing, therefore, knowing is

¹⁵⁷⁴ Yılmaz, K. Hasan: “İlim, Marifet ve Hikmet İlişkisi”, in: *Diyanet Dergi*, 297, 2015, pp. 14–16/15.

¹⁵⁷⁵ Kara, 1998, p. 519.

¹⁵⁷⁶ Kuşeyrî, *Risale*, Vol. 2, 1978, p. 245.

¹⁵⁷⁷ Kuşeyrî, *Risale*, Vol. 1, 1978, p. 65.

¹⁵⁷⁸ Al-Qushayrî, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 32.

¹⁵⁷⁹ Al-Qushayrî, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 157.

¹⁵⁸⁰ Çiçek, 2003, p. 16; Kara, 1998, pp. 518–519; Şaşa, 2014, p. 82.

¹⁵⁸¹ De Smet, 2017, p. 740.

¹⁵⁸² Corbin, 1993, pp. xv–xvi.

¹⁵⁸³ Renard, 2009, pp. 139, 154.

¹⁵⁸⁴ Ayverdi, 2010, p. 507.

understood as “intuitive”¹⁵⁸⁵ and the mode of knowing is expressed as “granted”¹⁵⁸⁶ to “specific individuals”¹⁵⁸⁷ in the form of “discovery”¹⁵⁸⁸ and “inspiration”. Both harbour moral and ethical dimensions requiring “purification”¹⁵⁸⁹ to acquire the perfect knowledge. Outside the Islamic terminology, the terms *hikmet* and *mârifet* have consistently been translated into English either as “theosophy”¹⁵⁹⁰ or “gnosis”¹⁵⁹¹.

8.5 *Hikmet* and Its Translations

At this point, in terms of translation, a critical issue comes into prominence, namely which one (or two) of the knowledge forms amongst *sophia*, *gnosis*, or intuition is suitable to render the Islamic terms *ilim*, *mârifet*, or *hikmet*. Though one can identify trends of translation that may consistently favour a term over another, neither in the early developmental centuries of Islamic sciences nor in the academic publications today there seems to be an agreement. As discussed in the preceding chapters concerning the recurrent ambiguity in defining the terms knowledge and wisdom—both in the usage of ancient philosophers, theologians, magicians, and their current employment as the translations of a variety of mental processes (*gnosis*, *sophia*, *hikmet* etc.)—the range of possibilities based on selective interpretation has been so broad that their inevitable translations into today’s primary language of scientific publication, English, as knowledge or wisdom are in a way amputating the semantic ranges and interpretative expansion possibilities of these terms. In other words, the translations of non-English terms referring to wisdom (*hikmet*, *mârifet*, *ilim*, *sophia*, or *gnosis*) as “wisdom of God” inevitably brings about, borrowing from Rosenthal’s argument¹⁵⁹², a syntactic ambiguity due to translative limitations in English. Rosenthal, in investigating the relation between *ilim* and *mârifet*, correspondingly maintained that the English translations of these terms cannot properly transmit the nuances in their meanings¹⁵⁹³. Hence, certain combinations of words such as “divine wisdom” or “intuitive wisdom” have been employed to encompass the semantic scope of these foreign con-

¹⁵⁸⁵ Tüerer, Osman: *Ana Hatlarıyla Tasavvuf Tarihi*, İstanbul: Ataç Yayınları 2013, pp. 34–35, quoted by Şaşa, 2014, p. 73; Frishkopf, 1999, p. 14.

¹⁵⁸⁶ Kutluer 1998, p. 504; Ayverdi, 2010, p. 771.

¹⁵⁸⁷ Kara, 1998, p. 506.

¹⁵⁸⁸ Öztürk, 2014, Vol. 1, p. 811; Şaşa, 2014, p. 73; Kara, 1998, p. 506.

¹⁵⁸⁹ Taylan, 1992, p. 160; De Smet, 2017, p. 740; Çiçek, 2003, p. 16.

¹⁵⁹⁰ Nasr / Leaman, 1996, p. 1210; Nicholson, 1906, p. 306; Corbin, 1993, p. 105.

¹⁵⁹¹ Corbin, 1993, p. xv; Marmura, 2005, p. 141; Cook, “Mysticism in Sufi Islam”, 2015; Dodge, Bayard (ed.): *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm. A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, New York / London: Columbia University Press 1970, p. 915.

¹⁵⁹² Rosenthal, 2007, p. 129.

¹⁵⁹³ Rosenthal, 2007, p. 1ff.

cepts as far as possible. In translating these terms, one usually has two options: wisdom as “God’s wisdom” that belongs exclusively to God, or wisdom as “human’s wisdom relating to, or of God” that refers not only to the mental capacity of the human to comprehend a metaphysical divine being but also to the ways (epistemology) to attain that specific form of wisdom. Considering *hikmet* has been employed in both manners, namely as God’s wisdom and human’s wisdom of God, the option left to translators is to deduce the meaning from the context in which it is used. The influential theologian and *mutasavvif* Gazzâlî also emphasizes this translative dilemma and consequent interpretative problems as early as the eleventh century:

“As far as the translators of Aristotle’s works into Arabic are concerned, our problem is even more difficult. For the translations themselves have been subjected to interpolation and changes, which have necessitated further commentaries and interpretations. As a result, the translations are as much in dispute among the philosophers as the original works are”¹⁵⁹⁴

Nasr reports that in Islam there had been multifarious attempts to define *hikmet*, which was often associated with philosophy or “*falsafah*, a term which entered Arabic through the Greek translations of the eighth and ninth centuries”¹⁵⁹⁵. In other words, *hikmet* and philosophy were usually equated with each other by different groups of thinkers (Muslim and non-Muslims who can speak both or either of the languages) and occasionally they were even used as a substitute for each other. This consequently compels us to treat these concepts within an Islamic frame and decipher their application range in addressing metaphysical, philosophical, and theological investigations. Apart from Nasr, who diagnosed a direct link between Islamic *hikmet* and Greek philosophy, Rosenthal too argues that “*hikmah* was chosen to become the Arabic equivalent of Greek philosophy”¹⁵⁹⁶, which was also extended by Muslim scholars and theologians to address *sophia*¹⁵⁹⁷. Corbin as well points to the Arabic terms *falsafah* and *faylasuf* (philosopher) that “derive from the transcription of the Greek terms and go back to the Peripatetics and neo-Platonists of the first centuries of Islam”¹⁵⁹⁸. Slightly diverging from Nasr but approximating Rosenthal, Corbin equates the Arabic “*hikmah*” with the Greek *sophia*¹⁵⁹⁹. However, if the larger history of *hikmet-sophia* translations is taken into account, an early fifth-century translation of the New Testament from Greek to the Syriac *Peshitta* Bible—which was

¹⁵⁹⁴ Ghazali: *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, Kamali, A. Sabih (trans.), Lahore: Pakistan Philosophical Congress 1963, pp. 4–5.

¹⁵⁹⁵ Nasr, 1996a, p. 21.

¹⁵⁹⁶ Rosenthal, 2007, p. 40.

¹⁵⁹⁷ Rosenthal, 2007, pp. 36–37.

¹⁵⁹⁸ Corbin, 1993, p. xv.

¹⁵⁹⁹ Corbin, 1993, p. xv.

used by various Syriac Christian denominations—evidently indicates an older translative tradition that had already equated *sophia* with *hikmet* even before the rise of Islam in the region. Throughout the verses in the *Peshitta*, e.g., *Matthew* 23:34, *Luke* 2:40, *Romans* 11:33, *1 Corinthians* 1:21 etc., consistent usage of the Syriac root *hkm* (ܚܚܡ) and its derivations (ܚܚܡܐ *hkym*) to address *sophia* can be identified. Possibly as an extension of this tradition, or as Rosenthal puts it “accustomed patterns of thought”¹⁶⁰⁰, the term *hikmet* had been associated with Greek philosophical terms also in the translations made during the expansion period of Islam. Another official translation of the New Testament into Arabic explicitly demonstrates this continuity. The Biblical chapter *Mark* 6:2, for example, contains the term الحِكْمَة (*al-hikma*)¹⁶⁰¹ in its Arabic translation of *sophia*, and in the Syriac/Aramaic version, the same term correspondingly translated as ܚܚܡܐ (*hkmt*)¹⁶⁰². Particularly following the conquests of Syria and Egypt, where a Hellenic complex had already been strongly present for centuries, the frequency of translative choices demonstrates that *hikmet* was employed significantly often as *sophia*’s rendering.

There was, on the other hand, another tradition that favoured transliteration technique instead of translating *sophia* as *hikmet*. While a Syriac Christian translator, philosopher, and Fârâbî’s teacher Abu Bishr Matta ibn Yunus (c. 870–940), who contributed tremendously to the Graeco-Arabic translations, for instance, follows the tradition and translates a passage from Aristotle’s *Poetics* (1456a22) into Arabic that contains the word wise (σοφός, *sofós*) as follows: “mattā nhada‘a ḥakīmun bi-manzilati Siyūsīfūs ma‘a r-raḏīlati” (when a wise man like Sisyphus is deceived with villainy)¹⁶⁰³; his handling of another term (σοφιστής, *sofistou*) from the same text (1455a6) intriguingly demonstrates a linkage of a derivation of Greek term *sophia* with the Arabic term *sūfī* as follows: “wa-ammā s-sūfistā ‘iyyu” (as for the sophist)¹⁶⁰⁴. Timothy I of Seleucia-Ctesiphon (727–823), the Nestorian Patriarch in Baghdad, as well renders the Greek word “sophist” in a similar manner and translates Aristotle’s *Refutation of the Sophists* or *Sophistical Refutations*¹⁶⁰⁵ (Σοφιστικοὶ Ἐλεγχοί) as “Maksānā d-swfisṭē”¹⁶⁰⁶. In addition to these

¹⁶⁰⁰ Rosenthal, 2007, p. 112.

¹⁶⁰¹ Raimondi, Giovanni Battista (ed.): *Evangelium Sanctum Domini nostri Iesu Christi conscriptum a quatuor Evangelistis Sanctis idest, Matthaeo, Marco, Luca, et Iohanne*. الإنجيل المقدس لربنا يسوع المسيح المكتوب من أربع الإنجيليين. Rome: Typographia Medicea 1590, p. 131.

¹⁶⁰² The Way International Research Team: *The Concordance to the Peshitta Version of the Aramaic New Testament*, Ohio: American Christian Press 1985, p. 121.

¹⁶⁰³ Tarán, Leonardo / Gutas, Dimitri: *Aristotle. Poetics. Editio Maior of the Greek Text with Historical Introductions and Philological Commentaries*, Leiden / Boston: Brill 2012, p. 411.

¹⁶⁰⁴ Tarán / Gutas, 2012, p. 395.

¹⁶⁰⁵ For the translations made from Greek into Syriac and Arabic of this work (*Sophistici Elenchi*), see: Peters, E. Francis: *Aristoteles Arabus. The Oriental Translations and Commentaries on the Aristotelian Corpus*, Leiden: E.J. Brill 1968.

¹⁶⁰⁶ Tarán / Gutas, 2012, p. 80; Brock, P. Sebastian: “Two Letters of the Patriarch Timothy from the Late Eighth Century on Translations from Greek”, in: *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 9/2, 1999, pp. 233–246/241.

transliterations (*sūfiṣṭā'iyū* and *swfiṣṭē*), Kaya provides further translations of the same work along with its reception by Muslim philosophers¹⁶⁰⁷. These translations allow us to specify how the term “sophist” in the title of Aristotle’s work had been rendered into the Arabic language, yet the discrepancies should as well be kept in mind. According to Kaya, the negative meaning attributed to the term “sophist” by Aristotle was reproduced by Muslim philosophers with slight variations: *el-Hikmet el-Mumevvihe* (Misleading Wisdom), *Sinâat el-Muğalutîn* (The Art of Demagogues), *el-Redd ala'l-Sufistâiye* (Rejection to the Sophists), and *Tebkât el-Sufistâiyyîn* (Silencing the Sophists)¹⁶⁰⁸. Correspondingly Nedîm in his *Fihrist* defines *al-Sūfiṣṭā'iyah* (the Sophists) as “scholars who denied reality”¹⁶⁰⁹. While both Kindî and Fârâbî investigated the etymological background of the term sophist, according to Kaya, Fârâbî’s understanding of sophist as a compound word (*sophia-hikmet* + *istis*-deception) was false¹⁶¹⁰, though his equation between Greek *sophia* and Arabic *hikmet* remains important. Kindî, on the other hand, argues that “the definition of *Sofistika* is ‘belonging to the *sofistâi*’, which comes to mean chauvinist (*el-Mütehakim*)”¹⁶¹¹. This corresponds with Aristotle’s definition of the term in original Greek, namely “in any case, the meaning of ‘sophist’ is someone who imagines what is actually not wisdom (*hikmet*) as if it were wisdom and praises that pretentious wisdom”¹⁶¹². The translative choices shown above demonstrate not only consistency in rendering Greek variations of the word *sophia* as *hikmet*, but they further exhibit attempts for transliterations in Syriac and Arabic that resulted in several options—*sūfiṣṭā'iyū*, *swfiṣṭē*, *sufistâiye*, *sufistâiyyîn*, or *sūfiṣṭā'iyah*. Considering the studies of Rosenthal and Kaya, who claimed that “the Muslims’ first acquaintance with Aristotle was attributable to the interest of the Sassanians of the sixth century in Greek learning”¹⁶¹³ and the prominent roles of Syriac and Pahlavi languages within the Abbasid translation efforts of Greek philosophical works, an investigation concerning the translative choices made by the Muslim philosophers needs to be expanded to the inclusion of these languages. Gutas, for example, identifies Syriac as an intermediary between Greek and Pahlavi languages through the appearance of certain Greek words, sophist and philosopher, in a ninth or tenth-century compendium of Zoroastrian belief system and practices known as *Dēnkard* (Acts of Religion)¹⁶¹⁴. According to Bailey’s study of *Dēnkard*, who dates the earliest Syriac

¹⁶⁰⁷ Kaya, Mahmut: *İslâm Kaynakları Işığında Aristoteles ve Felsefesi*, İstanbul: Ekin Yayınları 1983, pp. 108–112.

¹⁶⁰⁸ Kaya, 1983, p. 108.

¹⁶⁰⁹ Dodge, 1970, p. 924.

¹⁶¹⁰ Kaya, 1983, p. 108.

¹⁶¹¹ Kaya, 1983, p. 109.

¹⁶¹² Kaya, 1983, p. 109.

¹⁶¹³ Rosenthal, 1992, p. 4; Kaya, 1983, p. 111.

¹⁶¹⁴ Gutas, 1998, p. 44.

translations and Persian reception of Aristotle’s works to the fifth century—translations made “in the School of Persians in Edessa”¹⁶¹⁵, these Syriac words were transliterated into Pahlavi and took the forms of *sōkfistāk* for sophists, and *filisōkfāy* for philosophers. Bailey further provides the Syriac originals—*swpyst’*, *pylyswp’*, *pylswp’*, *pylwswp’*—as well as several differing transliterations in Arabic and Pahlavi languages (*sōfistā*, *suḡastāī*, and *al-sūfistā’ī*)¹⁶¹⁶. These, and possibly more, different translative choices bring this investigation to the discussion of the term *sūfī*’s etymological and contextual background.

8.6 The Etymology of *Sūfī*

Over the course of history, the potential roots and the emergence of the term *sūfī* have been discussed by a great number of scholars, however, there is still no consensus regarding the etymological origins of the interrelated Arabic terms *sūfī* and *tasavvuf*. The most popularly accepted, yet still questionable, interpretation regarding the etymology is that the terms *sufism*, *tasavvuf*, or *sūfī* were derived from the Arabic word *ṣūf* (wool)¹⁶¹⁷, implying the woollen garments worn by early ascetics¹⁶¹⁸ (*zāhid*, one who follows *zūhd* trend). In relation to this, the term *sūfī* referred to devotees of a particular “renunciatory”¹⁶¹⁹ type of piety that appeared during the time of Prophet Muhammed to the eighth century¹⁶²⁰. Those who suggest this link argued that *tasavvuf* was developed from this early type of piety and devotional lifestyle known as *zūhd*¹⁶²¹.

¹⁶¹⁵ Bailey, H. Walter: *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1943, pp. 157–158.

¹⁶¹⁶ Bailey, 1943, pp. 85–86.

¹⁶¹⁷ Yılmaz, 2004, pp. 26–27; Chittick, C. William: *Sufism. A Beginner’s Guide*, Oxford: Oneworld 2008, p. 22; Demirli, 2016, p. 11; Knysh, 2000, p. 5; Erginli, Zafer: *Metinlerle Tasavvuf Terimleri Sözlüğü*, İstanbul: Kalem 2006, pp. 919–939; Michon, 1997, p. 267; Chevalier, Jean: *Sūfilik*, Kotil, Ahmet (trans.), İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları 1993, p. 8.

¹⁶¹⁸ Renard, 2009, p. 229; Karamustafa, T. Ahmet: *Sufism. The Formative Period*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2007, p. 6; Crapanzano, Vincent: *The Ḥamadsha. A Study in Moroccan Ethnopsychiatry*, Berkeley / Los Angeles / London: University of California 1973, p. 15; Trimmingham, 1971, p. 1; Voll, John / Ohtsuka, Kazuo: “Sufism”, in: *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World. Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, <<http://www.oxford-islamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0759>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹⁶¹⁹ Karamustafa, 2007, p. 1.

¹⁶²⁰ Karamustafa, 2007, p. 6.

¹⁶²¹ Goldziher, Ignaz: “Materialien zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des Šūfismus”, in: *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 13, 1899, pp. 35–56; Goldziher, Ignaz: *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, pp. 116–166; Macdonald, B. Duncan: *Aspects of Islam*, New York: Macmillan 1911, pp. 190–203; Knysh, 2005, p. 112.

8.7 Zühhd

According to Êde, the woollen garment symbolizes death, both for the body and the soul (*nefs*). The death of the *nefs*, Êde argues, stands for turning away from the earthly needs or desires and accommodating only God as the object of desire in the heart. However, *zühhd* is not the abandonment of possession entirely, though there may be cases, but the abandonment of worldly desires and ambition¹⁶²².

The emergence of the *zühhd* movement has often been linked with the socio-political changes that occurred in the early Islamic dynasties. From the beginning of the Umayyad Dynasty (661–750), the military success and the related political developments gave rise to conflicts in various layers of Islamic society, which often took place in the form of individual reactions¹⁶²³. Certain prominent figures, who were known as *zâhid* (ascetic), and groups cumulated around them preferred to keep their distance from such conflicts and took a rather passive stance. These exceptionally pious individuals were dissatisfied with the commitment to worldly matters and mere fulfilment of religious obligations. Thus, they sought a deeper spiritual life. Reminiscent of Weber’s “world-rejecting asceticism”¹⁶²⁴, for the representatives of *zühhd*, the ambitions of the Umayyad rulers for material enrichment instead of spiritual gains and ever-increasing worldly achievements through the spoils of wars—lands, state treasury, slaves, concubines etc.—were a sign of religious degeneration. Towards the end of the eighth century, some radical opinions were voiced among the early ascetics, who defended the abandonment of cities that flourished exponentially during the Islamic expansion period. According to this group of ascetics, due to the new additional economic wealth, cultural elements, customs, and worldviews incorporated from the conquered lands, the city dwellers and rulers embraced a profane attitude in both worldly and religious affairs, and thus their focus was shifted from spiritual to material. As a reaction to it, certain *zâhid* individuals bluntly distanced themselves from *mübah* (any action or object neither forbidden nor recommended, but religiously neutral according to Islamic law) and even from *helâl* codes (any action or object that is permissible and lawful), with the fear of unknowingly disobeying the *şeriat* or doing something that Prophet Muhammed would not approve. Known as *takvâ* (God-fearing behaviour) this attitude may take various shapes in line with subjective personal interpretation and understanding of the term.

¹⁶²² Êde, E. Yusuf: “Tasavvuf Kavramının Kökeni ve Anlamları Hakkında Bir İnceleme”, Yıldız, Mehmet (trans.), in: *Akademiar Dergisi*, 2, 2017, pp. 227–252/235.

¹⁶²³ Yılmaz, 2004, pp. 103–104.

¹⁶²⁴ Karamustafa, T. Ahmet: *God’s Unruly Friends. Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period (1200 – 1550)*, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press 1994, p. 25.

Such extreme understanding of *takvâ* and *zühd* was possibly one of the main factors for *mutasavvife* to have separated themselves from the central thought and “stand in sharp contrast to the luxurious and wealthy lifestyles”¹⁶²⁵.

“The most famous representative of the ascetic movement”¹⁶²⁶, Hasan Basrî (642–728), was one of the first ascetics who publicly declared his dissatisfaction with the mere “formal acts of devotion”¹⁶²⁷ that carry no spiritual meaning or sincerity (*ihlâs*) behind. Kara identifies two main dimensions for the *zâhid* stance against this assumed deterioration. The first is the degeneration of the Prophet’s ascetic model¹⁶²⁸ through worldly gains mentioned above, and the second dimension in Kara’s view is “the attitude of (religious) scholars who ignore the spiritual dimension of religious matters, explaining them only rationally”¹⁶²⁹. According to Kara, these reactions have shaped *tasavvuf*’s ascetic character and accelerated its development process, since similarly “they [a.n. *mutasavvife*] opposed to the first group [a.n. degenerate rulers] with their ascetic behaviour and to the second group [a.n. religious scholars] with their mystical interpretations”¹⁶³⁰. For Goldziher too, what primarily differentiated the early asceticism from the preceding *tasavvuf* interpretation was the “mysticism”¹⁶³¹ of the latter, which was confirmed by Nicholson in the following statement: “the woollen garment adopted (as Ibn Khaldun says) by Muhammadan ascetics in order to distinguish themselves from those who affected a more luxurious fashion of dress, really marks a definite rift between asceticism and orthodoxy”¹⁶³². Even if some of these ascetics reacted to the deterioration in social life fiercely, initially they did not pose a serious threat to any political/religious authority.

The attachment of the etymological root of *tasavvuf* and *sûfî* to woollen garments was seen as the most convenient option by Serrâc in order not to reduce the complex set of meanings of *tasavvuf* to a single definition¹⁶³³. Serrâc treats *mutasavvife* as the masters of multiple *hâl*¹⁶³⁴ (state, condition) and *makam*¹⁶³⁵ (station, degree, rank), which turns *tasavvuf* into an umbrella term covering various altered state of consciousness (ASC) conditions experienced by certain

¹⁶²⁵ Cook, “Mysticism in Sufi Islam”, 2015.

¹⁶²⁶ Nicholson, 1906, p. 304.

¹⁶²⁷ Nicholson, 1906, p. 305.

¹⁶²⁸ For the varieties of Prophet Muhammed’s *zühd* derived from the *hadis* sources, see: Yılmaz, 2004, pp. 30–33, 85–90.

¹⁶²⁹ Kara, 1992, p. 8.

¹⁶³⁰ Kara, 1992, p. 8.

¹⁶³¹ Knysh, 2005, p. 112; Khalil / Sheikh, 2014, p. 359.

¹⁶³² Nicholson, 1906, p. 305.

¹⁶³³ Along with Serrâc, Yılmaz reports that certain other prominent figures including “Kelâbâzî, Ebû Nuaym, Gazzâlî, Ibnu’l-Cevzî, and İbn Teymiye” as well hold this position. See, Yılmaz, 2004, pp. 26–27.

¹⁶³⁴ Kuşeyrî, *Risale*, Vol. 1, pp. 126–129.

¹⁶³⁵ Kuşeyrî, *Risale*, Vol. 1, pp. 126–129.

people wearing certain clothing. Due to their subjective and changing nature, each *hâl* of a *mutasavvîf* corresponds to a different facet of *tasavvuf*, thus it (*tasavvuf*) cannot be defined merely by one of these states. From Serrâc's perspective, if we are to define *tasavvuf* according to one of the *hâl*, then for each *hâl* we will have to re-define it. Therefore, he suggests that attributing *tasavvuf* to those who wear woollen garments to declare their belief-oriented pious and ascetic attitude towards life is an appropriate and encompassing way to define it¹⁶³⁶. Along the same lines, Üde argues that "the epithet 'zâhid' falls short of denoting the complete meaning of *tasavvuf*"¹⁶³⁷. While *zühhd* is only one stage (*makam*) in the whole system, *tasavvuf* harbours several additional stages including repentance (*tövbe*), patience (*sabır*), and trust (*tevekkül*), or various ASC states (*hâl*)—e.g., anxiety (*kabz*), tranquillity (*bast*), effervescence (*üns*)¹⁶³⁸. Acknowledging a continuity between *zühhd* and *tasavvuf*, Yılmaz argues that "*zühhd* is not the goal itself but a means that leads to the spiritual maturity that *tasavvuf* aims to achieve; thus, it would be incomplete to describe *tasavvuf* as merely *zühhd*"¹⁶³⁹. However, the general opinion on the relation between *tasavvuf* and *zühhd* holds that the *zühhd* literature or poetry (*zühdiyyât*)¹⁶⁴⁰—in which an ascetic way of life is attributed to Prophet Muhammed and some of his companions' (*sahâbe*) lifestyles—was the source for *tasavvuf* literature in terms of content, critical discourse, and terminology. Kerhî's definition of *tasavvuf* quoted above, for example, is considered "in accordance with the understanding of *zühhd*"¹⁶⁴¹. From this view, the majority of *mutasavvife* stretch the history of *tasavvuf* to *asr-ı saâdet* (the century of happiness) and regard Prophet Muhammed the first *sûfî*¹⁶⁴² and his way of living as the absolute model¹⁶⁴³ or "the evident prototype"¹⁶⁴⁴ for both *zühhd* and *tasavvuf*¹⁶⁴⁵. A prominent leader of the Turkish Halvetî-Cerrâhî *tarikât*, Muzaffer Ozak, even regarded Prophet Muhammed as "the first [person] to practice whirling"¹⁶⁴⁶. Correspondingly, Knysh argues that "the normative literature of Sufism routinely

¹⁶³⁶ Serrâc, *El-Lüma'*, 1996, pp. 21–22.

¹⁶³⁷ Üde, 2017, p. 231.

¹⁶³⁸ Chittick, 2008, p. 116. For detailed investigations of these terms, see: Kuşeyrî, *Risale*, Vol. 1, 1978, pp. 126–133; Al-Hujwîrî, *Kashf Al-Mahjûb*, 1911, pp. 180–183, 367–371.

¹⁶³⁹ Yılmaz, 2004, p. 29.

¹⁶⁴⁰ Cebecioğlu, Ethem: *Tasavvuf Terimleri ve Deyimleri Sözlüğü*, İstanbul: Ağaç Kitabevi 2004, p. 735; Karamustafa, 2007, p. 29.

¹⁶⁴¹ Yılmaz, 2004, p. 29. For additional *sûfî* figures and their *zühhd*-related definitions of *tasavvuf*, see: Cebecioğlu, 2004, p. 734.

¹⁶⁴² For more information see: Moon, Farzana: *Prophet Muhammad. The First Sufi of Islam*, New York: Garnet 2013.

¹⁶⁴³ Chittick, C. William: "Dhikr", in: Jones, Lindsay (ed.), *MacMillan Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 4, Second Edition, Farmington: Thomson Gale 2005, pp. 2339–2342/2339; Kara, 1992, p. 8.

¹⁶⁴⁴ Michon, 1997, p. 281.

¹⁶⁴⁵ Yılmaz, 2004, p. 17; Douglas-Klotz, Neil: "The Key in the Dark. Self and Soul Transformation in the Sufi Tradition", in: Mijares, G. Sharon (ed.), *Modern Psychology and Ancient Wisdom. An Anthology of Healing Practices from the World's Religious Traditions*, New York: Hawthorn Press 2000, pp. 113–135.

¹⁶⁴⁶ Geels, 1996, p. 233; Ozak, 1978, p. 120.

describes the Prophet and some of his Companions, who were dissatisfied with the outward observance of the religious law and engaged in self-imposed strictures, as the first Sufis”¹⁶⁴⁷. According to Michon too, “by his personality, by his teaching, by the virtues he exemplified, the Prophet Muḥammad was the first Sufi, the model that would inspire mystics for all the generations to come”¹⁶⁴⁸. Consideration of Prophet Muhammed as a model was in fact based on a verse from the *Kur’an* holding that “In God’s messenger you have a fine model for someone who looks forward to [meeting] God and the Last Day, and mentions God frequently”¹⁶⁴⁹. As in this view, taking the assigned prophet as a model of imitation for the believers is commanded in almost all Abrahamic religions¹⁶⁵⁰. For example, the *First Epistle to the Corinthians* in the *New Testament*, attributed to Paul the Apostle (c. 5–64/67 AD), contains a chapter instructing the readers to “follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ”¹⁶⁵¹.

As in the case of various Islamic and non-Islamic sciences and trends, the *zūhd* movement too incorporated various sub-streams containing mild to certain extreme patterns of ascetic behaviour, which conceivably emerged from differing interpretations. The immediate followers of Prophet Muhammed, *sahābe* (the companions), from which the earliest examples of *zūhd* emerged¹⁶⁵², had demonstrated varying tendencies during and after the time of the Prophet. In addition to their interests in dealing with science, proselytizing religion, joining *cihad* (religious battle), or governing regions, some *sahābe* placed greater emphasis on their worship and piety. Though there was no such group of people carrying the title *zāhid* in the time of Prophet Muhammed, certain individuals who were distinguished by their piety, absolute focus on devotion, and abundant worship were identifiable. These individuals are variously called *nāsik* (devout), *bekkāin* (tearful), *ābid* (servant), *seyyāhūn* (traveller), *cūiyye* (hungry ones), *şıkeftiyye* (cave dwellers), *nūriyye* (those who seek for the divine light of the heart), or *fukarā* (poor)¹⁶⁵³, each demonstrating what they emphasize in their asceticism. In response to the degeneration of the ruling elite, they showed their reactions both with their critical discourse based on *hadis* and by wearing extremely plain and modest dresses. Later, the nickname “those who wear wool”

¹⁶⁴⁷ Knysh, 2000, p. 5.

¹⁶⁴⁸ Michon, 1997, p. 268.

¹⁶⁴⁹ *Kur’an* 33:21 (*Ahzâb*), in: Irving, B. Thomas (trans.): *The Qur’an. The First American Version*, Vermont: Amana Books 1985, p. 232.

¹⁶⁵⁰ For detailed information, see: Ryan, J. Patrick: “Imitation as a Religious Duty. Jewish, Christian and Muslim Perspectives”, Lecture given at Fordham University, Spring 2018, <https://www.fordham.edu/download/downloads/id/11528/spring_2018_lecture.pdf>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹⁶⁵¹ *1 Corinthians* 11:1, in: NIV, 2001, p. 636.

¹⁶⁵² Knysh, 2005, p. 112.

¹⁶⁵³ Yılmaz, 2004, p. 27; Yıldırım, Ahmet: *Tasavvufun Temel Öğretilerinin Hadislerdeki Dayanakları*, Dissertation, Ankara Üniversitesi, 1996, p. 15; Ceyhan, Semih: “Zühhd”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 44, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2013, pp. 530–533/531.

(*sûfiyyûn*), as Serrâc argues, was accepted as a general nomenclature defining all these different groups. Depending on the leading ascetic's tendency, circles (*halka*) for preaching, advice, storytelling, and education in religious matters began to be formed, which soon constituted the core of the trends of asceticism that began to emerge following the seventh and eighth centuries.

The main representatives of this *zühhd* movement can be listed as follows: Veysel Karanî (594–657), Hasan Basrî (642–728), Cafer Sâdık (702–765), İbrahim İbn Edhem (718–777), Süfyan Servî (715–778), Şakîk Belhî (?–810), Dâvud Taî (?–781), Râbiatü'l-Adeviyye (713–801), Fudayl İbn İyaz (726–803). Each of these prominent figures emphasized various aspects of *zühhd* in their relationship with God. While, for example, Basrî's devotion was based on fear of God, Râbia was considered one of the first representatives of the love-oriented *zühhd* attitude and the concept of divine love¹⁶⁵⁴. Chittick reproduces the common historical views on *tasavvuf* and considers this change from fear to love “a gradual development of Sufism”, which eventually combined the two aspects with an emphasis on “knowledge and gnosis”¹⁶⁵⁵.

Concerning the forms of Muslim asceticism, the life of a *sûfî*, İbn Seb'în (1217–1271), illustrates one extreme pole of taking Prophet Muhammed as an example when İbn Seb'în spent two years in the same cave (*Hira*), where Prophet Muhammed received the first revelation, possibly with the expectation of a kind of prophecy. The last years of Ahmet Yesevî's (1093–1166) life was another extreme attitude toward taking Prophet Muhammed as a model. According to the narrative, in his early sixties, at the age of Prophet Muhammed's death, Yesevî withdrew to an underground cell and remained there until his death¹⁶⁵⁶.

The personal “world-rejecting asceticism” of the *zühhd* movement that emerged as a reaction to the inevitable secularization of the community had serious implications for the majority, namely for those who prioritized the doctrine of *ehl-i sünnet ve'l-cemâat* (the consensus of the community). Karamustafa analyses the issue with an argument that the secluded personal experiences of religion were at odds with the communal experience due to the potential avoidance of *şeriat* as an administrating instrument:

“This doctrine expressed the binding nature of the consensus of the community of believers (*um-mah*); it embodied in effect the recognition of the community as the sole legitimate authority within the Sunnî sphere. Expressed somewhat differently, the doctrine of *ijmâc* acknowledged the commu-

¹⁶⁵⁴ For a detailed study of Râbia's conception of love, see: Smith, Margaret: *Râbi'a the Mystic & Her Fellow-Saints in Islâm*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1928, pp. 88–110.

¹⁶⁵⁵ Chittick, 2008, p. 74.

¹⁶⁵⁶ Eraslan, Kemal: “Ahmed Yesevî”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 2, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1988, pp. 159–161/160; Köprülü, M. Fuad: *Early Mystics in Turkish Literature*, Leiser, Gary / Dankoff, Robert (trans.), London / New York: Routledge 2006, p. 63.

nity as the only proper receptacle, bearer, and dispenser of the Qur’ān and the *sunnah*, the sole point of contact, albeit indirect, with God. The identification of the community of believers as the third source of legal authority after the Qur’ān and the *sunnah* necessitated a consistent emphasis on the communal as opposed to the private in religious life. In practice, this emphasis meant the primacy of public ritual and religiously sanctioned norms (the *sharī‘ah*) over private religiosity and morality. In all areas of the sacred in society, the exoteric (*ẓāhir*) was privileged over the esoteric (*bāṭin*); aspects of private piety that were not susceptible to public scrutiny automatically became a suspect as being potentially anticommunal. Not only could the private disrupt communal homogeneity by opening the door to blameworthy innovation (*bid‘ah sayyi‘ah*) and antinomianism, but it would in the long run also violate the primacy of the community through its propensity to generate claims of personal proximity to God. In the eyes of the ‘people of the community’, therefore, the community’s need to safeguard the core of religion overrode the equally urgent need to develop modes of piety that could satisfy the demands of the individual believer for a direct relationship with God”¹⁶⁵⁷

For the reason summarized above, the main task for *mutasavvif* was to correct these excesses in the understanding of *zūhd* by conforming it back to *sūnnī* jurisprudence, *ṣeriat*, and ensure that it regained its legitimate and authentic form to be reintegrated into society. Inherited from the *zūhd* self-assertion attempts to be located within the *ehl-i sūnnet ve’l-cemâat*, *mutasavvife* as well had to demonstrate their views’ suitability to the Islamic discourses as the disputes over *tasavvuf*’s legitimacy are remain unsolved among the opposers of *tasavvuf*.

8.8 The Legitimacy of *Zūhd* and *Tasavvuf*

Elias argues that “the early *sufi* theoreticians were concerned to present *tasavvuf* as an orthodox (right belief) system with orthopraxy (proper action)”¹⁶⁵⁸ that conforms to Islamic doctrines. According to Yaman, the main theoretical sources of *tasavvuf* were primarily composed to discuss “the central terminology and manners (*âdâb*) of *tasavvuf* originate from the *Kur’an* and *sūnnet* and that it emerged as a natural result of the spiritual dimension of Islam”¹⁶⁵⁹. Even though there is no mention of *tasavvuf* or *sūfī* in the *Kur’an* or any reference to its usage during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammed (*asr-ı saâdet*), it is now one of the most well recognized Islamic concepts for both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. According to Serrâc, the author of one of the earliest surveys written on *tasavvuf*, *Kitab el-Luma’ fi’t-tasavvuf* (*The Book of Light Flashes on Tasavvuf*), there were, however, certain terms in use during the life-

¹⁶⁵⁷ Karamustafa, 2007, p. 27.

¹⁶⁵⁸ Elias, 1999, p. 217.

¹⁶⁵⁹ Yaman, Hikmet: “İsmi Olmayan Bir Hakikatten Hakikati Olmayan Bir İsme Varan Yolculuk. Oryantalist Çalışmalarda Tasavvufun Menşesine Dair Tartışmalar Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme”, in: *Akademiar Dergisi*, 1, 2016, pp. 15–48/17.

time of the Prophet Muhammed such as *âbid*, *zâhid*, *saih* and *fakir*¹⁶⁶⁰ which are not directly associated with the term *sûfî* but can nevertheless be related to a *sûfî* way of life. Furthermore, Serrâc stresses that having the opportunity of being Prophet Muhammed's companion (*sahâbe*) was the highest rank an ordinary Muslim can get; therefore, the term *sûfî* was not needed to identify those who devoutly follow the model represented by Prophet Muhammed. Yaman reproduces early *mutasavvîf* argument by referring to the presence of “issues and provisions regarding *fikih* and *kelam* on the agenda of Muslims before their formation as Islamic sciences” and states that during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammed and even in his own personality “the elements of piety emphasized by *tasavvuf* were central points of Muslim's religious practices”¹⁶⁶¹ before the institutionalization of it.

The accounts of Serrâc imply that he was defending *tasavvuf* against certain opposing views claiming that *tasavvuf* and its practices were to be *bid'at* (innovation), a term used to denote beliefs, worship, and ideas related to religion that are “invented” after the century of happiness, in other words without the approval of Prophet Muhammed and the *Kur'an*. Similar conflicts on the legitimacy of *tasavvuf* in Islam have been taking place between the *mutasavvîf* and *ulemâ*¹⁶⁶² since the formation of *tasavvuf*. Numerous treatises have been written by both sides to defend their claims on the subject. The *ulemâ* group¹⁶⁶³ based their discourses primarily on the concept of *bid'at* and argued that *tasavvuf* and its practices, to put it in a nutshell, are non-confirmed and therefore non-allowed add-ons to religion. The *ulemâ* also claim that *sûfîs* are overinterpreting—through a specific form of interpretation (*te'vil*)—the revelations and terms in the *Kur'an* mentioned in this study including *zikir*, in their search for *hakikat* (the absolute truth or “ultimate reality”)¹⁶⁶⁴ and *mârifet*.

For Serrâc and most *mutasavvîf*, the whole *tasavvuf* idea with its characteristic education system, *seyrüsülûk*, was substantially built on the notion of purifying the heart (*nefs*) through disciplining it in a systematized and prescribed way. Since their argument is based on the *Kur'anic* verses, e.g., 91:7-10 (*Şems*)—where the importance of having a cleansed *nefs* as the key instrument to avoid failure (in the context of the *Kur'an*) and to reach prosperity is re-

¹⁶⁶⁰ Serrâc, *El-Lüma'*, 1996, p. 22.

¹⁶⁶¹ Yaman, 2016, pp. 41–42.

¹⁶⁶² The term *ulemâ* is the plural form of *âlim*, literally meaning the learned one or scholar. Both terms originate from the Arabic language but also have almost the same use in Turkish, though belonging to the jargon of a limited group. *Ulemâ* comes to mean Muslim scholars who are trained in a *medrese* on the topics of Islamic law and jurisprudence. They are considered to be the guardians and key warrantors of the continuity of religious knowledge.

¹⁶⁶³ It is important to note that not all members of the *ulemâ* group were against *tasavvuf*. Some of them were even adherent to a *tarikât* and a strict followers of a *sûfî* way of life.

¹⁶⁶⁴ Renard, 2009, p. 197.

minded— it strengthens the discourse of *mutasavvıf* regarding the nurturing of *nefs* in their attempts to understand ‘the knowledge of God’, *mârifet*, as part of authentic Islam. Therefore, the concept of *nefs* is embedded in all the doctrines of *tasavvuf*; in its various definitions, theories, parables, didactic stories, and anecdotes and the nurturing of *nefs* correspondingly constitutes the centre of gravity of *tasavvuf* and gives shape to its practices such as *zikir*, *halvet*, *tefekkün* etc. within an Islamic frame.

Beginning in the last period of the ninth century, the disputes between the *ulemâ* and *mutasavvıf* have led the latter to direct their critical discourse from social issues and distortions in the *ümme*t to religious sciences, which eventually resulted in the emergence of various trends in early *tasavvuf*. In this framework, during the ninth century, two main *zühd* trends among *mutasavvıf* stand out above others: the Khorasan trend of Ebu Yezid el-Bistâmî (804–874) and the Baghdad trend represented by Cüneyd-i Bağdâdî (830–910).

8.9 Some Varieties of *Zühd*

Exercising a variety of *zühd* and *tasavvuf* practices in his devotion including “*sekr*, *fenâ*, *melâmet*, *tevhid*, *mârifet*, *muhabbet*, *mi‘raç*, *îsâr*”¹⁶⁶⁵, Bistâmî has been highly esteemed by numerous *sûfî* for his asceticism and earliest formulations of an experience-based relationship with God. His views on certain *tasavvuf* concepts—e.g., *fenâ* (annihilation of the self) and *sekr* (intoxication) achieved through *riyâzet* (asceticism), struggle against the *nefs* (the self and its desires), *tefekkün* (contemplation), and *murakabe* (introspection, supervision)—have been unceasingly resonating in *sûfî* circles around the globe even today. The author of one of the earliest *sûfî* manuals, Hücivîrî’s description of Bistâmî’s understanding of intoxication or rapture displays several themes that correspond approximately to all ensuing *tasavvuf* and preceding non-Islamic (Greek philosophical and Gnostic) perspectives with ascetic inclinations in their perception of God. According to Hücivîrî, Bistâmî’s intoxication,

“involves the destruction of human attributes, like foresight and choice, and the annihilation of a man’s self-control in God, so that only those faculties survive in him that do not belong to the human genus; and they are the most complete and perfect”¹⁶⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶⁵ Uludağ, Süleyman: “Bâyezîd-i Bistâmî”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 5, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1992b, pp. 238–241/239.

¹⁶⁶⁶ Al-Hujwîrî, *Kashf Al-Mahjûb*, 1911, p. 185.

What can be deduced from Hücivîrî's account is a dimension Bistâmî brought to the love concept of Râbiatü'l-Adeviyye through the inclusion of a form of altered state of consciousness, which Bistâmî named *sekr* and described as intoxication, rapture, or spiritual "drunkenness"¹⁶⁶⁷. These terms, Uludağ argues, are the earliest symbolic expressions of an experience of God, known as *vecd*, or *cezbe* (ecstasy)¹⁶⁶⁸. Based on Hücivîrî's views, Bistâmî appears to employ a narrative of the desired perfection, considers the "human genus" to be insufficient to attain this perfection, and, reminding the introvertive mystical experiences, he assumes a possibility to obliterate the borders between the Creator and created through annihilation of the self (*fenâ*). While Nicholson argues that Bistâmî also brought "extreme pantheistic ideas into Sufiism"¹⁶⁶⁹ through his "ecstatic utterances"¹⁶⁷⁰ (*şathiye*), for Uludağ, Bistâmî's experiences should rather be seen as "*vahdet-i şühûd*"¹⁶⁷¹. Uludağ additionally refers to Ibn Teymiyye (1263–1328), a renowned *sünnî* theologian and jurist, who interpreted Bistâmî's views as "*vahdet-i vücûd*"¹⁶⁷². Some reported symbolic utterances of Bistâmî that caused at least three different interpretations shown above are:

"Verily, I am God, there is no God except Me, so worship Me"

"I came forth from Bayazid-ness as a snake from its skin. Then I looked. I saw that lover, beloved, and love are one, for in the world of unification all can be one"¹⁶⁷³

Differing from Bistâmî, prominent *mutasavvîf* Cüneyd-i Bağdâdî prioritizes sobriety (*sahv*) in his ascetic (*zühd*) and purification-based relationship with God, producing the concept of *bekâ* (everlastingness or subsistence in God)¹⁶⁷⁴ instead of *fenâ* (annihilation of the self)¹⁶⁷⁵. Bağdâdî, as a matter of fact, acknowledges *sekr* (intoxication)¹⁶⁷⁶, along with *vecd* and similar other ASC experiences, but advocates that in order to maintain the hardly attained relationship

¹⁶⁶⁷ Kuşeyrî, *Risale*, Vol. 1, 1978, p. 146; Ayverdi, 2010, p. 1077; Renard, 2009, p. 122; Long, Matthew: "Intoxication", in: Morrow, A. John (ed.), *Islamic Images and Ideas. Essays on Sacred Symbolism*, North Carolina / London: McFarland & Company 2014, pp. 75–100/95.

¹⁶⁶⁸ Uludağ, 1992b, p. 239; Kuşeyrî, *Risale*, Vol. 1, 1978, p. 147.

¹⁶⁶⁹ Nicholson, 1906, p. 326. Knysh also refers to Douglas Macdonald, who further includes Hallâc-ı Mansûr as the inaugurator of the pantheistic trend in Islam. See: Knysh, 2005, p. 115.

¹⁶⁷⁰ Ernst, W. Carl: *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*, Albany: SUNY Press 1985.

¹⁶⁷¹ Uludağ, 1992b, p. 240.

¹⁶⁷² Uludağ, 1992b, p. 240.

¹⁶⁷³ Nicholson, 1906, p. 327; Uludağ, 1992b, pp. 239–240.

¹⁶⁷⁴ Al-Hujwîrî, *Kashf Al-Mahjûb*, 1911, p. 185.

¹⁶⁷⁵ Frishkopf, 1999, p. 65.

¹⁶⁷⁶ According to Hücivîrî's account, however, Bağdâdî and his followers held that "intoxication is evil, because it involves the disturbance of one's normal state and loss of sanity and selfcontrol". See: Al-Hujwîrî, *Kashf Al-Mahjûb*, 1911, p. 185.

with God, following the experience of *sekr* one returns to a prior state, namely “to a sustainable level of spiritual engagement”¹⁶⁷⁷. According to Kuşeyrî’s input, “sobriety is returning to self-consciousness after absence [in God]. Drunkenness is absence [from one’s self] through a strong experience [of God]. In a sense, drunkenness is a complement to absence”¹⁶⁷⁸. Bağdâdî’s personal engagement with God in a form of unity was based on his “theory of the covenant” (*mîsâk nazariyesi*)¹⁶⁷⁹, which has been reproduced by numerous *mutasavvife* in the subsequent periods. As mentioned before, this primordial covenant predating creation known as *bezm-i elest* was settled between God and all the souls¹⁶⁸⁰ that were yet to be created. Bağdâdî believed the settlement was done in a state of *fenâ* (annihilation) of the souls¹⁶⁸¹. However, Bağdâdî’s annihilation “consists of *mârifet* and *vahdet-i şühûd* that an annihilation of the material existence or a union of God and human soul (*ittihad*) is out of question”¹⁶⁸². Correspondingly, Hücûvî quotes Bağdâdî and interprets his understanding of unification and its limits as follows:

“Junayd said: ‘Unification is the separation of the eternal from that which was originated in time,’ i.e. you must not regard the eternal as a *locus* of phenomena, or phenomena as a *locus* of the eternal; and you must know that God is eternal and that you are phenomenal, and that nothing of your *genus* is connected with Him, and that nothing of His attributes is mingled in you, and that there is no homogeneity between the eternal and the phenomenal”¹⁶⁸³

Compared to Bistâmî’s intoxication, Bağdâdî’s strictly kept existential dualism in the quotation above was interpreted as more “acceptable to the ulama [a.n. scholars] and Islamic mainstream”¹⁶⁸⁴, since—diverging from Bistâmî’s speculative ecstatic utterances—Bağdâdî emphasizes the ineffability aspect of encounters with God and “understood that much the Sufi’s experience and gnosis must be guarded and kept secret”¹⁶⁸⁵.

One characteristic feature of Bağdâdî is that he further applies his narrative of returning to a prior state, both in *sahv* and *bezm-i elest*, to the unification concept, as if it was a *leitmotif*:

“One should be sunk in the seas of His unity, self-annihilated and dead alike to the call of mankind to him and his answer to them, absorbed by the reality of the Divine unity in true proximity, and lost

¹⁶⁷⁷ Renard, 2009, p. 225.

¹⁶⁷⁸ Al-Qushayrî, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 93.

¹⁶⁷⁹ Ateş, Süleyman: “Cüneyd-i Bağdâdî”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 8, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1993, pp. 119–121/121.

¹⁶⁸⁰ *Kur’an* 7:172 (*A’râf*).

¹⁶⁸¹ Ateş, 1993, p. 121.

¹⁶⁸² Ateş, 1993, p. 120.

¹⁶⁸³ Al-Hujwîrî, *Kashf Al-Mahjûb*, 1911, p. 281.

¹⁶⁸⁴ Frishkopf, 1999, p. 65; Nicholson, 1906, p. 328.

¹⁶⁸⁵ Frishkopf, 1999, p. 65.

to sense and action, because God fulfils in him what He hath willed of him, namely, that his last state should become his first state, and that he should be as he was before he existed”¹⁶⁸⁶

Intriguingly, Baġdādī’s equation of the “last state” with the “first state” and returning to an original existence in the quotation above had been variously expressed in certain preceding non-Islamic trends, above all in Alexandrian syncretic trends, specifically from Parmenides to prominent Egyptian *ouroboros* symbol, and from Hermetic and Greek mottos to Cleopatra the Alchemist, which may allow this study to enter an area for speculation. However, keeping Knysh’s argument in mind, who holds that:

“The fact that certain ‘foreign’ ideas were intricately interwoven into this shared intellectual universe does not necessarily imply that it was decisively shaped by Greek or Hellenistic ideas. In and of itself, their *Gedankenwelt* remained thoroughly and distinctively Islamic. Therefore, to view their mysticism as a simple conduit to Islam of unprocessed ‘foreign’ influences is a gross oversimplification”¹⁶⁸⁷

Linking Baġdādī directly to these trends requires further studies, leaving this potential link to remain as speculation. However, when moved from Baġdādī’s views to the larger realm of *tasavvuf*, one can notice non-negligible correspondences with the application of the cognitive bridge theory.

As attempted to demonstrate in this chapter, the word *ṣūf* and its symbolic associations with *zūhd* in Islam have been interpreted so variedly, of which merely a small portion could be represented as the precursors of *tasavvuf*. Such inherent and unbroken continuity between the *zūhd* movement, with all its different actors and diverse attitudes, and *tasavvuf* may license the word *ṣūf* as the etymological root for *sūfī* and certain other derivations. This view, however, has not been unanimously accepted by all. Demirli, for example, opposes the idea that *zūhd* trend was the preceding form of *tasavvuf* and considers “identifying *zūhd* with Sufism or at least treating it as a starting point in academic research is a common mistake”¹⁶⁸⁸.

One another issue concerning *sūfī*’s etymology is that Nicholson refers to the woollen garment (*ṣūf*), based on Ibn Haldūn’s view, was “first applied to Abū Hāshim of Kúfa, of whom Jāmi says (*Nafahāt*, 34, 11): Before him, there were men eminent for asceticism and piety and well-doing in the path of trust and in the path of love, but he was the first that was called

¹⁶⁸⁶ Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 1911, pp. 282–283.

¹⁶⁸⁷ Knysh, 2005, p. 123.

¹⁶⁸⁸ Demirli, 2016, p. 11.

Şūfī”¹⁶⁸⁹. Verifying the inconsistencies and ambiguity with reference to certain names and terms including *sūfī* and *tasavvuf*, Knysh identifies a potential “textual corruption of Abū Hāshim’s name—‘al-Kūfī’ misspelled as ‘al-Şūfī’ in an early Şūfī text”¹⁶⁹⁰. This “textual corruption”, or variations in spelling and translations, as shown above, are characteristic to the history of *tasavvuf* and can be best exemplified through an investigation of the term *sūfī* in the context of translations from various languages into Arabic.

8.10 Sophia

Depending on the school of thought one pursues, *tasavvuf* and its origins can be interpreted in a variety of ways, which often brings about clashing opinions. As Kutluer argues, “alternative definitions and differences in approach that various thinkers proposed in accordance with their own system have led to the emergence of heated debates on these definitions”¹⁶⁹¹. One common ground for all these different approaches to *tasavvuf* is that the descriptions of it are generally too ambiguous, tending to impressionist, poetic, dramatic depictions, and many times excessively didactic explanations that exclude an external logical approach. Accordingly, Knysh argues that “people end up taking these terms to mean whatever they wish”¹⁶⁹², leading to unanimity among the interpreters. This is perhaps due to the fact that the way *mutasavvife* and sympathetic scholars conceptualize the notion of knowledge and how it is acquired in *tasavvuf* are often experience-based. For example, Eraydın, along the same lines as Serrâc¹⁶⁹³, proposes that “since *tasavvuf* is a science/knowledge of state (*hâl*), the descriptions of it should be evaluated as the results of this state”¹⁶⁹⁴.

Reflecting the endless discussions on the origins of *tasavvuf*, countless descriptions of *tasavvuf* are available offered by numerous *mutasavvife*, ordinary people, ill-/literate adherents of a *tarikat*, prominent historical figures, and many more. While some of those descriptions emphasize its Islamic features and discuss *tasavvuf* as a product of exclusively Islam, some others focus on its universals and seek ways to connect it with Indian, pre-Islamic Persian,

¹⁶⁸⁹ Nicholson, 1906, p. 305.

¹⁶⁹⁰ Knysh, Alexander: “Abū Hāshim al-Şūfī”, in: Fleet, Kate, et. al. (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Third Edition, 2011b, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/abu-hashim-al-sufi-COM_23645>, last accessed: 11 March 2022; Nicholson, 1906, p. 305; Yaman, 2016, p. 41. Yılmaz additionally refers to another “rumour” addressing the known Muslim alchemist Cābir b. Hayyân of Kûfe as the first to be called *sūfī*, see: Yılmaz, 2014, p. 23.

¹⁶⁹¹ Kutluer, 2000b, p. 86.

¹⁶⁹² Knysh, 2005, p. 106.

¹⁶⁹³ Ūde, 2017, pp. 230–231.

¹⁶⁹⁴ Eraydın, 1994, p. 36.

Turkish, Buddhist, as well as Greek traditions; and additionally, seek common denominators in early Jewish as well as Christian mystic schools of thought¹⁶⁹⁵. Trimingham, for instance, argues that despite “Sufism was a natural development within Islam”, it was “receiving radiations from the ascetical-mystical life and thought of eastern Christianity”¹⁶⁹⁶ and thus he does not altogether neglect the possibility that *tasavvuf* might be shaped to a certain extent by extra-Islamic elements. Throughout history, under the influence of the day’s research trends, scholars mostly applied divergent approaches to *tasavvuf* that “reflect their particular training as well as their intellectual and even ideological orientation”¹⁶⁹⁷. The same can be said for Muslim scholars who studied *tasavvuf* and its potential origins. Most of these scholars discussed *tasavvuf* as a product of Islam; namely its constitution, extensions, and transformation processes can be attributed only to Islam. A claim suggesting an alternative explanation to the origins and transformation of *tasavvuf* could easily be regarded as orientalist or un-Islamic and thus might create consequences for the claimant.

Proposing the Greek word *sophia* as the potential root for the Arabic term *sûfî* is one of these arguments which is considered an orientalist import or un-Islamic. However, a detailed investigation demonstrated that a *sûfî-sophia* correlation in fact complies with the *Kur’anic* narrative, which equipped certain pre-Islamic prophets with *hikmet* and thus encompasses all the wisdom-related phenomena that took place before its composition. Added up with the *hikmet-sophia* and *hikmet-philosophy* relations as part of various epistemological systems, a *sûfî-sophia* correlation can still be argued within the Islamic scope and therefore it will not necessarily be an Orientalist or un-Islamic import.

In search for the etymological roots of *tasavvuf* and *sûfî*, the Greek term *σοφία* has been offered by various Muslim and non-Muslim scholars who considered it the main indicator associating *tasavvuf* with Greek philosophical schools, above all with Neoplatonism. Merx’s bold claim, “Zunächst der Name Şufî selbst ist aus dem Griechischen σοφός entnommen”¹⁶⁹⁸, summarizes the perspective of those scholars who seek the etymological root of *sûfî* in Greek philosophy and *σοφία*. Conflicting Demirli’s assertion quoted in the introduction, who claimed the investigations concerning the origins of *tasavvuf* were to be “inherited from the Orientalist works”¹⁶⁹⁹, in the treatises of certain Muslim scholars—such as Bîrûnî (c. 973–1050) and

¹⁶⁹⁵ Eraydın, 1994, pp. 45–50; Khalil / Sheikh, 2014, pp. 357–360; Smith, Margaret: *Studies in Early Mysticism in the Near and Middle East*, Oxford: Oneworld, 1995.

¹⁶⁹⁶ Trimingham, 1971, p. 2.

¹⁶⁹⁷ Khalil / Sheikh, 2014, pp. 355–370.

¹⁶⁹⁸ Merx, Adalbert: *Idee und Grundlinien einer allgemeinen Geschichte der Mystik*, Heidelberg: Universitäts-Buchdruckerei von J.Hörnig 1893, p. 37.

¹⁶⁹⁹ Demirli, 2016, p. 7.

Sühreverdi¹⁷⁰⁰—one can trace investigations concerning the etymological origins of *tasavvuf* demonstrating that they were not Orientalist imports. In his *Tahqīq mā li-l-hind min maqūlah maqbūlah fī al-‘aql aw mardhūlah* (*Verifying All That the Indians Recount, the Reasonable and the Unreasonable*), written c. 1017–1030, Bîrûnî claimed that the word *şûf* is derived from the Greek term *sophos* (σοφός), meaning wisdom¹⁷⁰¹. According to Cengiz, Bîrûnî was the first Muslim historian to establish this connection between *sofia* and *sûfî*¹⁷⁰², who writes:

“This is also the theory of the *Şûfis*, i.e., *the sages*, for *şûf* means in Greek *wisdom* (σοφία). Therefore, a philosopher is called *pailâsôpâ* (φιλόσοφος), i.e., loving wisdom. When in Islam persons adopted something like the doctrines of these *philosophers*, they also adopted their name; but some people did not understand the meaning of the word, and erroneously combined it with the Arabic word *suffa*, as if the *Şûfî* (=φιλόσοφοι) were identical with the so-called ‘*Ahl-aşşuffa* among the companions of Muḥammad. In later times the word was corrupted by misspelling, so that finally it was taken for a derivation from *şûf*, i.e., the wool of goats.”¹⁷⁰³

Supporting Bîrûnî centuries later, Frishkopf points out a possibility of Neoplatonic influence on an Egyptian *sûfî* Zünnûn el-Mısrî (c. 796–859) who developed “a theory of *ma’rifa* (intuitive knowledge of God, gnosis) as opposed to ‘*ilm* (rational discursive knowledge)”¹⁷⁰⁴. Schimmel as being the source of Frishkopf’s argument strengthens this idea by writing “since this mystic (Zünnûn el-Mısrî) lived in Egypt, where Neoplatonic and hermetic traditions were in the air, and was regarded by some of his contemporaries as a ‘philosopher’, he may well have been acquainted with some Neoplatonic ideas”¹⁷⁰⁵. One another important confirmation is provided by Nicholson, particularly in the case of Mısrî, in which he writes:

“Now the lands of Greek civilisation were pre-eminently Syria and Egypt, the very countries in which, as we have seen, the Sufi theosophy was first developed. The man (Mısrî) who bore the chief part in its development is described as a philosopher and an alchemist: in other words, he was a student of Greek wisdom. When it is added that the ideas which he enunciated are essentially the same as those which appear, for example, in the works of Dionysios, does not the whole argument point with overwhelming force to the conclusion that there is an historical connection between”¹⁷⁰⁶

¹⁷⁰⁰ Kaya, 2001, p. 435.

¹⁷⁰¹ Sachau, C. Edward (trans.): *Alberuni’s India. An account of the religion, philosophy, literature, geography, chronology, astronomy, customs, laws and astrology of India about A.D. 1030*, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & CO. 1910, p. 33.

¹⁷⁰² Cengiz, Muammer: “Tasavvufün Kökenine Dair Tartışmalar”, in: Bolat, Ali et. al (eds.), *Tasavvuf. Tarih, Doktrin, Tenkit*, Samsun: E Yazı 2019, pp. 35–52/36–37.

¹⁷⁰³ Sachau, 1910, pp. 33–34.

¹⁷⁰⁴ Frishkopf, 1999, p. 64.

¹⁷⁰⁵ Schimmel, 1975, p. 43.

¹⁷⁰⁶ Nicholson, 1906, p. 318.

In line with these views, known orientalist Hammer-Purgstall and theologian Tholuck focus on *gymnosophists* of India (and of Ethiopia) as the potential origin for *tasavvuf* and assert that the Greek terms σοφος and σαφες (Gr. clear) were to be the etymological roots of Arabic “*sofi*” and “*safi*” (Ar. pure, clean)¹⁷⁰⁷. Though this view—offering Greek philosophy as the source or origin for *tasavvuf* through an association between Greek σοφία and Arabic *sûfi*—has been followed by some orientalists such as Nyberg and partially by Depont and Coppolani, towards the end of the nineteenth century Nöldeke and later Massignon along with several other scholars disproved this claim based on the Arabic language’s grammar system. The reasoning for the opposition is based on a translative choice, in which the Greek letter Σ and σ (*sigma*), the first letter of the word *sophia*, is usually transcribed in Arabic with the letter س (*sīn*); the word *sûfi* in Arabic, however, is consistently written with another letter, ص (*ṣād*)¹⁷⁰⁸. For many Muslim (Kuṣeyrî, İbn Haldûn, or Serrâc) and non-Muslim scholars, this incompatibility was enough to label a *sophia-sûfi* association “untenable”¹⁷⁰⁹ or disregard the Greek word *sophia*’s potential to be the etymological root for *sûfi*¹⁷¹⁰. On the other hand, a tenth-century Muslim biographer İbnü’n Nedîm (935–990), employs the term السوفسطائي (*al-swfsṭay*, with the letter *sīn*, س) to address Greek *Sofists*¹⁷¹¹, which demonstrates the letter س (*sīn*) had been in use, at least, to denote a derivation, σοφιστής (*sōfistís*), sharing the same root (σοφ, *sof*) with the word σοφία. It is, however, intriguing that *Nedîm* regardless employs the letter ص (*ṣād*) regularly when referring to the term *sûfi*¹⁷¹². Even so, when we investigate one another relevant term الفلسفة (*al-falsafa*, philosophy) it becomes clear that the Greek letter Σ and σ (*sigma*) was also rendered in Arabic with the letter س (*sīn*). The presence of such fluidity in translating Greek *sophia* into Arabic inevitably arouses suspicions concerning the conclusion that *sophia* cannot be an etymological relative for *sûfi*.

In the same context, Pakistani scholar and *mutasavvif* al-Azhari (1918–1998) stressed another aspect of the *sûfi-sophia* relation and criticized Bîrûnî’s view for being anachronistic with the following argument:

¹⁷⁰⁷ Hammer-Purgstall, Joseph: *Geschichte der schönen Redekünste Persiens*, Wien: Heubner und Volke 1818, p. 346; Tholuck, August: *Sufismus, sive Theosophia Persarum pantheistica*, Berlin: ? 1821, pp. 29–30.

¹⁷⁰⁸ Nöldeke, Theodor: “Sûfi”, in: *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 48, 1894, pp. 45–48.

¹⁷⁰⁹ Massignon, Louis / Radtke, Bernd: “Taṣawwuf”, in: Bearman, J. Peri et.al. (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Second Edition, 2012, <https://referenceworks-brillonline-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/tasawwuf-COM_1188>, last accessed: 11 March 2022.

¹⁷¹⁰ Şādiqī, Muzhgān: “Etymology”, in: Adel, Gholamali Haddad / Elmi, Mohammad Jafad / Taromi-Rad, Hassan (ed.), *Sufism. An Entry from Encyclopaedia of the World of Islam*, London: EWI 2012, p. 4; Yılmaz, 2004, p. 26; Yaman, 2016, pp. 28–29; Serrâc, *El-Lüma*, 1996, pp. 21–27; Eraydın, 1994, pp. 51–54; Yılmaz, 2004, pp. 23–27.

¹⁷¹¹ En-Nedîm, 2019, pp. 569, 811, 851.

¹⁷¹² En-Nedîm, 2019, pp. 569, 636, 903, 909, 1103, 1117.

“But this concept of ideology of Al-Bairuni is not acceptable in its entirety, for the simple reason that the work of transferring the Greek Cyclopaedia into Arabic language was undertaken only in approximately the half of the third century A.H. [a.n. 816–913 CE] whereas since the word Soofi was already in vogue as part of the spoken Arabic language much earlier than that, the concept of the word Soofi as a derivation of Greek philosophy does not remain tenable”¹⁷¹³

What al-Azhari refers to as “transferring the Greek Cyclopaedia into Arabic language” in this passage is the peak of the Graeco-Arabic translation activities that took place in and around *Beytü’l-hikme* of Baghdad. Considering the Syriac intermediary translations of the term *sophia* given above, al-Azhari’s argument appears to be disputable, since al-Azhari in fact, as proposed by this study, simultaneously confirms the presence of an orally circulated “*soofi*” term before the initiation of the official translations. Combined with the various translative choices in rendering non-Arabic terms in theological and philosophical treatises composed in the Arabic language, the presence of the word “*soofi*”, or variations of it, before the Graeco-Arabic translation movement, as a matter of fact, strengthens the possibility of a *sûfi* -*sophia* correlation outside the Islamic definitional scope. Furthermore, considering the accounts provided by Kuşeyrî, Hücvîrî, and Serrâc, in which they argued “non-Arabic”¹⁷¹⁴ and “pre-Islamic”¹⁷¹⁵ origins of the term *sûfi*, an investigation concerning the potential non-Islamic correspondences through etymological relations becomes possible.

8.11 Further Implications

The *hikmet-sophia* or *hikmet-philosophy* correlation established by Muslim theologians or philosophers of the early Islamic expansion period and contemporary scholars such as Corbin and Nasr eventually resulted in another equation between what is called “*hikmat ilahiyah*” and “theosophy”. As seen in these terms, their semantic fields enabled them to be attached to a divine reference, namely “*ilahiyah*” and the “*theo-*” prefix, both of which refer to divinity and God in corresponding languages. Faivre discusses that even though the term theosophy was synonymously employed for theology by the early church fathers, it denotes:

“Gnosis that has a bearing not only on the salvific relations the individual maintains with the divine world, but also on the nature of God Himself, or of divine persons, and on the natural universe, the

¹⁷¹³ Al-Azhari, M. K. Shah: “Preface”, in: Al-Hujwiri, *The Kashf al-Mahjub. A Persian Treatise on Sufism*, Lahore: Zia-ul-Quran Publications 2001, p. 4.

¹⁷¹⁴ Yılmaz, 2004, p. 24.

¹⁷¹⁵ Serrâc, *El-Lüma’*, 1996, p. 23.

origin of that universe, the hidden structures that constitute it in its actual state, its relationship to mankind, and its final ends”¹⁷¹⁶

Although Rosenthal claims without hesitation that “there can be no objection to the use of ‘*ilm* to translate Greek *gnôsis*”¹⁷¹⁷, in fact, several objections can be raised. First, due to the broad semantic coverage of the term *ilim* (both religious and non-religious), its equation with a rather specific, usually belief-oriented, esotericised, and salvific form of wisdom, *gnosis*, would be an attempt to reduce the range of *ilim*. The term *ilim* can possibly approximate *gnosis* when used in combination with specific, *tasavvuf*-based¹⁷¹⁸, terms such as *ledün* (*ilm-i ledün*) or *bâtın* (*ilm-i bâtin*), both of which mean intuitive, direct knowledge of the divine; wisdom belonging to an invisible divine realm (*gayb*)¹⁷¹⁹; *hâl* (“‘*ilm al-hâl*, knowledge of states), or *dhawq* (“‘*ilm al-dhawq*, knowledge of pleasure”¹⁷²⁰ or taste¹⁷²¹). All these upgraded terms containing *ilim* refer to a higher and more divine form of knowledge relating to God. Otherwise *ilim* alone—or combined with other terms such as “*fikih* (“‘*ilm al-fiqh*, jurisprudence), *lisan* (“‘*ilm al-lisân*, grammar), *mantık* (“‘*ilm al-mantıq*, logic), or *ilahi* (“‘*ilm al-ilâhî*, metaphysics)”¹⁷²²—generally refer to scientific, technical, or “discursive knowledge”¹⁷²³.

The second objection can be raised concerning the number of translations equating *mâ-rifet* with *gnosis*, e.g., Schimmel, Frishkopf, Nicholson, Nasr, and Leaman¹⁷²⁴, is far greater in number compared to translations rendering *ilim* as *gnosis*. Furthermore, in his analysis of various kinds of knowledge in Islam, Frishkopf disagrees with Rosenthal and places “*gnosis* (intuitive knowledge of God) as opposed to ‘*ilm* (rational, discursive knowledge)”¹⁷²⁵. And the last objection is that Rosenthal himself addresses the Graeco-Arabic translations and writes that “the Qur’ânic ‘*ilm al-yaqîn* [is] used to render Greek *epistêmê*, while *gnôsis tês alêtheias* occurring right next to it appears in Arabic as *ma‘rifat haqîqat*”¹⁷²⁶. However, Rosenthal argues this translation has “no significance” due to its later introduction and thus can be ignored. What Rosenthal seems to disregard is likely the introduction of a fully developed *tasavvuf* epistemol-

¹⁷¹⁶ Faivre, Antoine: *Access to Western Esotericism*, Albany: SUNY Press 1994, p. 23.

¹⁷¹⁷ Rosenthal, 2007, p. 24.

¹⁷¹⁸ Uludağ, 2003b, p. 54.

¹⁷¹⁹ *Kur’an* 12:37 (*Yûsuf*); Bashir, Shahzad: “Movement and Stillness. The Practice of Sufi *Dhikr* in Fourteenth-Century Central Asia”, in: Eifring, Halvor (ed.), *Meditation in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, London / New York: Bloomsbury 2013, pp. 201–211/206; Elias, 2013, p. 197.

¹⁷²⁰ Demirli, 2016, p. 3.

¹⁷²¹ Renard, 2009, pp. 236, 263.

¹⁷²² Rudolph / Hansberger / Adamson, 2017, p. 789.

¹⁷²³ Renard, 2009, p. 139; Şaşa, 2014, p. 74.

¹⁷²⁴ Schimmel, 1975, p. 43; Frishkopf, 1999, p. 63; Nicholson, 1906, p. 306; Nasr / Leaman, 1996, p. 1204.

¹⁷²⁵ Frishkopf, 1999, p. 4.

¹⁷²⁶ Rosenthal, 2007, p. 24/f.n. 4.

ogy around the tenth and eleventh centuries, which prioritized *mârifet* and its derivation methods above all the other forms of knowing. Even if Rosenthal quotes a prominent *mutasavvif*, al-Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyâd (726–803), who “expressed the view that scholars [a.n. *alîm*] were numerous, but of sages [a.n. *ârif* or *hakim*] were few and considered it more appropriate to call the sages [*hakim*], rather than scholars [*alîm*], the heirs of the prophets”¹⁷²⁷, Rosenthal insists *ilim* is *gnosis*’ translation. As demonstrated above, a *mârifet* - *gnosis* equation, due to many correspondences relating to metaphysical wisdom and its encompassing metasystems, appears to be more plausible than that Rosenthal’s claim. The issue in Rosenthal’s approach may be his focus on the *Kur’anic* and jurisprudential references to the concept of wisdom and its frequent applications in worldly matters, in which, *ilim* acquires a set of distinctive occupations rather than the much less mundane *mârifet*. Thus, Rosenthal’s extension of *ilim* to cover intuitive *gnosis* remains disputable.

