

The Concept of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* in Islam in the
Light of the Works of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī

by

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit
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Abstract

The principle of *tazkiyat al-nafs* is central to Islam but despite this, relatively little work has been written, if compared to the vast volumes devoted to Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) or Prophetic narration (*ḥadīth*). In addition to this, much of what has been written has been within the general precepts of what is now termed *taṣawwuf*, or Sufism and much of this work has been concerned with the post-Ghazzālī period.

Despite this, many works had been written and indeed, the concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* had been developed prior to the advent of al-Ghazzālī. One of the most influential scholars in the pre-Ghazzālī period within this field was the second/eighth century Muslim scholar Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī, who was born in Basra around 165/782 but later resided in Baghdad, albeit a period of exile in Kūfa, until his death in 243/857. Al-Muḥāsibī was also known for his skills in many disciplines, including the Qur’ān, Prophetic narration (*ḥadīth*) and scholastic theology (*‘ilm al-kalām*) but it is for his mastery in the field of Islamic spirituality and moral psychology for which he is remembered.

Regardless of his favourable notoriety he was not without criticism, being repudiated by Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 242/856) for his “unorthodox” views and reviled by Aḥmad’s subsequent followers Abū Zur‘a al-Rāzī (d. 264/878), Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 297/910) and ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ‘Irāqī (d. 806/1403). Despite this, he was a prolific writer, reportedly authoring more than two hundred works, the most famous of which is perhaps *Kitāb al-Ri‘āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*.

It was this latter, monumental work which drew the attention of the West in the form of the highly respected researcher Margaret Smith (d. 1970), who was the first European scholar to seriously address the life and works of this great exponent of *tazkiya*. This is not to say that al-Muḥāsibī has been exhausted as an area of research however, as many of his works have been preserved and indeed, have been published, edited and annotated since the pioneering work of Smith.

Thus, this research comprises:

- a) An examination of the linguistic and terminological usage of the terms *tazkiya* and *al-nafs* to determine an accurate understanding of these concepts within the framework of Islam.
- b) An extensive study of the historical period in which al-Muḥāsibī lived, to assess the extent to which the political, social and economic factors played a part in his life and work.

- c) An extensive survey of the available biographical and historical sources, to produce an accurate and comprehensive account of this unique and extraordinary scholar's life.
- d) An assessment of al-Muḥāsibī's works and an exposition of the author's understanding and methodology regarding the concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs*.

A Note on Transliteration

Arabic	English	Arabic	English
أ	<i>a</i>	ض	<i>ḍ</i>
ب	<i>b</i>	ط	<i>ṭ</i>
ت	<i>t</i>	ظ	<i>ẓ</i>
ث	<i>th</i>	ع	<i>‘</i>
ج	<i>j</i>	غ	<i>gh</i>
ح	<i>ḥ</i>	ف	<i>f</i>
خ	<i>kh</i>	ق	<i>q</i>
د	<i>d</i>	ك	<i>k</i>
ذ	<i>dh</i>	ل	<i>l</i>
ر	<i>r</i>	م	<i>m</i>
ز	<i>z</i>	ن	<i>n</i>
س	<i>s</i>	هـ	<i>h</i>
ش	<i>sh</i>	و	<i>w</i>
ص	<i>ṣ</i>	ي	<i>y</i>

ء is denoted by ‘ when not at the beginning of a word.

ة is denoted by *a*, except in *idāfa* constructions where it will be denoted by *t*.

Short Vowels :

َ — is denoted by *a*

ِ — is denoted by *i*

ُ — is denoted by *u*

Long Vowels:

آ / اَ are denoted by *ā*

إِ is denoted by *ī*

أُ is denoted by *ū*

Diphthongs:

أَي is denoted by *ay*

أَو is denoted by *aw*

س is denoted by the doubling of the letter.

The definite article ال is denoted *al-* in all cases except when it follows an inseparable preposition or construction, in which case it will be denoted `/-.

The divine name (*lufẓ al-jallāla*) will be transliterated as ‘Allāh’ in all cases.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The principle of *tazkiyat al-nafs* is central to Islam but despite this, relatively little work has been written, if compared to the vast volumes devoted to Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) or Prophetic narration (*ḥadīth*). In addition to this, much of what has been written has been within the general precepts of what is now termed *taṣawwuf*, or Sufism and much of this work has been concerned with the post-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111) period.

Despite this, many works had been written and indeed, the concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* had been developed prior to the advent of al-Ghazzālī. One of the most influential scholars in the pre-Ghazzālī period within this field was the second century Islamic scholar Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī, who was born in Basra around 165/782 but later resided in Baghdad, albeit with a period of exile in Kūfa, until his death in 243/857. Al-Muḥāsibī was also known for his skills in many disciplines, including the Qur’ān, Prophetic narration (*ḥadīth*) and scholastic theology (*‘ilm al-kalām*) but it is for his mastery in the field of Islamic spirituality and moral psychology that he is remembered.

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It was this latter, monumental work which drew the attention of the West in the form of the highly respected researcher Margaret Smith (d. 1970), who was the first European scholar to address the life and works of this great exponent of *tazkiya* in depth. This is not to say that al-Muḥāsibī has been exhausted as an area of research however, as many of his works have been preserved and indeed, have been published, edited and annotated, since the pioneering work of Smith.

Thus, this research comprises an examination of the linguistic and terminological usage of the terms *tazkiya* and *al-nafs* to determine an accurate understanding of these concepts. In addition, it will provide an extensive survey of the available biographical and historical sources, to produce an accurate and comprehensive account of this unique and extraordinary scholar’s life, including a study of the historical period in which al-Muḥāsibī lived, to assess the extent to which the political, social and economic factors played a part in

his life and work. Due to the large number of works produced by this prolific author and their importance, the final part of this thesis will be concerned with an assessment of al-Muḥāsibī's works to determine the writer's understanding and methodology regarding the concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs*.

This being the case, before we start it requires that several basic principles be clarified; this in turn therefore, requires that a brief background or overview be presented, to supply a foundation for the following chapters, which will contain various discussions, historical and methodological, perhaps unfamiliar to the majority. Thus, the aim and purpose of this introduction is to provide the reader with an outline of the research previously carried out in this field, so as to acquaint them with the depth of scholarship regarding al-Muḥāsibī and *tazkiya*, as well as to define the scope of the present work. Secondly, it is our purpose here to define and clarify the methodology to be used during the present work so that the reader is aware of the methods being employed by the researcher. Thirdly, since this area of research is concerned primarily with what is commonly termed 'spirituality' or 'mysticism', a section has been included regarding the terminology of each of these terms, so that when they are used, the reader is familiar with their meaning and context. Finally, the intrinsic link between the current area of research and what is termed Sufism or *taṣawwuf*, requires that a brief overview of this discipline be included as to familiarise the reader with the overall context of Islamic spirituality/mysticism.

1.1 Literature Review

Any piece of research requires that it clarifies its position with regard to the work carried out previously and in this sense the present thesis is no exception. Therefore, it is the purpose of this section to survey the current body of literature available, regarding the topic in question. However, as it is clear from the title of the thesis, the present work covers two main areas, i.e. that of *tazkiyat al-nafs* and secondly, that of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī. Thus, each one of these areas will be treated separately, to examine the work carried out in each field.

1.1.1 Literature Regarding *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*

Classical literature regarding this topic as a separate discipline is extremely limited but nevertheless there are a variety of contemporary works that exist and that include *tazkiyat al-nafs* in their titles. These include:

a) *Al-Mustakhlaṣ fī Tazkiyat al-Anfus* by Saʿīd Ḥawwā (4th edition, Cairo, Dār al-Islām, 1988). This is one of the most comprehensive works on the subject of *tazkiyat al-nafs* and begins with the various ways through which the soul may be purified that can be placed under the umbrella term of ‘Islamic beliefs and practices’, since they not only include physical acts of worship such as prayer (*al-ṣalāt*) but also, metaphysical aspects such as knowledge of the ailments of the heart and their cure. The discussion also encompasses the faults and ailments of the soul such as ostentation (*al-riyāʿ*) and arrogance (*al-kibr*) and the importance of cleansing the soul of such qualities. The opposing scenario in terms of positive moral and ethical qualities that need to be nurtured, such as patience (*al-ṣabr*) and gratitude (*al-shukr*) is also examined, as well as the importance of emulating both the attributes of Allāh and the characteristics of his Prophet. Finally, the fruits of *tazkiya* are also expounded and can be summarised as being the eradication of every blameworthy quality of the human being. Thus, Ḥawwā’s work is extremely thorough and as such is extremely important within the context of *tazkiyat al-nafs*.

b) *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs* by ʿUmar Sulaymān al-Ashqar, (Amman, Dār al-Nafāʿis, 1992). This very short treatise begins by stressing the importance of the subject matter in that it is only through a process of *tazkiya* that the human soul will remain ‘healthy’, which has an ultimate effect on its fate in the hereafter. Al-Ashqar subsequently defines *tazkiya* linguistically and terminologically and also discusses the importance of purification for the heart. In the second half of the treatise the author examines the Islamic methodology regarding purification of the soul, stressing the importance of true faith in Islamic monotheism (*al-tawḥīd*), knowledge (*al-ʿilm*), remembrance (*al-dhikr*), and repentance (*al-tawba*). As such this work is representative of a ‘practical’ approach to *tazkiya*, being well written and concise.

c) *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* by Saʿd b. Muḥammad al-Ṭakhīs (Riyadh, Dār al-Ṣamīʿi, 1992). This short, contemporary work begins with an introduction to contextualise the subject matter and continues with an appraisal of the various Qurʾānic verses dealing with *tazkiya* and the commentaries of Muslim exegetes concerning them. Subsequently, a discussion of the ailments and faults of the soul is provided along with an exposition of the three types of soul alluded to in the Qurʾān.¹ Al-Ṭakhīs continues by examining various ways in which the soul may be purified, including perfecting acts of worship (*iḥsān al-ʿibāda*), reciting the Qurʾān (*al-tilāwa*), Allāh’s remembrance (*al-dhikr*) and reflecting upon the lives and

¹ For a discussion of these see chapter two, section 2.2.2.2 below.

statements of the pious predecessors (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*). The final section of the book is devoted to the method and means of taking the soul to account (*muḥāsabat al-nafs*) and thus, this work also suggests a ‘practical’ approach to *tazkiya* within an ‘orthodox’ framework.

d) *Ma‘ālim fi ‘l-Sulūk wa Tazkiyat al-Nufūs* by ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Āl ‘Abd al-Laṭīf, (Riyadh, Dār al-Waṭan, 1993). This work, as the title would suggest, deals with a variety of moral and ethical issues from the Islamic perspective before examining the importance of *tazkiyat al-nafs* half way through the book. Āl ‘Abd al-Laṭīf, in approaching this subject relies on quoting from classical Islamic scholarship as represented by al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273), Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) and especially, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) to present an ‘orthodox’ representation of the subject matter. Although this work is limited in its dealing with *tazkiyat al-nafs*, it is well informed, concise and well written, the quotes in particular, being useful.

e) *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* (Riyadh, Dār al-Muslim, 1994). This book in fact is not a new work and indeed is little more than a new edition of the section by *shaykh al-Islām* Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) discussing this topic extracted from his *Majmū‘at al-Fatāwā*, being edited by Muḥammad b. Sa‘īd al-Qaḥṭānī. Al-Qaḥṭānī for his part has provided an introduction regarding Ibn Taymiyya and also provides a brief section regarding *tazkiyat al-nafs* to contextualise the treatise of the aforementioned scholar, as well as producing the usual annotation typical of an edited text. As for Ibn Taymiyya himself, he begins by discussing the various verses mentioning the terms related to *tazkiya* and provides the views of the early Muslim exegetes regarding their meaning as well as supplying his own opinions. Regarding purification of the soul, he concentrates his discussion around the importance of pure faith in Islamic monotheism (*al-tawḥīd*), as well as complying with every legally binding command and every injunction forbidding an act. It is this very pragmatic approach that seems to have influenced many of the contemporary scholars mentioned here to adopt a very ‘practical’ methodology to *tazkiya*.

f) *Tazkiyat al-Nafs wa Mu‘ālihat al-Āfāt* by ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Yūsuf (Riyadh, Dār al-‘Āṣima, 1996). After a brief introduction al-Yūsuf begins this work by providing an interesting discussion regarding the three types of *nafs* alluded to in the Qur‘ān and continues by examining how the soul may be taken to account (*muḥāsabat al-nafs*). The next chapter concerns the various moral and ethical qualities of the *nafs* and the duality of

these qualities and their opposites.² The final part of the book discusses how the soul may be trained through various forms of worship such as remembrance (*al-dhikr*), prayer (*al-ṣalāt*), fasting (*al-ṣawm*) and giving charity (*al-ṣadaqa*). Thus, this small treatise also suggests a ‘practical’ approach to the purification of the soul and in this sense is not ‘ground breaking’ but nevertheless al-Yūsuf’s discussion of the duality of the qualities of the *nafs* is extremely useful.

g) *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs* by Anas Karzūn (2 vols., Beirut, Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1997). This work spanning two volumes is the published version of the author’s PhD thesis awarded by Umm al-Qurā University in Mecca and as such is a thorough, academic and extensive survey of *tazkiyat al-nafs* in the Islamic context. The study begins with definitions of both *tazkiya* and *nafs* and focuses on the *nafs*, its relationship with the intellect (*al-‘aql*) and the heart (*al-qalb*), the duality of its qualities and the three types of *nafs* alluded to in the Qurān. The concept of the soul is further examined in the light of the views of the philosophers and modern psychology before being examined in the light of religions other than Islam such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity. Karzūn then turns his attention back to the Islamic perspective by first examining the creedal basis for the process of *tazkiya* in Islam before examining the now familiar ‘practical’ approach, which includes the ‘physical’ acts of worship such as prayer (*al-ṣalāt*), fasting (*al-ṣawm*) but also more esoteric methods of training the soul such as taking it to account (*muḥāsabat al-nafs*) and striving against its desires (*mujāhadat al-nafs*). The next major section discusses the ailments of the soul such as arrogance (*al-kibr*) and hindrances to the realisation of *tazkiya* such as the effect of Satan (*al-Shayṭān*) on the soul, as well as how to overcome these impediments. The final section of this work examines the fruits of implementing the Islamic concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, which may be summarised very simply as happiness in this life and in the hereafter. The value of this work cannot be underestimated due to its comprehensive nature and academic style and as such it remains one of the most important works in this field of study.

h) *Tazkiyat al-Nufūs* collected and arranged by Aḥmad Farīd (Alexandria, Dār al-‘Aqīda li ‘l-Turāth, 1998), which contains many of the subjects discussed as stations (*maqāmāt*) that we would expect to find within the classical works of the *taṣawwuf* genre, including sincerity (*ikhhlāṣ*), intention (*niya*), the heart (*al-qalb*), seeking forgiveness (*istighfār*), gratitude (*shukr*), contentment (*riḍāʿ*), hope (*rajāʿ*), as well as many others. The content of

² For a discussion of these see chapter two, section 2.2.2.1 below.

the book however, has been extracted from the works of other eminent scholars such as Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) and Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī (d. 795/1393) and seems to be an attempt to produce a book dealing with *taṣawwuf* issues but presenting them via the works of the scholars of the *'salaf*³. Thus, this book attempts to present the subject of *tazkiyat al-nafs* in the light of the above-mentioned scholars and so we find many quotes from the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth* and the first three generations of Muslims, as well as those who followed their methodology.⁴

i) *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* by Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Abū Fāris, (ʿAmmān, Dār al-Furqān, 2000). This work is yet another of those that propose a practical approach and in fact the whole book is dedicated to this purpose. After a brief but useful introduction Abū Fāris begins his exposition by first providing an in depth discussion of the concept of sincerity (*al-ikhlaṣ*) before examining more familiar acts of worship in this genre such as reciting the Qur'ān (*al-tilāwa*), remembrance (*al-dhikr*) and prayer (*al-ṣalāt*), as well as also discussing the subjects more familiar to the apologetic Sufi literature such as abstinence (*al-zuhd*), humility (*al-tawāḍu*) and forbearance (*al-ḥilm*). Although Abū Fāris appears to have said nothing new, his work is filled with examples and he has provided a series of counsels and advice at the end of every section, which makes his work somewhat unique.

j) *Self Purification and Development* by Amin Ahsan Islahi (Delhi, Adam Publishers, 2000).⁵ This work is one of the few works in English concerned with this subject area and

³ This term is used to indicate the trend towards following the so-called *'salaf al-ṣāliḥ* (lit. 'the Pious Predecessors) who were the group of people deemed to be intended by the Prophetic statement, "The best of generations is my generation, then the one that follows it, then the one that follows it." See al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870), Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (Riyadh, Dār al-Salām, 1999) p. 612 and Muslim (d. 261/875), Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayri, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, edited by Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī (1st edition, Riyadh, Dār al-Salām, 1998) p. 1110-1. Thus, these first three generations, i.e. the Companions (*al-ṣaḥāba*), the Successors (*al-tābi'ūn*) and the Successor's Successors (*atbā' al-tābi'ūn*) were known as the *'salaf al-ṣāliḥ* or 'the Pious Predecessors.' There has been a tradition amongst classical Islamic scholarship, represented by the scholars mentioned above, to refer to these three earliest generations with regard to the understanding of Islam in its every aspect. On this basis a movement known as, 'the Salafī Movement' (*al-da'wa al-salafiyya*) was seemingly established by Muḥammad 'Abdu (d. 1322/1905) and his student Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1353/1935) in Egypt, in the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries, to revive the teachings of the first three generations and those who followed in their footsteps. This movement has often been confused with and deemed an extension of the Wahhābī movement, originated by Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1206/1792) in Saudi Arabia, aimed at reviving the conservative Ḥanbalī tradition and eradicating innovation (*bid'a*) in Islam. See Hinnels, John (ed.), *Penguin Dictionary of Religions* (London, Penguin, 1995) p. 554 and Sirriyeh, Elizabeth, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis - the Defence, Rethinking and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World* (Richmond, Curzon, 1999), pp. 86-111.

⁴ This is interesting enough in itself as an attempt to bridge the gap between the so-called "Sufis" and the so-called 'Salafis', who have been the traditional adversaries of one another. See Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis*, pp. 86-111.

⁵ This appears to have been one of Islahi's works that have been translated from Urdu, the original being entitled *Tazkiyah-i-Nafs* and being the product of his lectures on the subject in the early 1950s. This culminated in a two volume work, part I of the book being published in 1957, while the second part was completed in 1989 and published in 1992. It is also worth noting that the original work was first translated

although the author considers the main object of *tazkiya* to be the human soul (*al-nafs*)⁶, he devotes much of this work to other aspects of *tazkiya* also. These other aspects revolve around a ‘practical’ approach and thus, concentrate on the purification of knowledge and action, where the author focuses his attention on the practical duties of Islam embodied in the ‘five pillars’ namely: prayer (*al-ṣalāt*), fasting (*al-ṣawm*), *zakāt* and pilgrimage (*al-ḥajj*). Although only the first two chapters specifically concern the study area of the current thesis, this work is nevertheless a useful addition to the literature concerning *tazkiya*, especially in terms of western languages.

k) *Purification of the Soul - Concept, Process and Means* by Jamaal al-Din Zarabozo (Denver, Al-Basheer Publications, 2002). This work was published during the course of the research and as such, was an interesting and welcome addition to the literature on *tazkiya*, particularly in a western language. The book begins by examining the concept of nurturing the soul in religions other than Islam and includes discussion of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity, as well as modern psychology. The author then discusses the concept of *tazkiya* and *nafs* in Islam, summarising by providing a ‘*sharīʿa*’ definition of the compound term *tazkiyat al-nafs*. Having provided the reader with a working definition, the importance and goal of the purification is then examined and is followed subsequently by a discussion of the process of purification, which posits a ‘practical’ approach denoted by a concentration on faith and action. The work is concluded by a comparison of the ‘Sunni’ and ‘Sufi’ methods of purification and the benefits of adopting the former approach. From the contents alone, this work bears a great resemblance to that of Karzūn, is written in a semi-academic style and from a specific standpoint - that of strict, ‘orthodox’, Sunni Islam, indicative of the Salafī denomination.

l) *Purification of the Soul (Tazkiat al-Nafs)* by Azra Nasim Farooqui. I found a reference to this work at the following website: http://islamicbookstore.com/cgi-bin/showboo.../purification_of_the_soul.jpg&description, but have been unable to locate it since.

into English with the title *How to Attain True Piety and Righteousness in Islam*, this clearly being a translation of the first part of Islahi’s work and which was subsequently re-published with the title quoted here. See Mir, Mustansir, *Coherence in the Qur’ān: A study of Iṣlāḥī’s Concept of Naẓm in Tadabbur-i Qur’ān* (Indianapolis, American Trust Publications, 1986); Islahi, Amin Ahsan, *How to Attain True Piety and Righteousness in Islam* (Kuwait, Islamic Book Publishers, 1982) and <http://www.amin-ahsan-islahi.org/?=8>, “Brief Introduction to the Major Works of Islahi”.

⁶ See Islahi, Amin Ahsan, *Self Purification and Development* (Delhi, Adam Publishers, 2000) pp. 24-5 and chapter two, section 2.2.3 below.

m) *Al-Rūḥ* by Muḥammad b. Abū Bakr b. Ayyūb [Ibn al-Qayyim] al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350), edited by Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Qutb and Walīd al-Dhikrā (Beirut, al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 2000). This work requires little introduction due to the fact that it is one of the most extensive and in-depth descriptions of the human soul in classical Islamic literature. Although it does not deal with *tazkiya* directly, it does provide essential information regarding the soul from the Islamic perspective and as such, will be a major source in chapter two.

n) *Al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā* by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ḥasan Ḥabanaka al-Maydānī (5th edition, 2 vols., Damascus, Dār al-Qalam, 1999). Similarly, although this work also does not technically fall within the realms of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, the subject matter of the work is intrinsically linked as it deals with the ethical and moral teachings of Islam. The work itself consists of two large volumes and as such, provides an extensive and in-depth survey of the Islamic tradition, which could not be done justice via a brief resume here. The most important aspect of this however with regard to the current study is al-Maydānī's exposition of the *nafs*, which is unique and this being the case will be relied upon in chapter two.

1.1.2 Literature Regarding *Taṣawwuf*

Due to the closely related nature of the terms *tazkiyat al-nafs* and *taṣawwuf* it also means that we must consider works written under this broad heading also.⁷ This being the case, as might be expected, when considering the term *taṣawwuf* we find a broad mosaic of literature from the earliest period to the present day, in several languages and from every possible perspective. As such, it is almost impossible to present a comprehensive list of *taṣawwuf* works here and therefore, only a few sources will be mentioned, due to their importance to the present research.⁸

a) *Al-Taʿarruf li Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf* by Abu Bakr Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Kalābādhi (d. 380/990), edited by Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1993). This work, which is typical of the apologetic Sufi genre is important for several reasons; firstly, due to its comprehensive nature, as it covers many areas essential in introducing this discipline and those involved in it. It begins by explaining the reasons why Sufis were named as such, their opinions regarding faith (*īmān*), their opinions regarding internal aspects of Islam such as gratitude (*shukr*) and annihilation (*fanāʾ*) and also their practices,

⁷ At this stage both terms will be considered synonyms, until the term *tazkiyat al-nafs* is discussed in chapter two, where the distinction will become clear.

⁸ The reader is advised to consult the bibliography for a more detailed treatment of *taṣawwuf* works.

such as listening to spiritual audience (*samāʿ*) and remembrance (*dhikr*). The second major reason is that this book is one of the earliest of its type to deal with this subject and thus, it clearly illustrates that by the 4th/10th century, Sufis were clearly established and had clearly established practices.⁹

b) *Hilyat al-Awliyāʾ* by Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Ishāq [Abū Nuʿaym] al-Aṣfahānī (d. 430/1039), edited by Saʿīd Saʿd al-Dīn al-Iskandarī (10 vols., Beirut, Dār Iḥyāʿ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 2001). Perhaps the most comprehensive collection of biographical literature, Abū Nuʿaym’s *Hilya* comprises the biographies and sayings of 689 pious individuals whom he considered Sufis or their direct predecessors and as such, remains one of Sufism’s greatest claims to orthodoxy due to its narration-based, transmission style. This is further enhanced by the fact that his survey begins with the four ‘Rightly Guided Caliphs’, continues with the Companion generation and proceeds with the subsequent generations until the end of the 3rd/9th century. Due to its comprehensive nature Abū Nuʿaym’s *Hilya* not only provides an early view of spiritual life in the Muslim community but also provides a window upon the early personalities and their teachings and in this sense is an invaluable resource for the study of Islamic mysticism. It is also worth noting here that this work has been abridged by Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) due to discrepancies he considered present in the original and is entitled *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, which is an equally useful reference work due to its more concise nature.¹⁰

c) *Al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya* by Abū al-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Hūzān b. ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ṭalḥah al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), edited by Maʿrūf Muṣṭafā Zurayq (Beirut, al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 2001). This work is important because it is considered a classical manual on *taṣawwuf*. It covers the various subject headings, which have now become so familiar, in elucidating the states and stages upon the Sufi path including striving (*mujāhada*), vigilance (*murāqaba*) and steadfastness (*istiqāma*), as well as many others.¹¹ These subject areas are dealt with briefly but are filled with quotes from the Qurʾān, *ḥadīth* and scholars known for their Sufi inclination and spiritual insight. Therefore, it is not surprising that it

⁹ It is not surprising that such an important work has not escaped the attention of Western scholars and this book is familiar to many as A. J. Arberry’s “Doctrine of the Sufis.”

¹⁰ The copy used in the current thesis is edited by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Lādiqī and Ḥayāt al-Lādiqī (4th ed., 4 parts in 2 vols., Beirut, Dār al-Maʿrifa, 2001).

¹¹ See al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Hūzān [Abū al-Qāsim], *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya fī ʿilm al-Taṣawwuf*, ed. Maʿrūf Muṣṭafā Zurayq (Beirut, al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 2001) pp. 89-350 *passim*.

traditionally served as guide for the novice, being a typical representation of Sufi apologetic literature.¹²

d) *Al-Taṣawwuf Mansha'uhu wa Muṣṭalaḥātuhu* by As'ad al-Sahmarānī (Beirut, Dār al-Nafā'is, 1987). This contemporary book is important because, as its name suggests, it deals with the origins and the terminology of *taṣawwuf*. It begins by defining *taṣawwuf* and continues by describing its historical development and the basis of Sufi teachings. The book continues by explaining some of *taṣawwuf*'s concepts, explaining Islam's position regarding what has been discussed and concludes with a chapter dedicated to al-Ghazzālī.

e) *Dirāsāt fī 'l-Taṣawwuf wa 'l-Akhlāq* by Aḥmad 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Sāyih and 'Ā'isha Yūsuf al-Manā'ī (Dār al-Thiqāfa, Doha, 1991). This is another contemporary book, which also begins by defining the word *taṣawwuf* and continues by explaining some of the terms used in this discipline. The book is useful however for two main reasons; first of all, as its title suggests, it concentrates on various aspects of moral character and ethics (*akhlāq*), which is particularly important in the context of the works of al-Muḥāsibī. Secondly, it presents some actual texts by well-known scholars of *taṣawwuf*¹³, introduces them, comments on them and explains them, which is useful as it gives practical examples of *taṣawwuf*, rather than just vaguely explaining its concepts.

f) *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism* by Louis Massignon (translated from the French by Benjamin Clark, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1997). This work - originally written in French but now available in English¹⁴ - is one of Massignon's most famous works and is considered by many to be a classical western treatise on Sufism. Massignon's basic premise that Sufism is essentially and intrinsically 'Islamic' is well sourced and presented and by default he also provides an extremely important discussion of Sufism's origins in particular and the Islamic spiritual and mystical traditions in general. Similarly, he devotes a great deal of the presentation the major personalities involved in this process and our subject, al-Muḥāsibī, is no exception.

¹² This book has also courted attention from western scholars and was translated into English twice. See al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), 'Abd al-Karīm b. Hūzān [Abū al-Qāsim], *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya fī 'Ilm al-Taṣawwuf*, translated as *Principles of Sufism* by Barbara R. von Schlegell; with an introduction by Hamid Algar (Berkeley, Mizan Press, 1990) and al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), 'Abd al-Karīm b. Hūzān [Abū al-Qāsim], *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya fī 'Ilm al-Taṣawwuf*, translated as *Sufi Book of Spiritual Ascent* by Rabia Harris, being edited by Laleh Bakhtiar (Chicago, ABC International Group Inc., 1997).

¹³ The works in question are a text from *Kitāb al-Riyāḍa* by Abū 'Abdullah Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 320/932), *Kīmiyā' al-Sa'āda* by Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111) and *Risālat al-Sirr* by Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1235).

¹⁴ The original work in French being published with the title *Essai sur les Origines du Lexique Technique de la Mystique Musulmane* (Paris, Paul Geuthner, 1922).

Although studies in Sufism have advanced tremendously since the writing of this book, Massignon's seminal examination of Islamic mysticism remains an essential source work in Sufi studies.

g) *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* by Annemarie Schimmel (Chapel Hill, The University of Carolina Press, 1975). Schimmel's *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* remains one of the most useful source texts on Sufism despite being almost thirty years old. This is due to a thorough - if brief - treatment of not only the historical development of Sufism and a survey of its major personalities but also due to her treatment of major Sufi theory and practice such as the concept of the 'path (*al-ṭarīq*)', Sufi psychology, Sufi orders and Sufi poetry. The work is enhanced by the fact that Schimmel was a gifted linguist and in addition to works in Arabic she includes works in Persian, Turkish and Urdu, as well as the usual European sources, adding to the comprehensive nature of the survey she provides.

h) *Islamic Mysticism - A Short History* by Alexander Knysh (Leiden, Brill, 1999). This book, as the title suggests, deals with the historical aspect of *taṣawwuf* but at the same time it is much more than a history book. This work charts the development of *taṣawwuf* from its earliest beginnings, its regional schools and the effect of *taṣawwuf* in each region. The eventual systemisation of the Sufi tradition into *ṭarīqas* is also dealt with, as well as laying emphasis upon the major personalities related to *taṣawwuf* throughout history. The book ends with a treatment of major Sufi concepts and institutions. This work is particularly useful due to its diverse treatment of various subjects and in particular from its historical perspective; for example it devotes a whole section to the Baghdadi School, which is of special importance regarding al-Muḥāsibī, as well as being extremely well written, lucid and informed.

1.1.3 Literature Regarding al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī¹⁵

¹⁵ In addition to the works mentioned here and those of a biographical nature quoted in chapter four, there are numerous works which shed light on al-Muḥāsibī but are not concerned with him specifically, these include: Ghalāb, Muḥammad, "al-Taṣawwuf wa 'l-Mutaṣawwifūn", in *Majallat al-Azhar* (Cairo, 9th Ramaḍān 1357/1938) pp. 601-4; "al-Taṣawwuf wa 'l-Mutaṣawwifūn", in *Majallat al-Azhar* (Cairo, 4th Rabī' al-Thānī 1360/1941) pp. 235-8 and "al-ʿAṣr al-Dhahabī li 'l-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī", in *Majallat al-Azhar* (Cairo, 2nd Ṣafar 1380/July 1960) pp. 166-70; Hilāl, Ibrāhīm, *al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī bayn al-Dīn wa 'l-Falāsifa* (Cairo, Dār al-Nahḍa al-ʿArabiyya, 1979) pp. 56-84; al-Ḥakīm, Suʿād, "Makānat al-Ghazzālī min al-ʿUlūm al-Ṣūfiyya", in *al-Turāth al-ʿArabī* (Damascus, Ittiḥād al-Kuttāb al-ʿArab, January 1986) pp. 120-63; ʿAshwī, Muṣṭafā, "al-Insān al-Kāmil fi 'l-Fikr al-Ṣūfī - Dirāsa Naqdiyya", in *al-Tajdīd* (Kuala Lumpur, International Islamic University, February, 2000) pp. 11-53; Arberry, Arthur J., *Sufism - An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (London, Unwin Hyman Ltd., 1979) pp. 46-52 and Sells, Michael, *Early Islamic Mysticism* (New York, Paulist Press, 1996) pp. 171-95.

Similarly, I have not included encyclopaedia entries due to their general nature but nevertheless two well informed articles include: al-Muḥāsibī by Josef van Ess, in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, edited by

The first and most obvious works to mention regarding al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī are those of the author himself. However, since these works will be dealt with specifically in chapter five, they will not be mentioned here and thus, this leaves us with the works related to al-Muḥāsibī, which will be summarised in the following paragraphs.

a) "Notice of the Writings of Abū ʿAbdullah al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī, the first Ṣūfī Author" by D. S. Margoliouth and published in "Transaction of the Third International Congress for the History of Religions" (Oxford, 1908). This paper is an attempt to introduce al-Muḥāsibī and his works to those unfamiliar with either. The author begins by introducing al-Muḥāsibī, indicating the sources where his biographical details can be found and then by giving a summarised version of the aforementioned material. The author then numbers al-Muḥāsibī's works and where they can be found. The content of these works is then described, to which the author attributes Ashʿarite¹⁶ tendencies to al-Muḥāsibī and proposes that his works are from improvised sermons.¹⁷ An interesting observation is made regarding al-Muḥāsibī's use of Christian sources, suggesting that the author had direct contact with them. Margoliouth then compares al-Muḥāsibī to later scholars, alludes to his influence upon them and shows that al-Muḥāsibī's works are free from many of the Sufi doctrines which developed later. However, the most interesting statement made by the

Robert McHenry (15th edition, 29 vols., Chicago, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1992) vol. 8, pp. 400-1 and al-Muḥāsibī by R. Arnaldez in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, edited by Gibb, Kramers, Levi-Provencal and Schacht (8 vols., Leiden and London, E. J. Brill and Luzac & Co., 1960) vol. VII, pp. 466-7.

It is also worth noting that a work entitled "Sacred Mind and Profane Mind: Two kinds of 'Aql with al-Muhasibi and al Hakim al Tirmidhi" has been attributed to Douglas Kareem Crow at the following website address: <http://www.american.edu/academic.depts/acainst/cgp/scholars.htm> and was supposedly published in the *Journal of Islamic Studies* published by Oxford University. However on contacting the 'author' the researcher received no reply and upon contacting the editor at *Journal of Islamic Studies* they informed me that they have no record of such an article.

¹⁶ Ashʿarite refers to the Sunnī school of scholastic theology associated with Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Ismāʿīl b. Iṣḥāq al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/936), who was originally educated in the Muʿtazilite doctrine but later rejected it and openly opposed it, defending the traditional stance regarding Allāh's divine attributes (*ṣifāt*). He himself did not give figurative interpretations (*taʾwīl*) to expressions of divine attributes but affirmed them without further qualifying them (*bi lā kayf*), adopting amodality as his methodology. However, those who attribute themselves to his doctrinal thought began to give figurative interpretations to such divine attributes, at a later date. See al-Shahrastānī (d. 538/1144), Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm, *al-Milal wa 'l-Niḥal* (2 vols. in one book, Beirut, al-Maktaba al-ʿAsriyya, 2002) vol. 1, pp. 74-82; al-Johanī, M. H. (ed.), *al-Mawsūʿa al-Muyassara fī 'l-Adyān wa 'l-Madhāhib wa 'l-Aḥzāb al-Muʿāṣira*, 2 vols. (Riyadh, al-Nadwa al-ʿĀlamiyya li 'l-Shabāb al-Islāmī, 1999) vol. 1, pp. 83-94; Watt, W. M., *Islamic Theology and Philosophy* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1997) pp. 64-68 and 75-97; *Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam* (London, Luzac & Company Ltd., 1948) pp. 135-164 and *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Oxford, Oneworld Publications, 2002) pp. 303-316.

¹⁷ The inaccuracy of these claims will become apparent during the discussion of al-Muḥāsibī's works in chapter five below.

author is that al-Muḥāsibī is the first ‘Sufi’ author who had written works attributed to him.¹⁸

b) *An Early Mystic of Baghdad* by Margaret Smith (New York, AMS Press, 1973). This is perhaps the most well known, if not the most important work to be carried out and as such, requires an in-depth discussion. This work is extremely thorough being over 300 pages long and consisting of fourteen chapters. The first three chapters of *Early Mystic* are concerned with the biographical details of al-Muḥāsibī’s life, such as where he was born, his environment, his ‘conversion’ to *taṣawwuf* and those who surrounded him, whether they were teachers, students, or associates. Chapters four and five concentrate on al-Muḥāsibī’s works and the sources he uses in them. Chapter six deals exclusively with what Smith terms the “Psychological Theory” the various ‘unseen’ aspects of *tazkiya*, such as the soul (*al-nafs*) and the heart (*al-qalb*). The next three chapters discuss various aspects of what Smith terms “Ascetic Theology” where such topics as sin (*dhanb*), the Devil (*Iblīs*) and asceticism (*zuhd*) are discussed. The following three chapters deal with the various moral, devotional and mystical teachings of al-Muḥāsibī, covering such topics as the ‘stations’ (*al-maqāmāt*) and ‘states’ (*al-aḥwāl*), prayer (*ṣalāt*) and love (*ḥubb*). The final two chapters summarise al-Muḥāsibī’s teaching and discuss its influence on later generations.

It is easy to see why Smith’s work is regarded as one of the most important when discussing al-Muḥāsibī and due to its comprehensive nature, one could argue that this is the reason why so little work has been done in this area. Despite this however, Smith does not define the methodology of al-Muḥāsibī in employing *tazkiya*, nor does she discuss the method he employs during his writings. She employs a descriptive, almost phenomenological approach but this is tinged with Christian theological overtones, so indicative of the period. For example, the Arabic terms are translated using a variety of Christian ascetic terminology and the various points made are accompanied by appropriate quotes from Christian Mystics. The purpose behind this is not entirely clear: is it to draw comparison? Or simply to say that what al-Muḥāsibī proposes is nothing new?

c) “The Forerunner of al-Ghazālī” in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* by Margaret Smith being published in January, 1936. Building on her excellent work in the above mentioned book and in particular chapter XIV of *Early Mystic*, Smith consequently wrote this article showing the significance of al-Muḥāsibī’s teachings

¹⁸ See Margoliouth, D. S., 10 - “Notice of the Writings of Abū ‘Abdullah al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī, the first Ṣūfī Author” in “Transaction of the Third International Congress for the History of Religions”, IV - Religions of the Semites (Oxford, 1908) pp. 292-293.

through their influence on one of Islam's most famous scholars - Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī. Starting from the perspective that al-Ghazzālī himself admits to reading the works of al-Muḥāsibī in his *al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl* and the fact that there is considerable similarity between al-Muḥāsibī's *Kitāb al-Tawahhum* and al-Ghazzālī's *al-Durra al-Fākhira*, Smith proceeds to make a further comparison between the content of *Iḥyā'* and a variety of al-Muḥāsibī's works, with particular attention being paid to *al-Waṣāyā* and *al-Ri'āya*. Smith constructs her comparative analysis around a variety of positive moral qualities such as sincerity (*ikhlaṣ*) and truthfulness (*ṣidq*), which formed the basis of the *maqām* system in later Sufism, as well as a number of moral deficiencies such as conceit (*'ujb*) and self delusion (*ghurūr*). To this extent Smith's appraisal is erudite and reasonably comprehensive and she concludes that although al-Ghazzālī was an outstanding scholar in his own right, his reliance on al-Muḥāsibī is considerable. As such, this article is extremely important as it establishes the importance of al-Muḥāsibī as an original thinker and in addition, shows to some extent the influence of his thought on later generations.

c) *Al-Muḥāsibī - Un Mystique Musulman Religieux Et Moraliste*¹⁹ by Abd-El-Halim Mahmoud (d. 1398/1978)²⁰ being published by Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, (Paris) in 1940. This work is a published PhD thesis, written by the aforementioned author, under the supervision of the renowned Orientalist scholar Louis Massignon and is divided into four main parts. The first part deals with al-Muḥāsibī's biography and works, being separated into three subsequent chapters. Chapter one examines the social milieu of al-Muḥāsibī and assesses its effect upon him, as well as surveying other external influences, which may have played their part in affecting his thought. Chapter two deals with the works of al-Muḥāsibī and is useful in the sense that it provides a chronological classification of the books he wrote. Chapter three concludes this part of the research and is concerned with the interpretive method used by al-Muḥāsibī when examining the Qur'ān. Part two contains one chapter only - Chapter four - and deals with al-Muḥāsibī's religious theory, including his concept of God, his attitude towards sects and rituals, religious obligations (*al-*

¹⁹ This work appears to be re-written by the author in Arabic entitled '*Ustādh al-Sā'irīn - al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī*' and published by Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, Cairo in 1973 and it is this later work which the researcher will rely upon.

²⁰ It is interesting to note that 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd was in fact a renowned scholar of the Arab World, having a distinguished career in al-Azhar University and was eventually awarded the prestigious title of '*Shaykh al-Azhar*'. In addition his own influence in promoting Sufism in the Arab World was also significant. For details regarding his life and influence see Abu-Rabi', Ibrahim M., "Al-Azhar Sufism in Modern Egypt: The Sufi Thought of 'Abd al-Halim Mahmud" in *The Islamic Quarterly* (London, The Islamic Cultural Centre, 1988) vol. XXXII (number 4), pp. 207-35 and Shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, *Shuyūkh al-Azhar*, http://www.ims.uwindsor.ca/~azhar/BIOGRAPHY/GRAND_SHAYKHS/Mahmud.html

farā'id) and meritorious acts (*al-nawāfil*) and concludes with his interpretation of repentance and eschatology. Part three discusses al-Muḥāsibī's moral system, including his ethico-psychological system of human nature and the factors which affect this such as *al-nafs*, Satan, vanity (*al-ujb*), arrogance (*al-kibr*), envy (*al-ḥasad*) and illusion (*al-ghirra*), as well as discussing the topic for which he is best known - *al-muḥāsaba*. The thesis concludes with part four in which the author discusses al-Muḥāsibī's ascetical and mystical theory within Chapter six. This chapter deals with the various qualities required by the mystic, including reliance on Allāh (*al-tawakkul*), scrupulousness (*al-wara'*), asceticism (*al-zuhd*), contentment (*al-riḍā*) and divine love (*al-maḥabba*). Thus, this work is also of great importance as it systematically discusses the religious, moral and mystical teachings of al-Muḥāsibī.

d) *Kitāb al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh* by al-Muḥāsibī: a translation with introduction and notes by Kermit A. Schoonover, which was submitted as a Ph.D. dissertation to Harvard University in 1948.

e) "Al-Muḥāsibī and his *al-Ri'āyah*" by Kermit A. Schoonover in *The Muslim World* (39, 1949), pp. 26-35. This article would seem to be a summary of the author's achievements in the previously mentioned work and is divided into three sections: *A. Life and works of al-Muḥāsibī*, *B. Al-Muḥāsibī and the Development of Muslim Mysticism* and *C. A Summary of "Kitāb al-Ri'āyah."* The first section deals with the biographical data surrounding al-Muḥāsibī's life and provides little which is new, reiterating his dispute with Aḥmad and confirming his Ash'arite tendency. In addition to this, it provides a brief mention of the number of works written by al-Muḥāsibī²¹ and the reason behind the author's choice of *Kitāb al-Ri'āyah*.²² The second section identifies the importance of al-Muḥāsibī's position within the overall development of Islamic mysticism saying:

For some time scholars have been aware of al-Muḥāsibī and his works, but his position in the history of Muslim mysticism has yet to be adequately recognised. From the point of view of date, geographic location, number of existing works, the quality of writing and the nature of his ideas, al-Muḥāsibī is in a key position to supply information for the understanding of early Islamic mysticism.²³

The author then discusses the differences between al-Muḥāsibī and the later Sufis, with regard to the concept of *dhikr*, *samā' istimā'*, *zuhd* and the purpose of the mystic, which the

²¹ It is interesting to note that Schoonover mentions that only four of these have been published and as we shall see, this has increased greatly in the intervening period. See chapter five below.

²² Schoonover, Kermit A., "Al-Muḥāsibī and his *al-Ri'āyah*", *The Muslim World*, 39, 1949, pp. 26-28.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 28. This is a view that the current researcher shares and hopes he is able to contribute further.

writer asserts differs greatly. He moves on to discuss the relationship between differing types of mysticism in the Near East and their influence on al-Muḥāsibī. He refutes the concept that al-Muḥāsibī's teachings are Christian based but concludes that although al-Muḥāsibī's thought is essentially Islamic an indirect Christian influence could not be ruled out.²⁴ In the third and final section Schoonover summarises al-Muḥāsibī's thought and teaching, as found in his most famous work *Kitāb al-Ri'āya*, and concludes the article with a translation from it.²⁵

f) *Die Gedankenwelt des Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī* by Josef van Ess in *Theologie* (vol. 4, Bonn, Selbstverlag des Orientalischen Seminars der Universität Bonn, 1961). Bearing in mind van Ess's reputation in the field of Islamic studies and the depth of the study in question this work, along with the efforts of Smith and Maḥmūd, can be considered one of the most important in a western language. Van Ess's work is extremely well structured and begins with a discussion of 'al-Muḥāsibī's Life and Works (*Leben und Werk*)', which encompasses his 'conversion', his relationship with the traditionists (*ahl al-ḥadīth*) and the dispute with the Ḥanbalites, as well as the sources quoted in his works and the problem of their chronology and authenticity.

The second major part of the book 'the Human Being (*Der Mensch*)' is divided into three sections, namely: 'al-Muḥāsibī's psychology (*Die Psychologie al-Muḥāsibī's*)', which includes an examination of the heart (*al-qalb*) and the self (*al-nafs*), 'the World and the Self (*Die Welt des Ich*)', where various negative human characteristics such as heedlessness (*al-ghafla*) and ostentation (*al-riyāʿ*) are discussed and 'the Conflict of the Intellect against the Self (*Der Kampf des Verstandes gegen das Ich*)', where the intellect (*al-ʿaql*), knowledge (*al-ʿilm*) and various other esoteric qualities such as sincerity (*al-ikhhlāṣ*) and patience (*al-ṣabr*) and their interrelationships with the ego are examined.

The third part 'God and the Human Being (*Gott und Mensch*)' is further divided into three sections and includes: 'Outward Knowledge (*Die äußere Erkenntnis*)', which discusses issues such as faith (*al-īmān*) and the debates surrounding God's existence and His attributes (*al-ṣifāt*), 'the Inner Encounter (*Die innere Begegnung*)', where such issues as remembrance (*al-dhikr*), spiritual audience (*al-samāʿ*) and the Qurʾān are examined and 'the Friends of God (Die „Freunde Gottes“)' where love of the divine (*al-maḥabba*) and God's elect (*al-awliyāʿ*) are discussed.

²⁴ Schoonover, "Al-Muḥāsibī and his *al-Ri'āyah*", *The Muslim World*, 39, pp. 28-31 and cf. Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 60.

²⁵ Schoonover, "Al-Muḥāsibī and his *al-Ri'āyah*", pp. 31-35.

As can be deduced from the discussion above, van Ess's treatise is extremely comprehensive, highly technical and written in an academic style, which makes it a major source work in the study of al-Muḥāsibī.

g) "Two Works of al-Muḥāsibī" by Ahmed Ateş in *Festschrift Werner Castel: zum siebzigsten Geburtstag 5 März 1966 gewidmet von Freunden und Schülern*, herausgegeben von Erwin Gräf (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1968) pp. 37-42. This article is part of a volume dedicated to the German scholar Werner Caskel and concerns two of al-Muḥāsibī's undiscovered works as alluded to by the Turkish scholar Ahmed Ateş. The two works in question are in manuscript form and are entitled *Kitāb Fahm al-Qurʾān wa Maʿānīh* and *Kitāb al-Qaṣd ilā Allāhi Taʿālā*. Thus, the main goal of Ateş's study is to present a basic description of these manuscripts and a succinct discussion of their contents. It is worth noting that at the time these manuscripts were undiscovered and that consequently both works have now been published as chapter five will reveal.²⁶

h) "Al-Junayd wa 'l-Muḥāsibī" by ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd in *al-Jadīd* (Cairo, September 1974) pp. 12-13. Despite the title, very little of this article is actually devoted to the relationship between al-Muḥāsibī and his principle student al-Junayd, apart from a few anecdotal statements from the biographical sources, which will be dealt with later.²⁷ Rather, Maḥmūd discusses the historical features of the period and the open dispute between the 'orthodox' represented by the Traditionists (*ahl al-ḥadīth*) and the 'rationalists', represented by the Muʿtazila. This 'natural' conflict as Maḥmūd terms it was indicative of two irreconcilable approaches to which al-Muḥāsibī adopted a third - the use of rational methods to defend 'orthodoxy', which ultimately alienated him from both factions. Nevertheless, this 'third' method enabled him to produce some of the most important books in the Islamic tradition that pioneered the exploration of moral psychology and Sufism in general, which is witnessed by the many praiseworthy comments Maḥmūd closes his article with. As such, this article provides little that is new but at the same time is a useful introduction for the uninitiated to al-Muḥāsibī and his era.

i) "Al-Muṣṭalaḥ ladā al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī 165-243" by Ḥusayn al-Quwwatī in *al-Fikr al-Islāmī* (Lebanon, December, 1983) pp. 53-9. Before embarking on his critical edition of al-Muḥāsibī's *al-Qaṣd wa 'l-Rujūʿ ilā Allāh*²⁸ al-Quwwatī provided a preliminary study of the technical terminology used in al-Muḥāsibī's works. As such, he begins by discussing the

²⁶ See pp. 225-7 and 230-2 below.

²⁷ See chapter four, section 4.5 below.

²⁸ See chapter five, pp. 230-1 below.

difficulties of studying the books of al-Muḥāsibī, this being partly due to the specific technical vernacular he uses and thus, the need for an explanation of this usage. Al-Quwwatī's discussion therefore concerns the period in which al-Muḥāsibī lived as this was a period that many of the Islamic sciences came to fruition in a technical sense, to examine al-Muḥāsibī's technical use of the language and to summarise his overall methodology. Al-Quwwatī also gives credit to Massingon, Ritter, van Ess and Roman, for their efforts in this field previously and concludes that within al-Muḥāsibī's writing style four major devices can be identified: firstly, the use of definitions (*al-taʿrīf*) in which he attempts to isolate the essence (*al-māhiyya*) of the subject in question. Secondly, the inference (*al-tafriʿ*) of further information derived from the original definition; thirdly, the generation (*al-tawliḍ*) of ideas and concepts from those just mentioned and finally, his use of the term “*al-ʿaql ʿan Allāh*” to denote an intrinsic, divinely inspired perception of a subject, whether it be ethical, psychological, social or metaphysical. Bearing in mind the above discussion, it is clear this article is an essential tool for anyone who wants to gain a greater insight into the works of al-Muḥāsibī.

j) “Taḥlīl Zāhirat al-Ḥasad ʿind al-Muḥāsibī” by Ḥāmid Ṭāhir in *Dirāsāt ʿArabiyya wa Islāmiyya* (Maktabat al-Zahrāʾ, Cairo, 1983) pp. 26-43. This particular article focuses on al-Muḥāsibī's treatment of the human characteristic of envy (*al-ḥasad*) as represented in his most famous work *Kitāb al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*. As such, Ṭāhir approaches the topic by addressing essentially the same subject areas that al-Muḥāsibī adopts in his work, which include: envy and rivalry (*al-ḥasad wa ʿl-munāfasa*), the location of envy (*mawḍiʿ al-ḥasad*), the motives of rivalry (*dawāfiʿ al-munāfasa*), the motives of envy (*dawāfiʿ al-ḥasad*) and the treatment of envy (*ʿilāj al-ḥasad*). In this context Ṭāhir provides an examination, discussion and commentary on each of these subject areas interpolating his own thoughts with quotes from al-Muḥāsibī himself and other sources. This being the case, Ṭāhir has produced an excellent addition to the literature, which is extremely useful in discerning al-Muḥāsibī's method as both an author and a moral psychologist.

k) “Al-ʿIzāt al-Ḥassān fī Shuʿab al-Īmān” by Muṣṭafā al-Shaʿrāwī in *al-Islām* (Cairo, 12th June 1987, pp. 5 and 11; 19th June 1987, pp. 5 and 12 and 26th June 1987, pp. 5 and 14). These short series of articles are little more than various quotes from biographical sources and a discussion of al-Muḥāsibī's works and writing style and as such, do not constitute a major addition to the literature other than providing the uninitiated reader with an introduction to this scholar.

l) *Al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī: al-‘Ālim, al-Zāhid, al-Faqīh* by Kāmil Muḥammad Muḥammad ‘Uwayḍa (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1994). This work published under the series title *Al-‘Ālām al-Fuqahā’ wa ‘l Muḥaddithīn* is a comprehensive treatise dealing with the life and teaching of al-Muḥāsibī by a contemporary scholar. Despite its comprehensive nature it suffers from a lack of organisation, as each subject is dealt with after the other, without any sectioning or categorisation. Thus, the book contains twenty eight titles each dealing with a specific topic related to al-Muḥāsibī. The first ten sections - almost half the book - are concerned with the life and works of al-Muḥāsibī: thus, we find the usual biographical information; his life, teachers, students and anecdotal statements are all included. The dispute with Aḥmad is also dealt with and a survey of al-Muḥāsibī’s works, including his narration of *ḥadīth* are also found and this area concludes with his death. The advantage of this book is that all of the above information is referenced to its origin in the Arabic literature, which is of obvious importance. The rest of the book is devoted to al-Muḥāsibī’s teaching and the author selects various aspects and discusses them with lengthy quotations from the author’s works, so as to summarise and crystallise al-Muḥāsibī’s thought and teaching in one place, which is of great service to the reader who wants to gain an overview of the scholar’s ideas, without having to read all of his works.

m) “Al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī’s Concept of Self Examination as Reflected in His *al-Ri‘āyah li Ḥuqūq Allāh*” by Iftitāḥ Ja‘far.²⁹ This is a concise, useful introduction for the uninitiated to the subject of al-Muḥāsibī. The article consists of three main sections after a brief introduction: the first section briefly presents biographical information regarding al-Muḥāsibī. The second part briefly introduces what is regarded to be al-Muḥāsibī’s greatest work - that of *Kitāb al-Ri‘āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*. The third section and possibly the most important, deals with al-Muḥāsibī’s concept of self-examination, or *muḥāsabat al-nafs*, where the author not only gives al-Muḥāsibī’s concept but also various scholarly interpretations of al-Muḥāsibī’s thought.

n) *Al-Fikr al-Tarbawī ‘ind al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī* submitted by Aḥmad Ḍiyā’ al-Dīn Ḥusayn (unpublished M.A. thesis Jordan, Jāmi‘at al-Yarmūk, 1990). This academic thesis attempts to examine the educational theory of al-Muḥāsibī whether it be related to the etiquettes of the learner/teacher relationship or psychological and intellectual development. To this effect the author begins by providing an informed biographical section on al-Muḥāsibī and assesses the effect that his environment may have had on him. The following chapter traces

²⁹ This article was found at the following internet website address: <http://www.indosat.net.id/alauddin/sufisme1.html>

the development of education until al-Muḥāsibī's time and assesses his contribution to the overall process. The next two chapters discuss al-Muḥāsibī's approach to both the psychological and intellectual development of the human being and examine the methods that this scholar employs in attempting to achieve this goal. As such this thesis is a very important addition to the literature regarding our subject as it not only examines al-Muḥāsibī's utilisation of moral psychology as an educational means but also assesses his pedagogical skill and methodology.

o) *Fikr al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī al-Ṣūfī fī Mizān al-Kitāb wa 'l-Sunna* submitted by Khālid b. Sulaymān al-Khaṭīb (unpublished M.A. thesis Riyadh, Jāmi'at al-Malik Sa'ūd, 1997). This thesis aims to examine the doctrinal position of al-Muḥāsibī from his *kalam* style works by comparing it to the creed represented by 'orthodox', Sunni Islam based on the Qur'ān and the *sunna*, as well as discussing to what extent this scholar differed from the teachings of contemporary and later Sufis, in addition to assessing al-Muḥāsibī's effect on those who came after him. To this effect al-Khaṭīb begins his thesis by providing an introduction to Sufism and its development and also a biographical account of al-Muḥāsibī and his works. The bulk of the thesis however is concerned with an examination of the Sufi concepts of station (*maqām*) and state (*ḥāl*), where al-Muḥāsibī's views are compared to those found in apologetic Sufi works such as the *Risāla* of al-Qushayrī and the *Luma'* of al-Sarrāj. Finally, an assesment of al-Muḥāsibī's effect on subsequent scholars is made, the two examples selected being Abu Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996) and Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111). Al-Khaṭīb's work is useful in the sense that it provides some good points and useful discussions but is ultimately limited by the adoption of an ultra 'orthodox' theological methodology.

p) *Mawā'iz al-Imām al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī* (Beirut, al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1999). This work which is part of the *Ma'ālim fī 'l-Tarbiyya wa 'l-Da'wa* series that examines various Muslim mystical personalities was collected and arranged by Ṣāliḥ Aḥmad al-Shāmī who is the same scholar who produced a critical edition of al-Muḥāsibī's *Sharḥ al-Ma'rifa wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*. In this book al-Shāmī has provided a brief but useful introduction to the life and personality of al-Muḥāsibī and arranged the work on the basis of subject areas, providing quotes from al-Muḥāsibī according to subject heading provided. As such, al-Shāmī has furnished the reader with a brief yet organised glimpse at the thought of al-Muḥāsibī and provided a quick reference to his teachings that is a useful addition to the literature concerned with this eminent scholar.

1.2 Methodology

Any thesis requires that it adopt a certain methodology, by which it can investigate and consequently present its findings, during the course of its research. There are many methodologies which may be adopted within a religious context and these include: sociology,³⁰ anthropology,³¹ psychology,³² philosophy³³ and theology.³⁴ However, none of these established techniques will be used here and it is proposed that phenomenology³⁵ be employed as the primary methodology in the current research. This being the case both phenomenology and the phenomenology of religion will require a detailed discussion.

1.2.1 Phenomenology

According to D. Cairns, E. Husserl (1859-1938) was the first philosopher to use the term “phenomenology” to designate a “whole philosophy” and intended his phenomenological philosophy to be an “objective” and “rigorous” science.³⁶ By this he meant, *inter alia*, a

³⁰ Sociology of religion is defined broadly as a study of the interrelation of religion and society and the forms of interaction, which take place between them. Sociologists of course, assume rightly, that religious impulses, ideas and institutions influence and in turn are influenced by social forces, social organisation and stratification. The sociologist of religion then studies the way which society, culture and personality influence religion, as well as the ways in which religion itself affects them. See Wach, J., *Sociology of Religion* (Chicago, 1943) pp. 11 and 205; Nottingham, E. K., *Religion and Society* (New York, 1954) p. 1; Yinger, J. M., *Religion, Society and the Individual* (New York, 1957) pp. 20-21 and Dhavamony, *Phenomenology of Religion* (Rome, Gregorian University Press, 1973) p. 3.

³¹ E. Evans-Pritchard has defined anthropology as, “A branch of sociological studies, which devotes itself to primitive societies.” Hence, social anthropology of religion is concerned with those rites, beliefs, actions and behaviour patterns in pre-literate societies that refer to what is regarded as being sacred and supernatural. Thus, religion is viewed as a cultural phenomenon in its many manifestations and it is the cultural dimension of religious phenomena, which is studied. See Evans-Pritchard, E., *Social Anthropology* (London, 1954) and Dhavamony, *Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 4.

³² The Psychology of Religion is the study of the religious function of the mind, partly dealing with the function of the individual mind in religious contexts and partly with the problem of the impact of the social religious life on its participants. Psychology studies the reactions of the human psyche, its responses, collective and individual, to what is considered to be ‘divine’, in whatever way it be described and experienced, as well as that ultimate satisfaction for which the human soul craves. See Stephens Spinks, G., *Psychology and Religion* (Boston, 1965) p. 29; Drever, James, *A Dictionary of Psychology* (London, 1968) p. 246 and Dhavamony, *Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 5.

³³ Philosophy of Religion is a philosophical reflection on religion by systematically applying a philosophical method. Examining critically the truth-value of the immense material of myths, symbols and rites that come from the history of religions, the philosophy of religion discovers their meaning, verifies their interrelationships and affirms their foundation. See Dhavamony, *Phenomenology of Religion*, pp. 5-6.

³⁴ Theology judges, in the light of faith, the validity of the results of the History of Religions. The method of theology uses categories that are strictly theological i.e. derived from a distinctively Christian revelation and thus, it is a normative science, as it compares other religious experiences in the light of its own and at the same time, in the sense that the ‘other’ experiences are inferior. This is different from theology in the sense of ‘a system of belief’ as in reality, in this sense, each and every religion has its own theology. See Dhavamony, *Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 4 and Smart, Ninian, *Dimensions of the Sacred - An Anatomy of the World's Beliefs* (Harper Collins Publishers, 1996) pp. 3-5.

³⁵ Smart defines phenomenology as (1) the attempt, through informed empathy, to present others’ experience and beliefs from their points of view and involving the suspension of one’s own values (*epoché*); (2) a morphology, or classification of types of religious phenomena. See Smart, *Dimensions of the Sacred*, p. xxiii.

³⁶ Smart, *Dimensions of the Sacred*, pp. 1-2.

system of thought which is well founded in the sense that it is free from “unexamined assumptions.”³⁷ Like Descartes, Husserl searched for an “unshakable” foundation to philosophy: “a cognition must be gained in philosophy which cannot be doubted but is ‘absolute’ in its validity and certainty.”³⁸

Thus, as a “rigorous science,” phenomenology deals with, or is constituted by “phenomena” or “essences” and both the terms “phenomena” and “phenomenology” are derived from the Greek verb *phainestai*, which means to show itself, or to appear. As such, Husserl uses the term “phenomenon” to refer to what appears to our consciousness and his concept of “phenomena” is closely connected with what could be called the basic task of his phenomenology. In other words, in the search for the “essential feature” or “essence” (*Eidos*) of the phenomenon.³⁹

The process which Husserl proposes to achieve this is Epoché, which is a Greek word meaning “suspension of judgement” or “abstention from beliefs” and is often used as a synonym for the “phenomenological reduction” or “method of bracketing.”⁴⁰ Husserl proposes that through Epoché “presuppositions” or “unexamined assumptions” are to be cast aside and that as a result of this phenomenological analysis of the essential feature of the phenomenon one sees, as it were, “its very essence.”⁴¹ Another central concept to that of Epoché is that of *Verstehen* or “empathic understanding.” By this it is meant that the phenomenologist adopt an empathic approach to the phenomenon, so that the process of eidetic vision be achieved fully.⁴²

In summary phenomenology is a method by which the researcher “brackets”, or sets aside his presuppositions before beginning his/her study and seeks to reveal the essence of the phenomena in question, by adopting an empathic standpoint to it. It is in this sense that phenomenology lends itself well to the study of religions and this method has been developed to such an extent that this has now become an independent field.

³⁷ Kocklemans, Joseph J., *Phenomenology* (New York, Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1967) p. 57 and Barbosa da Silva, Antonio, *The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem* (Uppsala, CWK Gleerup, 1982) p. 27.

³⁸ Ingarden, Roman, *On the Motives which led Husserl to Transcendental Idealism* (The Hague, Martinuss Nijhoff, 1975) p. 10 and Barbosa da Silva, *The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 27.

³⁹ Barbosa da Silva, *The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem*, pp. 31-32 and Dhavamony, *Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 18.

⁴⁰ Van Peursen, C. A., *Phenomenology and Reality* (Pittsburg, Duquesne University Press, 1972) p. 44; and Barbosa da Silva, *The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 36.

⁴¹ This is known as the “Eidetic Vision” in phenomenology, coming from *eidos* meaning idea of logical meaning. See Barbosa da Silva, *The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem*, pp. 38-39.

⁴² Husserl, Edmund, *Cartesian Meditations* (The Hague, Martinuss Nijhoff, 1960) p. 22; *Ideas* (London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1969) p. 382; Barbosa da Silva, *The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem*, pp. 44-53 and Dhavamony, *Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 18.

1.2.2 The Phenomenology of Religion (phR)⁴³

As previously mentioned, the method proposed by phenomenology lends itself conveniently to the study of religions, so much so that not only has it become a specialist field but there are many scholars who are famous as “phenomenologists of religion.”⁴⁴ PhR is usually considered a sub discipline of what is commonly called “*Religionswissenschaft*”, which is an all encompassing term used today to refer to the academic, or scientific discipline that deals with the study of various religious phenomena⁴⁵: historical, sociological, psychological, pedagogical and phenomenological. J. Wach distinguishes between two main types of study within *Religionswissenschaft*: (1) historical and (2) systematic. By (1) he means (a) the general history of religion and (b) the histories of specific religions. By (2) he means the sociological, psychological and phenomenological studies of religions. Therefore it is the second category of *Religionswissenschaft* that concerns us here and more specifically the area of (2) which we are concerned with, i.e. the phenomenological study of religions.⁴⁶

The phenomenological approach to religion can be regarded as a consequence of some scholars’ reaction to two different approaches to religion: a “theologically normative” and a “reductionist” approach. An approach is said to be theologically normative if its proponent takes one religion as the only “true religion” (which is usually his own) and compares it with all other religions regarded as false ones. This kind of approach was, around fifty years ago, almost the sole approach among the Christian scholars of religion, especially among the Protestant theologians in the West.⁴⁷ The reductionist approach, on the other hand, makes an ontological reduction of religious phenomena to, for example, socio-economical and psychological phenomena. Representatives of this latter approach include E. Durkheim (1858-1917), K. Marx (1818-1883) and S. Freud (1856-1939).⁴⁸

⁴³ For another useful discussion of Phenomenology of Religion, including its critics, see Hinnels (ed.), John R., *Penguin Dictionary of Religions*, pp. 377-379.

⁴⁴ These include: C. P. Tiele (1830-1902), C. de La Saussaye (1848-1920), Brede Kristensen (1867-1953), R. Otto (1869-1937), M. Scheler (1874-1928), G. van der Leeuw (1890-1950), C. J. Bleeker (1899-), M. Eliade (1907-), K. A. H. Hidding (1909-1977), W. C. Smith (1916-), N. Smart (1927-) and P. Ricoeur (1913-). See Barbosa da Silva, *The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 67.

⁴⁵ By religious phenomena we mean phenomena such as prayers, sacrifices, religious myths, rites, doctrines etc.

⁴⁶ Barbosa da Silva, *The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem*, pp. 17-18.

⁴⁷ See: Allen, Douglas, *Structure and Creativity in Religion, Hermeneutics in Mircea Eliade’s Phenomenology and New Directions* (The Hague, Mouton, 1978) pp. 203 and 249; Smart, *Dimensions of the Sacred - An Anatomy of the World’s Beliefs*, pp. 3-5; Barbosa da Silva, *The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 73 and Dhavamony, *Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 7.

⁴⁸ Hick, John, *Philosophy of Religion* (New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1963) pp. 31-34; Barbosa da Silva, *The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 73 and Dhavamony, *Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 7.

The phenomenologists of religion reject these two kinds of approach and propose instead the phenomenological one which, negatively speaking, is said to be non-reductionist and theologically non-normative.⁴⁹ In positive terms, the phenomenological approach takes religion as an object of study in its own right. In other words, the phR aims at describing the religious phenomena as such and the phenomenologists of religion take these phenomena in Husserl's sense, i.e. they hold that the phenomenon "shows itself", "appears to us" and "unveils itself."⁵⁰

This being the case, it is generally accepted that the aim of phR is taken to be, first of all, to describe and not to explain religious phenomena. As such, it is not difficult to see why the methods of Epoché and *Verstehen* explained above, which are specific to phenomenology, are so important to this method.⁵¹

Despite this general methodology used within phR, some phenomenologists of religion distinguish between two types of phR: the descriptive phR, which is contrasted with the essential phR.⁵² The former refers to the approach of those scholars who claim to restrict themselves to giving an inventory of religious phenomena of one or more particular religions. It is an inventory which claims to take into consideration the historico-cultural context of the particular religions and the "unique" meaning they have for the believers.⁵³ M. Scheler calls this kind of study, "concrete phenomenology," which he contrasts with "essential phenomenology". The latter is a cross-cultural comparison of religious phenomena, viewed apart from their peculiarity, due to their historico-cultural context. In other words, it is a comparison based upon "structural" similarities among phenomena taken from different historico-cultural contexts.⁵⁴

Thus, it suffices to point out that concrete phR is a kind of narrative description, while essential phR deals with the structural description, i.e. it describes the dominant or basic features of religious phenomena of the same type; for example the basic feature of myths,

⁴⁹ Hebblethwaite, B. L., *The Problems of Theology* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980) pp. 23-33 and Barbosa da Silva, *The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 73.

⁵⁰ Macquarrie, John, *Existentialism* (New York, Penguin Books, 1977) p. 22 and Barbosa da Silva, *The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem*, pp. 73-74.

⁵¹ See Smart, *Dimensions of the Sacred*, p. 1 and Dhavamony, *Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 17 for a useful summary.

⁵² Smart, Ninian, *The Phenomenon of Religion* (London, Mowbray, 1978) pp. 46-49 and Barbosa da Silva, *The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 89.

⁵³ Smart, *The Phenomenon of Religion*, pp. 46-49; Smith, Wilfred C., *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York, The New American Library, 1964) p. 11 and Barbosa da Silva, *The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 89.

⁵⁴ Barbosa da Silva, *The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 89. Dhavamony proposes another meaning for phR which is not unlike concrete phR saying, "Namely for the study of a particular religion as an organic structure within a certain period, disregarding the historical origin of the various beliefs and practice, while concentrating on their meaning to the believer." See *Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 9.

sacrifices and prayers, independent of their historico-cultural contexts.⁵⁵ In other words, concrete phR deals primarily with what the believers themselves regard as important in and peculiar to, their religions. At this level the scholar takes the believers' faith as the criterion of the correct description. In essential phR however, the scholar's own criterion of interpretation is the test of the correct description.⁵⁶ Here the scholar may use interpretive terms such as "Holy", "Sacred", "Ultimate Reality", "Power" etc. As a result concrete phR deals with what is intersubjectively intelligible among the believers and essential phR deals with what is primarily intersubjectively intelligible among the scholars.⁵⁷

As a result the scholars concerned with concrete phR defend the concept that the religion is "unique" for the believers and as a result, propose *Verstehen* as an adequate method to describe what they term the "internal" aspect or the "core" of religion. As Cantwell Smith puts it:

Religious men have charged that the objective study of religion leaves out the very part of religion that counts; it analyses the external but misses the core of the matter ... The religious may argue that the student of religion should have, in addition to objective accuracy and precise external knowledge about religious processes, also imaginative sympathy, appreciative understanding and even experimental participation in them.⁵⁸

It would seem that by "imaginative sympathy" and "participation" Smith seems to mean *Verstehen* as a process of understanding,⁵⁹ as he regards the methods used to study the external aspects of religion to be inadequate for studying its internal aspect.⁶⁰

Therefore, in summary, phR attempts to decipher and interpret every kind of encounter of man with the sacred, to give us the inner meaning of a religious phenomenon, as it is lived and experienced by religious men and it is this "inner meaning", which is said to constitute the essence of the phenomenon.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Smart, *The Phenomenon of Religion*, pp. 41-50 and Barbosa da Silva, *The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 90.

⁵⁶ Stace, W. T., *Mysticism and Philosophy* (London, Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1961) p. 37 and Barbosa da Silva, *The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 90.

⁵⁷ Barbosa da Silva, *The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 90.

⁵⁸ Cantwell Smith, Wilfred, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, p. 11 and Barbosa da Silva, *The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 98.

⁵⁹ Cantwell Smith, Wilfred, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, p. 10 and Barbosa da Silva, *The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 98.

⁶⁰ By the 'internal' aspect therefore is that which is precious to the insider and with regard to religious phenomena, is inter-subjectively intelligible and testable only for the believers within the same community or tradition, whereas the 'external' aspect is that which is inter-subjectively intelligible and testable by both the believers and the non-believers. Thus, it is the former aspect in which *verstehen* becomes essential. See Cantwell Smith, Wilfred, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, p. 11; Barbosa da Silva, *The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 98 and Dhavamony, *Phenomenology of Religion*, pp. 20-21.

⁶¹ Dhavamony, *Phenomenology of Religion*, pp. 26-27.

In the light of what has already been discussed it is therefore proposed that phenomenology be the methodology on which the current thesis is based. It is further proposed that the research is carried out using the phenomenological method outlined above as phR, since the area of research falls under the umbrella term of religion. Of the two types of phR that have been discussed, the type termed “concrete phR” will be employed here as we will deal with one religion specifically, i.e. that of Islam, including its historico-cultural context and the “unique” meaning it has for the believers, as opposed to a comparative approach adopted in essential phR. Concrete phR will also be employed here because we will be, for the most part, describing a specific aspect of Islam, i.e. that of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, which will require that we rely on the believers’ perspective of this discipline. Since *tazkiyat al-nafs* is an internal aspect of the Islamic faith it seems appropriate that the proposal of Smith, i.e. to adopt *verstehen* as a phenomenological method, is also employed here to study, understand, describe and arrive at the essence of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, from the practice of one of its most famous proponents, i.e. al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī.

This is not to say that phenomenology will be the only methodology used. The very nature of the area of research requires that a certain amount of theology be applied to the study.⁶² However, we do not mean it as described above but we mean theology in the sense of a system of belief.⁶³ This is essential, as indeed Islam has its own theology, which will be used throughout the thesis to judge between the various issues that may arise during the course of the research.⁶⁴

1. 3 Terminological Remarks

The discipline of *tazkiyat al-nafs* has a strong foundation in the classical Islamic disciplines but much of what it is concerned with is now included under the broad heading of *taṣawwuf*. Therefore, the next logical step would be to examine the nature of *taṣawwuf* but before we do so we also need to discuss the meaning of this term within western academic circles, to see if the commonly used terms are first of all, accurate and secondly, to see if they accurately incorporate the discipline of *tazkiya*. The two major terms used to describe

⁶² As Dhavamony puts it, “Theology is made living when the concrete religious experience and practice of religious men is taken into account, in the explanation and elucidation of the revealed truth, worship and practice.” Dhavamony, *Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 7.

⁶³ See footnote 32 above.

⁶⁴ The viewpoint that will be adopted regarding Islamic theology will be that of the Sunnī community, as al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī is considered a Sunnī scholar and also, to limit the scope of the research.

taṣawwuf are the words ‘spirituality’ and ‘mysticism’, which in turn are often prefixed by the term ‘Islamic’, to distinguish them from other forms of spirituality or mysticism. Thus, it is the purpose of this section to discuss these two terms to arrive at a positive, working, terminological framework at the outset for the remainder of the thesis.

1.3.1 Sprituality

The first of these terms, spirituality, is particularly difficult to define due to its derivation from another problematic term, namely ‘spirit’.⁶⁵ Its roots however would appear to lie in the Christian tradition where it has a long tradition in theology and religious practice.⁶⁶ The spiritual can be understood by contrasting it with the physical, material and external, being primarily an internal quest. Some understand the ‘spiritual’ as more diffuse and less institutionalised than the ‘religious’. Others, however, understand spirituality to be the very core of religion, particularly through religious and mystical experience. The subject matter of sprituality has been a perennial human concern and modern interest in spirituality has been combined with an emphasis on the individual subject and self development, thus becoming a universal term to indicate a search for direction and meaning.⁶⁷

Similarly, spirituality has often been descibed as an attempt to grow in sensitivity - to the self, to others, to non-human creation and to God, or as an exploration into what is involved in becoming human; a quest for full humanity. Thus, spirituality, not as an idea or a concept, but as a praxis found throughout human history, is resonant with the longings of the human heart for the permanent, eternal, everlasting - for wholeness, peace, joy and bliss - which have haunted human beings through the ages and for which, many people on our planet are searching today.⁶⁸

In addition to this, spirituality is regarded as having three distinct but interdependent levels in the contemporary understanding of spirituality:

1) spirituality as lived experience or praxis, which in a religious context can be seen as a faith’s wisdom to live that faith.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Hinnels (ed.), *Penguin Dictionary of Religions*, pp. 492 and 494 and Wakefield, Gordon S. (ed.), *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (London, SCM Press Ltd., 1983) p. 361.

⁶⁶ Hinnels (ed.), *Penguin Dictionary of Religions*, pp. 494-495 and Eliade, M. and Kitagawa J. M., *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology* (6th ed., Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1973) p. 81.

⁶⁷ Hinnels (ed.), *Penguin Dictionary of Religions*, p. 495 and Wakefield (ed.), *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, p. 361.

⁶⁸ Hinnels (ed.), *Penguin Dictionary of Religions*, p. 495.

⁶⁹ In the case of Islam this would be exemplified by the likes of al-Muḥāsibī.

2) Spirituality as a teaching that grows out of this praxis and guides it in turn, i.e. the spiritual disciplines and counsels of perfection found in different religions.⁷⁰

3) The systematic, comparative and critical study of spiritual experiences and teachings, which has developed in a new way.⁷¹

In the past, much of the spirituality that was taught and lived was developed by a social, cultural and intellectual group, which alone had the necessary devotion for cultivating mind and spirit.⁷² In the differing schools of spirituality two main models can be found:

1) an ascetic/monastic model of renunciation spirituality.⁷³

2) A model of 'householder spirituality' where asceticism is less dominant.⁷⁴

1.3.2 Mysticism

As for the term 'mysticism' its origin lies in the Greek root 'mu',⁷⁵ suggesting something closed, hidden, or secret and the group of words constructed from it - *mystikon*, *mysterion*, and *mystes* - were used in connection with the Greek mystery religions.⁷⁶ Mysticism is not confined to 'religion' however, as many describe 'mystical experiences' in a non-religious

⁷⁰ Within the Islamic framework this could be exemplified by the teachings of *shaykhs* to their *murīds* within their *ṭarīqas*, for which the works of al-Muḥāsibī serve as a primer.

⁷¹ This has been a product of the phenomenological approach to religion and has resulted in many works such as the Classics of Western Spirituality series and the Routledge Curzon Sufi series.

⁷² Hinnels, *Penguin Dictionary of Religions*, p. 495 and Wakefield (ed.), *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, p. 362.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ The author of this categorisation holds that 1) is primarily Christian Spirituality whereas 2) is primarily found in Islam, Judaism and 'Indian' religions. See Hinnels (ed.), *Penguin Dictionary of Religions*, pp. 495-496. However, it will be shown that many Muslims laid great emphasis on asceticism also.

⁷⁵ It has been suggested that the term originates from the form 'muein', meaning to close the lips or eyes, with the probable sense of 'one vowed to keep silence' and hence 'one initiated into the Mysteries', which were secret cults that appear to have survived from both underground and emotional survivals of the pre-Greek religion of the worship of the Earth Mother. See Parrinder, Geoffrey, *Mysticism in the World's Religions* (London, Sheldon press, 1974) p. 8.

⁷⁶ Wakefield (ed.), *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, p. 272. This developed in the theory and practice of Christianity; already in the Apocrypha of the Old Testament a 'mystery' was known to the initiated (*mystes*) as a secret doctrine, which, though not necessarily difficult to understand, should not be revealed. In the New Testament the 'mystery' is the revelation of the word of God, which had not been known in previous ages but was now revealed to the believers. Paul developed this further using terms, which could have a technical, mystical association, such as 'illuminated', 'fullness' and 'wisdom'. Other, later Christian writers and theologians spoke regularly of the sacraments as *mysteria*, baptism as *mystikon* and the celebrants of the eucharistic mystery were 'mystagogues'. The basis of all of this however, was in the Neoplatonism of Plotinus, who combined Platonic and other mystical ideas into a coherent whole and whose essays are from the classics of mysticism. Plotinus taught the union (*enosis*) of the soul with the divine one, which is the Good and the source of all existence and values. Later Christian writers absorbed Neoplatonic ideas and a crucial role was played by the short but potent writings of the so-called 'pseudo Dionysius'. Pseudo Dionysius was probably an anonymous Syrian monk who lived around 500 C. E. and who used many technical terms of the Mysteries. He, like Plotinus before him, wrote of the 'union' of the soul with God and the gradual 'divinisation' (*theosis*) of man and says that by the exercise of mystical contemplation, the mystic will rise 'by unknowing' (*agnosia*) towards the union, as far as it is attainable, with him who transcends all being and knowledge. See Parrinder, *Mysticism in the World's Religions*, pp. 8-10.

context. Thus, in theistic tradition it is often described as a fundamentally unitive experience of love and communion with God, whereas in non-theistic traditions it is described as an intuitive, contemplative approach to ultimate reality. In either case it is understood as an experience beyond ordinary human experience and reason but at the same time is not antagonistic to them. The study of mysticism is undertaken from the perspectives of theology, philosophy and psychology and examines the nature and interpretation of religious experience.⁷⁷

For most people, mystical experience is only indirectly accessible via mystical literature, which exists in many different genres.⁷⁸ Common to them is the insistence on an experience of fundamental unity or oneness transcending the diversity of everyday life. To this end many religions prescribe techniques of contemplation and meditation, as well as a variety of spiritual disciplines and ascetic practices, as a means to reach mystical experience. The majority of mystics maintain that their experience is fundamentally ineffable, i.e. it cannot be adequately expressed; yet this claim does not preclude the describability of such experiences to which the mystical literature in all religions bears witness.⁷⁹

Despite this however, when trying to define mysticism we encounter as many, if not more difficulties than with spirituality.⁸⁰ A myriad of definitions exist and a brief overview will be given here.⁸¹ In the Cabbalistic tradition for example, mysticism is either a mystery or a mystery of mysteries; it is a mystery when the teacher understands it and it is a mystery of mysteries when neither the teacher nor the pupil understands it.⁸² As can be seen this is not particularly helpful to our cause, however, but there are dictionary definitions which require consideration. In the first mysticism is said to be, "Reliance on spiritual intuition or exalted feeling as the means of acquiring knowledge of mysteries inaccessible to intellectual apprehension." This however, does not mean that mystics discover new facts, as this is the

⁷⁷ Hinnels (ed.), *Penguin Dictionary of Religions*, p. 333.

⁷⁸ The most common in the Islamic tradition is the use of poetry or prose to describe the authors' mystical experiences.

⁷⁹ Hinnels (ed.), *Penguin Dictionary of Religions*, p. 334.

⁸⁰ For an excellent discussion regarding the definition of mysticism see Ellwood (jnr.), Robert S., *Mysticism and Religion* (New Jersey, Prentice Hall Inc., 1980) pp. 27-31. The author eventually settles for the following definition, "Mystical experience is experience in a religious context that is immediately or subsequently interpreted by the experiencer as an encounter with ultimate divine reality in a direct, non-rational way that engenders a sense of unity and of living during the experience on a level of being other than the ordinary."

⁸¹ It is worth noting also however that mysticism is not always seen in a positive light, as the Oxford English Dictionary puts it, "From a hostile point of view, mysticism implies self delusion or dreamy confusion of thought; hence the term is often applied to any religious belief to which evil qualities are imputed." See Parrinder, *Mysticism in the World's Religions*, p. 7.

⁸² Ibid.

role of science but we mean that they seek a wisdom, which gives a new vision and understanding of the world.⁸³

To try and define the 'universal core' of mysticism, the philosopher W. T. Stace conducted a study of mystical expression within seven representative experiences.⁸⁴ From these he deduced seven central themes⁸⁵, which can be summarised as:

- 1) There is a unifying vision in which the One is perceived by the senses in and through many objects, so that 'All is One'.
- 2) The One is apprehended as an inner life, or presence in all things, so that 'nothing is really dead'.
- 3) This brings a sense of reality which is objective and true.
- 4) There is a feeling of satisfaction, joy and bliss.
- 5) There is a feeling of the holy and sacred that is the specifically religious element of the experience.
- 6) There is a feeling that is paradoxical.
- 7) There is a feeling that is inexpressable in words.⁸⁶

These observations lead us to give further consideration to mysticism in terms of union. The dictionary gives its central definition of mysticism as, 'belief in the possibility of union with the divine nature by means of ecstatic contemplation' and it further defines the mystic as 'one who, whether Christian or non-Christian, seeks contemplation or self surrender to obtain union with or absorption into the Deity'.⁸⁷ Zaehner also concedes that the basic idea of mysticism is union but states that there are not only different types of union but also different understandings of the object with which union is to be achieved. What he terms 'profane mysticism' is that which may speak of union simply as 'all is one', a feeling of oneness but without any divine or religious object.⁸⁸

The simple experience of unification has sometimes been termed Pantheism but this may well be a mistake. Pantheism is the doctrine that God, or at least the divine being, is everything and everything is divine. A simple feeling of unity or exaltation does not necessarily involve any divine being or *theos*. It may be expressed by a phrase from the

⁸³ Ibid., p. 11.

⁸⁴ These included two Roman Catholics, one Protestant, one ancient classical, one modern Hindu and two American agnostics. See Parrinder, *Mysticism in the World's Religions*, p. 11.

⁸⁵ For a similar discussion see Ellwood, *Mysticism and Religion*, pp. 15-17 and 32-33.

⁸⁶ Although this summary is useful it is not without its critics and does not tell us a great deal about the content of the mystical experience. See Parrinder, *Mysticism in the World's Religions*, pp. 11-12.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 12.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 13.

Upanishads⁸⁹, 'You are this all', but that has no evident reference to any divine being. Zaehner prefers to call such a simple expression of unity Pan-en-henism, 'all-in-one-ism'. It is profane not in any derogatory sense but simply because no sacred power is implied. There is a pantheistic mysticism, however, which may be called 'all-God-ism'. This is illustrated by famous sayings of the Upanishads such as 'Thou art That' and 'I am Brahman'. These expressions mean that the individual soul is the eternal and only real Absolute, the ultimate Being.⁹⁰

Thus, in summary we can distinguish various types of mysticism; theistic mysticism seeks union with God but not identity, whereas monistic mysticism seeks identity with a universal principle, which may be called divine though that would imply a difference from the human. Finally, non-religious mysticism also seeks union with something, or everything rather like monism.⁹¹

From the above discussion it is clear that spirituality and mysticism are not the same, although they may occupy a similar sphere of existence, their goals are clearly quite different. As will be seen the initial period of Islamic history was filled with individuals, al-Muḥāsibī included, who were essentially trying to realise a form of the spirituality as defined above. However, as time passed and the spirituality born out of asceticism progressed, new concepts were derived and full blown *taṣawwuf* was born and often combined many of the ideas presented above as 'mystical'. As a result, this Islamic discipline would be affected forever and therefore, this requires that we now turn our attention the concept of *taṣawwuf*.

1. 4 Sufism (*Taṣawwuf*)

The very nature of the topic of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, i.e. its intrinsic spiritual nature, requires that we pay some attention to the topic of Sufism or *taṣawwuf*. This is so that we can draw a comparison between the two areas of research to establish their areas of overlap and to examine the relationship between them. Despite this, however, an exhaustive discussion of

⁸⁹ The Upanishads are texts of the Vedic tradition and were influential in the development of Hindu thought. Upanishad means 'sitting down close to' a Ghuru and hence is an esoteric teaching. Like the Brahmanas, to which they are attached, they are explanations of Vedic tradition but on a mystical rather than a ritual level. See Hinnels (ed.), *Penguin Dictionary of Religions*, p. 540; Nikhilananda, Swami, *The Upanishads - A Second Selection* (London, Phoenix House Ltd., 1954) pp. 1-34 and Olivelle, Patrick, *The Early Upanishads - Annotated Text and Translation* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998) pp. 3-27.

⁹⁰ Parrinder, *Mysticism in the World's Religions*, p. 13 and Ellwood, *Mysticism and Religion*, p. 19. Also see Nikhilananda, *The Upanishads*, pp. 15, 20 and Olivelle, *The Early Upanishads*, pp. 26-7.

⁹¹ See Parrinder, *Mysticism in the World's Religions*, p. 15.

Sufism is clearly beyond the object of the current thesis⁹² and this being the case, the present section will revolve around a brief discussion of the following topics:

1. The linguistic origin of the words *ṣūfī* and *taṣawwuf*.
2. Definitions of the words *ṣūfī* and *taṣawwuf*.
3. The historical development of Sufism.

1.4.1 The Linguistic Origin of the Words *Ṣūfī* and *Taṣawwuf*

Many scholars, past and present, have discussed at length the origin of the words *ṣūfī* and *taṣawwuf*, providing a rich and varied body of literature, which will be summarised and presented here. The majority of scholars have concluded that the words *ṣūfī* and *taṣawwuf* were unknown during the initial period of Islamic history and thus, the terms are thought to have developed at later date.⁹³ Due to this a wide and diverse variety of opinions can be found in the various sources and can be summarised into the following points:

- i) The first of these opinions regarding the origin of the word *ṣūfī* and *taṣawwuf* is said to originate from the term *al-ṣaff al-awwal*, meaning the first row; this being an indication to the first row of the many rows behind the imam, during prayer, as this was traditionally the position of the righteous, due to their eagerness to be at the forefront of such pious actions. However, linguistically, the derivation of the word is incorrect because if this was the case

⁹² Sufi practices for example, both practical and in belief, with not be dealt with here due to the extensive nature of the topic and the great variation from one group of Sufis to the next. Due to this, for a discussion of such issues refer to the following sources: al-Kalābādhi (d. 380/990), Muḥammad b. Ishāq, *al-Ta'arruf li Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*, edited by Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1993); al-Ṭūsī (d. 378/988), ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAlī [Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj], *al-Lumaʿ*, edited by Kāmil Muṣṭafā al-Hindāwī (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1999); al-Aṣfahānī (d. 430/1039), Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Ishāq (Abū Nuʿaym), *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, edited by Saʿīd Saʿd al-Dīn al-Iskandarī (10 vols., Beirut, Dār Iḥyāʿ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 2001); al-Hujwiri, (d. between 465/1073 and 469/1077), ʿAlī b. ʿUthmān al-Jullabī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* (Beirut, Dār al-Nahḍa al-ʿArabiyya, n.d.); al-Miṣrī, *ʿUmdat al-Sālik wa ʿUddat al-Nāsik*, pp. 855-68; Shaqfa, Muḥammad Fahd, *al-Taṣawwuf bayn al-Ḥaqq wa ʿl-Khalq* (3rd ed., al-Dār al-Salafiyya, Ṣafah, 1983) pp. 52-183; al-Saḥmarānī, Asʿad, *al-Taṣawwuf* (Beirut, Dār al-Nafāʾis, 1987) pp. 113-146; al-Sāyih and al-Manāʿī, Aḥmad and ʿĀʾisha, *Dirāsāt fī ʿl-Taṣawwuf wa ʿl-Akhlāq* (Dār al-Thiqāfa, Doha, 1991) pp. 51-190; Ṣādiq, Ṣādiq Salīm, *al-Maṣādar al-ʿĀmma li ʿl-Talaqqī ʿind al-Ṣūfiyya* (Riyadh, Maktabat al-Rushd, 1994) pp. 183-710; Idrīs, Idrīs Maḥmūd, *Maḥāhir al-Inḥirāf al-ʿAqadiyya ʿind al-Ṣūfiyya wa Atharuhā ʿalā ʿl-Umma al-Islāmiyya* (3 vols., Riyadh, Maktabat al-Rushd, 1998) vol. 1, pp. 98-148; Schimmel, Annemarie, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, The University of Carolina Press, 1975) pp. 98-148; Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 301-14, and Chittick, *Sufism - A Short Introduction* (Oxford, Oneworld Publications, 2000).

⁹³ See Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm, *Majmūʿat al-Fatāwā*, edited by ʿĀmir al-Jazzār and Anwār al-Bāz (2nd ed., 20 vols., Riyādh, Maktabat ʿUbaykān, 1998) vol. 11, p. 7; Ḍahīr, Iḥsān Ilāhī, *al-Taṣawwuf - al-Manshaʾ wa Maṣādar* (Lahore, Idārat al-Turjumān al-Sunna, 1987) p. 43; Shaqfa, *al-Taṣawwuf bayn al-Ḥaqq wa ʿl-Khalq*, p. 12; al-Fawzān, Ṣāliḥ, *Ḥaqqiqat al-Taṣawwuf wa Mawqif al-Ṣūfiyya min ʿUṣūl al-ʿIbāda wa ʿl-Dīn* (Riyadh, Dār al-ʿĀṣima, 1992) p. 15; Idrīs, *Maḥāhir al-Inḥirāf al-ʿAqadiyya ʿind al-Ṣūfiyya wa Atharuhā ʿalā ʿl-Umma al-Islāmiyya*, vol. 1, p. 25 and Ṣiddiqī, Hārūn Bashīr, *Maṣādar al-Talaqqī ʿind al-Ṣūfiyya* (Riyadh, Dār al-Rāya, 1997) p. 15.

the term would not be *ṣūfī* but would be *ṣaffī* and therefore, many scholars reject this derivation.⁹⁴

ii) The second opinion derives its origin from the term *ahl al-ṣuffa* (lit. the people of the bench)⁹⁵ but once again we find that this derivation is incorrect because if the word was derived from *ahl al-ṣuffa* then the resulting term would be *ṣuffī*⁹⁶ and not *ṣūfī*.⁹⁷

iii) The third possibility stems from the Arabic word *ṣafā*⁹⁸, meaning to be pure or clean and despite its obvious connection to the subject matter⁹⁹, lexically the term is incorrect as the resultant descriptive noun would be *ṣafawī* and not *ṣūfī*.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ See al-Kalābādhi, *al-Ta'arruf li Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 10; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū'at al-Fatāwā*, vol. 11, p. 7; al-Saḥmarānī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 19; al-Sāyih and al-Manā'ī, *Dirāsāt fi 'l-Taṣawwuf wa 'l-Akhlāq*, p. 24 and 36; al-Fawzān, *Ḥaqīqat al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 16; Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-Āmmah li 'l-Talaqqī 'ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, p. 27; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 14; Baldick, Julian, *Mystical Islam* (London, I. B. Tauris and Co. Ltd., 1989) pp. 31-32 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, p. 5.

⁹⁵ These were the Prophet's Companions who were resident in his mosque and usually consisted of the emigrants from Mecca who had no place to stay, or no worldly wealth to speak of. Their state was such that they were also known as '*al-ghurabā*' - the 'strangers', i.e. to the worldly life. They were not specific group of people but indeed their number would vary due to their circumstances and condition. However, there were a number of Companions who would remain in the *ṣuffa* on a permanent basis; these included Abū Dharr al-Ghiffārī (d. 32/652), Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī (d. 44/665), Salmān al-Fārisī (d. 35/655) and others. Although their number would vary greatly it is thought that their number may have reached as high as four hundred people. The Prophet was known to encourage the more wealthy members of society to feed them and look after them, so that each person would take one or two of them at each mealtime to eat. It is reported that the more well-to-do members of the Medinan society would complain and request the Prophet to remove them from his company because an unpleasant odour would emanate from them (that of sheep - presumably due to their wearing of wool) but when this happened a portion of the Qur'ān was revealed saying, "And be the patient with those who call upon their Lord during the morning and evening, hoping for His pleasure and not turn away from them, desiring the adornments of this world. And do not obey those whose hearts we have made heedless to Our remembrance and those who pursue their desires and whose affairs are worthless" (18:26). Due to this the Prophet is reported to have shook hands with them and would not remove his hand until they did so first. In addition, he would not leave their company until they did so first, out of respect for them. See al-Kalābādhi, *al-Ta'arruf li Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 10; Ibn al-Jawzī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān, *Tablīs Iblīs*, edited by Ayman Ṣālih (3rd edition, Cairo, Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1999) pp. 167-8; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū'at al-Fatāwā*, vol. 11, p. 7; al-Saḥmarānī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 16; al-Sāyih and al-Manā'ī, *Dirāsāt fi 'l-Taṣawwuf wa 'l-Akhlāq*, p. 24; al-Fawzān, *Ḥaqīqat al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 15; Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-Āmmah li 'l-Talaqqī 'ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, p. 27; Idrīs, *Mazāhir al-Inḥirāf al-ʿAqadiyya 'ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, vol. 1, p. 25; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 14; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 31-32 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, p. 5.

⁹⁶ Some scholars do not deny the possibility that this derivation may be possible both lexically and practically. From the lexical standpoint the term may have simply been added to by a *waw* and the *shadda* removed. Secondly, from the practical viewpoint, the state of the early Sufis was not dissimilar to that of the *ahl al-ṣuffa*. See al-Kalābādhi, *al-Ta'arruf li Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 10; al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234), 'Umar b. 'Abd Allāh [Abū Ḥafs, Shihāb al-Dīn], *Awārif al-Ma'ārif* (as part of Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'*, vol. 5, Beirut, Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2001) vol. 5, pp. 65-6 and al-Saḥmarānī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 17.

⁹⁷ Al-Kalābādhi, *al-Ta'arruf li Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 10; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Tablīs Iblīs*, pp. 167-8; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū'at al-Fatāwā*, vol. 11, p. 7; al-Saḥmarānī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 16; al-Sāyih and al-Manā'ī, *Dirāsāt fi 'l-Taṣawwuf wa 'l-Akhlāq*, pp. 24 and 32-6; al-Fawzān, *Ḥaqīqat al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 15; Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-Āmma li 'l-Talaqqī 'ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, p. 27; Idrīs, *Mazāhir al-Inḥirāf al-ʿAqadiyya 'ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, vol. 1, p. 25; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 14; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 31-32 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, p. 5.

⁹⁸ This term will be discussed further when discussing the definition of *taṣawwuf*.

⁹⁹ For this reason some scholars chose this to be the correct derivation. See al-Kalābādhi, *al-Ta'arruf li Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 9-10; al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā'*, vol. 1, p. 17; Zarrūq, Aḥmad b. Ahmad, *Qawā'id al-Taṣawwuf*, edited by Muḥammad Zuhri al-Najjār (Cairo, Maktabat al-Kulliyāt al-Azhariyya, 1967) and al-Saḥmarānī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 16.

iv) The fourth possibility is that the word ‘*ṣūfi*’ is derived from a man known as ‘*Ṣūfa*’, whose actual name was al-Ghawth b. Murr b. Udd b. Ṭābikha b. Ilyās b. Muḍirr.¹⁰¹ This character was known for his retreat into worship within the Holy precincts of the Ka’ba in Mecca and as such the early Sufis resembled him in this aspect.¹⁰² This opinion has been refuted by the majority of scholars due to its unlikely nature.¹⁰³

v) The fifth option was provided by a scholar named al-Biyrūnī, who suggested that the word *ṣūfi* derives from the word *sūfi*, coming from the Greek *sophos*, meaning ‘wise’.¹⁰⁴ This opinion has been proposed by several western scholars also but has received little acceptance as being valid.¹⁰⁵

vi) Another possibility proposed by a minority of scholars, such as al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072) and al-Hujwīrī (d. 465/1072), is that the term ‘*ṣūfi*’ is not derived linguistically (*ishtiqāq*) nor by analogy (*qiyās*), but infact was nothing more than a title (*laqab*) given to identify a specific group of individuals.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ Al-Kalābādhi, *al-Ta’arruf li Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 9-10; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘at al-Fatāwā*, vol. 11, p. 7; al-Saḥmarānī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 17; al-Sāyih and al-Manā‘ī, *Dirāsāt fi ‘l-Taṣawwuf wa ‘l-Akhlāq*, pp. 24 and 38-39; al-Fawzān, *Ḥaqīqat al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 15; Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-‘Āmma li ‘l-Talaqqī ‘ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, p. 28; Idrīs, *Maṣāhir al-Inḥirāf al-‘Aqadiyya ‘ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, vol. 1, p. 25; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 14; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 31-32 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, p. 5.

¹⁰¹ See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Tablīs Iblīs*, pp. 167-8; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘at al-Fatāwā*, vol. 11, p. 7; al-Sāyih and al-Manā‘ī, *Dirāsāt fi ‘l-Taṣawwuf wa ‘l-Akhlāq*, pp. 32-33; al-Fawzān, *Ḥaqīqat al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 16; al-Saḥmarānī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 17-18; Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-‘Āmma li ‘l-Talaqqī ‘ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, pp. 29-30 and Idrīs, *Maṣāhir al-Inḥirāf al-‘Aqadiyya ‘ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, vol. 1, p. 26.

¹⁰² Surprisingly enough this opinion was considered the correct alternative by Ibn al-Jawzī. See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Tablīs Iblīs*, pp. 167-8.

¹⁰³ This is due to several factors: firstly, that this tribe is not very well known and therefore it is unlikely that the early Sufis would have associated themselves within a little known group. Secondly, this tribe were found in the pre-Islamic era and therefore, it is also highly unlikely that a group of Muslims would associate themselves with a people the *jāhili* period, when their association to the earliest generations of Muslims is more befitting. See Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘at al-Fatāwā*, vol. 11, p. 7; al-Fawzān, *Ḥaqīqat al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 16; al-Saḥmarānī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 17-18 and Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-‘Āmma li ‘l-Talaqqī ‘ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, pp. 29-30.

¹⁰⁴ Thus, the *sūfi* would be considered a wise man, being from the same root as *faylāsūf* ‘philosopher’, which literally means ‘the one who loves wisdom’. This has another connotation however, which is that many such *sūfīs* were in fact practitioners of medicine - an understanding which is still held today in the Muslim world by the term *ḥakīm*, who is a practitioner of traditional healing techniques. This was said to be developed even further by the *ṣūfīs*, who considered themselves to be the ‘healers of the hearts’. See Mubārak, Zakī, *al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī fi ‘l-Adab wa ‘l-Akhlāq* (Beirut, al-Maktaba al-‘Aṣriyya, n.d.) vol. 1, p. 41; al-Sāyih and al-Manā‘ī, *Dirāsāt fi ‘l-Taṣawwuf wa ‘l-Akhlāq*, pp. 25 and 36-38; Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-‘Āmma li ‘l-Talaqqī ‘ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, p. 30; Ṣiddīqī, *Maṣādar al-Talaqqī ‘ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, p. 15; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 14; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 31-32 and Stoddart, William, *Sufism - the Mystical Doctrines and Methods in Islam* (Wellingborough, Thorsons Publishers Ltd., 1976) p. 20.

¹⁰⁵ Schimmel rejects this view on the basis of it being philologically impossible. In addition to this, other questions must be raised: how could a Greek derivation become so widespread when the Greek language had only begun to be translated within a similar time frame? Secondly, why these Muslim individuals prefer a ‘foreign’ and ‘atheist’ term to express their own, very particular identity? See al-Sāyih and al-Manā‘ī, *Dirāsāt fi ‘l-Taṣawwuf wa ‘l-Akhlāq*, pp. 36-38 and Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 14.

¹⁰⁶ See al-Sāyih and al-Manā‘ī, *Dirāsāt fi ‘l-Taṣawwuf wa ‘l-Akhlāq*, p. 39; Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-‘Āmma li ‘l-Talaqqī ‘ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, pp. 33-4 and Ṣiddīqī, *Maṣādar al-Talaqqī ‘ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, pp. 15-16.

vii) The final suggestion is perhaps the most widely accepted and the area to which the majority of scholars have paid the greatest attention: this is the idea that the term *ṣūfī* derives from *ṣūf* for wool, being similar to *qamīs* (a shirt) and *taqammaṣa* (to wear a shirt), i.e. *ṣūf* (wool) *taṣawwafa* (to wear wool). In other words, a *ṣūfī* is a person who wears wool, this being the sign of an ascetic and one who renounces the world.¹⁰⁷

It is clear from this discussion that the origin of the term *ṣūfī* has been debated throughout the centuries by various scholars and it is equally clear that there is no definitive answer. Despite this we can say that the the opinions i, iv, v and vi, seem unlikely due both to their linguistic and practical considerations. Although the possibilities suggested in ii and iii seem unlikely linguistically, they remain obvious practical and theoretical models for the *Ṣūfiyya* and therefore cannot be ruled out. The most obvious and most popular choice seems to be the final proposition, that of *ṣūf* and this too is a highly viable choice mainly due to its linguistic implication, as well as its practical reality. After having discussed the origin of the words *ṣūfī* and *taṣawwuf*, it seems logical that the meaning and implication of these terms be examined and indeed, this is the role of the next section.

1.4.2 Definitions of the words *Ṣūfī* and *Taṣawwuf*

If the origin of the terms *ṣūfī*¹⁰⁸ and *taṣawwuf* prove difficult to pin down then a definition of these two terms is even more elusive. In fact it would seem that there are as many definitions of *ṣūfī* and *taṣawwuf* as there are scholars of this field. For example al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988) mentions that the definitions of *taṣawwuf* exceed one hundred¹⁰⁹, whereas al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234) states that there are more than one thousand statements on the

¹⁰⁷ See al-Kalābādhi, *al-Taʿarruf li Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 10-12; al-Sarrāj, *al-Lumaʿ fi ʿl-Taṣawwuf*, p. 20; al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif* (as part of al-Ghazzālī's *Iḥyāʾ*), vol. 5, pp. 59-60; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Tablīs Iblīs*, pp. 167; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿat al-Fatāwā*, vol. 11, pp. 7-8; Ibn Khaldūn, (d. 808/1405), ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad, *al-Muqaddima*, edited by Darwaysh al-Jawaydī (Beirut, al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 2002) p. 467; al-Saḥmarānī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 18-19; Mubārak, *al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī fi ʿl-Adab wa ʿl-Akhlāq*, vol. 1, pp. 43-45; al-Sāyih and al-Manāʿi, *Dirāsāt fi ʿl-Taṣawwuf wa ʿl-Akhlāq*, pp. 24-32; al-Fawzān, *Ḥaqīqat al-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 15-17; Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-ʿĀmma li ʿl-Talaqqī ʿind al-Ṣūfiyya*, pp. 31-33; Idrīs, *Mazāhir al-Inḥirāf al-ʿAqadiyya ʿinda al-Ṣūfiyya*, vol. 1, pp. 26-27; Ṣiddiqī, *Maṣādar al-Talaqqī ʿind al-Ṣūfiyya*, pp. 15-16; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 14; Stoddart, *Sufism*, p. 20; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 31-32 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 5-7.

¹⁰⁸ It is interesting to note that the scholars of this discipline differentiate between the terms *ṣūfī* and *mutaṣawwif*: the former being the scholar who has reached the spiritual goal of *taṣawwuf*, whereas the latter is the beginner on the path, who is striving to reach the same rank as that of the *ṣūfī*. See al-Jilānī (d. 561/1156), ʿAbd al-Qādir, *al-Ghunya li Ṭālibī Ṭariq al-Ḥaqq* (3rd edition, Cairo, Maktabat al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1965) vol. 2, p. 160; al-Saḥmarānī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 32-3; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 20 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁹ Al-Sarrāj, *al-Lumaʿ fi ʿl-Taṣawwuf*, p. 27 and Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-ʿĀmma li ʿl-Talaqqī ʿind al-Ṣūfiyya*, p. 34.

subject ¹¹⁰ and Zarrūq (d. 899/1493) claims that there are as many as two thousand.¹¹¹ Consequently, to produce a definitive description for this concept proves particularly difficult, due to the myriad of definitions that exist.¹¹²

Despite this rich diversity within the literature regarding the meaning of the terms *ṣūfī* and *taṣawwuf*, there is however a range of identifiable subjects which characterise such definitions. The first identifiable idea that can be found, when trying to capture the essence of *taṣawwuf*, is the inclusion of the concept of moral character/behaviour or *khuluq*.¹¹³ This is exemplified in the statement of Abū Bakr al-Kitānī (d. 233/848) who said, “*Taṣawwuf* is moral character (*khuluq*). So whoever surpassed you in moral character, has surpassed you in purity (*al-ṣafā*)”¹¹⁴ and in the statement of Abu Muḥammad al-Jarīrī (d. 311/924) who said, “*Taṣawwuf* is to adopt every Prophetic characteristic (*khuluq sunnī*) and to depart from every base characteristic (*khuluq dannī*).”¹¹⁵ In fact this concept was widely accepted which we can derive from Ibn al-Qayyim’s (d. 750/1351) comment, “Those who discuss this discipline agree that *taṣawwuf* is moral character (*khuluq*).”¹¹⁶

The next easily distinguishable feature that we find is that of etiquette and manners or *adab*.¹¹⁷ An example of the importance devoted to *adab* is seen on the statement of Abū Ḥafṣ al-Ḥaddād, who said:

All of *taṣawwuf* is etiquette (*adab*): every moment has an etiquette, every state (*ḥāla*) has an etiquette and every station (*maqām*) has an etiquette. Whoever observed each moment’s etiquette has reached the position of men; whoever neglected etiquette, then he is distant even when he thinks he is close and he is rejected even though he wishes for acceptance.¹¹⁸

Similarly, al-Hujwīrī (d. between 465/1073 and 469/1077) comments:

Know that the beautification and ornamentation of every worldly or religious affair is dependant upon etiquette. Every station (*maqām*) and every type of

¹¹⁰ Al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif* (as part of al-Ghazzālī’s *Iḥyāʾ*), vol. 5, p. 65 and Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-ʿĀmma li ʾl-Talaqqī ʿind al-Ṣūfiyya*, p. 34.

¹¹¹ Zarrūq, *Qawāʾid al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 3 and Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-ʿĀmma li ʾl-Talaqqī ʿind al-Ṣūfiyya*, p. 34.

¹¹² For a survey of these varying definitions see al-Kalābādhi, *al-Taʿarruf li Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 18-21; al-Saḥmarānī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 29-35; al-Sāyih and al-Manāʿī, *Dirāsāt fī ʾl-Taṣawwuf wa ʾl-Akhlāq*, pp. 41-9; Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-ʿĀmma li ʾl-Talaqqī ʿind al-Ṣūfiyya*, pp. 35-37; Idrīs, *Maṣāhir al-Inḥirāf al-ʿAqadiyya ʿind al-Ṣūfiyya*, vol. 1, pp. 28-33; Ṣiddiqī, *Maṣādar al-Talaqqī ʿind al-Ṣūfiyya*, pp. 15-16 and Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 14-18.

¹¹³ Baraka, ʿAbd al-Fattāh, *Fī ʾl-Taṣawwuf wa ʾl-Akhlāq* (Kuwait, Dār al-Qalam, n.d.) p. 59 and al-Sāyih and al-Manāʿī, *Dirāsāt fī ʾl-Taṣawwuf wa ʾl-Akhlāq*, pp. 41-43 and 44-46.

¹¹⁴ Al-Sāyih and al-Manāʿī, *Dirāsāt fī ʾl-Taṣawwuf wa ʾl-Akhlāq*, p. 42.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 42.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 43.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 43-44.

¹¹⁸ Al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif* (as part of al-Ghazzālī’s *Iḥyāʾ*), vol. 5, p. 203 and al-Sāyih and al-Manāʿī, *Dirāsāt fī ʾl-Taṣawwuf wa ʾl-Akhlāq*, p. 43.

moral character (*khuluq*) has its etiquette. The disbeliever (*al-kāfir*) and the Muslim, the monotheist (*al-muwaḥḥid*) and the atheist (*al-mulḥid*) and the orthodox (*al-sunni*) and the innovator (*al-mubtadʿ*), all agree that fine manners in behaviour is good. No formality in the world is completed without the use of etiquette. Etiquette with people is maintaining one's self esteem (*al-marūʿa*), the etiquette of religion is maintaining the *sunna* and the etiquette of love (*al-maḥabba*) is maintaining its sanctity (*al-ḥurma*). These three are linked to each other as whoever does not maintain *al-marūʿa*, he will not maintain the *sunna* and whoever does not maintain the *sunna* will not maintain sanctity.¹¹⁹

Thus, from these two quotes we can easily see the emphasis that the scholars have given to this particular aspect of *taṣawwuf*, to such an extent that it was to embellish every worldly action as well as every religious one.

The final term to be examined here is that of asceticism or *zuhd*. This term is perhaps the most wide spread understanding of the term *taṣawwuf*, as for many the word Sufi conjures up an image of an ascetic (*zāhid*) and indeed, as we will see in the next section¹²⁰, many consider *taṣawwuf* to have developed from an ascetic tendency within the earliest generations of Muslims. This image is also compounded by the various statements of scholars regarding not only the nature of *taṣawwuf* but also the essence of *zuhd* and its intrinsic link with *taṣawwuf*, even to the extent of classifying ascetics into different categories.¹²¹

To illustrate this point, al-Junayd (d. 298/810) was asked what asceticism (*zuhd*) was, to which he replied, "To remove your hand from possession in the worldly life and to eradicate greed from your heart."¹²² Building on this idea Ruwaym b. Ahmad (d. 303/915) stated, "Asceticism (*zuhd*) is to deny *al-nafs* its portion of everything in the world."¹²³ To clarify the nature of asceticism further, Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 162/778) said, "*Zuhd* in the world isn't wearing a patched cloak (*al-khirqa*), or eating barley bread but it is the heart's lack of attachment to the world and not having high hopes."¹²⁴ Thus, it can be seen that at the very heart of *taṣawwuf* is the concept of abstinence from the world and asceticism, which in turn is central to achieving the goals of the Sufi.

¹¹⁹ Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, vol. 2, p. 580 and al-Sāyih and al-Manāʿī, *Dirāsāt fī 'l-Taṣawwuf wa 'l-Akhlāq*, p. 43.

¹²⁰ See pp. 34 and 40 below.

¹²¹ See al-Sāyih and al-Manāʿī, *Dirāsāt fī 'l-Taṣawwuf wa 'l-Akhlāq*, pp. 46-7.

¹²² Al-Sāyih and al-Manāʿī, *Dirāsāt fī 'l-Taṣawwuf wa 'l-Akhlāq*, p. 46.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ghanī, Qāsim, *Tārīkh al-Taṣawwuf fī 'l-Islam* (Cairo, al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1970) p. 383 and al-Sāyih and al-Manāʿī, *Dirāsāt fī 'l-Taṣawwuf wa 'l-Akhlāq*, p. 47.

As time passed, *taṣawwuf* underwent several developmental stages including a period of systemisation, where the thoughts, ideas, doctrines and practises of *taṣawwuf* were brought together within a clearly identifiable corpus of material and consequently, ‘new’ definitions of *taṣawwuf* began to appear, indicative of this systemisation.¹²⁵ In the following statement by al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111) we find a loose definition, exemplifying this development and systemisation:

I understood that their path [i.e. that of the Sufis] is only completed through knowledge and action and the sum of their knowledge was to impose punitive measures upon the *nafs* and to eliminate its blameworthy traits and disgusting characteristics, until a stage is reached whereby the heart is free from any other than Allāh, being adorned with His remembrance.¹²⁶

In the modern period, after many years had passed to examine the teachings and practises of *taṣawwuf*, contemporary scholars who hold a negative view of *taṣawwuf* have also attempted to define the term.¹²⁷ Thus, we find Zakī Mubārak defining *taṣawwuf* as follows, “*Al-taṣawwuf* is a combination of Islamic, Christian and Judaic ideas or a spiritual summary of those three religions.”¹²⁸ Similarly, Muḥammad Shaqfa, defines *taṣawwuf* in the following way, “As for *taṣawwuf* in our opinion; it is an ascetic method in training the *nafs*, which relies upon a number of metaphysical beliefs, whose authenticity is not based on any intellectual or religious evidence.”¹²⁹

From the above discussion it is clear that there is no definitive definition of *taṣawwuf* and the definition of the term varies greatly from person to person, period to period and one’s own personal stance regarding this discipline. One may ask however why was there all of this diversity? One main reason for this, in the early period at least, was that each scholar would define the term according to his own personal understanding, state and circumstances. Therefore, the various statements differ due to the circumstances in which they were asked, the nature of the question and questioner and since *taṣawwuf* is essentially a human ‘journey’ of spiritual development, their own personal state at the point they were

¹²⁵ See the next section, pp. 35-6 below.

¹²⁶ Al-Ghazzālī, Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad, *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* (2nd edition, Beirut, al-Maktaba al-Sharqiyya, 1969) p. 35 and al-Saḥmarānī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 35.

¹²⁷ It should be pointed out however that this has been done mainly by scholars representing the anti-Sufi genre, who have tried to separate *taṣawwuf* from mainstream Islam and which is clear from the quotes above. See Mubārak, *al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī fī ‘l-Adab wa ‘l-Akhlāq*, vol. 1, p. 160; Shaqfa, *al-Taṣawwuf bayn al-Ḥaqq wa ‘l-Khalq*, p. 7 and Idrīs, *Mazāhir al-Inḥirāf al-‘Aqadiyya ‘ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, vol. 1, pp. 31-33.

¹²⁸ Mubārak, *al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī fī ‘l-Adab wa ‘l-Akhlāq*, vol. 1, p. 160 and Shaqfa, *al-Taṣawwuf bayn al-Ḥaqq wa ‘l-Khalq*, p. 7.

¹²⁹ Shaqfa, *al-Taṣawwuf bayn al-Ḥaqq wa ‘l-Khalq*, p. 7.

asked.¹³⁰ Despite this diversity in expression it seems that the overall comprehension of the term *taṣawwuf* continues in fact amongst those scholars concerned with it and irrespective of the period and the situation, the essence of *taṣawwuf* remains understood. Perhaps one of the most eloquent statements in this regard is that of ‘Alī b. Aḥmad Bushānjī, who said, “Today, *taṣawwuf* is a name without reality but it used to be a reality without a name.”¹³¹ Thus, in the next section we will attempt to survey the historical development of *taṣawwuf*, to see how this ‘reality’ came into being.

1.4.3 The Historical Development of Sufism

If the linguistic origin and the definition of the word *taṣawwuf* proved problematic then its historical development is no easier to chart. This due to the fact that the researcher, on examining the literature, finds two polarised viewpoints regarding the origin of *taṣawwuf*. The first of these suggests that *taṣawwuf* is a later incursion on the original Islamic format, being derived from external, ‘foreign’, un-Islamic sources such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Shamanism and Zorastorianism, as well as Greek philosophical influences.¹³² As a result, *taṣawwuf* is viewed as a later appendage and from the historical perspective its chronology thus starts in the 2nd/8th or 3rd/9th centuries. Contrary to this, there is an opposing view which is that *taṣawwuf* has its origins in Islam and more specifically, in the Qur’ān, *ḥadīth* and the life of the Prophet and his Companions (*al-ṣaḥāba*).¹³³ They argue that this developed in the time of the Successors (*al-tābi‘ūn*) and in the time of those after them in much the same way that the other Islamic disciplines such as jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Qur’ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*) and doctrine (*‘aqīda*) did.¹³⁴ As a result the historical chronology of *taṣawwuf* in this view begins with the Prophet himself and continues with his Companions and the succeeding generations.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ See Zarrūq, *Qawā’id al-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 3-4; Baraka, ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ, *Fī ‘l-Taṣawwuf wa ‘l-Akhlāq*, p. 56; al-Sāyih and al-Manā‘ī, *Dirāsāt fī ‘l-Taṣawwuf wa ‘l-Akhlāq*, p. 41 and Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-‘Āmma li ‘l-Talaqqī ‘ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, p. 37.

¹³¹ Chittick, William C., *Sufism - A Short Introduction*, pp. 1-2.

¹³² For an in-depth discussion of these views see al-Saḥmarānī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 47-59; Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-‘Āmma li ‘l-Talaqqī ‘ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, pp. 62-94; Idrīs, *Maṣāhir al-Inḥirāf al-‘Aqadiyya ‘ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, vol. 1, pp. 45-82; Ṣiddīqī, *Maṣādar al-Talaqqī ‘ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, pp. 23-60; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 33-5 and Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 13-33.

¹³³ For examples of this view see al-Miṣrī, *‘Umdat al-Sālik wa ‘Uddat al-Nāsik*, pp. 861-864; al-Saḥmarānī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 39-47; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 23-30 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 8-10.

¹³⁴ See: Keller, Nūḥ Ḥā Mīm, *The Place of Taṣawwuf in Traditional Islam*, at <http://ds.dial.pipex.com/masud/ISLAM/nuh/sufitlk.htm>, pp. 1-12, 1995 and How would you Respond to the claim that Sufism is bid‘ah? At <http://ds.dial.pipex.com/masud/ISLAM/nuh/sufism.htm>, pp. 1-3, 1995.

¹³⁵ For example see al-Kalābādhi, *al-Ta‘arruf li Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 21-26.

This latter view culminates in the personality of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), a successor who as his name suggests was a native of Iraq, as many regard him to be a pivotal figure in Sufism's development and who is often termed the 'archetypal proto-Sufi'.¹³⁶ He is even attributed the honour of being the first person to have used the term 'Sufi', along with Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 162/778),¹³⁷ and the first person who is said to have founded a circle for the Sufis was 'Abd al-Wāḥid b. Zayd (d. ca. 133/750), who was also a companion of al-Ḥasan.¹³⁸ Thus, from this short summary it would seem clear that this trend was firmly established in Basra¹³⁹ and that the term 'Sufi' was clearly established in the early period of the 2nd/8th century.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, the term *taṣawwuf* also appears to have been known, which we can derive from the following statement of al-imām Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795), who is reported to have said:

He who practices Sufism (*taṣawwafa*) without learning sacred Law (*lam yatafaqquh*) corrupts his faith (*tazanddaqa*), while he who learns sacred Law (*tafaqqaha*) without practicing Sufism (*lam yataṣawwuf*) corrupts himself (*tafassaqa*). Only he who combines the two has achieved the realisation (*taḥaqqaqqa*).¹⁴¹

These were not the only names known in the period and infact we find a rich mosaic of various personalities, who in one way or another were influential on the development of Sufism,¹⁴² as well as portraying a variety of devotional styles. This can be seen in the next generation of Muslim ascetics who included Ibrahim b. Adham (d. 160/777)¹⁴³, 'Abd Allāh b. al-Mubārak (d. 181/797)¹⁴⁴ and Fuḍayl b. 'Iyāḍ (d. 188/803).¹⁴⁵ Perhaps the most

¹³⁶ Al-Kalābādhi, *al-Ta'arruf li Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 22; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 30 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 10-13.

¹³⁷ See Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū'at al-Fatāwā*, vol. 11, p. 7; Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-Āmma li 'l-Talaqqī 'ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, p. 38 and Idrīs, *Mazāhir al-Inḥirāf al-ʿAqadiyya 'ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, vol. 1, p. 36. This is in opposition to Baldick and Schimmel, who state that the first person who was termed a Sufi was a certain Abū Ḥāshim, who died in 161/776. See *Mystical Islam*, p. 30 and *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 31.

¹³⁸ Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū'at al-Fatāwā*, vol. 11, p. 7; Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-Āmma li 'l-Talaqqī 'ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, p. 38; Idrīs, *Mazāhir al-Inḥirāf al-ʿAqadiyya 'ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, vol. 1, p. 36; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 31 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 16-18.

¹³⁹ Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū'at al-Fatāwā*, vol. 11, p. 7; Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-Āmma li 'l-Talaqqī 'ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, p. 38 and Idrīs, *Mazāhir al-Inḥirāf al-ʿAqadiyya 'ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, vol. 1, p. 36.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. Once again this is in opposition to Baldick, who states that, "It goes against all the evidence from classical Muslim sources who agree that the term dates from the third century of Islam, which began in 816." See Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, p. 30.

¹⁴¹ See Ibn 'Ajība, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, *Īqāz al-Himam fi Sharḥ al-Ḥikam* (Cairo, Muṣṭafā al-Bābī wa Awlādūhu, 1972) pp. 5-6 and al-Miṣrī, *Umdat al-Sālik wa 'Uddat al-Nāsik* p. 862. This statement once again would seem to prove Baldick wrong, see footnotes 135 and 138.

¹⁴² From al-Ḥasan's circle alone were the following: Yazīd b. Abān al-Raqāshī (d. between 101/729 and 121/738), Muḥammad b. Wasī' (d. 127/738), Mālik b. Dinār (d. 128/745), Farqad al-Sabakhī (d. 132/749) and Dāwūd al-Ṭā'ī (d. 165/781). See Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 13 and 35.

¹⁴³ For details concerning his life see al-Miṣrī, *Umdat al-Sālik wa 'Uddat al-Nāsik*, p. 1061; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 37 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 19-20.

¹⁴⁴ For details concerning his life see Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 21-2.

innovative of these devotional styles was that of Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya (d. 185/801), who promoted the concept of ‘absolute love for the divine’, and was later to influence many with her love mysticism.¹⁴⁶ Another is Shāfiq al-Balkhī (d. 195/810) who was instrumental in the formation of mystical language, speculation and what is now termed ‘the knowledge of the Path’ (*ʿilm al-ṭarīq*), as he seems to have been the first to discuss the various levels of spiritual attainment and their stages (*manāzil*).¹⁴⁷

These teachings were not only confined to the eastern provinces and indeed there were many important characters were also found in the western territories, who were disseminating the eastern tradition. For example, in Syria there was Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī (d. 215/830), who had studied with ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. Zayd and evolved his own version of al-Ḥasan’s teaching.¹⁴⁸ Similarly, in Egypt we find Dhū ʿl-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245/860), who studied with Fuḍayl b. ʿIyad and is accredited with the systematic teaching of the mystic ‘states’ (*aḥwāl*) and the ‘stations’ (*maqāmāt*).¹⁴⁹

This rich period was the ‘golden age’ in the development of what would become known as Sufism and culminated in what was later referred to as being the ‘Baghdadi School’.¹⁵⁰ This ‘school’ had amongst its ranks some of the most famous names to be found in Sufi history¹⁵¹ and was to have arguably the greatest influence on future generations. This is of importance to the current research as the subject of the thesis, namely al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, was not only a major figure of it but also one of the major contributors to its thought and teaching.

Due to its heavy emphasis on extreme asceticism and its strong moral teaching, the Baghdadi School was often termed the ‘sober (*ṣaḥw*) school’ of Sufism and was said to be

¹⁴⁵ For details concerning his life see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 35-6 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 23-4.

¹⁴⁶ For details concerning her life see Idrīs, *Mazāhir al-Inḥirāf al-ʿAqadiyya ʿind al-Ṣūfiyya*, vol. 1, p. 37; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 38-41; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 29-30 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 26-32.

¹⁴⁷ For details concerning his life and teaching see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 38 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 32-5.

¹⁴⁸ For details concerning his life and teaching see Idrīs, *Mazāhir al-Inḥirāf al-ʿAqadiyya ʿind al-Ṣūfiyya*, vol. 1, p. 42 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 36-9.

¹⁴⁹ For details concerning his life and teaching see al-Miṣrī, *Umdat al-Sālik wa ʿUddat al-Nāsik*, p. 1045; Idrīs, *Mazāhir al-Inḥirāf al-ʿAqadiyya ʿind al-Ṣūfiyya*, vol. 1, pp. 43-4; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 42-7; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, p. 35 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 39-42.

¹⁵⁰ The Baghdādī School will be discussed later, see chapter three, section 3.4.1 below.

¹⁵¹ These included: Maʿruf al-Karkhī (d. 200/815), Bishr al-Ḥāfi (d. 247/842), Sarī al-Saqāṭī (d. 253/867), Abū Saʿīd al-Kharrāz (d. ca 286/899), al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 298/810), Abū Hamza al-Khurāsānī (d. between 290/903 and 298/911), ʿAmr b. ʿUthmān al-Makkī (d. 291/903), Abū ʿl-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 295/907), Ruwaym b. Aḥmad (d. 303/915), Khayr al-Nassāj (d. 322/934), Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 334/946), Abū Muḥammad al-Jurayrī (d. 312/924), Abū ʿAlī al-Rūdhbārī (d. 322/934) and Jaʿfar al-Khuldī (d. 348/959).

exemplified by al-Junayd (d. 298/910).¹⁵² In contrast to this, there developed another school the so-called 'school of intoxication (*sukr*)', which would appear to have its roots in the teachings of Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. 234/848 or 261/875).¹⁵³ These concepts were developed further by one of the most controversial figures in the history of Sufism and Islam, that of al-Ḥusayn b. Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922),¹⁵⁴ until a whole new ideological teaching was formed. A discussion of al-Ḥallāj is beyond the scope of the current treatise but what is clear is that he is representative of a school of mystics who were given to so-called 'ecstatic utterances' (*shataḥāt*)¹⁵⁵, whilst expressing their experience of the divine and which, as a result, often raised the hackles of the jurists, due to their seemingly blasphemous overtones.¹⁵⁶

This is not to say however that Baghdad was the only centre for Sufism and Sufis. In the same way that individuals appeared throughout the Islamic empire, as we have seen¹⁵⁷, other ascetic and mystical movements existed outside of Baghdad. In Basra for example there was a group that developed known as the Sālīmiyya.¹⁵⁸ The roots of this movement lie with the famous mystic Sahl b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Tustarī (d. 283/896)¹⁵⁹, his disciple Muḥammad b. Sālim (d. 297/909) and the latter's son Aḥmad b. Sālim (d. 356/967), from whom the movement took its name.¹⁶⁰ The thought and teaching of the Sālīmiyya are found articulated in the words of Abu Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996), in his monumental work *Qūt al-Qulūb*.¹⁶¹

A regional school which did not survive the ideological expansion of Baghdad Sufism was that of the Karrāmiyya, which flourished in Jerusalem. Transoxiana and Khurasān from

¹⁵² See al-Miṣrī, *ʿUmdat al-Sālik wa ʿUddat al-Nāsik*, p. 1031; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 58-9; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, p. 46; Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 52-3 and Chittick, *Sufism - A Short Introduction*, pp. 26-9.

¹⁵³ For a discussion of his life and teachings see al-Miṣrī, *ʿUmdat al-Sālik wa ʿUddat al-Nāsik*, pp. 798 and 1034; Idrīs, *Mazāhir al-Inḥirāf al-ʿAqadiyya ʿind al-Ṣūfiyya*, vol. 1, p. 44; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 47-51; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 35-7; Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 68-72 and Chittick, *Sufism - A Short Introduction*, pp. 33 and 141.

¹⁵⁴ For a discussion of his life and teachings see al-Miṣrī, *ʿUmdat al-Sālik wa ʿUddat al-Nāsik*, pp. 1051-52; Idrīs, *Mazāhir al-Inḥirāf al-ʿAqadiyya ʿind al-Ṣūfiyya*, vol. 1, pp. 44-45; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 62-77; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 46-9 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 72-82.

¹⁵⁵ For an exhaustive discussion regarding the *shataḥāt* see Ernst, Carl W., *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1985) which gives an extensive introduction to this topic on pp. 9-20 and discusses al-Ḥallāj in detail on pp. 63-72 and pp. 102-110.

¹⁵⁶ For a discussion of relationship between the orthodox and that of the Sufis regarding *shataḥāt* see Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*, pp. 117-132.

¹⁵⁷ See page 41 above.

¹⁵⁸ For a discussion of the Sālīmiyya see Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 83-8.

¹⁵⁹ For a discussion of his life and teachings see al-Miṣrī, *ʿUmdat al-Sālik wa ʿUddat al-Nāsik*, p. 1092; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 55-7; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 37-40 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 83-88.

¹⁶⁰ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 56 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, p. 85.

¹⁶¹ See Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 85 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 84-5.

the 3rd/9th century until the Mongol conquest, under the auspices of their founder Ibn Karrām (d. 255/869).¹⁶²

A contemporary movement to that of the Karrāmiyya was a loosely structured ascetic movement known as the Malāmatiyya¹⁶³, who derived their name from the Quranic verse (5:54), which praises those who, “Fear not the blame of any blamer.” This group emerged in Nishapur in the 3rd/9th century and derived its following mostly from a middle class artisan or mercantile milieu. Al-Sulamī, the first author to describe the tenets of the Malāmatiyya, linked its origins with the teaching of Ḥamdūn al-Qaṣṣār, his master Abu Ḥafs al-Ḥaddād (d. between 265/874 and 270/869) and Abū ʿUthmān al-Hirī (d. 298/910). The latter was a disciple of Yaḥyā b. Muʿādh al-Rāzī (d. 258/872) who accredited with giving Khurāsānī mysticism its final form.

Following the formalisation of various other Islamic disciplines such as *fiqh* and *ḥadīth*, in the 4th/10th century, Sufism also underwent a period of construction and consolidation and many scholars term this period ‘a period of systemisation of the Sufi tradition.’¹⁶⁴ In fact within the next century, from 356/967 to 465/1074, we find that a myriad of treatises, biographical/historical works and manuals were produced discussing Sufism as a discipline or a science, which was termed *ʿilm al-taṣawwuf*. An in-depth discussion of these works, their contents and their contribution to Sufi thought is beyond the scope of the current work but the major works and their authors will be mentioned, so as to provide the reader with an overview.

The first of these worth mentioning is *Ṭabaqāt al-Nussāk* by Abū Saʿīd al-ʿArabī (d. 341/952), followed by *Akḥbār al-Ṣūfiyya* by Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Dāwūd Pārsā (d. 342/953), *Ḥikāyāt al-Mashāʾikh* by Jaʿfar al-Khuldī (d. 348/953), *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya* by Abū al-Faraj al-Warathānī (d. 372/982) and finally, *Ḥikāyāt al-Ṣūfiyya* by Abū Bakr Shādhān al-Razī (d. 376/986). These works provided the basis for the classical Sufi text books, which gave Sufism its final shape and orthodox flavour, namely *Kitāb al-Lumaʿ fī ʿl-Taṣawwuf* by Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988)¹⁶⁵, *Qūt al-Qulūb* by Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d.

¹⁶² For a discussion of the Karrāmiyya see Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 88-94.

¹⁶³ For a discussion of the Malāmatiyya see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 86-7 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 94-9.

¹⁶⁴ See Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 77-97; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 50-85 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 116-149.

¹⁶⁵ For a discussion of this work and its author see Ibn al-Jawzī, *Tablīs Iblīs*, p. 169; Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-ʿĀmma li ʿl-Talaqqī ʿind al-Ṣūfiyya*, p. 44; Idrīs, *Mazāhir al-Inḥirāf al-ʿAqadiyya ʿind al-Ṣūfiyya*, vol. 1, p. 47; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 84; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, p. 55 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 118-120.

386/996)¹⁶⁶ and *al-Ta'arruf li Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf* by Abū Bakr al-Kalābādhi (d. 380/990).¹⁶⁷ One should also not neglect to mention the valuable contributions of Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021)¹⁶⁸, especially his *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, the *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā'* of Abū Nu'aym al-Aṣfahānī (d. 430/1038)¹⁶⁹, the *Risāla fi 'l-Taṣawwuf* of Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1074)¹⁷⁰ and the first Persian treatise on Sufism by 'Alī b. 'Uthmān al-Jullabī al-Hujwīrī (d. 469/1077) entitled *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*.¹⁷¹ In addition, it is interesting to note that the tone of these works is often apologetic so as to satisfy the opponents of Sufism regarding its orthodoxy, which built up from the earliest period and culminated in the execution of al-Ḥallāj and its consequent backlash.¹⁷² The fourth century ended and the fifth began with perhaps the most celebrated 'champion' of the Sufi cause, that of Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111)¹⁷³, who is accredited by many to have bridged the gap between the Sufis and the 'orthodox' with his *magnum opus Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*.

In the post-Ghazzālī period, the next major development in Sufism came in the form of perhaps the most synonymous term associated with Sufism and one, which is known to the majority, that of the Sufi brotherhoods or *ṭuruq*, as they are known in Arabic. A major discussion of this topic is, as stated several times before, beyond the scope of the present work but a brief overview of some of the major brotherhoods will be given here.¹⁷⁴ After a period of consolidation, where Sufi theory had been systemised, various groups of Sufis appeared and gathered in 'lodges' (*zāwiya*, *khānaqā*, *ribāṭ*) established by their

¹⁶⁶ For a discussion of this work and its author see Ibn al-Jawzī, *Tablīs Iblīs*, pp. 169-170; al-Miṣrī, *Umdat al-Sālik wa 'Uddat al-Nāsik*, p. 1033; Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-Āmma li 'l-Talaqqī 'ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, pp. 44-5; Idrīs, *Mazāhir al-Inḥirāf al-ʿAqadiyya 'ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, vol. 1, p. 47; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 85; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, p. 56 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 121-2.

¹⁶⁷ For a discussion of this work and its author see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 85; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 55-6 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 123-4.

¹⁶⁸ For a discussion of this work and its author see al-Miṣrī, *Umdat al-Sālik wa 'Uddat al-Nāsik*, p. 1025-6; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 85-6; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 57-8 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 125-7.

¹⁶⁹ For a discussion of this work and its author see al-Miṣrī, *Umdat al-Sālik wa 'Uddat al-Nāsik*, p. 1032; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 85; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 63-64 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 132-5.

¹⁷⁰ For a discussion of this work and its author see Ibn al-Jawzī, *Tablīs Iblīs*, pp. 170; al-Miṣrī, *Umdat al-Sālik wa 'Uddat al-Nāsik*, p. 1031; Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-Āmma li 'l-Talaqqī 'ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, pp. 45-7; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 88; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, p. 58 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 128-130.

¹⁷¹ For a discussion of this work and its author see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 88-9; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 63-64 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 132-5.

¹⁷² See Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 81 and 116-7.

¹⁷³ For a discussion of this author and his works see Ibn al-Jawzī, *Tablīs Iblīs*, p. 171; al-Miṣrī, *Umdat al-Sālik wa 'Uddat al-Nāsik*, pp. 1047-8; Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-Āmma li 'l-Talaqqī 'ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, p. 48; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 91-7; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 65-6 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 140-9.

¹⁷⁴ For a detailed discussion of this topic see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 228-58; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 69-77 and 195-9 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 169-244.

predecessors. These ‘novices’ (*murīd*) would gather around a ‘master’ (*shaykh*) from whom they would take spiritual instruction. This instruction would normally take the form of remembrance (*dhikr*) or litanies (*wird, hizb*), spiritual music (*samāʿ, ḥadra*) and seclusion (*khalwa*) for those more advanced along the ‘path’ (*ṭarīq*). This basic formula also developed a hierarchical system, including specific rites of initiation, codes of conduct (*adab*) and spiritual genealogy (*silsila*). These basic elements, as well as others, were common to most *ṭarīqas* but varied according to the specific teachings of each master and the geographical location of the *ṭarīqa*, which resulted in many ‘off shoots’ or ‘branches’ of the original brotherhood.

Despite this rich mosaic of mystical schools, several major brotherhoods can be indentified. The first of these worth mentioning here is the Qādiriyya founded by ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī (d. 561/1166).¹⁷⁵ A contemporary of ʿAbd al-Qādir was ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Suhrawardī (d. 563/1168) who is attributed with establishing the Suhrawardiyya brotherhood.¹⁷⁶ North African Sufism is to a large extent associated with the Shādhiliyya brotherhood, which in turn is inextricably linked with the personality and teachings of Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258), although this *ṭarīqa* also has branches throughout the world.¹⁷⁷ In Central Asia, although certainly not confined to it, the next major *ṭarīqa*, the Naqshbandiyya, found its eponymous founder in the form of Bahāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Naqshband (d. 791/1389).¹⁷⁸ These brotherhoods, as well as many others beyond the scope of the present study, were instrumental in developing the form of Sufism

¹⁷⁵ For a discussion of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī and his *ṭarīqa* see Salik, S. A, *The Saint of Jilan: The Life of Ghaus-ul-Azam* (Lahore, Muhammad Ashraf, 1953); Abdul Ali, *The Shaik and his Sufism: Shaik Abdul Kader Jilani* (n. pl., Diocesan Press, 1955); Demeerseman, André, *Nouveau regard sur la voie spirituelle d'ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī et sa tradition*, Études musulmanes; 30 (Paris, Vrin, 1988); Trimmingham, Spencer J., *The Sufi Orders of Islam* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998) pp. 40-4 and 271-3; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 247-8; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 71-2 and 197 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 179-192.

¹⁷⁶ For a discussion of ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Suhrawardī and his *ṭarīqa* see Huda, Qamar-ul, *Striving for Divine Union: Spiritual Exercises for Suhrawardi Sufis* (London, Routledge-Curzon, 2002); Trimmingham, *The Sufi Orders of Islam*, pp. 33-7, 65-6 and 270-1; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 244-6; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 158 and 198 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 192-207.

¹⁷⁷ For a discussion of Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Shādhilī and his *ṭarīqa* see Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, Muḥammad b. Abū ʿl-Qāsim, *Durrat al-Asrār wa Tuḥfat al-Abrār*, translated into English as, *The Mystical Teachings of al-Shadhili: including his life, prayers, letters, and followers* by Elmer H. Douglas, edited with an introduction and a bibliography by Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabiʾ, SUNY series in Islam (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1993); Trimmingham, *The Sufi Orders of Islam*, pp. 45, 47-50 and 276-9; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 249-54; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 73-5 and 198 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 207-18.

¹⁷⁸ For a discussion of Bahāʾ al-Dīn Naqshband and his *ṭarīqa* see Kabbani, Muhammad Hisham, *The Naqshbandi Sufi Way: History and Guidebook of the Saints of the Golden Chain* (Chicago, Kazi Publications, 1995); *Classical Islam and the Naqshbandi Sufi Tradition* (Fenton, Islamic Supreme Council of America, 2003); *The Naqshbandi Sufi Tradition Guidebook of Daily Practices and Devotions* (Fenton, Islamic Supreme Council of America, 2004); Trimmingham, *The Sufi Orders of Islam*, pp. 62-4 and 93-6; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 363-73; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, p. 197 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 218-34.

known throughout the world today and not only that but from their inception they were a powerful motivating force, as we shall see later.¹⁷⁹

The next major development within the field of Sufism was firstly, the expansion of the poetical theme which had been present throughout - as Sufis often preferred to express their experience through verse - and secondly, its somewhat uncomfortable relationship with metaphysics. The poetical theme was developed in the sense that for the first time Persian replaced Arabic as the preferred medium and one of the primers of this change was Farīd al-Dīn al-ʿAttār (d. 627/1230)¹⁸⁰, in such works as *Mantiq al-Ṭayr*. The Arab poets were not without representation, however and their thought was expressed by Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235) of Cairo, who was to have an equally important role in influencing Sufi ideas.¹⁸¹ The Persian tradition was to reach its pinnacle however in the form of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273), who benefitted greatly from al-ʿAttār and consequently was known as the greatest Persian poet, due to such works as the *Mathnawī*, which is considered to be his *magnum opus*.¹⁸² The languages of both Arabic and Persian were used to express the thought of the final poet to be discussed here, that of ʿAbd al-Rahmān Jāmī (d./1492), in such works as *Tuḥfat al-Aḥrār* and *Subḥat al-Abrār* but he will also be remembered for his commentaries on the works of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and Muḥammad b. ʿAli (Muḥyī al-Dīn) Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240), to which he contributed a great deal in the development of the latter's thought.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ See pp. 47-8 below.

¹⁸⁰ For a discussion of this author and his works see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 301-9; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 78-9 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 152-6.

¹⁸¹ For a discussion of this author see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 274-9 and Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 81-2.

¹⁸² For a discussion of this work and its author see Iqbal, Afzal, *The Life & Work of Jalaluddin Rumi* (London, The Octagon Press, 1983); Lewis, Franklin D., *Rumi Past and Present, East and West: The Life, Teaching and Poetry of Jalal al-Din Rumi* (Oxford, Oneworld Publications, 2000); Schimmel, Annemarie, *The Triumphal Sun: A Study of the Works of Jalaloddin Rumi* (London, east-West Publications, 1980); *I am the Wind You are the Fire: The Life and Works of Rumi*, Shambhala Dragon Editions (Boston, Shambhala Publications, 1992); *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 309-328; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 89-91 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 156-161.

¹⁸³ For a discussion of this author and his works see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 263-274; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, p. 111 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 161-3.

This latter scholar, i.e. Ibn ‘Arabī¹⁸⁴, with the exception of al-Ḥallāj, is arguably the most controversial figure in the history of Islam, let alone that of *taṣawwuf*. This rather unenviable position arose due to his development of what may be termed ‘the metaphysical theosophy’ of Sufism. In such works as *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* and *al-Futuḥāt al-Makkiyya* he expounded his own mystic interpretations of Islam, developing the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*.¹⁸⁵ This earned him the honourific title of ‘*shaykh al-akbar*’ (the greatest *shaykh*) whereas those less endeared to him regarded him as ‘*shaykh al-akfar*’ (the most heretical *shaykh*). Like him or loathe him, Ibn ‘Arabī has had a major effect on the development of Sufism as we know it, as both his works and his thought are still considered by some corners of the Sufi fraternity to represent the essence of ‘true’ Sufism.¹⁸⁶

It is hardly surprising that such controversial ideas would be the target of an assault from the ‘orthodox’ elements of the Islamic community and indeed the 12th-14th/18th-20th centuries witnessed a backlash upon Sufism, reminiscent of al-Ḥallāj’s era.¹⁸⁷ This was not the only threat that Sufism faced however and indeed Sufism, as with the rest of Islam, was under severe pressure from their colonialist mentors.¹⁸⁸ Despite this onslaught Sufism was now deeply entrenched in the popular religion of the masses and survived the attack.¹⁸⁹ In fact, the Sufi brotherhoods were often instrumental in the politics of this period and their role in it varied considerably. On occasions they were instrumental in the maintenance of colonialist rule¹⁹⁰, whereas in others they were in violent opposition to it.¹⁹¹ In any case

¹⁸⁴ For a discussion of this author and his works see Chittick, William C., *The Sufi Path of Knowledge - Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1989); Addas, Claude, *Quest for the Red Sulphur: the Life of Ibn al-‘Arabī* (Cambridge, Islamic Texts Society, 1993); Chodkiewicz, Michel, *Seal of Saints - Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn al-‘Arabī* (Cambridge, Islamic Texts Society, 1993); Chittick, William C., *The Self-Disclosure of God - Principles of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Cosmology* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1998); Knysh, Alexander D., *Ibn al-‘Arabī in the Later Islamic Tradition - the Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1999); al-Miṣrī, ‘*Umdat al-Sālik wa ‘Uddat al-Nāsik*, pp. 1080-2; Ṣādiq, *al-Maṣādar al-‘Āmma li ‘l-Talaqqī ‘ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, pp. 48-50; Idrīs, *Maṣāhir al-Inḥirāf al-‘Aqadiyya ‘ind al-Ṣūfiyya*, vol. 1, p. 47; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 263-74; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 82-5; Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 163-8 and Chittick, *Sufism - A Short Introduction*, pp. 28-152 *passim*.

¹⁸⁵ As Knysh puts it rather succinctly, “He [Ibn ‘Arabī] viewed the world as a product of God’s self-reflection that urged His unique and indivisible essence to show itself in the things and phenomena of the material universe as in a mirror. ... In Ibn ‘Arabī’s system, God was not the otherworldly and impregnable entity of the mainstream Muslim theologians. Consequently, many of the latter came to view him as the founder of the heretical doctrine of oneness of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), understood as pantheism pure and simple.” See Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, p. 168.

¹⁸⁶ For an example of this see Chittick, *Sufism - A Short Introduction*, where the author continually refers to Ibn ‘Arabī as if to represent Sufism through the latter’s thought and teaching.

¹⁸⁷ See Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis*, pp. 86-111.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-85.

¹⁸⁹ For a discussion regarding the role of Sufism in the regional, social context over the last six centuries see Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 245-300.

¹⁹⁰ For example see Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis*, pp. 30-4.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-42.

Sufism has survived in to he 21st century and remains as the focus of religious life for many Muslims.

From the above discussion it is clear that the term ‘Sufism’ has no clear cut definition nor a singular method to reach its goals. However, the basic concept, in its early phase at least, was understood.¹⁹² Despite this, the word ‘Sufism’, particularly in the later period, also seems to have used as an umbrella term to encompass a mixture of beliefs, practices and teachings, some of which may have even been at odds with ‘mainstream’, ‘orthodox’ Islam.

As for its development, what we now know as Sufism would appear to have its primordial origins in the Prophetic period, which passed onto the Companions and their followers, the early Successors. However, it was during the Umayyad period that the signs of what would be recognised as Sufism were made manifest. This seems to have been a reaction to the decadence and extravagance of the Umayyid leaders and a longing to return to the simplicity and spirituality of the Prophetic period. Sufism like the other Islamic disciplines of the period did not stop there however and much like the development of *fiqh*, regional schools sprang up, including the celebrated Baghdadi school. With the introduction of other peoples, cultures and beliefs, we have seen that Sufism then took on specific characteristics, particularly in the period of systemisation. This development did not stop there, as both Persian as a language and Greek metaphysics as a philosophy, took Sufism to new dimensions, which were then incorporated and preserved in the various Sufi brotherhoods that are manifest until the current period.

The question remains however, “What is the relationship between Sufism and *tazkiyat al-nafs*?” The next chapter will attempt to answer this question as it tackles the concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* in Islam.

¹⁹² See Bushānjī’s comment, p. 31 above.

Chapter Two: The Concept of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* in Islam

Having provided the reader with an outline of the ideas and methodology behind the current thesis it is now time to turn our attention to the first major section of the work. As the title suggests this thesis aims to explore the concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* in Islam so as to draw a comparison between it and the teachings of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī.

To achieve this aim the chapter will be divided into the following sections: firstly, an examination of the meaning of the words *tazkiya* and *nafs* etymologically, i.e. within the Arabic language, by referring to classical and contemporary lexical sources to arrive at a basic linguistic understanding for these terms. Secondly, an in-depth study of these two terms as found in the Qurʾān, being the primary source of Islamic thought and Law, by locating these words within their various Qurʾānic contexts and examining them in the light of the exegetical literature (*tafāsīr*). Having derived a meaning for these two terms in the Qurʾānic context, attention will then be turned to the second source of Islamic thought and Law, i.e. the *ḥadīth*, by consulting the foremost collections of *ḥadīth* and their explanatory companion texts (*shurūḥ*) to arrive at an understanding of how these words were used by the Prophet, his Companions and the early generations who followed them. The final section will deal with the statements of the scholars of Islam (*al-ʿulamāʾ*) throughout history, by consulting them in their various source works to examine their understanding of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, in the light of what was discussed in the previous sections.

2.1 The Concept of the Terms *Tazkiya* and *Nafs* within the Arabic Language

Although we wish to examine the concept of the compound phrase *tazkiyat al-nafs* as a whole it suits our purpose here to treat each term separately and then attempt to derive an overall understanding of the phrase. Consequently, the term *tazkiya* will be dealt with first and the term *nafs* will be dealt with thereafter.

2.1.1 The Concept of the Term *Tazkiya* within the Arabic Language

The term '*tazkiya*' is a verbal noun (*maṣḍar*) of the form II verbal conjugation '*zakkā*', the root of this verb being *Zay Kāf Yā*. On examining the lexical sources it is not surprising that this form of the verb is intrinsically linked to form I of the verb '*zakā*' and as such, the discussion of the connotations of *tazkiya* will begin here. The essential meanings of this

form of the verb are to grow and flourish (*namā*), or increase and augment (*zād*), or enjoy the blessing and abundance of God (*tan^{cc}ama*) but can also mean to reform (*ṣalaḥa*) if used in conjunction with a person. In addition, it is also worth noting that the adjective derived from the verb ‘*zakiyyun*’ (pl. *azkiyā*) means righteous or pious and is synonymous with ‘*taqiyyun*’ (pl. *atqiyā*).¹⁹³

As for the form II of the verb ‘*zakkā*’, it possesses the meanings alluded to above but the emphasis of the action is different, in the sense that form II indicates a causal effect; for example ‘*zakkā*’ does not just mean to grow, increase and reform but means to cause to grow, increase and be reformed. In addition, another of the essential meanings of the form of the verb is to be purified (*ṭahhara* - [*hu*]) and is used in conjunction with himself (*zakkā nafsahu*) to indicate self-praise.¹⁹⁴ This concept of ‘praise’ is also extended to other contexts where the term ‘*tazkiya*’ is used for example in the legal context, when *tazkiya* is used in conjunction with witnesses (*shuhūd*); it would indicate their suitability to perform this task in a court of Law. Similarly, this concept of suitability is also seen when the term *tazkiya* is used in connection with a candidate for a particular post, as *tazkiya* here would mean ‘recommendation’.¹⁹⁵ Perhaps the most familiar derivative however, from the root *Zay Kāf Yā* in the Islamic context, is the term ‘*zakāt*’, this being the third ‘pillar’ of the Islamic faith and indeed, when the form II verb is used in conjunction with a person’s wealth (*mālahu*) it means to pay the appropriate amount of *zakāt*, which is due.¹⁹⁶

Having briefly surveyed the lexical sources regarding the meaning of the term ‘*tazkiya*’ it is now appropriate that the term ‘*nafs*’ is now examined, which is the task of the next section.

¹⁹³ See Ibn ‘Abbād (d. 385/995), Ismā‘īl, *al-Muḥīṭ fī ‘l-Lughā*, edited by Muḥammad Ḥasan Āla Yāsīn, (8 vols., Beirut, ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 1994) vol. 6, p. 300; al-Fayrūzābādī (d. 817/1414), Muḥammad b. Ya‘qūb, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, edited by Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mar‘ashlī (2 vols., Beirut, Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1997) vol. 2, p. 1695; Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311), Muḥammad b. Mukram, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, edited by Amīn Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Waḥhāb and Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq al-‘Ubaydī (15 vols., Beirut, Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1999) vol. 6, p. 64; al-Muqri’ (d. 770/1368), Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Fayyūmī, *al-Miṣbāḥ al-Munīr*, edited by Yūsuf al-Shaykh Muḥammad (2nd edition, Beirut, al-Maktaba al-‘Aṣriyya, 1997) p. 133; Muṣṭafā, Ibrāhīm, al-Zayyāt, Aḥmad Ḥasan, Ḥāmid, ‘Abd al-Qādir and al-Najjār, Muḥammad ‘Alī (eds.), *al-Muṣjam al-Wasīṭ* (2nd edition, 2 parts in 1 vol., Istanbul, al-Maktaba al-Islāmiyya, n.d.) p. 396; al-Rāzī (d. 660/1262), Muḥammad b. Abū Bakr, *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, (Beirut, Mu‘assasat al-Risāla, 1992) p. 273 and Lane, Edward William, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London, Williams and Norgate, 1867) vol. 2, p. 1240.

¹⁹⁴ Literally to attribute ‘purity’ and excellence to one’s self.

¹⁹⁵ For example, a letter of recommendation or reference is often termed ‘*risāla tazkiyya*’.

¹⁹⁶ Ibn ‘Abbād, *al-Muḥīṭ fī ‘l-Lughā*, vol. 6, p. 300; al-Fayrūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, vol. 2, p. 1695; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. 6, pp. 64-5; al-Muqri’, *al-Miṣbāḥ al-Munīr*, p. 133; Muṣṭafā et al (eds.), *al-Muṣjam al-Wasīṭ*, pp. 396-7; al-Rāzī, *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, p. 273 and Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 2, pp. 1240-1.

2.1.2 The Concept of the Term *Nafs* within the Arabic Language

As for the term '*nafs*' it is a noun derived from the root *Nūn Fā Shīn* and is distinguished by the second letter, i.e. *Fā*, having the *sukūn* vowel marking. The word *nafs* (pl. *anfus/nufūs*) is unusual in the sense that it has a variety of connotations, some seemingly having no link whatsoever with the original meaning of the verb. In this sense a survey of all the meanings of this noun will be made so as to provide the reader with a glimpse of the variety that this term provides. Thus, on examining the lexical sources regarding the word *nafs*, we find the following usages:

1. The Soul (*al-rūḥ*)

There seems to be a consensus in the sources consulted regarding this usage of '*nafs*', as all of them allude to this meaning: the Arabs are known to say, "His soul left [his body] (*kharajat nafsuhu*)". In fact, there seems to be an indication that the terms '*nafs*' and '*rūḥ*' are synonyms for the English equivalent of 'the soul'. Despite this however, as will become clear from the discussion below, some authors indicate that they are not synonymous with one another. In addition, it is worth mentioning that *rūḥ* is viewed as a masculine noun whereas *nafs* is mostly regarded to be feminine.¹⁹⁷

2. Blood (*al-damm*)

Similarly, there seems to be a consensus in the sources regarding this usage of '*nafs*', as all of them allude to this meaning, as the Arabs are known to say, "His blood ran (*sālat nafsuhu*)".¹⁹⁸ The implication of this however, is far deeper than one might expect, since the 'blood' here signifies the 'life-blood' of a living being, since it is blood which facilitates life through its passage through the arteries and veins. The link between this usage and the previous one is also not difficult to establish, since if one's blood flowed to such an extent that one's life were threatened, then the soul would also follow it upon death.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Ibn ʿAbbād, *al-Muḥīṭ fī 'l-Lughā*, vol. 8, p. 341; al-Fayrūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, vol. 1, p. 790; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, vol. 14, pp. 233-4; al-Muqriʿ, *al-Miṣbāḥ al-Munīr*, p. 318; Muṣṭafā *et al* (eds.), *al-Muʿjam al-Wasīṭ*, p. 940; al-Rāzī, *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, p. 672 and Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 2827.

¹⁹⁸ It has also been explained that this is why women who experience blood flows as a result of post-natal bleeding are termed '*al-nufasā*', which is derived from the same root as *nafs*. See al-Muqriʿ, *al-Miṣbāḥ al-Munīr*, p. 317.

¹⁹⁹ Al-Fayrūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, vol. 1, p. 790; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, vol. 14, pp. 234-5; al-Muqriʿ, *al-Miṣbāḥ al-Munīr*, pp. 317-18; Muṣṭafā *et al* (eds.), *al-Muʿjam al-Wasīṭ*, p. 940; al-Rāzī, *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, p. 672 and Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 2828.

3. Life (*al-ḥayāt*) and 4. The Intellect (*al-ʿaql*)

This is based on the statement which was related from the Prophetic Companion ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbbās (d. c. 67-8/686-8) who is reported to have said, “Every human being has two *nafs*; the first of them is the *nafs* of the intellect (*al-ʿaql*), with which he discriminates and the other is the *nafs* of the soul (*al-rūḥ*) through which life exists.” The rationale behind this comment can be understood in the following way: when a person sleeps the first type of *nafs*, i.e. the intellect, mentioned here is said to be taken by Allāh²⁰⁰ and as such, a person loses consciousness during sleep. Such a person may be unconscious but is still alive as the soul (*al-rūḥ*), which is the cause of his life, is still intact and this person will not die until the soul is actually taken at death.²⁰¹ Once again the link between the concepts expressed here and those proposed in the first two meanings are not incredibly dissimilar and they accommodate each other quite easily.²⁰²

5. The Self

This is used as a reflexive pronoun in the same way that it is used in English to mean ‘myself’, ‘yourself’, ‘ourselves’ etc., as the Arabs use it in much the same way. For example, they would say, “He talked to himself (*ḥaddatha nafsahu*)”, or “He killed himself (*qatala nafsahu*)” and “He caused himself to fall into destruction (*ahlaka nafsahu*).”²⁰³

6. The Essence (*al-dhāt*) and 7. The Body (*al-jasad*)

These two meanings are supported by examples in the Arabic language itself but do not transfer very well into English; for example, if we examine the concept of ‘essence (*al-dhāt*)’ the Arabs would say, “*Nafs al-jabal muqābilī* (lit. [the essence of] the mountain is in front of me)” and with regard to a person they would say, “*Raʿaytu fulānan nafsahu* (lit. I saw so and so [himself]).” As for the term *nafs* meaning the body (*al-jasad*), many sources quote this term but give no examples as to how it is used linguistically.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ Through an angel.

²⁰¹ In Islamic theology it is actually an angel - the Angel of Death (*Malak al-Mawt*) - who takes the *nafs* but the command itself comes from Allāh.

²⁰² See Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, vol. 14, p. 234; al-Rāzī, *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, p. 672 and Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 2827.

²⁰³ Al-Fayrūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, vol. 1, p. 790 and Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 2827.

²⁰⁴ Al-Fayrūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, vol. 1, p. 790; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, vol. 14, p. 235; Muṣṭafā *et al* (eds.), *al-Muʿjam al-Wasīṭ*, p. 940; al-Rāzī, *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, p. 672 and Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, pp. 2827-8.

8. The Human Being (*al-insān*)

The word *nafs* may also be used to mean a human being as a whole (*al-shakhṣ*) as the Arabs would say, “I have three people with me (*‘indī thalātha anfus*).” It is also worth mentioning that when it is used this way many scholars consider it to take a masculine form.²⁰⁵

9. Manners/Endurance/Generosity (*khuluq/ jalāda/ sakhā*)²⁰⁶

In this instance the term ‘*nafs*’ is used as an adjective to describe a person positively as the Arabs would describe a man as being “*rajulun dhū nafs*”, i.e. as having manners (*khuluq*), endurance (*jalāda*) and generosity (*sakhā*).²⁰⁷

10. An Evil Eye (*al-‘ayn*)

This usage of the word indicates that ‘*nafs*’ is a synonym for the term ‘*‘ayn*’ meaning an evil or envious eye, as the Arabs are known to say, “*aṣābat-hu nafsun*”, meaning ‘he has been affected by an evil eye.’ In fact the source of the evil eye (*al-‘ā’in*) is also termed ‘*al-nāfis*’, the person affected by the evil eye (*al-ma‘yūn*) is termed ‘*al-manfūs*’ and the evil eyes themselves (*al-‘uyūn*), which affect the wealth and possessions of people and so on, are known as ‘*al-nufūs*’, all of which are derived from the same root.²⁰⁸

11. Punishment (*al-‘uqūba*)

This particular meaning of *nafs* is arrived from the discussion of two particular Qur’ānic verses, namely (3: 28 and 30), where the phrase, “*Wa yuḥadhdhirukum Allāh nafsahu* (And Allāh warns you concerning His *nafs*)”, is repeated and since this usage does not fit with the usual usages discussed in this section, scholars allude to the concept of *nafs* here to mean punishment (*al-‘uqūba*) and thus, the verse would therefore read, “And Allāh warns you concerning His punishment.”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. 14, pp. 234-5; al-Muqri’, *al-Miṣbāḥ al-Munir*, p. 318; al-Rāzī, *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, p. 672 and Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 2828.

²⁰⁶ This may also be indicative of the positive human qualities and virtues that a person may develop if the soul is nurtured in the correct manner.

²⁰⁷ Ibn ‘Abbād, *al-Muḥīṭ fi ‘l-Luḡa*, vol. 8, p. 341; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. 14, pp. 234-5 and Muṣṭafā et al (eds.), *al-Muḥjam al-Wasīṭ*, p. 940.

²⁰⁸ Al-Fayrūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, vol. 1, 790; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. 14, p. 235 and Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 2828.

²⁰⁹ Al-Fayrūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, vol. 1, p. 790; Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372), Ismā‘īl, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm* (4 vols., Cairo, Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1988) vol. 1, pp. 337-8; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. 14, p. 234; al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273), Muḥammad b. Aḥmad, *al-Jāmi‘ li Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, edited by ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Mahdī (4th edition, 20 parts in 10 vols., Beirut, Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 2001) vol. 4, pp. 60-1 and al-Ṭabarī,

12. Brother (*al-akh*)

Similarly, this usage is narrated in the lexical sources to describe another Qur'ānic verse, namely (24:61), where the phrase, “*Fa idhā dakhaltum buyūtan fa sallimū ‘alā anfusikum* (And if you enter houses then greet *anfusikum*)”, the literal meaning of which is ‘yourselves’ and in which case the verse would read, “And if you enter houses then greet yourselves.” As such the verse seems to make little sense and therefore scholars have mentioned that the meaning is not literal here; thus, the suggested meaning of ‘*anfusikum*’ here is ‘your brothers’ in which case the verse would read, “And if you enter houses then greet your brothers.”²¹⁰

13. Meaning ‘with’ (*inda*) and 14. The Unseen (*al-ghayb*)

These meanings of the term *nafs* are also derived from a Qur'ānic verse, namely (5:116), where the story of Jesus (‘*Īsā*) is related, and the phrase, “*Ta‘lamu mā fī nafsī wa lā a‘lamu mā fī nafsik* (You know what is in my *nafs* but I do not know what is in Your *nafs*)”, is found. As a result the interpretations regarding the meaning of ‘*nafs*’ here have attempted to accommodate a usage consistent with the divine attributes of Allāh and at the same time render an appropriate meaning. One of the suggestions made is that the meaning of ‘*nafs*’ in the verse is ‘with’ (*inda*) and thus, the rendering of the verse would be, “You know what is with me (*indī*) but I do not know what is with You (*indak*).” Similarly, another proposed meaning is that the term ‘*nafs*’ here means the unseen, the hidden or that which is concealed (*al-ghayb*) and thus the understanding of the verse would be, “You know what I have concealed (*ghaybī*) but I do not know what You have concealed (*al-ghayb*).”²¹¹ Another option was supplied by al-Fayrūzābādī (d. 817/1414), who suggests that ‘*nafs*’ also implies the meaning of reality (*al-ḥaqīqa*) and thus, he considers the meaning of the verse

Muḥammad b. Jarīr (d. 310/922), *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān fī Ta‘wīl al-Qur’ān* (13 vols., 3rd edition, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1999) vol. 3, pp. 229 and 231.

²¹⁰ This is the explanation given in the lexical sources and although it is a possible interpretation, it should also be noted that the works of exegesis provide long discussions as to the meaning of this verse. See Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, vol. 3, p. 295; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. 14, p. 234; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ li Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol. 12, pp. 291-2; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān fī Ta‘wīl al-Qur’ān*, vol. 3, pp. 356-8 and Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 2828.

²¹¹ This particular rendering seems to be appropriate to the general context of the verse, which ends, “Indeed, You are the Knower of the unseen (*innaka anta ‘Allāmu ‘l-Ghuyūb*).” See Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. 14, p. 234 and Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 2827.

to be, “You know what the reality of me is (*ḥaqīqatī*) but I do not know what the reality of You is (*ḥaqīqatak*).”²¹²

15. Majesty/Might/Zeal/Pride (*al-ʿazama/ al-ʿizza/ al-himma/ al-anafa*)²¹³

Al-Fayrūzābādī, Ibn Manẓūr and Lane all allude to these meanings of *al-nafs* but give little further qualification, making it difficult to assess the usage of such terms in the Arabic language.²¹⁴

16. An amount of tanning material (*qadr dabgha*)

This is perhaps the most surprising usage of the term but nevertheless the lexical sources regularly mention that the word *nafs* was used by the Arabs to denote a quantity of tanning material used for the tanning of hides and that the measure would be approximately a handful (*milʾ al-kaff*).²¹⁵

2. 1. 3 Section Summary

Since the classical works of Islam are presented in the Arabic language, it was the goal of this section to survey the lexical sources dealing with this language to arrive at an understanding, which will provide the ground work for subsequent discussions. This being the case, both the terms ‘*tazkiyaʾ*’ and ‘*nafs*’ were dealt with separately, so as to survey the various meaning, usages and connotations that these words have within the Arabic language. The discussion has no doubt produced a variety of information, which in some cases may have been surprising.

On examining the term ‘*tazkiyaʾ*’, it is clear that the usages of this word related to the payment of *zakāt* and self-praise/recommendation are of little worth to the current discussion, as their relevance is limited. Similarly, the form I verb construction gives little more than an indication of the meanings, which are appropriate to the subject matter as a whole. Not surprisingly it was the form II verb construction - of which ‘*tazkiyaʾ*’ is a verbal noun (*maṣdar*) - that provided the most useful results. The meaning of purification

²¹² Al-Fayrūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, vol. 1, p. 790; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, vol. 14, p. 234; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, vol. 6, p. 347; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān fī Taʾwīl al-Qurʾān*, vol. 5, pp. 138-9 and Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 2827.

²¹³ It may well be that these could be negative qualities which manifest themselves in the soul if it is not disciplined in the correct manner.

²¹⁴ Al-Fayrūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, vol. 1, p. 790; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, vol. 14, p. 235 and Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 2828.

²¹⁵ Al-Fayrūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, vol. 1, p. 790; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, vol. 14, p. 238; Muṣṭafā *et al* (eds.), *al-Muʿjam al-Wasīṭ*, p. 940 and Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 2828.

(*tahhara*) was very much expected as this is the most common phrase used by authors when discussing this topic. However, other, less expected meanings were also observed; these included to grow and flourish (*namā*), or increase and augment (*zād*), or enjoy the blessing and abundance of God (*tan^āama*) but can also mean to reform (*ṣalaḥa*), all of which indicate an overall process of development, which could be termed ‘purification’ in the broad sense.

As for the term ‘*nafs*’, the task has proved far more complex, as the usage of this word in the Arabic language seems to have a variety of meanings, many of which are not consistent with the topic of discussion here. Examples of this include: blood (*al-damm*), life (*al-ḥayāt*), manners/endurance/generosity (*khuluq/ jalāda/sakhā^ṭ*), an evil eye (*al-‘ayn*), punishment (*al-‘uqūba*), brother (*al-akh*), ‘with’ (*‘inda*), the unseen (*al-ghayb*), majesty/might/zeal/pride (*al-‘azama/ al-‘izza/ al-himma/ al-anafa*) and an amount of tanning material (*qadr dabgha*). In contrast however, the remaining usages may all have some significance regarding the subject matter and as a result the terms the soul (*al-rūḥ*), the intellect (*al-‘aql*), the self, the essence (*al-dhāt*), the body (*al-jasad*), the human being (*al-insān*), all require further qualification.

Thus, although at a very superficial level, the above discussion would suggest that the term ‘*tazkiyat al-nafs*’ from the perspective of the Arabic language at least, would indicate the growth, augmentation, reform and development of a human being’s soul, intellect, body and self. This however, is the result of consulting the lexical sources of the Arabic language only and therefore, it remains vital to examine this term in the light of Islam, which is the task of the next section by referring to Islam’s primary source - the Qur’ān.

2.2 The Concept of the Terms *Tazkiya* and *Nafs* within the Qur’ān

The discussion in the last section concerned the meaning of the terms ‘*tazkiya*’ and ‘*nafs*’ within the context of the Arabic language, due to no other reason than the fact the classical source texts of Islam - namely the Qur’ān and the *ḥadīth* - are recorded in this language and as such, the Arabic language provides the researcher with a valuable starting point in understanding any ‘Islamic’ term.

There can be no doubt that the aforementioned discussion has been enlightening but it is not sufficient however as the goal of the current thesis is to examine such terms in the context of Islam as a whole. Thus, the next logical step is to examine these terms within the Qur’ān, as this is regarded by Muslims throughout the ages to be the direct, revealed word

of Allāh, in both word and meaning and as such, is Islam's primary source of thought and Law.²¹⁶

Consequently, each of these terms will be examined individually to come to an understanding of the meanings in the Qur'ānic context, so as to shed light on their implications within the religion of Islam.

2.2.1 The Concept of the Term *Tazkiya* within the Qur'ān

From the Islamic perspective it is Allāh who created the human being and his *nafs*, as the following Qur'ānic verse states: "O Mankind, fear your Lord Who created you from a single *nafs*²¹⁷ ..." (4:1)²¹⁸. As such one may argue that it stands to reason that the Creator of such a *nafs* would not only allude to the nature of this *nafs* but also to the way in which *tazkiya* of it may be carried out.

Thus, on examining the Qur'ān for the verb forms of the root *Zay Kāf Yā* we find numerous usages and derivatives. However, since the term *tazkiya* is a verbal noun of the form II verb the emphasis in this section will focus on this usage.²¹⁹ Perusal of the Qur'ānic text results

²¹⁶ See al-Zurqānī, Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Azīm, *Manāhil al-'Urfān fī Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, edited Amin Sulaymān al-Kurdī (2nd edition, 2 vols. in one book, Beirut, Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1997) pp. 16-18; al-Qaṭṭān (d. 1420/1999), Mannā' b. Khalīl, *Mabāḥith fī Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (35th edition, Beirut, Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1998) pp. 17-20; al-Ṣābūnī, Muḥammad 'Alī, *al-Tibyān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (3rd edition, Damascus, Dār al-Qalam, 1988) pp. 12-13; al-Bughā, Muṣṭafā Dīb and Mistuw, Muḥyī al-Dīn, *al-Wādiḥ fī Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (2nd ed., Damascus, Dār al-Kalim al-Ṭayyib, 1998) pp. 13-24; al-Juday', 'Abd Allāh b. Yūsuf, *al-Muqaddimāt al-Asāsiyya fī Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Beirut, Mu'assasat al-Rayyān, 2001) pp. 9-12; Von Denffer, Ahmad, *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān - An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'ān* (Leicester, The Islamic Foundation, 1989) pp. 7, 17-18 and Philips, Bilal, *Usool at-Tafseer - the Methodology of Qur'anic Explanation* (Sharjah, Dar al-Fatah, 1997) p. 15.

²¹⁷ The word *nafs* here could have the any of the following meanings: "[from a single] soul, person, human being ..." and refers to the first created man and prophet Ādam. This is significant in itself as in the Islamic tradition Allāh created Ādam as a 'single *nafs*' and then Allāh created his mate from this single *nafs*; consequently, through a normal procreative process many *nafs* were produced from a single lineage. Therefore, it is also logical that since the source of humanity is a single *nafs*, that each of individual human beings who followed would share some form of that humanity and certain qualities, which would be common to all. See Qur'ān, (4:1, 7:189, 39:6 and 6:98) and al-Maydānī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ḥasan Ḥabanaka, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā* (5th edition, 2 vols., Damascus, Dār al-Qalam, 1999) vol. 1, pp. 229-230.

²¹⁸ Also see the following verses: (6:98, 7:189, 31:28 and 39:6).

²¹⁹ The forms quoted in the Qur'ān other than form II include the form I of the verb 'to purify (*zakā*)' in the past tense (23:21) and it is used to indicate that it is Allāh who purifies the human being and that this is from His bounty upon them.

The form V derivative also meaning 'to purify' in both the past tense (*tazakkā*) and in the present tense (*yatazakkā*) is also used (20:76, 35:18, 79:18, 87:14 and 35:18, 92:18 respectively) and alludes to the human being taking the initiative to purify himself from the 'filth' of disbelief (*kufū*), polytheism (*shirk*), ignorance (*jahl*) and sin (*dhanb*). It should also be noted that this derivative also exists in a condensed form (*yazzakkā*) where the *tā* has been merged (*idghām*) as found in verses (80:3 and 7), with a similar connotation and without changing the meaning.

Also, the superlative (*azkā*) is found on four occasions (2:232, 18:19, 24:28 and 24:30) with the implication of being 'purer' or more 'pure'.

The adjectival derivative is also used in both its masculine (*zaki*) and feminine (*zakiyya*) forms in verses (19:19 and 18:74 respectively) again with a similar connotation of 'purity' or 'innocence' and in fact the feminine form (i.e. 18:74) being used in conjunction with the word *nafs*.

in twelve instances of the form II verb being found in both its past and present tenses. The connotation of self praise, when the verb is used in conjunction with the term *nafs* or its plurals alluded to in the previous section²²⁰, can be located in two of these verses, namely (4:49 and 53:32), both being used in the present tense and indicating a blameworthy quality of the human being.²²¹

Another four verses containing the verb can be seen where Allāh is the subject of the verb; in other words it is Allāh who directly takes on the role of *tazkiya* of the human being. Two of these verses (4:49 and 24:21) indicate that it is Allāh who decides who is worthy of *tazkiya* as in both verses the phrase, “Allāh purifies (*yuzakkī*) whomever He wills” is found, which is extremely significant from the Islamic perspective, as it indicates that not only is it Allāh Who decides who will be purified but it is He Who is the source of the *tazkiya*. In addition, this process of *tazkiya* is not arbitrarily decided but due to the need that the divine attribute of justice (*al-ʿadl*) be fulfilled; the verses end, “... and Allāh is not unjust in the slightest²²²” (4:49) and, “... and Allāh is the All Hearing, the All Knowing” (24:21). In the second two verses (2:174 and 3:77) where Allāh is the subject, the context is the Day of Judgement and describes the state of the disbelievers. These verses indicate that Allāh will neither address them (*yukallimuhum*) nor ‘purify’ them (*yuzakkīhim*) by forgiving them their transgressions and thus, entering them into Paradise. Once again the emphasis here is on the fact that in any eventuality it is Allāh alone who is the source of *tazkiya*.²²³

In addition, another four verses can be observed where the subject of the verb is a divinely chosen emissary (*rasūl*). The sequence of verses begins in *sūrat* al-Baqara with the supplication of the Prophet Ibrāhīm (2:129) where he says, “O my Lord send them a messenger from themselves who will recite to them Your signs (*āyātika*), who will teach

In addition, the derived noun ‘*zakāt*’ used as Islam’s monetary duty can be found in 32 verses in various places. See ‘Abd al-Bāqī, Muḥammad Fuʿād, *al-Muʿjam al-Mufahras li ‘l-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm* (Cairo, Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1996) pp. 406-7; al-Naḥḥās, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, *Irāb al-Qurʾān*, edited by ‘Abd al-Munʿim Khalīl Ibrāhīm (5 vols., Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2001) vol. 5, pp. 94-5; Wehr, Hans, *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, edited by J. Milton Cowan, pocket book edition (New York, Spoken Languages Services, 1976) pp. 379-80 and Kassis, Hanna E., *A Concordance of the Qurʾan* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1983) pp. 1325-27.

²²⁰ See page 49 above.

²²¹ See Karzūn, Anas Aḥmad, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs* (2 vols., Beirut, Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1997) vol. 1, pp. 10-11; Abū Fāris, Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* (ʿAmmān, Dār al-Furqān, 2000) pp. 15-17 and Zarabozo, Jamaal al-Din, *Purification of the Soul - Concept, Process and Means* (Denver, Al-Basheer Publications, 2002) p. 71.

²²² The verse actually reads, “... and Allāh will not be unjust [even the amount of a] *fatīlā*’, the *fatīlā* being the delicate fibre-like material that covers the depression in the centre of a date stone.

²²³ See Ibn Taymiyya, Aḥmad (d. 728/1328), *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, edited by Muḥammad b. Saʿīd al-Qaḥṭānī (Riyadh, Dār al-Muslim, 1994) p. 42; Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, p. 10; Abū Fāris, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, pp. 15-17; Chittick, *Sufism*, p. 42 and Zarabozo, *Purification of the Soul*, p. 70.

them the book (*al-kitāb*) and wisdom (*al-ḥikma*) and who will purify them (*wa yuzakkīhim*)." From the Islamic perspective this supplication was fulfilled with the sanctioning of the mission of the prophet Muḥammad, as in the very same *sūra* (2:151) we read, "Similarly, We sent amongst you a messenger from yourselves, who recites to you Our signs, purifies you, teaches you the Book and wisdom and teaches you what you did not know." In latter parts of the Qur'ānic text (3:164 and 62:2) we see that this concept is further reinforced as almost identical verses are found.²²⁴

In addition, there is also an indication as to how exactly the Prophet should 'purify' those around him in verse (9:103), where we find Allāh addressing the Prophet saying, "Take a charity from their wealth to cleanse them (*tuṭahhiruhum*) and purify them (*yuzakkīhim*) ..." Thus, in this series of verses containing the verb '*yuzakkī*' we see that from the Islamic perspective, although the source of *tazkiya* is Allāh, He facilitates the process of *tazkiya* by the sending of Prophets, whose role is to instruct humanity as to how to perform the task of *tazkiya*, by various means, one of which is the giving of one's wealth for God's sake.²²⁵

The final instance of the verb occurs in (91:9) and is the only occurrence of this verb being used in conjunction with the term '*nafs*'; thus, it is the most significant verse with regard to the current research and as such, will be discussed in the next section, after the appraisal of the term '*nafs*' in the Qur'ān has been concluded.

2. 2. 2 The Concept of the Term *Nafs* within the Qur'ān

As was mentioned previously,²²⁶ from the Islamic perspective the *nafs* of the human being is believed to have been created by Allāh and since the Qur'ān is also believed to be the final revelation to humanity from Him, one might expect to find various references to the nature and origin of the *nafs* in the Qur'ān. In fact, the term *nafs* and its derivatives occur in the Qur'ān 398 times,²²⁷ which provides the researcher with a vast wealth of material but it is

²²⁴ See Ḥawwā, Sa'īd, *al-Mustakhlaṣ fi Tazkiyat al-Anfus* (4th edition, Cairo, Dār al-Islām, 1988) p. 3; al-Ashqar, 'Umar Sulaymān, *Manhaj al-Islām fi Tazkiyat al-Nafs* (Amman, Dār al-Nafā'is, 1992) pp. 8-9; al-Ṭakhīs, Sa'd b. Muḥammad, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* (Riyadh, Dār al-Ṣamī'ī, 1992) p. 10; Āl 'Abd al-Laṭīf, 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Muḥammad, *Ma'ālim fi 'l-Sulūk wa Tazkiyat al-Nufūs* (Riyadh, Dār al-Waṭan, 1993) pp. 56-7; al-Yūsuf, 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs wa Mu'ālahaj al-Āfāt* (Riyadh, Dār al-'Aṣima, 1996) pp. 13-14; Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fi Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, pp. 10-11; Abū Fāris, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, pp. 11-15; Chittick, *Sufism*, pp. 49-50 and Zarabozo, *Purification of the Soul*, pp. 70-1.

²²⁵ See Ibn Taymiyya, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, edited by al-Qaḥṭānī, pp. 50-1; al-Ashqar, *Manhaj al-Islām fi Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, pp. 8-9; al-Ṭakhīs, Sa'd b. Muḥammad, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, p. 10; Āl 'Abd al-Laṭīf, *Ma'ālim fi 'l-Sulūk wa Tazkiyat al-Nufūs*, pp. 60-2; al-Yūsuf, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs wa Mu'ālahaj al-Āfāt*, p. 14 and Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fi Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, pp. 10-11.

²²⁶ See p. 56 above.

²²⁷ See al-Yūsuf, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs wa Mu'ālahaj al-Āfāt*, p. 14; 'Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Muḥjam al-Mufahras li 'l-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, pp. 803-7; Kassis, *A Concordance of the Qur'an*, pp. 824-30 and Chittick, *Sufism*, p. 42.

also worth mentioning that most of these occurrences are usage of the reflexive pronoun and therefore, are of little actual use.

Despite this, there are numerous verses that are of significance when discussing the *nafs* from the Qurʾānic perspective. The following usages may be observed:

a. The *Nafs* meaning the Soul (*al-rūḥ*)

This is evidenced via the description of the souls being extracted from the body at death by the angels, who rip the souls of disbelievers from their bodies, ultimately causing their demise. The verse in question is (6:93) where the angels are said to stretch forth their hands to grip the souls and drag them outwards, the souls themselves being termed, “*anfusikum*.”²²⁸

b. The *Nafs* meaning the Human Being (*al-insān*)

Once again the Qurʾān, as one might expect, makes reference to the *nafs* with the meaning of the human being as a whole, including both the body and the soul. One of the verses which identifies this usage is (31:27) in which the creation and resurrection of human beings is discussed and is described as being easy for Allāh, as if it were only the creation/resurrection of a single person (*nafsun wāḥida*).²²⁹

c. The *Nafs* meaning the Human Being’s Power of Understanding (*al-quwā al-mufakkira*)

By this it is meant that the human being has the ability to comprehend and reason using his intellect to arrive at and perceive certain ideas and concepts. Not only this, but the Qurʾān has also clarified that the human being may comprehend an idea until it becomes fixed in his mind to the extent that he reaches a level of certainty regarding the reality of this concept and it appears as fact, as far as he is concerned. The verse in question is (27:14), where this level of certainty is described as having been reached and in addition, is attributed to the *nafs* (*wa istayqanat-hā anfusuhum*).²³⁰

d. The *Nafs* meaning the Heart (*al-qalb*)

In addition to the intellectual implication of the term ‘*nafs*’ in the Qurʾān, there is also an implication that an emotional aspect also exists. Verses that imply such a meaning include (7:205 and 10:77), where both the attributes of remembrance (*al-dhikr*) and concealing a secret (*al-sirr*) are described as being actions of the *nafs*. It is also worth noting that both

²²⁸ Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, p. 14 and al-Ṭakhīs, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, p. 13.

²²⁹ Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, pp. 14-15.

²³⁰ Ibid., p. 15 and al-Ṭakhīs, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, p. 13.

these qualities are considered actions of the heart (*al-qalb*) and therefore, such verses indicate an intrinsic and fundamental link between the heart and the *nafs*.²³¹

e. The *Nafs* meaning the Inclination to Good and Evil (*quwā al-khayr wa 'l-sharr*)

The duality of the *nafs* to incline towards good and evil as described in the Qur'ān and its tendency to change between the two, is one of its outstanding characteristics. Various verses indicate this including (50:16, 75:2 and 79:40-1)²³² and due to the importance of such qualities, they will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

From this discussion it is clear, as one might expect, that the Qur'ān uses the term '*nafs*' in a number of usages which despite being identical or similar to the meanings alluded to in the section regarding the Arabic language, also have their own implication within the Qur'ānic context.²³³

In addition to the general description of the *nafs* in the Qur'ān, there are also two main areas that become apparent on examining the Qur'ānic text: qualities that the *nafs* itself manifests to which various verses allude and secondly, verses which describe the various states that the *nafs* experiences. This being the case the following sections will attempt to shed light upon these phenomena in the Qur'ān.

2.2.2.1 Qualities of the *Nafs* within the Qur'ān

The basis for this discussion lies in the information alluded to in verses (91:7-8), which reads, "And [by] the soul (*nafs*) and the One Who proportioned it; then He inspired it [to discern between] its iniquity and its righteousness." From this verse several issues become clear; firstly, that once again we find an inclination to the fact that, from the Islamic perspective, it is Allāh Who not only created the soul but also fashioned it as He willed. Secondly, part of this fashioning was to inspire the soul to know, put very simply, that which is 'right' and that which is 'wrong'. As such, this ability to comprehend the difference between virtue and sin also implies the faculty of 'free will' to choose between the two and consequently, makes the *nafs* accountable for its actions in both this life and next. In addition, this may also indicate that the *nafs* inclines to certain characteristic behaviours, which manifest themselves and are not only an indication of the soul's inner state but a

²³¹ Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, pp. 15 and 31-6 and al-Ṭakhīs, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, pp. 14-16.

²³² Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, pp. 15-16.

²³³ It is also worth mentioning that many of the linguistic usages of the term '*nafs*', particularly the more obscure usages, are entirely absent from the Qur'ān. Cf. section 2.1.2 above.

manifestation of an individual's humanity as a whole.²³⁴ As a result the following qualities of the *nafs* can be identified and observed in the Qur'ān:

a. It is the *Nafs* that Experiences Death.

As has been alluded, from the Islamic perspective, it is Allāh Who created the human soul or *nafs* and as such, it is Him who gives life to it also. Life is first given to the human being when it comes into existence in this life, where it undergoes a phase of trial to test which of them is best in action.²³⁵ Then death will occur and the soul will enter a new sphere of existence,²³⁶ which is a stage it remains in for a considerable period, until once again it enters another sphere of existence when it is resurrected and where it will return to its Lord, to be recompensed for its actions.

As such every soul will experience death to which a number of Qur'ānic verses make reference, namely (3:185, 21:35 and 29:57) where the phrase, "Every soul will 'taste' [lit.] death (*kullu nafsīn dhā'iqaṭ al-mawt*)" is reiterated.²³⁷ Also, in the same way that bringing life to the *nafs* is as a result of divine will then similarly, the causing of death is also by divine will (3:145). In addition, the lifespan of the *nafs* (*al-ajal*) is also predetermined by Allāh, Who will neither delay its term nor bring it forward (63:11).²³⁸

b. The *Nafs* has Perceptive Faculties

In addition, the Qur'ān also indicates to a number of sensations, feelings and emotions, which the *nafs* perceives, is conscious of and that can be discerned. A survey of these is given below:

i. Desires (*al-hawā*)

ii. Appetites (*al-shahwa*)

iii. Needs (*al-ḥājāt/al-maṭālib*).

The Qur'ān confirms for us that the *nafs* can be described as having desires (*al-hawā*), which act as emotions that drive it to fulfil its needs (*al-ḥājāt/al-maṭālib*), seek the fulfilment of its pleasures and appetites (*al-shahwa*) and which in most cases, are harmful and destructive for it.²³⁹

²³⁴ See al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, pp. 230-32 and 233-4.

²³⁵ See Qur'ān (67:2).

²³⁶ This is commonly termed '*al-barzakh*' in Islamic theology and literally means a 'barrier', i.e between the worldly life and the hereafter.

²³⁷ It should be also noted that in addition to the complete retaining of the *nafs* at death, the *nafs* is partially retained during sleep where it may be returned to the body in which life continues or retained completely, in which case death results. See Qur'ān (39:42) and cf. 2.1.2, number 3 of the Language section.

²³⁸ See al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, pp. 234-6.

²³⁹ For example see the following verses, (2:87, 5:70, 12:68, 21:102, 41:31, 43:71, 53:23 and 79:41) and al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, pp. 236-7.

iv. Difficulty and Hardship (*al-mashaqqa*)

In addition the *nafs* is given to preferring ease over hardship and as such it dislikes to be burdened with what it considers difficult tasks.²⁴⁰

v. Endurance (*al-ṣabr*) and Impatience²⁴¹

The *nafs* has the ability to endure hardship and be patient, persevering in adversity but its more common reaction is to be impatient with the events that befall it.²⁴²

vi. Generosity (*al-jūd*) and Miserliness (*al-shuḥḥ*)

Again the Qur'ānic text indicates the presence of the quality of miserliness (*al-shuḥḥ*) within the human *nafs*, suggesting that this is one of its overwhelming qualities, as it is commonly found in many souls. However, on the contrary, the Qur'ān also not only criticises this unenviable characteristic but also encourages its eradication and in fact extols the virtue of generosity (*al-jūd*), which is its direct opposite, suggesting that one replace the other entirely.²⁴³

vii. Envy and Jealousy (*al-ḥasad*)

Another of the most blameworthy characteristics in Islamic moral psychology is that of envy and jealousy (*al-ḥasad*) and therefore it is not surprising that the Qur'ān would be critical of such a quality. In addition however, this is not only regarded as being reprehensible but is also described as emanating from the *nafs* and as such, it also has the potentiality of not being characterised by this negative description but by positive counter qualities.²⁴⁴

viii. Fear (*al-khawf*)

Fear or apprehension (*al-khawf*) is a common psychological state which may be induced by a variety of stimuli and as such it is hardly surprising that the Qur'ān describes it as being a potential characteristic of the *nafs*. Similarly, the *nafs* has an equal potential to display directly opposing qualities such as bravery and self confidence.²⁴⁵

ix. Conceit (*al-kibr*)

²⁴⁰ For example see the following verse, (16:7) and al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, pp. 237-8.

²⁴¹ This begins a series of qualities which display the duality of the *nafs* mentioned above and in verse (91:7-8), where either quality - positive or negative - may be manifested by the *nafs*, or more commonly where one of the qualities mentioned is more apparent.

²⁴² For example see the following verse, (18:28) and al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, p. 238.

²⁴³ For example see (2:265, 4:4 and 127, 18:28, 59:9 and 64:16) and al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, pp. 238-9.

²⁴⁴ For example see the following verse, (2:109) and al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, p. 239.

²⁴⁵ For example see the following verses, (20:67 and 68) and al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, p. 239.

Pride, arrogance and conceit (*al-kibr*) are all qualities that the Qurʾān states are present in the *nafs* and similarly, the potential to attain modesty, humility and humbleness is also possible, if the negative characteristics are eradicated. However, as with many qualities of the *nafs* arrogance and conceit (*al-kibr*) are commonly manifest in the majority of souls.²⁴⁶

x. Anxiety (*al-dīq*) and Distress (*al-ḥaraj*)

Other psychological states, which result from personal discomfort, are anxiety (*al-dīq*) and distress (*al-ḥaraj*). Once again the Qurʾān counts these from being the qualities with which the *nafs* is characterised and in the same way it can also be nurtured to adopt the contrary qualities of being relaxed (*al-ittisāʿ*) and tranquility (*al-inshirāḥ*).²⁴⁷

xi. Affected by Eloquent Speech (*al-taʾaththur bi 'l-qawl al-balīgh*)

The Qurʾān also confirms that the *nafs* may be affected by eloquent speech to the extent that the behaviour of a human being may be reformed due to it. As such, through being addressed with an eloquent, oratory or written style, the *nafs* may receive admonition and thus, return to the truth.²⁴⁸

xii. Regret (*al-nadm*) and Grief (*al-taḥassur*)

As well as psychological states the *nafs* also experiences emotions and the Qurʾān implies this in a number of verses. Of these, the feeling of regret and grief over matters which may appear to be lost are mentioned in the Qurʾān. For example, in verse (35:8) Allāh informs His Prophet not to grieve over or feel regretful regarding the actions of his people in Mecca. Similarly, such feelings are also expressed in verse (39:56), where the situation on the Day of Judgement is described and the *nafs* will regret and grieve over its deficiencies regarding its duty to its Lord.²⁴⁹

xiii. The Ability to Comprehend (*al-idrāk*)

As mentioned earlier²⁵⁰, the Qurʾān in verse (27:14) has also clarified that the human being may comprehend an idea until it becomes fixed in his mind to the extent that he reaches a level of certainty regarding the reality of this concept. Similarly, the ability of the *nafs* to completely comprehend may be impaired due to its consideration of baseless conjecture (*al-ẓann*), causing doubts and worries to flourish, as is found in verse (3:154). As such, it could be argued that all other levels of understanding with regard to the *nafs* would fall between

²⁴⁶ For example see (2:21) and al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, pp. 239-40.

²⁴⁷ For example see (4:65 and 9:118) and al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, p. 240.

²⁴⁸ For example see (4:63) and al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, p. 240.

²⁴⁹ See al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, p. 241.

²⁵⁰ See p. 59 above.

these two extremes.²⁵¹ In addition, from the Islamic perspective, Allāh as the Creator of all mankind has endowed every one of them with the ability to perceive and comprehend righteousness (*al-taqwā*) and immorality (*al-fujūr*), or put very simply - the difference between good and evil. As such, every *nafs* is aware of its actions and is conversant with the nature of such actions, as a number of verses indicate.²⁵² In the same way that the *nafs* can come to 'know' certain information, it may also be heedless or ignorant of other matters. Indeed, from a Qur'ānic perspective, the *nafs* is completely unaware of the unseen (*al-ghayb*), including the true nature of the hereafter, how it will act in the future and where its demise will be, as verses (31: 34 and 32:15-17) indicate.²⁵³

xiv. The Ability to Conceal Feelings

As was mentioned earlier, the *nafs* manifests certain emotions but at the same time it also has the ability to conceal and hide its true feelings. Despite this however, one of the major concepts progressed in the Qur'ān is that Allāh is fully acquainted with even these concealed thoughts, emotions, ideas and feelings.²⁵⁴

xv. Responsibility

Bearing in mind the various abilities described above that the *nafs* has been granted, including emotional, perceptive and intellectual faculties, as well as the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, the *nafs* is consequently responsible for its actions within the realms of its capabilities. As such every *nafs* has the ability to act and earn or acquire good deeds and bad deeds, based on its intentions, personal efforts, determination and free will. This responsibility is unique to each individual and as such, every human being is personally responsible for their actions. Consequently, each person will be recompensed accordingly on the Day of Judgement, their ultimate abode being determined by their actions in this life.²⁵⁵

²⁵¹ See al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, pp. 241-2.

²⁵² These include (75:14-15, 81: 14, 82:4-5 and 91:7-10). See al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, p. 242.

²⁵³ See al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, pp. 242-3.

²⁵⁴ See the following verses (2:235 and 284, 3:153, 5:52 and 116, 12:77 and 33:38) and al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, pp. 243-4.

²⁵⁵ See the following verses: (2:48, 233, 281 and 286, 3:25, 30 and 165, 4:79 and 111, 6:103, 152, 158 and 163, 7:42 and 205, 10:30, 45, 100 and 108, 13:33 and 42, 14:51, 16:111, 17:13-14, 20:15, 23:62, 32:13, 39:70, 40:17, 50:20-21, 59:18, 65: 7, 74:38-42 and 82:19) and al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, pp. 244-51.

2.2.2.2 States of the *Nafs* within the Qurʾān²⁵⁶

In addition to the aforementioned qualities of the *nafs* as expounded in the Qurʾān, there are a number of categories or states that the *nafs* experiences, which the Qurʾān has also elucidated. As such, the human being experiences these states as a result of his intentions, thoughts, motives, deeds and will and therefore, it is appropriate at this juncture to shed light on these states of the *nafs*. On examining the Qurʾānic text the reader finds three types of *nafs* described, they are as follows:

a. The Soul Inclined to Evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi 'l-sū'*)²⁵⁷

This state of the *nafs* occurs when the human being is overcome by his desires, to the extent that he pursues the appetites of his soul, to the exclusion of everything else. As such the limits set by Allāh are made secondary in comparison to the fulfilment of his own needs and

²⁵⁶ In addition to the states of the *nafs* that occur in Qurʾān being discussed here there are a number of types of *nafs* which are referred to in the literature but are not quoted in the Qurʾānic text. Most of these terms are borrowed from the Greek philosophers' original discussion of the soul and include such terms as the vegetable soul (*al-nafs al-nabāṭī*), the animal soul (*al-nafs al-ḥayawānī*) and the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqā*). Since such philosophical terms fall outside the range of the present thesis they will not be discussed in any length here but the reader may refer to the following sources for discussion of the philosophical views concerning the soul: al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111), Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad (Abū Ḥāmid), *Ma'ārij al-Quds fi Madārij Ma'rifat al-Nafs* (4th ed., Beirut, Dār al-Afāq al-Jadīda, 1980); al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350), Muḥammad b. Abū Bakr b. Ayyūb [Ibn al-Qayyim], *al-Rūḥ*, edited by Muḥammad 'Alī al-Qutb and Walīd al-Dhikrā (Beirut, al-Maktaba al-'Aṣriyya, 2000) pp. 207-51; Al-Jurjānī, (d. 816/1413), 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī, *al-Ta'rīfāt*, edited by Muḥammad Bāsil al-Sūd (Beirut, Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 2000) pp. 239-40; al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), Muḥammad b. 'Umar, *Ilm al-Akhlāq*, translated into English by M. S. H. Ma'sumi (3rd edition, New Delhi, Kitab Bhavan, 1992) pp. 87-167; Muḥammad, Yūsuf Maḥmūd, *al-Nafs wa 'l-Rūḥ fi 'l-Fikr al-Insānī wa Mawqif Ibn al-Qayyim minhu* (Doha, Dār al-Ḥikma, 1993) pp. 145-251; al-Najjār, 'Āmir, *al-Taṣawwuf al-Nafsī* (Cairo, Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1984) pp. 21-35; Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fi Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, pp. 59-64; Bay, Jamāl Rajab Sayyid, *Nazariyyat al-Nafs bayn Ibn Sīnā wa 'l-Ghazzālī* (Cairo, al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-'Āmma li 'l-Kitāb, 2000); al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib, *The Nature of Man and the Psychology of the Human Soul* (Kuala Lumpur, The International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation, 1993); al-Kanadī, Muṣṭafā, *Mysteries of the Soul Expounded* (Jeddah, Abul-Qasim Publishing House, 1994) pp. 1-3; Philips, *The Exorcist Tradition in Islaam* (Sharjah, Dar al-Fatah, 1997) pp. 12-13 and Zarabozo, *Purification of the Soul - Concept, Process and Means*, pp. 57-60.

It is also worth noting that some of these terms have also found their way into Sufi theosophy being adopted with their own specific connotations. Once again a discussion of such terms is beyond the scope of the current thesis and as such, will not be discussed here. However, the reader may consult the following works which deal with this topic: al-Najjār, *al-Taṣawwuf al-Nafsī*, pp. 246-7; al-Shabrāwī (d. 1366/1947), 'Abd al-Khāliq, *The Degrees of the Soul*, translated from Arabic by Muṣṭafā al-Badawī (Dorton, Quilliam Press, 1997) pp. 20-60; <http://www.katinkahesselink.net/sufi/sufi.htm>, Frager, Robert, "Transforming the Self"; <http://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Comp/CompGode.htm>, Godelek, Kamuran "The Neoplatonist Roots of Sufi Philosophy" and <http://www.crescentlife.com/spirituality/seven-levels.htm>, al-Jerrahi, Tosun Bayrak, "Seven Levels of Being".

²⁵⁷ For this section see: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-'Azīm*, vol. 2, p. 463; al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), Muḥammad b. 'Umar [Fakhr al-Dīn], *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr / Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* (32 vol.s in 16 books, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2000) vol. 18, p. 126; al-Ālūsī (d. 1270/1854), Maḥmūd, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī fi Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-'Azīm wa 'l-Saba' al-Mathānī*, edited by 'Alī 'Abd al-Bārī 'Aṭiyya (15 vols., Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2001) vol. 7, p. 4; al-Jawziyya, *al-Rūḥ*, pp. 262-6; Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fi Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, pp. 49-52; al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, pp. 251-2; Farīd, Aḥmad, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* (Alexandria, Dār al-'Aqīda li 'l-Turāth, 1998) pp. 70-1; al-Yūsuf, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs wa Mu'ālatat al-Āfāt*, pp. 24-7; al-Shabrāwī, *The Degrees of the Soul*, pp. 20-8; Zarabozo, pp. 66-7 and Ḥasan, Suhaib, *Journey of the Soul* (London, Al-Quran Society, 2000) p. 17.

desires. Thus, the performance of forbidden acts is common and the ultimate result of this state is sin and transgression. The essence of this notion is evidenced in the following verse, “And I do not absolve own self [of blame], as indeed, the [human] soul is prone to evil (*inna 'l-nafs la ammāra bi 'l-sū'*), except when my Lord bestows mercy, as indeed my Lord is the Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.” (12:53)²⁵⁸

This verse alludes to the lowest level of the human soul, which not only encourages the performance of evil but also exerts effort to make such actions acceptable and appealing to the human being. Thus, the *nafs* is described as enticing (*sawwalat*), subjecting (*ṭawwa'at*) and tempting (*tuwaswis*) in verses (20:96 and 12:18, 5:30 and 50:16) respectively. Therefore, it is not surprising that the exaggerative form '*ammāra*' is used to describe the *nafs*, as it literally means 'constantly urging, always demanding, inciting and instigating',²⁵⁹ as if this type of *nafs* is always commanding the evil and the base. As such, al-Jurjāni (d. 816/1413) defined the *al-nafs al-ammāra bi 'l-sū'* as follows, “It is the one [*nafs*] that inclines to the bodily nature, ordering [the pursuit of] physical pleasures and appetites, attracting the heart to base levels; as such, it is the abode of every evil and the source of blameworthy characteristics.”²⁶⁰

In addition, this verse also implies that from the Islamic perspective it is from Allāh's mercy alone that this state of the *nafs* does not exist permanently, as this is its natural and regular state if left to its own devices and is not refined. As such, it is only from Allāh's beneficence that the other states of the *nafs*, via repentance and turning away from the soul's desires, become manifest in the human being.

Also, on examining and contrasting these qualities of the *nafs* as described in the Qur'ān, one finds a direct comparison between such attributes and those used to describe Satan (*al-shayṭān*). In fact the Devil (Iblīs) has been characterised as enticing (*sawwala*), tempting (*waswās*) and misguiding (*yudill*) in verses (47:25 and 114:3-4, 5:30 and 4:60) respectively. Thus, there is a clear and intrinsic link and relationship between the behaviour of the *nafs* and the role of Satan in influencing this behaviour. It would seem that the Devil entices and suggests actions and thoughts to the *nafs*, whereas the *nafs* itself, due to its self serving outlook, pursues such deeds satisfying the conscience by making them seemingly acceptable and appealing. To this effect, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya comments:

²⁵⁸ See Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, vol. 2, p. 463; al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr / Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, vol. 18, p. 126 and al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, ed. by 'Aṭīyya, vol. 7, p. 4.

²⁵⁹ Wehr, *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, p. 27.

²⁶⁰ Al-Jurjāni, *al-Ta'rīfāt*, p. 239.

As for the soul inclined to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi 'l-sū'*), Satan is its associate and companion; he makes promises to it and awakens its desires, casting falsehood into it, commanding it to evil and making it appear appealing in a form that it will find acceptable and condone, with a variety of provisions and falsehood, false hopes and destructive appetites. He seeks aid against it with its desires and wishes and through him every evil enters it.²⁶¹

b. The Self-Reproaching Soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāma*)²⁶²

This is the next level of the *nafs*, where it is elevated from the previous base state, so that the veil of disobedience is lifted and the soul begins to blame itself for the transgression it has committed, inclining towards repentance, regret, self recrimination and reproach. These implications are gleaned from the following Qur'ānic verse (75:1-2), "Do not swear [an oath] by the Day of Judgement nor by the self-reproaching soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāma*)."²⁶³ This verse is clear evidence of a second state of the soul, i.e. the soul being described as being self-reproaching or '*lawwāma*'. However, this particular adjective describing the soul has been the focus of discussion for numerous Muslim scholars, leading them to a variety of opinions, which will be summarised here.

The first of these views suggests that this term is derived from the Arabic verbal noun '*al-talawwum*' meaning 'shifting repeatedly' being synonymous with '*al-taraddud*'. This state of the soul is characterised by its changeability, fickleness, capriciousness and inconsistency, never truly remaining steadfast in one state of affairs.²⁶³ As such, in this state, the soul is mindful then heedless, loves then hates, is happy then sad, is obedient then disobedient, righteous then immoral, as well as many other qualities and a variety of levels of each characteristic in between, changing from one state to another, never truly settling on one quality.²⁶⁴

The second view considers this to be derived from the term '*lawm*' meaning 'blame', the implication being that the soul blames itself or alternatively is blameworthy. As such, the opinions regarding this derivation of '*lawwāma*' also vary and these opinions can be summarised as follows: the first of these is that the aforementioned verse refers to the

²⁶¹ Al-Jawziyya, *al-Rūḥ*, p. 263.

²⁶² For this section see: al-Jawziyya, *al-Rūḥ*, pp. 261-2; Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, pp. 52-4; al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, p. 253; Farīd, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, pp. 69-70; al-Yūsuf, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs wa Mu'ālahat al-Āfāt*, pp. 22-4; al-Shabrāwī, *The Degrees of the Soul*, pp. 29-35; Zarabozo, *Purification of the Soul - Concept, Process and Means*, pp. 66-7 and Ḥasan, *The Journey of the Soul*, pp. 17-18.

²⁶³ This fits neatly with the description of the *nafs*'s duality above in section 2.2.2.1, where the potentiality of the soul to adopt a positive quality, or its negative counterpart was explored.

²⁶⁴ See al-Jawziyya, *al-Rūḥ*, p. 262; Farīd, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, p. 69 and al-Yūsuf, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs wa Mu'ālahat al-Āfāt*, p. 22.

description of the soul of a believer (*al-mu'min*). This opinion was common amongst the early Muslim scholars, as it is reported that al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) said regarding this verse, “By Allāh, we do not see the believer except that he blames himself; [asking himself] ‘What did I intend by my speech? What did I intend by my eating? What did I intend by my thoughts?’, whereas the shameless reprobate (*al-fājir*) continues step by step, not sanctioning his soul.” Similarly, when Mujāhid b. Jabr (d. 104/722), the famous exegete (*al-mufassir*) was asked regarding the same verse he replied, “This is the soul that blames itself for what has passed and feels regret; it blames itself for the evil it has committed, as to why it did it and with regard to doing good, as to why it did not do more.”²⁶⁵

In a different view *al-nafs al-lawwāma* is considered to refer to both the sinner and the righteous person in the sense that the righteous person blames his soul for the committing of a sin or the neglect of an act of obedience.²⁶⁶ As such, al-Jurjāni (d. 816/1413) defined *al-nafs al-lawwāma* as follows, “It is the one [*al-nafs*] that is illuminated with the light of the heart according to the amount that it has become awakened from habitual heedlessness; as soon as it commits a transgression due to its naturally oppressive disposition it takes to blaming itself.”²⁶⁷ In contrast, the degenerate person blames itself for losing out on some form of carnal satisfaction.²⁶⁸

In a variation of this theme, this form of blaming is said to take place on the Day of Judgement, where every soul will blame itself for its deeds in the worldly life. Thus, there will be the sinful who will blame themselves for the sins they have committed, whereas the righteous will blame themselves for their deficiencies with regard to Allāh’s rights over

²⁶⁵ See Ibn Taymiyya, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, p. 47; al-Jawziyya, *al-Rūḥ*, pp. 261-2; *Ighāthat al-Lahfān min Maṣāyid al-Shayṭān*, edited by Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiqqī (Beirut, Dār al-Maʿrifā, n. d.) vol. 1, pp. 76-8; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān fī Taʾwīl al-Qurʾān*, vol. 12, p. 327; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAzīm*, vol. 4, p. 448; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, vol. 19, p. 84; al-Rāzī *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr / Mafātiḥ al-Ghayb*, vol. 30, pp. 190-1; al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, ed. by ʿAṭiyya, vol. 15, pp. 151-2; Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, pp. 52-3; Farīd, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, p. 69; al-Yūsuf, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs wa Muʿālat al-Āfāt*, pp. 22-3 and Zarabozo, *Purification of the Soul - Concept, Process and Means*, p. 67.

²⁶⁶ It is for this reason that some researchers have termed the self-reproaching soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāma*) the human conscience (*al-ḍamīr*). See Ḥilmī, Muṣṭafā, *al-Akhlāq bayn al-Falāsifa wa Ḥukamāʾ al-Islām* (Cairo, Dār al-Thiqāfa al-ʿArabiyya, 1987) pp. 139-140 and Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, p. 54.

²⁶⁷ See Ibn Taymiyya, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, p. 47; al-Jawziyya, *al-Rūḥ*, p. 262; Al-Jurjānī, *al-Taʿrīfāt*, p. 239; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAzīm*, vol. 4, p. 448; Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, pp. 53-4; Farīd, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, p. 69; al-Najjār, ʿAmir, *al-Taṣawwuf al-Nafsī al-Taṣawwuf al-Nafsī* (Cairo, al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li ʿl-Kitāb, 2002) p. 33 and al-Yūsuf, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs wa Muʿālat al-Āfāt*, pp. 22-3.

²⁶⁸ In this regard al-Maydānī considers this state of the *nafs* to be the state that manifests human free will (*al-irāda al-ḥurra al-mukhtāra*) and quotes verses (32:13 and 18:29) as proof of this. See al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, p. 253.

them.²⁶⁹ In this regard, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī is reported to have said, “There is no one who exists in the heaven or on the earth except that he will blame himself on the Day of Judgement.”²⁷⁰

Commenting on these various views Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya states:

All these statements are true and do not contradict one another, as the soul (*nafs*) may be described as such, in the sense that it has been termed ‘self reproaching (*lawwāma*)’. However, self reproach (*lawwāma*) is of two types: self reproach that is blameworthy (*malūma*), by which is meant the soul that is ignorant (*jāhila*) and tyrannical (*zālīma*) and which has been censured by Allāh and His angels. [The second type is] self reproach that is not blameworthy (*ghayr malūma*), which is the soul that continues to reproach its owner regarding his deficiencies in Allāh’s obedience despite his best efforts; [in this sense] this is self reproach that is not blameworthy (*lawwāma ghayr malūma*).²⁷¹

c. The Tranquil Soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʿinna*)²⁷²

This is the highest state of the *nafs*, having gained tranquillity from establishing Allāh’s obedience, accepting His promise of threat of punishment and promise of reward in Paradise, being satisfied with His decree. Such a soul has put its trust in Him alone, tasted the sweetness of faith and felt the pleasure of communicating with its Lord, to the extent that it seeks no other substitute. As such it has not deviated from Allāh’s devotion nor been affected by the changes in circumstances that normally cause a change in the psychological state of the human being, nor is it attracted to the ornamentation of the worldly life. This state of the *nafs* and its ‘serenity’ and ‘stability’ is alluded to in the following verses (89:27-30), “[It will be said to the righteous] O tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʿinna*), return to your Lord content [with Him] (*rāḍiya*) and pleasing [to Him] (*marḍiyya*), so enter into [the ranks of] My devotees and enter My paradise.”²⁷³

²⁶⁹ It is worthy of note that the verse itself is almost indicative of both circumstances in the worldly life and in the hereafter, as the verse mentions the Day of Judgement (*al-qiyāma*) prior to mentioning the self reproachful soul. As such, there is a subtle indication of self recrimination in the worldly life that is private and self governed, whereas on the Day of Judgement, according to Muslim theology, the censuring will be imposed and extremely ‘public’.

²⁷⁰ See Ibn Taymiyya, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, p. 47; al-Jawziyya, *al-Rūḥ*, p. 262; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, vol. 4, p. 448 and al-Yūsuf, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs wa Muʿālat al-Āfāt*, pp. 22-3.

²⁷¹ See al-Jawziyya, *al-Rūḥ*, p. 262; Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, p. 54; Farīd, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, pp. 69-70; and al-Yūsuf, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs wa Muʿālat al-Āfāt*, pp. 23-4.

²⁷² For this section see: al-Jawziyya, *al-Rūḥ*, pp. 256-61; Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, pp. 55-8; al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, pp. 252-3; Farīd, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, pp. 67-9; al-Yūsuf, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs wa Muʿālat al-Āfāt*, pp. 17-21; al-Shabrāwī, *The Degrees of the Soul*, pp. 48-52; Zarabozo, *Purification of the Soul*, pp. 67-8 and Ḥasan, *The Journey of the Soul*, pp. 13-16.

²⁷³ See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān fī Taʾwīl al-Qurʾān*, vol. 12, pp. 580-4; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, vol. 4, pp. 511-12; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, vol. 20, pp. 52-4; al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr / Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, vol. 30, pp. 160-2; al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, ed. by ʿAṭiyya, vol. 15, pp. 345-8; Ibn Taymiyya,

Commenting on this verse, early Muslim scholars provide a variety of views, which will be summarised here. For example, regarding the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʿinna*) Mujāhid (d. 104/722) said, “It is the soul that is satisfied with the decree of Allāh; it knows that what does not befall it was not destined to do so and what does befall it was destined to do so.” Similarly, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) clarifies, “If Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted, wishes to seize it [the *nafs*], it is contented with Allāh and Allāh is satisfied with it. As such, He commands its soul (*rūḥahā*) to be seized, enters it into paradise and makes it of His righteous devotees.” In addition, Qatāda (d. 118/736) comments saying, “It is the believer (*al-muʾmin*) whose soul became assured regarding what Allāh has promised.” Moreover, Ibn Zayd states, “It [the *nafs*] was termed tranquil (*muṭmaʿinna*) due to it being given glad tidings of paradise upon death, at resurrection and on the Day of Judgment.” In a similar quote the famous Qurʾānic exegete Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372) commented regarding the last part of the verse (89:30), “Enter My paradise”, that this will be said to the believer during the throes of death and on the Day of Resurrection.²⁷⁴

From the verse itself and the explanatory notes from Muslim commentators we can glean a reasonable amount of information; firstly, that this particular state of the *nafs* has been described as ‘*muṭmaʿinna*’ meaning ‘tranquil’ or ‘serene’ but one may well ask what is the source of this ‘tranquillity’ and ‘serenity’? Similarly, the *nafs* in this state of ‘serenity’ is commanded to return to its Lord being in a state of absolute contentment (*rāḍiya*) with Him. One may well query once again in what way is satisfaction (*riḍāʾ*) a quality of the serene soul and what is the relation between them? In these verses the *nafs* is also described as being pleasing to Allāh (*marḍiyya*) and we must also enquire as to what has brought about Allāh’s approval of such a soul?

As for the first and paramount quality, i.e. that of ‘tranquillity’ and ‘serenity’, this is said to be brought about by this soul’s constant remembrance of Allāh, relying on the following Qurʾānic verse (13:38), “Those who have believed and whose hearts become tranquil through the remembrance of Allāh; isn’t it through the remembrance of Allāh that the hearts become tranquil [?]” As such, one of the methods through which this state of the

Tazkiyat al-Nafs, p. 47; al-Jawziyya, *al-Rūḥ*, pp. 256-61; Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, p. 55; al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, pp. 252-3; Farīd, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, p. 67; al-Yūsuf, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs wa Muʾalajat al-Āfāt*, p. 17; Zarabozo, *Purification of the Soul*, p. 68 and Ḥasan, *The Journey of the Soul*, pp. 13-16.

²⁷⁴ See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, p. 883; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān fī Taʾwīl al-Qurʾān*, vol. 12, pp. 580-1; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAzīm*, vol. 4, p. 511; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, vol. 20, pp. 52-3; al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr / Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, vol. 30, pp. 160-1; al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, ed. by ʿAṭīyya, vol. 15, p. 345; Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, p. 55 and al-Yūsuf, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs wa Muʾalajat al-Āfāt*, p. 17.

nafs may be attained is through being engaged in the remembrance of God as much as possible.²⁷⁵

This serenity of the soul is further augmented by the acquisition of the quality of satisfaction and acceptance (*riḍāʾ*). This can be understood in the very broad sense of satisfaction and acceptance of the religion of Islam, as is indicated by the following narration transmitted on the authority of the Prophet's uncle al-Abbās b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib (d. 33/654 or 34/655), where the Prophet is reported to have said, "The one who is contented with Allāh as his Lord, Islam as his religion and Muḥammad as his prophet has truly 'tasted the flavour of faith'."²⁷⁶ On a more specific note however, this form of *riḍāʾ* is usually related to the devotee's faith in the sixth pillar of Islamic belief, commonly referred to as faith in divine predestination (*al-qadaʾ wa 'l-qadr*), where the practitioner of Islam is required to believe in Allāh's preordainment of all matters. This final article of Islamic faith is arguably the most difficult to actualise since it requires firm conviction (*yaqīn*) in God's overall wisdom and plan; as such this conviction is alluded to and hence nurtured in a number of Qurʾānic verses including (57:23-4 and 64:11). This being the case, there is an indication then that the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʾinna*) has not only reached this level but perfected it, in the sense that no matter what befalls it in terms of human or personal tragedy, its faith in the Almighty remains firm, as it knows that this has been preordained before it even existed. Similarly, it is not overjoyed by bounties it enjoys but on the contrary recognises God's favour upon it and fulfils the divine right of gratitude. It is thus this elevated level of perfection in faith that brings about God's pleasure and satisfaction regarding it, as no matter what such a soul endures it remains content with its Lord and as a result, its Lord is satisfied with it.²⁷⁷

In this regard Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) comments:

If the *nafs* became at ease from doubt to certainty; from ignorance to knowledge; from heedlessness to remembrance; from deception to repentance; from ostentation to sincerity; from deceit to truthfulness; from being incapable to being competent; from the tyranny of conceit to the

²⁷⁵ See al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, vol. 20, pp. 52-3; al-Jawziyya, *al-Rūḥ*, pp. 256-7; Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, pp. 56-7 and Ḥasan, *The Journey of the Soul*, pp. 13-14.

²⁷⁶ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, p. 38 and al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, pp. 252-3.

²⁷⁷ See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān fī Taʾwīl al-Qurʾān*, vol. 12, pp. 581-3; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAzīm*, vol. 4, p. 511; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, vol. 20, pp. 53-4; al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr / Mafātiḥ al-Ghayb*, vol. 30, pp. 161-2; al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, ed. by ʿAṭiyya, vol. 15, pp. 345-8; Ibn Taymiyya, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, p. 47; al-Jawziyya, *al-Rūḥ*, pp. 256-61; Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, pp. 56-7; al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, p. 252; Farīd, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, pp. 67-8; al-Yūsuf, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs wa Muʿālat al-Āfāt*, pp. 17-18 and Ḥasan, *The Journey of the Soul*, pp. 14-16.

submissiveness of humility; from arrogance to modesty and from laxity to action, then the soul has achieved tranquillity.²⁷⁸

This is obviously an extremely elevated state of faith and practice which Ibn al-Qayyim refers to further saying:

As for perfection in serenity it is contentment with His command, in terms of fulfilling it, sincerely and perfectly, so that no wish, desire or blind imitation is preferred to it. As such, neither uncertainty that contradicts His revelation nor any whim that opposes His command is entertained. Indeed, if it occurs it is considered to be satanic insinuation (*al-wasāwis*), such that if he were to fall from the heavens to the earth it would be more beloved to him than to find it (in his soul); this is what the Prophet, may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him termed, “Pure faith (*ṣarīḥ al-īmān*)”.²⁷⁹

In addition to the perfection of faith alluded to in the above discussion, the quality of permanency also graces this state, in the sense that this type of soul is so well accustomed to this form of faith and practice that it becomes a resident feature of its nature and character.²⁸⁰ In this regard al-Jurjāni has defined the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʿinna*) as follows, “It is the one [*al-nafs*] whose illumination with the light of the heart has been completed to the extent that it has been divested of every blameworthy attribute and has been adorned with every praiseworthy characteristic.”²⁸¹

2.2.3 The Singular Qurʾānic Verse Mentioning both the Terms *Tazkiya* and *al-Nafs*

Finally, we turn our attention to the singly, most important Qurʾānic verses regarding our area of enquiry, verses (91:7-10). The significance of these verses cannot be over emphasised due to their mention of not only the nature of the soul and the potentiality and duality created in it but also the matter of its purification or defilement. As such this is the only series of Qurʾānic verses that make mention of both the *nafs* and its *tazkiya* in one place and therefore, is deserving of particular mention and merits specific attention. The verse itself reads, “And [by] the soul (*nafs*) and the One Who proportioned it; then He

²⁷⁸ See al-Jawziyya, *al-Rūḥ*, p. 259 and Farīd, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, p. 68.

²⁷⁹ See al-Jawziyya, *al-Rūḥ*, p. 258; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, p. 69; Farīd, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, pp. 67-8 and al-Yūsuf, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs wa Muʿālahat al-Āfāt*, p. 18.

²⁸⁰ This is said to be one of the main differences between the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʿinna*) and the self-reproaching soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāma*); whereas the former has gained mastery over its appetites and desires through extreme effort, strong conviction and imposing punitive measures, the latter remains somewhat disposed to the soul inclined to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi 'l-sūʾ*), despite its best efforts to overcome it. See al-Jawziyya, *al-Rūḥ*, pp. 265-6; Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, p. 57 and al-Maydānī, *al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya wa Ususuhā*, vol. 1, pp. 252 and 254.

²⁸¹ Al-Jurjānī, *al-Taʾrīfāt*, p. 239; Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, p. 57 and al-Najjār, *al-Taṣawwuf al-Nafsī*, p. 33.

inspired it [to discern between] its iniquity and its righteousness; indeed, he who purifies it has succeeded; and indeed, he who defiles it has failed.”

These particular verses are interesting in a variety of ways and as such merit some reflection and discussion. The first characteristic is that the series of verses begins with the swearing of an oath using *waw al-qasm*, which according to the Islamic exegetical tradition implies emphasis to draw the attention of the reader/listener to the importance of the discourse being presented. Not only this but this particular verse comes at the end of six previous oaths at the beginning of each verse, the objects of the oath being the sun (*al-shams*), the moon (*al-qamar*), the day (*al-nahār*), the night (*al-layl*), the heaven (*al-samāʿ*), the earth (*al-arḍ*) and finally, the seventh oath concerns the soul (*al-nafs*). Commentators allude to the fact that this style in the Qurʾān is utilised to draw attention to the greatness and perfection of such creations, these ultimately being indications of the Creator Himself. Perhaps more subtly however, it can be further noticed that the first six items are manifest, i.e. ‘seen’ in the simplest sense, whereas the final object of the oath is ‘unseen’, causing some exegetes to conclude that this is in fact the greatest of the ‘unseen’ creations.²⁸²

Similarly, there is a direct reference to the Creator of this soul; the word used in the verse is ‘*mā*’ in this instance ‘*mā al-mawṣūlā*’ or the relative pronoun, carrying the meaning of ‘*alladhī*’ and in this specific example meaning ‘*man*’ or ‘the one who’.²⁸³ Thus, the verse speaks not only of the soul itself but also of the One, meaning Allāh, Who ‘*sawwāhā*’ carrying the meaning of ‘proportioned, made equal, made even and balanced’, suggesting not only that the soul created was thus in the body but also that the soul has been given ‘free will’ to choose at a moral level between good and evil, to which the following verse adds further credence.²⁸⁴

The next verse begins by making an important statement, i.e. that the soul is capable of receiving inspiration and insight, indicated to by the use of the verb ‘*alhamahā*’, once again the active participle being Allāh, stating clearly that He is the source of inspiration. The subject of the inspiration is equally significant however, as it is stated as being the soul’s iniquity (*fujūr*) and its righteousness (*taqwā*), i.e. the soul has been inspired and given insight to be able to discern between and choose either right action or sin. In this regard

²⁸² See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān fī Taʾwīl al-Qurʾān*, vol. 12, pp. 601-2; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, vol. 4, pp. 517-8; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, vol. 20, p. 68; al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr / Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, vol. 31, p. 174 and al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, ed. by ʿAṭīyya, vol. 15, p. 360.

²⁸³ See Ibn Taymiyya, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, pp. 38-9.

²⁸⁴ See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān fī Taʾwīl al-Qurʾān*, vol. 12, pp. 601-2; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, vol. 4, p. 517; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, vol. 20, pp. 68-9; al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr / Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, vol. 31, p. 175 and al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, ed. by ʿAṭīyya, vol. 15, pp. 360-1.

Ibn ‘Abbās (d. c. 67-8/686-8) said that the verse means, “Clarified for it [the soul] the good and the evil” and this was also the opinion of Qatāda (d. 118/736), al-Ḍaḥḥak (d. 102/721) and Sufyān al-Thawri (d. 162/778).²⁸⁵ In addition, this is another indication of the soul’s ‘free will’ and as such some commentators as a result consider this to be an indication of the human being’s rational faculty or intellect (*al-‘aql*), this being the highest form of human ability. However, it should be noticed that the subject of this inspiration is to choose between iniquity (*fujūr*) and righteousness (*taqwā*), which is essentially a moral dilemma, in which there can be no doubt that the intellect plays a role, but the influence here of the heart (*al-qalb*) and/or of the conscience (*al-ḍamīr*) cannot be underestimated. As such, this verse is also an indication of the dual potentiality within the soul, alluded to previously and also alludes to its responsibility and accountability, in both this life and the next, as it has been endowed with the capacity to discern and the ability to choose the right course of action or alternatively its opposite.²⁸⁶

The results and consequences of such ‘informed’ choices are the subject of the next two verses, which is also the only time in the Qur’ān where the *nafs* is used in conjunction with a derivative of the term *tazkiya*. In the very next verse we are informed that true success, prosperity and salvation (*falāḥ*), meaning the acquisition of God’s good grace and entry into His paradise, will be attained by a person who ‘purifies it (*zakkāhā*)’. This is the usual form II usage of the verb alluded to previously and therefore gives the meanings of ‘bringing about or causing growth, augmentation, reform and development’ or ‘purification’ in the broad sense. However, it is the subject of ‘it’ which concerns us here, as the attached pronoun being used is feminine, i.e. ‘*hā*’ and which as such refers directly to the term *nafs* mentioned previously. Thus, the verse in its broadest sense would mean, “He who has caused his soul to grow, be augmented, be reformed, developed and purified has indeed attained true success, prosperity and salvation.” In this sense Qatāda (d. 118/736) said that the meaning of the verse is, “He who has purified his soul through obedience to Allah and cleansed it from base characteristics and vices has indeed attained true success.”²⁸⁷

It is also worth mentioning that the subject of the verb ‘*zakkā*’ is not immediately obvious and thus, Muslim exegetes have differed regarding exactly ‘who’ it is that is doing the

²⁸⁵ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, vol. 4, p. 517.

²⁸⁶ See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān fī Ta’wīl al-Qur’ān*, vol. 12, pp. 601-3; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, vol. 4, p. 517; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ li Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol. 20, pp. 68-9; al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr / Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, vol. 31, p. 175; al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī*, ed. by ‘Aṭīyya, vol. 15, p. 360 and section 2.2.2.1 above.

²⁸⁷ See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān fī Ta’wīl al-Qur’ān*, vol. 12, pp. 603-4; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, vol. 4, p. 517; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ li Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol. 20, pp. 69-70; al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr / Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, vol. 31, pp. 175-6 and al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī*, ed. by ‘Aṭīyya, vol. 15, pp. 361-2.

purifying; the first of these views suggests that it is Allāh which is the subject, in which case the verse would mean, “He whom Allāh has caused his soul to grow, be augmented, be reformed, developed and purified has indeed attained true success, prosperity and salvation.”²⁸⁸ In this regard it is related that it was the opinion of both al-Farā’ (d. 207/822) and al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923) that the meaning of the verse is, “Indeed, a soul which Allāh has purified is successful and indeed, a soul which Allāh has defiled has failed.”²⁸⁹ The second view posits that it is the human being who brings about this process at a personal level, in which case the verse would mean, “He who has caused his soul to be purified has indeed attained true success.”²⁹⁰ In this sense, Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna (d. 198/813), Qatāda (d. 118/736) and others, said regarding this verse that the meaning is, “Indeed, he who has purified his soul with Allāh’s obedience and righteous actions has succeeded”, and similarly, Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201), commented that the meaning of ‘*zakkāhā*’ is, “Purified it from sin and reformed it with righteous deeds.”²⁹¹ It is not wholly implausible however that the process is indeed a combination of the two in harmony with one another.

The alternative consequence of these ‘informed’ choices is clarified in the very next verses, which alludes to the idea that whoever selects a path of iniquity will indeed have failed (*khāba*). The verse used in diametric opposition with ‘*zakkāhā*’ is equally worthy of mention here; the conjugation used is ‘*dassāhā*’ from the root ‘*dassasā*’, the final radical of this verb being substituted for an *alif* to ease and facilitate pronunciation (*takhfif*). The meaning of this verb is to ‘hide’ or ‘conceal’, which at first glance may seem obscure but the implication is that the person would commit sins, disbelieve and be disobedient, so much so that his soul would be ‘submerged’ in such reprehensible acts to the extent that his soul would be ‘buried’ in them.²⁹² In this sense Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) said the meaning of ‘*dassāhā*’ is,

²⁸⁸ This meaning of ‘*zakkā*’ was alluded to previously; see p. 49 above and cf. pp. 56-8 and al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān fī Ta’wīl al-Qur’ān*, vol. 12, p. 603 and al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī*, ed. by ‘Aṭīyya, vol. 15, pp. 361-2.