8.11.1 Theosophy

Composed of the Greek words for God (*theos*) and wisdom (*sophia*), theosophy comes to mean “wisdom of God”¹⁷²⁸ or “divine wisdom”¹⁷²⁹. Faivre’s inclusion of the term *gnosis* in his description of theosophy points at commonalities in their epistemology, to which Corbin further adds mysticism, *tasavvuf*, and esotericism as follows:

“It is not possible to speak of hikmah in Islam without speaking of mysticism—without speaking, that is to say, of Sufism both from the point of view of its spiritual experience and from that of its speculative theosophy, which has its roots in Shiite esotericism”¹⁷³⁰

Considering the discussions mentioned in the preceding chapters of this study, *hikmet*, with its characteristic epistemological procedures developed by Muslim philosophers and *mutasavvife*, corresponds largely with the characteristics of various forms of knowledge (or wisdom) such as *gnosis*, esoteric (hidden), or intuitive (and divine) knowledge acquired through mystical experience or specific other relevant practices. Even though the term theosophy often refers to the discourses and practices of the Theosophical Society founded by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky in 1875, the descriptions of Melton concerning the Theosophical Society display

¹⁷²⁷ Rosenthal, 2007, p. 38.

¹⁷²⁸ Faivre, 1994, p. 24.

¹⁷²⁹ Melton, J. Gordon: “Theosophy”, in: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Online Edition, 20 December 1999, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/theosophy>>, last accessed: 28 February 2022.

¹⁷³⁰ Corbin, 1993, pp. xv–xvi.

their inclusion of several concepts and interpretations in their discourses that are suitable for nearly all esotericised trends mentioned in this study:

“The various forms of theosophical speculation have certain common characteristics. The first is an emphasis on *mystical experience*. Theosophical writers hold that there is a *deeper spiritual reality* and that *direct contact* with that reality can be established *through intuition, meditation, revelation, or some other state transcending normal human consciousness*. Theosophists also emphasize *esoteric doctrine*”¹⁷³¹

The italicized parts in the passage above indicate certain corresponding characteristics of various esotericised systems including *tasavvuf*. As shown above, the same passage can be referred to describe the general frame of Gnosticism, esotericism, mysticism, and *tasavvuf*. For instance, the emphasis laid upon mystical experience, a deeper spiritual reality, direct contact, intuition, transcendental state of consciousness, and esoteric doctrine evinces explicit and intentional assimilation of various discourses into the esotericised system of the Theosophical Society. The strategic borrowing from ancient esotericised practices is a generic attribute of not only the Theosophical Society, but also numerous current New Age religions as well. This can be perhaps best exemplified via an analysis of the seal or emblem of the Theosophical Society:



Figure 15: The emblem of the Theosophical Society¹⁷³²

¹⁷³¹ Melton, “Theosophy”, 1999.

¹⁷³² “The emblem”, retrieved from: <<https://theosophicalsociety.org.au/statics/the-emblem>>, last accessed: 11 March 2022.

The combination of symbols in the Theosophical Society's emblem above demonstrates the conscious incorporation of various doctrines and meanings from different traditions including the Sanskrit term *om* or *aum* (ॐ), whirling cross, *ouroboros*, the six-pointed star (*hexagram*), and the *ankh*. Without going into the details, it is clear from the reading of the emblem that the Theosophical Society selectively deploys the symbols to illustrate their universalistic claims. While their motto, "there is no religion higher than truth", is identical to the perspectives of *philosophia perennis* or *prisca theologia*, it explicitly indicates their position that there is an overarching truth or reality beyond the exoteric perspective of religions. Correspondingly, all symbols that they deliberately brought together to support their claim refer to an all-embracing universal truth. The Theosophical Society thus appears to consolidate its discourses by means of the symbols and doctrines they absorbed from the following religious and philosophical systems: Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Greek Philosophy, Gnosticism, alchemy, Judaism, and Egyptian mystery traditions¹⁷³³.

The potential associations between the procedures of *tasavvuf* relating to the wisdom of God (*hikmet* or *mârifet*) and theosophy (as supposed by Nasr and Corbin) were already established by Nicholson's prominent work almost a century ago, in 1906, where he points out a "historical connection" between the Egyptian *sûfî*, alchemist, and philosopher Mîsrî (c. 796–859 CE) and "the Greek wisdom", philosophy. Nicholson argues that Egypt and Syria during the time of Mîsrî were still under the ongoing influence of Greek civilization, where "the Sufi theosophy was first developed"¹⁷³⁴. Whether originated in Alexandria or somewhere else, what the Theosophical Society and *tasavvuf* further share is the narrative of an intuitive knowledge concerning the divine being hidden in the self.

8.11.2 Know Thyself

The deliberately esotericised understanding of the transformation of the soul through wisdom and knowledge to access the divine is a *leitmotif* that has been shared and continuously reinterpreted by different systems with mystical or esoteric inclinations. This is perhaps one of the reasons why in a variety of religious and philosophical traditions, the widely known notion of "knowing the self"¹⁷³⁵ has become the key to an understanding of the universe, creation, and God. In almost all these teachings, the journey to understand both divine and ordinary things

¹⁷³³ For more information, see: Coon, M. Arthur: *The Theosophical Seal*, Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing House 1958.

¹⁷³⁴ Nicholson, 1906, p. 318.

¹⁷³⁵ Van den Broek, 2006, p. 410.

begins in the person's self and reaches the destination in the same place. Discovering the self's true nature has thus been presented as the paramount element in total comprehension of our existence. Without a doubt, the notion came to take on occasionally altered applications with the passing of the years as it has been appearing in different places from the maxims inscribed on the ancient Greek temples such as the Temple of Apollo¹⁷³⁶ at Delphi¹⁷³⁷, to certain Gnostic gospels of the Nag Hammadi Scriptures¹⁷³⁸, to Sun Tzū's (544–496 BCE) advice with Taoist influences in his famous *The Art of War*¹⁷³⁹, and to the popular culture of our day, e.g., *Matrix* the movie (1999). It even finds its way through contemporary work management and efficiency research articles and the training of personal development coaching¹⁷⁴⁰. The aphorism can be found in several languages as, for example, *gnothi seauton* (γνώθι σεαυτόν)¹⁷⁴¹ or “*heauton gartis ean gnōi, theon eisetai*”¹⁷⁴² in Greek¹⁷⁴³, *noverim me, noverim te* (employed by Augustine of Hippo¹⁷⁴⁴), *temet nosce* or *nosce te ipsum* in Latin, and *know thyself* in English. By means of reinterpretation, it has also been incorporated into a broad variety of esotericised systems and finds expression, for instance, as the alchemical acrostic *V.I.T.R.I.O.L.* (*Visita Interiora Terræ Rectificando Invenies Occultum Lapidem*)¹⁷⁴⁵ (Figure 16) denotes “visit the interior of the earth and by rectifying you shall find the hidden stone”¹⁷⁴⁶. In different variations of the aphorism, a second part is added as a conclusion, to define what to be gained by knowing the self. In these versions the aphorism has become “know (find) yourself, discover God”¹⁷⁴⁷. In its Arabic¹⁷⁴⁸, *men arefe nefsehu fekat arefe rabbehu* (مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ فَقَدْ عَرَفَ رَبَّهُ) and Turkish versions (*nefsini*

¹⁷³⁶ The Olympian deity Apollo was considered to be a god of wisdom and by means of this feature, he was also often associated with Hermes, Thoth, and eventually with Hermes Trismegistus. See: Preus, Anthony: “Thoth and Apollo. Greek Myths of the Origin of Philosophy”, in: *Méthexis*, 11/1, 1998, pp. 113–125.

¹⁷³⁷ Pausanias: *Description of Greece*, Vol. 4, Jones, Litt.D. / Ormerod, H.A. (transl.), Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935, pp. 506–507.

¹⁷³⁸ Scopello, Madeleine / Meyer, Marvin (trans.): “The Gospel of Philip”, in: Meyer, Marvin (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, New York: HarperOne 2007, pp. 157–186/180.

¹⁷³⁹ Tzū, Sun: *The Art of War*, Giles, Lionel / Evans, Michael (trans.), New York: Race Point Publishing 2017, p. 12.

¹⁷⁴⁰ Eurish, Tasha: “Working with People Who Aren't Self-Aware”, in: *Harvard Business Review*, 19 October 2018, <<https://hbr.org/2018/10/working-with-people-who-arent-self-aware>>, last accessed: 12 March 2022.

¹⁷⁴¹ Pausanias, Vol. 4, 1935, p. 506.

¹⁷⁴² Rosenthal, 2007, p. 137.

¹⁷⁴³ Finkelberg, Aryeh: *Heraclitus and Thales' Conceptual Scheme. A Historical Study*, Leiden: Brill 2017, pp. 216–217.

¹⁷⁴⁴ Sweeney, Terence: “God and the Soul. Augustine on the Journey to True Selfhood”, *The Heythrop Journal*, 57/4, 2016, pp. 678–691/688.

¹⁷⁴⁵ Kahn, Didier: “Alchemical Poetry in Medieval and Early Modern Europe. A Preliminary Survey and Synthesis Part I – Preliminary Survey”, in: *Ambix*, 57/3, 2010, pp. 249–274/263; Paracelsi, Theophrasti: *Aurora Thesaurusque Philosophorum*, Dorneum, Gerardum (trans.), Basileae: Thomas Guarin 1577, p. 32.

¹⁷⁴⁶ Principe, 2013, p. 120.

¹⁷⁴⁷ Merton, Thomas: *New Seeds of Contemplation*, New York: New Directions Paperbook 1972, pp. 35–36.

¹⁷⁴⁸ Arberry, 1968, p. 28.

bilen rabbini bilir)¹⁷⁴⁹, the second part is always present. As seen in the Arabic version, the act of knowing finds its expression as *arefe* (*ârîf, irfan, mârifet*), instead of *hikmet* or *ilim*, and thus signals a close *tasavvuf* association. This characteristically intuitive form of knowledge relating to God was conceptualized almost always along the same lines in several esotericised traditions. However, the categorization and the ranking system of knowledge and relevant derivation methods in *tasavvuf* is a form of arrangement peculiar to Islam (or perhaps an Islamicized form of it). As the position of alchemy standing at the crossroads of various esotericised systems demonstrates, a common narrative of the intuitive knowledge or wisdom is a crucial part of epistemology and associated practices.



Figure 16: An illustration from the *Occulta Philosophia* containing the motto *V.I.T.R.I.O.L.*¹⁷⁵⁰

8.11.3 Alchemy Revisited

The illustration above is taken from an early seventeenth-century text, which was added to the chapter on the alchemical manuscript known as *Tabula Smaragdina* whose authorship, according to the text itself, was attributed to Hermes Trismegistus. Hermes has frequently been narrated to “receive revelations from the divine world and eventually himself achieves immortality through self-purification but remains among men in order to unveil to them the secrets of

¹⁷⁴⁹ Kılıç, 2004, p. 98.

¹⁷⁵⁰ Trismegisti, Hermes / Valentini, F. Basili: *Occulta philosophia. von den verborgenen philosophischen Geheimnissen der heimlichen Goldblumen vnd lapidis philosophorum [...]*, Frankfurt am Main: Johann Bringern 1613, p. 50.

the divine world”¹⁷⁵¹. Within various streams of esotericism that combine “magic, alchemy, and astrology”¹⁷⁵², the figure Hermes Trismegistus and his alleged doctrines¹⁷⁵³ have been accommodated as the expressions of what Faivre calls “the idea of correspondences”. The idiom “*occultum lapidem*” (the hidden stone) in the acrostic motto *V.I.T.R.I.O.L.* refers to the philosopher’s stone, a supposed alchemical substance made of *prima materia* and acquired through the process of *magnum opus*. Alchemists who employed this symbolic motto mirrored the notion of “knowing the self” in the procedures of manufacturing the “*occultum lapidem*”, the philosopher’s stone. Their attempts to discover this hidden stone corresponded precisely to their efforts for spiritual perfection, whose initial starter is frequently narrated to be discovering the self, followed by spiritual transformation and perfection through *magnum opus*. The notion of spiritual transmutation leading to perfection calls for attention to its potential Pythagorean backgrounds¹⁷⁵⁴, which were widely disseminated throughout the Mediterranean region in the late antiquity via the intermediaries of certain other philosophical, esotericised, and religious systems including Neopythagoreanism, Middle Platonism, Gnosticism, and several renowned representatives of Neoplatonism, e.g., Plotinus, Porphyry, and Iamblichus.

As Arcari argues, “Pythagoras expounded the doctrines of his own philosophy mystically, by means of symbols, entertaining thoughts about the unity of God.”¹⁷⁵⁵. In addition to this, his esotericised body-renouncing doctrine of the soul’s purification (*katharsis*)—which was associated with the knowledge-granting epistemological tool *askesis*¹⁷⁵⁶ and the salvific process of *metempsychosis* (reincarnation)—may have been expanded upon various relevant systems. In numerous alchemical and esotericised traditions, this hidden knowledge concerning the self further brings about a knowing of the causes behind the creation, an awareness of intrinsic correspondences between the created beings or substances, and subsequently, a knowledge of how to manipulate them. Apart from the alchemical circles, this same esotericised knowledge of the self has been reinterpreted in various religious and philosophical systems, often as knowing, or acquiring the truth that leads the knowledge, happiness, or acquaintance with God.

¹⁷⁵¹ Fowden, 1993, p. 28.

¹⁷⁵² Bogdan, 2007, p. 11.

¹⁷⁵³ Especially his well-known quote summarizing the notion of correspondences: “that which is above is from that which is below, and that which is below is from that which is above”. Holmyard, 1923, p. 526.

¹⁷⁵⁴ Burkert, 1972, pp. 109ff.

¹⁷⁵⁵ Arcari, Luca: “Reinventing the Pythagorean Tradition in Pseudo-Justin’s *Cohortatio ad Graecos*”, in: Renger, Almut-Barbara / Stavru, Alessandro (eds.), *Pythagorean Knowledge from the Ancient to the Modern World. Askesis, Religion, Science*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag 2016, p. 192.

¹⁷⁵⁶ Arcari, 2016, p. 191.

The confidentiality of this intuitive knowledge accessed only by the initiated adepts in consequence created an elitist classification of knowledge and a corresponding epistemology. Despite the substantial interpretative variations present among different systems, the essential epistemological characteristics of this esotericised knowledge have been reproduced not only by “gnostic, hermetic, and theurgical currents of late antiquity”¹⁷⁵⁷, but additionally by the subsequent religious and philosophical systems, including *tasavvuf*. The ancient narrative of divine knowledge might have been reached to *tasavvuf* epistemology via multiple channels of transmission. One important source was the translation of Plotinus’ *Enneads* under the false name of Aristotle¹⁷⁵⁸, which in its various passages refers to the divine knowledge (and its specific epistemology) belonging to God as follows:

At this point, the genealogy of wisdom holders demonstrates a commonality or a continuity in terms of a hidden and divine form of knowledge owned by certain figures, each representing either a philosophical or a religious metasytem, e.g., Babylonian, Greek, Christian complexes along with the wisdom traditions of the “Brahmans, the Jews, the *Magi*, and the Egyptians”¹⁷⁵⁹. The most frequently mentioned names that constitute this ancient chain of wisdom holders often contain Moses, Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus, Pythagoras, Plato, and Jesus. One exemplary manifestation of this genealogy of wisdom in the Islamic world is a treatise named *Nawādir min Kalām al-Falāsifa al-Muwaḥḥidīn wa-l-a’lām al-māḍiyīn* (*The Most Precious Words of the Philosophers Professing the Oneness of God and of the Authorities of the Past*), which contained “a collection of sayings of the ancient Greeks including Hermes, Pythagoras and Plato and of the Alexandrians related to the central doctrine of Islam, the Oneness of God (*tawḥīd*)”¹⁷⁶⁰. The unifying feature of the wisdom chain is, that all these figures were believed to hold the God-given wisdom, which is concealed from the public. In time, a narrative germinating from this knowledge has been developed, whose cornerstones form an episodic metaphysical journey of the human soul and comprise the following themes: the soul possessing a divine essence (or spark) that must be discovered, a divine realm or being as the origin of the divine essence embedded within the human soul, material body as the prison of the divine essence caused by “the fall” from a divine realm, a possibility of liberation through the hidden or intuitive knowledge (*gnosis*), and “the return” to the divine, which has usually been interpreted as acquiring the primordial unity with the divine, bestowing illumination, salvation, virtue, and

¹⁷⁵⁷ Hanegraaff, 2012, p. 12.

¹⁷⁵⁸ Nicholson, 1906, pp. 316–317.

¹⁷⁵⁹ Quoted from Numenius of Apamea (c. second century CE) by: Hanegraaff, 2012, p. 14.

¹⁷⁶⁰ Wakelnig, Elvira: “Greek Sages on the Tawḥīd. Ancient Philosophy in Accord with the Islamic Doctrine of the Oneness of God”, in: *Studia graeco-arabica*, 5, 2015, pp. 205–245.

happiness¹⁷⁶¹. Expectedly, the ways of expression concerning the journey of the soul are so variegated that each interpretation, even though they resemble each other on several points, appears to be developed from different sources. While some trends emphasize their ties to Greek philosophy, the others may favour an Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian, or a Chaldean origin story. Furthermore, the entangled dynamics that were shaping discourses throughout the ancient Mediterranean and one of the most popular convergence points of them, Alexandria, enabled some groups to employ a selective combination of such discourses. As Fowden discusses, one of the consequences of these intrinsic relations “was an unevenly and idiosyncratically homogenized culture, in which it was not uncommon for the same texts to circulate indifferently under the names of both Greek and oriental sages”¹⁷⁶². As the embedded presence of, for example, Parmenides’ “all is one” doctrine or Pythagoreans’ understanding of the soul’s repetitive and cyclic operations towards perfection displayed in the illustration of the *ouroboros* symbol or the alchemical motto *V.I.T.R.I.O.L.*, one may interpret this embeddedness as a continuity amongst different systems.

“There is nothing in Him which He might want to know in the way in which a person knows something, but He is the knowledge which does not require to know through some other knowledge, because it (He) is the pure, ultimate knowledge that comprises every knowledge, and the cause of (all) sciences”¹⁷⁶³

While in the epistemology of Plato this intuitive form of knowledge was described as remembrance (*anamnesis*; *zikir*), Gnostics named it *gnosis*, which Plotinus linked explicitly with the salvific and prophetic nature of wisdom possessed only by those who have been venerated in the ancient chain of wisdom holders.

What the philosopher’s stone (*el-Hacer*)¹⁷⁶⁴ precisely symbolizes and how it has been reinterpreted as part of investigations throughout history demonstrate a traceable continuity, if not a shared understanding, among several esotericised systems during both the ancient history and the European Renaissance. The link between the ancient and the Medieval alchemy was constituted by the intermediary of Arabic translations of the ancient material, primarily those that came from Alexandria¹⁷⁶⁵, which were to be re-translated from Arabic into several Euro-

¹⁷⁶¹ Fowden, 1993, pp. 104–105; Von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 21.

¹⁷⁶² Fowden, 1986, p. 214.

¹⁷⁶³ Rosenthal, 1952, p. 485.

¹⁷⁶⁴ En-Nedim, 2019, p. 1108.

¹⁷⁶⁵ Holmyard, 1957, p. 65.

pean languages during the Middle Ages. Rosenthal, for example, points out the translations of certain alchemical texts written in Greek and Coptic languages into Arabic as early as the seventh century by the demand of the prince Khalid ibn Yazid (668–704 CE), the son of the second caliph, Yazid I (c. 646–683 CE), of the Umayyad Caliphate. He states that “alchemy is a science of immediate practical use and, accordingly, was one of the first achievements of Hellenistic culture to arouse Arab interest”¹⁷⁶⁶. Two alchemical texts whose authorship, perhaps falsely, was attributed to the Umayyad prince Khalid ibn Yazid, *Secreta Alchymiae*¹⁷⁶⁷ and *K. Firdaws al-ḥikma*¹⁷⁶⁸, display the flow of Greek and Egyptian wisdom-related esotericised discourses into the Islamic realm. Even though the author of these works, known as *Kalid*, *Calid*, or *Khalid*, appears to be a fictional character, and does not even have an Arabic background¹⁷⁶⁹, the narrative created around this figure has usually been associated with the Umayyad prince Khalid ibn Yazid¹⁷⁷⁰ and circulated among both Muslim and non-Muslim spheres. Regardless of the ambiguity of its author, the opening passages of *Secreta Alchymiae* summarize the convergence point of the esoteric, Gnostic, philosophical, and *tasavvuf* doctrines concerning the God-given, intuitive, and hidden form of wisdom, namely *hikmet*¹⁷⁷¹:

“Thanks be given to God, the Creator of all things, who hath made us, renewed us, taught us, and given us knowledge and understanding; for except he should keep us, preserve us, and direct us, we should wander out of the right way, as having no Guide or Teacher: Nor can we know anything in this World, unless he teach us, who is the beginning of all things, and the Wisdom itself, his power and goodness, it is, with which he over-shadows his People”¹⁷⁷²

¹⁷⁶⁶ Rosenthal, 1992, p. 3.

¹⁷⁶⁷ Salmon, William: *Medicana Practica [...]*, Book II, London: Printed for T. Howkins / J. Taylor / J. Harris 1692, p. 284.

¹⁷⁶⁸ Ullmann, Manfred: “Kḥālīd b. Yazīd b. Mu‘āwīya”, Bearman, J. Peri et.al. (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, 2012, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/*-SIM_4151>, last accessed: 13 January 2022.

¹⁷⁶⁹ Salmon, 1692, *Preface*, H3.

¹⁷⁷⁰ It is possible that the prince Khalid ibn Yazid had (also) interest in chemistry. Considering the ambiguity of the differences between chemistry and alchemy in both the Islamicate and the Hellenistic Mediterranean worlds, they might have been referred to similar scientific processes. The Muslim biographer En-Nedīm (c. 932–995 CE), for example, gives accounts in his renowned compendium *El-Fihrist* concerning the philosophers known to him, who “spoke about the art”, such as, among many others, Hermes, Agathodaemon, Pythagoras, Plato, Zosimus, Zoroaster, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Zūnnūn el-Misrī, and the prince Khalid ibn Yazid. See: En-Nedīm, 2019, pp. 1100–1102; Dodge, 1970, pp. 849–850.

¹⁷⁷¹ Forster, Regula: “The Transmission of Secret Knowledge. Three Arabic Dialogues in Alchemy”, in: *Al-Qantara*, 37/2, 2016, pp. 399–422; Kaya, Mahmut: “Câbir bin Hayyân”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 6, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1992, pp. 533–537/534.

¹⁷⁷² Linden, J. Stanton (ed.): *The Alchemy Reader. From Hermes Trismegistus to Isaac Newton*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003, p. 71.

Therefore, the term *hikmet* in its various relevant forms gradually gained a central role in the epistemologies of all these discourses and the attempts to acquire it by the adherents of each discourse have produced a kaleidoscope of theories and practices. Among them, the *zikir* ritual of *tasavvuf* has been developed from such epistemological attempts of early Muslims, yet never in an isolated manner but rather always through negotiating and selectively interpreting the available oral and written sources produced by their predecessors up until that time. Indeed, this did not exclusively take place in the narrow transmission channel of *hikmet*. As Rosenthal argues, “in order to be able to defend their religion against the arguments of Christian theologians Muslims were obliged to familiarize themselves with Christian theology and attempt to transform it according to Islamic ideas”¹⁷⁷³. Christianity, however, was not the only front that the early Muslim thinkers had to face and defend their views. There were additional conflicting philosophical, mythological, and religious opinions against which the Muslim theologians developed their arguments. Some of the opinions proposed by the rival parties were explicitly endorsing the *Kur’anic* doctrines, which increasingly induced the incorporation of certain Greek philosophical (especially Aristotelian and Neoplatonic) and Christian theological reasoning methods, most famously by the *Mu’tazile* group of thinkers. Whereas *hikmet* was only a stream of a larger transmission channel of religious and philosophical ideas between the Hellenized discourses and Near Eastern systems, the militaristic, scientific, and other areas of encounters pertaining to trade, marriage, or politics indicate further wide-ranging transmission possibilities. This is what Corbin correspondingly calls “a cultural phenomenon of major importance” and defines it as “the assimilation by Islam—the new centre of humanity’s spiritual life—of all the contributions made by the cultures which preceded it in both the East and the West”¹⁷⁷⁴. The primary obstacle preventing us to establish a direct link between non-Islamic discourses with *tasavvuf* is that interpretation and, if any, incorporation of foregoing elements is only allowed as far as they conform with Islamic doctrines and only within a frame allowed by Islamic jurisprudence, which discerns *tasavvuf* largely from all the other systems.

¹⁷⁷³ Rosenthal, 1992, pp. 3–4.

¹⁷⁷⁴ Corbin, 1993, p. 14.

9 Interim Conclusion

The main proposition of the preceding chapters is composed of several propositions. While the primary objective was to demonstrate the extent of *tasavvuf*'s relevancy with other discourses to ascertain, whether denominations “Islamic Mysticism”, “Islamic Gnosticism”, or “Islamic Esotericism” are admissible, its successful completion required a thorough analysis of each discourse separately including their mutually transforming relations with numerous other variables. Such an undertaking has revealed that the discourses constituting the epistemology of *tasavvuf* evidently demonstrate intriguing associations with the discourses of mysticism, Gnosticism, and esotericism, particularly in terms of their interpretation of the (divine) wisdom. Since none of these systems is monolithic and housed divergent terminologies, applications, and interpretations, one cannot talk about any form of generalization or the universals among them. However, with regard to the concept of wisdom, on the etymological level, there has been an evident continuity and a consistently identical interpretative approach within mysticism, Gnosticism, esotericism, and *tasavvuf*, in general, within various streams of Greek philosophy, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and several ancient Near Eastern civilizations. Tracing the written history of *hikmet* throughout the “process of continuity and change over the thousand years which separate Alexander the Great from Muhammad the Prophet”¹⁷⁷⁵ and even beyond, has enabled this study to reveal a coherent understanding of *hikmet*, no matter in which language it is employed. On the other hand, in each system, the term *hikmet* acquired nuanced meanings and applications based on varying interpretations. Nasr, for example, argues that within Islam,

“Each school of thought sought to define what is meant by *ḥikmah* or *falsafah* [a.n. philosophy] according to its own perspective and this question has remained an important concern of various schools of Islamic thought especially as far as the schools of Islamic philosophy are concerned”¹⁷⁷⁶

These varying handlings of *hikmet* even merely within Islam prevent us to establish a single definition other than wisdom, which, as mentioned above, has been largely an ambiguous term possessing occasionally corresponding and at times conflicting meanings. Nevertheless, in approximately all systems mentioned in this study, an esotericised form of wisdom as part of salvific investigations has become a significant element in discovering the forgotten self and consequently, in attaining both worldly as well as spiritual bliss, happiness, and perfection. This

¹⁷⁷⁵ Cotton, Hannah: *From Hellenism to Islam. Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2009, p. xiv.

¹⁷⁷⁶ Nasr, 1996a, p. 21.

commonality eventually brought about similar arguments concerning the acquisition of wisdom and its relevant epistemological characteristics. These corresponding patterns of thought have likely been interpreted as parallels, origins, or universals amongst various systems by different scholars, while the others assumed an absolute separateness of each system of wisdom.

9.1 Esotericism and *Tasavvuf*

Goodrick-Clarke understands esotericism as a “worldview”, which casts a “significant influence on philosophical, scientific, and religious change”¹⁷⁷⁷ in history. The epistemology of esoteric discourse focuses on one fundamental question, namely, how to reach the all-knowing hidden God. Since the transcendent God is allegedly beyond the reach of human capacities, this question then inevitably begets other relevant questions, such as, how to acquire divine wisdom or what the acquisition of wisdom enables in the possessor, which have become cardinal elements within esoteric, Gnostic, and mystified investigations. DeConick correspondingly argues that:

“The Gnostic, esoteric, and mystical currents within Western religious traditions capitalize on the hidden and hiding God, and all the tensions surrounding this characteristic. The hidden God becomes the hallmark of the mystics, Gnostics, the sages, and the artists who attempt to make accessible to humans the God”¹⁷⁷⁸

The same quest has also been undertaken as a duty by Muslim scholars in their attempts to make sense of human life in the world and its meaning in terms of the creator’s initial urge for creation. While for Plato, *Timaeus*, 30a, “God desired that” the universe must be “brought into order out of disorder”, in the Islamic sense, according to a known *hadis*, God similarly creates the world through His desire: “I was a hidden treasure, and I desired to be known; therefore, I created the creation in order to be known”¹⁷⁷⁹. The epistemological implication in the “desire to be known” is likely to be considered a duty by *mutasavvif* and led them to gradually establish idiosyncratic knowledge derivation methods shaped by Islamic jurisprudence and *ehl-i sünnet ve’l-cemâat*. Since the dynamics and the effects of creation have often been associated with the creator’s creative act based on wisdom, Muslim scholars, like their predecessors, aimed at the possession of this creative wisdom to decipher its epistemology and, if possible, to repro-

¹⁷⁷⁷ Goodrick-Clarke, 2008, p. 4.

¹⁷⁷⁸ DeConick, 2014, p. 3.

¹⁷⁷⁹ Arberry, 1968, p. 28.

duce it as was attempted in alchemy, magic, theurgy, and specific relevant esotericised and mystified rituals.

The attempts to associate *tasavvuf* with certain streams of esotericised Greek philosophy featured specific phenomena—such as hiddenness, the dichotomy of exterior vs. interior, symbolic expressions, the theory of “all is one”, or self-knowledge corresponding with knowledge of the divine—that emerged over the course of the history of religious and philosophical discourses. However, while *tasavvuf* had indeed transforming encounters with all the discourses referred to in this study, each encounter took place in essentially different environments as well as political and sociocultural contexts. Furthermore, as mentioned above, such encounters do not take place between, for example, *tasavvuf* and philosophy *per se*, but rather between the human actors with various backgrounds and objectives, who carry and interpret these epistemological systems in their own terms. What fundamentally differs *tasavvuf* from the other esotericised systems may be their interpretation of humans. As one of their main objects of study, the human has a central position in *tasavvuf* epistemology. For, human is a being created in the image of God, sent to the world as His caliph, and approximately everything in the world, including the angels, must submit to it. Unlike other esotericised systems, *tasavvuf* establishes the human actor as the reason for the creation, whose salvation, based on *hadis*, is directly linked with the act of knowing. This special position allocated to human in Islam and *tasavvuf* has therefore distinguished its relationship with God fundamentally. Such an understanding of humans is frequently expressed in the works of renowned representatives of theoretical *tasavvuf* such as İbnü’l-Arabî, Sadreddin Konevî, Dâvûd el-Kayserî, or Gazzâlî, and in the symbolic poems of Câmi, Mevlânâ, Yunus Emre, or Niyâzî-yi Mîsrî. While in these expressions one can identify a variety of correspondences with other esotericised systems, the frame in which *tasavvuf* operates—Islam—defines its limits and the consulted sources for interpretation. Excerpts from Câmi’s poetry below illustrate specific aspects of *tasavvuf* perspective, which are associated not only with esotericism in general, but also particularly with “Hermetism, Neoplatonism and the old Iranic religions”¹⁷⁸⁰:

“From all eternity the Beloved unveiled His beauty in the solitude of the unseen;
He held up the mirror to His own face, He displayed His loveliness to Himself.
He was both the spectator and the spectacle; no eye but His had surveyed the Universe.
All was One, there was no duality, no pretence of ‘mine’ or ‘thine.’

¹⁷⁸⁰ Del Re McWeeny, Virginia: “The Wonder of Creation. A few notes for reflection on Sufism and science and some ‘correspondences’”, in: Peat, F. David (ed.), *The Pari Dialogues. Essays in Science, Religion, Society and the Arts*, Vol. 1, Grosseto: Pari Publishing 2007, pp. 33–56/42.

(...)

Yet He desired that they should be displayed to Him in another mirror,
And that each one of His eternal attributes should become manifest accordingly in a diverse form,
Therefore He created the verdant fields of Time and Space and the life-giving garden of
the world”¹⁷⁸¹

The explicit references to the notions of the beloved, unveiling, hidden, mirror, all is one, and the reason for creation in Câmi’s poetry display elements of *tasavvuf*’s epistemology in its own terms. The application of such symbols was one of the consequences of the esoterising attitude of *mutasavvife* to maintain the secreted and salvific knowledge of human relation to God. The indication of “all is one” in the poem above stamps on the most controversial topic in Islam, namely *vahdet-i vücud*. As Nicholson argues,

“Both Moslem and Sūfī declare that God is One, but the statement bears a different meaning in each instance. The Moslem means that God is unique in His essence, qualities, and acts; that He is absolutely unlike all other beings. The Sūfī means that God is the One Real Being which underlies all phenomena. (...) If nothing except God exists, then the whole universe, including man, is essentially one with God, whether it is regarded as an emanation which proceeds from Him, without impairing His unity, like sunbeams from the sun, or whether it is conceived as a mirror in which the divine attributes are reflected”¹⁷⁸²

Indeed, one individual or poet hardly represents the whole complex of *tasavvuf* and thus, to reveal as many characteristics of *tasavvuf* as possible additional expressions should be referred to. Mevlânâ, for example, provides a wide range of topics in his poetry from which further details concerning an esotericised *tasavvuf* discourse can be distilled:

“There are two kinds of intelligence: one acquired,
as a child in school memorizes facts and concepts
from books and from what the teacher says,
collecting information from the traditional sciences
as well as from the new sciences.

With such intelligence you rise in the world.
You get ranked ahead or behind others
in regard to your competence in retaining
information. You stroll with this intelligence
in and out of fields of knowledge, getting always more
marks on your preserving tablets.

¹⁷⁸¹ Nicholson, 1914, pp. 80–81.

¹⁷⁸² Nicholson, 1914, pp. 79–80.

There is another kind of tablet, one
already completed and preserved inside you.
A spring overflowing its springbox. A freshness
in the center of the chest. This other intelligence
does not turn yellow or stagnate. It's fluid,
and it doesn't move from outside to inside
through the conduits of plumbing-learning.

This second knowing is a fountainhead
from within you, moving out"¹⁷⁸³

In the poem above, Mevlânâ calls attention to the straightforward difference between the tacit and explicit knowledge forms in his own terms. The division established between these two forms of knowing is often reflected in esotericised traditions as exterior and interior or as an exoteric and esoteric dichotomy. Mevlânâ's view about the interior or tacit knowledge, which was "already completed and preserved inside" the human and "in the center of the chest" (the heart), reflects the common narratives of esotericism, mysticism, and Gnosticism maintaining an absolute contrast between hierarchically organized tacit (intuitive) and explicit knowledge forms.

As discussed in the chapter on esotericism, in studying the esotericised practices, a researcher may employ specific models and approaches developed throughout history. While Eddy's model focused on initiation, transmutation, realization, and embedded divine nature in humans¹⁷⁸⁴, Urban and Von Stuckrad laid a particular emphasis on the socio-political dynamics in shaping the esotericised discourse¹⁷⁸⁵. Even though criticized by several scholars, Faivre's model, on the other hand, aimed at establishing the common characteristics of esotericism, which designated six of them as correspondences, living nature, imagination and mediation, the experience of transmutation, praxis of concordance, and transmission¹⁷⁸⁶. The terms in Eddy's model are perhaps the most crucial elements of *tasavvuf* epistemology. Especially following the establishment of the *tasavvuf* institutions (*tarikât*) around the eleventh century, initiation (*sûlûk*) into a *tarikât* under the guidance of a mentor (*şeyh*, *mürşid*), with its abundant number of practices such as *zühd* or *riyâzet*, *murakabe*, *zikir* etc., has acquired prime importance for the "realization" or remembrance (*zikir*) of the embedded divine essence in the self, which has often

¹⁷⁸³ Rumi: "Two Kinds of Intelligence", in: Barks, Coleman (trans.), *The Essential Rumi*, New Jersey: Castle Books 1997, p. 178.

¹⁷⁸⁴ Eddy, 2004, pp. 213–214.

¹⁷⁸⁵ Eddy, 2004, p. 215; Von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 17.

¹⁷⁸⁶ Faivre / Voss, 1995.

been narrated as the transmutation of the carnal self (*nefs*) into a perfected divinity (*insân-ı kâmil*). Each of these notions of *tasavvuf* can be investigated within Eddy's model, yet without a reference to the socio-political events as proposed by Urban and Von Stuckrad, this approach can only shed light on *tasavvuf* partially. For instance, the milestone developments that initiated the *zühd* movement, later efforts to re-integrate it back to *ehl-i sünnet ve'l-cemâat*, the constitution of *tarikât* as a *tasavvuf* institution and the variety of roles *tarikât* held in history, or the Muslim conquest of Egypt are merely a small fraction of a millennia-old complex *tasavvuf* traditions. Within this study, two models are combined to draw their advantages into one relatively more encompassing investigation. Despite the critics raised against Faivre's approach, it can, perhaps with slight appropriations, be applied to *tasavvuf* to assess whether *tasavvuf* can be categorized as Islamic esotericism or would it be a misinterpretation.

The notion of *correspondences* in Faivre's model finds expression in *tasavvuf* as the association between the self and God, which was uttered as *enelhak* (I am the Truth) by Hallâc-ı Mansûr. As explained above, the concept of *vahdet-i vücud* (the unity of being) and all the discussions encompassing it are in fact inherent aspects of *tasavvuf* and can be considered suitable for the notion of correspondences of esoteric discourse. Faivre describes *living nature* as an active and responsive being, though in *tasavvuf* it is not the nature *per se* that responds to humans, the omnipresent God in Islam is also responsive and actively engages with the human life. The third characteristic of Faivre's model, *imagination*, refers to the soul's capacity to access hidden realms. Based on the frequency and importance of the terms such as *gayb*, *ledün*, *sır*, or *bâtın*, a large portion of the hidden realm narrative appears to be similarly reproduced in *tasavvuf*. While manifestations of the experience of *transmutation* (*insan-ı kâmil*) and *transmission* (a master and disciple relationship) in *tasavvuf* and Faivre's model are mentioned above, the *praxis of concordance* narrates a deeper fundamental and salvific wisdom (*gnosis*) encompassing all the other forms of knowing. Thus, it corresponds with *tasavvuf* in terms of the hierarchical knowledge system, at the top of which stands *mârifet* or *hikmet*. When Faivre's model is combined with Von Stuckrad's clear-cut definition of esoteric discourse as "the rhetoric of a hidden truth, which can be unveiled in a specific way"¹⁷⁸⁷, and with Hanegraaff's view on esotericised Neoplatonism of Plotinus, "Platonic Orientalism"¹⁷⁸⁸, which highlights *gnosis* as a salvific tool for the soul to liberate itself from the matter and to acquire a noetic experience of unity, *tasavvuf* can be investigated under the rubric of esotericism. However, the connota-

¹⁷⁸⁷ Von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 10.

¹⁷⁸⁸ Hanegraaff, 2012, p. 12.

tions that the *-ism* prefix carries should still be considered when calling *tasavvuf* Islamic esotericism.

9.2 Mysticism and *Tasavvuf*

The noetic experience of the divine narrated both in esotericised discourses and *tasavvuf* links two systems with the study of mysticism. Nicholson even titled his book about *mutasavvif* *The Mystics of Islam* and claimed that “the word ‘mystic’, which has passed from Greek religion into European literature, is represented in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, the three chief languages of Islam, by ‘Sūfī’”¹⁷⁸⁹. Based on the shared commonalities between *tasavvuf* and types of mysticism, Schimmel as well defines “sufism” as Islamic mysticism¹⁷⁹⁰, demonstrating a focus on the analogies with regard to their orientation toward a divine knowledge reveals certain correspondences between the two. For Schimmel these correspondences can be grouped under three categories:

“The never-ending quest for God is symbolized in the ‘Path’ on which the ‘wayfarer’ has to proceed, as in the numerous allegories dealing with Pilgrim’s Progress or the Heavenly Journey. The transformation of the soul through tribulation and painful purification is often expressed in the imagery of alchemy or similar processes from nature and prescientific science: the age-old dream of producing gold from base material is realized on the spiritual level. Eventually, the nostalgia of the lover and the longing for the union was expressed by symbols taken from human love; often strange and fascinating combination of human and divine love permeates the verses of the mystics”¹⁷⁹¹

Numerous theories and methods developed within mystified traditions have certain correspondences in *tasavvuf* to varying degrees. The primary topics shared by the two systems are the notion of the ineffability of an allegedly mystical and ecstatic experience, whose noetic quality allows the subject of the experience to acquire a form of intuitive wisdom through which the experiencer is bestowed with extra epistemological capacities concerning the hidden reality of things along with the knowledge of the self and the divine. No matter how this experience is named—whether extrovertive, introvertive, ecstasy, trance, *vecd* or *hâl*—it causes a spiritual transformation in the experiencer. Only after this transformation, through several stages of purgation (*via purgativa*) and purification, a form of illumination (*via illuminativa*) may take place, eventually bringing about a feeling of unification (*unio mystica*)¹⁷⁹² with the divine. The main

¹⁷⁸⁹ Nicholson, 1914, p. 3.

¹⁷⁹⁰ Schimmel, 1975, p. 3.

¹⁷⁹¹ Schimmel, 1975, pp. 4–5.

¹⁷⁹² Schimmel, 1975, p. 4; Stoddart, 2005, p. 64.

difference between *tasavvuf* and mysticism occurs in the ways of expression relating to such metaphysical notions shaped by the socio-cultural environment as well as the metasytem (religion) giving content and context to them.

To exemplify, in mysticism, according to Stace, the introvertive mystical experience of God occurs by means of focusing inwards of the self, which requires an absolute or diminished sensual input from the surroundings. When the focus matures enough, the subject may feel what Stace calls “vacuum, void, or emptiness”¹⁷⁹³ leading to an experience of eradication of duality and of the borders between the self and the Divine, which is usually interpreted as unification with God. Cook, in his *Mysticism in Sufi Islam*, emphasizes a potential commonality of “spiritual exercises” used in various *tasavvuf* trends that have the object of “emptying out the personality of the initiate and filling it with the remembrance [a.n. *zikir*] of the divine”¹⁷⁹⁴. In both *tasavvuf* and introvertive forms of mystical experience, there appears to be an identical formulation of the experience. Combined with Schuon’s description of *vacare Deo* in Christian monastic traditions as a condition through which “the remembrance of God is established”¹⁷⁹⁵, speculative correspondences between them appear. Furthermore, James’ study of mystical experiences establishes four qualities—ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, and passivity—to designate any experience “mystical”¹⁷⁹⁶. Three of these qualities (ineffability, noetic quality, and passivity) were already explained above, however, the transiency aspect requires further elaboration. James argues that mystical experiences are temporal, impermanent, and unstable; within *tasavvuf* too, there is a durational distinction between the two forms of ASC conditions. The first, *hâl*, “ecstatic condition”¹⁷⁹⁷, refers to a “psychic state (*d'état psychique*), a mystic state (*états mystiques*), or a mystic state of consciousness (*états de conscience mystiques*)”¹⁷⁹⁸. The state of *hâl* can be defined as a temporary meaning or understanding that comes to the *heart* as a blessing of God without intention, attempt, or effort from the side of the experiencer and a euphoric, heightened feeling resulting from the encounter with this meaning. Corresponding with James’ transiency, *hâl* is an unstable, transient alteration in consciousness expressed in a variety of ways. Kuşeyrî provides further details of a set of feelings occurring in *hâl* as follows:

¹⁷⁹³ Stace, 1960, p. 86.

¹⁷⁹⁴ Cook, “Mysticism in Sufi Islam”, 2015.

¹⁷⁹⁵ Cutsinger, 2004, p. 44.

¹⁷⁹⁶ James, 2002, p. 295.

¹⁷⁹⁷ Gilson, 1982, p. 135.

¹⁷⁹⁸ Massignon, 1922, pp. 169, 189, 275; Avery, 2004, p. 69.

“According to Sufis, *hâl* is the spiritual states (or conditions) such as joy, sadness, extension (*bast*), contraction and boredom (*kabz*), enthusiasm and indecision, majesty and excitement that come to the heart of the servant without any exertion or effort”¹⁷⁹⁹

If this *hâl* lasts longer or “with a greater constancy”¹⁸⁰⁰, it then becomes another mode of spiritual experience called *makam* (station). To transform the fleeting states (*hâl*) into a more stable and perpetual station (*makam*), human effort and “individual striving”¹⁸⁰¹ are necessary. Quoted by Hücivîrî, Cüneyd-i Bağdadî described *hâl* as “the flashes of lightning”¹⁸⁰², while Kuşeyrî compared *hâl* and *makam* as “states are gifts, stations are earnings”¹⁸⁰³. Concerning the last two qualities—transiency and passivity—which James differs from the first two as “less sharply marked” in mystical experiences, it appears that while the term *hâl* can be categorized under both passivity and transient qualities, *makam* cannot be put under any of these James’ classifications. While certain experiences resulting from *tasavvuf* practices may be categorized as “mystical” regarding some of the approaches shown above, as in the case of *hâl* and *makam*, they are still inadequate to cover all spiritual experiences of *tasavvuf*.

Apart from the correspondences, there are also several inconsistencies between *tasavvuf* and mysticism due to the frames established by the metasystems. Concerning the differences and discrepancies between mysticism (in its most general sense¹⁸⁰⁴) and *tasavvuf*, perhaps the most obvious element of incompatibility between them is the fact that they are both framed by their own religious or philosophical systems in which they are continuously being reformed. In the words of Stoddart, “in practice, mysticism only makes its appearance within the framework of one or other of the revealed religions”¹⁸⁰⁵. In the case of *tasavvuf*, similarly, all the opinions, doctrines, and their applications must conform to the irrevocable Islamic religious law and the consensus, *şeriat*, and *ehl-i sünnet ve’l-cemâat*. These idiosyncratic legal and social verification systems constitute a frame for *tasavvuf* to operate. Particularly the two components of *şeriat*, namely *farz* (religious duty) and *haram* (any action or object that is forbidden and unlawful), set the limits of highest tolerability for interpretation. Informed by *mutasavvif* scholars through his personal attachment to *tasavvuf*, Guénon agrees this notion that the authority of *şeriat*—or,

¹⁷⁹⁹ Kuşeyrî, *Risale*, Vol. 1, 1978, p. 127.

¹⁸⁰⁰ Avery, 2004, p. 69.

¹⁸⁰¹ Renard, 2009, p. 228.

¹⁸⁰² Al-Hujwîrî, *Kashf Al-Mahjûb*, 1911, p. 185.

¹⁸⁰³ Kuşeyrî, *Risale*, Vol. 1, 1978, p. 127.

¹⁸⁰⁴ When mysticism and *tasavvuf* are compared with each other, at least in most of the works the author has encountered so far, it seems that what is usually meant with mysticism is the early Christian mysticism, which has its own interrelation with Hellenistic and Egyptian esoteric systems and its own “deviant” streams that do not necessarily conform the expression “mysticism in its most general sense”.

¹⁸⁰⁵ Stoddart, 2005, p. 58.

what he calls “religious exoterism”¹⁸⁰⁶—and its relation to *tasavvuf* is of utmost importance to comprehend fundamental differences between *tasavvuf* and other mystical systems. Following the common understanding of the dichotomy between the inner (*bâtın*) and outer (*zâhir*) dimensions of things, while *şeriat* constitutes the outer aspect of Islam and thus concerns all Muslims, *tarikât* refers to the inner dimension of *şeriat* that reveals itself to aspirants through their own personal efforts¹⁸⁰⁷. The essential characteristic of this relation between *şeriat* and *tarikât* is that one can take the *tarikât* path¹⁸⁰⁸ only through *şeriat*. In other words, to be a “mystic” or *sûfî*, one is first obliged to be or become a Muslim, who, by definition, unconditionally surrendered to God’s laws, *şeriat*¹⁸⁰⁹. Correspondingly, the renowned Egyptian *sûfî* Zünnûn el-Mısırî (796–859) claimed to have said that the aspirants should not believe in any esoteric knowledge that destroys the exoteric law¹⁸¹⁰ implying the prime importance of *şeriat*.

Along with the key role *şeriat* has in shaping *tasavvuf* and differing it fundamentally from all the other mystical systems, Guénon highlighted several differences between mysticism and *tasavvuf* throughout his works sporadically. Tahralı collected these references and summarized Guénon’s perspective as follows:

1. Two things characterize mysticism: passivity and absence of method. While mysticism is passive, *tasavvuf* is active. In mysticism one must just accept whatever is received (through discovery and inspiration). In mysticism, no particular work or effort is needed, capability is enough for a person to be mystical. In *tasavvuf*, on the other hand, attempt and effort are essential for the verification and realization/actualization of everything and thus capability alone is not enough.

¹⁸⁰⁶ Guénon, René: *Initiation and Spiritual Realization*, Fohr, D. Henry (trans.), New York: Sophia Perennis 2004, pp. 41–44.

¹⁸⁰⁷ In *tasavvuf*, religion is conceptualized as having a four-fold structure. Along with *şeriat* and *tarikât*, there are two other layers known as *mârifet* and *hakikat*. Within the hierarchical system of *tasavvuf*, the latter two are as well the members of *bâtın* yet regarded higher compared to *tarikât*.

¹⁸⁰⁸ Here the word “path” is chosen intentionally. Those who have knowledge in Arabic and Turkish languages will easily notice the syntactical problem in the formulation “*tarikât* path”, as the term *tarikât* in both Turkish and Arabic also means path(s) and/or way(s). However, here the secondary meaning of *tarikât* as institutionalized *tasavvuf* is preferred. Another important and related point is that *şeriat* too comes to mean path or way in Arabic language, with a slightly differing semantic content.

¹⁸⁰⁹ This is the view of the *sünnî* school of thought followed by most Muslims and *mutasavvif*. Especially after the prominent jurist and *mutasavvif* Gazzâlî (1058–1111). Nevertheless, this does not mean that there are no antinomian streams within *tasavvuf* that partially ignore or bend certain parts of *şeriat*. Some of these groups are, within the scope of Anatolian region, *Kalenderî*, *Haydarî*, *Câmî*, *Celâlî*, *Şems-i Tebrizî*, and *Cavlakî* who have been labelled as heretics, heterodoxes, or “deviant dervishes”. For detailed information, see: Karamustafa, T. Ahmet: *God’s Unruly Friends. Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period 1200–1550*, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press 1994; Vâhidî: *Hâce-i Cihân ve Netice-i Cân*, Karabey, Turgut / Şığva, Bülent / Babür, Yusuf (eds.), Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları 2015.

¹⁸¹⁰ Rosenthal, 2007, p. 164.

2. In *tasavvuf*, along with an intention from the part of the aspirant (*mürîd*), joining a *tarikât* requires acceptance, an initiation. *Sûlûk* (the education system designed to attain higher states) only takes place through the instructions and guidance of a *şeyh* or *mürşîd*, the guide, master, and teacher. Affiliation with a *tarikât* is also the first condition of *tasavvuf*. In mysticism, there is neither a spiritual leader like *şeyh* who is responsible for each stage of the aspirant's education process, nor a regular order like *tarikât* to be affiliated with.
3. Although there is no fixed lineage of masters in mysticism, there is [and must be] a continuous lineage, a spiritual genealogy (*silsile*) in all *tasavvuf* trends. An unbroken *silsile* that connects the Prophet to the current *şeyh*, functions as the legitimate source for a *şeyh* to teach, lead, and guide his followers.
4. In *tasavvuf*, each *tarikât* has its own special nature and techniques, in other words, manners and methods in teaching the aspirants. People who desire to join a *tarikât* should preferably conform to the nature of *tarikât*. In accordance with this, aspirants are advised to find a *tarikât* that would fit to their personal nature. There is no such application in mysticism.
5. There is a hierarchy in every subject in *tasavvuf*. Every *mürîd* in a *tarikât* occupies a place and a role according to his spiritual knowledge and degree. There is no such hierarchy in mysticism.
6. Suffering, mortification of the flesh or certain forms of it including fasting, sleep deprivation, or abstinence have become a custom in mysticism, while in *tasavvuf*, even though fasting, sleep deprivation, and abstinence is present, suffering is not prioritized.¹⁸¹¹

The arguments on the differences between mysticism and *tasavvuf* mentioned above are partially shared by several scholars¹⁸¹². As stressed before, these are usually representing the perspectives of certain schools of thought and most likely, in certain matters, will find opposition. Nevertheless, without immersing in the endless discussions, it appears that such differences, as well as shared features, should be taken into consideration carefully and require in-depth studies.

9.3 Gnosticism and *Tasavvuf*

Since Gnosticism, as demonstrated above, is a combination of discourses developed from their inherent structural and doctrinal negotiations with Judaism, Christianity, and Greek philosophy, the denomination "Islamic Gnosticism" appears to be the most controversial among

¹⁸¹¹ Tahralı, Mustafa: "Fransız Müslüman Abdülvâhid Yahyâ (René Guénon)'nın Eserinde Tasavvuf ve Mistisizm Farkı", in: *Kubbealtı Akademi Mecmuası*, 10/4, 1981, pp. 21–36; Guénon, René: "Haqîqa and Sharî'a in Islam", in: Michon, Jean-Louis / Gaetani, Roger (eds.), *Sufism. Love and Wisdom*, Bloomington: World Wisdom 2006, pp. 89–100/93–94.

¹⁸¹² See: Yılmaz, 2004, p. 14; Öngören, 2011, p. 119; Kara, Mustafa: *Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar Tarihi*, İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları 2003, p. 14–15; Filiz, Şahin: "Mistisizm ile Tasavvuf Arasındaki Temel Farklar – Felsefî Bir Yaklaşım", in: *Diyanet İlmî Dergi*, 30/1, 1994, pp. 103–124.

the others. Gnosticism's positioning in the face of these meta-systems gave it shape and content that can be revealed only in terms of their idiosyncratic encounters. Like in the case of magic and its relationship with religion, a fundamental distinction has always been favoured between Gnosticism and religions, a "distinction properly belongs to the domain of theological polemics internal to"¹⁸¹³ each religion separately. Therefore, the principal difference between Gnosticism and *tasavvuf* is that Gnosticism positions itself against certain fundamental tenets of the Bible, especially the *Genesis* account, for *tasavvuf*, opposing even a line in the *Kur'an*, which is believed to be God's word, will immediately end up with excommunication since being a *sûfî* is only possible after being Muslim. If *tasavvuf* was considered a monolithic entity and investigated how it positions itself in relation to Christianity, an answer would not be possible without a reference to the *Kur'anic* position¹⁸¹⁴. Calling *tasavvuf* Islamic Gnosticism may imply an inherent and embedded opposition to the Bible's *Genesis* account within *tasavvuf*, which is not the case in the *Kur'anic* perspective and thus prevents us to establish such association.

The commonalities between Gnosticism and *tasavvuf*, on the other hand, are manifold. It is to a great extent because they both engage with similar questions concerning the creation, the human condition in the world, and the afterlife. In other words, the attempts to know the reason behind human existence with all its constituents by both parties have produced approximating answers and theories. Nearly all religious systems tied these questions to the nature of God and believed that by knowing God one can as well know all the relevant aspects of creation and human fate in the world and beyond. Like Gnosticism incorporated a variety of philosophical and religious ideas into their discourses that were available to them, *tasavvuf*—or Islamic philosophy in general—also capitalized on diverse opinions including certain Greek philosophical and Gnostic notions, particularly through the translations of Plotinus' works. In this process, several representatives of Islamic philosophy or Muslim philosophers inherited the tools of their Greek counterparts to investigate their own theological dilemmas. As Leaman argues, Islamic philosophy "looks for the roots of the discussion elsewhere and implies that the interest of the discussion within Islamic world is secondary to its original manifestation in the Greek original context"¹⁸¹⁵. Leaman also holds that the Islamization of Greek philosophical notions was a process of adaptation, namely it did not take place as a mere translation of Greek concepts

¹⁸¹³ Hanegraaff, J. Wouter: "Magic I. Introduction", in: Hanegraaff, J. Wouter (ed.), *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, Leiden: Brill 2006a, pp. 716–719/718.

¹⁸¹⁴ Since *tasavvuf* is a complex structure and houses various opinions, a particular stream or *tarikât* may have alternative perspectives about the topic.

¹⁸¹⁵ Leaman, Oliver: "Introduction", in: Nasr, S. Hossein / Leaman, Oliver (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, London / New York: Routledge 1996, pp. 1–10/7.

into Arabic or Persian philosophical and theological investigations. What Leaman calls adaptation here, is considered a reinterpretation in this study, employed to adjust non-Islamic concepts that have irrelevant associations and semantic range in their original context to an Islamic frame.

From this perspective, calling *tasavvuf* Islamic mysticism, Gnosticism, or esotericism is significantly problematic for each term carries its own (non-Islamic) historical burdens. The other issue is to completely ignore all these traditions and their potential commonalities with *tasavvuf*. Mysticism, Gnosticism, and esotericism acquired each their own distinctive name and conferences held by international scholars to understand them on their own terms. However, as shown above, they also intertwined with each other so profoundly that thinking of them separately is perhaps only useful for devoting monographs to each in isolation. Meanwhile, their relation to *tasavvuf* constitutes a whole another dimension. Evidently, they appear to be important actors in the history of *tasavvuf*, providing it with ammunition that they developed and perfected in their conflict with opposing, usually “orthodox” and authoritarian, interpretations of wisdom and the ways to attain it. Both *tasavvuf* and other systems have been designed, developed, and performed in line with their human actors’ understanding of (divine) wisdom. They all have various common traits, especially when we employ a rather general perspective. Valantasis, for example, describes the Gnostics as “simply those who are oriented toward knowledge and understanding—or perception and learning—as a particular modality of living”¹⁸¹⁶. What was attempted to demonstrate in this study is that in terms of *hikmet* not only Gnostics, mystics, and esoterics, but also *mutasavvife* can be defined with the exact words used by Valantasis. If one compares the descriptions of mystical discourse with, for example, Trimmingham’s general description of *sūfī*—“anyone who believes that it is possible to have direct experience of God”¹⁸¹⁷—an experience that characteristically involves a “noetic quality”¹⁸¹⁸ and leads to a specific (ascetic) lifestyle, both perspectives appear to affirm a possibility of a “knowledge-granting”¹⁸¹⁹ direct experience of the Supernatural, the One, the Absolute, or *Allah*.

Perhaps against the settled tradition in *tasavvuf* studies, some chapters of this study attempted to trace the background for the consideration of Greek *σοφία* as the etymological root

¹⁸¹⁶ Valantasis, 2006, p. 12.

¹⁸¹⁷ Trimmingham, 1971, p. 1.

¹⁸¹⁸ James, 2002, p. 295.

¹⁸¹⁹ Gellman, “Mysticism”, 2004; Gilsenan, Michael: *Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt. An Essay in the Sociology of Religion*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1973, p. 156.

for the term *sûfî* with an analysis of the certain aspects of the history of the ancient Near East, Judaism, philosophy, and Christianity. As shown above, considering the importance laid upon the concept of wisdom, *hikmet*, both in the *Kur'an* and in a wide range of different *tasavvuf* schools, *tarikât*, and the associations made between the Hebrew root *ḥkm* (חכּם) and *sofîa* (σοφία) by various authors, translators, and commentators over the course of the early and recent history, it is possible that the *mutasavvife*, who are in constant search for *hikmet*, might have been addressed by their Greek-speaking counterparts through the term *sofîa* (σοφία).

In time, *tasavvuf* developed an applied and ritualized technique known as *zikir*, through which the knowledge of God, *hikmet* or *mârifet*, is remembered or systematically derived under specific circumstances shaped by *the Kur'an*. The second volume of this study is designed to investigate the anatomy of a *zikir* ritual with its structural components, musical grammar, and performative aspects as composed and practiced by a certain pseudo-*tasavvuf* organization, who call themselves Halvetî Uşşâkî Ruhzârî, from İstanbul.



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DISSERTATION / DOCTORAL THESIS

Titel der Dissertation / Title of the Doctoral Thesis

Zikir as the Applied Epistemology of Tasavvuf

Band 2 von 2 / Volume 2 of 2

verfasst von / submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doktor der Philosophie (Dr.phil.)

Wien, 2022 / Vienna, 2022

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme code as it appears on the student
record sheet:

UA 792 316

Dissertationsgebiet lt. Studienblatt /
field of study as it appears on the student record sheet:

Musikwissenschaft

Betreut von / Supervisor:

ao. Univ.-Prof. Dr. Gerhard Kubik

*Handân olur ma'nâ gülü
Âsâr-ı zikrullah ile
Şevke gelir cân bülbülü
Gülzâr-ı zikrullah ile*

Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi

10 Zikir

The first volume of this study is composed to demonstrate the events, theories, opinions, and their reinterpretations that likely brought about the *zikir* as an applied epistemological tool developed within the *tasavvuf* complex. This study proposes *zikir* to be the solution to the question of how to derive the salvific knowledge of God, devised and shaped collectively by numerous Muslims and *mutasavvife* following the initial revelation of the *Kur'an* to Prophet Muhammed.

As in the case of *tasavvuf* and relevant other esotericised systems, defining *zikir* is laden with a variety of views in terms of its contents, configuration, performance practices, and controversial legitimacy in Islam¹⁸²⁰. Even if the study is framed with the *zikir* performances in Turkey¹⁸²¹, an awareness of the numerous interpretations of *zikir* across the Islamicate world is required due to broad and vague conceptualization of its components, structure, and performative aspects. “Located in between meditation and prayer”¹⁸²², in its essence, *zikir* is “the ritual

¹⁸²⁰ See, for example: Swan, George: “The Dhikr”, in: *The Muslim World*, 2/4, 1912, pp. 380–386; Dakake, David: “The Practice of Dhikr in the Early Islamic Community”, in: Moris, Zailan (ed.), *Knowledge is Light. Essays in Honor of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, Chicago: Kazi Publications 1999, pp. 169–193; Shah-Kazemi, Reza: *Justice and remembrance. Introducing the spirituality of Imam Ali*, London: IB Tauris 2006; Loimeier, Roman: “Der dhikr. Zum sozialen Kontext eines religiösen Rituals”, in: *Der Islam*, 83/1, 2006, pp. 170–186; Ibn Teymiyye: *Kur'ân ve Sünnette Dua ve Zikir*, Yılmaz, Mehmet / Kalaycı, Ayhan (trans.), İstanbul: Pınar 2007; Kabbani, Shaykh Muhammad Hisham: *The Naqshbandi Sufi Tradition. Guidebook of Daily Practices and Devotions*, Fenton: Islamic Supreme Council of America 2004, pp. 95–163; Gardet, Louis: “*Dhikr*”, in: Bearman, J. Peri et.al. (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, 2012, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/*-COM_0162>, last accessed: 13 January 2022.

¹⁸²¹ See: Kara, Mustafa: *Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar Tarihi*, İstanbul: Dergah 1985; Markoff, Irene: “Introduction to Sufi music and Ritual in Turkey”, in: *Review of Middle East Studies*, 29/2, 1995, pp. 157–160; Feldman, Walter: “Musical genres and zikir of the Sunni Tarikats of Istanbul”, in: Lifchez, Raymond (ed.), *The Dervish Lodge. Art, Architecture, and Sufism in Ottoman Turkey*, Berkeley / Los Angeles / Oxford: University of California 1992, pp. 187–202; Uludağ, Süleyman: *İslam Açısından Müzik ve Semâ*, İstanbul: Kabalcı 2004.

¹⁸²² Elias, 2013, p. 189.

invocation of god”¹⁸²³, a form of Islamic “devotional act”¹⁸²⁴, or a “ritual prayer”¹⁸²⁵ performed diversely by different *tarikat* organizations and individual Muslims throughout the world.

Transferred into Turkish from the Arabic language, the term *zikir* in both Turkish and Arabic denote recollection¹⁸²⁶, mentioning, *anamnesis*¹⁸²⁷, or remembrance¹⁸²⁸. What is to remember is explained in the *Kur’an*, where *zikir* is often referred to as remembering God¹⁸²⁹. Indicating the importance laid upon the term, *zikir* and the variations of it appear in the *Kur’an* about two hundred times¹⁸³⁰ and throughout the verses in the *Kur’an*, this prominence of *zikir* is elucidated abundantly:

“So, remember Me, and I will remember you”¹⁸³¹

“Remember your Lord often, and praise Him in the evening and morning”¹⁸³²

“So remember the graces (bestowed upon you) from *Allah* so that you may be successful”¹⁸³³

“Those who fear *Allah*, when a thought of evil from Satan assaults them, bring *Allah* to remembrance, and then they can discern the reality”¹⁸³⁴

“And do not obey to one whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance, and who has followed his desire and whose behaviour has exceeded the limits”¹⁸³⁵

“Indeed, We have sent down to you a Book wherein is your remembrance; will you then not reason?”¹⁸³⁶

“Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book and establish prayer. Indeed prayer restrains from indecency and evil. And *Allah*’s remembrance is the greatest. And *Allah* knows all that you do”¹⁸³⁷

¹⁸²³ Shannon, H. Jonathan: *Among the Jasmine Trees. Music and Modernity in Contemporary Syria*, Connecticut: Wesleyan University 2006, p. 112; Algar, Hamid: “The Naqshbandī Order. A Preliminary Survey of Its History and Significance”, in: *Studia Islamica*, 44, 1976, pp. 123–152/129.

¹⁸²⁴ Noorhaidi, Hasan: “Piety, Politics, and Post-Islamism. Dhikr Akbar in Indonesia”, in: *Al-Jami’ah Journal of Islamic Studies*, 50/2, 2012, pp. 369–390/370.

¹⁸²⁵ Nakamura, Kōjirō: “A Structural Analysis of Dhikr and Nembutsu”, in: *Orient*, 7, 1971, pp. 75–96/79.

¹⁸²⁶ Nasr, S. Hossein: *Islamic Art and Spirituality*, Albany: SUNY 1987, p. 11; Geels 1996, p. 229.

¹⁸²⁷ Waley, I. Muhammad: “Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism”, in: Lewisohn, Leonard (ed.), *The Heritage of Sufism*, Vol. 1, Oxford: Oneworld, 1999, p. 507.

¹⁸²⁸ Vicente, A. Victor: *The Aesthetics of Motion in Musics for the Mevlana Celal ed-Din Rumi*, Dissertation, University of Maryland, 2007, p. 190.

¹⁸²⁹ Bardakçı, N. Mehmet: “Sûfilerin Zikir Yöntemlerinin Âdâb-Erkân Bağlamında Tasavvuf Kültürüne Katkıları”, in: *Araştırmalar İnsan Bilimleri Araştırmaları*, 9/17, 2007, pp. 15–38/16.

¹⁸³⁰ Öztürk, Vol. 2, 2012, p. 518.

¹⁸³¹ *Kur’an* 2:152 (*Bakara*).

¹⁸³² *Kur’an* 3:41 (*Âl-i İmrân*).

¹⁸³³ *Kur’an* 7:69 (*A’râf*).

¹⁸³⁴ *Kur’an* 7:201 (*A’râf*).

¹⁸³⁵ *Kur’an* 18:38 (*Kehf*).

¹⁸³⁶ *Kur’an* 21:10 (*Enbiyâ*).

¹⁸³⁷ *Kur’an* 29:45 (*Ankebût*).

“Men and women who remember *Allah* often, for them *Allah* has prepared forgiveness and a rich reward”¹⁸³⁸

This importance is further manifested in various verses as the *Kur'an* describes itself “the reminder” (of the covenant)¹⁸³⁹, “*zîkr-i hâkim*”¹⁸⁴⁰, wise (*hikmetli*) reminder¹⁸⁴¹, or “*ez-Zîkr*”¹⁸⁴² and with this, the messenger of the word of *Allah*, i.e., Prophet Muhammed, becomes a *müzekkir*¹⁸⁴³, the one who reminds (the divine ordinances)¹⁸⁴⁴. In Chittick’s words, “the first function of the prophets is to ‘remind’ people of their own divinely given reality”¹⁸⁴⁵. Along with the *Kur'an*, several *hadis* uttered by Prophet Muhammed as well refer to the centrality of *zikir* concept within the whole system of Islam:

“Have I not told you of the best of your works, the purest of them in your Lord’s eyes and the ones that are the most exalted in your ranks? They are better than giving gold and silver in charity and fighting your enemy and striking their necks as they are striking yours? They asked him: ‘What is it, O Messenger of God?’ He answered: ‘Remembering God Most High!’”¹⁸⁴⁶

Addressing both the *Kur'an* and Prophet Muhammed, the two primary sources to derive knowledge (*ilim*, *hikmet*, *mârifet*) in Islam through *zikir*-relevant terminology establishes its importance concerning the epistemology of Islam and *tasavvuf*.

As mentioned in the preceding chapters of this study, the divine covenant (*bezm-i elest*) in Shannon’s reference to *zikir* above that took place between God and the uncreated souls contains an epistemological quality. Namely, the souls’ acquaintance with God or knowing their relation to God means acknowledging God’s lordship and their submission to God’s will, which made them Muslims (submitted to God). The compelling condition of the human soul in the created realm is consequently described in the *Kur'an* as forgetfulness (*nisyan*), needing to be overcome by means of remembrance (*zikir*). Through remembering the covenant and the lordship of God over the self, those who are in the state of heedlessness (*gaflet*) can reportedly

¹⁸³⁸ *Kur'an* 33:35 (*Ahzâb*).

¹⁸³⁹ Shannon, 2006, p. 114.

¹⁸⁴⁰ Kurt, Hüseyin: “el-Bârikât’ta Zikir ve Duanın Psikolojik Boyutu”, in: *Harran Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 13/20, 2008, pp. 181–192/182.

¹⁸⁴¹ *Kur'an* 3:58 (*Âl-i İmrân*).

¹⁸⁴² Bilgiz, Musa: “Kur’an’da Zikir Kavramının Anlam Alanı”, in: *Atatürk Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 25, 2006, pp. 209–236/212; Chittick, 2005, p. 2339.

¹⁸⁴³ *Kur'an* 88:21 (*Gâşîye*).

¹⁸⁴⁴ Bilgiz, 2006, p. 217.

¹⁸⁴⁵ Chittick, 2002, p. 49.

¹⁸⁴⁶ Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 232.

receive divine blessing¹⁸⁴⁷. This importance of *zikir* is therefore reproduced by *mutasavvife* in their attempts to establish or reinstate a relationship with God, and “their desire and demand to attain”¹⁸⁴⁸ God’s remembrance¹⁸⁴⁹, yet with a degree of interpretative variations. Even though the presence of structural and performative variations necessitates monographic investigations to be marked, certain contextual, organizational, or performative components of *zikir* are commonly practiced by approximately all current and historical *tarikât* groups.