²⁸⁹ See Ibn Taymiyya, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, p. 38; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, vol. 4, p. 517 and al-Ṭakhīs, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, p. 17.

²⁹⁰ It should be noted that this latter rendering is the preference of Ibn Taymiyya who also suggests that the introduction of the word ‘*qad*’ at the beginning of this verse and the one following it, changes the suggested meaning of the verse from simply informing (*khābar*) to being a command (*amr*) and thus, the implications alluded to in the verses are indeed incumbent duties upon the faithful. See Ibn Taymiyya, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, pp. 37-42.

²⁹¹ See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān fī Ta’wīl al-Qur’ān*, vol. 12, pp. 603-4; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, vol. 4, p. 517; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ li Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol. 20, pp. 69-70; al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr / Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, vol. 31, pp. 175-6; al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī*, ed. by ‘Aṭīyya, vol. 15, pp. 361-2; Ibn Taymiyya, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, pp. 37-8 and al-Ṭakhīs, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, p. 17.

²⁹² See al-Jawziyya, (d. 751/1350), Muḥammad b. Abū Bakr b. Ayyūb [Ibn al-Qayyim], *al-Jawāb al-Kāfi li man Sa’ala an al-Dawā’ al-Shāfi* (Beirut, Dār al-Nadwa al-Ḥadītha, 1985) p. 95; al-Bukhārī, Sidiqī b. Ḥasan, *Faṭḥ al-Bayān fī Maqāṣid al-Qur’ān* (Beirut, al-Maktaba al-‘Aṣriyya, 1992) vol. 15, p. 256; al-Ṭakhīs, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, p. 17 and Zarabozo, *Purification of the Soul*, p. 71.

“Concealed it with iniquity and disobedience, as the reprobate hides his soul (*dassa nafsahu*) i.e. suppresses it through his committing of obscenities.”²⁹³ Similarly, al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923) commented by saying that such a person makes his soul lowly, despicable, vile and wretched.²⁹⁴ This emotive metaphor elucidates the state of such a soul and clarifies exactly how its ‘failure’ is constituted.

2.2.4 Section Summary

This section has attempted to survey the mention, usage and concept of the terms ‘*tazkiya*’ and ‘*nafs*’ in the Qur’ānic text to shed light upon their understanding in Islam. As such, the discussion began with the term ‘*tazkiya*’ and it was found that the linguistically implied meaning of the word has changed little, if at all, from its original usage in the language and therefore, can be considered still to mean, ‘to cause to grow, be augmented, be reformed, developed and purified’.

Despite this however, a great deal has been learned regarding the emphasis of *tazkiya* and indeed, its facilitation and implementation. It was found for example, from the Qur’ānic and by default the Islamic perspective, that it is Allāh who is the source of *tazkiya*, as many verses indicate and the decision of who will be purified in this sense is ultimately a divine one.²⁹⁵ Similarly, the process and implementation of *tazkiya* has also been attributed to the Prophets and Messengers and to the Prophet Muḥammad in particular. There are various verses in the Qur’ān that allude to this and in fact they state that this is one of the major roles of such divinely chosen and guided emissaries.²⁹⁶ In addition, depending on the interpretation of the verses in question, it has also been shown that the human being himself can take the impetus regarding the process of *tazkiya* via the decisions he makes, having been endowed with the faculty of discernment regarding the course of right action or a path of misguidance. As such, *tazkiya* can be understood to be a multi-level and multi-faceted process, indicating a subtle, complex and yet complementary process of human development.

On examining the term *nafs* it was also found that there is a great deal of overlap between the linguistic usages of the term and their utilisation in the Qur’ān. Many of the linguistic usages - quite expectedly - were not found in the Qur’ān but many also were and it can be

²⁹³ See Ibn Taymiyya, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, p. 43 and al-Ṭakhīṣ, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, p. 17.

²⁹⁴ See al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923), Ibrāhīm, *Ma‘ānī al-Qur’ān wa Irābuhu* (Beirut, ‘Ālam al-Kitāb, 1988) vol. 5, p. 332; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘at al-Fatāwā*, vol. 10, p. 353; al-Ṭakhīṣ, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, p. 17; Zarabozo, *Purification of the Soul*, pp. 67-8 and Ḥasan, *The Journey of the Soul*, p. 72.

²⁹⁵ See pp. 57-8 above.

²⁹⁶ See pp. 57-8 above.

said that the following concepts regarding the *nafs* are presented in the Qur'ānic discourse: the *nafs* meaning the soul (*al-rūḥ*); the *nafs* meaning the human being (*al-insān*); the *nafs* meaning the human being's power of understanding (*al-quwā al-mufakkira*); the *nafs* meaning the heart (*al-qalb*) and the *nafs* meaning the inclination to good and evil (*quwā al-khayr wa 'l-sharr*).²⁹⁷

In addition, the following section shed greater light on the very nature of the *nafs* by elucidating various qualities that the *nafs* possesses; it was seen for example that the *nafs* experiences a variety of 'psychological' and almost 'physical' states, which dictate its nature. Also, it was also seen that there is almost a 'dual potentiality' within the *nafs*, where its nature tends to negative potentialities but with volition, will, training and experience, the positive potentialities can be nurtured.²⁹⁸

Further information can be gleaned regarding the nature of the soul from the Qur'ān's discussion of the 'types' or 'states' of the *nafs*. These were found to be: the soul inclined to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi 'l-sū'*), the self-reproaching soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāma*) and the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭma'inna*). The first of these is said to be the base form of the *nafs* in its natural state, being inclined to the worldly life and being closest to an animal existence; it is controlled and motivated by the fulfilment of its desires and Satanic insinuation, being forever inclined to the base and the contemptible. The second can be viewed as an intermediate state where the *nafs* is undergoing an internal moral and psychological battle between good and evil and as such is continuously shifting between the positive and negative potentialities inherent within it. The final form is the ultimate state of the *nafs*, where the base instincts have been conquered, the internal moral and psychological battle has been won, the truths of faith have been realised and complete contentment with God has been attained.²⁹⁹

The final discussion concerned the only verses in the Qur'ān to make mention of both these terms in conjunction and a variety of information was further gleaned from this valuable series of verses. Indeed, it was seen in these verses that from the Islamic perspective, it is Allāh who primarily created this *nafs* in a form of equilibrium, inspiring it and giving it insight to be able to discern between choosing either right action or sin. Consequently, the result of such choices will lead ultimately to the *nafs* undergoing a process of purification

²⁹⁷ See section 2.2.2 and cf. section 2.1.1 above.

²⁹⁸ See section 2.2.2.1 above.

²⁹⁹ See section 2.2.2.2 above.

(*tazkiya*) or alternatively, a process of defilement (*tadsiya*), which has enormous consequences for it in the hereafter.

As such, our original conclusion seen at the end of the discussion of the linguistic implications of these terms, i.e. ‘the growth, augmentation, reform and development of a human being’s soul, intellect, body and self’, has changed little having surveyed the Qur’ānic text for the same purpose. All this increases our understanding of the process and goal of *tazkiyat al-nafs* considerably. The subtle interplay between the divine (Allāh), the human elect (Prophets/Messengers) and the humble worshipper (the human being), all have their parts to play; from divine guidance and inspiration, to human moral and spiritual excellence and example, to firm will, certitude and extreme effort. Similarly, that very essence of humanity - the human soul - has been seen to be multifaceted, multilayered and highly complex. Despite this, the Qur’ān has alluded to the goal of the aforementioned process of *tazkiya*, i.e. the attainment of the state of the *nafs* known as the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭma’inna*), which is its final and ultimate product. Thus, we may conclude that our understanding of *tazkiyat al-nafs* has now developed to mean: the growth, augmentation, reform, development and purification of the human soul, via divine guidance, Prophetic example and individual effort, to attain its most elevated form, that of the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭma’inna*).

This discussion has shed a great deal of light upon the understanding of the concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* in Islam but no such discussion would be complete without reference to Islam’s secondary source of Law and thought, namely the *ḥadīth* and this is the goal of the next section.

2.3 The Concept of the Terms *Tazkiya* and *Nafs* within the *Ḥadīth* Literature

From the Islamic perspective the Qur’ān is not the only form of divinely inspired revelation. Indeed, the very life of the Prophet is considered to be a source of guidance, where his customary practice known as the *sunna* is constituted by his statements, actions and tacit approval and is contained in a vast corpus of narrations transmitted by Muslims throughout history, known as *ḥadīth*.³⁰⁰ This literature is viewed as complementary to the Qur’ān and it is seen to fulfil an explanatory or interpretative role regarding Islam’s primary sacred text.³⁰¹

³⁰⁰ In addition, there will also be some reference to the narrations transmitted from Prophetic Companions and their Successors, commonly known as *athar* (pl. *āthār*), if deemed appropriate.

³⁰¹ See al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111), Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad [Abū Ḥāmid], *al-Mustaṣfā min ‘Ilm al-Uṣūl*, edited by Muḥammad Sulaymān al-Ashqar (2 vols., Beirut, Mu’assasat al-Risāla, 1997) vol. 2, pp. 217-34; al-Āmidī, ‘Alī b. Muḥammad, *al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, edited by Sayyid al-Jamīlī (3rd ed., 2 vols.,

This being the case, it is imperative that any 'Islamic' term or concept be examined in the light of this literature and as such, *tazkiyat al-nafs* is no exception. This said, the vast nature of the material means that only a representative survey will be made here and indeed, only those texts that have a direct link with the subject matter will be considered.

Following a similar methodology to the previous sections, each of these terms will be dealt with separately to shed light on their meanings and concepts so as to provide further information regarding these words; we will begin here by discussing the term '*tazkiya*' as it occurs in the *ḥadīth* literature.

2.3.1 The Concept of the Term *Tazkiya* within the *Ḥadīth* Literature

When surveying the usage of words with the *Zay Kāf Yā* root within the *ḥadīth* literature perhaps the most familiar derivative in the Islamic context, is the term '*zakāt*', this being the third 'pillar' of the Islamic faith and indeed, when the form II verb is used with a person's wealth (*mālahu*) it means to pay the appropriate amount of *zakāt*, which is due. Despite the vast wealth of narrations regarding this topic, as was mentioned earlier, this usage is of little use to us here and therefore will not be considered.³⁰²

This leaves rather a limited choice of *ḥadīth* to consider but fortunately the remaining narrations that contain the form II version of the verb '*zakkā*' also make mention of the term '*nafs*' also. The first of these is of particular significance, as indeed it makes specific mention of *tazkiyat al-nafs*; in the text of the *ḥadīth* the Prophet Muḥammad is reported to have said:

There are three acts [whereby] whoever performed them has tasted the sweetness of faith; he who worships Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted, alone as none is worthy of worship except Him; he who gives his *zakāt* willingly, not giving a weak old animal, a mangy animal or a sick animal but indeed, he gives from the median range of his wealth, as Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted, does not ask you [to give] the finest of it and did not order you [to give] the least of it; and he who purifies his soul (*zakkā nafsahu*). So a man asked, "And what is purification of the soul (*wa mā tazkiyat al-nafs*)?" He [the

Beirut, Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1998) vol. 1, pp. 223-41; al-Shāṭibī (d. 790/1388), Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā b. Muḥammad, *al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharīʿa*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Fāḍilī (4 vols., Beirut, al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 2000) vol. 4, pp. 5-52; Zaydān, ʿAbd al-Karīm, *al-Wajīz fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (6th edition, Beirut, Muʿassasat al-Risāla, 1985) pp. 161-7; al-Ashqar, Muḥammad b. Sulaymān b. ʿAbd Allāh, *al-Wāḍiḥ fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh li ʿl-Mubtadiʿīn* (4th Edition, Dār al-Nafāʿis, Jordan, 1992) pp. 89-102; al-Judayʿ, ʿAbd Allāh b. Yūsuf, *Taysīr ʿilm Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (Beirut, Muʿassasat al-Rayyān, 1997) pp. 125-143; Doi, Abdur Raḥmān I., *Shariʿah: The Islamic Law* (London, Ta-Ha Publishers, 1997) pp. 45-53; Şiddiqī, Muḥammad Zubayr, *Ḥadīth Literature - Its Origin, Development & Special Features* (Cambridge, Islamic Texts Society, 1993) pp. 1-9; Azami, Habib-Ur-Rahman, *The Sunnah in Islam* (Leicester, UK Islamic Academy, 1995) pp. 8-23 and 29-40 and Azami, Muhammad Mustafa, *Studies in Hadīth Methodology and Literature* (Plainfield, American Trust Publications, 1993) pp. 1-15.

³⁰² See p. 49 above.

Prophet] replied, “That he knows that Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted, is with him wherever he may be.”³⁰³

This *ḥadīth* seems to have solved the problem of the meaning of *tazkiyat al-nafs* since it is a direct definition and quotation from the mouth of the Prophet of Islam himself. Indeed, some scholars of the discipline of *ḥadīth* consider this narration to be authentic³⁰⁴ but on closer inspection however, this seems not to be the case.³⁰⁵ As such, it will not be considered here due to its lack of authenticity and hence cannot be viewed as a statement of the Prophet.³⁰⁶

In the second of these narrations it is reported by the Prophetic Companion Zayd b. Arqam (d. 66/686 or 68/688) that the Prophet, would teach them the following supplication:

O Allāh, indeed I seek shelter in you from incapacity and laziness, senility and cowardice and miserliness and the punishment of the grave. O Allāh, grant my soul (*nafsī*) its righteousness and purify it (*zakkihā*), as indeed, You are the best of those who purify it (*zakkāhā*), You are its Guardian and Master. O Allāh, I seek shelter in You from a heart that has no fear [of You], a soul that cannot be satisfied (*nafs lā tashba*), knowledge of no benefit and a request that will not be granted.³⁰⁷

³⁰³ See al-Ṭabarānī (d. 360/971), Sulaymān b. Aḥmad b. Ayyūb, *al-Muʿjam al-Ṣaghīr*, edited by Muḥammad Shakūr Maḥmūd al-Ḥājj Amrīr (2 vols., Beirut, al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1985) vol. 1, p. 334; al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066), Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, edited by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā (11 vols., Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1999) vol. 4, p. 161; al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870), Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl, *al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr* (12 vols., Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, n.d.) vol. 3, pp. 31-2; al-Mizzī (d. 742/1342), Yūsuf, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī Asmāʾ al-Rijāl*, edited by Bashshār Awād Maʿrūf (8 vols., Beirut, Muʿassasat al-Risāla, 1998) vol. 4, p. 293; Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, p. 12; ʿĀl ʿAbd al-Laṭīf, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Muḥammad, *Maʿālim fī ʿl-Sulūk wa Tazkiyat al-Nufūs* (Riyadh, Dār al-Waṭan, 1993) pp. 57-8 and Zarabozo, *Purification of the Soul*, p. 73.

³⁰⁴ See al-Albānī (d. 1420/2000), Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn, *Silsilat al-Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (2nd ed., Beirut, al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1979) no. 1046; Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, p. 12 and Zarabozo, *Purification of the Soul*, p. 73.

³⁰⁵ After a prolonged discussion from authoritative sources of this *ḥadīth*'s chain of narrators, Zarabozo concludes the lack of authenticity of the narration. In addition, on consulting with *shaykh* ʿAbd Allāh al-Judayʿ - one of the foremost scholars of *ḥadīth* in this time - he arrived at the same conclusion and kindly provided the researcher with a short commentary upon this narration, which has been included in Appendix 1. See Zarabozo, *Purification of the Soul*, pp. 73-4 and Appendix 1.

³⁰⁶ It is worth mentioning however, that the meaning of this *ḥadīth* is contained in another famous authentic narration known as *ḥadīth Jibrīl*, where the Prophet is questioned by the angel Gabriel, “And inform me of spiritual perfection (*iḥsān*)” to which he replies, “It is to worship Allāh as if you see Him [and know] that if you do not see Him, He sees you.” See Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, pp. 26-6; Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, pp. 12-13 and Zarabozo, *Purification of the Soul*, pp. 74-5.

³⁰⁷ See Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, p. 1181; al-Nasāʿī (d. 303/916), Aḥmad b. Shuʿayb, *Sunan al-Nasāʿī al-Ṣuḥrā* (Riyadh, Dār al-Salām, 1999) p. 743; Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), Aḥmad, *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal* (Riyadh, Bayt al-Afkār al-Duwaliyya, 1998) pp. 1412-3 and al-Nawawī (d. 626/1277), Yaḥyā b. Sharaf, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bi Sharḥ al-Nawawī* (18 vols., in 8 books, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1995) vol. 17, p. 34. It is also worth mentioning that Ibn Kathīr relates similar narrations regarding the exegesis of verse (91:8) mentioned above in the Qurʾān section, thus creating the link between Islam's primary text and the *sunna* of its Prophet. See Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAzīm*, vol. 4, pp. 517-18 and section 2.2.3 above.

In comparison this second narration was related by the famous *ḥadīth* scholar, Imam Muslim as well as others and as such, from the Islamic perspective is considered rigorously authenticated. Its significance is manifold; firstly, this supplication (*duʿā*) was actually taught by the Prophet to his Companions, which in itself is enough to show the importance of the content of this particular prayer. The subject matter of this supplication is seeking shelter in Allāh against negative or unbeneficial qualities and as such the *nafs* occurs reiterated within it. We find that granting the *nafs* its righteousness is attributed to Allāh alone and is reminiscent of the Qurʾānic verse (91:8) regarding the inspiration of the soul, as if to say not only has the soul been inspired to dual potentiality of both good and evil but in the light of this, there is a request of the divine for only the ‘good’ of such inspiration.

The supplication continues requesting divine assistance regarding the soul’s consequent purification (*tazkiya*), which is indicative of the fact that this ‘purification’ is indeed what will bring about righteousness in the soul and which in turn, reminds us of the qualities of the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʾinna*), which is the ultimate goal of this process. Despite this however, although Allāh is regarded to be, “The best of those who purify it (*zakkāhā*)”, which clarifies that there is primarily a divine role in purification, which has been witnessed earlier, but this also shows that *tazkiya* is not restricted to God alone but that it is He Who has achieved perfection in this regard. This also opens the possibility that others, i.e. other than God, may undertake this process and as we have also seen, this is the role of the Prophets and Messengers and indeed, the human being himself.³⁰⁸

In addition, the fact the Prophet himself would make and teach such a supplication is an indication of the enormity of the task in hand, as it would seem to be an indication that even God’s elect require His assistance in this regard and as such, the need of the ‘mere mortal’ is even greater. Indeed, it would seem in the light of this narration that to attain purification of the soul is impossible without divine intervention and the humble request for it.

These are the only Prophetic narrations that this researcher was able to locate; there are however, a number which relate directly to the *nafs* itself and therefore, it is the task of the next section to survey such transmissions to shed further light on the nature of the *nafs* from the Islamic perspective.

³⁰⁸ It should also be noted that al-Nawawī (d. 626/1277) considers the meaning not to be preferential but indeed, “It [the soul] has no purifier (*muzakki*) except You.” Al-Nawawī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bi Sharḥ al-Nawawī*, vol. 17, p. 34.

2.3.2 The Concept of the Term *Nafs* within the *Ḥadīth* Literature

When surveying the vast material of the *ḥadīth* literature for the term '*nafs*' we find - quite expectedly - a huge number of transmissions that contain this term. However, as was noticed previously, many of these narrations utilise this word as a reflexive pronoun, in much the same way that we use in English 'myself', 'yourself', 'ourselves' etc. and as such, these usages will not be considered here.

On examining the remaining material however, we find many references to the negative aspects of the *nafs*. For example, in the *ḥadīth* discussed in the last section, in addition to the mention of the concept of *tazkiya*, we also find the phrase, "O Allāh, I seek shelter in You from ... a soul that cannot be satisfied (*nafs lā tashba*)"³⁰⁹, this being an indication of the *nafs*'s voracious appetite to fulfil its desires as alluded to earlier, which is a particular characteristic of the soul prone to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi 'l-sū*).³¹⁰ Indeed, al-Nawawī (d. 626/1277) comments that the meaning of this supplication is, "Seeking shelter from greed, avarice, voracity and the soul (*al-nafs*) having high hopes."³¹¹ Furthermore, the *nafs* in question in the supplication is non specific and may be the *nafs* of the person making the *du'ā* or those of others; in either case this is further evidence of the need of divine assistance in protecting oneself from the evils of the soul.³¹²

On a similar theme, in a famous public address made by the Prophet, known as '*khutbat al-ḥāja*', we find the phrase, "... We seek shelter in Allāh from the evil of our own souls (*shurūr anfusinā*) and our sinful deeds (*sayyi'āt a'mālinā*)..."³¹³ This once again is a direct reference to the negative qualities of the *nafs*; in fact the narration is extremely explicit in its choice of words, since the word '*shurūr*' is the plural of '*sharr*' meaning evil or wickedness, indicating the many types of iniquity found within the *nafs*. Similarly, this seems to allude to the

³⁰⁹ See Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, p. 1181; al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan al-Nasā'ī al-Ṣuḡhrā*, p. 743; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, pp. 1412-3 and al-Tamīmī (d. 354/965), Muḥammad [Ibn Ḥibbān], *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān* (2nd ed., 18 vols., Beirut, Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1993) vol. 3, p. 293 and al-Nawawī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bi Sharḥ al-Nawawī*, vol. 17, p. 34.

³¹⁰ See p. 61 and cf. pp. 65-7 above.

³¹¹ See p. 62 above.

³¹² See al-Ḥanafī (d. 792/1390), 'Alī b. 'Alī b. Muḥammad [Ibn Abū al-'Izz], *Sharḥ al-Taḥāwīyya fī 'l-Aqīda al-Salafiyya*, edited by Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākīr (Riyadh, Wizārat al-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyya wa 'l-Awqāf wa 'l-Da'wa wa 'l-Irshād, 1997) p. 356.

³¹³ For this particular phraseology and variations of it see Sijistānī, Sulaymān b. al-Ash'ath (Abū Dāwūd), *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* (Riyadh, Dār al-Salām, 1999) pp. 165-166 and 715; al-Tirmidhī, Muḥammad b. 'Īsā, *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī* (Riyadh, Dār al-Salām, 1999) pp. 266-7; al-Qazwīnī, Muḥammad b. Yazīd (Ibn Mājah), *Sunan Ibn Mājah* (Riyadh, Dār al-Salām, 1999) p. 271; al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan al-Nasā'ī al-Ṣuḡhrā*, pp. 198-9; Ibn Ḥanbal, Aḥmad, *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, p. 252;. It is also worth mentioning that al-Albānī (d. 1420/2000) considers both the narrations in *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* to be inauthentic (*ḍa'īf*) but since the concept of the evil of the soul (*sharr al-nafs*) is established in the remaining transmissions it can be considered to be an authentic concept. See al-Albānī (d. 1420/2000) Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn, *Ḍa'īf Sunan Abū Dāwūd* (Beirut, al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1991) pp. 108 and 503.

consequences of such evils as the very next phrase used is, "... We seek shelter in Allāh from ... our sinful deeds (*sayyi'āt a'mālinā*)...", as if to say that these sins that have been committed are no more than a product or a consequence of the evils of the soul. Once again there is the pedagogical aspect of teaching such phrases in a public arena and also, the concept that such negative qualities found within the soul prone to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi 'l-sū'*) will not be overcome except through seeking the assistance of the Creator of the soul, Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted.³¹⁴

Similarly, within the corpus of *ḥadīth* literature the dual potential of the *nafs* for both positive and negative qualities can be identified. The following narration illustrates this dichotomy; the Prophet Muḥammad is reported to have said:

Satan ties three knots on the nape of the neck of one of you when he sleeps, striking the place of every knot, [saying:] "The night is long so sleep." So if one of you awoke, remembered Allāh one knot is untied; then if you performed ablution (*wuḍū'*) another knot is untied and if you prayed another knot is untied. [Thus, such a person] will become energetic and genial (*ṭayyib al-nafs*) or otherwise he will be lazy and unpleasant (*khabīth al-nafs*).³¹⁵

In this narration we find two diametrically opposed notions regarding the *nafs*, i.e. those of goodness (*ṭīb*) and malevolence (*khubth*), which manifest themselves behaviourally in terms of geniality and unpleasantness. These are again examples of the soul's inclination to both 'good' and 'bad' as alluded to in verse (91:8). Moreover, the significance of Satanic influence is also mentioned here and seems to fit nicely with the description of the soul prone to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi 'l-sū'*) mentioned previously³¹⁶ and its inclination to devilish insinuation, which seems to interact at the 'metaphysical' level. Furthermore, this particular narration also suggests the role that 'physical' acts of worship can have on the *nafs* in changing its state and presumably, its purification, as this *ḥadīth* mentions specifically remembrance of Allāh (*dhikr*), ritual ablution (*wuḍū'*) and prayer (*ṣalāt*), these

³¹⁴ See footnote 119 above.

³¹⁵ See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, pp. 183 and 545; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, p. 316; Sijistānī, *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*, p. 195; al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan al-Nasā'ī al-Ṣuḡhrā*, p. 231; Ibn Ḥanbal, Aḥmad, *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, p. 553; al-Naysābūrī (d. 311/923), Muḥammad b. Ishāq [Ibn Khuzayma], *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Khuzayma* (4 vols., Beirut, al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1970) vol. 2, p. 174; al-Tamīmī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*, vol. 6, p. 293; al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449), Aḥmad b. ʿAli b. Muḥammad [Ibn Ḥajar], *Fatḥ al-Bārī bi Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Imām Abī ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad bin Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī*, edited by ʿAbd al-Qādir Shaybat al-Ḥamd (13 vols., Riyadh, n. pub., 2001) vol. 3, pp. 30-4 and al-Nawawī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bi Sharḥ al-Nawawī*, vol. 6, pp. 58-9.

³¹⁶ See pp. 65-7 above.

being righteous deeds associated with the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʿinna*), also mentioned previously.³¹⁷

The duality of the *nafs* is also alluded to in another extended narration which discusses the fate of the soul upon death; the Prophet is reported to have said:

The angels come to the dead person [upon death] and if he was righteous they say, “Exit O good soul (*nafs ṭayyiba*) that was in a good body; exit nobly and receive glad tidings of repose (*rawḥ*), benevolence (*rayḥān*) and a Lord Who is not wrathful.” This will continue being said to it until it exits [the body]. Then it will be elevated into the heavens and they will be opened for it. It will be said, “Who is this?” And they [the angels] will say, “It is such and such.” It will be said, “Welcome to the good soul that was in a good body; Enter nobly and receive glad tidings of repose, benevolence and a Lord Who is not wrathful” and this will continue being said to it until it reaches the heaven in which Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted resides.

If [however] he was wicked they say, “Exit O despicable soul (*nafs khabītha*) that was in a despicable body; Exit in disdain and receive tidings of scalding water and purulence and other forms and types [of punishment].” This will remain being said to it until it exits [the body]. Then it will be elevated into the heavens and they will not be opened for it. It will be said, “Who is this?” And they [the angels] will say, “It is such and such.” It will be said, “No welcome for a despicable soul that was in a despicable body, go back in disdain as the gates of the heavens will not be opened for you.” Then it will be sent [away] from the heavens and will go back to the grave.³¹⁸

In this detailed account of the fate of the soul after death we are given to contrasting images of the soul depending on its actions and state before death. On the one hand, the good soul (*nafs ṭayyiba*) will be encouraged to leave the body, being extolled with the good news of its entry into paradise and the pleasure of its Lord. This honorific position is enhanced by its ascension into the heavens, where it is welcomed and ultimately is favoured with being brought into the proximity of its Creator. This no doubt is reminiscent of the description of the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʿinna*) and the success (*falāḥ*) awarded to it. In contrast, the despicable soul (*nafs khabītha*) is granted no such luxury; indeed, it exits the body in humiliation, being informed of the torments that await it. Similarly, there is no welcome for it in the heavens and it is commanded to return to its grave in disgrace. Once again this seems to allude to the fate of the soul prone to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi 'l-sūʿ*) that has disgraced itself with continuous self interest in the worldly life.

Therefore to avoid this form of humiliation there are a number of narrations praising the combating of the soul and disciplining it. In fact, one of the greatest acts of worship in Islam,

³¹⁷ See al-Nawawī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bi Sharḥ al-Nawawī*, vol. 6, pp. 58-9 and pp. 69-72 above.

³¹⁸ See al-Qazwīnī, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, pp. 620-1; Ibn Ḥanbal, Aḥmad, *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, p. 643-4 and cf. Qurʾān (38:58).

that of struggle or jihad - usually associated with physical combat - takes on a new connotation in this context. The religious warrior (*al-mujāhid*) is no longer, merely a soldier in God's path but as the Prophet stated, "The religious warrior (*al-mujāhid*) is the one who struggles against his soul for the sake of Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted."³¹⁹ Thus, from this we can glean that one of the essential qualities of dealing with the *nafs* is to struggle and strive against it, so as to purify it and in doing so, the practitioner of this difficult task gains the privilege of being considered a combatant in the path of Allāh.

In a similar vein, it is reported that Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (d. 13/634), the famous Prophetic Companion and the first caliph after the death of the Prophet, said, "Whoever loathes his soul for the sake of Allāh [then] Allāh will save him from His wrath."³²⁰ Thus, having disdain for one's soul, particularly the state referred to as the soul prone to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi 'l-sū'*) and its contemptible actions, is considered praiseworthy in the process of disciplining it and ultimately purifying it.

In addition to struggling against one's own soul, commonly referred to as '*mujāhada*' and having contempt for the soul, a further course of action is found in the narrations related to the *nafs* - that of taking the soul to account or '*muḥāsaba*', as it is known in Arabic.³²¹ This concept is pivotal in the teaching of al-Muḥāsibī and in fact his name is said to be derived from this quality. It is interesting to note however, that this concept was also found in the formative period before him, as it is related that 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23/644), another famous Prophetic Companion and the second caliph in Islamic history is reported to have said:

Take your souls to account before they are taken to account; weigh your souls [actions] before they are weighed, as indeed, it will be easier for you in the Reckoning tomorrow that you take your souls to account today; adorn yourselves for the great display! On that day you will be brought forth and not even the most hidden secret will be concealed.³²²

³¹⁹ In some narrations, "The religious warrior (*al-mujāhid*) is the one who struggles against his soul in the obedience of Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted." See Ibn Abū al-Dunyā (d. 281/894), 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad, *Muḥāsabat al-Nafs*, ed. Abū Ḥātim 'Abd Allāh al-Sharqāwī (Beirut, Mu'assasat al-Kutub al-Thiqāfiyya, 1988) p. 72; Ibn Abū al-Dunyā (d. 281/894), 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad, *Muḥāsabat al-Nafs wa 'l-Izrā' 'Alayhā*, ed. Muṣṭafā b. 'Alī b. 'Iwaḍ (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1986) pp. 102-3; al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī*, p. 392 and Ibn Ḥanbal, Aḥmad, *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, p. 1795.

³²⁰ See Ibn Abū al-Dunyā, *Muḥāsabat al-Nafs*, ed. al-Sharqāwī, p. 47 and Ibn Abū al-Dunyā, *Muḥāsabat al-Nafs wa 'l-Izrā' 'Alayhā*, ed. 'Iwaḍ, p. 72.

³²¹ This concept will be dealt with in detail when discussing methodology of *tazkiya* later on. See pp. 297-304 below.

³²² See Ibn Abū al-Dunyā, *Muḥāsabat al-Nafs*, ed. al-Sharqāwī, p. 33 and Ibn Abū al-Dunyā, *Muḥāsabat al-Nafs wa 'l-Izrā' 'Alayhā*, ed. 'Iwaḍ, p. 22.

Thus, it can be seen that it is necessary to take the soul to account in this life in order to make the reckoning in front of Allāh easier, since any sins committed would have had repentance made for them and as such would be forgiven, making them insignificant on the Day of Judgement. Once again it is easy to see how this along with other qualities mentioned above is an intrinsic component in the process of purifying the soul.

Despite the idea of implementing punitive measures on the *nafs* as a form of disciplining it, described in the aforementioned narrations, we also find a sense of balance in this process, as is related in the following *ḥadīth* regarding fasting in which the Prophet is reported to have asked ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amr al-‘Āṣ (d. between 63/683 - 77/696):

“Do you fast continuously and pray the night prayer?” To which he replied, “Yes.” The Prophet responded, “If you [continue] to do that the eyes will be overwhelmed and the soul will be exhausted (*nafihat lahu al-nafs*). Do not fast continuously; fasting three days [a month is the equivalent of] fasting continuously.” So he said, “I am able to do more.” To which the Prophet replied, “Then fast the fast of Dāwūd, peace be upon him, who would fast one day and break his fast the next” ...”³²³

Thus, forcing oneself into a state of continuous, physically demanding acts of worship, such as fasting - which is normally considered a highly effective way of disciplining the soul - is not recommended, as ultimately it has a negative effect, as the *ḥadīth* itself suggests, “... the soul will be exhausted (*nafihat lahu al-nafs*) ...” By implication also, this cannot be the method of purifying or disciplining the soul as otherwise this narration would have indicated as much; on the contrary this process must be balanced, bearing in mind both the physical and emotional needs of the person, whilst combating the negative qualities to which all souls are prone.

Perhaps on a more positive note we find that the Prophet is also reported to have said, “Being rich is not [due to] having a lot of material wealth but being [truly] rich is [having] richness of the soul (*ghinā al-nafs*).”³²⁴ This is a very significant indication of the importance of purification of the soul, as it alludes to the true meaning of happiness in the worldly life. Many people may consider having vast amounts of money to be understood as being wealthy and similarly, may consider that a penniless person is poor. However, this *ḥadīth* clarifies Islam’s position regarding being rich; in reality the person who thinks that

³²³ See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, p. 318; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, p. 6761; al-Tamīmī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*, vol. 14, p. 118, and al-‘Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, ed. Shaybat al-Ḥamd, vol. 4, pp. 264-6.

³²⁴ See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, p. 1119; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, p. 422; al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī*, p. 541; al-Qazwīnī, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, p. 604; Ibn Ḥanbal, Aḥmad, *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, p. 567; al-Tamīmī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*, vol. 14, p. 101; al-‘Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, ed. Shaybat al-Ḥamd, vol. 11, pp. 276-7 and al-Nawawī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bi Sharḥ al-Nawawī*, vol. 7, p. 125.

material wealth is in fact the true source of being rich is fooled, as he is not satisfied with what he has been given. Such a person continues trying to accumulate ‘wealth’ and as such all forms of temporal benefit, to the extent that they are indifferent as to the source of this ‘wealth’ due to their overwhelming greed; in this sense according to the above narration such a person is indeed ‘poor’ and not wealthy at all. Alternatively, if a person suffices himself with what he has been given, is satisfied and content with it, not desiring an increase in it, then this is the true meaning of ‘wealth’ since such a person does not feel ‘in need’ due to his satisfaction with what he has.³²⁵

In this regard al-Qurṭubī comments:

The meaning of the *ḥadīth* is that richness that is beneficial, great and praiseworthy is richness of the soul (*ghinā al-nafs*); this means that if a person’s soul is content, it refrains from desires, is enhanced and becomes superior, attaining respectability, prestige, honour and praise, which is more than the wealth that is acquired by someone who has poverty of the soul (*faqīr al-nafs*) due to his greed, as this embroils him in contemptible matters and despicable acts due to his base aspirations and his miserliness; [such a person is] continuously condemned by people, his position being diminished [in their sight], thus becoming the lowest of the low. As for the person who is described as having richness of the soul (*ghinā al-nafs*), he is content with what Allāh has provided him, he does not seek an increase that is more than his need, nor is he insistent or demanding in his request; indeed he is satisfied with what Allāh has ordained for him.³²⁶

This ‘poverty’ and ‘wealth’ is reminiscent of the characteristics of both the soul prone to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi ’l-sū’*) and the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭma’inna*) respectively. As for the first, it remains self-serving, being controlled by its desires to the extent that accumulation - and consequent consumption - is its primary goal, to the extent that it ignores its duties to its Creator. On the contrary, the outstanding quality of those endowed with richness of the soul is their satisfaction with God, this being one of the most outstanding qualities of the tranquil soul, as described above. Thus, we can equate poverty of the soul as being a characteristic of the soul prone to evil and richness of the soul to be a characteristic of the tranquil soul. Similarly, it stands to reason that eradicating the soul of such ‘poverty’ and adorning it with ‘richness’ is a major goal of *tazkiyat al-nafs*.

³²⁵ See al-‘Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, ed. Shaybat al-Ḥamd, vol. 11, p. 277 and al-Nawawī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bi Sharḥ al-Nawawī*, vol. 7, p. 125.

³²⁶ Al-‘Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, ed. Shaybat al-Ḥamd, vol. 11, p. 277.

2.3.3 Section Summary

Having examined Islam's secondary source of thought and Law, namely the *sunna* as preserved in the *ḥadīth* literature, we have found another source of valuable information regarding the terms '*tazkiya*' and '*nafs*'. Concerning the term '*tazkiya*', after initial disappointment regarding an inauthentic narration that contained the compound phrase '*tazkiyat al-nafs*', another narration shed further light on the process and means of *tazkiya*. This narration, in the form of a Prophetic supplication, provided further clarification on a number of issues; firstly, that even the Prophet himself sought shelter and assistance in Allāh regarding the process of purifying the soul. Indeed, Allāh was further qualified as the source and agent of this process but it was also found that the phraseology of the supplication also did not rule out the possibility of other agents taking a pro-active role in the purification process. At the same time however this narration seemed to allude to the idea that ultimately this process would not be completed except by placing one's trust in the guardianship of God, the Creator of the soul and "... the best of those who purify it (*zakkāhā*) ..." ³²⁷

With regard to the term '*nafs*' it was also found that many of the concepts discussed in the section concerning the Qur'ān were also reinforced. Firstly, the negative qualities of the *nafs* that are so indicative of the soul prone to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi 'l-sū'*) were encountered; for example, the *nafs* is clearly characterised by iniquity (*sharr*) and this innate quality leads to sins and misdeeds, which are ultimately so destructive in the Hereafter. As such, the importance of seeking divine assistance was also stressed, once again due to the fact that ultimately these negative qualities would not be overcome except through the intervention of the Creator of the soul and "... the best of those who purify it (*zakkāhā*) ..." ³²⁸

Similarly, the dual potentiality of the soul was also seen in the *ḥadīth* literature; such phrases as genial (*ṭayyib al-nafs*) and unpleasant (*khabīth al-nafs*), the 'good' soul (*nafs ṭayyiba*) and 'despicable' soul (*nafs khabītha*) and richness of the soul (*ghinā al-nafs*) and poverty of the soul (*faqīr al-nafs*) were identified, all of which are indications of the soul prone to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi 'l-sū'*) and the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭma'inna*) respectively. The transformation of such negative aspects of the soul to their positive counterparts was also discussed and certain disciplinary practices such as having contempt for the soul (*maqt al-nafs*), struggling against one's own soul (*mujāhadat al-nafs*) and taking

³²⁷ See pp. 80-1 above.

³²⁸ Ibid. and see section 2.3.2 above.

the soul to account (*muḥāsabat al-nafs*) were also identified. Despite this, it was also seen that there has to be a degree of balance in this process of purification as the emotional, physical and spiritual needs of the human being need to be considered, or in the words of the Prophet, “... the soul will be exhausted (*nafihat lahu al-nafs*) ...”³²⁹

As such, in many ways the definition proposed at the end of the section concerning the Qurʾān, i.e. “the growth, augmentation, reform, development and purification of the human soul, via divine guidance, Prophetic example and individual effort, to attain its most elevated form, that of the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʾinna*)” has not changed greatly. However, despite this our understanding of the process has, since this purification to bring about a ‘richness of the soul’ will not occur except by eliminating its ‘iniquity’ by a balanced and integrated process of ‘striving against it’ and ‘taking it to account’.

Having surveyed the Arabic language and Islam’s primary literary sources to gain a greater understanding of ‘*tazkiyat al-nafs*’, it is appropriate to examine the works of Muslim scholars to shed light upon their understanding of this term, bearing in mind their familiarity with these same sources and this is the goal of the next section.

2.4 The Concept of the Terms *Tazkiya* and *Nafs* in the view of Muslim Scholars

Having surveyed Islam’s revelatory sources and gained an understanding of the presentation of *tazkiyat al-nafs* therein, it is now equally appropriate that we examine the views of its scholarly circles so as to extend further our knowledge of this subject matter. At the same time however, this discussion is by no means intended to be exhaustive and comprehensive, as this itself would require a separate work. Instead, a selection of opinions will be presented here, to add to the discussion so far, in the sense that there will be an attempt to represent views that have not already been mentioned or have their own specific significance, thus adding to the richness of the discussion of this intriguing topic. In addition, the opinions discussed are merely representative of a wide range of similar views that exist and as such, are not meant to represent a particular stance or school of thought. Similarly, little commentary will be provided due to the lucidity of many of the quotes, to let such opinions ‘speak for themselves’. It is also worth noting that this section should be read in conjunction with the last two sections as many scholarly opinions were quoted previously, whilst examining the textual evidence found in the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* and as such, are very much part of the scholarly debate concerning the concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs*.

³²⁹ See section 2.3.2 above.

Finally, in keeping with the methodology of the previous sections each of the terms ‘*tazkiya*’ and ‘*nafs*’ will be discussed separately before discussing their compound derivative.

2.4.1 The Concept of the Term *Tazkiya* in the view of Muslim Scholars

The goal of this section is to clarify the views of Muslim scholars regarding the concept of the term ‘*tazkiya*’ both in its general linguistic usage and in its specific terminological usage within the *sharī‘a* context. One of the most prolific medieval scholars of Islam was the celebrated *shaykh al-Islām* Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) and bearing in mind his extensive writings it is not surprising that he also discussed this topic. Concerning the linguistic considerations of this term he said:

Al-tazkiya is to make something pure (*zakiyyan*), either in its essence or in terms of belief (*al-‘itiqād*) [in it] or informing (*al-khabar*) [regarding it], in the same way that it is said, “I straightened it (*‘addaltahu*)”; if you straightened it in itself or in terms of people’s belief regarding it. He the Exalted says, “And do not claim purity for your souls (*wa lā tuzakkū anfusakum*) [53:32]”, i.e. [do not] inform [others] of their purity.³³⁰

In addition to discussing the linguistic implications of the word ‘*tazkiya*’ Ibn Taymiyya also makes an important point; that *tazkiya* is not only a process of purification but indeed, this purification requires that not only ‘good’ qualities are encouraged but that ‘bad’ characteristics are eliminated. In this regard he says:

The origin of *al-zakāt* is an increase in good; it is said, “The crop increased (*zakā al-zar‘*) and the wealth increased (*zakā al-māl*)” if it grew, and good will not grow except via the relinquishing of evil, in the same way that a crop will not grow (*yazkū*) until the weeds are removed from it. Similarly, the soul (*al-nafs*) and deeds (*al-a‘māl*) will not be purified (*lā tazkū*) until that which contradicts is removed; a man will not be purified (*mutazakkiyan*) until he has relinquished evil and whoever does not relinquish evil will not ever be pure (*zākiyan*), as indeed evil pollutes the soul (*al-nafs*) and defiles it.³³¹

Regarding the process of purification he recommends a ‘practical’ approach³³² to the problem beginning with the very essence of faith and moving on to the practical aspects of religious life. For example he says:

³³⁰ See Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm, *Majmū‘at al-Fatāwā*, edited by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-‘Āṣimī (Riyadh, al-Ri‘āsa al-‘Āmma li Shu‘ūn al-Ḥaramayn al-Sharīfayn, 1984) vol. 10, pp. 97-8 and Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, pp. 9-10.

³³¹ See Ibn Taymiyya, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, pp. 42-3; Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, p. 9; ‘Abd al-Laṭīf, *Ma‘ālim fī ‘l-Sulūk wa Tazkiyat al-Nufūs*, p. 58 and Zarabozo, *Purification of the Soul*, p. 75.

³³² This approach, which involves an all-encompassing practice of Islam has been popularly promoted by a variety of contemporary scholars but will not be examined in great detail here, as the goal of the current thesis

As such, monotheism (*tawhīd*) and faith (*īmān*) are the greatest things through which the soul (*al-nafs*) is purified (*tatazakkā*), whereas polytheism (*shirk*) is the greatest thing which defiles it. It is also purified by righteous deeds and acts of charity and all of this is what has been mentioned by the predecessors. They said, “He who is purified is indeed successful [87:14]”, is he who is purified from polytheism and [purified] from disobedience through repentance.³³³

Of the contemporary scholars who have discussed the topic of *tazkiya* Amin Ahsan Islahi’s account of the topic is easily one of the most lucid and comprehensive studies. In the following extended quote he clarifies the effect of *tazkiya* on the human being:

The action of *tazkiyah* on different things will appear in different forms on the surface. On material objects it will take one form and on abstract objects quite another. But this apparent difference will not change the reality. The spirit of purification, growth and development and its final perfection will be visible in its actions everywhere. For instance the action of *tazkiyah* may be performed on a tract of land and also on the inner self of a person. Although due to variations in the fields of action, there will be a difference in the form, yet in reality and in its object there will be no difference between the two. The *tazkiyah* of the tract of land will comprise clearing it of the weeds, brushwood and brambles, levelling it, ploughing it to make it soft and porous, then watering it so that it may become capable of developing the healthy seeds of some sort in keeping with its natural capacity, and take it to the final stage of blossoming and fruition. The *tazkiyah* of the inner self of a person involves eradication of erroneous thought and false assumptions, the correction and levelling of the perversions and angularities created by the corrupt morality and bad habits; removal of the ills produced by the blind emulations and ritualism; treatment and cure of the evil of drooping spirits and cowardice created by craving for ephemeral carnal pleasures so that his eyes may be opened and his mind may become capable of thinking freely, his drooping spirits may be raised, his habits may be reformed and through development of his mental, moral and spiritual powers according to his natural capabilities, may attain the heights God endowed him with to reach. Technically it conveys the sense of checking ourselves from erroneous tendencies and learnings and turning them to the path of virtue and piety

is to study the specific approach of al-Muḥāsibī. However, the researcher draws the attention of the reader to the following works that are representative of this approach. They include: Abū Fāris, Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* (‘Ammān, Dār al-Furqān, 2000); Āl ‘Abd al-Laṭīf, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Muḥammad, *Ma‘ālim fī ‘l-Sulūk wa Tazkiyat al-Nufūs* (Riyadh, Dār al-Waṭan, 1993); Al-Ashqar, ‘Umar Sulaymān, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs* (Amman, Dār al-Nafā’is, 1992); Farīd, Aḥmad, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* (Alexandria, Dār al-‘Aqīda li al-Turāth, 1998) and *The Purification of the Soul*, translation from the Arabic (3rd ed., London, Al-Firdous Ltd., 1998); Ḥawwā, Sa‘īd, *al-Mustakhlaṣ fī Tazkiyat al-Anfus* (4th edition, Cairo, Dār al-Islām, 1988); Karzūn, Anas Aḥmad, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs* (2 vols., Beirut, Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1997); Al-Ṭakhīs, Sa‘d b. Muḥammad, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* (Riyadh, Dār al-Ṣami‘i, 1992); Al-Yūsuf, ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs wa Mu‘ālahaj al-Āfāt* (Riyadh, Dār al-‘Āṣima, 1996) and Zarabozo, Jamaal al-Din, *Purification of the Soul - Concept, Process and Means* (Denver, Al-Basheer Publications, 2002).

³³³ Ibn Taymiyya, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, p. 48.

(fear of God's displeasure) and developing it to attain the stage of perfection.³³⁴

Regarding the vast scope of the purification process he comments:

On the contrary *tazkiyah* deals with all the apparent and hidden aspects of our selves. It critically judges all the powers and the capabilities of which we are constituted, discusses all our emotions and feelings and corrects and reforms them; it takes stock of all the variegated and multifaceted ties that we are bound with, and creates an order in and regulates them all under a particular principle and regulation. Our thoughts, our apprehensions, our inclinations our movements, our eating and drinking, our engagements, entertainments, and interests, the daily routines of our lives, in short, no department and nothing that touches our lives is outside the pale of *tazkiyah*.³³⁵

Concerning the object of the purification process he is no doubt, as he states:

Tazkiyah does not demand only that our soul may somehow be subordinated to the Commandments of the *Shari'ah*, but its real demand lies in breaking this unruly steed of our soul in such a way that it carries out the orders of God and His apostle in the best possible manner. It does not only demand from us the service where the slave comes to imagine that he is beholding his Lord with his eyes (physical vision). In short, it means that *tazkiyah* places before us the demand of *Iman* or belief, *Islam* or submission and *ihsan* or utmost sincerity, at the same time. It demands that we believe in God with all His attributes, also that we obey His Commandments in every sphere of our lives and above all that this belief and obedience may not be formal and superficial but fully conscious and deeply sincere in which our hearts must coordinate with our physique.³³⁶

Similarly, he considers the process of *tazkiya* to be a continuous one, where the human being continually strives for perfection. In this regard he comments:

This nature of *tazkiyah* makes it a perpetual striving and a continuous struggle without any break or a period of rest. In this journey there is no turn or stage which may be mistaken for the last lap of the journey the destination where one may sojourn a while or become permanently at ease. At every stage in this striving one goes on looking for greater excellence and higher standards and nowhere his eyes can come to rest on any degree of excellence. With the greater polish of the deeds, the morals and the exterior and the inner self, the fineness of morals and the exterior and the inner self, the fineness of tastes, the degree of sensibility and keenness of eye-sight also progresses by leaps and bounds, with the result that no sooner has one

³³⁴ Islahi, Amin Ahsan, *Self Purification and Development* (Delhi, Adam Publishers, 2000) pp. 19-20.

³³⁵ Ibid., p. 21.

³³⁶ Ibid., p. 23.

washed the old stains off his raiment some more stains come in sight to be cleansed.³³⁷

Finally, one of the most important roles that *tazkiya* can play is in developing the individual's personality and by building his character. Concerning this aspect of the purification process Khurshid Ahmed says:

Tazkiya means literally the purification or the cleansing of all those things which are unwholesome and unwelcome and unwanted. At the same time it endows the human being with all those things that are essential for growth and development, for blossoming and flowering. The *tazkiya* of a person would mean the developing of his character, his thought, his behaviour; it would mean the moulding of his entire flow of actions to free them from those evils, those unwholesome traits which are obnoxious, undesirable in the eyes of Allah, and to endow them with all those virtues which Allah wants to flourish in human life. *Tazkiya*, one might say, is a "short-hand" word for the entire concept of character-building.³³⁸

2.4.2 The Concept of the Term *Nafs* in the view of Muslim Scholars

One of the oldest discussions that has occupied the minds of men from the earliest time is the question concerning the essence of humanity: what is the soul? Islahi alludes to this when he says:

Evidently enough the theme of *tazkiyah* is the human soul. But what is soul is an important question stressed in the Islamic philosophy and in that of *Jahiliyah* too, well enough. The arch of the doorway to the temple in ancient Athens bore the inscription of the sayings of Socrates: "Man know thyself!" This is a pointer to the fact that in Greek philosophy knowledge and cognizance of the soul was considered of fundamental importance.³³⁹

This being the case it is hardly surprising that Muslim scholarship has also addressed this fundamental question and indeed, due to the nature of this enquiry, theologians discussed this issue at an early stage. One of the first and still most popular 'orthodox' creeds of Islam was that set down by Abū Ja'far al-Ṭahāwī (d. 321/933). In a classical exposition of this creed Ibn Abū al-ʿIzz al-Ḥanafī (d. 792/1390) alludes to the variety of opinions in this debate before clarifying the 'orthodox' position when he says:

There is a difference of opinion regarding the soul (*al-rūḥ*) as to what it is. Some say it is a body and some say it is an accident (*ʿaraḍ*)³⁴⁰. Others say that they do not know what it is, either a substance or an accident. Some say

³³⁷ Ibid., pp. 23-4.

³³⁸ See <http://www.salaam.co.uk/knowledge/aspects.php>, Ahmed, Khurshid, "Some Aspects of Character Building".

³³⁹ Islahi, *Self Purification and Development*, p. 25.

³⁴⁰ This of course is in the terminology of the philosophers being the opposite of a substance (*jawhar*).

that the soul is nothing more than a balance of the four natural components [i.e. earth, air, fire and water]. Some others say that it is pure blood free from impurities and putridity. Some say that it is the natural heat that is life itself. Some say that it is a non-composite substance spread throughout the animal world that drives and organizes that world and that it is not divided into essence and structure, being existent in every animal of the world, as one. Others say that it is the breath that enters and exits during breathing and yet others have further opinions ...

The Qurʾān, *sunna*, consensus of the Companions and rational evidences prove that the soul is a body which differs in essence to that of the tangible body. It is a heavenly body of light that is agile, animate and is motile. It passes through the substance of the limbs in the same way that water spreads through a rose, or the way that oil diffuses through an olive, or the way fire enflames a coal. As long as these limbs remain healthy to accept the effects of this delicate body [the soul], this delicate body remains diffused throughout the limbs and drives effects, such as sensory perception, motion and volition. However, if these [limbs] become compromised due to an imbalance in the body and it becomes unable to accept the effects [of the soul on it], the soul will separate from the body and leave for the sphere of souls (*ʿālam al-arwāḥ*).³⁴¹

In a similar attempt to define the *nafs* in a terminological manner, seemingly basing his discourse upon verse (39:42) and the commentary of Ibn ʿAbbās (d. c. 67-8/686-8) mentioned previously³⁴², we find the following text from al-Jurjāni (d. 816/1413):

It is an ethereal, delicate essence that carries the life force, sensory perception and motion; al-Ḥakīm called this the animal soul (*al-rūḥ al-ḥayawāniyya*). As such it is an illuminating essence within the body, so at death its light is detached from the internal and external parts of the body. As for during sleep it is detached from the external part of the body and not the internal, which confirms that death and sleep are of one category, as death is a complete cessation whereas sleep is an partial one. Thus, it is confirmed that the All Powerful and the All Wise has connected the essence of the soul to the body in three ways: firstly, if the light of the soul reaches all parts of the body, both the external and the internal, then this is [termed] wakefulness; if its light was from the external part of the body and not the internal, then this is sleep, or [if it is detached] completely, then this is death.³⁴³

In addition to the theological attempts to define the *nafs* there have also been conceptual ideas regarding the soul from other sections of Muslim scholastic circles. The most obvious of these is the Sufi community. Bearing in mind the intrinsic nature of the subject matter and its relation to Sufism it is particularly important to spend some time discussing these

³⁴¹ Al-Ḥanafī, *Sharḥ al-Ṭaḥāwīyya fī 'l-ʿAqīda al-Salafiyya*, ed. by Shākir, pp. 384-88 and Zarabozo, *Purification of the Soul*, pp. 58-9.

³⁴² See p. 51 above.

³⁴³ Al-Jurjānī, *al-Taʿrīfāt*, p. 239.

ideas. The main concept of the Sufis is that *nafs* is the seat of every blameworthy quality; seemingly equating it entirely with the state of the soul termed ‘the soul prone to evil (*al-nafs la ammāra bi 'l-sū'*)’ in the Qurʾān. In this regard, we find the following statement from one of the early practitioners of Sufism, who discussed the *nafs* in detail, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. ca. 300/910), who states:

It is a ‘land (*arḍ*)’ of debauchery, inclined to carnal appetite after carnal appetite and desire after desire; it does not gain calmness nor does it gain stability. Its actions vary, none of them resembling the other; one time it is servitude and another it is divinity, one time it is surrender and another it is domination, one time it is incapacity and another it is capability. So if the soul is contented and disciplined it will become obedient.³⁴⁴

Another of the early Sufi masters Abū Saʿīd al-Kharrāz (d. 286/899) elucidates the importance of seeking divine aid when dealing with this ‘internal enemy’ and clarifies exactly how the soul should be treated when he says:

From the characteristics of the truthful (*al-ṣādiq*) in intending Allāh the Exalted, is that he calls his soul (*al-nafs*) to Allāh the Exalted’s obedience, seeking His pleasure and if it responds he praises Allāh the Exalted and treats it [the soul] well. If however, it does not respond regarding that which pleases Allāh, or he sees it slow [to respond] then he prevents it from its beloved in this life, opposes it regarding what it desires, takes it as an enemy for Allāh’s sake and complains to Allāh about it until He reforms it for him... Thus, it is related that some scholars said, ‘Indeed I know that part of my reforming of my soul is my knowing its vices.’ As such it is sufficient evil that person knows a fault in his own soul and doesn’t correct it.³⁴⁵

Commenting on the importance of reforming and purifying this base form of the soul and realising the true potential of one’s own humanity al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234) states:

Whoever knows the essence of the soul (*al-nafs*) and its deceptions, also knows that he has no power over it except by seeking the assistance of its Lord and Creator. As such, the devotee will not fully realise his humanity until he casts aside his animal instincts with knowledge and uprightness, by being careful to observe his excesses and his negligence. Through this his

³⁴⁴ Al-Tirmidhī (d. ca. 300/910), Muḥammad b. ʿAlī [al-Ḥakīm], *Nawādir al-Uṣūl* (Istanbul, n. pub., 1876) p. 201 and al-Najjār, *al-Taṣawwuf al-Nafsī* (1984) p. 42.

³⁴⁵ See al-Kharrāz (d. 286/899), Abū Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-Ṣidq*, edited by ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (Cairo, Dār al-Maʿārif, n. d.) pp. 35-37; *Kitāb al-Ṣidq*, edited and translated by A. J. Arberry as “*The Book of Truthfulness*” (London, Oxford University Press, 1937) pp. 12-13 [Arabic], p. 10 [English] and Murād, *al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī - Riyāḍa Rūḥiyya Khālīṣa* (Cairo, Maktabat al-Anjalū al-Miṣriyya, 1989) pp. 173-4.

humanity will be enhanced, he will comprehend the satanic characteristics within him, the blameworthy qualities and the perfection of his humanity.³⁴⁶

Regarding the many faults of the soul³⁴⁷, its positive/negative duality and its deceptive nature, the renowned Sufi and eponym of the Qādirī Sufi brotherhood, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1156) states:

Among the spiritual dangers posed by the lower self (*āfāt al-nafs*), is its dependence on acquiring praise, a good reputation, and the approval of fellow creatures. To that end, it is even prepared to endure the burdens imposed by acts of worshipful service (*ʿibādāt*). In order to do so, it must resort to ostentation (*riyāʿ*) and hypocrisy (*nifāq*). The symptom of this is apparent in its return to laziness and indifference, as soon as the performance is over, along with the risk of criticism from other people.

You will not become clearly aware of the spiritual dangers posed by your lower self (*nafs*), its polytheistic association (*shirk*), its pretension and its falsehood, unless you undergo a process of intense examination and assessment, designed to probe the roots of its pretentious behaviour. This is because it will speak in the manner of the fearful, as long as you are not compelled to experience fear, but if you need it [to respond correctly] in situations where fear is appropriate, you will find it feeling comfortably secure. It will speak in the manner of the righteous (*abrār*), as long as you are not being tested for true devotion (*taqwā*), but if you need it then, and call upon it to satisfy the preconditions of true devotion (*taqwā*), you will find it polytheistic (*mushrika*), hypocritically ostentatious (*murāʿiya*), and vainly conceited (*muʿjaba*). It will seem to fit the description of those who truly understand (*ʿārifīn*), as long as you do not need to explain what something really means, but if you ask it to supply that information, you will find it telling lies. It will pretend to be one of those who are genuinely certain (*mūqinīn*) of their claim, as long as you are not tested for sincerity (*ikhlaṣ*). It will insist that it is one of those who are modestly unassuming (*mutawāḍiʿīn*), as long as it is not presented with opposition to its passionate desire, in an anger-provoking situation.

It will likewise lay claim to generosity, magnanimity, altruism, liberality, affluence, chivalry (*futuwwa*), and other such praiseworthy characteristics; the characteristics of the saints (*awliyāʿ*); the spiritual deputies (*abdāl*), and the spiritually eminent (*aʿyān*) from motives of desire, frivolity and foolishness. If you demand proof of all that, and put it to the test, you will find that it resembles nothing more than the

³⁴⁶ Al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234), ʿAbd al-Qāhir b. ʿAbd Allāh [sic. ʿUmar b. ʿAbd Allāh], *Kitāb ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif* (2nd ed., Beirut, Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1984) p. 453 and Murād, Saʿīd, *al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī - Riyāḍa Rūḥiyya Khālīṣa*, p. 181.

³⁴⁷ These are enumerated as being as many as 68. See http://www.crescentlife.com/spirituality/blemishes_of_nafs.htm, al-Jerrahi, Tosun Bayrak, “68 Blemishes of the Nafs”.

mirage (*sarāb*) of an oasis, which the thirsty traveller supposes to be water, until he reaches it and finds that it is really nothing at all. If there had been any truthfulness (*ṣidq*) and sincerity (*ikhlaṣ*) present, if its word had indeed been correct, and its tongue had spoken the truth, it would not have put on a fancy display, designed to impress mere creatures, who have no power to cause it either harm or benefit. Its actions would have been appropriate, under the test conditions, and its words would have matched its deeds.³⁴⁸

In dealing with such faults of the soul Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) enlightens us regarding his own personal account:

One day I asked *shaykh al-Islām* Ibn Taymiyya, may Allah have mercy on him, about this matter and how to eliminate faults and occupy oneself with the cleansing of one's path. The gist of his reply was that the self is like a garbage pile: the more you dig in it, the more of it comes out to the surface; if you can pave a pathway over it and go past it, do so, and do not preoccupy yourself with digging into it for you shall never reach its bottom because the more you dig the more that surfaces. The similitude of the faults of the souls (*āfāt al-nafs*) is like that of snakes and scorpions in the path of a traveller; if he started to examine the road for them and was preoccupied with killing them he would be halted and never be able to make progress. However, your aspiration should be to progress on your journey and to avert yourself from them [the faults] and not to pay any attention to them. However, if you are faced with something that prevents your journey then kill it and then continue on your way.³⁴⁹

Bearing in mind the prolific writings of the celebrated 'Proof of Islam' (*Hujjat al-Islām*) Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111), it is not surprising to find that he has commented on the concept of the *nafs* and in doing so he discusses both the previous concepts of the *nafs*, as well as the states of the *nafs*, saying:

Nafs: It also has several meanings, two of which concern us here; first, it means the powers of anger and sexual appetite in a human being, which will be explained later, this usage being mostly found among the people of *taṣawwuf* [Sufis], who take "*nafs*" as the comprehensive word for all the blameworthy characteristics in the human being. That is why they say, 'One must certainly do battle with the ego and break it', as is referred to in the *ḥadīth*, "Your worst enemy is your *nafs* which lies between your flanks."³⁵⁰

³⁴⁸ <http://www.students.missouri.edu/lists/muslim-l/0460.html>

³⁴⁹ Al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350), Muḥammad b. Abū Bakr b. Ayyūb [Ibn al-Qayyim], *Madārij al-Sālikīn bayn Manāzil "Iyyāka Naʿbud wa Iyyāka Nastaʿīn"*, edited by Muḥammad al-Muṭaṣim bi Allāh al-Baghdādī (4th ed., 3 vols., Beirut, Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1997) vol. 2, p. 299.

³⁵⁰ Al-ʿIrāqī (d. 806/1404) says it is in al-Bayhaqī on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās. However, its chain of transmission contains Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ghazwān, who is one of the forgers. See Al-Ghazālī

The second meaning of *nafs* is the delicate entity [the soul] we have already mentioned, the human being in reality, his self and his essence. However, it is described differently according to its different states. If it assumes calmness under command and has removed from itself the tumult caused by the onslaught of passion, it is called ‘the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʿinna*)’, as the Exalted said regarding it [89:27-30], “O tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʿinna*), return to your Lord content [with Him] (*rāḍiya*) and pleasing [to Him] (*marḍiyya*), so enter into [the ranks of] My devotees and enter My paradise.” In its first meaning of the *nafs* one does not envisage its return to Allāh, as it is far removed from Him and is from ‘the party of Satan’. However, when it does not achieve calmness, yet resists the base soul (*al-nafs al-shahwāniyya*), objecting to it, it is called ‘the self-reproaching soul’ (*al-nafs al-lawwāma*), because it rebukes its owner for his deficiencies in worshipping its Master, as the Exalted said regarding it, [75:1-2], “Do not swear [an oath] by the self-reproaching soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāma*).” If it gives up all protest and surrenders itself in total obedience to the call of passions and enticement of Satan, it is named ‘the soul prone to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi ʾl-sūʾ*)’ as the Exalted said regarding it, by way of informing regarding Yūsuf and the vizier’s wife [12:53], “And I do not absolve my own self [of blame], as indeed, the [human] soul is prone to evil (*inna ʾl-nafs la ammāra bi ʾl-sūʾ*), except when my Lord bestows mercy, as indeed my Lord is the Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful”, which could be taken to refer to the soul in its first meaning. As such, the *nafs* in the first meaning is absolutely blameworthy, whereas in the second meaning it is praiseworthy, being the essence and reality of the human being that has cognisance of Allāh and all other particulars.³⁵¹

Finally, a contemporary scholar Karzūn, attempts to combine the various elements of the above discussion when he summarises, “*Al-nafs*: is something internal within the human being, whose essence cannot be comprehended; it is susceptible to being directed to good and bad, and encompasses many of the human characteristics and qualities that have a manifest effect on human behaviour.”³⁵²

2.4.3 The Concept of the Term *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* in the view of Muslim Scholars

Some Muslim scholars would argue that not only is *tazkiyat al-nafs* an intrinsic part of the Islamic teaching but indeed it is the ultimate objective of this religion as Saʿīd Murād comments, “The goal that Islam strives to fulfil regarding mankind, in terms of belief and rectitude, is to combine in the individual travelling along such paths, correct belief and

(d. 505/1111), Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad [Abū Ḥāmid], *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn* (5 vols., Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2001) vol. 3, p. 4.

³⁵¹ Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 4-5.

³⁵² Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, p. 16.

methodology, so that he can be elevated to the rank of the 'people of purity' (*ahl al-ṣafāʾ*). This is fulfilled by struggling against the soul (*al-nafs*) and training it."³⁵³

Similarly, since this is one of the main roles - if not the main role - of the manifestation of Islam, as we have seen previously, one of the fundamental tasks of the Prophets and Messengers was also to purify the souls of their followers. In this regard, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) states:

Purification of the souls (*tazkiyat al-nufūs*) is more severe and more difficult than treating the body; so whoever purified his soul by training (*riyāḍa*) and disciplining (*mujāhada*) [it] and spiritual retreat (*khalwa*) in a manner that was not brought by the Messengers then he is like a sick person who attempts to treat himself using his own opinion. And how does his opinion compare to that of a physician? The Messengers are the physicians of the heart and as such, there is no way to purify them or reform them except [by adopting] their method, putting yourself in their hands, with absolute compliance and submission to them.³⁵⁴

Continuing on this theme and developing it to express the scope and nature of purification of the soul Saʿīd Ḥawwā states:

Tazkiyat al-nafs is one of the tasks of the prophets, it is the goal of the righteous and through it will be salvation or destruction. *Tazkiya* linguistically has two meanings: [firstly,] purification (*taḥīr*) and [secondly] growth (*namuw*). Similarly, it has the same meaning terminologically, as purification of the soul (*zakāt al-nafs*) means its cleansing (*taḥīruḥā*) from sicknesses and faults, its realisation is through spiritual stations (*maqāmāt*) and its [the soul's] adoption of [divine] names and attributes. Thus, *tazkiya* in summary is cleansing, realisation and adoption. Its means are legally legitimate and its essence and fruits are the *sharīʿa*. Its effect is seen in one's behaviour, in one's relationship with Allāh the Mighty and Exalted, in one's relationship with the creation and in one's control of the limbs with regard to Allāh's command.³⁵⁵

In addition to this a number of contemporary scholars have attempted to elucidate this concept further. For example, ʿUmar al-Ashqar said:

Tazkiyat al-nafs terminologically means the cleansing of the soul from corruption that intermingles with the soul and its development with good and blessed things, which is all achieved by the performance of righteous deeds and the leaving of despicable acts. The purified soul (*al-nafs al-zakiyya*) is the one that has been cleansed in accordance with the *sharīʿa* of Allāh; it is the good soul (*al-nafs al-ṭayyiba*) being the one that is deserving

³⁵³ Murād, *al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī - Riyāḍa Rūḥiyya Khāliṣa*, p. 14.

³⁵⁴ Al-Jawziyya, *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, ed. al-Baghdādī, vol. 2, p. 300 and Āl ʿAbd al-Laṭīf, *Maʿālim fī 'l-Sulūk wa Tazkiyat al-Nufūs*, p. 59.

³⁵⁵ Ḥawwā, Saʿīd, *al-Mustakhlaṣ fī Tazkiyat al-Anfus* (4th edition, Cairo, Dār al-Islām, 1988) p. 3.

of praiseworthy characteristics in the worldly life and reward and recompense in the hereafter.³⁵⁶

Similarly, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir Abū Fāris, states, “*Tazkiyat al-nafs* is achieved through cleansing of the soul of polytheism, disbelief, base characteristics and despicable acts; it is also achieved through developing the good and the growth of piety in the soul, which is a path that leads to paradise.”³⁵⁷ In an exposition of the singular *ḥadīth* mentioning this term³⁵⁸, Karzūn, summarises, “*Al-tazkiya*: is the cleansing (*taḥīr*) of the soul (*al-nafs*) from being inclined to iniquity and sin and the development of the natural disposition to good within it, which leads to its rectitude and it reaching the level of spiritual perfection (*iḥsān*).”³⁵⁹ Also, ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Laṭīf defines the concept succinctly thus, “*Al-Tazkiya* linguistically means cleansing (*al-taḥīr*), growth (*al-nimāʾ*) and increase (*al-ziyāda*) but the meaning here is reformation of the souls and their cleansing via beneficial knowledge, performing righteous deeds and carrying out what has been commanded and refraining from what has been forbidden.”³⁶⁰ Finally, in a more elaborate definition Zarabozo states, “Purification of the soul equals the process in which the healthy elements found in the soul are fostered, built upon and added to while any invading contaminants are removed or controlled such that the person worships Allah properly and fulfils his purpose in life, which can culminate in the ultimate expression of true *ihsaan*.”³⁶¹

2.4.4 Section Summary

Having examined the primary revelatory sources of Islam, namely the Qurʾān and the *sunna* in the form of *ḥadīth*, as well as the medium of these sources, the Arabic language, the purpose of this section was to provide an overview of how Muslim scholarly circles have interpreted these sources, what theories they have constructed, what concepts they presented and what contribution they have made to the understanding of this topic.

Upon examining the views of the *ʿulamāʾ* one cannot help but be impressed by the rich variety that is found, regarding both the terms *ʿtazkiyaʿ* and *ʿnafsʿ*, as well as their compound derivative. It must be said however that little has been forwarded in this section regarding the term *ʿtazkiyaʿ*. Many of the scholarly opinions are somewhat repetitive, particularly in

³⁵⁶ Al-Ashqar, ʿUmar Sulaymān, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs* (Amman, Dār al-Nafāʾis, 1992) pp. 19-20.

³⁵⁷ Abū Fāris, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* (ʿAmmān, Dār al-Furqān, 2000) pp. 17-18.

³⁵⁸ See pp. 79-80 above.

³⁵⁹ Karzūn, *Manhaj al-Islām fī Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, vol. 1, p. 12 and Zarabozo, *Purification of the Soul*, pp. 72-3.

³⁶⁰ ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Laṭīf, *Maʿālim fī ʿl-Sulūk wa Tazkiyat al-Nufūs*, p. 57.

³⁶¹ Zarabozo, *Purification of the Soul*, pp. 76-7.

their exposition of the linguistic usage of the term and it remains very much with the realms of to grow and flourish (*namā*), or to increase and augment (*zād*), or to enjoy the blessing and abundance of God (*tan^āama*) but can also mean to reform (*ṣalaḥa*), all of which indicate an overall process of development, which could be termed ‘purification’ in the broad sense. Having said this, their interpretation of these implications in the Islamic paradigm does yield an interesting response. For example, as we have seen, Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) develops this theme not just to mean the positive sense of ‘growth’ and ‘development’ but quite astutely observes that this process of development will not occur with the presence of negative influences. Indeed, the ‘cultivation’ simile is a common feature of the literature on this point, the negative qualities of sin and iniquity being likened to the ‘weeds’ that endanger the growth of any ‘crop’.³⁶²

Furthermore, there is a tendency to a very practical approach to the topic, being represented in an absolute and complete implementation of Islam at its every level, from issues of belief to physical acts of worship, to seemingly ‘beat’ the *nafs* into submission. This ‘broad scope’ of *tazkiya*, as Islahi suggests, needs to permeate every aspect of the human being; this encompasses not only the soul but also the intellect (*al-‘aql*), actions, relationships, interactions and the very consciousness of a person’s humanity. As such, *tazkiya* is an absolute method to reform the human state, which is the very goal of revelation.³⁶³

On examining the concept of the *nafs*, which by now we can comfortably equate to the human soul, we find - somewhat expectedly - a much more diverse set of views. The very nature of the soul, its vague description and almost ineffable quality, have occupied the minds of men for millennia and as such, it is not surprising that the Muslim scholarly elite have also engaged in this debate. Thus, almost every section of Muslim scholarship can find representation here from theologians to philosophers and Sufis to jurists. The rich variety of this debate can easily be seen in Ibn Abū al-‘Izz’s (d. 792/1390) introductory paragraph before discussing the theological view of the soul, where non Islamic influences are equally evident.³⁶⁴

It may be said that when examining would-be definitions of the soul such efforts often enlighten our concept of the soul rather than facilitating a definitive view of it. In fact one may argue that attempting to define the soul is a thankless task, let alone a near impossible one. The Qur’ān itself alludes to the ineffability of the human soul, in an incident where the

³⁶² See section 2.4.1 above.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ See section 2.4.2 above.

Prophet is reported to have been asked regarding the soul, the Qurʾān responds (17:85), “They ask you concerning the soul (*al-rūḥ*), say: the soul is the concern of my Lord and you [mankind] have been given nothing more than a little knowledge.” This verse is particularly poignant, as it not only affirms the fact that both the soul and consequently, its purification are concerns of the divine but also that whatever knowledge mankind has regarding the soul, can only be a fraction of the true knowledge of its nature.

However, where the Qurʾān is particularly informative, as has been shown previously, is regarding the description of the soul, its attributes and its states. In this particular field the Sufis have concentrated a great deal of effort, their whole concern being to oppose the *nafs* and its every whim. This seems to be due to the fact that they equate the *nafs* with the base form of the soul, which the Qurʾān terms ‘the soul prone to evil (*al-nafs la ammāra bi ’l-sūʾ*)’. This being the case, much time is dedicated to discussion of the faults of the soul (*āfāt al-nafs*), its deception (*khudʿa*) and the duality of its nature, the goal of these discussions being of course to enlighten the owner of such a soul to its dangers and to put in place a programme to eliminate such negative qualities.³⁶⁵ As such, a much less involved discussion is made regarding the other two states of the soul mentioned in the Qurʾān, i.e. the self-reproaching soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāma*) and the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʾinna*), which as mentioned previously, is the goal of *tazkiya*.³⁶⁶

In addition, many contemporary scholars have revived the study of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, seemingly in an attempt to oppose the ‘unorthodoxy’ of many Sufi practices and to accentuate the spiritual element of the Islamic faith. As such, they attempt to revive the practical approach so evident in the writings of scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) and his student, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350). These are useful attempts and provide a valuable addition to the literature, as well as the concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, which is apparent from their definitions of these terms.³⁶⁷

Conclusion

As the title of this thesis suggests, the main aim of this work is to explore the concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* in Islam and draw a comparison between it and the teachings of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī. As such this chapter was divided into the following sections: firstly, it examined the meaning of the words *tazkiya* and *nafs* etymologically to arrive at a basic

³⁶⁵ See pp. 95-8 above.

³⁶⁶ See section 2.2.4 above.

³⁶⁷ See section 2.4.3 above.

linguistic understanding for these terms. Secondly, it made an in-depth study of these two terms as found in the Qur'ān by locating these words within their various Qur'ānic contexts and examining them in the light of the exegetical literature (*tafāsīr*). Having derived a meaning for these two terms in the Qur'ānic context, attention was then turned to the *ḥadīth*, to arrive at an understanding of how these words were used by the Prophet, his Companions and the early generations who followed them. The final section dealt with the statements of the scholars of Islam (*al-ʿulamāʾ*) to examine their understanding of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, in the light of what was discussed in the previous sections.

In conclusion the researcher, rather than attempting to define the term *tazkiyat al-nafs* in a strict sense as other authors have, would prefer to present an overview of the understanding of this term as discussed in this chapter. As such, it may be summarised that our understanding of *tazkiyat al-nafs* has now developed to mean: the growth, augmentation, reform, development and purification of the human soul, via divine guidance, Prophetic example and individual effort, to attain its most elevated form, that of the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʿinna*). This process involves the nurturing of its positive potentialities and eradicating its negative inclinations, to bring about its purification (*tazkiya*) and eliminate its defilement (*tadsiya*). This in turn is attained by executing a balanced and integrated process of punitive measures, such as striving against it (*mujāhada*) and taking it to account (*muḥāsaba*), as well as implementing both the basic beliefs and practical actions of Islam, to bring about a richness of the soul (*ghinā al-nafs*), which is indicative of the soul's success (*falāḥ*) in both this life and the next.

From the Islamic perspective, the religion of Islam, whether in terms of tenets of faith or legislation, is said to have been completed during the lifetime of the Prophet.³⁶⁸ Despite this, this teaching is thought to have lived on after his death, being preserved in the practice and teachings of his Companions and their Successors, until the Islamic tradition was formalised in a written format in the 2nd/8th and 3rd/9th centuries. Nevertheless, this tradition, during this period and up until the present day, has had an ethos of informed interpretation and intellectual enquiry.

Islamic history bears the names of a multitude of theologians, exegetes and jurists, who enhanced and enriched this tradition. It is suggested here that the field of *tazkiyat al-nafs* was no different and in the same way that there were jurists (*fuqahāʾ*) capable of independent reasoning (*ijtihād*) known as *mujtahids* in the field of jurisprudence,

³⁶⁸ See Qur'ān (5:3).

outstanding exegetes (*mufassirūn*) in the field of Qur'ānic interpretation (*tafsīr*) and exemplary intellectuals in the field of *ḥadīth* (*muḥaddithūn*), there were also exceptional and erudite scholars of *tazkiyat al-nafs*.

It is further suggested that Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857) was one such scholar and this being the case, it is also suggested that he and his works are a case study of how the concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* may be implemented. Therefore, the following chapters will discuss al-Muḥāsibī's methodology of *tazkiyat al-nafs* in the light of the present chapter. Firstly, however, this will require that the period in which he lived be examined to assess the effect of his social milieu upon him, before moving onto an exposition of his life, works and methodology of *tazkiyat al-nafs* and indeed, this is the goal of the next chapter.

Chapter 3: The Historical Background to al-Muḥāsibī's Life

Al-Muḥāsibī was born in a highly interesting and well chronicled era known as the ʿAbbāsīd period. Such a rich historical period is difficult to represent in a short chapter such as this bearing in mind that individual works have been dedicated to this cause. This being the case this section of the thesis concentrates on the factors within the reign of the ʿAbbāsīds that may have directly affected the life of al-Muḥāsibī. As such, this chapter will begin by providing a brief impression of the ʿAbbāsīds themselves, so as to furnish the reader with an overview of the rulers of this particular period of Islamic history. Similarly, the early ʿAbbāsīd period is often regarded as the 'Golden' era of Islamic learning and thus, an assessment of intellectual life under these caliphs will also be made. Thirdly, since al-Muḥāsibī spent his formative years in Basra and the better part of his life in Baghdad, both these geographical locations will be discussed to assess their influence on our author. Finally, perhaps the single most important religio-political event in this period was the *miḥna*, commonly termed the 'Inquisition', which affected religious praxis during a large proportion of al-Muḥāsibī's life and therefore, this event will also be examined, so as to assess its impact on our scholar.

3.1 The ʿAbbāsīds

As noted previously, a full representation of this period is beyond the scope of this study and therefore, only a very brief overview will be given here, so as to give the reader a taste of the era as a whole. The ʿAbbāsīd period in its entirety covers approximately half a millennium spanning the years 132/750 to 656/1258.³⁶⁹ Consequently, historians have divided the period into three sub-periods.³⁷⁰ The primary era, being known as the first ʿAbbāsīd period (132/750-247/861)³⁷¹, is generally regarded as a period of growth and prosperity, having built upon the successes of the Umayyads. This is followed by the second ʿAbbāsīd period (247/861-447/1055)³⁷², which is regarded as era of political decline, due to

³⁶⁹ Saunders, J. J., *A History of Medieval Islam* (London, Routledge, 1990) p. 106.

³⁷⁰ Other historians divide this period into only two sections. See Gibb, Kramers, Levi-Provencal and Schacht (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden and London, E. J. Brill and Luzac & Co., 1960), vol. 1, p. 17.

³⁷¹ Abū Zayd, ʿUlā ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, *al-Dawla al-ʿAbbāsiyya* (Cairo, al-Maʿhad al-ʿĀlamī li `l-Fikr al-Islāmī, 1996) p. 17.

³⁷² The point at which the second period begins is focus of dispute amongst researchers in Islamic history but the consensus is that the period begins with the death of al-Mutawakkil in 247/861. Abū Zayd, *al-Dawla al-ʿAbbāsiyya*, p. 63.

the events leading to the loss of ʿAbbāsīd power. Finally, there is the third ʿAbbāsīd period, which includes the eventual collapse of the caliphate (447/1055-565/1258).³⁷³

The ʿAbbāsīds themselves took charge of the Islamic empire from the Umayyads with the ascension to the throne of Abū `l-ʿAbbās ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad (r. 132/749-136/754), commonly known as ʿal-Saffāḥ (lit. ʿthe blood spiller’) due to his merciless execution of the remaining Umayyad dignitaries. The rise of the ʿAbbāsīds was mainly due to on the one hand to the lack of popularity of the Umayyads, who were seen as a debauched, ʿpro- Arab’ aristocracy who had little regard for the welfare of their subjects and the messianic campaign of the ʿAbbāsīds for a return of authority to the house of the Prophet or ʿ*al-riḍāʿ min āl Muḥammad*’ as they put it, on the other. Their claim to authority came through their familial link to the Prophet’s uncle al-ʿAbbās and they would later counter the ʿAlid claim to authority - since they were also of Prophetic lineage - by showing that their link was through a male relative, i.e. al-ʿAbbās and not through a female one, i.e. Fāṭima, the Prophet’s daughter, which was apparently still an important factor despite this being a supposed post-*jāhili*, Arab society. This call, or *daʿwa*, proved very popular and gained great support in the eastern provinces generally and in Khurasān in particular. Subsequently, it would be support from this province that would bring the ʿAbbāsīds to ascendancy and remain their powerbase for years to come.³⁷⁴

The seemingly religious overtone to their claim of legitimacy as rulers was consolidated by their adoption of honorific titles (*alqāb*, sin. *laqab*), which was unprecedented and seemingly added to their apparent link with God and later, by their patronising of religious learning, which equally added to their claim of ʿorthodoxy’. Despite this however, their powerbase constituted a departure from the ʿArab aristocracy’ of the Umayyads, since the majority of their supporters were in fact of Persian origin. Thus, the early ʿAbbāsīd period became synonymous with the rise of the Persian ʿclients’ or *mawālī*, who occupied key

³⁷³ Ibid., p. 110.

³⁷⁴ See Ḥasan, Ḥasan Ibrāhīm, *Tārīkh al-Islām al-Siyāsī wa `l-Dīnī wa `l-Thiqāfī wa `l-Ijtimāʿī*, 7th ed., (4 vols., Cairo, Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1964) vol. 2, pp. 14-27; al-Khuḍari, Muḥammad Bek, *al-Dawla al-ʿAbbāsiyya*, Muḥāḍarāt fī Tārīkh al-Umam al-Islāmiyya series (Beirut, Muʿassasat al-Kutub al-Thiqāfiyya, 1999) pp. 5-54; al-Wakīl, Muḥammad al-Sayyid, *al-ʿAṣr al-Dhahabī li `l-Dawla al-ʿAbbāsiyya* (Damascus, Dār al-Qalam, 1998) pp. 7-44; Gibb *et al* (eds.) *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1, pp. 15-16; Kennedy, Hugh, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate - A Political History* (London, Croom Helm Ltd., 1981) pp. 35-55; Bosworth, Clifford Edmund, *The New Islamic Dynasties: a Chronological and Genealogical Manual* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1996) pp. 7-8 and El-Hibri, Tayeb, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography - Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Narrative of the ʿAbbāsīd Caliphate*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilisation Series (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999) pp. 1-6.

positions in the ʿAbbāsid administration and who seemingly ‘Persianised’ the running of the state along the lines of the old Sasanian model.³⁷⁵

The consolidation of ʿAbbāsid power did not lie with Abū `l-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ however and indeed, it was his successor Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ‘al-Manṣūr’ who succeeded in suppressing the ʿAlid uprisings and provided the ʿAbbāsid state with a new epicentre, Baghdad³⁷⁶, which would remain the state capital for more than half a century to come.³⁷⁷

It was into this era that our subject al-Muḥāsibī is reported to have been born in 165/782 and since he died in 243/857, he lived through a considerable portion of the entire primary period of the ʿAbbāsid era. This being the case, al-Muḥāsibī lived through the reign of eight ʿAbbāsid caliphs, who were briefly as follows:

1. Muḥammad b. al-Manṣūr, ‘al-Mahdī’ (r. 158/775-169/785)

Due to the determination, energy, political acumen and renowned frugality of his father, al-Mahdī inherited an empire that was stable, powerful and richly endowed. Consequently, al-Mahdī is remembered as being generous in comparison with his father and he used the state’s substantial wealth to improve relations with the ʿAlids, by offering them generous stipends and esteemed positions. Seen as a religious ruler due to his building of mosques and patronising of the pilgrimage, al-Mahdī is also remembered for his persecution of those with anti-Islamic tendencies known as *zindīqs*. At the political level, his reign is also a period in which the ‘clients’ *mawālī* continue to come to prominence and there is a continuation of the expansion of the new class of civil servants known as the ‘*kuttāb*’, who helped define the administration’s bureaucracy.³⁷⁸

2. Mūsā b. al-Mahdī, ‘al-Hādī’ (r. 169/785-170/789)

With his reign being so short and with the sources comparing him unfavourably with his brother Hārūn, al-Hādī is difficult to assess yet we are given the impression that he was determined, forceful and on occasion hasty and ill-tempered. In many ways his reign was a reaction to his father’s, as he reversed his policies regarding the ʿAlids and attempted to limit the influence of both the *mawālī* and the *kuttāb*. His greatest aim however was to

³⁷⁵ See Ḥasan, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 2, pp. 14-19; Gibb *et al* (eds.) *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1, pp. 15-16; Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 35-45; Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties*, p. 8 and El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*, p. 1.

³⁷⁶ For a more in-depth discussion of Baghdad see pp. 126-33 below.

³⁷⁷ See Ḥasan, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 2, pp. 27-40; al-Khuḍari, *al-Dawla al-ʿAbbāsiyya*, pp. 54-85; al-Wakīl, *al-ʿAṣr al-Dhahabī li `l-Dawla al-ʿAbbāsiyya*, pp. 45-127; Gibb *et al* (eds.) *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1, pp. 16-17; Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 57-93 and El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*, p. 1.

³⁷⁸ See Ḥasan, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 2, pp. 40-4; al-Khuḍari, *al-Dawla al-ʿAbbāsiyya*, pp. 85-95; al-Wakīl, *al-ʿAṣr al-Dhahabī li `l-Dawla al-ʿAbbāsiyya*, pp. 128-70 and Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 96-108.

remove his brother Hārūn from the succession and replace him with his own son Jaʿfar but his life was cut short in suspicious circumstances and considerable court intrigue.³⁷⁹

3. Hārūn b. al-Mahdī, ‘al-Rashīd’ (r. 170/789-193/809)

Arguably the most famous of the ‘Abbāsīd caliphs, Hārūn al-Rashīd is well known due to his relations with Europe through Charlemagne and perhaps more so, for his apparent immortalisation in the *One Thousand and One Nights*. Similarly, he has a privileged place in Sunni hagiography for his frequent trips for pilgrimage and his own personal support of the jihad against Byzantium. His reign would be marked, however, by his appointment of members of the Barmakid family as his closest ministers and confidantes, who essentially administered the caliphate on his behalf for most of his reign until their untimely demise in controversial circumstances under the very same caliph. Al-Rashīd’s caliphate is considerably marred however by his almost naïve decision to divide power after his death between his sons Muḥammad and ‘Abd Allāh - a decision that would lead ultimately to civil war.³⁸⁰

4. Muḥammad b. al-Rashīd, ‘al-Amin’ (r. 193/809-198/813)

Often portrayed as politically incompetent, reckless and somewhat debauched, al-Amin remains one of the most tragic figures in ‘Abbāsīd history. Having been denied the entire caliphate to himself by his father’s will, he wasted little time in attempting to manipulate it back to his own control. His brother’s steadfastness in resisting the caliph’s attempt at wresting power away from him could only have one possible outcome - a civil war. Hostilities soon ensued and culminated in a siege of Baghdad that lasted several months and destroyed great areas of the city but a more severe blow was dealt to the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate when al-Amin was executed by his brother’s forces, this being the first incident of regicide during the dynasty’s rule.³⁸¹

5. ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Rashīd, ‘al-Maʿmūn’ (r. 198/813-218/833)

After receiving the caliphate in the most inauspicious manner al-Maʿmūn redeemed himself somewhat, by proving himself a patron of the arts through actively supporting the translation movement and the celebrated ‘House of Wisdom (*Bayt al-Ḥikma*)’. Thus, he is

³⁷⁹ Ḥasan, *Taʾriḫ al-Islām*, vol. 2, pp. 44-50; al-Khuḍari, *al-Dawla al-‘Abbāsiyya*, pp. 95-100; al-Wakīl, *al-‘Aṣr al-Dhahabī li ‘l-Dawla al-‘Abbāsiyya*, pp. 171-91 and Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 108-113.

³⁸⁰ Ḥasan, *Taʾriḫ al-Islām*, vol. 2, pp. 50-63; al-Khuḍari, *al-Dawla al-‘Abbāsiyya*, pp. 100-52; al-Wakīl, *al-‘Aṣr al-Dhahabī li ‘l-Dawla al-‘Abbāsiyya*, pp. 192-301; Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 115-33 and El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*, pp. 17-58.

³⁸¹ Ḥasan, *Taʾriḫ al-Islām*, vol. 2, pp. 63-66; al-Khuḍari, *al-Dawla al-‘Abbāsiyya*, pp. 152-68; al-Wakīl, *al-‘Aṣr al-Dhahabī li ‘l-Dawla al-‘Abbāsiyya*, pp. 302-37; Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 135-48 and El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*, pp. 59-94.

remembered for his role in the translation of Greek, Indian and Persian works on astronomy, mathematics, medicine and philosophy, which will be elaborated on further, shortly, as well as his encouraging of court debates on a variety of intellectual matters. His spirit of 'tolerance' was further enhanced by the fact he seemingly attempted to bridge the gap between his own family's dynasty and the rival 'Alids by appointing Alī al-Riḍā' as his heir but this attempt proved doomed to failure. Due to his tolerant approach to 'foreign' learning and 'unorthodox' views he was labelled 'commander of the unbelievers (*amīr al-kāfirīn*)', a title which would be given further credence in the eyes of his opponents by his adoption of the 'Inquisition (*miḥna*)' - a policy, as we will see, that would define his caliphate.³⁸²

6. Muḥammad b. al-Rashīd, 'al-Mu'taṣim' (r. 218/833-227/842)

On ascending the throne al-Mu'taṣim had been requested by his brother to continue pursuing the policy of the *miḥna*, which he did reluctantly and it seems that he was satisfied to pursue it in the form of courtroom formality only. The one exception was of paramount significance, however, as it lives on in the pages of history, this being the trial of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, which will be discussed later. Al-Mu'taṣim's reluctance to pursue the *miḥna* is often attributed to his lack of intellectual learning but equally the caliph was occupied by a number of events during his reign, such as the revolt of Bābak, the trial of his general Ashfīn, mounting his offensive against Amorium, coping with the revolt of Mayzār, overcoming the Zoṭṭ revolt and the transfer of the capital from Baghdad to Sāmarrā'. This latter move was an attempt to relocate the army which had become influenced by its Turkish contingent - a feature that would define 'Abbāsīd politics in the years to come.³⁸³

7. Hārūn b. al-Mu'taṣim, 'al-Wāthiq' (r. 227/842-232/847)

In many ways the reign of al-Wāthiq was also an extension of his father's, as he continued appointing Turks to key positions in the military and Bughā was one of these who distinguished himself in suppressing the various revolts of the period. Although al-Wāthiq was seemingly a capable politician, he relied heavily on his two chief ministers, Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Zayyāt and Aḥmad b. Abū Du'ād, to the extent that he consulted them in all of his affairs. It was under this latter vizier that the *miḥna* was vigorously pursued and

³⁸² Ḥasan, *Ta'riḫ al-Islām*, vol. 2, pp. 66-74; al-Khuḍari, *al-Dawla al-'Abbāsiyya*, pp. 168-220; al-Wakīl, *al-'Aṣr al-Dhahabī li 'l-Dawla al-'Abbāsiyya*, pp. 338-421; Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 151-74; Cooperson, Michael, *Classical Arabic Biography - the Heirs of the Prophets in the Age of al-Ma'mūn*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilisation Series (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000) pp. 24-69 and El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*, pp. 95-142.

³⁸³ Ḥasan, *Ta'riḫ al-Islām*, vol. 2, pp. 74-79; al-Khuḍari, *al-Dawla al-'Abbāsiyya*, pp. 220-38 and al-Wakīl, *al-'Aṣr al-Dhahabī li 'l-Dawla al-'Abbāsiyya*, pp. 422-89.

the insurgent Aḥmad b. Nasr al-Khuzā'ī was executed seemingly not for his ill-fated coup but for his opposition to the state creed. Ibn Abū Du'ād continued to wield power within the administration until he was defeated in a debate regarding the nature of the Qur'ān and thus, the caliph seems to have withdrawn his support for the *miḥna* policy.³⁸⁴

8. Ja'far b. al-Mu'taṣim, 'al-Mutawakkil' (r. 232/847-247/861)

Despite this general period being known as a period of decline, the ascension of al-Mutawakkil began a period of relative stability for the Islamic state. It is true that the caliph began to lose his influence over the wider boundaries of the empire, due to the internal competition of his officers and bureaucrats but despite this, the state stabilised due to al-Mutawakkil's ending of the Mu'tazilite policy and its consequent inquisition. In addition to this, the caliph also adopted a severe policy regarding the Shi'ite elements, destroying the mausoleum of al-Ḥusayn at Karbalā'. Thus, the rule of al-Mutawakkil had a rather authoritarian flavour, as he took his dignity as a ruler very seriously. This however, was not sufficient for him to survive the devious plotting of his Turkish *amīrs* and they eventually succeeded in assassinating him in 247/861.³⁸⁵

3.2 Intellectual Life in the Early 'Abbāsid Period

Despite virtual autonomy in the Middle East the Arab caliphate had little to show in terms of academic endeavour, the Arabs being mostly an illiterate people whose main achievement was the eloquence of their language and the recording of their history and culture in a poetic form. This 'underachievement' was to change dramatically during the early 'Abbāsid period for a number of reasons, the foremost of which will be alluded to here. Firstly, the shifting of the seat of power to Iraq placed the new caliphate at the centre of the academic and cultural world; India with a long history of mathematics, medicine and science lay to the east. Alexandria, the seat of accumulated Greek thought lay to the north as did the academic centres of Damascus and Ḥarrān. Similarly, in neighbouring Persia were other intellectual institutions such as that at Jundīsābūr.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁴ Ḥasan, *Ta'riḫ al-Islām*, vol. 2, pp. 79-84; al-Khuḍari, *al-Dawla al-'Abbāsiyya*, pp. 238-43 and al-Wakīl, *al-'Aṣr al-Dhahabī li 'l-Dawla al-'Abbāsiyya*, pp. 490-516.

³⁸⁵ Ḥasan, *Ta'riḫ al-Islām*, vol. 3, pp. 4-6; al-Khuḍari, *al-Dawla al-'Abbāsiyya*, pp. 243-58; al-Wakīl, *al-'Aṣr al-Dhahabī li 'l-Dawla al-'Abbāsiyya*, pp. 518-75; Holt, Lambton, Lewis, *The Cambridge History of Islam* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988) vol. 1A, pp. 126-8; El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*, pp. 178-215 and Sourdel, Dominique, *Medieval Islam*, translated by J. Montgomery Watt (London, Routledge Kegan Paul, 1983) pp. 143-4.

³⁸⁶ See Gutas, Dimitri, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture - The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsid Society (2nd-4th/8th-10th centuries)* (London, Routledge, 1998) pp. 11-16; Von Grunebaum, G. E., *Classical Islam A History (600-1258)*, translated by Kathrine Watson (London, George Allen and Unwin,

These locations had also existed under the rule of the Umayyads yet they had little impact. Therefore, the second important factor in the flourishing of learning under the ʿAbbāsids was the changing demographic structure of its administration. The introduction of the *mawālī* ‘clients’ into the bureaucratic structure created a new ‘civil servant’ or ‘secretary’ class (*kuttāb*) into the administration, the vast majority of whom were non-Arabs and who were exemplified by the Barmakids and Nawbakhts and their protégés. Having access to the caliph and hence influence, this ‘foreign’ contingent encouraged the rulers to take an interest in the surrounding culture of science and learning of the adjacent non-Arab/non-Muslim populations.³⁸⁷

The response of the caliphs was forthcoming and they obliged by patronising the accessing of this knowledge of the ancient and diverse societies surrounding them. The impetus for this development came from what Gutas terms ‘the Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement’ that existed in Baghdad and early ʿAbbāsīd society.³⁸⁸ This primary cause in the development of learning in the ʿAbbāsīd era would have been impossible however without an important discovery - that of paper. The introduction of this technology by Chinese prisoners of war quickly replaced the regular writing materials of the day and although initially it was only used by the caliph himself for official documents and personal letters, it soon became more widely available, thus fuelling the learning process.³⁸⁹

Although the translation of ‘foreign’ works was not unheard of in the Umayyad period it was under the ʿAbbāsīd reign that it flourished initially under the policies of both al-Manṣūr and his son al-Mahdī.³⁹⁰ The same policy of translation continues amongst their successors but it was under the authority of al-Maʿmūn that the translation movement was at its height³⁹¹, culminating in the development of the celebrated Bayt al-Ḥikma ‘the House of

1970) pp. 80-1 and 86-88; Brockleman, Carl, *History of Islamic Peoples*, translated into English by Joel Carmichael and Moshe Perlmann (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979) pp. 124-6 and Clot, Andre, *Harun al-Rashid and the World of the Thousand and One Nights*, translated from the French by John Howe (London, Saqi Books, 1989) pp. 207-9.

³⁸⁷ See Ḥasan, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 2. pp. 320-3; Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, pp. 17-20; Von Grunebaum, *Classical Islam A History (600-1258)*, pp. 80-1 and 86-88 and Clot, *Harun al-Rashid and the World of the Thousand and One Nights*, pp. 207-9.

³⁸⁸ See Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, pp. 1-191 *passim*.

³⁸⁹ See Saʿīd, Khayr Allāh, *Warrāqū Baghdād fī ʿl-ʿAṣr al-ʿAbbāsī* (Riyadh, Markaz al-Malik Fayṣal li ʿl-Buḥūth wa ʿl-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya. 2000) pp. 127-168; al-Ṭurayfī, Nāṣir b. ʿUqayl b. Jāsir, *Tārīkh al-Fiḥ al-Islāmī* (Riyadh, Sharikat al-ʿUbaykān, 1987) p. 87; Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, p. 13 and Weit, Gaston, *Baghdad - Metropolis of the Abbasid Caliphate*, translated by Seymour Feiler (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1971) pp. 70-1.

³⁹⁰ See Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, pp. 28-74.

³⁹¹ See al-Wakīl, *al-ʿAṣr al-Dhahabī li ʿl-Dawla al-ʿAbbāsiyya*, pp. 384-8; Saʿīd, *Warrāqū Baghdād fī ʿl-ʿAṣr al-ʿAbbāsī*, pp. 50-3; Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, pp. 28-74; Watt, W. Montgomery, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1962) pp. 37-9; *The Formative Period of Islamic*

Wisdom', which acted as an institution for the translation, copying and keeping of books.³⁹² It is also worth mentioning that it was not only the caliphs who played a role in this process but indeed other members of society also took part in this culture of supporting the translation of non-Arabic works; the most celebrated of these were arguably the Banū Mūsā, i.e. Mūsā b. Shākir and his three sons, who would pay as much as 500 *dīnārs* monthly for full time translators.³⁹³

As for the translators themselves, it is worth noting that many of them were Christians, usually of the Nestorian denomination, due to their skills with Greek, Syriac, which was usually an intermediate language and Arabic. These scholars were numerous but the foremost in this field were Yaḥyā [Ibn] al-Biṭrīq, Qusṭā b. Lūqā (d. 298/912), ʿAbd al-Masīḥ b. Nāʿima al-Ḥimsī, Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī (d. 362/974) and Abū Bishr Mattā b. Yūnus (d. 327/940).³⁹⁴ However, the most illustrious of these scholars was the renowned Ḥunayn b. Ishāq (d. 296/910), who is reported to have translated more than 31 works, being paid 500 *dīnārs* per month and an amount of gold equivalent to the weight of the books translated, in addition to being the court physician during the time of al-Mutawakkil.³⁹⁵ The nature of the translated works concerned classical learning as a whole and included astronomy, mathematics, medicine and philosophy from the works of Aristotle, Hippocrates, Galen, Euclid, Plotinus and Ptolemy.³⁹⁶

This is not to say that these sciences were merely academic efforts but indeed, they were put to practical use by a number of luminaries of the period. Astronomical observation had begun in Baghdad at an observatory in the al-Shammāsiyya district, on the left bank of the Tigris, east of al-Ruṣāfa and Ibrāhīm al-Fazārī, who had translated the Indian book of Astronomy, *Sindhind*, into Arabic for al-Manṣūr and who had helped plan the foundation of

Thought, Oneworld Classics in Religious Studies series (Oxford, Oneworld publications, 2002) pp. 185-6; Weit, *Baghdad*, pp. 66-9 and Brocklemann, *History of Islamic Peoples*, pp. 124-6.

³⁹² See Ḥasan, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 2. p. 348; al-Wakīl, *al-ʿAṣr al-Dhahabī li ʿl-Dawla al-ʿAbbāsiyya*, p. 385; Saʿīd, *Warrāqū Baghdād fī ʿl-ʿAṣr al-ʿAbbāsī*, pp. 51-3; Gibb *et al* (eds.) *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1, p. 1141; Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, pp. 53-60; Watt, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, p. 38; *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, p. 185; Weit, *Baghdad*, p. 68 and Brocklemann, *History of Islamic Peoples*, p. 125.

³⁹³ See Ḥasan, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 2. p. 346; Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, pp. 121-36; Weit, *Baghdad*, p. 69 and Clot, *Harun al-Rashid and the World of the Thousand and One Nights*, pp. 210-11.

³⁹⁴ See Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, pp. 136-141 and Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, p. 303

³⁹⁵ See Saʿīd, *Warrāqū Baghdād fī ʿl-ʿAṣr al-ʿAbbāsī*, p. 52; Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, pp. 2-185 *passim*; Watt, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, p. 41; Weit, *Baghdad*, p. 69 and Hanafi, Manzoor Ahmad, *A survey of Muslim Institutions and Culture* (Lahore, Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1980) p. 175.

³⁹⁶ Ḥasan, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 2. pp. 346-7 and Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, pp. 136-50 *passim*.

Baghdad, was the first in the Arab world to make astrolabes.³⁹⁷ This work was continued in the time of al-Ma'mūn by Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Khwārizmī, who also adapted Ptolemy's *Geographike Hyphegesis* and composed the first independent textbook on algebra (*al-jabr*), resulting in his name surviving until today in the term 'algorithm' for the formulation of the calculation method.³⁹⁸

Medicine was always a popular topic academically, considering its practical application and the royal court's requirement for the caliph's treatment when ill. Thus, in addition to Ḥunayn b. Ishāq there were a host of royal physicians during the 'Abbāsīd period; the earliest of these may have been Jurgis b. Jibrīl b. Bukhtīshū' who came from Jundīsābūr to Baghdad in 147/765 to treat the caliph al-Manṣūr due to his skill in Hippocratic/Galenic medicine. The Bukhtīshū' family was arguably the most influential medical dynasty, their descendants serving a series of caliphs right up until the time of al-Mutawakkil. In addition, other Jundīsābūr families also participated in this field including those of al-Ṭayfūrī and Māsawayh who were the most prominent, Yaḥyā b. Māsawayh being the foremost exemplar of the latter family.³⁹⁹

Perhaps the most influential of these academic disciplines from the ancient world to have the greatest effect on the religious learning was that of philosophy. In the same way that the other translated sciences found their champions mentioned above, philosophy would find its champion in the personality of Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb b. Ishāq al-Kindī (d. ca. 255/870). Al-Kindī was from the well known, aristocratic Arabic tribe of Kinda and enjoyed a privileged upbringing, his family being associated with government positions in the 'Abbāsīd regime, while he himself became attached to the court in the time of al-Mu'taṣim. It would be a misrepresentation however, to portray al-Kindī as purely a philosopher, as he was a polymath, involving himself in all of the disciplines mentioned thus far and indeed, he was very much a product of his time. Nevertheless, it is with philosophy that his name is synonymous and to this end, he was one of those who introduced the Muslim world to

³⁹⁷ See Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, pp. 30, 33 and 114; Brocklemann, *History of Islamic Peoples*, p. 126; Weit, *Baghdad*, p. 67 and Clot, *Harun al-Rashid and the World of the Thousand and One Nights*, p. 210.

³⁹⁸ See Ḥasan, *Ta'rikh al-Islām*, vol. 2. pp. 346-7; Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, pp. 58, 113 and 117; Brocklemann, *History of Islamic Peoples*, p. 126; Weit, *Baghdad*, p. 68; Clot, *Harun al-Rashid and the World of the Thousand and One Nights*, p. 211 and Young, Latham and Serjeant, *Religion, Learning and Science in the Abbasid Period*, pp. 274-89 *passim*.

³⁹⁹ See Ḥasan, *Ta'rikh al-Islām*, vol. 2. pp. 353-55; Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, pp. 118-19; Brocklemann, *History of Islamic Peoples*, pp. 125-6; Weit, *Baghdad*, pp. 69-70; Clot, *Harun al-Rashid and the World of the Thousand and One Nights*, p. 213 and Young, Latham and Serjeant, *Religion, Learning and Science in the Abbasid Period*, pp. 343-63 *passim*.

philosophy, to the extent that he was given the honorific title of ‘the philosopher of the Arabs (*faylasūf al-‘Arab*)’.⁴⁰⁰

This is not to say that the only works that were translated were of a scientific nature, as in fact literary works were also transferred from one culture to another, to which Ibn al-Muqaffa’s (d. 139/757) translation of Bidpai’s fables, in the form of *Kalīla and Dimna* bears witness.⁴⁰¹ Ibn al-Muqaffa’s superb writing style is regarded to have given birth to Arabic prose (*adab*) as a discipline but his seminal efforts were brought to fruition by other writers who wrote not from translations but from their own literary ability. The most illustrious of these was Abū ‘Uthmān ‘Amr b. Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ (b. 250/864 or 255/869 or 256/870), who in addition to being an ardent Mu‘tazilite, wrote prose works of outstanding quality, such as *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* and *Kitāb al-Bukhalā’*.⁴⁰² A similar polymath, who followed shortly behind al-Jāḥiẓ in the field of Arabic prose was his contemporary, Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), who distinguished himself with equally impressive works such as *Adab al-Kātib*.⁴⁰³

Despite the development of a new literary vehicle, i.e. that of prose literature, Arabic poetry remained a vibrant artistic form. Nevertheless, the style, metre and to some extent, the content differed from the more ‘classical’ Arabic style. The Arabs, for the most part, no longer lived a nomadic lifestyle in the desert but rather, had become urbanised, living in flourishing cities and budding metropolises and consequently, this was reflected in their poetry. The poetry also took a more ‘debauched’ feel as the subject matter was often concerned with wine drinking and illicit affairs; the most notable of the poets of this genre in the ‘Abbāsid period were Abū Nuwās, whose drunken misadventures were often the

⁴⁰⁰ See Ḥasan, *Ta’rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 3. pp. 380-2; Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, pp. 119-20; Von Grunebaum, *Classical Islam A History*, p. 96; Brocklemann, *History of Islamic Peoples*, p. 125; Weit, *Baghdad*, pp. 68-9; Clot, *Harun al-Rashid and the World of the Thousand and One Nights*, p. 210 and Watt, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 39-40 and *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 204-8.

⁴⁰¹ See Ḥasan, *Ta’rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 2. p. 343; Weit, *Baghdad*, p. 66; Clot, *Harun al-Rashid and the World of the Thousand and One Nights*, p. 220 and Watt, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, p. 34 and *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 171-2.

⁴⁰² See Ḥasan, *Ta’rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 2, p. 344 and vol. 3. pp. 370-2; Weit, *Baghdad*, pp. 76-7; Clot, *Harun al-Rashid and the World of the Thousand and One Nights*, pp. 221-2 and Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, p. 173.

⁴⁰³ See Ḥasan, *Ta’rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 2. pp. 344; Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, pp. 111-12; Weit, *Baghdad*, p. 77; Clot, *Harun al-Rashid and the World of the Thousand and One Nights*, p. 221; Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, p. 173 and Ashtiany (ed.), Julia, *‘Abbasid Belles-Lettres* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989) pp. 48-95.

subject of his poetic talent and Bashshār b. Burd (d. 166/783), who frequented the court of al-Mahdī but whose eroticism alarmed those with religious tendencies.⁴⁰⁴

Other linguistically related disciplines were also not neglected during this period and Arabic philology was notably developed. The need to examine the depth of the Qurʾānic implementation of the Arabic language became paramount so as to understand the nuances of usage and to gain insight into the multiplicity of meanings that some verses could potentially present. To this end, a number of scholars began the process of formulating works in his field, which apparently resulted in competing schools in both Basra and Kūfa. Of the early Basran contingent Khalīl b. Aḥmad is the most famous for his dictionary *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, which employed the method of utilising classical poetical verses as proof of usage - a method that later would become the established practice. Similarly, Khalīl is credited with the creation of the basic concepts that govern poetic meter (*ʿilm al-ʿarūd*) and grammar (*al-naḥw*) and therefore, his contribution cannot be underestimated. Equally significant however, are the efforts of his student, the much celebrated Sībawayh, who preserved this grammatical system and developed it further. On the Kūfan side Sībawayh’s competitor was al-Kisāʿī, who had taught al-Rashīd and his son al-Mahdī, as well as his disciple al-Farrāʾ, who taught Qurʾānic exegesis (*tafsīr*) in the mosque at Kūfa and composed a work on grammatical definitions in the court of al-Maʾmūn.⁴⁰⁵

It was also in this period that Muslims began to register works concerning their history and in particular, biographical details concerning the life of the Prophet Muḥammad (*al-sīra al-nabawiyya*). One of the earliest of these works to reach us is a complete account of the Prophet’s life written for al-Manṣūr by Muḥammad b. Ishāq (d. 151/768). His work was continued under al-Rashīd by the Barmakid protégé al-Wāqidī (d. 207/822), whose efforts concerned the campaigns of the Prophet (*al-maghāzī*). Similarly, another work in the period and heavily reliant on Ibn Ishāq is one the most famous works of the genre, the *Sīra*

⁴⁰⁴ See Ḥasan, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 2. pp. 339-43; Nicholson, Reynold A., *A Literary History of the Arabs* (London, Fisher Unwin, 1907) pp. 89-96; Weit, *Baghdad*, pp. 73-5; Clot, *Harun al-Rashid and the World of the Thousand and One Nights*, p. 216-20 and Brocklemann, *History of Islamic Peoples*, p. 117.

⁴⁰⁵ See al-Fāsi (d. 1376/1956), Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan, *al-Fikr al-Sāmī fī Tārīkh al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, edited by Amīn Ṣāliḥ Shaʿbān (four parts in 2 vols., Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1995) vol. 1 (part 2), pp. 436-7; 390-2; Ḥasan, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 2. pp. 338-9; Weit, *Baghdad*, pp. 64-5; Brocklemann, *History of Islamic Peoples*, pp. 118-19; Owens, Jonathan, *The Foundations of Grammar: an Introduction to Medieval Arabic Grammatical Theory* (Amsterdam, John Benjamin B.V., 1988) pp. 5-30 *passim*; *Early Arabic Grammatical Theory: Heterogeneity and Standardization* (Amsterdam, John Benjamin B.V., 1990) pp. 1-9; Dévényi, Kinga, “On Farrāʾ’s Linguistic Methods in his work *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*” in Versteegh, Kees and Carter, Michael G. (eds.), *Studies in the History of Arabic Grammar 2 : Proceedings of the 2nd Symposium on the History of Arabic Grammar, Nijmegen, 27 April-1 May 1987* (Amsterdam, John Benjamins, 1990) and Young, Latham and Serjeant, *Religion, Learning and Science in the Abbasid Period* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990) pp. 118-38.

Rasūl Allāh of Ibn Hishām (d. 218/833). In addition to strict biographical accounts, another genre appeared - that of charting each generation from the Prophet's time to the present, commonly referred to as '*ṭabaqāt*' and the first scholar to construct a work in this manner was Muḥammad b. Sa'd (d. 230/845).⁴⁰⁶

This biographical trend can be seen as an extension of another tradition that had continued from an early period - that of collecting narrations regarding the Prophet's actions, statements and tacit approval - also known as *ḥadīth*.⁴⁰⁷ Although this process had continued for some time and had some official support under the Umayyads, it was under the 'Abbāsīd regime that it would flourish and in many ways come to fruition.⁴⁰⁸ During this period there were a number of prominent *ḥadīth* collectors scattered throughout the Muslim world who included: 'Abd al-Malik b. 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Jurayj (d. 150/767) at Mecca, Muḥammad b. Ishāq (d. 151/768) and Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abū Dhi'b (d. 158/775) in Medina, Sa'd b. 'Arūba (d. 156/773) and Ḥammād b. Salama (d. 167/783) at Basra, Zā'ida b. Qudāma (d. 160/777) and Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778) at Kūfa, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Amr al-Awzā'ī (d. 157/774) in Syria, 'Abd Allāh b. al-Mubārak (d. 181/797) in Khurasān, Hushaym b. Bashīr (d. 183/799) at Wāsiṭ, Jarīr b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (d. 188/804) at Rayy and 'Abd Allāh b. Wahb (d. 197/813) in Egypt.⁴⁰⁹

Despite their best efforts, of the earliest *ḥadīth* works to reach us from this era is that of the imam of Medina, Mālik b. Anas's (d. 179/795) *al-Muwatta'*, reportedly written at the behest of al-Manṣūr⁴¹⁰, in addition to the encyclopaedic '*Musnad*' of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), which contains nearly 30, 000 narrations.⁴¹¹ These early works were followed by the most famous collections of *ḥadīth*, known as the 'six canonical works' that comprised *al-*

⁴⁰⁶ See Ḥasan, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 2. p. 350; Weit, *Baghdad*, p. 65; Brocklemann, *History of Islamic Peoples*, pp. 120-1 and Young, Latham and Serjeant, *Religion, Learning and Science in the Abbasid Period*, pp. 188-201.

⁴⁰⁷ See Ḥasan, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 2. pp. 329-30; al-Khaṭīb, Muḥammad al-'Ajjāj, *Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth - 'Ulūmuhu wa Muṣṭalaḥuhu* (Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, 1989) pp. 139-206; Azami, Muhammad Mustafa, *Studies in Hadīth Methodology and Literature* (Plainfield, American Trust Publications, 1993) pp. 9-31; Ṣiddīqī, Muḥammad Zubayr, *Ḥadīth Literature - Its Origin, Development & Special Features* (Cambridge, Islamic Texts Society, 1993) pp. 2-7 and Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, p. 68.

⁴⁰⁸ See al-Khaṭīb, *Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth*, pp. 176-81; Azami, *Studies in Hadīth Methodology and Literature*, p. 15 and Ṣiddīqī, *Ḥadīth Literature*, p. 6.

⁴⁰⁹ See al-Khaṭīb, *Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth*, pp. 176-81; al-Ṭurayfī, *Tārīkh al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, p. 88 and Ṣiddīqī, *Ḥadīth Literature*, p. 7.

⁴¹⁰ See al-Ṭurayfī, *Tārīkh al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, pp. 87-8; Azami, *Studies in Hadīth Methodology and Literature*, pp. 81-3 and Ṣiddīqī, *Ḥadīth Literature*, pp. 7-8.

⁴¹¹ See al-Khaṭīb, *Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth*, pp. 328-30; Azami, *Studies in Hadīth Methodology and Literature*, pp. 84-6 and Ṣiddīqī, *Ḥadīth Literature*, pp. 46-52.

Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥiḥ of Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870)⁴¹², *al-Musnad al-Ṣaḥiḥ* of Abū 'l-Ḥusayn Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī (d. 261/875)⁴¹³, the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān b. al-Ash'ath al-Sijistānī (d. 275/889)⁴¹⁴, the *al-Jāmi'* of Abū 'Īsā Muḥammad b. 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892)⁴¹⁵, the *Sunan* of Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Aḥmad b. Shu'ayb al-Nasā'ī (d. 303/915)⁴¹⁶ and the *Sunan* of Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Yazīd al-Qazwīnī [Ibn Mājah] (d. 273/886)⁴¹⁷, in addition to a variety of other works in the period.⁴¹⁸

The collection of *ḥadīth* also contributed to the development of another field of learning that was equally vibrant during the 'Abbāsīd period - that of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). The flourishing of *fiqh* during this period was facilitated by a number of factors including state support for jurists and the commissioning of jurisprudential works, the atmosphere of debate and discussion that was apparent amongst the scholars and that even took place at the royal court, the increase in the centres of learning and the compilation of the first works.⁴¹⁹ This ultimately led to the formation of the four major schools of Islamic jurisprudence that still exist today, i.e. those of Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nu'mān b. Thābit (d. 150/767) known as the Ḥanafī school (*al-madhab al-ḥanafī*)⁴²⁰, Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795) known as the Mālikī school (*al-madhab al-mālikī*)⁴²¹, Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-

⁴¹² See al-Khaṭīb, *Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth*, pp. 308-14; Azami, *Studies in Hadīth Methodology and Literature*, pp. 87-93 and Ṣiddīqī, *Ḥadīth Literature*, pp. 53-8.

⁴¹³ See al-Khaṭīb, *Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth*, pp. 314-16; Azami, *Studies in Hadīth Methodology and Literature*, pp. 94-6 and Ṣiddīqī, *Ḥadīth Literature*, pp. 58-60.

⁴¹⁴ See al-Khaṭīb, *Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth*, pp. 320-1; Azami, *Studies in Hadīth Methodology and Literature*, pp. 99-102 and Ṣiddīqī, *Ḥadīth Literature*, pp. 61-3.

⁴¹⁵ See al-Khaṭīb, *Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth*, pp. 322-4; Azami, *Studies in Hadīth Methodology and Literature*, pp. 103-4 and Ṣiddīqī, *Ḥadīth Literature*, pp. 64-7.

⁴¹⁶ See al-Khaṭīb, *Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth*, pp. 324-6; Azami, *Studies in Hadīth Methodology and Literature*, pp. 97-8 and Ṣiddīqī, *Ḥadīth Literature*, pp. 67-8.

⁴¹⁷ See al-Khaṭīb, *Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth*, pp. 326-7; Azami, *Studies in Hadīth Methodology and Literature*, pp. 105-7 and Ṣiddīqī, *Ḥadīth Literature*, p. 69.

⁴¹⁸ See Ṣiddīqī, *Ḥadīth Literature*, pp. 68-72.

⁴¹⁹ See al-Ashqar, 'Umar Sulaymān, *Tārīkh al-Fiqh al-Islāmī* (3rd ed., Amman, Dār al-Nafā'is, 1991) pp. 92-3; al-Ṭurayfī, *Tārīkh al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, pp. 86-95 and Philips, Bilal, *The Evolution of Fiqh* (Riyadh, Tawheed Publications, 1990) pp. 52-8.

⁴²⁰ See al-Fāsī, *al-Fikr al-Sāmī fī Tārīkh al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, vol. 1 (part 2), pp. 410-36; al-Shalabī, Muḥammad Muṣṭafā, *al-Madkhal fī 'l-Ta'rif bi 'l-Fiqh al-Islāmī* (Beirut, Dār al-Nahda al-'Arabiyya, 1985) pp. 171-84; al-Dur'ān, 'Abd Allāh, *al-Madkhal li 'l-Fiqh al-Islāmī - Tārīkhuhu, Qawā'iduhu, Mabādī'uhu al-'Amma* (Riyadh, Maktabat al-Tawba, 1993) pp. 133-40; al-Ṭurayfī, *Tārīkh al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, pp. 104-112; Melchert, Christopher, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law 9th-10th centuries C.E.* (Leiden, Brill, 1997) pp. 48-67 and Philips, *The Evolution of Fiqh*, pp. 64-8.

⁴²¹ See al-Fāsī, *al-Fikr al-Sāmī fī Tārīkh al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, vol. 1 (part 2), pp. 446-63; al-Shalabī, *al-Madkhal fī 'l-Ta'rif bi 'l-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, pp. 184-91; al-Dur'ān, *al-Madkhal li 'l-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, pp. 141-7; al-Ṭurayfī, *Tārīkh al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, pp. 112-16; Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law 9th-10th centuries C.E.*, pp. 156-77 and Philips, *The Evolution of Fiqh*, pp. 69-74.

Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820) known as the Shāfi'ī school (*al-madhab al-shāfi'ī*)⁴²² and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) known as the Ḥanbalī school (*al-madhab al-ḥanbalī*)⁴²³. This is not to say that there were only four skilled, independent jurists (*mujtahidūn*) during this period but indeed, this part of Islamic history was renowned for the existence of a host of prominent scholars of comparable ability who included: Sufyān b. Sa'īd al-Thawrī (d. 161/778)⁴²⁴, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Amr al-Awzā'ī (d. 157/774)⁴²⁵, al-Layth b. Sa'd al-Fahmī (d. 175/791)⁴²⁶, Sufyān b. 'Uyayna al-Hilālī (d. 197/814)⁴²⁷, Ishāq b. Rāhawayh al-Ḥanzalī (d. 238/853)⁴²⁸, Abū Thawr Ibrāhīm b. Khālid al-Kalbī (d. 240/854)⁴²⁹, Dāwūd b. 'Alī al-Zāhirī (d. 270/884)⁴³⁰ and Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923)⁴³¹.

Theological debate was no less dynamic during the reign of the early 'Abbāsīd caliphs; the Shi'ite and Khārijite tendencies of the early period were still active⁴³² and the trend towards polemics regarding man's actions and divine will was further developed by a new sectarian view termed Mu'tazilism⁴³³, geared towards a rational dialectic and probably fuelled by the introduction of the Greek sciences of logic and philosophy.⁴³⁴ This latter trend will be dealt

⁴²² See al-Fāsi, *al-Fikr al-Sāmī fī Tārīkh al-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, vol. 1 (part 2), pp. 464-75; al-Shalabī, *al-Madkhal fī 'l-Ta'rīf bi 'l-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, pp. 192-99; al-Dur'ān, *al-Madkhal li 'l-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, pp. 147-58; al-Ṭurayfī, *Tārīkh al-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, pp. 117-21; Hallaq, Wael, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: an Introduction to Sunni Usul al-Fiḥ* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997) pp. 21-35; Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law 9th-10th centuries C.E.*, pp. 68-87 and Philips, *The Evolution of Fiḥ*, pp. 80-4.

⁴²³ See al-Fāsi, *al-Fikr al-Sāmī fī Tārīkh al-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, vol. 2 (part 1), pp. 20-9; al-Shalabī, *al-Madkhal fī 'l-Ta'rīf bi 'l-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, pp. 200-7; al-Dur'ān, *al-Madkhal li 'l-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, pp. 159-73; al-Ṭurayfī, *Tārīkh al-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, pp. 122-46; Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law 9th-10th centuries C.E.*, pp. 137-55 and Philips, *The Evolution of Fiḥ*, pp. 84-7.

⁴²⁴ See al-Fāsi, *al-Fikr al-Sāmī fī Tārīkh al-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, vol. 1 (part 2), pp. 438-9; al-Ṭurayfī, *Tārīkh al-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, pp. 98-9 and Philips, *The Evolution of Fiḥ*, pp. 79-80.

⁴²⁵ See al-Fāsi, *al-Fikr al-Sāmī fī Tārīkh al-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, vol. 1 (part 2), pp. 436-7; al-Ṭurayfī, *Tārīkh al-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, pp. 97-8 and Philips, *The Evolution of Fiḥ*, p. 69.

⁴²⁶ See al-Fāsi, *al-Fikr al-Sāmī fī Tārīkh al-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, vol. 1 (part 2), pp. 439-40; al-Ṭurayfī, *Tārīkh al-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, p. 99 and Philips, *The Evolution of Fiḥ*, p. 78-9.

⁴²⁷ See al-Fāsi, *al-Fikr al-Sāmī fī Tārīkh al-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, vol. 1 (part 2), pp. 463-4 and al-Ṭurayfī, *Tārīkh al-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, p. 100.

⁴²⁸ See al-Fāsi, *al-Fikr al-Sāmī fī Tārīkh al-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, vol. 2 (part 1), pp. 29-43 and al-Ṭurayfī, *Tārīkh al-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, pp. 100-1.

⁴²⁹ See al-Fāsi, *al-Fikr al-Sāmī fī Tārīkh al-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, vol. 2 (part 1), pp. 19-20 and al-Ṭurayfī, *Tārīkh al-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, p. 101.

⁴³⁰ See al-Fāsi, *al-Fikr al-Sāmī fī Tārīkh al-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, vol. 2 (part 1), pp. 29-43; al-Ṭurayfī, *Tārīkh al-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, pp. 101-3; Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law 9th-10th centuries C.E.*, pp. 175-90 and Philips, *The Evolution of Fiḥ*, pp. 87-9.

⁴³¹ See al-Fāsi, *al-Fikr al-Sāmī fī Tārīkh al-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, vol. 2 (part 1), pp. 45-7; al-Ṭurayfī, *Tārīkh al-Fiḥ al-Islāmī*, p. 103; Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law 9th-10th centuries C.E.*, pp. 191-7 and Philips, *The Evolution of Fiḥ*, p. 89.

⁴³² See Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 33-4 and 50-57.

⁴³³ See al-Nashshār, 'Alī Sāmī, *Nash'at al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī 'l-Islām*, 7th ed., (3 vols., Cairo, Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1978) vol. 1, pp. 314-366 *passim*; Watt, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 25-31 and Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 82-118 *passim*.

⁴³⁴ See al-Nashshār, *Nash'at al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī 'l-Islām*, vol. 1, pp. 443-503 *passim*; Watt, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 54-5 and *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 249-50.

with briefly in the following sections but the discussion here will focus on a repercussion of this development. The general populace of the Muslim community and their scholars at this stage can be designated as being 'Sunni' and be considered in opposition to the controversies raised by the sects just mentioned. With the advent of a rational approach as proposed by the Mu'tazilites, what Watt terms 'the General Religious Movement'⁴³⁵ was faced with a new challenge to their claim of 'orthodoxy'. In the face of the onslaught of Mu'tazilite rationalism many scholars remained steadfast, doggedly holding on to the creed they inherited from their predecessors, whereas others evolved an equally rational approach to defend their 'orthodox' beliefs against the digressions of their coreligionists. This rational method of defending orthodoxy that would be closely associated with Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935) in later times, was apparent in the first generation of Sunni scholastic theologians (*mutakallimū ahl al-sunna*) long before his arrival.⁴³⁶ Indeed, these scholars maybe viewed as the precursors of al-Ash'arī and included such notables as: 'Abd Allāh b. Sa'īd b. Kullāb (d. ca. 239/854)⁴³⁷, Abū 'l-'Abbās al-Qalānisi⁴³⁸ and of most interest to us, our subject al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī.⁴³⁹ As such, this trend, which was vehemently opposed by ultra 'orthodox' Sunnites such as Ibn Ḥanbal, is extremely significant as it lays the ground for the latter day Ash'arite school of scholastic theology (*kalām*).⁴⁴⁰

In summary, when reflecting on the discussion that has been presented above in the current section it is hardly surprising that the early 'Abbāsīd period was known as the 'Golden Age' of Islamic learning. Bearing this in mind, it is appropriate now to examine the geographic locations in which al-Muḥāsibī lived, to explore what other trends may well have influenced his life and works.

⁴³⁵ See Watt, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 19-24 and *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 63-81.

⁴³⁶ See al-Nashshār, *Nash'at al-Fikr al-Falsafi fī 'l-Islām*, vol. 1, p. 265; Watt, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 42-4; *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 180-6 and Young, Latham and Serjeant, *Religion, Learning and Science in the Abbasid Period*, pp. 1-9.

⁴³⁷ See Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa 'l-Niḥal*, vol. 1, p. 74; al-Nashshār, *Nash'at al-Fikr al-Falsafi fī 'l-Islām*, vol. 1, pp. 265-78; Watt, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 58-9 and *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 286-7.

⁴³⁸ See Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa 'l-Niḥal*, vol. 1, p. 74; al-Nashshār, *Nash'at al-Fikr al-Falsafi fī 'l-Islām*, vol. 1, pp. 278-84; Watt, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, p. 64 and *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 287-9.

⁴³⁹ See Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa 'l-Niḥal*, vol. 1, p. 74; al-Nashshār, *Nash'at al-Fikr al-Falsafi fī 'l-Islām*, vol. 1, p. 284; Watt, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, p. 136 and *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, p. 282.

⁴⁴⁰ See Watt, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, p. 64 and *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 287-9 and 311-12.

3.3 Basra in the ‘Abbāsīd Early Period

The city of Basra may well stand on the site of an old Persian settlement as it was known to the Arabs as ‘al-Khurayba’ (lit. the little ruin) but its life as a Muslim town can be considered a new construction. The area was chosen by the Prophetic Companion ‘Utba b. Ghazwān in 17/638 on the orders of the second caliph ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb to establish a military camp; this became known as al-Baṣra, probably due to the nature of the area’s soil, as the name appears to mean ‘black pebbles’. Strategically placed 15 kilometres from the Shaṭṭ al-‘Arab, Basra was to afford control over the Persian Gulf and provide a base for expeditions east. The location’s first dwellings were simple reed huts, which were gradually replaced by crude bricks and eventually by baked bricks due to the efforts of Ziyād b. Abū Sufyān, who can be regarded as the artisan of the city’s prosperity.⁴⁴¹

Despite its early development, Basra suffered from a lack of readily available drinking water and a notoriously difficult climate but nevertheless, due to various economic and political factors it became a great city. Being a major military encampment it was populated by some of the aristocratic tribes, the town being divided into five tribal sectors (*khums*, pl. *akhmās*): Ahl al-‘Āliya, Tamīm, Bakr b. Wā’il, ‘Abd al-Qays and ‘Azd. Similarly, the population of Basra included the ranks of the *mawālī*, and a number of immigrant populations, such as Persians, Indians, Malays and people from Sind, and the Zanj, adding to the new town’s ‘cosmopolitan’ nature.⁴⁴²

Basra reached its zenith in the 2nd/8th century, being fully developed and having a large population.⁴⁴³ At this stage it was very much a great city and a ‘complete metropolis’, as it had a commercial centre, Mirbad (the kneeling place for camels), situated at the western gate where the caravans halted and which, was one of the busiest parts of the city. Similarly, it contained a river port termed al-Kallā‘, which could accommodate ships of a fairly large tonnage and a financial centre run by wealthy non Arabs, Christians and Jews. In addition, Basra also had an industrial area with its arsenal and an agricultural centre famed for its variety of dates.⁴⁴⁴ During this period Basra had the character of a semi-independent metropolis but with the foundation of Baghdad it lost most of this quality that

⁴⁴¹ Le Strange, G., *The Lands of the Eastern Caiphate* (Frank Cass & Co., London, 1966) p. 44, Gibb *et al* (eds.) *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1, p. 1085 and Appendix 2.

⁴⁴² Gibb *et al* (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1, pp. 1085-6.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁴ Le Strange, G., *The Lands of the Eastern Caiphate*, p. 45 and Gibb *et al* (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1, p. 1086.

it had possessed since its inception, becoming little more than a provincial town, being completely supplanted by the newly founded ʿAbbāsid capital.⁴⁴⁵

3.3.1 The First Ascetic School in Basra

It is hardly surprising that such a metropolis that boasted such a highly diverse demographic make-up also became a centre for intellectual endeavour and academic excellence. In fact Basra was one of the earliest and most influential centres of learning in the Muslim world, as Louis Massignon comments, “Basra, in fact, is the veritable crucible in which Islamic culture assumed its form, crystallised in the classic mould, between the first and 4th centuries of the *hijra* (16/637-311/923).”⁴⁴⁶ As such, a number of intellectual, academic and religious movements arose in tandem with the flourishing of Basra itself. Some of these are of primary importance to the current discussion, in the sense that they may have direct relevance to the life of al-Muḥāsibī and therefore, will be discussed presently.⁴⁴⁷

Of these clearly identifiable trends is the ascetic nature of the spiritual teaching in Basra, which is almost exclusively associated with the city’s most famous son al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) and which, is commonly held to be the precursor of what would later be termed Sufism. Although al-Ḥasan’s influence upon the ascetic tradition in Basra cannot be denied, upon examination we find that this trend originates long before his arrival on the scene. In fact the trend for an ascetic, spiritual lifestyle can be traced back to one of its early governors from the Companion generation, Abū Mūsā [ʿAbd Allāh b. Qays] al-Ashʿarī (d. 44/665). Abū Mūsā was one of the most famous Prophetic Companions, being associated with *ahl al-ṣuffa* (lit. the people of the bench)⁴⁴⁸ and one of the renowned reciters of the Qurʾān, who were requested by the Prophet himself to recite for him personally. With this in mind, the second caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb placed him in charge of the affairs of Basra but in addition to his administrative duties, one of his main tasks was to teach the recital of the Qurʾān - a tradition that later became a manifest quality of the Basran ascetic ‘school’.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁵ Gibb *et al* (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1, p. 1086.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Similarly, there are number of trends and developments in learning that originated in Basra but their effect on the life of al-Muḥāsibī is less tangible and therefore, they have been discussed above in the general section dealing with intellectual life in the early ʿAbbāsid period.

⁴⁴⁸ See pp. 32-3 above.

⁴⁴⁹ The term ‘school’ is used in a very loose way in the sense that this was not a specific group of individuals who would meet in a specific location, study a particular curriculum and express a certain number of beliefs but rather, a nascent teaching that had identifiable trends in a particular locale, in this case Basra. Indeed, this

In addition, he was famed for his fasting despite the heat and his rousing sermons, in which he would warn of the torments of hell and the dangers of becoming attached to the worldly life, to the extent that the audience would weep out of fear - another quality that became an intrinsic part of the spiritual teaching in Basra.⁴⁵⁰

The initial impetus supplied by Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī gave rise to a number of scholars who took up the mantle of such an ascetic teaching, each of them advancing it in their own way until we find the development of what al-Nashshār terms, ‘the first Basran school (*madrasat al-Baṣra al-ūlā*)’.⁴⁵¹ This school was exemplified by a number of personalities but since an in-depth discussion of each of them individually is beyond the scope of the current research, only the prominent names will be given here: ‘Āmir b. ‘Abd [al-] Qays (d. ca. 50/670)⁴⁵², Harim b. Ḥayyān⁴⁵³, al-Aḥnaf b. Qays⁴⁵⁴, Abū ‘Āliya [Rafī‘ b. Mahrān] al-Rayyāḥī (d. 93/712)⁴⁵⁵, Ṣila b. Ushaym al-‘Adawī (d. 62/682)⁴⁵⁶ and his wife Mu‘ādha bt. ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Adawīyya⁴⁵⁷.

3.3.2 The Second Ascetic School in Basra

The development of asceticism did not stop here however and continued into what al-Nashshār terms ‘the second Basran school (*madrasat al-Baṣra al-thāniya*)’⁴⁵⁸ for which

was the case throughout the initial period of Islam’s spread throughout the region, as formulated schools in the traditional sense did not appear until much later.

⁴⁵⁰ See al-Aṣfahānī (d. 430/1039), Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Ishāq [Abū Nu‘aym], *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā*, edited by Sa‘īd Sa‘d al-Dīn al-Iskandarī (10 vols., Beirut, Dār Iḥyā‘ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 2001) vol. 1, pp. 236-43; Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201), ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad [Abū al-Faraj], *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, edited by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Lādiqī and Ḥayāt al-Lādiqī (4th ed., 4 parts in 2 vols., Beirut, Dār al-Ma‘rifa, 2001) vol. 1, pp. 262-5 and al-Nashshār, *Nash‘at al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī ‘l-Islām*, vol. 3, pp. 106-8.

⁴⁵¹ See al-Nashshār, *Nash‘at al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī ‘l-Islām*, vol. 3, pp. 103-14.

⁴⁵² See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā*, vol. 2, pp. 88-94; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 3, pp. 141-7; al-Nashshār, *Nash‘at al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī ‘l-Islām*, vol. 3, pp. 108-14; Massignon, Louis, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, translated from the French by Benjamin Clark (Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1997) p. 112 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 15-16.

⁴⁵³ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā*, vol. 2, pp. 116-19; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 3, pp. 149-50; al-Nashshār, *Nash‘at al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī ‘l-Islām*, vol. 3, pp. 114-15 and Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 112.

⁴⁵⁴ See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 3, pp. 139-40 and al-Nashshār, *Nash‘at al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī ‘l-Islām*, vol. 3, pp. 115-16.

⁴⁵⁵ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā*, vol. 2, pp. 199-205; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 3, pp. 147-8 and al-Nashshār, *Nash‘at al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī ‘l-Islām*, vol. 3, pp. 116-18.

⁴⁵⁶ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā*, vol. 2, pp. 217-21; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 3, pp. 151-3; al-Nashshār, *Nash‘at al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī ‘l-Islām*, vol. 3, pp. 118-20 and Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 112.

⁴⁵⁷ See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 4, pp. 288-9; al-Nashshār, *Nash‘at al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī ‘l-Islām*, vol. 3, pp. 120-1 and Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 112.

⁴⁵⁸ See al-Nashshār, *Nash‘at al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī ‘l-Islām*, vol. 3, pp. 122-37.

Muṭarrif b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Shakīr (d. 87/706 or 95/714)⁴⁵⁹ may be viewed as a precursor. The eponym of this school was not Muṭarrif however but Basra’s most illustrious inhabitant al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, whose influence in shaping religious life in general and the ascetic life in particular in Basra is proverbial. After spending his formative years in the city of the Prophet, Medina and a brief period of military service on the frontiers, he eventually settled in Basra where he became famous - like his spiritual predecessor Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī - for his fiery sermons, which are held to be masterpieces of religious rhetoric, as well as one of the earliest specimens of Arabic prose. His teaching revolved around the avoidance of sin, anticipation of the Last Judgement, rejection of worldly attitudes and the attachment to worldly possessions. Similarly, al-Ḥasan’s practice of humility and self scrutiny provided the cornerstone of his self discipline and introspection and when combined with his brotherly feeling towards his contemporaries, it defined him as Knysh puts it, as being “the archetypal proto-Sufi”⁴⁶⁰.⁴⁶¹ It is hardly surprising that such a personality influenced so many of his contemporaries and although there were many, due to the constraints of the current research, only the most prominent names will be mentioned here: Yazid b. Abān al-Raqāshī (d. between 101/719-121/739)⁴⁶², Muḥammad b. Wāsiʿ (d. 120/738 or 123/741 or 127/745)⁴⁶³, Thābit b. Aslam al-Bunānī (d. 123/741 or 127/745)⁴⁶⁴, Mālik b. Dīnār (d.

⁴⁵⁹ See al-Aṣḥānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 2, pp. 183-95; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 3, pp. 157-60; al-Nashshār, *Nashʿat al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī ʿl-Islām*, vol. 3, pp. 122-7 and Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 112.

⁴⁶⁰ Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, p. 10.

⁴⁶¹ See al-Aṣḥānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 2, pp. 126-8; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 3, pp. 205-6; al-Nashshār, *Nashʿat al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī ʿl-Islām*, vol. 3, pp. 128-37; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 112 and 119-138 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 10-13.

⁴⁶² See al-Aṣḥānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 3, pp. 47-51; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 3, pp. 205-6; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 114 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 13-15.

⁴⁶³ See al-Aṣḥānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 2, pp. 309-19; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 3, pp. 191-4; al-Nashshār, *Nashʿat al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī ʿl-Islām*, vol. 3, pp. 168-71; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 114 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 13-15.

⁴⁶⁴ See al-Aṣḥānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 2, pp. 286-98; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 3, pp. 186-9; al-Nashshār, *Nashʿat al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī ʿl-Islām*, vol. 3, pp. 171-2 and Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 114.

128/746)⁴⁶⁵, Farqad b. Ya‘qūb al-Sabkhī (d. 131/749)⁴⁶⁶, Ḥabīb al-‘Ajāmī (d. 156/773)⁴⁶⁷, Ayyūb b. Tamīma al-Sikhtiyānī (d. 131/749)⁴⁶⁸ and ‘Abd al-Wāḥid b. Zayd (d. 177/794)⁴⁶⁹. This generation of scholars were known as ascetics (*nussāk*) due to their austere lifestyles, reciters (*qurrāʾ*) due to their emphasis on the teaching of the Qurʾān and presumably its implementation, worshippers (*‘ubbād*) due to their strict adherence to their devotions, preachers (*quṣṣāṣ*) due to the delivery of their heart rendering sermons and ‘weepers’ (*bakkāʾūn*), due to their shedding of tears publicly when moved by eloquent speech or the remembrance of death or the hereafter.⁴⁷⁰ This teaching was further advanced by the students of Ibn Zayd, such as Riyāḥ b. ‘Amr al-Qaysī (d. 195/210)⁴⁷¹ but more famously by Rābi‘a al-‘Adawiyya (d. 185/801)⁴⁷², who espoused the doctrine of ‘divine love (*al-ḥubb al-ilāhī*)’, which would infuse the doctrines of Sufism for centuries to come.

3.3.3 The Mu‘tazilite School in Basra

The other outstanding intellectual trend that may have had a direct effect on al-Muḥāsibī during the early ‘Abbāsīd era was the establishment of the Mu‘tazilite school in Basra. Quite paradoxically this too is said have been a product of the circle of students that surrounded al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. Tradition has it that a student of al-Ḥasan, Wāṣil b. ‘Aṭā’ (d. 131/749)⁴⁷³, was present during a debate concerning the status of a sinful believer, i.e. what

⁴⁶⁵ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 2, pp. 320-45; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifāt al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 3, pp. 195-205; al-Nashshār, *Nashʾat al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī ‘l-Islām*, vol. 3, pp. 162-8; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 114 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 13-15.

⁴⁶⁶ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 3, pp. 42-7; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifāt al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 3, pp. 194-5; al-Nashshār, *Nashʾat al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī ‘l-Islām*, vol. 3, pp. 150-5; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 114 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 13-15.

⁴⁶⁷ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 6, pp. 130-4; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifāt al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 3, pp. 226-38; al-Nashshār, *Nashʾat al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī ‘l-Islām*, vol. 3, pp. 150-5 and Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 114.

⁴⁶⁸ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 3, pp. 5-15; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifāt al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 3, pp. 209-12; al-Nashshār, *Nashʾat al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī ‘l-Islām*, vol. 3, pp. 172-3 and Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 114.

⁴⁶⁹ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 6, pp. 135-43; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifāt al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 3, pp. 229-32; al-Nashshār, *Nashʾat al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī ‘l-Islām*, vol. 3, pp. 178-83; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 114 and 147-52 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 16-18.

⁴⁷⁰ See Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 113-15 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁷¹ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 6, pp. 167-171; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifāt al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 3, pp. 261-3; al-Nashshār, *Nashʾat al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī ‘l-Islām*, vol. 3, pp. 189-97; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 150-2 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, p. 26.

⁴⁷² See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifāt al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 4, pp. 292-4; al-Nashshār, *Nashʾat al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī ‘l-Islām*, vol. 3, pp. 197-213; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 149-50 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 26-32.

⁴⁷³ See al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037), ‘Abd al-Qādir b. Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifa, 2001) pp. 115-18; al-Shahrastānī (d. 538/1144), Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Karīm, *al-Milal wa ‘l-Niḥal*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Fāḍilī (Beirut, al-Maktaba al-‘Aṣriyya, 2002) pp. 40-3; al-Nashshār,

would be the abode of such a person in the hereafter, paradise or hell? Wāṣil's opinion, which he no doubt expressed, was that such a person would neither be in paradise nor hell but in an intermediate position (*manzila bayn manzilatayn*). This view was opposed by those present and Wāṣil left this gathering to which al-Ḥasan is reported to have said that Wāṣil has withdrawn (*i'tazala*). Thus, such exponents of this view were known as al-Mu'tazila, lit. 'those who have withdrawn', i.e., from the views held by the majority of the community.⁴⁷⁴

This 'intellectualising' of religious dogma seemingly set in motion by Wāṣil b. 'Aṭā' developed into a rationalised approach to theology, which seems to have been associated with the acquaintances of another Basran theologian, Abū 'Amr 'Dirār b. 'Amr al-Ghaṭafānī (d. 182/800 or 204/820)⁴⁷⁵ and culminated in what became to be known as the Mu'tazilite school in Basra. A full discussion of this school and its views are beyond the scope of the current work and as such, only the names of the most prominent personalities will be given here: Abū Hudhayl Muḥammad b. Hudhayl al-'Allāf (d. 227/842)⁴⁷⁶, Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Sayyār al-Nazzām (d. 221/836 or 230/845 or 231/846 or 232/847)⁴⁷⁷, Mu'ammār b. 'Abbād al-Sulamī (d. 214/830 or 220/835)⁴⁷⁸, Abū Bakr 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Kaysān al-Aṣamm (b. 200/816)⁴⁷⁹, Hishām b. 'Amr al-Fuwaṭī al-Shaybānī (b. 218/833 or 226/841)⁴⁸⁰,

Nash'at al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī 'l-Islām, vol. 1, pp. 381-406; al-'Aql, Nāṣir b. 'Abd al-Karīm, *al-Jahmiyya wa 'l-Mu'tazila* (Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭan, 1996) pp. 140-4 and Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 209-15 and *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 47-8.

⁴⁷⁴ For an in-depth discussion of these reports see al-Juhanī, M. H. (ed.), *al-Mawsū'a al-Muyassara fī 'l-Adyān wa al-Madhāhib wa 'l-Aḥzāb al-Mu'āṣira* (2 vols., Riyadh, al-Nadwa al-'Ālamiyya li 'l-Shabāb al-Islāmī, 1999) vol. 1, pp. 64-5 and Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 209-17.

⁴⁷⁵ See Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 189-95 and 219 and *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 42-4.

⁴⁷⁶ See al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, pp. 119-27; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa 'l-Niḥal*, pp. 43-6; al-Nashshār, *Nash'at al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī 'l-Islām*, vol. 1, pp. 443-81; al-'Aql, *al-Jahmiyya wa 'l-Mu'tazila*, pp. 155-6; al-Juhanī (ed.), *al-Mawsū'a al-Muyassara*, vol. 1, p. 66; Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, p. 219 and *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 46-55.

⁴⁷⁷ See al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, pp. 127-44; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa 'l-Niḥal*, pp. 46-50; al-Nashshār, *Nash'at al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī 'l-Islām*, vol. 1, pp. 484-503; al-'Aql, *al-Jahmiyya wa 'l-Mu'tazila*, pp. 156-8; al-Juhanī (ed.), *al-Mawsū'a al-Muyassara*, vol. 1, p. 66; Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 219-220 and *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, p. 53.

⁴⁷⁸ See al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, pp. 144-8; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa 'l-Niḥal*, pp. 54-6; al-Nashshār, *Nash'at al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī 'l-Islām*, vol. 1, pp. 504-17; al-'Aql, *al-Jahmiyya wa 'l-Mu'tazila*, p. 158; al-Juhanī (ed.), *al-Mawsū'a al-Muyassara*, vol. 1, p. 66; Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, p. 220 and *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 47 and 52-3.

⁴⁷⁹ See Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, p. 220.

⁴⁸⁰ See al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, pp. 150-5; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa 'l-Niḥal*, pp. 58-60; al-'Aql, *al-Jahmiyya wa 'l-Mu'tazila*, p. 159 and Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, p. 220.

Abū ʿUthmān ʿAmr b. Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ (b. 250/864 or 255/869 or 256/870)⁴⁸¹ and Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Shaḥḥām (d. ca. 266/880)⁴⁸².

3.4 Baghdad in the Early ʿAbbāsīd Period

It is a common historical feature that each dynasty upon its seizing the reins of power establishes a new seat for that power, to demonstrate its identity and prestige and thus, wipe their subjects' memories from its predecessors. In this regard, the ʿAbbāsīds were no exception; on ascending the throne al-Saffāḥ had moved the centre of the empire from Damascus to Kūfa and later, to a purpose built capital known as al-Hāshimiyya, in honour of the dynasty. This proved relatively unsuccessful however since the establishment of this new centre was attempted at four different sites in the vicinity of Kūfa and Anbar.⁴⁸³

Upon taking control of the state from his brother, al-Manṣūr maintained al-Hāshimiyya as the capital but with the riot of the Rāwandiyya in 141/758 and the close vicinity of Kūfa, which had maintained its Shiʿite sympathies from an early period, al-Manṣūr decided to search for a new more suitable seat for his power. In addition, he decided that the new capital would remain in Iraq despite the power-base of the dynasty being in Khurasān, as this province was far too remote from the rest of the empire for power to be wielded efficiently but nevertheless, the ʿAbbāsīds still required a suitable location to settle their eastern partisans. After travelling to inspect various sites personally, al-Manṣūr eventually decided upon the small hamlet of Baghdād, being suitably impressed with its strategic position - on the banks of the Tigris, its pleasant climate and the legends surrounding it - the name apparently meaning 'a gift from God'.⁴⁸⁴

Having chosen the site, al-Manṣūr himself was active in tracing the foundations of the new city and having done so, summoned the local craftsman and artisans to begin work on the

⁴⁸¹ See al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, pp. 164-7; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa 'l-Niḥal*, pp. 60-1; al-ʿAql, *al-Jahmiyya wa 'l-Muʿtazila*, p. 159; al-Juhanī (ed.), *al-Mawsūʿa al-Muyassara*, vol. 1, p. 67; Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 220-1 and *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 47 and 52-3.

⁴⁸² See al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, p. 167 and Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, p. 221.

⁴⁸³ Ḥasan, *Taʾriḫ al-Islām*, vol. 2. p. 362; Gibb et al (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1, p. 895; Le Strange, G., *Baghdad During the Abbasid Caliphate* (London, Oxford University Press, 1924) pp. 5-6; Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 86 and Appendix 2.

⁴⁸⁴ See al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071), Abū Bakr b. Aḥmad b. ʿAlī [al-Khaṭīb], *Taʾriḫ Baghdād - Madīnat al-Salām* (18 vols., Beirut, Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, n.d.) vol. 1 pp. 58-62 and 66; Ḥasan, *Taʾriḫ al-Islām*, vol. 2. pp. 362-8; al-Wakīl, *al-ʿAṣr al-Dhahabī li 'l-Dawla al-ʿAbbāsiyya* pp. 82-4; Saʿīd, *Warrāqū Baghdād fī 'l-ʿAṣr al-ʿAbbāsī*, pp. 19-22; al-Khuḍarī, *al-Dawla al-ʿAbbāsiyya*, p. 77; Gibb et al (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1, pp. 894-5; Le Strange, *Baghdad During the Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 7-14; Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate - A Political History*, pp. 86-7; Lassner, Jacob, *The Shaping of 'Abbasid Rule* (Princeton, Princeton University Press,) pp. 159-65; Brockleman, *History of Islamic Peoples*, pp. 107-9; Weit, *Baghdad*, p. 8; Clot, *Harun al-Rashid and the World of the Thousand and One Nights*, p. 152 and Appendix 2.

construction in 145/762, which was located on the west bank of the Tigris. The official name of the city was Madīnat al-Salām ‘the City of Peace’ in reference to paradise in the Qur’ānic verse (6:127, 10:26) but the city was also known as al-Zawrā’ ‘the crooked’, as well as the original name of Baghdād. At the heart of the construction was the tremendous Round City, with its huge fortifications, walls, moat and gates. At the centre of the Round City lay some administrative buildings, troops quarters, the main mosque and the caliph’s palace, known as the ‘Palace of Gold (*qaṣr al-dhahab*)’, famous for its green dome over the audience chamber. The almost ‘cosmic’ design of the Round City with its four huge gates, each leading to a ‘corner’ of the empire (Syria [NW], Kūfa [SW], Basra [SE] and Khurasān [NE]), seemed to imply the caliph’s centralising of the ‘Abbāsīd power, as well as supplying him with a fortress to act as a base for his plans. The initial building process took almost one year - 146/763 - before the official caliphal administration was moved to the new capital and construction was finally completed in 149/766.⁴⁸⁵

The eloquent town planning of the Round City was not the only stroke of genius manifested by al-Manṣūr however, but indeed, the surrounding and adjacent areas to the main complex were also well thought out. The neighbouring areas to the Round City were organised into quarters that were designed for a specific purpose and to be populated by a specific section of society. Most notably these included al-Ḥarbiyya district, which housed the military contingent made up of the Khurasānī troops and the Karkh quarter, which was a commercial district, housing the main markets of Baghdad and supplying the palace complex with its needs. Similarly, al-Manṣūr built himself a second palace termed ‘al-Khuld (Eternity)’, which later became his and many of his successors’ preferred residence, possibly due to its pleasant location on the bank of the Tigris and as an escape from the pressure of the administrative centre in the Round City. In addition, the east bank also flourished with the building of bridges and a new district termed al-Ruṣāfa ‘the causeway’. This was further enhanced by the establishment of a further palace for his son and heir known as ‘Askar al-Mahdī, due to the encampment of his troops there, in 151/768 on his triumphant return to

⁴⁸⁵ See al-Baghdādī, *Ta’rīkh Baghdād*, vol. 1 pp. 66-75 and 66; Ḥasan, *Ta’rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 2. pp. 368-74; al-Wakīl, *al-‘Aṣr al-Dhahabī li ‘l-Dawla al-‘Abbāsiyya*, pp. 83-7; Sa’id, *Warrāqū Baghdād fī ‘l-‘Aṣr al-‘Abbāsī*, pp. 22-3; al-Khuḍarī, *al-Dawla al-‘Abbāsiyya*, pp. 77-8; Gibb et al (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1, pp. 895-7; Le Strange, *Baghdad During the Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 16-26; Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 88; Lassner, *The Shaping of ‘Abbasid Rule*, pp. 166-95; Brockleman, *History of Islamic Peoples*, p. 109; Weit, *Baghdad*, pp. 11-17; Shaban, M. A., *Islamic History A New Interpretation* (2 vols., London, Oxford University Press, 1976) vol. 2, pp. 8-9; Clot, *Harun al-Rashid and the World of the Thousand and One Nights*, pp. 152-4 and Appendix 3.

Baghdad. Subsequently, this had the knock on effect of developing the market areas on the east side to the extent that they came to rival the Karkh district on the western bank.⁴⁸⁶

Thus, by the time al-Mahdī ascended the throne in 158/775 - some seven years before the birth of al-Muḥāsibī - Baghdad was a fully developed, thriving metropolis, acting as the new capital for a firmly established ‘Abbāsīd state. With the myriad of opportunities such a new construction posed, it is not surprising that the capital also became a multicultural centre assimilating various peoples and culture in an open, Islamic context, in much the same way that Basra had done before it. As such, it became a ‘melting pot’ for new ideas, thought and learning, which was a product of its nascent demography. Consequently, numerous new intellectual trends appeared and developed to the background of Baghdad society and this being the case it is appropriate that the most prominent and significant of these to our study be examined.⁴⁸⁷

3.4.1 The Mystical School in Baghdad

If the ascetic school in Basra exemplified by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and his teachers was extremely prominent, it was by no means unique in Iraq and indeed, a similar trend existed in other cities such as Kūfa. The foundation of Baghdad, however, provided a focal point for the gathering of scholars and the accumulation and assimilation of the various trends that existed in a variety of fields of Islamic learning. This being the case spiritual instruction was no exception and the formation of one of the earliest tendencies towards a ‘true’ form of Islamic mysticism - or Sufism as it was later termed - can be seen to develop out of the prevailing spiritual propensities in the new ‘Abbāsīd capital, which has caused this development to be termed the ‘Mystical School of Baghdad’.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁶ See al-Baghdādī, *Ta’rīkh Baghdād*, vol. 1 pp. 75-98 and 66; Ḥasan, *Ta’rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 2. pp. 374-378; al-Wakīl, *al-‘Aṣr al-Dhahabī li ‘l-Dawla al-‘Abbāsiyya*, pp. 86-90; Sa’īd, *Warrāqū Baghdād fi ‘l-‘Aṣr al-‘Abbāsī*, pp. 23-4; al-Khuḍarī, *al-Dawla al-‘Abbāsiyya*, pp. 77-8; Gibb et al (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1, pp. 895-7; Le Strange, *Baghdad During the Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 40-2; Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 88-9; Lassner, *The Shaping of ‘Abbasid Rule*, pp. 196-229; Brocklemann, *History of Islamic Peoples*, p. 109; Weit, *Baghdad*, pp. 16-30; Clot, *Harun al-Rashid and the World of the Thousand and One Nights*, pp. 155-6 and Appendix 3.

⁴⁸⁷ See Ḥasan, *Ta’rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 2. pp. 322-55; al-Wakīl, *al-‘Aṣr al-Dhahabī li ‘l-Dawla al-‘Abbāsiyya*, pp. 381-401; Sa’īd, *Warrāqū Baghdād fi ‘l-‘Aṣr al-‘Abbāsī*, pp. 41-53; al-Khuḍarī, *al-Dawla al-‘Abbāsiyya*, pp. 130-2 and 198-214; Gibb et al (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1, pp. 898-9; Lassner, *The Shaping of ‘Abbasid Rule*, pp. 229-41; Brocklemann, *History of Islamic Peoples*, p. 110-29 *passim*; Weit, *Baghdad*, pp. 11-17; Shaban, *Islamic History*, vol. 2, p. 19; Weit, *Baghdad*, pp. 64-82 and Clot, *Harun al-Rashid and the World of the Thousand and One Nights*, pp. 156-64.

⁴⁸⁸ See Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 158-60; Abdel-Kader, Ali Hassan, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd* (London, Luzac & Company Ltd., 1976) pp. 35-47 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 43-67.

The development of the school is relatively difficult to trace but the agent of its design in its initial stages is usually regarded as being Abū Maḥfūz Maʿrūf b. Fayruzān al-Karkhī⁴⁸⁹ (d. 200/815). Maʿrūf al-Karkhī is a pinnacle personality in the nascent Baghdadi school as he was a student of Farqad al-Sabkhī, which thus links him to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and consequently, the Basran tradition as a whole.⁴⁹⁰ Though not formally trained, Maʿrūf carried on the Basran tradition as a pious sermoniser, who preached abstinence and humility.⁴⁹¹

Bishr b. al-Ḥārith al-Ḥāfi ‘the barefoot’ (d. 227/842) was another personality associated with the Baghdadi school despite originally being a native of Merv, where he is said to have been a member of a gang and lived a particularly irreligious life. At some point however, he left this lifestyle and journeyed east where his travels brought him into the company of the renowned jurist Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795), with whom he studied jurisprudence and ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Mubārak (d. 181/797), under whose supervision he studied *ḥadīth*. Despite this ‘formal’ training in Islamic learning he shunned the notoriety and potential wealth it could bring, preferring to live the life of a poor ascetic. Similarly, his attitude was similar to his ascetic predecessors and his teaching emphasised the importance of righteous deeds rather than theoretical knowledge.⁴⁹²

A contemporary and seemingly a rival of al-Muḥāsibī was Sarī b. al-Mughallas al-Saqāṭī ‘the spice seller’ (d. 253/867). The son of a peddler, Sarī too became a merchant but as was the habit of the time, became equally interested in the study of *ḥadīth*. These aspects of his lifestyle came to an end when he heard a typically fiery sermon by Maʿrūf al-Karkhī which ultimately led him to pursue a more spiritual approach to his religious convictions. His teaching combines the various elements of the ascetic schools up until that point and is characterised by his succinct comments regarding loyalty to one’s friends, practical virtues, the dangers of hypocrisy and the remembrance of God.⁴⁹³ Although these themes seem

⁴⁸⁹ Seemingly named after the Karkh district of Baghdad, which was one of the main commercial centres housing the markets of the capital’s southern area.

⁴⁹⁰ He is reportedly equally linked to the Kūfan school via Dāwūd al-Ṭāʿī (d. 166/783) but this claim is contentious. See Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 48-9.

⁴⁹¹ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 8, pp. 296-316; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 2, pp. 592-6; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 158-9; Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, pp. 12-18 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 48-9.

⁴⁹² See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 8, pp. 316-22; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 2, pp. 596-603; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 158-9 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 49-50.

⁴⁹³ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 10, pp. 97-107; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 2, pp. 624--34; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 159; Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, pp. 8-12; Mason, Herbert, “Ḥallāj and the Baghdad School of

familiar to the preceding traditions, it is Sarī's teaching that is characteristic of the Baghdadi school and is a significant departure from the basic ascetic practice of those before him. In this regard Knysh comments:

In a sense, Sarī's religions [sic.] attitude marks a departure from the traditional asceticism of Baṣra and Kūfa. Although he built his preaching upon basically the same assumptions as his predecessors, the accents he placed on various strands of the old ascetic tradition constitute his distinct contribution to its growth and sophistication. Moreover, his teaching reflects his internal evolution from a conventional ascetic, preoccupied with avoidance of sin and meticulous compliance with the religious and social conventions of the age, to a fully-fledged mystic immersed in the contemplation of God and, therefore, totally oblivious to the world around him.⁴⁹⁴

Similarly, Abdel-Kader observes:

We may regard as-Saqāṭī as the founder of the Ṣūfī School of Baghdād. This school differed from contemporary ṣūfī schools in Syria and Khorasan. The Baghdād school's main topic was Unification, *Tawḥīd*, and it developed the 'knowledge' of Unification. The school is distinguished by its symbolic expressions and by its discussions on the mystic state and station of the ṣūfī. The members of the school are, therefore, called 'The Masters of Unification,' *Arbāb al-Tawḥīd*, like al-Junayd, an-Nūrī and ash-Shiblī.⁴⁹⁵

The principal personalities of Ma'rūf al-Karkhī, Bishr al-Ḥāfī and Sarī al-Saqāṭī, amongst others, in turn produced a variety of students who all contributed in their own personal way to the Baghdad mystical tradition but due to the limitations of the current thesis, cannot be discussed at length and as such, only the few, representative names will be given here: Abū Sa'īd [Aḥmad b. 'Īsā] al-Kharrāz (d. ca. 286/899)⁴⁹⁶, 'Amr b. 'Uthmān al-Makkī (d. 291/903 or 297/910 or 300/913)⁴⁹⁷, Abū 'l-Ḥusayn [Aḥmad b. Muḥammad] al-Nūrī (d. 295/907)⁴⁹⁸ and Ruwaym b. Aḥmad (d. 303/915)⁴⁹⁹.

Sufism" in *The Heritage of Sufism*, edited by Leonard Lewisohn (3 vols., Oxford, Oneworld Publications, 1999) vol. 1, p. 68 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 50-2.

⁴⁹⁴ Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, p. 51.

⁴⁹⁵ Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, p. 11.

⁴⁹⁶ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā'*, vol. 10, pp. 210-12; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 2, pp. 663-5; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 203-5; Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, p. 41; Mason, "Ḥallāj and the Baghdad School of Sufism" in *The Heritage of Sufism*, vol. 1, p. 70 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 56-60.

⁴⁹⁷ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā'*, vol. 10, pp. 246-50; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 2, pp. 666-7 and Mason, "Ḥallāj and the Baghdad School of Sufism" in *The Heritage of Sufism*, vol. 1, pp. 70-1.

⁴⁹⁸ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā'*, vol. 10, pp. 212-17; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 2, pp. 665-6; Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, pp. 40-1; Mason, "Ḥallāj and the Baghdad School of Sufism" in *The Heritage of Sufism*, vol. 1, p. 69 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 60-3.

⁴⁹⁹ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā'*, vol. 10, pp. 250-5; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 2, pp. 667-8; Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, p. 42 and Mason, "Ḥallāj and the Baghdad School of Sufism" in *The Heritage of Sufism*, vol. 1, p. 69.

Although the Baghdadi school produced a number of notable exponents, as exemplified in the previous list above, its most illustrious student is without doubt Abū `l-Qāsim al-Junayd b. Muḥammad (d. 298/910). Born of Persian stock in Baghdad, al-Junayd was raised in a mercantile environment, where his father was a glass merchant [hence the appellation ‘al-Qawāriri’] and he himself became a silk merchant [hence his appellation ‘al-Khazzāz’]. In addition to his mercantile activities, he also studied classical knowledge in terms of *ḥadīth* and jurisprudence under the auspices of the foremost jurist in Baghdad before the arrival of al-Shāfi‘ī, Abū Thawr Ibrāhīm b. Khālid al-Kalbī (d. 240/854). This ‘formal’ knowledge was supplemented by gatherings with a number of spiritual masters, the most notable being his paternal uncle Sarī al-Saqāṭī and our subject within this thesis, al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī. Through these latter scholars al-Junayd was introduced to the now more sophisticated Baghdadi school and he himself also contributed to its development. The exact nature of this development is difficult to assess in many ways, as no more than a number of his epistles (*rasāʾil*) on mystical themes have reached us and their language is obscure and extremely difficult to access. Nevertheless, the Baghdadi School, under the leadership of al-Junayd, due to its heavy emphasis on extreme asceticism and its strong moral teaching, was often termed the ‘sober (*ṣaḥw*) school’ of Sufism and was said to be exemplified by its chief exponent. This, ‘sober’ school, with its roots in ‘orthodox’ learning was perhaps al-Junayd’s biggest legacy, as it defined the nature of Sufism for centuries to come.⁵⁰⁰

Of al-Junayd’s illustrious students Abū Bakr Dulaf b. Jaḥdar al-Shiblī (d. 334/946)⁵⁰¹ stands out but he is eclipsed in terms of notoriety by al-Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922). This latter personality seemingly advanced the concepts initiated by Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. 234/848 or 261/875) until another school developed, the so-called ‘school of intoxication (*sukr*)’. This second school was in opposition to the method of al-Ḥallāj’s master al-Junayd and was characterised by the so-called ‘ecstatic utterances’ (*shaṭaḥāt*), which such mystics would make whilst expressing their experience of the divine and which,

⁵⁰⁰ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 10, pp. 217-32; al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, edited by Nūr al-Dīn Shurayba (3rd edition, Cairo, Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1997) pp. 155-63; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 2, pp. 652-7; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 205-9; Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, pp. 1-7; Mason, “Ḥallāj and the Baghdad School of Sufism” in *The Heritage of Sufism*, vol. 1, pp. 65-72 *passim* and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 52-56.

⁵⁰¹ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 10, pp. 317-25; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 2, pp. 677-80; Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, pp. 44-56 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 64-7.

as a result, often raised the hackles of the 'orthodox', due to their seemingly blasphemous overtones.⁵⁰²

3.4.2 The Mu'tazilite School in Baghdad

In the same way that the Mystical School of Baghdad was a product of the Basran ascetic school, when Basra was supplanted by Baghdad as the 'Abbāsid state capital, the trend towards rationalising the Muslim creed did not stop there and the era which Watt terms the period of 'the Great Mu'tazilites'⁵⁰³ continued for some time. In fact many of the major personalities of the Basran Mu'tazilite school such as Abū Hudhayl, al-Nazzām, Mu'ammār, al-Fuwaṭī, al-Jāḥiẓ and al-Shahḥām, later migrated to Baghdad at some point and were active in court affairs, particularly in the reign of al-Ma'mūn.⁵⁰⁴ This is not to say however that there was no Mu'tazilite influence in Baghdad before the arrival of the Basran contingent. Indeed, there did exist at that time a completely independent school of Mu'tazilism in Baghdad, which although the Basran school is thought to predate the Baghdadi school, co-existed in a similar time frame. These scholars are remembered as having influence at the highest echelons of 'Abbāsid society in Baghdad, primarily by participating in debates arranged by the famous vizier Yaḥyā al-Barmakī but more importantly, in the time of al-Ma'mūn, where some of them even held official appointments, particularly during the *miḥna* period. Once again a full discussion of their thought and teaching is far beyond the present research but nevertheless the most famous personalities will be mentioned here: Abū Sahl Bishr b. Mu'tamir al-Hilālī (d. 226/841)⁵⁰⁵, Abū Ma'n Thumāma b. Ashras al-Numayrī (d. 213/828)⁵⁰⁶, Abū 'Abd Allāh Aḥmad b. Abū Du'ād al-Iyādī (d. 239/854)⁵⁰⁷, Abū Mūsā 'Īsā b. Ṣubayḥ al-Murdār (d. 226/841)⁵⁰⁸, Abū Faḍl Ja'far

⁵⁰² See Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 209-14; Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, pp. 45-47; Mason, "Ḥallāj and the Baghdad School of Sufism" in *The Heritage of Sufism*, vol. 1, p. 65-74 *passim* and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 65-82.

⁵⁰³ See Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 209-50.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 209-21.

⁵⁰⁵ See al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, pp. 148-50; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa 'l-Niḥal*, pp. 53-4; al-'Aql, *al-Jahmiyya wa 'l-Mu'tazila*, p. 158; al-Juhānī (ed.), *al-Mawsū'a al-Muyassara*, vol. 1, p. 66 and Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, p. 222 and *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 47-8 and 53.

⁵⁰⁶ See al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, p. 161-4; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa 'l-Niḥal*, pp. 57-8; al-'Aql, *al-Jahmiyya wa 'l-Mu'tazila*, p. 159; al-Juhānī (ed.), *al-Mawsū'a al-Muyassara*, vol. 1, p. 67 and Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, p. 222.

⁵⁰⁷ See Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 222-3 and pages 133-9 below.

⁵⁰⁸ See al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, pp. 155-7; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa 'l-Niḥal*, pp. 56-7; al-'Aql, *al-Jahmiyya wa 'l-Mu'tazila*, p. 158; al-Juhānī (ed.), *al-Mawsū'a al-Muyassara*, vol. 1, p. 67 and Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, p. 223.

b. Ḥarb (d. 235/850)⁵⁰⁹, Abū Muḥammad Jaʿfar b. Mubashshir al-Thaqafī (d. 233/848)⁵¹⁰ and Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Iskāfī (d. 239/854)⁵¹¹.

3.5 The Miḥna

Having discussed the Muʿtazilite schools of both Basra and Baghdad, this brings us neatly to the subject of the current section - that of the *miḥna*. This historic event demonstrates to us the way in which this relatively obscure group of scholastic theologians (*mutakallimūn*), became a driving force in the religious life of Muslims at large during this period, due to their acquisition of caliphal support in the form of al-Maʿmūn. The term itself '*miḥna*' and its synonym '*imtiḥān*' have the connotation of 'to test, to try and to put to trial' but in the specific historical context of the early ʿAbbāsid period, mean 'a test of faith', this being synonymous with the religio-political trial introduced by al-Maʿmūn.⁵¹²

The subject of this trial of conviction may seem even more curious to the casual observer, as it concerned a seemingly hair splitting article of faith, i.e. the very nature of revelation - is the revealed word of God, in this case the Qurʾān, created or not? For the vast majority of Muslims who held the Sunni view, the Qurʾān was considered to be uncreated and an intrinsic attribute of the divine being, i.e. His speech and thus, inseparable from Him.⁵¹³

For the Muʿtazilites, however, this contradicted one of their most basic concepts as it was at odds with their comprehension of one of their 'five principles (*al-uṣūl al-khamsa*)', which are enumerated as being: 'divine unity' (*al-tawḥīd*), 'justice' (*al-ʿadl*), 'the promise of reward and threat of punishment' (*al-waʿd wa ʿl-waʿīd*), the 'intermediate state' (*al-manzila bayna*

⁵⁰⁹ See al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, pp. 157-8; Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, p. 223 and *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, p. 53.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ See al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, pp. 158-61; Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, p. 224 and *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, p. 53.

⁵¹² See al-Fayrūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, vol. 2, p. 1620; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, vol. 13, pp. 42-3; al-Muqriʿ, *al-Miṣbāḥ al-Munīr*, p. 291; Muṣṭafā *et al*, (eds.), *al-Muʿjam al-Wasiṭ*, p. 856; al-Rāzī, *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, p. 617; Patton, Walter M., *Aḥmed Ibn Ḥanbal and the Miḥna* (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1897) p. 1; Hinds, Martin, *Studies in Early Islamic History*, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam Series (Princeton, The Darwin Press Inc., 1996) pp. 232 and Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 178-9.

⁵¹³ See al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/935), ʿAlī b. Ismāʿīl [Abū ʿl-Ḥasan], *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn wa Ikhtilāf al-Muṣallīn*, edited by Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (2 vols., Beirut: al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 1997) vol. 1, pp. 267-70; al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, p. 113; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa ʿl-Niḥal*, p. 39; Abū Zahra, Muḥammad, *Ibn Ḥanbal - Ḥayātuhu wa ʿAṣruhu wa Ārāʾuhu wa Fiqhuhu* (Cairo, Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, n.d.) p. 46; al-Khuḍarī, *al-Dawla al-ʿAbbāsiyya*, p. 203; al-Wakīl, *al-ʿAṣr al-Dhahabī li ʿl-Dawla al-ʿAbbāsiyya*, p. 401; Madelung, Wilfred, "The Controversy on the Created Koran", in *Orientalia Sive Hispanica sive studia F. M. Pareja octobenaria dictata*, ed. J. M. Barral (vol. 1, Leiden, 1974) p. 504; Hinds, *Studies in Early Islamic History*, p. 240; Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, p. 33; El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*, pp. 96-7; Watt, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, p. 35 and *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 178-9.

manzilatayn), and ‘enjoining the good and forbidding the evil’ (*al-amr bi ’l-ma’rūf wa nahy ‘an al-munkar*).⁵¹⁴ The principle in question was ‘divine unity’ or *al-tawhīd*, by which they meant that Allah was incomparable and unique - a view common to Sunni belief, but they employed it to mean that the divine attributes (*al-ṣifāt*) are not a distinct quality of divinity, as this would indicate multiplicity in the Godhead but are in fact identical with His essence and as such, they denied their true nature to a large extent. For example, they would affirm the names of Allāh, such as the ‘All Knowing (*al-‘Alīm*)’ as it occurs in the Qur’ān but at the same time they would deny the fact that for Allāh to be ‘*al-‘Alīm*’, it was intrinsic that He possessed the hypostatic attribute of knowledge (*‘ilm*), as this would create an additional feature in His essence and thus, multiplicity, which is diametrically opposed to indivisible nature of *al-tawhīd*. As such, the Mu‘tazilites were referred to as ‘*al-mu‘aṭṭilā*’, as they would ‘strip’ God of His attributes (*ta‘ṭīl*) and deny them (*naḥy al-ṣifāt*).⁵¹⁵

Similarly, when discussing the issue of the Qur’ān, they would infer that if it is uncreated, this must also mean that it is pre-eternal (*qadīm*) and since only Allāh existed in pre-eternity it is impossible that the Qur’ān also existed, as this would mean that there was a duality in pre-eternity, which once again negates *al-tawhīd*. Due to this, they believed that the Qur’ān is created as it is considered the ‘work’ of Allāh and not His speech, which also dictates that the Qur’ān in their view is not eternal, as this would also indicate multiplicity. Although this view is traceable before the advent of al-Ma’mūn, as it is tangible as early as the Umayyads in the form of Ja‘d b. Dirham, most famously in Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nu‘mān and later in the reign of al-Ma’mūn’s father al-Rashīd through Bishr al-Marīsī (d. 217/833 or 218/834 or 226/842), it never gained much credence outside the dialectical discussion of scholastic theologians, particularly those of the Mu‘tazilites.⁵¹⁶ Nevertheless, al-Ma’mūn appears to have made this issue the crux of *miḥna*, which raises an important question; why choose this particular tenet of faith to base the test upon when there were many other creedal points upon which the Mu‘tazilites differed with the majority to choose from?

⁵¹⁴ See al-‘Aql, *al-Jahmiyya wa ’l-Mu‘tazila*, pp. 164-74; al-Juhānī (ed.), *al-Mawsū‘a al-Muyassara*, vol. 1, pp. 67-8; Watt, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 48-53 and *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 228-49.

⁵¹⁵ See al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, vol. 1, pp. 235-6 and 245-9; al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, pp. 112-13; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa ’l-Niḥal*, p. 39; al-‘Aql, *al-Jahmiyya wa ’l-Mu‘tazila*, pp. 175-80; al-Juhānī (ed.), *al-Mawsū‘a al-Muyassara*, vol. 1, p. 68; Hinds, *Studies in Early Islamic History*, p. 240; Watt, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 48-50 and *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 242-9.

⁵¹⁶ See Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal*, p. 47; al-‘Aql, *al-Jahmiyya wa ’l-Mu‘tazila*, pp. 168-9; al-Juhānī (ed.), *al-Mawsū‘a al-Muyassara*, vol. 1, p. 68; Patton, *Aḥmed Ibn Ḥanbal and the Miḥna*, pp. 47-8; Madelung, Wilfred, “The Controversy on the Created Koran”, pp. 504-25; Hinds, *Studies in Early Islamic History*, p. 240; Watt, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 49-50 and *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 242-5.

To answer this question is far from an easy task but researchers have made attempts to unravel this conundrum. For example Watt suggests that this was an attempt by al-Ma'mūn to undermine the authority of the scholarly class (*al-ʿulamāʾ*), who were the reference point for the general Muslim populace regarding matters of religion and reassert the power of the caliph in this circle of subjects. At the same time, by disempowering the scholarly elite this move would also afford the 'secular', civil servant class (*al-kuttāb*) more influence in the running of the state, as a created Qurʾān simply had less 'prestige', since the implication was that as such, it is changeable and if so, its edicts may be overruled by an inspired imam (*imam al-hudā*).⁵¹⁷ Although the initial notion may be true, i.e. that al-Ma'mūn sought to undermine the authority of the scholarly class, which is clear from the fact that he targeted many of the populist *ḥadīth* luminaries, the second aspect, i.e. that the authority of the Qurʾān was somehow to be overruled, is less convincing. As Hinds observes, "But this misses the point: for one thing, the doctrine of the created Qurʾān is a doctrine about God and more specifically God's unity, rather than a doctrine about the Qurʾān, and there is in any case no evidence whatsoever to support the view that al-Ma'mūn wanted to overrule the Qurʾān."⁵¹⁸

The extent of the Muʿtazilite influence over al-Ma'mūn is further evidenced by a *miḥna* letter quoted by Abū ʿl-ʿArab (d. 333/944) in his *Kitāb al-Miḥan*, which stipulated that not only the doctrine of the created Qurʾān be imposed but also the doctrine of denying the punishment in the grave (*ʿadhāb al-qabr*), this being a popular feature of Muʿtazilite dogma.⁵¹⁹ Thus, at best we can view al-Ma'mūn as a sincere proponent of Muʿtazilism, using his considerable influence to correct the 'misguided' beliefs of the ignorant masses, or at worst a divisive politician who manipulated the Muʿtazilite creed to achieve political supremacy. It is further suggested here that in the first case scenario, he may well have begun the reformation of the Islamic belief system with the Qurʾān due to its pivotal position in the lives of Muslims, thinking that if he could succeed here, then convincing the public of the remaining doctrines would be 'easy'.

Al-Ma'mūn's Muʿtazilite sympathies are also seen in the fact that many of the leading proponents of this school such as Bishr b. Muʿtamir and Thumāma b. Ashras, are witnessed at an early stage at Merv in 201/817, as signatories on the document declaring Alī al-Riḍāʾ

⁵¹⁷ See Watt, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, p. 35; *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, p. 179 and Hinds, *Studies in Early Islamic History*, p. 242.

⁵¹⁸ See Hinds, *Studies in Early Islamic History*, pp. 241-2.

⁵¹⁹ Abū ʿl-ʿArab, *Kitāb al-Miḥan*, ed. Y. W. al-Jubūrī (Beirut, n. pub., 1983) p. 451; al-ʿAql, *al-Jahmiyya wa ʿl-Muʿtazila*, p. 172 and Hinds, *Studies in Early Islamic History*, p. 242.

heir to the caliphate⁵²⁰, long before al-Ma'mūn's move to Baghdad to assume the caliphate proper. Similarly, one of the major figures of this incident, as we shall see, is Aḥmad b. Abū Du'ād who was greatly honoured at the court of al-Ma'mūn, was charged with supervision of the *miḥna* after his death, as the caliph apparently stipulated this in his will for his successor al-Mu'taṣim. It has been suggested that al-Ma'mūn did this due to al-Mu'taṣim's lack of intellectual acumen in dealing with such issues, yet it is further evidence of Mu'tazilite influence at the caliph's court, as presumably al-Ma'mūn would not have appointed Ibn Abū Du'ād unless he thought he could fulfil the task, as well as being an indication of his conviction that the *miḥna* should be pursued in the first place.⁵²¹ These facts and the others have caused Abū Zahra to conclude that Ibn Abū Du'ād was in fact the architect of the *miḥna*⁵²² but even if we concede this, he could not have brought it into being without the caliph's support or will, suggesting that although al-Ma'mūn may have had some political ambition from the implementation of the *miḥna*, he was also sympathetic to the ideological foundation behind it.

As for the historical details of the *miḥna* itself, al-Ma'mūn is said to have been convinced of the created Qur'ān doctrine as early as 212/827 or even earlier and paved the way for its imposition by deposing the chief judge (*qāḍī al-quḍāt*) Yaḥyā b. Aktham, who apparently opposed the idea and replaced him with Aḥmad b. Abū Du'ād in 217/832.⁵²³ Thus, in the last year of his reign in 218/833 and with his new appointee in place, al-Ma'mūn utilised his state power and initiated the *miḥna*, by sending the first of the *miḥna* letters to his deputy in Baghdad, Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm. The letter instructed this official to examine the judges (*qāḍī*, pl. *quḍāt*) under his jurisdiction regarding the creation of the Qur'ān and used particularly critical language, vilifying those who opposed this creed, terming them "a people ignorant of God", "deficient in understanding", "those who lie about God and His creation" and the "worst and chief in error."⁵²⁴ Copies of this letter were also sent to the other provinces of the caliphate but in reality seem to have had little effect due to a lack of

⁵²⁰ See Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, p. 222.

⁵²¹ See Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal*, pp. 48-51; al-Khuḍarī, *al-Dawla al-Abbāsiyya*, pp. 207-8; al-Wakīl, *al-ʿAṣr al-Dhahabī li 'l-Dawla al-Abbāsiyya*, pp. 409-15; al-ʿAql, *al-Jahmiyya wa 'l-Mu'tazila*, pp. 160-3; Patton, *Aḥmed Ibn Ḥanbal and the Miḥna*, pp. 50-6; Hinds, *Studies in Early Islamic History*, p. 234; Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, pp. 34-40 and El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Hystriography*, pp. 34-40.

⁵²² Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal*, pp. 63-5.

⁵²³ See Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal*, p. 48; al-Khuḍarī, *al-Dawla al-Abbāsiyya*, p. 203; al-Wakīl, *al-ʿAṣr al-Dhahabī li 'l-Dawla al-Abbāsiyya*, pp. 401-2; Patton, *Aḥmed Ibn Ḥanbal and the Miḥna*, pp. 52-5 and Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, p. 33.

⁵²⁴ See Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal*, pp. 48-54; al-Khuḍarī, *al-Dawla al-Abbāsiyya*, pp. 203-4; al-Wakīl, *al-ʿAṣr al-Dhahabī li 'l-Dawla al-Abbāsiyya*, pp. 402-5; Patton, *Aḥmed Ibn Ḥanbal and the Miḥna*, pp. 56-61; Hinds, *Studies in Early Islamic History*, p. 233 and Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, p. 33.

popular support. Similarly, al-Ma'mūn wrote to Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm again ordering him to send seven prominent personalities including the traditionists (*muḥaddithūn*) Muḥammad b. Sa'd and Yaḥyā b. Ma'in (d. 233/847) to him at al-Raqqā, where he undertook the examination himself and as a result all seven succumbed to the doctrine of the created Qur'ān.⁵²⁵

Consequently, al-Ma'mūn wrote another *miḥna* letter to his deputy in Baghdad in a similar style and manner to continue the process. Thus, Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm gathered around thirty of the leading jurists (*faqīh*, pl. *fuqahā'*), judges and traditionists and began examining them regarding the Mu'tazilite creed regarding the Qur'ān. The vast majority of these scholars, some of them notably under duress, yielded and there were only two exceptions, that of Muḥammad b. Nūḥ al-'Ijlī and more significantly, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. These latter two scholars were thus despatched to Tarsus to be dealt with directly by al-Ma'mūn but the caliph's demise occurred on route (Rajab 218/August 833) and they were therefore, temporarily reprieved. However, Muḥammad b. Nūḥ died on the return journey to Baghdad and Aḥmad was kept in detention upon his arrival.⁵²⁶

Al-Mu'taṣim's advent to power saw no reprieve in the *miḥna* as a policy, as al-Ma'mūn had stipulated in his will that his brother continue with this course of action and make Ibn Abū Du'ād his closest confidant in the issue, with which he duly complied. Nevertheless, the issue of the *miḥna* during his reign is seemingly easier due perhaps to the reluctance of the new caliph to pursue this policy. However, there was one exception - that of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. After a period of approximately two and half years in prison Aḥmad was removed, apparently due to the intercession of his uncle Ishāq b. Ḥanbal with the prefect of Baghdad, Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm, as his uncle thought that Aḥmad would relent. In actual fact it was possibly the worst thing he could have done as his interrogation was initiated once more. Over the next two days Aḥmad defended his position with a variety of questioners, including the caliph and gave a good account of himself, the time in prison seemingly giving him time to formulate convincing arguments of a *kalām* style. On the third day, however, under pressure from the Mu'tazilite faction at court and despairing of Aḥmad yielding his

⁵²⁵ See Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal*, p. 54; al-Khuḍarī, *al-Dawla al-'Abbāsiyya*, p. 204; al-Wakīl, *al-'Aṣr al-Dhahabī li 'l-Dawla al-'Abbāsiyya*, p. 403; Patton, *Aḥmed Ibn Ḥanbal and the Miḥna*, pp. 61-5; Hinds, *Studies in Early Islamic History*, p. 233 and Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, p. 33.

⁵²⁶ See Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal*, pp. 54-63; al-Khuḍarī, *al-Dawla al-'Abbāsiyya*, pp. 204-8; al-Wakīl, *al-'Aṣr al-Dhahabī li 'l-Dawla al-'Abbāsiyya*, pp. 405-9; Patton, *Aḥmed Ibn Ḥanbal and the Miḥna*, pp. 65-85; Hinds, *Studies in Early Islamic History*, p. 233 and Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, pp. 33-4 and 118-9.

position, al-Mu'taṣim ordered him to be flogged, during the course of which his wrists were dislocated and he lost consciousness after thirty or so lashes.⁵²⁷

That Aḥmad was released after the flogging seems in little doubt; however the circumstances in which his release took place are disputed. The hagiographic works dealing with this incident suggest that his release was due to outrage expressed by the population of Baghdad, who when they heard of the harsh treatment of their imam, gathered angrily outside the palace in protest, which caused al-Mu'taṣim to release Aḥmad, despite the objections of Ibn Abū Du'ād. The less friendly, Mu'tazilite sources of al-Jāḥiẓ and Ibn al-Murtaḍā, as well as others, suggest that Aḥmad actually capitulated and his release was a result of his acknowledgement, as the caliph would have no other real reason to free him. In any case, whatever the truth regarding Aḥmad's release may be and despite this being one of the few incidents to draw attention during al-Mu'taṣim's execution of the *miḥna* policy, it still remains the most significant.⁵²⁸

Similarly, the *miḥna* did not relent with the advent of al-Mu'taṣim's son al-Wāthiq. In fact, the *miḥna* can be said to have increased in severity during the beginning of his reign, as he wrote to the various regional capitals, commanding them to a renewed prosecution of the policy. This was particularly true in Egypt, where the regional *qādī*, Muḥammad b. Abū Layth al-Aṣamm, was instructed to implement the *miḥna* with vigour and he duly complied, leaving no prominent religious figure untouched, until the prisons were full with dissenters to the state-imposed creed.⁵²⁹ A more peculiar incident is that of Aḥmad b. Nasr al-Khuzā'i who attempted an unfortunate uprising that misfired and was brought before the caliph for questioning. The interesting feature of this interrogation, however, was not the caliph's questions regarding the failed coup but that he asked this 'second' Aḥmad regarding views concerning the doctrine of the created Qur'ān. His answers, due to his opposition to the creed are said to have enraged the caliph to the extent that he had him decapitated and his head displayed in Baghdad, as a grisly deterrent to would be non-conformists. Perhaps the most significant incident however concerns a '*shaykh* from *ahl al-fiqh wa 'l-ḥadīth*', who when brought before the caliph and questioned by Ibn Abū Du'ād regarding the creed,

⁵²⁷ See Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal*, pp. 69-70; al-Khuḍarī, *al-Dawla al-'Abbāsiyya*, p. 208; al-Wakīl, *al-'Aṣr al-Dhahabī li 'l-Dawla al-'Abbāsiyya*, pp. 427-8; Patton, *Aḥmed Ibn Ḥanbal and the Miḥna*, pp. 88-111; Hinds, *Studies in Early Islamic History*, p. 235 and Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, pp. 119-24.

⁵²⁸ See Patton, *Aḥmed Ibn Ḥanbal and the Miḥna*, p. 111; Hinds, *Studies in Early Islamic History*, pp. 235-6 and Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, pp. 124-138.

⁵²⁹ Among his victims was the prominent jurist and disciple of al-Shāfi'i Yūsuf b. Yaḥyā al-Buwayṭī who died while languishing in a Baghdadi jail in 231/846.

bettered the latter in the discussion, which ultimately led to the caliph withdrawing active support for the policy.⁵³⁰

The *miḥna* did not formally end here either however but was eventually abolished under al-Wāthiq's brother and successor, al-Mutawakkil. The whole process of abolition of the policy was not immediate and appears to have taken place over a period of time; the first stage seems to have been the caliphal prohibition of debate concerning the Qur'ān throughout the empire, which took place in 234/847, being pre-empted by Ibn Abū Du'ād's paralysis the year before. Similarly, the following year many of the *miḥna qādīs*, including Ibn Abī Layth, the *qādī* in Egypt, were removed from office and this continued over the next two years. The policy was formerly brought to a close after almost twenty years of persecution and Sunni 'orthodoxy' firmly re-established in 237/851, with the dismissal of Ibn Abū Du'ād and his sons.⁵³¹

Having surveyed the most significant historical, political, cultural and intellectual events of the early 'Abbāsīd period to our study, it is clear that this part of history was an extremely important and interesting era. It remains to be seen, however, how these events may affect the life and development of an individual. This being the case it is equally relevant now to examine the life of our subject, al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, to examine and assess the impact of these events, if any, on him, his life, his works and his teachings and indeed, this is the goal of the next chapter.

⁵³⁰ See al-Khuḍarī, *al-Dawla al-'Abbāsiyya*, pp. 208-9; al-Wakīl, *al-'Aṣr al-Dhahabī li 'l-Dawla al-'Abbāsiyya*, pp. 500-4 and 507-10; Patton, *Aḥmed Ibn Ḥanbal and the Miḥna*, pp. 114-22 and Hinds, *Studies in Early Islamic History*, pp. 237-9.

⁵³¹ See al-Khuḍarī, *al-Dawla al-'Abbāsiyya*, pp. 209 and 247-8; al-Wakīl, *al-'Aṣr al-Dhahabī li 'l-Dawla al-'Abbāsiyya*, pp. 531-2 and 537-8; Patton, *Aḥmed Ibn Ḥanbal and the Miḥna*, pp. 122-3 and Hinds, *Studies in Early Islamic History*, pp. 239-40.

Chapter 4: The Life of al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī

Having highlighted the era into which al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī was born, the current chapter is concerned with surveying the biographical details of his life. Little is known about al-Muḥāsibī other than a few, anecdotal statements and factual, historical glimpses that the biographical and historical sources provide. Nevertheless, there is sufficient material to attempt a chronological reconstruction of his life from these works to attempt to provide a coherent picture of this eminent scholar's worldly moments. This being the case, the usual biographical sketch will be attempted including a survey of his early life, his teachers, his influences, his students and his death. In addition, however, since all we have are a few anecdotal statements regarding al-Muḥāsibī, an examination of these reports will be made, as well as a discussion of the controversy surrounding Ibn Ḥanbal's dispute with him, which unfortunately affected the final days of his life and his reputation, particularly with a section of the scholarly elite, in subsequent generations. Finally, an assessment of the effect of al-Muḥāsibī's milieu, environment and period upon his life will be made to examine to what extent he was 'a product of his time.'

4.1 Al-Muḥāsibī's Early Life

The classical biographical and historical sources agree that al-Ḥārith b. Asad was born in the thriving metropolis of Basra, but unfortunately, are less forthcoming regarding the date of his entry into this world. More contemporary scholars, however, seem also to have reached a consensus that his birth occurred in the year 165/781 but this is purely a speculative opinion based on circumstantial evidence as support.⁵³² What is more certain is the affirmation of the appellation 'al-ʿAnazī' seemingly denoting an affiliation with the Arab tribe of ʿAnaza, which may well have been one of the Arab tribes to settle in Basra after its founding.⁵³³ Similarly, there is an even larger consensus amongst the biographical and historical sources that al-Ḥārith b. Asad's agnomen (*kunya*) was Abū ʿAbd Allāh; this is in

⁵³² Much of this is based on subsidiary historical information, such as the fact that al-Muḥāsibī related *ḥadīth* from the same *shaykhs* as Ibn Ḥanbal and that his father was involved in the theological controversies of the time. Despite this, however, there remains no clear statement in the classical literature regarding this issue, but nevertheless, the date supplied has little to refute it and in the absence of an alternative, may be used from a practical perspective. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 6; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 12-13; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʿirīn*, p. 31; ʿUwayḍa, *al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī*, p. 7; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 5; Schoonover, "al-Muḥāsibī and his *al-Riʿāya*", *The Muslim World*, p. 26 and Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 54.

⁵³³ See al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, p. 56; al-Jazarī, ʿIzz al-Dīn b. al-Athīr, *al-Lubāb fī Tahdhīb al-Ansāb* (3 vols., Beirut, Dār al-Ṣādir, 1980) vol. 2, pp. 361-2 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 5.

spite of the fact that there is no evidence to suggest that he was married or had children and as such, this seems to be a manifestation of the cultural trend towards the use of *kunya* in Arab society rather than having a basis in reality.⁵³⁴

Despite his familial affiliation, there can be little doubt that al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-ʿAnazī did not reach fame under this name but rather, under the appellation of ‘al-Muḥāsibī’, for which biographers and historians give two accounts regarding its origin. The first and less common view posits that the appellation ‘al-Muḥāsibī’ is due to the fact that he possessed a number of small pebbles (*ḥaṣan*) that he would enumerate (*yaʿudduhā wa yaḥsubuhā*) whilst engaged in the remembrance of God (*ḥāl al-dhikr*).⁵³⁵ The more established opinion regarding the appellation ‘al-Muḥāsibī’ and perhaps more befitting bearing in mind his teachings, is that it relates to al-Ḥārith’s excessive practice of taking himself to account in all circumstances (*li kathrat muḥāsabatihī li nafsihī fī jamīʿ al-aḥwāl*).⁵³⁶

Other than this very little is known regarding al-Muḥāsibī’s early life apart from two narrations related by Ibn Zafar al-Ṣaqlī in his *Anbāʾ*, one of which reads as follows:

It has reached me that al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī, may Allāh be pleased with him, whilst still a child passed by some young boys playing outside the house of a date seller and al-Ḥārith stopped to watch them play. Meanwhile, the owner came out carrying with him some dates and said to al-Ḥārith, “Eat these dates.” Al-Ḥārith replied, “What do you know about them?” The date seller said, “I have just sold some dates to a man and these fell from them.” Al-Ḥārith then said, “Do you know him?” and he replied “Yes.” Al-Ḥārith then turned his attention to the children who were playing and said, “Is this man a Muslim?” to which they [the children] said, “Yes, yes.” Al-Ḥārith then left him and the date seller followed until he caught up with him and grabbed him saying to al-Ḥārith, “By Allāh I will not release you until you tell me what

⁵³⁴ Similarly, there is no information regarding siblings, if they existed at all.

⁵³⁵ See al-Shahrazūrī (d. 643/1245), ‘Uthmān b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān [Ibn Ṣalāḥ], *Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahāʾ al-Shāfiʿiyya*, edited by Muḥyī al-Dīn ‘Alī Najīb (2 vols., Beirut, Dār al-Bashāʾir al-Islāmiyya, 1992) vol. 1, p. 438 and Ibn Mulaqqin (d. 804/1401), ‘Umar b. ‘Alī b. Aḥmad, *al-ʿAqd al-Madhhab fī Ṭabaqāt Ḥamalāt al-Madhhab*, edited by Ayman Naṣr al-Azharī and Sayyid Muḥannā (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1997).

⁵³⁶ See al-Shahrazūrī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahāʾ al-Shāfiʿiyya*, vol. 1, p. 438; Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282), Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, *Wafayāt al-Ayān wa Anbāʾ Abnāʾ al-Zamān*, edited by Iḥsān ‘Abbās (8 vols., Beirut, Dār Sādir, 1977) vol. 2, p. 58; al-Subkī (d. 771/1370), ‘Abd al-Waḥhāb b. ‘Alī [Tāj al-Dīn], *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya al-Kubrā*, edited by Maḥmūd al-Tanāḥi and ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Ḥulw (10 vols., Cairo, Maṭbaʿat Isā al-Bābi wa Shurakāʾihī, 1964) vol. 2, p. 275; al-Asnawī (d. 772/1370), ‘Abd al-Raḥīm, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya*, edited by Kamāl Yūsuf al-Ḥūt (2 vols., Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1987) vol. 1, p. 25; Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372), Ismāʿīl, *Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahāʾ al-Shāfiʿiyyīn*, edited by Aḥmad ‘Umar Hāshim and Muḥammad Muḥammad Gharb (Cairo, Maktabat al-Thiqāfiyya al-Dīniyya, 1993) vol. 1, p. 126; Ibn Mulaqqin, *al-ʿAqd al-Madhhab fī Ṭabaqāt Ḥamalāt al-Madhhab; Ṭabaqāt al-Awliyāʾ*, edited by Nūr al-Dīn Sharība (Beirut, Dār al-Maʿrifa, n.d.) p. 175; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba (d. 851/1448), Abū Bakr b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya*, edited by ‘Abd al-ʿAlīm Khān (4 vols., Hyderabad, Maṭbaʿat Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1978) vol. 1, p. 9; al-Bundaniyyī (d. 1283/1866), ‘Isā Ṣafāʾ al-Dīn, *Jāmiʿ al-Anwār fī Manāqib al-Akhyār - Tarājum al-Wujūh wa ʿl-Ayān al-Madfūnīn fī Baghdād wa mā Jāwarahā min al-Bilād*, edited by Usāma Nāṣir al-Naqshabandī and Mahdī ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn al-Najm (Beirut, Dār al-ʿArabiyya li ʿl-Mawsūʿāt, 2002) p. 290 and al-Jazarī, *al-Lubāb fī Tahdhīb al-Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 171.

you think of me.” So he replied, “O *shaykh* if you are a Muslim then seek out the owner of the dates and free yourself from your transaction with him in the same way that you would seek out water if you were extremely thirsty. O *shaykh* do you feed Muslim children the unlawful (*al-suḥṭ*) whilst you yourself are a Muslim?” The man then said, “By Allah, I will never undertake a worldly transaction again!”⁵³⁷

This anecdotal statement is typical of the Sufi biographical tradition and being couched in religious imagery, it sheds much light on the early life of al-Muḥāsibī. We find that al-Muḥāsibī is a regular child observing his peers at play, although not joining in their frivolity, who is then confronted by a seemingly innocuous offer of dates from a person who would be fully expected to possess them, i.e. a date seller. Al-Muḥāsibī does not just simply accept the offer however but rather enquires as to the source of the dates in order to ascertain their lawfulness and after finding out that they were unlawful, which is made worse by the fact that the owner of the dates is a Muslim, the devout youth flees to escape such an undesirable scene. Consequently, on confronting the date seller, he shocks him further with a pious admonishment that not only clarifies the legal aspect for him but also counsels him in a sermonising manner, showing the enormity of his crime by drawing his attention to the fact that he had not only committed a forbidden act but in addition, that he intended to involve the next generation of believers in it also. Thus, the intention of this report is clear; to clarify that al-Muḥāsibī at even a young age was indeed knowledgeable, scrupulous and concerned with the affairs of his community, which in itself is a pattern that would follow him into adulthood.

The same author provides us another glimpse of the young al-Ḥārith in the following text:

It has reached me that a woman came to him [al-Muḥāsibī] while he was in elementary school (*al-maktab*) and requested that he write a letter for her, which he did and she gave him a *dirham* but he returned it to her, so she took it and left. The teacher (*al-muʿaddib*) then said to him, “Why did you return the *dirham* to her when she had engaged your services [and paid you] for it?” He [al-Muḥāsibī] replied, “Because of His, the Exalted’s statement, ‘And let no scribe refuse to write as Allāh has taught him [to do so]’ (2:282) so I wrote it [the letter] for her out of obedience to Allāh, as He commanded so how can I take payment for being obedient to Allāh?” The teacher then asked, “Then what prevented you from giving it to me if you didn’t want to take it?” So al-Ḥārith replied, “I was prevented by His, Glory be to Him, the Exalted’s statement, ‘And they will surely carry their [own] burdens and [other] burdens in addition to their burdens and they will surely be questioned on the Day of Resurrection regarding what they used to fabricate.’” (29:13).⁵³⁸

⁵³⁷ Ibn Ẓafr al-Ṣaqlī (d. 575/1179), Muḥammad b. Abū Muḥammad b. Muḥammad, *Kitāb Anbāʾ Nujabāʾ al-Abnāʾ* (Beirut, Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīda, 1980) p. 148-9.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 149-50.

This further anecdotal statement creates yet another image of piety for us regarding our subject al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī; an image of a boy who, when employing the skills acquired as part of his education, still refused to take payment for his efforts out of fear that it would impinge upon his sincerity and distract him from implementing the command of his Lord. The use of Qurʾān in the report also indicates to us that, even at such a young age, he perhaps memorised a large portion, if not all of the text, as he quotes from differing parts at will but what is far more significant is the application of this knowledge in a practical manner, even in the minute details of his life. He implements this knowledge further with the teacher, reminding him that despite the *dirham* that he enquired about being of little worth and seemingly insignificant in this life, that its implications would be much greater in the hereafter, thus admonishing him in the process. Similarly, al-Muḥāsibī may have well left the issue at refusing to take the money but instead attempts to avert a disaster in the hereafter for one of his peers, which not only shows his concern for those in his company but also demonstrates his highly honed spiritual insight. Once again we are given a portrait of a youth full of devotion, who prefers the lasting pleasures of the hereafter to the fleeting comforts of the worldly life and as such, it is not surprising that he lived in poverty for most of his life, as his religious conviction would not allow him to make a living at the expense of serving his Lord.

Al-Muḥāsibī's scrupulousness first seen as a young boy in the first report above was to manifest itself further in adulthood in another narration that many biographers quote and which Abū Nuʿaym relates as follows in his *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*:

Jaʿfar [al-Khuldī] informed me that Abū ʿl-Ḥasan told him that he heard al-Junayd say: On the day that al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī's father died al-Ḥārith was in desperate need of a silver *dāniq*⁵³⁹ and his father had left a huge sum of money⁵⁴⁰ but he took nothing from it; he [al-Ḥārith] would say, "The people of two [differing] religions do not inherit from one another"⁵⁴¹, as his father was a Wāqifī^{542, 543}.

⁵³⁹ A common unit of currency at the time worth one sixth of a *dirham*, which was of little value and used here to indicate the abject poverty in which he lived.

⁵⁴⁰ In differing reports the amount varies, being sometimes quoted as being 30, 000 *dinārs*, 70, 000 *dirhams* and 90, 000 *dirhams*. In any case it was a considerable sum of money for the time and certainly not an amount to be rejected so easily.

⁵⁴¹ This phrase is based on a statement of the Prophet. See al-Sijistānī, *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*, p. 423.

⁵⁴² The nature of his father's theological stance is variably quoted as being Qadarite, Rāfiḍite and Magian. However, I have selected 'Wāqifī' here as it is quoted more commonly and fits more conveniently with the historical context, as a Wāqifī was someone who held back (*waqafa*) in giving an opinion on the issue of the created Qurʾān, i.e. is it created or not? This of course was the great debate of the day, which ultimately led to the *miḥna* described in pages 133-9 above. It is also worth noting that the term Qadarite was almost synonymous with being a Muʿtazilite by this point and this too cannot be ruled out.

⁵⁴³ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 10, p. 65; al-Kalābādhī, *al-Taʿarruf li Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 165; al-Baghdādī, *Tarīkh Baghdād*, vol. 8, p. 214; al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya fi ʿIlm al-Taṣawwuf*, p.

There can be little doubt that this text is indicative of al-Muḥāsibī's extreme scrupulousness (*wara'*) as indeed, he forfeited what can be considered a huge fortune, which was rightfully his and in spite of his grave need, for the sake of avoiding any remote chance of there being the slightest doubt (*shubha*) regarding his father's wealth.⁵⁴⁴ The same report upon reflection is indicative of other factors also however; for example, it informs us that al-Muḥāsibī, despite his later poverty, may have been raised in a household with considerable wealth. This in turn may also cause us to conclude that due to this financial stability he may have been privy to a high standard of religious education, which was common to the period in his places of residence, both Basra and Baghdad. This is also confirmed by his familiarity with both the lawful (*al-ḥalāl*) and the unlawful (*al-ḥarām*) as indicated in the first two reports and his knowledge of *ḥadīth*, as indicated by the third. In addition, the fact that his father held such a theological stance is indicative not only of the extent of the controversy concerning the created Qur'ān but also of the fact that al-Muḥāsibī's father was equally acquainted with the issue and as such, may have been equally conversant with other aspects of religious knowledge and learning.

In a related report, which in many ways actually precedes the previous one we find an equally impressive account of al-Muḥāsibī's religious zeal as once again Abū Nu'aym relates in his *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā'*: "I heard Abū 'l-Ḥasan b. Muqsim say: I heard Abū 'Alī b. Khayrān al-Faqīh say: I saw Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥārith b. Asad at Bāb al-Ṭāq (the Gate of the Archway)⁵⁴⁵ in the middle of the road clinging to his father whilst the people gathered [around them] saying to him, 'Divorce my mother as you are upon one religion and she is

429; Ibn Ḥafṣ al-Ṣāqilī, *Kitāb Anbā' Nujabā' al-Abnā'*, p. 150; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 2, p. 623; *al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa 'l-Umam*, edited by Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā and Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā (18 vols, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1992) vol. 11, p. 243; al-Shahrazūrī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahā' al-Shāfi'iyya*, vol. 1, p. 440; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A'yān*, vol. 2, p. 57; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, p. 277; Ibn Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-Awliyā'*, p. 176; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī Asmā' al-Rijāl*, vol. 2, p. 10; al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1347), Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. 'Uthmān, *Tārīkh al-Islām wa Wafayāt al-Mashāhīr wa 'l-A'lām*, edited by 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmurī (45 vols., Beirut, Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1991) vol. 18, p. 206; *Siyar 'Alām al-Nubalā'*, edited by Shu'ayb al-Arnā'ūt and Ṣāliḥ al-Samr (1st edition, 23 vols., Beirut, Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1983) vol. 12, p. 110; al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 1, p. 326; al-Bundaniyyī, *Jāmi' al-Anwār fī Manāqib al-Akhyār*, p. 291; al-Ṣafadi, Khalīl b. Aybak, *Kitāb al-Wāfi bi 'l-Wafayāt*, edited by Shukrī Fayṣal (22 vols., Franz, Vaisbarden, 1981) vol. 11, p. 257 and Aṭṭār, Farīd al-Dīn, *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā'*, translated as *Muslim Saints and Mystics* by A. L. Arberry (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979) p. 144.

⁵⁴⁴ The 'doubt' here of course being the inference that a 'Wāqifi' stance regarding the Qur'ān is paramount to infidelity (*kufū*), which was hardly as cut and dried as al-Muḥāsibī's decision would have us believe.

⁵⁴⁵ A thriving commercial district on the east side of Baghdad, which challenged the Karkh district on the west side, being denoted by its large gate (*bāb*). See Le Strange, *Baghdad During the Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 218; Lassner, *The Topography of Baghdad*, pp. 173-6 and Appendix 3.

upon another'.⁵⁴⁶ This second report concerning his relationship with his father indicates that by this time al-Muḥāsibī and his family had moved to Baghdad and so both these incidents must have taken place there. What is more striking, however, is the zealous approach of al-Muḥāsibī regarding the issue of his father's theological stance, from which it is quite apparent that he thought of it as innovative from a religious perspective and thus, completely rejected. So much so that he felt it necessary to proclaim his disapproval of this publicly, hence the significance of the incident taking place at Bāb al-Ṭāq. Notwithstanding, his request for his father to divorce his mother is equally significant, as this cannot be regarded as an act of scrupulousness (*waraʿ*), which by its nature is supererogatory but we can only assume that al-Muḥāsibī held that his father's belief was an act of disbelief (*kufr*), as there is no other explanation for his insistence that a solemn marriage vow be broken. Thus, we can conclude that al-Muḥāsibī was not only pious and scrupulous as a young man but also that his religious fervour was extremely high, to the extent that even his closest family members were not spared.

4.2 Al-Muḥāsibī's Teachers⁵⁴⁷

The primary education indicated in the anecdotes mentioned above was not only acquired at the basic level but like so many scholars of his period al-Muḥāsibī also undertook studies of an advanced type. Perhaps of the most common forms of study was that of *ḥadīth* and as with many of his contemporaries, he undertook instruction in this discipline with a variety of traditionists of the period. The very nature of *ḥadīth* transmission, i.e. its narration based format, dictates that the number of narrations transmitted from a singular *shaykh* may vary from one scholar to another and in this sense al-Muḥāsibī was no different. Of those from whom he relates only singular narrations include: Hushaym b. Bashīr (d. 183/799)⁵⁴⁸, Marwān b. Shujāʿ (d. 184/800)⁵⁴⁹, Wakīʿ b. Jarrāḥ (d. 197/813)⁵⁵⁰, ʿAbbād b. al-ʿAwwām (d.

⁵⁴⁶ See al-Aṣḥānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 10, p. 65; al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. 8, p. 214; al-Shahrazūri, *Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahāʾ al-Shāfiʿiyya*, vol. 1, p. 441; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, p. 277; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol. 2, p. 10; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 18, p. 206 and *Siyar ʿAlām al-Nubalāʾ*, vol. 12, pp. 110-11.

⁵⁴⁷ An in-depth discussion of each of al-Muḥāsibī's teachers is beyond the scope of the current thesis and as such only a brief mention of their names will be made here.

⁵⁴⁸ See al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī Asmāʾ al-Rijāl*, ed. Maʿrūf, vol., 7, pp. 418-22; al-ʿAsqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 4, p. 280-2 and al-Muḥāsibī, (d. 243/857), al-Ḥārith b. Asad, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, edited by Ḥusayn al-Quwwatli (3rd edition, Beirut, Dār al-Kindī, 1982) pp. 13-14.

⁵⁴⁹ See al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 7, p. 73; al-ʿAsqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 4, p. 51 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, edited al-Quwwatli, p. 14.

⁵⁵⁰ See al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 7, pp. 461-7; al-ʿAsqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 4, pp. 311-14 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, edited al-Quwwatli, p. 14.

185/801)⁵⁵¹, ‘Alī b. ‘Āṣim (d. 201/816)⁵⁵², Sulayman b. Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīsī (d. 203/818)⁵⁵³, Abū Nu‘aym al-Faḍl b. Dukayn [‘Amr b. Ḥammād al-Taymī] (d. 219/834)⁵⁵⁴ and Abū Bakr b. Abū Shayba (d. 235/849)⁵⁵⁵. Similarly, there were other scholars from whom he related more than one narration and these included: Yaḥyā b. Abū Bukayr (d. 209/824)⁵⁵⁶, ‘Abd Allāh b. Bakr (d. 208/823)⁵⁵⁷, Ḥujayn b. al-Muthannā (d. 205/820)⁵⁵⁸, Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. 224/839)⁵⁵⁹, Sunayd b. Dāwūd al-Miṣṣīṣī (d. 226/841)⁵⁶⁰, Surayj b. Yūnus (d. 235/849)⁵⁶¹, ‘Affān al-Baṣrī (d. 220/835)⁵⁶², ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. ‘Abd Allāh⁵⁶³ and Muḥammad b. Kathīr⁵⁶⁴. In addition, it is well documented that the most famous of his *ḥadīth shaykhs* was Yazīd b. Hārūn (d. 206/821), from whom he received a great many *ḥadīth*.⁵⁶⁵

In addition to *ḥadīth*, one of the other foremost religious disciplines studied at the time was jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and once again it is not surprising that al-Muḥāsibī also underwent a

⁵⁵¹ See al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 4, pp. 52-3; al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 2, pp. 279-80 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-‘Aql wa Fahm al-Qur’ān*, edited al-Quwwatī, p. 14.

⁵⁵² See al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 5, pp. 265-9; al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 3, pp. 173-5 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-‘Aql wa Fahm al-Qur’ān*, edited al-Quwwatī, p. 14.

⁵⁵³ See al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 3, pp. 272-4; al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 2, pp. 90-2 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-‘Aql wa Fahm al-Qur’ān*, edited al-Quwwatī, p. 15.

⁵⁵⁴ See al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 6, pp. 30-5; al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 3, pp. 387-90 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-‘Aql wa Fahm al-Qur’ān*, edited al-Quwwatī, p. 15.

⁵⁵⁵ See al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 4, pp. 264-6; al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 2, pp. 419-20 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-‘Aql wa Fahm al-Qur’ān*, edited al-Quwwatī, p. 15. It should also be noted that this Traditionist’s name is ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad not ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Abd al-Malik as al-Quwwatī suggests.

⁵⁵⁶ See al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 8, p. 20; al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 4, p. 344 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-‘Aql wa Fahm al-Qur’ān*, edited al-Quwwatī, p. 15.

⁵⁵⁷ See al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 4, pp. 95-6; al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 2, pp. 309-10 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-‘Aql wa Fahm al-Qur’ān*, edited al-Quwwatī, p. 15.

⁵⁵⁸ See al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 2, p. 71; al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 1, pp. 365-6 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-‘Aql wa Fahm al-Qur’ān*, edited al-Quwwatī, p. 15.

⁵⁵⁹ See al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 6, pp. 66-70; al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 3, pp. 410-12 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-‘Aql wa Fahm al-Qur’ān*, edited al-Quwwatī, p. 16.

⁵⁶⁰ See al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 3, pp. 318-19; al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 2, p. 120 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-‘Aql wa Fahm al-Qur’ān*, edited al-Quwwatī, p. 16.

⁵⁶¹ See al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 3, pp. 111-12; al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 1, pp. 686-7 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-‘Aql wa Fahm al-Qur’ān*, edited al-Quwwatī, p. 16. The name Surayj is the actual name of this Traditionist rather than Shurayḥ as al-Quwwatī suggests.

⁵⁶² See al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 5, pp. 187-90; al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 3, pp. 117-19 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-‘Aql wa Fahm al-Qur’ān*, edited al-Quwwatī, p. 17.

⁵⁶³ Al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 2, p. 10.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁵ See al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. 8, p. 211; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 2, p. 623; *al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa ‘l-Umam*, vol. 11, p. 243; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol. 2, p. 10 and vol., 8, pp. 154-6; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 18, p. 205; *Siyar ‘Alām al-Nubalā’*, vol. 12, p. 110; *Mizān al-Itidāl fī Naqd al-Rijāl*, edited by ‘Alī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī (Beirut, Dār al-Ma‘rifa, n.d.) vol. 1, p. 430; *al-Ibar fī Khabar man Ghabar*, edited by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjad, al-Turāth al-‘Arabī series (5 vols., Kuwait, n.pub., 1960) vol. 1, p. 440; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘īyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, p. 276; al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 1, p. 326 and vol. 4, pp. 431-33; Ibn al-‘Imād (d. 1089/1678), ‘Abd al-Ḥayy b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab fī Akhbār man Dhahab*, edited by ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Arnā‘ūt and Maḥmūd al-Arnā‘ūt (10 vols., Beirut, Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1988) vol. 3, p. 197; al-Jazarī, *al-Lubāb fī Tahdhīb al-Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 171; Kahāla, ‘Umar Riḍā, *Mujam al-Mu‘allifīn* (15 vols., Beirut, Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, n.d.) vol. 3, p. 174 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-‘Aql wa Fahm al-Qur’ān*, edited al-Quwwatī, pp. 16-17.

form of juridical training, which is apparent in many of his works but especially in *Fahm al-Ṣalāt*, *Kitāb al-Makāsib* and *Kitāb al-Masā'il fī A'māl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ*. What is more striking however is that al-Muḥāsibī is not linked with one of the many, perhaps more obscure personalities, but indeed, is documented as being a pupil of none other than Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820), the founder of the later Shāfi'ī school of jurisprudence (*al-madhhab al-shāfi'ī*). However, many of the scholars of this school contest the notion that al-Muḥāsibī was a direct disciple of al-Shāfi'ī, but rather suggest that he was in fact one of those included in the first generation of jurists to follow al-Shāfi'ī who were not his direct pupils, as the following statement from Ibn Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūri (d. 643/1245) would indicate:

Abū Manṣūr al-Tamīmī regarded him [al-Muḥāsibī] as being from the first generation (*al-ṭabaqa al-ūlā*) of the Shāfi'ī scholars who associated [directly] with (*ṣaḥība*) al-Shāfi'ī, saying, “[al-Muḥāsibī is an] imam of the Muslims in jurisprudence (*al-fiqh*), principles (*al-uṣūl*), Sufism (*al-taṣawwuf*), prophetic narration (*ḥadīth*) and scholastic theology (*kalām*). His books in these disciplines are the foundation for whoever desired to write on such subjects. [In addition], most of the theologians of al-Ṣifāṭiyya⁵⁶⁶ are linked with him.” He [al-Tamīmī] also said, “If there had been no one else than al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī from the companions of al-Shāfi'ī in jurisprudence (*al-fiqh*), scholastic theology (*kalām*), principles (*al-uṣūl*), analogical deduction (*al-qiyās*), abstinence (*al-zuhd*), scrupulousness (*al-wara'*) and gnosis (*al-ma'rifa*), it would have been ‘dust in the faces’ of his opponents and all praise is due to Allāh for that.”⁵⁶⁷

Ibn Ṣalāḥ then states:

I haven't seen his [al-Muḥāsibī's] association with al-Shāfi'ī, may Allāh be pleased with him, mentioned by anyone other than him [al-Tamīmī]. In this regard, Abū Manṣūr is not an expert, such that a unique opinion of his would be relied upon and in fact, corroborating evidence bears witness to the lack of al-Muḥāsibī's association with al-Shāfi'ī.⁵⁶⁸

Commenting on this appraisal al-Subki (d. 771/1370) says:

⁵⁶⁶ A term used in the initial period that indicated all of the earliest generations (*al-salaf*) who would affirm the divine, eternal attributes of God (*yuthbitūna li Allāh ṣifāt azaliyya*), whether they were essential attributes (*ṣifāt al-dhāt*) or ‘active’ attributes (*ṣifāt al-fi'*), as opposed to stripping God of them (*al-ta'tīl*) or figuratively interpreting them (*al-ta'wīl*), which was the methodological approach of the Mu'tazilites and thus, they were known as ‘al-Mu'aṭṭila', this being almost an antonym of ‘al-Ṣifāṭiyya’. See Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa 'l-Niḥal*, vol. 1, pp. 73-4.

⁵⁶⁷ See al-Shahrazūri, *Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahā' al-Shāfi'īyya*, vol. 1, p. 439; al-Subki, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, p. 275; al-Asnawī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyya*, vol. 1, p. 25; Ibn Kathīr, *Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahā' al-Shāfi'īyyīn*, vol. 1, p. 126; Ibn Mulaqqin, *al-'Aqd al-Madhhab fī Ṭabaqāt Ḥamalāt al-Madhhab*; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyya*, vol. 1, p. 9 and al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al- Tahdhīb*, vol. 1, p. 327.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

If Abū Manṣūr has clearly stated that he [al-Muḥāsibī] associated [directly] with al-Shāfi‘ī, then an objection to this is appropriate, otherwise when he said, ‘The first generation’ he must have meant of those who were contemporaries of al-Shāfi‘ī and as such, those who were of the generation who took from his knowledge. Abū ‘Āṣim al-‘Abbādī also mentioned him in the first generation, saying, ‘He was from the contemporaries of al-Shāfi‘ī and chose his school’, and he didn’t say, “He was of those who associated [directly] with him.” So perhaps this is what Abū Manṣūr meant.⁵⁶⁹

Thus, it would seem that al-Muḥāsibī did not in fact directly study with al-Shāfi‘ī but nevertheless, it is apparent from these excerpts also that he was clearly regarded as al-Shāfi‘ī’s pupil in the sense that he adopted his principles and adhered to his school.⁵⁷⁰

In addition to traditionist and jurisprudential studies, al-Muḥāsibī also acquired knowledge concerning the Arabic linguistic tradition and the sciences of the Qurʾān (*al-lughā wa ‘l-Qurʾān*). These disciplines were studied in particular with Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. 224/839), who is famous for the works *Gharīb al-Ḥadīth* and *Kitāb al-Amwāl* and with whom al-Muḥāsibī also studied *ḥadīth*. Thus it is likely that under the tutelage of Abū ‘Ubayd, al-Muḥāsibī mastered the concepts of abrogation (*al-nāsikh wa ‘l-mansūkh*) and other Qurʾānic sciences such as the ‘general’ and the ‘specific’ (*al-‘āmm wa ‘l-khāṣṣ*), which are apparent in his work entitled *Fahm al-Qurʾān*. From this it is clear that from an early period al-Muḥāsibī understood that many of the disputes that raged in his time revolved around linguistic concepts regarding the Qurʾānic text and to this effect we find that many of his narrations from Sulaymān b. Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīsī (d. 203/818), Shurayḥ b. Yūnus (d. 235/849) and Yazīd b. Hārūn (d. 206/821) are related to these issues.

Thus, it is clear from the above account that al-Muḥāsibī enjoyed an excellent education, typical of what the period offered in terms of instruction and the extent of which is apparent from the variety of sources that he quotes.

4.3 Al-Muḥāsibī’s Sources⁵⁷¹

In addition to and most probably as part of the learning al-Muḥāsibī undertook, we can identify numerous sources which he quotes, both to clarify his thought and add credence to it. As such, al-Muḥāsibī, in addition to quoting the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* literature, provides a

⁵⁶⁹ Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘īyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, p. 275.

⁵⁷⁰ This is an assumption that requires further qualification as the researcher is yet to see an academic work that examines al-Muḥāsibī’s jurisprudential views and establishes the similarity between these and those of al-Shāfi‘ī.

⁵⁷¹ Similarly, an in-depth discussion of each of al-Muḥāsibī’s sources is beyond the scope of the current thesis and as such, only a brief mention of their names will be made here so as to provide a representative selection.

rich mosaic of opinions from the early generations of scholars, which at times reads like a 'who's who' of famous and important Islamic personalities.⁵⁷²

Thus, in the Companion generation (*al-ṣaḥāba*) we find a variety of names including the following: Abū Bakr [al-Ṣiddīq] (d. 13/634), ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23/644), ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān (d. 35/655), ʿAlī b. Abū Ṭālib (d. 40/660), ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd (d. 32/652), ʿAbd Allāh b. al-ʿAbbās (d. 57/678), Hudhayfa b. al-Yamān (d. 36/657), Muʿādh b. Jabal (d. 17/639), Abu Dardāʾ [ʿUwaymar b. ʿAbd Allāh] (d. 32/653), Abū Hurayra [ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Sakhr al-Dawsī] (d. 58/677), Abū Mūsā [ʿAbd Allāh b. Qays] al-Ashʿarī (d. 44/665), ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAmr al-ʿĀṣ (d. 79/698), Tamīm al-Dārī, Kaʿb al-Aḥbār (d. 32/652) and ʿAbd Allāh b. Salām (d. 43/663) amongst others.⁵⁷³

In the following generation of the Successors (*al-tābiʿūn*) we find an equally impressive array of personalities upon whom al-Muḥāsibī relies including: Abū ʿĀliya (d. 90/708), Saʿīd b. al-Musayyib (d. 91/709 or 94/712), Ibrāhīm al-Taymī (d. 92/710), ʿAbd Allāh b. Qays (d. 103/721), Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makhzūmī (d. 104/722) and Ṭāwūs b. Kaysān al-Yamanī (d. 105/723). However, the most important authorities of this generation with regard to al-Muḥāsibī's works are Abū ʿAbd Allāh Wahb b. Munabbih al-Dimārī (b. 110/728) and the celebrated al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728). Of the later luminaries of this period we also find ʿAṭāʾ b. Abū Rabāḥ (d. 115/733) and the mystic students of al-Ḥasan, Thābit b. Aslam al-Bunānī (d. 123/741 or 127/745), Mālik b. Dīnār (d. 128/746) and Ayyūb b. Tamīma al-Sikhtiyānī (d. 131/749).⁵⁷⁴

Similarly, from around the middle of the second/eighth centuries we find the following authorities quoted: Sulaymān b. Mihrān al-Aʿmash (d. 148/765), Ibn Jurayj al-Makkī (d. 150/767), ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAmr al-Awzāʿī (d. 157/773), Abū ʿUthmān Wuhayb al-Makkī (d. 153/773), Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/777) and Ibrāhīm b. Adham (d. 160/777). Following on from this group of scholars we then find a number of al-Muḥāsibī's contemporaries who are also quoted and include: Fuḍayl b. ʿIyād (d. 188/803), Shaqīq al-Balkhī (d. 194/809), Sufyān b. ʿUyayna (d. 198/814), Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d.

⁵⁷² It is also worth noting that much of what is related is concerned with the 'spiritual' and 'esoteric' aspects of religious practice as opposed to the more 'legalistic' or 'exoteric' aspects.

⁵⁷³ See Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 64-70 and Schoonover, Kermit A., *Kitāb al-Riʿāya li-Ḥuqūq Allāh* by al-Muḥāsibī: a translation with introduction and notes, unpublished PhD thesis (Cambridge, Department of History and Philosophy of Religion, Harvard University, March 1948) pp. xlv-liv *passim*.

⁵⁷⁴ See Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 61-4 and Schoonover, *Kitāb al-Riʿāya li-Ḥuqūq Allāh* by al-Muḥāsibī, pp. xlv-liv *passim*.

204/820), Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī (d. 215/830), Bishr b. al-Ḥārith al-Ḥāfi (d. 227/842) and Dhū `l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245/860).

The selection of authorities quoted by al-Muḥāsibī alluded to in this section has been provided merely to demonstrate the range of al-Muḥāsibī's learning and familiarity with a variety of fields of study and their major personalities. Thus, within this representative collection we find scholars famous as Qur'ānic exegetes (*mufassirūn*), traditionists (*muḥaddithūn*) and jurists (*fuqahā*), all of whom al-Muḥāsibī quotes effortlessly, not only exemplifying his own level of knowledge and understanding but also adding - indirectly - 'orthodox' authority to his own works. Further, these quotations also indicate to us that al-Muḥāsibī did not consider himself to be 'innovating' a new technique of spirituality and purification of the soul but rather, that he based his teaching on 'classical' Islamic sources of learning. Yet at the same time, he was developing his own unique approach to moral psychology in an Islamic framework drawn from these very sources, which would be utilised by mystics for centuries to come.