During the initial periods of Islam, i.e., before the emergence of regulated, ritualized, and standardized forms of collective *tarikât zikir* around the tenth and eleventh centuries, *zikir* was being practiced “individually and plainly”¹⁸⁵⁰ by certain *zâhid* profiles and the first models of *mutasavvife*¹⁸⁵¹. As there is no specific or allocated time and space in the *Kur’an* concerning how and when to perform *zikir*¹⁸⁵², the popular *tasavvuf* motto mentioned in the introduction of this study, “the paths to God are as many as the breaths of His creatures” applies to the varied *zikir* performances. Almost every individual or *tarikât* leader (*şeyh*, *mürşid*), based on *nass*, proposed subjective opinions (*ictihad*) on the contents and performance practices, which led to the formation of types of *zikir*. These opinions ranged from a simple mentioning of God while taking care of daily business to the strictly regulated, ritualized, and often acoustically accompanied forms of *zikir* performances. According to Chittick, for *mutasavvife*, “once we see the world for what it is, we see that it is nothing but *dhikr Allâh*—a reminder of God, a mention of God, a remembrance of God”¹⁸⁵³. In other words, *mutasavvife* consider everything in the sensible realm a manifestation of God that reminds His attributes (*esmâ-i hüsnâ*)¹⁸⁵⁴. While, for example, the verse 24:37 (*Nûr*) states that “people whom neither commerce nor striving after profit diverts them from remembering Allah”, these people, reported in another verse, 3:191 (*Âl-i İmrân*), are “those who remember Allah while standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth”. Moreover, differing from the fixed times allocated to certain prayer forms, performing *zikir* is not “confined to appointed times”¹⁸⁵⁵. This relative freedom in performing *zikir* has allowed Muslims to consider certain behaviours and references to God—such as “taking refuge in *Allah* (*istiâze*), asking forgiveness

¹⁸⁴⁷ *Kur’an* 7:205 (*A’râf*), 19:24 (*Kehf*); Yılmaz, 2004, p. 164.

¹⁸⁴⁸ Öngören, Reşat: “Zikir”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 44, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2013, pp. 409–412/410.

¹⁸⁴⁹ Kuşeyrî, *Risale*, Vol. 2, 1978, p. 358.

¹⁸⁵⁰ Bardakçı, 2007, pp. 16, 20.

¹⁸⁵¹ Ateş, Süleyman: “Zikir”, in: *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 14, 1966, pp. 235–244/237.

¹⁸⁵² However, certain verses in the *Kur’an* provide partial information on how to perform *zikir*, yet they are open to interpretation, see for example: 3:191 (*Âl-i İmrân*) and 7:205 (*A’râf*). See: Kuşeyrî, *Risale*, Vol. 2, 1978, p. 357.

¹⁸⁵³ Chittick, 2002, p. 63.

¹⁸⁵⁴ *Kur’an* 17:44 (*İsrâ*), 59:24 (*Haşr*).

¹⁸⁵⁵ Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 234.

(*istiğfar*), reciting formulas (*besmele*), benediction (*takdis*)”¹⁸⁵⁶—valid forms of remembrance. In the words of el-İskenderî,

“*Zikir* may be in the form of the remembrance of God or of one of the attributes, or one of his commands, or one of his actions, or evidence (*istadlāl*) of one of these things; or [it may be] a prayer, or remembrance of his messengers, his prophets, his saints (*awliya*’), or one who is attached to him, or near to him in some form or another or some cause or action. It is [in the form of] recitation (*qirā’a*) or remembrance (*dhikr*) or verse, or song, or lecture (*muḥāḍara*), or a story (*hikāya*)”¹⁸⁵⁷

On the other hand, over time certain *zikir* types have been developed, categorized, and contextualized differently by various *mutasavvife*.

10.1 Forms of *Zikir*

Numerous *mutasavvife* have categorized different forms of *zikir* regarding specific variables. In terms of sound production, for example, *zikir* is usually categorized under two sections. The first one is known as the silent or secret *zikir* (*zikh-i hafī*), in which little—just enough to be heard by the performer—or no sound phenomenon can be observed. Those who favour silent *zikir* base their preference on the *Kur’anic* verse below:

“And remember your Lord within yourself, humbly and with fear and without loudness in words in the mornings, and in the afternoons and do not be among the heedless”¹⁸⁵⁸

Another conceptualization of *zikh-i hafī* is its association with the heart. According to this view, *zikir* is performed silently and from the heart “(*dhikr khafī, qalbī*), [a.n. which] is usually recognized as superior to”¹⁸⁵⁹ the voiced (*cehrī*) forms of it. Within *hadis* sources too, the silent *zikir* or a moderate praying within designated limits is recommended:

“Narrated by Abū Mūsā Al-Ash‘arī: We were in the company of *Allāh*’s Messenger (during *Hajj*). Whenever we went up a high place we used to say: ‘*Lā ilāha illallāh* and *Allahu Akbar* (none has the right to be worshipped but *Allāh*, and *Allāh* is the Most Great)’, and our voices used to raise. So the Prophet said, ‘O people! Be merciful to yourselves (i.e., don’t raise your voice), for you are not

¹⁸⁵⁶ Serrâc, *El-Lüma*’, 1996, p. 223; Öngören, 2013, pp. 409–410; Erginli, 2006, p. 1265.

¹⁸⁵⁷ Al-İskenderi, Ibn ‘Ata Allah: *Miftāḥ al-falāḥ wa-miṣbāḥ al-arwāḥ*, Basra: Mustafa Albani al-Halabi 1961, pp. 11–12 quoted by Elias, 2013, p. 190.

¹⁸⁵⁸ *Kur’an* 7:205 (*A’râf*).

¹⁸⁵⁹ Schimmel, 1975, p. 171.

calling a deaf or an absent one, but One Who is with you, no doubt He is All-Hearer, Ever Near (to all things)''¹⁸⁶⁰

In a performance of the *zikir* of the heart, no physical organ is involved in the practice, especially the tongue is motionless; only the heart remembers the *mezkûr* (*Allah*). The heart here is not the one that ensures blood circulation, but it is the spiritual heart, allegedly the centre of divine blessings and access point to the divine realm. A person whose heart is busy with *zikir* forgets everything other than what is remembered (*Allah*) and thus establishes a bond (*râbîta*) with the remembered unpolluted with *mâsivâ* (anything other than *Allah*). A more organized silent *zikir* is generally performed apart from the crowds, individually, and in isolation. Likely given as an assignment by the leader to a recent candidate (*sâlik*) of a *tarikât*, this form of silent *zikir* is made of a specific number of repetitions of the names and attributes of God known as *esmâ-i hüsnâ*. Through repeating each name *sâlik* is believed to purify and eventually perfect the relevant faculties of the heart in establishing a bond with God. In silent *zikir*, to maintain the silence, a *zâkir* may be recommended to touch the palate of the mouth with the tongue and keep it in this manner, so that a voiced articulation with the movements of the tongue can be hindered. Even though the majority of *tarikât* organizations favour the voiced forms of *zikir*, Nakşibendî *tarikât* differs from the majority through their preference for the silent *zikir* over the ritualized or voiced forms of it. The Nakşibendî group base their argument of silent *zikir* on a *Kur'anic* event reported in the verse 9:40 (*Tevbe*), in which Prophet Muhammed assumedly “imparted the formula of the silent *dhikr* to Abû Bakr, thereby allowing God to be manifested to him in the form of his ‘quiescence’ or ‘divine presence’ (*sakîna*)”¹⁸⁶¹. The association of the silent *zikir* with the first caliph Ebû Bekir (c. 573–634) and Nakşibendî *tarikât*—a group which places the caliph Ebû Bekir, following Prophet Muhammed, as the starting point of their traditional lineage (*silsile*)—is now somewhat an established view within *tasavvuf*. However, Gölpınarlı argues that this narrative can be found neither in the *Kur'an* nor in the valid *hadis* sources, thus “(it) is nothing but a repetition of the rumours that were made up later”¹⁸⁶². Nevertheless, this narrative has been frequently reproduced among *tasavvuf* circles throughout history and has eventually become a commonly accepted view. Yılmaz links this case with the essential feature of *tasavvuf*, namely, with the interpretative variations and argues that the verse

¹⁸⁶⁰ Al-Bukhârî, Muhammad: *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahîh Al-Bukhârî*, Khan, M. Muhsin (trans.), Vol. 4, Riyadh: Darussalam 1997, pp. 147–148.

¹⁸⁶¹ Le Gall, Dina: *A Culture of Sufism. Naqshbandîs in the Ottoman World, 1450 – 1700*, Albany: SUNY 2005, p. 130.

¹⁸⁶² Gölpınarlı, Abdülbâki: *100 Soruda Tasavvuf*, İstanbul: Gerçek Yayınevi 1969b, p. 31.

9:40 (*Tevbe*), in which Prophet Muhammed tells Ebû Bekir to “not grieve, *Allah* is with us”, can be interpreted as Prophet reminding Ebû Bekir to remember God silently while they were hiding in a cave¹⁸⁶³. Ultimately this event has become the main indicator for Nakşibendî *tarikât* to deploy silent *zikir* as their means to acquire proximity to God¹⁸⁶⁴ and hold Ebû Bekir as the founder of their lineage (*silsile*)¹⁸⁶⁵. Historically, the foundation of the Nakşibendî *tarikât* is attributed to Bahâeddin Nakşibend (1318–1389)¹⁸⁶⁶. However, the lineage of Nakşibendî group is traditionally traced back to Prophet Muhammed and subsequently to Ebû Bekir¹⁸⁶⁷, which led Nakşibendî adherents, unlike the other *tarikât* organizations¹⁸⁶⁸, to perform the repetitions of the names of God “in the mind or muttered in a low voice”¹⁸⁶⁹, namely, in the form of silent *zikir*¹⁸⁷⁰. This Nakşibendî *zikir* is summarized by a prominent adherent as follows:

“The master says in his heart ‘There is no god but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God’: The disciple brings his heart to presence and places it in front of the master’s heart. He opens his eyes, purses his mouth, presses his tongue against the roof of his mouth, and places his teeth together. He gathers himself and obediently, with all his power, begins the dhikr together with the master. He says this in his heart, not by the tongue, being patient and doing three iterations per each breath”¹⁸⁷¹

10.1.1 The Voiced *Zikir*

At the other end of the spectrum stands the loud or voiced *zikir* (*zikr-i cehrî*), which, as the classification indicates, contains various sound phenomena, and therefore constitutes the primary subject of the second volume of this study. For Vicente, the silent and voiced forms of *zikir* are essentially the same, while the main diverging point is the emphasis on hearable sounds. He argues that even though both the silent and voiced *zikir* forms “include the same features, gestures, and recitations”, the voiced *zikir* “is usually more active and is distinguished

¹⁸⁶³ Yılmaz, H. Kâmil: “Hz. Ebubekir Sıddîk (r.a.)”, in: *Altınoluk Dergisi*, 63, 1991, pp. 28–30/30.

¹⁸⁶⁴ Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 232.

¹⁸⁶⁵ Gölpınarlı, Abdülbâki: *100 Soruda Türkiye’de Mezhepler ve Tarikatlar*, İstanbul: Gerçek Yayınevi 1969a, p. 218.

¹⁸⁶⁶ Kara, 1992, p. 72.

¹⁸⁶⁷ Algar, Hamid: “Nakşibendiyye”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 32, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2006a, pp. 335–342/338; Kugle, Scott: *Sufis and Saint’s Bodies. Mysticism, Corporeality, and Sacred Power in Islam*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina 2007, p. 143.

¹⁸⁶⁸ Weismann, Itzhak: *The Naqshbandiyya. Orthodoxy and Activism in a Worldwide Sufi Tradition*, London / New York: Routledge 2007, p. 24.

¹⁸⁶⁹ Gilsenan, 1973, p. 156.

¹⁸⁷⁰ However, not all adherents or Nakşibendî branches (*kol*) exclusively practice the silent *zikir*; there are as well occasions reported containing voiced *zikir* performances within Nakşibendî. See: Algar, Hamid: “Silent and Vokal Dhikr in the Naqshbandi Order”, in: Dietrich, Albert (ed.), *Akten des VII. Kongresses für Arabistik und Islamwissenschaft*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht 1974, pp. 39–46.

¹⁸⁷¹ Quoted by Bashir, 2013, p. 203.

by the fact that it is performed aloud and comprises all vocal and sonic articulations of the anamnesis of *Allah*”¹⁸⁷².

Unlike the Nakşibendî preference for the silent *zikir*, the majority of *tarikât* organizations in the Islamicate world employ various forms of the voiced *zikir* (*zîkr-i cehrî*) in their spiritual education systems (*seyrüsülûk*). Over time, approximately every *tarikât* and its sub-branches have developed a style, structure, and content of *zikir* rituals. While the context—derived from the *Kur’ân* and Prophet Muhammed’s *sünnet*—is the same and reproduced unan- imously, the style of “the voice” is often designed according to regional and temporal interpre- tations of religion, arts, law, and certain other socio-cultural dynamics¹⁸⁷³. This feature, as in musical styles, essentially differs the *zikir* performances and the ritual structure of one region from the others. For instance, a *zikir* proper in Pakistan will make use of local instruments, expression ways (vocal or instrumental), or body movements, whereas a *zikir* organized within the Muslim groups in China will select whatever is available to them, which often differs from the other regions’ repertoire of sound and movements. In line with these variations, the names given to the voiced *zikir* rituals in different regions may also display diversity—such as *hadra*, *hatm-i hâcegân*, *devran*, *meclis*, *zîkr-i erre*, or *semâ*¹⁸⁷⁴. Accordingly, the *tarikât* groups have been customarily categorized in terms of the produced sound within their *zikir* performances: those groups (Nakşibendî and Yesevî) whose lineage goes back to the first caliph of Prophet Muhammed, practice the silent *zikir*. The other *tarikât* organizations whose lineage emphasizes the fourth caliph Ali (599–661) are collectively known as “*turuk-ı aliyye*”¹⁸⁷⁵, and practice pri- marily the voiced (*cehrî*) *zikir* forms. These *tarikât* groups are, for example, Bektaşî, Kâdirî, Rifâî, Halvetî, Bedevî, Sa’dî, Şâzelî, and Bayramî among many others.

On the other hand, intrinsic relations between *tarikât* groups and their leaders have pro- duced hybrid organizations that may possess both “Bekrî or Sıddîkî (Ebû Bekir) and Alevî (Ali)”¹⁸⁷⁶ lineages. A *mürşid* (leader of a *tarikât*), for example, may receive authorization (*icâzet*) to lead a branch (*kol*) of a *tarikât* and teach *tasavvuf* doctrines from two and even more different *tarikât* organizations with divergent lineages, *zikir* performances, or social roles. In such cases, a *mürşid* may prefer to maintain the doctrines and practices of one *tarikât*, select specific elements from different *tarikât* organizations, or compose a completely new system of

¹⁸⁷² Vicente, 2007, p. 192.

¹⁸⁷³ Arslan, Ferhat: “The Politicization of Tradition. The New Visibility of Zikir in Soldier Send-Off Ceremonies in Turkey”, in: *Etnografie sonore/ Sound Ethnographies*, 3/1, 2020, pp. 47–70/55.

¹⁸⁷⁴ Öngören, 2013, p. 411.

¹⁸⁷⁵ Kara, 1992, p. 36; Öngören, 2013, p. 412.

¹⁸⁷⁶ Tosun, Necdet: “Silsile”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 37, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2009b, pp. 206–207/207.

practices based on his interpretation. An exemplary case can be demonstrated within the historical developments of the Nakşibendî *tarikât*, whose name was initially known as Bekrî (or Bekriyye) indicating the period between Ebû Bekir and Bistâmî. Following Bistâmî, the group took the name Tayfûrî until Hâce Yûsuf el-Hemedânî (1062–1141), whose influence led his organization to be called Hâcegân *tarikât*. Eventually, with the renowned *mürşid* Hâce Bahâeddin Nakşibend, the same *tarikât* took its final name today known as Nakşibendî¹⁸⁷⁷. Essentially, under each *mürşid* the group not only acquired a new name but also displayed varying inclinations in line with the *mürşid*'s preferences¹⁸⁷⁸ concerning the “method for obtaining the eternal blessing of the Almighty, for exalting the soul, and for arriving at a state of perpetual happiness”¹⁸⁷⁹. Despite Nakşibendî differs today from the other *tarikât* organizations with its emphasis on the silent *zikir* form, the Kâsânî branch of Nakşibendî, for example, holds a slightly different, rather a “positive view on *cehrî zikir*, *semâ*, and *halvet* practices”¹⁸⁸⁰. Similarly, while Hemedânî favoured the voiced (*cehrî*) *zikir* in his *tarikât* program, his two caliphs, Gucdüvânî and Bahâeddin Nakşibend, have changed Hemedânî's trend and preferred the silent *zikir*¹⁸⁸¹ after trying the voiced forms of it. The third caliph of Hemedânî, Hâce Ahmed Yesevî (1093–1166), on the other hand, initially practiced the silent *zikir* but “when he went to the Turkestan region, he realized that he could not bring the people of that region to the right path with this [a.n. silent] *zikir* and started the loud and effective form called *zikr-i erre*”¹⁸⁸².

Since the rules for performing *zikir* are not clearly defined in the *Kur'an*¹⁸⁸³, Muslims interpreted its performance practices, schedule, and content rather freely, which allowed them to set up various categorizations. In addition to the silent and voiced forms of *zikir*, several *mutasavvife* propounded categorizations such as the *zikir* of the tongue (*lisan zikri*), *zikir* of the heart (*kalbin zikri*), and *zikir* of the soul (*ruhun zikri*) or the secret (*sırr*)¹⁸⁸⁴. On the one hand, certain *mutasavvife* may include all these varied *zikir* categorizations into their program and accordingly develop *seyrüsülûk* by means of these *zikir* forms organized hierarchically; on the other hand, they may use either two or three specific types of *zikir* in a subjectively designed

¹⁸⁷⁷ Algar, Hamid: “Hâcegân”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 14, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1996, p. 431.

¹⁸⁷⁸ Ateş, 1966, p. 237.

¹⁸⁷⁹ Schuyler, Eugene: *Turkistan. Notes of a Journey in Russian Turkistan, Khokand, Bukhara, and Kuldja*, Vol. 1, New York: Scribner, Anton & Co. 1876, p. 158.

¹⁸⁸⁰ Tosun, Necdet: “Yeseviyye”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 43, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2013, pp. 487–490/489.

¹⁸⁸¹ Algar, 1996, p. 431.

¹⁸⁸² Tosun, 2013, p. 489.

¹⁸⁸³ Geels, 1996, p. 230.

¹⁸⁸⁴ Kuşeyrî, *Risale*, Vol. 2, 1978, p. 358; Yılmaz, 2004, p. 166; Ateş, 1966, pp. 237, 239, 240; Geels, 1996, pp. 230–231; Kurt, 2008, p. 182.

way, or even add new concepts and types to their classifications. While, for example, Kuşeyrî speaks of a two-partite classification of *zikir* as the *zikir* of the tongue and the heart¹⁸⁸⁵, Serrâc, quoting from İbn Sâlim, additionally mentions a third type containing specific components such as “*yakınlık* (proximity), *muhabbet* (love), and *hayâ* (modesty)”¹⁸⁸⁶.

As in numerous other topics of *tasavvuf*, the question of how to classify various *zikir* forms hierarchically is subject to interpretation and thus the answers are abundant. According to Ateş’s tripartite classification “*zikir* is divided into three: *Zikr-i Celî* or *zikir-i Cehrî*, *Zikr-i Hafî* or *zikr-i Sırrî*, and *Zikr-i kalbî*”¹⁸⁸⁷. As explained above, *zikr-i cehrî* or *celî* is performed with a “loud voice”, *zikr-i hafî* or *sırrî*, likely denoting the silent *zikir*, is performed with “breath”, and the last one, *zikr-i kalbî*, as the name indicates, refers to the *zikir* of the heart. Ateş further cites two other corresponding classifications established by Fâhru’d-Dîn-i Razî (1150–1210) and Erzurumlu İbrahim Hakkı (1703–1780), both of which favour a classification containing the *zikir* of the tongue (*dil*), heart (*kalp*), and spirit (*ruh*)¹⁸⁸⁸. In the same manner, Bilgiz too suggests a ternary classification for *zikir*, yet differing from Ateş, the third element is the *zikir* of the body (*beden*)¹⁸⁸⁹. Even though the body and the soul are usually conceptualized as two distinct ontological beings, both Razî and İbrahim Hakkı equate the two in their systems. For Razî, *zikir* begins with the tongue, which, upon successful execution, proceeds to the heart, and from there it spreads to the limbs. İbrahim Hakkı follows the same progression and describes this process as “there comes a moment when *zikir* spreads from the heart to the whole body and envelops the soul. This is the *zikir* of the soul”¹⁸⁹⁰. This sequenced progression of *zikir* is customarily designed hierarchically. Whereas the *zikir* of the tongue is understood as the beginning of the process (*seyrüsülûk*) of spiritual perfection (*insan-ı kâmil*), it eventually leads to the higher realm of the *zikir* of the heart, which often denotes a silent and sincere practice. The peak of the tripartite classifications, and thus the most esteemed one, is described either as the *zikir* of the soul (*ruh*) or the secret (*sır*). This ideal *zikir* signifies a more or less completed progression where the act of remembrance (*zikir*) itself is forgotten¹⁸⁹¹, the assumed borders between the remembered (*mezkûr*) and the one who remembers (*zâkir*) are abolished¹⁸⁹², and —based on the *Kur’anic* verse 2:152 (*Bakara*)— it is understood as the God’s

¹⁸⁸⁵ Kuşeyrî, *Risale*, Vol. 2, 1978, p. 355.

¹⁸⁸⁶ Serrâc, *El-Lüma’*, 1996, p. 222.

¹⁸⁸⁷ Ateş, 1966, p. 237.

¹⁸⁸⁸ Ateş, 1966, pp. 237–240.

¹⁸⁸⁹ Bilgiz, 2006, pp. 224–226.

¹⁸⁹⁰ Quoted by Ateş, 1966, p. 240.

¹⁸⁹¹ Al-Kalābādihī, Abū Bakr: *The doctrine of the Sūfīs*, Arberry, J. Arthur (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University 1978, p. 98.

¹⁸⁹² Öngören, 2013, p. 410.

response to *zâkir*'s attempt to reach God's blessing¹⁸⁹³. According to Stoddart, the tripartite construction of *zikir* or divinity in general—whose last stage is a unitive experience of either in the form of annihilation of the self (*fenâ*) or everlastingness in God (*bekâ*)—is correspondingly reproduced in several mystical systems:

“This trinitarian aspect of the Divinity is universal, and is found in all religions. In Christianity it is the central dogma: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The analogy between the Christian Trinity and ‘Being-Consciousness-Bliss’ can be seen from certain doctrinal expositions of the Greek Fathers and also from St. Augustine’s designation of the Christian Trinity as ‘Being-Wisdom-Life’. In Islam, although it is above all the religion of strict monotheism, certain Sufi formulations evoke the selfsame trinitarian aspect of the Divinity [...], in Sufism this is essentially mediated by the invocation (*dhikr*) of the Name of God. In this connection it is said that God is not only That which is invoked (*Madhkûr*), but also That within us which invokes (*Dhâkir*), and even the invocation itself, since, in the last analysis, this is none other than the internal Act (*Dhikr*) of God. We thus have the ternary *Madhkûr-Dhâkir-Dhikr* (‘Invoked-Invoker-Invocation’), which is yet another form of the basic ternary ‘Object-Subject-Union’. This cardinal relationship is the very essence of the theory and practice of mysticism, for this ‘Union’ *in divinis* is the prefiguration of and pattern for the union of man with God. Hindu, Christian, and Sufi doctrine coincide in elucidating just why this is so”¹⁸⁹⁴

This tripartite classification of *zikir* has been reproduced by numerous *mutasavvîf* with slight variations in the ordering and terminology. However, the core idea that the *zikir* forms can be arranged hierarchically with a possibility to advance through the stages (*makam*) is essentially the same¹⁸⁹⁵. In Geels’ words:

“Roughly speaking, there are three stages to be distinguished in *dhikr*. The first is *dhikr* of the tongue, which should be performed with intention of the heart, not as a routine repetition of a divine name. This stage can be further divided into two steps a voluntary recitation with effort and an effortless repetition, when the dervish, according to al-Ghazzali, ‘leaves off the movement of the tongue and sees the word (or formula) as it were flowing over it’ (quoted in Gardet, 1978, p. 225). The second stage is *dhikr* of the heart, also characterized by two steps, similar to the ones already mentioned. The heart (*qalb*) was regarded as the seat of the knowledge of divine things. Finally, the third stage is the *dhikr* of the inmost being (*sirr*), a substance more subtle than the spirit (*ruh*), the place of the experience of *tauhid*, unification. At this last stage we again touch upon the total annihilation of the self-experience, the personality of the Sufi”¹⁸⁹⁶

¹⁸⁹³ Kurt, 2008, pp. 187–188; Koçar, Musa: “İslâm İnançları Açısından Zikir”, in: *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 7, 2000, pp. 103–121/117.

¹⁸⁹⁴ Stoddart, 2005, p. 62.

¹⁸⁹⁵ Öngören, 2013, p. 411.

¹⁸⁹⁶ Geels, 1996, pp. 230–231.

Theoretically, both the silent and voiced *zikir* forms, if bestowed by God, may lead to the idealized condition of the experience of “unification” (*tevhid*), “the annihilation of the self” in God (*fenâfillâh*), or “the annihilation of the rememberer in the Remembered”¹⁸⁹⁷. This last stage of spiritual perfection is therefore occasionally called the stage of *fenâ-bekâ*, while some other *mutasavvife* used different terminology, e.g., “*sekr-sahv*, *cem-tefrika*, or *gaybet-huzûr*”¹⁸⁹⁸. Also known as the real *zikir* or the *zikir* of reality (*zîkr-i hakîkî*), this specific level of remembrance is limited to certain individuals who completed their *seyrûsûlûk* and thus designates the higher levels of *tasavvuf* an elitist system¹⁸⁹⁹. Whereas the *zikir* of *ehl-i zâhir* is for everyone and denotes following the commandments of the *Kur’an* and *şariat*, the *zikir* of *ehl-i tasavvuf* is the desire and intention for ascension to God. Lastly, the *zikir* of *ârif* means being lost, annihilated (*fânî*), or permanent (*bâkî*) in performing *zikir*, namely, forgetting the remembrance itself, and “looking at eternity by reaching the realm of light (*nûr*)”¹⁹⁰⁰. Whether silent, voiced, or in any other form, a performance of *zikir* is invariably conditioned to specific rules designed variously by different groups. These rules not only frame the limits of *zikir*, but further establish its performance practices.

10.2 Rules and Conditions of an Authentic *Zikir*

Tomasello argues that *zikir* is a “synesthetic phenomenon” involving simultaneously the entire spectrum of human sensations that produce information—i.e., taste, smell, sight, touch, and sound¹⁹⁰¹. While most of these sensations are the outputs of a *zikir* performance causing the performer to experience various “culturally conditioned”¹⁹⁰² feelings throughout the process of *seyrûsûlûk* and encounters with the divine; in particularly the voiced (*cehrî*) *zikir* forms, the sound element acquires a rather privileged position over the other sensations for having the quality of trance-inducing function.

Based on the *Kur’anic* verse 20:7 (*Tâhâ*), Beydâvî (d. 1286) in his commentary on the *Kur’an* maintains that the application of the voiced *zikir* is not for God to hear the *zâkir*, but to indoctrinate the recited names of God from *esmâ-i hüsnâ* and the knowledge thereof to the soul

¹⁸⁹⁷ Chittick, C. William: *Sufism. A Beginner’s Guide*, Oxford: Oneworld 2008, p. 72.

¹⁸⁹⁸ Kara, Mustafa: “Fenâ”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 12, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1995, pp. 333–335/333.

¹⁸⁹⁹ Awn, J. Peter: “The Ethical Concerns of Classical Sufism”, in: *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, 11/2, 1983, pp. 240–263/240.

¹⁹⁰⁰ Öngören, 2013, p. 410.

¹⁹⁰¹ Tomasello, 2017, p. 34.

¹⁹⁰² Avery, 2004, p. 141.

(*nefs*), “shape the soul with *zikir*, to prevent the soul being busy with other things than *zikir*, and to discipline it”¹⁹⁰³. This disciplining of the soul (*nefs*) through *zikir* implies a process of perfection of relevant human faculties to ensure an epistemological acquaintance (*mârifet*) with and proximity to God (*kurb*). By reciting the names of God, the human soul is believed to respond to the transforming effects of the names and acquire qualities to receive the divine blessings that are often felt in a manner of ultimate happiness, salvation, annihilation, or *vecd* (trance-like altered state of mind). In their attempts to establish a bidirectional relationship with God, *mutasavvife* make use of specific names (*esmâ-i hüsnâ*)—since each name denotes an attribute of God, with which the created realm is being actively administered.

Before analyzing the acoustical components of the voiced *zikir* forms, it is important to note that a “dry recitation” or remembrance of the names is not sufficient to reach the desired condition. Therefore, numerous *mutasavvife* who composed a treatise on the subject propose several rules and conditions for an authentic performance of *zikir*. Perhaps the most frequently mentioned rule is that *zikir* should be done with consciousness, intention, contemplation, and with a consideration of the meanings of the names. As Gilsenan writes, a performance of *zikir* is designed to acquire the “knowledge of God by way of contemplation”¹⁹⁰⁴ that requires before anything else an “intention” (*niyet*) from the side of the *zâkir*¹⁹⁰⁵. During the recitation of the names,—in other words while performing *zikir*—by contemplating the divine names with an intention to understand their meanings (*mâna*)¹⁹⁰⁶, *zâkir* is believed to “see the reality as it is”, namely the *Kur’anic* fact (*kelime-i tevhid*) that “there is no deity but *Allah*” (*lâ ilâhe illallah*). A prominent *mutasavvif*, Şehâbeddin es-Sühreverdî, for example, asserts in his famous treatise *Avârifü’l-Maârif*:

“When, in his solitude, the servant utters the *zikir* of *kelime-i tevhid* in a state of harmony with his tongue and heart; this blessed word takes root in the heart and removes the selfish thoughts (*nefsânî*) from there. Instead of the desires of the soul, the meaning of *kelime-i tevhid* dominates the heart [...] in this way, the light (*nûr*) of *yakîn* settles in the heart”¹⁹⁰⁷

In the same view, one of the names of *esmâ-i hüsnâ*, *Hakk* (truth or reality), refers to God as well as everything that derived from Him (e.g., the *Kur’an*, Prophet Muhammed) to be

¹⁹⁰³ Kâdî Beydâvî: *Muhtasar Beydâvî Tefsiri (Envâru’l-Tenzil ve Esrârü’t-Te’vîl)*, Vol. 3, Eren, Şadi (trans.), İstanbul: Selsebil 2010, pp. 14–15.

¹⁹⁰⁴ Gilsenan 1973, p. 156.

¹⁹⁰⁵ Elias, 2013, p. 191; Ozak, 1978, p. 107.

¹⁹⁰⁶ The same rule is also applied to listening to music (*semâ*), see: Rouget, 1985, p. 257.

¹⁹⁰⁷ Sühreverdî, Şihâbüddîn: *Gerçek Tasavvuf [Avârifü’l-Meârif]*, Selvi, Dilâver (trans.), İstanbul: Semerkand 2010, pp. 274–275.

the absolute truth and reality, which makes anything other than God (*mâsivâ*) by definition false¹⁹⁰⁸. This notion is then interpreted within *tasavvuf* circles as to acknowledge the reality, contemplate upon it, and turn away from anything other than God. By means of reciting this specific name, the reciter first remembers God and through repetitions, distances the self from everything but God and thus creates space for the truth (*Hakk*) to take place within the self, ideally at the expense of annihilating (*fenâ*) the self (*nefs*). According to Bilgiz, acknowledging God as the sole authority through *zikir* is the most important goal of the practice, in other words, “*zikir* is to be in the consciousness of being a servant to *Allah* in any case, to show complete surrender, and to place in our minds that He is constantly watching over us under all circumstances”¹⁹⁰⁹. Tomasello correspondingly argues that

“The purpose of this invocation is nothing less than *fana fi'llah* — annihilation in God, annihilation into the name, to be more precise, for every name has its specific virtues. It is a venue for the worshipper (*'abd*) and the Worshipped (*Ma'bud*) in a connection that aims to reintegrate man into his center and achieve union with God”¹⁹¹⁰

Perhaps the most frequently recited name of God in a *zikir* event is *Allah*, also known as *lafza-i celâl* or *ism-i celâl*, which on its own houses all the attributes of God listed in *esmâ-i hüsnâ*. Like the other names, *Allah* too is recited to remember, contemplate its meanings, and focus on nothing other than God. In the words of a prominent *şeyh* of the *Şâzelî tarikat* in Morocco:

“You must focus on the five letters of the Majesty’s Name (*Allah*) and seek steadily to maintain this visualization. Each time it vanishes, you have to restore swiftly, even a hundred time, if it were. You need to prolong the invocation until the limit: ‘Alla...h’ without saying fast ‘Allah Allah’ [...] The purpose of such a visualization of the Name’s Letters is to seize your soul in order not to allow it to lose itself in the material world (thus in what is not appropriate), for the material world is the right opposite of the spiritual world and opposites never meet [...] If the invoking one devotes himself to the Name’s visualization, he will be visited by many intuitions, which get stronger and stronger, and take him to His Lord’s Presence. There he will receive some blessings and secrets that no one has ever seen nor heard of before, coming from a nonhuman source. That said, this path along the Spiritual Way is not for everybody, for it suitable only to the shrewd people”¹⁹¹¹

¹⁹⁰⁸ Demirci, Mehmet: “Hak: Tasavvuf”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 15, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1997, p. 151.

¹⁹⁰⁹ Bilgiz, 2006, p. 34.

¹⁹¹⁰ Tomasello, 2017, p. 36.

¹⁹¹¹ Al-Darqâwî, Shaykh al-'Arabî: *Lettres sur la Voie spirituelle. Al-Rasâ'il*, Paris: La Caravane 1968, pp. 285–286, quoted by Tomasello, 2017, pp. 35–36.

In addition to an active contemplation of the names and their meanings with an intention to understand them or “bring out the spiritual potentialities”¹⁹¹², a proper *zikir* conduct requires sincerity (*ihlâs*), namely, in general, performing religious duties without fear of punishment or an expectation for a reward¹⁹¹³. The concept of *ihlâs* can be exemplified by a renowned *sûfi* Râbia el-Adeviyye’s expression: “I want to throw fire into Paradise and pour water into Hell so that these two veils disappear, and it becomes clear who worships God out of love, not out of fear of Hell or hope for Paradise”¹⁹¹⁴. The lexical meanings of *ihlâs*—“to be purified, refined, and freed”¹⁹¹⁵—demonstrate its intrinsic associations with other concepts of *tasavvuf* including *zikir*. Tüsterî, for instance, points out that “there are so many people who say, ‘there’s no deity but God’, yet so few of them are sincere”¹⁹¹⁶, implying the recitations of this formula (*kelime-i tevhid*), especially in a *zikir* proper, must involve sincerity from the side of the reciter. Since the performance of *zikir* is an epistemological event seeking to acquire an acquaintance (*mârifet*) with God, which is bounded up with the repetitions of the names of God, Tüsterî’s emphasis on sincerity in performing *zikir* becomes a crucial aspect of *tasavvuf* epistemology in general. In connection with this matter, Kuşeyrî further highlights the concept’s noetic feature by citing, “anyone who has remained sincere for forty days will see wisdom flowing from the springs of his heart to his tongue”¹⁹¹⁷. The term wisdom in this quotation is rendered in the Arabic original with the word *hikmet*¹⁹¹⁸, which demonstrates a network of relations between several *tasavvuf* concepts—i.e., *hikmet*, *zikir*, *ihlâs*—and their collective participation in a proper acquaintance with God (*mârifet*). As shown in the example of Gazzâlî above, the practices that are relevant to the *zikir* idea are not limited to *ihlâs*, yet *ihlâs* takes part in all religious actions (*amel*) as an authentication tool. With a combination of several other practices—such as *riyâzet* (asceticism), *tövbe* (repentance), *takvâ* (devotion), *zühhd* (God-fearing behaviour), *rıza* (consent), or *şükür* (gratitude)—a *sâlik* (seeker) may efficaciously perform the idiosyncratic applied epistemology of *tasavvuf* (*zikir*) and in return may receive God’s blessing (*bereket*), establish an acquaintance (*mârifet*), and ideally be remembered by God.

Constituting a major aspect of the entire *tasavvuf* education system (*seyrüsülûk*), the practices listed above altogether form the notion of *edeb* (manners) or *âdâb* (customs). While

¹⁹¹² Chittick, 2008, p. 71.

¹⁹¹³ Renard, 2009, p. 223.

¹⁹¹⁴ Schimmel, 1975, pp. 38–39; Smith, 1928, pp. 98–99.

¹⁹¹⁵ Ateş, Süleyman: “İhlâs”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 21, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2000, pp. 535–537/535.

¹⁹¹⁶ Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 222.

¹⁹¹⁷ Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 222.

¹⁹¹⁸ Kuşeyrî, *Risale*, Vol. 2, 1978, p. 340; Ateş, 2000, p. 536.

Ayverdi defines the term *edeb* in the context of *tasavvuf* as “knowing that you are always in the presence of God, behaving as required by this presence, seeing the unity of God and being respectful to all created”¹⁹¹⁹, numerous *mutasavvife* vastly interpreted this established definition of *edeb* and composed special *âdâb* manuals (*âdâb-ı sûfiyye* or *âdâb-ı tarikat*) for initiates to guide them towards perfection. Among many, the most frequently consulted manuals can be listed as Şakîk-ı Belhî’s (d. 810) *Âdâbü’l-ibâdât*, known as the first written manual, Hakîm et-Tirmizî’s (820–869) *Âdâbü’l-mürîdîn*, Muhammed b. Hüseyin Sülemî’s (937–1021) *Cevâmî’u âdâbi’ş-şûfiyye*, or Ebü’n-Necîb Sühreverdî’s (1097–1168) treatise carrying the same title as Tirmizî’s work¹⁹²⁰.

One of the widely spread *tarikât* organizations in Anatolia (modern Turkey) has been the Uşşâkî branch of the Halvetî *tarikât*. In an *âdâb* manual named *Tuhfetü’l-Uşşakîyye* (*Uşşâkî Sâliklerinin Âdâbı, The Customs of Uşşâkî Initiates*), written for the initiates of the Halvetî-Uşşâkî *tarikât*, the authors list a voluminous number of manners and customs that an initiate is obliged to perform on a regular day in *tarikât* or in general throughout the process of *seyrüsülûk* “in order to discipline the spiritual life and thus to achieve spiritual progress”¹⁹²¹. Covering several topics such as times to sleep, how to recite the *zikir* of *kelime-i tevhid*, table manners, rules concerning both *cehrî* (voiced) and *hafî* (silent) *zikir* forms, *semâ*, *vahdet-i vücûd*, or the conditions of *seyrüsülûk*, this work and approximately entire *âdâb* literature point at not only the complex network of contexts within *tasavvuf* epistemology or the contents but also at its applied, namely, the performative aspects that are inherently relevant to *zikir*. Concerning *seyrüsülûk*, for example, the author(s) of *Tuhfetü’l-Uşşakîyye* writes that

“It should be known that eating less, sleeping less, talking less, staying away from people, continuing *zikir* that is allowed by the guidance (*irşâd*) of a person (*mürşid*), and breathing with this *zikir* in every breath and exhalation are the conditions of *sulûk*.

It should be known, to continue *zikir* in any case and without interruption one should not impose a condition to *zikir*. The *sâlik* should not be separated from *zikir* and never ceases to remember under any circumstance. He only recites in his heart during sexual intercourse and ejaculation as well as in bad places, but not with a tongue.

¹⁹¹⁹ Ayverdi, 2010, p. 322.

¹⁹²⁰ Arpaguş, Sâfi / Baydar, B. Kübra: “Tasavvuf’ta Âdâb ve Erkân Risâleleri”, in: *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi*, 15/30, 2017, pp. 285–315. Even though they are not considered to be examples of the *âdâb* literature, the works of numerous *mutasavvife* contain specific chapters devoted to the topic. See, for example, Serrâc, *El-Lüma*, 1996, pp. 151–234; Sühreverdî, *Avârifü’l-Meârif*, 2010, pp. 253–270, 281–288 etc. covering various topics concerning *âdâb* rules such as ablution (*taharet*, *abdest*), salat (*namaz*), almsgiving (*zekât*), fasting (*oruç*), *semâ*, *vecd*, or death.

¹⁹²¹ Kılıç, E. Mahmud: “Preface”, in: Uşşâkî, A. Salâhaddîn, / Uşşâkî, A. Sâmî: *Tuhfetü’l-Uşşakîyye*, İstanbul: Sufi Kitap 2016a, pp. 9–14/9.

However, the effect of *zikir* also has conditions; sitting in a clean place, facing the *qibla* and in a dark place, with full purity, receiving from right to left with closed eyes, remembering the meaning with peace in the heart, sitting on one's knees or cross-legged, connecting one's heart to God through his *mürşid*, knowing *mürşid* as the gateway for the divine blessings and waiting for blessings from *mürşid* [...]. The worldly and otherworldly happiness should be demanded with the consent of *mürşid* as your bad habits cause *mürşid* to reject you. For, there is a *hadis* stating that the consent of the parents is the consent of *Allah*, and the wrath of the parents is the wrath of *Allah*. The *mürşid*, on the other hand, is actually in the position of the spiritual father. The *sâlik* should put the service of his *mürşid* before anything else other than the obligatory religious duties (*farz*)”¹⁹²²

Explicit references to purification and cleaning in the quotation above indicate that a proper performance of *zikir* does not only prepares the heart for an encounter with the divine by cleaning it from the earthly desires of the lower soul (*nefs*), but it also requires absolute control over the environment in which the performance takes place. As Gilsenan emphasizes, “one must be in a purified state and have performed the correct ritual ablutions”¹⁹²³ to reach the desired state through *zikir*. In addition to physical purification requirements that lead to a purified divine state, at the beginning of the quotation above the essential components of spiritual purification, i.e., an ascetic lifestyle (*zühhd, riyâzet*), are listed as “eating, sleeping, and talking less”, which must be supported with the practice of seclusion (*halvet*)¹⁹²⁴. As in numerous other esotericised and Gnostic systems mentioned in this study, these components of asceticism have been practiced to distance the individual from being dependent on the possessions, body's needs, and worldly issues, in short, within *tasavvuf* context, from anything other than God (*mâsivâ*). Asceticism is thus considered as a lifestyle covering moral, ethical, and religious virtue manufacturing method that eventually leads to “a spiritual ideal, goal”¹⁹²⁵, or to salvation. As a virtue-oriented method, asceticism prepares, cultivates, and disciplines the relevant faculties of the soul or heart. It “refines the ‘subtle substance of I-ness’ to the point of being a perfect mirror of God”¹⁹²⁶ required for an encounter or acquaintance (*mârifet*). Upon successful completion, it—as in Gnostic views—enables an individual to attain ultimate happiness, salvation, or—in *tasavvuf* context—God's remembrance. It is, therefore, *zikir* “is considered the most important principle of asceticism applied for self-discipline and most important act of worship, which enables the servant to get closer to God”¹⁹²⁷. Based on the *Kur'anic* commandments, for a *mu-*

¹⁹²² Uşşâki, A. Salâhaddîn / Uşşâki, A. Sâmi: *Tuhfetü'l-Uşşâkiyye*, Kılıç, E. Mahmud (ed.), İstanbul: Sufi Kitap 2016, p. 93.

¹⁹²³ Gilsenan, 1982, p. 139.

¹⁹²⁴ Elias, 2013, p. 192.

¹⁹²⁵ Vööbus, 1974, p. 135.

¹⁹²⁶ Elias, 2013, p. 192.

¹⁹²⁷ Öngören, 2013, p. 411.

tasavvuf, the act of *zikir* is beyond worship, as it is “simultaneously a means to reach the knowledge of discovery (*keşf*)”¹⁹²⁸.

10.2.1 Şeyh-Mürşid

Another explicit reference in the quotation from *Tuhfetü'l-Uşşakîyye* is the highlighted importance of a *mürşid* (guide) to lead (*irşad*) an initiate (*sâlik*, or *mürîd*) towards spiritual perfection in the process of *seyrüsülûk*¹⁹²⁹. As mentioned above, from the earlier *zühhd* period to the establishment of *tarikât* organizations after the eleventh century, groups of people have been cumulating around prominent individuals, who were believed to have deeper knowledge of religious matters and a corresponding lifestyle in which they embodied this knowledge. The experiences gained over time in these groups have led to the formation of specific, *zühhd*-oriented educational methods in teaching complex religious themes such as *bezm-i elest*, God’s knowledge, or *fenâfillâh*. Reproducing the relationship between Prophet Muhammed and his immediate followers (*ashab*)¹⁹³⁰, a *mürşid* not only teaches religious doctrines but exemplifies them in his actions (*amel*) from which those who desire to learn (*mürîd*) take as an example and imitate¹⁹³¹. When a *mürşid* in one region has become famed with his knowledge and teaching in the Islamicate world, usually many individuals from different regions come to visit and even start to live close by to derive his knowledge and learn the ways of religion. Eventually, these elite people possessing religious knowledge (*havas*) have become the centres of attraction and the number of people coming to learn gradually increased. As one of the consequences of such grouping, places to host these growing numbers of people were required, which led to the earliest examples of *tekke* (lodge) organizations and “the foundation of the orders”¹⁹³² known as *tarikât*. While some sources—Herevî’s *Ṭabaḳātü’ş-şûfiyye* and Câmî’s *Nefehâtü’l-üns*—mention that the first dervish lodge was built in the eighth century in Ramla, Palestine, other views consider Hasan-ı Basrî’s student Abdülvâhid b. Zeyd (c. eighth century) the founder of a *ribât*, one of the first dervish lodges in the history of *tasavvuf*, in the city of Abadan and gave sermons advising asceticism there¹⁹³³. Depending on the number of individuals residing in these places

¹⁹²⁸ Koçar, Musa: “İslâm İnançları Açısından Zikir”, *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 7, 2000, pp. 103–121/119; Öngören, Reşat: “Bir Bilgi Kaynağı Olarak Tasavvufta Keşfin Değeri”, in: *Journal of Istanbul University Faculty of Theology*, 5, 2002, pp. 85–96.

¹⁹²⁹ Schimmel, 1975, p. 104.

¹⁹³⁰ Tatlılıoğlu, 2009, p. 104.

¹⁹³¹ Nasr, S. Hossein: *Sufi Essays*, New York: Schocken Books 1977, p. 62.

¹⁹³² Trimmingham, 1971, p. 3.

¹⁹³³ Kara, Mustafa: “Tekke”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 40, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2001, pp. 368–370/368.

and the type of education given by the leading *mürşid*, a *tekke* or *ribât* may take various forms and contain several rooms or buildings with specific purposes.

Also known as *şeyh*, *velî*, *pîr*, *eren*, *ermiş*, or *hâce*¹⁹³⁴, the central position of a *mürşid* in *tasavvuf* epistemology and education manifests itself in the intimate relation between a *mürşid* and *mürîd*. As the essential principle and meaning of Islam as well as being a Muslim is total submission of the will to God, becoming a *mürîd* is correspondingly conditioned to an “unconditional submission”¹⁹³⁵ to *mürşid*. The reasoning for such total obedience to the *mürşid*’s authority is due to the risks that a *mürîd* may face in the process of *seyrüsülûk*, which was symbolically illustrated by Attar in his *Manîku’î-t-ţayr*. To avoid such risks a *mürşid*’s guidance and an absolute trust (*tevekkül*) in the *mürşid*’s ability to guide are needed. Perhaps one of the most feared risks is falling out of the frame drawn by *şeriat*, which is often caused by a false interpretation of the *Kur’anic* verses or the *sünnet* of Prophet Muhammed. Like the elementary school teachers instructing students in various topics—e.g., maths, reading, or writing—and correcting them in case of mistakes or misunderstandings, a *mürşid* mentors the disciples in diverse matters, above all concerning the limits of *şeriat* shaping the process of spiritual perfection¹⁹³⁶. Like a schoolteacher needs to possess several qualities along with a certificate of competency to teach students, a *mürşid* or *şeyh* must be “someone who has joined (*intisap*) a *tarikât*, completed *seyrüsülûk*, and reached high levels in the sciences of *şeriat*, *tarikât*, and truth (*hakikat*)”¹⁹³⁷. To put it another way, “a true master is [...] one who has himself already traversed the path, who knows its route, and its dangers, so that he can guide others”¹⁹³⁸. In addition to these expected qualities, a *mürşid* must be given a certificate (*icâzetnâme*) by his verified mentors demonstrating his completed journey (*seyrüsülûk*), spiritual perfection, and competency to teach and guide others.

Apart from the *zâhir* aspect of religion (*şeriat*), a *mürşid* instructs his disciples about the inner dimension (*bâtın*) of Islam and a corresponding knowledge system with a *zâhir* and *bâtın* construction. The inner dimensions of knowledge in *tasavvuf* epistemology, explained in detail in previous chapters, can only be accessed by those who desire and can comprehend them. In comparison to the apparent and visible (*zâhir*) aspects of knowledge—which are composed of literal meanings of the verses in *Kur’an*, accessible to everyone, and pertain to the *şeriat*—the

¹⁹³⁴ Öngören, Reşat: “Şeyh”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 39, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2010, pp. 50–52/50.

¹⁹³⁵ Boivin, 2013, p. 221; Kara, 1992, p. 28.

¹⁹³⁶ Schimmel, 1975, p. 104.

¹⁹³⁷ Öngören, 2010, p. 50.

¹⁹³⁸ Michon, 1997, p. 272; Kara, 1992, p. 28; Sühreverdî, *Avârifü’l-Meârif*, 2010, p. 105.

deeper dimension (*bâtin*) is understood as hidden and requires a certain process, a spiritual journey¹⁹³⁹ (*seyrüsülûk*) to disclose itself. One of the main functions of *mürşid* is thus to bring the seekers of knowledge (*mürîd*) as close as possible to this hidden knowledge and help them to be enlightened by it. Through the process of *seyrüsülûk*, a *mürşid* trains and disciplines the disciples in various religious and moral matters and shows ways to obtain *bâtin* dimension of religious knowledge. Beyond merely an instructor of theoretical aspects of *tasavvuf*, a *mürşid* often acts as a parent “watching every moment of the disciple’s spiritual growth”¹⁹⁴⁰, rendering it possible for the second or spiritual birth¹⁹⁴¹ of a *mürîd* from the material realm (*âlem-i mülk*) to the spiritual one (*melekût*)¹⁹⁴², and “in *tarikât* organizations that accept the way of *esmâ*¹⁹⁴³ as the basis of their *seyrüsülûk*, *şeyh* trains *mürîd* with self-discipline, *evrâd*¹⁹⁴⁴, *ezkâr*¹⁹⁴⁵, *ri-yâzet*, *halvet*, and dream interpretations”¹⁹⁴⁶. Nasr argues that a disciple must be correspondingly devoted to the path (*tarîk*) and “be attached to Him [a.n. God] not only through a theoretical comprehension of Sufi metaphysics but also by a total ‘ontological’ attachment”¹⁹⁴⁷.

The crucial role of the *mürşid* has been expressed by numerous *mutasavvîf*. According to a frequently cited narrative, a seeker without a guide is less likely able to attain a deeper dimension of religious knowledge, since without a guide there is the imminent danger of false interpretations and “illusions”¹⁹⁴⁸. In several treatises, a famous saying attributed to Bistâmî (804–874) confirms the above-stated rule: “the leader of one who does not have a master is Satan”¹⁹⁴⁹. To avoid this risk, the institutionalization of *tarikât* organizations with a *mürşid* on top of their hierarchical structure to guide his disciples came true as required and *seyrüsülûk* was developed as a systematized method to “purify the mirror of the heart”¹⁹⁵⁰, to be able to receive divine manifestations (*tecellî*) and reveal the hidden meanings of existence according to the interpretation of *tasavvuf*. This, however, as mentioned above, is conditioned to a total submission of *mürîd* to a verified *şeyh* or *mürşid*, which as well found its abundant expressions

¹⁹³⁹ Eraydın, 1994, p. 30.

¹⁹⁴⁰ Schimmel, 1975, p. 103.

¹⁹⁴¹ Nasr, 1977, p. 57.

¹⁹⁴² Sühreverdi, *Avârifü'l-Meârif*, 2010, p. 105.

¹⁹⁴³ In other words, the *tarikât* groups that employ the ninety-nine “beautiful names of God” (*esmâ-i hüsnâ*) as their means to spiritual perfection (*seyrüsülûk*).

¹⁹⁴⁴ In the context of *tasavvuf*, Ayverdi defines *evrâd* (plural of *virâd*) as “prayers consisting of verses and the names of God, arranged by a *pir* or *şeyh* and recited by the members of *tarikât* every day and at certain times”. See: Ayverdi, 2010, p. 362.

¹⁹⁴⁵ Pl. *zikir*.

¹⁹⁴⁶ Öngören, 2010, p. 51.

¹⁹⁴⁷ Nasr, 1977, p. 59.

¹⁹⁴⁸ Tringham, 1971, p. 3.

¹⁹⁴⁹ Karamustafa, 2007, p. 117; Schimmel, 1975, p. 103; Öngören, 2010, p. 51; Nasr, 1977, p. 63.

¹⁹⁵⁰ Sühreverdi, *Avârifü'l-Meârif*, 2010, p. 102.

in *tasavvuf* literature and *âdâb* manuals. While a common saying establishes the high-level trust (*tevekkül*) needed in *mürşid*'s guidance as a *mürid* should “be as a corpse in the hands of the washer”¹⁹⁵¹. This implies “the total effacement of the ego, the psychic death, which signals the true birth into the spiritual life”¹⁹⁵². Attar pushes the limits of the *şeriat* further and argues that “one who does not surrender to the master more than *Allah* can never be a *mürid*”¹⁹⁵³. Along the same lines, even though a *mürşid* appears to go against the laws of *şeriat* in his guidance, a *mürid* must—as Gazzâlî also emphasizes—regardless continue to obey the *mürşid* and continue to do what is commanded¹⁹⁵⁴. This was summarily expressed by a Persian *mutasavvif*, Shams al-‘Urafâ’, in describing his relationship with his master, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Quddûs Kirmânshâhî, as follows:

“For two years I travelled upon the spiritual Path under his care and following his instructions. I turned away completely from the formal sciences and endeavoured to understand questions of gnosis and to march upon the Path of certainty. Whatever he ordered I obeyed without saying yes or no. If some of the things I heard or saw appeared on the surface to be opposed to the *Sharî’ah*, I considered it a defect of my own ears and eyes and did not fail in any way to serve and obey him. In service, conversation, solitude and retreat I obeyed as completely as I could”¹⁹⁵⁵

Since gaining peace of mind in the context of salvation (*felâh*), both in this world and the hereafter (*âhiret*), “comes from knowing *Allah* and acquiring the knowledge of *mârifet*”¹⁹⁵⁶ and *mârifet* is only possible with a cleansed and purified soul or heart (*nefs*), the primary role of a *mürşid* is to instruct his *mürid* in the ways of purification. As a *mürid* is supposed to “be as a corpse”, it allows *mürşid* to give the desired shape and quality to *mürid* for a purification within the confines of the settled *tarikât* traditions. In addition to several specially designed *tasavvuf* practices such as *halvet* (seclusion), *tevekkül* (trust), or *rızâ* (consent), a *mürşid* may employ various other mentoring methods and practices to increase the chances for a *mürid* to become perfected (*insân-ı kâmil*). For example, in the *tasavvuf* context, the term *râbita* refers to a spiritual bonding between a *mürşid* and a *mürid* through which the *mürid* is “summoning up in the imagination a mental picture of the shaykh”¹⁹⁵⁷ with a dedicated focus on *mürşid*. “By removing all the worldly notions from the heart”¹⁹⁵⁸ the *mürid* aims at inheriting the *mürşid*'s

¹⁹⁵¹ Karamustafa, 2007, p. 117.

¹⁹⁵² Michon, 1997, p. 272.

¹⁹⁵³ Attâr, Ferîdüddîn: *Tezkiretü 'l-Evliyâ*, Uludağ, Süleyman (trans.), İstanbul: Semerkand Yayıncılık 2013, p. 219.

¹⁹⁵⁴ Schimmel, 1975, p. 103.

¹⁹⁵⁵ Balâghî, ‘Abd al-Hüjjat: *Maqâlât al-hunafâ’ fî maqâmât Shams al-‘Urafâ’*, Tehran 1327 (A. H. Solar), pp. 232–234, quoted by Nasr, 1977, p. 65.

¹⁹⁵⁶ Sühreverdî, *Avârifü 'l-Meârif*, 2010, p. 103.

¹⁹⁵⁷ Renard, 2009, p. 249.

¹⁹⁵⁸ Ayverdi, 2010, p. 1009.

spiritual capabilities. Upon successful execution, the practice of *râbita* may lead to *fenâ fi’ş-şeyh*, “being annihilated in *şeyh* as the first step of annihilation in *Allah (fenâfillâh)*”¹⁹⁵⁹. This symbolic transformation through the spiritual assistance and admixture of *mürşid*—expressed variously as the second or spiritual birth and annihilation—is equated by Nasr with alchemy as follows: “without the philosopher’s stone, no alchemical transformation is possible”¹⁹⁶⁰. In Nasr’s expression, “the philosopher’s stone” stands for *mürşid* and alchemical transformation indicates the process of spiritual perfection in *tasavvuf* known as *seyrüsülûk*. Similarly, Chittick too draws parallels between the transformative power of *zikir* and alchemy by writing that “the alchemy of dhikr transmutes the accursed into the blessed”¹⁹⁶¹.

As discussed above, the process of spiritual perfection ideally leads to an experience of unification (*tevhid*), the annihilation of the self in God (*fenâfillâh*), or, “the annihilation of the rememberer in the Remembered”¹⁹⁶², which are all the targets of the epistemological procedures that are developed in *tasavvuf*. Therefore, a *mürşid* who completed *seyrüsülûk* and “reached the highest stage of *mârifet* is called ‘*şeyhü’l-ârifin*’ [...], in which the truth (*hak*), one of the names of God, appears with the light (*nûr*) of discovery (*keşf*) and certainty (*yakîn*)”¹⁹⁶³ and this also constitutes the prime objective of a *mürîd*. In line with this objective, the principal instrument to purify the soul, bring it to perfection, and acquire an acquaintance of God (*mârifet*) in a manner of annihilation, salvation, or spiritual rebirth, is the remembrance (*zikir*). As Karamustafa argues,

“It was only when the aspirant had met these conditions [a.n. total submission] that the master started the training process in earnest by ‘infusing’ [a.n. *telkin*] a particular dhikr into him. The aspirant was expected to maintain uttering this ‘invocation’ first with the tongue, then also with the heart, while he kept himself ritually pure on a continuous basis, slept and ate little, and avoided all company”¹⁹⁶⁴

Along with the ascetic practices and the condition to submit the will to the *mürşid*, the quotation above indicates another important feature of *tasavvuf*. Here, the expression *mürşid* “infuses a particular dhikr into” a *mürîd* means, the *mürşid* controls, supervises, and if needed, changes every aspect—e.g., the content, form, and the performance practices—of a *mürîd*’s *zikir*¹⁹⁶⁵. The expression “a particular dhikr” here reveals a multiplicity of *zikir* forms from

¹⁹⁵⁹ Öngören, 2010, p. 52; Michon, 1997, p. 272.

¹⁹⁶⁰ Nasr, 1977, p. 58.

¹⁹⁶¹ Chittick, 2002, p. 63.

¹⁹⁶² Chittick, 2008, p. 72.

¹⁹⁶³ Öngören, 2010, p. 50.

¹⁹⁶⁴ Karamustafa, 2007, p. 118.

¹⁹⁶⁵ Michon, 1997, p. 277.

which a *mürşid* selects an appropriate one compatible with the *mürid*'s disposition, capacity, and progress in *seyrüsülûk*. Each *zikir* selected by the *mürşid* is believed to correspond with the condition of the *mürid*'s *nefs* (soul or ego), which has a seven-fold construction (*atvâr-ı seb'â*) in the theory of *tasavvuf* and, in line with the *mürid*'s progression in *seyrüsülûk*, it acquires or loses specific qualities bringing the *mürid* gradually to an idealized perfection.

10.2.2 The Regulation of the *Nefs* via *Zikir*

The term *nefs* or *nefis*, like most terms in *tasavvuf*, is a polysemic one involving both positive and negative qualities. In various verses of the *Kur'an*, *nefs* acquire meanings such as soul, ego, personality, human, blood, or body along with several others¹⁹⁶⁶. In the context of *tasavvuf*, Kuşeyrî argues, “when the Sufis utter the word ‘soul’ they imply neither being nor a [physical] body. Rather, they imply the deficiencies of one’s character traits as well as one’s reprehensible morals and deeds”¹⁹⁶⁷. Based on these certain negative features attributed to the concept of *nefs* in the *Kur'anic* verses—such as 2:30 (*Bakara*), 5:30 (*Mâide*), 59:8 (*Haşr*), or 12:18 (*Yûsuf*), which list persuasion to kill, stinginess, temptation, or mischief—*mutasavvife* often interpreted the *nefs* as the archenemy and primary obstacle for their desired spiritual development¹⁹⁶⁸ requiring absolute obedience and submission to a *mürşid*. Since, *nefs*, by its nature, causes the individual to be influenced by clashing character traits involving “pride, arrogance, wrath, grudge, envy, greed, intolerance, gossip, passion, or lust”¹⁹⁶⁹. Accordingly, particularly in *tasavvuf*, the struggle against the *nefs* and its worldly attachments is called the greater *cihad* (*cihâd-ı ekber*)¹⁹⁷⁰ and constitutes one of the primary ascetic *tasavvuf* practices developed to take the *nefs* under control (*hâkim*) known as *mücâhede*¹⁹⁷¹. As Serrâc reports from Sehl b. Abdullah, “only those who know how to defeat their soul (*nefs*) with decency (*edeb*) can serve *Allah* with sincerity (*ihlâs*)”¹⁹⁷². This summarizes not only the subject matter of *tasavvuf* epistemology as “divine discipline (*terbiye*), decency (*edep*), and morals (*ahlâk*) necessary for an individual to love *Allah* and accordingly be loved by *Allah*”¹⁹⁷³, but addition-

¹⁹⁶⁶ Öztürk, Vol. 2, 2012, p. 135; Uludağ, Süleyman: “Nefis”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 32, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2006b, pp. 526–529/526.

¹⁹⁶⁷ Al-Qushayrî, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 109.

¹⁹⁶⁸ Al-Hujwîrî, *Kashf Al-Mahjûb*, 1911, pp. 196–197.

¹⁹⁶⁹ Ayverdi, 2010, p. 923; Al-Qushayrî, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 109; Al-Hujwîrî, *Kashf Al-Mahjûb*, 1911, p. 196.

¹⁹⁷⁰ Uludağ, Süleyman: “Mücâhede”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 31, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2006a, pp. 440–441/440; Schimmel, 1975, p. 112; Al-Hujwîrî, *Kashf Al-Mahjûb*, 1911, p. 200.

¹⁹⁷¹ Al-Hujwîrî, *Kashf Al-Mahjûb*, 1911, p. 292.

¹⁹⁷² Serrâc, *El-Lüma'*, 1996, p. 151.

¹⁹⁷³ Çiçek, Yakup: “Tasavvufun Kaynağı”, in: Çiçek, Yakup / Selvi, Dilaver (trans.), *Ebû Tâlib El-Mekkî. Sevgiliye Giden Yolda Kalplerin Aızığ/Kûtu'l-Kulûb*, Vol. 1, İstanbul: Semerkand 2003, pp. 13–30/16.

ally establishes its objective as a sincere (*ihlâs*) acquaintance with *Allah* (*mârifet*), and its methodology as the preparation as well as nurturing the necessary faculties of an individual (the heart or a trained *nefs*) through *seyrüsülûk*. Combined with the *Kur'anic* verse 59:19 (*Haşr*) establishing that “be not like those who forgot *Allah*, so He made them forget themselves. Those are the defiantly disobedient”, approximately all *mutasavvife* thus aimed at remembering *Allah* (*zikir*) to avoid forgetting themselves and become “defiantly disobedient” in their *seyrüsülûk*.

Despite *nefs* as ego or the lower soul is often seen as “the lowest dimension of a man’s inward existence, his animal and satanic nature”¹⁹⁷⁴, based on the *Kur'anic* verses 91:7-10 (*Şems*) it can also be purified and brought to a level of perfection:

“And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it, and inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness, he has succeeded who purifies it, and he has failed who instils it [with corruption]”

In the verse above, two simultaneous qualities of the *nefs* are referred to as wickedness (*fücür*) and righteousness (*takvâ*). Whereas purification of the *nefs* (*tezkiye*) generates success or righteousness in the context of Islam, a failure to purify the *nefs* culminates in corruption and wickedness. On the other hand, in the verses 89:27-30 (*Fecr*), the *nefs* also appear to possess positive connotations:

“[To the righteous it will be said], ‘O reassured soul, return to your Lord, well-pleased and pleasing [to Him], and enter among My [righteous] servants, and enter My Paradise’”

The expression “reassured soul” in the verse above is known as *nefs-i mutmainne* and denotes a satisfied condition of the *nefs* that possesses no doubt in faith¹⁹⁷⁵ and thus attains peace¹⁹⁷⁶. Furthermore, the well-pleased (*nefs-i râziye*) and pleasing *nefs* (*nefs-i marziyye*) in the same verse above are two other levels of the seven-fold construction of the *nefs* (*atvâr-ı seb’â*) in *tasavvuf*. The level of *nefs-i râziye* indicates the condition of an individual who is “content with everything that comes from *Allah*”¹⁹⁷⁷ and *nefs-i marziyye* accordingly is the level where *Allah* is pleased by the purified state of the individual. In *tasavvuf* epistemology that prioritizes purification of the *nefs* to acquire God’s blessing or a salvific acquaintance (*mârifet*),

¹⁹⁷⁴ Chittick C. William: *The Sufi Path of Love. The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*, Albany: SUNY Press 1983, p. 12.

¹⁹⁷⁵ Gölpınarlı, 1969b, p. 34.

¹⁹⁷⁶ Öztürk, Vol. 2, 2012, p. 137.

¹⁹⁷⁷ Gölpınarlı, 1969b, p. 34.

the stage of *nefs-i mutmainne* constitutes the fourth level of the seven-fold construction of the *nefs*. Along the same lines, *nefs-i râziye* is the fifth and *nefs-i marziyye* is the sixth level. In this hierarchical design, advancement through each level of *nefs* towards the last stage of perfection is conditioned to a successful purification (*tezkiye* or *tasfiye*) of the preceding level. In other words, to be able to reach *nefs-i râziye* (the fifth level) one must successfully purify the *nefs-i mutmainne* (the fourth level), and in the same manner, to be able to reach *nefs-i marziyye* (the sixth level), the level of *nefs-i râziye* must be completed.

The lowest degree of the seven-fold construction of the *nefs* known as *nefs-i emmâre* is “a persistent enjoiner of evil”¹⁹⁷⁸ and is called the commanding ego. It us commands to commit sins, evil deeds, egoistic behaviours, to take pleasure from worldly desires and their satisfaction. In doing so, it prevents the individual from advancing to higher degrees. For this reason— from the earliest ascetic movements developed within Islam (*zühhd*) that at some point transformed into *tasavvuf*—“it was necessary to constantly oppose the *nefs* and not be at peace with it in any way and that it was necessary to overcome it in order to achieve goodness and salvation”¹⁹⁷⁹. Based on the verse 79:40-41 (*Nâziât*) holding that those who “restrained their soul (*nefs*) from lust” are promised paradise, Kuşeyrî, along with numerous other *mutasavvife*, explicates the manner of restraining to be ascetic practices involving “to have recourse to the strictures of hunger, thirst, night vigil and other types of self-exertion that lead to the weakening of [the soul’s] power”¹⁹⁸⁰. As Schimmel underlines, the lowest degree of *nefs-i emmâre*, despite all the negative associations, also “forms the starting point for the Sufi way of purification”¹⁹⁸¹, namely the process of *seyrüsülûk*.

¹⁹⁷⁸ *Kur’an* 12:53 (*Yûsuf*); 4:79 (*Nisâ*).

¹⁹⁷⁹ Uludağ, 2006b, p. 527.

¹⁹⁸⁰ Al-Qushayrî, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 109; Al-Hujwîrî, *Kashf Al-Mahjûb*, 1911, p. 196.

¹⁹⁸¹ Schimmel, 1975, p. 112.

Nefsin Sıfatları	Seyrin Çeşitleri	Âlemler	Hâller	Mahaller	Vâridât	Şuhûd	Esmâ	Nur Rengi
Emmâre	İllallah	Şehadet	Zevk	Sadr	Şerîat	Tevhid-i ef'âl	Lâ ilâhe illallah	Ezrak (blue)
Levvâme	Allellah	Misal	Şevk	Kalb	Tarîkat	Tevhid-i sıfat	Allah	Asfar (yellow)
Mülheme	Billah	Ervah	Aşk	Ruh	Hakikat	Tevhid-i zât	Hû	Ahmer (red)
Mutmeinne	Anillah	Ceberut	Vasi	Sırr	Ma'rifet	Cem	Hakk	Esved (black)
Râziye	Fillah	Lâhût	Hayret	Sırru's-sırr	Velâyet	Cem'u'l-cem	Hayy	Ahdar (green)
Marziye	Maallah	Nâsut	Fenâ fi'l-fenâ	Hafî	Sıddıkiyet	Hazretü'l-Cem'u'l-cem'	Kayyûm	Ebyaz (white)
Kâmile	Lillah	Hakikat	Bakâ bi'l-bakâ	Ahfâ	Kurbet	Ahadiyyetü'l-cem'	Kahhâr	Bilâ-levn (no color)

Table 1: The seven degrees of the *nefs* and corresponding *zikir* formulas¹⁹⁸²

In the table above, Yılmaz demonstrates all the seven degrees of the *nefs* from the lowest level of *emmâre* to the seventh degree of *kâmile* (perfection, *insân-ı kâmil*) along with the types of journeys (*seyrin çeşitleri*), states (*hâl*), revenue (*vâridât*), and even the corresponding colours of light (*nur rengi*) in each degree¹⁹⁸³. Reproducing the established *tasavvuf* theory of the *nefs*, the second degree is called *nefs-i levvâme* (blaming or regretful self)¹⁹⁸⁴ and the third degree is *nefs-i mülheme* (inspired self). Opposing the self-appraising and hedonist *nefs-i emmâre*, the *nefs*' second degree (*levvâme*)—owing to the practices performed (*zikir*, *cihad*, *tezkiye*, *takvâ* etc.) in the first degree—not only becomes aware of its own condition, desires, and attachments that prevent an acquaintance with God but also, based on the *Kur'anic* verse 75:2 (*Kıyâme*), it shows remorse and seeks for forgiveness by repenting to God. The third level of the *nefs* (*mülheme*) acquires its name (inspired) from verse 91:8 (*Şems*). As the verse explicates, this *nefs* is “inspired [with discernment of] its wickedness (*fücür*) and righteousness (*takvâ*)”, which acknowledges both its positive and negative inclinations, “finds the strength to resist the desires of lust, and begins to receive divine inspiration (*ilhâm*) as well as discovery (*keşf*)”¹⁹⁸⁵ from God. The seventh and the most perfected or purified form of the *nefs* is named *nefs-i kâmile*

¹⁹⁸² Reproduced from Yılmaz, 2004, p. 239.

¹⁹⁸³ For an example of how colour partakes in different stages of the *nefs*, see: Elias, 2013, pp. 196–198.

¹⁹⁸⁴ Gölpınarlı, 1969b, p. 35.

¹⁹⁸⁵ Yılmaz, 2004, p. 237; Öztürk, Vol. 2, 2012, p. 137.

(occasionally also *nefs-i sâfiyye* or *zekiyye*)¹⁹⁸⁶, which is the last station of spiritual development (*seyrüsülûk*) in *tasavvuf* and the ideal state to attain for all *mutasavvife*¹⁹⁸⁷.

Even though a full-scope investigation concerning all the units in this table is beyond the limits of this study, the eighth column (from the left)—*esmâ* (the names)—is of primary importance as it shows which *zikir* formulas are needed to be recited to advance into the next degree of the *nefs*. Before an analysis of the formulas and their participation in designing the performance practices of *zikir*, certain thematic characteristics that indicate both Islamic and extra-Islamic backgrounds should be mentioned.

10.3 The Thematic Characteristics of *Zikir*

As mentioned above, *zikir* is a knowledge-granting phenomenon, functioning both by the grace of God and through the efforts of the *zâkir*. Within the context of *tasavvuf*, this knowledge is salvific in nature and takes the forms of acquaintance (*mârifet*), manifestation (*tecellî*), discovery (*keşf*), annihilation (*fenâfillâh*), or permanence (*bekâ*) in God¹⁹⁸⁸. Hücivîrî explains how the practice of *zikir* has become a performed and applied mode of *tasavvuf* epistemology to attain the salvific knowledge as follows:

“But the subsistence and annihilation of a state (*hâl*) denotes, for example, that when ignorance is annihilated knowledge is necessarily subsistent, and that when sin is annihilated piety is subsistent, and that when a man acquires knowledge of his piety his forgetfulness (*ghaflat*) is annihilated by remembrance of God (*dhikr*), i.e., when anyone gains knowledge of God and becomes subsistent in knowledge of Him he is annihilated from (entirely loses) ignorance of Him, and when he is annihilated from forgetfulness he becomes subsistent in remembrance of Him, and this involves the discarding of blameworthy attributes and the substitution of praiseworthy attributes. A different signification, however, is attached to the terms in question by the elect among the *Şûfis*. They do not refer these expressions to ‘knowledge’ (*‘ilm*) or to ‘state’ (*hâl*) but apply them solely to the degree of perfection attained by the saints who have become free from the pains of mortification and have escaped from the prison of ‘stations’ and the vicissitude of ‘states’ and whose search has ended in discovery, so that they have seen all things visible, and have heard all things audible, and have discovered all the secrets of the heart; and who, recognizing the imperfection of their own discovery, have turned away from all things and have purposely become annihilated in the object of desire, and in the very essence of desire have lost all desires of their own, for when a man becomes annihilated from his attributes he attains to perfect subsistence, he is neither near nor far, neither stranger nor intimate, neither sober nor intoxicated, neither separated nor united; he has no name, or sign, or brand, or mark”¹⁹⁸⁹

¹⁹⁸⁶ Gölpinarlı, 1969b, p. 34.

¹⁹⁸⁷ Schimmel, 1975, p. 178.

¹⁹⁸⁸ Shannon, 2006, p. 113.

¹⁹⁸⁹ Al-Hujwîrî, *Kashf Al-Mahjûb*, 1911, p. 242.

“To bring the believer to a realization of divine truths such as the unity of God and the unity of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*)”¹⁹⁹⁰, the consensus, based on the *Kur’an*¹⁹⁹¹, holds that the *nefs* can and must be purified and tamed (*nefis tezkiyesi*) via *zikir*. However, the question of how brings about more than one answer. While for Gazzâlî this salvific acquaintance with *Allah* (*mârifet*) at the end of *seyrüsülûk* is only possible with the purification of the heart or *nefs* for a noetic divine blessing (*tecellî*)¹⁹⁹², for İbnü’l-Arabî, “the only way to know and have acquaintance with *Allah* [a.n. *mârifet*] is to know and have acquaintance with our own selves (*nefs*)”¹⁹⁹³ and “by penetrating into ourselves (*nefs*) with consciousness we can taste the divine manifestation (*tecellî*) in there”¹⁹⁹⁴. What İbnü’l-Arabî implies here can be interpreted in terms of alchemy and an esotericised, often intuitive, understanding of the self variously expressed as knowing thyself, *V.I.T.R.I.O.L.*, *gnothi seauton* (γνῶθι σεαυτόν), or *men arefe nefsehu fekat arefe rabbehu* (مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ فَقَدْ عَرَفَ رَبَّهُ). A verification concerning this notion—the knowledge of God bounds up with the knowledge of the self—has been expressed by, for example, Hücivîrî as follows:

“If he knows himself as perishable he knows God as everlasting, or if he knows himself as humble he knows God as Almighty, or if he knows himself as a servant he knows God as the Lord. Therefore, one who does not know himself is debarred from knowledge of all things”¹⁹⁹⁵

Despite Gazzâlî and Arabî appear to recommend two different methods, Gazzâlî’s already mentioned treatise—*Kimyâ-yı Sa’âdet* (*The Alchemy of Happiness*)—demonstrates that the two along with approximately all *mutasavvife* may be referring to the same notion, namely, the knowledge of God acquired through self-purification, knowledge, and perfection, which brings about ultimate happiness, salvation, or annihilation:

“O seeker after the divine mysteries! Know thou that the door to the knowledge of God will be opened to a man first of all, when he knows his own soul, and understands the truth about his own spirit, according as it has been revealed, ‘he who knows himself knows his Lord also’. And God proclaims in his holy book: ‘We will display our miracles in the different countries of the world, till

¹⁹⁹⁰ Shannon, 2006, p. 114.

¹⁹⁹¹ *Kur’an* 13:28 (*Ra’d*); 62:10 (*Cum’a*).

¹⁹⁹² Gazzâlî: *İhyâü Ulûmi’d-Dîn*, III: 19, quoted by: Taylan, 1992, p. 160.

¹⁹⁹³ Izutsu, Toshihiko: *İbn Arabî’nin Fusûs’undaki Anahtar-Kavramlar*, Özemre, Y. Ahmet (trans.), İstanbul: Kaknûs 1997, p. 35.

¹⁹⁹⁴ Izutsu, 1997, p. 35.

¹⁹⁹⁵ Al-Hujvîrî, *Kashf Al-Mahjûb*, 1911, p. 197.

it shall be demonstrated to them that the Koran is the truth'¹⁹⁹⁶, that is, let us show men in the visible world, and in their own souls, the wonderfulness of our works and the perfection of our power''¹⁹⁹⁷

Both Gazzâlî and Arabî emphasize the crucial role of *zikir* in finding peace in the heart, acquiring familiarity, friendship (*ünsiyet*), and love of God (*muhabbet*), or establishing a mutual remembrance with God¹⁹⁹⁸. As all *mutasavvife* agree, Gazzâlî, in his *Kimyâ-yı Sa'âdet*, expands upon the complex network of *tasavvuf* practices and requirements of an authentic or functioning *zikir* as follows:

“The remembrance of God will be predominant in the heart that is always engaged in devotion: and the heart will be engaged in devotion and worship, whenever it withdraws from worldly lusts and sensual pleasures: it will withdraw from worldly lusts, when it refrains from sins. To abstain from sins of rebellion, brings peace to the heart: to be constant in worship, is a means of remembrance of God; and both are a means of growing in the love of God, which is the seed of happiness. And so the Lord speaks in his word : ‘Blessed is the man who keeps himself pure, who repeats the name of the Lord and prays’”¹⁹⁹⁹

In addition to *zikir*'s role in disciplining and realizing the self's veiled true nature²⁰⁰⁰, in terms of specific themes, to which the practice of *zikir* is associated, further correspondences between *tasavvuf* and the esotericised systems of the Mediterranean world can be revealed. As discussed above, various esotericised Islamic, Christian, Hindu, and Greek philosophical traditions can be studied as a “way of love”²⁰⁰¹, involving a shared narrative that designs the relation between the divine and human in a manner of lovers, which demands significant efforts from the human part to be reciprocated and reunite (*vuslat, ittihâd, tevhid*) with the beloved²⁰⁰². Also known as “*zîkr-i mahbûb* (recollecting the lover)”²⁰⁰³, several Muslim philosophers and *mutasavvife* consider *zikir* a generator of love, while Gazzâlî highlights its importance within the epistemology of *tasavvuf* as follows:

“But we ought to know that the love of God will never reign in the heart of a man until first the knowledge of God reigns there, and until the remembrance of God becomes unceasing”²⁰⁰⁴

¹⁹⁹⁶ *Kur'an*, 41:53 (*Fussilet*).

¹⁹⁹⁷ Al-Ghazzali, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, 1873, p. 13.

¹⁹⁹⁸ Kurt, 2008, pp. 183–184.

¹⁹⁹⁹ Al-Ghazzali, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, 1873, p. 56.

²⁰⁰⁰ Trimmingham, 1971, p. 154; Eraydın, 1994, pp. 392–393.

²⁰⁰¹ Stoddart, 2005, p. 60.

²⁰⁰² Akarpınar, 2004, p. 10; Kılıç, 2014, p. 158.

²⁰⁰³ Erginli, 2006, p. 1266; Kuşeyrî, *Risale*, Vol. 2, 1978, pp. 355–357.

²⁰⁰⁴ Al-Ghazzali, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, 1873, p. 56.

In transmitting complex *tasavvuf* theories, the concept of (divine or mystical) love has frequently been expressed symbolically. As in Attâr's *Manṭıku't-tayr* (*The Conference of the Birds*)—in which the seven valleys corresponding to the seven degrees of the *nefs* must be traversed by the birds (*mürîd*) under the guidance of *hüdhdüd* (*mürşîd*) to acquire *Simurg*'s (God's manifestation) wisdom (*mârifet*)—a *mürîd* must go through the second valley (love) and “distance the self from [a.n. evil] attributes with love”²⁰⁰⁵. Like an authentic performance of *zikir* simultaneously requiring and generating ascetic behaviours (*zühhd*, *takvâ*, or *tecerrüd*) by distancing the self from anything but God (*mâsivâ*), the love phenomenon, as understood by *mutasavvife*, “also cleanses the *sûfî* from spiritual impurities”²⁰⁰⁶.

Concerning symbolism, the founder of the Celvetî *tarikât*, Aziz Mahmud Hüdâyî (1541–1628), for example, employs several *tasavvuf* symbols—e.g., nightingale, heart, rose garden—to emphasize the central role of the remembrance of *Allah* (*zıkrullah*): “the heart's nightingale becomes overzealous, with the rose garden of *zıkrullah* [...], it becomes the recipient of wisdom (*irfân*) and the land of spring, with the flowers of *zıkrullah*”²⁰⁰⁷. Similarly, in the *hadis* sources, Prophet Muhammed reportedly said that an assembly for performing *zikir* is like the gardens of paradise²⁰⁰⁸.

This symbolic dimension constitutes another point of convergence between *tasavvuf* and several other esotericised systems. As discussed in the previous chapters, the usage of symbolic expression means is often caused by a necessity, namely due to the indescribable and excessive nature of the encounters with the divine and the attempts to verbalize them. These encounters often give rise to various religious feelings—e.g., *mysterium tremendum*, *henosis*, *fenâfillah*, or *vecd*—whose non-/verbal expressions are generally investigated in terms of ineffability, apophatic theology, *via negativa*, or *şathiyat*. Since *zikir* is a conscious invitation of religious awe²⁰⁰⁹, what is experienced during a successful performance of it is frequently described as losing the self and the ability to verbalize the experience that are now considered indicators or “outward manifestations”²⁰¹⁰ of the altered state of consciousness experiences. Consequently, in *tasavvuf*, “a metaphysical symbolism that belongs only to those who have become *ârif*”²⁰¹¹ (wise, possessor of *mârifet*) has been developed to articulate the contents or the dynamics of

²⁰⁰⁵ Usta, Muhiddin: *Tasavvuf Eğitimi Yöntemleri. Etvâr-ı Seb'a/ Yedi Mertebe*, Ankara: Mânâ Yayınları 2019, p. 89.

²⁰⁰⁶ Usta, 2019, p. 90.

²⁰⁰⁷ Quoted by: Bardakçı, 2007, p. 19.

²⁰⁰⁸ Kuşeyrî, *Risale*, Vol. 2, 1978, p. 356; Öngören, 2013, p. 409.

²⁰⁰⁹ *Kur'an* 8:2 (*Enfâl*); 23:1-2 (*Mü'minûn*).

²⁰¹⁰ Avery, 2004, p. 8.

²⁰¹¹ Kılıç, 2004, p. 53.

the experience and to transfer the knowledge thereof to the others²⁰¹², which are otherwise impossible to transmit. In a performance of *zikir*, according to Gilsenan, even “the form can be seen symbolically as a spatial representation of the separation of the group from the world”²⁰¹³. Whereas Mevlânâ often consults a symbolic language with an emphasis on the ineffable nature of his experiences²⁰¹⁴, numerous other *mutasavvife*—such as Hâfız, Bistâmî, Gazzâlî, or Attâr—persistently employed a vast repertoire of symbols including various animals, flowers, fire, wine, mirror, or light.

The light theme is perhaps one of the most typical symbolic elements of various esoterised systems (including Plato and Plotinus) as well as *tasavvuf* epistemology and *zikir* practice. The aforementioned theories of the Muslim philosophers (İbn Sînâ and Fârâbî) that narrate a knowledge-granting ascension towards God in a manner of spiritual perfection were inherited by *tasavvuf* scholars in designing the process of *seyrüsülûk*. As both trends prioritized the knowledge or wisdom of God to be the principal tool for the desired perfection of humans (*insân-ı kâmil*), which acquires the meaning of “a person who is blessed with the manifestations (*tecellî*) of *Allah* at every level”²⁰¹⁵ in *tasavvuf*, an analogy of light employed to describe an encounter with God often generates relevant symbols such as mirror, manifestation, or polishing the heart to receive the divine blessings. While Sühreverdî constructs his whole system of spiritual perfection on the theory of *hekmat-e eshrâq* (حکمت اشراق, the philosophy or wisdom of the light)²⁰¹⁶, Serrâc, quoting İbn Atâ, associates *zikir* with the features of light as “when *zikrullah* enters the hearts with all its brightness, it annihilates the attribute of humanity with its radiance”²⁰¹⁷. Along similar lines Schimmel combines various elements of *tasavvuf*’s thematic catalogue and demonstrates how the complex network of *tasavvuf* epistemology utilizes these elements:

“For the reality that is the goal of the mystic, and is ineffable, cannot be understood or explained by any normal mode of perception; neither philosophy nor reason can reveal it. Only the wisdom of the heart, gnosis, may give insight into some of its aspects. A spiritual experience that depends upon neither sensual nor rational methods is needed. Once the seeker has set forth upon the way to this Last Reality, he will be led by an inner light. This light becomes stronger as he frees himself from the attachments of this world or—as Sufis would say—polishes the mirror of his heart”²⁰¹⁸

²⁰¹² Akarpınar, 2004, p. 5.

²⁰¹³ Gilsenan, 1973, pp. 160–161.

²⁰¹⁴ Kılıç, 2004, p. 72; Rûmî, 1926, 1:219, p. 15.

²⁰¹⁵ Aydın, S. Mehmet: “İnsân-ı Kâmil”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 22, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2000, pp. 330–331.

²⁰¹⁶ Aminrazavi, 2003, pp. 203–214.

²⁰¹⁷ Serrâc, *El-Lüma’*, 1996, p. 222.

²⁰¹⁸ Schimmel, 1975, p. 4.

Bilgiz defines the process in the quotation above as “a journey towards *ma’rifet*” and associates the influence of *zikir* in this process with a “light (*nûr*) that arises in the soul”²⁰¹⁹, which is “reinforced and improved to the point of perfection by means of mirrors”²⁰²⁰. The noetic operation of spiritual perfection via *zikir* and its illuminating feature was not only a theory of early *tasavvuf* epistemology, as a recent *mutasavvif* scholar, Fâtîmatü’l-Yeşrutıyye (1891–1978), reproduces the same view in her *Nefehâtü’l-Hakk (The Gifts of Truth)* writing that “*zikir* illuminates the heart, the light of the heart illuminates the faith, the light of faith enables one to reach the *ledünnî* knowledge”²⁰²¹, and the *ledünnî* knowledge leads to the highest station”²⁰²².

In addition to the themes of symbolism, ineffability, love, and light, in terms of *zikir*, *tasavvuf* and various esotericised systems demonstrate further correspondences covering the topics of wisdom, purification, return to the divine realm conditioned to moral and spiritual perfection. As shown above, the practice of *zikir* in *tasavvuf* is designed to acquire *mârifet* by purifying the heart or the *nefs* for a return to God—or to be remembered by God—through increasing the spiritual capabilities of a *zâkir*, which has been linked with moral and spiritual perfection as well as various forms of asceticism (*zühd*). As in Plato’s “recollection of Forms” leading to an altered state of consciousness (madness, *μανία*) “gifted by the gods” (*Phaedrus*, 244a), a recollection of the names of *Allah* in *tasavvuf* may similarly result in *vecd*, a form of ecstatic feelings and behaviours, often experienced as the annihilation of the self, eradication of the borders between the reciter and the recited (or the lover and the beloved) or in a manner of union (*vuslat*, *ittihâd*, *vahdet-i vücûd*, *fenâ*, or *bekâ*). Despite being nourished from different sources and apart from each other for more than a millennium, both Plato and *mutasavvife* understand remembrance (*anamnesis*, *zikir*) as an epistemological device used by a specific (elite) wise people (*sofôn* or *sûfî*) as part of their “pursuit of knowledge of true reality”²⁰²³ that is “the perfect wisdom that belongs to gods”²⁰²⁴. While for Plato this remembrance does not concern with external learning, but instead with an innate way of knowing embedded in humans that can be revealed through “philosophical midwifery”²⁰²⁵ (*μαιευτικός*, *maieutikós*) or “mental

²⁰¹⁹ Erginli, 2006, p. 1261; Kurt, 2008, p. 187.

²⁰²⁰ Bilgiz, 2006, p. 226.

²⁰²¹ A form of intuitive knowledge concerning the metaphysical realm of God and divine secrets, see: Taylan, 1992, p. 160.

²⁰²² Quoted by: Erginli, 2006, p. 1274.

²⁰²³ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 2011, p. 116.

²⁰²⁴ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 2011, p. 241.

²⁰²⁵ Grimes, Richard / Uliana, L. Regina: *Philosophical Midwifery. A New Paradigm for Understanding Human Problems with its Validation*, California: Hyparxis 1998.

pregnancy”²⁰²⁶, in *tasavvuf*, as shown above, the concept of remembrance is comparably linked with an alchemical notion—the knowledge of the self leads to the knowledge of God. The Neoplatonist Plotinus too correspondingly understands remembrance as the generator of a salvific knowledge of the One and interprets salvation as an ineffable ecstatic experience or obliteration of all the borders accomplished through ascetic practices and purification (*katharsis*)²⁰²⁷. Both in Plotinus and *tasavvuf* salvation means union (*henosis*)²⁰²⁸ with the divine. Even though *zikir*, as designed, systematized, contextualized, or ritualized in *tasavvuf*, finds correspondence neither in Plato’s works nor Plotinus’ views, the parallels demonstrated above may indicate continuity between them—yet with interpretative variants—through the intermediary of numerous other esotericised and religious systems of the Mediterranean region. However, a form of Christian contemplative prayer known as the Jesus prayer or *hesychasm*—ἡσυχασμός, *hesychasmos*; ἡσυχία, *hesychia*; stillness, rest, quiet, silence²⁰²⁹—demonstrates “remarkable similarities”²⁰³⁰ with the practice of *zikir*.

10.4 *Hesychasm*

Dating the origins of the practice sometime between the fifth and the eighth centuries, Ware describes *hesychasm* as “the remembrance or invocation of the name of Jesus”²⁰³¹. As there are scattered references to the practice of invocation in Christianity, concerning the emergence of *hesychasm* several other dates have also been proposed. De Bleeker, for example, argues that *hesychasm* as a “mystical tradition” originated from the religious lives of “the desert fathers and mothers of the third century”²⁰³². Likely derived from the specific verses in the New Testament, e.g., 1 *Thessalonians* 5:17, *Philippians* 2:9-11, *Luke* 18:13, 38, or *Matthew* 6:6, the Jesus prayer is based on the repetitive invocation of the name of Jesus or a fixed formula: “O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me”²⁰³³ as rendered by the Christian

²⁰²⁶ Rawson, Glenn: “Platonic Recollection and Mental Pregnancy”, in: *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 44/2, 2006, pp. 137–155.

²⁰²⁷ Plotinus: “Enneads III”, Vol. 3, 1988, p. 231.

²⁰²⁸ Plotinus: “Enneads VI”, Vol. 6, 1988, p. 329; 6.9.11, pp. 341–342; Gregory, 1999, p. 124.

²⁰²⁹ De Bleeker, Andre: “Dhikr and the Jesus Prayer. Unceasing recollection of God leading to peace”, in: *Sedos Bulletin*, 49/9-10, 2017, pp. 2–10/3.

²⁰³⁰ Nasr, S. Hossein: “The Prayer of the Heart in Hesychasm and Sufism”, in: *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 31/2, 1986, pp. 195–203/195.

²⁰³¹ Ware, Kallistos: “The Origins of the Jesus Prayer. Diadochus, Gaza, Sinai”, in: Jones, Cheslyn / Wainwright, Geoffrey / Yarnold, Edward (eds.), *The Study of Spirituality*, New York: Oxford University Press 1986, pp. 175–184/176.

²⁰³² De Bleeker, 2017, p. 3.

²⁰³³ Schaff, Philip / Wace, Henry (eds.): *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol. 11, New York: The Christian Literature Company 1894, p. 405.

ascetic John Cassian (c. 360–435 CE) or as in Abba Philimon’s (c. the sixth century) expression “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, the sinner”²⁰³⁴. Ware argues that from the earliest times on, the practice of repetitive invocation has had various forms and names such as *mnēmē Theou* (the remembrance of God)²⁰³⁵, or, from the seventh century on, a continuously repeated prayer of a “single *logos*, single word, or phrase” has been known as “monologic prayer”²⁰³⁶. Especially with the compiling works of the Orthodox monks such as St. Gregory of Sinai, Nikephoros the Hesychast, St. Symeon the New Theologian, or Gregory Palamas of the Mount Athos in Greece, a prominent centre of the Eastern Orthodox monasticism, the practice has been gradually systematized around the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries²⁰³⁷. St. Gregory of Sinai, for instance, attempted to standardize various components of *hesychasm* and establish the requirements for a successful performance of it involving a particular way of breathing, posture, methods for focusing, how to practice psalmody, or specific ascetic practices, all of which are also crucial components of *zikir* practice in *tasavvuf*²⁰³⁸. He asserts:

“One should therefore listen, to those who have experienced the hardships involved in cultivating the virtues and should cultivate them as they have—that is to say, by severe fasting, painful self-control, steadfast vigils, laborious genuflections, assiduous standing motionless, constant prayer, unfeigned humility, ceaseless contrition and compunctive sorrow, eloquent silence, as if seasoned with salt (cf. Col. 4:6), and by patience in all things”²⁰³⁹

Along with several ascetic practices involving fasting etc., particularly a need for a guide, spiritual master, or “who have experienced the hardships”, approximates *hesychasm* to *zikir* closely²⁰⁴⁰. Furthermore, commenting on this contemplative prayer, Philimon provides several points that may indicate a similarity between the Jesus prayer and *zikir* as follows:

“When one’s intellect is completely pure, God reveals to him the visions [...], [a.n. the wandering mind] is one of the outer passions and it stays with you because you still have not acquired a perfect longing for God. The warmth of this longing and of the knowledge of God has not yet come to you. [...] Meditate inwardly for a while, deep in your heart; for this can cleanse your intellect of these things. [...] Keep watch in your heart; and with watchfulness [a.n. *nepsis*] say in your mind with awe and trembling ‘Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me’”²⁰⁴¹

²⁰³⁴ Palmer, E. H. Gerald / Sherrard, Philip / Ware, Kallistos (eds.): *The Philokalia. The Complete Text*, Vol. 2, London: Faber & Faber 1979, p. 343.

²⁰³⁵ Ware, 1986, p. 176.

²⁰³⁶ Ware, 1986, p. 177.

²⁰³⁷ Nasr, 1986, p. 196; De Bleeker, 2017, p. 4.

²⁰³⁸ Öngören, 2013, p. 410; Gilsenan, 1973, pp. 157, 164ff.; Nakamura, 1971, p. 80ff.

²⁰³⁹ Palmer et. al., Vol. 4, 1979, p. 274.

²⁰⁴⁰ Nasr, 1986, p. 198.

²⁰⁴¹ Palmer et. al., Vol. 2, 1979, p. 347.

Apart from two prominent features, repetition and the names or formulas, in terms of Jesus prayer's resemblance to *zikir*, certain expressions in the quotation above including pure, reveal/vision, outer passions, perfection, the knowledge of God, inward meditation, the heart, cleaning, and awe appear to be the common elements. The importance of the heart as “the locus of divine presence”²⁰⁴² and a compulsory process of purification of the heart from the “outer passions”, earthly desires, or, as expressed by *mutasavvife*, anything other than God (*mâsivâ*), by means of continuous remembrance of the divine stand at the very centre of both *zikir* and *hesychasm*. Reminiscent of the introvertive mystical experiences, partially in *zikir*²⁰⁴³ and in the Jesus prayer, the performer is supposed to disable the external flow of information that comes through the senses and “banish all thoughts from the discursive faculty”²⁰⁴⁴ that may distract the performer from contemplating and focusing on reciting the name Jesus, or the formula shown above. Furthermore, both *zikir* and *hesychasm* are believed to function as instruments of purification (*katharsis*) and the noetic invocations of the relevant names lead not only to the knowledge of God²⁰⁴⁵, but also bring “the sense of joy, sweetness and light to the heart”²⁰⁴⁶. Moreover, as Diadochus writes, “those who meditate unceasingly upon this glorious and holy name in the depths of their heart can sometimes see the light of their own intellect”²⁰⁴⁷, which indicates that the light theme is also present in *hesychasm* practice as in *zikir*²⁰⁴⁸. Correspondingly, St. Philotheos of Sinai combines various features of the Jesus prayer in a way that may allow this study to draw further parallels between not only *zikir* and *hesychasm*, but also to expand upon certain other esotericised systems as well as notions:

“At every hour and moment let us guard the heart with all diligence from thoughts that obscure the soul's mirror; for in that mirror Jesus Christ, the wisdom and power of God the Father (cf. 1 Cor. 1:24), is typified and luminously reflected. And let us unceasingly seek the kingdom of heaven inside our heart (cf. Luke 17:21), the seed (cf. Luke 13:19), the pearl (cf. Matt. 13:45) and the leaven (cf. Matt. 13:33). Indeed, if we cleanse the eye of the intellect we will find all things hidden within us. This is why our Lord Jesus Christ said that the kingdom of heaven is within us, indicating that the Divinity dwells in our hearts”²⁰⁴⁹

²⁰⁴² Nasr, 1986, p. 196.

²⁰⁴³ Elias, 2013, p. 192.

²⁰⁴⁴ De Bleeker, 2017, p. 4.

²⁰⁴⁵ Coniaris, M. Anthony: *Philokalia. The Bible of Orthodox Spirituality*, Minneapolis: Light & Life Publishing 1998, p. 204.

²⁰⁴⁶ Ware, 1986, p. 183.

²⁰⁴⁷ Palmer et. al., Vol. 1, 1979, p. 270.

²⁰⁴⁸ For a corresponding description of *zikir* and its illuminating function, see: Elias, 2013, pp. 194, 196 –198.

²⁰⁴⁹ Palmer et. al., Vol. 3, 1979, p. 25.

Derived from various verses in the New Testament, the explicit reference to God's presence within the self or the heart of a human, which is obscured in the soul's polluted mirror and requires a process of purification of the heart to reveal the inner or hidden divinity of the self, i.e., know-thyself, demonstrate intriguing correspondences. Another prominent source focusing on the Jesus prayer written originally in Russian, *Откровенные рассказы странника духовному своему отцу* and known as *The Way of a Pilgrim*, emphasizes additional features of the practice that may be considered approximating to the common narratives of esotericism involving an ineffable quality of the God-given experience as "ah, how indescribably wonderful it is when God deigns to purify a soul from passion and grants to it the gift of self-activating interior prayer"²⁰⁵⁰.

Perhaps one of the most prominent correspondences between *zikir* and *hesychasm* is the narrative of unification with the divine, or an "experience [a.n. of] God as the core of my very being"²⁰⁵¹. Despite their significantly different theological undercurrents, both practices enable the performer, upon successful execution, a form of attainment to the divine or even unification in a manner of the union (*theosis*) between a lover and the beloved. In the words of Gregory Palamas:

"He who participates in divine energy becomes himself in some way light. He is united with light and with this light he sees with full consciousness all that remains from those who do not possess this grace...The pure of heart see God...who being light dwells in them and reveals to those who love him, their Beloved"²⁰⁵²

What Palamas argues above is not a union with the essence of God, but, reminding the theory of emanation, a partaking in the divine effluence, energies, or light of God, with which the created universe is being perpetually maintained. Since the transcendental essence of God is unknowable and thus beyond the reach of the human agent, a union can only be attained in a limited manner, in other words without sharing the essence. As the objective of "Orthodox spirituality" is often narrated as "the attainment of union with God and consequently *theosis* and deification"²⁰⁵³ or "to commune with the Lord Jesus face to face without intermediary"²⁰⁵⁴,

²⁰⁵⁰ Bacovcin, Helen (trans.): *The Way of a Pilgrim. And the Pilgrim Continues His Way*, New York: Doubleday 1978, p. 13.

²⁰⁵¹ De Bleeker, 2017, p. 6.

²⁰⁵² Quoted by: Nasr, 1986, p. 201.

²⁰⁵³ Coniaris, 1998, p. 130.

²⁰⁵⁴ Ware, 1986, p. 184.

by means of *hesychasm* “the pious believer is given an affirming sign of this prayer of the heart through a living vision of God’s Uncreated Light”²⁰⁵⁵. Even though attaining this vision of God’s light has its varying dynamics and processes in different Christian denominations and theological views, it is often associated with a tripartite stage of purification (*katharsis*) of the heart, illumination (*theoria*) by the grace of God, and deification (*apotheosis*) of the self, or union (*theosis*)²⁰⁵⁶ with God. As in *zikir* and its crucial role in the process of *seyrüsülûk*, in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, the practice of *hesychasm* acquires a similar role in bringing the individual to a salvific perfection through the tripartite process of union. A narrative of spiritual transformation towards perfection by means of remembrance, equipped with various ascetic practices leading to a noetic experience of God thus appears to be a common notion in both practices. Despite the presence of several correspondences, commonalities, and therefore a possibility of an interaction or a mutual influence between *hesychasm* and *zikir*²⁰⁵⁷, the theological undercurrents that give shape, content, and context to these practices and their interpretations are so varied, even merely in a single denomination, a claim for continuity or association between *hesychasm* and *zikir*, at this stage of research, remains to be speculation requiring further in-depth studies. This, however, did not prevent some scholars from emphasizing a potential association. While Baldick links certain pre-Islamic notions with *zikir* and argues that the expression remembrance of God, “in Greek *mneme Theou*, which is found first among the Stoic philosophers and is also connected with the use, in the Hebrew Bible, of the term *zakar*, ‘remembering’”²⁰⁵⁸ played “a major role” in *tasavvuf*, according to Nasr,

“The remarkable resemblance between Sufism and Hesychasm, especially as far as the prayer of the heart is concerned, is due not to historical borrowings but to the nature of Christian and Islamic spirituality on the one hand and the constitution of the human microcosm on the other”²⁰⁵⁹

Gilsenan, on the other hand, interprets such associations between *zikir* and *hesychasm* to be “misleading”. He further argues that “although there is a similarity of intention and effect, the repetition is not the *raison d’être* of the ritual [a.n. *zikir*], nor is it a *structured* group action [a.n. *hesychasm*]”²⁰⁶⁰. Apart from *hesychasm*, in terms of repetitive invocation of a divine name

²⁰⁵⁵ Cheng, John: “The Distinction Between God’s Essence and Energy. Gregory Palamas’ Idea of Ultimate Reality and Meaning”, in: *Ultimate Reality and Meaning*, 21/1, 1998, pp. 56–75/59.

²⁰⁵⁶ Devine, Arthur: “State or Way. Purgative, Illuminative, Unitive”, in: Herbermann, G. Charles et. al. (eds.), *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 14, New York: The Encyclopedia Press 1913, pp. 254–257.

²⁰⁵⁷ For additional comparisons, see: Nasr, 1986; De Bleeker, 2017.

²⁰⁵⁸ Baldick, 2002, pp. 16–17.

²⁰⁵⁹ Nasr, 1986, p. 196.

²⁰⁶⁰ Gilsenan, 1973, p. 158/f.n. 3.

or a formula in a manner of remembrance that leads to perfection, salvation, or union, the practice of *zikir* has also been compared with several other religious behaviours such as *nembitsu*, *dhāraṇī* or *mantra*, and certain techniques of Merkabah mysticism²⁰⁶¹. Furthermore, “as in Judaic and Christian meditation”, Elias emphasizes, that the practice of repetitive recitation is “intimately linked with breath, body postures, body movement, and the placement of the meditation object in various bodily locations”²⁰⁶², which indicate additional correspondences between various meditative practices in different religious organizations. Whereas Nasr’s view approximates the doctrine of perennialism, Gilsenan favours a pluralistic perspective. This study, on the other hand, acknowledges a degree of validity in both views, yet designs such correspondences as a continuity of an idea of divine knowledge (*hikmet*, *sophia*, *gnosis*, or *mârifet*) and its inherent embeddedness in historically, regionally, and contextually divergent epistemological interpretations.

These interpretations, however, are often so varied that each interpretation even in a single religion, denomination, or *tarikāt* requires monographic studies. In the following chapters, the second main form of *zikir*—the voiced (*cehrî*) *zikir*—will be evaluated and how a contemporary pseudo-*tarikāt* organization from İstanbul, Turkey, calling themselves Halvetî-Uşşâkî-Ruhzarî led by Eyyüp Fatih Şağban (b. 1962), also known as Fatih Nurullah Efendi (FNE), performs this *zikir* form allegedly to purify the *nefs* or attain the knowledge of God in their weekly ritual gatherings.

²⁰⁶¹ For detailed information, see: Nakamura, 1971, pp. 75–96; Anawati, C. Georges / Gardet, Louis: *Mystique musulmane. Aspects et tendances, expériences et techniques*, Paris: Vrin 1961, p. 190; Gilsenan, 1973, pp. 157–158; Schuon, Frithjof: *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, Wheaton: Quest Books, 1984, pp. 159–166; Poché, Christian: “Zikr and Musicology”, in: *The World of Music*, 20/1, 1978, pp. 59–73/62.

²⁰⁶² Elias, 2013, p. 189.

11 Musical Characteristics of *Zikir*

In line with Tomasello's evaluation of *zikir* as a synesthetic phenomenon that "convenes all the sensory characteristics through the pronunciation, rhythmically and repetitively, of a ritual formula"²⁰⁶³, in its acoustically accompanied forms, the *zikir* practice often becomes a social gathering²⁰⁶⁴ and a collectively performed ritual involving various bodily movements, sound phenomena, "a strict programme of recitation"²⁰⁶⁵, specific types of religious music, and, on occasion, musical instruments. As briefly mentioned above, *tasavvuf* schools (*tarikât*) can be categorized in terms of sound production in their *zikir* performances. While Nakşibendî and Yesevî groups, whose lineage (*silsile*) goes back to the first caliph Ebû Bekir favour the silent (*hafî*) *zikir*, the majority of *tarikât* organizations, collectively known as "*turuk-ı alîyye*", employ a wide variety of organized sounds as part of their process of spiritual perfection (*seyrüsülûk*). This, however, does not mean Nakşibendî or Yesevî groups to hold a code of absolute silence, as even in those *tarikât* branches that prefer silent *zikir*, the repeated formulas inevitably force the performer to follow their rhythmic structures in association with the metrical shape and keep the tempo for a better experience. The lack of an external stimuli does not mean that there is no listening or hearing in solitary *zikir*; specific types of recitations, cantillations, or prayers such as "the recitation of the *Kur'an* (*tilâvet*), call to prayer (*ezan*), *kâmet*, *salât*, *tekbir*, or *tesbih*"²⁰⁶⁶ along with other prayer forms are customarily performed. Both in *hafî* and *cehrî* (voiced) *zikir* performances, the prosodic features of a recitation of the *Kur'an* are structurally based on the rhythmical characteristics of the Arabic language. Apart from the types of prosody that cover rhythmic patterning or poetic meters of language, certain attributes of speech including intonation, articulation, and various other acoustic properties of verbal expressions of Arabic designate the performance practices of a ritualized *zikir*. As Elias cites from Simnânî, in a *zikir* practice, "the formula should be said forcefully and all syllables must be pronounced properly because its efficacy derives from correct pronunciation"²⁰⁶⁷.

In addition to the speech, from the high-pitched snapping sounds of the prayer beads (*tesbih*) produced while counting the number of repetitions of invocations in an individual *hafî* *zikir* performance to the strictly regulated intonations of the *Kur'an*, *semâ* concerts, and corporally accompanied religious song forms, a *zikir* proper incorporates diverse acoustical compo-

²⁰⁶³ Tomasello, 2017, p. 31.

²⁰⁶⁴ Geels, 1996, p. 245.

²⁰⁶⁵ Elias, 2013, p. 191.

²⁰⁶⁶ Uygun, N. Mehmet: "Zikir: Mûsiki", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2013 (Volume 44), pp. 412–413/412.

²⁰⁶⁷ Elias, 2013, p. 195.

nents. In Islam, and thus in *tasavvuf*, the limits of *şeriat* are not only imposed on the ways of sound production, but also on the manners of listening to the sounds. Both the ways of sound production and its reception are bound to certain conditions and must follow strict prerequisites in order to avoid the danger of accumulating earthly pleasures from the sound and make “musicking”²⁰⁶⁸ in accord with the limits of the *şeriat*. Like numerous other Islamic paradigms, the production and reception of sounds are interpreted variously by different groups and *tarikât* organizations. As Hücûvîrî argues in his *Keşfü’l-mahcûb*, “belief in His Apostles does not become obligatory until the obligatoriness of knowing God is ascertained by means of hearing. It is hearing, then, that makes religion obligatory”²⁰⁶⁹, in other words, the *şeriat* is acknowledged by a Muslim primarily through hearing. This crucial role of hearing in receiving the divine revelations and knowing the *şeriat* is thus consequently placed as a method of knowledge derivation in Islamic and *tasavvuf* epistemology. Several *mutasavvife* and prominent spiritual leaders—for example, Ahmed er-Rifâî (Rifâî) and Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî (Mevlevî)—link hearing or listening (*semâ*) with the noetic divine covenant known as *bezm-i elest*, in which the uncreated souls heard God’s question (Am I not thy Lord?)²⁰⁷⁰. This in a way catechetical instruction was the uncreated souls’ very first encounter with God experienced by means of hearing the question; and by responding “yes, we bear witness”²⁰⁷¹, the uncreated souls generate the core of *tasavvuf* epistemology that is an immediate encounter or acquaintance with God (*mâ-rifet*) and the methods (*seyriüsülûk*, *zikir* etc.) developed to reach that level of knowing, often narrated as perfection or the pure state of pre-creation²⁰⁷².

11.1 *Semâ*

The term *semâ* in Arabic and Turkish languages acquires the meanings of hearing, an audition that “incorporates the recitation of sacred text and poetry as well as various forms of ritual movement or dance”²⁰⁷³, “the song, the circular dance of the darvishes”²⁰⁷⁴, or “listening

²⁰⁶⁸ Small, Christopher: *Musicking. The Meanings of Performing and Listening*, Hanover: Wesleyan University Press 1998; Becker, Judith: *Deep Listeners*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2004, p. 7.

²⁰⁶⁹ Al-Hujwîrî, *Kashf Al-Mahjûb*, 1911, p. 393.

²⁰⁷⁰ Ceyhan, Semih: “Semâ”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 36, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2009, pp. 455–457/457; During, Jean: “The Symbolic Universe of Music in Islamic Societies”, in: Danielson, Virginia / Nettl, Bruno (eds.), *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music. The Middle East*, Vol. 6, New York: Routledge 2002, pp. 177–188/181; Uludağ, 2004, pp. 237–244; Schimmel, 1975, p. 184.

²⁰⁷¹ *Kur’an* 7:172 (*A’râf*).

²⁰⁷² Bardakçı 2007, p. 23; Kurt 2008, p. 184; Yılmaz, H. Kâmil: “Azîz Mahmûd Hüdâyî’nin ‘Semâ Risâlesi’”, in: *Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 4, 1986, pp. 273–284/274.

²⁰⁷³ Renard, 2009, pp. 39–40.

²⁰⁷⁴ Sahrwardî, Shahâbu-d-Dîn: *The ‘Awârifu-l-Ma’ârif*, Clarke, H. Wilberforce (trans.), Calcutta: Government of India Central Printing Office 1981, p. 29.

to music”²⁰⁷⁵. Within the context of *tasavvuf*, *semâ* means “hearing the divine visitations and conveying what is heard to the heart”²⁰⁷⁶. The English translation “divine visitations” in this quotation belongs to Knysh²⁰⁷⁷; however, Ayverdi provides a more detailed definition for the original term *vâridât* as “the [a.n. divine] meanings, inspiration, or enlightenment that come to the heart of the believer without intention or involvement”²⁰⁷⁸. Along the same lines, During argues that “hearing is a synonym of ‘understanding’, [...] and the practice of *samâ*’, beyond ecstasy or rapture, can be unveiling of mysteries, a means of attaining higher knowledge”²⁰⁷⁹. With the latter information, *semâ* appears to be a phenomenon of hearing the knowledge of the divine²⁰⁸⁰. It “‘makes the heart aware of the things in that produce absence’, so that the effect thereof is to make the heart present with God”²⁰⁸¹, which turns *semâ* a part of *tasavvuf* epistemology²⁰⁸². Correspondingly, hearing the divine—or as Serrâc reports from a certain Ebû Osman, “lending an ear to *hikmet*”²⁰⁸³—has often been interpreted as discovering the divine secrets, or “unveiling of the innermost selves for the vision of the Beloved”²⁰⁸⁴, and related with one of the God’s names (*esmâ-i hüsnâ*) known as *Semî*²⁰⁸⁵ (All-Hearer). It is believed that “those who reach the secret of this divine name (*ârif*) hear like God does”²⁰⁸⁶. To be able to reach such a level of hearing, one must equip the self with a special mode of listening abilities as designed within *tasavvuf* epistemology:

“Listening to music is of two types. [The first type is] listening to music by way of religious learning and sobriety. One who takes part in it must have knowledge of [divine] names and attributes, or else he will fall into pure unbelief. [The other type is] listening to music by way of a spiritual state. One who takes part in it must eliminate all his human attributes and purify himself from all mundane attachments and traces by manifesting the characteristics of the True Reality”²⁰⁸⁷

Similar to a number of core components of *zikir*, in the sense of devotional practice or “spiritual concert” *semâ* houses specific phenomena that may alter the state or condition of an

²⁰⁷⁵ Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 342.

²⁰⁷⁶ Ceyhan, 2009, p. 455.

²⁰⁷⁷ Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 347.

²⁰⁷⁸ Ayverdi, 2010, p. 1308.

²⁰⁷⁹ During, Jean: “Samâ”, in: Bearman, J. Peri et. al. (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, 2012, <https://referenceworks-brillonline-com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/sama-COM_0992>, last accessed: 13 January 2022.

²⁰⁸⁰ Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 350.

²⁰⁸¹ Al-Hujwiri, *Kashf Al-Mahjûb*, 1911, p. 405.

²⁰⁸² Rouget, 1985, p. 262.

²⁰⁸³ Serrâc, *El-Lüma*’, 1996, p. 286.

²⁰⁸⁴ Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 350.

²⁰⁸⁵ *Kur’an* 2:127 (*Bakara*); 8:17 (*Enfâl*); 49:1 (*Hucurât*).

²⁰⁸⁶ Ceyhan, 2009, p. 456.

²⁰⁸⁷ Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 348.

individual. As “the musical ceremony for the attainment of a sense of union with *Allah*”²⁰⁸⁸, *semâ*, for example, may “induce ecstasy”²⁰⁸⁹, “intense emotional transports (*tawâdjüd*), states of grace (*aḥwâl*), of trance or ecstasy (*wadġ*, *wudġūd*) and even revelations”²⁰⁹⁰, which generally manifest in the form of uncontrolled bodily movements or vocal utterances involving “epileptic-like behaviours, Tourette’s syndrome, glossolalia [...], and other ‘hyperaroused’ states”²⁰⁹¹. Moreover, the practice of *semâ* may partake in the process of spiritual perfection, and, like *zikir*, depending on the “spiritual grade”²⁰⁹² of the hearer it may help purify the heart or the soul from the earthly desires²⁰⁹³ by means of hearing the divine. Combining several elements of *tasavvuf* epistemology with the practice of *semâ*, Kuşeyrî writes that “listening to music is allowed only to one whose soul is dead and whose heart is still living. The soul of such a person is slaughtered by the sword of spiritual self-exertion and his heart is enlivened by the light of compliance [with God’s will]”²⁰⁹⁴. This view reproduces the classical *sûfî* defence mechanism against those theologians (*mütekellim*) or *mutasavvif* who criticize and even accuse the practice of listening to music, covering also the voiced *zikir* forms, as heresy. What Kuşeyrî establishes here is the desired condition of a hearer of sounds, “whose soul [a.n. *nefs*] is dead”, yet the heart, as the locus of divine manifestation, must be alive. In other words, for a proper *semâ* experience, the hearer must have a purified heart²⁰⁹⁵, since only then, as Gazzâlî argues, “the melodious song takes out what is hidden in the heart”²⁰⁹⁶. In addition to the Islamic conception of the soul’s (*nefs*) death that releases an individual’s attachments from the material world, this purified heart is too understood in the context of Islam, namely, possessing nothing other than God (*mâsivâ*), perpetually remembering (*zîkr-i dâim*)²⁰⁹⁷ God’s authority, and being sincere in submission to God’s will (*ihlâs*). Such a need for defence has consequently brought about several categorizations, conditions, and *âdâb* rules to authenticate the practice of *semâ* within the limits of the

²⁰⁸⁸ Becker, 2004, p. 8.

²⁰⁸⁹ Tringham, 1971, p. 195; Al-Ghazzâlî, “The Book of the Laws of Listening to Music and Singing and of Ecstasy”, in: MacDonald, B. Duncan, “Emotional Religion in Islām as Affected by Music and Singing”, *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1901, pp. 195–252; 705–748.

²⁰⁹⁰ During, 2012, p. 1018.

²⁰⁹¹ Avery, 2004, p. 5.

²⁰⁹² Al-Hujwîrî, *Kashf Al-Mahjûb*, 1911, p. 406; Al-Ghazzâlî, 1901, p. 239.

²⁰⁹³ Ceyhan, 2009, p. 455; Rouget, 1985, p. 258.

²⁰⁹⁴ Al-Qushayrî, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 347.

²⁰⁹⁵ Al-Qushayrî, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 348; Al-Hujwîrî, *Kashf Al-Mahjûb*, 1911, p. 419.

²⁰⁹⁶ Imam Ghazzâlî: *Ihya Ulum-id-Din. Revival of Religious Learnings*, Vol. 2, Ul-Karim, Fazl (trans.), Karachi: Darul-Ishaat 1993 p. 162; Schimmel, 1975, p. 182.

²⁰⁹⁷ Uşşâkî / Uşşâkî, *Tuhfetü’l-Uşşâkiyye*, 2016, p. 83; Eraydın, 1994, p. 130; Kurt, 2008, p. 183.

*şeriat*²⁰⁹⁸, most of which, though with slight alterations, can also be applied to the voiced *zikir* performances²⁰⁹⁹.

Sühreverdî, for example, establishes the first rule of a *semâ* practice to be sincerity (*ih-lâs*) and writes that if the cause of the *semâ* is “lustful desire” one must avoid it, but

“If the claim of sincerity, of desire, and of search for the increase of *hāl* and for comprehending the blessing (of God)—be united, free from lust’s impurities, the grace of such an assembly (despite the absence of a *shaiḫ*, or men of *samā’* of the brothers of concord, and of sincere seekers) is great gain”²¹⁰⁰

Cüneyd-i Bağdâdî, on the other hand, does not accord with the absence of a *şeyh* or “men of *samā’* of the brothers of concord” in Sühreverdî’s view and claims that a proper *semâ* “requires three things: time (*zaman*), place (*makan*), and friends (*ikhwan*)”²¹⁰¹. In terms of maintaining absolute control of the environment, in which the performance of *semâ* takes place, Bağdâdî’s threefold requirements indicate another correspondence between *semâ* and *zikir*. Namely, as Ceyhan argues, one must avoid participating or performing *semâ* when it coincides with, e.g., the time of the compulsory religious duties, takes place in unclean places, suggests things other than God that may occupy the heart, or is performed by the participants without sincerity²¹⁰². In addition to sincerity as a rule of thumb in a *semâ* performance, Hücivîrî argues that “the auditor ought to hear the spiritual reality, not the mere sound”²¹⁰³, that is the legality of the practice is primarily based on the meaning of the sounds²¹⁰⁴ or *vâridât*²¹⁰⁵ rather than their acoustical features. Hücivîrî exemplifies his argument via Zünnûn el-Misrî’s following expression:

“Audition is a Divine influence (*wârid al-ḥaqq*) which stirs the heart to seek God: those who listen to it spiritually (*ba-ḥaqq*) attain unto God (*taḥaqqāqa*), and those who listen to it sensually (*ba-nafs*) fall into heresy (*tazandaqa*)”²¹⁰⁶

²⁰⁹⁸ Schimmel, 1975, p. 180; Gribetz, Arthur: “The samā’ Controversy. Sufi vs. Legalist”, in: *Studia Islamica*, 74, 1991, pp. 43–62; Al-Ghazzālî, 1901, pp. 200–252.

²⁰⁹⁹ Elias, Jamal: “Zikr-i Dervîşâne’den Divân Musikisine Kadar Osmanlılar Devrinde Semâ’ya Bir Bakış”, in: *Cogito* 19, 1999, pp. 216–224/216.

²¹⁰⁰ Sahrwardî, *’Awârifu-l-Ma’ârif*, 1981, p. 34.

²¹⁰¹ Al-Qushayrî, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 347; Serrâc, *El-Lüma’*, 1996, pp. 191, 264; Bardakçı, 2007, p. 30; Rouget, 1985, p. 260.

²¹⁰² Ceyhan, 2009, p. 456.

²¹⁰³ Al-Hujwîrî, *Kashf Al-Mahjûb*, 1911, p. 404.

²¹⁰⁴ Imam Ghazzalî, Vol. 2, 1993, p.171.

²¹⁰⁵ Serrâc, *El-Lüma’*, 1996, p. 270.

²¹⁰⁶ Al-Hujwîrî, *Kashf Al-Mahjûb*, 1911, p. 404.

Hücvîrî further asserts that if an individual only listens to the sounds of a *semâ*, it is an act of the *nefs* (the lower soul) that derives earthly pleasures and thus leads to the immediate danger of esoteric interpretation (*te'vil*)²¹⁰⁷. The reference to the *nefs* in both Hücvîrî and el-Mîsrî indicates specific conditions or a purified level of the *nefs* that a hearer must have while listening to *semâ*. Like el-Mîsrî, Sühreverdî and Kuşeyrî hold that “for those engaged in love for God, *samâ* ‘ is the aider to perfection; for those filled with lust, the cause of disaster”²¹⁰⁸. Therefore, what is of primary importance is to derive the meaning or the knowledge of the divine reality during the *semâ*. If it is successfully transferred to the heart, *semâ* becomes a “nourishment of the soul (just as the *dhikr*)”²¹⁰⁹ for “[divine] gnostics”²¹¹⁰ and may induce *vecd*, a form of altered state of consciousness interpreted variously as a divine manifestation (*tecellî*), perfection (*kâmil*), or union (*vahdet*, *vuslat*)²¹¹¹. However, this level of *semâ* requires novices to progress into the higher grades in their process of spiritual perfection (*seyrüsülûk*) to avoid an unrestricted interpretation, disaster, “temptation, and hypocrisy”²¹¹². For this reason, in almost all *tarikât*, participating in a *semâ* event is often prohibited for the novices as “the arrival of the spiritual sense of *samâ* ‘ is anchored in the degree of reception and preparedness of a person’s psyche”²¹¹³ or “the disposition of the listener”²¹¹⁴.

As in a performance of *zikir* (remembering the divine), in a *semâ* event (listening to the divine) the performers derive a form of heightened religious awe or a “spiritual sense”, which often causes a set of uncontrolled behaviours as the ostensible manifestations of an encounter with the divine (*vecd*). These behaviours vary “from quiet, still, and trance-like paralysis to violent spasmodic movements of the limbs, shouting, and occasionally such extreme acts as slashing the head, chewing glass, and inserting swords or skewers in various parts of the body”²¹¹⁵. In Gazzâlî’s tripartite categorization of the stages of *semâ*, this level corresponds with the third stage, whereas “the understanding of the meaning of Sama songs”²¹¹⁶ constitutes the first stage and ecstasy (*vecd*) is the second one. According to this organizational scheme, attaining *vecd* is conditioned to the completion of the first stage where “the hearer of songs who

²¹⁰⁷ Al-Hujwîrî, *Kashf Al-Mahjûb*, 1911, p. 404.

²¹⁰⁸ Sahrwardî, *‘Awârifu-l-Ma’ârif*, 1981, p. 32; Al-Qushayrî, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 349.

²¹⁰⁹ Schimmel, 1975, p. 183.

²¹¹⁰ Al-Qushayrî, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 348.

²¹¹¹ Al-Ghazzâlî, 1901, pp. 705–748; Rouget, 1985, p. 256.

²¹¹² Al-Qushayrî, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 349.

²¹¹³ Avery, 2004, p. 152; During 2012, pp. 1018–1019.

²¹¹⁴ Rouget, 1985, p. 257.

²¹¹⁵ Shannon, 2006, p. 115.

²¹¹⁶ Imam Ghazzali, Vol. 2, 1993, p.171.

reached the highest stage of *Ma'arfat* [...], is lost to everything except the knowledge of God [...], and who enters the stage of *Fana Fillah*"²¹¹⁷.

Considering *semâ* "an extension of the more basic practice of *dhikr*"²¹¹⁸, Avery argues that the practice was developed "for the generation of altered states experiences"²¹¹⁹ around the eighth and the ninth centuries²¹²⁰. These experiences are often compared with the "mystical experiences" of certain other groups and generally induced, within the context of *tasavvuf*, via "aural stimulation: chanting, listening to music, poetry, or the recitation of the Qur'ân"²¹²¹. Both Sühreverdî and Gazzâlî evaluate the altered state of experiences (*vecd*) as a consequence of listening to the divine meanings in *semâ*. While Gazzâlî links the occurrence of the *vecd* experiences directly with *tasavvuf* epistemology, namely "*Mokashafa* [a.n. discovery] and *Moshahada* [a.n. observation] which lead to unseen and unthinkable knowledge"²¹²², Sühreverdî emphasizes the legitimacy of this occurrence and writes:

"The way of true wājids is this: So long as they gain not fully the ardour of samā', they move not in samā'; from them, motion issueth only when they cannot restrain it,—even as the palsied one cannot restrain himself from the motion of palsy"²¹²³

In generating *vecd*, along with various kinds of auditory stimuli, "kinesthetic elements of the *dhikr* [a.n. or] *samā*"²¹²⁴ also partake as the components, triggering parameters, and the consequences of the experience²¹²⁵. In addition to the acoustical constituents of *zikir* and *semâ*, these corporal movements are considered to be another point of convergence between the two practices. However, these correspondences, owing to "typically fluid emic distinctions" and "inappropriate Western categories"²¹²⁶, also brought about a certain degree of ambiguity in defining, categorizing, or distinguishing *zikir* and *semâ*. Apart from Avery and Boivin, who consider the practice of *semâ* "an extension"²¹²⁷ or "an advanced form"²¹²⁸ of *zikir*, Vicente and Trimmingham link various ritualized Islamic practices and argue that "once known as *sama*'

²¹¹⁷ Imam Ghazzali, Vol. 2, 1993, p.173.

²¹¹⁸ Avery, 2004, p. 4.

²¹¹⁹ Avery, 2004, p. 3.

²¹²⁰ During, 2012, p. 1018. Schimmel verifies this date and refers to the foundation of *semâhâne* buildings "in which the Sufis could listen to music and let themselves be drawn into ecstatic states" around the ninth century in Baghdad. See: Schimmel, 1975, p. 181.

²¹²¹ Avery, 2004, p. 3.

²¹²² Imam Ghazzali, Vol. 2, 1993, p.173.

²¹²³ Sahrwardî, 'Awārifu-l-Ma'ārif, 1981, p. 36.

²¹²⁴ Shannon, 2006, p. 114.

²¹²⁵ During, 2012, p. 1019.

²¹²⁶ Vicente, 2007, p. 198.

²¹²⁷ Avery, 2004, p. 4.

²¹²⁸ Boivin, 2013, pp. 213, 216.

(‘audition’), the ceremony came to be termed *hadra* (‘presence’) in the nineteenth century and is now more simply and universally named *zikir*²¹²⁹. On the other hand, while several scholars evaluated *semâ* as an episode within the larger *zikir* ritual²¹³⁰, either “as the introductory part (Kādirīs of Kurdistān) or concluding part (Sūfī brotherhoods of the Maghrib)”²¹³¹, some others proposed *zikir* with its specific repetitive chanting style and accompanying bodily movements or drums²¹³², as being a part of *semâ* gatherings²¹³³. This ambiguous correlation between *semâ* and *zikir* comes to the surface likely due to the varying interpretations of such practices in temporally and geographically diverse *tasavvuf* schools (*tarikāt*) and scholars. For instance, in specific *tarikāt* groups in the Indus Valley, “except in the Naqshbandiyya, the *samā*‘ was closely associated with *dhikr*, and sometimes seen as *dhikr* itself”²¹³⁴, or “the whirling *zikir*”²¹³⁵ of, e.g., Mevlevî, known as *semâ*, can be categorized as “quite simply the Mevlevi variant of the Sufi *zikir* ceremony”²¹³⁶.

Despite the presence of multiple music-relevant, contextual, and experience-based correspondences between *semâ* and *zikir*, the latter practice appears to be the most prevalent ritual form in Islam, which turns the epistemology of *tasavvuf* into an applied phenomenon.

11.2 The Voiced *Zikir*: Acoustic Components

Due to the emphasis laid upon the notion of hearing in Islam and *tasavvuf*, sounds and their specific organization in time—which Varèse establishes as the definition of music—have become crucial matters. This importance covers not only their ways of production but also in terms of the human reaction to them. However, for Rouget merely the sound organization falls short to cover all performative aspects of a *zikir* ritual, which involves bodily movements, breathing techniques, and, on occasion, trance in a form of altered state of consciousness (*vecd*). He writes that “music in the *dhikr* operates as a corporeal technique, not as an organization of sounds, hence its characteristic of being strictly indissociable from dance”²¹³⁷. On the other hand, in its communally performed and ritualized forms, the practice of *zikir* involves a variety

²¹²⁹ Vicente, 2007, p. 193; Trimingham, 1971, p. 204.

²¹³⁰ Bashir, 2013, p. 209.

²¹³¹ During, 2012, p. 1019.

²¹³² Robinson, Scott: “To Go Among the Saracens. A Franciscan Composer’s Journey into the House of Islam”, in: *Cross Currents*, 56/3, 2006, pp. 413–423.

²¹³³ Uygun, 2013, p. 412; Rouget, 1985, p. 264.

²¹³⁴ Boivin, 2013, p. 220.

²¹³⁵ Bardakçı, 2007, p. 20.

²¹³⁶ Vicente, 2007, p. 198.

²¹³⁷ Rouget, 1985, p. 303.

of contextually loaded sounds organized to fulfil the expectancy of the performance. As discussed above in detail, this expectation is summarily a noetic, knowledge-granting encounter with the divine and a self-alignment (mentally and bodily)²¹³⁸ with the dynamics of an extended reality (*bâtın*) as assumed by the participants of the event, in which the presence of the divine (*hadra*)²¹³⁹ can be experienced.

11.2.1 Repetition

Perhaps the most apparent music-related feature of approximately all *zikir* rituals is the repetitive structure of the performance. This structure consists of the repetitive recitation of specific names of God (*esmâ-i hüsnâ*) or formulas derived from the *Kur'an*²¹⁴⁰. Even though different *tarikât* groups and their leaders may hold different views on which names to be recited or how many times, the most frequently recited names, for instance, within the Halvetî form of *zikir* proper are customarily seven in number (six names and one formula) and known as *esmâ-i seb'a* (seven names)²¹⁴¹:

<i>Lâ ilâhe illallah</i>	There is no deity but <i>Allah</i>
<i>Allah</i>	
<i>Hû</i> ²¹⁴²	
<i>Hakk</i>	The Truth or Reality
<i>Hayy</i>	The Living
<i>Kayyûm</i>	The Subsisting
<i>Kahhâr</i>	The Subduer

In solitary or communally performed *zikir* events, each of these names is repeated a certain number of times—300, 3000, 6000, 12000, and up to 70000²¹⁴³—to purify the *nefs* from

²¹³⁸ Vicente, 2007, p. 95.

²¹³⁹ The term *hadra* in *tasavvuf* also refers to the *zikir*-like events performed by certain *tarikât* groups in North Africa, Indonesia, or Malaysia. For a description of *hadra* and its common as well as distinguishing elements with *zikir*, see: Touma, H. Habib: *The Music of the Arabs*, Portland: Amadeus Press 2003, pp. 165–166; Gilsenan, 1973, pp. 159–163.

²¹⁴⁰ During, Jean: “What is Sufi Music?”, in: Lewisohn, Leonard (ed.), *The Heritage of Sufism*, Vol. 2, Oxford: Oneworld Publications 1999, pp. 277–287/282.

²¹⁴¹ Eraydın, 1994, p. 390.

²¹⁴² The term *hû* is not found among the ninety-nine names of *Allah* (*esmâ-i hüsnâ*), however, for *mutasavvife*, it refers to “the essence of God” and thus often known as “*ism-i a'zam*” (the greatest name), see: Gill, Denise: *Melancholic Modalities. Affect, Islam, and Turkish Classical Musicians*, New York: Oxford University Press 2017, pp. 76–77; Türer, Osman: “Hû”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 18, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1998, pp. 260–261/261.

²¹⁴³ Anawati / Gardet, 1961, p. 204 quoted by De Bleeker, 2017, p. 8.

anything but God (*mâsivâ*), become gradually perfected (*insân-ı kâmil*), attain the knowledge of or acquaintance with God (*mârifet*), receive divine manifestations (*tecellî*) in the heart, and to be reciprocally remembered by God known as *zîkrullah*. In almost all *tarikât* organizations, the *mürşid* or *şeyh* controls every aspect of a *mürîd*'s life. This control involves determining the content and structure of *evrâd* (prayers or formulas assigned to a *mürîd*), which are selected by the *şeyh* according to the *mürîd*'s disposition, his development in the process of perfection (*seyr-rûsûlûk*), and certain other external conditions. In communally performed *zikir* occasions, the number of repetitions and order may be determined beforehand and applied to all participants or the end of each cycle of repetition is indicated by the participating *şeyh*.

The phenomenon of repetition has a particular performative and contextual importance in *zikir* and *tasavvuf* epistemology. Apart from forming the common repetitive rhythmic structure of nearly all *zikir* rituals, the number of repetitions also dictates the length of the event, which may take up to several hours. By means of repetition of the divine names of God, an individual obtains a form of divine knowledge requiring, ideally, death of the *nefs* (ego), and through this knowledge, gains an access to the divine realm (*bâtın*, *ledün*). Even though the sequence of the events is different, Adorno's critique of Stravinsky's music contains an intriguingly similar notion, in which Adorno links the ego's death with repetition with an argument that "in certain schizophrenics, the autonomization of the motoric apparatus, after the collapse of the ego, leads to an endless repetition of gestures and words"²¹⁴⁴. Within the context of *zikir*, "the autonomization (*die Verselbständigung*) of the motoric apparatus" may be related to the final level of *zikir* (*zîkr-i ârif*), in which the one who remembers (*zâkir*) becomes completely unaware of the recitation or the remembrance itself, "the annihilation of the rememberer in the Remembered"²¹⁴⁵ occurs, and the *zâkir* becomes endless or permanent (*bâkî*)²¹⁴⁶. However, standing in the opposite of Adorno's view, in *zikir*, this condition (*hâl*) is not the cause that leads to repetition, but it is reached after "an endless repetition of gestures and words" and "the collapse of the ego" is a result of the repetition, not a state occurring prior to it. Interpretations concerning the notion of repetition and its implications can be multiplied. Eifring, for example, writes that:

²¹⁴⁴ Adorno, W. Theodor: *Philosophy of New Music*, Hullot-Kentor, Robert (trans.), Minneapolis / London: Minnesota Press 2006, p. 132; Adorno, W. Theodor: *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt 1958, p. 165.

²¹⁴⁵ Chittick, C. William: *Sufism. A Beginner's Guide*, Oxford: Oneworld Publications 2008, p. 72.

²¹⁴⁶ Öngören, 2013, p. 410.

“Consider the use of repetition in recitative practices. Although the words or phrases recited almost always have semantic content, the act of repeating does not, or at least not always. It is a technical element, which has an influence on body and mind beyond the meaning of the words or phrases recited. To the extent that the effect of repetition is a topic at all, various meditative cultures may focus on different aspects of it, such as its positive impact on quietude and concentration and its ability to bring recitation from an act of will to an almost internalized and near-spontaneous, ever-present impulse. At times, it may also be given near-semantic interpretations, as an expression of the urgency, persistence and determination of prayer, or as a help to ‘ruminate’ on its content. Repetition may involve a mixture of technical and nontechnical elements”²¹⁴⁷

As discussed above, whether *mârifet*, *hikmet*, or *gnosis*, this form of knowledge can be associated with the experience-based tacit knowledge, which a bodybuilder, surgeon, or chef gradually gains through repetition and perfects specific abilities to carry out a relevant operation. Bodybuilders, for instance, develop the mass of the body and the muscular system by eliminating dispensable body fat and increasing the volume of the muscles, all of which depend on specific repetitive exercises involving weightlifting, various resistance training, or protein-based nutrition²¹⁴⁸. Despite the development in the muscles being microscopic in each repetition, ultimately, after a process of training, their accretion becomes visible and demonstrates the operability of repetitive exercises. Correspondingly, in *zikir*, repetition is the primary tool for developing specified faculties of the material and spiritual body. The desired end, i.e., perfection, acquaintance, or salvation, may be attained through repeating the names of God. Whereas the aim to eliminate the body fat can be associated with the elimination of the *nefs*, the muscle development can be similarly associated with the development of the heart, where an encounter with the divine, in whatever form, is believed to take place. As in bodybuilding, each repetition in *zikir* brings about microscale changes in the performer leading to alterations in disposition or perception and thus it can be said that neither the effects of the repetition nor the state of the performer are the same in various stages of the process²¹⁴⁹.

In various techniques of learning such as the “spaced repetition” or “rote learning”, repetition is an essential principle and takes on a crucial role in, e.g., “memory formation”²¹⁵⁰ or

²¹⁴⁷ Eifring, Halvor: “Meditation in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Technical Aspects of Devotional Practices”, in: Eifring, Halvor (ed.), *Meditation in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Cultural Histories*, New York: Bloomsbury 2013, pp. 3–13/10.

²¹⁴⁸ Roberts, D. Michael / Haun, T. Cody / Vann, G. Christopher / Osburn, C. Shelby / Young, C. Kaelin: “Sarcomplasmic Hypertrophy in Skeletal Muscle. A Scientific ‘Unicorn’ or Resistance Training Adaptation?”, in: *Frontiers in Physiology*, 11/816, 2020.

²¹⁴⁹ Jankowsky, C. Richard: *Ambient Sufism. Ritual Niches and the Social Work of Musical Form*, Chicago / London: University of Chicago Press 2021, p. 38.

²¹⁵⁰ Smolen, Paul / Zhang, Yili / Byrne, H. John: “The Right Time to Learn. Mechanisms and Optimization of Spaced Learning”, in: *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 17/2, 2016, pp. 77–88.

increasing the efficiency of learning²¹⁵¹. As the number of repetitions increases, the amount of error in learning decreases and the rate of learning without error gradually increases, which is directly linked with the biological and chemical features of the human neural system. The objective through repetition is to build up the efficiency of communication in the neural network that stores and recalls the encoded information. Repetition builds myelin that isolates the axons in the neurons and thus increases the speed of information transfer via electrical signals between the neurons²¹⁵². As a dynamic system, the pathways in the neural system connecting the neurons and the whole network that these pathways constitute change continuously, sometimes losing connections between specific neurons and at other times building up a new one or strengthening the already existing connection.

In *zikir*, by repeating the names of God the reciter is believed to brand their meanings to the heart, namely, through *zikir* practice, the heart is indoctrinated²¹⁵³, altered, or perfected. From the perspective of neuroscience, the repetitions in *zikir* may strengthen the pathways between the neurons and help myelination. In the context of *zikir* practice, without repetition, it is not possible for consciousness (or heart) to fully absorb the truth (*Hakk*) and retain it, since articulating or remembering the names only once is less likely to be effective in rooting their meanings in the heart or consciousness that leads to a transformation in the reciter. Regarding this, repetitions after completed learning, encoding, or indoctrination do not increase the learning but prevent forgetting or decay. Avery further links the phenomenon of repetition in *zikir* with the emotional and behavioural outcomes of the repetitive practice and writes that:

“Recent neuropsychological research suggests that repetitive auditory stimuli can drive neuronal rhythms in the brain and produce intensely pleasurable and ineffable experiences. Such repetitive stimuli can bring about simultaneous intense discharge from both the arousal and quiescent systems, only one of which predominates in normal brain functioning, with excitation of one usually inhibiting the other. With prolonged rhythmic stimuli, however, simultaneous strong discharge of both parts of the autonomic nervous system creates feelings of intense pleasure”²¹⁵⁴

²¹⁵¹ Kang, H. Sean: “Spaced Repetition Promotes Efficient and Effective Learning. Policy Implications for Instruction”, in: *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 3/1, 2016, pp. 12–19; Zhan, Lexia / Guo, Dingrong / Chen, Gang / Yang, Jiongiong: “Effects of Repetition Learning on Associative Recognition over Time. Role of the Hippocampus and Prefrontal Cortex”, in: *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 12/77, 2018.

²¹⁵² Zatorre, J. Robert / Fields, R. Douglas / Johansen-Berg, Heidi: “Plasticity in Gray and White. Neuroimaging Changes in Brain Structure During Learning”, in: *Nature Neuroscience* 15/4, 2012; Williamson, M. Jill / Lyons, A. David: “Myelin Dynamics Throughout Life. An Ever-Changing Landscape?”, in: *Frontiers in Cellular Neuroscience*, 12/424, 2018.

²¹⁵³ Weiss, F. Robert: “Repetition of Persuasion”, in: *Psychological Reports*, 25/2, 1969, pp. 669–670; Cacioppo, T. John / Petty, E. Richard: “Effects of Message Repetition and Position on Cognitive Response, Recall, and Persuasion”, in: *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37/1, 1979, pp. 97–109.

²¹⁵⁴ Avery, 2004, p. 97.

A similar effect of repetition, in relation to hyperventilation²¹⁵⁵, leading to arousal, “heightened enjoyment”²¹⁵⁶, or a mystical experience of a transcendent God²¹⁵⁷ can also be found in various sub-genres of electronic trance music²¹⁵⁸ and certain other musical types around the globe²¹⁵⁹. Since in its communally organized forms the practice of *zikir* becomes a ritual performance and various types of repetition are often instrumentalized as constructive elements in both religious and secular rituals²¹⁶⁰, the crucial role of the repetition taking part in several layers of a ritualized *zikir* performance—contextual, structural, neurological—requires further investigations. Serving the objectives of this study, Tambiah, for instance, describes “the creative role of the ‘formula’”, whose repetition constitutes the essential base of *zikir* rituals, as “‘repeated word groups’ that express an essential idea, in generating and producing an actual recitation as performance”²¹⁶¹. In communally performed *zikir*, this performance style, is based on repetitively “aspirated and chanted *zikr* formulas and underlying rhythmic framework of the *zikr* ceremony”²¹⁶²:

“Sometimes serves as an ostinato background for a melody, which can lead either to the superimposition of the verbal *dhikr* upon a melody or to the incorporation of a *dhikr* in a chorus, i.e., a chanted *dhikr*. In some cases, a song gradually takes the form of a *dhikr* by reducing its melodic range and by repeating a verbal formula”²¹⁶³

The *raison d'être* for the repetitive structure of *zikir*, which, musically, has become the most prominent emblem of the ritual, is drawn from the *Kur'anic* commandment “Remember

²¹⁵⁵ Geels, 1996, p. 249.