4.4 Al-Muḥāsibī's Students⁵⁷⁵

The foremost student of al-Muḥāsibī is without doubt Abū `l-Qāsim al-Junayd b. Muḥammad (d. 298/910), the celebrated latter day leader of the Baghdadi school and through whom we have retained a great deal of information regarding al-Muḥāsibī, particularly in Abū Nu'aym's *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā*.⁵⁷⁶ Another of the primary figures of the Baghdadi school who became synonymous with it and who was also associated with al-Muḥāsibī was Abū `l-Ḥusayn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Nūrī (d. 295/907).⁵⁷⁷ Similarly, Abū `l-Abbās Aḥmad b. Masrūq al-Ṭūsī (d. 298/910) also gained a considerable reputation within Sufi circles and was likewise an associate of al-Muḥāsibī, providing us with some of

⁵⁷⁵ Similarly, an in-depth discussion of each of al-Muḥāsibī's students is beyond the scope of the current thesis and as such, only a brief mention of their names will be made here.

⁵⁷⁶ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā*, vol. 10, pp. 64-92 *passim* and 217-32; al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, pp. 155-63; al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya fī 'Ilm al-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 430-1; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 2, pp. 652-7; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 2, p. 10; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 18, p. 205; *Siyar 'Alām al-Nubalā*, vol. 12, p. 110; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, p. 276; al-Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 1, p. 326; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 170 and 205-9; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 27-30; Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, pp. 1-7; Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 52-56 and pp. 41 and 131 above.

⁵⁷⁷ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā*, vol. 10, pp. 212-17; al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, pp. 164-9; al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya fī 'Ilm al-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 438-9; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 2, pp. 665-6; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 31-4; Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, pp. 40-1 and Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 60-3.

the anecdotal phrases we find regarding his *shaykh* in Abū Nu‘aym’s *Hilya*.⁵⁷⁸ Another of al-Muḥāsibī’s associates who also had mystical proclivities and was also a traditionist, yet of whom little is known is Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan b. Abd al-Jabbār ‘al-Ṣūfī al-Kabīr’ (d. 306/918) who transmitted *ḥadīth* from his teacher.⁵⁷⁹ Perhaps the greatest contributor after al-Junayd to our portrait of al-Muḥāsibī in *Hilyat al-Awliyā’* is the little known Abū ‘Abd Allāh Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Khawwāṣ, whose many narrations also indicate his intimacy with our subject.⁵⁸⁰

Of the less well known disciples of al-Muḥāsibī was Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. al-Qāsim al-Farā’idī (d. 310/932), the brother of Abū Layth, who led an extremely ascetical lifestyle and who also related *ḥadīth* from his teacher.⁵⁸¹ More famous in Sufi circles being celebrated in their hagiographic works was Abū Ḥamza Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Bazzāz [al-Baghdādī] (d. 269/883), who famously taught his ideas publicly and seemingly enjoyed the approval of Ibn Ḥanbal.⁵⁸² A close associate of al-Muḥāsibī was Abū Bakr Ismā‘īl b. Ishāq al-Sarrāj (d. 286/899) to the extent that his teacher would gather in the aforementioned student’s house with his other disciples.⁵⁸³ Finally, perhaps an unexpected associate of al-Muḥāsibī was Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥusayn b. Ṣāliḥ Ibn Khayrān (d. 310/923), who was a renowned Shāfi‘ī jurist (*faqīh*) known for his scrupulousness to the extent that he refused a judgeship (*al-*

⁵⁷⁸ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Hilyat al-Awliyā’*, vol. 10, pp. 64-92 *passim* and 179-82; al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, pp. 237-41; al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya fī ‘Ilm al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 432; al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. 8, p. 211; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 4, pp. 367-8; al-Shahrazūrī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahā’ al-Shāfi‘iyya*, vol. 1, p. 439; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 2, p. 10; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 18, p. 205; *Siyar ‘Alām al-Nubalā’*, vol. 12, p. 110; *Mizān al-‘Itidāl fī Naqd al-Rijāl*, vol. 1, p. 430; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, p. 276; al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 1, p. 326; al-Jazarī, *al-Lubāb fī Tahdhīb al-Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 171; Kahāla, *Muṣjam al-Mu‘allifīn*, vol. 3, p. 174; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 170 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 34-5.

⁵⁷⁹ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Hilyat al-Awliyā’*, vol. 10, pp. 91-2; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 2, p. 10; al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-‘Itidāl fī Naqd al-Rijāl*, vol. 1, p. 430; *Siyar ‘Alām al-Nubalā’*, vol. 12, p. 110; *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 18, p. 205; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, p. 276; al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 1, p. 326; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 170 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 38.

⁵⁸⁰ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Hilyat al-Awliyā’*, vol. 10, pp. 64-92 *passim* and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 38.

⁵⁸¹ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Hilyat al-Awliyā’*, vol. 10, pp. 91-2; al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, p. 56; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 2, p. 10; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 18, p. 205; *Siyar ‘Alām al-Nubalā’*, vol. 12, p. 110; al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 1, p. 326; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 170 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 37.

⁵⁸² See al-Aṣfahānī, *Hilyat al-Awliyā’*, vol. 10, pp. 273-4; al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, p. 295-8; al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya fī ‘Ilm al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 395 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 29-31.

⁵⁸³ See al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 2, p. 10; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 18, p. 205; *Siyar ‘Alām al-Nubalā’*, vol. 12, p. 110; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, p. 276; al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 1, p. 326; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 170 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 35-6.

qaḍāʾ), yet despite his juridical background we find him narrating directly regarding al-Muḥāsibī, thus once again indicating his intimacy with our subject.⁵⁸⁴

4.5 Anecdotes Related About Al-Muḥāsibī

Since the historical and biographical works offer us very little information about the life of al-Muḥāsibī, other than a series of anecdotal statements, it is appropriate here that a selection of these be examined to assess exactly what kind of picture we are presented with regarding his life and personality.

Much of this information is provided by his foremost student Abū `l-Qāsim al-Junayd, from whom the following narration is transmitted in Abū Nuʿaym's *Ḥilya*:

Al-Ḥārith was very emaciated and as he passed by one day while I was sitting at our door, I saw that his face was further shrunken due to hunger, so I said to him, "O uncle, if you enter you can partake of something we have." He replied, "Would you do that?" and I said, "Yes, and by doing so you will have pleased me and honoured me." So I entered and he followed; I proceeded swiftly to my uncle's house, as it was more spacious than ours and was never empty of sumptuous foods, the like of which we didn't have in our house.⁵⁸⁵ I then brought a variety of foods and set them before him. He then stretched out his hand and took a morsel, raising it to his mouth; I saw him chew it but he did not swallow it and then he left without speaking to me. The next day I met him and said, "O uncle you pleased me and then you caused me distress." So he replied, "O my son, as for my need it was great and I made every effort to partake of the food you set before me but there is a sign between myself and Allāh⁵⁸⁶ - if the food is not acceptable to Him, a rancid odour arises in my nose from it, which I cannot accept⁵⁸⁷, so I threw that morsel in your porch way and left."⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁴ See al-Aṣḥānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 10, p. 65; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 2, pp. 673-4; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 2, p. 10; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 18, p. 205; *Siyar ʿAlām al-Nubalāʾ*, vol. 12, p. 110; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, p. 276; al-ʿAsqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 1, p. 326; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 170 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 36.

⁵⁸⁵ In some reports the food is said to be from a relative's wedding feast (*ʿurs*). See al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya fī ʿIlm al-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 112 and 429-30; Ibn Ḥafṣ al-Ṣāqlī, *Kitāb Anbāʾ Nujabāʾ al-Abnāʾ*, p. 149; Ibn Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-Awliyāʾ*, pp. 176-7 and al-Bundanījī, *Jāmiʿ al-Anwār fī Manāqib al-Akhyār*, p. 291.

⁵⁸⁶ Equally, the 'sign' (*ʿallāma*) is said to be that a vein in his finger would throb if the food was doubtful (*fihī shubha*), yet this view seemingly has little textual evidence. See Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-Aʿyān*, vol. 2, p. 58; al-Bundanījī, *Jāmiʿ al-Anwār fī Manāqib al-Akhyār*, p. 291; al-Ṣafādī, *Kitāb al-Wāfi bi ʿl-Wafayāt*, vol. 11, p. 258 and Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-Awliyāʾ*, p. 144.

⁵⁸⁷ The phrase used in Abū Nuʿaym's *Ḥilya* "*irtafaʿa ilā anfi zamnahu fawratan*" appears to be a mistake but perhaps should read "*irtafaʿa ilā anfi minhu zafratun/zafūratun*." See al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. 8, pp. 213-4; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 2, pp. 622-3; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 2, p. 11; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 18, p. 207 and *Siyar ʿAlām al-Nubalāʾ*, vol. 12, p. 111.

⁵⁸⁸ For this specific report and versions of it see al-Ṭūsī (d. 378/988), ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAlī [Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj], *al-Lumaʿ*, edited by Kāmil Muṣṭafā al-Hindāwī (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1999) pp. 43 and 285; al-Aṣḥānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 10, p. 65; al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya fī ʿIlm al-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 112 and 429-30; al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. 8, pp. 213-4; Ibn Ḥafṣ al-Ṣāqlī, *Kitāb Anbāʾ Nujabāʾ al-Abnāʾ*, p. 149; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 2, pp. 622-3; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 2, p. 11; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 18, p. 207; *Siyar ʿAlām al-Nubalāʾ*, vol. 12, p. 111; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-Aʿyān*, vol. 2,

In some reports the narration continues with al-Junayd asking, “Will you enter today?” and he said, ‘Yes!’ So I set before him a piece of bread that we had and he ate it and said, ‘If you offer anything to the destitute (*al-faqīr*)⁵⁸⁹ then offer such as this.’⁵⁹⁰ The reports in the primary sources vary somewhat regarding this particular anecdote, casting some doubt as to its authenticity yet at the same time, the main features remain consistent. The first identifiable feature is al-Muḥāsibī’s desperate state of poverty being evidenced by his emaciated appearance, which was clearly visible to his disciple. Despite this being an indication of his otherworldliness we can also conclude that this was not necessarily a state which he chose, since when he was invited to eat by his student, he dutifully accepted fulfilling the Prophetic guidance on the subject. Where his true spiritual status is indicated is in the next part of the story; previous anecdotal narrations have shown al-Muḥāsibī’s extreme sense of scrupulousness but here, in this narration this characteristic is enhanced further, as al-Muḥāsibī is held in a kind of ‘divine custody’ where due to his own efforts at being scrupulous, God has granted him an elevated state of protection from all that is unlawful and doubtful from the perspective of sacred law.⁵⁹¹

As such, this is not only indicative of his advanced spiritual station but also of his preference of his Lord’s pleasure as opposed to the ephemeral enjoyments of the worldly life, as he forsakes the food from the wedding feast - usually the most delicious and well prepared - for food which is not only lawful in a strictly legal sense but has also gained God’s approval. This is further evidenced by the addition to the narration, which shows al-Muḥāsibī’s preference for the simple, humble sustenance of a true devotee of God, i.e. a simple piece of bread that will suffice his hunger and please his Lord, rather than a sumptuous banquet of ‘doubtful’ origins, suggestive of the fleeting pleasures of this life.

In another report narrated to us and preserved in *Hilya* we find that Abū Nu‘aym narrates on the authority of Ja‘far al-Khuldī that al-Junayd stated:

I would often say to al-Ḥārith, “Seclusion is my delight and you extract me [from it] to the alienation of seeing people and [the ‘dangers’ of] the streets”,

p. 58; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, p. 276; Ibn Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-Awliyā’*, pp. 176-7; al-Bundaniji, *Jāmi‘ al-Anwār fī Manāqib al-Akhyār*, p. 291; al-Ṣafadi, *Kitāb al-Wāfi bi ‘l-Wafayāt*, vol. 11, p. 258 and Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā’*, p. 144.

⁵⁸⁹ I have translated this term in its strict linguistic context but it is equally possible that the technical term being synonymous with ‘Sufi’ is meant.

⁵⁹⁰ See al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya fī ‘Ilm al-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 112 and 429-30; Ibn Ḍafr al-Ṣaqlī, *Kitāb Anbā’ Nujabā’ al-Abnā’*, p. 149; Ibn Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-Awliyā’*, pp. 176-7; al-Bundaniji, *Jāmi‘ al-Anwār fī Manāqib al-Akhyār*, p. 291 and Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā’*, p. 144.

⁵⁹¹ This of course is considered in the Sufi apologetic works to be an indicator of his highly elevated status with God, being considered a miraculous divine gift (*karāma*). See al-Ṭūsī *al-Luma’*, pp. 42-4 and 284-5 and al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya fī ‘Ilm al-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 109-115.

so he replied, “How often you say that seclusion is your delight! Yet if half of [God’s] creation came close to me I would find no delight [in their company] and if the other half distanced themselves from me I would not feel alienated due to their remoteness.”⁵⁹²

In this statement we also find a variety of features that are used to indicate his spiritual station and ascetical nature. The first feature is al-Muḥāsibī’s correction of the misplaced notion that being detached from the world in a spiritual sense or to refrain from sin requires that one remain secluded from society. On the contrary, al-Muḥāsibī clarifies for his student that being detached from the world requires no physical detachment but rather a spiritual detachment of the heart from the world and those who exist within it. This in turn clarifies for us not only al-Muḥāsibī’s concept of this issue but also that this was indeed his own spiritual experience as he is talking from a purely personal perspective. In addition, it also gives a further indication to al-Muḥāsibī’s ability to discern the finer, more subtle qualities of human nature and similarly, his pedagogical skill in providing guidance to an aspirant upon the spiritual path.

In a seemingly related narration, again it is al-Junayd, who informs us in Abū Nu‘aym’s *Ḥilya*:

Al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī would come to our house and say, “Come with me and let’s go to the desert.” So I would reply, “Would you turn me out from my seclusion and the security of my soul to the [the ‘dangers’ of] the streets, tribulations and to witness carnal desires?” He replied, “Come out with me and do not fear.” So I went out with him and it was as if the street was empty, such that we saw nothing that we disliked. When I reached the place where he would sit he said, “Ask me,” to which I would reply, “I have no question to ask” and he would repeat, “Ask me about what occurs in your soul” and questions would crowd in on me such that I would ask him and he would answer me immediately and then return home, writing them as books.⁵⁹³

This narration begins by further reiterating the main message of the last anecdote, i.e. that al-Muḥāsibī was not merely an exoteric ascetic - although he was known for his outward renouncement of the world - but for him, it was an esoteric asceticism of the heart, which was also vitally important. Similarly, we find him portrayed as a man entirely certain of his reliance on God, as when questioned anxiously by his disciple he simply replies, “Come out with me and do not fear”, thus instilling a sense of calm and serenity in his student, allaying

⁵⁹² See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 10, p. 64; al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. 8, p. 213; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 2, p. 622; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 2, p. 11; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 18, p. 207; *Siyar ʿAlām al-Nubalāʾ*, vol. 12, p. 111 and al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, p. 276.

⁵⁹³ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 10, p. 64; al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. 8, p. 213; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, vol., 2, pp. 10-11 and al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 18, pp. 206-7.

his genuine concern. A similar, ‘miraculous’ event then ensues, with al-Muḥāsibī’s certainty proven true as God seemingly rewards his trust in Him by emptying the street of all that al-Junayd feared - which serves as a further indication of his elevated status and closeness to his Lord.

Perhaps the most striking feature of this narration however, is the section relating to al-Muḥāsibī’s questioning of his associate, which is equally suggestive of his concern for his student but also, of his quest to reach the depths of human experience and provide answers to the spiritual ailments of his peers. The very nature of the question and answer format referred to in the report - which also adorns many of his works - is also indicative of his intimate relationship with his disciples and a specific and unique, esoteric approach to purification of the soul, rather than relying on a merely ritualistic enactment of physical acts of worship. In essence al-Muḥāsibī strives to reach the very core and nature of the soul so as to enhance its positive qualities and leave it bereft of the negativity of its base proclivities. As such, this unique and very “hands on” approach supplied al-Muḥāsibī with the basis for his essential works on moral psychology for which he became renowned. Consequently, al-Muḥāsibī demonstrates a profound knowledge of human nature and its weaknesses that predates Freud by a millennium, albeit in a religious context and reveals “the discerning wisdom and inspired insight of a true spiritual director and shepherd of souls.”

In another of such anecdotes, related in al-Hujwīrī’s (d. between 465/1072) *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, we find the following story,

He [al-Muḥāsibī] possessed a ‘king bird’ (*shāhmurghī*), which used to sing aloud. One day, Abū Ḥamza al-Baghdādī, who was al-Ḥārith’s pupil and an ecstatic man came to see him and during his visit the bird sang and Abū Ḥamza shrieked out loud. Al-Ḥārith rose, seizing a knife and declared, “You are a disbeliever”, and would have executed him had it not been for the intervention of his disciples. Then he [al-Ḥārith] said to Abū Ḥamza, “Become a Muslim O reprobate!” His disciples exclaimed, “O *shaykh*, we all know him to be one of the elect saints and monotheists, why does the *shaykh* regard him with suspicion?” Al-Ḥārith replied, “I do not suspect him, his opinions are sound and I know that he is a profound monotheist but why should he do something that resembles the incarnationists (*al-ḥulūliyyūn*), which has the appearance of being derived from their doctrine? If a senseless bird sings capriciously after its fashion, why should he behave as though its song were the voice of God? God is indivisible and the Eternal does not become incarnate, united with creation or merged with it.” When Abū Ḥamza perceived the *shaykh*’s insight, he said, “O *shaykh*, although I am right in

theory, nevertheless, since my action resembled those of heretics, I repent and withdraw.”⁵⁹⁴

In this excerpt, al-Muḥāsibī is portrayed as a strict adherent to ‘orthodox’ doctrines, not tolerating for one moment phrases resembling the ‘ecstatic utterances’ (*al-shaṭaḥāt*) of the so-called intoxicated school of Sufism (*al-sukr*), exemplified by such notables as Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. 234/848 or 261/875) and al-Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922). As such, al-Muḥāsibī is seen as a paragon of strict orthodox virtue, defending the beliefs of Islam to the extent of threatening one of his own students with the most severe of consequences for his errant misdemeanour. Similarly, al-Muḥāsibī is also portrayed as an erudite spiritual master, explaining the reason for his apparently extreme reaction and as such, clarifying for his students his views regarding spiritual purification and development on the path to God. Thus for al-Muḥāsibī, his goal is not divine union (*al-ittiḥād*) or incarnation (*al-ḥulūl*) like that of the ‘ecstatic’ Sufis but rather, an evacuation of all falsehood from the inner sanctuary of the soul, to allow it to be purified and consequently elevated, by attaining closeness to God.

In summary, in al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī we are presented with an image of a man who was erudite in the fields of learning of his day and strictly ‘orthodox’ in his belief, yet at the same time a man who had acquired great spiritual insight and a window upon the human soul, to the extent that his spiritual state and proximity with regard to God, was extremely elevated. This is particularly true of the Sufi hagiographical works and their apologia, where al-Muḥāsibī is regarded as one of the early exemplars of their tradition, being held in high esteem. Nevertheless, despite this ‘positive press’ al-Muḥāsibī was not without his detractors and indeed, his personality is equally couched in controversy within sections of the biographical and historical literature.

4.6 Imam Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal’s Repudiation of al-Muḥāsibī

The excellent reputation that al-Muḥāsibī enjoyed in scholarly circles generally and in Sufi circles specifically, may well have survived the controversy that surrounded him if the personality involved had been relatively unknown, or had been poorly regarded amongst the scholarly elite. However, al-Muḥāsibī was not spared this misfortune, as the detractor in question was none other than Abū ‘Abd Allāh Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, the great traditionist and

⁵⁹⁴ See al-Hujwīrī (d. between 465/1073 and 469/1077), ‘Alī b. ‘Uthmān al-Jullabī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* (The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism), translated by Reynold A. Nicholson (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1911) pp. 182-3 with some editing.

imam of the Sunni community at the time. Thus, the status of Ibn Ḥanbal in Muslim society and his reputation as a steadfast, defender of 'orthodoxy' due to his dogged opposition to the doctrine of the created Qur'ān at the time of the inquisition (*al-miḥna*), meant that anyone who courted his disapproval would be castigated in no uncertain terms and in this sense, al-Muḥāsibī was no exception.

Thus, the rejection of al-Muḥāsibī is essentially contained in the following narration related to us by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī in his *Ta'riḫ*:

Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Ya'qūb informed me that Muḥammad b. Na'im al-Ḍabbī said that I heard al-imām Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Ishāq - meaning al-Ṣibghī - say that I heard Ismā'īl b. Ishāq al-Sarrāj say, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal said to me one day, "It has reached me that al-Ḥārith - meaning al-Muḥāsibī - frequents your company, so would you bring me to your house and allow me to sit, such that he can't see me but I can listen to his discourse?" so I replied, "Your word is my command O Abū 'Abd Allāh!" This initiative from Abū 'Abd Allāh pleased me and so I made for al-Ḥārith and requested him to attend that night and said, "And ask your companions to come with you." He replied, "O Ismā'īl, they are many so do not give them more than pressed oil (*kusb*) and dates, or otherwise more than that you will not be able." So I carried out all that he had commanded me and went to Abū 'Abd Allāh and informed him, who came after the sunset prayer (*al-maghrib*) and ascended to a room in the house, where he busied himself with reading a portion of the Qur'ān (*wird*) until he had finished. Al-Ḥārith and his companions then came, ate and stood for the evening prayer (*al-'atama*) and they prayed no further prayer after it. They then sat in front of al-Ḥārith silently; not one of them said a word until almost half the night had passed, when one of them asked al-Ḥārith a question and he began to speak whilst his companions listened attentively, some of them weeping and others crying out during his discourse. Then, I went up to check on Abū 'Abd Allāh and found that he had wept until he lost consciousness, so I went back to them and they remained in this state until the morning, when they stood and went on their separate ways. I then went back up to Abū 'Abd Allāh and his state had changed and I asked him, "How did you find them O Abū 'Abd Allāh?" To which he replied, "I don't think that I have seen a people such as these nor anyone speak regarding the realities [of faith] (*al-ḥaqā'iq*) like this man, yet despite what I have said, I do not think that you should keep their company." Then he stood and left.⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹⁵ See al-Baghdādī, *Ta'riḫ Baghdād*, vol. 8, pp. 214-15; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Manāqib al-Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, edited by 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī and 'Alī Muḥammad 'Umar (Cairo, Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1979) pp. 239-40; al-Dhahabī, *Tāriḫ al-Islām*, vol. 18, p. 208; *Mizān al-'Itidāl fī Naqd al-Rijāl*, vol. 1, p. 430; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, p. 279; al-Sha'rānī (d. 972/1565), 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā - Wāqih al-Anwār wa Ṭabaqāt al-Akhyār* (Cairo, Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, n.d.) vol. 1, p. 64 and al-Bundaniyī, *Jāmi' al-Anwār fī Manāqib al-Akhyār*, pp. 291-2.

It is this peculiar anecdotal statement, which has set into motion the debate regarding Ibn Ḥanbal's censuring of al-Muḥāsibī.⁵⁹⁶ The story itself is difficult to qualify as it contains many apparent contradictions. Firstly, as unlikely as it may seem, the first step in the story is taken by Ibn Ḥanbal himself by instigating the secretive observance of al-Muḥāsibī's teaching of his disciples and upon hearing his discourse, he is not only suitably impressed with its content but moreover, is overcome with emotion whilst listening to it. Similarly, he seemingly endorses the content of the discourse and states his approval of its originator and his associates, yet in the very same sentence he considers this form of instruction unsuitable for the very man who arranged his attendance at al-Muḥāsibī's night vigil. Thus, the semiotics of this narrative prove virtually indecipherable and as such, have produced a great deal of debate regarding the nature of Ibn Ḥanbal's dislike of al-Muḥāsibī's method and teaching, which will be categorised and will be summarised here in the following sections.

4.6.1 Al-Muḥāsibī's Elevated Spiritual Station (*maqām*)

This view is perhaps one of the least popular views expressed concerning the dispute between Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Muḥāsibī and in fact is only proposed by one scholar, this being Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī [ʿAbd al-Wahhāb b. ʿAlī] (d. 771/1369), who was consequently quoted in this regard by Ibn Ḥajar [Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-ʿAsqalānī] (d. 852/1448). Thus, after relating the above mentioned story quoted by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī concerning Ibn Ḥanbal's observance of al-Muḥāsibī's discourse, al-Subkī comments:

Contemplate this story with intuitive insight (*ʿayn al-baṣīra*) and know that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal did not consider this man's accompaniment of them [appropriate] due to his inadequacy regarding their spiritual station (*maqām*), as they were in a very restricted spiritual station that not every one can adopt and as such, one fears for those who do adopt it. Despite this, Aḥmad indeed wept and showed gratitude to al-Ḥārith and each of them has his own personal view and independent opinion (*raʾī wa ijtihād*).⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁶ The peculiarity of the story is pointed out by al-Dhahabī who states, "Ismāʿīl [b. Ishāq al-Sarrāj] was considered reliable by al-Dāraquṭnī and this story is authentic in its chain of transmission (*ṣaḥīḥat al-sanad*) but rejected (*munkara*); it doesn't find acceptance in my heart and I consider it highly unlikely that something like this would be done by Aḥmad."

In addition, the final part of the story is even more peculiar in al-Bundanījī's version where he claims that Ibn Ḥanbal said, "It has reached me that there are circles of remembrance (*majālis al-dhikr*) in which people gather and if these are such circles, then I do not disavow anything of them."

See al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-ʿItidāl fī Naqd al-Rijāl*, vol. 1, p. 430 and al-Bundanījī, *Jāmiʿ al-Anwār fī Manāqib al-Akhyār*, p. 292.

⁵⁹⁷ See al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, p. 279; al-ʿAsqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 1, p. 327 and cf. al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. 8, pp. 214-15.

This interpretation of the original narration quoted above is perhaps the most hagiographic in nature as al-Subkī, fully aware of the status of both these scholars and of Ibn Ḥanbal in particular, attempts to find a suitable solution to the apparent dislike of Ibn Ḥanbal for al-Muḥāsibī's teachings. Therefore, he employs almost a Sufi interpretation of events and attributes the seemingly derogatory comment to Aḥmad's intuitive knowledge of spiritual matters. This being the case, Ibn Ḥanbal is portrayed as being not only the 'orthodox' scholar of *ḥadīth* for which he is renowned but also, a *shaykh* of deep spiritual insight who, bearing in mind the student's spiritual status and caring for his spiritual welfare, advises him not to adopt such a teaching as it is beyond his capability.

At the same time Ibn Ḥanbal is also portrayed as having comprehended al-Muḥāsibī's message from his discourse such that it affected him emotionally, to the extent that he comments, "I don't think that I have seen a people such as these nor anyone speak regarding the realities [of faith] (*al-ḥaqā'iq*) like this man," which serves not only to indicate Aḥmad's spiritual status but more importantly, al-Muḥāsibī's also, as well as keeping his reputation intact.

Finally, perhaps the cleverest part of al-Subkī's interpretation is the final comment, "... and each of them has his own personal view and independent opinion (*ra'ī wa ijtihād*)." By stating this al-Subkī is denoting that the whole subject area under discussion is an issue of personal reasoning and judgement (*ijtihād*), which by its very nature is open to disputation that is not only permissible but also, is extremely likely to occur. As such, the scholar capable of *ijtihād*, the *mujtahid*, is often regarded as the most elite scholar in Islamic learning who, even if he errs, is rewarded due to his elevated status described in a Prophetic narration.⁵⁹⁸ Therefore, by employing this kind of terminology al-Subkī further secures the reputations of both scholars and in fact enhances them somewhat, attributing the dispute between them to the exercising of personal judgement in religious matters of which both of them were more than capable.

Although this interpretation of the events by al-Subkī fits neatly with the overall image portrayed in the original narration, it hardly fits with our image of Ibn Ḥanbal⁵⁹⁹ and as such, cannot be considered the 'full' story. This being the case other possibilities have to be given consideration.

⁵⁹⁸ See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, p. 1264 and Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, p. 761.

⁵⁹⁹ By this I'm not suggesting that Ibn Ḥanbal was not a deeply spiritual and intuitive individual or indeed, that he would not have made such an observation but rather, the impression given by al-Subkī is far too convenient, bearing in mind the image of Aḥmad that is portrayed to us by the sources.

4.6.2 Al-Muḥāsibī's Method was Innovative (*bid'a*)

One of the popular views expressed regarding the dispute between Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Muḥāsibī is that the former scholar considered both al-Muḥāsibī's approach and methodology innovative (*bid'a*) in a pejorative sense. Although there is no direct statement from Ibn Ḥanbal on this particular issue regarding al-Muḥāsibī, we find some evidence to suggest this from various indirect sources. One of Ibn Ḥanbal's more celebrated students was Abū Zur'ā al-Rāzī (d. 264/878), who, when he asked concerning al-Muḥāsibī and his books, as al-Khaṭīb informs us in his *Ta'riḫ*, said:

“Do not dare read such books (*iyyāka wa hādhihi 'l-kutub*)! They are books of innovation and misguidance (*bida' wa ḍalālāt*). Concern yourself only with transmission (*al-athar*) as you will find within it that which will suffice you of such works.” It was said to him that within such books one may find beneficial lessons (*'ibra*) to which he replied, “Whoever does not find beneficial lessons in the Book of Allāh, Exalted is He, then he will find no such beneficial lesson in these books either. Has it reached you that Mālik b. Anas or Sufyān al-Thawrī or al-Awzā'ī or any of the previous imams wrote books about fleeting thoughts (*al-khaṭarāt*), satanic insinuation (*al-wasāwis*) and other such things? They are a people who have contradicted the people of knowledge (*ahl al-'ilm*); one time they come to us with al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, another with Abd al-Raḥīm al-Dubaylī, another with Ḥātim al-Aṣamm and yet another with Shaqīq [al-Balkhī].” Then he said, “How swift people are in turning to innovation!”⁶⁰⁰

The polarised view presented here is indicative of the stance adopted by many of the traditionists of the time and the significance of the phraseology cannot be underestimated. Al-Rāzī begins with a strict censuring of approaching such works, clarifying that as far as he was concerned they are nothing more than books that contain erroneous teachings and conjecture. The ‘true’ methodology is consequently elucidated as being a strict and uncompromising adherence to both the Qur'ān and the Prophetic practice, as laid down in the *hadīth* literature, which is further evidenced by the fact that none of the earlier scholars contributed in terms of written treatises other than in these two primary fields of Islamic learning.

Thus, we are left with the impression of a clash of methodologies, in the sense that the works and subject matter of al-Muḥāsibī and others of his ilk were simply unheard of and as such, constituted a departure from the teachings of the previous, exemplary generations.

⁶⁰⁰ See al-Baghdādī, *Ta'riḫ Baghdād*, vol. 8, p. 215; Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201), 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Alī b. Muḥammad [Abū al-Faraj], *Tablīs Iblīs*, edited by Ayman Ṣāliḥ (3rd edition, Cairo, Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1999) pp. 171-2; al-Dhahabī, *Ta'riḫ al-Islām*, vol. 18, pp. 208-9; *Mizān al-'Itidāl fī Naqd al-Rijāl*, vol. 1, p. 431; *Siyar 'Alām al-Nubalā'*, vol. 12, p. 112 and al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 1, p. 327.

The context of this clash is further illustrated by the terms “... fleeting thoughts (*al-khaṭarāt*), satanic insinuation (*al-wasāwis*) and other such things ...”, which indicates that the inner workings of the human being were almost not a subject for discussion and the dismissive nature of the phraseology indicates the speaker’s contempt for such issues. The people (*qawm*) involved in this field of enquiry are also alluded to and in addition to al-Muḥāsibī, include other luminaries who were to be found later in the ranks of celebrated Sufis and al-Rāzī also clarifies his contempt for the ‘new’ spiritual and mystical direction taken by some sections of Islam’s scholarly community.

It is interesting to note that despite his being al-Rāzī’s teacher, the name of Ibn Ḥanbal is not mentioned here amongst the other eminent jurists or traditionists of the time. Nevertheless, we can assume that Ibn Ḥanbal’s methodology did not differ drastically from his contemporaries as we find that his teacher, the celebrated traditionist ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī (d. 198/814) is reported to have said, “It is forbidden for a man to speak regarding an issue of religion except [he bases it on] something that he heard from a reliable narrator (*thiqqa*).”⁶⁰¹ In a comparable statement, Ibn Ḥanbal himself said to al-Maymūnī, “O Abū ‘l-Ḥasan do not dare speak on an issue unless you have a proof (*imam*) regarding it.”⁶⁰² Similarly, when asked regarding the issue of fleeting thoughts (*al-khaṭarāt*) and satanic insinuation (*al-wasāwis*) mentioned above, he is reported to have replied, “Neither the Companions or the Successors spoke regarding them.”⁶⁰³ Illustrating this point further, Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī [‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Shihāb al-Dīn] (d. 795/1393) states:

Aḥmad and others only censured those amongst the Sufis who discussed fleeting thoughts (*al-khaṭarāt*) and satanic insinuation (*al-wasāwis*), as their statements in this regard were not based on any legal evidence (*dalīl shar‘ī*) but rather, [were based] on personal opinion and experiential knowledge (*ra‘ī wa dhawq*). Similarly, he would reject statements on issues of the permissible and the forbidden (*al-ḥalāl wa ‘l-ḥarām*) based purely upon personal opinion (*ra‘ī*) without any legal proof.⁶⁰⁴

In addition to the discussion regarding various aspects of the esoteric and psychological religious life, Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372) adds a further possibility for the proposal that Ibn Ḥanbal rejected al-Muḥāsibī on the basis of innovative practice, saying:

⁶⁰¹ Al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā’*, vol. 9, p. 6.

⁶⁰² Ibn al-Jawzī, *Manāqib al-Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, p. 231.

⁶⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

⁶⁰⁴ Al-Ḥanbalī (d. 795/1393), ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Shihāb al-Dīn [Ibn Rajab], *Jāmi‘ al-‘Ulūm wa ‘l-Ḥikam fi Sharḥ Khamsīn Ḥadīth min Jawāmi‘ al-Kalim*, edited by Shu‘ayb al-Arnā‘ūt and Ibrāhīm Bājīs (2 vols. in one book, Beirut, Mu‘assasat al-Risāla, 1994) vol. 2, p. 104.

Indeed, he [Aḥmad] disliked that because their discourse contained aspects of asceticism and extreme behaviour that had no legal basis and a precise form of taking the soul to account, that was meticulous and exaggerated but which had not been commanded. Due to this when Abū Zur‘a al-Rāzī read al-Ḥārith’s book entitled *al-Ri‘āya* he said, “This is innovation (*bid‘a*)” and said to the man who brought the book, “You should follow that which Mālik, al-Thawrī, al-Awzā‘ī and al-Layth followed and leave this, as indeed it is innovation.”⁶⁰⁵

Upon examining these various views regarding al-Muḥāsibī’s practice and methodology we find that they are far more difficult to prove than one might at first imagine. Regarding Abū Zur‘a al-Rāzī’s censuring of al-Muḥāsibī, in which he states that one must restrict one’s learning to the Qur‘ān and *ḥadīth*, then of course when examining al-Muḥāsibī’s works we find a great deal of personal introspection is evident. However, at the same time what we also find that he includes a plethora of Qur‘ān verses and multifarious *ḥadīth*, many of which he transmitted personally, to add form, structure and authenticity to his writings. Thus, the claim that al-Muḥāsibī’s teachings existed outside the sphere of the Islamic paradigm is for the most part, simply erroneous.

The next accusation from al-Rāzī’s perspective that none of the previous scholars had written on the topic of fleeting thoughts (*al-khaṭarāt*), satanic insinuation (*al-wasāwis*) and Ibn Ḥanbal’s perspective that both the Companion and Successor generations had not discussed this, is equally misleading. The fact that a topic had not been discussed in a written form in the formative generations of Muslims does not necessarily mean that they were not aware of it and indeed, many of the Islamic disciplines that became an intrinsic part of learning were not discussed in the technical sense they inferred at a later date. Examples of these include the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), which had been utilised practically from the time of the Companions but did not reach fruition until its codification in al-Shāfi‘ī’s *al-Risāla* and various *ḥadīth* disciplines that both Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Rāzī would have been familiar with, such as *ḥadīth* terminology (*muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth*) and the biographical *ṭabaqāt* and *rijāl* genres, which were developed purely to authenticate *ḥadīth* and which, had not even been fully developed in the time of these two eminent traditionists.

Similarly, the most controversial religious incident of the period, the *miḥna*, was driven by an issue never discussed in the initial generations of Muslims, i.e. that of the created Qur‘ān

⁶⁰⁵ Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372), Ismā‘īl, *al-Bidāya wa ‘l-Nihāya*, edited by Aḥmad Abū Muḥim, ‘Alī Najīb ‘Aṭwī, Fu‘ād al-Sayyid and Mahdī Nāṣir al-Dīn (4th ed., 14 vols. in 7 books, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1988) vol. 10, p. 344.

and indeed, Ibn Ḥanbal himself engaged - admittedly under duress - in this debate to defend the 'orthodox' view. Thus, we can conclude that the fact that an earlier generation of scholars did not discuss a topic does not exclude its inclusion in a later scholarly tradition. As such, the topic in question, i.e. the introspective thought process is in fact alluded to in the Qurʾān, in the following verse, "Indeed, We created the human being and We know that which whispers in his own soul; We are closer to him than his jugular vein" (50:16) and this being the case, in addition to the body of material related in chapter two regarding the human soul from both the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*, provides the theoretical, practical and legal basis for much of what al-Muḥāsibī dedicated himself to in his life and works.

In addition, the notion that Ibn Ḥanbal rejected al-Muḥāsibī on the basis of his extreme asceticism is equally questionable, as the biographical material dealing with Aḥmad's life is replete with examples of his own extreme asceticism, which also on occasion seems beyond the normal boundaries of religious practice.⁶⁰⁶ This otherworldliness of Ibn Ḥanbal is so celebrated to the extent that even the Sufi apologetic works include anecdotes from him in this regard as al-Qushayrī's *al-Risāla* contains the following narration:

Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal said, "Asceticism (*al-zuhd*) is of three types: the first is to leave that which is forbidden (*al-ḥarām*) and this is the asceticism of the common folk (*al-ʿawāmm*). The second is to leave that which is superfluous from the permissible (*faḍl al-ḥalāl*) and this is the asceticism of the elite (*al-khawāṣṣ*). The third is to leave that which occupies the devotee from any other than Allāh the Exalted and this is the asceticism of the gnostics (*al-ʿārifīn*)."⁶⁰⁷

Thus, in summary we may conclude that the basis of the argument posited to prove al-Muḥāsibī's 'unorthodox' teaching is at best contentious and rather than being indicative of his innovative practice, could equally be viewed as being a by-product of the rigidity of the traditionist faction that was in the ascendancy in the post-*miḥna* period. One of the major factors in this stance adopted by this traditionist faction - also referred to as the *Ḥanābila*⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁶ See al-Aṣḥānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 9, pp. 145-201 *passim*; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Manāqib al-Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, pp. 255-60; Patton, *Aḥmed Ibn Ḥanbal and the Miḥna*, pp. 139-172 *passim* and 178-82 and Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, pp. 138-151 *passim*.

⁶⁰⁷ Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya fī ʿilm al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 119.

⁶⁰⁸ This term being the plural of the word 'Ḥanbalī' proves difficult to define as it is used to denote both the jurisprudential school and the theological stance adopted by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, as well as being used to infer an uncompromising and rigid position on religious matters. What we can say here, however, is that the phrase when used to describe certain sections of society at the time of al-Muḥāsibī did not refer to the school of jurisprudence, as this had yet to be formed but rather, the theological stance adopted by Ibn Ḥanbal against the Muʿtazilites and perhaps, a dogmatic and obdurate 'attitude' that accompanied it amongst Aḥmad's

- seemingly arises from their interpretation of what constitutes innovation, in the sense that from the statements of both Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Rāzī it seems to infer a practice or belief that either contradicts the religious praxis and creedal system of the earliest generations, or indeed, topics that were never discussed by them. Thus, their understanding of the term ‘*bid‘a*’ was in reality very restricted and limiting and it may well have been the case that al-Muḥāsibī understood ‘*bid‘a*’ to be a practice or belief that had no basis or precedent in the revelatory sources of the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*, rather than his contemporaries’ rigid interpretation. As such, the source of this dispute is in fact a methodological one, on the one hand between a group of scholars whose world view was extremely obdurate and uncompromising, rejecting outright any teaching which in their view contradicted their system, or indeed was simply ‘new’ and on the other, a scholar who having grounded his teaching in the primary sources, aimed to treat the moral and psychological ailments of his peers.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, this view does not solve the conundrum of the original narration related by al-Khaṭīb, if one bears in mind the strictness of the stance of the Ḥanbalī/traditionist faction to *bid‘a* generally and the position of Ibn Ḥanbal in particular⁶⁰⁹, which is that if Ibn Ḥanbal had considered al-Muḥāsibī’s discourse so innovative, as we are lead to believe, then why did he stay until the morning listening to it? The uncompromising nature of Ibn Ḥanbal on such an issue would lead us to imagine that he would not have stayed even a moment longer than necessary, if this was really the case and therefore, we must consider other possibilities in this regard.

4.6.3 Al-Muḥāsibī’s Unreliability in *Ḥadīth* (*ḍa‘īf*)

As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, al-Muḥāsibī studied the science of *ḥadīth* with some of the most eminent traditionists of the period and in fact many of these scholars were also the teachers of Ibn Ḥanbal.⁶¹⁰ Similarly, with regard to the biographical *ḥadīth* literature that deals with reliability and acceptability of narrators, al-Muḥāsibī receives a favourable appraisal from the critics of this discipline, being considered both truthful in

followers. See Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal - Ḥayātuhu wa ‘Aṣruhu wa Ārā’uhu wa Fiqhuhu*, pp. 356-65 and Gibb et al (eds.) *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 3, pp. 158-62.

⁶⁰⁹ For examples of Ibn Ḥanbal’s treatment of innovators see Ibn al-Jawzī, *Manāqib al-Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, pp. 236-41.

⁶¹⁰ See pp. 145-6 above.

himself (*ṣadūq fī nafsihī*) by al-Dhahabī and acceptable (*maqḅūl*) by Ibn Hajar.⁶¹¹ Nevertheless, al-Muḥāsibī has been accused of utilising inauthentic *ḥadīth* in his works and as such, this has been suggested as being a possible reason as to why Ibn Ḥanbal disliked him.

In this regard, we find that the celebrated Mālikī jurist and traditionist Ibn al-ʿArabī [Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh] (d. 543/1148) states:

“... the most excellent of those who discussed this was our eminent scholar al-Ḥārith b. Asad [al-Muḥāsibī] and from the principal [*ḥadīth*] that he took [to be authentic] was al-Saʿdī’s statement from the Prophet, may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him, “The devotee will not reach the [rank of the] righteous (*al-muttaqīn*) until he leaves that which is doubtless out of fear that it is doubtful”, and other such narrations of this level [of authenticity] and of other levels [of authenticity]. He also said on the authority of Abū Dharr, “The perfection of God-consciousness (*al-taqwā*) is that the devotee fears Allāh by leaving some aspect of the permissible (*al-ḥalāl*) out of fear that it is forbidden (*ḥarām*), [taking it] as a barrier (*ḥijāb*) between himself and the forbidden.” He also mentioned that it was said to Ibrāhīm b. Adham, “Will you not drink from Zamzam water?” He replied, “If it was not for the leather bucket (*al-dalw*) I would drink”, indicating to the fact that the leather bucket was from the property of the ruler (*māl al-sulṭān*) and as such, the property of the ruler is doubtful (*mushtabah*). He also mentioned that Saʿd burnt his vineyard (*karm*) and said, “I am not a *shaykh* if I sell wine” and he also said, “Indeed, it was only due to a doubt (*shubha*) that occurred in my heart, which should be avoided.” It has been narrated that the Prophet, may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him, said, “Examine your soul (*ifti nafsaka*)⁶¹² even if those who are asked have [already] answered you” and he [al-Muḥāsibī] discussed these [narrations] at length, producing benefit in that which he reiterated, was original in that which he wrote, if only he hadn’t been attached to inauthentic *ḥadīth* and the formulation of principles from them. If the scholars of *ḥadīth* had read them [the narrations] they would have ridiculed them and derided him, despite him having met the world’s experts regarding the study of *ḥadīth* such as Ibn Abī Shayba and others. My opinion and Allāh knows best, is that which we have narrated from Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, “Inauthentic *ḥadīth* are permitted in the issue of scrupulousness (*al-waraʿ*).” And may Allāh be pleased with al-Bukhārī who did not consider it fitting that the heart should be attached nor the religion linked to anything except that which is authentic (*al-ṣaḥīḥ*) and this is our opinion also. If we were to incline to the opinion of Aḥmad, then the attachment to inauthentic *ḥadīth* should not occur in anything except sermons that are meant to soften the heart and with regard to principles (*al-uṣūl*) then this is not possible.⁶¹³

⁶¹¹ See al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-ʿItidāl fī Naqd al-Rijāl*, vol. 1, p. 430 and al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449), Aḥmad b. ʿAli b. Muḥammad [Ibn Ḥajar], *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, edited by ʿĀdil Murshid (Beirut, Muʿassasat al-Risāla, 1999) p. 85.

⁶¹² It would be equally valid to translate this as “conscience” bearing in mind the context.

⁶¹³ Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 543/1148), Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh, *ʿĀrīḍat al-Aḥwadhī bi Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī*, edited by Jamāl al-Marʿashlī (14 vols. in 8 books, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1997) vol. 5, p. 162 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 25.

Commenting on this in the introduction to his edited version of al-Muḥāsibī's *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, Abū Ghudda adds: "This flaw is conspicuous in the books of Abū ʿAbd Allāh [i.e. al-Muḥāsibī] and cannot be [easily] disregarded as indeed, this treatise *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn* despite its small size, has a number of inauthentic (*ḍaʿīf*) and some fabricated (*mawḍūʿ*) *ḥadīth*, as you will see during the course of the [book's] verification."⁶¹⁴

Thus, we are given the impression that al-Muḥāsibī was a scholar who, despite his extensive training in the field of *ḥadīth*, used inauthentic narrations freely within his works, which would of course in turn raise the hackles of an ardent traditionist such as Ibn Ḥanbal. However, before we assert this conclusion we must first examine the status of the utilisation of inauthentic *ḥadīth* within the Islamic tradition to assess this claim fully. In fact, when examining the works dedicated to the science of *ḥadīth*, we find that there are three approaches adopted by traditionists in dealing with the utilisation of inauthentic narrations. The first of these rejects the notion of applying such *ḥadīth* under any circumstances neither in terms of legal rulings (*al-aḥkām*), articles of faith (*al-ʿaqāʾid*), or even the encouragement of virtuous acts (*al-faḍāʾil*) and this was the opinion of a number of prominent traditionists including al-Bukhārī and Ibn al-ʿArabī, as the above quote indicates but also, Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn and Muslim.⁶¹⁵

The second of these views states that implementation of such *ḥadīth* is acceptable under all circumstances, regardless of the nature of the application and especially when there is nothing other than personal opinion involved, this being ascribed to both Ibn Ḥanbal and Abū Dāwūd.⁶¹⁶

The third and final of these opinions posits that inauthentic narrations may not be used in legal rulings (*al-aḥkām*) and articles of faith (*al-ʿaqāʾid*) but may be utilised for the encouragement of virtuous acts (*al-faḍāʾil*), pious sermonising (*al-mawāʿiẓ*) and the like. This latter implementation is not without some reservation, however and the following prerequisites are to be applied:

⁶¹⁴ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, pp. 25-6.

⁶¹⁵ See Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, pp. 9-10; al-Khaṭīb, *Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth*, p. 351 and al-Judayʿ, ʿAbd Allāh b. Yūsuf, *Taḥrīr ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth* (2 vols., Beirut, Muʿassasat al-Rayyān, 2003) vol. 2, pp. 1103-7.

⁶¹⁶ This statement by al-Khaṭīb is peculiar since Ibn Taymiyya attests, "Not any of the imams has said, 'It is permissible to make something compulsory or recommended with an inauthentic *ḥadīth* and whoever said this has indeed, contradicted the consensus [of the scholars] (*al-ijmāʿ*)'." See Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm [*shaykh al-islām*], *Qāʾida Jalīla fī 'l-Tawassul wa 'l-Wasīla*, edited by Rabīʿ b. Hādī al-Madkhalī (Cairo, Maktabat Līna, 1988), p. 162; al-Khaṭīb, *Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth*, p. 351 and al-Judayʿ, *Taḥrīr ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 2, pp. 1103-7.

- a) That the weakness in the narration not be extreme, such that *ḥadīth* containing known liars or those accused of lying, for example, would not be included.
- b) That the content of the *ḥadīth* be included with a general precept which has already been firmly established within the revelatory sources.
- c) That when utilising such a *ḥadīth*, one does not believe its authenticity but indeed, that one should be cautious in ascribing it to the Prophet.⁶¹⁷

Therefore, when re-examining Ibn al-ʿArabī's appraisal above, we may assume that most probably al-Muḥāsibī adopted the third approach to the issue of inauthentic *ḥadīth*, as we find that the various narrations quoted by Ibn al-ʿArabī would come under the general heading of piety (*al-taqwā*) or scrupulousness (*al-waraʿ*), which are both such well established concepts within the Islamic tradition such that we may dispense with even giving examples here due to their widely established proofs. Nevertheless it seems appropriate to examine one example here; with regard to the narration quoted above, "Examine your soul (*istaftī nafsaka*)⁶¹⁸ even if those who are asked have [already] answered you", we find a related narration in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* which reads, "Righteousness is good character and sin is that which pricks your conscience (*mā ḥāka fī nafsika*) and that which you would hate people to know about"⁶¹⁹, this being related a *ḥadīth* collection regarded by the vast majority of traditionists to be rigorously authenticated. Similarly, a virtually identical narration is related by al-Tabrīzī in his *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*, which concerns a man who came to the Prophet and asked him regarding righteousness to which he replied, "Ask your heart (*isʿal qalbaka*)", this being a *ḥadīth* deemed authentic (*ḥasan*) by the foremost traditionist of this time, Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (d. 1420/2000).⁶²⁰

Thus, we can see that in this case at least it is true that al-Muḥāsibī was utilising an inauthentic *ḥadīth*, yet the concept promoted within it is already firmly established within

⁶¹⁷ See al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071), Abū Bakr b. Aḥmad b. ʿAlī [al-Khaṭīb], *al-Kifāya fī ʿIlm al-Riwāya* (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, n.d.) pp. 133-4; al-Shahrazūrī (d. 643/1245), ʿUthmān b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [Ibn Ṣalāḥ], *Muqaddimat Ibn Ṣalāḥ fī ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth*, edited by Nūr al-Dīn Iṭar (Beirut, al-Maktaba al-ʿIlmiyya, 1980) p. 93; al-Ṣanʿānī (d. 1181/1768), Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl [al-Amīr], *Tawḍīḥ al-Afkār li Maʿānī al-Anzār*, Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut, Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, n.d.) vol. 2, pp. 109-11; al-Sakhāwī, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, *Fath al-Mughīth Sharḥ Alfiyyat al-Ḥadīth*, edited by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿUthmān (2nd ed., 3 vols., Medina, al-Maktaba al-Salafiyya, 1968) vol. 1 p. 267; al-Tirmisī, Muḥammad Maḥfūz b. ʿAbd Allāh, *Manhaj Dhuway al-Nazar* (Indonesia Sharikat Maktabat Aḥmad al-Nabahān, 1973) pp. 96-7; al-Khaṭīb, *Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth*, pp. 351-4; al-Mashāṭ, Ḥasan Muḥammad, *al-Taqrīrāt al-Sunniyya - Sharḥ al-Manzūmat al-Bayqūniyya fī Muṣṭalaḥ al-Ḥadīth*, edited by Ḥasan Aḥmad Zamurlī (3rd ed., Beirut, Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1993) p. 17-19 and al-Judayʿ, ʿAbd Allāh b. Yūsuf, *Taḥrīr ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 2, pp. 1108-13.

⁶¹⁸ It would equally valid to translate this as "conscience" bearing in mind the context.

⁶¹⁹ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, p. 1120.

⁶²⁰ Al-Tabrīzī, Muḥammad b. Abd Allāh al-Khaṭīb, *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*, edited by Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (3 vols., Damascus, n. pub., 1961) vol. 2. p. 845.

other narrations of a similar genre and since the very nature of his works were the encouragement of virtuous acts based on an exposition that resembles a pious sermon, we could conclude that al-Muḥāsibī held a view similar to that proposed in the third opinion above.

Despite this however, even if we accept that al-Muḥāsibī used inauthentic *ḥadīth*, and this certainly seems to have been the case, it is still difficult to establish that this was the reason that caused Ibn Ḥanbal's dislike of al-Muḥāsibī. This is due to several factors: firstly, the quote from Ibn al-ʿArabī himself indicates that Ibn Ḥanbal permitted the use of weak narrations in the issue of scrupulousness (*al-waraʿ*) and since much of al-Muḥāsibī's works and teachings were on this and other pietistic subjects, which encouraged the performance of virtuous acts via pious sermonising, it would seem highly unlikely that Ibn Ḥanbal would hold this against al-Muḥāsibī to the extent that he would request an aspiring student to avoid his company. In addition, as mentioned above and as shown by Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, Ibn Ḥanbal considered the implementation of such *ḥadīth* acceptable and especially in legal matters, when there is nothing other than personal opinion exists as a solution, such that he approved the application of an inauthentic *ḥadīth* rather than resort to a view of a non-'revealed' variety such as analogous deduction (*al-qiyās*), albeit with certain prerequisites.⁶²¹ Similarly, it seems extremely unlikely that Ibn Ḥanbal would censure al-Muḥāsibī for actually using *ḥadīth*, even if they were inauthentic, bearing in mind that he had devoted his entire life to this science and the tremendous reverence he had for it. As such, we can consider this particular suggestion unlikely and this being the case, it requires that we examine further options.

4.6.4 Al-Muḥāsibī and Ibn Ḥanbal were Contemporaneous (*aqrān*)

Of the less popular explanations for Ibn Ḥanbal's dislike of al-Muḥāsibī is that they were contemporaries who may have disagreed upon an issue of religious knowledge which in turn, led to a dispute of a personal nature, causing Ibn Ḥanbal to react in the way that he did. In this regard, Islamic scholarship, particularly in the field of *ḥadīth* through the genre of literature dealing with the disparagement and acceptability of narrators known as '*al-jarḥ wa 'l-ta'dīl*', has discussed incidents of such a nature and developed its own particular stance regarding it. Accordingly, we find the following statement from al-Subkī:

⁶²¹ See al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350), Muḥammad b. Abū Bakr b. Ayyūb [Ibn al-Qayyim], *A'lām al-Muwaqqi'īn ʿan Rabb al-ʿĀlamīn*, edited by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Salām Ibrāhīm (2nd ed., 4 vols., Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1993) vol. 1, pp. 25-6.

So it is appropriate for you, O seeker of guidance (*al-mustarshid*) that you adopt the correct etiquette with the previous scholars (*al-a'imma*) and do not look at the statements of some of them regarding others except if they produce clear evidence. Thus, if you are able to interpret [such incidents] or have a good opinion (*ḥusn al-ẓann*) [regarding them] then do so, otherwise 'turn a blind eye'⁶²² regarding what occurred between them as you were not created for this purpose and concern yourself with that which concerns you and do not concern yourself with that which does not. A student of knowledge (*ṭālib al-ilm*) remains noble in my sight until he delves into that which occurred between the predecessors and judges [in favour] of some rather than others. So dare not incline [to one or the other] in that which occurred between Abū Ḥanīfa and Sufyān al-Thawrī, or Mālik [b. Anas] and Abū Dhi'b, or Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ and al-Nasā'ī, or al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, which continued until the time of Ibn Abd al-Salām and al-Taḳī b. al-Ṣalāḥ. As indeed, if you busied yourself with this I fear for your destruction! These people were renowned scholars (*al-a'imma*), their statements may be interpreted in more than one way and perhaps some of them were not understood. As such, we can do nothing except be pleased with them and be silent regarding what occurred between them in the same way that we do regarding that which occurred between the Companions, may Allāh be pleased with them.⁶²³

Thus, we can see from al-Subkī's comments that with regard to disputes between scholarly personalities, including that which occurred between al-Muḥāsibī and Ibn Ḥanbal, he adopts a non-inflammatory approach, which attempts to diffuse the situation and which is reminiscent of his appraisal of the dispute between al-Muḥāsibī and Ibn Ḥanbal in his *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-Kubrā* mentioned above.⁶²⁴ It is interesting to note, however, that there is an exception to this approach which is indicated by the phrase, "...except if they produce clear evidence (*burhān wāḍiḥ*)", a factor that up until now in texts previously quoted, Ibn Ḥanbal has not alluded to.

Similarly, it is equally interesting to note that al-Subkī also attempts to diffuse the situation further and maintain reverence for such luminaries by suggesting that in some cases the reasons behind the discourse of certain scholars are difficult to discern, indicated by the phrase, "These people were renowned imams, their statements may be interpreted in more than one way and perhaps some of them were not understood." In the particular case under discussion here, i.e. the dispute between al-Muḥāsibī and Ibn Ḥanbal, this is certainly the case as Ibn Ḥanbal did not qualify further his statement, "... yet despite what I have said, I

⁶²² The literal translation of the term used would be 'to turn one's cheek away (*fa `ḍrib ṣafḥan 'an*)' meaning not to even look but I have used 'turn a blind eye', which appears a useful equivalent in English.

⁶²³ See al-Subkī (d. 771/1370), 'Abd al-Wahhāb b. 'Alī [Tāj al-Dīn], *Qā'ida fī 'l-Jarḥ wa 'l-Ta'dīl*, in 'Arba'a Rasā'il fī 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth', edited by 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (6th ed., Beirut, Maktabat al-Maṭbū'āt al-Islāmiyya, 1999) pp. 59-65 and *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, p. 278.

⁶²⁴ See p. 159 above.

do not think that you should keep their company” and this is equally demonstrated by the number of opinions and amount of discussion that this comment has generated.

Thus, the approach of traditionists in assessing the reliability of narrators is further elucidated in a comparative discussion in the *al-Raf' wa 'l-Takmil fi al-Jarh wa 'l-Ta'dil* of the more modern *hadith* scholar 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Luknawī (d. 1304/1886) who states:

If disparagement [of a narrator] (*al-jarh*) is a result of fanaticism (*ta'aṣṣub*), or enmity (*'adāwa*), or personal dislike (*munāfara*), then it is disparagement which is rejected (*jarh mardūd*). As such, the statement of *al-imām* Mālik [b. Anas] regarding Muḥammad b. Ishāq - the author of *al-Maghāzī* - that he was a “deceiving charlatan (*dajjāl min al-dajājila*)” is not accepted ... [Similarly] al-Nasā'ī's vilification (*qadh*) of Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ al-Miṣrī, or [Sufyān] al-Thawrī's vilification of Abū Ḥanīfa, or [Yaḥyā] Ibn Ma'īn's vilification of al-Shāfi'ī, or Aḥmad's vilification of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī would also not be accepted ... So do not dare delve into that which occurred between Abū Ḥanīfa and Sufyān ... or between Aḥmad and al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī.⁶²⁵

As such, al-Luknawī goes a step further than the non-inflammatory approach of al-Subkī inferring that not only should such disparaging or ambiguous statements of scholars regarding their peers be ‘overlooked’ but that they should even be rejected due to the underlying reasons for such comments being not only contentious but possibly even occurred as a result of personal dislike. Thus, according to al-Luknawī, Ibn Ḥanbal's comment regarding al-Muḥāsibī may be cast aside altogether because it is impossible to know the true reasons behind it.

Shedding further light on this al-Subkī comments, “And what must also be taken into consideration - and, as *shaykh al-Islām* Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd has pointed out - is the dispute that occurred between many of the Sufis and the traditionists (*aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*), as indeed many of them imposed statements regarding one another, as some of them did regarding al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī and others.”⁶²⁶ Thus, we are given the impression that due to the methodological differences alluded to above⁶²⁷, many traditionists often deprecated those they considered ‘Sufis’ and as such, when examining the disputes between scholars of these two denominations this factor must be taken into consideration. Therefore, the inference here also is that the comments of traditionists regarding other non-traditionists and Sufis in particular, should be rejected due to the nature of the methodological dispute between them.

⁶²⁵ Al-Luknawī (d. 1304/1886), 'Abd al-Ḥayy, *al-Raf' wa 'l-Takmil fi 'l-Jarh wa 'l-Ta'dil*, edited by 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda, (3rd ed., Aleppo, Maktab al-Maṭbū'āt al-Islāmiyya, 1963) pp. 187-200 *passim*.

⁶²⁶ Al-Subkī, *Qā'ida fi 'l-Jarh wa 'l-Ta'dil*, p. 54 and *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, p. 19.

⁶²⁷ See pp. 160-4 above.

This is further confirmed by Ibn al-Jawzī, who demonstrating his uncompromising Ḥanbalite tendency, comments before briefly mentioning the dispute between Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Muḥāsibī:

Indeed, *al-imām* Abū ʿAbd Allāh Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal due to his extreme adherence to the Prophetic practice (*al-sunna*) and his forbidding of innovation (*al-bidʿa*) criticised a number of the elite (*al-akhyār*), if they did anything that contradicted the *sunna* and his statements in this regard should be interpreted as providing good counsel in religious matters (*al-naṣīḥa li ʿl-dīn*).⁶²⁸

Thus, from the above statement even Ibn al-Jawzī admits that, due to his own strict interpretation and application of Islamic principles, Ibn Ḥanbal would disparage those whom he considered to contradict such fundamentals, despite their being from the scholarly ranks of the community “*al-akhyār*”. However, rather than interpreting this tendency as a case of, “... providing good counsel in religious matters (*al-naṣīḥa li ʿl-dīn*)”, as Ibn al-Jawzī has done, one may equally interpret this in the light of the discussion above, provided by traditionists dealing with the discipline of *al-jarḥ wa ʿl-taʿdīl*, as being the result of a stance taken due to a different methodological approach being adopted.

Further clarifying the concept amongst scholarship that there was almost a ‘natural’ departure between the traditionists and the ‘Sufis’, al-Dhahabī, having quoted the remarks made by al-Rāzī⁶²⁹, comments in his *Mizān al-ʿItidāl*:

Where are the likes of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī?! How then if Abū Zurʿa had seen the books of the later Sufis, such as the *Qūt al-Qulūb* of Abū Ṭālib [al-Makkī] and where are the likes of the *Qūt*?! How then if he had seen *Bahjat al-Asrār* of Abū Jahdam, and *Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tafsīr* of al-Sulamī?! He would have lost his mind (*la ṭāra lubbuhu*)! How then if he had seen the works of Abū Ḥāmid [al-Ghazzālī] al-Tūsī bearing in mind the many fabricated *ḥadīth* (*al-mawḍūʿāt*) there are in *al-Iḥyāʾ*?! How then if he had seen *al-Ghunya* of *shaykh* ʿAbd al-Qādir [al-Jilānī]?! How then if he had seen *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* and *al-Futūḥāt al-Makiyya* [of Ibn ʿArabī]?! Indeed when al-Ḥārith was the spokesman of such people in his era (*lisān al-qawm fī dhālika ʿl-ʿaṣr*), his contemporaries consisted of one thousand scholars of *ḥadīth*, including the likes of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and Ibn Rāhawayh but when the pole of Gnostics (*quṭub al-ʿarifīn*) became the author of *al-Fuṣūṣ* [i.e. Ibn ʿArabī] the scholars of [in that time] were the likes of Ibn Walad al-Khamsīn and Ibn Shaḥāna.⁶³⁰

On examining this excerpt in the light of the quote from al-Rāzī, we may conclude that, even if al-Dhahabī accepted his claim that al-Muḥāsibī was a proponent of innovation, he

⁶²⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Manāqib al-Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, pp. 239-41.

⁶²⁹ See p. 160 above.

⁶³⁰ Al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-ʿItidāl fī Naqd al-Rijāl*, vol. 1, p. 431.

clearly thought that al-Muḥāsibī's '*bid'ā*' was insignificant compared with the 'innovations' of the later exponents of Sufism, to the extent that he concludes that, if al-Rāzī had encountered these later works he would have gone insane! Similarly, al-Dhahabī also takes into consideration the factors of space and time, in the sense that he attempts to make an appraisal of al-Muḥāsibī within his own historical context. This being the case, he quite correctly notes that this era was the 'golden age of traditionism' to the extent that not only was the vast majority of scholarship concerned with the transmission and authenticating of narrations but also that this period contained many of the authorities in the field of *ḥadīth*, who would be considered its greatest exponents and experts for centuries to come. Thus, bearing this factor in mind and also taking into consideration the 'clash of methodologies' between the traditionists and other sections of the scholarly community, it is hardly surprising that al-Muḥāsibī came under scrutiny and consequently, incurred the wrath of the *ḥadīth* experts who were in the ascendancy in the post-*miḥna* period.

In a similar vein, further accentuating the 'clash of methodologies' between the traditionists and the nascent Sufi fraternity, Ibn Khaldūn comments in his *Shifā' al-Sā'il*:

The basis of the story between al-Muḥāsibī and Ibn Ḥanbal, was Ibn Ḥanbal's belief that it is not permissible for someone studying Sacred Law (*al-sharī'a*) to have a *shaykh* to whom he submits his affairs but rather that acquisition [of knowledge] should be from the Book [i.e. the Qur'ān] and the Prophetic example (*al-sunna*) [directly].⁶³¹

As such, this is a further indication of the disparate approaches of these two scholars, which appear on the surface to have created an unsolvable rift between them.

Therefore, at least from a superficial perspective, the fact that these two eminent Muslim personalities were contemporaneous may be a possible cause of their discord. However, I would suggest here that there is little indication that the dispute in question was in fact fuelled by personal feelings, but rather, that their methodologies of religious practice were entirely different, as was shown in this section and even more so in section 4.6.2 above. Despite this, however, there remains yet another major factor in the relationship between al-Muḥāsibī and Ibn Ḥanbal and since this is arguably the most important it will be dealt with at length in the next section.

⁶³¹ Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1405), 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad, *Shifā' al-Sā'il fī Tahdhīb al-Masā'il*, edited by Aghnāṭiyūs 'Abda Khalīfa al-Yasū'ī (Beirut, al-Maṭba'a al-Kāthūlikiyya, n.d.) p. 64 quoted in al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*, p. 45.

4.6.5 Al-Muḥāsibī's Utilisation of Scholastic Theology (*ilm al-kalām*)

Of the most popular and regularly cited reasons for Ibn Ḥanbal's abjuration of al-Muḥāsibī is the suggestion that Aḥmad's dislike of al-Ḥārith stems from the latter's utilisation of scholastic theology (*ilm al-kalām*) and in particular, in refuting 'unorthodox' views, especially those of the Mu'tazilites and Shi'ites.⁶³² The fact that al-Muḥāsibī employed dialectical and rational argument in some of his works is well established, as this technique is tangible during his discussion of the aforementioned sects within a minority of his works, namely in particular *Māhiyyat al-ʿAql* and *Fahm al-Qurʾān*.⁶³³ Therefore, this suggestion requires further qualification not from the perspective of al-Muḥāsibī, as his use of *kalām* is known, but rather, one has to first clarify Ibn Ḥanbal's view of this subject, so as to establish the validity of this concept.

In fact, upon examining the classical biographical and historical sources, one finds a trend amongst the more strict traditionist and jurisprudential ranks towards vehement censuring of the use of *ilm al-kalām* in any format and under any circumstance. As such, we find that when it was said to one of Ibn Ḥanbal's teachers, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī, "Such and such (*fulān*) has authored a book regarding the *sunna* as a refutation against someone else", he replied, "Did he refute [him] with the Book of Allāh [i.e. the Qurʾān] and the practice of His Prophet (*sunnat nabiyyihī*), may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him?" It was said to him, "[He refuted him] with scholastic theology (*kalām*)", to which he replied, "Then he has refuted falsehood with falsehood (*bāṭil bi bāṭil*)."⁶³⁴ Thus, we find that this view - representative of the traditionist stance towards *kalām* - not only rejected it as a method since it was considered falsehood (*bāṭil*) but moreover, its use was even rejected in refuting others who may well employ it within a religious discourse, despite its purpose being the defence the 'orthodox' position.

In a more scathing attack on those who engage in scholastic theology and dialectics, another of Ibn Ḥanbal's teachers - the renowned jurist Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī - is reported to have said, "No one engaged in *kalām* and was successful."⁶³⁵ He also said, "For a person to be afflicted with everything that Allāh has forbidden apart from polytheism (*al-*

⁶³² It is worth noting here that al-Khaṭīb contends that there are theological issues other than those alluded to in this section, in which al-Muḥāsibī contradicts the creed of 'orthodox' Sunnism. However, most of these are derived by examining al-Muḥāsibī's views from his works, in particular *Fahm al-Qurʾān*, whereas the goal of this section is to explore this contention from the classical primary sources as a whole, so as to reach the essence of this dispute. See al-Khaṭīb, *Fikr al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī al-Ṣūfī fī Mizān al-Kitāb wa 'l-Sunna*, pp. 40-7.

⁶³³ See pp. 221-2 and 225-7 below.

⁶³⁴ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, vol. 9, pp. 11-12.

⁶³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

shirk) is better than if he were to engage in *al-kalām*.”⁶³⁶ Similarly, his own judgement regarding scholastic theology was clear as he stated:

My opinion and my position (*ra’yī wa madhhabī*) regarding those who engage in scholastic theology (*aṣḥāb al-kalām*) is that they should be beaten with palm branches (*al-jarīd*), put on camels and paraded amongst the clans and tribes and that it should be proclaimed, “This is the recompense of anyone who left the Book of Allāh [i.e. the Qur’ān] and the Prophetic practice (*al-sunna*) and engaged in *al-kalām*.”⁶³⁷

As for Ibn Ḥanbal himself, he had an equally negative view of scholastic theology and dialectics, as it is reported that he said, “Do not sit with those who engage in scholastic theology (*ahl al-kalām*) even if they defend the Prophetic practice (*al-sunna*).”⁶³⁸

Thus, the traditionists and jurists of the period are portrayed as holding an uncompromising and rigid view regarding both scholastic theology and those who engaged in it. This can be understood in several ways: firstly, they held the view that Islam was a revealed religion and it was to be understood from its revelatory sources, these being entirely sufficient to understand and interpret this religious tradition. Secondly, bearing in mind the ‘self sufficient’ nature of the revelatory sources, there was simply no need for another interpretative method, such as scholastic theology, to be employed and this being the case, such a subsidiary interpretative method was extraneous and thus surplus to requirement. Thirdly, since scholastic theology by its very nature relies on dialectic and rational discourse to prove its point rather than basing an argument exclusively on a Qur’ānic verse or Prophetic *ḥadīth*, then such a method had no basis from a religious or legalistic perspective and was to be rejected as innovation (*bid‘a*), even if it were to be employed to defend the ‘orthodox’ stance from other ‘innovative’ sects. Fourthly, such scholars, from their perspective, had seen the ‘negative’ effect of engaging in *kalām*, since many of the ‘innovations’ of groups such as the Qadarites, Mu‘tazilites and the Jahmites had been due to their delving into theological debate on a ‘rational’ basis rather than a ‘revelatory’ one, which in many ways ultimately led to the tribulations of the *miḥna*.

Therefore, it is hardly surprising that anyone found employing scholastic theology, even if it were to be for the noble goal of defending the ‘orthodox’ position by using the methods of the ‘unorthodox’ against themselves, was strongly censured and vilified. Therefore, it is equally no surprise that al-Muḥāsibī was subject to such vilification, as he was clearly involved in

⁶³⁶ Ibid.

⁶³⁷ Ibid., p. 104.

⁶³⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Manāqib al-Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, p. 205.

the defence of the beliefs of Sunni ‘orthodoxy’ by utilising rational and dialectic methods, comparable to those of the sects with whom he was engaged, such as those of the Mu‘tazilites.

Bearing these factors in mind and despite his ‘non inflammatory’ approach to the dispute between Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Muḥāsibī alluded to in the aforementioned discussion, al-Subkī also concedes that al-Muḥāsibī’s utilisation of scholastic theology may well have been a factor in this issue, as the following excerpt shows:

Know that *al-imām* Aḥmad, may Allāh be pleased with him, was highly critical of anyone who spoke regarding scholastic theology (*ilm al-kalām*) out of fear that it would lead to that which is inappropriate. There is little doubt that to remain silent regarding it [*kalām*] is preferable provided there is no need to do so and to speak concerning it when there is no need is innovation (*bid‘a*) and al-Ḥārith had indeed spoken on some issues of scholastic theology; Abū al-Qāsim al-Nāṣirābādhī said, “It has reached me that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal repudiated him for this reason.” I say: it is presumed that al-Ḥārith only spoke [regarding *kalām*] when the need arose.⁶³⁹

Thus, while acknowledging Ibn Ḥanbal’s strict censuring of *kalām* under all circumstances due to its potential to open discussions of a theological nature that may even be impermissible or at the very least misleading, al-Subkī differentiates between this approach and another, which suggests that scholastic theology may be employed when the need to do so arises. If no such need arises, however, then to introduce *kalām* into the discourse is, according to al-Subkī at least, innovative. On this premise al-Subkī sets out to defend al-Muḥāsibī’s position by suggesting that he did not engage in dialectical debate for its own sake but rather, when the need arose to defend the Sunni ‘orthodox’ position from the onslaught of the rationalising theology of the Mu‘tazilites - an objective, as we have already seen, that Ibn Hanbal found equally unacceptable.

Arguing from a similar perspective, al-Ghazzālī [Abū Ḥāmid] (d. 505/1111), provides a similar defence of al-Muḥāsibī’s approach. Al-Ghazzālī in his typically lucid style, presents what he considers to be representative of the views of these scholars by way of an imaginary dialogue and then gives his own conclusion, as we find in the following quote from *al-Munqidh*:

Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal rejected al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī’s writing of refutations against the Mu‘tazilites, so al-Ḥārith said, “To refute innovation (*al-bid‘a*) is a compulsory duty (*farḍ*)” and Aḥmad replied, “Indeed, but you first make mention of their deviant view (*shubha*) and then you reply to it; What guarantee do you have that someone won’t examine this deviant view such

⁶³⁹ Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘īyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, pp. 278-9.

that it sticks in his mind and then he will not be attentive to the reply, or give it consideration yet not understand its full significance?" What Aḥmad has mentioned is true but only in the case of a deviant view that is not widespread or well known. However, if such a deviant view became well known, then to reply to it is compulsory and it is not possible to reply to it without first making mention of it.⁶⁴⁰

Therefore, al-Ghazzālī's first defence of al-Muḥāsibī's refutations against the Mu'tazilites comes from a legalistic perspective, i.e. that it is a compulsory duty (*farḍ*) to do so, perhaps a view that Ibn Ḥanbal may even have agreed with, as he himself did so during the *miḥna*. However, according to al-Ghazzālī, this was not the reason for Ibn Ḥanbal's censuring of al-Muḥāsibī but rather, his mentioning of their doctrines before replying to them to refute them, as there is no guarantee that someone reading such an exposition may be convinced by the Mu'tazilite view before reading the refutation or even be confused by it, such that the specific nature of the reply may not be fully understood. Al-Ghazzālī contends, however, that this is only true in the case of a deviant view that is not widespread, since in this case mentioning such a view which is not well known to the public would only cause them further consternation. In the case of the Mu'tazilites however, the opposite was true, since their doctrines came into the public domain due to the very nature of the *miḥna*. In this case al-Ghazzālī suggests that it is a duty to answer such widespread views by refuting them openly and that one can only achieve this by first making mention of such views and then refuting them systematically - a duty that al-Muḥāsibī gratefully undertook on behalf of his peers. Although al-Ghazzālī's reasoning is sound, his explanation does not deal with the fundamental question of al-Muḥāsibī's engaging in *kalām*, as, even if Ibn Ḥanbal were to accept such an appraisal he would have surely contended that this process could have been undertaken without utilising a *kalām*-style method - an approach which he himself adopted in dealing with the Mu'tazilites.

With regard to mentioning the views of heretical groups we find a similar defence from *qāḍī* 'Iyyāḍ as he states in his *Kitāb al-Shifā'*:

Both the predecessors (*al-salaf*) and later scholars (*al-khalaḥ*) from imams of guidance agreed that it was permissible to quote the views of the disbelievers and atheists in their books and assemblies to make them clear to people and to refute their heresies. Although it has been reported that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal objected to al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī doing this, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal

⁶⁴⁰ Al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111), Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad [Abū Ḥāmid], *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*, edited by Jamīl Ṣalībā and Kāmil 'Ayyād (9th ed., Beirut, Dār al-Andalus, 1990) pp. 118-9.

himself did something similar when he refuted the *Jahmiyya* and those who said that the Qur'an was created.⁶⁴¹

The contention that al-Muḥāsibī made mention of the 'innovative' sects in Islamic doctrine seems to be a baseless argument, since, as *qāḍī* 'Iyyād has pointed out, there is a consensus amongst both the early and later scholars of Islam that this is permissible - if the goal of it is to clarify their heresies and at the same time refute them. Indeed, this was the same goal to which al-Muḥāsibī aspired and moreover, as *qāḍī* 'Iyyād observes, Ibn Ḥanbal himself appropriates the same technique when refuting similar heretical views in his work *al-Radd 'alā 'l-Jahmiyya wa 'l-Zanādiqa*.⁶⁴² Therefore, the claim that al-Muḥāsibī was repudiated for this reason seems unlikely, since Ibn Ḥanbal himself in this work and as the *miḥna* accounts bear witness, engaged in refutation of his opponents and their views. The only possible explanation of this is that Ibn Ḥanbal's objection was due to the fact that al-Muḥāsibī utilised *kalām* as a method to achieve this goal, whereas Aḥmad, due to his opposition to this approach, employed discussions purely based on the *Qur'ān* and *sunna*.⁶⁴³ It is also worth mentioning here that Ibn Ḥanbal's contention with al-Muḥāsibī may not just have been with his utilisation of *kalām* as a method but also with some the specific views he may have held regarding the doctrine surrounding the Qur'ān. There is little doubt that al-Muḥāsibī's general view regarding the Qur'ān was that of Ibn Ḥanbal, in the sense that he held that the Qur'ān was the uncreated word of God. Despite this, however, during the course of the dispute concerning the nature of the Qur'ān other, more subtle and complex debates arose. One of these concerned the physical, human articulation of the Qur'ān during recital (*al-luḥūz*); the question being of course - is this created also? Those who contended that the recital of the Qur'ān was in fact created were thus termed 'al-Luḥūziyya' due to their belief in this specific aspect of doctrine concerning the Qur'ān and this too has been suggested as a possible reason behind Ibn Ḥanbal's contention with al-Muḥāsibī, as al-Dhahabī states:

⁶⁴¹ Al-Yaḥṣubī (d. 544/1149), 'Iyyād [*al-qāḍī*], *Kitāb al-Shifā' bi Ta'rīf Ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā*, edited by Haytham al-Ṭu'aymī and Najīb Mājidi (2 vols. in one book, Beirut, al-Maktaba al-'Aṣriyya, 2001) pp. 371-2. In addition, one should also refer to the implausible and inaccurate explanation that al-Qārī provides in attempting to explain Ibn Ḥanbal's action. See al-Qārī (d. 1014/1605), 'Alī [al-Mullā], *Sharḥ al-Shifā li 'l-Qāḍī 'Iyyād* (2 vols., Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, n.d.) vol. 2, p. 455.

⁶⁴² It is worth noting that this particular work is one of the many works attributed to Ibn Ḥanbal and whose authorship is questionable. For a discussion of this issue see Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), Aḥmad, *al-Radd 'alā 'l-Jahmiyya wa 'l-Zanādiqa*, edited by 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-'Umayra (Riyadh, Dār al-Liwā', 1977) pp. 72-8.

⁶⁴³ This is a contention that requires further research and perhaps even a comparative study of both Ibn Ḥanbal's and al-Muḥāsibī's works and their refutations of 'heretical' sects will be a useful addition to the literature.

Ibn al-Aʿrābī said, “Al-Ḥārith studied jurisprudence, recorded *ḥadīth* and became familiar with the practices of the ascetics, such that he reached an [elevated] rank in knowledge. However he spoke regarding [human] articulation [of the Qurʾān] (*al-luḏʿ*) and faith (*al-īmān*) and thus, it is said that Aḥmad repudiated him such that he went into hiding for a while.”⁶⁴⁴

Regarding this issue, Ibn Ḥanbal’s position was equally uncompromising as with other aspects of the discussion regarding the divine nature of the Qurʾān. In this regard al-Subkī relates:

It has been narrated that it was said to [al-Ḥusayn] al-Karābīsī, “What do you say regarding the Qurʾān?” to which he replied, “It is the uncreated speech of Allāh.” So the questioner then asked, “What do you say regarding my articulation of the Qurʾān?” and he replied, “Your articulation of the Qurʾān is created.” So the questioner went to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and explained to him what occurred to which he commented, “This is innovation (*bidʿa*).”

[Al-Subkī:] As for our opinion it is that Aḥmad, may Allāh be pleased with him, by saying, ‘This is innovation’ was merely referring to answering a question regarding articulation [of the Qurʾān] (*al-luḏʿ*), as this does not concern a person and for a person to delve into that which does not concern him within scholastic theology is an innovation and as such, to remain silent concerning it is better and more preferred.

Similarly, no one should think that Aḥmad, may Allāh be pleased with him, is claiming that the words articulated from the lips are pre-eternal and at the same time al-Ḥusayn’s statement has been related from the likes of al-Bukhārī, al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, Muḥammad b. Naṣr al-Marwazī and others and we will return to this during the discussion of al-Bukhārī’s biography. It has also been narrated that when Aḥmad said, “This is innovation”, the questioner returned to al-Ḥusayn who then said, “Your articulation of the Qurʾān is uncreated.” The questioner once again returned to Aḥmad and informed him of al-Ḥusayn’s statement, which Aḥmad also rejected saying, “This is also innovation.” This indicates to you what we are saying, [i.e.] that when Aḥmad said, “This is also innovation” he was merely referring to the question itself, or otherwise how could he oppose the affirmation of something and then [also] its denial?!⁶⁴⁵

The first striking feature of the above quotation is the involvement of al-Ḥusayn al-Karābīsī, a renowned scholastic theologian (*mutakallim*) who would revel in Ibn Ḥanbal’s criticism of him due to his discussion of this particular issue, i.e. the articulation of the Qurʾān (*al-luḏʿ*) and therefore, it is equally not surprising that Ibn Ḥanbal regarded his opinion as innovative.⁶⁴⁶ What is more interesting is the attribution of the view to major jurists and traditionists other than al-Muḥāsibī, including such eminent personalities as al-Bukhārī and

⁶⁴⁴ Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 18, p. 209 and *Siyar ʿAlām al-Nubalāʾ*, vol. 12, p. 112.

⁶⁴⁵ Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, pp. 118-19.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

al-Marwazī, indicating that this was not only a well known view but also that its interpretation was extremely complex.

Ibn Ḥanbal's stance towards this issue, according to al-Subkī at least, is one of disengagement, in the sense that he considered the question itself innovative and therefore, it is no surprise that anyone who answered the question or held a specific view regarding it would also be considered an innovator, which seems to have been the situation in al-Muḥāsibī's case.

The discussion provided here by al-Subkī seems to be little more than a biographical gloss, as, when we examine other sources Ibn Ḥanbal's position becomes crystal clear. Ibn al-Jawzī, for example, relates the following reports regarding Ibn Ḥanbal's stance towards the issue at hand, "Aḥmad b. Zanjuwayh said that he heard Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal say, 'Al-Lufziyya are worse than the Jahmiyya.'"⁶⁴⁷ In a similar narration we find, "Muḥammad b. Muslim said that he heard Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal say, 'Whoever said that my articulation of the Qur'ān is created (*lufzī bi 'l-Qur'ān makhluq*) then he is a Jahmī.'"⁶⁴⁸ Moreover, his position is further clarified by the following statement, "Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm b. Hāni' said that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal was asked should one pray behind someone who says that their articulation of the Qur'ān is created, he said 'He should not be prayed behind, nor should he be sat with and no-one should pray [the funeral prayer] over him'."⁶⁴⁹

Thus, the issue is far more serious than al-Subkī seems to indicate, since the issue of articulation of the Qur'ān was not merely an issue that should not be raised but also, if one did so and in addition, believed in it, was clearly considered by Ibn Ḥanbal to be a disbeliever (*kāfir*). This is indicated not only by the phrase, "... no-one should pray [the funeral prayer] over him" but also due to Ibn Ḥanbal's position regarding the Jahmites in general, to which al-Lufziyya are compared in these narrations. As such, Ibn Ḥanbal's opinion of someone who considered their own personal articulation of the Qur'ān to be created is unequivocal; he considered them non-Muslims and it would suggest that, if he did indeed think that al-Muḥāsibī adopted this article of faith, then it would be a manifest reason for his repudiation of him. Despite this however, it does not entirely explain the initial comment made by Ibn Ḥanbal, quoted at the beginning of this section, since once again - as was the case with the accusation that al-Muḥāsibī engaged in innovation - it stands to

⁶⁴⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Manāqib al-Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, p. 205.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

reason from the above quote of Ibn Ḥanbal himself, that he would not spend even one moment in the company of someone who was even suspected of holding such a belief.

In a similar and somewhat related debate surrounding the nature of the Qurʾān, yet another complex theological concept is proposed as the reason for Ibn Ḥanbal's rejection of al-Muḥāsibī. In an almost reversed argument, the question in hand does not concern the human being's articulation of the Qurʾān but the divine pronunciation of speech, in the sense that, is this articulation of words accompanied by sound or not? In this regard we find the following quote in al-Futūḥī's *Sharḥ al-Kawkab al-Munīr*:

Zayn al-Dīn Ibn Rajab [al-Ḥanbalī] said in *al-Manāqib*, "And from the innovations concerning the Qurʾān that Aḥmad would reject is the statement that Allāh spoke without sound (*bi ghayri ṣawṭ*), such that he [Ibn Ḥanbal] would reject this view and attribute innovation to the one who held it." It has been said that Aḥmad renounced al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī for this reason. Abū al-Abbās [Ibn Taymiyya] comments, "This was the reason for Aḥmad's abjuration of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī and others like him from the Kullābiyya⁶⁵⁰."⁶⁵¹

On the same theme and illustrating this point further we find that al-Dhahabī relates in his *Tārīkh al-Islām* that al-Marwadhī also stated that:

Abū Bakr b. Ḥammād told me that al-Ḥārith passed by him one day and Abū Ḥafṣ al-Khaṣṣāf was with him, so he said to him, "O Abū ʿAbd Allāh, do you say that Allāh's speech [is articulated] with sound?" So he said to Abū Ḥafṣ, "Answer him" and Abū Ḥafṣ replied, "If I say it is [articulated] with sound, then I also need to say this or that (*kadhā wa kadhā*)⁶⁵²." So I said to al-Ḥārith, "What do you say?" and he replied, "Abū Ḥafṣ has already answered you." So Abū ʿAbd Allāh Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal then said, "From this day I will warn [others] against Ḥārith."⁶⁵³

Thus, having consulted the previous two texts regarding the articulation of divine speech, one may conclude that such an issue was 'cut and dried', since al-Muḥāsibī appears to have adopted this particular theological stance to which Ibn Ḥanbal was equally opposed.

⁶⁵⁰ The first generation of Sunni scholastic theologians (*mutakallimū ahl al-sunna*) associated with ʿAbd Allāh b. Saʿīd b. Kullāb (d. ca. 239/854) who engaged in scholastic theology so as to defend the beliefs of the 'orthodox' majority from the innovations of deviant sects and included in addition to al-Muḥāsibī, such luminaries as Abū ʿl-Abbās al-Qalānīsī. Whether this was indeed a formal 'school' and that al-Muḥāsibī and al-Qalānīsī followed Ibn Kullāb rigorously or indeed, merely adopted a similar form of argumentation requires further research. See Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa ʿl-Niḥal*, vol. 1, p. 74; al-Nashshār, *Nashʿat al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī ʿl-Islām*, vol. 1, pp. 265-84; Watt, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 58-9, 64 and 136; *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 282 and 286-9 and p. 119 above.

⁶⁵¹ Al-Futūḥī, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, *Sharḥ al-Kawkab al-Munīr [al-musammā bi Mukhtaṣar al-Taḥrīr]*, edited by Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiqqī (Cairo, Maktabat al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1953) p. 47.

⁶⁵² Meaning that one would then have elaborate regarding the modality of how the sound is produced.

⁶⁵³ Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 18, pp. 209-10.

However, the complexity of the issue and al-Muḥāsibī's view regarding it is alluded to by al-Kalābādhī in his discussion of the nature of divine discourse when he states:

The vast majority of them [the Sufis] agreed that Allāh the Exalted's speech consists of neither letters (*ḥurūf*) nor sound (*ṣawt*) or words (*ḥijāʾ*). Indeed, letters, sounds and words are indicators of speech yet they require specific devices and bodily parts [for articulation], which are the uvula, the mouth and the tongue and since Allāh the Exalted has no bodily parts, nor a need for devices, His speech does not consist of words and sounds. Some the most revered [Sufis] said regarding His speech, "That whoever speaks with words then he is deficient (*maʿlūl*) and whoever speaks sequentially [i.e. one word after another] is in need (*muḍṭarr*)."

Another group of them said that the speech of Allāh does consist of words and sounds as they claimed that speech is not known any other way, despite their affirmation that it is an uncreated attribute of Allāh the Exalted in His essence and this was the view of Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī and from the later scholars, Ibn Sālim. The basis for this is the following: since it has been established that Allāh the Exalted is pre-eternal (*qadīm*) and that He does not resemble His creation in any way, nor do any of His attributes resemble those of created beings, then His speech will not consist of words and sounds like that of created beings.⁶⁵⁴

On examining this text, one realises the subtlety of al-Muḥāsibī's argument, which is typical of the *kalām* style; he was in fact saying that God's speech does consist of sounds but also, that since He does not resemble His creation in any way, then neither does His speech. The sounds that articulate His speech do not resemble His creation either and al-Muḥāsibī, in his view at least, eliminates the possibility of anthropomorphism (*al-tashbīh*). As we have seen however, this would most likely have been rejected by Ibn Ḥanbal for a variety of reasons; firstly, he may have regarded the question itself to be innovation and as such, whatever one's personal conviction regarding the issue it is unacceptable to even discuss such a matter, as it has no precedent amongst the preceding generations. Secondly, the argument proposed above adopts a dialectical technique typical of the *kalām* style and is, therefore rejected as a method of proof.⁶⁵⁵ Thirdly, it is unlikely that he would have even entertained the argument in the first place, as Ibn Ḥanbal often appears only to have been interested in the answer to the question itself rather than the rationale behind it. However, as was the case with the issue of the created nature of the Qurʾān's articulation, this does not explain Ibn Ḥanbal's comment at the beginning of this section, as one may safely assume that he would not have entertained al-Muḥāsibī's discourse for one moment, if he

⁶⁵⁴ Al-Kalābādhī, *al-Taʿarruf li Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 42.

⁶⁵⁵ It should also be noted here that Ibn Ḥanbal actually held that there was evidence concerning this issue from the revelatory sources and there was no need to exercise one's own rational faculties in trying to explain it. See al-Futūḥī, *Sharḥ al-Kawkab al-Munīr*, pp. 47-8.

thought that it was underpinned by an unacceptable aberration in a believer's faith such as this.

Thus, it is clear from the discourse presented here that one of the most manifest explanations for Ibn Ḥanbal's abjuration of al-Muḥāsibī is the latter's engagement in scholastic theology (*ʿilm al-kalām*) to which Aḥmad was completely averse. Although the specific feature of al-Muḥāsibī's engagement in *kalām* is not entirely clear as alluded to in the above discussion, nevertheless it provides a strong basis for the suggestion that this was the primary factor in the dispute between these two eminent personalities of the scholarly community in 2nd/8th-3rd/9th centuries Baghdad. As such Ibn Ḥanbal's comment, "I don't think that I have seen a people such as these nor anyone speak regarding the realities [of faith] (*al-ḥaqāʾiq*) like this man, yet despite what I have said, I do not think that you should keep their company" may be understood in the light of al-Subkī's comment mentioned above, "Know that *al-imām* Aḥmad, may Allāh be pleased with him, was highly critical of anyone who spoke regarding scholastic theology (*ʿilm al-kalām*) out of fear that it would lead to that which is inappropriate." Therefore, although Ibn Ḥanbal may well have been impressed by al-Muḥāsibī's discussion of spiritual matters, he was not willing to allow a student to keep his company whilst the possibility existed that al-Muḥāsibī may engage in *kalām* during his discourse, which as Aḥmad viewed it, was an unacceptable risk and indeed, detrimental to the religion as a whole, even if it was on the premise of defending the faith.⁶⁵⁶

4.7 Al-Muḥāsibī's Death

Although there is no confirmed report of the date of al-Muḥāsibī's birth, the historical biographers are in agreement that his death occurred in 243/857, approximately two years after that of his adversary Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. With regard to this incident, i.e. the occasion of his death, we find the following report: al-Qāḍī al-Ḥusayn b. Ismāʿīl al-Maḥāmīlī said Abū Bakr b. Hārūn b. al-Mujaddar told me, "I was present at the demise of al-Ḥārith - meaning al-Muḥāsibī - and he said to us, 'If I see that which pleases me then I will smile at

⁶⁵⁶ One of the great ironies of this incident is that the defence of Sunni 'orthodoxy' via rational and dialectic methods as employed by scholastic theology became a normative practice during the following centuries with the development of Sunni *kalām* and the advent of Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Ash'arī and the subsequent school associated with him. In this regard al-Muḥāsibī's contribution is significant and not without appreciation as al-Baghdādī observes, "And the books of al-Ḥārith b. Asad on scholastic theology (*al-kalām*), jurisprudence (*al-fiqh*) and Prophetic tradition (*al-ḥadīth*) were relied upon by the theologians (*mutakillimun*), jurists (*fuqahāʾ*) and Sufis from our companions [i.e. the Ash'arites]." See al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037), 'Abd al-Qādir b. Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad, *Kitāb Uṣūl al-Dīn* (Istanbul, Maṭba'at al-Dawla, 1928) p. .

you but if I see something else [other than that which pleases me] you will find it apparent on my face.⁶⁵⁷ Then he smiled and passed away.”⁶⁵⁸ This ‘pleasant’ end, indicative of piety in the hagiographical literature, was certainly short lived at his funeral, as, even if God had accepted his efforts during his life, the people of Baghdad were less forgiving, apparently due to Ibn Ḥanbal’s abjuration of al-Muḥāsibī and the population of Baghdad’s fanaticism for the great traditionist. In this regard we find that Abū al-Qāsim al-Nāṣirābādī narrates,

It has reached me that al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī had spoken [on issues] regarding scholastic theology (*al-kalām*), so Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal repudiated him and he [al-Muḥāsibī] went into hiding in a house in Baghdad, dying therein; only four people prayed over him [at his funeral] and he passed away in the year two hundred and forty three.⁶⁵⁹

The place of al-Muḥāsibī’s burial is therefore confirmed as being Baghdad yet there is some dispute as to the actual location of his grave⁶⁶⁰; al-Mustawfī (d. 750/1349) for example proposes in his work *Nuzhat al-Qulūb* that his grave is on the west side of Baghdad. On the contrary al-Bundaniḡī (d. 1283/1866) in his *Jāmi‘ al-Anwār fī Manāqib al-Akhyār* goes into great detail, suggesting that al-Muḥāsibī is buried on the east side of Baghdad on the site of a mosque formally known as ‘Zāwiyat al-Mawlawiyya’ built by Dāwūd Bāshā and now known as ‘Jāmi‘ al-Āṣawīyya’.⁶⁶¹

4.8 The Effect of al-Muḥāsibī’s Milieu on his Life

Having selectively examined the era in which al-Muḥāsibī lived in the last chapter and consequently shed considerable light on his personal biography in the current chapter, it is equally befitting here to discuss to what extent this historical period had an effect on our subject, to try and assess the extent that his surroundings played in shaping his life. Although in reality little biographical detail is available regarding the specifics of al-Muḥāsibī’s life, one factor that is confirmed is that his birth and formative years were in

⁶⁵⁷ Al-Subkī affirms the phrase “*tanassamtum fī wajhī*” but I feel the original proposed by al-Khaṭīb “*tabayyantum fī wajhī*” is more accurate.

⁶⁵⁸ See al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. 8, p. 215; al-Shahrazūrī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahā’ al-Shāfi‘īyya*, vol. 1, p. 441 and al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘īyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, pp. 277-8.

⁶⁵⁹ See al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. 8, pp. 215-16; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 11, p. 309; *Manāqib al-Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, p. 241; Ibn Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 298; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A‘yān*, vol. 2, p. 58; al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-Itidāl*, vol. 1, p. 430; *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 18, p. 209; al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 1, p. 327; al-Jazarī, *al-Lubāb fī Tahdhīb al-Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 171 and Abū al-Fidā’, *al-Mukhtaṣar fī Tārīkh al-Bashar*, p. 40.

⁶⁶⁰ Both these claims are virtually impossible to verify almost 1200 years on but have been mentioned here to make the survey of the literature complete.

⁶⁶¹ See al-Bundaniḡī, *Jāmi‘ al-Anwār fī Manāqib al-Akhyār*, p. 297 and Sarkīs, Ya‘qūb Na‘ūm, “Dafīn Jāmi‘ al-Āṣawīyya”, in *Lughat al-‘Arab* (vol. 3, year 6, 1928) pp. 181-2.

Basra. Similarly, the suggested date of his birth is 165/781 and at that time we may assume that Basra was at the beginning of its decline as a major urban centre, coinciding naturally with the rise and flourishing of Baghdad.

Nevertheless, one may also assume that the ascetic tradition that was associated with Basra did not die over night and indeed, bearing in mind that this social trend is said to originate with the Prophetic Companion Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī, one may suggest that this world view was deeply rooted in certain sections of Basran society. In fact this early pietistic trend was further developed with the group of individuals whom al-Nashshār terms, ‘the first Basran school (*madrasat al-Baṣra al-ūlā*)’, which culminated in the life and personality of Basra’s most famous son al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and the development of another group of ascetics who formed the basis of ‘the second Basran school (*madrasat al-Baṣra al-thāniya*)’. Although al-Muḥāsibī was far too young to have met most of these personalities, some of them such as ‘Abd al-Wāḥid b. Zayd and his student Riyāḥ b. ‘Amr al-Qaysī were still alive in his childhood years and despite having no firm evidence to support their meeting, it seems reasonable to assume that the trend towards religious austerity and moral excellence was still prevalent in his early life, a fact which is confirmed by the two narrations from Ibn Ḥafṣ al-Ṣāqilī.⁶⁶²

This was not the only tangible influence that may have had an effect on his early life in Basra however, as the trend towards rational and dialectical theology seems also to have started there. Indeed, one of the earliest incidences of this sort - as the tradition would have it - appears to have occurred within the circle of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, ultimately leading to the exit of one of his students Wāṣil b. ‘Aṭā’. This incident is quoted as being the historical starting point for the Mu‘tazilite movement and consequently, al-Muḥāsibī was contemporaneous with some of the Basran school’s greatest figures including Abū Hudhayl and al-Nazzām. Despite this, al-Muḥāsibī did not join or indeed even accept the teachings of the early Mu‘tazilites but rather, in the tradition of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, remained strictly ‘orthodox’ in his outlook but at the same time one cannot help but feel that this familiarity with such a methodology at an early stage may well have influenced his use of scholastic theology at a later stage.

Having spent his formative years in Basra, he moved to Baghdad with his family at an early age, most probably due to the perceived opportunities therein and the relative decline of Basra, as Baghdad had now been established as the ‘Abbāsīd state capital for at least twenty

⁶⁶² See pp. 141-2 above.

years or more. It is here that al-Muḥāsibī seems to have flourished as a young man, particularly in terms of his learning. It will be remembered from chapter three that this period is often referred to as “the Golden era of Islamic learning” and despite that fact that there is no evidence to suggest that al-Muḥāsibī was involved with the ‘secular’ disciplines of medicine, philosophy and astronomy, there is ample evidence of his engagement with religious learning. Indeed, it is equally clear from the second quotation from Ibn Z̧afr al-Ṣaqlī that al-Muḥāsibī’s training began very early in the basics of reading, writing and memorising the Qurʾān and we may assume that this process continued after his move to Baghdad. In fact al-Muḥāsibī himself alludes to this at the beginning of his work *al-Naṣāʾiḥ* and his studies in the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*, as well as *fiqh*, have already been alluded to earlier in this chapter.⁶⁶³

The tendency towards the learning and teaching of the Qurʾān, *ḥadīth* and *fiqh* was not the only intellectual trend that was present in Baghdad however and indeed, the inclination towards a moralising, spiritual asceticism that was prevalent in both Kūfa and Basra prior to the establishment of Baghdad, continued in a new form in the new state capital. The manifestation of this trend seems to have been a reaction to the affluence and somewhat ‘irreligious’ lifestyle that was a remnant of the old Umayyad dynasty but continued - albeit in a form cloaked in a much more religious appearance - with the advent of the ‘Abbāsids and the expansion of their empire. As a consequence, the teaching evolved in Baghdad became the first ‘model’ to which the subsequent generations of Sufis would turn to for inspiration, being known as the ‘Mystical School of Baghdad’. This ‘school’ combined a variety of ascetical and spiritual teachings and was developed by the efforts of a number of prominent personalities such as Maʿrūf al-Karkhī, Bishr b. al-Ḥārith al-Ḥāfi and Sarī al-Saqāṭī, as well as al-Muḥāsibī himself, and culminated with the ‘sober (*ṣaḥw*) school’ of Sufism associated with al-Junayd. Such eminent company was no doubt a great influence on the life and teachings of al-Muḥāsibī and combined with the introspective asceticism of the Basrans, as exemplified by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, provided the essence of much of his thought.⁶⁶⁴

What is equally apparent however, in addition to the deep, spiritual tendencies found in the teachings of al-Muḥāsibī, is his staunch stance regarding the Muʿtazilites, of which there was by now a second school in the capital of Baghdad and chronologically at least, many of

⁶⁶³ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾiḥ*, edited by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Aḥmad (Cairo, Maktabat al-Qurʾān, 1992) p. 11 and pp. 145 -8 above.

⁶⁶⁴ See pp. 128-30 and cf. pp. 122-3 above.

their most famous exponents such as Bishr b. Mu'tamir were also his contemporaries. His defence of 'orthodox' Sunni doctrines reaches its pinnacle - as will be seen in the next chapter - in his works *Māhiyyat al-Aql* and *Fahm al-Qur'ān* but is equally tangible in his own personal life with both of the narrations elucidating his relationship with his father, all of which indicates not only the widespread extent of the Mu'tazilite doctrines but also, the effect that this dispute had on him personally. One may also assume that this was a major factor in his employing scholastic theology (*ʿilm al-kalām*) as an approach, so as to hold a discourse with the Mu'tazilites, in an attempt to defeat them using their own vernacular and methodology.⁶⁶⁵

Related to this of course is the most singularly significant religio-political event during al-Muḥāsibī's life, i.e. that of the *miḥna*, since this was intrinsically linked to the Mu'tazilite movement and the caliph's support for it at a state level. Bearing in mind al-Muḥāsibī's strong refutation of Mu'tazilite doctrines, one may have expected to find his name intrinsically associated with the event as a whole. However, in contrast, one finds that al-Muḥāsibī has no mention whatsoever during the *miḥna* accounts and this in itself requires some pause for thought.

This is especially true if we consider the fact that he was involved in a public display of disavowal of the Mu'tazilites' doctrines when he openly disowned his father at Bāb al-Ṭāq - an event that in all likelihood could not have failed to escape the attention of the state authorities. In this case, the incident may be explained from the perspective that al-Muḥāsibī was still fairly young and as such, had no common backing or power - either religious or political - to wield, being relatively unknown and thus, having little or no popular support. This does not explain, however, his indirect attack on the state doctrine by the writing of specific refutations of the Mu'tazilites such as those found in *Māhiyyat al-ʿAql* and *Fahm al-Qur'ān* but this may also be understood in a number of ways: firstly, al-Muḥāsibī wasn't a judge (*qāḍī*) and did not occupy any other state appointment. Likewise, he was not even a popular preacher or renowned scholar of *ḥadīth* and therefore, was not in the direct 'line of fire' in terms of the caliphal administration, as it was only such people who could command popular support and who seem to have been targeted in the initial period at least. Secondly, it may have been the case that, even if al-Muḥāsibī had been suspected, he would have been left alone, as he was more commonly known for his exposition of spiritual matters rather than his scholastic theology or his political ambition

⁶⁶⁵ See pp. 132-4 and cf. pp. 143-45 above.

and indeed, al-Ma'mūn is even reported to have entertained those whom he considered 'ignorant ascetics'.⁶⁶⁶ Finally and most probably in the opinion of this researcher, is that al-Muḥāsibī wrote works containing refutations of the Mu'tazilites such as *Māhiyyat al-'Aql* and *Fahm al-Qur'ān* in the post-*miḥna* period, when the situation allowed him to do so due to the apparent 'pro-Sunnism' stance of al-Mutawakkil, or at the very least if al-Muḥāsibī did write such works in a pre-*miḥna* period, he kept them very close to his chest.⁶⁶⁷ In any case, the presence of an anti-Mu'tazilite trend within his works, in addition to the disavowal of his father, is sufficient proof that al-Muḥāsibī was clearly affected by the impact of such theological issues to the extent that he took action in his own, personal way to uphold a belief, which he felt was under a critical attack and which, he felt duty bound to defend.

Although al-Muḥāsibī himself may not have been directly affected by the event of the *miḥna*, there can be no doubt that the person it affected more than anyone else was *al-imām* Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and despite his elevated position in Sunni hagiography, one of the most difficult incidents to comprehend is his repudiation of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī. Possible reasons for Ibn Ḥanbal's stance regarding our subject have been elaborated above and although the most apparent of Aḥmad's objections to al-Muḥāsibī was his utilisation of scholastic theology (*ilm al-kalām*), it is likewise possible that the suggestions posited above are to a lesser or greater extent, equally feasible or indeed, one cannot rule out a combination of factors. The viability of each suggestion has also been shown in the sense that the accusations that al-Muḥāsibī used weak *ḥadīth*, that he engaged in scholastic theology and dialectics and that he adopted and 'invented' a 'new', strict, introspective spiritual approach have been proven.⁶⁶⁸ In this sense one can suggest that al-Muḥāsibī's methodology in approaching religious learning was fundamentally different from that of Ibn Ḥanbal and in the same way this requires us to examine the methodological approach of al-Muḥāsibī, by the same token it equally requires that we shed further light on the personality and thought of Ibn Ḥanbal and the aura that surrounds him.

It is clear from the above discussion that Ibn Ḥanbal was an exponent of the traditionalist trend that began to take precedence in Islamic learning from the beginning of the second

⁶⁶⁶ See for example Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, pp. 44-8.

⁶⁶⁷ It is suggested here that al-Muḥāsibī wrote such works in the post-*miḥna* period, as this would have given sufficient reason for Ibn Ḥanbal to repudiate him. This is because from Ibn Ḥanbal's perspective this issue was now 'dead and buried' and similarly, we must not forget his personal feelings on the issue, as he had personally suffered torture and imprisonment because of it. Therefore, for al-Muḥāsibī to retread the whole issue of the *miḥna* in his works by refuting the Mu'tazilite views must have not only been objectionable to Ibn Ḥanbal but also very painful for him, potentially inciting his anger in the process.

⁶⁶⁸ See pp. 160-82 above.

century onwards. This trend was characterised by an erudite approach to the authentication of *ḥadīth* narration and the verification of their chains of transmission but also, by a strict and uncompromising outlook both to the interpretation and application of such texts, which constituted the *sunna* and which is also clear from the above statements of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī, Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī and Ibn Ḥanbal himself.⁶⁶⁹

In addition to this however, Ibn Ḥanbal was a unique scholar in his own right with his own unique approach. For example, regarding the authorship of books, his strict traditionalist nature comes through in the following quotation from Ibn al-Jawzī that Ibn Ḥanbal said, “Do not look at the books of Abū ʿUbayd, nor that which Ishāq wrote, nor that of Sufyān, or al-Shāfiʿī, or Mālik; you yourself should go to the source (*ʿalayka bi ʿl-ʿaṣl*).”⁶⁷⁰ Thus, in the issue of written works, even the opinions of the foremost scholars were to be cast aside, when compared to the original sources such as that of the *ḥadīth* and indeed, one should not even bother to consult them but should consult the original texts themselves. Similarly, this attitude was not only applied to other scholars but also by Ibn Ḥanbal to himself, in the sense he would forbid that even his own statements be recorded.⁶⁷¹ Bearing this in mind it is little surprise that the works of al-Muḥāsibī were so reviled, since although they contain textual evidence from the sources, they mostly consisted of al-Muḥāsibī’s own thoughts and interpretations.

Another factor that requires consideration is the reverence that Ibn Ḥanbal enjoys within the Sunni hagiographical sources due not only to his immense knowledge but also to the very fact that he was persecuted during the *miḥna* for his insistence on this belief and as a consequence, he has been referred to as the ‘Imam of *Ahl al-Sunna wa ʿl-Jamāʿa*. This, no doubt, is a rank which Ibn Ḥanbal probably deserved due to his forbearance, patience and certitude during the tribulation that personally afflicted him, but at the same time his position has been somewhat exaggerated in consequent generations. This has led to what Cooperson terms “the cult of sanctity” that surrounds the personality of Ibn Ḥanbal in the hagiographical sources generally and those dealing with the Ḥanbalites specifically.⁶⁷² The essential notion that this posits is the idea that due to his closeness to the original sources and his application of them, as well as his experiences during the *miḥna*, Ibn Ḥanbal becomes almost ‘untouchable’ and ‘infallible’ and the precedent that he sets is considered to be the standard by which religious belief and practice is judged. This is a consistent theme

⁶⁶⁹ See pp. 160-4 above.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Manāqib al-Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, pp. 249-50 *passim*.

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 251-2.

⁶⁷² See Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, pp. 138-151 *passim*.

throughout the biographical sources dealing with Ibn Ḥanbal but due to the limited scope of this study only a few examples will be quoted here.

Perhaps the best examples of the exaggerated reports to enhance the status given to Ibn Ḥanbal is manifested in Ibn al-Jawzī's *Manāqib*, where he relates a spurious narration regarding a man whose boat is damaged when travelling on the Indian Ocean and consequently, he encounters two people who inform him that he would be saved if he simply relayed the greeting of *salām* to Ibn Ḥanbal; the first of these two being the angel entrusted with the welfare of the oceans and the second being the prophet Elias (Ilyās).⁶⁷³ In an equally incredible story another man from Baghdad is entrusted with relaying the greeting of *salām* to Ibn Ḥanbal from the semi-legendary figure of al-Khiḍr⁶⁷⁴ and similarly, when al-Khiḍr is asked regarding the status of Ibn Ḥanbal the questioner is told that he is, "A man of true faith (*ṣiddīq*)."⁶⁷⁵ Such fabrications are clearly hagiographic devices to further augment Ibn Ḥanbal's already considerable status and as such, almost place him in a position where his views are beyond reproach.

In a less esoteric but equally exaggerated account Ibn Abū Yaʿlā (d. 526/1132) relates in his *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* al-Shāfiʿī's statement that Ibn Ḥanbal was an imam in eight qualities: Prophetic narration (*al-ḥadīth*), jurisprudence (*al-fiqh*), language (*al-luḡha*), the Qurʾān, poverty (*al-faqr*), abstinence (*al-zuhd*), scrupulousness (*al-waraʿ*) and Prophetic practice (*al-sunna*).⁶⁷⁶ Ibn Abū Yaʿlā then goes on to elucidate these various facets of Ibn Ḥanbal's but by far the most interesting for us here is his exposition of the last quality, "imam concerning Prophetic practice (*al-sunna*)."⁶⁷⁶ In this regard Ibn Abū Yaʿlā relates another quotation attributed to al-Shāfiʿī who is reported to have said, "Whoever shows enmity towards Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal then he is a disbeliever (*kāfir*)."⁶⁷⁶ Al-Rabīʿ b. Sulaymān then asks, "Do you attribute disbelief to such a person?" Al-Shāfiʿī then replies:

Yes! As anyone who shows enmity towards Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal has opposed the *sunna* and whoever has opposed the *sunna* has intended [to harm] the

⁶⁷³ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Manāqib al-Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, pp. 186-7.

⁶⁷⁴ Khiḍr (meaning greenness), according to commentators, is Baylāʾ b. Malikan, Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Khiḍr, who is referred to in the Qurʾānic story of Mūsā (Moses) (18:65). It is said that he is from the Israelites (Banū Isrāʾīl), while others relate that he was a prince who left his worldly life for a life of asceticism and devotions. Scholars differ as to whether he is presently alive and to whether he is a prophet, angel or *walī*. See al-Miṣrī (d. 769/1368), Aḥmad b. Luʾluʾ [Ibn Naqīb], *ʿUmdat al-Sālik wa ʿUddat al-Nāsik*, translated as 'Reliance of the Traveller: a Classical Manual of Islamic Sacred Law' by Nuḥ Ḥā Mīm Keller (3rd ed., Maryland, Amana Publications, 1999) p. 1067; Netton, Ian Richard, *A Popular Dictionary of Islam* (Richmond, Curzon, 1997) pp. 142-143.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Manāqib al-Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, p. 188.

⁶⁷⁶ Al-Farrāʾ, Muḥammad b. al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā (d. 526/1132), *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, abridged by Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Nābulūsī (d. 797/1395), edited by Aḥmad ʿUbayd (Damascus, al-Maktaba al-ʿArabiyya, 1931) p. 3.