²¹⁵⁶ Agres, Kat / Bigo, Louis / Herremans, Dorien / Conklin, Dorien: “The Effect of Repetitive Structure on Enjoyment in Uplifting Trance Music”, in: *International Conference on Music Perception and Cognition*, San Francisco, 2016, pp. 280–282/280.

²¹⁵⁷ Joseph, Rhawn: “The Limbic System and The Soul. Evolution and the Neuroanatomy of Religious Experience”, in: *Zygon*, 36/1, 2001, pp. 105–136/132; Trimingham, 1971, p. 199.

²¹⁵⁸ Garcia, Luis-Manuel: “On and On. Repetition as Process and Pleasure in Electronic Dance Music”, in: *Music Theory Online*, 11/4, 2005, <<https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.05.11.4/mto.05.11.4.garcia.html>>, last accessed: 13 January 2022.

²¹⁵⁹ Neher, Andrew: “A Physiological Explanation of Unusual Behavior in Ceremonies Involving Drums”, in: *Human Biology*, 34/2, 1962, pp. 151–160; Walsh, Roger: “Shamanism and Early Human Technology. The Technology of Transcendence”, in: *ReVision*, 21, 1989, pp. 34–40/40.

²¹⁶⁰ Rappaport, A. Roy: “Obvious Aspects of Ritual”, in: *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, 2/1, 1974, pp. 3–69; Moore, F. Sally / Myerhoff, G. Barbara (eds.): *Secular Ritual*, Assen: Van Gorcum 1977, pp. 8–9.

²¹⁶¹ Tambiah, J. Stanley: “A Performative Approach to Ritual. Radcliffe-Brown Lecture in Social Anthropology”, in: *The Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol. LXV, London: Oxford University Press 1979, pp. 113–169/135.

²¹⁶² Vicente, 2007, p. 222.

²¹⁶³ During, 1999, p. 282. Both Touma and Meier, in their analysis of *hadra* performances, and Yönetken, analysing the corporal movements of *zikir*, emphasize that the rhythmic repetition of the formulas constitutes “a kind of ostinato”, see: Touma, 2003, p. 166; Meier, Fritz: “Der Derwisch Tanz. Versuch eines Überblicks”, in: *Asiatische Studien*, 8, 1954, pp. 107–136/131; Yönetken, S. Halil: “Kıyamî Zikirler ve Türk Dinî Raksıları”, in: Çiftçi, Cemil (ed.), *Tasavvuf Kitabı*, İstanbul: Kitabevi 2003, pp. 235–240/236.

your Lord often”²¹⁶⁴. Predictably, one of the most efficient methods to remember God often, within the context of Islam, is to mention God’s names and attributes (*esmâ-i hüsnâ*)²¹⁶⁵ that are filled with condensed meanings and concisely refer to the transcendent God²¹⁶⁶. Owing to this quality, the names of God are believed to have spiritual benefits for the reciter. Chittick, for example, writes that “full remembrance means actualizing all the ontological perfections latent within the primordial human nature (*fiṭrah*) by virtue of its being a divine image. These perfections belong ultimately to God, the one true being, and in his case they are referred to as the divine names”²¹⁶⁷. According to Türer, “with whichever name of God is mentioned, the blessing (*feyz*) and manifestations (*tecellî*) of that name are requested; for example, with the name of *kerîm* (generous), benevolence (*ihsan*) is hoped for, and with the name of *şâfî* (healer), healing is hoped for”²¹⁶⁸.

Those *tarikât* groups who adopted the *nefs*-based *seyrüsülûk* method (*nefsânî tarikat*) entitle the seven-fold construction of the *nefs* as *etvâr-ı seb‘a* (seven degrees)²¹⁶⁹ and by means of remembering, they deploy these seven selected names of God (*esmâ-i seb‘a*) to purify the relevant degree of the *nefs*. The list below shows the degrees of the *nefs* and corresponding names of God to be recited:

<i>Nefs-i Emmâre</i>	<i>Lâ ilâhe illallah</i>
<i>Nefs-i Levvâme</i>	<i>Allah</i>
<i>Nefs-i Mülheme</i>	<i>Hû</i>
<i>Nefs-i Mutmainne</i>	<i>Hakk</i>
<i>Nefs-i Râziye</i>	<i>Hayy</i>
<i>Nefs-i Marziyye</i>	<i>Kayyûm</i>
<i>Nefs-i Kâmile</i>	<i>Kahhâr</i>

According to the list above, in a *zikir* performance, whether solitary or communal, one of the five pillars of Islam, *kelime-i tevhid* (*lâ ilâhe illallah*), is repetitively recited (*tehlil*) to purify the first stage of the *nefs-i emmâre*. Having the meaning “there is no deity but *Allah*”, *kelime-i tevhid* is considered the essence of the Islamic faith and its remembrance is believed to brand that essence, namely acknowledging *Allah* as the sole authority, to the heart of the

²¹⁶⁴ *Kur’an* 3:41 (*Âl-i İmrân*).

²¹⁶⁵ Chittick, 2005, p. 2339.

²¹⁶⁶ Izutsu, 1997, p. 36.

²¹⁶⁷ Chittick, 2005, p. 2340.

²¹⁶⁸ Türer, 1998, p. 261.

²¹⁶⁹ Usta, 2019, p. 62; Yılmaz, 2004, p. 236.

zâkir (the one who remembers). As discussed above, *nefs-i emmâre*, by definition commands evil deeds and prevents its holder from receiving divine blessings. By means of reciting *kelime-i tevhid*, combined with several ascetic (*zühed*, *riyâzet*, *halvet* etc.) practices, the reciter maintains control over the lower *nefs*. Also known as “*kelime-i tevhid zikir*”²¹⁷⁰, repeating this *Kur’anic* formula unceasingly, when successfully branded, annihilates (*fenâ*) everything other than *Allah* (*mâsivâ*) in the heart²¹⁷¹, in other words, as Chittick quotes from Mevlânâ, “love is that flame which, when it blazes up, burns away everything except the beloved. It drives home the sword of *lâ ilâha* in order to slay other than God”²¹⁷². The length (the number of syllables) and the prosodic features of this formula—such as intonation, stress, and rhythmic characteristics—constitutes the musical frame for the performance of the *zikir* of *kelime-i tevhid*. Since within this study a Turkish-speaking pseudo-*tarikât*, Halvetî-Uşşâkî-Ruhzârî, and their *zikir* ritual will be analyzed, it is important to note that there may be differences in performing the prosodic or rhythmical organization of this formula. Even though the formula is recited by the HUR group in Arabic, which, being a stress-timed language, loads it with specific rules for intonation and stressing the syllables²¹⁷³, Turkish is a syllable-timed language and thus in vocalizing the Arabic words or phrases there may be deviations from the standard (*fasih*) Arabic usage concerning, —e.g., the “differences in syllable structure, vowel reduction, and the phonetic realization of stress”²¹⁷⁴. However, throughout the world, the formula and its rhythmic structure are often vocalized as illustrated roughly below:



Notation Example 1: Rhythmic outline of the *kelime-i tevhid* formula²¹⁷⁵.

Apart from the structure shown above, almost every researcher working on the topic determined a slightly differing rhythmic outline for the recitation of the *kelime-i tevhid zikir*. Shannon, for example, based on a *zikir* performance from Syria, suggests a structure as below:

²¹⁷⁰ Feldman, 2002, p. 192.

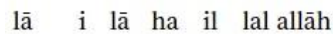
²¹⁷¹ Geels, 1996, p. 234.

²¹⁷² Chittick, 2005, p. 2341.

²¹⁷³ Poché, 1978, p. 67.

²¹⁷⁴ Dauer, M. Rebecca: “Stress-timing and Syllable-timing Reanalyzed”, in: *Journal of Phonetics*, 11, 1983, pp. 51–62/51.

²¹⁷⁵ The transcription of this and notation examples that follow are done by the author, unless otherwise stated.



Simon, on the other hand, detects at least two different organizations in articulating the formula in a Sudanese *zikir* performance:



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multiple breaths²¹⁸⁰, in almost all *tarikāt*, the accompanying bodily movements are organized in close association with the rhythmic respiration. Thus, sound, movement, and breathing develop into essential performative elements of a *zikir* event²¹⁸¹ (Figure 17).

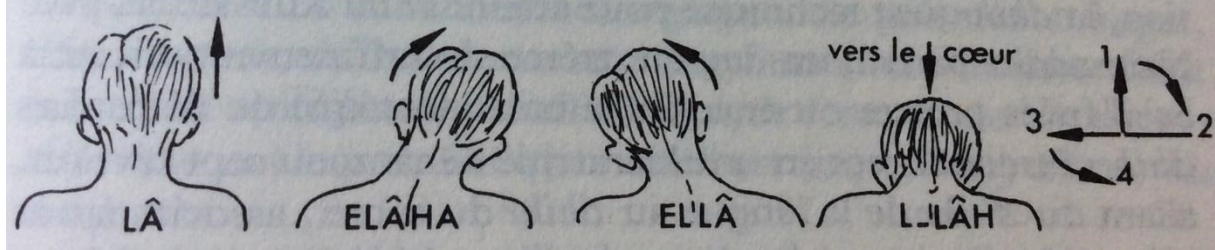


Figure 17: The head movements accompanying the *kelime-i tevhid* formula²¹⁸²

As Tambiah argues, the combinations of these various elements in a ritual are not only demonstrative of the performance practices involving sound and movement, but they are also indicative of the emotional, psychological, and physiological state of the performers:

“The coding of emotive elements in ritual speech through prosodic features of intonation and stress, emphatic vocal prolongations, etc., and the supplementary use of paralinguistic features such as kinetic movements and gestures, whether conventionally required or unconsciously manifested, are familiar indices that reveal the emotional attitudes of the officiants and participants”²¹⁸³

Trimingham provides two corresponding examples of how to perform the *zikir* of the *kelime-i tevhid* in relation to the breathing, both in its silent (*hafî*) and the voiced (*cehrî*) forms as follows:

“A Naqshbandi *dhikr khafî* expressed simply: He must keep the tongue pressed against the roof of his mouth, his lips and teeth firmly shut, and hold his breath. Then starting with the word *lâ*, he makes it ascend from the navel to the brain. When it has arrived at the brain he says *ilâha* to the right shoulder and *illâ'llâh* to the left side, driving it forcefully into the pineal heart through which it circulates to all the rest of the body”²¹⁸⁴

²¹⁸⁰ Moreover, in some *tarikāt* groups the number of recitations in one breath also show discrepancies and the formula may be repeated up to twenty-one times in one breath. See: Tosun, Necdet: *Bahâeddin Nakşibend Hayatı, Görüşleri, Tarikatı*, İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları 2012, p. 307.

²¹⁸¹ Markoff, Irene: “Introduction to Sufi Music and Ritual in Turkey”, in: *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*, 29/2, 1995, pp. 157–160/157.

²¹⁸² During, Jean: *Musique et Extase. L'audition mystique dans la tradition soufie*, Paris: Michel 1988, p. 159.

²¹⁸³ Tambiah, 1979, p. 133.

²¹⁸⁴ Trimingham, 1971, p. 202.

In the quotation above demonstrating an application of the silent form of the *zikir*, the formula is divided into three uneven sections and, as in *hesychasm*, circulated through both the physical and the spiritual body to show its effects²¹⁸⁵. Likewise, in a voiced performance of the *zikir*, in which certain performative elements of the silent *zikir* are augmented, the formula is divided into three sections, yet this time with the explicit accompaniment of the head:

““Mirghanī congregational *dhikr* movements: ‘When uttering the *dhikr* he should incline his head towards the right side while saying *lā*; and should incline it towards his chest while saying *ilāha*; and towards the heart while saying *illā’llāh*, that is, the left side, and should aspirate it from his navel up to his heart so that the glorious name *Allāh* will settle in the heart and burn out all wicked notions. He should also accentuate the *hamza* and lengthen the *alif* (ā) moderately or a little more. The *hā* in the word *ilāh* should be followed by *fatha* and the *hā* in the word *Allāh* by *sukūn*”²¹⁸⁶

Analogously, various branches of the Halvetî *tarikāt* hold a similar view and in performing their *zikir*, these branches also divide the *kelime-i tevhid* formula into specified sections. According to the Cerrâhî branch of the Halvetî *tarikāt*, for instance, the *zikir* of the *kelime-i tevhid* finds its first application in Prophet Muhammed’s demonstration to the fourth caliph Ali as follows:

“Our Lord closed his blessed eyes and repeated the *kelime-i tevhid* three times, which is the best of *zikir*. In their *zikir*, they say *la ilahe* to their right side and then while completing the formula with *illallah*, they turn their blessed head to the left, to their enlightened hearts. They were reciting the *zikr-ü tevhid* aloud and with closed eyes”²¹⁸⁷

In another branch of the Halvetî *tarikāt*, the forty-fifth *şeyh*, Mehmet Dumlu Kütahyevî, reproduces the same view and outlines the performance of the *kelime-i tevhid* as below:

“In the *emmâre*, dervish sits facing the *qibla*, kneeling in a state of ablution, and declares the intention sincerely by taking the *rabıta*. Then he recites a hundred *istiğfar*²¹⁸⁸, a hundred *salâvât-ı şerife*²¹⁸⁹ and a *Fatiha*²¹⁹⁰. Turning his head to his right shoulder, he says ‘*la ilahe*’ (negation), then bends to

²¹⁸⁵ Eifring, 2013, pp. 7, 12.

²¹⁸⁶ Trimmingham, 1971, pp. 206–207/f.n. 2.

²¹⁸⁷ Ozak, 1978, p. 82.

²¹⁸⁸ The term *istiğfar* stands for a kind of Islamic petition or supplication and used to ask for forgiveness from God by saying *estağfirullah*.

²¹⁸⁹ Based on the *Kur’anic* verse 33:56 (*Ahzâb*), the term *salâvât* or *salâvât-ı şerif* means “peace be upon him” used for blessing Prophet Muhammed by saying “*Allahümme salli âla seyyidina Muhammed*” or certain other variations.

²¹⁹⁰ Considered to be the essence of the *Kur’an*, *Fâtiha* is the opening chapter of the *Kur’an* and one of the most frequently recited prayers in various devotional practices in Islam, including *zikir*.

the left side on the heart under the chest and hits it strongly, says ‘*illallah*’ (affirmation) and continues the *zikir* of *tevhid*²¹⁹¹

In the Uşşâkî branch of the Halvetî *tarikât*, both of which constitute the main affiliation of the Halvetî-Uşşâkî-Ruhzârî group, the *zikir* of the *kelime-i tevhid* “begins with the wording of ‘*fa’lem*’²¹⁹² and every time *Fâtiha* is read, before *istiğfar*, the *salavât* is recited”²¹⁹³ a certain number of times. As mentioned above, the number and the sequence of the recitations may vary depending on the branch’s establishment or on the personal choices of a *şeyh*, which inevitably increases the number of differing interpretations and applications of an idea, or a doctrine embedded in a *zikir* formula and thus does not allow all-encompassing generalizations. The details concerning the HUR branch and their idiosyncratic performance of the *kelime-i tevhid zikir* will be given in the analysis chapter below.

Apart from the *kelime-i tevhid*, the other recited names and formulas too dictate certain rules of pronunciation, and their repetitive articulation constitutes the rhythmic framework of the relevant episode of the *zikir*. As in the case of the *kelime-i tevhid*, these mono- or disyllabic names in *esmâ-i seb’a* are performed variously by different *tarikât* organizations. Following the Uşşâkî tradition, while reciting the names except *Allah*, the HUR branch, for example, adds a particularly emphasized exclamation “*yâ*” (o!) before the name to address God²¹⁹⁴, which turns the mono- or disyllabic names into trisyllabic ones and thus alters the rhythmic framework of the performance. Moreover, the rhythmic structure of a *zikir* event is often derived from the local or regional musical styles, which may differentiate performance practices of one region from another. An example provided by Gilsenan demonstrates how a slight change in the rhythmic organization may hinder performers to keep in time with the recited formula and limit the desired uniformity in the performance:

“Our sheikh [town’s local sheikh] then stood for the zikr and led the performers in his customary gentle and controlled rhythms, himself standing at the center of the circle and turning slowly around, bowing back and forth in time as the assembly chanted the Names of God. The Syrian sheikh suddenly interrupted the chanting and began to show us a totally different rhythm and movements of a very quick and complicated kind that swiftly threw everyone off balance. The ritual disintegrated because of the participants’ failure to keep in unison”²¹⁹⁵

²¹⁹¹ “Halveti Yolunda Zikir”, in: <<http://www.halveti.net/tr/yeni/Tasavvuf.asp?cid=6&sid=125>>, last accessed: 11 March 2022.

²¹⁹² *Kur’an* 47:19 (*Muhammed*).

²¹⁹³ Uşşâkî / Uşşâkî, *Tuhfetü’l-Uşşâkiyye*, 2016, p. 62.

²¹⁹⁴ Cengil, Muammer: *Tasavvufî Yaşantı. Halveti-Uşşâkî Topluluğu Üzerine Psiko-Sosyolojik Bir Araştırma*, Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2010, p. 43.

²¹⁹⁵ Gilsenan, 1982, p. 135

11.2.2 Tempo

Corresponding with the majority of *zikir* performances around the globe²¹⁹⁶, the *zikir* of the HUR group consists of several episodes marked by the selected *zikir* formula. While the *zikir* of the *kelime-i tevhid* is often the first episode, the other episodes, e.g., *Allah*, *Hayy* etc., may be sequenced differently. Customarily, each *zikir* episode begins with recitations (litanies, prayers, *Kur'anic* formulas etc.) in a rather slow tempo, which gradually increases to a climax point towards the end of the episode, unless the transition between the episodes takes place without interruption²¹⁹⁷. This continuously accelerating tempo is another characteristic feature of approximately all ritualized *zikir* performances²¹⁹⁸. As in the case of determining which names to be recited, the *şeyh* is again the paramount figure who consistently regulates the tempo of the performance²¹⁹⁹ “by an ejaculation or clapping his hand or other means”²²⁰⁰ and designates the aimed climaxes of each episode²²⁰¹. These climaxes are often reached by means of tempo acceleration as much as is achievable, sometimes doubling it, e.g., from ♩ ≈ 60 beats per minute (BPM) to ♩ ≈ 120 BPM²²⁰², and at other times even greater changes than doubling the tempo occur. McGregor, for example, highlights a tempo increase in a *zikir* performance of a Şâzelî *tarikât* branch in Tunisia and diagnoses both the episodic structure of the event and a change in tempo in each episode as follows:

“At first *Allāh* is pronounced very slowly and in low tones (so slowly, in fact, that the name is difficult to say in one breath). The recitation speeds up, and the two lines begin alternating in pronouncing the name. This is necessary because one cannot properly pronounce the word at the higher speeds. When the recitation reaches an unsustainable speed, the shaykh of the *dhikr* stops it and starts the process again with *Huwa*”²²⁰³

Correspondingly, whereas Shannon determines the tempo change in a *kelime-i tevhid* *zikir* performance from Aleppo, Syria that begins with “approximately 100 beats per minute”

²¹⁹⁶ Shannon, 2006, 117.

²¹⁹⁷ Waugh, H. Earle: “Ritual Leadership in the Dhikr. The Role of the Munshidin in Egypt”, in: *Journal of Ritual Studies*, 5/1, 1991, pp. 93–108/102.

²¹⁹⁸ Bardakçı, 2007, p. 32; Trimingham, 1971, p. 205; Vicente, 2007, p. 223; Geels, 1996, p. 238; During, 1999, p. 283; Touma, 2003, p. 167; Feldman, 2002, p. 192.

²¹⁹⁹ Geels, 1996, p. 238; Rouget, 1985, p. 272.

²²⁰⁰ Trimingham, 1971, p. 205.

²²⁰¹ Jankowsky, 2021, p. 55; Shannon, 2006, pp. 111, 118.

²²⁰² Vicente, 2007, p. 223.

²²⁰³ McGregor, J. A. Richard: “A Sufi Legacy in Tunis. Prayer and the Shadhiliyya”, in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 29/2, 1997, pp. 255–277/268.

and ends with a tempo that “exceeds 240 BPM”²²⁰⁴, Simon detects various tempo fluctuations in a single Sudanese *zikir* performance from $\text{♩} \approx 120$ to $\text{♩} \approx 175$, from $\text{♩} \approx 75$ to $\text{♩} \approx 114$, and from $\text{♩} \approx 103$ to $\text{♩} \approx 240$ ²²⁰⁵ BPM among some other variations.

Combined with the breathing techniques²²⁰⁶ and bodily movements accompanying the recitation, the acceleration in tempo correlatively generates an excessive breathing to the level of hyperventilation syndrome—which is “a constellation of findings directly or indirectly associated with the phenomenon of overbreathing, ie, respiratory effort in excess of metabolic requirements”²²⁰⁷—and thus both the tempo acceleration and, if any, hyperventilation are often linked with attaining forms of altered state of consciousness experience²²⁰⁸. Haas, for example, diagnoses a similar effect in a *zikir* performed by the “Rahmanija” order in Algeria and argues that:

“Acceleration of breathing, through oversaturation with oxygen, is a state of a more euphoric character; obstruction or retardation of breathing is a state of anxiety and anguish; but both states are more or less connected with dizziness (vertigo), swoon and the fading away of object-consciousness. The aim of the *zikir* is a state of consciousness different from the normal, whatever be its nature and whatever be the significance and name given to it. The technique of breathing in its artificial and ingenious arrangement serves the purpose of leading up to the *ḥāl*”²²⁰⁹

Whereas Geels, in the context of *zikir*, acknowledges the effect of hyperventilation in inducing ASC experiences, he links the alterations in consciousness or the altered perception of the “I” (ego), which may be felt in a manner of mystical experience, with the “monotony”²²¹⁰ of *zikir* recitations that are consistently repeated:

“The dhikr can be described in the following way. The repetition of divine names with corresponding movements of the body are examples of verbal and motoric monotony. This monotony can lead to an alteration of ordinary perceptual and cognitive processes, in other words, a partial inhibition of the ego’s adaptive functions”²²¹¹

²²⁰⁴ Shannon, 2006, p. 216/f.n. 26.

²²⁰⁵ Simon, 1975, pp. 265, 267, 271.

²²⁰⁶ Rouget, 1985, p. 263.

²²⁰⁷ Smith, W. Charles: “Hyperventilation syndrome. Bridging the behavioral-organic gap”, in: *Postgraduate Medicine*, 78/2, 1985, pp. 73–84/73.

²²⁰⁸ Simon, 1975, p. 278; Rouget, 1985, pp. 81–84; Smith, 1985, pp. 74, 78.

²²⁰⁹ Haas, S. William: “The Zikr of the Rahmanija-Order in Algeria. A Psycho-Physiological Analysis”, in: *The Muslim World*, 33/1, 1943, pp. 16–28/22.

²²¹⁰ Concerning monotony in *zikir*, Gilsenan, in an attempt of associating *zikir* with a similar technique from “Merkabah mysticism”, quotes Scholem, who also links this monotony with “a state of mind bordering ecstasy”, see: Scholem, G. Gershom: *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, Jerusalem: Schocken Publishing House 1941, p. 59 quoted by Gilsenan, 1973, p. 158.

²²¹¹ Geels, 1996, p. 248.

Schüttler provides a corresponding account from Bengal, yet in a context of “Tibetan Oracle ritual”, in which “the pattern of hyperventilation exhibited by the priest would lead to carbon dioxide depletion, blood alkalosis, and constriction of the arteries carrying blood to the central nervous system”²²¹² that are, along with several other indicators, the main symptoms of respiratory alkalosis and may be experienced as an ASC condition²²¹³. Rouget too, considers “the acceleration of tempo [a.n. in a given repetitive music] is universally used as a means of triggering trance”²²¹⁴ and gives an abundant number of examples from around the globe to verify his argument²²¹⁵. Alternatively, in terms of inducing, maintaining, and extinguishing the experience, Becker places the phenomenon of ASC, whether experienced as trance or ecstasy, within the social milieux and proclaims that apart from the techniques to induce or control the experience, the social setting in which the trancing occurs has also a role in contextualizing and interpreting the experience with the following argument:

“Religious trancers differ from secular deep listeners in the degree of arousal and in differing social milieu. Trancers have been socialized within a community for whom trancing is valued as a means of interaction with the holy. They have learned to trance within that community, based on trance models of the community. Both trancing and deep listening are physical, bodily processes, involving neural stimulation of specific brain areas that result in outward, visible physical reactions such as crying, or rhythmical swaying or horripilation [...] Deep listening and trancing, as processes, are simultaneously physical and psychological, somatic and cognitive”²²¹⁶

However, despite the presence of strong indications of a heightened condition in the performers, the subject of this study, the HUR group, does not seem to have *vecd* in their *zikir* performance nor do they demonstrate any excessive behaviour or “violent trances during which the dervishes pierce their flesh, walk on burning coals, grasp red-hot pieces of iron without burning themselves, swallow broken glass”²²¹⁷ that might suggest so.

On the other hand, the concept of *vecd* or *cezbe* (rapture) is not entirely excluded from the doctrinal repertoire of the HUR group. One of the most influential characters in shaping the HUR group doctrines and dynamics of performing their *zikir*, *şeyh* Hüsnü Gülzârî, to whom the

²²¹² Schüttler, Günter: *Die letzten tibetischen Orakelpriester. Psychiatrisch-neurologische Aspekte*, Wiesbaden: Steiner 1971, pp. 110–111 quoted by Wulff, M. David: *Psychology of Religion. Classic and Contemporary*, New York: Wiley 1991, p. 71.

²²¹³ Smith, 1985, p. 75.

²²¹⁴ Rouget, 1985, p. 81.

²²¹⁵ Rouget, 1985, pp. 128–129, 145, 176.

²²¹⁶ Becker, 2004, p. 29.

²²¹⁷ Rouget, 1985, p. 263; Shannon, 2006, p. 114.

Halvetî-Uşşâkî-Ruhzârî branch is attributed²²¹⁸ refers to *vecd* and *cezbe* in his poetry (*divan*) as part of their *seyrüsülûk*:

“Aşkın şarabından içer kanarız,	We drink the wine of love to repletion,
Vecde gelir pervâneler döneriz,	We turn in ecstasy like the propellers,
Yârin ateşine dâim yanarız,	We permanently burn in the fire of the Beloved,
Ey Hüsni nûr olur nârımız bizim.	O Hüsni, our fire will be our light” ²²¹⁹

The current leader of the HUR group, FNE, however, while holding a view that *cezbe* can be a potential consequence of their encounter with God and their *zikir* may enable a *zâkir* to experience this feeling, he argues that

“Some of my brothers are jumping, bouncing, and shouting a lot. No need for it. If we are to get excited, let’s do it all together at the same time. What is happening to you? Why are you jumping, why are you bouncing? Let it be sweet. Just like when the wind blows, it sprinkles the trees on the same side, so be it. Let your voice be a little low but think a little about the God you mentioned. Is not there a little thought and reason? We say, God, nothing happens, neither to me nor to you”²²²⁰

The quotation above demonstrates that the *zikir* of the HUR group is strictly controlled, which extends itself towards the external manifestations of the *vecd* condition. By marking the episodes and regulating the tempo it is aimed that the participants follow the established performance practices and stay in tune with the rest of the group, which brings forth the issue of group dynamics. While for a beginner it is compulsory to follow the rest of the group and not to lose the self in an individual endeavour to find God, for the regular and more experienced participants this control mechanism might also function similarly to keep them with the group instead of having a personal journey towards God. In another speech of FNE, customarily held before the weekly *zikir* performances, he elaborates on the topic of *vecd* and asserts that they in fact aim to attain the *vecd* or *cezbe* and to do that they simulate or mimic the *vecd* known as *tevâcüd*, which is “the petitioning of ecstasy through a kind of self-will”²²²¹ executed primarily by those “who have not reached the maturity of ecstasy (*vecd*) demanding and fulfilling it with coercion”²²²². Since the *vecd* is by definition “something that encounters your heart and de-

²²¹⁸ Cengil, 2010, p. 43.

²²¹⁹ Kayacı, Eyyüp: *Hüsni-i Gülzârî. Hayatı-Divân’ı ve Tasavvufî Görüşleri*, Çorum: Salmat 2015, p. 91.

²²²⁰ Şağban, Fatih Nurullah: *Nurda Doğan Nur Damlayan Sohbetler*, İstanbul: ? 2005, p. 6.

²²²¹ Sells, A. Michael: *Early Islamic Mysticism. Sufi, Qur’an, Mi’raj, Poetic and Theological Writings*, New Jersey: Paulist Press 1996, p. 112.

²²²² Ceyhan, Semih: “Vecd”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 42, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2012, pp. 583–584/583.

scends upon you without any intention or effort”, argues Kuşeyrî, *tevâcüd* is “the beginning of ecstasy, which is followed by the ecstasy proper (*vecd*)”²²²³ that is “the hearing with the heart”²²²⁴ in an epistemological sense. Confirming Becker’s argument above, namely, emphasizing both the technical and contextual background of the experience of *tevâcüd*, FNE gives a detailed description of the process:

“You are all sitting here now, after a while, *destur* [a.n. permission, the blessing of God] will be taken, we will perform acts of *tevâcüd* in order to reach *vecd*, to catch love and *cezbe*. What are we going to do? When we say *lâ ilâhe illallah*, we will take it from the right and give it to the left, we will shake our heads together in a rhythm and harmony according to those rhythms of *lafzatullah* [a.n. *Allah*] meanwhile we will chant *zikrullah* as well. In the meantime, chants (*ilâhi*) and odes (*kaside*) to keep us from the world and *mâsivâ*, and our brothers will make the environment fertile with the chants of *zikir* in accordance with the methods and order of the *tarikât* in order to weaken our minds and bring them to *cezbe*. At that time, a state of *cezbe* will suddenly be attained and what we will do, we will try to reach *cezbe* collectively. What did he say [a.n. Ahmet Yiğitbaşı Şemseddin]²²²⁵: ‘The *zikir* that is connected with love (*muhabbet*) does not stop, the love connected with *zikir* will not be lost, the *zikir* creates love, the love stirs the *zikir*, these two combines to form *cezbe*, and the *cezbe* brings its owner to *Allah*’”

11.2.3 The Vocal Accompaniment

Whether structured according to a *makam*, *türkü*, or the tempered tonal system,—all of which may be employed in a single *zikir* proper—compared to repetition and tempo increase, the tonal organization does not have a specific role in *tasavvuf* epistemology. However, “the emotional content of the *maqâm*”²²²⁶ and the “expressivity of the singing [...] working through the combined action of the beauty of the voice and the emotional power of the words”²²²⁷ may have a degree of influence in forming the listeners’ mood or altering their state of mind. This alteration often takes place in connection with the favoured and enacted *tasavvuf* doctrines (fear of sin, longing for the Beloved etc.). In the words of Poché:

“In the collective sufi ceremony, the *munshed* (singer of hymns) fulfils a similar function. One demands of him a perfect knowledge of the religious patrimony of psalmody and songs. Furthermore, he is also judged by his capacity in improvisation, his manner of developing *maqâm* to its full flowering when, of course, one had progressed to the heart of the modal system based on the *maqâm*.

²²²³ Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risala*, 2007, p. 84.

²²²⁴ Kılıç, E. Mahmud: *Anadolu Tasavvuf Tarihine Notlar – I*, İstanbul: Sufi Kitap 2016b, p. 119.

²²²⁵ Sağban, 2005, p. 81.

²²²⁶ Touma, 2003, pp. 43–45.

²²²⁷ Rouget, 1985, p. 283.

One also expects him to prepare his *afleh* literally meaning the manner of concluding the *maqām* or creating a peroration as finale, with all the necessary dexterity in order to arouse in the listener the fundamental aspiration to religious feeling”²²²⁸

As several scholars have already pointed out, rituals, with all performative and symbolic components, are specially designed events taking place within a particular context, space, and time. They require not only corporal participation but also a complete mental involvement, since “rites necessarily imply accomplishing a series of actions in a certain order, respecting the prescribed order, *correctly* following a certain traditional behavior”²²²⁹. In its communally performed forms, *zikir* is, by all means, a ritual²²³⁰, “a thoroughly planned scheme”²²³¹, or “a well-regulated social space”²²³², and thus requires total mental involvement. Combined with the strong emphasis laid upon the concept of *mârifet* in *tasavvuf* epistemology and in performing *zikir*²²³³, the mental state of the performers and its “preparedness”²²³⁴ to be able to attain the desired knowledge or state (*hâl*) become prominent topics.

This preparedness can be formed in various ways. Asad, for example, in his critique of Geertz’s notion of “rituals in generating religious conviction”, analyses the topic under the rubric of “adopting a religious standpoint”, which defines the ideal state of mind in religious rituals such as *zikir*, and argues that:

“If we are to understand how this happens, we must examine not only the sacred performance itself but also the entire range of available disciplinary activities, of institutional forms of knowledge and practice, within which dispositions are formed and sustained and through which the possibilities of attaining the truth are marked out”²²³⁵

Asad’s input above is particularly valuable in terms of verifying the importance of *tasavvuf* epistemology—or the “institutional forms of knowledge and practice”—in forming the required state of mind in a *zikir* ritual. Approximating closely to this study, Avery, based on Serrâc’s accounts, similarly emphasizes the significance of the “preparedness of the listener’s mind [a.n. as] a necessary prerequisite” in inducing ASC conditions in *semâ* events and holds

²²²⁸ Poché, 1978, pp. 65–66.

²²²⁹ Rouget, 1985, p. 196.

²²³⁰ Feldman, 2002, p. 189.

²²³¹ Haas, 1943, p. 24.

²²³² Shannon, 2006, p. 115.

²²³³ Shannon, H. Jonathan: “The Aesthetics of Spiritual Practice and the Creation of Moral and Musical Subjectivities in Aleppo, Syria”, in: *Ethnology*, 43/4, 2004, pp. 381–391/384.

²²³⁴ Avery, 2004, p. 122.

²²³⁵ Asad, Talal: *Genealogies of Religion. Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, Baltimore / London: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1993, p. 50.

that “Sufis would often be in a state of preparedness for altered consciousness, by means of constant fasting, meditations, and other austerities”²²³⁶. Becker correspondingly refers to the role of the mental preparedness in legitimizing the effects of the musically induced trancing in its various forms and—basing her argument on Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s views—underlines the significance of the cultural aspects of this preparedness, “the social meanings of particular musical pieces and the effects of those socially constructed, semiotically ascribed sounds on the psyches of listeners”²²³⁷, that is “the expectation” that enables, for example, *zikir* attendees to be affected by the employed sound phenomenon.

Even though several scholars referred to the mood-setting quality of certain recitation forms (*ilâhi*, *tecvit* etc.) performed in a *zikir* ritual—as “preparatory prayers [...] that open the sanctified space of the *dhikr*, purifying the *zâwiya* and the hearts of the participants”²²³⁸—they alone constitute merely a small percentage of all the dynamics that are at work in inducing the altered state of mind conditions experienced as the encounters with God—e.g., *vecd*, *cezbe*, or *istiğrak*, the ideal mental states of *tasavvuf* epistemology. Marshall, despite in a different context, correspondingly writes that “the loud singing that assails the ears for hours, the exertion of dancing, the repetitiousness of the rhythm, the physical nearness to others and the synchronization of movement with others—all, I believe, help to fortify the powers of autosuggestion that induce trance”²²³⁹.

The concept suggestion (*telkin*), which, in the *tasavvuf* context, means “teaching *zikir* by *şeyh* to a *mürîd* who has just entered the *tarikât*”²²⁴⁰, has therefore a prominent role in *tasavvuf*. As Haas mentions, in addition to the techniques of breathing,

“The techniques of suggestion and hypnotism, [a.n. which] belong the recitations and litanies the *zikr* begins with, [...] not only lead the minds in the right direction and strengthen the religious belief, but by their monotony they prepare the psychological ground for suggestive and hypnotic influence”²²⁴¹

²²³⁶ Avery, 2004, p. 122.

²²³⁷ Becker, 2004, p. 26.

²²³⁸ Shannon, 2004, p. 385; Gilsenan, 1973, p. 156.

²²³⁹ Marshall, Lorna: “The Medicine Dance of the !Kung Bushmen”, in: *Africa. Journal of the International African Institute*, 39/4, 1969, pp. 347–381/373.

²²⁴⁰ Ayverdi, 2010, p. 1230.

²²⁴¹ Haas, 1943, p. 24.

11.2.4 Poetry

Analogously the *tasavvuf* poetry as a collection of various poetical genres—which often constitute “the poetic basis”²²⁴² for the majority of recitations in a *zikir* performance and from which the thematic characteristics of *zikir* mentioned above are derived—is frequently in didactic nature, warning and advising the novices about the dangers of the path (*tarikât* and *seyrüsülûk*). *Sûfî* poets indicate the legitimacy of *tasavvuf* doctrines and practices in avoiding these dangers through suggestions or indoctrinations (*telkin*). In this context, “within Turkish *tasavvuf* tradition, these poems are called *hikmet*”²²⁴³. Geels too emphasizes this feature as used in a *zikir* and writes that “in a more limited sense, *dhikr* is connected with repetitive prayer as an act, as text, for example, the different words used, and as subject, for example, different statements of belief, instructions, legitimations, and the like, associated with *dhikr*”²²⁴⁴. Combined with the intoned prayers from the *Kur’an*, these texts, often clothed with the musical characteristics of *makam* framework, create the content of the “spiritual atmosphere”²²⁴⁵ of a *zikir* event, in which “the mindset of *mutasavvif*”²²⁴⁶ is reconstructed and the idealized lifestyle of *tasavvuf* is verbally reproduced. As mentioned above, the lifestyle of *tasavvuf* is based on a search for the divine truth (*hakikat*, *hikmet*, *mârifet*) and designed to allow *mutasavvife* to have an encounter, as in the primordial realm (*bezm-i elest*), with the divine through knowledge. In *tarikât* organizations, which are, according to Cengil, “the institutionalized form of *ilm-i ledûn* education”²²⁴⁷, all stages of the spiritual perfection process (*seyrüsülûk*) and the educational methods (*tevekkül*, *râbita*, *zikir*) used throughout the *seyrüsülûk*—from the initiatory practices (*biat*, pledging allegiance) of the novices to *âdâb* rules that stimulate absolute obedience to *şeyh* and to the higher degrees of receiving authorization to lead *zikir* (*icâzet*)—are expressed as well as taught via poetry. In other words, *tasavvuf* poetry with its idiosyncratic terminology and symbolism is “comprehended through inner experiences within the framework of the methods determined by the rules of religion”²²⁴⁸, and it “reflects the theological, ontological, and epistemological mindset of *mutasavvif*”²²⁴⁹, which can be considered crucial sources to derive information concerning various aspects of the *zikir*.

²²⁴² Feldman, 2002, p. 193.

²²⁴³ Cebecioğlu, Ethem: *Tasavvuf Terimleri ve Deyimleri Sözlüğü*, İstanbul: Ağaç Yayınları 2009, p. 276.

²²⁴⁴ Geels, 1996, p. 232.

²²⁴⁵ Cengil, 2010, p. 117.

²²⁴⁶ Kılıç, 2004, p. 11.

²²⁴⁷ Cengil, 2010, p. 108.

²²⁴⁸ Kayıklık, Hasam: *Tasavvuf Psikolojisi*, Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları 2009, p. 49 cited by Cengil, 2010, p. 107.

²²⁴⁹ Kılıç, 2014, p. 96.

To exemplify this argument numerous poems composed by renowned *mutasavvif* poets, some of which are recited in the *zikir* of the HUR group with specific *makam* styles, may be cited:

*Nutk-i Şerîf*²²⁵⁰

Can olur, can içre cânanı olan	The heart, in which the Beloved housed
MEN AREF sırrına irfanı bulur	Finds wisdom of the <i>men aref</i> 's secret ²²⁵¹
Halka-i tevhidde iz'anı olan	The one who has understanding in the circle of <i>tevhid</i> ²²⁵²
Katresin bahredip, ummânı bulur	Turns the drop into the sea and finds the ocean ²²⁵³
Aşk yolu sarıdır, kolay aşılmaz	The path of love is steep, insurmountable
Tarık-i vuslâta tez ulaşılmaz	The path of union cannot be reached with haste
Bu gizli bir sırdır, pek anlaşılmaz	It's a hidden secret, hardly understandable
Âşık-ı Hakiki ihsanı bulur ²²⁵⁴	The genuine lover finds the benevolence

The two quatrains above are part of a larger poem rendered by the renowned *şeyh* of the Halvetî-Cerrâhî *tarikât*, Muzaffer Ozak (1916–1985), in Istanbul. As discussed in the preceding chapters, Ozak's expressions here are didactic in nature and explicitly address the aspects of an esotericised *tasavvuf* epistemology, in which the acquisition of the hidden knowledge (*irfan*, *mârifet*) of the divine is interpreted as a love relation or union of the lovers and whose secret is sought within the self.

Cümlelerin Muradını Veren Mevlamdır

Bismillah diyelim alalım destur	Let's say <i>bismillah</i> , get permission
Cümle ibadetler mevlaya hasır	All the worships are unique to the Lord
İlahi lütfunla bize de göster	Show us with your divine grace
Cümlelerin muradını veren Mevlamdır	It is my Lord who grants all the wishes
İstiğfar edelim cümle günaha	Let's repent all the sins
Niyaz eyleyelim ol padişaha	and supplicate to the Lord

²²⁵⁰ The term *nutk-i şerîf* stands for “the *hikmet*-filled moral and didactic speeches and poems given by a *şeyh* to his followers”, see: Cebecioğlu, 2009, p. 489.

²²⁵¹ The expression “the wisdom of *men aref*'s secret” refers to the renown *tasavvuf* aphorism “*men arefe nefsehu fekat arefe rabbehu*” (know thyself, know God) and implies the esotericised dimension of *tasavvuf* epistemology as discussed in detail above.

²²⁵² “The circle of *tevhid*” means a specific form of *kelime-i tevhid zikir* practice performed communally in a circle. The details of this form will be given in the movement repertoire chapter below.

²²⁵³ The terms *katre* (drop), *bahir* (sea), and *ummân* (ocean) are symbolically referring to the ontological condition of humans in the universe. The admixture of drop with the ocean is thus interpreted as the desired ontological union with God, *vahdet-i vücud*.

²²⁵⁴ Ozak, 1978, p. 192.

Tevhid kılalım ol ulu şaha
Sırrı tevhidi veren Mevlamdır

Let's be one with the almighty Lord²²⁵⁵
It is my Lord who gives the secret of unity

İsm-i celal cümle dertlere derman
Böyle emreylemiş ol gani Rahman
Hu ismi azamdır eylemiş ihsan
Esmanın sırrını veren Mevlamdır

*Ism-i celal*²²⁵⁶ cures all troubles
The merciful Lord commanded this
The name *Hu* is supreme, acting with benevolence
It is my Lord who gives the secret of the names

Hak esması hak üzere kuruldu
Cümle sırlar müminlere verildi
Cümle dert sahibi hakka sarıldı
Dertlere derman veren Mevlamdır

The name *Hak* was established for the righteousness
All secrets are given to believers
All troubled ones implored the Lord
It is my Lord who cures the troubles

Hay esmasıyla hayat bulalım
Yalvarıp Mevlaya sırra erelim
Ölü **kalbimizi** diri kılalım
Ölüleri diri kılan Mevlamdır

Let's find life with the name *Hay*
and beg our Lord to attain the secret
Let's make our dead hearts alive
It is my Lord who raises from the dead

Kayyum esmasını kavi tutalım
Kalbimizden kal-i kılı atalım
Dost bağında **bülbül** gibi ötelim
Bülbüle feryadı veren Mevlamdır

Let's keep the name *Kayyum* strong
and throw hearsay out of our hearts
Let's sing like a nightingale in Beloved's vineyard
It is my Lord who gives wailing to the nightingale

Kahhar esmasında kılalım hafi
Cümle günahlardan olalım safi
Mevlam affeder cümle günahı
Günahları mağfur eden Mevlamdır

Let's recite the name *Kahhar* abundantly
and be purified from all the sins
My Lord forgives all the sins
It is my Lord who pardons the sins

Fettah esmasında kalpler açılsın
Herkes uzlet edip nistan seçilsin
Küntü kenzin kapıları açılsın
Rahmet kapılarını açan Mevlamdır

Let the hearts open with the name *Fettah*
Let everyone seclude [...]
Let the doors of the hidden treasure open
It is my Lord who opens the doors of mercy

Vahit ahad dedim birliğin bildim
Samed Allah dedim ihsanın gördüm
Çok şükür Hüsnünün muradın verdin
Cümlelerin muradını veren Mevlamdır²²⁵⁷

I said *Vahit Ahad*, I knew your unity
I said *Samed Allah*, I saw your benevolence
Glory to God who granted Hüsnü's wish
It is my Lord who grants all the wishes

²²⁵⁵ The meaning of this line is rather ambiguous, it can also be translated as: "let's unite with the almighty Lord".

²²⁵⁶ An expression used to refer to the name *Allah*. See also *Lafza-i Celâl*.

²²⁵⁷ Partly quoted by Kayacı, Eyyüp: "Çorum ve Yöresi Halveti Uşşaki Geleneğinde Tasavvuf Edebiyatı", in: Işık Zekeriya (ed.), *Uluslararası Bütün Yönleriyle Çorum, Symposium Proceedings*, Vol. 2, Çorum: Salmat 2016, pp. 303–321/308.

This poem was composed by the Halvetî-Uşşâkî *şeyh* Hüsn-i Gülzârî (1872–1965)²²⁵⁸, whose name is customarily revealed in the last quatrain of the poem. Gülzârî was considered the founding spiritual leader of the HUR branch and thus his views are, as expressed in poetry, the orientation pole (*kutub*) of the *tarikât* group led by FNE²²⁵⁹. A preliminary analysis of the content demonstrates that specific terms used in the poem (shown in italic in English translations) are corresponding to the names of God (*esmâ-i hüsnâ*). As mentioned above, these names constitute the main formulas recited in any *zikir* event. What is of particular importance in Gülzârî's poem is that he refers to twelve *zikir* formulas (ten names and two formulas) that are recited by the HUR group led by FNE. As will be shown in the analysis of their *zikir* performance below, these twelve formulas are the fundamental units of the *zikir*, and each formula marks the episodes of the whole ritual structure accompanied by various poetical styles composed mostly in *makam* music. The usage of twelve formulas is a feature of certain branches of the Halvetî *tarikât* (Figure 18), e.g., Rûşenî and Uşşâkî²²⁶⁰, adding five more names, —*Fettah, Vahit, Ehat, Samed, and Allah* known as *hazret-i hamze* or *furuat-ı hamze*²²⁶¹— to the customary seven names (six names and the *kelime-i tevhid* formula, *esmâ-i seb'â*) used by the encompassing Halvetî view.

Furthermore, several other terms used in Gülzârî's poem (all shown in bold in the original text) such as *destur* (permission), *istiğfar* (repentance), *tevhid* (unity), *sır* (secret), *kalp* (the heart), *bûlbûl* (nightingale), or *küntü kenz* (the hidden treasure) indicate an explicit *tasavvuf* context.

The term *destur* means asking for permission and in the *zikir* of the HUR group led by FNE, it takes place following the opening recitation (*silsile*) of all *zikir* events²²⁶² and precedes the threefold repetition of the initiatory *kelime-i tevhid* formula. As in the opening line of Gülzârî's poem above, *destur* officially marks the opening of the *zikir* ritual. The terms *istiğfar* (repentance) and *tevhid* (unity) in the second quatrain stand for two prominent *tasavvuf* doctrines. These are, asking God for forgiveness to be purified from the sins by saying “*es-tağfirullah el azim*” (I ask forgiveness from *Allah*, the Magnificent) and nurturing (*terbiye*) the

²²⁵⁸ Haksever, C. Ahmet / Kayacı, Eyyüb / Yıldız, Mehmet: “Çorum’da Bir Uşşâkî Şeyhi. Hüsn-i Gülzârî ve Sülûk Merkezli Kavramlara Yaklaşımı”, in: *Hitit Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 9/1, 2016, pp. 21–37/22–23.

²²⁵⁹ Cengil, 2010, pp. 43–45.

²²⁶⁰ Gölpınarlı, 1969a, p. 206; Cengil, 2010, p. 42.

²²⁶¹ Cengil, 2010, p. 42.

²²⁶² However, in some events (30 October 2014, 19 November 2015, 08 March 2018) the opening recitation of the *silsile* is preceded by an *ilâhi* in *rast makam* called *Mevlâm Ver Aşkını Bana*.

lowest level of the *nefs* (*emmâre*) by employing the “*lâ ilâhe illallah*” (There is no deity but *Allah*) formula.

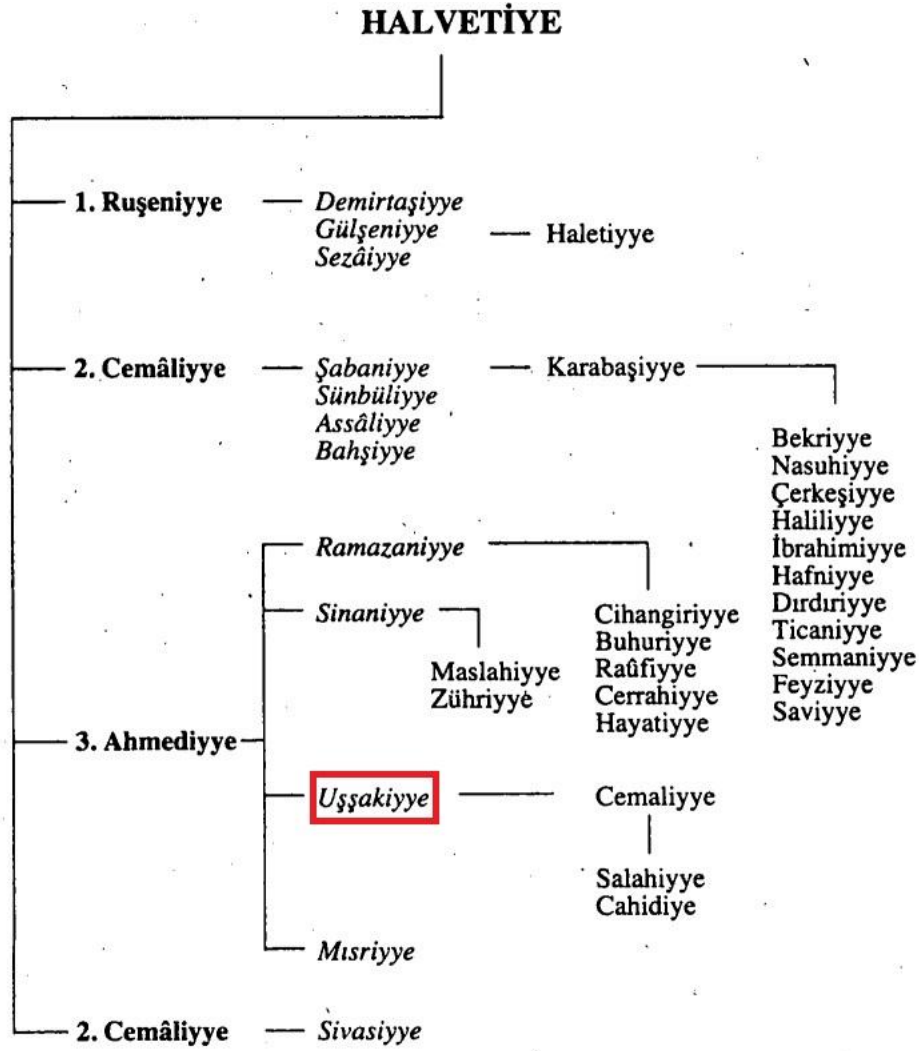


Figure 18: The branches (*kol*) and the sub-branches (*şube*) of the Halvetiyye tarikat and the place of the *Uşşâkî* branch (shown in red rectangle)²²⁶³.

Whereas *sır* (secret) implies the esotericised dimension of *tasavvuf* (*bâtın*), analogously *kalp* (the heart)—as “the seat of the knowledge of divine things”²²⁶⁴ (*mârifet*) and thus the locus of divine manifestation (*tecellî*)—signifies an esotericised epistemology. As part of the *tasavvuf* knowledge system, *bûlbûl* (nightingale) as “the most mentioned bird in Turkish and Persian

²²⁶³ Aşkar, Mustafa: “Bir Türk Tarikatı Olarak Halvetiyye’nin Tarihi Gelişimi ve Halvetiyye Silsilesinin Tahlili”, in: *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 39, 1999, pp. 536–563/561. Please note that the second branch “2. Cemâliyye” was repeated at the bottom of the schema, which should have been “4. Şemsiyye”, see: Eraydın, 1994, p. 393.

²²⁶⁴ Geels, 1996, pp. 230–231.

literature”²²⁶⁵ has symbolic and ontological meanings derived from various philosophical²²⁶⁶ and theological sources²²⁶⁷ referring to the *mutasavvıf* as *aşık* (lover), God as *maşuk* (beloved) and *gül* (rose), which the nightingale is longing for. The cage (*kafes*), in which the nightingale is imprisoned, stands for the material body (*beden*) that significantly limits the lover seeking God’s response. Finally, the expression “*küntü kenz*”—also known as *kenz-i mahfî*, the hidden treasure²²⁶⁸—is extracted from a *hadis*, though its authenticity is still a matter of debate, asserting that God said: “I was a hidden treasure, and I desired to be known; therefore I created the creation in order to be known”²²⁶⁹, which has been considered the essence of Islamic creation according to *mutasavvıfe* and the reason why *tasavvuf* has been developed as a salvific epistemological system. Afnani summarizes the themes that are related to the notion of the hidden treasure and constitute various aspects of *tasavvuf* epistemology as follows:

“1. The concept of being (*wujūd*), the Absolute Being or God as the Hidden Treasure, and the Ontological categories of existence:

- *Aḥadiyya*: the station of unicity of God, wherein divine names and attributes are non-existent. This is the station of pure essence.
- *Wāḥdiyya*: the station of oneness of God, wherein divine names and attributes find existence.
- Other themes such as *A’yān*, *Thābita*, ‘*Amā*’ or the Primordial dust, and holy emanations.

2. The concept of self-disclosure of God and loci of manifestation.

3. The concept of love, divine love as the motive for creation, manifestation of divine love in the physical world, and forms and stages of love.

4. The concept and process of creation, and the purpose behind Creation.

5. The concept of knowledge and *Ma’rifa* (true understanding), knowledge of the Divine, and levels and forms of knowledge”²²⁷⁰

²²⁶⁵ Kurnaz, Cemal: “Bülbül”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 6, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1992, pp. 485–486; Akarınar, 2004, p. 13.

²²⁶⁶ Especially the philosophical works of Farâbî and İbn Sînâ, see: Güner, Dilaver, “Sûfî İbn Sînâ (ö. 428/1037) ve Makâmâtü’l-Ârifin’i”, in: *Tasavvuf İlmi ve Akademik Araştırma Dergisi*, 2/6, 2001, pp. 119–158/133–134; Bayrakdar, Mehmet: “İbn Sînâ’da Varlık, Varoluşun Sebebi ve Varlığın Delili Olarak Aşk”, in: *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 27, 1986, pp. 299–306/299–300; Ülken, H. Ziya: “Preface”, in: Ateş, Ahmed (trans.), *İbn Sînâ, Aşkın Mahiyeti Hakkında-Risâle fî Mâhiyeti’l-Işk*, İstanbul: Büyüyen Ay 2017, pp. 49–56.

²²⁶⁷ Especially in the works of İbnü’l-Arabî, Attâr, Kâşânî, and İbn Haldûn, see: Aydın, H. İbrahim: “Kenz-i Mahfî”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 25, Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2002, pp. 258–259.

²²⁶⁸ Aydın, 2002, p. 258.

²²⁶⁹ Arberry, A. John: *Sufism. An Account of the Mystics of Islam*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1968, p. 28.

²²⁷⁰ Afnani, Moeen: *Unraveling the Mystery of The Hidden Treasure. The Origin and Development of a Ḥadîth Qudsî and its Application in Sûfî Doctrine*, Dissertation, University of California, 2011, pp. v–vi.

References from G lzh r 's poem and their role in *tasavvuf* epistemology can easily be multiplied. However, apart from providing the content and order for the *zikir* recitations of the HUR group, this poem also confirms this study's proposal submitting that the practice of *zikir* is the applied epistemology of *tasavvuf* and specific musical characteristics of approximately all *zikir* practices around the globe—the repetition and an escalating tempo—are the primary instruments in enabling *zikir* performers to attain an altered state of mind, which is interpreted by *mutasavvife* as attaining the knowledge of the self and, simultaneously, the divine (*hikmet*, *m r fet*, *gnosis*).

In the analysis of the *zikir* below, how the content of G lzh r 's poem is musically performed by the HUR group will be demonstrated. Concerning the ordering of the names (*esm *) and formulas (*isti far*, *tevhid*) in G lzh r 's poem, which begins with *isti far* (the *zikir* of *esta firullah el azim*), followed by *tevhid* (*l  il he illallah*) and ends with *Samed Allah*, it should be noted that the *zikir* of the HUR group follows an exact corresponding order of these names and formulas:

1. <i>Tevbe isti�far</i> ²²⁷¹ (<i>esta�firullah el azim</i>)	7. <i>Kahh�r</i>
2. <i>Kelime-i tevhid</i> (<i>l� il�he illallah</i>)	8. <i>Fett�h</i>
3. <i>H�</i>	9. <i>V�hid</i>
4. <i>Hak</i>	10. <i>Ehad</i>
5. <i>Hayy</i>	11. <i>Samed</i>
6. <i>Kayy�m</i>	12. <i>Allah</i>

Apart from the *zikir* formulas and short recitations in Arabic from the *Kur'an*, the *zikir* of the HUR group contains a wide range of recited units and vocal genres in various poetical styles and languages. The performance (*A ıklar n Zikir Sofrası*)²²⁷² that took place on 18 May 2017, Thursday²²⁷³, for instance, contained forty-eight different units that were sung, both solo and collective, throughout the ninety-minutes-long performance as the musical accompaniment to the repetitively recited *zikir* formulas. Corresponding with Tomasello's argument of *zikir* as

²²⁷¹ This is the expression used by the HUR group to name their practice: *tevbe isti far zikri* (the *zikir* of repentance).

²²⁷² This is the name given by the HUR group to their *zikir* event, meaning "The *zikir* meal of lovers".

²²⁷³ Following the worldwide custom, the ritualized *zikir* of the HUR group is regularly held every Thursday evening.

being a “synesthetic phenomenon”²²⁷⁴, Frishkopf gathers all performed elements in a *zikir* (in his study, *hadra*) event under the title of “Language Performance” (LP) and formulates it as

“to cover all the vocal genres comprising *hadra* together with their accompanying behaviors, including principally: *fawatih* and *ad‘iyya* (short supplicatory prayers, involving a call-response dialog between soloist and group), *hizb* (group recitation of invariable extended prayer texts characteristic of each *tariqa*), *inshad dini* (religious singing, in solo, group, or call and-response formats), *dhikr* (group repetitive chanting of one of the Names of God, usually accompanied by rhythmic movements), and religious speeches (sermons, discussions, teachings), variously called *wa‘z*, *khutba*, *mudhakara*, or *dars* (performed by a soloist for the group). I define LP to include not only the textual and sonic aspects of these activities, but the way they are Performed in a social space (including accompanying behavior)”²²⁷⁵

Though with entirely different terminology, the *zikir* of the HUR group involves all the musical elements mentioned above. These are, along with their social and organizational implications, “–when recited properly–ought to have the effect of raising one’s spiritual level, or increasing one’s store of religious knowledge”²²⁷⁶. As discussed above, the musical style, e.g., *makam*, has a particular effect on the performers’ mood and each *makam* scale with its specific intervallic structure suggests a different state of mind or, as in the Indian raga system, an emotional “state of being coloured or impassioned”²²⁷⁷ by a particular melodic tone scale. However, compared to the rhythmical structure and tempo arrangement, the effect of the sung *makam* in attaining the idealized state of mind is rather limited and therefore, in the analysis of the HUR’s *zikir* ritual proper below the emphasis will be laid upon the rhythmical organization, tempo calibration, and the content of the sung units.

Depending on the region in which the *zikir* is performed, the vocal accompaniment in communally practiced *zikir* events may be different and involve various poetical and musical styles such as *ilâhi*, *durak*, *kasîde*, *salât*, *şuğul*, *mersiyye*, *nefes*, *na’t*, or *münâcât* (*temcit*) among several others.

²²⁷⁴ Tomasello, 2017, p. 34.

²²⁷⁵ Frishkopf, Michael: *Sufism, Ritual, and Modernity in Egypt. Language Performance as an Adaptive Strategy*, Dissertation University of California 1999, p. 12.

²²⁷⁶ Frishkopf, 1999, p. 9.

²²⁷⁷ Monier-Williams, Monier: *A Sanskrit English Dictionary*, London: Oxford University Press 1899, p. 872; Ruckert, George / Widdess, Richard: “Hindustani Raga”, in: Arnold, Alison (ed.), *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music. South Asia. The Indian Subcontinent*, Vol. 5, New York: Routledge 2000, pp. 64–88/74.

11.3 The Content and the Form of the Sung Material

Feldman argues that the sung material in “the Turkish *zikir* shares several musical features”²²⁷⁸ and can be categorized as “nonmetrical and metrical composed genres”²²⁷⁹. While the nonmetrical genres are listed as *durak*, *kasîde*, *mersiyye*, *na’t*, and *temcit*, the other forms, *ilâhi*, *şuğul*, *nefes* constitute the metrical genres. To this list, Özkan further adds the recitation of the *Kur’an*, *mevlid*, and *ezan* as nonmetrical genres in Islamic religious music²²⁸⁰. Depending on the day in which the weekly *zikir* is performed, according to the Islamic lunar calendar²²⁸¹, the *zikir* of the HUR group involves all these genres.

Basing his argument on Feldman’s classification, Vicente too divides the sung material in a *zikir* event as metrical and non-metrical²²⁸². “In terms of musical semantics”²²⁸³, this division represents two different phenomena. Whereas the non-metrical organization of sound (e.g., the recitation of the *Kur’an* or the forms mentioned above) is linked with the transcendent and atemporal word of God, independent from any time-related configuration, the characteristic repetitive rhythmical structure of the *zikir* and the accompanying sung material organized in a specific metrical system is thus consequently associated with the limits of human temporality, as “mankind’s response to *Allah*”²²⁸⁴. Chittick correspondingly argues that when the Prophet Muhammed has brought the message of God (the *Kur’an*) to humanity, “the perspective shifts from the atemporal to the temporal”²²⁸⁵, from eternal to ephemeral, which proportionally “calls the human response” after a fashion conditional upon the human biological temporality.

11.3.1 *İlâhi*

Like hymn, the term *ilâhi* stands for both a poetic style and a form of religious music in Turkish Islam. Especially in poetry, before various poetic genres gained independent names and diverging features, almost all kinds of religiously loaded poems were addressed as *ilâhi*, whose coverage then has become gradually narrowed as the new poetical and musical forms

²²⁷⁸ Feldman, 2002, p. 192.

²²⁷⁹ Feldman, 2002, pp. 192–197.

²²⁸⁰ Özkan, İ. Hakkı: “Makam”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 27, Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2003, pp. 410–412/410.

²²⁸¹ Kılıç, 2016b, p. 124.

²²⁸² Vicente, 2007, pp. 199–200.

²²⁸³ Feldman, 2002, p. 192.

²²⁸⁴ Feldman, 2002, p. 192.

²²⁸⁵ Chittick, 2002, p. 49.

developed²²⁸⁶. These poems are often written in *koşma* style, which is a form of Turkish folk poetry composed of quatrains with generally eleven syllables and structured according to certain rhyme schemes. For instance, in the first stanza of *koşma*, the first line rhymes with the third, and the second line with the fourth. In the other stanzas, the first three lines rhyme with each other, and their last lines rhyme with the last line of the first stanza²²⁸⁷. The name or pseudonym of the poet is often stated in the last stanza. Gülzârî's poem quoted above can be shown as an example of the *koşma* style. In context of Turkish *tekke* music²²⁸⁸, *ilâhi* becomes a form of religious music consisting of poems written in *koşma* style (syllabic meter)²²⁸⁹ and composed in various *makam* as well as Turkish rhythmic modes (*usûl*)²²⁹⁰. The term *ilâhi* is in fact an umbrella term and an *ilâhi* may acquire a different name—e.g., “*durak*, *na't*, *tevşih*, *şuğul*, or *mersiyye*”²²⁹¹—in relation to certain variables. For instance, an *ilâhi* written in Arabic language but composed according to Turkish *makam* and *usûl* rules is called *şuğul*, or if an *ilâhi*'s text is composed by a poet belonging to Bektâşi *tarikât*, it is called *nefes*²²⁹². Among the forty-eight sung units in the *zikir* of the HUR group, all these forms, from *şuğul* to *nefes* and *na't*, are performed throughout the event. When these forms are compared with each other, they constitute a table (Table 2), in which the sung *ilâhi*, the predominant music form used in the HUR *zikir*, takes a special name according to certain criteria—e.g., the vocal accompaniment, the content or the subject of the text, the poetic or the musical meter (*usûl*)—and in relation to its place in the *zikir* event (during *zikir* or between *zikir* episodes). Even though in different *zikir* events of the HUR group the number of the sung units, their content, and ordering changes often²²⁹³, the sequence of the *zikir* formulas remains constant. Furthermore, the HUR group consistently employ at least thirty sung units in their weekly *zikir* rituals, which demonstrates that they have a dynamic and a wide potpourri of music repertoire. An initial analysis of the *ilâhi* content of the HUR *zikir* repertoire demonstrates that more than one hundred different

²²⁸⁶ Uzun, İ. Mustafa: “İlâhi”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 22, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2000, pp. 64–68/64.

²²⁸⁷ Dizdaroğlu, Hikmet: *Halk Şiirinde Türler*, Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi 1969, pp. 68–85.

²²⁸⁸ In Turkish musicology, religious music is often divided into two main parts as *camî mûsikisi* (music performed in mosques, both during and before, or after the worship) and *tekke mûsikisi*, which is the music composed by those *tarikât* groups who perform “the voiced (*cehrî*) *zikir* forms to accompany their rituals”, also known as “*tasavvuf mûsikisi*”. Özcan, Nuri: “Tekke Mûsikisi”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 40, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2011, pp. 384–385/384.

²²⁸⁹ Apart from the eleven-syllable meter, the composed *ilâhi* pieces may be based on seven, eight, fourteen, and sixteen syllabic structures, see: Uzun, 2000, p. 65.

²²⁹⁰ Özkan, İ. Hakkı: *Türk Mûsikîsi Nazariyatı ve Usûlleri, Kudüm Velveleleri*, İstanbul: Ötüken Yayınları 1994, p. 83.

²²⁹¹ Ezgi, Suphi: *Nazarî ve Amelî Türk Mûsikîsi*, Vol. 3, İstanbul: İstanbul Belediyesi 1933–1953, p. 54.

²²⁹² Uzun, 2000, p. 67.

²²⁹³ For instance, the *zikir* event held on 19 November 2015 contains twenty-nine sung units and another held on 30 October 2014 has thirty units. In this connection, the events may last from about one hour to one and half hours.

sung units were used in their weekly rituals between a time span of six years (2014–2020). In the detailed analysis section, forty-eight of these *ilâhi* content as used by the HUR group in a single event, on 18 May 2017, will be referred to.

Genre	Vocal Accompaniment	Content/Subject	Meter	Zikir Relation
<i>Durak</i>	<i>Solo/Chorus</i>	<i>Allah</i>	<i>Usûl: Durak Evferi</i>	<i>Between</i>
<i>Kasîde</i>	<i>Solo</i>	<i>Islam</i>	<i>Free</i>	<i>Accompaniment</i>
<i>Na't</i>	<i>Solo</i>	<i>Muhammed</i>	<i>Any Usûl</i>	<i>Between</i>
<i>Nefes</i>	<i>Solo/Chorus</i>	<i>Ali</i>	<i>Syllabic</i>	<i>Accompaniment</i>
<i>Salât</i>	<i>Chorus</i>	<i>Muhammed</i>	<i>Usûl: Durak Evferi</i>	<i>Accompaniment</i>
<i>Şuğul</i>	<i>Solo/Chorus</i>	<i>Allah</i>	<i>Any Usûl</i>	<i>Accompaniment</i>

Table 2: Various forms of *ilâhi* according to specific variables²²⁹⁴.

The sung units in the *zikir* of the HUR group correspond largely with the table above. Except, *na't* is not performed in between two *zikir* episodes but as an accompaniment to the *Hû* *zikir* formula communally. Some of the *ilâhi* forms used by the HUR group in their *zikir* proper are:

Geldim Kapına Geldim (I came to your door)

Biz zikire başladık	We started <i>zikir</i>
Emmareyi taşladık	We stoned the <i>emmare</i>
Çok günahlar işledik	We have committed many sins
Estağfirullah el aziym	O supreme Lord forgive us

The *ilâhi* above is possibly written by İbrahim İpek Efendi, otherwise unknown, in a seven-syllable-meter (except the last lines) *koşma* style. Though a different stanza of this poem is recited in the HUR *zikir* as the accompaniment, which will be demonstrated below, the one above (third stanza) is the epitome of the whole poem, and even perhaps the entire *tasavvuf* epistemology. Whereas the first two lines refer to the nurturing of the *nefs-i emmâre* (the lowest level) via *zikir* practice, the third line correspondingly speaks of the sinful nature of the *nefs-i*

²²⁹⁴ This table is derived from various sources referring to the listed musical styles. It is important to note that the table is in no way comprehensive and focuses only on the styles that may have a correspondence in the *zikir* of the HUR group. See: Özkan, 1994, pp. 83–84; Uzun, 2000, p. 66–67; Feldman, 2002, pp. 193–196, and the relevant entries in the *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*.

emmâre, and the last line,—as in Güلزârî’s poem above—which is also the name of the accompanying *zikir* episode, the reciters ask for God’s forgiveness by means of repentance (*istiğfâr*), in order to be purified from the sins. As it is the first recited *ilâhi* accompanying a *zikir* formula (*estağfirullah el azim*) within the whole HUR *zikir* event, it may have certain functions. Judging by the content, its probable function may be purificatory for the event, attendees, or the space in which the *zikir* performance takes place.

İstiğfara Gel Kardeşim

Ben deyipte şeytan olma	Do not be the devil by saying I
Kimsenin kalbini kırma	Do not break anyone’s heart
Yemin edip vallah deme	Do not swear and hold the Lord witness
İstiğfara gel kardeşim	Come brother for forgiveness

Having the same theme (*istiğfar*), the stanza above is written by Hasan Mansur Efendi, a *halife* (successor) of İbrahim İpek Efendi, in an eight-syllable-meter. Apart from *istiğfar*, the first line refers to the renowned *tasavvuf* doctrine, obliterating the ego, and the second line suggests a moral and mannered lifestyle. Like the first sung unit, *Geldim Kapına Geldim*, this *ilâhi* is too used as an accompaniment to the relevant *zikir* (*istiğfar*) episode.