Companions and whoever has intended [to harm] the Companions has shown enmity towards the Prophet, may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him, and whoever has shown enmity towards the Prophet has disbelieved in Allāh, the Exalted.⁶⁷⁷

Thus, the very delicate issues of belief and disbelief are no longer to be judged according to the revelatory sources but rather, to be judged according to the faith and practice of Ibn Ḥanbal, due to his physical and moral representation of the essence of Islam. In a similar embellishment Ibn Abū Yaʿlā also quotes ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī who is reported to have said, “Allāh supported this religion with two men: Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq during the apostasy [wars] (*al-riḍḍa*) and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal during the *miḥna*.”⁶⁷⁸ Therefore, once again Ibn Ḥanbal is equated with one of the Prophet’s closest and most revered companions, not only in terms of position but also in terms of sacrifice for the sake of protecting the religion. Moreover, to elucidate this point further he adds to this the statement of Iṣḥāq b. Rāhawayh who is quoted as saying, “If it wasn’t for Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and his personal sacrifice, Islam would have disappeared.”⁶⁷⁹

Not satisfied with al-Shāfiʿī’s appraisal, Ibn Abū Yaʿlā then adds another eight qualities, which he claims were unique in the personality of Ibn Ḥanbal but in reality they are little more than a repetition of the points raised by al-Shāfiʿī.⁶⁸⁰ Nevertheless, two of the issues stated by Ibn Abū Yaʿlā further illustrate the exaggerated status given to Ibn Ḥanbal and therefore, will be discussed briefly here. The first of these is the contention that the principles of faith (*al-uṣūl*) that Ibn Ḥanbal derived and believed in personally have reached the status of consensus (*al-ijmāʿ*) such that, “If anyone deviated from such a principle (*al-aṣl*) they would attribute disbelief to him, warn others regarding him and repudiate him, as all proof leads back to him (Ibn Ḥanbal).”⁶⁸¹ In a later, related point Ibn Abū Yaʿlā also suggests that concerning the issue of innovators (*ahl al-bidʿa*) Ibn Ḥanbal’s opinion regarding them is final such that, “If anyone manifested rejection of his [Ibn Ḥanbal’s] view or wished to change one of his beliefs, then the attribution of disbelief to such a person is confirmed.”⁶⁸²

Thus, the image portrayed to us of Ibn Ḥanbal is one of religious perfection such that his opinions, beliefs and praxis are the criterion by which all issues in Islamic thought and Law

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 8-11.

⁶⁸¹ Ibid., p. 8.

⁶⁸² Ibid., p. 9.

should be judged. As such, al-Muḥāsibī's fate seems to have been decided from the very start and it is not difficult to understand why al-Muḥāsibī and others fell foul of this exemplary figure, being completely censured in the process.⁶⁸³ Despite the hagiographical glosses quoted above however, the impression one is left with when reading the biographical tradition surrounding Ibn Ḥanbal is his rigid and uncompromising nature. Perhaps the most striking and near incomprehensible display of this is his obdurate attitude regarding al-Muḥāsibī portrayed in the following report related by al-Dhahabī:

Al-Ḥasan b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Khiraqī said, I asked al-Marwadhī concerning the reason why Abū ʿAbd Allāh [Ibn Ḥanbal] repudiated al-Muḥāsibī and he said, "I said to Abū ʿAbd Allāh [Ibn Ḥanbal] that al-Muḥāsibī has gone to Kūfa to record *ḥadīth* and has said, 'I repent from all that Abū ʿAbd Allāh [Ibn Ḥanbal] rejected,'" and he [Ibn Ḥanbal] replied, "There is no repentance for al-Ḥārith; they bear witness against him with something and he denies it. Repentance is only for those who acknowledge [their guilt] and as for those for whom witness has been born against them yet they deny it, then there is no repentance for them."⁶⁸⁴

As such, even when al-Muḥāsibī engaged himself with the recording of *ḥadīth*, which was a quality Ibn Ḥanbal must have deemed praiseworthy and had seemingly repented from whatever objections Ibn Ḥanbal may have had, this was still not enough for Aḥmad, who even rejected al-Muḥāsibī's repentance.

In contrast, in the only narration in which al-Muḥāsibī makes mention of Ibn Ḥanbal we find a rather different attitude as Ibn al-Jawzī relates in his *Manāqib* that al-Faṭḥ b. Shukhruf said to al-Muḥāsibī:

I heard from ʿAbd al-Razzāq that Sufyān b. ʿUyayna said, "There were three scholars, one in each period: Ibn ʿAbbās in his time, al-Shaʿbī in his time and al-Thawrī in his time.' Al-Faṭḥ then said to al-Ḥārith, 'And Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in his time'" to which al-Ḥārith replied, "Except that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal suffered in a way that al-Thawrī and al-Awzāʿī didn't."⁶⁸⁵

Therefore, we can assume that al-Muḥāsibī clearly appreciated the sacrifice of his contemporary and despite Ibn Ḥanbal's repudiation of him, al-Muḥāsibī confirmed the excellence and status of Aḥmad.

The goal of this discussion was not to provide a critique of Ibn Ḥanbal but rather to clarify the nature and atmosphere of the environment in which these eminent scholars lived. Thus,

⁶⁸³ For an exposition of other contemporaneous scholars who incurred the wrath of Ibn Ḥanbal and his followers see Melchert, Christopher, "The Adversaries of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal" in *Arabica* (44, 1997) pp. 234-253 and "The Ḥanābila and the Early Sufis" in *Arabica* (48, 2001) pp. 352-367.

⁶⁸⁴ Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 18, p. 209.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Manāqib al-Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, p. 161.

in summary we may regard al-Muḥāsibī as very much a product of his time in the sense that he engaged himself with the various fields of learning of the day and making the most of his presence in the thriving state capital. Indeed, he appears to have developed his own scholarly methodology in dealing with the deep, moral introspection of the human soul and actively engaged in the theological debates of his era, as to provide a rational defence of Sunni 'orthodoxy'. At the same time, however, this very approach, which in many ways seems diametrically opposed to the staunch traditionalist stance, caused him to be reviled in his own time and in consequent generations and as such, by the same token he may be viewed equally as a 'victim' of his own era, falling foul of the scholars whose very view he was trying to defend.

In any case whatever the truth of Ibn Ḥanbal's repudiation of al-Muḥāsibī may have been, what is certain is that despite the Baghdad population's disavowal of this scholar, this city and the Muslim community at large lost one of their greatest, erudite and innovative scholars of his generation. Consequently, his real value would only be sufficiently realised in the years to come, through the examination of his legacy of works, which indeed is the goal of the next chapter.

Chapter 5: The Works of al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī

Since so little is known about the life of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, it is worth surveying the works of this eminent scholar, so as to glean more information regarding his personality. In addition to this, the works of al-Muḥāsibī will also be our first port of call in trying to assess the nature and essence of his thought and teaching, which will lay the foundation for the subsequent chapter. To this effect al-Muḥāsibī himself has made our task easier, as it has been reported by al-Subkī (d. 771/1370) that al-Muḥāsibī authored approximately two hundred works.⁶⁸⁶ If, as al-Subkī claims, al-Muḥāsibī was indeed such a prolific writer then we have little evidence of it, due to the simple fact that only a fraction of these works have actually reached us. Consequently, the earlier generation of researchers in the modern period recorded less than twenty-five works being attributed to al-Muḥāsibī.⁶⁸⁷ However, as the various libraries of manuscripts throughout the world began to be catalogued, many of al-Muḥāsibī's works came to light; not only this but a new generation of scholars began the process of editing al-Muḥāsibī's works for publication.⁶⁸⁸ Thus, both these factors have had an extremely important effect on the research that has been carried out on al-Muḥāsibī and bearing this in mind, the goal of this chapter is to survey the works of al-Muḥāsibī mentioned in the literature, so as to provide an overview of the material written by this scholar. To this effect, the works of al-Muḥāsibī can be classified as follows:

5.1 The Published Works

1. *Kitāb al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*⁶⁸⁹ (*wa 'l-Qiyām bihā*)⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁸⁶ Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, p. 276.

⁶⁸⁷ For example Smith mentions 24 works, whereas both Maḥmūd and Abū Ghudda mention 23. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshadīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, pp. 31-2; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, pp. 76-88 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 44-59.

⁶⁸⁸ The role of 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā cannot be underestimated here as he was instrumental in bringing many of al-Muḥāsibī's works to light.

⁶⁸⁹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 37-40; al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 31; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. by 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 39-40; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 74-5; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 24; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, pp. 76-9; Sezgin, *Tārikh al-Turāth al-'Arabī*, vol. 1, p. 115; 'Uwayḍa, *Al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī*, pp. 32-9; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 44-7 and Van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt*, pp. 12-13.

⁶⁹⁰ Both Smith and Maḥmūd make the addition of '*wa 'l-Qiyām bihā*'. See Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 76 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 44. Smith also notes that Ḥājji Khalīfa (d. 1067/1657) terms this work '*Ri'āya fī Taṣawwuf*' and that a work attributed to al-Muḥāsibī entitled '*al-Ri'āya fī Taḥṣīl al-Maqāmāt al-Sālikīn*' is apparently by a later author, though much of it is in accordance with al-Muḥāsibī's teaching. See Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 44-5 and footnote 1, p. 45.

This is arguably al-Muḥāsibī's most famous if not his greatest work⁶⁹¹ and therefore the discussion regarding the writings that have reached us will start here.⁶⁹² If we were to ask a

⁶⁹¹ For example ʿUwayḍa says, "This book contains a number of issues which were [subsequently] approved and reached a state of consensus amongst the Sufis of *ahl al-sunna*." ʿUwayḍa, *al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī*, pp. 32-3. Also see al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 37.

⁶⁹² That this is al-Muḥāsibī's greatest work is testified to by the great deal of attention it has received by various scholars throughout history. The book itself has had various publications, these include:

1. Smith's own edited version of *al-Riʿāya*. This is possibly the first published version of this work being printed in 1940, as part of the E. J. W. Gibb memorial series by Luzac & Co. (London). Smith includes a concise but useful introduction to both the author and his works. However, the most valuable addition found in this section is the discussion regarding the manuscripts used by the editor to produce the final published version. Smith mentions the following manuscripts:

a) Hunt. 611 of the Bodleian Library, Oxford, containing 147 folios (4b-151b), which is preceded by a title page verifying the author and title. The copy was made at Ḥamāt (N. Syria) and is written in neat, clear hand, with 28 lines to the page. The copy was completed on the 5th of Dhu al-Qaʿda 539/25 April 1145. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, edited by Margaret Smith (London, Luzac and Co., 1940) pp. xvii-xviii; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 24 and Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, p. 115.

b) Jāmiʿ al-Kabīr, Broussa 1534, containing 175 folios, which is written in a good, well formed hand and has additional titles not included in a). There is no title and the manuscript is undated. This copy is incomplete, defaced in parts and has some displacement. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. Smith, p. xviii.

c) Diyānat islēri riyāsēti, Angora 403, which contains 142 folios, numbered as 284 pages. The manuscript is written in a small, clear hand, with 25 lines to the page and is almost fully vocalised. The copy was made by ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Hibat Allāh al-Āmidī and was completed on the 1st of Dhu al-Ḥijja, 739/9th June, 1339. Despite this detail there is some displacement of the text. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. Smith, p. xviii.

d) No. G 702 of the Chester Beatty collection, Damascus, which is in a good *naskh* style and is entitled '*Kitāb al-Riʿāya fi Sulūk*'.

e) In addition there is a copy of manuscript d) in the Manuscript Library of Kuwait University under number 2096 *mīm kāf*.

See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. Smith, p. xix; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, p. 115; al-Khāzandār, Aḥmad Saʿīd, *Fihras al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya al-Muṣawwara al-Mawjūda bi Maktabat al-Makḥṭūṭāt bi Jāmiʿat al-Kuwayt* (vol. 2 [*jīm-sīn*], Kuwait, Kuwait University, 1989) p. 337; al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya, *Fihras al-Kutub al-Mawjūda bi 'l-Maktaba al-Azhariyya ilā 1366* (vol. 3, Cairo, al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya, n.d.) vol. 3, p. 571; al-Maktaba al-Zahiriyya, *Fihras al-Kutub bi Dār al-Kutub al-Zāhiriyya* (vol. 1 [*taṣawwuf*], Damascus, al-Maktaba al-Zahiriyya, n.d.) p. 834; Arberry, Arthur J., *A Handlist of the Arabic Manuscripts - The Chester Beatty Library* (7 vols., Dublin, Hodges, Figgis & Co. Ltd., 1958) vol. 3 (MSS. 3501-3750), p. 40 and Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 162.

2. A version edited by ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Ṭaha ʿAbd al-Bāqī Sarūr, published by Dār al-Maʿārif, in 1960. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, pp. 24-5 and Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, p. 115.

3. A version edited by ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, published by Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya (Beirut), in 1985. The copy the researcher has is the 4th edition which is termed, "increased (*mazīda*), revised (*munaqqaha*) and includes referencing of the prophetic narrations (*mukharrajāt aḥādīthihā*)." This is due to it being an updated version of the work, which was published by Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha in 1970 and which used the manuscripts located in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya and al-Azhar Library. In addition, the 'referencing of the prophetic narrations (*mukharrajāt aḥādīthihā*)' was also misleading as this part of the research was littered with errors, as the editor has seemed to rely upon '*al-Muḥjam al-Mufahras li Alfāz al-Ḥadīth al-Nabawiyya*', quoting from it extensively without verifying the *ḥadīth* from their original sources. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 4-5 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 25.

4. A version edited by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿAbd al-Ḥamid al-Barr, published by Dār al-Yaqīn (al-Manṣūra, Egypt), in 1999. The editor states that his reasons for working on *al-Riʿāya* are to produce an academic version of the text, including referencing of the narrations (*takhrīj*) whether they be from the Prophet, the Companions (*al-ṣaḥāba*) or the Successors (*al-tābiʿūn*) from their original sources and consequently, state the authenticity of such narrations (*darajat al-aḥādīth*). In addition, he provides explanation of the peculiar words and ambiguous phrases in the text. Despite these useful additions there is no mention of which manuscripts (if any) were used by the editor to verify the original. Due to the quality of this version, if the researcher quotes from '*al-Riʿāya*', then it will this version which is intended.

simple question, 'If no other work of al-Muḥāsibī's was available to us, would *Kitāb al-Ri'āya* suffice us in understanding al-Muḥāsibī and his thought?' In fact the answer to this query would almost certainly be in the affirmative. This is due to the fact that *al-Ri'āya* contains all of the main ideas found in his other works such as '*al-Waṣāyā*', '*al-Tawahhum*', '*al-Makāsib*', '*Bad' Man Anāba ilā Allāh*', '*Ādāb al-Nufūs*' and '*al-Masā'il fī A'māl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ*'. Not only does *al-Ri'āya* encompass the ideas expressed in these works but it is also more comprehensive, better organised and more logical.⁶⁹³

To this effect al-Quwwatī summarises this very well saying:

This book represents the pinnacle in the development of al-Muḥāsibī's thought: in it he leaves scholastic theology (*ilm al-kalām*) well behind him. Indeed, he leaves jurisprudence (*al-fiqh*) also; he uses *ḥadīth* sparingly and concentrates entirely on Sufi topics, which concerned every part of the Islamic world at that time. He becomes more precise and delves deeply into fine points of Sufism, along with a focus upon his favourite topic: the etiquettes, desires and faults of the soul (*al-nafs*), including its treatment and its taking to account. Isn't this al-Muḥāsibī?⁶⁹⁴

Thus, if *al-Ri'āya* had been lost, we would still be able to acquaint ourselves with al-Muḥāsibī via his other works, but it is only through *al-Ri'āya* that we see the real quality of

5. A version edited by 'Iṣām Fāris al-Ḥarastānī and Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Zaghli, published by Dār al-Jil (Beirut), 2001. The editors of this particular version claim that the existing publications still require verification of the text. In addition, they include referencing of the prophetic narrations (*takhrij al-aḥādīth*) and state the authenticity of such narrations (*darajat al-aḥādīth*). Despite these useful additions, once again there is no mention of which manuscripts (if any), were used by the editors to verify the text.

In addition to the original work there is also an abridged version of *al-Ri'āya* by 'Izz al-Dīn b. 'Abd al-Salām al-Sulamī (al-'Izz b. 'Abd al-Salām [*Sulṭān al-'Ulamā'*] d. 660/1262) entitled '*Maqāṣid al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh 'Azza wa Jall*'. This abridgement is approximately a quarter of the original text and has five existing manuscripts:

a) 'Āṭif Afandī, 1417, folios (114a-138b), written in 853/1449 and copied from a version read to its author and corrected by him.

b) Number 3183:2 of the Chester Beatty collection, Damascus.

c) Berlin, no. 2812.

d) *Al-Khizāna al-'Āmma*, al-Ribāt, no. 2279d.

e) The Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Frankfurt, written by the author himself.

This work has been edited by Iyād Khālīd al-Ṭabbā' and published by Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āṣir, Beirut, 1995. See al-Sulamī, 'Izz al-Dīn b. 'Abd al-Salām, *Maqāṣid al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh 'Azza wa Jall*, ed. Iyād Khālīd al-Ṭabbā' (Beirut, Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āṣir, 1995) pp. 5-9; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-'Arabī*, vol. 1, p. 115 and <http://sunna.org/tasawwuf/scholar20.htm>, '*Taṣawwuf* Ibn 'Abd al-Salām'.

In terms of Western academic writing, *al-Ri'āya* has also been translated by Kermit Schoonover as part of a yet unpublished PhD thesis, presented to the Department of the History and Philosophy of Religion at Harvard University, in March 1948. The same author published an article entitled 'Al-Muḥāsibī and his *al-Ri'āya*' in *The Muslim World*, 1949, 39, pp. 26-36, extracting much of it from the aforementioned thesis.

Finally, a very useful article entitled 'Al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī's Concept of Self Examination as Reflected in His *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*' has been written by Iftitāḥ Ja'far and can be found on the internet. See page 19 above and <http://www.indosat.net.id/alauddin/sufisme1.html>, Ja'far, Iftitāḥ, 'Al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī's Concept of Self Examination as Reflected in His *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*'.

⁶⁹³ Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 76.

⁶⁹⁴ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qurān*, p. 74 and cf. al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 37 and 39.

al-Muḥāsibī in exposing the secret hidden depths of the human soul and the consequent alleviation of its ills. It is here that we see al-Muḥāsibī as a true scholar in the disciplines of religion, an expert in human behaviour and a physician of the soul.⁶⁹⁵

Part of this is indeed due to the fact that al-Muḥāsibī had a particular and specific goal in mind from writing *al-Ri'āya*, as the title would suggest, which is to clarify for the human being what is incumbent upon him with regard to fulfilling the command of Allāh. Despite this however, he does not tackle the topic directly but believes that the human being requires wise advice at the beginning, before his travelling to the greater goal, which will open his heart and which will make his intellect attentive to the discourse.⁶⁹⁶

Similarly, al-Muḥāsibī, despite the title of the book, does not simply concentrate on quoting the permissible and the prohibited in religion (*al-wājibāt wa 'l-muḥarramāt*) but concerns himself with a methodology, which can be employed by the human being in performing these commands practically with sincerity and purity. Bearing this goal in mind al-Muḥāsibī observes that people in every place are slowly distancing themselves from this path day by day⁶⁹⁷ and therefore, he provides a description of the route to repentance and the subsequent return to Allāh.⁶⁹⁸ In addition, in this particular work, al-Muḥāsibī is more concerned with giving precise meanings to the terms used, almost providing the reader with a series of definitions of the various concepts he discusses.⁶⁹⁹

The work itself is in the form of counsels given to the seeker in reply to his questions regarding the aforementioned methodology. The book contains eight major books (*kitāb*, pl. *kutub*)⁷⁰⁰ each with numerous subsections (*bāb*, pl. *abwāb*) and indeed the first of these books is preceded by various chapters (*abwāb*) discussing a variety of topics.⁷⁰¹ Thus, he begins by giving advice regarding being attentive while listening (*ḥusn al-istimā'*) and then he approaches the topic of the book, not in depth or with extensive explanation but simply clarifying the necessity of the human being's submitting of his *nafs* to the will of Allāh. This is because it is through this submission that piety (*taqwā*) springs forth and it is this which

⁶⁹⁵ Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 77.

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁷ The role and influence of his society on him cannot be underestimated here as he was clearly affected by the milieu surrounding him, with its varying morality, obsession with material wealth and preoccupation with the worldly life and its enjoyment.

⁶⁹⁸ Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 77.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 76. 'Uwayḍa gives plenty examples of this. See 'Uwayḍa, *al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī*, pp. 34, 38-9 and footnotes 709-13 below.

⁷⁰⁰ These are namely *Kitāb al-riyā'*, *Kitāb al-ikhwān wa ma'rifat al-nafs*, *Kitāb al-tanbīh*, *Kitāb al-'ujb*, *Kitāb al-kibr*, *Kitāb al-ghirra*, *Kitāb al-ḥasad* and *Kitāb ta'dīb al-murīd*.

⁷⁰¹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 41-195; 'Uwayḍa, *al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī*, p. 33; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya*, ed. Smith, pp. xvii and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 44.

will lead the person to fulfil the command of Allāh and shun that which He has forbidden.⁷⁰²

Al-Muḥāsibī then begins to explain the nature of *taqwā* defining it as being, “Shunning associating partners [with Allāh] (*shirk*) and every sin lesser than this from that which Allāh has forbidden, or neglecting any obligatory act, which He has prescribed.”⁷⁰³ He then continues to explain the nature of this *taqwā* and its virtues, clarifying the preparation that the human being needs to make to be ready to stand before his Lord on the Day of Judgement. He then defines scrupulousness (*waraʿ*), warning not to be deceived by external aspects of worship and continues by describing exactly what steps need to be taken first by the slave on his journey on the path to his Lord.⁷⁰⁴

Having realised this aspect, the human being then reaches a stage of varying levels of repentance (*tawba*), intending that his worship is sincerely for Allāh alone. However, at this point he will be at odds with what may be termed ‘elements of evil’ (*ʿanāṣir al-sharr*), which may cause him to err from the straight path through heedlessness (*ghafla*). These elements are particularly dangerous, as they are constantly on the alert and are constantly feeling out their prey in the human being, who is by his nature weak.⁷⁰⁵ Al-Muḥāsibī considers there to be two main ‘elements of evil’; the first of these is the *nafs* itself, which he considers to be the internal element of evil⁷⁰⁶, whereas the Devil (*Iblīs*) is the external element, who manipulates the first element by inspiring it to evil. He therefore cautions the reader concerning them and the complexity of their strategies.⁷⁰⁷ He does not stop there, however, but also warns against the other elements of evil such as negative companionship (*ikhwān al-sūʿ*) and corrupt environments (*mujtamaʿāt al-fasād*).⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰² See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 37-8 and 41-59; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya*, ed. Smith, pp. xvii; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʿirīn*, p. 77; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 44-5 and Schoonover, “al-Muḥāsibī and his *al-Riʿāya*”, *The Muslim World*, p. 32.

⁷⁰³ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 38 and 58-9 and Schoonover, “al-Muḥāsibī and his *al-Riʿāya*”, *The Muslim World*, p. 33.

⁷⁰⁴ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 38 and 60 and Schoonover, “al-Muḥāsibī and his *al-Riʿāya*”, *The Muslim World*, p. 33.

⁷⁰⁵ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 78-88; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʿirīn*, p. 78 and Schoonover, “al-Muḥāsibī and his *al-Riʿāya*”, *The Muslim World*, p. 34.

⁷⁰⁶ This of course is where the process of ‘taking the soul to account’ (*muḥāsabat al-nafs*) takes precedence to which al-Muḥāsibī also devotes a substantial discussion of *al-Riʿāya*. He considers the basis of *taqwā* to be founded on *muḥāsabat al-nafs*, which in turn is rooted in fear (*khawf*) [of Allāh’s punishment] and hope (*rajāʿ*) [in His mercy]. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 38 and 65-77; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya*, ed. Smith, p. xvii; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 45 and Schoonover, “al-Muḥāsibī and his *al-Riʿāya*”, *The Muslim World*, p. 34.

⁷⁰⁷ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 252-7.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 381-397; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya*, edited by Smith, pp. xvii; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʿirīn*, p. 78 and Schoonover, “al-Muḥāsibī and his *al-Riʿāya*”, *The Muslim World*, p. 34.

Having clarified the dangers of these aspects of human existence, al-Muḥāsibī further explains that this is not sufficient to know; indeed he then draws our attention to the aspect of sincerity (*al-ikhhlāṣ*) to Allāh, which is the foundation of all action and through which a person is rewarded. Having described this essential aspect of human endeavour he then explains at length⁷⁰⁹ the quality that destroys such actions due to it opposing *al-ikhhlāṣ*, which is ostentation (*al-riyā'*)⁷¹⁰. Al-Muḥāsibī concentrates on this topic, as it is an aspect of behaviour that lowers the quality of the human being, as this is essentially his field. He continues to discuss other negative human character traits by examining self conceit (*al-ʿujb*)⁷¹¹, arrogance (*al-kibr*)⁷¹², self delusion (*al-ghirra*)⁷¹³ and envy (*al-ḥasad*)⁷¹⁴, dedicating a complete book (*kitāb*) of *al-Riʿāya* to each of them. He does not suffice however with only describing these faults and their consequences but also clarifies their causes, how they can be avoided and how they can be treated.⁷¹⁵

Al-Muḥāsibī concludes his book with the section entitled *Kitāb taʿdīb al-murīd* in which he describes a programme designed to govern the conduct of the slave 'by day and by night', being always mindful of the One Whom he serves, of the constant self discipline required

⁷⁰⁹ He devotes a whole book (*kitāb*) of *al-Riʿāya* to this topic. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 198-374 and footnote 699 above.

⁷¹⁰ Al-Muḥāsibī defines *al-riyā'* as being, "To perform an act of obedience intending other than the pleasure of Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted; thus *al-riyā'* is seeking the pleasure of the creation via an act of obedience to Allāh." See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 207-9 and ʿUwayḍa, *al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī*, pp. 37-8.

⁷¹¹ Al-Muḥāsibī describes *al-ʿujb* as follows, "This is a fault in many of the devotees (*al-ʿibād*), which blinds the heart until the conceited person (*al-muʿjab*) considers himself good when in fact he is bad, he has attained salvation when in fact he is destroyed and is right when in fact he is wrong." See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 415 and ʿUwayḍa, *al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī*, p. 38.

⁷¹² Al-Muḥāsibī describes *al-kibr* as follows, "This is the greatest of faults as every other affliction stems from it. It makes compulsory the swift punishment and anger of Allāh the Mighty and Magnificent. *Al-kibr* is not the right of anyone other than Allāh, as it is not appropriate or befitting of any other than Him." See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 469 and ʿUwayḍa, *al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī*, p. 38.

⁷¹³ Al-Muḥāsibī describes *al-ghirra* as follows, "This is a deception (*khidʿa*) from the *nafs* and an enemy, which reminds you of your hope in the oneness of Allāh (*al-rajāʿ fi tawḥīd Allāh*), or of your righteous forefathers (*al-ābāʾ al-ṣāliḥīn*), or of some small, insignificant action [you've performed]; the *nafs* becomes satisfied with this deception until it considers its sins of little importance because of its [mistaken] belief that it has been forgiven." See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 550 and ʿUwayḍa, *al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī*, p. 38.

⁷¹⁴ Al-Muḥāsibī defines two types of *al-ḥasad* as found in the Qurʾān and *sunna*, "The first of which is not forbidden as it is similar to competition; the other type is forbidden and it is this type that Allāh termed blameworthy in His Book and the Prophet in his *sunna*, [which is] hatred of a bounty to be bestowed upon the devotees and the desire that it would be removed." See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 607-616 and ʿUwayḍa, *al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī*, p. 38.

⁷¹⁵ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 39; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya*, edited by Smith, p. xvii; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʾirīn*, p. 78; ʿUwayḍa, *al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī*, pp. 38-9; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 45 and Schoonover, "al-Muḥāsibī and his *al-Riʿāya*", *The Muslim World*, pp. 34-5.

to remain on this path and to guard against the temptations, which may assail him after he has begun to serve Allāh with his whole body, mind and soul.⁷¹⁶

It may seem an over simplification but *al-Ri'āya* is essentially a book concerning sincerity to Allāh, cleansing the heart, purification of the soul and a life of complete moral, ethical and behavioural perfection.⁷¹⁷ In summary, we quote Smith, who has captured the essence of *al-Ri'āya* when she says:

This is al-Muḥāsibī's great treatise on the interior life, which reveals a profound knowledge of human nature and its weaknesses, while in the means which he suggests for combating these weaknesses and for attaining to the single-hearted service of God, he shews also the discerning wisdom and inspired insight of a true spiritual director and shepherd of souls.⁷¹⁸

2. *Kitāb al-Waṣāyā'*⁷¹⁹ / *al-Naṣā'ih al-Dīniyya*⁷²⁰

⁷¹⁶ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 39 and 645-667; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya*, edited by Smith, pp. xvii; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, pp. 78-9 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 45.

⁷¹⁷ To this effect [Aḥmad b. Muḥammad] Ibn 'Aṭā Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 707/1307) says, "I read al-Muḥāsibī's *al-Ri'āya* to Abū al-'Abbās [Aḥmad b. 'Umar al-Mursī] (d. 686/1287) and he said, "Two words will suffice you concerning everything which is in this book: worship Allāh with knowledge and don't ever be satisfied with your *nafs*." He never let me read that book again and I don't know why!?" See 'Uwayḍa, *al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī*, p. 32 and Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 79.

⁷¹⁸ Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 45.

⁷¹⁹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 31; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā'*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 41-50; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 63-5; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-'Arabī*, vol. 1, p. 115; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, pp. 79-81; 'Uwayḍa, *Al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī*, pp. 28-32; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 46-7 and Van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt*, p. 13.

This particular work is related with both these names, for example Massignon, Smith, Quwwatī and Aḥmad, quote both titles, whereas Maḥmūd terms it '*Kitāb al-Waṣāyā'*, Abū Ghudda terms it '*Risālat al-Waṣāyā'* and 'Aṭā terms it simply '*al-Waṣāyā'*. See al-Muḥāsibī, al-Ḥārith b. Asad, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 31; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā'*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 40; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 63-4; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 79; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, edited by Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Azīz Aḥmad (Cairo, Maktabat al-Qur'ān, 1992) p. 10 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 46.

⁷²⁰ This book, with either name, has the following extant manuscripts:

1. British Museum, Oriental 7900.
2. Istanbul, Baghdādī Wehbī, 614.
3. Three copies in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya:
 - a) No. 3 *shīn, taṣawwuf*, is written in a North African hand and is from the legacy of the famous scholar Muḥammad al-Amin al-Shanqīṭī (d. 1392/1972) (*min mukhallafāt al-'allāma al-Shanqīṭī*).
 - b) No. 30 *mīm, taṣawwuf*, of which the last part is missing and chapters 3 to 20 are perforated in various places. In addition the handwriting is particularly poor.
 - c) No. 1416 *taṣawwuf*. This is the best of the manuscripts, being written in a clear, beautiful *naskh* style and has few mistakes.
4. A copy located in The Chester Beatty Library under catalogue number 4918 and entitled '*al-Naṣā'ih*'. The copyist is recorded as being Ismā'il b. Muhaymin al-Ṭaḥḥaz and the manuscript is dated Monday, 7th Ṣafar 734 /18th October 1333.

See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā'*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 47; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 9; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-'Arabī*, vol. 1, p. 115; Maḥad al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-'Arabiyya, *al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-Muṣawwara ḥattā 1948 - al-Jāmi'a al-'Arabiyya*, vol. 1, p. 159 and 186; Maḥad Iḥyā' al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-'Arabiyya, *Fihras al-Makḥṭūṭāt bi 'l-Jāmi'a al-'Arabiyya*, vol. 1, p. 197; Arberry, *A Handlist of the Arabic*

After *al-Ri'āya* this work is one of the longest of al-Muḥāsibī's books to reach us and therefore will be discussed next.⁷²¹ In a similar manner to *al-Ri'āya*, this work represents a foundation in the skill of examining the *nafs*, as it delves into its depths and qualities, which are hidden from the vast majority of people.⁷²²

As 'Aṭā' puts it:

This book, along with the other works of al-Muḥāsibī, was a new development in the field of Islamic psychology (*ʿilm al-nafs al-Islāmī*) for the ascetics (*zuhhād*) of the third century [*hijrī*] and the master of this development was indeed al-Muḥāsibī: the splendour of the scholars (*zahrāt al-ʿulamāʾ*), the pride of the ascetics (*fakhr al-zuhhād*), the imam of the path of the people of Allāh (*ahl Allāh*).⁷²³

In addition to this however one of the most important aspects of this work is the fact that al-Muḥāsibī sheds light on his own life, his personal search for the truth and his despair at

Manuscripts (The Chester Beatty Library), 1963, vol. 6 (MSS. 4501-5000), p. 141; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 46 and Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 162.

As a result three edited copies of this work have been produced:

i) A version edited by 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā and published by Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya (Beirut), in 1986. Aṭā relied on the manuscript mentioned above in 3. c) while producing his edited version of this work and selected the title '*al-Waṣāyā*' as this conforms to the general nature of the book. In addition, he also included various other works by al-Muḥāsibī within this version; these included *al-Qaṣd wa 'l-Rujūʿ ilā Allāh*, *Badʿ Man Anāba ilā Allāh*, *Fahm al-Ṣalāt* and *al-Tawahhum*. As with his version of *al-Ri'āya* this version is said to be, "Edited (*taḥqīq*), annotated (*taʿlīq*) and have an introduction (*taqdīm*)." However, similar to his version of *al-Ri'āya* this research was also littered with errors (see footnote 691:3 above), in terms of being distorted (*al-taḥrīf*) and misread (*al-taṣḥīf*), as well as mistakes regarding the referencing of the narrations (*takhrij al-aḥādīth*). See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 4 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, pp. 26-7.

ii) A version published by Muʿassasat Qurṭuba, and entitled simply '*al-Naṣāʾih*', which has very little detail included other than that, as there is no place of publication, no date of publication and no mention of who exactly edited the work. The only information we can glean from this book is the manuscripts that were used in editing it; these were manuscripts 1 and 2 above, being copied versions found in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya. Having examined the descriptions of these two manuscripts it may well be that the two of the three copies found in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya mentioned above are copies of manuscripts 1 and 2. However, it is impossible to say without examining them in person. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 47; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Naṣāʾih* (Muʿassasat Qurṭuba, n.d., n.p.) p. 170 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 46.

iii) A version edited by Muḥammad 'Abd al-ʿAzīz Aḥmad and published by Maktabat al-Qurʾān (Cairo), in 1992. In this version the editor terms the work '*al-Naṣāʾih*' (based on the *ḥadīth* in Muslim, no. 196/95) and strives to correct the mistakes found in Aṭā's copy mentioned above. In addition, he includes the referencing of the Prophetic narrations (*takhrij al-aḥādīth*), as well as providing explanations for the peculiar words and ambiguous phrases in the text. Despite these useful additions there is no mention of which manuscripts (if any) were used by the editor to verify the text (it is assumed he used those mentioned 3. c) above). Despite this small shortcoming, this is the better and newer version of this work and if the researcher quotes from *al-Waṣāyā/al-Naṣāʾih*, then it will be this version which is intended. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 3-4 and Muslim, Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayri, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, edited by Muḥammad Fuʾād 'Abd al-Bāqī (1st edition, Riyadh, Dār al-Salām, 1998) pp. 44-5.

⁷²¹ Despite this Maḥmūd does not consider it one of his better works from a stylistic perspective but Aṭā holds an opposing view. On this point I would have to agree with Aṭā, as the introductory paragraphs of *al-Naṣāʾih* bear witness. See Al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 11-13; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 42 and Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʾirīn*, p. 79.

⁷²² Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 41.

⁷²³ Ibid.

not finding the guidance he sought. He also sheds considerable light indirectly on the period in which he lived, in particular the political situation and the state of the people in his environment generally.

These points become apparent from the very first statement which he makes: he begins by saying⁷²⁴, “It has reached us that ‘This community (*umma*) will split up into seventy-three sects; of them only one will be saved’⁷²⁵, and Allāh knows best regarding the remainder of them.”⁷²⁶ By this very statement al-Muḥāsibī indicates his own mood and the mood of the period in general, as we know the state of the sects attributed to Islam at this time in addition to the political discord sewn through the dispute between al-Amin and al-Ma‘mūn.⁷²⁷ He continues by mapping out his own personal journey in seeking the truth, acquiring knowledge and practice of the religion. During this process he identifies various types of people within the members of society he has come across⁷²⁸ and clarifies his own stance regarding the path to take.⁷²⁹ Based on the *ḥadīth* mentioned above he then

⁷²⁴ Of course he says this after making the customary introductory comments of praising Allāh and sending peace and salutations upon His Prophet. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā’ih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 11.

⁷²⁵ A Prophetic narration related by Abu Dāwūd (d. 275/889) nos. 4596 and 4597; Ibn Mājah (d. 273/886) no. 3993 and al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892), nos. 2640 and 2641. See al-Sijistānī, Sulaymān b. al-Ash‘ath (Abū Dāwūd), *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* (Riyadh, Dār al-Salām, 1999) p. 650; al-Tirmidhī, Muḥammad b. ‘Īsā, *Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī* (Riyadh, Dār al-Salām, 1999) p. 600 and al-Qazwīnī, Muḥammad b. Yazīd (Ibn Mājah), *Sunan Ibn Mājah* (Riyadh, Dār al-Salām, 1999) p. 574.

⁷²⁶ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā’ih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 11. Also see: al-Muḥāsibī, *al-‘Aql wa Fahm al-Qur‘ān*, ed. al-Quwwatli, p. 64; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā‘irīn*, p. 79; ‘Uwayḍa, *al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī*, p. 28; al-Shāmī (ed.), Ṣāliḥ Aḥmad, *Mawā‘iẓ al-Imām al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, M‘ālim fi ‘l-Tarbiyya wa ‘l-Da‘wah* series (Beirut, al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1999) p. 27 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 46.

⁷²⁷ See pp. 108-9 above.

⁷²⁸ He identifies them as being:

1. “A scholar in the affairs of the hereafter (*al-ākhirah*); meeting him is difficult and his presence is rare.
2. The ignorant person; to keep one’s distance from him is a blessing (*ghanīma*).
3. Those who resemble the scholars but are infatuated with the worldly life, being affected by it.
4. Those who have knowledge associated with the religion but seek glorification (*al-ta‘ẓīm*) and grandeur (*al-‘uluw*) through it; thus they receive the pleasures of this life (*arḍ al-dunyā*) via the religion.
5. People who have knowledge but have no understanding of it.
6. Those who resemble the devout ascetics (*al-nussāk*), they pursue the good, they have no wealth and no implementation of the knowledge they have; their opinion is not to be relied upon.
7. Those who are associated with intellect (*al-aql*) and cleverness (*al-dihāb*) but have neither scrupulousness (*al-wara’*) nor piety (*al-tuqā*).
8. Friends, who concur in serving their desires, they humiliate themselves for the worldly life, seeking leadership.
9. Human devils (*shayāṭīn al-ins*), they block the path to the hereafter, they struggle fiercely for the worldly life, they hasten in its accumulation, they desire an excess of it; they are alive in this life but conventionally (*fi ‘l-‘urf*) they are dead.”

This once again is clear evidence of how precise al-Muḥāsibī was in observing and identifying human behaviour. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā’ih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 11-12; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-‘Aql wa Fahm al-Qur‘ān*, ed. al-Quwwatli, p. 64; ‘Uwayḍa, *al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī*, pp. 28-9 and al-Shāmī (ed.), *Mawā‘iẓ al-Imām al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī*, pp. 28-9.

⁷²⁹ For example he says, “Then I found in the consensus of the community (*ijmā‘ al-umma*) and Allāh’s revealed book that the path to salvation lay in: holding firmly to the fear of Allāh and the fulfilment of what he has made compulsory; being scrupulous in what He made permissible, what He forbade and in all the confines set by Him; sincerity to Allāh by worshipping Him and emulating His Messenger.” Al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb*

searched for the 'saved sect' and after much hardship⁷³⁰ he finally found what he was looking for.⁷³¹

As such al-Muḥāsibī divides his work into forty one sections (*abwāb*) on a variety of topics, which is his usual method; the main ideas, however, will be summarised here. In this work al-Muḥāsibī proposes various counsels as to how to identify the faults of the soul via long research and reflection, thus clarifying his path and as a result it contains a summary of his experience. He does this by discussing his own thoughts and ideas but also lends great importance to the revealed texts also, with the goal of perfecting the human soul. He is concerned with avoiding misguidance due to the turmoil of the soul and the various facets of personality and consequently, he attempts to deal with illness at its root.⁷³²

To this effect al-Muḥāsibī begins by reminding the reader that the origin of happiness lies in the fear of Allāh (*taqwā*) and that the basis of discontent is love of the worldly life (*ḥubb al-dunyā*).⁷³³ Al-Muḥāsibī then discusses one of the main topics of *al-Waṣāyā* which is the

al-Naṣā'ih, ed. Aḥmad, p. 12; 'Uwayḍa, *Al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī*, p. 29 and al-Shāmī (ed.), *Mawā'iz al-Imām al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī*, pp. 29-35.

⁷³⁰ For example he says, "I considered my misfortune multiplied due to the loss of the pious and I feared that death would come suddenly and surprise me during this tumultuous part of my life because of the disputes within the community." Al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 12 and al-Shāmī (ed.), *Mawā'iz al-Imām al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī*, pp. 30-31.

⁷³¹ He describes them in the following manner, "Then the All-Merciful to His devotees destined for me a people (*qawm*); I found in them the indications of piety, the signs of scrupulousness and that they prefer the hereafter over the worldly life. I found their guidance and advice in agreement with the actions of the rightly guided imams. I found them in agreement regarding advising the community; they do not desire that anyone fall into His disobedience nor do they despair of His mercy for anyone. They are continually patient during adversity and distress, satisfied with His decree (*al-qaḍā*) and show gratitude for His bounties (*al-ni'mā*). They cause Allāh the Exalted to become beloved to the devotees by reminding them of His favours, His kindness towards them and they encourage the devotees to return to Him. They are scholars of Allāh's sublimity, scholars of His exalted power and scholars of His book and His Messenger's *sunna*. They are jurists in His religion and scholars of what He loves and hates. They avoid innovations and blameworthy desires, they have left delving deeply [into controversial issues] and [seeking] admiration, they despise debate and argument and they shun slander and oppression. They oppose their own whims, take their souls to account, control their body parts, are scrupulous in their food, clothing and all their affairs. They avoid dubious issues (*al-shubahāt*), shun their appetites (*al-shahawāt*), are content with a meagre provision, take little from that which is allowed (*al-mubāḥ*) and are austere in that which is permissible (*al-ḥalāl*). They are wary of the reckoning (*al-ḥisāb*) and are filled with dread regarding the return (*al-ma'ād*). They hold themselves in contempt but not others and every person has a state which will suffice him [80:37]. They are scholars in the affairs of the hereafter and the terrors of the day of judgement; [a day of] tremendous recompense and painful punishment. This has caused them [a state of] permanent sorrow, continuous worry and so they became distracted from pleasures of this world and its delights. Their excellence became obvious to me, their advice was clear to me and I was certain that they were working towards the path of the hereafter. They emulate the messengers, they are a beacon for whoever sought to be enlightened by them and guides for whoever sought guidance. Thus, I became desirous of their way, acquiring their morals, accepting of their manners, loving their obedience, not equating anyone with them and not preferring anyone to them." al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 12-13; 'Uwayḍa, *Al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī*, pp. 29-30 and al-Shāmī (ed.), *Mawā'iz al-Imām al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī*, pp. 31-33.

⁷³² See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 8 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 47-9.

⁷³³ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 14-31.

love of wealth, the desire to accumulate it and the power this has over the human being.⁷³⁴ He discusses this in a general manner but also discusses the position of the Companions regarding this issue, proving, as far as he is concerned, their extreme dislike of wealth and attachment to the worldly life.⁷³⁵ Whilst discussing this topic he covers the following areas: the earning of wealth in a permissible manner, being economical in the use of the sustenance provided, being careful not to waste what you have (*isrāf*) and at the same time avoiding being miserly (*bakhīl*).⁷³⁶

After explaining the importance of freeing oneself from the power that wealth can have over the human being, al-Muḥāsibī turns his attention to the topics for which he is familiar, i.e. those dealing with the internal workings of the mind, heart and soul. He deals with issues we have already seen⁷³⁷, such as satisfaction with the decree of Allāh (*al-riḍā bi qaḍāʾ Allāh*), the traps of the Devil (*makāʾid al-Shayṭān*), self conceit (*al-ʿujb*), arrogance (*al-kibr*), as well as dealing with the *nafs* itself and the heart (*al-qalb*).⁷³⁸ He then spends some time warning the reader from the disputes within the community⁷³⁹ and the concept of '*riʿāya li ḥuqūq Allāh*' is frequently quoted throughout *al-Waṣāyā*.⁷⁴⁰

In addition to this al-Muḥāsibī also gives importance in this work to the subject of *ilm*, clarifying the significance of having sound knowledge, as this is the basis of sound action. He also indicates the importance of intellect but at the same warns against misuse of both these important faculties, as well as discussing the defects knowledge can cause in the character, if it is not kept in check.⁷⁴¹

⁷³⁴ Ibid., p. 8; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 49; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Aql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 64; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʾirīn*, pp. 79-80 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 46.

⁷³⁵ We sense here that al-Muḥāsibī may well have been refuting scholars of his period who supported this idea, as to satisfy the caliphs of the day, which once again is an indication of the effect the social milieu had on him.

⁷³⁶ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 33-6; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 49; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʾirīn*, pp. 79-80 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 46.

⁷³⁷ See pages 198-9 above.

⁷³⁸ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 36-41 and Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʾirīn*, p. 80.

⁷³⁹ This is most likely due to the fact that he suffered himself as a consequence of this issue, as we have seen. See pages 201-2 above, al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Aql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 64 and Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʾirīn*, p. 80.

⁷⁴⁰ For example he talks about *riʿāyat al-jawāriḥ wa ʿl-qulūb, muṣibat taḍyīʿ ḥuqūq Allāh*, and *irādat adāʾ al-ḥuqūq*, which suggests this is why he wrote a separate work on this subject on this topic as we have already seen. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 8-9, 44-46 and 65-7; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʾirīn*, p. 80; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 47 and pages 193-9 above.

⁷⁴¹ Al-Muḥāsibī in *al-Waṣāyā* affords a great deal of discussion to both the subjects of wealth and knowledge, as he considers them to be a great source of good but at the same time they can be the most corrupting elements regarding the character of the human being, if they are not subject to accountability. It is interesting that al-Muḥāsibī discusses knowledge in this regard, as for the majority of people wealth can be a source of corruption but knowledge, which is usually regarded by the majority as a source of benefit, at the same time can be equally as deadly to the human soul. This once again shows the subtlety of his investigation of the

Another interesting aspect of *al-Waṣāyā* is al-Muḥāsibī's in-depth discussion of the physical acts of worship that are either incumbent on all Muslims or are highly recommended. As one might expect al-Muḥāsibī does discuss these in traditional jurisprudential manner, but links the legal element of these actions to their hidden, internal aspects. Thus, we find him discussing such aspects as presence of mind in prayer (*al-khushūc fi 'l-ṣalāt*) and not just the physical mechanical movements of prayer and fasting and includes fasting from that which Allāh has forbidden and not just from food, drink and sexual relations. In addition he advises increasing the superogatory acts (*al-nawāfil*) as a means of fulfilling the compulsory duties⁷⁴² and as a means of erasing the sins committed. He also mentions the importance of supplicating (*al-du'ā*) in private, having presence of heart while speaking and reflecting and contemplating whilst reciting the Qur'ān.⁷⁴³

Al-Muḥāsibī continues throughout the various sections mentioned and continues in the latter part of the work by discussing more issues regarding the soul and heart and concludes his book by discussing sincerity to Allāh in acts of obedience (*ikhḷāṣ al-ṭā'a*), as if to close the discussion on this fundamental point, which is of course the very corner stone of much of his teaching.⁷⁴⁴

In summary we quote 'Aṭā who clarifies clearly the result of implementing the methodology of al-Muḥāsibī in this work:

Thus if a person has been able to remove the power wealth and knowledge have [over his soul], correct his intention in acts of worship, desire to work for Allāh alone and has knowledge, which pushes him forward, then he will be a human being who enjoys perfection of his soul and has complete peace of mind.⁷⁴⁵

3. *Kitāb al-Tawahhum*⁷⁴⁶

human being as a whole. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 8, 48-51, 67-70 and 89-92; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*, ed. al-Quwwatli, p. 64 and Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 80.

⁷⁴² This is an interesting concept proposed by al-Muḥāsibī here, as many people consider the performance of extra acts of worship to be a source of additional reward or an increase in their position with Allāh. On the contrary, however, al-Muḥāsibī clarifies his own position, which is that such acts are actually only used to fulfil and complete the compulsory duties, in the sense of fulfilling the deficiencies found in such acts.

⁷⁴³ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 8, 53-63; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 49; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 80 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 47.

⁷⁴⁴ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 8, 72-89 and 92-4; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 49 and Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, pp. 80-1.

⁷⁴⁵ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 50 and See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 9.

⁷⁴⁶ This work appears to have three extant manuscripts, they are:

1. A manuscript entitled '*Kitāb al-Tawahhum*', which is located in the Chester Beatty library, Dublin, under number 611, fols. 152a-172a, being copied in 539/1145.
2. A manuscript entitled '*Kitāb al-Tawahhum*', which is located in the Bodelian library, Oxford, Hunt, under number 611, fols. 152a-172a, being copied in 539/1145.

This work is one of al-Muḥāsibī's most famous works and has received a great deal of attention, being published several times.⁷⁴⁷ This is indicative of the importance of this work

3. A manuscript entitled '*Kitāb al-Tawahhum bi Kashf al-Aḥwāl wa Sharḥ al-Akhlāq*', which is located in Matjānā, under number 3/774, consisting of 42 pages and being copied in the 11th/17th centuries. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 55; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum - Riḥlat al-Insān ilā 'Ālim al-Ākhira*, edited by Muḥammad 'Uthmān al-Khusht (2nd edition, Cairo, Maktabat al-Qur'ān, 1999); al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 24; Sezgīn, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-'Arabī*, vol. 1, p. 116; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 82; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 47; Van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt*, p. 14 and Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 162.

⁷⁴⁷ These published works include:

1. It would seem that the first version of this work to be published was edited by Arthur J. Arberry in 1937 (Cairo). Arberry relied on the manuscript '1' above and provided an introduction in English, written by himself and a preface in Arabic by the highly respected Egyptian scholar Aḥmad Amīn. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Tawahhum*, edited by Arthur J. Arberry (Cairo, Lajnat al-Ta'lif wa 'l-Tarjama wa 'l-Nashr, 1937); al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 24 and Sezgīn, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-'Arabī*, vol. 1, p. 116.
2. A second version by the French scholar André Roman entitled *Une Vision Humaine des Fins Dernières - Le Kitāb al-Tawahhum d'al Muḥāsibī* and published as part of the *Études Arabes et Islamiques* series in 1978. This version is fully edited, contains an extensive index, an extremely useful introduction and is also translated into French. Similarly, this work has also been published without the Arabic text and subsequently, the extensive index. See Roman, André, *Une Vision Humaine des Fins Dernières - Le Kitāb al-Tawahhum d'al Muḥāsibī*, *Études Arabes et Islamiques* series (Paris, Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1978).
3. A third version of this work was published in 1979 by Dār al-Wa'ī (Aleppo), entitled '*Kitāb al-Tawahhum*' but no mention of who edited the work or the manuscripts used in the editing, if any, has been made. The only other addition to the original text is a brief introduction regarding the author, al-Muḥāsibī and even briefer footnotes regarding the variations in the manuscripts. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Tawahhum* (Aleppo, Dār al-Wa'ī, 1979).
4. A fourth version has been edited Muḥammad 'Uthmān al-Khusht and published originally in 1984 and then again in 1999, by Maktabat al-Qur'ān (Cairo), being entitled '*al-Tawahhum Riḥlat al-Insān ilā 'Ālim al-Ākhira*'. Al-Khusht has relied on manuscripts '2' and '3' above in editing this work and clarified that the reason why he choose to edit this treatise were the apparent mistakes in Arberry's version, for which he gives various examples. Consequently, al-Khusht has provided a useful introduction regarding the concept of the Hereafter (*al-ākhirā*), as well as the usual biography of al-Muḥāsibī. In addition, the editor states that he wished to produce an academic version of the text and as result includes referencing of the Qur'ānic verses, Prophetic narrations, as well as providing biographical details regarding the personalities mentioned. In addition, he provides explanation of the peculiar words and ambiguous phrases in the text and removes any distortion (*al-taḥrīf*) and misreading (*al-taṣḥīf*) that occurs. Due to the quality of this version if the researcher quotes from '*al-Tawahhum*' then it will this version which is intended. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum Riḥlat al-Insān ilā 'Ālim al-Ākhira*, ed. al-Khusht, pp. 5-27.
5. A version edited by 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā and published by Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya (Beirut), in 1986, as part of al-Muḥāsibī's other works and entitled '*al-Waṣāyā - Al-Qaṣd wa 'l-Rujū' ilā Allāh - Bad' Man Anāba ilā Allāh - Fahm al-Ṣalāt -al-Tawahhum*'. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 55 and footnote 719:i above.
6. A version edited by Khālīd 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-'Ak and published by Dār al-Bashā'ir (Damascus), in 1991. Al-'Ak, in editing this work has provided a useful introduction regarding the Hereafter (*al-ākhirā*), as well as the usual biography of al-Muḥāsibī but has made no mention of the manuscripts used, if any, in editing this text. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Tawahhum fī waṣf Aḥwāl al-Ākhira*, edited by Khālīd 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-'Ak (Damascus, Dār al-Bashā'ir, 1991) pp. 2-17.
7. A version published by Dār Ibn Ḥazm (Beirut), in 1994 and entitled '*al-Tawahhum Riḥlat al-Insān ilā 'Ālim al-Ākhira*'. This version contains the text only and therefore no other information can be gleaned from it. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum Riḥlat al-Insān ilā 'Ālim al-Ākhira* (2nd edition, Beirut, Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1994).
8. A version edited by Abū al-Yazīd al-'Ajāmī and published by Dār al-Arqam, with no mention of place or date of publication. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum*, ed. Abū al-Yazīd al-'Ajāmī (Dār al-Arqam, n.p., n.d.).
9. A version published by Dār al-Furqān, with no mention of place or date of publication. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum* (Dār al-Furqān, n.p., n.d.).

The final two versions (7 and 8) were mentioned in the catalogue of Al-Rushd bookstore in Riyadh but unfortunately the researcher was unable to acquire a copy as they were out of stock. Consequently, it is suggested that there may be more versions of this work than those mentioned here.

and therefore it will be discussed here after *al-Ri'āya* and *al-Waṣāyā*. The work itself is a short treatise of an eschatological nature, which discusses the events that all human beings will face in the hereafter (*al-ākhirā*). To this effect al-Muḥāsibī begins sequentially, starting with death, its pain and its agonies, describing how each person struggles with the throes of death and the events that occur in the grave itself, immediately after death, such as the questioning of the two angels and gazing into paradise and hell.⁷⁴⁸

Al-Muḥāsibī continues by painting a vivid picture of the resurrection where every soul will be summoned to stand before its Lord on the Last Day. He describes the events in detail; how all will stand equal in front of their Lord bereft of the virtue of wealth, status and position, which they enjoyed in the worldly life, as only faith and righteous deeds will avail them in the trials ahead. Due to this their state is one of fear, astonishment, desperation and regret. Not only this, but the other creatures that Allāh created will be summoned devoid of their animal tendencies, standing still and humbly in front of their Lord; all will be gathered and wait meekly for the judgement of the King of kings.⁷⁴⁹ The heavens will then be cast asunder, being destroyed forever and the angels in all their glory, power and immense size and creation will pour forth surrounding the assembly. The sun will then be drawn close and the resurrected will begin to sweat in accordance with the actions they did in the worldly life and there will be no shade from this intense heat except in the shade of the throne of Allāh.⁷⁵⁰

Every soul will then cry for its own fate as the messengers of Allāh are questioned regarding the message that they brought and each individual tries to flee from even the most beloved people to them in this life. The deeds of each soul will then be weighed and their records distributed, as Allāh questions them regarding all that they did. The records will then be given, in the right hand of those who were successful and the left hand for those who are disgraced to dwell in eternal paradise or hell respectively.⁷⁵¹ Each individual will then travel the bridge over hellfire (*al-ṣirāt*), that is 'finer than a hair and sharper than a sword's blade', the speed at which they pass across it being proportionate to the deeds that they

In addition to the work itself, there is also an academic appraisal of it and its author, entitled 'Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī wa Kitābuhu al-Tawahhum' by 'Abd al-Karīm al-Yāfi and published in 'al-Turāth al-'Arabī', which is a cultural magazine produced by Ittiḥād al-Kitāb al-'Arab in Damascus. The article itself is extremely useful in describing both the life and one of the works of al-Muḥāsibī, being written in a highly academic style, provides useful footnotes and has even used Western sources. See al-Yāfi, 'Abd al-Karīm, 'Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī wa Kitābuhu al-Tawahhum', *al-Turāth al-'Arabī* (Damascus, Ittiḥād al-Kitāb al-'Arab, no. 41, October 1990) pp. 7-34.

⁷⁴⁸ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum*, ed. al-Khusht, pp. 31-4.

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 34-5 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 47-8.

⁷⁵⁰ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum*, ed. al-Khusht, pp. 34-40 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 48.

⁷⁵¹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum*, ed. al-Khusht, pp. 40-55 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 48.

performed, to reach paradise on the other side or to fall from it into eternal damnation in hellfire.⁷⁵²

As for those who survive this treacherous journey, their faces are enlightened and made radiant as they enter the gates of paradise, joyous in the company of the righteous. They delight in the foods, drinks, clothing, vessels and palaces which have been prepared for them and most of all the sheer unadulterated beauty of their companions with whom they dwell with therein.⁷⁵³ This, however, is not the only pleasure of paradise, in fact the greatest and most honourable of its bounties is still yet to come as it has been saved for Allāh's beloved elite (*al-awliyā'*); they will be summoned, the veils will be set aside and there, they will gaze upon their Lord in all His majesty and splendour.⁷⁵⁴

The value of this work lies not only in the fact that that he substantiates it with a variety of verses from the Qur'ān, Prophetic narrations and statements of the earliest generations, providing it with authenticity, but also in the eloquent style in which it is written and the vivid images he portrays. It would also seem a very personal work, as it is clear from the expression of the thoughts that al-Muḥāsibī had actually imagined himself taking the same journey and thus, is extremely significant, to the extent it may have influenced others.⁷⁵⁵

4. *Risālat*⁷⁵⁶ / *Kitāb al-Makāsib wa 'l-Wara' wa 'l-Shubha wa Bayān Mubāḥihā wa 'l-Maḥzūrihā wa Ikhtilāf al-Nās fi Ṭalabihā wa 'l-Radd 'alā 'l-Ghāliṭina fihī*⁷⁵⁷

⁷⁵² See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum*, ed. al-Khusht, pp. 56-63 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 48.

⁷⁵³ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum*, ed. al-Khusht, pp. 63-82 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 48.

⁷⁵⁴ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum*, ed. al-Khusht, pp. 83-92 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 48.

⁷⁵⁵ Smith has already discussed the possible influence of al-Muḥāsibī on Dante in his 'Divine Comedy' but it also interesting to note that within the Islamic context, al-Khusht mentions the influence of al-Muḥāsibī's '*al-Tawahhum*' on another eschatological work, the '*Risālat al-Ghufrān*' of Abū 'l-ʿAlā' al-Maʿarrī. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum*, ed. al-Khusht, p. 18 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 290-1.

⁷⁵⁶ Both Mazālī and Smith term this work '*Risāla*' as this seems to be the name recorded in the manuscripts. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 27 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 50.

⁷⁵⁷ There would appear to be three existing manuscripts for this work, they are:

1. A manuscript located in the Carullah section of the Süleymaniye library in Istanbul under number 1101, fols. 29a-51b.

2. A copy of '1.' above located in Cairo University under number 9678 and entitled '*al-Makāsib wa 'l-Wara' wa 'l-Shubha wa Bayān Mubāḥihā wa 'l-Maḥzūrihā wa Ikhtilāf al-Nās fi Ṭalabihā wa 'l-Radd 'alā 'l-Ghāliṭina fihī*'. The manuscript consists of 43 pages, with 20 lines to a page and an average of 12 words to a line. In addition the manuscript is extremely difficult to read in places.

3. A version of this work included as part of compilation of al-Muḥāsibī's works found in Cairo University from the original, which is part of the personal library of Aḥmad al-Jazzār Baʿkā, being stored in al-Azhar under number 1367 *taṣawwuf*.

4. A manuscript located in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, under 4064 *taṣawwuf*.

5. A manuscript found in Jāmiʿat Fuʾād, under number 26048.

See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masāʾil fi Aʿmāl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ wa 'l-Makāsib wa 'l-ʿAql*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā (Cairo, ʿĀlam al-Kutub, n.d.) pp. 38-40; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Makāsib wa 'l-Wara' wa 'l-Shubha wa Bayān Mubāḥihā wa 'l-Maḥzūrihā wa Ikhtilāf al-Nās fi Ṭalabihā wa 'l-Radd 'alā 'l-Ghāliṭina fihī*, edited by ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā (Beirut, Muʿassasat al-Kutub al-Thiqāfiyya, 1987) p. 34; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Makāsib*

The effect of al-Muḥāsibī's environment becomes apparent on him again here as he discusses the manner in which a human being should gain his daily provision. To this effect he begins by presenting the importance of the concept of putting absolute trust and reliance in Allāh (*al-tawakkul*) and for each and every human being to realise that He alone is their Sole Provider, the Sovereign over all things and the Most Generous of those who give. This by its very nature dictates that mankind be grateful, put their complete trust in Him and remember the bounty of their Lord, but at the same time it does not mean that they should refrain from taking lawful means to earn a livelihood, or live idly at the expense of others.⁷⁵⁸

Al-Muḥāsibī then turns his attention to the topic of scrupulousness (*al-wara'*), explaining that this is to abstain from that which Allāh has forbidden and that which is objectionable to Him, whether in word or deed, thought or motive and this can only be achieved through extensive self examination prior to action.⁷⁵⁹

wa 'l-Rizq al-Ḥalāl wa Ḥaḡiqat al-Tawakkul 'alā Allāh, edited by Muḥammad 'Uthmān al-Khusht (Cairo, Maktabat al-Qur'ān, 1984) pp. 25-7; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 27; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-'Arabī*, vol. 1, p. 116; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, pp. 81-2; Ma'had al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-'Arabiyya, *al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-Muṣawwara ḡattā 1948 - al-Jāmi'at al-'Arabiyya*, vol. 1, pp. 146 and 157; Ma'had Iḡyā' al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-'Arabiyya, *Fihras al-Makḥṭūṭāt bi 'l-Jāmi'a al-'Arabiyya*, vol. 1, p. 193; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 50-2 and Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 162.

As a result there are several published versions of this work:

1. A version edited by 'Abd al-Qādir Aḡmad 'Aṡā, published by 'Ālam al-Kutub, Cairo, with no date and entitled '*al-Masā'il fī A'māl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḡ wa 'l-Makāsib wa 'l-'Aql*', this being part of compilation of al-Muḥāsibī's works, as mentioned above. In editing the work 'Aṡā has relied on manuscript '2.' above and followed the usual manner of editing including referencing of the Qur'ānic verses, Prophetic narrations, as well as providing biographical details regarding the personalities mentioned. In addition, he provides explanation of the peculiar words and ambiguous phrases in the text as well as titles for each section in the work. It would seem that the same edited was published as a separate and independent work by Mu'assasat al-Kutub al-Thiqāfiyya, Beirut, in 1987.

2. A version edited by Muḥammad 'Uthmān al-Khusht, Maktabat al-Qur'ān, Cairo, in 1984. In editing the work al-Khusht has also relied on manuscript '2.' above and followed the usual manner of editing including referencing of the Qur'ānic verses, Prophetic narrations, as well as providing biographical details regarding the personalities mentioned. In addition, he provides explanation of the peculiar words and ambiguous phrases in the text, as well as titles for each section in the work. However he has surprisingly changed the original title of the work, i.e. '*al-Makāsib wa 'l-Wara' wa 'l-Shubha wa Bayān Mubāḡihā wa 'l-Maḡzūrihā wa Ikhtilāf al-Nās fī ṡalabihā wa 'l-Radd 'alā 'l-Gḡālīṡina fihī*', to '*al-Makāsib wa 'l-Rizq al-Ḥalāl wa Ḥaḡiqat al-Tawakkul 'alā Allāh*' as he considers this a more appropriate to the content of the treatise. Despite this minor discrepancy al-Khusht has succeeded in producing an academic version of this work and for the purposes of the current research when quoting from '*al-Makāsib*', it will be this version that is meant.

3. A version annotated by Nūr Sa'īd and published by Dār al-Fikr al-Lubnānī (Beirut) in 1992. It is unclear if Sa'īd actually edited the original or not and if not, it is also unclear which edited version he relied on whilst commenting on the work.

See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā'il fī A'māl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḡ*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḡmad 'Aṡā, pp. 38-40; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Makāsib*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḡmad 'Aṡā, p. 34; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Makāsib*, ed. al-Khusht, pp. 25-7; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Makāsib wa 'l-Wara' wa 'l-Shubha wa Bayān Mubāḡihā wa 'l-Maḡzūrihā wa Ikhtilāf al-Nās fī ṡalabihā wa 'l-Radd 'alā 'l-Gḡālīṡina fihī*, ed. Nūr Sa'īd (Beirut, Dār al-Fikr al-Lubnānī, 1992) and footnote 796:4 below.

⁷⁵⁸ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Makāsib*, ed. al-Khusht, pp. 35-70 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 50.

⁷⁵⁹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Makāsib*, ed. al-Khusht, pp. 71-93 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 50.

Having discussed various spiritual and theosophical dimensions of how provision is earned, al-Muḥāsibī utilizes the second half of the book to discuss a variety of issues of a juristic nature and gives his opinion regarding them. Such issues include the rulings regarding inheriting from a father who is a transgressor, doubtful matters (*al-shubha*), the permissible and the prohibited (*al-ḥalāl wa 'l-ḥarām*) and the permissibility of accepting gifts from rulers, as well as seeking out the 'purest'⁷⁶⁰ forms of sustenance.⁷⁶¹ He also uses this work to discuss various ascetic practices familiar at the time, including a refutation of those who claim that hunger is in itself an act of worship. He concludes this treatise with a discussion of various juristic issues regarding the categories of land used for agriculture and the rulings regarding the permissibility of gaining sustenance from them.⁷⁶²

Consequently, this work is also significant in presenting the personality of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, as it not only presents his spiritual theology and his environment's influence upon him but also his ability as a jurist, his familiarity with legal issues and the opinions of the scholars before him. Thus, it adds a further facet to his already impressive list of disciplines with which he was well versed.

5. (*Risālat*) *Ādāb al-Nufūs*⁷⁶³ / *Risāla fī 'l-Akhlāq*

⁷⁶⁰ 'Pure' in the sense of being from a permissible source and being free of doubt regarding its nature.

⁷⁶¹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Makāsib*, ed. al-Khusht, pp. 94-120.

⁷⁶² Ibid., pp. 121-134 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 50-2.

⁷⁶³ This work has several extant manuscripts they are:

1. A manuscript located in Carullah, Istanbul, under number 1101, fols. 59 *alif* to 103 *bā*, being copied in 523/1129.
2. A manuscript located in Cairo University, under number 26048 and is a copy of '1.' above.
3. A manuscript located in Azhar University, this being a copy the Walī al-Dīn version.
4. A manuscript located in the Paris National Library, this being a copy of '1.' above.
5. A manuscript located in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, under 4064 *taṣawwuf* and this is a copy of '1.' above.
6. A manuscript found in Keuprülū, İstāna, under number 725, fol. 42 onwards and was copied in the 11th/17th centuries.
7. A manuscript found in Jāmi'at Fu'ād, under number 26048.

In addition, there are three published versions of this work that have been produced, they are:

- a) A version edited by 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā, being published by Dār al-Jil, Beirut, in 1987. In editing this work 'Aṭā has relied on using manuscript '2.' above, using this as the source work and then comparing to manuscript '4.' above.
- b) A version edited by Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Azīz Aḥmad, being published Maktabat al-Qur'ān (Cairo) and with no date of publication. Aḥmad has relied on manuscript '2.' above in editing this work.
- c) A version edited by Majdī Fathī al-Sayyid, being published by Dār al-Salām (Cairo), in 1991. Al-Sayyid has relied on manuscripts '2.' and '5.' above in editing this work.

All the editors have adopted the usual manner of verifying the text in that they have provided footnotes explaining ambiguous terms, references for the verses of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* quoted and included a brief introduction to the life and works of al-Muḥāsibī.

See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, edited by 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā (2nd edition, Beirut, Dār al-Jil, 1987) pp. 28 and 32-3; al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, edited by Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Azīz Aḥmad (Cairo, Maktabat al-Qur'ān, n.d) p. 13; al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, edited by Majdī Fathī al-Sayyid (Cairo, Dār al-Salām, 1991) p. 49; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, pp. 28-9; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-'Arabī*, vol. 1, p. 116;

In this work al-Muḥāsibī focuses attention on the two words used in the title; namely etiquettes (*ādāb*) and the soul (*al-nafs*). He combines these two concepts effortlessly throughout the work combining both of these fundamental elements of the path to Allāh, in the form of counsels, extolling the reader to adopt such lofty qualities.⁷⁶⁴

In addition to discussing manners and etiquettes, it is in the discussion regarding the soul that al-Muḥāsibī excels, providing an in-depth examination of the *nafs* and its related topics. It is here that we glimpse the thought of al-Muḥāsibī first hand as he clarifies that the root of the cause must be dealt with first before going forward any further. By this he means that the soul should be corrected first before even considering performing superogatory acts since there is no use in pruning the branches of a tree to assist its growth when it is the roots that are diseased.⁷⁶⁵

Al-Muḥāsibī, in a similar vein, also discusses the importance of purifying the soul of every blameworthy characteristic before performing any action. His rationale is simple; human beings are required to refrain from all forms of evil, but are not ordered to perform all forms of good. Thus, they must be able to distinguish between the two and prioritise regarding the actions that they perform, so that a good action is not mixed with evil, or consequently the whole action will be invalidated. This however, requires knowledge of such blameworthy characteristics and al-Muḥāsibī allots much time to this, as well as the praiseworthy characteristics that directly counter such negative attributes and which are consequently, absolutely necessary.⁷⁶⁶

The essence of the soul's rebellious nature is its love of the worldly life and the soul's adoption of it as its only concern and goal. As a result the soul separates the worldly life from that of the hereafter, but by doing so, fails to realise the true nature of the worldly life, which is that it is nothing more than a trial to test those who are best in action. Thus, the cure for many of the diseases of the heart and soul is to remember the hereafter and in particular, death.⁷⁶⁷

Maḥad al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, *al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-Muṣawwara ḥattā 1948 - al-Jāmiʿa al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 1, pp. 1210 and 150; Maḥad Iḥyāʾ al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, *Fihras al-Makḥṭūṭāt bi 'l-Jāmiʿa al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 1, p. 143; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, pp. 28-9; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 52-3; Van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt*, p. 13 and Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 162.

⁷⁶⁴ These include the correct etiquette to have with Allah and the Companions of the Prophet. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, pp. 35-39; al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 17-20 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 55-60.

⁷⁶⁵ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, p. 32 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 11-12.

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid.

It is true to say that al-Muḥāsibī has discussed much of the content of *‘Ādāb al-Nufūs* in other works in more depth, such as *‘al-Ri‘āya* but despite this, this work has in return summarised much of what is contained in such extensive works without the reader having to consult them.⁷⁶⁸ Consequently, it is an invaluable contribution to the field of works concerned with the human soul and as al-Sayyid summarises, “This book is considered one of the hidden treasures that has reached from the earliest generation regarding the soul and its etiquettes.”⁷⁶⁹

6. *Sharḥ al-Ma‘rifā*⁷⁷⁰ wa *Badhl al-Naṣīḥa*⁷⁷¹

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid. and Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā‘irīn*, p. 81.

⁷⁶⁹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 48.

⁷⁷⁰ It is worth mentioning that in the hagiographic Sufi sources that al-Muḥāsibī himself makes reference to a work concerning *al-ma‘rifā* as we find the following narration, “I authored a work on intuitive knowledge of God (*al-ma‘rifā*) and was well pleased with it. One day while I was looking through it, thinking how good it was, when a young man wearing shabby clothing came in, greeted me and said, ‘O Abū ‘Abd Allāh, is intuitive knowledge of God (*al-ma‘rifā*) the right (*ḥaqq*) of the True One (*al-ḥaqq*) upon His creation (*al-khalq*) or the right of the creation the upon the True One?’ So I replied, ‘It is a right of the True One upon His creation.’ So he said, ‘It is more appropriate that He unveil it to those who deserve it.’ So I said, ‘Then indeed it is the right of the creation upon the True One.’ To which he said, ‘He is more just than to treat them unfairly.’ Then he bade me farewell and left, so I tore it [the book] up and said, ‘I will never discuss intuitive knowledge of God again.’”

It is unclear if the book referred to in this narration is the work in question here, in which case there may have been versions of this work that had already been copied and thus, it remained extant. Alternatively, al-Muḥāsibī may have written a later work after he felt that he had gained a greater understanding of the subject matter, or this one may simply view this narration as a later embellishment.

See al-Sha‘rānī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, vol. 1, p. 64; al-Bundanijī, *Jāmi‘ al-Anwār fī Manāqib al-Akhyār*, p. 293 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 11-12.

⁷⁷¹ This work more than any other has proven extremely difficult in drawing a conclusion regarding its actual status. This has been for a variety of reasons; the first difficulty is the title of the work itself. Abū Ghudda for example simply terms it *‘Sharḥ al-Ma‘rifā* and does not refer to any of the titles which will be mentioned below. On the contrary, Smith mentions three different titles for the one work, namely, *‘Sharḥ al-Ma‘rifā wa Badhl al-Naṣīḥa*, *‘Risāla fī ‘l-Muraqaba wa Inqisāmihā* and *Kitāb Muḥāsabat al-Nafs*. It is clear from this that Smith saw all three titles on differing manuscripts and after comparing them concluded that they were the same work. Maḥmūd on the other hand confuses issues further by terming the work, *‘Kitāb fī ‘l-Murāqaba* and then states that there is another, separate work by al-Muḥāsibī entitled, *‘al-Ma‘rifā*. However, having examined the published versions of this work and comparing them to the quotes taken from what Maḥmūd terms *‘al-Ma‘rifā*, it is clear that in fact these quotes are from *‘Sharḥ al-Ma‘rifā wa Badhl al-Naṣīḥa*, or what he terms *‘Kitāb fī ‘l-Murāqaba* and therefore, there is no separate work entitled *‘al-Ma‘rifā* as he claims. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Ma‘rifā wa Badhl al-Naṣīḥa*, ed. Ṣāliḥ Aḥmad al-Shāmī (Damascus, Dār al-Qalam, 1993) p. 23; al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 31; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-‘Arabī*, vol. 1, p. 117; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā‘irīn*, pp. 85-7 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 53.

In addition, there are two published versions of this work:

1. A version edited by Ṣāliḥ Aḥmad al-Shāmī, entitled *‘Sharḥ al-Ma‘rifā wa Badhl al-Naṣīḥa* and published by Dār al-Qalam (Damascus), in 1993. In editing the book al-Shāmī has relied on the following manuscripts:
 - a) a manuscript found in the library at the King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies in Riyadh, under number 3/73 *fā*. The original manuscript can be found in al-Azhar under no. 1208 *taṣawwuf*, consists of 10 fols. and was written in a clear *naskh* style in the 9th/15th centuries.
 - b) A manuscript found in the al-Azhar library in Cairo under no. 615 *wāw taṣawwuf*. It consists of 12 fols. and at first glance appears complete but on examination there is gap in the copy equivalent to one page.
 - c) A manuscript found in al-Imam Muḥammad b. Sa‘ūd Islamic University, Riyadh, under number 4979 *fā*. The manuscript was written in Dhu al-Ḥijjah 911/April 1506 and there are two places where it is incomplete.

In this concise treatise al-Muḥāsibī deals with two fundamental elements concerning the disciplining of the soul, i.e. that of essential knowledge (*al-maʿrifa*) and appropriate advice (*al-naṣīḥa*), regarding the journey back to Allāh.⁷⁷² The importance of these two issues is clear, as both of them have an effect on both the individual and the community. As for *al-maʿrifa*, it plays an essential role in developing the individual, as it teaches him the nature

d) A manuscript found in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, Cairo, under number 4084 *taṣawwuf*. The manuscript consists of 8 fols., six of which are the work itself ending at the section entitled 'the soul prone to evil (*al-nafs al-amāra bi 'l-sūʾ*)', whereas fols. 7-8 contain a text copied from '*al-Riʾāya*' by al-Muḥāsibī.

As for al-Shāmī's contribution regarding this text he has carried out a comparison of the manuscripts and edited them accordingly. In addition, he has attempted to produce a version with a minimum of annotation, so that the reader would not be lost within the footnotes at the expense of benefiting from the main text. To this effect the editor does however provide footnotes explaining ambiguous terms, as well as having split the work into two sections according to the title, i.e. '*Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa*' and '*Badhl al-Naṣīḥa*'. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badhl al-Naṣīḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 17-20.

2. A version edited by Majdī Fathī al-Sayyid, entitled, '*Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badhl al-Naṣīḥa*' and published by Dār al-Ṣaḥāba li al-Turāth (Ṭanṭā, Egypt), in 1993. In editing this work al-Sayyid has relied on the manuscript found in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, Cairo, under *taṣawwuf al-Shanqīṭī* no. 3 (microfilm 3889). This manuscript consists of 12 fols. i.e. 24 pages with 22 lines to a page of good quality handwriting. In addition there is another copy of this manuscript in the al-Azhar library under (3/634) *taṣawwuf*, no. 1207. Although al-Sayyid has only relied on the manuscript described above he does however mention other copies of it and they are as follows:

- a) A manuscript found in Berlin under number 2815, fols. 208-10, copied in 1200/1786.
- b) A manuscript found in the British Museum, appendix 1242, Oriental 3/4026, fols. 66b ff.
- c) A manuscript found in Shahīd ʿAlī, Istanbul, under number 3/1345, fols. 37 *alif*-47 *alif*, copied in the 8th/14th century.
- d) A manuscript found in Ṣāʿib, Ankara, under number 1/3319, fols. 1 *alif*-11 *bā*, being copied in 731/1331.
- e) A manuscript found in Chester Beatty, Damascus, under catalogue number 4969, consisting of 17 fols., being copied in 911/1505.

As for al-Sayyid's contribution regarding this text, he has added a great deal of annotation, in a similar manner to that of Abū Ghudda in his edited version of '*Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*' (see footnote 819:1 below) but not in such a profuse manner. To this effect the editor provides footnotes explaining ambiguous terms and various quotes from the pious predecessors (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*), as well as dividing the work into sections and adding headings for each one.

Despite this however, there are major discrepancies between the two published versions of the work. On examining the introduction alone the reader feels at times that he is reading two different books as al-Sayyid's version lacks much of what al-Shāmī provides. This is clearly due to the fact that al-Shāmī has carried out a comparison of the manuscripts available to him and therefore his version is more complete, whereas al-Sayyid has only relied on one manuscript. What is not clear however is how such discrepancies occurred in the original manuscripts? There is no simple answer to this but it may go so far in explaining why one work had so many titles. Bearing this in mind if the researcher quotes from '*Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badhl al-Naṣīḥa*' it will be al-Shāmī's edition which will be meant, as it contains a broader view of al-Muḥāsibī's teaching in this particular work. Despite this, the value of al-Sayyid's footnotes cannot be underestimated and therefore, will also be quoted where appropriate.

In addition to the manuscripts mentioned above there is a further copy in Umm al-Qurā University in Mecca, under number 4/258, being entitled '*Risāla fī 'l-Murāqaba*' and being copied in 979/1571.

See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badhl al-Naṣīḥa*, ed. Majdī Fathī al-Sayyid (Ṭanṭā, Dār al-Ṣaḥāba li al-Turāth, 1993) pp. 11-13 and 17-19; al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badhl al-Naṣīḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 23-5; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 31; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, p. 117; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʾirīn*, p. 85-7; Jāmiʿat Umm al-Qurā, *Fihras Makḥṭūṭāt Jāmiʿat Umm al-Qurā* (Mecca, Jāmiʿat Umm al-Qurā, 1983) vol. 1, p. 219; Maḥad al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, *al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-Muṣawwara ḥattā 1948 - al-Jāmiʿa al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 1, pp. 137 and 155; Maḥad Iḥyāʾ al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, *Fihras al-Makḥṭūṭāt bi 'l-Jāmiʿa al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 1, p. 170; Arberry, *A Handlist of the Arabic Manuscripts (The Chester Beatty Library)*, 1963, vol. 6 (MSS. 4501-5000), p. 158; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 53 and Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 163.

⁷⁷² It is almost as if al-Muḥāsibī separated the book into two sections the first dealing with *al-Maʿrifa* and the second with *al-Naṣīḥa*, which is probably why al-Shāmī choose to do exactly that. See footnote 770:1 above.

and essence of life, so that he can eventually contribute to his society and it provides him with a basis on which to act. With regard to *al-naṣīḥa*, it plays the equally important role of removing the ills of the individual and the society by correcting it with subtlety and wisdom.⁷⁷³

As for the subject of *al-maʿrifa*, al-Muḥāsibī is not concerned here with discussing the theory of *al-maʿrifa*, as is done by the Sufi philosophers⁷⁷⁴, but he is concerned with what could be termed ‘essential’ *maʿrifa*, which every Muslim should have a grasp of.⁷⁷⁵ This is summarised in the following topics:

a) The knowledge of Allāh the Magnificent and Exalted (*maʿrifat Allāh ʿazza wa jall*).

Al-Muḥāsibī begins discussing this element of *maʿrifa* by extolling the names and attributes of Allāh in a manner which not only lists them but also shows how they play a practical role in the human being’s life.⁷⁷⁶ Al-Muḥāsibī is not content with this however but also describes the method⁷⁷⁷, the means⁷⁷⁸ and the results⁷⁷⁹ of absorbing this form of *maʿrifa*.⁷⁸⁰

b) The knowledge of Satan, the enemy of Allāh (*maʿrifat Iblīs ʿaduw Allāh*).

⁷⁷³ Stressing the importance of advising not just the individual but society as a whole, al-Muḥāsibī says, “And do not conceal advice from the people of the *qibla* [i.e. the Muslims] and do not leave advising the whole of creation, whether they be righteous or corrupt...” See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badhl al-Naṣīḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 11-12.

⁷⁷⁴ This is why I have not termed it ‘gnosis’ here as Smith has done. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badhl al-Naṣīḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 12-13 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 53.

⁷⁷⁵ Al-Muḥāsibī considers this vital for every Muslim and does not consider *maʿrifa* to be the right of the elite (*al-khāṣṣa*) only, as some Sufis do. He says for example, “It [*maʿrifa*] is a compulsory duty from Allāh, it has been neglected even though it is in the revealed book of Allāh; through it the slave may attain the honour of rank in this world and the hereafter and through it he will receive [a high] status with Allāh and His creation. It is the foundation of all obedience, its beginning and its end; it is a duty upon all believers, [whether] they be male or female, knowledgeable or ignorant and [a duty] upon all of the creation.” See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badhl al-Naṣīḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 13 and 23-4.

⁷⁷⁶ These have obviously derived from the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*; for example he says, “As for the explanation of the *maʿrifa* of Allāh the Blessed and Exalted, it is that you maintain in your heart your closeness to Him, His power over you, His ability and witness upon you, His knowledge of you, that He observes and protects you, that He is one and no one shares His dominion, that when He promises He is faithful, when He makes a guarantee He fulfils it, and when He calls His devotees to Him, He is abundantly wealthy.” See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badhl al-Naṣīḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, p. 30.

⁷⁷⁷ For example he says, “Thus, maintain this in your heart with a certain faith and effective knowledge; maintain it in every part of you, every limb, every joint, every vein and nerve, every hair and every [piece of] skin.” See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badhl al-Naṣīḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, p. 31.

⁷⁷⁸ For example he says, “You will not attain any of this except through remembrance of Allāh and severing all other concerns apart from what leads you to this. So Allāh should never leave your heart, out of fear of His authority [to punish], His power over regarding what you have done and what you will do and you should be ashamed in front of Him because of His closeness to you. [Thus,] your determination will never end, your aspiration will continue and you will have no thought except that He fills it.” See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badhl al-Naṣīḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 31-2.

⁷⁷⁹ For example he says, “This is what the scholars who have intimate knowledge of Allāh know, [those who are] fearful, pious and scrupulous. May Allāh grant both us and you success in achieving it and that He does not forbid us its benefit because of our sins.” See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badhl al-Naṣīḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, p. 32.

⁷⁸⁰ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badhl al-Naṣīḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 29-32; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʾirīn*, pp. 85-6 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 53.

This element of *maʿrifa* is equally important as it not sufficient just to know who your Lord is and His rights upon you, but indeed, it is of vital importance also to know your enemy on the path back to Allāh. Al-Muḥāsibī begins his discussion by informing the reader that Allāh has ordered the devotees to be at war with Iblīs and struggle against him at every moment. This is because Iblīs was the first enemy of Ādam and thus, of every prophet and of mankind as a whole. The danger arises from this adversary because of his continuous vigilance in trying to cause the slave to falter; not only this, but his goal is not only to cause them to sin but ultimately to disbelieve in Allāh and consequently, dwell in hellfire eternally just as he will. It should be known that every one is in a tremendous struggle against this cunning opponent and that each and every person must turn to Allāh in humility and humbleness to ask for assistance in overcoming this devious enemy.⁷⁸¹

c) The human's knowledge of his own soul (*maʿrifat al-insān nafsahu*).

This third element of *maʿrifa* concerns the human element of this series as it concerns the human being's understanding of the nature of his own soul. In this regard al-Muḥāsibī adopts his familiar position in warning of the danger of this internal element by advising the reader to approach the issue of one's own soul by reflecting on how its creator described it in the Qurʾān, i.e. that it "urges to evil."⁷⁸² Indeed, al-Muḥāsibī considers this 'internal enemy' more dangerous than Iblīs due to its nature and tendency to serve its own interests; Iblīs uses it to manipulate the human being, causing him to falter regarding his duty to his Lord.⁷⁸³ Despite this, however, al-Muḥāsibī does not suffice with this warning only, but in addition, he also briefly alludes to the manner in which one can combat the soul, which includes opposing it (*mukhālifatuhā*), taking it to account (*muḥāsibatuhā*), knowing it (*maʿrifatuhā*), expending effort against it (*mujāhidatuhā*) and keep it under strict observation (*murāqibatuhā*). Al-Muḥāsibī concludes by advising the seeker to expend effort in being sincere to Allāh, seeking His assistance in combating the *nafs* and as a result he will acquire His pleasure.⁷⁸⁴

⁷⁸¹ For example al-Muḥāsibī concludes by saying, "So be in Allāh's company always, do not think you are safe from him [Iblīs] as Allāh, the Magnificent and Exalted, has not created anything harder upon you than him, so be extremely careful and take every precaution, as it is your lifeblood running through your veins against destruction and salvation is only by the bounty of Allāh the Magnificent and Exalted. May Allāh grant us and you sanctuary from Iblīs and his armies and there is no power or ability except that of Allāh." See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badhl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 32-5; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʾirīn*, pp. 85-6 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 53.

⁷⁸² Qurʾān 12:53.

⁷⁸³ For a full exposition of this, see chapter six below.

⁷⁸⁴ For example he says, "Then seek Allāh's assistance in all of this, seek His pleasure in all that He has ordered you and don't seek any other than Him. If you did this and turned to Allāh, He will guide you - Allāh willing - give you success, love you, distance you from His displeasure, cover you with the veil of the elite - the

d) The knowledge of actions for the sake of Allāh (*maʿrifat al-ʿamal li Allāh*)

In this element of *maʿrifat* al-Muḥāsibī establishes a principle at the beginning of the discussion which lays the foundation for the rest of the section. Here he distinguishes two categories of actions; the first of which are those that Allāh has ordered and which as a result he considers to be obedience (*ṭāʿa*). The second type of action is that which Allāh has forbidden and which, as a result he considers to be disobedience (*maʿṣiya*). In addition to this, he once again reminds the reader that both of these types of actions require a third factor, which has also been ordered, that of sincerity (*ikhhlāṣ*); this is clearly the most important concern of al-Muḥāsibī, as it is this factor which will determine the intention behind the action and which, if corrupted, will cause all actions to become acts of disobedience regardless. Thereafter he once again warns of the dangers of Iblīs, in the sense that he tries to invalidate these actions, not only by trying to make the servant commit sins or corrupt the intention, but also by trying to make the person perform a lesser form of obedience rather than a more elevated one.⁷⁸⁵

Upon this basis, i.e. the four types of *maʿrifat*, al-Muḥāsibī describes the way in which a person should act; he should neither intend an action nor perform it without first considering these four issues. This in turn has an important subsequent effect upon the *nafs*, as it plays an essential role in taking the soul to account (*muḥāsabat al-nafs*); as such every claim that the *nafs* consequently makes can be examined in the light of this *maʿrifat* and as a result, it can be seen in its true reality, despite the deception it may try to manifest regarding the good qualities it proposes to have.⁷⁸⁶

The second half of the book⁷⁸⁷ contains a variety of pieces of practical and moral advice for those wishing to purify their souls and tread the path leading to the hereafter and ultimately to their Lord, as is al-Muḥāsibī's usual habit. In addition to discussing the usual topics for which al-Muḥāsibī is well known, he also includes a section where he discusses

scholars of Allāh and through this they attained knowledge of Him. May Allāh give us and you success in seeking that which pleases Him and may He save us from the evil of our own souls, He is Aid and there is no power or ability other than through Allāh, the Exalted and Magnificent. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifat wa Badhl al-Naṣīḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, p. 38.

⁷⁸⁵ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifat wa Badhl al-Naṣīḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 38-41; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʿirīn*, pp. 85-6 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 53.

⁷⁸⁶ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifat wa Badhl al-Naṣīḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 42-9.

⁷⁸⁷ See footnote 88 above.

ten characteristics (*khiṣāl ʿashara*)⁷⁸⁸, which every aspirant should have if they wish to reach the highest degrees of righteousness.⁷⁸⁹

In summary I quote al-Muḥāsibī's own conclusion to this work:

And know, may Allāh have mercy on you, that I have left no advice [unspoken], I have expended every effort in proposing advice and there is no good in a people who do not advise or who do not like to be advised. This is my book for you, for whoever read it and act according to it; it is a supplication for the one who compiled it and thus, do not prevent anyone from it. It is advice [which] few know and few apply. May Allāh bless us and you by endowing us with His *maʿrifa* and [allow us] to act according to it, give us His success and direct us to that which He loves and pleases Him. Make this book a mirror in front of you in all your affairs as I have left out no type of advice except that I have given it and may the peace and mercy of Allāh be upon you.⁷⁹⁰

7. *Kitāb Badʿ Man Anāba ilā Allāh*⁷⁹¹ (*taʿālā*)⁷⁹²

⁷⁸⁸ See pp. 300-1 below.

⁷⁸⁹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badhl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 57-66 Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʿirīn*, p. 86.

⁷⁹⁰ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badhl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, p. 90.

⁷⁹¹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 45 and 329-53; al-Muḥāsibī, *Badʿ Man Anāba ilā Allāh*, ed. Majdī Fatḥī al-Sayyid (Cairo, Dār al-Salām, 1991) pp. 5-19 and 21-41; al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 31; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʿirīn*, p. 84; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 23; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, p. 116; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 54 and Van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt*, p. 13.

In addition, there are two edited versions of this text they are:

1. A version by ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, which as has mentioned previously, he included within his edited version of *al-Waṣāyā* (see footnote 719:i above). The manuscript used by Aṭā is included within a collection of al-Muḥāsibī's works entitled, *al-Masāʾil*, which also contains *al-ʿAql* and *al-Makāsib*, which made it particularly difficult to locate. This copy of this collection can be found in the Cairo University library and it was taken from an original in the Aḥmad al-Jazzār Baʿkā library, which was deposited in the al-Azhar library under *taṣawwuf*, no. 1367. This copy was made at the beginning of the 6th/12th century and is in extremely difficult to read in places. In addition the copier switches the feminine and masculine pronouns and some displacement has also occurred. As for Aṭā's contribution, he placed section headings for each subject, correcting the mistakes and displacement and added annotated footnotes where appropriate, as well as adding some words as to as to make the meaning more comprehensible. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 45 and 329-53.

2. A version by Majdī Fatḥī al-Sayyid published by Dār al-Salām, Cairo, in 1991. Al-Sayyid has used a manuscript found in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, Cairo, under *taṣawwuf*, no. 4064 and of which there is microfilm copy under 5998. The manuscript consists of seven pages (14 sides) and has 20 lines to a page, averaging seven words a line. In addition, al-Sayyid also mentions another copy in Berlin under no. 3/66. As for al-Sayyid's contribution, he has divided the work into paragraphs, placed section headings for each subject, correcting the mistakes and added annotated footnotes where appropriate. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Badʿ Man Anāba ilā Allāh*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 5-19 and 21-41.

In addition to the manuscripts mentioned above, others also exist, they are:

i) A manuscript found in Carullah, under no. 1101/2 (*fols. 18a-24b*) being copied in 523/1129.

ii) A second manuscript in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, Cairo, under *taṣawwuf*, no. 4664.

iii) A further manuscript found in Jāmiʿat Fuʿād, under no. 26048.

See Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, p. 116; Maʿhad Iḥyāʾ al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, *Fihras al-Makḥṭūṭāt bi 'l-Jāmiʿa al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 1, p. 148; Maʿhad al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, *al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-Muṣawwara ḥattā 1948 - al-Jāmiʿa al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 1, pp. 124 and 151 and Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 162.

⁷⁹² The addition of *taʿālā* is Abū Ghudda's and he is alone in doing so. Al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 31.

Once again this work despite its small size, represents one of the most important sources of al-Muḥāsibī's thought and in particular, his training of the soul, its self-discipline and its purification.⁷⁹³ During the course of the book the author maps out the path that one must take in order to reach the truth for those who have committed sins, disobeyed Allāh and whose hearts have hardened and are devoid of fear. He then presents the means and principles which will assist in disciplining the *nafs* and so drive the human being to the straight path.⁷⁹⁴

The outstanding feature of this work, however, is that the author proceeds gradually, chapter by chapter, producing discussions of vital importance regarding the *nafs*. By doing so he imagines the *nafs* as a separate entity whose nature is evil; this in turn is opposed by the human conscience, which is constantly anxious and in a state of turmoil due to the *nafs*'s remoteness from the path of Allāh. Al-Muḥāsibī here spends his utmost efforts to warn the reader and to ensure that he understands that the conscience must overcome the *nafs*, so that it can avert it from the amusement of the worldly life and return it to the path of Allāh, which is its ultimate goal. Not only this, but in addition, al-Muḥāsibī expresses this internal struggle between the human being and his *nafs* in such a vivid manner that it has the most profound effect on the reader.⁷⁹⁵

In summary, al-Sayyid says, "This book was written for the repentant soul desiring to truly return to Allāh the Exalted and at the same time for anyone who felt regret for his failings and who is searching for a way to purify his soul, so as to attain the status of the righteous."⁷⁹⁶

8. *Kitāb al-Masā'il fī A'māl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ*⁷⁹⁷

⁷⁹³ Smith suggests that this is an autobiographical account and it is clear that al-Muḥāsibī's drew on his own personal experience, as the account given is extremely subtle and precise. Despite this, some doubts surround the nature of the book as the customary 'qāla'/'qultu' question and answer style is employed. This is not unusual but it begs the question, "Is this a conversation between al-Muḥāsibī and his teacher as we've seen previously in 'al-Qaṣd wa 'l-Rujū' ilā Allāh? Or is it as al-Sayyid suggests, a conversation between al-Muḥāsibī and one of his students, or simply an imaginary conversation, which took place in the author's own mind and he recorded?" The answer is not at all clear. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Bad' Man Anāba ilā Allāh*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 23; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 331 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 54.

⁷⁹⁴ Smith describes this path and its goal when she says:

"But when God has stirred the conscience, then it is for man to examine and discipline himself, and to keep continually before the remembrance of death and the hereafter, and so, by attaining mastery of his lower soul, and keeping his eyes fixed on higher things, he will make continual progress in the path of God, and having relinquished the pleasures and temptations of all that would hinder him from the service of his Lord, will attain fellowship to Him."

See Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 84 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 54.

⁷⁹⁵ See Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 84.

⁷⁹⁶ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Bad' Man Anāba ilā Allāh*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 7.

⁷⁹⁷ There are two manuscripts for this work mentioned in the literature, they are:

In this treatise, as the title would suggest, al-Muḥāsibī sheds light on a number of issues which concern both the interior and exterior life of the human being. He begins by stressing the importance of hiding some actions from the eyes of people and also when it is permissible to perform such actions openly. This leads quite naturally to the topic of notoriety (*al-shuhra*) and the seeking of it, where he provides a discussion involving the statements of the previous generations (*al-salaf*), regarding what is and is not permissible. In addition, he warns of a number of issues which the aspirant should be wary of, as well as discussing the merits of performing supererogatory acts.⁷⁹⁸

Al-Muḥāsibī then turns his attention to the heart, its duties, characteristics, its diseases, their cure, how the heart and soul may be purified and the different categories of people in this regard. He then discusses the merits and ordinances of silence and speech, including a section on debate and defence of the honour of a fellow believer. Al-Muḥāsibī also presents a section regarding entrusting one's affairs to the will of Allāh (*al-tafwīḍ*), its causes, types, the way in which people differ with regard to it and the relationship between this and trusting in Allāh (*al-tawakkuḥ*).⁷⁹⁹

In the next section al-Muḥāsibī returns to his favourite subject of the soul (*al-nafs*) but here discusses the relationship between it and the heart and how this may result in the attainment of true knowledge (*ma'rifa*). He also discusses how both heedlessness (*al-ghafla*) and forgetfulness (*al-nisyān*) affect the human being, the difference between them, their types and their differing affects on believers and non-believers alike. al-Muḥāsibī concludes this work by presenting various juristic issues regarding what is and is not

1. A manuscript located in Carullah, Istanbul, under number 1101, fols. 114a-145b, being copied in 523/1129.

2. A manuscript located in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya under number 4064 *taṣawwuf*.

3. A manuscript located in Jāmi'at Fu'ād, under number 26048.

4. A copy found in Cairo University from the original, which is part of the personal library of Aḥmad al-Jazzār Ba'kā, being stored in al-Azhar under number 1367 *taṣawwuf*. This particular manuscript is of extreme importance as it also includes a series of al-Muḥāsibī's other works, namely '*Kitāb Masā'il fī 'l-Zuhd wa Ghayrihi*', '*al-Makāsib*' and '*al-'Aql*'. Consequently, 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā edited the entire manuscript, producing all four works under one title of '*al-Masā'il fī 'l-Māl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ wa 'l-Makāsib wa 'l-'Aql*', which was published by 'Ālam al-Kutub (Cairo) with no date. As for Aṭā's contribution, he placed section headings for each subject, correcting the mistakes and displacement and added annotated footnotes where appropriate, as well as adding some words as to as to make the meaning more comprehensible.

See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā'il fī 'l-Māl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ wa 'l-Makāsib wa 'l-'Aql*, edited by 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā (Cairo, 'Ālam al-Kutub, n.d.) pp. 38-40; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 27; Sezgin, *Tārikh al-Turāth al-'Arabī*, vol. 1, p. 116; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 82; Ma'had Iḥyā' al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-'Arabiyya, *Fihras al-Makḥṭūṭāt bi 'l-Jāmi'a al-'Arabiyya*, vol. 1, p. 191; Ma'had al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-'Arabiyya, *al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-Muṣawwara ḥattā 1948 - al-Jāmi'a al-'Arabiyya*, vol. 1, p. 145 and 157; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 27; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 54-5; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 163 and Van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt*, p. 14.

⁷⁹⁸ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā'il fī 'l-Māl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ wa 'l-Makāsib wa 'l-'Aql*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā, pp. 91-126; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 82 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 54.

⁷⁹⁹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā'il fī 'l-Māl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ wa 'l-Makāsib wa 'l-'Aql*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā, pp. 127-47; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 82 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 55.

permissible to look at (*al-naẓar*), as well as the rulings regarding the swearing of oaths (*al-nudhūr*).⁸⁰⁰

9. (*Mukhtaṣar*)⁸⁰¹ *Kitāb Fahm al-Ṣalāt*⁸⁰²

Once again we find that despite the concise nature of this short work it sheds a great deal of light on not only the subject matter but also on al-Muḥāsibī as a scholar and an author. Here we see al-Muḥāsibī the jurist (*al-faqīh*) expounding issues concerning one of the most important elements of Islamic faith and practice - prayer (*al-ṣalāt*). In this sense we see him deal with the classical juristic issues such as ablution (*al-wuḍūʿ*)⁸⁰³, ritual bath (*al-ghuṣl*)⁸⁰⁴, the prerequisites of prayer (*shurūṭ al-ṣalāt*)⁸⁰⁵, the actions and what is read in prayer (*afʿāl*

⁸⁰⁰ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masāʾil fī Aʿmāl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ wa 'l-Makāsib wa 'l-ʿAql*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp.148-70 and Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʾirīn*, p. 82.

⁸⁰¹ Both Maḥmūd and Abū Ghudda include the term '*mukhtaṣar*' as a prefix to *Kitāb Fahm al-Ṣalāt*, as is recorded in the original manuscript (see footnote 801:2 below). This usually indicates that this is an abridgement of a longer work but since there is no indication of the fact that al-Muḥāsibī wrote a separate work and as this work is already extremely short, the researcher suggests that the term '*mukhtaṣar*' has been used metaphorically to indicate the concise nature of the work in question.

⁸⁰² See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 54 and 355-83; al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 32; Sezgin, *Tārikh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, p. 118; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʾirīn*, p. 85 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 56.

There are only two published versions of this work:

1. A copy edited by ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā and which is included within his edited version of *al-Waṣāyā*, as has been mentioned previously. In producing this version Aṭā has relied upon a copy of this manuscript found in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya (Cairo), number 4064 *taṣawwuf*, which was copied from the original in Carullah, Istanbul, no. 1101, fols. 1a-17b. In addition, Aṭā states that there is another copy from this original in the University of Cairo's library. As for Aṭā's contribution, he placed section headings for each subject, correcting the mistakes and displacement and added annotated footnotes where appropriate, as well as adding some words as to as to make the meaning more comprehensible. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 54; Sezgin, *Tārikh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, p. 118; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 56 and Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 163.

2. A version edited by Muḥammad ʿUthmān al-Khusht with the title '*Fahm al-Ṣalāt - Taʿlīm al-Ṣalāt - al-Kushūʿ fī 'l-Ṣalāt - ʿUqūbah Tārik al-Ṣalāt*', being published by Maktabat al-Qurʾān (Cairo) in 1984. In producing this version al-Khusht has relied upon a copy of this manuscript found in the University of Cairo's library, which was copied from the original in Carullah onto microfilm (no. 9678) and is entitled '*Mukhtaṣar Fahm al-Ṣalāt*'. This manuscript begins from page 52 and carries on to page 59, each page containing around 20 lines and each line approximately 14 words. As for al-Khusht's contribution he has placed section headings for each subject, correcting the mistakes and displacement and added annotated footnotes where appropriate, as well as adding some words as to as to make the meaning more comprehensible. In addition he has included a brief introduction about al-Muḥāsibī, brief biographical notes for each personality mentioned and added an introductory chapter entitled '*al-ʿIbāda min Manẓūr Khārijī*', where he discusses various aspects of the relationship between the human being and acts of worship.

In addition to the manuscripts mentioned above there would appear to be another manuscript in Jāmiʿat Fuʾād, under no. 26048.

See al-Muḥāsibī, *Fahm al-Ṣalāt - Taʿlīm al-Ṣalāt - al-Kushūʿ fī 'l-Ṣalāt - ʿUqūbah Tārik al-Ṣalāt*, ed. Muḥammad ʿUthmān al-Khusht (Cairo, Maktabat al-Qurʾān, Cairo, 1984) pp. 5-34; Maʿhad Iḥyāʾ al-Makhtūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, *Fihras al-Makhtūṭāt bi 'l-Jāmiʿa al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 1, p. 190; Maʿhad al-Makhtūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, *al-Makhtūṭāt al-Muṣawwara ḥattā 1948 - al-Jāmiʿa al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 1, pp. 118 and 157.

⁸⁰³ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 359-62.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 363.

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 364.

wa aqwāl al-ṣalāt)⁸⁰⁶, as well as what is forbidden in prayer (*mā nuhiya ‘anhu fī ‘l-ṣalāt*)⁸⁰⁷ in much the same way that we might expect to find in any classical juristic text.

Despite this, however, *Kitāb Fahm al-Ṣalāt* is not an average *fiqh* manual, but as we have come to expect from him, he deals with the spiritual elements of prayer also, linking them directly to the juristic points he raises, so as to provide a perfect and complete picture of how to pray in Islam, in a way that not only fulfils the requirements of the Islamic Law (*al-sharī‘a*) but is also pleasing to Allāh and gratifying for the soul.⁸⁰⁸

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 366-378.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 380-3.

⁸⁰⁸ There are many examples of this throughout the work and a few of these will be quoted here to illustrate the point. At the very beginning of the book al-Muḥāsibī begins by saying, “It has been narrated from the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that he said, ‘Purification is part of faith’ and some scholars said, ‘It has only been termed *al-ṣalāt* because it is the link between the slave and Allāh the Exalted.’ Entering into prayer means entry into Allāh’s presence and standing before Him to communicate with Him. Thus, everything he [the person praying] performs, in terms of recital (*qirā‘a*), supplication (*du‘ā*) and remembrance (*dhikr*), he is communicating with his Lord the Mighty and Magnificent, as has been narrated in the *ḥadīth*, ‘Indeed, the person praying is communicating with his Lord.’ His action [during the prayer] should be sincerity of heart and body.” Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 357.

Regarding ablution (*al-wuḍū‘*), he says, “And as you are taking the water you should extol Allāh in your heart as part of your purification for Him. If you can you should renew your intention for repentance for all the sins between purification of repentance and the purification of ablution as Allāh combined the two saying, ‘Indeed Allāh loves those who repent and those who purify themselves’ [2:222]. You should reflect whilst washing and wiping every part of your body and think about every sin you committed with them, due to the narrations which have related regarding this.” Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 361.

As for the prayer itself he says, “And remember when you enter into the prayer the exaltedness of the One you are communicating with, having a firm intention to shun all that invalidates it [the prayer] and that you have entered it out of obedience to Allāh the Mighty and Magnificent, answering His command. You should understand what you recite from what He has enjoined and forbidden, His promise [of paradise] and threat [of hellfire], and comprehend that He has called upon you to fear Him, so hasten to His obedience and understand that the promise of your reward is great, if you fulfil His command. Force your mind to concentrate on what you recite and nothing else and similarly on what you perform from remembrance (*dhikr*), glorification (*tasbīḥ*), bearing witness (*shahāda*), bowing (*rukū‘*) and prostration (*sujūd*), with the intention of transparency in what you perform. You should be fearful, humble, your tongue recites while your heart translates what you know of its commentary; you should comprehend what has been enjoined and forbidden, the promise [of paradise] and the threat [of hellfire], the admonition and etiquettes, the great bounty, the subtle invitation from Allāh, the great bounty upon you of true certainty, which you intend by its comprehension an increase and blessing.

Similarly, everything you recite regarding the previous nations and what came after them; your heart should see it as if it were witnessing such events, as you are reciting, your tongue speaks, your heart imagines and understands. If its concentration wanders then return it by embarrassing it [by reminding it] of Who you are standing in front of and that He sees your heart resisting His understanding and His duties upon you. Understand with the comprehension of someone who considers his heart sick and who is requesting for a cure from Allāh the Mighty and Magnificent; he understands what he recites, secretly seeking sanctuary in Him so as to attain the power of fear, an increase in understanding and an elevated gnosis. Pray as if you were praying a farewell prayer and imagine and fear that you will not pray another prayer for Allāh the Mighty and Magnificent; so perfect it and strive in it for it has been related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “If you stand for prayer, pray as if it were your farewell prayer.” Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 365.

10. *Kitāb Mā'iyyat (Māhiyyat⁸⁰⁹) al-ʿAql wa Maʿnāhā (wa Ikhtilāf al-Nās fihā⁸¹⁰)⁸¹¹*

If we were to pose the question, “What is the intellect and what is its purpose?” then we would find the answer forthcoming in this concise but valuable treatise by al-Muḥāsibī. Bearing in mind the great importance of this seemingly innocent question during al-Muḥāsibī’s era, it is clear that he felt it needed addressing, so as to clarify the role of the intellect from his interpretation of Islam’s primary sources.⁸¹²

In answering this question al-Muḥāsibī begins by defining the intellect (*al-ʿaql*) as being an innate quality of the human being and not, as some scholastic theologians (*al-mutakallimūn*) suggest, the essence of the soul.⁸¹³ Having dispelled this theory al-Muḥāsibī then turns his attention to the use of the intellect to comprehend and gain understanding of

⁸⁰⁹ This term as opposed to that of ‘*Mā'iyya*’ is recorded by both Maḥmūd and Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir Aṭā. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharaf al-ʿAql wa Māhiyyatuhu*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir Aṭā (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1986) p. 15 and Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʿirīn*, p. 82.

⁸¹⁰ Both Smith and al-Quwwatī record this addition as part of the title due to its presence in the manuscript. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 193 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 56.

⁸¹¹ There appear to be several available manuscripts of this work:

1. A manuscript found in Carullah, under number 1101, fols. 51b to 53b.
2. A manuscript found in Cairo University from the original, which is part of the personal library of Aḥmad al-Jazzār Baʿkā, being stored in al-Azhar under number 1367 *taṣawwuf*. This is part of the manuscript entitled ‘*al-Masāʾil fī Aʿmāl al-Qulūb wa ʾl-Jawāriḥ*’ edited by ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā.
3. A manuscript found in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya (Cairo), under number 4064 *taṣawwuf*.
4. A manuscript found in Jāmiʿat Fuʾād, under number 26048.

See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masāʾil fī Aʿmāl al-Qulūb wa ʾl-Jawāriḥ wa ʾl-Makāsib wa ʾl-ʿAql*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 38-40; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 193-9; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 27; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, p. 116; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʿirīn*, p. 82; Maʿhad Ihyaʾ al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, *Fihras al-Makḥṭūṭāt bi ʾl-Jāmiʿa al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 1 (*falsafa wa mantiq*), p. 231 and vol. 1, p. 188; Maʿhad al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, *al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-Muṣawwara ḥattā 1948 - al-Jāmiʿa al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 2, pp. 453 and 463; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 56; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 162 and Van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt*, p. 12.

Based on these manuscripts three published versions have been produced, they are:

1. A work edited by Ḥusayn al-Quwwatī entitled ‘*al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*’, published originally by Dār al-Fikr in Beirut and then subsequently by Dār al-Kindī, also in Beirut. This edited version is an indispensable addition to the literature concerning al-Muḥāsibī, as al-Quwwatī has not only edited two of al-Muḥāsibī’s works in this book but also provided a variety of introductory chapters, dealing with his life, work, thought and era. In addition, he has provided a wealth of information regarding the concept of the intellect up until and including the period of al-Muḥāsibī, as well as assessing al-Muḥāsibī’s own theories regarding this subject. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 5-192 and 241-260.
2. A work edited by ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masāʾil fī Aʿmāl al-Qulūb wa ʾl-Jawāriḥ wa ʾl-Makāsib wa ʾl-ʿAql*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 38-40 and footnote 796:4 above.
3. A work edited by Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir Aṭā and published by Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya (Beirut), in 1986 and entitled ‘*Sharaf al-ʿAql wa Māhiyyatuhu*’. In this version Aṭā has simply annotated the version edited by ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā in ‘2.’ above but has also added a work entitled ‘*Sharaf al-ʿAql wa Māhiyyatuhu*’ by al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111). See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharaf al-ʿAql wa Māhiyyatuhu*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir Aṭā, pp. 5-14.

⁸¹² It is noticeable that this work is substantiated with quotations from the Qurʾān in particular. However, he does not suffice with this only but also qualifies his opinions with Prophetic narrations (*aḥādīth*) and statements recorded from his predecessors (*al-salaf*). See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 137-9.

⁸¹³ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 201-19; al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharaf al-ʿAql wa Māhiyyatuhu*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir Aṭā, pp. 17-31 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 56.

Allāh (*al-ʿaql ʿan Allāh taʿālā*), which manifests itself in the form of complete obedience to Him.⁸¹⁴ Al-Muḥāsibī concludes this brief treatise by discussing various issues related to the intellect to clarify the subject further and manifest the true meaning of the intellect and its role in the human being.⁸¹⁵

In summary, the importance of this work cannot be underestimated due to several factors; firstly, this work represents one of the first, if not the first work in Islamic literature to deal with the subject of the intellect and its purpose within the human being. Secondly, this work is indicative of the historical era in which al-Muḥāsibī lived, as it addresses the very essence of the debate which raged between the so called ‘rationalists’ (al-Muʿtazila) and the ‘orthodox’ scholastic trend, represented by the traditionists (*al-muḥaddithūn*).⁸¹⁶ Finally, in this work al-Muḥāsibī lays the methodological foundation for the remainder of his written legacy, as much of what he discusses in his other works is dependent on the ground rules put in place in this treatise.⁸¹⁷

11. *Kitāb Iḥkām al-Tawba wa radd Maẓālim al-ʿIbād wa Khalāṣ minhā qabl al-Maʿād*⁸¹⁸

This treatise deals with the issue of repentance as its title would suggest and in it al-Muḥāsibī affirms his position that repentance is a duty upon the devotees as imposed on them by Allāh. In addition, he employs this work to discuss the major (*al-kabīra*, pl. *al-kabāʾir*) and minor sins, as well as affirming the need to repent for both.⁸¹⁹

⁸¹⁴ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 219-231 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharaf al-ʿAql wa Māhiyyatuhu*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā, pp. 32-42.

⁸¹⁵ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 232-7 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharaf al-ʿAql wa Māhiyyatuhu*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā, pp. 43-7.

⁸¹⁶ The great irony of this being that by trying to defend the position of the *al-muḥaddithūn* by using a rationalist approach, so as to counter the stance of the al-Muʿtazila, he was then accused of being ‘unorthodox’ by the very people he was trying to defend!

⁸¹⁷ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 133-7.

⁸¹⁸ This is the full title as given by Smith, whereas Maḥmūd gives only *Iḥkām al-Tawba* as the name of this work. Both researchers quote only one manuscript for this treatise, this being the one located in Cairo under *taṣawwuf shīn* 3, being copied in 1173/1759 and it also appears to have been edited. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā states that he is in the process of publishing this work but the researcher was unable to source this published version. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Muʿātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā (Cairo, Dār al-ʿItisām, 1986) p. 23; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 29; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, pp. 117-18; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʾirīn*, p. 86; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 56-7 and Van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt*, p. 12.