Müminin Kalbini Yuyup Arıtan Allah

Müminin kalbini yuyup arıtan Allah	<i>Allah</i> washes the believer’s heart and purifies it
La ilahe illallahdır ya nedir Allah	It is <i>la ilahe illallah</i> , what else, <i>Allah</i>
Cehennem odunu söndür söndüren Allah	<i>Allah</i> who extinguishes the firewood of hell
La ilahe illallahdır ya nedir Allah	It is <i>la ilahe illallah</i> , what else, <i>Allah</i>

The stanza above written in a thirteen-syllable meter belongs to a well-known Turkish *mutasavvıf* and folk poet Yunus Emre (1238–1328), whose several works are used not only in the HUR *zikir* but also in numerous other *tarikât* organizations. Different from the first two examples, this *ilâhi* is sung between two *zikir* episodes (*istiğfar* and *tevhid*) and thus it is not used as an accompaniment to a *zikir* formula. Therefore, it may take the name *durak*, meaning “stopping point”²²⁹⁵, as shown in the table above. On the other hand, during the recitation of this *durak*, specific corporal *zikir* movements continue to be executed, as if following the rhythmic pattern of the *istiğfar zikir* formula. In terms of its theme and place in the entire *zikir* proper,

²²⁹⁵ Feldman, 2002, p. 196.

this *durak* is possibly recited as a preparatory *ilâhi* to introduce the subsequent *kelime-i tevhid zikir* (*lâ ilâhe illallah*).

Bugün Vardım Bir Lokmana

Bugün vardım bir lokmana	I went to see a doctor today
Derdin sana derman dedi	Your trouble is your cure, he said
Minnet etme ten ve cana	Do not plead to the flesh and vitality
Canındadır canan dedi	The Beloved is in your soul, he said
Zikir eyle hey divane	Do <i>zikir</i> , o madman
Bulur Hak'kını kıyana cana	He who kills himself finds the Lord
Niçin geldin sen lokmana	Why did you come to see the doctor
Zikir derde derman dedi ²²⁹⁶	<i>Zikir</i> is the cure for your trouble, he said

The two eight-syllable stanzas above are written by İbrahim İpek Efendi and sung by the HUR group as an accompaniment to the *kelime-i tevhid* formula. Regarding its content, this *ilâhi* reproduces the essential *tasavvuf* doctrines including an ascetic life (first stanza, third line), finding the divine within the self (first stanza, last line), the practicability of *zikir* in such a quest of finding the self, and the obliteration of the ego as a prerequisite in finding the divine.

Levlâke levlâke lemâ halaktül eflâk

Ey risâlet tahtının hurşîd ü mâh-ı enveri	O the brightest sun and the moon of the prophethood's throne
Ey nübüvvet mazharı âhir zaman peygamberi	O the recipient of the prophethood of the end of time

Focusing on the Prophet Muhammed as its subject, this *ilâhi* is an example of the *na't* genre. Even though its text is attributed to a certain Gazzâlî, whether the renowned theologian Ebû Hâmid el-Gazzâlî (1058–1111) or his younger brother Ahmed el-Gazzâlî (c. 1061–1126) is not clear. Differing from the first three examples above due to its composition in the Arabic language (its translation into Turkish appears to be Ottoman Turkish), the poetic meter of this *na't* is formed according to the established rules of the Arabic prosody (*aruz vezni*), in which not the numbers of syllables are counted but their forms are evaluated in terms of length, or

²²⁹⁶ Sağban, E. Fatih: *İpek Yolu*, İstanbul: İpek Yolu Yayınları 2003, p. 16.

openness and closedness²²⁹⁷. As maintained by the Arabic prosodic system, each line of this *na't* takes the following form:

Mnemonics: Fâilâtün / Fâilâtün / Fâilâtün / Fâilün
Length: (- . - -) / (- . - -) / (- . - -) / (- . -)

However, considering that each line of this *na't* has also a count of fifteen-syllabic-meter, it is possible that within the HUR *zikir* it may be evaluated in terms of syllabic feature. Finally, the title of this *na't* is not fixed, yet whatever the form it takes it still demonstrates the panegyric aspect of the *na't* genre. Following the custom, it may either be named after the first line (*Ey risâlet tahtının hurşîd ü mâh-ı enveri*), or as used by the HUR group, it may take the name *Levlâke levlâke lemâ halaktül eflâk*, which is an expression inherited likely from a still disputed *hadis* and means “I would not have created the universe if it were not for you”, namely, Prophet Muhammed.

Cânî cânâna kurbân eyleyen gelsin bu meydâne

Cânî cânâna kurbân eyleyen gelsin bu meydâne	Let the one who sacrifices his soul to the Beloved come to this square
Soyup benliğini uryân olan gelsin bu meydâne	Let the one who undresses his self bare-naked, come to this square
Bu meydân mekteb-i irfân cesâret edemez her cân	This square is the school of wisdom, not every soul can dare to enter
Hased kin kibr ü cehlini koyan gelsin bu meydâne	Let the one who drops envy, grudge, pride, and ignorance come to this square

Corresponding with the description of Özkan—“the solo reading of *tasavvuf* poems containing religiously stimulating thoughts and advice”²²⁹⁸—the *ilâhi* form above is sung solo, partly improvised, by a professional singer (*zâkir*) as an accompaniment to three different *zikir* episodes, *Kayyûm*, *Kahhâr*, *Fettâh* and classified as *kasîde*. Composed of couplets, this *kasîde* is written in sixteen-syllable-meter by a certain Kelâmî Baba. Regarding its context, the text refers to two important *tasavvuf* epistemological notions, at least in the two couplets above, namely, the obliteration of the ego and *mârifet*. The first is indicated via self-sacrifice and eradication of the attributes (envy, grudge, pride, and ignorance) of the lowest ego (*nefs-i emmâre*)

²²⁹⁷ Elwell-Sutton, L. Paul: *The Persian Metres*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1976, p. 3.

²²⁹⁸ Özkan, H. İsmail: “Kaside. Mûsiki”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 24, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2001, p. 566.

and the second, *mârifet*, is referred to via a derivation (*irfân*), a term carrying the same meaning with *mârifet*. The expression “this square is the school of wisdom” is directly associated with the purpose of the *zikir* practice as discussed in this study, in other words, as the applied epistemology. In this context, the *zikir* means learning to get acquainted with God (*irfân*, *mârifet*)²²⁹⁹ and applying it in the square (*meydân*) where both physiological and spiritual experiences take place²³⁰⁰.

Ali Göründü Gözüme

Aynayı tuttum yüzüme
Ali göründü gözüme
Nazar kıldım ben özüme
Ali göründü gözüme

I held the mirror to my face
Ali appeared to me
I gazed upon my essence
Ali appeared to me

Based on another disputed *hadis*, the *ilâhi* above is a Bektaşî *nefes* written by Hilmi Dede Baba (1842–1907)—who adhered to the Bektaşî *tarikât*—in eight-syllable-meter. The content of the text signals the controversial topic and theological discussion known as *vahdet-i vücûd*. Derived from the same root (*vcd*) of *vecd* and *tevâcûd*, *vücûd* here means existence or being²³⁰¹ and combined with *vahdet* (unity, oneness) it refers to a trend within *tasavvuf* ontology and metaphysics known as the unity of existence²³⁰². Even though the theory of *vahdet-i vücûd* is attributed to Ibnü’l Arabî, the term cannot be found in his works, yet still, some views of Arabî are decisive in understanding the concept, who argues that “other than *Allah*, the Eternal and the Wise, things have no body or true existence”²³⁰³. Reminiscent of both Plato’s allegory of the cave (*Republic*, Book VII, Chapter 514a-520a) and Plotinus’ view of the world as a mere stage and our bodies as costumes (*Enneads*, 3.2.15), the metaphysical theory of *vahdet-i vücûd* similarly holds that only true reality is the being (*vücûd*) of God, which designates everything else (*mâsivâ*) as nonexistent²³⁰⁴ and turns them into an illusion (*lâ mevcûde illallah*)²³⁰⁵. According to Renard, *vahdet-i vücûd* is the complete annihilation (*fenâ*) of individuality in God’s

²²⁹⁹ Kılıç, E. Mahmud: *Anadolu Tasavvuf Tarihine Notlar – II*, İstanbul: Sufi Kitap 2016c, p.103.

²³⁰⁰ Cebecioğlu, 2009, p. 434; Ayverdi, 2010, p. 816.

²³⁰¹ Demirli, Ekrem: “Vahdet-i Vücûd”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 42, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2012, pp. 431–435/431.

²³⁰² Schimmel, however, justly argues that the term *vücûd* is difficult to translate due to the Semitic linguistic features and writes that *vücûd* means “finding” or “to be found” and “thus, more dynamic than mere ‘existence’”, see: Schimmel, 1975, p. 267; Demirli, 2012, p. 431.

²³⁰³ Erginli, 2006, p. 1158.

²³⁰⁴ Erginli, 2006, p. 1161.

²³⁰⁵ As a reinterpreted form of *kelime-i tevhid*, this expression means “there is no being other than *Allah*”. See, for example, Sâmî, Abdurrahman: *Divân-ı Sâmî*, İzmir: Şahinler Vakfı 1980, p. 107; Uludağ, Süleyman: “Mahv ve İsbât”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 27, Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2003a, pp. 395–396/396.

being and can be metaphorically expressed, as used in Gölzârî's poem, "drop losing itself completely in the ocean of divine unity"²³⁰⁶. Kuşeyrî similarly links the concept with certain terms of *tasavvuf* epistemology and writes that

"As for finding [of God] (*wujud*), it comes after one has raised oneself above ecstasy [a.n. *vecd*]. The finding of the True Reality [a.n. *keşf*] can happen only after one's human nature is completely extinguished [a.n. *fenâ*], for there is no place for it in the presence of the Master of Reality"²³⁰⁷

As discussed in the first volume of this study, similarities between *tasavvuf* and certain esotericised theological and philosophical trends—e.g., Gnostic, Neoplatonic, alchemical, or Hermetic²³⁰⁸—feature specific notions and theories. Perhaps one of the most important of them is the theory of "all is one", or, in line with Faivre's model of esotericism, knowing the self finds *correspondence*²³⁰⁹ in knowing the divine, experienced as unification. Intriguingly, this unitive experience, whose realization is conditioned to *katharsis* (purification) and *ekstasis* (ecstasy, being outside of oneself) in especially Neoplatonism, is correspondingly interpreted by Plotinus as *henosis*, i.e., "identity with the One, with no distinction of seer and seen"²³¹⁰ and thus approximates closely to the view in Dede Baba's *nefes* above, namely looking into the mirror and seeing the divine. When Câmî's poem is consulted again, which was associated with "Hermetism, Neoplatonism and the old Iranic religions"²³¹¹, regarding the concept of *vahdet-i vücûd*, a continuity between Câmî (1414–1492) and Dede Baba appears:

"From all eternity the Beloved unveiled His beauty in the solitude of the unseen;
He held up the mirror to His own face, He displayed His loveliness to Himself.
He was both the spectator and the spectacle; no eye but His had surveyed the Universe.
All was One, there was no duality, no pretence of 'mine' or 'thine'"²³¹²

As was seen in the ecstatic utterances (*şathiye*) of Bistâmî, the experience of unification with the divine has often been interpreted as the last stage of an epistemological process, involving "the destruction of human attributes" and "the annihilation of a man's self-control in

²³⁰⁶ Renard, 2009, p. 245.

²³⁰⁷ Al-Qushayrî, *Al-Risala*, 2009, p. 84.

²³⁰⁸ Fowden, 1986, pp. 104–106; Mahé, Jean-Pierre: "The Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth", in: Meyer, Marvin (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, New York: HarperOne 2007, pp. 409–418/410ff.

²³⁰⁹ Faivre, Antoine: *Access to Western Esotericism*, Albany: SUNY Press 1994, pp. 10–11.

²³¹⁰ Gregory, 1999, p. 124.

²³¹¹ Del Re McWeeny, Virginia: "The Wonder of Creation. A few notes for reflection on Sufism and science and some 'correspondences'", in: Peat, F. David (ed.), *The Pari Dialogues. Essays in Science, Religion, Society and the Arts*, Vol. 1, Grosseto: Pari Publishing 2007, pp. 33–56/42.

²³¹² Nicholson, 1914, pp. 80–81.

God”²³¹³ (*fenâ*) following the stages of *vecd* or *cezbe* (ecstasy)²³¹⁴. Despite the concept of oneness of God (*tevhid*) holds an absolute ontological separateness between the Creator and the created, various interpretations of *vahdet-i vücûd* were expressed by different *mutasavvife* who were regionally and temporally distant such as Hallâc-ı Mansûr, Yunus Emre, İmâm-ı Rabbânî, Eşrefoğlu Rûmî, or Niyâzî-i Mısırî²³¹⁵. These varying interpretations have also brought about a certain degree of ambiguity to the idea of unification and caused a need for a modification to align it with the middle point of *ehl-i sünnet ve'l-cemâat* (the consensus of the community) in formulating the experience. While some scholars link the development of *vahdet-i vücûd* concept with the philosophical theories of Fârâbî and İbn Sînâ, who, in their attempt to solve the logical problems (duality, evil in the world etc.) of the theory of *creatio ex nihilo*, consider the creation a process of emanation (*sudûr*)²³¹⁶, others emphasize the diverging views within *tasavvuf* with specific terms including *hulûl* (penetration, permeation, or union), *tenâsüh* (reincarnation, transmigration, or *metempsychosis*), *ittihad* (union), and *vahdet-i şühûd* (unity of witnessing)²³¹⁷.

The term *hulûl* stands for a spiritual event, through which “the divine essence or attributes are transferred to and merged with one, some, or all of the creatures and God appears in the form of a human or another material being”²³¹⁸. Though essentially both *hulûl* and *tenâsüh* mean transmigration of the soul, the first refers to the transmigration of the divine essence or spark and the latter speaks of a soul transference between humans and animals²³¹⁹. As several scholars argue, from the ecstatic utterances of Bistâmî to Mansûr’s claim to be the Truth (*enel-hak*), which Gazzâlî understands as *şathiyat*, namely, statements articulated by the “intoxicated lovers”²³²⁰, almost all the expressions concerning *vahdet-i vücûd* concept were associated with pantheism²³²¹, an unacceptable view that leads to polytheism (*şirk*) according to the established *ehl-i sünnet ve'l-cemâat* consensus of metaphysics²³²², and thus necessitated a new, less controversial formulation. Afîfî, for example, considers both İbnü’l Arabî and Mansûr pantheists,

²³¹³ Al-Hujwîrî, *Kashf Al-Mahjûb*, 1911, p. 185.

²³¹⁴ Uludağ, 1992b, p. 239; Kuşeyrî, *Risale*, Vol. 1, 1978, p. 147.

²³¹⁵ Demirli, 2012, p. 433.

²³¹⁶ Bayrakdar, Mehmet: “İbn Sina’da Varlık, Varoluşun Sebebi ve Varlığın Delili Olarak Aşk”, in: *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 27, 1986, pp. 299–306/303–304; Gürer, 2001, pp. 133, 147.

²³¹⁷ Renard, 2009, p. 245.

²³¹⁸ Demirci, Kürşat: “Hulûl”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 18, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1998, pp. 340–341/340.

²³¹⁹ Yavuz, Ş. Yusuf: “Hulûl. İslâm Düşüncesinde Hulûl”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 18, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1998, pp. 341–344/342.

²³²⁰ Kara, 1992, p. 46.

²³²¹ Nicholson, 1906, p. 326; Knysh, 2005, p. 115; Kara, 1992, p. 48; Bausani, Alessandro: “Theism and Pantheism in Rumi”, in: *Iranian Studies*, 1/1, 1968, pp. 8–24.

²³²² Uludağ, 1992b, pp. 239–240.

yet he also distinguishes them with an argument that while in Arabî's theory *hulûl* and *tenâsüh* do not find expression for being inadmissible, in the expressions attributed to Mansûr below Afîfî diagnoses the theory of *hulûl*:

"I am He whom I love, and He whom I love is I.
We are *two* spirits dwelling in one body.
If thou seest me, thou seest Him,
And if thou seest Him thou seest us both"²³²³

However, certain expressions of Arabî—which indicate another theory, *vahdet-i şühûd* (unity of witnessing)—may be precisely corresponding with both Mansûr's and Dede Baba's lines above:

"When my Beloved appears.
With what eye do I see Him?
With His eye, not with mine.
For none sees Him except Himself"²³²⁴

Though the theory does not originally belong to him, Imâm-ı Rabbânî was the key figure in promoting the concept of *vahdet-i şühûd* (unity of witness or contemplation) as a substitution for *vahdet-i vücûd*. Maintaining the absolute ontological distinction between the Creator and the created, Rabbânî holds that *vahdet-i vücûd* is only a station in the process of *seyrüsülûk*. To reach the desired level of perfection, *fenâ*²³²⁵, an individual must go beyond this level and attain *vahdet-i şühûd*, in which "the devotee sees the existence of *Allah* but does not deny that there are other beings besides Him or sees the world as a shadow. Everything is not He, but, everything is from Him"²³²⁶. Particularly, the last sentence is of importance as it indicates a modified view of pantheism known as panentheism, in which God is understood as being "in everything that exists", not as "everything that exists" or their sum. In panentheism, God cannot be reduced to the sum of the existent things, but every being receives a share (essence, spark etc.) from God. Despite *vahdet-i vücûd* and *vahdet-i şühûd* are used as "quasi-synonymous"²³²⁷ with each other occasionally, Schimmel argues that neither pantheism nor panentheism appears to be adequate to compensate for these terms as God:

²³²³ Afîfî, E. Abdelrahman: *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Din-Ibnul 'Arabî*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1939, p. 172.

²³²⁴ Nicholson, 1914, pp. 165–166; Schimmel, 1975, p. 266.

²³²⁵ Serhendî, A. R. Rabbânî: *Mektûbât*, Vol. 1, Işık, H. Hilmi (trans.), İstanbul: Hakikat Kitâbevi 2017, p. 72.

²³²⁶ Tosun, 2009a, p. 187.

²³²⁷ Schimmel, 1975, p. 267.

“Manifests Himself only by means of the names, not by His essence. On the plane of essence, He is inconceivable (transcending concepts) and nonexperiential (transcending even nonrational cognition). That means that in their actual existence the creatures are not identical with God, but only reflections of His attributes”²³²⁸

To maintain the ontological separateness, the theory of *vahdet-i şühûd* may therefore be related to panentheism as it implies not the union of essences, but an epistemological witnessing (*şehâdet*) of God’s manifestations (*tecellî*) through the names and attributes (*esmâ*) on a mirror, namely, the creation, or the heart²³²⁹. Being laden with all these theories, Dede Baba’s poetry above can thus be interpreted in various ways, yet the main issue here is to identify whether Dede Baba’s expressions, as used by the HUR group, accord with the original Bektâşî view or the reinterpreted Halvetî-Uşşâkî perspective, which, though they may be corresponding with each other on certain accounts, are two potentially different trends of interpretation in Islam. The same issue is in fact present in numerous symbolically expressed unitive experiences. From Attâr’s *Manţıku ’t-ţayr* (*The Conference of the Birds*) to the concept of *metempsychosis* or *metempsychosis* as used by Plotinus (*Enneads* 2.9.6; 4.3.9), the number of interpretations concerning various forms of unitive experiences mentioned above can be multiplied. Demirci, for example, translates the term *hulûl* as the incarnation and explains the doctrine of incarnate Jesus—as accepted by the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE—in terms of the personification of God (*hypostasis*). Moreover, relevant to this study, Demirci further links this notion with the Semitic and Greek perspectives of God, in which specific epistemological concepts, e.g., *hikmet* and *logos*, had been as well often personified:

“In Greek-speaking Judeo-Christian circles, the incorporation of the personified conception of wisdom (*hokma*) in Judaism with the concept of *logos* in Greek philosophy first led to the recognition of Jesus as a pre-existent being”²³³⁰

The expressions that *mutasavvif* poets employed to refer to unity are innumerable and varying interpretations of the concept of *vahdet* even in a single poet’s career may not always be consistent as they might change their views during their lives. Mevlânâ, for example, employs several unification theories throughout his poetry, which occasionally leads to—as

²³²⁸ Schimmel, 1975, pp. 267–268.

²³²⁹ Schimmel, 1975, p. 268; Renard, 2009, p. 158.

²³³⁰ Demirci, 1998, p. 341.

Yıldırım argues—“paradoxical discourses”²³³¹. He sometimes implies the soul’s transmigration, *hulûl* or *tenâsüh*, as in the poem below:

“I died as mineral and became a plant,
I died as plant and rose to animal,
I died as animal and I was Man,
Why should I fear? When was I less by dying?
Yet once more I shall die as Man, to soar
With angels blest, but even from angelhood.
I must pass on, *all except God doth perish*”²³³²

And at other times, Mevlânâ appears to discern *tevhid* and *hulûl* in absolute terms and writes in another poem that:

“Unless the servant is absolutely mortal from himself,
tevhid is not fully realized for him.
Tevhid is not *hulûl*, it is your obliteration;
otherwise, no falsity can be made truth with unfounded words”²³³³

Furthermore, in addition to the notions of *tevhid* and *hulûl*, according to commentary (*şerh*) of Olgun (also known as Tâhirü’l-Mevlevî), Mevlânâ implies the concept of *vahdet-i şühûd* in his *Mesnevî* (16870) as below:

“The brightness and grace of the cloud comes in fact from the moon.
Whoever says the cloud is the moon is a pervert”²³³⁴

In one of the speeches of FNE, held customarily before every Thursday-*zikir*-event and broadcasted from the HUR group’s own television channel (Nurani TV), he explains their standpoint concerning *vahdet-i vücûd* and *vahdet-i şühûd* as follows:

“The sound way is Rabbânî’s stance of *şühûd*, but those who know the truth of the matter and those who have a knowledge level equal to Arâbî’s knowledge know that they both reach the same ends, both are true. One is a solid path that is closed to deviations and slips and does not allow for *te’vil* [a.n. esoteric interpretation]. The other, Arâbî, said ‘Those who do not rise to our station should not read our works, because they have difficulty in understanding the meaning there’. We admire

²³³¹ Yıldırım, Ali: “Mevlânâ’nın Vahdet Anlayışı ve Paradoksal Söylemi”, in: *Erdem*, 17/50, 2008, pp. 223–232.

²³³² Nicholson, A. Reynold: *Rûmî. Poet and Mystic*, London: Unwin 1950, p. 103.

²³³³ Quoted by Büyükkörükçü, Tahir: *Hakiki Vecesiyle Mevlânâ ve Mesnevî*, İstanbul: Şelâle Yayınları 1972, p. 60.

²³³⁴ Olgun, Tahir: *Şerh-i Mesnevî*, Vol. 14, İstanbul: Şamil Yayınevi 1974, p. 199.

Arâbî's knowledge. All the saints that have come down to our day, inherited the knowledge of *mâ-rifet*, the science of knowing and acquaintance with *Allah*, from Arâbî, but we follow the sound Rabbânî way. However, it is not for us to smack the saints each other and analyze them. This is way beyond our knowledge and capacity. Our job is to bring the shepherd on the mountain closer to God”

Even though FNE does not mention the role of their *zikir* practice in performing the doctrine of unity, the fact that they use Dede Baba's poem in their *zikir* and FNE's statements concerning the two interpretations of unity allow this study to continue to evaluate *zikir* as an application of *tasavvuf* epistemology and an instrument that may lead to a sense of unity.

11.3.2 Melodic and Intervallic Characteristics

Apart from the textual genres and content, the intervallic structure of the sung material is another characteristic musical component of the HUR *zikir*, which is based on the Turkish *makam* system of pitch scales. In this system, depending on the theoretician, an octave may be divided into seventeen, twenty-four, or forty-one unequal intervals²³³⁵. Among these, the most widely accepted one, Arel-Ezgi-Uzdilek (AEU) system, divides an octave, corresponding to 1200 Cents, into twenty-four unequal tones or intervals²³³⁶ (Table 3).

²³³⁵ The number of system of divisions are multifarious. From the thirteenth century on several musicologists have offered various *makam* systems based on different intervallic structures and constructive elements. Some of these musicologists are Safiyüddin Urmevî (c. 1216–1294), Abdülkâdir el-Merâgî (1360–1435), Ali Ufkî Bey (also known as Wojciech Bobowski, c. 1610–1675), Dimitrie Cantemir (1673–1723), Rauf Yektâ Bey (1871–1935), Sadeddin Arel (1880–1955), Suphi Ezgi (1869–1962), and Mehmet Uzdilek (189–1967). See: Karaduman, İrfan: “Geleneksel Türk Halk Müziğinde Makâm Kavramının Kullanılmasına Edvâr Geleneği Açısından Bir Yaklaşım”, in: *Turkish Studies*, 9/8, 2014, pp. 587–601/594.

²³³⁶ Signell, L. Karl: *Makam. Modal Practice in Turkish Art Music*, New York: Da Capo Press 1986, p. 26.

II. Octave	I. Octave	Intervals
24. ÇÂRGÂH	0. KABA ÇÂRGÂH	(with previous)
25. Nüm Hicâz	1. Kaba Nüm Hicâz	90.225 e
26. Hicâz	2. Kaba Hicâz	23.460 e
27. Dik Hicâz	3. Kaba Dik Hicâz	66.765 e
28. NEVÂ	4. YEGÂH	23.460 e
29. Nüm Hicâz	5. Kaba Nüm Hicâz	90.225 e
30. Hicâz	6. Kaba Hicâz	23.460 e
31. Dik Hicâz	7. Kaba Dik Hicâz	66.765 e
32. HUSEYNÎ	8. HUSEYNÎ AŞÎRÂN	23.460 e
33. ACEM	9. ACEM AŞÎRÂN	90.225 e
34. Dik Acem	10. Dik Acem Aşîrân	23.460 e
35. Evîç	11. Irak	66.765 e
36. Mâhûr	12. Geveç	23.460 e
37. Dik Mâhûr	13. Dik Geveç	66.765 e
38. Gerdaniye	14. RÂST	23.460 e
39. Nüm Şehîdî	15. Nüm Zîrgîlî	90.225 e
40. Şehîdî	16. Zîrgîlî	23.460 e
41. Dik Şehîdî	17. Dik Zîrgîlî	66.765 e
42. MUHAYYER	18. DUGÂH	23.460 e
43. Sîmbüle	19. Kirdî	90.225 e
44. Dik Sîmbüle	20. Dik Kirdî	23.460 e
45. Tîz Segdî	21. Segdî	66.765 e
46. TÎZ BÛSELİK	22. BÛSELİK	23.460 e
47. Tîz Dik Bûselik	23. Dik Bûselik	66.765 e
48. TÎZ ÇÂRGÂH	24. ÇÂRGÂH	23.460 e

Table 3: The Arel-Ezgi-Uzdilek division of two octaves²³³⁷.

Different from the Western equal temperament system, in which the octave is divided into twelve equal intervals of 100 Cents, in the AEU system a whole tone or major second interval corresponds to 204 Cents instead of 200 Cents, and a half-tone or minor second is equal to 90 Cents instead of 100 Cents (Example 5).

²³³⁷ Ozan Yarman: "A Comparative Evaluation of Pitch Notation in Turkish Makam Music. Abjad Scale & 24-Tone Pythagorean Tuning – 53 Equal Division of the Octave as a Common Grid", in: *Journal of Interdisciplinary Music Studies*, 1/2 (2007), pp. 43–61/53; Özkan, 1994, p. 38.

Intervals 204 204 90 204 204 204 90 Cents

Kaba Yegâh Hüseyinî Acem Râst Dügâh Bûselik Çârgâh

Çârgâh 0 204 408 498 702 906 1110 1200 Cents

2 204 90 204 204 204 204 90

Nevâ Hüseyinî Acem Gerdâniye Muhayyer Tîz Tîz

Bûselik Çârgâh

Notation Example 5: The notes used in Turkish Classical music corresponding to seven-notes (diatonic) of the Western Classical music and their intervallic values in Cents.

While in the temperament system of the Western classical music a whole tone is made of two equal halftones, which is the smallest discernible unit, in the AEU system a whole tone, for example, C-D, is divided into nine equal intervals of approximately 22 Cents (Holder's or Holdrian comma) known as *koma* (Example 6).

Do Diyarlar

DO RE

RE Bemoller

KOMA OLARAK DEĞERİ	DİYEZİ	BEMOLÜ
1	#	d
3	—	—
4	#	♭
5	#	b
8	#	♭
9	×	b b

Notation Example 6: The division of the interval between C-D (204 Cents) into nine equal intervals (*koma*) and the corresponding accidentals²³³⁸.

As seen in the example above, certain intervals are indicated with specific accidental signs as employed in Turkish classical music. The music performed by the HUR group is as well primarily composed of the intervallic structures and relations based on this system. The accidentals and the intervallic values they represent can be found in the table below:

²³³⁸ Özkan, 1994, p. 37.

Accidentals in Arel Ezgi Uzdilek System							
Type of Interval	Koma	Bakîye	Küçük mücenneb	Büyük mücenneb	Tanini	Artık ikili	Naturel
Sharp	♯	♯	♯	♯	×	{♯♯}	
Flat	♭	♭	♭	♭	bb		
Letter	F	B	S	K	T	A	q
Comma Value	1	4	5	8	9	12	
Ratio	81/80	256/243	2187/2048	65536/59049	9/8	576/486	
Cent Value	23	90	114	180	204	271	

Table 4: Accidentals and their Cent values in AEU system²³³⁹.

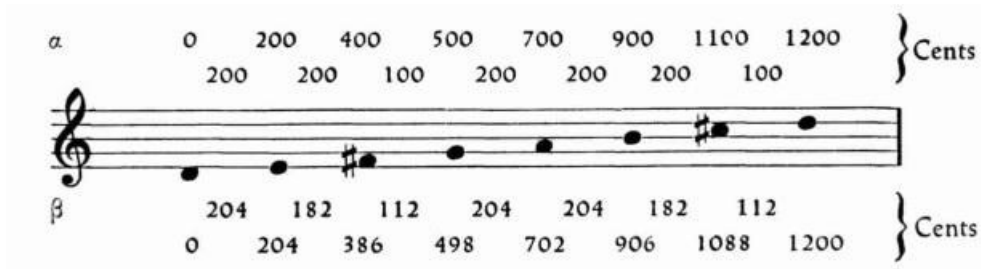
Throughout centuries, specific combinations of these intervals have produced not only numerous *makam* scales and types of ascending or descending melodic courses (*seyir*)²³⁴⁰, but also various performance practices and extra-musical associations, all of which had been transmitted orally (*meşk*) between the generations of musicians until well into the twentieth century. In other words, as Behar argues, “today, almost all of what we have in the classical Turkish music repertoire, which is a tradition of approximately 450-500 years, consists of works that have been notated in the last 70-80 years”²³⁴¹. Kubik correspondingly asserts that “many tone systems, in fact, are determined by a combination of formative factors resulting from more than one dimension of human experience”²³⁴². As in Western classical music, in this system too certain pitches in a scale are related to each other and have specific roles that may be related to the tonic (*durak*), the initial note; dominant (*güçlü*), often the fifth or sometimes the fourth degree in the scale, functioning as a modulation point; or leading tone (*yeden*), the penultimate note resolving into the tonic (*durak*). However, in the section below, such intervallic relations will be excluded from the analysis due to their uncertain effect (compared to repetitive rhythm and increasing tempo), apart from the mood-setting or preparatory quality, in general *tasavvuf* epistemology. On the other hand, to allow further analysis, the notation examples below consist of the accidentals used in Turkish classical music, since an attempt to use Western notation symbols will result in deviations from the performed version (Notation Examples 7, 8, and 9).

²³³⁹ Ayangil, Ruhi: “Western Notation in Turkish Music”, in: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 18/4, 2008, pp. 401–447/426.

²³⁴⁰ Salgar, M. Fatih: *Türk Müziğinde Makamlar/Usûller ve Seyir Örnekleri*, İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat 2017; Özkan, 1994, pp. 41–43; Signell, 1986, pp. 22–65.

²³⁴¹ Behar, Cem: *Klasik Türk Musikisi Üzerine Denemeler*, İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları 1987, p. 9.

²³⁴² Kubik, Gerhard: “African Tone-Systems: A Reassessment”, in: *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 17, 1985, pp. 31–63/45.



Notation Example 7: A comparison of the tempered D major scale (α) with corresponding Râst makam (β)²³⁴³.

In the example above, the tempered D major scale and the Turkish *Râst makam* scale transposed to the D note are compared with each other. Even though the notes of each scale are having the same accidentals and ordering, the idiosyncratic Cent values of the pitches and their intervallic relations in Turkish music differentiates the two systems both structurally and aesthetically. According to this example, the deviations in the pitch values are +4, -14, -2, +2, +6, and -12 Cents and in conjunction with these pitch values the intervallic deviations are +4, -18, +12, +4, +4, -18, and +12 Cents. The first example below (Example 8) is an excerpt from the HUR group's *zikir* performance demonstrating their intonation of the *istiğfar* formula and the intervallic relations of the pitches; the second example (Example 9) is the same excerpt transposed into the tempered system:



Notation Example 8: The *istiğfar* zikir formula as performed by the HUR group.



Notation Example 9: The *istiğfar* zikir formula transposed to the tempered system.

²³⁴³ Oransay, Gültekin: "Das ton-system der türkei-türkischen Kunstmusik", in: *Die Musikforschung*, 10/2, 1957, pp. 250–264/251.

When the two examples above are compared, considerable intervallic deviations from each other appear. Whereas in the first example the interval between B[♯] and F[♯] corresponds to 656 Cents, in the transposed version the interval between B-flat (B[♭]) and F is equal to 700 Cents, which results in a deviation of +44 Cents (approximately two commas). Along the same lines, the other intervallic deviations are +20, +6, and -34 Cents in the given sequence. Considering a comma, the smallest unit, is approximately equal to 22 Cents in Turkish music, these deviations that are mostly larger than a comma do not fall into the “margin of tolerance”, which is “not the same in different musical cultures and depends on the nature of the tonal-harmonic system”²³⁴⁴, and thus not tolerable from the perspective of the Turkish tone-system. In addition to this, in the sung repertoire of the HUR group a certain degree of fluctuation— often within the range of a comma²³⁴⁵—transposition to another pitch degree, or specific modulations into other *makam* scales from the leading tone (*yeden*) are observable. As pointed out by Signell, “occasionally a ‘transposition’ will cause a slight alteration in the size of an interval”²³⁴⁶, which may end up using the pitch levels of another *makam*. Combined with the characteristic education and transmission model of Turkish classical music and certain other art forms (e.g., *hat*, calligraphy) known as *meşk*—which reproduces the exact dynamics of a *mürşid-mürîd* relationship in *tarikât* organizations in the form of master-apprentice bond and thus covers a larger set of experiences than the term “orally transmitted” knowledge may suggest²³⁴⁷—the relative freedom of transposition and modulation has also enabled performers, transmitters, and receivers of the inherited musical knowledge to reflect their interpretation into a composition and improvise (*taksim*), vocal or instrumental, within the specified limits. In the light of such space for

²³⁴⁴ Kubik, 1985, pp. 47–55.

²³⁴⁵ Signell, 1986, p. 37.

²³⁴⁶ Signell, 1986, p. 31.

²³⁴⁷ As in the *mürşid-mürîd* relationship, in transmitting the musical material (pitches, melodic courses, instrument playing techniques, manner of embellishments etc.) a teacher who employs the *meşk* practice further conveys the moral, aesthetic, and societal norms and values to act upon, which is only possible with an intimate relation or bond between the teacher and student. In the practice of *meşk*, a student does not use a book to read, or a pen and paper to take notes of what the teacher transmits. There is no intermediary tool, step, or activity between the transmitter and the receiver, which requires from the receiver a dedicated observation, imitation, and repetition of the transmitted material. The student here observes not only the sequence of sounds that build a *makam*, their course, or modulation points into another *makam* but also pays attention to the posture of the teacher, breathing points, his gestures and attitudes embedded in the performance, and musical or extra-musical aesthetical concerns that may affect the performance. Imitation in *meşk* practice denotes a learning method with pedagogic dimensions, through which the student mimics every act of the teacher to the point of an exactly matching copy of what and how the teacher performs involving timing, tempo, embellishment, modulation, rhythmic accompaniment (*usûl*), and even improvisation. The repetition, which indicates an intrinsic correspondence with the notion of repetition as understood in *tasavvuf* epistemology, enables the student’s act of mimicking to reach perfection, an exactly matching copy, and continues to be executed by the student “over and over until it is [a.n. the transmitted material] firmly and completely embedded in the memory”. Behar, Cem: *Aşk Olmayınca Meşk Olmaz*, İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları 2003, p. 16.

freedom provided by both *makam* system and *meşk* application, Behar evaluates Turkish classical music in terms of “open form” and writes that

“This freedom and openness were not an opportunity unique to the composer or the performer in the Turkish Classical Music tradition. These possibilities existed in the structure of *makam* itself, which is the basis of our music. The fact that the *makam*, as used in Turkish Classical Music, is always and everywhere open to modulation, that these modulation possibilities are not subject to a pre-established or definite hierarchy, and that there are no differences in importance and rank between the *makams*, point to this direction. In Harold Powers’ classification, it is quite justified that the use of *makam* in Turkish Classical Music is called an ‘open-ended modal system’. [...] In the Turkish Classical Music tradition, the freedom of transition from one *makam* to another is almost endless, and the unconventionality and softness of these transitions are considered a skill, even among today’s top performers”²³⁴⁸.

Even though the *zikir* of the HUR group consists of professional musicians or singers, most of the participants do not have a musical background. In other words, while from the solo performances of the professional singers in the HUR *zikir* a commitment to the *makam* rules or an “authentic” improvisation can be observed, in the collective performances and solo sections held by unprofessional singers some degree of fluctuations from the absolute pitches can be expected²³⁴⁹. In a response to the author’s question, the usage of *makam* scales by professional singers in the HUR *zikir* was confirmed in an email interview made with Oğuzhan Kantar, an adherent of the HUR group, one of FNE’s successors (*halife*) and a regular participant of the weekly held *zikir* performances, in which he also gives clues concerning the employment of *makams* with potential deviations due to various reasons:

Q: How many of the *ilâhi* forms sung in your *zikir* have been transmitted from older generations to the present, and how many of them have been composed recently (in the last ten, twenty, or thirty years)?

A: “I cannot give any percentage on this subject, but we do not have any objection to using all kinds of *ilâhi* suitable for our *zikir* tempo and we recite them in appropriate places of *zikir*. However, I would like to explain here that especially in Halvetî *tarikât* and its branches spread in Anatolia, while *ilâhis* that were sung according to the *usûl* and *makam* rules are called *tekke tavrı* [a.n. lodge style], which is performed in bigger cities where urban culture is common, such as İstanbul, Bursa, and Edirne, the *tekkes* [a.n. lodge] in the provinces sang the *ilâhis* in their *zikir* mostly in local manners and styles. In this sense, while this *tekke* style was applied in central places such as İstanbul, Bursa, Edirne, or Manisa, our *silsile* [a.n. the lineage of *mürşid* leaders] that spent its last century in the Çankırı basin of Çorum, Ankara, and Kırıkkale, could not raise reciters in the post-republican

²³⁴⁸ Behar, 1987, p. 14.

²³⁴⁹ Vicente, 2007, p. 215.

era [a.n. post-1923], who would employ a high level of *makam* and *usûl* in their *zikir*. These singers generally recite some poems written by their *şeyh* in local manners. In that respect, in our *silsile*, our *tekkes* in Central Anatolia, especially before the year 2000, when there were limited communication means, continued to practice this local manner of reciting *ilâhis*, but in the last ten-fifteen years, thanks to the prevalence of communication, some adherents of our *tarikat* have developed themselves by listening to and practicing [a.n. *meşk*] the recordings of masters in *tasavvuf* music. We also have a few friends who received conservatory education, which evolved our *zikir* into an İstanbul style *tekke* music”²³⁵⁰

As can be seen in Kantar’s response, the application of *makam* scales professionally in the *zikir* of the HUR group appears to be a recent introduction, which may be associated with the personal choices of their leader, FNE. This, on the other hand, does not indicate that the *zikir* practices performed in “local manners” pre-FNE era by the older generation of *mürşids* were entirely lacking *makam* scales. What Kantar indicates above with the expression “local manners” is categorized as Turkish folk music, in which a set of *makam*-like scales or “folk counterpart for *makam*”²³⁵¹ are called *ayak*. Even though there is not yet any consensus on the associations between *makam* and *ayak*, several authors have confirmed Kantar’s views above concerning the differences between the “local manners” and the urban styles of Turkish music. They argued that depending on the distance and the level of isolation from the urban centres, the music practices in the rural regions in Turkey may demonstrate a degree of *makam* influence²³⁵². Similar distinctions between the urban and rural elements in Turkish music have also been made by Feldman, who asserts that “in contemporary Turkey the *taksîm* [a.n. instrumental improvisation involving several modulations between various *makam* scales] is essentially urban and shows no close affinity with rural genres”²³⁵³. While some *ayak* scales used in the Turkish folk music do have correspondence with the *makam* scales of the Turkish classical music in several aspects—such as the melodic course (*seyir*), manner of musicking (*tavîr*), or absolute dependence on the rules of modulation—discrepancies can also be observed²³⁵⁴. Gazimihal, for example, refers to one city from central Turkey (Konya), in which specific re-

²³⁵⁰ The response of Oğuzhan Kantar in an email sent to the author on August 17, 2018.

²³⁵¹ Signell, 1986, p. 177.

²³⁵² Kılıç, 2016c, pp. 36–37; Kutluğ, F. Yakup: *Türk Musikisinde Makamlar*, İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları 2000, pp. 506–513; Pelikoğlu, C. Mehmet: *Mesleki Müzik Eğitiminde Geleneksel Türk Halk Müziği Dizilerinin İsimlendirilmesinin Değerlendirilmesi*, Dissertation, Gazi Üniversitesi, 2007, pp. 44–49; Ertuğrul, M. Bayraktarkatal: “Der Tonartbegriff in der traditionellen türkischen Musik”, in: Greer, David (ed.), *Musicology and Sister Disciplines*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 627; Sümbüllü, T. Hasan: “Nikriz Türkülerin Bilgisayar Destekli Makam Analizi”, in: *Ekev Akademi Dergisi*, 12/36, 2008, pp. 235–252.

²³⁵³ Feldman, Walter: “Ottoman Sources on the Development of the Taksîm”, in: *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 25, 1993, pp. 1–28/1.

²³⁵⁴ Kutluğ, 2000, p. 504; Şenel, Süleyman: “Türk Halk Müziğinde Beste, Makam ve Ayak Terimleri Hakkında”, 5. Milletlerarası Türk Halk Kültürü Kongresi. *Halk Müziği, Oyun, Tiyatro, Eğlence Seksiyonu Bildirileri*, Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı 1997, pp. 372–396.

gional folk music manners that are different from the other regions' manners can be found, in comparison to *makam*-based İstanbul manners and writes that:

“In Konya’s old feudal folk songs, there are combinations that can be explained with *Mahur*, *Uşşak* and *Hüzzam* [a.n. *makams*]. In some of them, parts of *makams* used in İstanbul are performed, but the local instrumentalists do not have any information about these *makams*. Sometimes, for example, they start in *Hicaz* and finish in *Rast*”²³⁵⁵

All these considered, despite an in-depth analysis of the tone scales as performed by the HUR group in their *zikir* may prove fruitful, it will be excluded from the analysis. Combined with the limited partaking of *makam* in *tasavvuf* epistemology, this is due to the ambiguous terminology, multiplicity of theories, and relative improvisatory freedom, both in the classical and folk music manners. However, it should also be noted that among the forty-eight sung units by the HUR group, approximately all of them were performed according to certain *makam* scales and some of these sung units were as well performed by different *tarikat*, e.g., the Cerrâhî branch of the Halvetî *tarikat*, almost verbatim. Corresponding with the wide range of poetical genres and movements in their *zikir*, the HUR group employs considerably diverse *makam* scales to accompany the *zikir* formulas they recite, some of which are *Uşşâk*, *Segâh*, *Râst*, *Nevâ*, *Bestenigâr*, *Mahûr*, *Hüseynî*, *Nikriz*, *Sabâ*, *Çargâh*, and *Nihavend*.

11.3.3 Style(s) of Vocal Accompaniment

As in the hierarchically ordered structural organization of the HUR group, at top of which stands FNE, their *zikir* performances contain a strict hierarchical operation. In other words, apart from the collectively sung passages, singing *ilâhis* pertains to specified participants, who customarily possess higher ranks in the *tarikat* organization and may be marked by a different colour of the costume. While FNE, corresponding with his highest rank in his organization, appears to be the most active singer in the HUR *zikir* in all events, an unknown and variable number of singers²³⁵⁶ often also lead or introduce certain sung materials (solo or collectively), accompany the *şeyh*'s solo, or join the whole group in reciting *cumhur ilâhi*. It is

²³⁵⁵ Gazimihal, R. Mahmut: *Anadolu Türküleri ve Musiki İstikbalimiz*, İstanbul: Marifet Matbaası 1928, p. 200 quoted by Kutluğ, 2000, p. 508.

²³⁵⁶ The *zikir* recordings in the possession of the author sometimes contain six singers with different costumes, two of which are the solo singers placed on the right side of the *şeyh* and the rest, including the *bendir* players, are on the left of the *şeyh*. At other times, either only two solo singers on the right side of the *şeyh* are visible or a minimum of two solo singers can be discerned though they are not seen in the frame of the recordings. Depending on the event, a visiting *şeyh* from another *tarikat* may also sing several *ilâhi* forms solo.

likely that these limited number of singers—who demonstrate a high degree of competence in singing various *makam* scales and *ilâhi* styles—are the ones “who received conservatory education” referred to by Kantar. Even though the exact categorization of singers and *zikir* participants in the HUR group is unknown, these singers, according to custom, may be called *zâkir*, *serzâkir*, or *münşid*. The *şeyh* may be simultaneously a *serzâkir* or *zâkirbaşı* (the head of *zâkir*) as he regulates every aspect (tempo, the number and order of the recited formulas and *ilâhis*, the employment of instruments etc.) of the HUR *zikir* performances²³⁵⁷. In response to the question of the author on the subject, Kantar wrote:

“Q: Is there a *zâkirbaşı* rank in your *tarikat*?

A: As far as I understand from your question, with the *zâkirbaşı* concept you must mean the person who sings *ilâhi* and administers *zikir* events. We have the concept of *zâkir*. We say *zâkir* to those who are the administrators of our small *zâviye* convents, mostly affiliated with the centre, and who are authorized to make *zikir* and conversation (*sohbet*) there. I think, in other *tarikat* organizations such as the Cerrâhiyye, *zâkirbaşı* means the person who sings hymns and even administers the *zikir* according to his position among the lead chanters. In our *tarikat*, there is an order consisting of the master *şeyh*, then the caliph *şeyh*, *dedegan* (guide), *zâkir*, and dervishes. A dervish lodge is opened where necessary and a suitable dervish *zâkir* is appointed there. That *zâkir* organizes *zikir* and conversations there, and he is the manager of his lodge. The *zâkir* group of adherents are subordinate to the caliph in their region, and caliphs are subordinate to the leading *şeyh*. We have such an organizational structure, anyone who can sing a little with a beautiful voice can sing in every dervish lodge”²³⁵⁸

Concerning intonation, the pitch range used for the vocalization of the sung material in the HUR *zikir* is notably broad, usually covering an entire octave, despite Vicente argues that many *ilâhi* (hymn) or other religious musical forms used in *zikir* rituals are having “narrower melodic range than is used in classical music”²³⁵⁹. In the HUR *zikir* practice, this broad pitch range is on occasion simultaneously occupied by “three timbral registers”, where

“The uppermost register was the muezzin’s high-pitched solo voice. The middle register was occupied by the small group of specialists, the *zâkirler*, who sang the metrical hymns (*ilâhîler*). The lowest register was occupied by the mass of dervishes, who chanted and breathed the divine Names”²³⁶⁰

²³⁵⁷ On the roles of *zâkirbaşı* as the regulator and ignitor of the event, see: Kılıç, 2004, p. 141; Geels, 1996, p. 238; Bardakçı, 2007, p. 30; Uygun, 2013, pp. 412–413.

²³⁵⁸ The response of Oğuzhan Kantar in an email sent to the author on August 27, 2018.

²³⁵⁹ Vicente, 2007, p. 201.

²³⁶⁰ Feldman, 2002, p. 192.

A corresponding three-layered organization of the vocal elements is referred to by Simon in his analysis of a Sudanese *zikir* form:

Hauptsänger ♩ = 120

8 Yā Rab-bi sal- li 'a- la 'a la Mo- ham- med

Solist

A- llāh hu A- llāh A- llāh A- llāh

Gruppe: ḥay- yo ḥay-yo ḥay- yo ḥay-yo

4x Strophenschluß:

8 ma a- ḡe- ra bal bid di Rab- bi a- mā- mi

(b) A- llāh A- llāh A- llāh

etc.

allmählich Einfall der ganzen Gruppe auf "Allāh"

Notation Example 10: Three vocal registers in a Sudanese *zikir* form reproduced from Simon²³⁶¹.

This organization, however, take place merely on several occasions (e.g., singing a collective *cumhur ilāhi*) and is seldom held for a long time in the HUR *zikir*. In other words, the vocal pitch range is in fact predominantly used by two registers, the solo or duo *ilāhi* recitations and the guttural framework. When the *ṣeyh* and the solo singers sing simultaneously, they often hold a heterophonic multipart singing style with an octave difference. On the other hand, when the multipart organization is considered in terms of its rhythmic structure, three simultaneous timbral registers in different tempi appear with the addition of the *usûl* cycles played by the frame drum *bendir*:

²³⁶¹ Simon, 1975, p. 272.

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 110$

Se he- r

lâ i lâ he il lal lah

düm te ke düm tek düm te ke düm tek

2

vak ti- i

lâ i lâ he il lal lah

düm te ke düm tek düm te ke düm tek

3

me ra- a

lâ i lâ he il lal lah

düm te ke düm tek düm te ke düm tek

4

mı- n da

lâ i lâ he il lal lah

düm te ke düm tek düm te ke düm tek

Notation Example 11: The tripartite rhythmic organization of an episode within the HUR zikir event, at the top of which is the duo recitation of the singers, in the middle is the collectively recited guttural zikir formula, and at the lowest register stands the rhythmic cycle played by the bendir, c. 9 seconds.

Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of the vocal accompaniment in the HUR *zikir* takes place in what Feldman suitably mentioned as the lowest register, where the most participants collectively chant the relevant *zikir* formula gutturally. This technique, as mentioned above, primarily functions as a rhythmic framework or an ostinato background upon which the solo recitations are built, “leading to either superimposition of the verbal dhikr upon a melody, or to the incorporation of a dhikr in a chorus, i.e., a chanted dhikr”²³⁶². Despite the articulation in these guttural accompaniments entirely different from the normally recited formulas, the rhythmic structure remains unchanged. For instance, the first *zikir* formula *estağfirullah el-âzim* has its specific stressed syllables and rhythmic organization that can be demonstrated as below:

♩ = c. 85 → c. 105

es tağ fî rul lah el â zim

Usûl: düm düm te ke tek düm te ke tek

Mnemonics: civ civ çı ka cak kuş çı ka cak

Notation Example 12: The istiğfar zikir formula and its rhythmic organization.

In the example above, the rhythmic articulation of the *istiğfar zikir* formula, as performed gutturally by the adherents of the HUR group—which constitutes the lowest timbral register—is shown. In terms of Turkish rhythmic cycles (*usûl*), the formula appears to be a variation (*velvele*) of the cycle known as *düyek* in 8/8 time. Detailed information concerning the syllables (*düm*, *tek*) and their organization in Turkish musical traditions will be given below. The section titled mnemonics contains a known Turkish mnemonic expression which retains the same rhythmic organization when articulated. As a characteristic musical feature of all *zikir* practices, within the *istiğfar zikir* episode, as shown in the example above, the tempo increases gradually from approximately 85 BPM to 105 BPM. While the formula is articulated gutturally in the lowest register as an accompaniment to the first *ilâhi*, its syllables are omitted and only a rasping sound can be heard, but the rhythmic organization of the formula remains unchanged:

²³⁶² During, 1999, p. 282.

♩ = c. 85

Gü na- a hım ço- k ben bıl dim

es tağ fî rul lah el â zim

Notation Example 13: The *istiğfar zikir* formula articulated gutturally (syllables omitted) and collectively in the lowest register accompanying the first line of the solo recited *ilâhi*, Geldim Kapına Geldim.

With the second *ilâhi*, the syllables are uttered again while the rhythmic organization of the formula stays the same and the tempo is increased:

♩ = c. 100 → 105

Gov gıy be te- e e da lan ki şî Gü na- h o lu -r her an i şî

es tağ fî rul lah el â zim es tağ fî rul lah el â zim

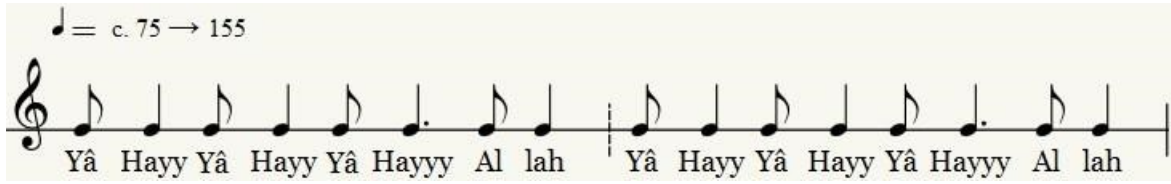
Nef si- i o lu -r ar ka da şî İ s ti- ğ fa ra- a gel kar da şım

es tağ fî rul lah el â zim es tağ fî rul lah el â zim

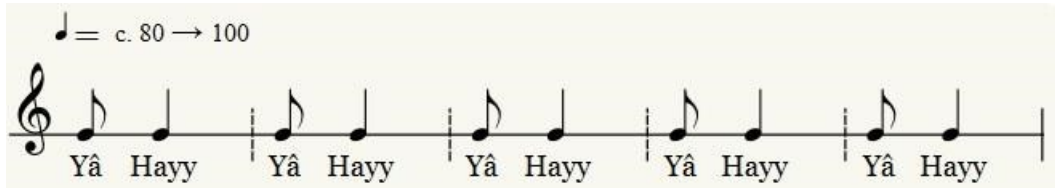
Notation Example 14: The *istiğfar zikir* formula articulated gutturally (with the syllables) and collectively in the lowest register accompanying the first line of the solo recited *ilâhi*, *İstiğfara Gel Kardaşım*.

In the HUR *zikir*, this guttural technique as a kind of ostinato rhythmic background for solo recitation is applied throughout the event. Each formula picked among the *esmâ-i hüsnâ* is gutturally recited in the lower register and, depending on the syllabic organization of the formula, their rhythmical structure is appropriated to the sung *ilâhi*. While, for example, to the first group of names following the *istiğfar* and *tevhid* formulas—*Hû*, *Hakk*, and *Hayy*—often

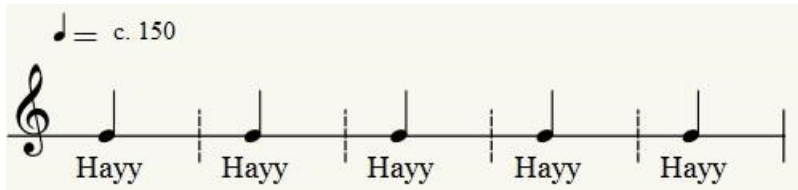
the exclamation *Yâ* is affixed at the beginning of the monosyllabic name, the last of which (*Hayy*) is further articulated throughout the event in the following ways²³⁶³:



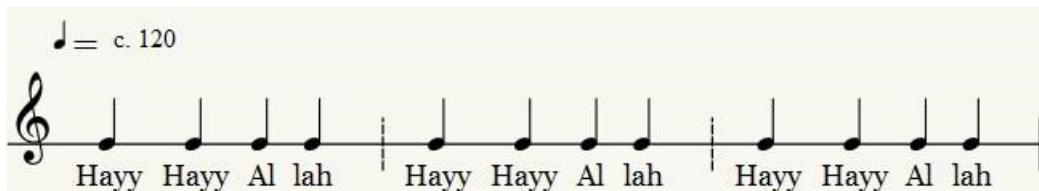
Notation Example 15: *Yâ Hayy Yâ Hayy Yâ Hayy Allah* formula.



Notation Example 16: *Yâ Hayy* formula.



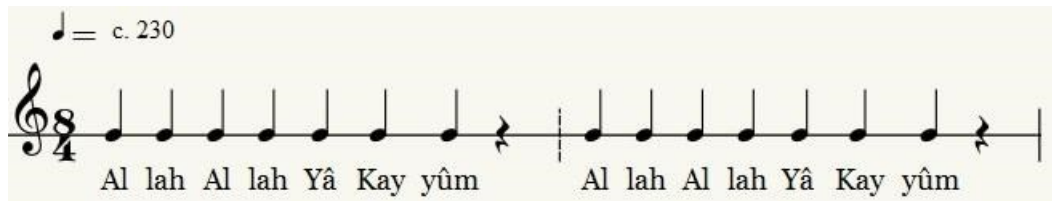
Notation Example 17: *Hayy* formula.



Notation Example 18: *Hayy Hayy Allah* formula.

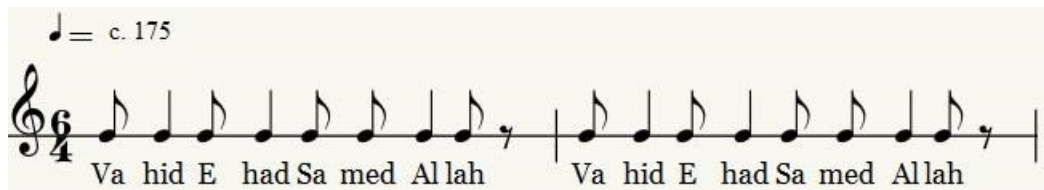
The second group of names consist of disyllabic names, *Kayyûm*, *Kahhâr*, and *Fettâh*, and always articulated as *Allah Allah Yâ* (*Kayyûm*, *Kahhâr*, and *Fettâh*) separately:

²³⁶³ According to Kılıç, the addition of “*yâ*” is a custom within the Halvetî-Uşşâkî *tarikat* since the eighteenth century, see: Kılıç, 2016c, p. 93.



Notation Example 19: Allah Allah Yâ (Kayyûm, Kahhâr, Fettâh) formula.

Despite the entire last group of names are as well disyllabic, in the HUR *zikir* they are grouped together and articulated as if they were one formula:



Notation Example 20: Vahid Ehad Samed Allah formula.

11.4 Instrumental Accompaniment

For those *tarikât* organizations that allow musical instruments in their *zikir* practice, perhaps the most frequently employed ones are the percussion instruments. In certain *tarikât* organizations, e.g., the Mevlevî, a wide range of instruments involving idiophones (e.g., *halile*), membranophones (e.g., *kudüm*), aerophones (e.g., *ney*), chordophones (e.g., *rebab*, *kanun*) and additionally “almost all of the Turkish musical instruments in recent times”²³⁶⁴ are used frequently. In some others, e.g., the Bektaşî and Alevî, the ritual may be associated with specific instruments such as *bağlama* or *saz* (long-necked chordophones or plucked string instruments) and correspondingly with the Turkish folk music²³⁶⁵. Even though in their official *zikir* rituals held on every Thursday the HUR group uses merely one type of membranophone called *bendir* (Figure 19), the author has observed that apart from the Thursday-*zikir* events, the HUR group was also uploading several videos to their YouTube account (Nurani TV) showing the musician adherents performing various *zikir* forms that are accompanied by several musical instruments (Figures 21 and 22).

²³⁶⁴ Uygun, 2013, p. 413.

²³⁶⁵ Markoff, 1995; Feldman, Walter: “Musical Genres and Zikr of the Sunni Tarikats of Istanbul”, in: Lifchez, Raymond (ed.), *The Dervish Lodge. Architecture, Art, and Sufism in Ottoman Turkey*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1992, pp. 187–202; Uygun, 2013, p. 413.



Figure 19: Four membranophones (*bendir*) used in the HUR zikir held every Thursday.

As seen in the excerpt above, the HUR *zikir* consists of four *bendir* frame drums, the two at the front are approximately 40-cm and the two larger *bendir* at the back are about 55-cm in diameter, each played individually by four musicians who are called *bendirzen*²³⁶⁶. While the term *bendir* can be found throughout North Africa and certain regions of the Middle East, similar one-sided frame drums may also be called *def*, *mazhar*, or *tar*²³⁶⁷. Even though the instruments in this excerpt do not possess any cymbals, in non-official recorded performances, which are likely new movements and musical models trained by the musician adherents of the group, some of the *bendirs* used have cymbals (*zil*) made of brass (Figure 20).



Figure 20: An excerpt from a non-official zikir performance held by the musician adherents of the HUR group demonstrating two 40-cm *bendirs* with cymbals.

²³⁶⁶ Özcan, Nuri: “Def. Mûsiki”, in: TDV *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 9, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1994a, p. 85.

²³⁶⁷ Blench, Roger: “The Morphology and Distribution of Sub-Saharan Musical Instruments of North African, Middle Eastern and Asian Origin”, in: Picken, Laurence (ed.), *Musica Asiatica* 4, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1984, pp. 155–191/164; Özcan, 1994a, p. 85.

Important to note that the location of the musicians—both the instrumentalists and vocals—is only visible in Figure 19, dating to October 2014 (currently the oldest recording in possession of the author). In the other recordings covering weekly *zikir* events of the HUR group, including the one subject to the analysis below, the location of the musicians cannot be detected. It is likely that in later times they were re-positioned to the mezzanine floor’s balcony and therefore out of the frame. The positioning of the musicians in the Figures 21 and 22 does not represent their regular positioning or “directional orientation of the ritual”²³⁶⁸ in the Thursday *zikir* events. Moreover, though the *bendirs* in the first video excerpt do not have cymbals, in the *zikir* event analysed (held in May 2017) the distinctive sounds of cymbals can be heard. In other words, in different *zikir* events held by the HUR group, the *bendir* forms or their location may not be uniform, which may correspondingly alter the acoustic components of the whole event.

What is seen in the excerpts below are additional instruments and forms of individuals using the same space (*meydan*), where the weekly HUR *zikir* events take place. Apart from the *bendir*, in both excerpts, a different form of drum known as *kudüm* can be seen, which consists of a pair of hemispherical membranophones and one of the main instruments used in the Mevlevî *semâ* rituals. In the second excerpt, additionally, a *rebap* (bowed chordophone) and two *neys* (end-blown aerophone made of reed) are visible. However, though none of these instruments other than the *bendir* is used in the weekly-held HUR *zikir* events, they may be included in the regular performances in the future.

²³⁶⁸ Feldman, 2002, p. 191.



Figure 21: At the top-right corner, four bendirs and a kudüm at the center can be seen.



Figure 22: The instruments, from right to left, are a rebap, two neys, a kudüm, and two bendirs (one player is standing).

As pointed out by several scholars, among these instruments especially *bendir* is the most frequently used one in those *tarikats* organizations that employ musical instruments for

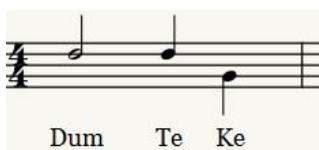
their *zikir* events²³⁶⁹. Depending on the *tarikât* or its leader *şeyh*, the number, size, and density of *bendir*'s participation in the whole event, along with the rhythmic patterns played, may be conceivably divergent. However, the same scholars also noted that among the numerous *usûl* (rhythmic cycles) used in Turkish classical music, particularly two of them—*düyek* and *sofyan* (Examples 21–24)—are the most frequently employed patterns as the accompaniment to the repetitive *zikir* formulas. According to both Feldman's and Vicente's classifications, an *ilâhi* that is sung to accompany the movements of *zikir* is called “*zîkr-ilâhi*”, which “almost always have a simple binary rhythmic pattern”²³⁷⁰ due to its role as a supportive accompaniment to the *zikir* formulas. The other *ilâhi* forms which are “sung apart from the movements of the *zîkr*”, namely in between the *zikir* episodes, are called “*tevşîh*” (ornamentation) and “*cumhur*”²³⁷¹ (crowd) *ilâhi*²³⁷². While the first refers to un-metered, partly improvised solo recitations, the latter (*cumhur ilâhi*) denotes collectively sung *ilâhi* forms, “either in unison or in heterophony by professional singers”²³⁷³. Although all these varieties are performed in the HUR *zikir*, what is referred to as “*zîkr-ilâhi*” with “a simple binary rhythmic pattern”, based on *düyek* or *sofyan usûl*, is of utmost importance as it corresponds largely with the *ilâhi* forms used in the HUR *zikir* practice.



Notation Example 21: *Sofiyân usûl* reproduced from Feldman.



Notation Example 22: *Düyek usûl* reproduced from Feldman²³⁷⁴.



Notation Example 23: *Sofiyân usûl* by Vicente.



Notation Example 24: *Düyek usûl* by Vicente²³⁷⁵.

As seen in the examples above, *düyek* and *sofyan usûls* can be grouped and measured differently. Combined with the various degrees (*mertebe*) of each *usûl*, according to which the

²³⁶⁹ Uygun, 2013, p. 413; Özcan, 1994a, p. 85; Feldman, 2002, p. 192; Vicente, 2007, pp. 143, 200.

²³⁷⁰ Feldman, 2002, p. 194; Vicente, 2007, p. 201.

²³⁷¹ Feldman, 2002, p. 195.

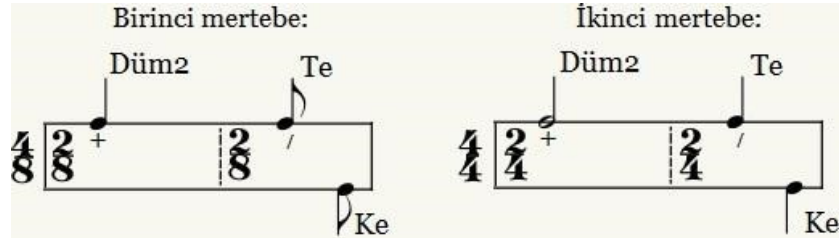
²³⁷² İnançer, T. Ömer: “İstanbul’da Tarikat Ayin ve Zikirleri”, Yılmaz, Coşkun (ed.), *Antik Çağ’dan XXI. Yüzyıla Büyük İstanbul Tarihi*, İstanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi 2015, pp. 316–340/322.

²³⁷³ Vicente, 2007, p. 200.

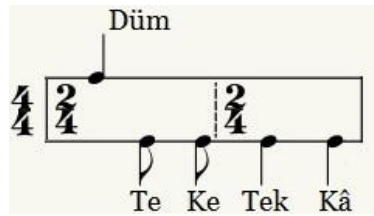
²³⁷⁴ Feldman, 2002, p. 194.

²³⁷⁵ Vicente, 2007, p. 201.

note values of each beat can be doubled or quadrupled and thus the tempo can be altered, and the possibility for variations (*velvele*), such differences in notation can be predicted. Below, the *düyek* and *sofyân usûls* along with the accompanying mnemonics and degrees of each *usûl* are demonstrated by Özkan as used in the Turkish musicology and music education:



Notation Example 25: *Sofyân usûl's degrees (mertebe) and mnemonics reproduced from Özkan²³⁷⁶.*



Notation Example 26: *Sofyân usûl's variation (velvele) and mnemonics reproduced from Özkan²³⁷⁷.*

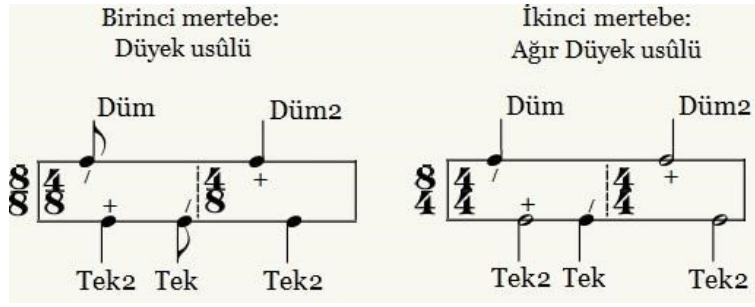
While in the first degree the *sofyân usûl* is shown with the quarter and eighth note values, in the second degree these durations are doubled with the half and quarter notes. Here, the numerator indicates the number of strokes in the cycle and is constant for a given *usûl*, the denominator value changes depending on the tempo of a piece (*yürüklük*). The variation in the Notation Example 26 demonstrates a frequently played *bendir* pattern in the *zikir* rituals. The other examples below illustrate the *düyek usûl*, its degrees, and variations, which, according to Özkan, is made up by two *sofyân usûl* and may also be used in a *zikir* event. The construction of more complex rhythmic cycles in Turkish music is often understood as the combinations of shorter cycles. Whereas Adelburg argues that the long *usûl* cycles are made of the combinations of *sofyân*, *yürük-semâî*, and *türkî darb*²³⁷⁸, for both Özkan and Çakar the base *usûls* from which the more complex *usûls* can be derived, are *nim sofyân* (duple time) and *semâî* (triple time)²³⁷⁹.

²³⁷⁶ Özkan, 1994, p. 573.

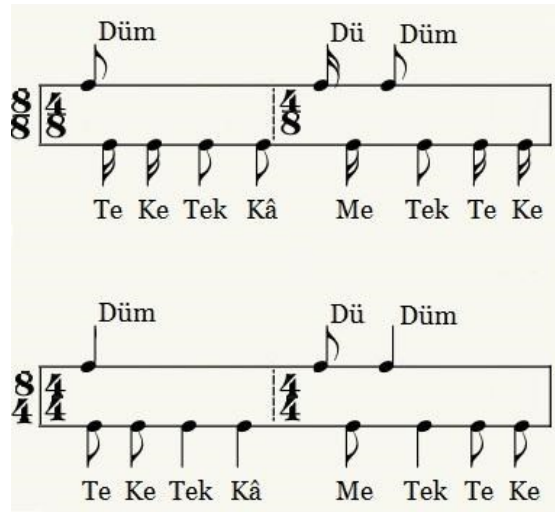
²³⁷⁷ Özkan, 1994, p. 573.

²³⁷⁸ Von Adelburg, R. August: "Einiges über die Musik der Orientalen, insonderheit über das dominierende persisch-türkische Tonsystem", in: *Ästhetische Rundschau Wochenschrift*, 4/20, 1867, p. 121.

²³⁷⁹ Özkan, 1994, p. 563; Çakar, Şeref: *Türk Musikisinde Usûl*, İstanbul: Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları 1996, p. 27.



Notation Example 27: Düyek usûl's degrees (mertebe) and mnemonics by Özkan²³⁸⁰.



Notation Example 28: Düyek usûl's variations (velvele) and mnemonics by Özkan²³⁸¹.

The mnemonics (*düm*, *te*, *ke*, *tek*, *kâ* etc.) in the notation examples represent different low-pitched (*düm*) and high-pitched (*te*, *ke*, etc.) sounds produced either instrumentally by *kudüm*, *bendir*, or other percussion instrument (Figure 23), or vocalized as a memorization tool in *meşk* practice²³⁸². The signs (+, /, and empty space) used in Özkan's notations indicate another important aspect concerning the construction of *usûl* cycles, namely the accentuations added to the sequence of strokes as accentuated (+), semi-accentuated (/), and unaccentuated ()²³⁸³.

²³⁸⁰ Özkan, 1994, p. 588.

²³⁸¹ Özkan, 1994, p. 589.

²³⁸² Behar, 2003, p. 23.

²³⁸³ Özkan, 1994, p. 561.

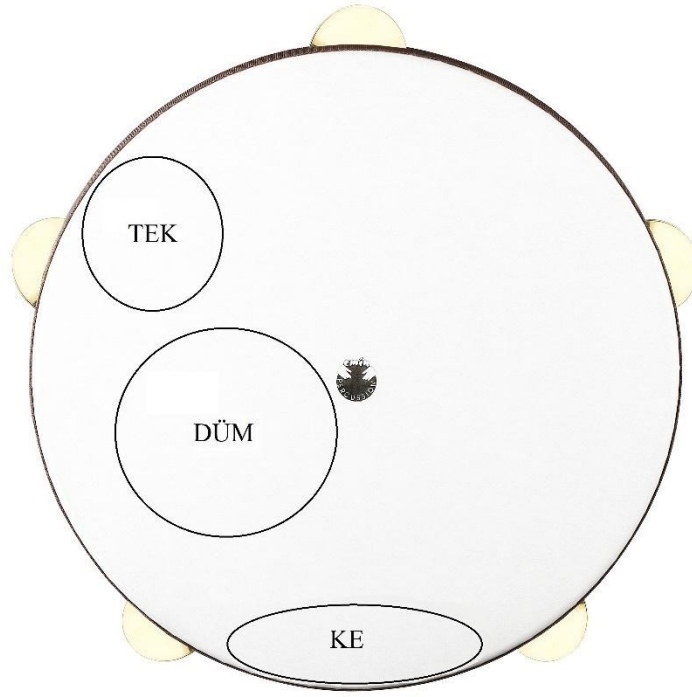


Figure 23: The production of mnemonic sounds as performed by the musicians of the HUR group, located on a 40-cm bendir.

As in the case of *semâ* and *zikir*, “typically fluid emic distinctions” and categorizations in Turkish music have brought a certain degree of ambiguity in notating and transmitting these rhythmic cycles. A preliminary comparison of the sequence of mnemonics attributed to certain *usûl* patterns demonstrates this ambiguity as below:

Düyek: *düm tek tek düm tek*

Çifte düyek: *düm teke düm tek düm düm tek teke*

Semâî: *düm teke düm tek*

Sofyân: *düm teke düm teke düm teke*²³⁸⁴

Sofyân: *düm teke*

Yürük semâ’î: *düm tek tek düm tek*

Ağır semâ’î: *düm teke düm tek*

Ağır semâ’î: *düm tek tek düm te-ek*

Sofyân: *düm te’ke düm tek*²³⁸⁵

²³⁸⁴ Kılıç, Erdal: “Hekimbaşı Edvarının Sistematik Müzikoloji Açısından İncelenmesi”, in: *Rast Müzikoloji Dergisi*, 5/1, 2017, pp. 1430–1446/1439.

²³⁸⁵ Kalaitzidis, Kyriakos: *Post-Byzantine Music Manuscripts as a Source for Oriental Secular Music (15th to Early 19th Century)*, Koubaroulis, Kiriaki / Koubaroulis, Dimitri (trans.), Würzburg: Ergon Verlag 2016, pp. 280–282.

Sofyân: *düm teke tek kâ*

Düyek: *düm tek tek düm tek*

Düyek: *düm teke tek kâ dü-me-düm tek teke*²³⁸⁶

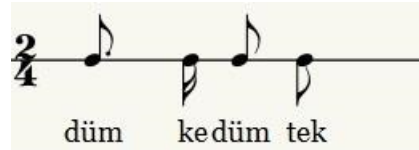
Düyek: *düm tek tek düm tek*

1 2 1 2 2 – (eight strokes)

Düyek: *düm tek tek düm tek*

1 - 1 1 1 – (four strokes)²³⁸⁷

The *zikir* of the HUR group, however, consists of a rhythmical pattern played by multiple *bendirs*, which, with occasional variations, is used as an accompaniment throughout the event. It coincides neither with the *sofyân* nor the *düyek usûl*, but it may as well be a variation (*velvele*) of one of these *usûls*, an idiosyncratic combination of the two, or a distinct *usûl* on its own. Among the mnemonic examples given above, the last one, *düyek* with four strokes and with a beat (*tek*) skipped, partly corresponds with the predominant rhythmic pattern used in the HUR *zikir*, whose mnemonics can be shown as *düm ke düm tek*:



Notation Example 29: Predominant rhythmic pattern played by *bendir* in the HUR *zikir*.

This two-beat, four-stroke rhythmical pattern is played in the HUR *zikir* with various tempi, mostly beginning with a slow tempo with stepwise or sudden increase and as such corresponds with a rhythmic pattern (*ayyoub*) used in the Egyptian *zar* rituals. In this form, however, the pattern is reminiscent of the *sofyân usûl* as noted by Feldman above, with the first sixteenth note omitted. On the other hand, apart from this pattern, the HUR *bendir* players also employ several variations and elaborations (*velvele*):

²³⁸⁶ Özkan, 1994, pp. 573, 588, 589.

²³⁸⁷ Uz, İ. Kâzım: *Musiki İstılâhâtı*, Ankara: Küğ Yayınları 1964, p. ? quoted by Hatipoğlu, Vasfî / Sağlam, Atilla, “Türk Mûsikîsi’nde Usûl Geleneğinin Değerlendirilmesi”, in: *Eğitimde Kuram ve Uygulama*, 9/2, 2013, pp. 113–134/133.



Notation Example 30: A variation (a) played by bendir in the HUR zikir.



Notation Example 31: A variation (b) played by bendir in the HUR zikir.

In addition to these rhythmic cycles, most of the *ilâhis* that are sung in the HUR *zikir* have their own compositional *usûls*, among the forty-eight units minimum fifteen of them are composed in *sofyân*, about five in *düyek*, several *nim sofyân*, and one in *aksak usûl* can be so far detected.

11.5 Movement Repertoire

As discussed above, the practice of *zikir*, especially when collectively performed, can be categorized in terms of the employment of sound (*hafî* or *cehrî*) or the (spiritual) organs that participate in reciting the *zikir* formulas—tongue, heart, spirit. Another categorical distinction concerning the *zikir* forms is based on the postures, movements, and the spatial organization of the individuals and the group, which are often exclusively associated with specific *tarikat* groups' *zikir*²³⁸⁸.

Concerning the posture, the most prevalent distinctions are made through the body's bearing in a *zikir* performance as sitting (*kuûdî*), standing (*kıyâmî*), and circular movement (*devrânî*)²³⁸⁹. The last, *devrânî zikir*, is in fact a form of standing (*kıyâmî*) *zikir* but different from the *kıyâmî* variation—in which the performers stand in their place while performing the *zikir* formulas—in *devrânî* form, the participants rotate collectively around an imaginary axis or occasionally around the leading *şeyh*, namely, the embodiment of this imaginary axis²³⁹⁰. It is this circular motion that assigns the name *devrânî* to the *zikir* form, which houses several

²³⁸⁸ Gilsenan, 1973, p. 161; Yönetken, 2003, pp. 235–236.

²³⁸⁹ Uygun, 2013, p. 412; Bardakçı, 2007, p. 28.

²³⁹⁰ Uludağ, Süleyman: "Halka", in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 9, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1994, pp. 248–249/249.

symbolic meanings²³⁹¹. Whereas the sitting and standing *zikir* forms are derived from the *Kur'an* 3:191 (*Âl-i İmrân*)²³⁹²:

“The ones who remember *Allah*, upright and seated and on their sides, and meditate upon the creation of the heavens and the earth: ‘Our Lord, in no way have You created this untruthfully. All Extolment be to You! So protect us from the torment of the Fire’”

The circular movement of *devrânî zikir* form extracts its validation from the *Kur'an* 39:75 (*Zümer*)²³⁹³:

“And you will see the Angels encircling round about the Throne extolling with the praise of their Lord; and (justice) will be decreed between them with the Truth; and it will be said, ‘Praise be to *Allah*, the Lord of the worlds’”

Additional associations have also been attributed to the *devrânî zikir* movement by different *mutasavvife* or scholars. Ozak, for example, refers to one of the five pillars of Islam, temporary pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, in which the practice of circumambulation of the Kaaba (the directional orientation of the Muslim prayers), known as *tavaf*, represents “the acceptance and the will to be a part of the cosmic order in which everything revolves around something else in a prescribed arrangement”²³⁹⁴. The notion of the arrangement of the cosmic order, a crucial element of all the creation theories, and its manifestation in the revolving celestial movements of the moon, the sun, stars, and planets are thus often associated with the *devrânî zikir*²³⁹⁵. Depending on which *tarikât* performs it and how, the *devrânî* form may acquire a different name such as *semah*, *semâ*, *darb-ı esmâ*²³⁹⁶, *halaka*, *demdeme*, *tavaf tevhidi*, *bedevî topu*, *vefa devri*, or *halvetî devranî*²³⁹⁷. These names also indicate slight variations in performing the *devrânî zikir*:

²³⁹¹ On the symbolic meanings of *devrân* involving themes such as *fenâfillâh*, *bezm-i elest*, rapture (*istiğrak*), ascension (*mi'rac*), *bâtın-ledûn* (secrecy, esotericism) etc., see: Uşşâki / Uşşâki, *Tuhfetü'l-Uşşâkiyye*, 2016, pp. 142–147; Kılıç, 2016b, pp. 118–123.

²³⁹² Ozak, 1978, p. 74.

²³⁹³ Uludağ, Süleyman: “Devran”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 15, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1997, pp. 358–359/359; Ozak, 1978, p. 127; Geels, 1996, p. 233.

²³⁹⁴ Ögüt, Salim: “Tavaf”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 40, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 2011, pp. 178–180/178; Ozak, 1978, pp. 74–75, 128.

²³⁹⁵ Bardakçı, 2007, pp. 20, 28; Trimmingham, 1971, p. 195; Kılıç, 2016b, pp. 118–119.

²³⁹⁶ Uludağ, 1994, p. 249; Kemikli, Bilal: “Türk Tasavvuf Edebiyatında Risale-i Devran ve Semâ Türü ve Gaybî'nin Konuya İlişkin Görüşleri”, in: *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 37/1, 1997, pp. 443–460/447.

²³⁹⁷ Yönetken, 2003, pp. 236–237; Bardakçı, 2007, p. 29; İnancı, 2015, pp. 328–340; Uludağ, Süleyman: “Âyin. Tasavvuf”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 4, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1991a, pp. 250–251/250.

“In *devrânî tekkes*, *zikir* begins with in a sitting (*kuûdî*) position while the *tekke*’s *evrâd* read aloud; after continuing with the *zikir* of *kelime-i tevhid* and *ism-i celâl*, the participants stand up and move on to standing (*kıyâmî*) *zikir*. Following this *kıyâmî zikir*, which lasts for a long time, *devrânî zikir* is performed. *Devrân*, which shows many differences according to the *tekke*, is generally done as follows: Dervishes holding hands start by chanting ‘*ism-i hû*’. In the first ‘*hû*’, a short step is taken with the right foot to the right, in the second ‘*hû*’ the left foot is brought next to the right foot, so the starting *devrân* continues for three turns. The names of *Allah*, *Vâhid*, *Ahad*, *Samed* are repeated and the *devrân* continues in the same way. According to the preferences of the *tarikât*, this turn can be to the right or to the left. For example, the turn is to the right in Kâdiriyye and to the left in Halvetiyye”²³⁹⁸

While in the quotation above Özcan provides a general information on how *devrânî zikir* is performed by one specific *tarikât*, several other *mutasavvife* and scholars may give somewhat diverging accounts:

“They first chant in *kuud* (sitting) position, then stand up and hold hands, and move to the left with *ism-i Hu*. By moving the right foot forward and the left foot slightly back, they perform three cycles, the *zikir* gets faster, then they continue in a circle with one arm on the shoulder and one arm on the waist of the next person. Some Halveti branches recite *ism-i Hay* at this time”²³⁹⁹

What can be deduced from the accounts above is that in *devrânî tarikât* organizations, the *zikir* event appears to begin customarily in a sitting position (*kuûdî*) followed by the next episode, the standing (*kıyâmî*) *zikir*. These two different positions involve several kinetic elements such as springing up on the knees in place without taking a step, swaying or turning the upper body back and forth or left to right, or specific prescribed head and feet movements or steps²⁴⁰⁰. Like various forms of *devrânî zikir* have different names, both *kuûdî* and *kıyâmî zikir* forms as well may acquire a name of their own. For instance, the Celvetî *nısf-ı kıyâm* is an idiosyncratic form as a semi-sitting position on the knees. The *tulubî nevbe* and *devsiye* forms of Sa’dî *tarikât*, the *beyyumî*, *desdere*, *bedevî topu*, *bürhan* of Nakşibendî, or the *kabir tevhidi* of Rifâiyye *tarikât* groups²⁴⁰¹ are all specific forms. The weekly *zikir* performances of the HUR group invariably contain all three main forms (*kuûdî*, *kıyâmî*, and *devrânî*). When these are compared with both the historical and the current accounts provided by numerous *mutasavvıf* and scholars, however, minor incongruities from the HUR *zikir* are detected. These differences often appear in certain points such as the ordering and the number of prayers or *zikir* formulas

²³⁹⁸ Özcan, Nuri: “Devran. Mûsiki”, in: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 9, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı 1994b, pp. 249–250/250.

²³⁹⁹ Yönetken, 2003, p. 237.

²⁴⁰⁰ İnançer, 2015, pp. 321–322.

²⁴⁰¹ Yönetken, 2003, pp. 236–237; İnançer, 2015, pp. 316–327; Uygun, 2013, p. 413.

used in one of the main forms; the movements of the head, upper body, or feet; the sequence of swaying movements; the direction of the rotary motions, or the way participants hold each other (by their hands, linking the arms, or putting hands on shoulders). Below, this comparison is made between the HUR group's *zikir* forms and other potentially corresponding examples as illustrated by Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson (Figures 24–34).



Figure 24: The sitting (*kuûdî*) *zikir* as practiced by the HUR group.



Figure 25: The sitting (*kuûdî*) *zikir* as practiced by the Rifâiyye tarikat around the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. D'Ohsson, Plate Nr. 128.



Figure 26: The standing (kıyâmî) zikir with semâzens as practiced by the HUR group.

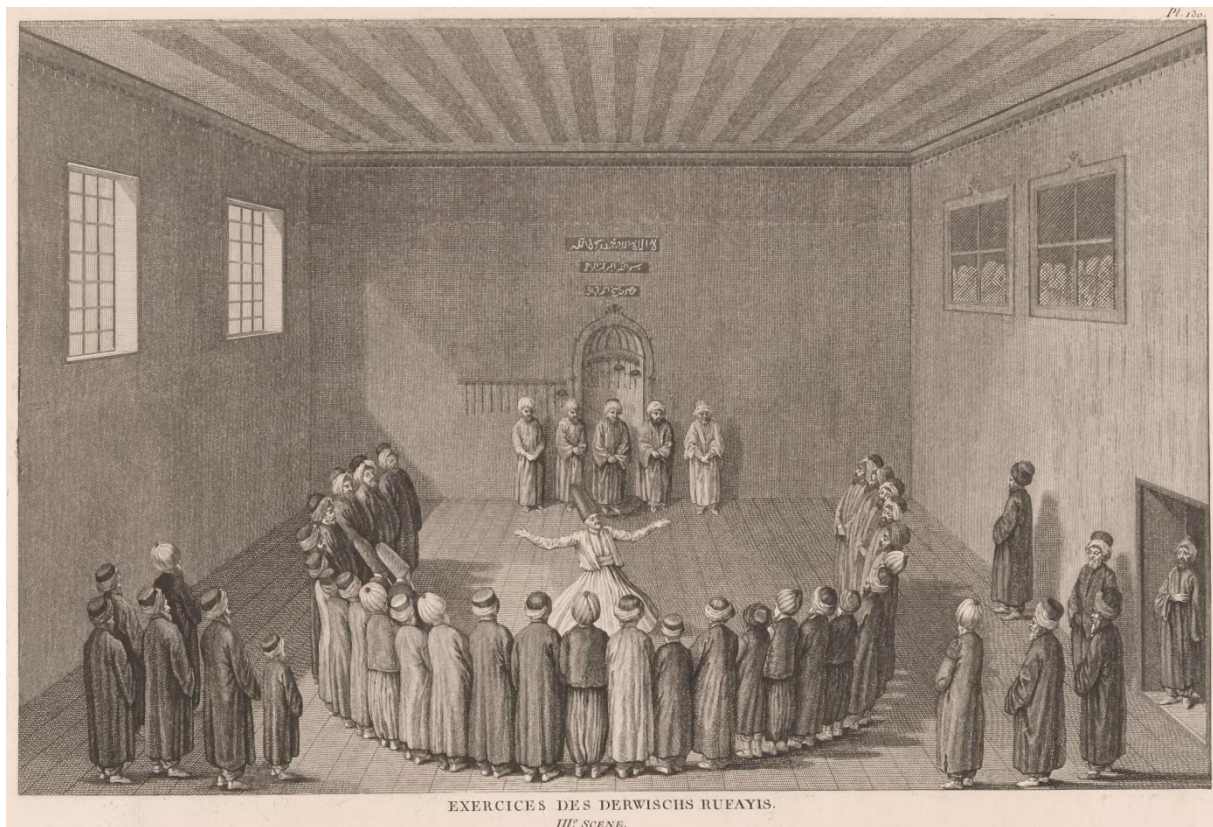


Figure 27: The standing (kıyâmî) zikir with a semâzen as practiced by the Rifâiyye tarikat around the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. D'Ohsson, Plate Nr. 130.



Figure 28: The circling (devrânî) zikir with the şeyh at the center as practiced by the HUR group.

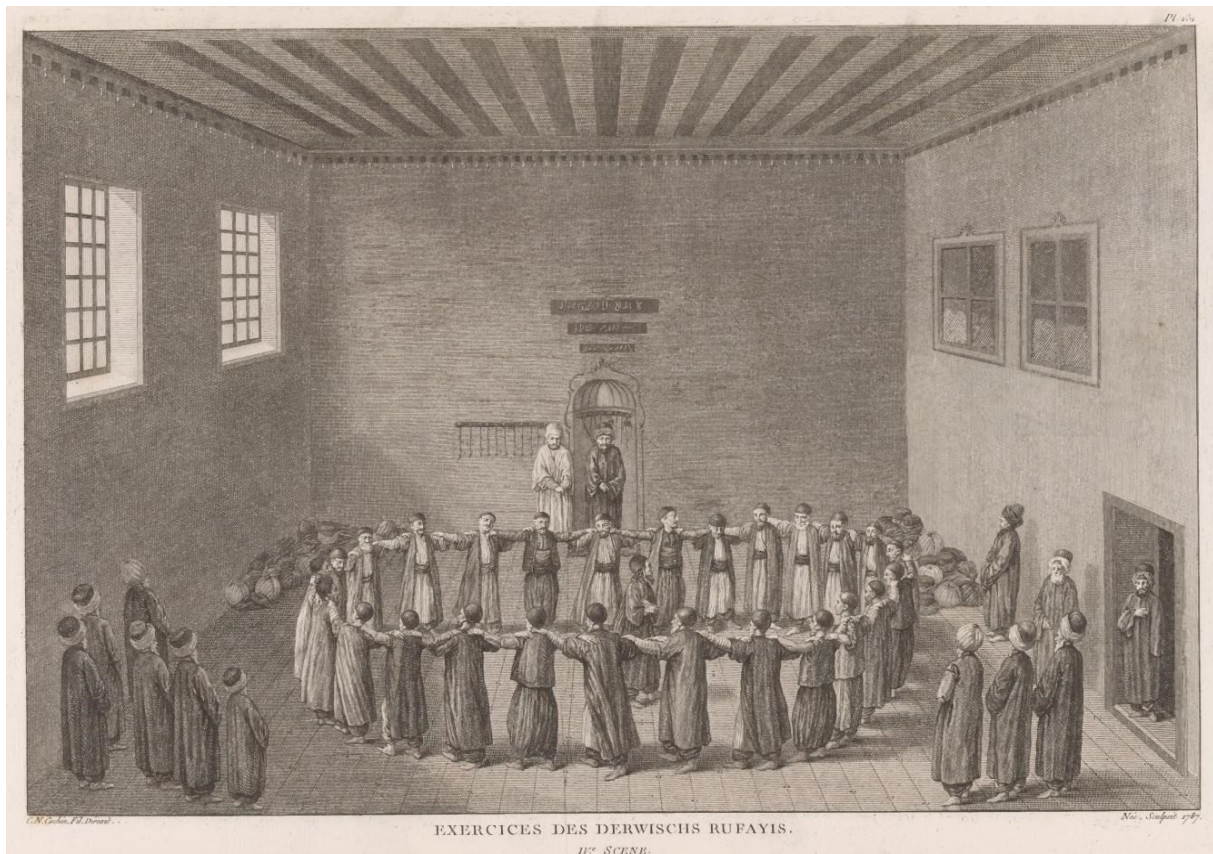


Figure 29: The circling (devrânî) zikir with likely a şeyh at the center as practiced by the Rifâiyye tarikat around the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. D'Ohsson, Plate Nr. 131. According to İnançer, this is the form called "halveti devrani"²⁴⁰².

²⁴⁰² İnançer, 2015, p. 329.



Figure 30: Another circling (devrânî) zikir with three dancers at the center as practiced by the HUR group.



Figure 31: The circling (devrânî) zikir with several participants at the center as practiced by the Kādiriyye tari-kat around the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. D'Ohsson, Plate Nr. 127. This form may also be the characteristic “bedevi topu” (bedevi ball), in which several or all participants come closer to each other creating a ball of themselves.



Figure 32: The formation of “bedevi topu” while in transition from devrânî form as practiced by the HUR group.



Figure 33: The formation of “bedevi topu” with the şeyh at the center distributing the gained blessing (bereket) from the zikir as practiced by the HUR group.



Figure 34: The completed “bedevi topu” with the şeyh at the center distributing the gained blessing (bereket) or mârifet²⁴⁰³ from the zikir as practiced by the HUR group.

In response to the author’s interview question on the current movement repertoire of the HUR *zikir*, Kantar provided the following explanation:

“Q: While, for example, the *semâ* practice of the Mevlevî *tarikât* and its current structure can be attributed to Sultan Veled, when and by whom was the last form of your *zikir* determined?

A: Ömer el-Halvetî, who is considered the founding master (*pir*) of our *tarikât*, lived in the Shamakhi region, which is now within the borders of Azerbaijan, and later, with the Seyyid Yahyâ-yı Şîrvânî, who grew up a century after him, the Halvetî *tarikât* became systematic and reached Anatolia through his caliphs. In general, *zikir* starts with forming a circle (*halaka*) and sitting on two knees and chanting the prayer of *istiğfar* and *tevhid* in a large area such as a mosque or a *tekke*. Then [a.n. the *zikir* participants] stand up and swing to the right and left, while some names (*esmâ*) are recited. After that, the most privileged part of *zikir* in the Halvetî tradition begins, which is called *devrân* which dervishes perform by holding hands and turning from left to right.

I do not know who applied this [a.n. *devrânî*] *zikir* for the first time, but according to *tasavvuf* books, the sitting (*kuûd*) and standing (*kıyâm*) forms of *zikir* go long way back even until the Prophet Muhammed. In other words, to sum up, the sitting, standing, and circling forms of *zikir* are generally practiced in all branches of the Halvetî *tarikât*. Provided that this method is the basis, some different *zikir* methods, for example, one or more *semâzen* whirling or a few dervishes dancing (*raks*) in the middle of *zikir*...These are the things that the current şeyh of the *tarikât* may or may not apply according to his own will and desire. In fact, the methods of *zikir* are transitive in *cehrî* [a.n. *zikir*

²⁴⁰³ Uludağ, 1994, pp. 248–249.

practicing] *tarikat* organizations: a Kādirî *şeyh* may apply a ritual from Rūfâî or Halvetî *tarikat* in his own *zikir*, or a Halvetî *zikir* may incorporate different *zikir* methods”²⁴⁰⁴

In addition to these explanations, Kantar further replied to the author’s question on the historicity of the sung material in the HUR *zikir* as follows:

“Q: Are the dates of your oldest and newest *ilâhi* material (or any element in your *zikir*) known?

A: There is no way that we can date as old or new either in our hymns or in our method; however, the *zikir* method we are applying now generally follows a written work describing the Uşşâkî *zikir* practiced in the 1800s²⁴⁰⁵. According to my private research, we have more or less basic similarities with the other branches of the Uşşâkî *tarikat*. However, there are many elements shaped by the taste of our current master *şeyh*”²⁴⁰⁶

As mentioned above, the *zikir* of the HUR group is episodic in its structure consisting of “a series of climactic moments rather than a gradual building up to one”²⁴⁰⁷ at the very end of the event. The “*Hamidiya Shadhiliya*” *zikir* described by Gilsenan appears to have an identical ritual process with several climaxes, which are “at once physical, expressed in the increasing violence of the bodily movements and the vocal crescendo; and emotional, intensified by the other elements such as the hymns, and the changing rhythms”²⁴⁰⁸. On the factors triggering these episodic climaxes, which may be experienced as ecstasy or a similar epistemological altered state of consciousness (*vecd*), several authors provide corresponding accounts with Gilsenan and the HUR *zikir*, namely, “as the tempo quickens, the rhythmic patterns, dynamic, vocal iterations, and physical gestures all intensify, creating what is perceived as an ascendant trajectory”²⁴⁰⁹. When this is combined with the accompanying breathing techniques that often lead to degrees of hyperventilation syndrome²⁴¹⁰ and thus may trigger the experience of ecstasy, such total intensification of the parameters that are at work in *zikir* turns the practice into “an amplifier and harmonizer of the psychic energy of both listeners and musicians”²⁴¹¹. Even though this episodic structure of the *zikir* necessitates each episode to be treated in their own terms and dynamics, most *zikir* events, in terms of generating ecstasy, often consist of a “pro-

²⁴⁰⁴ The response of Oğuzhan Kantar in an email sent to the author on August 17, 2018.

²⁴⁰⁵ Kantar here likely refers to the *âdâb* manual written by Şeyh Abdullah Salâhaddîn-i Uşşâkî (d. 1782), see: Uşşâkî / Uşşâkî, *Tuhfetü'l-Uşşâkiyye*, 2016.

²⁴⁰⁶ The response of Oğuzhan Kantar in an email sent to the author on August 27, 2018.

²⁴⁰⁷ Gilsenan, 1973, p. 169.

²⁴⁰⁸ Gilsenan, 1973, p. 169.

²⁴⁰⁹ Vicente, 2007, p. 223. See also: Trimmingham, 1971, pp. 199–201, 205–207; Shannon, 2006, p. 111; Touma, 2003, p. 166.

²⁴¹⁰ Geels, 1996, p. 249; Haas, 1943, pp. 19–22.

²⁴¹¹ During, 1999, p. 286; Vicente, 2007, pp. 206–207.

cess whose sequential order obeys a particular internal logic, preparation, onset, climax, and resolution—each present peculiarities that vary significantly from one cult to another”²⁴¹². In the HUR *zikir*, despite no ecstasy (*vecd*) in the sense of losing self-control can be detected²⁴¹³, “the internal logic of the sequential order” of the episodes follows a corresponding trajectory (preparation, onset, climax, resolution) as referred to by Rouget above.

Each episode of the HUR *zikir* is marked by the form of the accompanying movement (*kuûd*, *kıyâm*, or *devrân*). In general, the beginning as well as the ending of each episode, and their sub-divisions (e.g., transition from one *ilâhi* to another), are highlighted by the *şeyh* via hand gestures, clapping the hands, and emphasizing the beginning or ending syllable of the sung *ilâhi* etc. All these gestures further designate the varying tempi of each episode’s recitation and movements.

This sequenced order of *zikir* rituals as a general characteristic led scholars to evaluate the practice as having two or sometimes three main parts²⁴¹⁴. While the first introductory part consists of the least musical recitations from the *Kur’an* or *evrâd* (litanies) specific to each *tarikât*—which “were often composed by famous mystics and handed down as part of the heritage of an order”²⁴¹⁵—the second (and if present, the third) parts involve musicking and an increased spatial movement compared to the first part. This first part of the “general binary layout”²⁴¹⁶ of the *zikir* practice, argues Gilsenan, “fulfils the function for the dhikr proper and establishes the appropriate psychological ‘frame’ for its performers”²⁴¹⁷. As discussed above, such psychological preparation involves suggestions (*telkin*) that may lead participants to acknowledge the spiritual experiences of the second part. Reminiscent of Becker’s view of the socially constructed ritual experiences, Michon writes that “the liturgical elements used in the course of the preparatory phase are mainly songs and cadenced recitations performed in an order that forms ‘stages’ (*marâtib*) destined to lead the participants from an ordinary state of consciousness to a level of receptivity and fervor favorable to the mystical experience”²⁴¹⁸.

In the *zikir* practice of the HUR group, a similar classification is applied, in which the first part contains several sub-sections and the beginning of the second is marked by specific

²⁴¹² Rouget, 1985, p. 32.

²⁴¹³ This, however, does not mean that some “extraordinary experiences” are absent in the HUR *zikir*. According to a study on the HUR group conducted by Cengil, several participants expressed their extraordinary experiences while performing both solitary and collective *zikir* forms. These experiences involve an encounter with Satan, receiving a warning from an imaginary elder, sensing a sweet scent, or seeing angels participating in the collective *zikir* etc. See: Cengil, 2010, pp. 213–215.

²⁴¹⁴ Trimmingham, 1971, pp. 204–205; Uygun, 2013, p. 413; Vicente, 2007, p. 205; Geels, 1996, p. 234.

²⁴¹⁵ Renard, 2009, p. 144.

²⁴¹⁶ Vicente, 2007, p. 205.

²⁴¹⁷ Gilsenan, 1973, p. 156.

²⁴¹⁸ Michon, 1997, p. 274.

prayers and recitations performed by the leader FNE. Whereas in the first part, the HUR group employs new technological tools (broadcasting via the internet) to disseminate their views and show “the true path towards salvation” (*irşad*) to a larger audience, in the second part the *zikir* proper is performed, which is as well considered the part of *irşad* and thus broadcasted on the internet. This was confirmed by Kantar upon a question of the author as follows:

“Q: Since when have your *zikir* performances been broadcast on internet platforms? How did this idea come about?

A: Our *zikir* performances in fact have been recorded with the possibilities at hand since older times. However, especially after the 2000s, we found it appropriate to broadcast our *zikir* due to the wide-spread use of internet communication. While we used to broadcast some special meetings, *zikir* and *devrân* performances that we made in certain periods, we are now trying to broadcast both the conversations (*sohbet*) and *zikir* practices of our master on a weekly basis by making better quality shots through a studio we created in our central *dergâh* after 2010. Our *şeyh* believes that we can only bring about one thousand people into our dervish lodge, but with these internet-like communication tools, we can convey our conversation and *zikir*, that is, the joy and love of *tasavvuf*, to millions and this, encourages the broadcasting of our *zikir* performances, based on the idea that it is a kind of guidance (*irşad*) activity”²⁴¹⁹

²⁴¹⁹ The response of Oğuzhan Kantar in an email sent to the author on August 27, 2018.

12 The Anatomy of the HUR Zikir

As a feature of the HUR group, the first introductory phase of their *zikir* extends beyond the space—*dergâh* or *âsitâne*²⁴²⁰—where the *zikir* is performed. For example, the conversation part (*sohbet*) mentioned by Kantar is named *Nurdan Doğan Nurani Sohbetler* (Luminous Conversations Born from the Divine Light) and takes place in a studio belonging to the *tarikât*, in which the leader FNE answers the questions asked by the adherents or the audiences of their TV channel (Nurani TV):



Figure 35: FNE responds to the questions broadcasted from Nurani TV.

These conversations led by FNE often contain advice for the novices and may last up to an hour²⁴²¹. They are always broadcasted online and live before the Thursday *zikir* events and on some occasions, additional conversations, advice, or detailed information concerning the *zikir* practice may be given by FNE in the space where the ritual takes place:

²⁴²⁰ The response of Oğuzhan Kantar in an email sent to the author on August 27, 2018.

²⁴²¹ As far as the author could observe, the topics explained by FNE during these conversations are, e.g., “the importance of the *şeyh*’s attention (*teveccüh*) and how not being a burden to the *şeyh*”, which was replied with references from the *âdâb* manual *Tuhfetü'l-Uşşâkiyye* (1 January 2017), “how to interpret suspicion that occurs in the heart of the disciple (*mürîd*) concerning his *şeyh*” (8 July 2018), “is it possible to practice *râbita* (spiritual bonding) by looking at the picture of the *şeyh*?” (10 June 2018) etc.



Figure 36: FNE explaining the four types of zikir to the attendees as *dil* (tongue), *kalb* (heart), *ruh* (soul/spirit), and *müşahede* (observation), each allowing a passage to the next type and the last of which (*müşahede*) leads to the final objective, *keşf* (discovery).

12.1 The Opening

Following these conversations, a transition to the ritual proper is often marked by a recitation of an *ilâhi* called *Mevlâm Ver Aşkını Bana* (I.1.) in *Rast makam*:

♩ = c. 120

Mev lâm ver aş kı nı- ı ba na- a Hay ra nın o la yı- m se ni- n

Bül bül gi bi gül şe nin de-e- Nâ lâ nın o la yı- m se ni- n

Notation Example 32: Outline of the *ilâhi*, *Mevlâm Ver Aşkını Bana* as performed by the HUR group.

At this point, it should be noted that most of the *zikir* footage uploaded to the internet has a different starting point and this *ilâhi* is only sung before the general *zikir* performance in certain recordings and always just after the conversations as a transition channel to the event. It

is possible that this *ilâhi* constitutes the opening section of all HUR *zikir* performances, but the differences in the available material prevent this conclusion from being reached.

When this *ilâhi* is taken as part of the HUR *zikir* ritual, it becomes the first sung unit in the whole event, which is followed by a short recitation (I.2.) in Arabic articulated by FNE as follows:

“E’ûzübi’l-lâhimine’ş-şeytâni’r-racîm. Bismi’l-lâhir’rahmâni’r-rahîm. Allah. Celle Celâlihu Amme Nevalihu ve Lâ ilâhe Ğayrihu”

“I seek refuge in *Allah* from Satan, who was expelled from *Allah*’s Mercy. I begin in the name of *Allah*, the Merciful and Compassionate. The only God who is exalted, majestic and honourable, there is no god but Him”

The content of this recitation, whose first half is known as *besmele* or *euzû besmele*, in fact may imply the official beginning of the *zikir* ritual proper as it contains one of the most important and frequently recited formulas or phrases (*besmele*) in Islam. The *besmele* formula is invariably recited by Muslims when starting a prayer or a deed with good intentions. Immediately after this formula, a recitation of the HUR lineage (*silsile*) sung in *Uşşâkî makam* takes place (I.3.):

♩ = c. 140

Ne bi el Mus ta fa A li el Mur te za E bu be kir Sıd dık

Hem A li A ba Ha sa nül Bas ri Ha bi bi A ce mi Da vu du Ta ğıy le

Kalp ler pür se fa Ma ru ful Ker hi Sır rı Sa ka ti Ca mi üt ta-rik

Cü ney di Ba ğ da di

Notation Example 33: Outline of the HUR *silsile*’s opening sung collectively (*cumhur ilâhi*) in *Uşşâkî makam*.

While the example above demonstrates merely the opening part of the entire *silsile*, the melodic development of the rest of *silsile* follows approximately the same course within the same *makam*. The *silsile* is one of the most crucial elements of all *tarikât* organizations as it contains an unbroken lineage going back to the Prophet Muhammed (Nebi el-Mustafa) and thus also functions as an authorization mechanism for the relevant *tarikât*. The *silsile* of the HUR group mentions fifty persons—including their current leader FNE—consisting of renowned *mutasavvife* such as Hasan-ı Basrî, Ma'rûf-i Kerhî, Cüneyd-i Bağdâdî and the founders (*pir*) of each *tarikât* tradition or its branches constituting the HUR's name (Halvetî-Uşşâkî-Ruhzârî), Ömer el-Halvetî, Hasan Hüsameddin Uşşâkî, and Hüsnü Gülzârî (Ruhzârî):

Silsile-i Uşşâkıyye Ruhzârîyye

Nebiyy'ül-Mustafâ, Aliyy'ül-Murtezâ
Ebû Bekir Sıddîk, Hem âl-i abâ

Hasan'ül Basrî, Habîb el-Acemî
Dâvûd et-Tâî'yle kalpler pür sefâ

Mar'ûf-i Kerhî, Serî es-Sakatî
Câmiü't-Târik Cüneyd-i Bağdâdî

Mimşâd, Muhammed Zünnûr
Muhammed Bekrî, Vecihüddîn-i Kâdî'i, Sühreverdî

Kutbettin, Rükneddin, Muhammed Şîrâz
Zâhid Muhammed Geylânî, Cemâleddin Bâz
Ömer el-Halvetî Pîr'i evvel yaz

Muhammed, İzzeddin, Sadreddin Hişam
Seyyid Yahyâ Şîrvânî ile ettiler kıyam

Muhammed, Tâceddin, Alâeddin Uşşâk
Yiğitbaşı Karamânî Sinan'da kuşak

Kutb'ül Âfâk, Gavs'ül Uşşâk, Hâtemen Pîr nesli pak
Seyyid Hasan Hüsameddin Uşşâkî koludur Hak

Mîmcânî, Garibî, Alîm Sinan
Keşânî, Halil Abdülkerîm Hân

Osman, Hamdi, Cemâl, Selâhaddin
Zühtü, Süleyman, Vasfî Galib, Şemseddin

Tâlibî İrşâdî, Hüseyin, Kamber
Necâtî, Gülzârî, Fehmiye Önder

Ol Nur geldi şimdi İbrahim İpek Yanar
Sırrı Nurullah'da eylemiş karar

İsteyen aşıklara eylesin vefâ
Ya Râb, senin aşkınla bulsunlar sefâ

Following the collectively sung *silsile* in a sitting position (Figure 37), a new sub-section (I.4.) in which FNE recites the *destur* (permission, asking for God's blessing) solo in a style similar to parlando—as in other short solo recitations performed by FNE between specific episodes. After this solo section, all attendees collectively recite the *tevhid* formula with slight variations (I.5.):

I.4. FNE → “*Destur ver Yâ Hû. Destur ver Yâ Hz. Pîr. Destur ver Yâ Ricâlû'l-gayb. Neveytû li'llâh. E'üzûbi'l-lâhimine's-şeytânî'r-racîm. Bismi'l-lâhir'rahmânî'r-rahîm. Efdâli zikrullah. Alemenne Hû*”

I.5. Collectively → “*Lâ ilâhe illallah Allah
Lâ ilâhe illallah Mevlâm
Lâ ilâhe illallah*”



Figure 37: The collective recitation of the silsile in sitting position.

I.6. FNE → “[...]”²⁴²² *şefaât senden Yâ Resulullah [...]*”

I.7. Collectively → “*Allah (3X) + Hû (3x)*”

I.8. FNE → “*ve lâ mabûde ve lâ maksûde ve lâ murâde illâ hû [...] cemâli görmek isteriz Yâ Hazreti Yâ Hû; Allahümme salli alâ seyyidina Muhammed*”

I.9. FNE → “*E’üzûbi’l-lâhimine’ş-şeytâni’r-racîm. Bismi’l-lâhir’rahmâni’r-rahîm. Yâ eyyuhâ-lleżîne âmenû tûbû ila(A)llâhi tevbeten nasûhan. Allahümme [...]*”²⁴²³

These alternating solo and collective recitations are immediately followed by the first *zikir* episode (II.), in which the *istiğfar zikir* formula (*estağfirullah el-âzim*) constitutes the main frame of the episode:



Notation Example 34: The istiğfar zikir formula as sung by the HUR group.

²⁴²² The sign [...] from here on will indicate the recitation parts that could not be detected by the author.

²⁴²³ *Kur’an* 66:8 (*Tahrîm*).

The *istiğfar* formula shown above is recited collectively, accompanied by the back-and-forth oscillation of the upper body in the sitting position. These oscillations are swaying the torso and the head forward-right, backward, forward-left, and backward again, which covers a recitation of one *istiğfar* formula. The inhaling point coincides with the first syllable of the formula (*es-*), which also corresponds with the swaying forward-right movement, whereas all remaining syllables are articulated while exhaling:

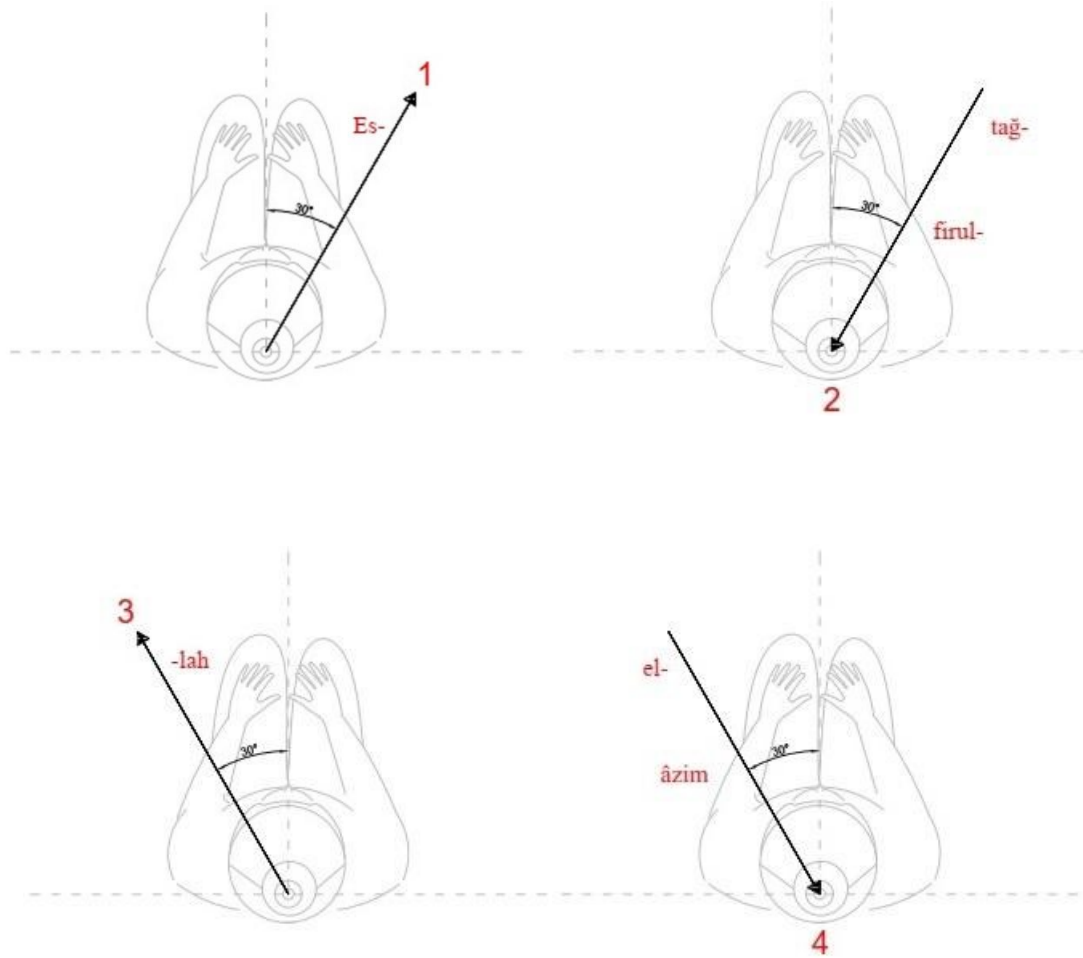
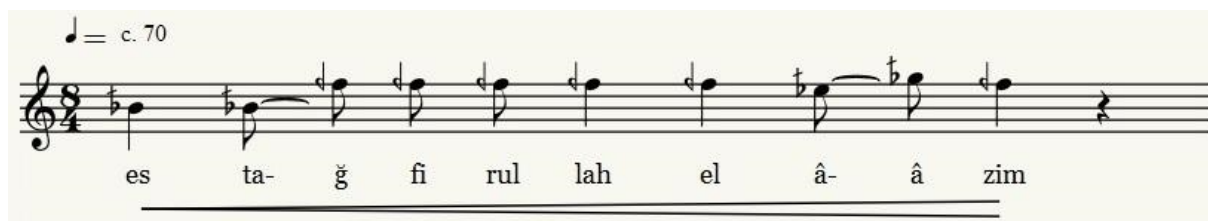


Figure 38: The movement repertoire of the *istiğfar* zikir practice as performed by the HUR group.

The *istiğfar* formula is recited in this manner ten times, lasting approximately fifty-eight seconds and then, with FNE's emphasis on the first syllable of the eleventh recitation, a sizeable fluctuation in the dynamics takes place. Initially, the collective recitation rises to a crescendo with a different melodic course (Example 35):



Notation Example 35: The eleventh istiğfar repetition with a crescendo. The F flat here indicates the Turkish flat value corresponding approximately twenty-three Cents below the natural F, not the Western flat which equals to fifty Cents.

This is followed by a decrescendo guttural group recitation of the same formula without pronouncing its syllables but preserving its rhythmic structure. While the group thus constitutes a frame, upon which FNE begins singing a *zikir-ilâhi*, *Geldim Kapına Geldim* (II. 1.) and forms two vocal registers. Meanwhile, with the hand gestures of FNE, the tempo of the recitation is moderately increased:

Notation Example 36: An outline of the sub-chapter II.1., at the top which is the eleventh repetition of the istiğfar formula building up to a tension and resolving into FNE's solo recitation of "Geldim Kapına Geldim" and accompanied by the collective guttural istiğfar formula (the twelfth and thirteenth repetition).

Following this, the fourteenth recitation of the *istiğfar* formula is sung collectively four times in a different melodic course by the entire group, without guttural alteration of the voice:



Notation Example 37: The fourteenth *istiğfar* repetition.

The eighteenth repetition is the same as the eleventh *istiğfar* formula shown above (Example 35). It is sung with a crescendo and resolved in the same way to FNE's solo of the subsequent two lines of *Geldim Kapına Geldim* and accompanied by the collective guttural formula in the lower register. After four non-guttural *istiğfar* formulas as in Example 37, with the twenty-fifth repetition, the same pattern is reproduced. As the HUR group further applies this compositional technique in the subsequent *zikir* episode, it may be a characteristic of the HUR *zikir*.

With the thirty-first recitation of the formula, the second sub-chapter (II.2.) begins. The articulation of the group takes the guttural form and is maintained until the end of the *istiğfar* episode (sixty-four repetitions in total). Simultaneously, the tempo is also gradually increased with the hand-clapping signal of FNE from approximately ♩ = 90 to ♩ = 105 BPM. After four guttural *istiğfar* formulas, with the thirty-sixth repetition, FNE and one of the professional singers begin to sing the next *zikir-ilâhi*, *İstiğfara Gel Kardeşim*, in monophony while the remaining group provides the rhythmic framework in the lower register:

♩ = c. 100 → 105

Gov gıy be te- e e da lan ki şı Gü na- h o lu -r her an i şı

es tağ fi rul lah el â zim es tağ fi rul lah el â zim

3 Nef si- i o lu -r ar ka da şı İs ti- ğ fa ra- a gel kar da şım

es tağ fi rul lah el â zim es tağ fi rul lah el â zim

Notation Example 38: An outline of the sub-chapter II.2 and the zikir ilâhi İstiğfara Gel Kardeşim.

Following the sixty-fourth repetition of *istiğfar*, FNE ends the second episode of their *zikir* abruptly and recites a prayer in Arabic solo: “*Estağfirullah el-âzim [...] Allahümme sallı âlâ seyyidınâ Muhammed*” (II.3). After FNE’s recitation, one of the professional singers begins to sing a *durak*, *Eşiğine Süreydim Yüzümü* (III.1.)²⁴²⁴, solo, while the rest of the group silently listens and adjusts their sitting position. The course of the HUR *zikir* with additional recitations is then continuing until the *tevhid zikir* episode as follows:

III.2. FNE → “*E’üzübi’l-lâhimine’ş-şeytânî’r-racîm. Bismî’l-lâhir’rahmânî’r-rahîm. Kul huva(A)llâhu vemelâ-iketeHu yusallûne ‘alâ-nnebiy(yi)(c) yâ eyyuhâ-lleżîne âmenû sallû ‘aleyh sallû ‘aleyhi vesellimû teslîmâ(n)*²⁴²⁵. *SadakAllâhü’l-Azim*”.

III.3. Collectively → “*Allâhümme sallı alâ seyyidınâ Muhammedini’n-nebiyyi’l-ümmiyyi ve alâ âlihî ve sahbihî ve sellim*” (3X)

“*Allâhümme sallı alâ seyyidınâ Muhammedin-abdike ve habibîke ve resûli-ken-nebiyyi’l-ümmiyyi ve alâ âlihî ve sahbihî ve sellim*” (3X)

²⁴²⁴ Since this unit is a *durak*—sung between the *zikir* episodes—it may or may not be a part of the *zikir* episodes (II.3. or III.1.).

²⁴²⁵ *Kur’an* 33:56 (*Ahzâb*).

III.4. FNE → Solo recitation in Arabic, cannot be detected.

III.5. Collectively → Mü'minin Kalbini Yuyup Arıtan Allah

Following this section, the fourth episode (IV.), *tevhid zikir*, begins with an opening prayer recited by FNE: “E’üzübi’l-lâhimine’s-şeytâni’r-racîm. Bismi’l-lâhir’rahmâni’r-rahîm. Efdâli zikrullah. Alemenne hû” (IV.1.). The compositional structuring of the first thirty *tevhid* (*lâ ilâhe illallah*) repetitions and the accompanying movements of the *tevhid zikir* episode corresponds precisely with the *istiğfar* episode’s first thirty repetitions (Table 5 and Figure 39).

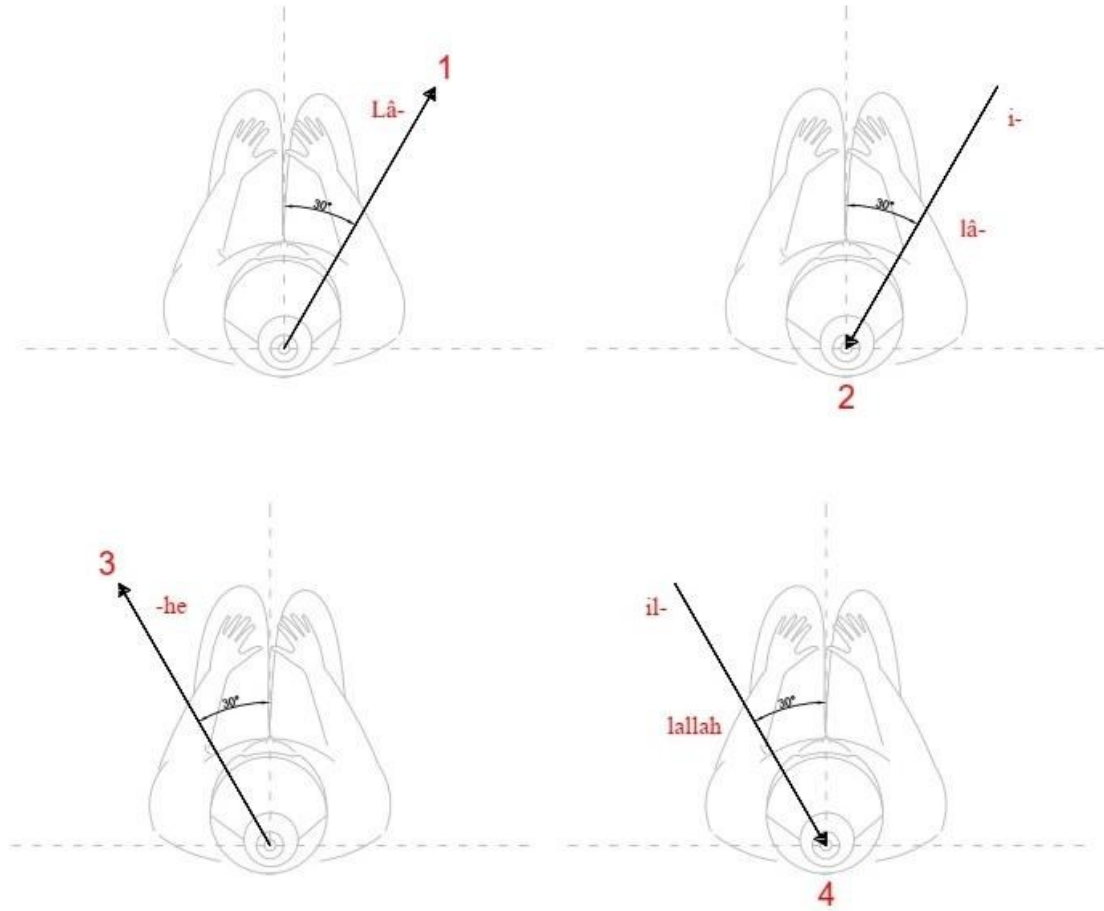
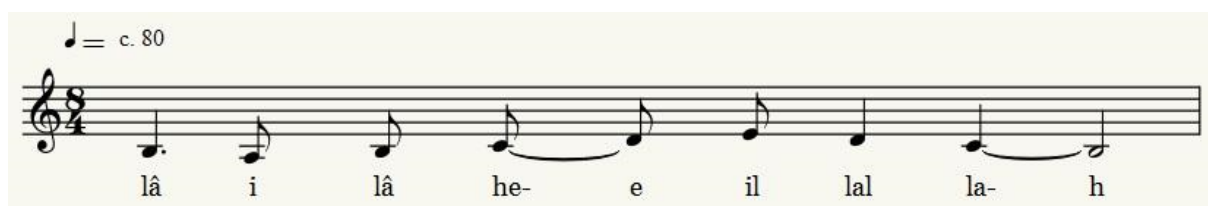


Figure 39: The movement repertoire of the *tevhid zikir* practice as performed by the HUR group.

The first ten repetitions are recited collectively about an octave lower with back-and-forth oscillation of the upper body while sitting (Notation Example 39).



Notation Example 39: The first ten repetitions of the tevhid formula.

With the eleventh repetition (Notation Example 40), FNE signals a crescendo movement by emphasizing and prolonging the first syllable (*lâ*), which resolves into one of the professional singer's solo recitation of *Allah Bize Lütfe'tti* (IV.2.), also known as “*Hamd ilâhisi*”²⁴²⁶, accompanied by the group's guttural recitation in the lower register.



Notation Example 40: The eleventh repetition of the tevhid formula.

12.2 The Outline of the *Tevhid Zikir* Episode

Zikir Formula	Number of Repetition	Event	Bendir Pattern
<i>Tevhid</i>	1.	Collectively <i>Lâ ilâhe illallah</i> (Example 39)	-
	11.	FNE's emphasis on the first syllable and crescendo (Examples 40)	-
	12. & 13.	Guttural & FNE sings a <i>zikir-ilâhi</i> solo (+1 professional singers), <i>Allah Bize Lütfe'tti</i> (Example 41)	-
	14.	Collectively, without guttural alteration (Example 42)	-
	18.	As in the 11. repetition	-
	25.	As in the 11. & 18. repetitions	-

²⁴²⁶ Uşşâki / Uşşâki, *Tuhfetü'l-Uşşâkiyye*, 2016, pp. 46–47.

	30.	Guttural & tempo increase from app. ♩ = 90 to ♩ = 110 BPM	-
	36.	Guttural & FNE sings a <i>zikir-ilâhi</i> solo <i>Bugün Vardım Bir Lokman'a</i>	-
<i>Allah Allah illallah</i>	44.	FNE's emphasis on the last syllable and crescendo	-
	45.	The “e” letter is added to the beginning of the <i>tevhid</i> formula	-
	49.	Guttural & FNE continues singing <i>Bugün Vardım Bir Lokman'a</i> solo	-
	57.	As in the 44. repetition	-
	62.	As in the 49. repetition	-
	70.	As in the 44. and 57. repetitions	-
	71.	Guttural & tempo increase from app. ♩ = 110 to ♩ = 160 BPM	-
	76.	FNE introduces a new <i>zikir-ilâhi</i> , <i>Şeyhim Hüsnü Gülizari</i>	Düm ke düm tek
	87.	Guttural & tempo increase from app. ♩ = 160 to ♩ = 220 BPM	Variation: Düm teke düm tek
	103.	FNE introduces a new <i>zikir-ilâhi</i> , <i>Görmeyenden Kaçındılar</i> (Example 43)	
	133.	Guttural & FNE continues <i>zikir-ilâhi</i>	-
	157.	Guttural & tempo increase from app. ♩ = 90 to ♩ = 110 BPM	-
	187.	The formula begins to be articulated without guttural alteration	Variation: Düm teke düm tek
	214.	Guttural, one of the professional sing- ers introduces a new <i>zikir-ilâhi</i> , “ <i>Gel Gel Beru</i> ”	Düm ke düm tek Düm teke tek tek
	262.	Guttural, one of the professional sing- ers introduces a <i>şuğul</i> , “ <i>Ya Imam er-Ruslî</i> ” (Example 44)	
	301.	FNE ends the <i>tevhid zikir</i> episode ab- ruptly and recites a short prayer.	-

Table 5: Outline of the *tevhid zikir* episode made of 301 repetitions.

♩ = c. 90

Şü kü- r el ha- m dü lil lah

lâ i lâ he il lal lah

²

Ni me- e ti ne- e gark et ti- i- i

lâ i lâ he il lal lah

♩ = c. 85

³

lâ i lâ he- e il lal la- -a -h

Notation Example 41: The 12. and 13. repetitions articulated gutturally by the group, upon which FNE sings the zikir-ilâhi “Allah Bize Lütfetti” and followed by the 14. repetition without guttural alteration.

♩ = c. 85

lâ i lâ he- e il lal la- -a -h

Notation Example 42: The fourteenth repetition of the tevhid formula.

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 110$

Se he- r

lâ i lâ he il lal lah

düm te ke düm tek düm te ke düm tek

²

vak ti- i

lâ i lâ he il lal lah

düm te ke düm tek düm te ke düm tek

³

me ra- a

lâ i lâ he il lal lah

düm te ke düm tek düm te ke düm tek

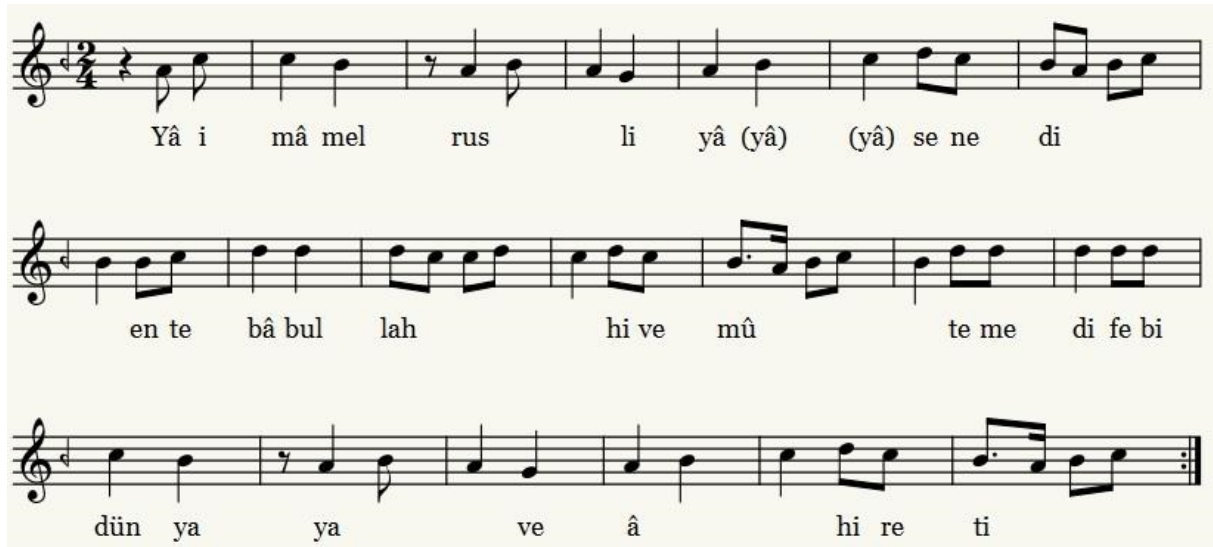
⁴

mı- n da

lâ i lâ he il lal lah

düm te ke düm tek düm te ke düm tek

Notation Example 43: An outline of the zikir ilâhi “Görmeyenden Kaçındılar”.



Notation Example 44: Transcription of the şughul “Yâ imam ex-ruslî”²⁴²⁷.

12.3 Other Episodes

Following FNE’s solo recitation, “*Lâ ilâhe illallah. Muhammeden Resulullah. Şefaat senden Yâ Resulullah. [...] cemâlin görmek isteriz Yâ Hazreti Allah. Aşkını gönlümüzden, zikrimizden kesme Yâ Hazreti Allah. Şefaat senden Yâ Resulallah*” (a combination of **I.6.** and **I.8.**), which ended the *tevhid* episode (**IV.**), one of the professional singers begin chanting a *durak*, *Medet Yâ Sahib’ül-Meydan*, for about twenty seconds and then the same singer passes through another *ilâhi* or *kaside*, *Gönül Nûr-i Cemâlinden Habibim Bir Ziyâ İster*. Towards the middle of the latter, with FNE’s sign, the new *zikir* episode, *Hû* (**V.**), begins, in which the attendees begin reciting *Hû* with the accompaniment of *bendir*. While the sitting position is still maintained, the movement of the upper body and the head slightly changes and takes the form of swinging the head in right and left directions. Then with FNE’s sign, the movement turns into a back-and-forth movement. This fifth episode of the HUR *zikir* has two sub-sections. In the first section, the *zikir* formula *Hû* is recited in a sitting position (*kuûdî*), whereas in the second section all attendees stand up (*kıyâmî*) and several *semâzen* enter the performance area (*meydan*) and their *zikir* thus takes a new form (Figure 40).

²⁴²⁷ Türk Tasavvuf Mûsikisini ve Folklorunu Araştırma ve Yaşatma Vakfı, <<https://dilbeyti.com/besteler/133>>, last accessed: 13 March 2022.



Figure 40: The transition from *kuûdî* (sitting) form to *kiyâmî* (standing) *zikir*, two members (in red circles) arrange the position of the attendees.

The first half of the *Hû zikir* episode (V.1.) is composed of 388 repetitions with a gradually increasing tempo from approximately $\text{♩} = 85$ to $\text{♩} = 120$ BPM. Due to the attendees' articulation, while exhaling, the initial fifty repetitions sound like “*he*” syllable rather than *Hû*. After these fifty repetitions, however, the *Hû esmâ* becomes discernible.

Zikir Formula	Number of Repetition	Event	Bendir Pattern
<i>He</i>	1.	Collectively <i>He</i> accompanied by <i>Gönül Nûr-i Cemâlinden Habibim Bir Ziyâ İster</i>	Düm ke düm tek
<i>Hû</i>	50.	Collectively guttural <i>Hû</i>	
	75.	Tempo increases from app. $\text{♩} = 85$ to $\text{♩} = 100$ BPM	
	122.	Tempo increases from app. $\text{♩} = 100$ to $\text{♩} = 110$ BPM accompanied by an unknown <i>zikir-ilâhi</i>	
	172.	Tempo increases from app. $\text{♩} = 110$ to $\text{♩} = 120$ BPM accompanied by a <i>şuğul</i> , <i>Allahümme Erham Ceddü'n-el-Geylânî</i>	Düm ke düm tek Düm teke düm tek
	388.	FNE ends the <i>Hû zikir</i> episode abruptly.	

Table 6: Outline of the first half of the *Hû zikir* episode.

With the 388. repetition of the *Hû esmâ*, FNE abruptly ends the first half with a recitation “[...] *cemâlin görmek isteriz Yâ Hazreti Allah. Aşkını gönlümüzden, zikrimizden kesme Yâ Hazreti Allah. Şefaât senden Yâ Resulallah*” (a combination of **I.6.** and **I.8.**), which is followed by a *durak*, *Daldı Gönlü Bahr-i Gam’a*, sung solo by one of the professional singers. Following the first line of this *durak*, FNE and the entire participants stand up, allowing an empty space in the middle of the *meydan*, where the HUR *zikir* is performed, for *semâzen* performers to enter.

The second half of this fifth episode begins again with FNE’s short recitation as in **I.8.** above: “*ve lâ mabûde ve lâ maksûde ve lâ murâde illâ Hû [...] cemâli görmek isteriz Yâ Hazreti Yâ Hû*”. This time, FNE prolongs the last part (*Yâ Hû*) and connects it to the *zikir* formula. Initially, an “e” letter is attached to “*Yâ Hû*” and recited in this manner thirteen times. Following this, the formula becomes “*E Hû Hû*” and is recited eight times. After these altered formulas, with the twenty-first repetition, only “*Hû*” is begun to be articulated and maintained in this fashion until the end of the episode:

Zikir Formula	Number of Repetition	Event	Bendir Pattern
<i>E-Yâ-Hû</i>	1.	The <i>semâzen</i> group enters the <i>meydan</i> and salutes FNE (Figure 26 & Example 45)	-
<i>E-Hû-Hû</i>	14.	The <i>semâzen</i> group takes position in the <i>meydan</i> (Example 46)	-
<i>Hû</i>	21.	The <i>semâzen</i> group begins whirling counterclockwise	Düm ke düm tek
	30.	The <i>zikir-ilâhi</i> , <i>Sevgi Baht Olmuş Ezelden Bize</i> (Example 47)	
	45.	Tempo increases from app. ♩ = 45 to ♩ = 50 BPM	
	94.	Tempo increases from app. ♩ = 50 to ♩ = 55 BPM accompanied by a <i>şuğul Tala’el-bedru ‘Aleyne</i> (Example 48)	Düm teke düm tek
	128.	Tempo increases from app. ♩ = 55 to ♩ = 60 BPM	
	130.	A new, unknown <i>şuğul</i> is introduced	
	193.	The tempo is approximately doubled from ♩ = 60 to ♩ = 120 BPM	
	195.	A new, unknown <i>şuğul</i> is introduced	

	295.	A new, <i>şuğul</i> is introduced <i>Allahümme sallı alel Mustafa</i> (Example 49)	
	372.	FNE ends the episode abruptly.	

Table 7: Outline of the second half of the *Hû zikir* episode.

When the two halves (V.1. and V.2.) of the *Hû zikir* episode are added up together, it appears that the *Hû esmâ*, in its various forms, is repeated 760 times in total with varying tempi. The movement repertoire of this episode is composed of moving the upper body back and forth and swinging the whole body in the right and left directions, in a manner of switching the body weight from the left foot to the right, or vice versa.



Notation Example 45: The first thirteen repetitions of the *Hû* formula.



Notation Example 46: The fourteenth repetition of the *Hû* formula.

Sev gi baht ol muş e zel den bi ze Sev gi baht ol muş

e zel den bi ze Siz de bir tür lü biz de bir tür lü

Siz de bir tür lü biz de bir tür lü A la ca düş müş

gör dü ğü mü ze A la ca düş müş

gör dü ğü mü ze Siz de bir tür lü biz de bir tür lü

Siz de bir tür lü biz de bir tür lü

Notation Example 47: Transcription of the zikir ilâhi “Sevgi Baht Olmuş Ezelden Bize”²⁴²⁸.

²⁴²⁸ Türk Tasavvuf Mûsikisini ve Folklorunu Araştırma ve Yaşatma Vakfı, <<https://dilbeyti.com/besteler/703>>, last accessed: 13 March 2022.

Ta la al bed ru a ley na Ta la al bed

ru a ley na Ta la al bed ru a ley na

Min se niy ya til ve da i ve ce beş şük rü a

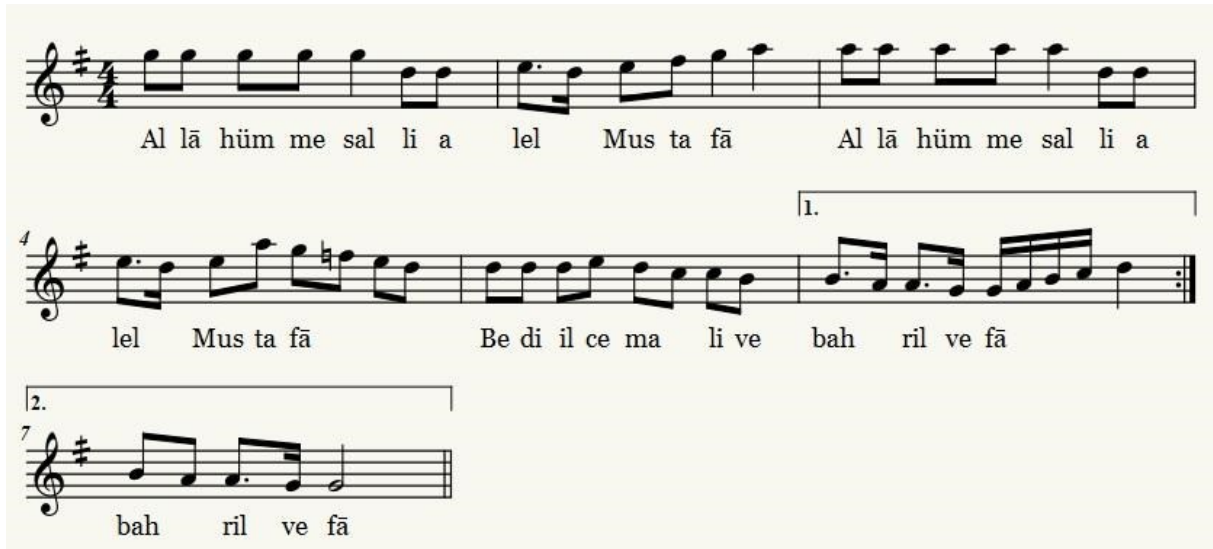
ley na ve ce bes şük rü a ley na ve ce

beş şük rü a ley na ma de a lil la hi

da i ey yu

Notation Example 48: Transcription of the şuğul “Tala’el-bedru ‘Aleyne”²⁴²⁹.

²⁴²⁹ Türk Tasavvuf Mûsikisini ve Folklorunu Araştırma ve Yaşatma Vakfı, <<https://dilbeyti.com/besteler/212>>, last accessed: 13 March 2022.



Notation Example 49: Transcription of the şüğü “Allahümme salli alel Mustafa”²⁴³⁰.

After abruptly ending the episode, FNE recites again a combination of **I.2.**, **I.6.**, and **I.8.** as follows:

“Allah. Celle Celâlihu Amme Nevalühu ve Lâ ilâhe Ğayrühü. [...] cemâlin görmek isteriz Yâ Hazreti **Yâ Hû**²⁴³¹. Aşkını gönlümüzden, zikrimizden kesme Yâ Hazreti **Yâ Hû**. Şefaât senden Yâ Resulallah”

Following this, one of the professional singers begins reciting a new *durak*, *Ağlatır sa Mevlâm Yine Güldürür*, marking the transition to the next *zikir* episode (**VI.**), *Hakk*. As in the preceding episodes, this sixth episode begins again with FNE’s short recitation as in **I.8.** above: “ve lâ mabûde ve lâ maksûde ve lâ murâde illâ Hakk [...] cemâli görmek isteriz Yâ Hazreti Yâ Hakk”. This time, FNE alters the last part “Yâ Hû” into “Yâ Hakk” indicating the name of the episode and connects it to the *zikir* formula. During this episode three different *ilâhi*, *Ey Risâlet Tahtının Hurşîd ü Mâh-ı Enveri* (Example 50), *Erenler Dertliyiz Derman İsteriz*, and *On Sekiz Bin Aleme Server (Yâ Muhammed)*, are sung as an accompaniment to *Hakk* formula. The tempo of these recitations increased from approximately ♩ = 45 to ♩ = 120 BPM.

²⁴³⁰ Türk Tasavvuf Müsîkisini ve Folklorunu Araştırma ve Yaşatma Vakfı, <<https://dilbeyti.com/besteler/49>>, last accessed: 13 March 2022.

²⁴³¹ Instead of “Allah”.

Zikir Formula	Number of Repetition	Event	Bendir Pattern
<i>E-Yâ-Hakk</i>	1.		-
<i>E-Hakk</i>	5.		-
<i>Hakk</i>	10.	Tempo is approximately ♩ = 45 BPM	Düm ke düm tek
	18.	<i>Ey Risâlet Tahtının Hurşîd ü Mâh-ı Enveri</i> (Example 50) ♩ = c. 55 BPM	
	83.	<i>Erenler Dertliyiz Derman İsteriz</i> ♩ = c. 60 BPM	
	172.	Tempo increases from app. ♩ = 60 to ♩ = 120 BPM	Variations
	176.	<i>On Sekiz Bin Aleme Server</i> (Yâ Muhammed)	
	322.	FNE ends the episode abruptly	

Table 8: Outline of the Hakk zikir episode.