In addition, this work should not be confused with another work entitled ‘*al-Tawba*’, attributed to al-Muḥāsibī and edited by ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā. This work is in fact a compilation of works on the subject of repentance containing a work entitled ‘*Aḥkām al-Tawba*’ by ʿAbd al-Qādir b. Ismāʿīl al-Nābulusī, an appendix on the topic by the editor and al-Muḥāsibī’s ‘*Badʾ Man Anāba ilā Allāh*’. It would seem that the nature of this work of al-Muḥāsibī’s (see pages 216-8 above) and in particular the term ‘*Anāba*’, having a similar contextual meaning to ‘*tawba*’ caused it to be included with the rest of these works. However, this seems to have been a rather crass decision bearing in mind the fact that al-Muḥāsibī has another work with a very similar title. See ‘al-Muḥāsibī’, *al-Tawba*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā (Cairo, Dār al-Faḍīla, 1977).

⁸¹⁹ See Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʾirīn*, p. 86 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 56-7.

12. *Kitāb al-Mustarshid*⁸²⁰

Despite this being one of al-Muḥāsibī's shorter works it is nevertheless a very important one. This lies in the fact that this book contains all of the ideas and advice of the author

⁸²⁰ This is the name cited by Smith (*An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 57) and Maḥmūd (*Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 86). In addition the book has two published versions:

1. An edited and annotated version by 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda. This copy has proven very popular, as it is in its fifth edition, and has done a great deal to publicise the life and works of al-Muḥāsibī. It was first published in the late sixties and was consequently translated into Turkish by 'Alī Arslān in Istanbul. Abū Ghudda's work on this book is indeed very useful as he has provided considerable information regarding the life of al-Muḥāsibī in the biographical section of the introduction and in particular regarding the dispute with Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. In addition to this he has provided profuse footnotes explaining ambiguous terms, referencing the *ḥadīth* and general narrations from the '*salaf*' (see footnote 3 above) according to the appropriateness of the subject matter in the text.

In producing the edited work Abū Ghudda used a personal copy of the manuscript whose handwriting is clear and has very few mistakes; it consists of 33 small pages, was probably written after the 10th/16th century by his own estimation and has no name attributed to it except that on page three the following was written in small dots, "Written by Aḥmad b. al-Ḥājj Ismā'īl."

In addition to this personal copy of the text Abū Ghudda also mentions another copy in the Maḥad al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-'Arabiyya (Cairo). This version was copied from an original in the Municipal Library in Alexandria, no. 13/3023 *jīm*: it consists of 14 small pages and is a North African hand but similar to the first it has neither the copyist's name nor a date. Thus, Abū Ghudda compared both of these manuscripts in producing this version of al-Muḥāsibī's work and entitled it '*Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*'. Due to the quality of the editor's work and the academic nature of this version it will be this edition of the work which will be relied upon in the current thesis. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, pp. 3-32 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 26.

2. An edited and annotated version by Amīn Nu'mān Nār, published by Dār wa Maktabat al-Hilāl, Beirut, in 1983 and entitled '*Risālat al-Mustarshadīn wa Kayfa Yataqarrub al-Insān ilā Rabbihi*.' This version was produced after that of Abū Ghudda's and the editor clarifies that he was well aware of this copy but wished to produce a version with a minimum of annotation, so that the reader would not lose himself within the footnotes at the expense of benefiting from the main text. To this effect the editor also provided footnotes explaining ambiguous terms, referenced the *ḥadīth* mentioned and included a brief introduction to the life and works of al-Muḥāsibī. It is not clear however what (if any) manuscripts he relied upon while completing this publication. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshadīn wa Kayfa Yataqarrub al-Insān ilā Rabbihi*, ed. Amīn Nu'mān Nār (Beirut, Dār wa Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1983) pp. 5-12.

It should also be noted here that in addition to what has been quoted above, there are other manuscripts mentioned in the literature, they are:

i) Another manuscript in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, Cairo, no. 3 *shīn*, *taṣawwuf* as alluded to by Smith.

ii) A copy of this manuscript in The Chester Beatty Library under catalogue number 4985.

iii) A copy of this manuscript in al-Khizāna al-'Ilmiyya al-Ṣubayḥiyya under number 5/202 (cat. no. 556).

iv) A copy of this manuscript in the Manuscript Library of Kuwait University under number 3482 *mīm kāf*.

See Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-'Arabī*, vol. 1, p. 117; Ḥajjī, Muḥammad, *Fihras al-Khizāna al-'Ilmiyya al-Ṣubayḥiyya bi Salā* (Kuwait, Maḥad al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-'Arabiyya, 1985) p. 267; al-Khāzandār, Aḥmad Sa'īd, *Fihras al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-'Arabiyya al-Muṣawwara al-Mawjūda bi Maktabat al-Makḥṭūṭāt bi Jāmi'at al-Kuwayt*, vol. 2 (*jīm-sīn*), p. 326; Maḥad al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-'Arabiyya, *al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-Muṣawwara ḥattā 1948 - al-Jāmi'a al-'Arabiyya*, vol. 1, p. 134; Maḥad Iḥyā' al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-'Arabiyya, *Fihras al-Makḥṭūṭāt bi 'l-Jāmi'a al-'Arabiyya*, vol. 1, p. 163; Arberry, *A Handlist of the Arabic Manuscripts (The Chester Beatty Library)*, 1963, vol. 6 (MSS. 4501-5000), p. 162; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 57 and Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 163.

In addition to the books produced regarding '*Risālat al-Mustarshadīn*', there is also a set of 12 tapes (11 hours approx.) produced by Deen Productions, in 2000, entitled 'Purification of the Soul: *al-Muḥāsibī's Risalat al-Mustarshideen*' by the American scholar Zaid Shākir who reads the original text in Arabic, translates it into English and provides a commentary by himself and additional notes from Abū Ghudda's edited version. The commentary is particularly useful in the modern context and the translation is indispensable. See Shākir, Zaid, *Purification of the Soul: al-Muḥāsibī's Risalat al-Mustarshideen* (12 tapes [11 hours approx.], Newhaven, Deen Productions, 2000).

that we find explained at length in his other works. Thus, this treatise summarises his teachings in much the same way that the classical short texts (*matn*, pl. *mutūn*) of later writers did, which then would be memorised by students and studied later with their accompanying commentaries (*sharḥ*, pl. *shurūḥ*). Many of these *mutūn* would often be put into poetry to make memorisation easier⁸²¹ and here once again we find a common factor with this work as much of the text is rhythmical.⁸²² For the sake of analogy, *Kitāb al-Mustarshid* fulfils the role of such a *matn*, whereas al-Muḥāsibī's longer works such as *al-Ri'āya* serve the purpose of a *sharḥ*.

The work itself takes the usual form of a series of counsels for the seeker of guidance, which are short, concise, rich in meaning and often build on one another to link the various subjects the author wishes to present.⁸²³ The subject matter of *Kitāb al-Mustarshid* is, as already mentioned, a summary of al-Muḥāsibī's thought and therefore, it contains the various subjects already discussed in detail above. Although it is slightly repetitive in parts, al-Muḥāsibī links the repetitive parts of *Kitāb al-Mustarshid*, to new topics so as to create a different link between them.

In summary, *Kitāb al-Mustarshid* is a concise manual for the wayfarer journeying to Allāh, which maps out the path before him and shows him how to adorn himself with all the etiquette and fine manners that the *sharī'a* endorses⁸²⁴, as Ḥasanayn Muḥammad Makhḷūf says, after discussing the nature of 'true' *taṣawwuf*, "And in '*Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*' there is evidence to support what we have mentioned, as there is in it: instruction for the souls (*tarbiya li al-nufūs*), refinement of human nature and true knowledge for anyone who reads it precisely and carefully."⁸²⁵

⁸²¹ They would be subsequently termed 'didactic poem' (*manẓūma*, pl. *manẓūmāt*).

⁸²² This begs the question, 'Was this work written in reply to a student's request for a short treatise advising the student or a summary of the author's teachings, or did al-Muḥāsibī pre-empt all of this by writing the work to serve such a purpose?'

⁸²³ For example, whilst discussing the characteristics of the spiritual instructors (*ṣifāt al-murabbiyīn*) he says, "Seek [knowledge of] narrations from those whose knowledge increased them in fear (*khashya*), action in insight (*baṣīra*) and intellect in gnosis (*ma'rifa*). Your separation from their method is a loss of etiquette, so blame no one but yourself and the characteristics of the sincere are not hidden from the people of knowledge. Know that every thought has an etiquette, every indication some knowledge and that this can only be differentiated by understanding Allāh's intended meaning, so derive certainty in your heart from his address ... such people are a guarded treasure, whoever forsakes them for the worldly life is deceived; they are your foundation in times of trial, your reliance from emptiness, if you are impoverished they will suffice you and if they call upon their Lord they would not forget you: "They are the party of Allāh, indeed it is the party of Allāh that will succeed." (58:22) Al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, pp. 101-8 *passim* and al-Shāmī, *Mawā'iz al-Imām al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī*, pp. 33-6.

⁸²⁴ See Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 87 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 57.

⁸²⁵ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 12.

13. *Kitāb Fahm al-Qurʾān*⁸²⁶

This treatise is one the longest of al-Muḥāsibī's works to reach us intact and therefore is of considerable importance in clarifying further his teaching and thought. This point is compounded by the fact that '*Fahm al-Qurʾān*' is one of al-Muḥāsibī's works in which he discusses many of the theological issues that were prevalent at the time. In essence '*Fahm al-Qurʾān*' is not only a book which discusses how the Qurʾān should be comprehended but is also concerned with how belief in Allāh should be understood and is a refutation of those who do not conform to the theological methodology therein.

To this effect we can identify six categories which al-Muḥāsibī discusses:

a) The Qurʾān

Since the Qurʾān has such an essential and important role in the understanding of Islam and since it is 'the guardian of the intellect', al-Muḥāsibī uses this section to discuss this fundamental element of the religion. In doing so al-Muḥāsibī extols the virtues of the Qurʾān itself (*faḍā'il al-Qurʾān*), describing the various qualities that it contains and the various disciplines related to it. In addition, he also makes mention of the excellence of Qurʾānic reciters (*faḍā'il al-qurrā'*), their virtues, merits, etiquettes and the special position given to them by Allāh.⁸²⁷

b) The jurisprudential issues within the Qurʾān (*fiqh al-Qurʾān*)

Since the Qurʾān is also the primary source of Islamic Law, there are a series of disciplines that are required for the reader of the Qurʾān to understand so that they can comprehend its legal aspects. In this regard al-Muḥāsibī sheds light on several of these legalistic elements, including the abrogated and abrogating verses (*al-nāsikh wa 'l-mansūkh*), its precise and ambiguous verses (*al-muḥkam wa 'l-mutashābih*), the general and specific verses (*al-ʿāmm wa 'l-khāṣṣ*), as well as its unusual vocabulary (*gharīb al-Qurʾān*).⁸²⁸

c) The permissibility of Abrogation (*al-naskh*)

⁸²⁶ It is interesting that both Smith and Maḥmūd consider this work to be lost; in fact Ahmed Ateş described a manuscript of this work as being in the Selimiye library in Edirne, under number 951, fols. 82b to 131b and being copied in the 8th/14th to 9th/15th centuries. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 28; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, p. 119; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʿirīn*, pp. 86-7; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 59; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 163; Van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt*, p. 12 and Ateş, Ahmed, "Two Works of al-Muḥāsibī", in *Festschrift Werner Castel: zum siebzigsten Geburtstag 5 März 1966 gewidmet von Freunden und Schülern*, herausgegeben von Erwin Gräf (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1968) pp. 37-9.

There is only one published version of this work, having been edited by Ḥusayn al-Quwwatli entitled '*al-Aql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*', published originally by Dār al-Fikr in Beirut and then subsequently by Dār al-Kindī, also in Beirut. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Aql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatli, pp. 239-505.

⁸²⁷ Ibid., pp. 246-7.

⁸²⁸ Ibid., p. 248.

Having discussed abrogation in the previous section, al-Muḥāsibī elaborates further here to clarify when abrogation is permissible in the Qurʾān and when it is not. From the aspects of the Qurʾān in which there is no room for abrogation he includes the names and attributes of Allāh (*asmāʾ Allāh wa ṣifātuhu*) and information given by Allāh regarding past or future events (*akhbār Allāh taʿālā ʿammā kāna wa yakūn*).⁸²⁹ Therefore as a result, al-Muḥāsibī concludes that abrogation is only permissible in issues which involve legal rulings, as it is only that which has been ordered and that which is forbidden (*al-amr wa ʾl-nahy*) that can be changed.⁸³⁰

d) *al-Muʿtazila*

Bearing in mind that *al-Muʿtazila* were the foremost sect at the time of al-Muḥāsibī, due to the state support of the Caliph, it is hardly surprising that he deals with them in a specific part of the current work. This is compounded by the fact that many of the opinions, which differed from those of the traditionists (*al-muḥaddithūn*) of the time⁸³¹, were misinterpretations of concepts found in the Qurʾān and therefore, it is to be expected that al-Muḥāsibī, being grounded in the traditionist method of learning, would deal with them here.⁸³² Consequently, al-Muḥāsibī refutes their views, stating that they went to extremes in their use of analogy (*al-qiyās*), in addition to their ignorance of the Qurʾān's interpretation and its sciences.

e) Abrogation in Legal Rulings

Having dealt with the erroneous views of various sects during his era and their refutation, al-Muḥāsibī then turns his attention to subjects which would be traditionally termed 'Qurʾānic Sciences' (*ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*) and in particular, the issue of abrogation (*al-naskh*). In this section al-Muḥāsibī identifies fifteen categories of abrogation, based on his extensive knowledge of the Qurʾān, once again proving his authority on the subject.⁸³³

⁸²⁹ It is clear that he does this to clarify and refute various misconceptions regarding the Qurʾān proposed by the numerous sects present at that time. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 248-253.

⁸³⁰ Ibid., pp. 248-53.

⁸³¹ In fact they differed to such an extent that al-Muḥāsibī considers them to be *ahl al-bidʿa* (lit. the people of innovation). See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 253.

⁸³² The discussion in this case centring on the issue of Allāh's promise of paradise for the righteous and promise of hellfire for the sinful (*al-waʿd wa ʾl-waʿīd*). Al-Muʿtazila argued that those who committed major sins (*al-kabāʾir*) would definitely be punished in hellfire, whereas those who had only committed minor sins (*al-ṣaghāʾir*) would be forgiven and enter paradise. The position of *Ahl al-Sunna wa ʾl-Jamāʿa*, on this issue was that those who committed major sins may also be forgiven if Allāh so willed, based on the Qurʾānic verse, "Indeed Allāh does not forgive those who associate partners with Him (*al-shirk*) but He forgives that which is lesser than this for whomever He wills." (4:48) In addition al-Muḥāsibī provides several other arguments as to why the position of al-Muʿtazila is untenable. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 253-5.

⁸³³ Ibid., pp. 255-8.

f) Qur'ānic Stylistics

Al-Muḥāsibī concludes this work with a discussion of various fields of knowledge related to Qur'ānic exegesis (*tafsīr al-Qur'ān*) and in particular those related to linguistics, such as grammar (*al-naḥw*) and rhetoric (*al-balāgha*). In this sense al-Muḥāsibī discusses the bringing forward and delay of certain words (*al-taqdīm wa 'l-ta'khīr*) to create emphasis, ellipsis (*al-iḍmār*), additional words (*ḥurūf al-zawā'id*) to give the meaning more depth and eloquence and the separation and combination of words (*al-faṣl wa 'l-waṣl*) to give the meaning continuance.⁸³⁴

In summary, one cannot underestimate the importance of this work with regard to his thought and teaching. His position regarding various issues of the day are presented here, including his refutation of what he considered innovation (*bid'a*) in the religion, proposed by the sects which were manifest during his lifetime, such as the 'rationalists' (*al-Mu'tazila*) and the Shi'ites (*al-Rāfiḍa*). In addition to his vast knowledge of Islam's belief system displayed in this work, he also demonstrates his equally extensive knowledge regarding the Qur'ān, as he discusses topics which had not reached fruition in a written form at that time and therefore, his contribution to the discipline of Qur'ānic exegesis (*tafsīr al-Qur'ān*) as a primordial science is also considerable.

14. *Kitāb al-'Ilm*⁸³⁵

This once again is a very short treatise by al-Muḥāsibī but despite its concise nature, it sheds a great deal of light upon al-Muḥāsibī's own particular understanding of this facet of Islamic learning. He classifies knowledge (*al-'ilm*) as being of three types: firstly, the knowledge of legal matters, quite literally the *ḥalāl* and the *ḥarām*, which are rulings

⁸³⁴ Ibid., pp. 259-60.

⁸³⁵ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-'Arabī*, vol. 1, p. 117; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, pp. 86-7 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 57.

There is only one published copy of this work edited by Muḥammad al-'Ābid Mazālī and published by Dār al-Tūniyya in 1975. In editing this work Mazālī used the following manuscripts:

1. A manuscript located in the Ambrosiana library (Milan), which consists of six pages in a beautiful *naskh* hand. Each page of the manuscript contains 23 lines of multicoloured calligraphy and was copied in 1066/1656.

2. A manuscript located in the Shahīd 'Alī library, Istāna, which consists of fols. 32 *bā* to 34 *alif*, in an equally elegant hand. Each page of the manuscript contains 25 lines but there is no mention of the copier, the owner or the date of the manuscript. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, pp. 41-7.

This edited work is a particularly valuable addition to the literature, as it appears that the editor is of Arab descent but lives in Switzerland and thus, he was familiar with not only the Arabic sources but the European ones also. Consequently, he provides an invaluable survey of the works of al-Muḥāsibī, an account of his personality, his affect on later writers and a discussion of al-Muḥāsibī's concept of *al-'ilm* in this and his other works. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, pp. 13-78; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-'Arabī*, vol. 1, p. 117 and Löfgron, Oscar and Traini, Renato, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Amrosiana* (vol. 1 [Antico Fondo and Medio Fondo], Milan, Neri Pozza Editore, 1958).

concerning this world and as such, are considered as outward knowledge (*‘ilm al-zāhir*).⁸³⁶ The second type of knowledge is that which concerns the affairs of the hereafter, dealing with state of the heart and soul, along with their various diseases and states and as such, is inward knowledge (*‘ilm al-bātin*).⁸³⁷ The third and final form of knowledge is that concerning Allāh and the manner in which He deals with His creation in this life and the next.⁸³⁸

In addition, al-Muḥāsibī informs us of three categories of people who in turn involve themselves in each type of knowledge.⁸³⁹ As for the first group, who are concerned with legal issues only, they have an outward appearance of piety but in reality they are corrupted internally, as they have allotted none of their time or effort to curing the heart and soul of their diseases. As for the second group, they are those who have devoted themselves to the identification of every internal fault and every hidden sin, being concerned constantly with the second type of knowledge in their quest for purification. The third group are the elite, having concerned themselves with a knowledge which is “a bottomless ocean”, as they are the scholars from the people of true faith.⁸⁴⁰

15. *Mu‘ātabat al-Nafs*⁸⁴¹

⁸³⁶ Al-Muḥāsibī himself however does not criticise this knowledge for its own sake, in fact he considers it to be an exalted knowledge (*‘ilm jalīl*), which is required by everyone according to their need and is a compulsory duty on the community as a whole (*farḍ ‘alā ‘l-kifāya*) to learn and teach such knowledge. Thus, his contention is not with this knowledge as such but with the sole study of it to the exclusion of the other two types. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-‘Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, pp. 82-3.

⁸³⁷ Al-Muḥāsibī stresses the importance of this form of knowledge to the extent that he considers it to be compulsory on every individual, no matter what their state. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-‘Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 86.

⁸³⁸ Ibid., p. 81; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā‘irīn*, p. 86 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 57.

⁸³⁹ This once again is indicative of the effect al-Muḥāsibī’s environment had upon him, as he was clearly affected by the juristic and theological debates which surrounded him and were prevalent at the time. Ever the guide, al-Muḥāsibī was clearly trying to define the path of the aspiring student, by advising him to avoid secondary matters and concentrate on the true goal.

⁸⁴⁰ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-‘Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, pp. 82-92; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā‘irīn*, pp. 86-7 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 57.

⁸⁴¹ There are two published versions of this treatise, they are:

1. A version edited by Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir Aṭā and published by Dār al-Itiṣām (Cairo), in 1986. In editing the text Aṭā has relied on the manuscript found in al-Azhar University, no. 1039, pp. 1-19. This manuscript is of very poor quality both in terms of the script and the mistakes of the copier, as well as being affected by dampness. The manuscript itself consists of 20 pages, with 17 lines to a page and 10 words to a line. In addition, Aṭā mentions a second manuscript in the private library of his father (‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā) but this copy is incomplete and therefore was only used for reference purposes. As for Aṭā’s work on the manuscript, he has followed the traditional route of producing a version with a minimum of annotation, provided footnotes explaining ambiguous terms, references the verses of the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* and includes a brief introduction to the life and works of al-Muḥāsibī. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu‘ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir Aṭā (Cairo, Dār al-Itiṣām, 1986) pp. 24-6; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-‘Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 34; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-‘Arabī*, vol. 1, p. 118 and al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya, *Fihras al-Kutub al-Mawjūda bi ‘l-Maktaba al-Azhariyya ilā 1366* (Cairo, al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya, n.d.) vol. 3, p. 632.

This is yet another short treatise by al-Muḥāsibī expounding the virtues of returning back to Allāh, causing the human being to reassess the way in which he lives his life. The work concerns three main topics: that of the heart (*al-qalb*), that of the soul (*al-nafs*) and the relationship of both of these with their Lord. Thus, the primary section concerning the heart deals with the means by which the heart can regain its awareness of its Sustainer to the extent that it becomes aware of Allāh's observance of both the inward and outward actions of the human being. The advantage of this is that faith in the divine decree (*al-qadar*) becomes a reality and the constant awareness of Allāh guides ultimately to the straight path (*al-ṣirāṭ al-muṣṭaqīm*). In addition, al-Muḥāsibī discusses the diseases of the heart, warning of their effect on making the heart hard and indifferent to the remembrance of Allāh, clarifying that this leads ultimately to Allāh's rejection of such a hard heart.⁸⁴²

As for al-Muḥāsibī's treatment of the soul, he begins by reminding it that it is unable to bear the wrath of Allāh, extolling it to the remembrance of death, to be ashamed in the presence of its Lord and to compare the punishment of the hereafter to its pleasures.⁸⁴³

When discussing the relationship of the human being with his Lord, al-Muḥāsibī reminds the wayward soul to always seek the aid of Allāh through supplication, to always bring to mind that Allāh forgives all sins and to remember that it is destitute without the provision of Allāh and His mercy.⁸⁴⁴

While following al-Muḥāsibī's exposition of the aforementioned subjects the reader is struck by the unusual style that he employs throughout. He continually addresses each subject, i.e. the heart, soul and Allāh, as if they were in front of him and he is conversing with them directly.⁸⁴⁵ One feels that these are an outpouring of al-Muḥāsibī's thoughts, feelings and emotions, which have been written down and which as a result, give us a very intimate view of the writer's personality, thus making it an important addition to the literature concerning him.

2. A version edited by Muḥammad 'Īsā Riḍwān being published by Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya (Beirut), in 1986. This copy is included with the editor's version of *Kitāb al-Baṭh wa 'l-Nushūr* mentioned below (see footnote 869 below). Although Riḍwān makes no mention of which manuscripts he used it can be assumed that he used the same sources, as the literature makes no mention of a second manuscript. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu'ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad 'Īsā Riḍwān (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1986) pp. 39-72 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 34.

⁸⁴² See al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu'ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Aṭā, pp. 29-41 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu'ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Riḍwān, pp. 41-8.

⁸⁴³ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu'ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Aṭā, pp. 42-63 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu'ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Riḍwān, pp. 48-62.

⁸⁴⁴ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu'ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Aṭā, pp. 63-82 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu'ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Riḍwān, pp. 62-72.

⁸⁴⁵ For example regarding the soul he uses terms such as "*wayḥaka yā nafs*" and when invoking Allāh he says "*fa aghithni yā Mughīth warḥamani yā Raḥīm*". See al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu'ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Aṭā, pp. 43 and 65 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu'ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Riḍwān, pp. 49 and 63.

16. *Al-Qaṣd wa 'l-Rujū' ilā Allāh*⁸⁴⁶

This is an interesting addition to the works of al-Muḥāsibī as it sheds light on his own path in searching for knowledge of the hereafter. The reason for this is that this work, like much of what al-Muḥāsibī wrote, takes the form of a conversation, where the aspirant asks his guide regarding the path, returning back to Allāh. The difference here however, is that in this particular case, al-Muḥāsibī himself is the questioner.⁸⁴⁷ This point is clarified by the editor, 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, when he says:

⁸⁴⁶ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qaṣd wa 'l-Rujū' ilā Allāh*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā (Cairo, Dār al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1980) pp. 26-7; al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 32; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 51-3; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 33 and Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-'Arabī*, vol. 1, p. 118.

There are two published copies of this work:

1. The first version has been edited by 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā. During the course of editing the text Aṭā has relied on what he terms "The only surviving manuscript of this work", which is in the Shahīd 'Alī library (Turkey) and which has been copied to microfilm by Ma'had Iḥyā' al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-'Arabiyya (Cairo). Thus, Aṭā made his own copy of the original and edited the text from its 'only source'. In addition, he includes references for the Quranic verses and Prophetic narrations, a comparison of this book to al-Muḥāsibī's other works, includes the statements of other Islamic scholars and begins by giving an introduction on the importance of understanding the actions of the heart and its effect on the development of the Muslim individual. This particular edited version was also included within the editor's version of *al-Waṣāyā* but without the introduction regarding 'the actions of the heart'.

2. The second edited version is by Ḥusayn al-Quwwatī and published in the Lebanese journal *al-Fikr al-Islāmī*. The work was published over a series of months beginning with an introductory article in December 1983 and continuing until February 1985. In the editing of this work al-Quwwatī mentions the following three manuscripts:

a) A manuscript found in the Carullah section of the Süleymaniye library in Istanbul under number 1728.

b) A copy of a) found in the Erdine library.

c) A manuscript found in the Rabat library, in which al-Muḥāsibī's work is interpolated with statements from al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258) and consequently is unsuitable to be used in editing the final work.

It is interesting to note here that this edited version is far longer than that of Aṭā; in fact the point at which Aṭā's version ends al-Quwwatī continues with another two pages of text, this being in the November 1984 edition of *al-Fikr al-Islāmī*. Not only this but al-Quwwatī continues for another three issues, i.e. December 1984, January 1985 and February 1985. In addition, these are only the issues that the researcher was able to locate and it is clear from the February 1985 issue that al-Quwwatī had not finished with *al-Qaṣd wa 'l-Rujū' ilā Allāh*, in this issue either. Therefore, it is absolutely certain that the version edited by Aṭā is incomplete and that al-Quwwatī had found additions in the manuscripts that he used to edit his version of the work.

Similarly, Ateş mentions a further manuscript in the Orhan library in Bursa under number 637, being copied by Yaḥyā b. 'Umar al-Hamadḥānī on Saturday 12th Ramaḍān 740/12 March 1340.

See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qaṣd wa 'l-Rujū' ilā Allāh*, ed. Ḥusayn al-Quwwatī, *al-Fikr al-Islāmī*, Lebanon, December, 1983, pp. 53-9; January, 1984, pp. 43-7; February, 1984, pp. 57-62; March, 1984, pp. 49-54; April, 1984, pp. 39-43; July, 1984, pp. 47-52; August, 1984, pp. 43-6; September, 1984, pp. 31-4; October, 1984, pp. 71-5; November, 1984, pp. 65-70; December, 1984, pp. 49-53; January, 1985, pp. 31-5; February, 1985, pp. 37-43; Ma'had Iḥyā' al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-'Arabiyya, *Fihras al-Makḥṭūṭāt bi 'l-Jāmi'a al-'Arabiyya*, vol. 1, p. 176 and Ateş, 'Two Works of al-Muḥāsibī', in *Festschrift Werner Castel*, pp. 39-42.

⁸⁴⁷ It could also be for this reason that neither Smith, Maḥmūd nor al-Quwwatī mention this during their discussions regarding the works of al-Muḥāsibī. There seems to be little doubt however that this work is al-Muḥāsibī's as it begins with the statement, "The *shaykh* Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī, may Allāh be satisfied with him, said ..." After a customary introduction praising Allāh and sending peace and salutations upon His Messenger, he continues by saying, "These are questions regarding gnosis (*al-marifa*), knowledge of the path of the hereafter and the aim and the return to Allāh the Exalted, as He wishes and from Allāh comes [all] success, if He wills." (See Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 219-221 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qaṣd wa 'l-Rujū' ilā Allāh*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 31-3). In addition there seems little purpose in attributing a book to yourself, when in fact it contains the teachings of your

This book runs the same course as most of his works: answers given in reply to questions proposed by his companions but in this book he says that he is the questioner and that Muḥammad b. Mūsā ‘Abū Ja‘far’ replies. He also mentions him in ‘*ʿAmāl al-Qulūb wa ʿl-Jawāriḥ*’ with the name ‘Abū Ja‘far’ only without mentioning Muḥammad b. Mūsā.⁸⁴⁸

As Aṭā has just mentioned, this work covers many of the topics which are included in his other works, but this particular source is also very important as it discusses many topics which are not included, for example in such works as ‘*al-Ri‘āya*’, like gnosis (*al-ma‘rifā*), and wisdom (*al-ḥikma*).⁸⁴⁹ As for the actual content of *al-Qaṣd wa ʿl-Rujū‘ ilā Allāh*, Aṭā summarises it saying:

The book is a summary regarding the return to Allāh beginning with repentance and ending with the fear of Allāh, passing through honesty (*al-ṣidq*), gnosis (*al-ma‘rifā*), wisdom (*al-ḥikma*), asceticism (*al-zuhd*), scrupulousness (*al-waraʿ*), certainty (*al-yaqīn*) and satisfaction (*al-riḍā*), as well as other stages that a Muslim must pass through on his path to Allāh^{850 851}.

17. *Kitāb al-Khalwa wa ʿl-Tanaqqul fī ʿl-Ibāda wa Darajāt al-ʿĀbidīn*⁸⁵²

instructor and therefore, this would also suggest that al-Muḥāsibī wrote this work. This does raise an important question which is why did al-Muḥāsibī include this work at all when it is not even his own work as such. What is clear is that al-Muḥāsibī was in complete agreement with what is being said otherwise he would have recorded this dialogue for posterity. In addition, this work as Aṭā mentions above contains a discussion of topics that are not included in his other works and therefore, has a uniqueness of its own, which he would have wanted to preserve. Finally, this work, in addition to containing important teachings, serves as a model for both the student and the teacher, in terms of behaviour and etiquette, as well as representing a ‘manual’ of spiritual aspiration.

⁸⁴⁸ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 52 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qaṣd wa ʿl-Rujū‘ ilā Allāh*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 27.

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁰ It is interesting to note here the effect that this teaching had on al-Muḥāsibī, how it was manifested in his later works and how he himself developed it until it became his own unique methodology.

⁸⁵¹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 52 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qaṣd wa ʿl-Rujū‘ ilā Allāh*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 27.

⁸⁵² This work was unknown in the academic community’s bibliographical works until the Turkish scholar Ahmed Ateş discovered it in a large collection of Sufi works in one of the libraries in Istāna and consequently, published the details in the journal *Oriens*. As a result, the priest Aghnāṭiyūs ‘Abda Khalīfat al-Yasū‘ī, edited this work and published it in Christian journal ‘*al-Mashriq*’. In addition, the researcher located a copy of this manuscript in microfilm form in the King Fahd National Library in Riyadh but on consulting the library staff they were unsure as to its origin and tentatively suggested it may have been copied from Leiden. This would seem to make sense as behind the manuscript a section of Latin script was apparent. However, without further verification it is impossible to say if this is another manuscript of al-Muḥāsibī’s ‘*al-Khalwa*’ or simply a copy of the Turkish manuscript. Consequently, up until this point as al-Yasū‘ī states, this is the only known copy of this work (*al-nuskha al-yatīma*). See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa wa ʿl-Tanaqqul fī ʿl-Ibāda wa Darajāt al-ʿĀbidīn*, ed. Aghnāṭiyūs ‘Abda Khalīfat al-Yasū‘ī, *al-Mashriq*, Beirut, Ādhār/Nisān, 1954, pp. 182-191; Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāṭ, 1955, pp. 43-54 and Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, pp. 451-490; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, pp. 24-5; Sezgīn, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, p. 118; Van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt*, p. 13 and Ateş, Ahmed, “Kastamonu Genel Kitaplığında Bulunan Bazı Mühim Arapça ve Farsça Yazmalar” in *Oriens* (vol. 5, no. 1, Brill, Leiden, 1952) pp. 28-9.

Once again the title of this work is particularly appropriate as it describes concisely the subject matter. Al-Muḥāsibī begins by extolling the virtues of spiritual retreat from the worldly life (*al-khalwa*) and in particular when this is performed with constant reading of and reflection upon the book of Allāh. He then continues by describing various states of worship - all internal of course - and various degrees and levels people reach regarding each of them. He facilitates this by presenting a series of counsels and answers to questions proposed by a would-be aspirant on the path to Allāh.⁸⁵³

The first virtue that al-Muḥāsibī discusses is that of certainty in Allāh (*al-yaqīn bi Allāh*), which is the basis of faith. The next best action after this is the acknowledgement of bounties (*maʿrifat al-niʿam*) and as a result the manifestation of gratitude (*al-shukr*). Al-Muḥāsibī then clarifies the various states that a devotee may find himself in and the ability to progress from one stage to the next, which he considers to be intrinsically related to the knowledge a human being has of his own soul's faults (*ʿuyūb al-nafs*).⁸⁵⁴

He continues by urging the reader to maintain silence and to consider any speech that he is forced to make as a disaster which has struck. In addition, he warns of the importance of opposing one's desires as this is a quality which all people suffer from.⁸⁵⁵ He completes this section of the work by discussing one of his familiar topics, that of ostentation (*al-riyāʿ*) and rulers (*al-mulūk*) are singled out in particular for criticism.⁸⁵⁶

Al-Muḥāsibī also discusses the importance of distinguishing between fear (*al-khawf*) and hope (*al-rajāʿ*) and that both of these will not be fulfilled except through a process of intimidating the soul (*al-tarhīb*) and awakening its desire (*al-targhīb*).⁸⁵⁷ He then furnishes us with his views regarding the importance of truthfulness (*al-ṣidq*) in the actions performed for the sake of Allāh and even more importantly, the essence of the action, the intention (*al-irāda*). This concept is further developed and its importance discussed with regard to the compulsory acts (*al-farāʿid*) in particular and in addition, the supplementary acts (*al-nawāfil*), as well as the internal virtues of fear (*al-khawf*) and hope (*al-rajāʿ*).⁸⁵⁸

Al-Muḥāsibī concludes this work with a long discussion concerning the importance of maintaining a good opinion with regard to Allāh (*ḥusn al-ẓann*) and restraining oneself

⁸⁵³ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī, *al-Mashriq*, Ādhār/Nisān, 1954, pp. 188-191.

⁸⁵⁴ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī, *al-Mashriq*, Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāṭ, 1955, pp. 43-9.

⁸⁵⁵ Al-Muḥāsibī comments, "And know that you are in a time when desires have overcome the 'red' and the 'black', the knowledgeable and the ignorant, with regard to the affairs of this world and the next." This once again shows how critical al-Muḥāsibī was of his society. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī, *al-Mashriq*, Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāṭ, 1955, pp. 50-1.

⁸⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-4.

⁸⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, pp. 451-6.

⁸⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 451-62.

from despondency and despair (*zajr ʿan al-qunūṭ*), as well as discussing the necessity of realising the dangers of sin (*al-sayīʿa*) and preoccupying oneself with the performance of good (*al-ḥasana*).⁸⁵⁹

In summary this work, as with *ʿĀdāb al-Nufūs* before it⁸⁶⁰, is representative of much of al-Muḥāsibī's teachings in his other works, in particular *ʿal-Riʿāya*⁸⁶¹ and *ʿal-Naṣāʾih*⁸⁶². Nevertheless, this work, as with *ʿĀdāb al-Nufūs* is of equal importance, as it not only summarises his teaching in a concise manner but also, to some degree at least, reflects the period in which he lived.

18. *Kitāb Masāʾil fī ʿl-Zuhd (wa Ghayriḥ)*⁸⁶³⁸⁶⁴

From the title of this work it would be reasonable to expect a discussion regarding ascetic theology in Islam (*al-zuhd*) and in this sense al-Muḥāsibī does not disappoint but it would be misleading to think that this work deals exclusively with asceticism, as in fact it deals with numerous issues. He does begin this treatise however with the discussion concerning *al-zuhd* and clarifies its various types and rulings, as well as discussing the characteristics of the true ascetic (*al-zāhid*). Al-Muḥāsibī then turns his attention to the topics of silence (*al-ṣamt*) and reflection (*al-fikra*), stressing their important affect on the heart and the internal faculties they bestow. He then presents his views regarding the true nature of wealth (*al-*

⁸⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 462-86.

⁸⁶⁰ See pages 209-11 above.

⁸⁶¹ Al-Yasūʿī is so convinced of this that he has even included a section at the end of the published version, which includes quotes from *ʿal-Riʿāya* and compares them to *ʿal-Khalwā*. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī, *al-Mashriq*, Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, pp. 487-490.

⁸⁶² Al-Quwwatī on the other hand, regards *ʿal-Khalwā* to be similar to *ʿal-Naṣāʾih*, as it reflects the same air of despondency, which is apparent in this latter work. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 65.

⁸⁶³ Maḥmūd excludes this addition and Smith mistakenly terms it *ʿgayriḥā*. See Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʾirīn*, p. 83 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 56.

⁸⁶⁴ There are three manuscripts for this work mentioned in the literature, they are:

1. A manuscript located in Carullah, Istanbul, under number 1101, fols. 1a-17b.
2. A copy found in Cairo University from the original, which is part of the personal library of Aḥmad al-Jazzār Baʿkā, being stored in al-Azhar under number 1367 *taṣawwuf*. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā edited this manuscript, as was mentioned earlier.
3. A manuscript located in Jāmiʿat Fuʾād, under number 26048.

See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masāʾil fī Aʿmāl al-Qulūb wa ʿl-Jawāriḥ*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, pp. 38-40; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 27; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, p. 117; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʾirīn*, p. 83; Maʿhad al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, *al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-Muṣawwara ḥattā 1948 - al-Jāmiʿa al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 1, pp. 145 and 157; Maʿhad Iḥyāʾ al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, *Fihras al-Makḥṭūṭāt bi ʿl-Jāmiʿa al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 1, p. 191; al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya, *Fihras al-Kutub al-Mawjūda bi ʿl-Maktabat al-Azhariyya ilā 1366*, vol. 3, p. 630; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 56; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 163 and Van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt*, p. 12 and 15.

ghinā), poverty (*al-faqr*) and gratitude (*al-shukr*) for the bounties bestowed upon the slave by his Lord.⁸⁶⁵

In the following sections al-Muḥāsibī deals with familiar topics which he has also dealt with in his other works such as arrogance (*al-kibr*), ostentation (*al-riyāʿ*), satanic incitement (*al-waswisa*) and the dangers of the desires (*al-hawā*).⁸⁶⁶ He continues by discussing the best of the acts of worship, in which he discusses such topics as the knowledge of Allāh (*al-ʿilm bi Allāh*), prayer (*al-ṣalāt*), having sympathy with those less fortunate and coming to the aid of others.⁸⁶⁷ Al-Muḥāsibī continues this work with a discussion of the way a person can identify the suggestions of Satan (*ḥadīth al-Shayṭān*) from those of the soul (*ḥadīth al-nafs*) and concludes with a number of beneficial counsels on a variety of subjects.⁸⁶⁸

19. *Al-Ḥasad al-Dāʿ wa 'l-Dawāʿ*

This work is a particularly surprising addition to the literature as, before visiting Saudi Arabia, the researcher had never come across it. However, after having acquired a copy of the work it became obvious why; this book is no more than an edited extract of al-Muḥāsibī's '*al-Riʿāya*', namely the author's introduction and '*Kitāb al-Ḥasad*' and as such, will not be treated as a separate work here.⁸⁶⁹

20. *Kitāb al-Baʿth wa 'l-Nushūr*⁸⁷⁰

⁸⁶⁵ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masāʿil fī Aʿmāl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, pp. 43-54; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʿirīn*, p. 83 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 56.

⁸⁶⁶ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masāʿil fī Aʿmāl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, pp. 58-72; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʿirīn*, p. 83 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 56.

⁸⁶⁷ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masāʿil fī Aʿmāl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, pp. 73-80; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʿirīn*, p. 83 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 56.

⁸⁶⁸ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masāʿil fī Aʿmāl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, pp. 81-8; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʿirīn*, p. 83 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 56.

⁸⁶⁹ To term this work "an edited extract" may also be misleading as the 'editor' has not edited the work as such, having relied upon the version of '*al-Riʿāya*' published by Dār al-Maʿārif and with an introduction by ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (see footnote 691:2 above). The 'editor's' contribution therefore, is mainly in the field of *ḥadīth* literature and verification. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ḥasad al-Dāʿ wa 'l-Dawāʿ*, ed. Muḥammad Shākir al-Sharīf (Riyadh, Dār al-Ṭayba, 1995) pp. 18-23.

⁸⁷⁰ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 32; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 37; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, p. 117; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʿirīn*, pp. 71-2; Maḥad al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, *al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-Muṣawwara ḥattā 1948 - al-Jāmiʿa al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 1, p. 151; Maḥad Iḥyāʾ al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, *Fihras al-Makḥṭūṭāt bi 'l-Jāmiʿa al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 1, p. 149; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 48-50 and Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 163.

In addition there is a copy of this manuscript in the Islamic University of Medina, under catalogue number 455, this being a copy of the original found in al-Maktaba al-Zāhiriyya in Damascus. See al-Faqīhī (ed.), ʿAlī Muḥammad Nāṣir, *al-Nashrat al-Bibliyūjarāfiyya li Makḥṭūṭāt al-Maktaba al-Markaziyya bi 'l-Jāmiʿa al-Islāmiyya*, (Medina, Islamic University, 1983) p. 222.

Consequently, there is only one published version of this work, being edited by Muḥammad ʿĪsā Riḍwān and published by Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya in 1986.

This, as the title suggests, is an eschatological work charting the events that will occur after death and the details of which have been discussed by other authors.⁸⁷¹ The researcher will not attempt an overview here as this work is said to be attributed to al-Muḥāsibī only and is in fact not one of his works at all.⁸⁷²

21. (*Kitāb*) *Dawā' Dā' al-Qalb*

Sprenger attributes this work to al-Muḥāsibī but he would appear to be incorrect and as such, it will not be treated as one of al-Muḥāsibī's works here.⁸⁷³

5.2 The Works Surviving in Manuscript

1. *Risālat*⁸⁷⁴ *al-ʿAzama*⁸⁷⁵

⁸⁷¹ See Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 48-50.

⁸⁷² Maḥmūd is the most ardent supporter of this view and quotes the following reasons as to why he is certain that book is not the work of al-Muḥāsibī:

1. Al-Muḥāsibī has already authored a brilliant work on the same subject, namely '*al-Tawahhum*' and therefore it makes no sense that he would have written another work of a much poorer quality on the same topic.

2. In his work '*al-Tawahhum*' al-Muḥāsibī deals with the events of the resurrection in an organised and sequential manner: firstly, he deals with those who were disobedient to Allāh, describing the manner of their account, recompense and ultimate punishment in hellfire. He then turns his attention to describing the pleasure of those who preserved the rights of Allāh and their joy at being entered into paradise. Finally, he takes the reader slowly to the final scene of the hereafter, the divine vision of Allāh, reserved exclusively for His beloved elite, which is the ultimate reward and pleasure of paradise. As for the book '*al-Ba'ṭh wa 'l-Nushūr*', the sequence of events differ entirely and in fact take place in an unorganised and illogical manner. The divine vision of Allāh, for example comes in the middle passages, taking the emphasis away entirely from the greatness of this ultimate reward.

3. Finally, Maḥmūd considers this work laughable due to the many superstitious stories quoted within it, thus making it impossible to be from the hand of al-Muḥāsibī. See Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, pp. 71-2.

In addition to what has been mentioned by Maḥmūd, on reading '*al-Ba'ṭh wa 'l-Nushūr*' one is struck by the complete lack of scholarly ability exhibited in this work. There are few facts based on classical Islamic theology, in which as has already been noted, al-Muḥāsibī was somewhat of an expert, having even written refutations on various theological points. Similarly, al-Muḥāsibī's works, in particular works such as '*al-Tawahhum*', display the penmanship of an accomplished author able to create and express ideas fluently but once again the style of '*al-Ba'ṭh wa 'l-Nushūr*' is particularly poor, so much so that one does not feel as though one is reading the work of such an accomplished scholar. In summary, this work can be excluded from the list of works written by al-Muḥāsibī, as it is hardly befitting that it should be attributed to him.

⁸⁷³ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 38; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, p. 119; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 163 and Van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt*, pp. 16-18.

⁸⁷⁴ The term "*Risāla*" is Smith's whereas both Aṭā and Maḥmūd term this work *Faṣl min Kitāb al-ʿAzama*. In addition Abū Ghudda terms it *Kitāb al-ʿAzama*. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, p. 39; al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 32; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 32; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 85 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 55.

⁸⁷⁵ This manuscript can be found in Istanbul, Carullah, İstāna, 1101, fols. 24b-27b and there is also a copy of the same manuscript in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, no. 4064, *taṣawwuf*. In addition to the manuscripts mentioned above there would appear to be another manuscript in Jāmi'at Fu'ād, under no. 26048.

See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, p. 39; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 32; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, p. 116; Ma'had Iḥyā' al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, *Fihras al-Makḥṭūṭāt*

This work is a refutation against *al-Thanaẓīyya*⁸⁷⁶ who had started to arrive in Baghdad and began spreading an atmosphere of atheism (*zandaqa*)⁸⁷⁷ and scepticism (*tashkīk*).⁸⁷⁸ During the course of this work al-Muḥāsibī discusses the unity of Allāh, His oneness and the impossibility of there being a second or third deity. Al-Muḥāsibī's evidence for this depends upon the unity of creation; that every created being has a known place in the scheme of things and a purpose for its creation. In addition, every created being is dependent on another and as such the creation as a whole is like a chain with many links; if one were to break, then the whole chain would collapse. This unity of creation thus is indicative of a sole Creator Who is bounteous to His creation, as he provides them with sustenance from the very moment they are brought into existence. In addition, al-Muḥāsibī exposes the fate of previous societies who rejected faith in such a Creator and suggests that anyone who reflects on this cannot fail but to believe in God and His unity. Consequently it is through such a faith that human beings will be guided, enter Paradise and reach perfect satisfaction with their Lord.⁸⁷⁹

2. *Risāla fī 'l-Taṣawwuf*⁸⁸⁰

3. *Al-Khiṣāl al-ʿAshra allatī Jarabahā Ahl al-Muḥāsaba*⁸⁸²

bi 'l-Jāmiʿa al-ʿArabiyya, vol. 1, p. 182; Maʿhad al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, *al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-Muṣawwara ḥattā 1948 - al-Jāmiʿa al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 1, pp. 156 and vol. 2, p. 413; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 55; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 162 and Van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt*, p. 12.

⁸⁷⁶ A form of Manichaeism (the doctrines of Manes), which believed in dualism; that there is a 'god of good' and a 'god of evil', which they would express in terms of light and darkness. See Muṣṭafā *et al.* (eds.), *al-Muʿjam al-Wasīṭ*, p. 102 and Wehr, Hans, *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, p. 889.

⁸⁷⁷ The origin of this word lies in the belief that the world is eternal but was used to describe Manicheans and other groups from *al-Thanaẓīyya* (see previous footnote). It was later expanded to include any misguided person (*ḍāll*), or sceptic (*shākk*), or atheist (*mulḥid*). See Muṣṭafā *et al.* (eds.), *al-Muʿjam al-Wasīṭ*, p. 403 and Wehr, *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, p. 383.

⁸⁷⁸ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatli, p. 69.

⁸⁷⁹ See Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʿirīn*, p. 85 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 55.

⁸⁸⁰ This is Maḥmūd's version whereas Aṭā excludes the "fī". See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, p. 38 and Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʿirīn*, p. 87.

⁸⁸¹ No author gives an account of what this work contains but there does appear to be a copy of this manuscript in the Municipal Library of Alexandria, no. 3121 *jīm*. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā states that he is in the process of publishing this work but the researcher was unable to source this published version. However, it is also worth noting that al-Khaṭīb suggests that this is indeed just another copy of *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifā* but without access to the primary manuscript it is impossible to reach a conclusion. Thus, this may not be in fact a separate work but is tentatively included here to complete the picture. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Muʿātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir Aṭā, p. 23; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, p. 38; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 29; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1; p. 118; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʿirīn*, p. 87; Maʿhad Iḥyāʾ al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, *Fihras al-Makḥṭūṭāt bi 'l-Jāmiʿa al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 1, p. 161; Maʿhad al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, *al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-Muṣawwara ḥattā 1948 - al-Jāmiʿat al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 1, p. 132 and al-Khaṭīb, *Fikr al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī al-Ṣūfī fī Mizān al-Kitāb wa 'l-Sunna*, pp. 50-1.

4. *Muḥāsabat al-Nafs*⁸⁸³

5. *Mukhtaṣar al-Maʿānī*⁸⁸⁴

6. *Al-Murāqaba wa 'l-Muḥāsaba*⁸⁸⁵

7. *Naṣīḥat al-Ṭālibīn*⁸⁸⁶ (wa 'l-Farq bayn al-Taḥqīq wa 'l-Muddaʿīn)⁸⁸⁷

8. *Al-Radd ʿalā baʿḍ al-ʿUlamāʾ min al-Aghniyāʾ ḥaythu Iḥtajjū bi Aghniyāʾ al-Ṣaḥāba*⁸⁸⁸

9. *Tanbīh alā ʿAmāl al-Qulūb*⁸⁸⁹

⁸⁸² Aṭā mentions this work but gives no account of its content. However, he does state that there is a copy of the manuscript in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, no. 4184 *taṣawwuf*, the original being in the Berlin Library. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, p. 38; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 30 and Maʿhad Iḥyāʾ al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, *Fihras al-Makḥṭūṭāt bi 'l-Jāmiʿa al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 1, p. 158.

⁸⁸³ There appear to be three copies of this manuscript; two in Berlin, no. 2814 (*fol.* 80b-81a), written in 813/1410 and a small fragment, *fol.* 1b-7b. The other is located in the British Museum (no. 1244). See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, p. 39; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 33 and Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, p. 117.

⁸⁸⁴ Mazālī states that the original is under Bengal, number 1167, *fol.* 15-17. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, p. 39; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 34 and Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, p. 119.

⁸⁸⁵ A copy of this manuscript is in Shahīd ʿAlī library, Istanbul, in the *taṣawwuf* section, number 137. In addition there is also a copy of this manuscript in the The Chester Beatty Library, under number 4893. Abū Ghudda also makes reference to a work entitled *Risālat al-Murāqaba* which may well be the same work as Mazālī also makes reference to copies in Berlin. In addition, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā states that he is in the process of publishing this work but the researcher was unable to source this published version. Once again however, it is worth noting that al-Khaṭīb suggests that this is also just another copy of *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifā* and as such, this may not be in fact a separate work but similarly, is tentatively included here to make the research comprehensive. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Muʿātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir Aṭā, p. 23; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, p. 39; al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 32; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 34; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, p. 118; Maʿhad al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, *al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-Muṣawwara ḥattā 1948 - al-Jāmiʿa al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 1, p. 157; Maʿhad Iḥyāʾ al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, *Fihras al-Makḥṭūṭāt bi 'l-Jāmiʿa al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 1, p. 163; Arberry, *A Handlist of the Arabic Manuscripts (The Chester Beatty Library)*, 1963, vol. 6 (MSS. 4501-5000), p. 131 and al-Khaṭīb, *Fikr al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī al-Ṣūfī fī Mizān al-Kitāb wa 'l-Sunna*, p. 51.

⁸⁸⁶ A copy of this manuscript is in the Shahīd ʿAlī library, Istanbul, number 3319. However Mazālī quotes the same number but suggests this copy is in Saīb, Ankara (*fol.* 23a-36b), being copied in 731/1331. In addition he also suggests the presence of another manuscript in the same collection under number 5281 (*fol.* 1a-8b). See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, p. 39; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, pp. 34-5 and Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, p. 118.

⁸⁸⁷ Both Mazālī and Sezgin include this addition. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, pp. 34-5 and Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, p. 118.

⁸⁸⁸ There are two manuscripts of this work both located in al-Istāna, Istanbul under numbers 3706-20 and 701/1. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, p. 38; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 30 and Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, pp. 118-9.

⁸⁸⁹ A version of this manuscript is available in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, number 4064 *taṣawwuf*, having been copied from an original in Carullah, Istanbul. Abū Ghudda also makes reference to this work with the addition

Smith mentions that only a fragment of this work is extant⁸⁹⁰ and the existing piece deals again with *tawḥīd* (the unity of the worship of Allāh), providing rational arguments to prove the point, in much the same way that *Risālat al-‘Aẓama* does.⁸⁹¹

10. *Kitāb al-Ṣabr wa ‘l-Riḍā*

Only a short fragment of this work is also extant as only the last three pages still exist.⁸⁹² The work itself concerns two of the most important principles of *zuhd*, namely patience (*ṣabr*) and satisfaction (*riḍā*), regarding the decree of Allāh (*qadar* Allāh), whether they be favourable or unfavourable, along with complete submission to Allāh’s will when such events occur. In addition, the work is written in the form of a dialogue between the guide (*al-murshid*) and the aspirant (*al-murīd*), which is a common method employed by al-Muḥāsibī throughout his writings. Al-Hujwīrī discusses the aspect of *riḍā* in al-Muḥāsibī’s teaching in detail in his *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* and may well have derived it from this work in its complete form.⁸⁹³ He also presents al-Muḥāsibī’s teaching as being a new exposition of this topic, which was then adopted by later writers.⁸⁹⁴

“fi ‘l-Dalāla ‘alā Waḥdāniyat Allāh”. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad ‘Aṭā, p. 38; al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 32; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-‘Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, pp. 29-30; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-‘Arabī*, vol. 1, p. 116; Ma‘had Iḥyā’ al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-‘Arabiyya, *Fihras al-Makḥṭūṭāt bi ‘l-Jāmi‘a al-‘Arabiyya*, vol. 1, p. 153 and Ma‘had al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-‘Arabiyya, *al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-Muṣawwara ḥattā 1948 - al-Jāmi‘a al-‘Arabiyya*, vol. 1, p. 155.

⁸⁹⁰ The fragment is located in Carullah, Istanbul, number 1101, folios. 24a-27b. See Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 55 and Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 162.

⁸⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 55-6. In addition, Maḥmūd mentions another work entitled *Kitāb al-Tanbīh*, which may well be the same manuscript, as he describes it as being in Carullah and that only quarter of a page remains. See Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā‘irīn*, p. 87.

⁸⁹² Maḥmūd states that these few pages not only exist but have been published by Otto Spies, this being produced from a manuscript found in the Public Library at Bankipore. However, Spies himself states that after examination of the available sources he was unable to find a work by al-Muḥāsibī entitled ‘*Kitāb al-Ṣabr wa ‘l-Riḍā*. As a result Maḥmūd believes that the work in question did not originally have this title and was in fact called ‘*Kitāb al-Riḍā*’ only. He concludes this on the basis that since the topic of *riḍā* would automatically concern the subject of *ṣabr*, then it makes sense that the title was changed as it is inconceivable that al-Muḥāsibī would author two such works with similar titles. In addition, since so little of the original remains I have included them in the current section. See Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā‘irīn*, pp. 75-6 and 87; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-‘Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 23; Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-‘Arabī*, vol. 1, p. 117; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 162; Spies, Otto, “Ein Fragment aus dem Kitāb aṣ-Ṣabr wa-Riḍā des al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī”, *Islamica*, vol. vi (3), (Leipzig, 1934) pp. 283-9 and The Public Library at Bankipore, *Catalogue of the Arabic and Persian Manuscripts in the Public Library at Bankipore*, Calcutta, 1928, vol. XIII, no. 820.

⁸⁹³ It is also worth mentioning here that Abū Ghudda mentions a further work entitled *Kitāb al-Riḍā* which may be the same work discussed here, or may have been another work from which al-Hujwīrī may have extracted al-Muḥāsibī’s thought. Al-Muḥāsibī himself mentions this work in *al-Masā‘il fi A‘māl al-Qulūb wa ‘l-Jawāriḥ* but ‘Aṭā states that he has not come across this work as yet. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 32 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā‘il fi A‘māl al-Qulūb wa ‘l-Jawāriḥ*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad ‘Aṭā, p. 147.

⁸⁹⁴ See Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 58 and Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā‘irīn*, p. 87.

11. 'Risāla'

This treatise has no title but nevertheless is attributed to al-Muḥāsibī.⁸⁹⁵

5.3 The Lost Works

1. *Risāla fī 'l-Akhlāq*⁸⁹⁶

2. *Kitāb*⁸⁹⁷ *Akhlāq al-Ḥakīm*

Al-Muḥāsibī mentions this work in his book *al-Masā'il fī A'māl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ*.⁸⁹⁸

3. *Kitāb al-Tafakkur wa 'l-Itibār*

Ibn Nadīm mentions this work in his *Fihrist*.⁸⁹⁹

4. *Kitāb al-Ghayba*

Once again it is suggested that Ibn Nadīm mentions this work in his *Fihrist* and in addition the work is also mentioned by Abū Bakr b. Khayr in *Bibliotheca Arabico-Hispana*.⁹⁰⁰

5. *Kitāb Fahm al-Sunan*

Al-Zarkashī mentions this work in his book '*al-Burhān*'.⁹⁰¹ In addition al-Suyūṭī quotes al-Muḥāsibī from this work in his '*al-Itqān*' whilst discussing the 18th category of the Qur'ān Sciences 'concerning its collection and sequence (*fī jam'ihī wa tartībihī*)'.⁹⁰²

⁸⁹⁵ The manuscript itself is located in Bursa under number 4/1428 (*fols.* 34b-40a), being copied in the 8th/12th centuries. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 35 and Sezgīn, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-'Arabī*, vol. 1, p. 118.

⁸⁹⁶ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā, p. 39 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 35. It is interesting to note that Massignon makes mention of an extant manuscript entitled *Akhlāq*, which may indeed be this 'lost' work but without direct access to the manuscript it is impossible to say. See Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 163.

⁸⁹⁷ Maḥmūd adds the term "*Kitāb*" whereas Aṭā excludes it. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā, p. 39 and Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 87.

⁸⁹⁸ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā'il fī A'māl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 157; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā, p. 39; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 35 and Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 87.

⁸⁹⁹ See Ibn Nadīm, Muḥammad b. Abū Ya'qūb b. Ishāq, *al-Fihrist*, ed. Ibrāhīm Ramaḍān (2nd edition, Beirut, Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1997) p. 230; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā, p. 39; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 35; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 88; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 58-9 and Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 163.

⁹⁰⁰ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā, p. 39; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 36 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 59; Khayr, Abū Bakr, *Bibliotheca Arabico-Hispana*, ed. F. Codera and J. Ribera (n.p., n. pl. pub. 1894) p. 272 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 59.

⁹⁰¹ See al-Zarkashī (d. 794/1392), Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh [Badr al-Dīn], *al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, edited by Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (4 vols., Cairo, Maktabat Dār al-Turāth, n.d.) vol. 1, p. 238; al-

6. *Kitāb al-Dimāʾ/Kitāb al-Kaff ʿammā Shuḥira (Shajara) bayn al-Ṣaḥāba*

There can be no doubt that one of the most controversial topics in Islamic history is that of the disputes that occurred between the Companions of the Prophet (*al-ṣaḥāba*). In addition, the period in which al-Muḥāsibī lived was clearly affected by such disputes, as they were the subject of continuous critique, which can readily be seen in the various opinions of both the Muʿtazila⁹⁰³ and the Shīʿa⁹⁰⁴ regarding the Prophet’s Companions.⁹⁰⁵ Consequently, it is not surprising that al-Muḥāsibī authored a specific work on this topic and in fact, this is stated by various authors.⁹⁰⁶

In actual fact, al-Muḥāsibī has touched on this topic in various places within his works, in addition to the specific treatise mentioned here.⁹⁰⁷ On examining these various extracts one finds that al-Muḥāsibī’s stance regarding the issue is clear. We find that al-Muḥāsibī, whilst addressing this issue attempts to find a middle ground between the extreme views of both the Muʿtazila and the Shīʿa, whose stances towards the issue by that time were well known. In addition, al-Muḥāsibī, as we have already seen, was concerned not only with scholastic theology (*ʿilm al-kalām*) but also its use in defending the classical Sunni position as far as he was concerned. This being the case and after witnessing his defence of classical Sunni positions on such issues as the beatific vision and the divine attributes, it is no surprise that

Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, p. 39; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 36; al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 32 and Sezgin, *Tāriḫ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, p. 119.

⁹⁰² The actual text reads as follows, “Writing of the Qurʾān was no novelty, for the Prophet used to order that it be written down, but it was in separate pieces, on scraps of leather, shoulder blades and palm risp, and [Abū Bakr] al-Ṣiddīq ordered that it be copied from the [various] places to a common place, which was in the shape of sheets, these [materials] were found in the house of the Prophet in which the Qurʾān was spread out, and he gathered it all together and tied it with a string so that none of it was lost.” See al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 32; al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, vol. 1, p. 238; al-Suyūṭī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, *al-Itqān fī Ulūm al-Qurʾān*, ed. Fawwāz Aḥmad Zamarlī (2 vols., Beirut, Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1999) vol. 1., pp. 210-1 and Von Denffer, Ahmad, *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān - An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qurʾān* (Leicester, The Islamic Foundation, 1989) p. 43.

⁹⁰³ See al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-Itidāl*, vol. 3, pp. 274-5; al-ʿAql, *al-Jahmiyya wa ʿl-Muʿtazila*, pp. 148-9 and Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 224-8.

⁹⁰⁴ See al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, vol. 1, pp. 39-64 and 88-9; al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, pp. 60-1; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa ʿl-Niḥal*, pp. 130-3 and Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 157-62.

⁹⁰⁵ Maḥmūd for example says that they attributed blame to the Companions. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, pp. 70-2 and Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʿirīn*, p. 74.

⁹⁰⁶ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 32; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, p. 39; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 70-1; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 36; al-ʿAsqalānī, *Tahdhīb al- Tahdhīb*, ed. al-Zaybaq and Murshid, vol. 1, p. 327; Sezgin, *Tāriḫ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, vol. 1, p. 119; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʿirīn*, pp. 74-5 and 87-8; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 58 and Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 163.

⁹⁰⁷ See for example al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 19-20.

al-Muḥāsibī also refutes the ‘unorthodox’ position of various sects regarding the Prophetic Companions.⁹⁰⁸

On examining his approach to the topic, we can identify various aspects which are worth mentioning. Firstly, whilst adopting the role of guide, al-Muḥāsibī advises his ‘brothers’ by warning them to avoid delving too deeply into this complex issue concerning the early generations of the Muslim community. The reason for this is then made clear; the cause of the disputes of those who came after the era of the Companions were due to their examination and delving into the reasons behind the disputes between the Companions. In addition, they then used the Qurʾān’s ambiguous⁹⁰⁹ verses (*mutashābih*) as opposed to its unambiguous verses (*muḥkam*) as proof for their stance as well as the various narrations (*āthār*) from the Prophet and the Companions themselves, which were also open to interpretation.⁹¹⁰ In addition, their ‘misguidance’ (*ḍalāl*) is compounded by the fact that they fought, killed and apostatised anyone who opposed their whims. Al-Muḥāsibī includes within these sects the Qadariyya⁹¹¹, i.e. the followers of Maʿbad and Ghaylān, then the followers of Wāṣil b. ʿAṭā⁹¹² (who later became the Muʿtazila), the Murjiʿa⁹¹³, the Rāfiḍa (i.e. the Shiʿa)⁹¹⁴, the Jahmiyya⁹¹⁵ and the Ḥarūriyya (i.e. the Khawārij)^{916, 917}.

⁹⁰⁸ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 70-2 and Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʿirīn*, p. 74.

⁹⁰⁹ Ambiguous in the sense that they may possess more than one shade of meaning. For a more complete discussion of the *mutashābih* and *muḥkam* verses See al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fī Ulūm al-Qurʾān*, ed. Zamarlī, vol. 1., pp. 592-622; al-Zurqānī, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīm, *Manāhil al-ʿUrfān fī Ulūm al-Qurʾān*, ed. Amin Sulaymān al-Kurdī (2nd edition, 2 vols. in one, Beirut, Dār Iḥyāʿ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1997) pp. 528-45; al-Qaṭṭān, Mannāʿ b. Khalīl, *Mabāḥith fī Ulūm al-Qurʾān* (35th edition, Beirut, Muʿassasat al-Risāla, 1998) pp. 191-5; al-Bughā, Muṣṭafā Dīb and Mustū, Muḥyi al-Dīn, *al-Wādiḥ fī Ulūm al-Qurʾān* (2nd edition, Damascus, Dār al-Kalim al-Ṭayyib, 1998) pp. 122-38; Philips, Bilal, *Usool at-Tafseer - the Methodology of Qurʾanic Explanation* (Sharjah, Dar al-Fatah, 1997) pp. 237-44 and Von Denffer, *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, pp. 80-1.

⁹¹⁰ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 41-2 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 71.

⁹¹¹ See al-Juhanī (ed.), *al-Mawsūʿa al-Muyassara fī ʿl-Adyān wa al-Madhāhib wa ʿl-Aḥzāb al-Muʿāṣira*, vol. 2, pp. 1114-1115; Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 82-118; *Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam* (London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1948) pp. 49-57 and *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 25-30.

⁹¹² See al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, pp. 115-18; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa ʿl-Niḥal*, pp. 40-3; al-Nashshār, *Nashʿat al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī ʿl-Islām*, vol. 1, pp. 381-406; al-ʿAql, *al-Jahmiyya wa ʿl-Muʿtazila*, pp. 140-4; Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 209-15; *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 47-8 and pp. 124-5 above.

⁹¹³ See al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, vol. 1, pp. 213-234; al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, pp. 187-191; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa ʿl-Niḥal*, pp. 111-116 and Watt, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, p. 23 and *Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam*, pp. 40-48.

⁹¹⁴ See al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, vol. 1, pp. 66-136; al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, pp. 46-78; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa ʿl-Niḥal*, pp. 130-140 and Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 157-62.

⁹¹⁵ See al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, vol. 1, pp. 338; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa ʿl-Niḥal*, pp. 67-69 and Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 143-148.

⁹¹⁶ See al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, vol. 1, pp. 167-8 and 203-12; al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, pp. 78-86; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa ʿl-Niḥal*, pp. 91-5; Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 12-19 and *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 7-13.

The safest path to adopt is to avoid delving into such complexities as the danger of doing so lies in the fact that these groups were all brothers before they adopted this position and in addition, it is impossible to find a solution which will satisfy everyone.⁹¹⁸ This being the case, al-Muḥāsibī proposes that the path to salvation is by adopting that which the Muslim community (*al-umma*) has agreed upon (*mujmaʿ ʿalayhi*) in terms of faith in Allāh, His messengers (*rusūlhi*), His angels (*malāʾikatihi*), His books (*kutubihi*), the limits set by Him (*ḥudūdihi*), the acts made compulsory by Him (*farāʾidihi*), the open manifestations of His religion (*sharāʾiʿ dīnihi*) and all that the earliest generations (*al-salaf*) reached consensus about, as all of this is guidance (*al-rushd*) and truth (*al-ḥaqq*).⁹¹⁹

Despite the advice proposed by al-Muḥāsibī regarding this sensitive issue, he also clarifies his own personal point of view, regarding the disputes, which occurred between the Companions. In this sense once again we find him proposing the position of a classical *sunni* scholar. He considers ʿUthmān and ʿAlī both to have been killed unjustly⁹²⁰ and considers ʿAlī to have been correct regarding the disputes with ʿĀʾisha, Ṭalḥah, al-Zubayr and Muʿāwiya.⁹²¹ That is not to say that he is critical of this latter group either⁹²²; in fact he considers them to have exercised their personal judgement but were mistaken in the conclusions they formulated (*mujtahidūn mukhtiʿūn*).⁹²³ This being the case, it is easy to deduce and there can be no doubt that al-Muḥāsibī's goal from such a discussion was to absolve them of any responsibility and purify them from all sin.⁹²⁴

For example, al-Samʿānī quotes Abū ʿAlī b. Shādhān (d. 350/961) in his *Kitāb al-Anṣāb* as stating that al-Muḥāsibī wrote a book entitled *Kitāb al-Dimāʾ* describing the circumstances in which the Companions' blood was spilled and that these events did not affect the unity of Islamic faith. In fact, Ibn Shādhān goes as far as to say that this book was relied upon by

⁹¹⁷ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 41-2 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 71.

⁹¹⁸ Ibid.

⁹¹⁹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 42-3 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 71.

⁹²⁰ Regarding ʿUthmān in particular he relates from Abū Qulāba that those who murdered ʿUthmān did so out of jealousy (*ghayra*). He goes on to relate another narration from an unknown source that, "I didn't wish for evil to befall ʿUthmān except that some evil befell me and if I had wished for his death then I would surely have been killed." See Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʾirīn*, p. 75.

⁹²¹ For example al-Muḥāsibī himself states in *al-Makāsib*, "This community (*umma*) was preceded at its beginning by tribulations (*fitan*), disputes (*ikhtilāfāt*), division (*tafarruq*), as well as the tribulations of al-Jamal, Ṣiffin, Ibn Zubayr, al-ʿIrāq, al-Jamājum in Baṣrah, Kūfa and in other places. Indeed, the Commander of the Faithful (*Amīr al-Muʾminīn*) ʿUthmān was killed unjustly and out of aggression." See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Makāsib*, ed. al-Khusht, pp. 92-3 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 72.

⁹²² For example, regarding Mother of the Faithful (*Umm al-Muʾminīn*) ʿĀʾisha and those who attacked her, he says, "They are indeed a people who are misguided." See Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʾirīn*, p. 75.

⁹²³ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 71-2.

⁹²⁴ Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʾirīn*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 74.

him and his associates.⁹²⁵ Similarly, Smith quotes al-Dhahabī as mentioning a work by al-Muḥāsibī entitled ‘*Kitāb al-Kaff ‘ammā Shuḥira*’⁹²⁶ *bayn al-Ṣaḥāba* regarding the same topic.⁹²⁷ It is interesting that both Smith and Maḥmūd conclude that these two works are in fact one treatise, despite the differing titles, as it is highly improbable that al-Muḥāsibī wrote two books on one topic.⁹²⁸ In either case, the work concerns the latter period of ‘Uthmān’s era and the disagreements that occurred which ultimately lead to his death, as well as the dispute between ‘Alī on the one hand and ‘Ā’isha and Mu‘āwiya on the other.⁹²⁹

7. *Kitāb al-Ḥubb li ‘llāh wa Marātib Ahlihi*

Smith is alone in mentioning this work⁹³⁰ and identifies it with *Faṣl al-Maḥabba*, included by Abū Nu‘aym in his ‘*Hilyat al-Awliyā’*’.⁹³¹ She states that this is the most mystical of al-Muḥāsibī’s writings, in which he describes:

The love of God for His saints, and the signs by which these lovers of God may be known while they dwell in this world among men. To such lovers is granted the Vision of God and that communion with Him, which is the aim of the mystic, the indwelling of the human by the divine.⁹³²

⁹²⁵ Al-Sam‘ānī, *Kitāb al-Anṣāb*, p. 539; al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, ed. al-Zaybaq and Murshid, vol. 1, p. 327; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā’irīn*, p. 74 and ‘Uwayḍa, *Al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī*, p. 10.

⁹²⁶ Maḥmūd suggests that the correct title of the work should read “*Shajara*” not “*Shuḥira*” so that the meaning makes more sense. See Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā’irīn*, p. 74.

⁹²⁷ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-‘Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 36 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 58.

⁹²⁸ See Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā’irīn*, p. 74 and Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, p. 58.

⁹²⁹ Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā’irīn*, p. 74.

⁹³⁰ It is interesting to note here that there is a certain amount of doubt surrounding the authorship of this particular work as it is not at all in keeping with the general style and teaching of al-Muḥāsibī. This is compounded by the fact that this treatise is related by al-Junayd whose own thought tended to the mystical more than that of al-Muḥāsibī. In addition, al-Junayd also narrated from another major Sufi figure of the period, namely Abū ‘Alī Aḥmad b. ‘Āṣim al-Anṭākī, who had a long relationship with al-Junayd and many researchers consider this work to belong him for the following reasons: firstly, he was from al-Muḥāsibī’s peers and became well known, similar to al-Muḥāsibī, for his discussion of the heart, to such a degree that al-Dārānī (d. 215/830) termed him ‘the spy of the hearts’ (*jāsūs al-qulūb*) because of his sharp perception. Secondly, these extracts regarding the topic of divine love are tainted with strong philosophical overtone uncharacteristic of al-Muḥāsibī’s method, teaching and style, as he was staunchly against this form of ‘intoxicated’ spirituality.

Those who support the idea that al-Muḥāsibī did write this work defend their opinion by saying that if al-Muḥāsibī’s name had not been associated with his book ‘*al-Tawahhum*’ then no one would have attributed this work to him, as it is uncharacteristic of his general style. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to think that al-Muḥāsibī may well have written the work in question also, despite it being beyond the regular scope of his teachings.

See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-‘Aql wa Fahm al-Qur’ān*, ed. al-Quwwatli, p. 76; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-‘Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 36; al-Kalābādhi, *al-Ta’arruf li Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*, ed. Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn, pp. 17 and 29; al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya fi ‘Ilm al-Taṣawwuf*, ed. Zurayq, pp. 394-5; al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, ed. Shurayba, pp. 137-40; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 57-8 and Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, p. 163.

⁹³¹ See al-Aṣfahānī, *Hilyat al-Awliyā’*, ed. al-Iskandarī, vol. 10, pp. 66-9; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-‘Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 36; ‘Uwayḍa, *al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī*, pp. 42-45; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 57-8 and Van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt*, p. 15.

⁹³² Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, pp. 57-8.

5.4 The Chronological Sequence of al-Muḥāsibī's Works

Having discussed the works of al-Muḥāsibī at length and in some detail, it may be worth asking, 'Are we able to place these works in a chronological sequence?' This issue is no easy task, since neither the classical Arabic scholars nor the contemporary Western writers have contributed a great deal in this regard. In addition, there is little in the works themselves to assist us in this task, as only a minimum of historical detail is provided by al-Muḥāsibī himself.⁹³³ Consequently, it is also worth mentioning here the efforts of some scholars to provide a chronological sequence for these works in order to assess the various stages that al-Muḥāsibī may have gone through as an author and writer. There have been two seminal attempts to provide such information, namely by Maḥmūd, in his work '*Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*' and al-Quwwatī in his edited version of '*al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*'. Bearing this in mind both these view points will be presented briefly here so as to provide the reader with an overview of their opinions.

5.4.1 The Chronological Sequence of al-Muḥāsibī's Works Suggested by Maḥmūd

The essence of Maḥmūd's discussion revolves around the concept of al-Muḥāsibī as a Sufi and he begins with the basic and logical premise that al-Muḥāsibī was not born a Sufi and therefore must have undergone various stages of development before he reached the level expressed in his more complex and in depth works. Similarly we do not find any evidence of al-Muḥāsibī changing 'overnight' in adopting a spiritual path nor do we find him reaching an elevated form of Sufism until the latter period of his life. Indeed, we find that al-Muḥāsibī, at the beginning of his career as a writer, can be observed to have adopted the general style of religious writings of the period.⁹³⁴

However, as he progressed in his path to Sufism, he also grew in age and as a result became more mature in his thinking, as it is at this stage that a person not only relies upon the knowledge he has acquired but also upon the experience he has gained. Consequently, al-Muḥāsibī gained a higher level of spirituality at this stage, but this is not all; this stage of al-Muḥāsibī's life and career was also characterised by an outstanding ability to examine and diagnose the faults, diseases and treatment of the human soul, for which of course, he later became renowned.⁹³⁵

⁹³³ Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 88.

⁹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-9.

⁹³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

As he progressed in age and spiritual experience he reached the pinnacle of his Sufi teachings. It is in this period that we find al-Muḥāsibī began writing works filled with counsels aimed at those searching for the correct path regarding spiritual matters and that the examination of the human soul becomes less frequent as if it became only an echo of the previous stage.⁹³⁶

In summary we can say that Maḥmūd separates the stages of al-Muḥāsibī's life with regard to his Sufism into the following three categories:

1. An initial stage where al-Muḥāsibī was essentially influenced by the style and writing of the scholars of his era.⁹³⁷ Maḥmūd exemplifies this in al-Muḥāsibī's '*Fahm al-Qur'ān*', as this work concerns various religious issues and matters concerning belief, being written in a typically argumentative style which was common during this period.⁹³⁸

2. An intermediate period⁹³⁹ where he progressed in his path to Sufism and became more mature in his thinking, characterised by an outstanding ability in his examination of the human soul.⁹⁴⁰ Maḥmūd exemplifies this in al-Muḥāsibī's '*al-Ri'āyā*', as this work shows his skill in determining the faults of the soul, his depth of comprehension regarding their cure and his powerful mental ability.⁹⁴¹

3. The advanced stage of his life where he reached the peak of his teaching, turning his attention to guidance of others specifically and reaching the pinnacle of his Sufism. Maḥmūd exemplifies this in al-Muḥāsibī's '*al-Waṣāyā*', as this work concerns the beginning of how to attain the true path by advising the aspirant of the course of action he must adopt to achieve this.⁹⁴²

⁹³⁶ Ibid., pp. 90-1.

⁹³⁷ Maḥmūd concludes that this period begins with al-Muḥāsibī's first efforts as a writer, which is difficult to define, until the age of 38. Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 91.

⁹³⁸ Ibid., pp. 88-94.

⁹³⁹ Maḥmūd concludes that this period begins with the end of the first period until the age of 65. See Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 92.

⁹⁴⁰ Maḥmūd also concludes that al-Muḥāsibī's '*al-Makāsib*' is also from this period not only because of the depth of knowledge and insight displayed therein but also due to the fact that al-Muḥāsibī mentions the death of al-Ma'mūn, which occurred in 218/833, making al-Muḥāsibī at least 53 at the time. See Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, p. 95.

⁹⁴¹ In addition, a second conclusive proof confirms this as al-Muḥāsibī mentions the death of Bābak, which occurred in 221/836, meaning that al-Muḥāsibī wrote this work having reached the age of at least 56. Al-Quwwatli confers with Maḥmūd on this point and consequently they agree that the work is of later phase in al-Muḥāsibī's life. Quite surprisingly Mazālī refutes this view with various rather unconvincing arguments. See Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, pp. 89-91, 93-4 and 95-6; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*, ed. al-Quwwatli, p. 75; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 67-72 and footnote 954 below.

⁹⁴² See Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, pp. 90-1, 92-3 and 96.

5.4.2 The Chronological Sequence of al-Muḥāsibī's Works Suggested by al-Quwwatī

In assessing the chronological sequence of al-Muḥāsibī's works, al-Quwwatī appreciates the suggestions made by Maḥmūd, but differs from him in the sense that he suggests only two periods in the chronological sequence of al-Muḥāsibī's writing. He recognizes the initial period suggested by Maḥmūd, but pays little attention to it, as he considers the information regarding this primary stage to be unreliable and consequently he distinguishes two main periods, which are identifiable regarding al-Muḥāsibī's authorship.⁹⁴³

These two periods can be described as follows:

1. A period that he terms 'a transition phase (*fatrat al-taḥawwul*)', which he considers to last from 195/811 to 207/823.⁹⁴⁴ By this al-Quwwatī seems to suggest that this is a period in which al-Muḥāsibī's tendency to intellectualism (*al-naz'at al-'aqliyya*) is apparent in his writing, before a definitive change to Sufism became manifest. To this effect al-Quwwatī, quite surprisingly contradicts Maḥmūd, by including '*al-Waṣāyā*' as being from al-Muḥāsibī's works in this period.⁹⁴⁵ In addition other works included by al-Quwwatī in this period are '*Kitāb al-Khalwa wa 'l-Tanaqqul fī 'l-'Ibāda wa Darajāt al-'Ābidīn*'⁹⁴⁶, '*Ādāb al-Nufūs*'⁹⁴⁷, '*Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*'⁹⁴⁸ and '*al-Tawahhum*'⁹⁴⁹.⁹⁵⁰

⁹⁴³ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 63.

⁹⁴⁴ This being the period in which the control of the state came to rest in the hands of al-Ma'mūn. How al-Quwwatī defines this so precisely however is not at all clear. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 63.

⁹⁴⁵ Al-Quwwatī justifies this by quoting the fact that al-Muḥāsibī warns of the schisms which affect the Muslim community, this being directly representative of the events of the dispute between al-Amin and al-Ma'mūn, as well as the theological sectarianism, which was also apparent at the time. Despite this the researcher feels that Maḥmūd's is closer to the truth, i. e. that '*al-Waṣāyā*' is from the latter stages of al-Muḥāsibī's writing. This is for a number of reasons; firstly, the fact that al-Muḥāsibī mentions the schisms which affect the Muslim community, is not sufficient proof that the work itself is from this period as the whole work has a retrospective feel, as if al-Muḥāsibī is looking back on a period which he had experienced first hand. In addition, the nature of this work, i.e. that it is a set of counsels, indicates that this was wise advice from a person who had experienced the hardship of such times and that he was only too eager to guide those at the beginning of their path to guidance.

Secondly, '*al-Waṣāyā*' is written in an eloquent style, indicating that it is the product of an accomplished author, who was not at the beginning of his career nor in a 'transition period'. Similarly, al-Quwwatī himself mentions that al-Muḥāsibī includes a large section discussing taking the soul to account (*al-muḥāsaba*) and the dispraisal of ostentation (*al-riyā'*), these being a pillars of his spiritual teaching and as such, it is unlikely that al-Muḥāsibī would include such a detailed account of this aspect of his thought while he was still in a preliminary stage of his career.

Thirdly, al-Quwwatī himself also mentions that much of the writing produced by al-Muḥāsibī was the familiar 'question and answer' format whereas '*al-Waṣāyā*' does not manifest this method. Thus, even the style employed by the author is different in this work, further suggesting that it is not from this period. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 63-5 and 68.

⁹⁴⁶ Al-Quwwatī justifies this by stating that the subject matter of '*al-Waṣāyā*' and '*Kitāb al-Khalwa wa 'l-Tanaqqul fī 'l-'Ibāda wa Darajāt al-'Ābidīn*' are similar and therefore from a similar period. However this is hardly a convincing argument as the style of both works differs entirely. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 65.

⁹⁴⁷ Once again al-Quwwatī justifies this by stating that the 'spirit' of '*Ādāb al-Nufūs*' is similar to that '*al-Waṣāyā*' and '*Kitāb al-Khalwa wa 'l-Tanaqqul fī 'l-'Ibāda wa Darajāt al-'Ābidīn*' and therefore, they are from a

2. A period which he terms 'a instruction phase (*fatrat al-tadrīs*)', in which al-Muḥāsibī taught his thought to others and which al-Quwwatī suggests lasted from 207/823 to 236/851. During this phase al-Quwwatī alludes to the fact that al-Muḥāsibī's tendency towards scholastic theology (*al-naz'at al-kalāmiyya*) dominates the early period of this part of his life and begins to be mixed with a tendency also for Sufism. In addition, he also begins to include a large number of narrations to support his views, which al-Quwwatī suggests was in reply to the harsh reaction of al-Ḥanābila to his refutation of the sects common at that time. Al-Quwwatī also suggests that it was in this era that al-Muḥāsibī's writing style reached its pinnacle in terms of eloquence and subject matter. As for the works included by al-Quwwatī in this period, they are: '*Kitāb Mā'iyyat al-ʿAql wa Ma'nāhā*'⁹⁵¹, '*Kitāb al-ʿAzama*', '*Kitāb Iḥkām al-Tawba*',⁹⁵² '*Kitāb al-Dimā*'⁹⁵³, '*al-Makāsib*', '*Kitāb Masā'il fī*

similar period. However this is also not a convincing argument, as the depth shown '*Ādāb al-Nufūs*' regarding the treatment of the human soul is far greater generally than in either of the other two works. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 65-6.

⁹⁴⁸ Again al-Quwwatī justifies this by stating that the 'spirit' of '*Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*' is similar to that of '*Ādāb al-Nufūs*' and therefore, they are from a similar period. It is true that subject matter of each work is similar in content but the manner and style of each work is completely different. As mentioned previously '*Ādāb al-Nufūs*' is an in depth discussion of human psychology, whereas '*Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*' is more a brief manual on behavioural and character traits. In addition the '*Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*' is written in a concise, often poetic style. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 66 and pp. 223-5 above.

⁹⁴⁹ Al-Quwwatī suggests that '*al-Tawahhum*' is also from this period as it demonstrates al-Muḥāsibī's tendency to the intellect (*al-naz'at al-aqliyya*), as do the other books in this period. However, the researcher differs with both al-Quwwatī and Maḥmūd - who considers this to be from what he terms his 'second period'. This is due the fact this particular work is characterised by its eloquent and powerful style, which through its vivid imagery, has a profound affect on the reader. This is obviously not the product of a writer at the beginning of his career but is indeed the result of many years of accomplished penmanship. In addition, it has already been mentioned that this work has a very personal style and is without doubt the product of his own reflection on the journey through the hereafter. This being the case, it is also highly likely that al-Muḥāsibī produced this work near the end of his life, while himself preparing for death. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 66-8 and Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, pp. 95-6.

⁹⁵⁰ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 65-8.

⁹⁵¹ It seems highly ironic here that al-Quwwatī chooses to begin this section where al-Muḥāsibī is supposed to move away from his tendency to the intellect (*al-naz'at al-aqliyya*) by including a work that is concerned entirely with the intellect (*al-aql*). See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 69.

⁹⁵² Al-Quwwatī considers both of these works to be of the same period that '*Fahm al-Qurʾān*' was written as they have a similar subject matter in the sense that they discuss various aspects of faith which were points of dispute at the time. However, as Maḥmūd asserted previously, these works are typical of the subject matter and style of al-Muḥāsibī's contemporaries in the same period and as such are not likely to have written at this later, more advanced stage. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 69 and page 246 above.

⁹⁵³ It is even stranger that al-Quwwatī would attribute this work to any period so precisely since it has been lost and therefore is impossible to verify. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 70-2 and pages 240-4 above.

'*l-Zuhd wa Ghayrihī*', '*Kitāb al-Masā'il fī A'māl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ*'⁹⁵⁴ and '*al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*'.⁹⁵⁵

In conclusion, it would seem that Maḥmūd's survey of the chronological sequence of al-Muḥāsibī's works is far more useful than that of al-Quwwatī, as it is not only more representative of his life and career but is also more accurate in attributing the works themselves to a specific period.

It is also worth mentioning here that both scholars seem to have overlooked an important aspect regarding al-Muḥāsibī's writings; in assessing the chronological sequence of his works, they have seemed to lay great emphasis on the role of subject matter, which is a rather arbitrary means of appraisal. For example, al-Quwwatī casually lumps together '*al-Makāsib*', '*Kitāb Masā'il fī 'l-Zuhd wa Ghayrihī*' and '*Kitāb al-Masā'il fī A'māl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ*', as being from one period and where there can be no doubt that their subject matter is similar, there is little or nothing to suggest that they were written in a similar time frame.

In addition, al-Muḥāsibī himself was a unique author in both his style, subject matter and in particular, the method which he employed in authoring his works, as the incident with al-Junayd illustrates only too well.⁹⁵⁶ Al-Muḥāsibī, was an author who wrote only when the need arose, whether for his own personal journey of discovery regarding his own soul, or whether counselling his students concerning their journey along the path.⁹⁵⁷ However, even this is not easy to distinguish due to the common 'question and answer' style that al-Muḥāsibī adopts and in either case it provides little information regarding the sequence in which al-Muḥāsibī's works were written.⁹⁵⁸ As has been mentioned previously, it would also seem that al-Muḥāsibī wrote various concise works, which were expounded in later, more expansive ventures and as such, it further proves his ability as a teacher and a spiritual guide, as each of these treatises was written with a specific goal, or specific students' needs

⁹⁵⁴ Al-Quwwatī suggests that these three works are also from a similar period due to the comparable nature of their subject matter. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 72-4.

⁹⁵⁵ Both al-Quwwatī and Maḥmūd agree on the fact that al-Muḥāsibī wrote this work at a relatively late stage of his career, which is apparent both from the style of the presentation and the treatment of the subject matter. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 74-5 and Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā'irīn*, pp. 89-90 and 95.

⁹⁵⁶ See p. 154 above.

⁹⁵⁷ Even al-Quwwatī himself recognises this concerning al-Muḥāsibī but seems not to take this into account when discussing the chronological sequence of al-Muḥāsibī's works. See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 62.

⁹⁵⁸ In fact this information only benefits us if the student is mentioned, as in this case we can therefore assume such a work was written in a 'teaching period' and not in an initial phase of al-Muḥāsibī's life.

in mind. Thus, a more appropriate question to pose, due to its methodological significance, is not when al-Muḥāsibī's works were written but why were they written and for whom were they written?

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter it stated that the works of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī were reported to have number approximately two hundred.⁹⁵⁹ Having surveyed the available literature and collated this information, it would appear that there are thirty-six works that can be confirmed as being al-Muḥāsibī's. This is by no means the two hundred mentioned by al-Subkī (d. 771/1370), but it is nevertheless, a significant percentage of them. In addition, the researcher feels that this chapter is the single most thorough discussion of this topic and has produced a variety of important information regarding this eminent author.

What is also apparent from this discussion is the significance of al-Muḥāsibī as a writer; not only was he the first to write in depth on spiritual matters but he was also the first to treat the human soul in so much detail. What is also apparent is that this was not the only field with which al-Muḥāsibī was familiar, but indeed, he was well acquainted with a variety of Islamic fields of learning, including the views of those before him and those of his own contemporaries. In addition, al-Muḥāsibī clearly reflected the society in which he lived as he not only discussed the issues which concerned the scholarly elite, but also debated the opinions of the various sects present at the time and paid great attention to the spiritual welfare of his community.

Having discussed al-Muḥāsibī's works in detail and at great length it is appropriate that attention is now given to his thought and teaching and indeed, this is the objective of the following chapter, where the methodology of al-Muḥāsibī regarding the purification of the soul will be discussed.

⁹⁵⁹ See p. 193 above.

Chapter 6: Al-Muḥāsibī's Methodology Regarding *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*

Since the discussion of the two major aspects of this thesis, namely the concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* in Islam and the life and works of al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī have now been completed, it is appropriate in this final chapter to discuss the concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* from al-Muḥāsibī's perspective, through the medium of his works. In this sense the current chapter will follow a similar structure to that of chapter two where both the terms *tazkiyat* and *nafs* were discussed in detail. The major emphasis, however, will be on comparing the teachings of al-Muḥāsibī with the ideas presented in both the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, since, in terms of language, it is not expected that al-Muḥāsibī's usage of the Arabic language would differ greatly and similarly, much of what has been presented from the perspective of Muslim scholarship occurred in the post-al-Muḥāsibī period.

This being the case the current chapter will examine the usage of the term *tazkiya* in the works of al-Muḥāsibī and its various synonyms to establish this scholar's understanding and usage of the term. However, since al-Muḥāsibī is regarded by many to be an erudite exponent of the inner workings of the human soul, much more emphasis will be laid on providing an exposition of his understanding of the term *nafs*. With this in mind the analysis here will be concerned with the various facets of *tazkiyat al-nafs* within the works of al-Muḥāsibī, as well as discussing his concept of the term *nafs*; the qualities of the *nafs*; the states of the *nafs* and the nature of the *nafs*, as presented in the extant works of this author. In addition, al-Muḥāsibī's theory and methodology of *tazkiyat al-nafs* will be examined and the salient features of his approach will be identified.

6.1 The Concept of the Term *Tazkiya* within the Works of al-Muḥāsibī

Upon surveying the works of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, it is of little surprise that the compound term '*tazkiyat al-nafs*' is found. However, what is surprising perhaps is the fact that the incidence of this phrase is very rare, occurring only on a few occasions and what is more surprising is that it is not used at all in the context used thus far in this thesis. Indeed, on each occasion the phrase is used in an exclusively negative context, as alluded to in both the language and Qur'ān sections of chapter two, meaning to indicate self praise, this being considered a blameworthy quality of the human being.⁹⁶⁰ It is worth noting that al-Muḥāsibī, when discussing this concept, even uses one of the verses mentioned above in chapter two, namely (53:32), "And do not attribute purity to yourselves (*wa lā tuzakkū*

⁹⁶⁰ See pp. 49 and 57 above.

anfusakum)”, when commenting on the issue of a person attributing ‘purity’ and excellence to himself, particularly regarding religious practice and adds the commentary of Zayd b. Aslam, who is reported to have said that the verse means, ‘And do not attribute innocence to your souls.’ In addition, al-Muḥāsibī himself comments in this regard saying that a person who engages in such self praise (*zakkā nafsahu*) has indeed been afflicted with self conceit (*al-ʿujb*) and consequently, does not censure his soul regarding its contradiction of the divine command, which may ultimately lead to his destruction.⁹⁶¹

In addition to this usage of the term ‘*tazkiyaʿ*’, other derivatives of the form II verb ‘*zakkā*’, are also found, but not in conjunction with the term ‘*al-nafs*’. Indeed, it is almost exclusively used with the term ‘deed (*ʿamal*)’, where the phrases ‘pure deed (*ʿamal zakkī*)’ and ‘the deeds have been purified (*zakkat al-ʿmāl/ tazkū al-ʿmāl*)’ are found, seemingly indicating actions of the heart and limbs, which were performed sincerely, being free from any ulterior motive and as such, are purely for God alone.⁹⁶²

Although the term ‘*tazkiyaʿ*’ is somewhat of a rarity in the works of al-Muḥāsibī, it is also worth noting that other synonymous terms with similar connotations of ‘cleansing’ and ‘purification’ are also found. One such word is ‘*taṣfiyaʿ*’ meaning to ‘clarify, rectify and purify’ and being used in conjunction once more with the term righteous deeds (*ʿmāl al-birr*) in the sense of being purified from the influence of the soul’s appetites (*shahawāt*).⁹⁶³ In a similar example, we also find another synonymous term to that of ‘*tazkiyaʿ*’, which is the word ‘*yunqīʿ*’ being derived from ‘*al-naqāʿ*’ and once again meaning ‘purified and cleansed’. In this instance al-Muḥāsibī uses this phrase regarding the heart (*al-qalb*) and denotes its ‘purification’ from the influences of the soul (*al-nafs*), the desires (*al-hawā*) and the appetites (*al-shahawāt*).⁹⁶⁴

Despite this however, by far the most commonly utilised synonymous term with that of ‘*tazkiyaʿ*’ are derivatives of the form I verb ‘*ṭaharā*’ and include both the form II *maṣdar* ‘*al-taḥīr*’ and the equivalent form V conjugation ‘*al-taṭahhur*’, which once again all have the connotation of ‘cleansing, purging and purification’. One of these derived phrases in particular ‘*al-ṭahāraʿ*’ seems to indicate a highly desired state of purification as both the true

⁹⁶¹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī in *al-Mashriq*, Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāṭ, 1955, p. 49; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 38-40 and 73-5 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 417.

⁹⁶² See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 69; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī in *al-Mashriq*, Ādhār/Nīsān, 1954, p. 188; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Makāsib*, ed. al-Khusht, pp. 54 and 96; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa ʿl-Rujūʿ ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 260-1 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 588.

⁹⁶³ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 88.

⁹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

believers and paradise are referred to as being ‘*ahl al-ṭahāra*’ and ‘*dār al-ṭahāra*’ respectively.⁹⁶⁵ This term is also used for those wishing to ‘purify’ themselves “before meeting their Lord” via repentance (*al-tawba*) and regret (*al-nadm*) for the defilement (*al-danas*) of every sin (*al-dhanb*), transgression (*al-ithm*) and evil deed (*al-sayyi’a*) committed by the heart and the limbs and also, by turning away from all that Allāh hates (*al-ināba*).⁹⁶⁶ In fact al-Muḥāsibī considers this so important that he states:

The best and most beneficial of virtues is that you consider your soul (*nafsuka*) lesser than its true position; that your inward (*sarīra*) be better than your outward (*‘alāniya*) and that you are just to people without requesting justice for yourself, as there can only be purification (*taḥīr*) and then action (*‘amal*) and purification is more appropriate for us than action. Purification (*taḥīr*) is to move away from all evil (*al-sharr*) to the foundation upon which all good (*al-khayr*) is built, as a building may collapse but the foundations will remain intact and equally, it is impossible that the foundations collapse and the building remains intact.⁹⁶⁷

Similarly, he exhorts his readers thus, “My brothers, scrutinise the hidden aspects of the soul and the secrets of the hearts and purify them (*ṭaharūhā*) from enmity, envy, rancour, malice, having a bad opinion [of someone], animosity and hatred.”⁹⁶⁸

Therefore, we can see that even though the works of al-Muḥāsibī are not a rich source of the word ‘*tazkiya*’, they not only contain a great many synonymous terms and concepts, which are comparative to those already discussed regarding the principle of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, but in many ways are closely identified with them.

6.2 The Facets of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* within the Works of al-Muḥāsibī

It will be remembered from chapter two that from the Qur’ānic perspective the process of *tazkiya* was a multi-faceted and multi-layered process, involving three main elements: the divine, the prophetic and the human being himself. It was seen for example that the ultimate source and agent of *tazkiya* is Allāh, as it is He who ultimately decides who will be purified. Similarly, to facilitate the process of *tazkiya* divinely chosen emissaries are selected from mankind to provide an interface between God and His creation, so as to provide

⁹⁶⁵ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā’il fī A’māl al-Qulūb wa ‘l-Jawāriḥ wa ‘l-Makāsib wa ‘l-‘Aql*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad ‘Aṭā, pp. 56-7 and 67 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Ma’rifa wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 69 and 74-5.

⁹⁶⁶ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā’ih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 60; al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu‘ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir Aṭā, pp. 41, 55 and 69; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-‘Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 92; al-Muḥāsibī, *Fahm al-Ṣalāt*, ed. al-Khusht, pp. 42-3; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-‘Aql wa Fahm al-Qur’ān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 273 and 307; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā’il fī A’māl al-Qulūb wa ‘l-Jawāriḥ wa ‘l-Makāsib wa ‘l-‘Aql*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad ‘Aṭā, pp. 111 and 130 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri’āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 104, 106, 179, 180, 588 and 662.

⁹⁶⁷ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 76.

⁹⁶⁸ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā’ih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 40.

guidance through the receiving and the application of revelation. The final aspect of this process is the role of the individual himself, in taking on board this revealed message and implementing it, accompanied by expending his own considerable efforts in an attempt to conquer the base elements of his soul.⁹⁶⁹

Therefore, it is appropriate here to examine the works of al-Muḥāsibī to see if there is a corresponding concept within his understanding of how to deal with the purification and development of oneself. Upon surveying al-Muḥāsibī's works, we find that there is definite reference to these three facets of *tazkiya* and therefore, the discussion will begin here with a discussion of the divine element.

Regarding this aspect of *tazkiya*, al-Muḥāsibī places so much emphasis on the divine element that he holds that the beginning of the path of the aspirant journeying to Allāh is that He makes him aware of the desires of his own soul, such that he is able to make it submissive to the wishes of his Lord.⁹⁷⁰ Even more important however, is that al-Muḥāsibī lays great emphasis on supplicating to God (*al-du'ā*) for His bounty and assistance in attempting to make both the soul and its desires subservient to His command.⁹⁷¹ One of the most eloquent of examples of this is his admonition of the soul where he addresses it directly saying:

Woe unto you (*wayḥaki*)! Seek shelter (*ista'īni*) with the Most Merciful of those who are merciful and raise your complaint to the Most Generous of those who are generous! Continually seek His aid and do not become weary due to the extent of your grievance, so that perhaps He may have mercy upon your weakness and answer you. Indeed, your disaster has been magnified, your affliction intensified and your call unanswered; all of your stratagems have been severed and your means departed and so there is no place to flee, no shelter [to be sought], no escape [from God's anger] and no saviour except your Lord.⁹⁷²

Therefore, it is clear to see that al-Muḥāsibī does not underestimate the divine element in the process of *tazkiya* but rather apportions it a vital role. The seeking of God's aid is not only restricted to the soul, however, but also to the negative effect that the Devil has on it, as the following excerpt clarifies:

⁹⁶⁹ See sections 2.2.1, 2.2.3 and 2.2.4 above.

⁹⁷⁰ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Bad' Man Anāba ilā Allāh*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 23-4 and 34 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 433.

⁹⁷¹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 119, 128 and 135-6; al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Ma'rifa wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 34, 37-8 and 70-1; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa 'l-Rujū' ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 266; al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu'ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Aṭā, pp. 67-9 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 81, 411, 433, 435 and 438.

⁹⁷² Al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu'ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Aṭā, p. 48.

And flee to Allāh the Exalted and seek shelter in Him in all of your actions and demonstrate your poverty, your desperate need and your refuge in Him, as you have no stratagem [to save you] and there is no power except through Him. And ask Allāh the Exalted to give you victory over him [Satan] through striving and finding pleasure in weeping and humility, by day and by night, secretly and openly, privately and publicly, until combating your soul becomes insignificant in your eyes because of your knowledge of your adversary [i.e. Satan] and due to Allāh granting you success, as indeed he [i.e. Satan] is the enemy of your Lord.⁹⁷³

This being the case, reliance on God and seeking his assistance (*al-isti'āna/al-istghātha*) is seemingly a recurrent theme within al-Muḥāsibī's works as he continuously exhorts his readers to undertake this form of worship.⁹⁷⁴ Thus, from these texts alone it becomes clear that al-Muḥāsibī was not only aware of this divine contribution to the process of purification but also gave it precedence when approaching the topic of reforming the soul. In this regard he was clearly of the opinion that the disciplining of the *nafs* would not, first of all, take place if Allāh did not will it and grant it and secondly, if the human exponent of *tazkiya* did not put his complete trust in his Lord and seek His aid upon such a path. Thus, we can conclude that al-Muḥāsibī was in complete agreement with the Qur'ānic perspective on this issue, being in agreement with the concepts previously seen in chapter two.⁹⁷⁵

With regard to the second element of the process of purification, i.e. the role of divinely chosen messengers being sent with revelation to guide the aspirant on the path to Allāh, we also find a number of references in the works of al-Muḥāsibī. The first of these examples was seen in the previous discussion concerning the divine element as we saw that al-Muḥāsibī consistently encourages the seeking of God's help in purifying the soul via supplication - an act that was equally encouraged by the Prophet and which was seen in practice in chapter two.⁹⁷⁶ Similarly, it was also seen in chapter four that al-Muḥāsibī was known for his transmission of *ḥadīth*⁹⁷⁷ and upon examining his works we find that this was far from being a purely academic exercise, as he utilises such narrations to add authenticity to the discussion and more importantly, to act as a source of guidance for his readers.⁹⁷⁸

⁹⁷³ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Ma'rifa wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, p. 34.

⁹⁷⁴ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Ma'rifa wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 25, 34, 37-8, 54, 56, 70-1, 77, 86 and 88-9; al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu'ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Aṭā, pp. 48-9, 56-7 and 67-9; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum*, ed. al-Khusht, p. 31 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 138, 411, 435 and 438.

⁹⁷⁵ Cf. sections 2.2.1, 2.2.3 and 2.2.4 above.

⁹⁷⁶ See section 2.3.1 above.

⁹⁷⁷ See sections 4.2, 4.4 and 4.6.3 above.

⁹⁷⁸ There are many examples of this in the works of al-Muḥāsibī but one of the most apparent is his discussion of careless use of the tongue in *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 62-3.

Indeed, al-Muḥāsibī encourages the examination and study of the knowledge associated with the narrations of the Prophet, since this has a direct effect on the soul, being an alternative to the mundane, worldly and quite often sinful discourse offered by the rest of humankind.⁹⁷⁹ His encouragement does not stop there, however, as he also enjoins strict adherence to the Prophetic practice (*ittibāʿ*), this being the criterion with which all actions should be judged.⁹⁸⁰ In this regard he provides his own understanding of the term '*sunna*':

As for being correct (*al-ṣawāb*) it is the *sunna*; and by the *sunna* I do not mean excessive prayer, fasting or charity, nor [do I mean by the *sunna*] the intellect or understanding, nor peculiar wisdom, nor eloquence or admonition but rather, strict adherence and submission to the book of Allāh and the practice of his Prophet and the rightly guided imams who came after him.⁹⁸¹

Similarly, the process of *tazkiya* via prophetic guidance is not only restricted to adherence to the Prophetic practice but al-Muḥāsibī also introduces a second concept in this regard, which may be termed 'emulation of the Prophet' (*al-taʿassī bi 'l-rasūl*). This emulation is not merely a 'blind following' and differs from strict adherence in the sense that al-Muḥāsibī intends that one should emulate the Prophet in his every action, not simply because one is commanded to do so, but rather, out of love and reverence for him. This may be considered a particularly useful device in cleansing the soul as someone who undertakes such emulation prefers the actions, motives and practice of the Prophet to that of his own and as such, leaves his *nafs* no portion from its needs, whims and desires. Furthermore, al-Muḥāsibī considers this to be the characteristic of the knowledgeable spiritual guide and it is such people who should be followed and indeed, he quotes this as being one of the attributes of the scholars of the hereafter (*'ulamā' al-ākhirā*) whom he sought in his youth and whom he eventually found.⁹⁸²

Thus once again it would seem that al-Muḥāsibī is following a similar methodology regarding this facet of *tazkiya* as that seen previously in chapter two⁹⁸³ and in this respect is very much within the Islamic paradigm.

This leaves the final facet of the process of *tazkiya*, namely the human being as the individual who is personally responsible for undertaking the task of purification by employing the aforementioned facets and by exerting his own efforts, in subjecting the

⁹⁷⁹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Bad' Man Anāba ilā Allāh*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 27.

⁹⁸⁰ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 57-8 and 78 p. 145; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, pp. 93-4 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifā wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, p. 87.

⁹⁸¹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 78.

⁹⁸² See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'iḥ*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 12-13 and 94.

⁹⁸³ Cf. section 2.2.1 above.

negative qualities of his soul and enhancing its positive potentiality. When surveying the works of al-Muḥāsibī one finds that this is by far the most important feature of *tazkiyat al-nafs* from his perspective. As such, his works have left a rich and insightful account of the human condition and rather than discuss this important facet of purification at this juncture, it will be left to be seen in the coming sections and in particular section 6.7, where al-Muḥāsibī's theory and methodology of *tazkiyat al-nafs* will be discussed.

6.3 The Concept of the Term *Nafs* within the Works of al-Muḥāsibī

On examining the concept and usage of the term '*nafs*' in the Qur'ān, it was found that a number of connotations can be found that included: the *nafs* meaning the soul (*al-rūḥ*); the *nafs* meaning the human being's power of understanding (*al-quwā al-mufakkira*); the *nafs* meaning the heart (*al-qalb*); *nafs* meaning the inclination to good and evil (*quwā al-khayr wa 'l-sharr*) and the *nafs* meaning the human being (*al-insān*).⁹⁸⁴ Since the vast majority of al-Muḥāsibī's works deal with the term '*nafs*' in one form or another, it is equally appropriate here to examine the works of this author and assess the usages of this term therein.

It was noted in chapter two that the most common synonymous term associated with the term '*nafs*' was the word *rūḥ*, which may be commonly referred to as 'the soul' in English. Since the term '*rūḥ*' is commonly associated with death, as this occurs when the *rūḥ* exits the body, it is little surprise that al-Muḥāsibī utilises this term in exactly the same context.⁹⁸⁵ We find that when discussing the state of an immoral person, al-Muḥāsibī describes such a person thus, "Indeed some of them wish that their souls would never be extracted (*yunzi'a nafsuhu*)" and similarly, "... and then he will know that his weakness will not save him from the punishment of Allāh but unfortunately his soul will be extracted (*tanzi'u nafsahu*) and then he will ask to return."⁹⁸⁶ Therefore, it is easy to see from these two examples that al-Muḥāsibī uses the term '*nafs*' to mean its synonym '*rūḥ*' in exactly the same way that we have seen it used previously.

Further evidence of this is that al-Muḥāsibī also comments on verse (39:42) and quotes Ibn Jurayj in this regard who is reported to have said:

The *rūḥ* and *nafs* are in the body of a person, being separated by something resembling a ray of sunlight. So if Allāh takes the *nafs* [during sleep], the *rūḥ*

⁹⁸⁴ See section 2.2.2 above.

⁹⁸⁵ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu'ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Aṭā, p. 47 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 181, 189 and 647.

⁹⁸⁶ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 189.

remains in the body but if Allāh seizes the *nafs* the *rūḥ* will also exit the body and if He doesn't cause the person's death, He will return the *nafs* to its place before the person awakes.⁹⁸⁷

Al-Muḥāsibī then comments, “And Ibn ‘Abbās made a similar comment except that he termed the *nafs* the intellect (*al-‘aql*).”⁹⁸⁸ It is interesting to note here that al-Muḥāsibī quotes a text which differentiates between the *rūḥ* and *nafs* but at the same time demonstrates their intrinsic link with each other. Similarly, he follows up this quotation with another explanatory comment from the famous companion and exegete ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās, which we have also already seen regarding the same verse.⁹⁸⁹

Although less frequent than the usage of the term *nafs* to mean *rūḥ*, we can also locate in the works of al-Muḥāsibī the use of the word the *nafs* meaning the human being's power of understanding (*al-quwā al-mufakkira*), as seen in verse (27:14) and characterised by the phrase, “... and their souls were convinced of it (*wa istayqanathā anfusuhum*) ...”⁹⁹⁰ The use of this concept is limited and indeed, the exact phraseology differs slightly, being a derivative of the same verb, but nevertheless, the concept remains intact, as al-Muḥāsibī comments regarding the self-deluded person (*al-mughtarr*) concerning the way in which he has deceived himself, “Indeed, within his own soul he is absolutely convinced (*mūqin*).”⁹⁹¹

Another connotation of the term *nafs* meaning the heart (*al-qalb*) is comparatively rare, but nevertheless, remains present in the works of al-Muḥāsibī. During the course of al-Muḥāsibī's discussion concerning the torments and agonies in the hereafter in his work *al-Tawahhum*, the following phrase is repeated twice, “... so your ‘*nafs*’ became constricted in your chest (*fa dāqat nafsuka fī ṣadrika*) ...”⁹⁹² Since the *nafs* with its other usages mentioned here are not usually associated with a specific locale within the body and conversely, the position of the heart is exclusively linked to the chest, we can safely assume that Muḥāsibī's usage of the term ‘*nafs*’ in this context means the heart (*al-qalb*).

In addition, the implication of the *nafs* meaning ‘the inclination to good and evil’ (*quwā al-khayr wa 'l-sharr*) and hence, the duality of the *nafs* is also tangible within the works of al-Muḥāsibī. Since this dual potentiality of the soul will be discussed in more detail in section 6.6 ‘the nature of the *nafs* within the works of al-Muḥāsibī’, we will suffice here with only a minimal exposition. In one such example of this, al-Muḥāsibī speaks in broad terms stating,

⁹⁸⁷ I have deliberately avoided translating the terms *rūḥ* and *nafs* to limit any further confusion.

⁹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 647.

⁹⁸⁹ See p. 51 above.

⁹⁹⁰ See p. 59 above.

⁹⁹¹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri‘āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 579.

⁹⁹² Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum*, ed. al-Khusht, pp. 39 and 60 and cf. pp. 59-60 above.

“And know that you have been created with the innate quality of good and evil (*maṭbūʿ ṭibāʿ ḥasana wa sayyiʿa*)” and further gives a specific example of this saying, “... all of mankind have been created with a natural disposition (*ṭubiʿa ʿalā*) to heedlessness (*al-ghafla*) and attentiveness (*al-tayaqquḏ*)...”⁹⁹³

Thus, from these two quotes it is easy to see that al-Muḥāsibī understood the very nature of the *nafs* to have a dual potentiality to both good and evil in the very broad sense and to particular manifestations of these in the specific sense. Indeed, his use of language is equally interesting here, as al-Muḥāsibī uses derivatives of the verb *ṭabaʿa* as if to indicate that these dual qualities are ‘imprinted’ and ‘stamped’ upon the soul and as such, part of the very makeup of human nature. Furthermore, one may attain knowledge and insight into the potential duality of the *nafs*, as al-Muḥāsibī also states, “And know that whoever was from the people of solicitude with his soul (*ahl al-ʿināya bi nafsihī*) and had been granted comprehension of experience, then he has reached the understanding of good and evil (*al-khayr wa ʿl-sharr*)...”⁹⁹⁴ Therefore, al-Muḥāsibī maintains that, through having care and concern for the soul and understanding of its varying experiences and conditions, one may be able to differentiate between the two potentialities that exist within it and consequently, act appropriately.

As for the final connotation of the *nafs* meaning the human being (*al-insān*), then this is equally well evidenced in the works of al-Muḥāsibī, so much so that one may even be surprised of the extent of the physicality of the description of the *nafs*, since it is described variously as having a body (*jism*); tongue (*lisān*); tears (*dumūʿ*); speech (*lufẓ*); silence (*sukūt*); nourishment (*ghidhāʿ*) and nakedness (*ʿawra*). This notion is extended even further as al-Muḥāsibī also attributes to the *nafs* a heart (*qalb*), intellect (*ʿaql*), a conscience (*ḍamīr*) and even a soul (*nafs*).⁹⁹⁵ Thus, we may also safely assume that, bearing in mind both the physical ‘exoteric’ and the hidden ‘esoteric’ aspects of the *nafs* as described in his works, al-Muḥāsibī clearly means the human being as a whole in his every attribute.⁹⁹⁶

⁹⁹³ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī in *al-Mashriq*, Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāṭ, 1955, p. 47 and Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, p. 452.

⁹⁹⁴ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 116.

⁹⁹⁵ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum*, ed. al-Khusht, pp. 40-2; al-Muḥāsibī, *Muʿātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir Aṭā, pp. 47, 51 and 76; al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 60-1; al-Muḥāsibī, *Badʿ Man Anāba ilā Allāh*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 26; al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, p. 45-6 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 446.