1.
Ey ri sa let tah tı nın hur şî di ma hı en ve ri

2.
en ve ri Vey nü büv vet maz ha rı a hir za man pey

1. 2.
gam be ri gam be ri

Notation Example 50: Transcription of the zikir ilâhi “*Ey Risâlet Tahtının Hurşîd ü Mâh-ı Enveri*”²⁴³².

After abruptly ending the episode, FNE recites again a combination of **I.2.**, **I.6.**, and **I.8.**:

“Allah. Celle Celâlihu Amme Nevalühu ve Lâ ilâhe Ğayrühü [...] cemâlin görmek isteriz Yâ Hazreti **Yâ Hakk**. Aşkını gönlümüzden, zikrimizden kesme Yâ Hazreti **Yâ Hakk**. Şefaât senden Yâ Resulallah”

²⁴³² Türk Tasavvuf Müsîkisini ve Folklorunu Araştırma ve Yaşatma Vakfı, <<https://dilbeyti.com/besteler/78>>, last accessed: 13 March 2022.

This is then followed by a *durak ilâhi*, *Zülfü Kaküllerin Amber Misâli*, indicating the transition from *kıyâmî* (standing) *zikir* to *devrânî* form. As in the preceding episodes, the seventh episode, *Hayy*, begins again with FNE's short recitation as in **I.8.** above: “*ve lâ mabûde ve lâ maksûde ve lâ murâde illâ Hayy [...] cemâli görmek isteriz Yâ Hazreti Yâ Hayy*”. This time, FNE alters the last part “*Yâ Hakk*” into “*Yâ Hayy*” indicating the name of the upcoming episode and connects it to the *zikir* formula. This is then followed by another solo recitation of FNE as below:

“*E'üzübi 'l-lâhimine 'ş-şeytânî 'r-racîm. Bismi 'l-lâhir 'rahmânî 'r-rahîm. Elif Lâm Mîm. [...] SadakAllâhü 'l-Azim*”.

However, differing from the preceding episodes, the transition from the *Hayy zikir* to the subsequent *zikir* episodes occurs without intermediary prayers of FNE (e.g., **I.2.**, **I.6.**, or **I.8.**):

Zikir Formula	Number of Repetition	Event	Bendir Pattern
<i>Yâ-Hayy (3X) Allah</i>	1.	The group has a new form. (Figure 28)	-
	5.	<i>Zâhid Bizi Ta'an Eyleme</i>	Düm ke düm tek + Variations
	18.	Tempo increases from app. J = 75 to J = 115 BPM	
	22.	<i>Pirlere Niyaz Ederiz</i>	
	30.	Tempo increases from app. J = 115 to J = 155 BPM (Notation Example 15)	
<i>Yâ-Hayy</i>	51.		
	58.	<i>Hak Bir Gönül Verdi Bana</i>	
	119.	A new form with three dancers at the center. (Figure 30)	
	151.	<i>Benim Şahım Geylânî</i>	
	188.	<i>Bayram o Bayram Ola</i>	
	254.	<i>Gider Hakk'a Uşşâkiler</i>	
	281.	<i>Göster Cemâlin Şem'ini</i>	

	292.	Tempo increases from app. ♩ = 80 to ♩ = 100 BPM (Notation Example 16)	
	332.	<i>Dolap Niçin İnilersin</i>	
<i>Hayy</i>	376.	(Notation Example 17)	
	378.	<i>Salât</i>	-
<i>Hayy Hayy Allah</i>	429.		Düm ke düm tek
	435.	<i>Cân-ı Dilde Hâne Kıldın</i>	
	466.	Tempo increases from app. ♩ = 100 to ♩ = 120 BPM (Notation Example 18)	
	467.	<i>Ali Göründü Gözüme</i>	
<i>Allah Allah Yâ Kayyûm</i>	491.	(Notation Example 19)	-
	496.	<i>Cânı Canân'a Kurban Eyleyen</i>	-
<i>Allah Allah Yâ Kakhâr</i>	514.		-
<i>Allah Allah Yâ Fettâh?</i>	527.		-
	535.	<i>Açıldı Bu Meydan</i>	-
<i>Allah Allah Yâ Fettâh?</i>	542.		Düm teke düm tek
	566.	<i>Ben Dervîşim Diyene</i>	-
<i>Vahid-Ehad- Samed-Allah</i>	586.	(Notation Example 20)	-
	587.	<i>Güzel Aşık...Demedim mi?</i>	Düm ke düm tek
	638.	<i>Şeyhimin İlleri</i>	-
<i>Allah</i>	652.		Düm ke düm tek
	678.	<i>Haktır Allahım</i>	
<i>Hû</i>	700.		
	721.	<i>Bi Ruh Yâ Aziz Misrek</i>	
	839.	Collectively: <i>Hayy Hayy Hayy Hayy</i>	
	873.	Collectively: <i>Hayy Hayy Hayy Hayy</i>	
	892.	Tempo increases from app. ♩ = 110 to ♩ = 130 BPM	

	909.	Collectively: <i>Hayy Hayy Hayy Hayy</i>	
	936.	FNE ends the episode abruptly.	

Table 9: Outline of the *Hayy*, *Kayyûm*, *Kahhâr*, *Fettâh*, *Vahid-Ehad-Samed-Allah* zikir episodes.



Figure 41: A cyclic form in the *Hayy* zikir episode.



Figure 42: Another cyclic form having three dancers rotating counterclockwise at the center of a circle, which rotates both clockwise and counterclockwise directions.



Figure 43: The second form of the dancers at the center.

After the end of this last episode, a new phase begins. As if the heightened collective energy (*bereket*) was condensed in the leader FNE, in this phase the condensed energy is distributed (*bereketin dağıtılması*) to the participants (Figure 33). Meanwhile, FNE recites a part of their genealogy (*silsile*) at a fast pace and when the name of Hasan Hüsameddin Uşşâkî is reached, the entire group says *Hû* and then three times *Allah*. This is followed by the salutation:

FNE → “*Selâmün aleyküm*”

Group → “*Ve aleyküm selâm ve rahmetullâhe ve berekâtuhû*”

Immediately after the salutation, both FNE and the group recite *teşrik tekbiri* three times:

Collectively → “*Allâhü ekber Allâhü ekber lâ ilâhe illallâhü vallâhü ekber Allâhü ekber ve lillâhi'l-hamd*”

After completing the *teşrik tekbiri*, the entire group starts reciting a *na't*, *Yok Cihanda Sana Benzer Muhammed*, with the accompaniment of *bendir* and *zikir* movements. Followed by a solo recitation of a prayer by FNE, the group takes the last form (Figure 34), in which the closing prayers, permission (*destur*), *istiğfar*, *tevhid zikir* formulas as well as the last sung unit

of the event, *Şeyhîmin İlleri* (with a different melodic course) are shortly repeated, which mark the conclusion of the HUR *zikir* event.

13 Conclusion

This chapter is designed to conclude the study by reviewing the major research findings with respect to the research aims, objectives, and questions. It will also assess the value and contribution of the study to the current state of research. Subsequently, recommendations will be made for future research in light of its limitations.

This study aimed to identify the practice of *zikir* as the applied epistemology of *tasavvuf*. Based on qualitative analysis of broad *tasavvuf* theories, it can be concluded that knowledge acquisition procedures and their thematic correspondences constitute the main parameters in structuring and performing the *zikir* rituals. The results indicate that a set of *tasavvuf* discourses including contemplation, self-discipline, perfection, and asceticism are put into practice by means of sound and motion via *zikir*. By analyzing the nuanced interpretations of *tasavvuf* throughout history, this study has demonstrated how the structural, contextual, and thematic components of musicking in *zikir* can be linked with the epistemological theories of the *tasavvuf* complex.

While the wide range of varying interpretations on how to perform *zikir* fundamentally limit the generalizability of the results, an in-depth content analysis of both the emic and etic perspectives on the subject provides new insight into the development of performance practices of *zikir* ritual and their embeddedness in the epistemology of *tasavvuf*. To identify interpretative variations, collected data was continuously reviewed by employing the “constant comparative method” of grounded theory, which enabled this study to pinpoint the essentials of *tasavvuf* epistemology and how the experience-based divine wisdom (*hikmet*) concept was applied in a reinterpreted form (*mârifet*) in *zikir* rituals.

Following the established trajectory of *tasavvuf* studies, the investigation began with a review of the terminological ambiguities and resultant discrepancies in addressing *tasavvuf*. To be able to diagnose the idiosyncrasy of its epistemology, ambiguous attributions to *tasavvuf* in the form of various “-isms” were revisited by analyzing their historical backgrounds. With a comparative approach derived from grounded theory, these historically related systems and their knowledge acquisition procedures were examined in detail, which further revealed that there is a degree of rationale in addressing *tasavvuf* via such “-isms”. Furthermore, certain tools of these “-isms” and the academic investigations about their historical backgrounds have proven to be useful in *tasavvuf* studies. Whereas this historical investigation focusing on *hikmet* concept illustrated an unbroken continuity between *tasavvuf* and certain preceding epistemological systems (hypothesis 1), it also raised several questions concerning the established approaches

in *tasavvuf* studies. Specifically, the ambiguous etymology of the Arabic terms *tasavvuf* and *sûfî* and the historical narratives derived from the favoured etymological connotations of these terms indicate a controversial area and perhaps a researcher bias. On the one hand, the term *sûfî* with its etymological background and multiple meanings in Arabic has been instrumentalized to frame *tasavvuf* and its practices, including *zikir*, solely within Islam and on the other hand, these varying meanings of the term have been considered to signal *tasavvuf*'s extra-Islamic origins. Though based on the culture contact theories the origins of *tasavvuf* cannot be attributed to a single tradition or group, an investigation of *hikmet* concept has demonstrated that in terms of knowledge acquisition procedures its origins may be partially ascribed to several preceding epistemological systems. However, interpretative differences in such systems do not allow for an encompassing theory or reach a conclusion concerning the origins of *tasavvuf*. Despite it is not directly relevant to the objectives of this study, findings further indicate that the concept *hikmet* provides a better explanation than the term *sûfî* concerning the etymology-based historical backgrounds of *tasavvuf*, in which the term acquires a specific role not only in linking different religious epistemological systems but also in tracing the sources from which *tasavvuf* has been deriving its epistemological theories in a reinterpreted form. As the existing research makes use of the etymological connotations of *sûfî* to explicate the origins of *tasavvuf*, the study at hand proposes the concept *hikmet* to be a profitable source to derive a theory of *tasavvuf*'s origins and identify the fundamentals of its epistemology.

An investigation concerning the applications of *hikmet* concept has also demonstrated that the term *hikmet* and its semantic scope are laden with multi-layered interpretations and thus allow for the additional layers of reinterpretation. Within this study, its applications in *tasavvuf* epistemology are therefore understood as idiosyncratic interpretations of *sûfî* theoreticians and practitioners. As the performance practices of *zikir* are derived from this reinterpreted form of *hikmet*, which is loaded with divergent approaches and speculations, it needed to be revisited for a better understanding of musicking in *zikir* events. Based on the outcomes of this study, it can be said that the epistemology of *tasavvuf* is composed of a wisdom narrative, which contains the following components:

- An esotericised, intuitive way of knowing in a reinterpreted form: *hikmet* → *mârifet*
- Its acquisition is being dependent not only on human effort but also on the divine benevolence: bestowed knowledge

- The aspect of the human effort involves several themes that had been developed before the constitution of *tasavvuf*: love, ineffability, light, wisdom, purification, remembrance, moral and spiritual perfection, asceticism, symbolism, the chain of ancient wisdom
- A reinterpretation and re-embeddedness of these themes within the confines of Islam
- A narrative of a bestowed and ecstatic union with the divine through knowing: noetic experience
- Knowing is being linked with an esotericised knowledge of the self, which leads to the knowledge of the divine embedded in the self: remembrance

Based on these components, the subject matter of *tasavvuf* epistemology can be outlined as the ontological relationship between God and humans. This establishes the objective of *tasavvuf* as to attain a genuine acquaintance (*mârifet*) with God and defines the method of *tasavvuf* as a set of devotional, moral, and intellectual training of the self (ego, *nefs*) known as *seyrüsülûk*. In sum, *tasavvuf* epistemology creates a division between the sensuous world and an extended reality beyond the senses. This dualism is reflected in the human body and soul (or spiritual heart, *nefs*), leading to a desire to overcome duality in order to achieve oneness or unity. While the body is bound to sensuous reality, the soul is thought to have traits that allow it to acquire knowledge, access the extended reality, and, for certain *sûfî*, experience oneness with *Allah*. The knowledge of the extended or hidden dimension of reality is commonly seen as divine, intuitive, and bestowed, and its attainment involves a process of moral and spiritual purification through ascetic activities (*seyrüsülûk*). When this knowledge is attained, it is often portrayed as salvation, illumination, eternal bliss, or unification since it is above all “mystically” experienced. The narratives of different *tarikât* groups’ noetic unification are diverse, and they frequently employ symbolic and metaphorical language to depict the nature and dynamics of unification—such as discovery, inspiration, ecstasy, or observation. Certain *sûfî* express their desire for unification as a love affair, while others express it as absolute obedience to *Allah* to the point of self-annihilation. Another *tarikât* group or *sûfî*, however, may combine these two perspectives and characterize it as a love affair that leads to self-annihilation in *Allah*.

As part of this self-discipline and training (*seyrüsülûk*), the practice of *zikir* enables the performer to acquire a hidden knowledge of the self and of God and through which access to an extended reality via remembering. The notion of remembrance here is essentially understood

as rediscovering and attaining a forgotten knowledge, which turns *zikir* into an applied epistemology of *tasavvuf*. Deriving its validity, limits of operability, and a blueprint of its structure from the *Kur'an*, the *zikir* practice has taken its final ritual form gradually through the interpretations of numerous Muslims and *sûfi* theoreticians scattered over longer than a millennium. This ritual structure customarily involves two principal characteristics that define the musicking in *zikir* events: repetition and tempo fluctuations. Since the other performance practices of *zikir* including the sound aesthetics, instrumental accompaniment, rhythmic patterns, vocal styles, or the size of ensembles are bound to regional and temporal variations—aside from repetition and tempo increase throughout the event—these performance practices cannot be generalized. The movement repertoire of *zikir* rituals also derives its different forms (sitting, standing, revolving) largely from the *Kur'anic* verses and the repetitive body movements appear to be a consequence of the repetitions of recited formulas and the names of God (*esmâ-i hüsnâ*). It should however be noted that despite the *tarikât* organizations around the globe share certain structural traits, in performing their ritualized *zikir* forms they demonstrate diverse musical and motional elements that may differ from the other performances of *zikir* depending on the contents of the cultural bulk the performance is being attached to. Therefore, within this study's second volume, the performance practices of the *zikir* of the HUR group and their distinguishing motional and acoustical elements were analyzed as a monographic work.

The tools for analyzing performance practices of *zikir* involve primary sources such as manuscripts and instruction books written by *sûfi* scholars, historical accounts of performances provided both by Muslims and non-Muslims, manuals, musical instruments, and various image and iconographical sources. While the movement repertoire of the HUR *zikir* was analyzed through the means of ethnochoreology, the tone system, vocal styles, instruments, content of the sung materials and several other components of musicking in HUR *zikir* were analyzed via the tools of ethnomusicology. The findings derived from this analysis indicate that in applying *tasavvuf* epistemology, the *zikir* practice makes use of all the identified themes that cover the wisdom conception and its acquisition procedures and thus the hypothesis of this study, namely the *zikir* practice as the applied epistemology of *tasavvuf* complex, is confirmed. Furthermore, a musicological analysis of the rhythmic patterns, tone system, resultant intervallic relations, and melody types or modes known as *makâm* has demonstrated that the structural components of musicking in the HUR *zikir* are both specific to the region (Turkey, İstanbul) and time (twenty-first century), and it is universal in the sense of building on repetition and tempo fluctuations. Whereas the language of the sung material, preferred melody types, vocal styles, order of formulas and the rhythmic accompaniment to the recited formulas fundamentally differ the

zikir of the HUR group from the others, in terms of repetition and tempo fluctuation it reproduces the widely accepted contextual and structural characteristics of *zikir* in general.

As the corona pandemic has imposed several obstructions in conducting this research project, these obstructions also constituted the limitations of the study. Firstly, the essential data collecting method of ethnomusicology, namely fieldwork, could not be done. This caused critical alterations in structuring the objectives, relevant research questions, and the flow of the study. Based on the recent theoretical constructions of the field and its workers in ethnographic disciplines, which no longer design the field as merely a spatial place which is characteristically constructed as exotic and conventionally in the direction of the east, this issue was attempted to overcome with a change of perspective and understanding of the multilayered field concept. Within this study, the field is understood beyond its spatialized conceptions and constructed on the interpretative variations of wisdom (*hikmet*) and its applications via *zikir*.

Combined with the dynamism of grounded theory, such a conception of field allowed this study to regularly review the collected data that constituted the field of research and to refine its feasibility. This approach generated several additional chapters, in which mentioned theories relating to *hikmet* concept were revisited. However, this new conception of the field was inherently too wide and housed an excessive amount of data to be analyzed by one person. As the languages and epistemological systems that make use of the *hikmet* concept are diverse—which are scattered through three continents and approximately five millennia—a comprehensive analysis of each linguistic and philosophical system was unachievable.

On the other hand, a preliminary analysis has shown that there is more research to be done to identify the roles of *hikmet* in different epistemological systems and the processes of culture contact leading to various interpretations of it. Monographic studies on each system and the transition points of *hikmet* concept may provide fruitful information to gain a deeper understanding of how *hikmet* constitutes a historical continuity between *tasavvuf* and different systems of knowledge. Informed by varying disciplines—such as linguistics, religious studies, history, archaeology, anthropology, ethnology etc.—different scholars can build on and enrich the conclusions of this study. In terms of musicology, various studies can be conducted focusing on sound archaeology to reveal whether the concept *hikmet* was also equipped with specific acoustic parameters in mentioned epistemological systems before the constitution of *tasavvuf*, which could not be done due to the lack of historical data and the scope of this study. Furthermore, to gain a deeper insight into the processes of musicking, additional studies can be conducted concerning different *tarikats* groups' *zikir* performances and the roles the *hikmet* concept acquires within these performances. This may help to fill the gap in the current research and

musicological studies on *zikir* phenomenon, which often lack a comprehensive perspective on the historical backgrounds and the processes of construction of musicking in *zikir* rituals.

This study attempted to demonstrate specific aspects of musicking in *zikir* as performed by the HUR group from İstanbul. As the practice of *zikir* is loaded with diverse performance practices, contexts, and interpretations derived from numerous mythological, religious, and philosophical sources, the study at hand sheds light merely on the surface of the deeply rooted dynamics that are at work in *zikir* performances. The epistemological dimension of performing *zikir* is only a channel among many networks of relations from which various aspects of *zikir* practice are nourished, but this channel also appears to be a significant one for providing any *zikir* performance of today with a long historical background and a theoretical base.

All things considered, the practice of *zikir* and its complex religious, philosophical, historical, socio-cultural, and performative implications indicate that the subject calls for further in-depth studies to reveal its meanings both for its performers and researchers. Anticipating that this study will be one small step toward this end.

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15 Glossary

Arabic- Turkish

<i>abdest</i>	ablution, procedural ritual cleaning
<i>âbid</i>	servant, worshipper
<i>âdâb</i>	customs, manners, moral codes
<i>ahde vefa</i>	<i>pacta sunt servanda</i>
<i>âhiret</i>	hereafter
<i>ahlâk</i>	morality, morals
<i>akīde / itikad</i>	belief, religious doctrine
<i>akıl</i>	mind, reason, intelligence
<i>âlem-i mülk</i>	material realm
<i>âlim</i>	scholar, wise
<i>amel</i>	deed, action
<i>ârif</i>	wise, gnostic
<i>aruz vezni</i>	Arabic and Ottoman prosody
<i>âşık</i>	lover
<i>âsitâne</i>	central dervish lodge
<i>asr-ı saadet</i>	the century of happiness, the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammed
<i>atvâr-ı seb'a</i>	seven degrees of the ego
<i>ayak</i>	<i>makam</i> -like musical scales used in Turkish folk music
<i>ayna</i>	mirror
<i>basîret</i>	foresight
<i>bast</i>	tranquillity
<i>bâtın</i>	interior, inner, esoteric
<i>beden</i>	body
<i>bekā</i>	permanence

<i>bekkâîn</i>	tearful ones
<i>bendir</i>	a type of frame drum used in <i>zikir</i> events
<i>bereket</i>	blessing, plentifulness
<i>besmele</i>	saying “in the name of God, the most gracious and merciful”
<i>beytü ’l-hikme</i>	House of Wisdom, an old library in Baghdad
<i>bezm-i elest / kâlû belâ</i>	divine covenant made in a primordial realm
<i>biat</i>	pledging allegiance
<i>bid‘at</i>	innovation, heretical innovations in religion
<i>bûlbûl</i>	nightingale
<i>bürhan</i>	evidence
<i>cehl</i>	ignorance
<i>cehrî</i>	voiced, loud
<i>cem</i>	assemble, gathering
<i>cevher</i>	essence
<i>cezbe</i>	rapture, ecstasy
<i>cihad</i>	religious struggle
<i>cilâ</i>	polish, purification, <i>katharsis</i>
<i>çile</i>	suffering
<i>cûiyye</i>	hungry ones
<i>cumhur ilâhi</i>	collectively sung hymns in <i>zikir</i> events
<i>dergâh</i>	a form of dervish lodge
<i>destur</i>	permission
<i>devrânî</i>	circular, cyclic
<i>dhawq</i>	taste
<i>dil</i>	tongue
<i>divan</i>	poetry, a collection of poems
<i>durak</i>	initial note of a musical scale, a hymn performed in between <i>zikir</i> episodes

<i>düyek</i>	a rhythmic pattern used in Turkish classical music
<i>edep</i>	decency, decorum
<i>ef'âl-i mükellefîn</i>	Islamic system of values applied to religiously responsible
<i>ehl-i beyt</i>	family members of Prophet Muhammed
<i>ehl-i sünnet ve'l-cemâat</i>	the consensus of the community
<i>esmâ</i>	names (of God)
<i>esmâ-i hüsnâ</i>	ninety-nine names or attributes of God
<i>evrâd</i>	collection of prayers and formulas
<i>ezan</i>	call to prayer
<i>ezkâr</i>	plural of <i>zikir</i>
<i>faal akıl</i>	active intellect
<i>fakr</i>	spiritual poverty
<i>fâni</i>	mortal, annihilated
<i>fakîh</i>	scholar of Islamic law
<i>farz</i>	obligatory religious duty
<i>fasih</i>	correct, standard
<i>felâh</i>	restoration, salvation
<i>felsefe</i>	philosophy
<i>fenâ</i>	annihilation of the self (in God)
<i>feyz</i>	blessing, overflow, emanation
<i>fıkıh</i>	study of Islamic jurisprudence
<i>filozof</i>	philosopher
<i>fitrat</i>	human nature, disposition
<i>fücur</i>	wickedness
<i>fukarâ</i>	poor, plural of <i>fakr</i>
<i>gaflet</i>	heedlessness
<i>gayb âlemi</i>	unseen, metaphysical realm of <i>Allah</i>

<i>güçlü</i>	dominant; the fourth or fifth note of a <i>makam</i> scale
<i>gül</i>	rose
<i>hadis</i>	Prophet Muhammed's sayings
<i>hadra</i>	divine presence; a form of <i>zikir</i> ritual
<i>hak</i>	truth, reality
<i>hakem</i>	referee, judge, authority
<i>hakikat</i>	truth
<i>hakîki</i>	true
<i>hâkim</i>	sage, wise, judge, philosopher
<i>hâl</i>	condition, mystified experiences
<i>halife</i>	successor
<i>halk</i>	folk; to create
<i>halvet</i>	retreat, seclusion
<i>haram</i>	sinful
<i>havas</i>	elite people possessing religious knowledge
<i>hayâ</i>	modesty
<i>hekim</i>	medical doctor
<i>hekmat-e eshrâq</i>	philosophy or wisdom of the light
<i>heyûlâ / hyle</i>	prime matter
<i>hikmet</i>	wisdom, hidden cause, philosophy
<i>hulûl</i>	penetration, permeation, or union
<i>ibdâ'</i>	creation
<i>iç görü</i>	insight
<i>icâzet</i>	authorization, permission to lead a <i>tarikât</i>
<i>icâzetnâme</i>	certificate
<i>ictihad</i>	subjective opinion, supposition
<i>ihlâs</i>	sincerity
<i>ihsan</i>	benevolence

<i>ihvan</i>	brethren
<i>ilâhi aşk</i>	divine love
<i>ilâhi</i>	divine; a form of hymn; it may also be called <i>kasîde</i> , <i>salât</i> , <i>şuğul</i> , <i>mersiyye</i> , <i>nefes</i> , <i>na't</i> , <i>mûnâcât</i> (<i>temcit</i>), <i>ilâhi</i> , <i>tecvit</i>
<i>ilham</i>	inspiration
<i>ilim</i>	science, discipline
<i>ilm 'ün-nefs</i>	rational psychology
<i>ilm-i bâtın</i>	esoteric knowledge or wisdom
<i>ilm-i esrar</i>	knowledge of mystery
<i>ilm-i fenâ-bekâ</i>	knowledge of annihilation-permanency
<i>ilm-i hâl</i>	knowledge of state
<i>ilm-i ledün</i>	bestowed knowledge concerning the metaphysical realm of God and divine secrets
<i>ilm-i makam</i>	knowledge of stage
<i>ilm-i mükâşsefe-müşâhede</i>	knowledge of revelation-observation
<i>insan-ı kâmil</i>	perfect human
<i>intisap</i>	to become affiliated with a <i>tarikât</i>
<i>irade</i>	will
<i>irfan</i>	wisdom, knowledge
<i>irşad</i>	to guide, showing the right path
<i>işârî</i>	meaning derived from the hidden signs
<i>ispat</i>	evidence
<i>işrak</i>	illumination
<i>istiâze</i>	taking refuge in God
<i>istidlâl</i>	deduction
<i>istiğfar</i>	forgiveness, repentance
<i>iştikak</i>	Arabic word derivation system
<i>ittihad</i>	union (of God and human soul)
<i>ittisal</i>	union or convergence

<i>kabz</i>	anxiety
<i>kafes</i>	cage
<i>kâfir</i>	infidel
<i>kalp</i>	heart, spiritual centre and the location of <i>mârifet</i> as well as <i>zikir</i>
<i>kāmet</i>	<i>ezan</i> -like phrases recited at certain times
<i>kâmil</i>	perfect, perfection
<i>kelâm</i>	word; study of the main principles and doctrines of Islam
<i>kelâmullah</i>	word of God
<i>kerîm</i>	generous
<i>keşf</i>	discovery
<i>kıyâmî</i>	standing (<i>zikir</i> posture)
<i>kıyas</i>	syllogism
<i>kol</i>	branch (of a <i>tarikât</i>)
<i>koma</i>	an interval equals to 22 Cents in Turkish music
<i>koşma</i>	a poetical style written in syllabic meter
<i>kudüm</i>	a pair of hemispherical membranophones
<i>küfür</i>	disbelief in God, heresy
<i>küntü kenz</i>	the hidden treasure
<i>kurb</i>	nearness
<i>kutub</i>	the orientation pole (of a <i>tarikât</i>)
<i>kuûdî</i>	sitting (<i>zikir</i> posture)
<i>ledün</i>	divine, transcendental (realm of God)
<i>ledünnî</i>	pertaining to divine
<i>ma'kûl</i>	reasonable; object
<i>mâ'suk</i>	beloved
<i>madde</i>	matter
<i>makam</i>	rank, stage

<i>makam</i>	musical scales or melody types used in Turkish classical music
<i>mekân</i>	place, space
<i>mâna</i>	meaning
<i>mantık</i>	logic
<i>mârifet</i>	wisdom, skill, acquaintance
<i>mâsivâ</i>	anything other than God
<i>meâd</i>	afterlife
<i>medrese</i>	theological school
<i>mekruh</i>	disapproved
<i>melekût</i>	spiritual and divine realm of angels
<i>mertebe</i>	degrees of note values in <i>makam</i> scales
<i>merziye</i>	approved
<i>meşk</i>	orally transmitted practice
<i>meşşâi</i>	peripatetic
<i>meydân</i>	square (stage for <i>zikir</i> rituals)
<i>mezhep</i>	systematized schools of law in Islam
<i>mezkûr</i>	one who is remembered, <i>Allah</i>
<i>mu‘tezile</i>	a school of rational theology (<i>kelâm</i>) in Islam
<i>mubah</i>	neutral
<i>mücahede</i>	struggle
<i>müderris</i>	teacher
<i>müfessir</i>	<i>Kur’an</i> interpreter, commentator
<i>muhabbet</i>	friendly conversation; love
<i>muhkem</i>	clear, firm, or not open to interpretation
<i>mükâşefe</i>	to uncover
<i>mülhime</i>	inspire(d)
<i>mümkün</i>	possible, dependent
<i>murakabe</i>	introspection, supervision
<i>mürid</i>	one who surrenders his will to God, disciple in <i>tarikât</i>

<i>mürşid</i>	guide, leader of a <i>tarikât</i>
<i>müşahede</i>	observation
<i>mushaf</i>	written copy of the <i>Kur'an</i>
<i>müstefâd</i>	acquired (intellect)
<i>mutasavvîf</i>	<i>sûfî</i>
<i>mütekellim</i>	theologian, <i>kelâm</i> scholar
<i>müteşâbih</i>	unclear, metaphorical, or allegorical
<i>mutmainne</i>	convinced, assured, tranquil
<i>müzekkîr</i>	one who reminds
<i>namaz</i>	obligatory ritual worship, <i>salât</i>
<i>nass</i>	clear and definitive judgement of the <i>Kur'an</i> or <i>hadis</i>
<i>nazarî akıl</i>	rational or theoretical mind
<i>necis</i>	unclean
<i>nefs tezkiyesi</i>	purification of the heart or ego
<i>nefs</i>	heart, ego, the self and its desires
<i>nefs-i emmâre</i>	the unregenerate ego, soul
<i>nefs-i levvâme</i>	blameworthy ego, soul
<i>nisyan</i>	forgetfulness
<i>niyet</i>	intention
<i>nizamiye</i>	a form of theological school, <i>medrese</i>
<i>nübüvvet</i>	prophecy
<i>nûr</i>	light
<i>nûriyye</i>	those who seek for the divine light of the heart
<i>râbûta</i>	bond
<i>râziye</i>	contented
<i>ribât</i>	a form of dervish lodge
<i>rivayet</i>	hearsay; transmitting a <i>hadis</i> with its source
<i>riyâzet</i>	asceticism

<i>rızâ</i>	consent
<i>ruh</i>	soul, spirit
<i>saadet</i>	happiness, bliss
<i>sabır</i>	patience
<i>şâfî</i>	healer
<i>sahâbe</i>	the immediate followers of Prophet Muhammed
<i>sahih</i>	valid, legitimate
<i>sahv</i>	sobriety
<i>sâkî</i>	cupbearer
<i>salât</i>	the obligatory ritual worship executed daily five times
<i>sâlik</i>	candidate, initiate, seeker (in a <i>tarikât</i>)
<i>şarap</i>	wine; it may also be called <i>mey</i> , <i>bade</i> , <i>müdâm</i>
<i>şatahat / şathiye</i>	ecstatic utterances
<i>şehâdet</i>	testimony, witness; martyrdom
<i>sekr</i>	drunkenness, intoxication; it may also be called <i>vecd</i> , <i>cezbe</i> , <i>galebe</i> , <i>inbisat</i> , <i>istiğrak</i> , <i>cem'</i> , <i>fenâ</i> , <i>tevhîd-i zâtî</i>
<i>semâ</i>	audition, hearing, spiritual concert
<i>şerh</i>	commentary
<i>şeriat</i>	religious laws
<i>şeyh</i>	mentor, guide, leader of a <i>tarikât</i> ; it may also be called <i>velî</i> , <i>pîr</i> , <i>eren</i> , <i>ermiş</i> , or <i>hâce</i>
<i>seyir</i>	melodic course in <i>makam</i>
<i>seyrüsülûk</i>	a set of procedures and training methods for spiritual perfection
<i>seyyâhûn</i>	travelers
<i>sezgi</i>	intuition
<i>sıfat</i>	attributes (of God)
<i>şikeftiyye</i>	cave dwellers
<i>silsile</i>	lineage

<i>simurg</i>	a mythical bird
<i>sırr</i>	secret; spiritual faculty
<i>şirk</i>	polytheism
<i>sofyan</i>	a rhythmic pattern used in Turkish classical music
<i>sohbet</i>	conversation
<i>sudûr</i>	emanation, procession
<i>sûfî</i>	those who adhered to <i>tasavvuf</i>
<i>sûfiyyûn</i>	those who wear wool
<i>şükür</i>	gratitude
<i>sülûk</i>	spiritual journey towards God, initiation
<i>sünnet</i>	Prophet Muhammed's deeds
<i>sûret</i>	form
<i>tâbiîn</i>	the second generation of Muslims following the <i>sahabe</i>
<i>tahayyül</i>	imagination
<i>takdis</i>	benediction
<i>taksim</i>	instrumental improvisation in Turkish classical music
<i>takvâ</i>	piety, devotion, God-fearing behaviour
<i>tâlim</i>	training
<i>tarîk</i>	path
<i>tarikât</i>	paths; institutionalized schools of <i>tasavvuf</i>
<i>tasavvuf</i>	a theological and philosophical stream of Islam
<i>tasavvur</i>	imagination
<i>tavâf</i>	the circumambulation of the <i>Kaaba</i>
<i>tavîr</i>	manner of musicking
<i>te'vil</i>	allegorical interpretation
<i>tecellî</i>	manifestation
<i>tedvin</i>	compilation
<i>tefekür</i>	contemplation

<i>tefsir</i>	commentary, explanation, or critical interpretation of the <i>Kur'an</i> ; exegesis
<i>tehlil</i>	ascription, repetitive recitation
<i>tekbir</i>	saying “ <i>Allahü Ekber</i> ” (God is the greatest)
<i>tekke</i>	a form of dervish lodge
<i>telkin</i>	suggestion, indoctrination
<i>tenâsüh</i>	reincarnation, transmigration, or <i>metempsychosis</i>
<i>tenzih</i>	acquitting God from anthropomorphic attributes
<i>terbiye</i>	discipline
<i>tesbih</i>	prayer beads
<i>tevâcüd</i>	the beginning of ecstasy, followed by the ecstasy proper (<i>vecd</i>)
<i>tevekkül</i>	trust (in God)
<i>tevhid</i>	unity, oneness of God
<i>tilâvet</i>	recitation of the <i>Kur'an</i>
<i>tövbe</i>	repentance
<i>türkü</i>	Turkish folk song
<i>turuk-ı aliyye</i>	<i>tarikât</i> organizations whose lineage emphasize the fourth caliph Ali
<i>ulemâ</i>	scholars (of religion)
<i>ümme</i>	Muslim community
<i>üns</i>	familiarity; effervescence
<i>usûl</i>	method; rhythmic modes in Turkish music
<i>vâcib</i>	necessary, absolute
<i>vâcib 'ül-vücûd</i>	God having a reality outside the limits of the human mind
<i>vahdet-i şühûd</i>	unity of witnessing
<i>vahdet-i vücûd</i>	unity of existence, unity of being
<i>vahiy</i>	God's revelations
<i>vâridât</i>	divine meanings, inspiration, or enlightenment

<i>vecd</i>	ecstasy; it may also be called <i>cezbe</i> , <i>istiğrak</i>
<i>veli</i>	saint
<i>velvele</i>	variation in Turkish classical music
<i>vera'</i>	piety, devotion, God-fearing behaviour
<i>vuslat</i>	to reunite
<i>yakīn</i>	certainty, certain knowledge
<i>yakınlık</i>	proximity
<i>yeden</i>	modulation point, or leading tone in Turkish classical music
<i>yürüklük</i>	tempo of a piece in Turkish classical music
<i>zâhir</i>	apparent, clear, external
<i>zâkir</i>	one who remembers
<i>zâkirbaşı</i>	one who leads the <i>zikir</i> attendees; it may also be called <i>serzâkir</i>
<i>zaman</i>	time
<i>zevk</i>	pleasure
<i>zikir</i>	recollection, remembrance
<i>zîkr-i hafî</i>	silent <i>zikir</i>
<i>zîkr-i hakîkî</i>	<i>zikir</i> of reality
<i>zühd</i>	God-fearing behaviour, devotion, ascetic

Latin

<i>creatio ex nihilo</i>	creation out of nothing
<i>ex essentia Dei</i>	from the essence of deity / God
<i>ex nihilo nihil fit</i>	nothing comes from nothing
<i>imago Dei</i>	image of God
<i>lapis philosophorum</i>	philosopher's stone
<i>mysterium coniunctionis</i>	mystery of the conjunction).

<i>occultum lapidem</i>	hidden stone
<i>opus</i>	creative activity
<i>philosophia perennis</i>	perennial philosophy / wisdom
<i>pia philosophia</i>	pious philosophy
<i>prima materia</i>	prime / first matter
<i>prisca theologia</i>	ancient theology
<i>sapientia</i>	wisdom
<i>temet nosce</i>	know thyself; it may also be known as <i>nosce te ipsum</i> or <i>noverim me, noverim te</i>
<i>V.I.T.R.I.O.L.</i>	“visit the interior of the earth and by rectifying you shall find the hidden stone”
<i>vacare Deo</i>	to be empty for God
<i>via negativa</i>	apophatic (unsaying) language

Greek

<i>aeon /aion (αἰών)</i>	offspring of God
<i>anamnesis (ἀνάμνησις)</i>	remembrance
<i>anamnēsthēnai (ἀναμνησθῆναι)</i>	remembrance, recollection
<i>aporrhoia (ἀπόρροια)</i>	outflow, effluence
<i>archaios logos (ἀρχαίος λόγος)</i>	ancient doctrine
<i>arche (ἀρχή)</i>	beginning, the first principle
<i>arete (ἀρετή)</i>	goodness and excellence
<i>askesis (ἄσκησις)</i>	exercise, training,
<i>cosmos (κόσμος)</i>	universe
<i>dēmiurgós (δημιουργός)</i>	craftsman, artisan, creator
<i>ekstasis (ἔκστασις)</i>	state of being outside of oneself or of body, ecstasy
<i>episteme (ἐπιστήμη)</i>	science, scientific knowledge
<i>erōs (ἔρως)</i>	love, desire
<i>esōterikós (ἐσωτερικός)</i>	belonging to an inner circle, esoteric
<i>eudaimonia (εὐδαιμονία)</i>	happiness, righteousness, blessedness

<i>gnōsis</i> (γνώσις)	knowledge
<i>gnōthi seautón</i> (γνώθι σεαυτόν)	know thyself
<i>harmonia</i> (ἁρμονία)	fitting together, harmony
<i>hen</i> (ἓν)	one, the transcendent One
<i>henosis</i> (ἕνωσις)	union
<i>hesychasm</i> (ἡσυχασμός)	stillness, rest, quiet, silence
<i>hypostasis</i> (ὑπόστασις)	substance, essence, personification
<i>idéa</i> (ιδέα)	shape, form
<i>katharsis</i> (κάθαρσις)	purification
<i>lógos</i> (λόγος)	speech, word, reason
<i>lógos spermatikos</i> (λόγος σπερματικός)	seminal reason
<i>maieutikó</i> (μαιευτικός)	obstetric, philosophical midwifery
<i>maníā</i> (μανία)	madness
<i>metempsychosis</i> (μετεμψύχωσις)	soul transmigration
<i>metensomatosi</i> (μετενσωματώσεις)	soul transmigration
<i>mnēmē Theou</i> (μνήμη Θεού)	remembrance of God
<i>monad</i> (μόνος)	singularity, basic substance
<i>mystikós</i> (μυστικός)	mystic, secret
<i>nepsis</i> (νήψις)	watchfulness
<i>nous</i> (νοῦς)	mind, intelligence
<i>okeanos</i> (Ὠκεανόν)	the progenitor of the gods
<i>óntōs ón</i> (ὄντως ὄν)	the really real
<i>orthí doxa</i> (ὀρθή δόξα)	orthodox right opinions
<i>ouroboros</i> (οὐροβόρος)	devouring own tail
<i>ousia</i> (οὐσία)	reality, substance, divine essence
<i>parádeigma</i> (παράδειγμα)	model, pattern, paradigm
<i>philosophiā</i> (φιλοσοφία)	love or pursuit of wisdom
<i>phronesis</i> (φρόνησις)	prudence, wisdom, understanding
<i>pleroma</i> (πλήρωμα)	unity, fullness, primordial divine integrity
<i>rhizōmata</i> (ρίζώματα)	roots

<i>saphés</i> (σαφές)	clear
<i>sofón</i> (σοφῶν)	wise
<i>sophia</i> (σοφία)	skill, knowledge, wisdom
<i>techné</i> (τέχνη)	craft, art, technical skill
<i>teleiôsis</i> (τελείωσις)	completion, perfection
<i>theoria</i> (θεωρία)	looking at, contemplation

16 Appendix

16.1 The Tracklist of the HUR Zikir

• Mevlâm Ver Aşkını Bana	Rast	Cumhur	
Silsile	Uşşak		
1. Geldim Kapına Geldim		İstiğfar	[04:18]
2. İstiğfara Gel Kardaşım		İstiğfar	[06:32]
3. Eşiğine Süreydim Yüzümü		Durak/solo	[09:15]
4. Salât-ı Ümmiyye	Segâh	Homophonic Mult.	[10:34]
5. Müminin Kalbini Yuyup Arıtan Allah		Homophonic Mult.	[13:52]
6. Allah Bize Lutfetti Nimetine Gark Etti		Tevhid	[16:57]
7. Bugün Vardım Bir Lokmana		Tevhid	[19:04]
8. Şeyhim Hüsnü Gülizârî		Tevhid	[22:05]
9. Görmeyenden Kaçındılar		Tevhid	[23:13]
10. Gel Gel Beru	Nevâ	Tevhid	[27:31]
11. Ya İmam er-Rusli	Uşşak	Tevhid	[29:21]
12. Medet Ya Sahib'ül-Meydan		Durak/solo	[31:11]
13. Gönül Nur-i Cemalinden	Bestenigâr	Solo → Hû	[31:33]
14. Unknown		Hû	[33:37]
15. Allahümme Erham Ceddünel Geylani		Hû	[34:06]
16. Daldı Gönül Bahr-i Gam'a	Rast	Durak/solo	[36:21]
17. Sevgi Baht Olmuş Ezelden Bize	Rast	Hû + Semâzen	[39:41]
18. Tala'el-bedru 'aleyne	Rast	Hû + Semâzen	[40:57]
19. Unknown		Hû + Semâzen	[41:37]
20. Unknown		Hû + Semâzen	[42:47]
21. Allahümme salli alel Mustafa	Mâhûr	Hû + Semâzen	[43:38]
22. Ağlatırsa Mevlam Yine Güldürür	Gülizâr	Durak/solo	[44:41]
23. Ey Risâlet Tahtının Hurşid ü Mâh-ı Enveri	Hüseynî	Hakk + Semâzen	[46:48]
24. Erenler Dertliyiz Derman İsteriz		Hakk + Semâzen	[48:04]
25. On sekiz bin Aleme Server Olan Muhammed		Hakk + Semâzen	[49:43]
26. Zülfü Kaküllerin Amber Misali		Durak/selamlama	[51:22]
27. Zahid Bizi Ta'n Eyleme		Hayy	[54:32]
28. Pirlere Niyaz Ederiz	Hüseynî?	Hayy	[55:49]
29. Hak Bir Gönül Verdi Bana	Nikriz	Hayy	[57:13]
30. Benim Şahım Geylâni		Hayy	[59:00]
31. Bayram o Bayram ola	Hüseynî	Hayy	[59:42]
32. Gider Hakk'a Uşşâkiler		Hayy	[01:00:54]
33. Göster Cemâlin Şem'ini	Uşşak	Hayy	[01:01:24]
34. Dolap Niçin İnlersin	Nevâ	Hayy	[01:01:57]
35. Selâ	Hüseynî/Dilkeş.?	Hayy	[01:02:21]
36. Cân-ı Dilde Hâne Kıldın	Hüseynî	Hayy	[01:03:28]
37. Ali Göründü Gözüme	Sabâ	Hayy	[01:04:35]
38. Cân'ı Canân'a Kurban Eyleyen		Kayyum+Kahhâr+ Fettâh	[01:05:37]
39. Açıldı Bu Meydan	Sabâ	Fettâh	[01:07:02]
40. Ben Dervişim Diyene	Çargâh	Fettâh	[01:08:10]
41. Güzel Aşık...Demedim mi	Nihavend?	Vahid + Ehad + Samed Allah	[01:08:54]
42. Şeyhimin İlleri		V.E.S.A. → Allah	[01:10:42]
43. Haktır Allahım	Nihavend	Allah → Hû	[01:11:44]
44. Bi Ruh Yâ Aziz Misrek	Hüseynî	Hû/Hayy	[01:12:19]
45. Unknown		Hû/Hayy	[01:13:15]
46. Yok Cihanda Sana Benzer Muhammed		Cumhur	[01:16:34]

16.2 Oğuzhan Kantar's Responses to the Author's Questions, 17.08.2018

1. Can everyone join your *zikir*? Do you need to go through a specific process/training to participate?

“Our *zikir* meetings are open to the public, everyone can attend. There is no pre-admission requirement to participate in the weekly *zikir* meetings, but after a person takes part in our *zikir* and conversations for a while, he feels a sense of belonging to our community and if he wants to join our sect, he will pledge allegiance to our *şeyh* or one of his caliphs, and with this allegiance, he will make an individual commitment to that person. A certain number of *zikir* lessons are assigned to this individual and it is recommended that he recites these lessons at all hours of the day and night, especially at night, so that he becomes a dervish and enters a *tariikat* education process.”

2. (If you have such an approach) Who cannot join your *zikir*?

“As I mentioned above, our public *zikir* is open to everyone. Even if the person is not a Muslim, we do not have a condition that this or that person cannot attend these general *zikir* meetings. However, if someone whose purpose is not *zikir* but comes to our lodge for other purposes and deals with work and occupations that will disrupt the general order, they will be removed from our lodge.”

3. While, for example, the *semâ* practice of the Mevlevî *tariikat* and its current structure can be attributed to Sultan Veled, when and by whom was the last form of your *zikir* determined?

“Ömer el-Halvetî, who is considered the founding master (*pir*) of our *tariikat*, lived in the Shamakhi region, which is now within the borders of Azerbaijan, and later, with the Seyyid Yahyâ-yî Şîrvânî, who grew up a century after him, the Halvetî *tariikat* became systematic and reached Anatolia through his caliphs. In general, *zikir* starts with forming a circle (*halaka*) and sitting on two knees and chanting the prayer of *istiğfar* and *tevhid* in a large area such as a mosque or a *tekke*. Then [a.n. the *zikir* participants] stand up and swing to the right and left, while some names (*esmâ*) are recited. After that, the most privileged part of *zikir* in the Halvetî tradition begins, which is called *devrân* which dervishes perform by holding hands and turning from left to right.

I do not know who applied this [a.n. *devrânî*] *zikir* for the first time, but according to *tasavvuf* books, the sitting (*kuûd*) and standing (*kıyâm*) forms of *zikir* go long way back even until the Prophet Muhammed. In other words, to sum up, the sitting, standing, and circling forms of *zikir* are generally practiced in all branches of the Halvetî *tariikat*. Provided that this method is the basis, some different *zikir* methods, for example, one or more *semâzen* whirling or a few dervishes dancing (*raks*) in the middle of *zikir*... These are the things that the current *şeyh* of the *tariikat* may or may not apply according to his own will and desire. In fact, the methods of *zikir* are transitive in *cehrî* [a.n. *zikir* practicing] *tariikat* organizations: a Kâdirî *şeyh* may apply a

ritual from Rûfâî or Halvetî *tarikât* in his own *zikir*, or a Halvetî *zikir* may incorporate different *zikir* methods.”

4. How many of the *ilâhi* forms sung in your *zikir* have been transmitted from older generations to the present, and how many of them have been composed recently (in the last ten, twenty, or thirty years)?

“I cannot give any percentage on this subject, but we do not have any objection to using all kinds of *ilâhi* suitable for our *zikir* tempo and we recite them in appropriate places of *zikir*. However, I would like to explain here that especially in Halvetî *tarikât* and its branches spread in Anatolia, while *ilâhis* that were sung according to the *usûl* and *makam* rules are called *tekke tavrı* [a.n. lodge style], which is performed in bigger cities where urban culture is common, such as İstanbul, Bursa, and Edirne, the *tekkes* [a.n. lodge] in the provinces sang the *ilâhis* in their *zikir* mostly in local manners and styles. In this sense, while this *tekke* style was applied in central places such as İstanbul, Bursa, Edirne, or Manisa, our *silsile* [a.n. the lineage of *mürşid* leaders] that spent its last century in the Çankırı basin of Çorum, Ankara, and Kırıkkale, could not raise reciters in the post-republican era [a.n. post-1923], who would employ a high level of *makam* and *usûl* in their *zikir*. These singers generally recite some poems written by their *şeyh* in local manners. In that respect, in our *silsile*, our *tekkes* in Central Anatolia, especially before the year 2000, when there were limited communication means, continued to practice this local manner of reciting *ilâhis*, but in the last ten-fifteen years, thanks to the prevalence of communication, some adherents of our *tarikât* have developed themselves by listening to and practicing [a.n. *meşk*] the recordings of masters in *tasavvuf* music. We also have a few friends who received conservatory education, which evolved our *zikir* into an İstanbul style *tekke* music.”

16.3 Oğuzhan Kantar’s Responses to the Author’s Questions, 27.08.2018

5. Are the dates of your oldest and newest *ilâhi* material (or any element in your *zikir*) known?

“There is no way that we can date as old or new either in our hymns or in our method; however, the *zikir* method we are applying now generally follows a written work describing the Uşşâkî *zikir* practiced in the 1800s²⁴³³. According to my private research, we have more or less basic similarities with the other branches of the Uşşâkî *tarikât*. However, there are many elements shaped by the taste of our current master *şeyh*”

6. Is there a *zâkirbaşı* rank in your *tarikât*?

“As far as I understand from your question, with the *zâkirbaşı* concept you must mean the person who sings *ilâhi* and administers *zikir* events. We have the concept of *zâkir*. We say *zâkir* to those who are the administrators of our small *zâviye* convents, mostly affiliated to the center,

²⁴³³ Kantar here likely refers to the *âdâb* manual written by Şeyh Abdullah Salâhaddîn-i Uşşâkî (d. 1782), see: Uşşâkî / Uşşâkî, *Tuhfetü'l-Uşşâkiyye*, 2016.

and who are authorized to make *zikir* and conversation (*sohbet*) there. I think, in other *tarikât* organizations such as the Cerrâhiyye, *zâkirbaşı* means the person who sings hymns, and even administers the *zikir* according to his position among the lead chanters. In our *tarikât*, there is an order consisting of the master *şeyh*, then the caliph *şeyh*, *dedegan* (guide), *zâkir*, and dervishes. A dervish lodge is opened where necessary and a suitable dervish *zâkir* is appointed there. That *zâkir* organizes *zikir* and conversations there, and he is the manager of his lodge. The *zâkir* group of adherents are subordinate to the caliph in their region, and caliphs are subordinate to the leading *şeyh*. We have such an organizational structure, anyone who can sing a little with a beautiful voice can sing in every dervish lodge.”

7. What is the importance of *zikir* in your *seyrüsülûk*?

“The main purpose of all *tarikât* groups is *zikir*. The *zikir* is the most important thing in disciplining the dervishes and completing their *seyrüsülûk*. Of course, first of all, the commands of the *şeriat*, individual and obligatory acts of worship such as prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, must be fulfilled by the dervishes. Afterwards, they must take the lessons given to them, that is, the *zikir*.

If what you mean in this question is collective *zikir*, let me answer this as follows: Collective *zikir* is, in the words of our master, the ceremony of *tarikât* groups. It is an open showcase of the *tarikât*, like a parade of soldiers. The soldier does all kinds of training in the background, and as a result of this training, he represents this in the best way on the ceremonial guard. In a way, a circle of *zikir* is like this.

Also, in the words of İbrahim İpek Efendi, who was our *şeyh* master before Fatih Efendi: ‘My son, just like the declaration of *şeriat* is the call to prayer [a.n. *ezan*], the declaration of the *tarikât* is the circle of *zikrullah*. If a dervish does not participate in the circle of *zikir* once a week, he will fall out of the *tarikât* even if he has followed all the other rules’. That is, to elaborate, you know that the *ezan* is a call to prayer in the entire Islamic world. If the call to prayer is recited in a place, it means that there is a community there and prayers are being performed with the community. Well, the circle of *zikir* is in this sense. If there is *zikir*, it means that there is a *tarikât* and a *tasavvuf* service there. Participating in these public *zikir* ensures that dervishes and other people receive enlightenment (*feyz*), as we call it, and live wisely depending on this enlightenment. This is what the master meant by “falling from the *tarikât*’. If a dervish does not attend *zikir* once a week, his affection (*muhabbet*) for the *tarikât* will cease over time. This interruption of affection also breaks the spiritual power of the person, perhaps causing him to deviate even from an Islamic life.”

8. What is the total number of adherents of your *tarikât* and in Istanbul?

“It is not possible to give an exact number, but I think there are 10000 men and women only in Istanbul.”

9. Since when have your *zikir* performances been broadcast on internet platforms? How did this idea come about?

“Our *zikir* performances in fact have been recorded with the possibilities at hand since older times. However, especially after the 2000s, we found it appropriate to broadcast our *zikir* due to the widespread use of internet communication. While we used to broadcast some special meetings, *zikir* and *devrân* performances that we made in certain time periods, we are now trying to broadcast both the conversations (*sohbet*) and *zikir* practices of our master on a weekly basis by making better quality shots through a studio we created in our central *dergâh* after 2010. Our *şeyh* believes that we can only bring about one thousand people into our dervish lodge, but with these internet-like communication tools, we can convey our conversation and *zikir*, that is, the joy and love of *tasavvuf*, to millions and this encourages the broadcasting of our *zikir* performances, based on the idea that it is a kind of guidance (*irşad*) activity.”

10. While performing your *zikir*, are there specific *makam* modes/procedures in your hymns?

“As I explained above, our *zikir* were sung in various Anatolian local manners and styles until 15-20 years ago, while today, hymns are sung in certain *makam* modes by our singers who know *makam* and *usûl* techniques. I do not have a music education, that is why I do not have enough information about the topic.”

11. How do you name the place where you perform *zikir* (*tekke*, *dergâh*, *âsitâne*, *hankah*, etc.)?

“We usually call our *zikir* places *dergah*. However, we call our Kasımpaşa Dervish Lodge *Kasımpaşa Asitanesi*. This is because Kasımpaşa Asitanesi is close to the office of our *pir*, and thus it acts as a centre to which our smaller dervish lodges (*dergah*) are affiliated, both in Anatolia and İstanbul.

By the way, as you know, lodges (*tekke*) are officially prohibited in Turkey, and expressions such as *tekke*, *dergah*, *hangah*, *zaviye*, or *asitane* cannot be used officially. That’s why each of our dervish lodges is an association. We have three federations that we established with the combination of our associations, and we also have a foundation named *Gülzarı Mualla* based in Kasımpaşa, İstanbul. Both our associations and our foundation have treated the *tarikât* activities that we perform under the name of *tasavvuf* culture and folklore, and we have officially named the places where we perform these performances as cultural centres. If you examine our official website <<http://www.gulzarimuallavakfi.org.tr/>>²⁴³⁴ and read the definitions of our vision and mission, you will have better information on this subject.”

12. Does your *zikir* change according to the specific months/period (such as the month of Ramadan, Eid-al-Adha, the death anniversary of an older *şeyh*...)? (e.g., added/removed hymns, chapters etc.)

“Let me answer this question so: although not constantly and regularly, there may be poems that we read according to various times and situations. For example, in the month of *Mu-*

²⁴³⁴ As of March 2022, the website cannot be accessed.

*harrem*²⁴³⁵, we read a hymn that describes the 12 *imams*, or we read a poem called *regaibiye* before *zikir* in the evening of *Regaib*²⁴³⁶.”

13. How do you think *zikir* should be defined in academic texts: *âyin*, *ritüel*, *merasim*, etc...?

“As you know, *ayin* means religious ceremony in Persian language. In this sense, the collective *zikir* practices of *tarikât* organizations, especially in the Ottoman society, were named as *Mevlevi ayini*, or *Halveti ayini*. My humble opinion is that at this point the word *ayin* should be used. However, unfortunately, as a result of the language revolution [a.n. in 1928], our society today generally does not know many words used in the past, or the correct meaning of these words. Even, when someone uses the word *ayin*, things like satanic ritual, Christian worship, etc. are understood. That’s why we usually call our collective *zikir*: *zikir*, *zıkrullah*, *erkan*, *erkan-ı zıkrullah* and so on. However, in an academic text, it should be mentioned as *ayin*, like *Halveti ayini*, *Uşşaki ayini*...”

14. While the *zikir* of the Kādirî *tarikât* is called *devran*, or the *zikir* of the Nakşibendî *tarikât hatm-i hâcegân*, how would you describe your *zikir*?

“We call it *Uşşaki zikir* or *Uşşaki devran* etc.”

15. Is your *tarikât* open to all sects (*mezhep*) of *Sünni* Islam?

“Our *tarikât* is a way that adheres to the creed of ‘*ehli sünnnet velcemaat*’, that is *Sünni*. However, all *tarikât* groups derive from Hz. [a.n. his holiness] Ali’s channel as of lineage. In this sense, we have a special love for Imam Ali and his family as a spiritual bond, and I call it ‘*tasavvuf* and *tarikât Alevism*’, which is a long talk. Our *zikir* is open to everyone. Our door is open to everyone, no matter who comes, Christian or nonbeliever. But if a person wants to become a *derviş* and wants to achieve spiritual progress on this path, he must bring his faith and deeds to the required line [a.n. *ehl-i sünnnet ve’l-cemâat*, the consensus of the community], but this is another discussion.

16. What are the social functions of your *tarikât* according to you? (Opening educational institutions, helping the poor, etc.)

“Until the 2000s, the branch (*kol*) of our *tarikât* that we represent could not become an official organization due to the conditions of that period and the position of our sheikhs and dervishes at that time. However, as I mentioned above, we currently have a foundation, associations, and a federation. We have two *Kur’an* courses based in İstanbul and Kırıkkale, and a primary

²⁴³⁵ The first month of the Islamic lunar calendar.

²⁴³⁶ It is the holy night of *Regâib*, which coincides with the first Friday night of the seventh month (*Recep*) in the Islamic lunar calendar.

school in Çorum. We are also engaged in social assistance activities to the extent of our possibilities.”

17. In a speech given by your *şeyh*, Mr Fatih Nurullah Efendi, he talks about his link with the Nakşibendî *tarikât*. What other *tarikât* groups do you have links with?

“The *tarikât* and *tasavvuf* life of our *şeyh* started with the Naksi *tarikât*. His grandfather Abdulkadir Efendi was the dervish of Osman Bedrettin Erzurumi Efendi, known as Imam Efendi from Erzurum. His father, uncle Hasan, was the dervish of Şerif Efendi from Amasya, who was also a caliph of Bedrettin Efendi from Erzurum. In the 1980s, Fatih Efendi entered the Nakşi *tarikât* with allegiance (*biat*) to Şerif Efendi from Amasya, and after a while, he became a member of the Uşşaki *tarikât* as a result of some spiritual signs and events. There is biographical information about Fatih Efendi on our website called Nurani TV²⁴³⁷, you can check it out.”

18. Which (poetry/song) forms do you use in your *zikir*? (*ilâhi*, *mersiye*, *nefes*, *durak*, *şuğul*, *kaside* etc...)

“Again, we use all kinds of forms depending on the place. You have already determined this from our *zikir* videos on YouTube.”

19. Do you control your breathing while performing your *zikir*? (e.g., saying certain words or parts of the words while inhaling or exhaling etc.)

“Yes, it is important to control the breath in *zikir* and participate in *zikir* by making a sound suitable for the harmony of *zikir* with correct breathing.”

²⁴³⁷ As of March 2022, the website cannot be accessed.

16.4 Two *icâzet* Documents Provided by the HUR Group

[illegible]

Hazmi Tura efendi de Allah ve Peygamber aşığı Arifi billah, (Nusret Tura) Uşşaki efendiye hilafet vermiştir. Nusret Tura Uşşaki efendi de bendeniz, gözünün nuru (Necdet Ardıç) Uşşaki evladına Hilafet ve İlahi emanetleri lutuf ve ihsan buyurmuşlardır.

Biz fakir de evlatlarımızdan yetişkin ve kabiliyyet sahibi olanlara, bu hilafet ve emanetleri aldığımız gibi nakletmeye çalışmaktayız.

Tarikat-ı Aliyyenin o saf kurallarını icraya devam şartıyla talib-i Hakk olanlara zikr'i hafi ve celiyi talim ve telkin eyleyip tılsımını-sırrını taşımaya icazet; halifelerimizden istidat sahiplerinden olan (FATİH..NURULLAH..) efendiye izin ve ruhsat vermişizdir.

Tevfik ve hidayet Allah'dan'dır.

TERZİ BABA NECDEFARİÇ UŞŞAKİ



[Signature]

06-12-2012

22-01-1434 Hicri

16.5 Statement of DUTI



DEWAN ULAMA THARIQAH ASEAN DEWAN ULAMA THARIQAH INDONESIA

DEWAN ULAMA THARIQAH INDONESIA SUMATERA BARAT
Jl. Pahlawan Seribu CBD BSD Lot. 13, Bumi Serpong Damai, Tangerang Selatan Banten – Indonesia, 15321
Pondok Pesantren Taruna Rabbani Koto Sani Kec. X Koto Singkarak Kab. Solok Sumatera Barat
Telp. 081398856256/085218865213
Email: duti.thariqah@gmail.com, www.dewanulamathariqah.org

**PERNYATAAN SIKAP
DEWAN ULAMA THARIQAH INDONESIA/ ASEAN
TERHADAP SITUASI TURKI**

Mencermati perkembangan ekonomi mutakhir di Turki dengan melemahnya nilai tukar Lira Turki atas Dollar Amerika akibat perang dagang yang dilakukan oleh Amerika dan sekutunya, maka Dewan Ulama Thariqah Indonesia (DUTI)/ ASEAN menyatakan sikap sebagai berikut:

1. Menghormati Turki sebagai negara yang berdaulat yang tidak dapat ditekan atau diperlakukan diskriminatif oleh negara mana pun. Mengancam tindakan Amerika Serikat dan sekutunya yang menggunakan perang dagang untuk menekan Turki menyelesaikan sengketa politik antara keduanya.
2. Mendukung segala usaha Presiden Erdogan dalam rangka untuk mempertahankan kedaulatan negerinya dan menjaga marwahnya sebagai bangsa terhormat, terutama dalam hal memulihkan keterpurukan ekonomi yang dialami dengan bekerjasama dengan negara-negara sahabat.
3. DUTI/ ASEAN akan tetap melanjutkan hubungan persahabatan dengan berbagai organisasi thariqah di Turki, khususnya yang dipimpin oleh Syekh Eyyub Fatih Nurullah Efendi, dan akan meningkatkan kerjasama yang lebih komprehensif dalam bidang dakwah, pendidikan dan ekonomi, dalam rangka menambah kekuatan dan kualitas umat islam diantara kedua negara. Wassalamualaikum warahmatullah wabarakatuh

Dewan Ulama Thariqah ASEAN
Rais Mustasyar,



TUAN GURU SYAIKH MUHAMMAD ALI HANAFIAH AR RABBANI

Jakarta, August 17, 2018
Dewan Ulama Thariqah Indonesia
Sekjend,



Dr. Zubair Ahmad, M. Ag

16.6 Turkish Official Bulletin

16 Eylül 2015 – Sayı : 29477

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] AKFİN ADI ALINCA VAKİT
[REDACTED] AKFİNLER Örtün Yegin Mümi Bozkurt
[REDACTED] AKFİN İLAMİTİZAHİ ANKARA
[REDACTED] AKFİN TESCİL KARARINI VEREN MAHKEMESİNİN ADI KAPAK TARİHİ VE NO Sıra Ankara 10. Asliye Hukuk Mahkemesinin 16/07/2015 tarihinde kesinleşen 05/05/2015 tarihli ve E-2015/22 K-2015/208 sayılı kararı
[REDACTED] AKFİN AKFİN Akınla ile ilgili sosyal ekonomik kültürel basın ve diğer alanlarda faaliyetler yürütme çalışmaları ve bilimsel çalışmalar yapmak Türkiye ile Afrika arasında tarihi kültürel siyasi sosyal ve ekonomik ilişkiler başta olmak üzere ilişkilerin ve birliğinin geliştirilme çalışmaları yapmak
[REDACTED] AKFİN MAL VARLIĞI 75.000 TL nakit
[REDACTED] ZORUNLU KURULUŞ
[REDACTED] AKFİN SONA ERMESİ HALİNDE MAL VE HAKLARIN DEVRİ Borçları tasfiyesinden arda kalan mal ve hakların mütevellî heyetin belirlediği vakfa devredilir
[REDACTED] Türk Medeni Kanununun 104 maddesi gereğince ilan olunur [REDACTED]

Türk Medeni Kanununun 104. maddesi gereğince ilan olunur. 8368/1-1

17 Abstract (English)

Building on a complex historical knowledge system, the metaphysical epistemology of *tasavvuf* has a direct association with the modes of musicking in its *zikir* rituals. As the applied form of this epistemology, *zikir* embodies knowledge via specific acoustic and motional parameters. This study aims to bring to light the inherent structural and contextual links between the knowledge derivation methods of *tasavvuf* and the performance practices of the *zikir* ritual, to promote a better understanding of the dynamics that are at work in performing *zikir*. Moreover, the purpose of this study is to provide insights into a certain *tasavvuf* trend, Halvetî-Uşşâkî-Ruhzârî, based in İstanbul, concerning their musical performance of *tasavvuf* doctrines in *zikir*.

The data for the historical part of this study was collected through archival research relating to the topic (Volume 1) and the data for the analysis of the *zikir* ritual (Volume 2) was gathered through various online documents uploaded by the HUR group in text, video, and image formats.

The fundamental components of *tasavvuf* epistemology include an esotericised, intuitive way of knowing, *hikmet* or *mârifet*, which links the knowledge of the self with the knowledge of the divine and expands the range of human knowledge on a plane that theoretically covers not only our sensible world but also an extended metaphysical realm. Based on this structure, the subject matter of *tasavvuf* epistemology can be outlined as the ontological relationship between God and humans, which defines the method of *tasavvuf* as a set of devotional, moral, and intellectual training of the self (ego, *nefs*) known as *seyrüsülûk*. The acquisition and application methods of this specific knowledge discussed in this study involve several themes such as love, ineffability, purification, light, remembrance, moral and spiritual perfection through ascetic practices, and a chain of ancient wisdom. When this knowledge is attained, it is often portrayed as salvation, illumination, eternal bliss, or unification since it is above all “mystically” experienced.

As part of this self-discipline and training (*seyrüsülûk*), the ritual structure of *zikir* enables the performer to acquire a hidden knowledge of the self and of God and through which they access the extended reality via remembering. This ritual structure customarily involves two principal characteristics that allow the performer to “remember” and simultaneously define the musicking in *zikir* events: repetition (of divine names) and tempo fluctuations.

The findings of this study indicate that any performance of *zikir* harbours a complex network of historical, cultural, theological, and philosophical dynamics from which various performance practices have been derived. The epistemological dimension of performing *zikir* appears to be only one component, yet a significant one, of these dynamics that extend beyond the confines of Islam.

18 Abstract (German)

Aufbauend auf einem komplexen historischen Wissenssystem hat die metaphysische Epistemologie des *tasavvuf* eine direkte Verbindung zu den Arten des Musizierens in wessen *zikir*-Ritualen. Als angewandte Form dieser Erkenntnistheorie verkörpert *zikir* Wissen über spezifische akustische und Bewegungsparameter. Diese Studie zielt darauf ab, die inhärenten strukturellen und kontextuellen Verbindungen zwischen den Wissensableitungsmethoden von *tasavvuf* und den Aufführungspraktiken des *zikir*-Rituals ans Licht zu bringen, um ein besseres Verständnis der Dynamik zu fördern, die bei der Aufführung von *zikir* Wirken. Darüber hinaus soll diese Studie Einblicke in einen bestimmten pseudo-*tasavvuf*-Trend, Halvetî-Uşşâkî-Ruhzârî mit Sitz in Istanbul, bezüglich ihrer musikalischen Darbietung von *tasavvuf*-Lehren in *zikir* geben.

Die Daten für den historischen Teil dieser Studie wurden durch Archivrecherchen zum Thema (Band 1) gesammelt und die Daten für die Analyse des *zikir*-Rituals (Band 2) wurden durch verschiedene Online-Dokumente gesammelt, die von der HUR Gruppe in Textform sowie in Video- und Bildformate hochgeladen wurden.

Zu den grundlegenden Bestandteilen der *tasavvuf*-Epistemologie gehört eine esoterische, intuitive Art des Wissens, *hikmet* oder *mârifet*, die das Wissen des Selbst mit dem Wissen des Göttlichen verbindet und die Reichweite des menschlichen Wissens auf einer Ebene erweitert, die theoretisch nicht nur unsere sinnliche Welt umfasst, sondern auch einen erweiterten metaphysischen Bereich. Basierend auf dieser Struktur kann der Gegenstand der *tasavvuf*-Epistemologie als die ontologische Beziehung zwischen Gott und Menschen umrissen werden, die die *tasavvuf*-Methode als eine Reihe hingebungsvoller, moralischer und intellektueller Schulung des Selbst (Ego, *nefs*) definiert, bekannt als *seyrüsülûk*. Die Erwerbs- und Anwendungsmethoden dieses spezifischen Wissens, die in dieser Studie diskutiert werden, umfassen mehrere Themen wie Liebe, Unaussprechlichkeit, Reinigung, Licht, Erinnerung, moralische und spirituelle Vollkommenheit durch asketische Praktiken und eine Kette alter Weisheit. Wenn dieses Wissen erreicht ist, wird es oft als Erlösung, Erleuchtung, ewige Glückseligkeit oder Vereinigung dargestellt, da es vor allem „mystisch“ erfahren wird.

Als Teil dieser Selbstdisziplin und Schulung (*seyrüsülûk*) ermöglicht die rituelle Struktur des *zikir* dem Ausführenden, ein verborgenes Wissen über das Selbst und über Gott zu erwerben und dadurch Zugang zur erweiterten Realität durch Erinnern. Diese rituelle Struktur umfasst üblicherweise zwei Hauptmerkmale, die es dem Ausführenden ermöglichen, sich zu „erinnern“ und gleichzeitig das Musizieren in *zikir*-Ereignissen zu definieren: Wiederholung (von göttlichen Namen) und Temposchwankungen.

Die Ergebnisse dieser Studie weisen darauf hin, dass jede *zikir*-Aufführung ein komplexes Netzwerk historischer, kultureller, theologischer und philosophischer Dynamiken beinhaltet, aus denen verschiedene Aufführungspraktiken abgeleitet wurden. Die erkenntnistheoretische Dimension der Durchführung von *zikir* scheint nur eine Komponente zu sein, jedoch eine bedeutende dieser Dynamik, die sich über die Grenzen des Islam hinaus erstreckt.