⁹⁹⁶ It is equally interesting to note that this is the most common usage of the term *ʿnafs* in al-Muḥāsibī’s works and therefore, makes the scope of *tazkiya* much broader and indeed, brings it into line with the concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* arrived at in chapter two.

Consequently, we can confirm with confidence that al-Muḥāsibī uses the term *nafs* to mean the soul, the human being's power of understanding, the heart, the inclination to good and evil and the human being, in exactly the same way as we have seen it used thus far in the current thesis.

6.4 The Qualities of the *Nafs* within the Works of al-Muḥāsibī

In addition to the various concepts of the *nafs* that can be identified within the Qur'ān as discussed in chapter two, it was also seen that there are a variety of qualities and attributes that can also be identified with the human soul.⁹⁹⁷ When examining the works of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, we can also identify the vast majority of these qualities and as such, we can see that the *nafs*: experiences death⁹⁹⁸; has perceptive faculties⁹⁹⁹; has needs (*al-ḥājāt/al-maṭālib*)¹⁰⁰⁰; experiences difficulty and hardship (*al-mashaqqa*)¹⁰⁰¹; can exhibit generosity (*al-jūd*) and miserliness (*al-shuḥḥ*)¹⁰⁰²; experiences anxiety (*al-dīq*) and distress (*al-ḥaraj*) as well as relaxation (*al-ittisā'*) and tranquillity (*al-inshirāḥ*)¹⁰⁰³; is affected by eloquent speech (*al-ta'aththur bi 'l-qawl al-balīgh*)¹⁰⁰⁴; has the ability to comprehend (*al-idrāk*)¹⁰⁰⁵ and the ability to conceal feelings¹⁰⁰⁶, all these are observed in the works of our author to a greater or lesser degree.

Similarly, the qualities of the *nafs* specifically seen in the *ḥadīth* literature, such as wealth of the soul (*ghinā al-nafs*)¹⁰⁰⁷ and the good soul (*al-nafs al-ṭayyiba*) vis-à-vis the despicable

⁹⁹⁷ See section 2.2.2.1 above.

⁹⁹⁸ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu'ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Aṭā, p. 47; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum*, ed. al-Khusht, pp. 31-2 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 181-195 *passim* and 647.

⁹⁹⁹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Bad' Man Anāba ilā Allāh*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 24 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu'ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Aṭā, pp. 55 and 69.

¹⁰⁰⁰ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Bad' Man Anāba ilā Allāh*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 34 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 55.

¹⁰⁰¹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Bad' Man Anāba ilā Allāh*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 24.

¹⁰⁰² See al-Muḥāsibī, *Bad' Man Anāba ilā Allāh*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 25; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 617 and 628 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'iḥ*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 37.

¹⁰⁰³ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'iḥ*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 38 and 79; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa 'l-Rujū' ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 225 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 151, 199, 311, 379 and 434.

¹⁰⁰⁴ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Bad' Man Anāba ilā Allāh*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 30.

¹⁰⁰⁵ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 81; al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu'ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Aṭā, p. 69; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum*, ed. al-Khusht, p. 79 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 579.

¹⁰⁰⁶ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Ma'rifa wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, p. 46.

¹⁰⁰⁷ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 172 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 558.

soul (*al-nafs al-khabītha*)¹⁰⁰⁸, are also identifiable within the discussions provided by al-Muḥāsibī.

Bearing in mind the great deal of attention al-Muḥāsibī affords to the negative attributes of the *nafs* it is little wonder that in his exposition, such qualities are mentioned more frequently and good examples of these are envy and jealousy (*al-ḥasad*)¹⁰⁰⁹ and conceit (*al-kibr*).¹⁰¹⁰ In addition, it is also worthy of note that the more 'positive' qualities of regret (*al-nadm*) and grief (*al-taḥassur*)¹⁰¹¹ and fear (*al-khawf*)¹⁰¹² are equally well represented.

Despite this, however, most of the qualities of the *nafs* mentioned thus far are relatively rare in the works of al-Muḥāsibī and so will not be discussed at length here. Conversely, there are qualities of the *nafs* in the works of al-Muḥāsibī such as the desires (*al-hawā*) and appetites (*al-shahawāt*) that are continuously reiterated throughout and therefore, due to their importance the discussion of the qualities of the *nafs* within this section will concentrate on these attributes of the soul.

Of the aforementioned qualities of the *nafs*, perhaps the most commonly mentioned attribute is that of the desires (*al-hawā*) and indeed, this is very much a recurrent theme within the works of al-Muḥāsibī.¹⁰¹³ The problematic nature of this quality of the soul is

¹⁰⁰⁸ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu'ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Aṭā, pp. 34 and 70; al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, pp. 55, 101 and 130 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 87.

¹⁰⁰⁹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 108-110 and 115-17 *passim* and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 605-43 *passim*.

¹⁰¹⁰ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Bad' Man Anāba ilā Allāh*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 31; al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 109; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 38 and 79; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā'il fi A'māl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ wa 'l-Makāsib wa 'l-'Aql*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā, pp. 48-9 and 127 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 278, 469-549 *passim*, 592, 600 and 617.

¹⁰¹¹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 61, 94, 125 128, 163, 166 and 169; al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Ma'rifa wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 72 and 88; al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu'ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Aṭā, pp. 48, 59, 65 and 71; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*, ed. al-Quwwatli, pp. 218 and 318; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 60; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 224; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā'il fi A'māl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ wa 'l-Makāsib wa 'l-'Aql*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā, pp. 46, 56 and 132 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 68, 70, 105, 111, 177, 223, 258 and 309.

¹⁰¹² See al-Muḥāsibī, *Bad' Man Anāba ilā Allāh*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 24; al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 56, 81-2, 95, 98-9 and 163; al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu'ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Aṭā, 38-9, 48, 51, 54-5 and 65; al-Muḥāsibī, *Fahm al-Ṣalāt*, ed. al-Khusht, pp. 56 and 70; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*, ed. al-Quwwatli, pp. 220-1; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum*, ed. al-Khusht, pp. 58 and 88; al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 143; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Makāsib*, ed. al-Khusht, p. 119; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū'ī in *al-Mashriq*, Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, pp. 451-2, 459, 473 and 476-80 *passim*; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 75 and 94; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa 'l-Rujū' ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 225, 237, 309-12, 319 and 321-8; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā'il fi A'māl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ wa 'l-Makāsib wa 'l-'Aql*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā, pp. 112-4 *passim*, 118-20, 126 and 130 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 52, 55, 61, 82-3, 89-91, 101-3, 105-6, 156, 170-2, 180, 193, 206, 221-2, 235, 294-5, 326, 363-8, 392, 407, 438, 440, 456, 527, 530-2, 534, -6, 560, 563, 568, 570, 572, 574-5, 580-1, 589-90, 635, 649 and 655.

¹⁰¹³ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 61, 88-9, 128-9 and 135-6; al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Ma'rifa wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 46, 53-4, 57 and 61; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Makāsib*, ed. al-Khusht, p. 54; al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu'ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Aṭā, p. 71; al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-*

made extremely clear in the works of al-Muḥāsibī, as it is the primary source and cause of disobedience, being the result of heedlessness that allows the desires to flourish and ultimately cause the corruption of the worshipper's intentions, motives and deeds.¹⁰¹⁴ In this regard al-Muḥāsibī provides a working definition of the desires, which he describes as follows, "The attachment of the soul to its appetites (*al-shahawāt*) and its inclination to ease and comfort. Thus, according to the strength of the appetites, the soul will be afflicted with weakness and then the desires (*al-hawā*) will overpower it."¹⁰¹⁵ Thus, such a person eventually becomes overwhelmed by his desires, becomes dependent upon them and finds pleasure in them until they are eventually consumed by them.¹⁰¹⁶ As such, the desires are an intrinsic quality of the *nafs*, as al-Muḥāsibī clarifies in the following passage:

If the truth is required of it [*al-nafs*] it prefers its desires (*hawāhā*). If the time came for its actions to be tested it clings to its desires, divesting itself of knowledge, insight, the manifest aspects of its intellect and the hidden qualities of wisdom. Thus, it withdraws [from action] due to its desires, it acts in accordance with its desires, it becomes angry for the sake of its desires and it is pleased [with something] because of its desires.¹⁰¹⁷

Consequently, every good that is lost and every mistaken or incorrect opinion leading to innovation (*al-bid'ā*) is a result due to desires of the soul (*hawā al-nafs*).¹⁰¹⁸ This being the case, the soul's desires are pivotal in the growth and production of a number of negative potentialities within it. For example when asked regarding the esoteric aspects of the world (*bāṭin al-dunyā*) al-Muḥāsibī replies that it is:

Strict adherence to the desires (*ittibā' al-hawā*) that are concealed with the souls (*al-nufūs*), which are consequently pursued by the heart such as:

Mustarshidīn, ed. Abū Ghudda, pp. 79, 81 and 131; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, pp. 82 and 93; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum*, ed. al-Khusht, p. 49; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 217 and 236; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū'ī in *al-Mashriq*, Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāt, 1955, p. 50 and Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, pp. 452, 473, 479 and 480-5 *passim*; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 14, 31, 38, 42, 44, 46, 53, 67, 86 and 91; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa 'l-Rujū' ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 225, 227, 230-1, 234, 248, 291 and 297; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā'il fi 'Amāl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ wa 'l-Makāsib wa 'l-'Aql*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 46, 50, 58, 69-72, 77, 78 and 148 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 46, 68, 74, 81, 82, 84-5, 89, 110, 111, 116, 121, 125, 128, 235, 241, 258, 305, 306, 317, 320, 327, 356, 378, 381, 384, 391, 397, 401, 402, 407, 408, 419, 432, 433, 434, 436, 439, 512, 527, 576, 584 and 587.

¹⁰¹⁴ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 79; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum*, ed. al-Khusht, p. 49; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 217 and 236; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 31 and 42 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 46, 110, 111, 116 and 401.

¹⁰¹⁵ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa 'l-Rujū' ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 231.

¹⁰¹⁶ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 61; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Makāsib*, ed. al-Khusht, p. 54; al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 81; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 82; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum*, ed. al-Khusht, p. 49; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 217 and 236 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 82 and 110.

¹⁰¹⁷ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Ma'rifa wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, p. 46.

¹⁰¹⁸ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 408, 419, 432 and 584.

conceit (*al-kibr*); malice (*al-ghill*); envy (*al-ḥasad*); ostentation (*al-riyāʿ*); having a bad opinion [of someone] (*sūʿ al-ẓann*); believing in the evil of the conscience (*iʿtiqād sūʿ al-ḍamīr*); fallacious flattery (*al-mudāhana*); the love of praise (*ḥubb al-maḥmada*); the love of accumulating wealth (*ḥubb jamʿ al-māl*); excess (*al-takāthur*); bragging (*al-tafākhur*) and the love of rank (*ḥubb al-sharaf*).¹⁰¹⁹

Indeed, the soul's adherence to this facet is fuelled by high hopes (*tūl al-amal*) and equally, the desires of the soul are manipulated by Satan until one becomes a slave to them, being ultimately destroyed by them.¹⁰²⁰

It is little surprise then that al-Muḥāsibī exhorts his readers to gain mastery over the soul's desires (*ghalabat al-hawā*).¹⁰²¹ In this regard al-Muḥāsibī does not underestimate the divine role in the process of purifying the soul of its desires as he suggests that it is only through God and through His assistance that the desires can be overcome.¹⁰²² As for the human being himself, then his greatest weapon against his soul's desires is his intellect (*al-ʿaql*), which God awakens and through which the human being may make his desires subservient by overcoming the emotions of the soul with the light of reason, as al-Muḥāsibī states, "The soul awaits its desires and the desires await the intellect; so if the intellect restrains them, then they hold back but if it relaxes then they continue onward."¹⁰²³ Clarifying this further he says, "If you want your intellect to be dominant over your desires, then do not rush to fulfil your appetites until you have considered the outcome, as indeed, it has been said, 'regret for fulfilling one's appetites remains longer in the heart than the pleasure the heart experiences through fulfilling its desires'."¹⁰²⁴

Consequently, he equally exhorts his readers to: oppose their desires (*mukhālafat al-hawā*)¹⁰²⁵; disassociate themselves from their desires (*mufāraqat al-hawā*)¹⁰²⁶; to wear down

¹⁰¹⁹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa 'l-Rujūʿ ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 248.

¹⁰²⁰ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 38, 44 and 91 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 436.

¹⁰²¹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 61 and 88-9; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī in *al-Mashriq*, Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, p. 483; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 14; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa 'l-Rujūʿ ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 234 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 68, 235 and 587.

¹⁰²² See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 81.

¹⁰²³ Ibid., pp. 306 and 433.

¹⁰²⁴ Ibid., p. 68.

¹⁰²⁵ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifā wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 53-4 and 57; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī in *al-Mashriq*, Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, pp. 473, 479, 481 and 482; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 42, 46 and 53 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 576.

¹⁰²⁶ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 79.

the desires (*mukābadat al-hawā*)¹⁰²⁷; combat their desires (*mujāhadatal-hawā*)¹⁰²⁸; avoid adhering to the soul's desires (*ittibāc al-hawā*)¹⁰²⁹; avoid the desires (*mujānibat al-ahwā*)¹⁰³⁰ and repudiate the desires (*khalc al-hawā*)¹⁰³¹, all of which indicates how dangerous this facet of the soul is to the human being and how important it is to discipline the *nafs* in this regard.

It is worth noting here however that al-Muḥāsibī's exposition regarding opposing one's desires is not only theoretical but rather, he also gives practical advice and indicates in the following text, as to how one should begin this process, as he says:

The first stage of opposing the desires (*mukhālafat al-hawā*) is to gain control over one's stomach, since if the devotee can control his stomach he will have charge of his limbs, he will have full knowledge of his heart, taking his soul to account (*al-muḥāsaba*) will become easy and he will be able to oppose his soul in everything it desires, if Allāh wills. However, if you lose control of your stomach then the issue will become difficult for you, your limbs will go astray, your heart will overstep the bounds and be misguided, you will not truly know your state and you will not be able to take your soul to account.¹⁰³²

Similarly, al-Muḥāsibī also provides a number of other devices that help in the process of restricting the desires, such as: remaining silent instead of indulging in vain talk; lowering one's gaze; avoiding backbiting; the avoidance of indulging in sins and excesses, as well as contemplation and remembrance of God, as all of these acts preoccupy the soul from its desires. Moreover, he gives a full account of how the desires may be weakened in the following excerpt:

Persist in: reflecting upon your past sins; fear regarding the hardship Allāh has imposed upon you because of them; contemplating the resurrection, the questioning, hellfire and being forbidden paradise, as indeed you will have to answer to all of this. Also persist in: renewing your repentance and intention; caution regarding that which awaits you in the future and forbidding the soul (*al-nafs*) its pleasures, which its Lord, the Mighty and Exalted dislikes. If it [*al-nafs*] falters then return quickly and renew your

¹⁰²⁷ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū'ī in *al-Mashriq*, Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, p. 452; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā'il fī A'māl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ wa 'l-Makāsib wa 'l-ʿAql*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, p. 50 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 121.

¹⁰²⁸ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū'ī in *al-Mashriq*, Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, p. 480; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'iḥ*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 86 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 241, 305, 327, 391 and 397.

¹⁰²⁹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū'ī in *al-Mashriq*, Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, p. 481; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā'il fī A'māl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ wa 'l-Makāsib wa 'l-ʿAql*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, p. 58 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 512 and 587.

¹⁰³⁰ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 46.

¹⁰³¹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā'il fī A'māl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ wa 'l-Makāsib wa 'l-ʿAql*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, p. 46.

¹⁰³² Al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Ma'rifa wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 53-4.

intention and repentance. If you continue with the thought of instilling fear into your soul then your fear will be strengthened and if you continue to refute your soul and be disobedient to it, leaving the entertainment of its desires, then it [*al-nafs*] will be severed from its habits, despair from you providing it its pleasures and its appetites will be terminated, as they are not being entertained. However, if you do entertain them [the appetites], you censure it [*al-nafs*] with fear and grief and then it will be strengthened and become upright upon truthfulness, ascending in the observance of Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted, and [ascending] in sincerity to Him.¹⁰³³

Thus, we may summarise al-Muḥāsibī's regarding the desires of the soul in his own words as he states, "If the benefit of the soul (*al-nafs*) and its welfare lay in that which it desires and wishes for, then all of mankind would be from the righteous (*al-ṣāliḥīn*), so consider its reform to be in that which it dislikes and its corruption in that which it loves and wishes for."¹⁰³⁴

What is clear from the above discussion of the soul's desires is the intrinsic relationship between this and another quality of the *nafs*, that of the appetites (*al-shahawāt*). Indeed, on surveying the works of al-Muḥāsibī we find that this quality of the soul is mentioned with equally impressive frequency, thus indicating to us the importance that our author gives this facet of the *nafs*.¹⁰³⁵ In his exposition of this quality of the soul al-Muḥāsibī relies on both Prophetic guidance through the medium of *ḥadīth* and the explanation of his Companions to elucidate the dangers of the *nafs*'s appetites as the following quote shows:

Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd is reported to have said, "Do not exceed the limits set by Allāh" and then he mentioned the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet, "Indeed, paradise is surrounded by unpleasant things and hellfire is surrounded by appetites (*al-shahawāt*)."¹⁰³⁶ He [Ibn Mas'ūd] then commented, "Whoever lifted the veil will fall into what is beyond it." [Al-Muḥāsibī] meaning: whoever exceeded the boundary of hellfire will fall into it, as its boundary is

¹⁰³³ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 378.

¹⁰³⁴ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 128-9.

¹⁰³⁵ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 88, 93, 135-6 and 169; al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Ma'rifa wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 60 and 77; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Makāsib*, ed. al-Khusht, p. 119; al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu'ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Aṭā, pp. 32-3, 39, 56 and 71; al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 81; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 82; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 236; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū'ī in *al-Mashriq*, Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāṭ, 1955, p. 47 and Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, pp. 452, 453, 470 and 480; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'iḥ*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 13, 14, 18, 23, 28, 33, 34, 35, 57, 69 and 91; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa 'l-Rujū' ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 230-1, 244, 291, and 307; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā'il fī 'Amāl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ wa 'l-Makāsib wa 'l-'Aql*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 102, 116, 131, 149-50, 159 and 163 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 46, 68, 78, 80, 83, 84-5, 110, 111, 115, 116, 160, 162, 200, 234-8 *passim*, 237, 240, 241, 247, 248, 304, 306, 327, 377-80 *passim*, 391, 395, 405, 407, 433, 434, 435, 511, 600 and 634.

¹⁰³⁶ See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, pp. 1124-5; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, p. 1228 and al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī*, p. 582.

the appetites and the boundary of paradise is that which is unpleasant¹⁰³⁷; so whoever went beyond the unpleasant entered paradise and whoever preferred the appetites entered hellfire and thus, it is known that the point of departure (*al-maṭlaʿ*) is exceeding [the limits] (*al-mujāwaza*).¹⁰³⁸

In a variation of this *ḥadīth*, al-Muḥāsibī relates another narration to clarify his point further where the Prophet is reported to have said:

Indeed, Allāh the Blessed and Exalted, created hellfire and said to Jibrīl, “Go and look at it”, so Jibrīl went and looked and said, “By your Might, no one will hear of it and consequently enter it.” Then it [hellfire] was surrounded by appetites (*al-shahawāt*) and He said [to Jibrīl], “Go and look at it”, so Jibrīl went and looked and said, “By your Might, I fear that there will be no one who didn’t enter it.” Then He created paradise and said [to Jibrīl], “Go and look at it”, so Jibrīl went and looked and said, “By your Might, no one will hear of it and consequently not enter it.” Then it [paradise] was surrounded by unpleasant things (*makāriḥ*) and He said [to Jibrīl], “Go and look at it”, so Jibrīl went and looked and said, “By your Might, I fear that there will be no one who will enter it.”¹⁰³⁹

Al-Muḥāsibī then comments, “So whoever leaves what his heart desires (*yahwā qalbuḥu*) and his soul wishes for (*tashtahī nafsuḥu*) from that which his Lord, the Mighty and Exalted, dislikes then he has protected himself from hellfire and brought about proximity to Allāh.”¹⁰⁴⁰ Thus, as with the soul’s desires (*al-hawā*), the appetites of the soul (*al-shahawāt*) are equally destructive and indeed, there can be only one outcome from pursuing them - annihilation in hellfire. This being the case al-Muḥāsibī expends a great deal of effort to explain what the appetites are and also their nature. Seemingly relying on the Qur’ānic verse (3:14), al-Muḥāsibī enumerates a number of such appetites in the following excerpt, “... the bodily appetites (*shahawāt al-jasad*) are women, children and excess food, drinks, clothing and riding animals. These are all detrimental to abstinence (*al-zuhd*) ...”¹⁰⁴¹ Thus, al-Muḥāsibī describes the bodily, carnal and ‘physical’ appetites, which he commonly terms ‘worldly appetites’ (*shahawāt al-dunyā*)¹⁰⁴² and which are inherent in all human beings but also distinguishes a further ‘esoteric’ or ‘psychological’ category of appetite that is, in his opinion at least, even more destructive as the following quote clarifies:

¹⁰³⁷ In the sense that it requires personal effort and may incur some difficulty.

¹⁰³⁸ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Muʿātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir Aṭā, pp. 32-3; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masāʾil fī Aʿmāl al-Qulūb wa ʾl-Jawāriḥ wa ʾl-Makāsib wa ʾl-ʿAql*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, pp. 149-50 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 84-5.

¹⁰³⁹ See Sijistānī, *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*, p. 670; al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī*, p. 582 and al-Nasāʾī, *Sunan al-Nasāʾī al-Ṣuḥrā*, p. 529.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 85.

¹⁰⁴¹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī in *al-Mashriq*, Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāṭ, 1955, p. 470.

¹⁰⁴² See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾiḥ*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 23 and 34.

... The appetites (*al-shahawāt*) are not sins (*dhunūb*) and evil deeds (*sayyi'āt*): the appetites are foods; drinks; clothing; buildings; riding animals; women; gold and silver. However, the most destructive of appetites are [craving] status; the love of leadership; establishment of prestige; the attainment of rank; [the desire for] the acceptance [of one's] command and prohibition; the fulfilment of needs; the love of good reputation amongst neighbours, friends and brothers and to be praised for the righteous deeds one has performed.¹⁰⁴³

Therefore, the human being is not only subject to a variety of 'physical' appetites, many of which are part of his innate nature¹⁰⁴⁴, but also a variety of 'psychological' appetites, which are hidden and much harder to identify.¹⁰⁴⁵ This is, therefore, what al-Muḥāsibī terms 'hidden' appetites (*al-shahawāt al-khafiyya*), which are concealed within the soul and which he contrasts with the 'manifest' appetites (*al-shahawāt al-zāhira*) that are the focus of the body. The danger of such 'hidden' appetites is that a person may well exhibit the outward manifestation of righteousness, but inwardly, they may be afflicted with other ailments, which have a detrimental effect on their sincerity to God, as al-Muḥāsibī explains, "This does not become clear except through knowledge that indicates to the nature of his intention, as they [*al-shahawāt*] are hidden and concealed from the person undertaking the act if he is not illuminated by knowledge."¹⁰⁴⁶

Apart from the hidden aspects of the appetites, which by default makes them treacherous, the appetites are also subject to many of the factors that affect the desires (*al-hawā*). For example, the appetites are a product of heedlessness (*al-ghafla*) and forgetfulness (*al-sahw*) and are increased by entertaining high hopes (*ṭūl al-ama*). Similarly, the soul by its very nature is given to its appetites being agitated (*hayajān*) and stimulated (*jayyāsh*) and once again, Satan duly obliges by instigating the appetites by inviting the soul to them.¹⁰⁴⁷ Indeed, the problem is exacerbated by the fact that the soul takes pleasure in (*ladhdha*) and

¹⁰⁴³ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 88.

¹⁰⁴⁴ A good example of this is eating, as human beings would simply die if they didn't have the appetite to nourish their bodies. Therefore, al-Muḥāsibī is not suggesting that one divest oneself of this quality, as this would be simply preposterous but rather, he is proposing that such appetites be controlled and reined in. The consequence of not doing this is that the appetites can then lead to an excess that in turn causes an exceeding of the limits, which is exactly what the above *ḥadīths* are referring to.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Thus, once again al-Muḥāsibī shows just how adept he was at identifying the character traits of the human soul.

¹⁰⁴⁶ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 200 and cf. al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 91.

¹⁰⁴⁷ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 93 and 135-6; al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Ma'rifa wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, p. 77 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 110, 115, 238, 240, 377, 379, 407 and 600.

enjoys the ‘sweetness’ (*ḥalāwa*) of its appetites¹⁰⁴⁸ and thus, if denied one of them, it immediately seeks out another, as al-Muḥāsibī observes, “The soul, if it is forbidden from certain categories of appetites (*abwāb al-shahawāt*), then it will seek other appetites for its enjoyment, as a substitute for the appetites and pleasures it has been prevented from.”¹⁰⁴⁹

Despite the complex nature of this adversary, al-Muḥāsibī remains undeterred and indeed in a similar fashion to the way in which he deals with the desires (*al-hawā*), he urges his readers to: be cautious from falling into the enticements of the appetites¹⁰⁵⁰; oppose the soul’s desires (*mukhālafat al-shahawāt*)¹⁰⁵¹; to combat their appetites (*mujāhadat al-shahawāt*)¹⁰⁵²; to wear down their appetites (*mukābadat al-shahawāt*)¹⁰⁵³; overcome their desires (*ghalabat al-shahawāt*)¹⁰⁵⁴; avoid their desires (*mujānabat al-shahawāt*)¹⁰⁵⁵; be fearful of the voracity of the appetites (*ḍarāwat al-shahawāt*)¹⁰⁵⁶ and to have enmity towards their appetites (*al-bughḍ li ’l-shahawāt*)¹⁰⁵⁷. Similarly, one of the consistent counsels that al-Muḥāsibī gives is to abandon one’s appetites (*tark al-shahawāt*) for God’s sake, so as to be safe from their harm and indeed, this again is one of the attributes of the guiding scholars whom he sought in his youth.¹⁰⁵⁸

In addition, as with the desires of the soul (*al-hawā*), al-Muḥāsibī’s exposition of the soul’s appetites is not just a theoretical presentation, but rather, he also gives practical advice; thus, in dealing with appetites he says, “The most effective way to mortification of the appetites is to maintain grief (*al-ḥuzn*) in the heart.”¹⁰⁵⁹ In a similar quote, he advises, “Avert the sudden occurrence of appetites with grief (*al-ḥuzn*) and regret (*al-nadāma*) for the fulfilment of previous appetites, whose pleasures have been gratified but whose consequences have remained with you.”¹⁰⁶⁰ Therefore, we can assume that maintaining and

¹⁰⁴⁸ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri’āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 110, 116, 234, 240, 378, 511 and 600.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri’āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 111.

¹⁰⁵⁰ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Mu’ātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir Aṭā, p. 39.

¹⁰⁵¹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-‘Aql wa Fahm al-Qur’ān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 236 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri’āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 433.

¹⁰⁵² See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri’āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 241 and 391.

¹⁰⁵³ Ibid., p. 241.

¹⁰⁵⁴ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa ’l-Rujū’ ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 230-1 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri’āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 235-6.

¹⁰⁵⁵ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri’āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 46.

¹⁰⁵⁶ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 81.

¹⁰⁵⁷ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā’ih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 69.

¹⁰⁵⁸ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā’ih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 13; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa ’l-Rujū’ ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 244; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā’il fī A’māl al-Qulūb wa ’l-Jawāriḥ wa ’l-Makāsib wa ’l-‘Aql*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 102 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri’āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 80.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā’il fī A’māl al-Qulūb wa ’l-Jawāriḥ wa ’l-Makāsib wa ’l-‘Aql*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 131.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 169.

inculcating grief (*al-huzn*) into the *nafs* is a major goal in al-Muḥāsibī's system of purifying the soul from its negative quality of its appetites. Another measure that al-Muḥāsibī suggests is the imposition of hunger (*al-jūʿ*), which he considers a valuable method of severing the soul from its appetites (*qaṭʿ al-shahawāt*). If done sincerely for God, the divine element of *tazkiya* also plays a role, since God then causes such a person to 'taste' the 'flavour' of divine love and the 'sweetness' of conversing with Him, which in turn further severs him from his desires. Consequently, the carnal pleasures of the appetites are replaced with the spiritual delights of divine satisfaction.¹⁰⁶¹

Thus, the greater the extent to which the soul is disciplined (*taʿdīb*) the easier it is for the individual to reject his soul's desires (*rafḍ al-shahawāt*).¹⁰⁶² In this regard, al-Muḥāsibī comments, "Indeed, the appetites (*al-shahawāt*) are a mere amusement (*liʿb*), but if amusement exists, then seriousness is absent. However, the world will not exist and the religion (*al-dīn*) will not be reformed except through being serious."¹⁰⁶³ Therefore, for al-Muḥāsibī the purification of the soul and its disciplining regarding its appetites is a pinnacle feature of spiritual life upon which the very status of religion is dependent.

In summary, once again we can conclude that al-Muḥāsibī's conceptual understanding of the soul's qualities as elucidated in chapter two, is in complete agreement with the Islamic paradigm. Moreover, al-Muḥāsibī due to his emphasis being on the base form of the soul, *al-nafs al-ammāra bi 'l-sūʿ*, provides an extensive exposition of the most destructive facets of this state of the *nafs*, namely its desires (*al-hawā*) and its appetites (*al-shahawāt*). Not only this but he also provides both encouragement and practical advice on how to deal with these facets of the soul further expounding his methodology regarding its purification.

6.5 States of the *Nafs* within the Works of al-Muḥāsibī

During the discussion of the human soul in chapter two it was discovered, that from the Qurʾānic perspective, the soul may experience three states, namely the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʾinna*), the self-reproaching soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāma*) and the soul inclined to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi 'l-sūʿ*). Since these are firmly established concepts within the Qurʾānic text it is equally important to examine the works of al-Muḥāsibī to ascertain whether or not this author utilises these terms during the course of his writings.

¹⁰⁶¹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Muʿātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir Aṭā, p. 71 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa 'l-Rujūʿ ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 291 and 307.

¹⁰⁶² See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Makāsib*, ed. al-Khusht, p. 119.

¹⁰⁶³ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī in *al-Mashriq*, Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāṭ, 1955, p. 452.

Upon surveying the works of al-Muḥāsibī for the phrase ‘the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʿinna*)’, one does not find this scholar using this exact wording but does find derivatives of it. For example when discussing the importance of intimately knowing the soul al-Muḥāsibī states:

So if you gained knowledge of it (*al-nafs*) you will increase in love and affection for Allāh and in hatred and enmity for it; similarly [you will increase in] trust and confidence in Allāh, the Magnificent and Exalted and in despair of it. Likewise, you will increase in tranquillity towards Allāh (*ṭumaʿnīna ilā Allāh*) and in cautiousness concerning it.¹⁰⁶⁴

On the same theme al-Muḥāsibī also states, “And whoever gained knowledge of his soul (*ʿarafa nafsahu*) then self conceit (*al-ʿujb*) will leave him, his gratitude to Allāh will increase and his cautiousness regarding it [*al-nafs*] and his tranquillity and his trust in his Master will be intensified.”¹⁰⁶⁵ This is not exclusively an attribute for the worldly existence however, as, when clarifying the state of the believer who has been informed of their admittance into paradise, post-mortem in the grave, al-Muḥāsibī describes him as follows, “... and so your soul will find tranquillity with Allāh (*taṭmaʿinnu ilā Allāh nafsuka*).”¹⁰⁶⁶

Similarly, during the exposition of the tranquil soul in chapter two, it was seen that reason behind the soul being described as ‘tranquil’ was the satisfaction (*riḍāʿ*) of both parties - the divine and the human - with one another and in particular the human being’s satisfaction with divine predestination and predetermination (*al-qadāʿ wa ʿl-qadar*).¹⁰⁶⁷ When surveying the works of al-Muḥāsibī we also find a great deal of emphasis laid on the quality of satisfaction (*al-riḍāʿ*) and in particular satisfaction with divine predestination and predetermination (*al-qadāʿ wa ʿl-qadar*).¹⁰⁶⁸ For example, when asked regarding the meaning of *al-riḍāʿ* he replies, “It is the satisfaction of the heart with the ‘bitterness’ of divine predestination”¹⁰⁶⁹ and with regard to the manifestation of *al-riḍāʿ* in reality he reiterates, “It is satisfaction with divine predestination, meaning: the composure of the heart regarding the judgement of Allah and to entrust (*al-tafwīḍ*) [all affairs] to Allāh before satisfaction (*al-riḍāʿ*) and to be satisfied after having entrusted [all affairs to

¹⁰⁶⁴ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 409.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 437.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum*, ed. al-Khusht, p. 32.

¹⁰⁶⁷ See p. 71 above.

¹⁰⁶⁸ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 111, 146, 150 and 173; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum*, ed. al-Khusht, pp. 32 and 88; al-Muḥāsibī, *Muʿātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir Aṭā, p. 34; al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 56; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 37; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa ʿl-Rujūʿ ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 275-8 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masāʾil fī Aʿmāl al-Qulūb wa ʿl-Jawāriḥ wa ʿl-Makāsib wa ʿl-Aql*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 46 and 129-30.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa ʿl-Rujūʿ ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 276.

Him].”¹⁰⁷⁰ Regarding the importance of this quality al-Muḥāsibī also states, “And know that you will not ‘taste’ the ‘flavour’ of faith until you believe in divine predestination, the good of it and the bad of it.”

Thus, we can conclude that even though al-Muḥāsibī does not use the specific phrase ‘*al-nafs al-muṭmaʿinna*’, the concept was not alien to him and indeed, when dealing with the human soul, the quality of tranquillity and serenity (*al-ṭumaʿnīna*) is seen to be an attribute of the person who has truly understood the nature of the *nafs* and consequently, gained success in the hereafter because of it. Similarly, he also exhorts his readers to the qualities that will bring about the reformation of the soul until it reaches a state of ‘tranquillity’, namely *al-riḍāʿ* with divine predestination, which in turn results in the pleasure of God.

This is further evidenced by the following excerpt which is almost a perfect description of the tranquil soul:

So when his [the believer’s] state changes and it [*al-nafs*] deems agreeable that which it used to be averse, found pleasant that which it found to be distasteful and was abstinent concerning that which it desired, then his heart will be purified. As such, his heart will be illuminated with certainty in the hereafter and he will witness in his mind that which is unseen in the next life. Then, the exaltation of Allāh will be strengthened in his heart, his fear of Him and hope in Him will be intensified and his shame in front of Allāh will be awakened. Moreover, he will be irritated by every barrier that prevents him from proximity to his Lord and every issue that preoccupies him with other than Him.¹⁰⁷¹

If mention of the tranquil soul is rare, then mention of the self-reproaching soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāma*) is even rarer, as it is not mentioned by name even once in the works of al-Muḥāsibī. Despite this, however, bearing in mind the description of this state of the *nafs* given in chapter two¹⁰⁷², we can deduce some inference to the self-reproaching soul in a limited number of examples in al-Muḥāsibī’s works. The first of these describes the actions of someone who has just come to the realisation of the true nature of his soul and his past misdeeds and as such, al-Muḥāsibī describes his state thus:

And when this has become clear to him, he will know that in being obedient to it [the *nafs*] lies his perdition on the Day of Judgement and in being disobedient to it lies his salvation in the hereafter and that it has habitually attempted to destroy him, becoming accustomed to extended reticence and aversion to that which pleases his Lord.¹⁰⁷³

¹⁰⁷⁰ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 146.

¹⁰⁷¹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Badʿ Man Anāba ilā Allāh*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 32.

¹⁰⁷² See pp. 67-9 above.

¹⁰⁷³ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Badʿ Man Anāba ilā Allāh*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 25.

In a similar example, al-Muḥāsibī describes the course of action of such a person as follows, “So then he rebukes it [the *nafs*], reminding it of its sins; he then strikes fear into it that it may have incurred [God’s] wrath because of them and that it did not perform its duty to Him as He truly deserves and also, as it does not know in what state it will die. Consequently, it became submissive, fearful, trembling and humbled.”¹⁰⁷⁴

Moreover, although al-Muḥāsibī does not mention the self-reproaching soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāma*) by name, he does describe its state and the circumstances that bring about this state. Therefore, the description of the *nafs* given above is neither the base state of the soul inclined to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi ’l-sū’*) but nor is it the elevated state of the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭma’inna*) and thus, we can conclude that it is an intermediate state where the soul begins to blame itself for the transgression it has committed, inclining towards repentance, regret, self recrimination and reproach, these being salient features of the self-reproaching soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāma*).

Bearing in mind the importance that al-Muḥāsibī gives to the discussion of the negative qualities of the *nafs* in general and of the desires and appetites specifically, as seen in the last section, it is little wonder that of the three states of the *nafs* related in the Qur’ān by far the most common in the works of al-Muḥāsibī is the third and final state, the soul inclined to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi ’l-sū’*). Indeed, al-Muḥāsibī makes mention of this form of the soul in both terms of concept and exact phraseology and this is indicative of the importance that al-Muḥāsibī gives to this state of the soul and the emphasis he lays on gaining knowledge of it, combating it and reforming it.¹⁰⁷⁵ Thus, his concentration on dealing with this form of the *nafs* is due to the fact that, as we have seen in chapter two¹⁰⁷⁶, it alludes to the lowest level of the human soul, which not only encourages the performance of evil but also exerts effort to make such actions acceptable and appealing to the human being. Thus, the *nafs* is described as enticing (*sawwalat*), subjecting (*ṭawwa’at*) and tempting (*tuwaswis*), causing the human being to be overcome by his desires, to the extent that he pursues the appetites of his soul, to the exclusion of everything else. As such, the limits set by Allāh are made secondary in comparison to the fulfilment of his own needs and desires.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁰⁷⁵ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 88-9 and 93-4; al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Ma’rifa wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 29 and 35-8; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-’Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 92; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-’Aql wa Fahm al-Qur’ān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 229; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū’ī in *al-Mashriq*, Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, p. 480; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā’ih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 26 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri’āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 434.

¹⁰⁷⁶ See pp. 65-7 above.

It is no surprise then that al-Muḥāsibī warns the aspirant on the path to God regarding this state of his soul, from associating with it, being in agreement with it and the effect of its desires on acts of obedience to Him, as the following excerpt clarifies, “And know that I am not suggesting that you abandon the performance of righteous actions, as every action you do not perform today will have no reward tomorrow but rather, I am warning you concerning the deception of the Satan and the desires of your soul that is inclined to evil (*hawā nafsika al-ammāra bi 'l-sū'*).”¹⁰⁷⁷ Similarly, al-Muḥāsibī considers this state of the soul so important that he makes it one of the essential elements of his system of intimate knowledge and insight (*al-marifa*)¹⁰⁷⁸, stressing its importance as follows:

And as for intimate knowledge of the soul inclined to evil (*marifa al-nafs al-ammāra bi 'l-sū'*) then abase it [*al-nafs*] as Allah has abased it, describe it as Allāh has described it [i.e. that it is inclined to evil] and attack it with that which Allāh has commanded you, as it is a greater enemy for you than Iblīs, since he gains influence over you through it, due to its acceptance of him.¹⁰⁷⁹

Therefore, a person who has gained such intimate knowledge of his soul has, “Comprehended from Allāh that He has described his soul as being inclined to evil (*ammāra bi 'l-sū'*) and enticing towards sins (*li 'l-dhunūb musawwila*) and it is the soul that has performed the transgressions for which his Lord will take him to account.”¹⁰⁸⁰

Consequently, having achieved this understanding, the believer who attempts to purify this base form of his soul has:

Left the external defects and turned his attention to the internal defects, engaging the soul inclined to evil (*al-nafs ammāra*). Thus, he disciplines it until it renounces such characteristics and strives against it (*jāhadahā*) until it submits, being sincere in combating it (*mujāhadatihā*) until it becomes righteous. As a result, he will approach his Lord purified, repentant and divested of both external and internal defects.¹⁰⁸¹

This being the case, from al-Muḥāsibī’s perspective it is the soul inclined to evil that presents the greatest danger in this regard, since it is the biggest factor in the potential destruction of the human being in both this life and in the hereafter and therefore, it is the target and goal of *tazkiya*. Thus, in summary we may quote al-Muḥāsibī, who, when discussing the danger and nature of this state of the soul said, “It is sufficient for you to know that Allāh, the Magnificent and Exalted, informed you that it is ever commanding to

¹⁰⁷⁷ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 88-9 and 93-4.

¹⁰⁷⁸ See pp. 213-16 above.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Marifa wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 29 and 35-8.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Aql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 229.

¹⁰⁸¹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 92.

evil (*ammāra bi 'l-sū'*), except for whomever your Lord had mercy upon and upon whom He bestowed His favours.”¹⁰⁸²

Once again we may conclude that despite al-Muḥāsibī not always specifically mentioning the three states of the soul alluded to in the Qurān, he clearly understood the implications of these phrases, being entirely in agreement with them conceptually at least. This is particularly true of the base form of the soul, the soul inclined to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi 'l-sū'*), which is specifically mentioned in his works and which is the focus of his attention due to the danger it poses to the security of the human being and as such, from his perspective, it is this lowest manifestation of the *nafs* that must be purified.

6.6 The Nature of the *Nafs* within the Works of al-Muḥāsibī

In addition to the above survey based upon the categories and subject headings discussed in chapter two, it is also worth examining al-Muḥāsibī's own attitude, approach and view of the *nafs*, as manifested in his works. It was observed in chapter two¹⁰⁸³ that the creator of the human soul is Allāh, as the following verse alludes, “O Mankind, fear your Lord Who created you from a single *nafs* ...” (4:1) and it is worth noting that al-Muḥāsibī also understood this point as the following excerpt shows, “A person should know that the nature of all souls (*al-nufūs*) is quite similar. Indeed, all of them are prone to forgetfulness (*al-sahw*) and heedlessness (*al-ghafla*), and that his [the person's] soul is from the souls of creation, derived from the son of Ādam, peace be upon him.”¹⁰⁸⁴ This being the case al-Muḥāsibī regards the nature of all souls to be reasonably similar and as such, we can identify a negative trend towards the innate character of the human soul and as stated previously, when al-Muḥāsibī speaks regarding the *nafs* it seem that he is virtually referring exclusively to the base form of the soul - *al-nafs ammāra bi 'l-sū'*.¹⁰⁸⁵

In understanding the nature of soul, as we have already seen in this chapter, al-Muḥāsibī relies heavily on both of Islam's revelatory sources, namely the Qurān and *ḥadīth*, as well as the opinions of the earliest generations, as the following extended quote indicates, where he is asked about the *nafs*:

¹⁰⁸² Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 434.

¹⁰⁸³ See p. 56 above.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 440.

¹⁰⁸⁵ This is not to say there is no reference to positive qualities of the soul in the works of al-Muḥāsibī but indeed they are rare. For example, there is a reference to the patience of the soul (*ṣabr al-nafs*) see: al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū'i in *al-Mashriq*, Ādhār/Nisān, 1954, pp. 188 and other limited references to the conscience of the soul (*ḍamīr al-nafs*), see: al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā'il fī Amāl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ wa 'l-Makāsib wa 'l-Aql*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā, p. 91 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 215 and 530.

Haven't you heard Allāh, the Exalted's statement, "Indeed, the soul is prone to evil (*inna 'l-nafs la ammāra bi 'l-sū'*) [12:53]"? And His, the Exalted's statement, "As for the one who feared the position of his Lord and forbid his soul (*nafsahu*) its desires (*al-hawā*) [79:40]"¹⁰⁸⁶? And in the story of the son of Ādam, "Then his soul made the murder of his brother seem appealing (*ṭawwa'at lahu nafsuhu*)¹⁰⁸⁷ and so he killed him" [5:30]? "He [Ya'qūb] said: indeed your souls have enticed you (*sawwalat lakum anfusukum*)¹⁰⁸⁸ to some matter, so patience is more befitting" [12:18]? "He [Moses] said: And what have you to do with this O Sāmīrī?" until His statement, "Thus did my soul entice me (*sawwalat lī nafsī*)¹⁰⁸⁹" [20:95-6]? In addition, the Prophet, may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him, said, "You have returned from the lesser jihad (*al-jihād al-aṣghar*) to the greater jihad (*al-jihād al-akbar*); the struggle against your souls (*mujāhadat al-nufūs*)." A man asked the Prophet, "What is the best form of jihad?" and he replied, "Your personal struggle against your soul and your desires (*mujāhadatuka nafsaka wa hawāk*)" ... Al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said, "Revive your hearts with the remembrance of Allāh as indeed, they soon become rusty and vilify these souls (*al-anfus*) as indeed they are lame (*zul'a*)" ... And the Prophet, may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him, and his Companions would seek shelter in Allāh from the evil of their own souls (*min shurūr anfusihim*)¹⁰⁹⁰, as indeed, the soul (*al-nafs*) has the propensity to incline to the fulfilment of its desires, as long as it has not been 'etched' (*yaḥfiruhā*) by fear (*al-khawf*) ...¹⁰⁹¹

Therefore, it is little surprise that, when discussing the nature of the soul, al-Muḥāsibī expends a great deal of effort to clarify the dissension of the soul (*munāza'at al-nafs*)¹⁰⁹²; the enticement of the soul (*taswīl al-nafs*)¹⁰⁹³; the doubts of the soul (*rayb al-nafs*)¹⁰⁹⁴ and warns against the sinister aspirations (*amānī*)¹⁰⁹⁵ and unrealistic hopes of the soul (*irtijā' al-nafs*)¹⁰⁹⁶, as well as the ailments and cure of the soul (*da' al-nafs wa dawā'uhā*)¹⁰⁹⁷.

¹⁰⁸⁶ The *sūra* continues, "Then indeed, paradise is his abode." (79:41)

¹⁰⁸⁷ See p. 66 above.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹⁰ See p. 82 above.

¹⁰⁹¹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū'ī in *al-Mashriq*, Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, pp. 480-1 and cf. al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 89 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 126-7.

¹⁰⁹² See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū'ī in *al-Mashriq*, Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāṭ, 1955, p. 44, and Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, p. 452; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 87 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 243, 355, 356 and 407.

¹⁰⁹³ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū'ī in *al-Mashriq*, Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāṭ, 1955, p. 49; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 55 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 126-7.

¹⁰⁹⁴ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū'ī in *al-Mashriq*, Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāṭ, 1955, p. 53.

¹⁰⁹⁵ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 81.

¹⁰⁹⁶ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū'ī in *al-Mashriq*, Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāṭ, 1955, p. 53.

¹⁰⁹⁷ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 47, 89 and 91 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 222.

Advancing the exposition of the soul above, which was entirely based upon classical Islamic sources, al-Muḥāsibī provides a no less negative but more ‘psychological’ and ‘introspective’ appraisal when asked about how to have contempt (*al-izdirāʾ*) for the soul, he says:

Through your knowledge of its true position and the evil of its aspirations and deeds. By knowledge of its true position I mean how it was created with a natural disposition and form; how it considers the path to salvation to be burdensome, not out of enmity for salvation but because it despises the imposition of hardship and equally despises having to abandon the things it adores from the transient world. Similarly, how it deems insignificant that which will bring about its destruction, without having any affection for destruction in the hereafter but rather, due to it avoiding its pleasures and avoiding its desires therein, despite it affirming that both the reward and punishment in the hereafter are greater and more lasting and that both the pleasant and unpleasant aspects of the worldly life are lowly and ephemeral. So despite it knowing and grasping that [the world is] lowly and ephemeral, it still prefers it to the greater and more lasting, not out of denying that [the hereafter] is greater and more lasting but rather, out of preferring something from the transient world, whether it be the fulfilment of a pleasure, comfort from hardship, or that it be diverted from its passions ... It is incumbent on someone who has comprehended this from Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted, that if he wants to bring about its [*al-nafs*] salvation that he never leaves being attentive and contemplative and is never heedless of it or feels secure from it. Indeed, he should divest himself of having a good opinion of it and be quick to accuse it if it was swift in seeking salvation, due to him knowing that it opposes this and due to what has already occurred in terms of the evil of its aspirations and deeds, as he knows that it considers the path to salvation to be burdensome, considers the path of destruction insignificant and that it will not submit to the path of salvation except through compulsion and coercion.¹⁰⁹⁸

This being the case and bearing these factors in mind, al-Muḥāsibī warns against the destruction of the soul (*halk/talif al-nafs*)¹⁰⁹⁹; its procrastination (*taswif al-nafs*) regarding the performance of righteous acts¹¹⁰⁰; its wickedness (*sūʾ al-nafs*)¹¹⁰¹ that leads to it committing offences (*jināyāt al-nafs*)¹¹⁰² and the many faults of the soul (*ʿuyūb al-nafs*)¹¹⁰³,

¹⁰⁹⁸ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masāʾil fī ʿĀmāl al-Qulūb wa ʾl-Jawāriḥ wa ʾl-Makāsib wa ʾl-ʿAql*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, pp. 148-9 and cf. al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 96-7 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾiḥ*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 26..

¹⁰⁹⁹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 74, 97, 113, 137, 142 and 173; al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 155; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa ʾl-Rujūʿ ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, p. 233; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masāʾil fī ʿĀmāl al-Qulūb wa ʾl-Jawāriḥ wa ʾl-Makāsib wa ʾl-ʿAql*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, pp. 91 and 148 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 402, 438 and 558.

¹¹⁰⁰ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, p. 76.

¹¹⁰¹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾiḥ*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 40, 91 and 94 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masāʾil fī ʿĀmāl al-Qulūb wa ʾl-Jawāriḥ wa ʾl-Makāsib wa ʾl-ʿAql*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, pp. 148 and 149.

¹¹⁰² See al-Muḥāsibī, *Badʾ Man Anāba ilā Allāh*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 23.

which constitute the many things that it conceals and attempts to keep them hidden (*khabāyā/khafāyā/sarā'ir al-nafs*)¹¹⁰⁴. Indeed, the cunning nature of the soul is manifested in the fact that it is given to deception (*khid'at al-nafs*)¹¹⁰⁵, deceit and falsehood (*kidhb al-nafs*)¹¹⁰⁶ and employs subterfuge and various stratagems (*ḥiyal al-nafs*)¹¹⁰⁷ to ensure that its appetites and desires are fulfilled. In this regard he says:

Don't be deceived by what it makes manifest to you, do not hope for what it wishes, if you released it you will have gone astray and if you fulfilled its request you will be destroyed. If you became heedless of taking it to account, then you will have fled [responsibility], if you were unable to oppose it, you will be drowned and if you submitted to its desires you will have been appointed [a place] in the hellfire. It [the *nafs*] has no truth and no good can come from it; it is the cause of every tribulation, a treasure trove of disgrace, the vault of Iblīs and the abode of every evil. It is as its Creator described it [i.e. *ammāra bi 'l-sū*], every time it manifests fear then you are secure, every time it claims to be truthful it is lying and every time it mentions sincerity it is ostentation and self conceit.¹¹⁰⁸

Therefore, even to have empathy for the soul is a mistaken approach as he explains, “You have mercy on it [*al-nafs*] but it does not have mercy on you ... it strives in that which pleases Satan and in that which lies the anger of your Lord.”¹¹⁰⁹

Consequently, it is little surprise that al-Muḥāsibī considers the *nafs* a deadly adversary and the ‘enemy within’, which is clear from his statement, “And take every precaution against your contemporaries (*ahl zamānik*) and especially against your soul, as indeed, it is your true enemy.”¹¹¹⁰ Similarly, he clarifies:

So through that which Allāh has commanded, be its [*al-nafs*] adversary opposing that which it invites you to from its desires. Spend all your time in mortifying its desires, burying its wishes and be cautious concerning its aspirations and procrastination. Turn to it repeatedly with disparagement and deprecation, reminding it of its shortcomings, so that perhaps its authority may dwindle and be crushed. May Allāh, the Exalted, aid us and

¹¹⁰³ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 51; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū'ī in *al-Mashriq*, Ādhār/Nisān, 1954, p. 189; Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāṭ, 1955, pp. 44, 47, 48 and 52 and Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, pp. 475, 476, 478 and 480-5 *passim* and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 387, 403 and 410.

¹¹⁰⁴ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 72, 75, 80, 81, 82 and 90 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 530.

¹¹⁰⁵ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū'ī in *al-Mashriq*, Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāṭ, 1955, p. 48 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 102, 103, 107, 108, 157, 158, 159, 317, 360, 362, 374, 403, 529, 543, 550, 554 and 664-5.

¹¹⁰⁶ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū'ī in *al-Mashriq*, Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, pp. 475-6.

¹¹⁰⁷ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā'il fi A'māl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ wa 'l-Makāsib wa 'l-'Aql*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā, p. 143.

¹¹⁰⁸ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Ma'rifa wa Badhl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, p. 36 and cf. 47-9.

¹¹⁰⁹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Ma'rifa wa Badhl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 55-6.

¹¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 89

you against it without any punishment from Him! Thus, if you acted to extinguish this 'darkness' and these despicable characteristics from your heart, you will have become purified with your Lord and nothing will defile your soul (*nafsaka*).¹¹¹¹

As such, al-Muḥāsibī expends very effort to avert his readers from being overcome, conquered and subdued by the soul and its desires (*ghalabat al-nafs*).¹¹¹²

In summary, we can conclude that al-Muḥāsibī's view of the soul is not only heavily grounded in his understanding of the revelatory sources of Islam and the tradition of early scholarship but also in his own, personal experience of reflection, introspection and contemplation. Consequently, he has a highly developed and intricate vision of the *nafs*, which forms the basis of much of his discourse within the field of Islamic spirituality and mysticism. His theory of the soul revolves around his censuring of its inclination to the fleeting and ephemeral and its proclivity to relaxation and comfort, these being its outstanding characteristics, which are seemingly 'imprinted' upon its nature. Moreover, he sets out to enlighten his readers to these facts and illuminate them to the subtle and precise facets of the soul, so as to ultimately bring about its reform and avoid its destruction.

It remains to be seen, however, how exactly al-Muḥāsibī proposes to 'cleanse' such a degenerate soul of its faults, desires and appetites and indeed, this is the task of the next section.

6.7 Al-Muḥāsibī's Methodology of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*

Due to the nature and importance al-Muḥāsibī lays on the *nafs* in his works, much of this chapter has been concerned with providing an exposition of his view regarding the human soul and having done so, it is now time to turn our attention to the way in which al-Muḥāsibī proposes that one may 'deal' with such a soul and indeed, ultimately bring about its purification. Upon surveying the works of al-Muḥāsibī, one finds a great many expressions and phrases that may be conceived to relate to what could generally be termed the 'training' of the soul. In fact, careful examination of such phrases suggests that despite the almost exclusively 'negative' view of the soul that al-Muḥāsibī holds, his approach to disciplining the *nafs* is not exclusively 'negative' also, but includes terminologies, which may be broadly considered to be 'positive' attitudes to 'training' of the soul. The following

¹¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 74.

¹¹¹² See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū'ī in *al-Mashriq*, Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāṭ, 1955, p. 44 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 110, 170, 361 and 379.

discussion now attempts to identify and isolate both these 'negative' and 'positive' approaches employed to bring about the soul's purification.

With regard to the 'negative' perspective, one is able to identify a number of concepts that al-Muḥāsibī employs to bring under control the detrimental potentialities within the human soul, which include dispraisal of the soul (*dhamm al-nafs*)¹¹¹³ for its evil actions and intentions and the pursuit of its desires, the accusation of the soul (*ittihām al-nafs*)¹¹¹⁴ due to its deceptive and deceitful nature described above and having contempt for the soul (*izdirāʾ al-nafs*)¹¹¹⁵, as it is the 'enemy within' and strives for the human being's destruction. Similarly, al-Muḥāsibī suggests that the soul be 'broken' (*inkisār al-nafs*)¹¹¹⁶, through imposing punitive measures upon it (*ʿuqūbat al-nafs*)¹¹¹⁷; that the soul be abased (*muhānat al-nafs*)¹¹¹⁸ due to its evil nature; that the soul be coerced (*ilzām al-nafs*)¹¹¹⁹ towards correct action and on occasion, he even describes the soul as an enemy combatant that should be fought against (*qitāl al-nafs*).¹¹²⁰

Of the more common 'negative' themes within the works of al-Muḥāsibī is censuring of the soul (*muʿātabat al-nafs*)¹¹²¹ and in this regard al-Muḥāsibī clarifies in what respect it should be performed, as a person should:

... Censure his soul regarding its inadequacy (*tafriṭihā*) and rebuke it for its committing of sins (*dhunūbihā*), out of adherence to the command of Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted, to do this to his soul (*nafsihī*). He should also know that he is not consistent in this except that Allāh, the Exalted, to Whom he has entrusted his affairs, has caused him to be successful in it. Thus, it is He Who has destined it for him, awakened him and granted him success to censure his soul.¹¹²²

¹¹¹³ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifā wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, p. 76 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 102.

¹¹¹⁴ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 62; al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifā wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, p. 41; al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 151; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masāʾil fī Aʿmāl al-Qulūb wa ʾl-Jawāriḥ wa ʾl-Makāsib wa ʾl-ʿAql*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, pp. 92 and 149; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī in *al-Mashriq*, Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, pp. 473 and 485 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 109, 402-3, 404, 417, 432, 439, 440, 442, 562, 563, 583, 586 and 600.

¹¹¹⁵ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾiḥ*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 40 and 55.

¹¹¹⁶ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 241 and 305.

¹¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 258.

¹¹¹⁸ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masāʾil fī Aʿmāl al-Qulūb wa ʾl-Jawāriḥ wa ʾl-Makāsib wa ʾl-ʿAql*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, p. 60; al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifā wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, p. 37 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Makāsib*, ed. al-Khusht, p. 119.

¹¹¹⁹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī in *al-Mashriq*, Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāt, 1955, p. 45.

¹¹²⁰ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī in *al-Mashriq*, Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, pp. 453, 459-61 and 474 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾiḥ*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 65.

¹¹²¹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Badʾ Man Anāba ilā Allāh*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 25-6; al-Muḥāsibī, *Fahm al-Ṣalāt*, ed. al-Khusht, pp. 62 and 70 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 94, 128, 436 and 527.

¹¹²² Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masāʾil fī Aʿmāl al-Qulūb wa ʾl-Jawāriḥ wa ʾl-Makāsib wa ʾl-ʿAql*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, p. 146.

Furthermore, one of the more severe descriptions is that remembering the torments of the hereafter is a ‘cauterising’ of the soul (*taldhīc li ‘l-nafs*).¹¹²³ More conventional descriptions, however, suggest that the soul be made to proceed cautiously (*tathbīt al-nafs*) by instilling fear into it (*al-takhwīf*)¹¹²⁴, that it be forced to shun (*‘azūf al-nafs*)¹¹²⁵ the worldly life (*al-dunyā*), its pleasures (*ladhdhātihā*) and appetites (*shahawātihā*), to inculcate wisdom into it (*al-ḥikma*) by averting it (*inṣirāf al-nafs*)¹¹²⁶ from its nature and restricting it (*habs al-nafs*) from its desires.¹¹²⁷

Conversely, al-Muḥāsibī equally utilises a number of more ‘positive’ terms and concepts regarding disciplining the soul; these include that one should have both care (*ri‘āyat al-nafs*)¹¹²⁸ and concern (*al-‘ināya bi ‘l-nafs*)¹¹²⁹ for the soul; counsel and exhort the soul (*waṣīyat/naṣīḥat al-nafs*)¹¹³⁰; be concerned with its state (*al-ishtighāl bi ‘l-nafs*)¹¹³¹ and even on occasion have gentleness with the soul (*al-rifq bi/al-shafaqa ‘alā ‘l-nafs*).¹¹³² Similarly, al-Muḥāsibī frequently attempts to bring out the generosity of the soul (*sakhā’ al-nafs*)¹¹³³ and as well as instilling fear into the soul regarding God’s punishment and its own destruction, also encourages his readers to instil hope into the soul (*rajjā’ al-nafs*)¹¹³⁴ that its repentance be accepted and God’s satisfaction be attained.

Indeed, another feature of al-Muḥāsibī’s discourse is the reformation of the soul (*iṣlāḥ al-nafs*)¹¹³⁵ regarding which he says, “And be carefully observant concerning your aspiration and preoccupy yourself with the reformation of your soul (*iṣlāḥ nafsika*) rather than being concerned with the faults of others, since it used to be said, ‘It is sufficient a fault in a person

¹¹²³ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri‘āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 92-3 and 95.

¹¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 102.

¹¹²⁵ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa ‘l-Rujūc ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 238 and 293.

¹¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 238.

¹¹²⁷ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 145; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa ‘l-Rujūc ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 269 and 307 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri‘āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 128 and 218.

¹¹²⁸ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā’ih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 80.

¹¹²⁹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 116 and 142-3 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū‘ī in *al-Mashriq*, Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, p. 479.

¹¹³⁰ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā’ih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 40 and 91; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri‘āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 636; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa ‘l-Rujūc ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 283 and 284 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 76.

¹¹³¹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū‘ī in *al-Mashriq*, Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāṭ, 1955, p. 46 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri‘āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 392 and 662.

¹¹³² See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 60 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Ma‘rifa wa Badl al-Naṣīḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 70-1.

¹¹³³ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-‘Ilm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 83 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri‘āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 168, 170, 174, 218, 301, 302, 304, 307, 308, 344, 351, 361, 362, 373, 374, 377, 553, 556, 617, 628 and 636.

¹¹³⁴ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri‘āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 117, 119, 555, 557 and 558.

¹¹³⁵ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 112-13 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū‘ī in *al-Mashriq*, Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, p. 485.

that he brings to light in people that which is hidden from himself in his own soul.”¹¹³⁶ Furthermore, when clarifying the initial stage of the process of reformation of the soul and explaining its true position, al-Muḥāsibī says, “The first thing that is incumbent upon you with regard to reformation of your soul - which will not be reformed by any other means and which is the beginning of ‘concern’ (*al-ri‘āya*) - is that you know that it [*al-nafs*] is an indentured slave.”¹¹³⁷

In making the soul realise this reality and the reality of its state, al-Muḥāsibī once again employs the intellect encouraging his readers to look closely at this intrinsic part of humanity (*naẓr ilā al-nafs bi ‘l-‘aql*)¹¹³⁸, such that it acts as a protection (*ḥirāsat al-nafs*)¹¹³⁹, guarding over the soul’s treachery and deception. In addition, however, the reformation of the soul ultimately requires not only ‘rational’ examination but also ‘physical’ action and in this regard al-Muḥāsibī suggests spiritual exercises (*riyādat al-nafs*)¹¹⁴⁰ for the soul with the goal of weaning it from its habits (*iftām al-nafs*)¹¹⁴¹ and bringing about its rectitude (*istiqāmat al-nafs*).¹¹⁴²

Thus, in summary al-Muḥāsibī introduces a number of terms and concepts, both punitive and progressive in an integrated manner, according to the state, condition and qualities of the soul to nurture it and develop it and ultimately bring about its purification. This being as it may, these terms are relatively rare when compared to other concepts presented in the works of al-Muḥāsibī and as such, are only part of the story regarding his methodology of purifying the soul. Indeed, al-Muḥāsibī himself alludes to other, more important methods in the following text regarding how to deal with the soul, “It is incumbent upon you to oppose it (*mukhālafatihā*), take it to account (*muḥāsabatihā*), be knowledgeable concerning it (*ma‘rifatihā*) and strive against it (*mujāhadatihā*)...”¹¹⁴³ This being the case, it is equally vital that these concepts also be examined and indeed, this is the goal of the following sections.

¹¹³⁶ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 50.

¹¹³⁷ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri‘āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 63.

¹¹³⁸ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā’ih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 31.

¹¹³⁹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa ‘l-Rujū‘ ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 229 and 232.

¹¹⁴⁰ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū‘ī in *al-Mashriq, Ādhār/Nisān*, 1954, p. 189.

¹¹⁴¹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri‘āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 395.

¹¹⁴² See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū‘ī in *al-Mashriq*, Tamūz/Tashrin, 1955, p. 480.

¹¹⁴³ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Ma‘rifa wa Badl al-Naṣīḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, p. 37.

6.7.1 *Maʿrifat al-Nafs*

As the above quote indicates, one of the principal features of al-Muḥāsibī's teaching is intimate knowledge of the soul (*maʿrifat al-nafs*) and indeed, it is a recurrent theme within his works.¹¹⁴⁴ Similarly, as we have seen previously, al-Muḥāsibī considers this aspect of the soul so important that he makes it one of the essential elements of his system of intimate knowledge and insight (*al-maʿrifa*).¹¹⁴⁵ It may seem entirely obvious to indicate that one requires a certain amount of knowledge of a thing before one may begin to understand it and indeed, in this case set about its purification. Yet as the discussion so far has alluded, the *nafs* is a particularly unique adversary, since it dwells hidden deep within the nature of man and this being the case, its faults and hence their elimination are especially difficult to identify. To this effect, al-Muḥāsibī has seemingly spent the better part of his scholarly career in attempting to elucidate and verify this esoteric knowledge (*ʿilm al-bāṭin*), so that his peers and the latter day Muslim community may be fully aware of the dangers of their own souls and the terrible consequences of ignoring such dangers.

Thus, when asked regarding intimate knowledge of the soul (*maʿrifat al-nafs*), al-Muḥāsibī replied:

You have asked about the 'root' (*ʿaṣl*) of all good and evil and its branches (*furūʿihimā*), its outward and its inward, what is known of it and what is unknown. You have asked about a knowledge that no one can endure these days and whoever does endure it, does so only verbally, as they cannot endure action. This is because in this knowledge there is patience, hardship, struggling against outward and inward evil, enduring outward and inward good, which is the reality of sincerity in word and deed, true repentance, continuous grief and contemplation of the hereafter. And how impossible it is that the slave will reach the knowledge of the faults of his soul (*ʿuyūb nafsihi*) except through extensive knowledge and use of the intellect, unequivocal understanding, profound wisdom and penetrating insight.¹¹⁴⁶

Therefore, reflecting on this quote from al-Muḥāsibī, it is easy to see the great emphasis that he places on this facet of the purification process, as he deems it to be the essence of distinguishing between good and evil, which is also seemingly an indication of the dual

¹¹⁴⁴ See for example: al-Muḥāsibī, *Badʿ Man Anāba ilā Allāh*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 24; al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 74, 128-9, 146 and 176; al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifā wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 37, 41 and 45-6; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī in *al-Mashriq*, Ādhār/Nisān, 1954, p. 190; Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāt, 1955, pp. 44, 49 and 52 and Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, pp. 473, 474, 477, 479, 480, 481 and 482; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa ʿl-Rujūʿ ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 289 and 323; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masāʾil fī Aʿmāl al-Qulūb wa ʿl-Jawāriḥ wa ʿl-Makāsib wa ʿl-Aql*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 148-53 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʾāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 110-12, 220, 298, 402-3, 415, 437, 454, 589 and 602.

¹¹⁴⁵ See pp. 213-16 above.

¹¹⁴⁶ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī in *al-Mashriq*, Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, p. 481.

potentiality within the soul. This being the case, it is only through an intimate and erudite understanding of the soul that such potentialities will be distinguished. At the same time however, due to the struggle and effort required in undertaking the study of this knowledge and its consequent implementation, al-Muḥāsibī also informs us that there are very few people who adopt such a path. Indeed, this path requires that every motive and action be examined through utilising not only the knowledge gained but also, every asset of the perceptive faculties to reach the true nature of the human soul. Thus, despite the difficulties of acquiring intimate knowledge of the soul (*maʿrifat al-nafs*), it is an essential first step in the purification process, as without it the aspirant upon the path to God could not possibly hope to succeed.

As such, no one can even begin to purify his soul without first attaining some familiarity with it and in this regard, al-Muḥāsibī says, “If a person didn’t know the faults of his soul (*ʿuyūb nafsihi*), then came to know them and rejected them, then he will be truly repentant.”¹¹⁴⁷ The implication of this is that true repentance - often regarded by Sufis to be the first stage on the mystical path¹¹⁴⁸ - cannot take place until knowledge of the soul’s defects is comprehended and consequently, they are rejected. Indeed, by this statement al-Muḥāsibī alludes to another completely different concept of repentance, in the sense that repentance is customarily associated with the expiation of sins, whereas here al-Muḥāsibī suggests that one should first eliminate the cause of the sin in the first place - the faults of the soul. Therefore, the concept of purification commonly associated with repentance, i.e. that one is ‘cleansed’ from one’s sins, is taken a step further to mean the ‘cleansing’ of the cause of the sin, which therefore extends the scope of purification to a new level. Indeed, this is one of the reasons why repentance (*al-tawba*) has not been included here in al-Muḥāsibī’s theory of *tazkiya*, even though it is commonly associated with the ‘cleansing’ process. This is because al-Muḥāsibī, as alluded to here, seems to have been concerned with a completely different form of purification - that of identifying the defects of the soul and consequently, purifying them so that the incidence of sin would be minimal in the first place and as such, the need for repentance was equally limited.

This being the case, the consequences of al-Muḥāsibī’s understanding of *maʿrifat al-nafs* are often far reaching as the following excerpt indicates:

You will not be sincere to Allāh until you are sincere to your own soul; and you will not be sincere to your own soul until you know it well; and you

¹¹⁴⁷ Ibid., *Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāṭ*, 1955, p. 44.

¹¹⁴⁸ See al-Kalābādhi, *al-Taʿarruf*, pp. 107-9; al-Ṭūsī, *al-Lumaʿ*, pp. 40-2; al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, pp. 89-97 and al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif* (as part of al-Ghazzālī’s *Iḥyāʾ*), vol. 5, p. 221.

won't know it well until you examine closely and subject it to [remembering] death and the display in front of Allāh, then its [true] states will be made manifest; and its [true] states will not be made manifest until you accuse it regarding that which it considers itself righteous therein and judge it according to its misdeeds. If you have accused it, then you have examined it and if you have examined it, then its [true] states will be made manifest. If its [true] states have been made manifest, then you will also know its pretence, deception and deceit. So if you came to know it well you would be cautious concerning it; and if you were cautious concerning it, you will have scrutinised it; and if you have scrutinised it, you will see the true nature of its flight from the obedience of its Lord, the Mighty and Exalted, and its simulation of that which its Lord dislikes, as it is the treasure trove of every evil and the inviter to every affliction. Its Creator, the Mighty and Exalted, has informed you that it is ever inclined to evil (*bi 'l-sū' ammāra*), so take every precaution regarding it and accuse it for the sake of your religion.¹¹⁴⁹

According to this account of al-Muḥāsibī's conceptualisation of *ma'rifat al-nafs*, the very essence of religious practice - sincerity to God - is intrinsically related to the intimate knowledge of the soul, as sincerity of word and deed will not be attained except through this facet of purification. The acquisition of intimate knowledge of the soul is equally dependent however on subjecting the *nafs* to precise examination and scrutiny, through which its true nature of deception and deceit is known. Once a person has gained an understanding of these qualities of the soul, this in turn instils caution into him regarding it, which causes him to strive against it, further purifying it. Therefore, *ma'rifat al-nafs*, as al-Muḥāsibī views it, is also a multi-faceted, multi-layered process that has many positive consequences in dealing with the human soul and indeed, he regards it as being pivotal to the essence of religious praxis.

The results of this essential knowledge of the soul also become clear in the following text taken from al-Muḥāsibī's work that specifically deals with the concept of *ma'rifa*:

So if you come to know it, it will become contemptible [in your eyes] and you will have gained influence over it. Thus, if these three qualities¹¹⁵⁰ existed in you, then remain steadfast and seek Allāh's aid in maintaining them and do not be heedless. Then, if you managed to discipline your soul (*adab al-nafs*) and oppose it (*mukhālafatihā*) in that which it desires and wishes for, you will be strong in all characteristics, if Allāh wills.¹¹⁵¹

Thus, once one has gained a knowledge of the human soul, its true nature becomes manifest, i.e. that it is lowly and despicable and as such, once this is known the soul will

¹¹⁴⁹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 402-3.

¹¹⁵⁰ Meaning: knowledge of the soul (*ma'rifat al-nafs*), that it is contemptible in your eyes (*hawānuha*) and your influence over it (*al-quwwa 'alayhā*).

¹¹⁵¹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Ma'rifa wa Badl al-Naṣīḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, p. 37.

hold no influence, since one is under no illusion as to the claims it makes nor the deceptions it attempts to mask. However, this particular quote is also significant from two other perspectives; firstly, that this is not a ‘one off’ process but rather, it requires continual, renewed perseverance and steadfastness and secondly, even though one was characterised by the aforementioned attributes, the divine role in *tazkiya* remains constant as this whole process will be impossible without God’s assistance.

Therefore, in summary we may conclude that intimate knowledge of the soul (*maʿrifat al-nafs*) is an essential and intrinsic, primary facet of al-Muḥāsibī’s vision of the soul’s purification - a fact to which both the discussion in this chapter so far and the works of al-Muḥāsibī himself bear testimony. Indeed, one brief statement from our author may summarise his whole approach to the topic, as he states, “And the sign of truly knowing the soul (*maʿrifat al-nafs*) is having a bad opinion of it (*sūʿ al-ẓann bihā*).”¹¹⁵²

6.7.2 *al-Murāqaba*

In addition to the facets of purification mentioned in the above quote by al-Muḥāsibī, one is also able to identify another aspect of the *tazkiya* process, which is the continual observance of God (*al-murāqaba*). By this we mean the constant cognisance of divine observance of every thought, word and deed and therefore, both the external (*al-ẓāhir*) and internal (*al-bāṭin*) actions of the human being, which in turn causes the believer to act in his every circumstance as if God is ‘watching’ his every move. In fact, this is a common feature of al-Muḥāsibī’s works¹¹⁵³, both conceptually and in terms of phraseology and indeed, we have seen this concept alluded to previously in chapter two¹¹⁵⁴, where the Prophet, when asked concerning spiritual perfection (*iḥsān*), is reported to have said, “It is to worship Allāh as if you see Him [and know] that if you do not see Him, He sees you.” Thus, we can conclude that the concept of observance of God (*al-murāqaba*) is virtually synonymous with that of Prophetic notion of spiritual perfection (*iḥsān*).

¹¹⁵² Al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 146.

¹¹⁵³ See for example: al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 69-71, 95, 125, 143, 145, 157-8, 169 and 175-6; al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifā wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 23, 32, 37 and 54; al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, pp. 91, 127 and 181; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī in *al-Mashriq*, Ādhār/Nisān, 1954, p. 188; al-Muḥāsibī, *Muʿātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir Aṭā, pp. 35 and 44; al-Muḥāsibī, *Fahm al-Ṣalāt*, ed. al-Khusht, p. 58; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾiḥ*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 31, 33, 39, 45, 48, 51, 53, 54, 60, 67-9, 72 and 77; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa ʿl-Rujūʿ ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 280-1, 287 and 313-18; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masāʾil fī Aʿmāl al-Qulūb wa ʿl-Jawāriḥ wa ʿl-Makāsib wa ʿl-Aql*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 129-30 and 150 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 166, 168, 175, 178, 199, 368, 377-8 and 527.

¹¹⁵⁴ See footnote 304, p. 80 above.

Having understood this to be the case and in applying this Prophetic narration, al-Muḥāsibī is unequivocal in stressing the importance of *al-murāqaba*, “You should be concerned with three characteristics to the exclusion of all others: your Lord’s observance of you (*murāqabatika rabbika*), taking your soul to account (*muḥāsabatika nafsika*) and reminding yourself of your sins (*mudhākaratika dhanbika*).”¹¹⁵⁵ Therefore, from al-Muḥāsibī’s perspective, this facet of the purification process is a vital concern for any aspirant seeking to undertake the task of *tazkiya* and indeed, it is interesting to note that this along with another facet - that of taking your soul to account (*muḥāsabat al-nafs*), which will be discussed shortly, constitute the only factors that one should be concerned with, indicating their vital and essential nature.

Al-Muḥāsibī exhorts his readers to take on board this quality, saying, “I advise you, O my brother, after the observance of Allāh (*murāqabat Allāh*) in your aspirations and in your every movement; to listen attentively to Allāh and understand through Him, as indeed, within this Qur’ān, which has been revealed to us, is the clarification of everything and the knowledge of everything.”¹¹⁵⁶ As such, the essential nature of *al-murāqaba* is made absolutely clear, as the very first piece of advice al-Muḥāsibī offers is regarding it and not only this but also that it has a primary place in the advice he gives, as it precedes his counsel regarding the Qur’ān. Similarly, the subject matter is also made clear as it not only concerns the outward action but also the inward facets of the human being.

Thus, regarding the ‘outward’ acts of worship, this facet of *tazkiya* even has an effect on the most basic of Islamic duties - that of prayer, as, when describing the state of someone praying al-Muḥāsibī says, “It is appropriate for anyone who knew that Allāh is approaching him and is in front of him [in prayer] that he be fearful, not be distracted and turn his attention elsewhere, as he should be ashamed that He is looking at him while he has turned away.”¹¹⁵⁷ However, as one might expect from al-Muḥāsibī’s discourse, it is in the more ‘esoteric’ aspects of religious practice that one finds the greatest benefit, as al-Muḥāsibī observes:

The best of stations (*al-maqāmāt*) and the most noble of them is the observance of Allāh (*murāqabat li Allāh*). And from the best of the observance [of Allāh] (*al-murāqaba*) is that the slave is observant of being grateful for the bounties [he receives], acknowledges his misdeeds and turns his attention to pardon for them. Thus, his heart adheres to this station in all his actions and whenever he became heedless he returns to this [state],

¹¹⁵⁵ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 169.

¹¹⁵⁶ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 158.

¹¹⁵⁷ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Fahm al-Ṣalāt*, ed. al-Khusht, p. 58 and cf. al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā’ih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 54.

with the will of Allāh. This [process] is assisted by abandoning sins, being free of preoccupations and being careful to critically examine [one's soul] (*al-murāja'a*). And from the actions of the heart that are purified (*tazkū*) through it [*al-murāqaba*] are: sincerity (*al-ikhlaṣ*); certitude (*al-thiqqa*); gratitude (*al-shukr*); humility (*al-tawāḍu'*); submission (*al-istislām*); counsel (*al-naṣīha*) and love and enmity for Allāh's sake (*al-ḥubb wa 'l-bughḍ li Allāh*).¹¹⁵⁸

It is worth noting here that al-Muḥāsibī considers *al-murāqaba* to be of the spiritual stations (*al-maqāmāt*), commonly associated with the Sufi path¹¹⁵⁹, indicating his familiarity with this concept. Not only this, however, but in addition to acknowledging this idea, he also considers *al-murāqaba* to be the best of such spiritual stations, clearly indicating the importance he attaches to it and by implication, its importance in the process of *tazkiya*. *Al-murāqaba* is also important however, due to the fact that it instils gratitude into the believer for God's favours and also brings him to the realisation of his own shortcomings, for which he consequently seeks forgiveness.¹¹⁶⁰ The last phrase is the most important, however, as when discussing the effect of *al-murāqaba* on actions of the heart, al-Muḥāsibī describes these actions as being “purified (*tazkū*) through it [*al-murāqaba*]”, this being a clear indication of this facet of *tazkiya's* contribution to the overall purification process.

In this regard, al-Muḥāsibī identifies two categories of *al-murāqaba*; the first of these deals with the ‘outward’ aspects of observance, whereas the second is concerned with the ‘inward’ aspects of religious life, as al-Muḥāsibī comments:

The best form of shyness (*al-ḥayā'*) is the observance of Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted, (*al-murāqabat li Allāh*). Observance [of God] (*al-murāqaba*) is in three things: observance of Allāh regarding His obedience by action; observance of Allāh regarding His disobedience by abandoning it and observance of Allāh regarding intentions and fleeting thoughts due to the statement of the Prophet, may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him, ‘Worship Allāh as if you see Him [and know] that if you do not see Him, He sees you.’ Indeed, observance of the heart for Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted, is harsher on the body than enduring the night prayer (*qiyām al-layl*), fasting during the day and spending one's wealth in the path of Allāh.¹¹⁶¹

It is equally interesting to note here that al-Muḥāsibī alludes to the intrinsic link between *al-murāqaba* and shyness/shame before God (*al-ḥayā'/al-istiḥyā'*), which is an equally

¹¹⁵⁸ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 69.

¹¹⁵⁹ See al-Ṭūsī, *al-Luma'*, pp. 51-2; al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, pp. 189-92 and al-Suhrawardī, *Awārif al-Ma'ārif* (as part of al-Ghazzālī's *Iḥyā'*), vol. 5, pp. 222-3.

¹¹⁶⁰ Cf.: al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 67-9 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 95.

¹¹⁶¹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 181 and cf. al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 70-1 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 166.

common theme within his works¹¹⁶² and he concludes that this facet of *tazkiya* is indeed, the best form of the quality of *al-ḥayāʾ*. In addition, al-Muḥāsibī also distinguishes three forms of *al-murāqaba*; the first two which may be regarded as ‘outward’ forms, where as the third form is solely related to the ‘inward’ aspect of observance. It is equally interesting to note that al-Muḥāsibī, in this regard, relies on the very same *ḥadīth* that was quoted at the beginning of this section, indicating that he too understood *al-murāqaba* to be synonymous with the concept of *iḥsān* alluded to in the aforementioned Prophetic narration. What is more important to observe however is the emphasis that al-Muḥāsibī places on *al-murāqaba*, since he considers it to be more effective in the purification process than many of the more familiar, ‘physical’ acts of worship.

With regard to the actualisation of observance [of God] (*al-murāqaba*), al-Muḥāsibī notes that its origin it lies in, “The heart knowing the proximity of its Lord, the Mighty and Exalted,” which is perfected in, “The heart maintaining and persisting in the knowledge that Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted, has knowledge of your every movement.”¹¹⁶³ Therefore, we can conclude that *al-murāqaba* is an intrinsic feature of the heart, as, when discussing the three qualities that a person should maintain in his heart, al-Muḥāsibī states: “Having fear in the heart that he will be heedless or falter and thus, be lowered in His sight, as such a fear will make him attentive, his attentiveness will make him mindful and his remembering will make him cautious, until he [reaches the stage where he] is observant of his supreme Sovereign (*yurāqib malīkahu*).”¹¹⁶⁴

In addition, the process of *al-murāqaba* brings about other positive qualities in the human being as al-Muḥāsibī elucidates, “It causes him to have shame (*al-ḥayāʾ*) in front of Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted and reverence for Him.”¹¹⁶⁵ Indeed, this quality of *al-murāqaba* is the antidote to the ailment of heedlessness (*al-ghafla*), which, as was seen earlier, leads to the affliction of the desires (*al-hawāʾ*) and the appetites (*al-shahawāt*) and may even reach a stage where the person may in fact be concerned with the affairs of the world but at the

¹¹⁶² See for example: al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 71 and 125; al-Muḥāsibī, *Muʿātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir Aṭā, pp. 36, 59, 61 and 66; al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, p. 32; al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidin*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 158; al-Muḥāsibī, *Fahm al-Ṣalāt*, ed. al-Khusht, p. 58; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawahhum*, ed. al-Khusht, p. 86; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 210-11; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī in *al-Mashriq*, Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, p. 479; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 31, 39, 50, 53, 68, 69, 86 and 87; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa ʿl-Rujūʿ ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyāʾ*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 287, 316-18 and 319; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masāʾil fī Aʿmāl al-Qulūb wa ʿl-Jawāriḥ wa ʿl-Makāsib wa ʿl-ʿAql*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 51, 55, 99, 150 and 158 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 168, 246, 278, 341-6, 368-9, 391, 568, 639 and 659.

¹¹⁶³ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa ʿl-Rujūʿ ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyāʾ*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 313.

¹¹⁶⁴ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Muʿātabat al-Nafs*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir Aṭā, p. 35.

¹¹⁶⁵ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa ʿl-Rujūʿ ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyāʾ*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 315.

same time they are observant of God's pleasure in their hearts. When this stage is reached, three qualities become apparent, as al-Muḥāsibī clarifies:

Firstly, the joy of satisfaction that awakens in his heart out of hope for the pleasure of Allāh and not that of the people; secondly, being secure from the sins of the heart due to [the heart] being occupied with conversing with his Lord the Mighty and Exalted and finally, security from the sins [he committed] in the rest of his life in his dealings with people, which brought no benefit, neither in the religious or in the worldly life. Such a person is observant of his Lord (*murāqib li rabbihi*), fearful of Him in his innermost thoughts, prefers His love to what he himself loves and has detached himself from the creation preferring Allāh, glorified be He. As such, his outward appearance is that of the people of the worldly life, whereas his inward state is that of those who revere their Lord and are in awe of Him.¹¹⁶⁶

Thus, for such a person, through *al-murāqaba* the outward state of the worldly life is maintained, being comparable to that of the rest of his peers but inwardly, within his heart, he is in the 'presence' of his Lord.

Seemingly relying on the Qur'ān as his source¹¹⁶⁷, al-Muḥāsibī then clarifies the need for intensity and precision of *al-murāqaba*, when he says;

So do not be heedless of observance [of God] (*al-murāqaba*) such that even an atom's weight [of something] does not escape your mind and do not become satiated or bored with it, as indeed, Allāh is not heedless of you; He observes you and watches over your conscience, accounting for even an atom's weight or the weight of a mustard seed¹¹⁶⁸, so that He may recompense you for it.¹¹⁶⁹

As such, every thought, word and deed must be carefully observed, as indeed, even the motives, intentions and aspirations of each of these very hidden, internal actions is subject to divine scrutiny, as the following excerpt indicates:

O young man, indeed the state (*ḥāla*) in which all the states are combined is one state - that of observance [of God] (*al-murāqaba*). So maintain in your heart and your soul the knowledge that Allāh is watching you in your every movement, as indeed, you are fixed in the sight of Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted in your every moment; you are in His grasp wherever you are and the eyes of Allāh are cast upon your heart, examining your internal and external [states]. O young man, this characteristic is an ocean that has no

¹¹⁶⁶ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā'il fi A'māl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ wa 'l-Makāsib wa 'l-'Aql*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā, pp. 129-30.

¹¹⁶⁷ See verses: 10:61, 21:47, 31:16, 34:3 and 99:7-8.

¹¹⁶⁸ This is an indication to the minute detail that will characterise this 'accounting' and subsequent 'recompense'.

¹¹⁶⁹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 158.

shores; an ocean from which streams and rivers flow and ships sail therein to acquire its treasures.¹¹⁷⁰

Thus, in summary we can conclude that continual observance of God (*al-murāqaba*) being synonymous with the Prophetic concept of spiritual perfection (*iḥsān*), is a salient feature of al-Muḥāsibī's methodology of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, as it is a vital and essential facet of the purification process and at the same time, is intrinsically linked to the first element of his approach, as the following quote bears testimony, "No one sought aid against his own soul and sought to fortify his religion with anything better than the observance of Allāh (*murāqaba li Allāh*) and through it [he would] attain shame in front of Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted, this being the essence of intimate knowledge and insight (*al-maʿrifa*)."¹¹⁷¹

6.7.3 *al-Mujāhada*

It will be remembered from chapter two that, when discussing the nature and purification of the soul, the following *ḥadīth* was quoted, "The religious warrior (*al-mujāhid*) is the one who struggles against his soul for the sake of Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted"¹¹⁷² and indeed, in this chapter we have also seen al-Muḥāsibī quote the following narrations attributing them to the Prophet:

The Prophet, may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him, said, "You have returned from the lesser jihad (*al-jihād al-aṣghar*) to the greater jihad (*al-jihād al-akbar*) - the struggle against your souls (*mujāhadat al-nufūs*)." A man asked the Prophet, "What is the best form of jihad?" and he replied, "Your personal struggle against your soul and your desires (*mujāhadatuka nafsaka wa hawāk*)."¹¹⁷³

Bearing in mind that Prophetic guidance provides us with our second facet of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, it is just such narrations that furnish us with the third aspect of al-Muḥāsibī's methodology of purifying the soul - that of combating or struggling against the soul (*mujāhadat al-nafs*). Indeed, al-Muḥāsibī himself mentions this aspect of *tazkiya* in the aforementioned quote from *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa*¹¹⁷⁴ and upon closer examination one finds that this methodological tool in purifying the soul, although not as common as the previous two aspects, still occupies a central position in the works of our author.¹¹⁷⁵

¹¹⁷⁰ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa 'l-Rujūc ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 280.

¹¹⁷¹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badl al-Naṣīḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, p. 23.

¹¹⁷² See p. 85 above.

¹¹⁷³ See p. 275 above.

¹¹⁷⁴ See p. 282 above.

¹¹⁷⁵ See for example: al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 150; al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badl al-Naṣīḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 32 and 34; al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 104; al-

Once again, with regard to combating the soul (*mujāhadat al-nafs*) al-Muḥāsibī is unequivocal in clarifying the importance of this task as he addresses his readers, telling them that they have been afflicted with the duty of struggling against their souls and exhorts them saying, “Fight your souls with a war that is more beneficial for you than any other type of war.”¹¹⁷⁶ Thus, al-Muḥāsibī clarifies in no uncertain terms that the believer has to do battle with his own soul to bring about its reformation and in this sense can be viewed as “the greater jihad (*al-jihād al-akbar*)”, referred to in the above *ḥadīth*, since as we have already seen in this chapter so far, the *nafs* is a more than capable adversary.

Al-Muḥāsibī sets about the task of explaining in what respect the soul is to be fought against and in his work *al-Naṣāʾih* we find a number of aspects, in which he explains that *mujāhadat al-nafs* must be employed. To this effect al-Muḥāsibī utilises the phrase, “... and struggle against your souls regarding ... (*wa jāhidū anfusakum ‘alā ...*)” and then lists various aspects of the soul that require disciplining. The first of these qualities is to struggle against one’s soul to be patient when afflictions and disasters strike, since even though the soul has the potential to be patient, it is rarely the case that it does so.¹¹⁷⁷ The danger in this, as al-Muḥāsibī clarifies, is that impatience with an event that befalls one of us is tantamount to rejecting the predestination of God and would incur His wrath. Conversely, if one were to be patient when afflicted, then one would have gained God’s pleasure and satisfaction (*al-riḍāʾ*), a quality that will be remembered was closely associated with the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʾinna*).¹¹⁷⁸ Thus, by undertaking the process of *al-mujāhada*, one may purify the soul and so attain an attribute of its most elevated form.¹¹⁷⁹

In another example of this, al-Muḥāsibī advises that once upon the path of reforming the soul to struggle against one’s soul regarding the change from blameworthy characteristics (*akhlāq al-madhmūma*), since this change is an arduous task that cannot be implemented ‘overnight’. Thus, once again it requires perseverance and patience yet its reward is the pleasure of God and as such, entry into paradise.¹¹⁸⁰ Similarly, al-Muḥāsibī also encourages to struggle against one’s soul in loving that which Allāh loves, since if someone was to fulfil

Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, ed. Mazālī, p. 92; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, p. 237; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī in *al-Mashriq*, Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāt, 1955, pp. 44, 46 and 52 and Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, pp. 452, 480-1, 482 and 485-6; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 37, 39, 40-1, 45, 51, 53, 54, 56, 72, 75, 78, 83, 84, 86 and 92 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʾāya li Huqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 80, 120-1, 157, 241, 243, 248, 252, 305, 328, 355, 378, 391, 395, 396, 397, 402, 406, 415 and 435.

¹¹⁷⁶ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī in *al-Mashriq*, Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, p. 452.

¹¹⁷⁷ See p. 62 above.

¹¹⁷⁸ See p. 71 above.

¹¹⁷⁹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣāʾih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 37-8.

¹¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-1.

this, they would not only pleased their Lord but also denied the soul its inclination to its own passions at the same time, thus causing it once again to be purified.¹¹⁸¹

From these few examples alone it is easy to see the positive effect that *al-mujāhada* has on the soul and we may summarise al-Muḥāsibī's view with one of the counsels he provides from the very same work:

My brothers, this is the path to Allāh, so adhere to what I have described to you, believe in it in your heart, construct your actions based upon it and struggle against your souls (*jāhidū anfusakum*) to establish it, as indeed, I see that the soul inclined to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra*) is determined to disregard the command of Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted. So be observant of Allāh (*rāqibū Allāh*) and do not neglect it [*al-nafs*] or your religion will be destroyed.¹¹⁸²

Therefore, *al-mujāhada* is an essential feature of the purification process and especially in its initial stages as al-Muḥāsibī, when describing the beginning of the path for the aspirant and his attempt to be sincere, asserts that it is attained:

With struggle (*al-mujāhada*) and endurance (*al-mukābada*) due to the strength of the appetites, the weakness of his intention, the lack of practice at being sincere and being habitually ostentatious. This is because the weak slave, since his childhood has been used to being insincere in front of his peers and if he wished to wean his soul away from this habit and break the strength of his appetites whilst his intention is weak and he lacks practice at being sincere, his soul will refuse and deem it difficult. Thus, he struggles (*jāhada*) and endures (*kābada*) until he is consistent in refuting his soul, sincerity becomes the norm and ostentation is rejected. Then the reward of sincerity from Allāh enters his heart with light and insight, the soul is broken due to it being prevented its passions for a protracted period and the enemy [Iblīs] despairs and withdraws, awaiting [the advent of] the appetites and heedlessness. Then Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted, draws near with assistance and aid due to what He has seen of his patience for His sake and his consistency in combating his desires (*al-mujāhada li hawāhu*).¹¹⁸³

Thus, through continuous struggle against one's soul, one is able not only to overcome the base qualities of the *nafs* but also to bring about the most essential feature of a religious act -that of sincerity for God alone. In addition, when this act of sincerity is observed at the heavenly level, the divine facet of *tazkiya* plays its role also, as God then grants His servant the bounty of His assistance in maintaining this heightened spiritual state, further adding to the process of reform and purification. The divine facet of *tazkiya* is further evidenced in the following text from al-Muḥāsibī's *al-Ri'āya*:

¹¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 51.

¹¹⁸² Ibid., p. 45.

¹¹⁸³ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 241.

So when Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted, grants the devotee strength of conviction, consistency in combating it (*mujāhadatiḥā*) and subduing it [*al-nafs*] will despair from him giving it its desire, its nature will be made subservient by strength of conviction and the light of truth, it will be overcome by the concerns and worries of the hereafter, becoming tranquil to its [the hereafter's] invitation, severing hope in seeking its habits.¹¹⁸⁴

The practice of *al-mujāhada* is not restricted to the novice however and indeed, it is an attribute of the most spiritually advanced on the path to God as when discussing the characteristics of the spiritual instructors (*ṣifāt al-murabbiyīn*) whom he sought in his youth and whom he eventually found, he says:

The sign of this in the truthful person (*al-ṣādiq*) is that when he contemplates he is admonished, when he is silent he reflects, when he speaks he is reminded, if he is prevented [from something] he is patient, if he is presented [with something] he is grateful, if he is tried he recalls, if [some] ignorance was committed against him he forebears, if he gains knowledge he becomes humble, if he teaches he is gentle and if he were asked he expends [his efforts in answering]. He is a healing for the aspirant, an aid to the seeker of guidance, an ally of truth, a repose of righteousness, easily pleased regarding his own rights and is zealous regarding the rights of Allāh. His intentions are better than his actions and his actions are more than effective than his words. His abode is the truth, his sanctuary is shyness, his knowledge is scrupulousness and his witness is reliable. He has insights from light that he sees with, realities of knowledge which he speaks with and evidences from certainty which he expresses.

Those who reach this are only those who have strived against their own souls for Allāh, the Exalted's sake (*jāhada nafsahu li Allāh ta'ālā*), made their intention sincere for His obedience, feared Allāh secretly and openly, reduced their hopes, 'buckled the belt' of caution and 'set sail with the wind' of salvation 'upon a sea' of supplication.¹¹⁸⁵

Thus, a major factor in bringing about this change in state and undertaking the process of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, culminating in the highest of spiritual levels is combating one's soul for God's sake and the positive consequences of this are many and varied, as he continues to enumerate its benefits saying:

Thus, his time is a blessing, his affairs are secure, he is not deluded by the adornment of the abode of deception and he is not distracted from the torments of the day of resurrection by the lustre of a mirage's breeze ... so he [became] learned after ignorance, rich after poverty, genial after ferocity, intimate after being remote, rested after fatigue, his affairs were united and his concerns drawn together... the ignorant consider him speechless but it is his wisdom that has silenced him. The foolish consider him to be talking idly but it is his advice which has caused him to speak. [Some people]

¹¹⁸⁴ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 435 and cf. pp. 395, 396, 406 and 438.

¹¹⁸⁵ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, pp. 102-4.

consider him rich but it is his modesty which has sufficed him and [some people] consider him poor but it is his humility which has humbled him. He doesn't involve himself in that which doesn't concern him, he doesn't burden himself more than he needs, he doesn't take that which he doesn't require, he doesn't leave that with which he has been entrusted and people are comfortable with him, while he is in a state of fatigue. He has killed his avarice with scrupulousness, terminated his greed with piety and annihilated his appetites with the light of knowledge.¹¹⁸⁶

In addition to *al-mujāhada* being implemented on the soul, as may have been noticed in previous excerpts, the target of *al-mujāhada* is also the two most manifest negative qualities of the *nafs* i.e. the appetites (*al-shahawāt*) and the desires (*al-hawā*).¹¹⁸⁷ As such, the phrase 'combating or struggling against the soul' (*mujāhadat al-nafs*) can be understood to mean the soul and its every negative facet.

It is also worth noting that the practice of *al-mujāhada* is not restricted to the soul only in the works of al-Muḥāsibī but also to the other hidden adversary - Satan. In this regard, al-Muḥāsibī states, "And know that your love for obedience lies in fighting your enemy (*al-muḥāraba li 'aduwik*), combating your soul (*al-mujāhada li nafsika*) and opposing your desires (*al-mukhālafa li hawāk*), especially if your soul is compliant with its desires, as your desires are Iblīs's poisoned arrow, through which he reaches your heart."¹¹⁸⁸ Moreover, in al-Muḥāsibī's system of intimate knowledge and insight (*al-marʿifa*), Satan plays an intrinsic part and as such, al-Muḥāsibī explains, "And as for the intimate knowledge (*marʿifa*) of the enemy of Allāh, Iblīs, it is that you should know that the Almighty, may He be praised and His names sanctified, has commanded you to fight him (*muḥārabatihi*) and to combat him (*mujāhadatihi*), in secret and in public and in obedience and disobedience."¹¹⁸⁹ Further clarifying the manner in which one should approach this despicable adversary, he says, "So fight him with the most severe battle and combat him with the most intense war, in secret and in public, outwardly and inwardly and do not be deficient in this until you have expended every effort in fighting him and combating him, as combating him is fighting him in every thing that he invites you to, whether it be good or evil."¹¹⁹⁰

Therefore, in summary we can clearly see that combating the insinuations, enticements and whisperings of the Devil are an equally intrinsic part of the practice of *al-mujāhada* and as

¹¹⁸⁶ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, pp. 105-6.

¹¹⁸⁷ See Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 305, 391 and 397 and pp. 264, 268 and 275 above.

¹¹⁸⁸ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī in *al-Mashriq*, Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, p. 482.

¹¹⁸⁹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Marʿifa wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, p. 32.

¹¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 33 and cf. al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī in *al-Mashriq*, Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāṭ, 1955, pp. 46-7 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 252-5.

such, an equally intrinsic part of *tazkiya*. This being the case, the targets of the *al-mujāhada* are both Satan and his ally, the negative facets of the human soul and as such, *al-mujāhada* consists of a two pronged attack on both the hidden external enemy and his internal counterpart.¹¹⁹¹

In addition, it is also worth noting that al-Muḥāsibī utilises a similar concept to *al-mujāhada*, namely that of opposing or contradicting the soul (*mukhālafat al-nafs*) and once again we find this phrase well evidenced in the works of al-Muḥāsibī.¹¹⁹² Moreover, we may consider these two terms as being synonymous since whoever opposed his soul has most certainly struggled against and combated it. In this regard, al-Muḥāsibī states, "... Look at what your soul desires and then oppose it (*khālifhā*), as its desires only invite [you] to the affairs of the worldly life, so oppose (*khālif*) the invitations of your soul and adhere to the command of your Lord, the Mighty and Exalted..."¹¹⁹³

Thus, it is easy to see the similarity between *mukhālafat al-nafs* and *mujāhada al-nafs*, which is further evidenced by the following excerpt, which also stresses the divine facet of *tazkiya*:

It has been affirmed by the people of understanding (*ūla 'l-nuhā*) that whoever attained righteousness and obedience did so through opposing (*yukhālif*) the soul's passions, via some fatigue that afflicts it or by preventing it from some relaxation or pleasure it attempts to gain. As such, this is a clear proof and clear testimony against it [*al-nafs*] that the one who caused it to oppose its passions is not the soul itself but rather, the One Who is bounteous to it and as such, all praise and gratitude is due to Him.¹¹⁹⁴

Therefore, in summary we can conclude that as al-Muḥāsibī himself alludes to, *mukhālafat al-nafs* and *mujāhada al-nafs* are intrinsic features of the purification process through which the soul and its base qualities of the appetites (*al-shahawāt*) and the desires (*al-hawā*) are purified and the soul's nemesis - Satan, is controlled. This in turn brings about the pleasure of the soul's Creator and consequently, His greatest reward, as al-Muḥāsibī alludes to when describing the believer who is a 'worker' (*ʿāmil*) and merchant (*tājir*) for God's pleasure in the hereafter says, "He is a combatant of his soul (*mujāhid li nafsihi*) and endures his desires (*mukābid li hawāhu*); he hopes that He will look at him whilst in that state and

¹¹⁹¹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 355.

¹¹⁹² See for example: al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 150; al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 37 and 53; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasūʿī in *al-Mashriq*, Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāt, 1955, pp. 46-7 and Tamūz/Tashrīn, 1955, pp. 485-6 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 109, 327, 356, 377, 402, 434 and 436.

¹¹⁹³ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 327.

¹¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 434.

thus, be pleased with him (*yardā ‘anhu*), which in turn brings about his eternal existence in His abode and secures him from His punishment.”¹¹⁹⁵

6.7.4 *al-Muḥāsaba*

In addition to the multifarious verses related to the concept of the account and recompense (*al-ḥisāb*) in the hereafter, exhibited in the Qurʾān¹¹⁹⁶, it was found in chapter two that the Prophet’s Companion and the second caliph in Islam history, ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb is reported to have said, “Take your souls to account before they are taken to account; weigh your souls [actions] before they are weighed, as indeed, it will be easier for you in the Reckoning tomorrow that you take your souls to account today; adorn yourselves for the great display! On that day you will be brought forth and not even the most hidden secret will be concealed.”¹¹⁹⁷

Taking these two concepts into consideration, al-Muḥāsibī would apply a method of intricate, precise and introspective examination and taking the soul account (*muḥāsabat al-nafs*) to himself so seriously, out of fear for the evaluation of his deeds on the Day of Judgement by God, that he became famous for it, to the extent that it became synonymous with him.¹¹⁹⁸

Therefore, it is little surprise that he employs the concept of introspective examination (*muḥāsabat al-nafs*) as a valuable and intrinsic facet of the purification process. In addition, it is worth noting however, he also utilises other different but related terms within this context such as ‘appraisal and evaluation of the soul’ (*murāja‘at al-nafs*) and ‘inspection of the soul’ (*mufātashat al-nafs*), which are used collectively and frequently throughout his works.¹¹⁹⁹ Similarly, he also makes use of the phrase ‘scrutinising [the hidden aspects] of

¹¹⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 120-1.

¹¹⁹⁶ For example see verses: 6:52, 6:69, 21:1, 23:118, 24:39, 26:113, 40:17, 40:27, 40:40, 65:8, 69:20, 69:26, 78:27, 78:36, 84:8 and 88:26 and cf. al-Muḥāsibī, *al-‘Aql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 265 and 436.

¹¹⁹⁷ See p. 86 above.

¹¹⁹⁸ See p. 141 above.

¹¹⁹⁹ See for example: al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 59-60, 73, 74, 92-3, 116-17, 125, 128, 129, 130, 142-3, 150 and 169; al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Ma‘rifā wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 31, 36, 37, 53-4, 57, 72-3, 83 and 85; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Makāsib*, ed. al-Khusht, pp. 71 and 103; al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, pp. 46, 48, 110 and 123; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-‘Aql wa Fahm al-Qurʾān*, ed. al-Quwwatī, pp. 265 and 436; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Khalwa*, ed. al-Yasū‘ī in *al-Mashriq*, Kānūn al-Thānī/Shabāṭ, 1955, p. 47; al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā’ih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 13, 24, 27, 36 and 55; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa ‘l-Rujū‘ ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, pp. 228 and 229-31; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā’il fī A’māl al-Qulūb wa ‘l-Jawāriḥ wa ‘l-Makāsib wa ‘l-‘Aql*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad ‘Aṭā, p. 132 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri‘āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 63-4, 65-77, 160 and 164.

the soul' (*tafaqqud* [*sarā'ir*] *al-nafs*)¹²⁰⁰ with an analogous connotation and together these phrases all indicate an in depth, insightful, precise and exact examination of the soul and its qualities, which is invaluable as a method of *tazkiyat al-nafs*.

One may be struck by the fact that a scholar is attributed an appellation based on an esoteric spiritual practice but when examining the works of al-Muḥāsibī, it is not surprising that he was renowned as 'al-Muḥāsibī' bearing in mind the huge stress he places on this facet of purifying the soul. Regarding the great emphasis al-Muḥāsibī places on introspective examination and taking the soul account (*muḥāsabat al-nafs*), he explains this to one of his students when he says, "And know that I only frequently remind you and myself of appraisal [of the soul]' (*al-murāja'at*) because it has been made clear to me how necessary it is."¹²⁰¹

The necessity of introspective examination lies in the fact that it plays an essential role in religious and spiritual life as a whole as al-Muḥāsibī explains, "The basis of obedience is scrupulousness (*al-wara'*) and the basis of scrupulousness is 'God consciousness' (*al-taqwā*); the basis of God consciousness is examining the soul (*muḥāsabat al-nafs*) and the basis of examining the soul is hope (*al-rajā'*) and fear (*al-khawf*)."¹²⁰²

Therefore, as far as al-Muḥāsibī is concerned *muḥāsabat al-nafs* is a pinnacle feature of the internal faith system since it is the basis of God consciousness (*al-taqwā*), this in turn being the very essence of piety and righteousness. The relationship between *muḥāsabat al-nafs* and *al-taqwā* therefore seems to lie in the fact that introspective examination is based on two other essential features of the contemplative, moral faith system in Islam -those of hope (*al-rajā'*) and fear (*al-khawf*), since if one is continually hoping in God's mercy and paradise and fearing His wrath and punishment it would seem to stand to reason that a person may be described as 'God conscious'. Similarly, it is also understandable that al-Muḥāsibī would consider hope and fear as the basis for *al-muḥāsaba*, since if one were continually hoping in God's mercy and paradise and fearing His wrath and punishment, they would clearly be concerned with making their account in front of Allāh on the Day of Judgement as easy as possible and consequently, would take great pains to make sure that this account was fully in order in this life.

¹²⁰⁰ See for example: al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 40, 71, 78 and 91; al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa 'l-Rujū' ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 229 and al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 106, 403, 562, 563, 574, 577, 578, 579, 590, 596, 597, 600, 602, 662 and 665.

¹²⁰¹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 92.

¹²⁰² Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 63-4.

Although al-Muḥāsibī mentions in the previous excerpt that the important moral quality of scrupulousness (*al-waraʿ*) is intrinsically related to God consciousness (*al-taqwā*), he also states that scrupulousness also has an important link to *al-muḥāsaba* when he says, “The beginning of scrupulousness (*al-waraʿ*) is introspective examination of the soul (*muḥāsabat al-nafs*) when fleeting thoughts occur in the heart.”¹²⁰³ Consequently, when asked by a student of his to elucidate the form of *al-muḥāsaba* that brings about scrupulousness, he clarifies that it is:

Proceeding cautiously in every circumstance before acting or abandoning an act, whether it be an intention in the heart or the action of the body, until it becomes clear that he should either act or abandon the action. Thus, if it became clear to him that it is something that Allāh hates then he avoids it with a firm intention in his heart and he causes his body to refrain from that which Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted, hates or [alternatively] he prevents his soul from non-performance of a compulsory duty and was swift to fulfil it.¹²⁰⁴

Thus, for al-Muḥāsibī the process of *al-muḥāsaba* concerns every type of action that the human being performs, both the exoteric and esoteric and revolves around God’s pleasure and command. With regard to the esoteric aspect, with which al-Muḥāsibī seems more concerned, before relating the narration of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb seen at the beginning of this section, he says, “And examine your soul (*ḥāsib nafsaka*) regarding every fleeting thought (*khaṭra*) and be observant of Allah (*rāqib Allāh*) in every breath (*nafas*).”¹²⁰⁵ As such, al-Muḥāsibī considers the practice of *al-muḥāsaba* so important that it should even be carried out upon the most hidden of human faculties - the thought process - that may not even last for a fraction of a second. In addition, he also alludes to the fact that an intrinsic feature of *al-muḥāsaba* is another facet of *tazkiya* that we have already seen - that of *al-murāqaba*, since through maintaining the observance of Allāh one may establish whether the action at hand is indeed, pleasing to Him or not. Al-Muḥāsibī makes this even clearer in the following text when he says:

It is not appropriate for an intelligent person to be indifferent regarding inspecting his aspirations (*mufātashat himmatihī*), examining his soul (*muḥāsabat nafsihī*), purifying his conscience (*naqāʾ damirihī*), being observant of Allāh (*murāqabat Allāh*), Glory be to Him the Exalted, concerning every action he wants to perform - or otherwise he is deceived.¹²⁰⁶

¹²⁰³ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Makāsib*, ed. al-Khusht, p. 103.

¹²⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 71.

¹²⁰⁵ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, pp. 46-7 and cf. al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 164.

¹²⁰⁶ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, pp. 142-3 and cf. pp. 149-50.

In an even more apparent exposition of the esoteric aspect of *al-muḥāsaba*, al-Muḥāsibī makes clear that another important aspect of this practice when he says, “And from examining it [*al-nafs*] (*muḥāsabatihā*) is that you be alone with it and remind it of its deeds, saying, ‘O soul, you cannot deceive and overcome Allāh, so do not accept Satan’s deceit and his attempt to overcome [you] and do not follow your desires as they will ruin and destroy you.’” Therefore, as we can plainly see from this text and from others he provides¹²⁰⁷, that al-Muḥāsibī even advocates addressing the soul as if it were another person, as the effect of this is more manifest when attempting to censure the soul (*mu‘ātabat al-nafs*) regarding its immoral behaviour.

In addition to this, it is also worth noting that al-Muḥāsibī apporions the intellect (*al-‘aql*) a pivotal role in introspective examination as he explains that *al-muḥāsaba* is, “The intellect (*al-‘aql*) being put in charge over guarding the soul’s treachery and scrutinising its accomplishments from its deficiencies.”¹²⁰⁸ Thus, it is the light of reason that is an indispensable tool in discerning the motives and intentions of the soul and differentiating between acts performed sincerely for God alone or alternatively, carried out at the behest of the soul’s appetites and desires. With regard to discriminating between such features of the believers’ interior life being related to God’s pleasure and command in the process of *al-muḥāsaba*, al-Muḥāsibī clarifies the criteria for action when he says, “Ask before any act you intend to perform, ‘Why and for whom?’ So if it was for Allāh then you continue in performing it but if it was for other than Allāh then you refrain from it.”¹²⁰⁹ Thus, the only criteria for action is God’s pleasure alone, this being the pinnacle of sincerity.

Therefore, one can deduce from the above texts and al-Muḥāsibī’s emphasis on *al-muḥāsaba* how important he held it to be. This is further confirmed when he discusses the benefits of adopting this practice, as once again he describes it as being one of the qualities of the scholars he sought out in his youth¹²¹⁰ and in addition, he also includes a section in his work *Sharḥ al-Ma‘rifa* where he discusses ten characteristics of the people of introspective examination (*ahl al-muḥāsaba*), which every aspirant should have if they wish to reach the highest degrees of righteousness.¹²¹¹ He lists them as follows:

1. To not swear an oath by Allāh, whether it be true or a lie, deliberately or forgetfully.

¹²⁰⁷ See for example al-Muḥāsibī’s text entitled *Mu‘ātabat al-Nafs*, which is replete with examples of this.

¹²⁰⁸ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa ‘l-Rujū‘ ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 229.

¹²⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹²¹⁰ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā’ih*, ed. Aḥmad, p. 13.

¹²¹¹ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Ma‘rifa wa Badhl al-Naṣīḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 57-66.

2. Not to lie whether it be jokingly or in seriousness.
3. Not to promise anyone anything, such that you break a promise whilst being able to fulfil it and if you were to break a promise then it should be for a valid reason.¹²¹²
4. Not to curse anything from creation and not to harm the smallest of insects let alone anything greater.
5. Not to supplicate against anyone even if they oppress you but bear it patiently.
6. Not to bear witness against anyone from the people of the *qibla* [i.e. Muslims] that they have committed polytheism (*shirk*), disbelief (*kufr*) or hypocrisy (*nifāq*).
7. Not to gaze at anything that is disobedience (*ma'āsī*) of Allāh, whether in public or in private and equally, to prevent one's limbs also from falling into disobedience.
8. Not to rely on anyone from the creation for any of your needs.
9. Not to put your hope in any human being.¹²¹³
10. Not to meet any person except that you consider them better than you, that they are more excellent than you and that their position with Allāh is higher than yours.¹²¹⁴

Therefore, we can assume that it is undertaking the process of *al-muḥāsaba* that brings about this change in moral behaviour and thus, makes them of the righteous. Similarly, *al-muḥāsaba* saves one from the fear of deficiency and the disgrace of loss in the hereafter, since in the same way a merchant takes his business partners to account for the state of their business affairs, out of trying to avoid a deficit and in the hope of attaining profits, the believer equally has to take his soul to account to ensure that he has no 'deficit' with his Lord.¹²¹⁵ Moreover, *al-muḥāsaba* produces an increase in insight (*al-baṣīra*), makes one swift in being able to establish proofs, makes one refined in discernment and increases one in understanding, according to the extent that one maintains examining the heart and soul.¹²¹⁶ In addition, the practice of *al-muḥāsaba* inculcates the faculty of attentiveness (*al-tayaqquḥ*) into the practitioner of introspective examination of the soul and as such, brings him out of a state of forgetfulness (*al-sahw*) to one of remembrance (*dhikr*).¹²¹⁷ Bearing in mind the many positive qualities that adopting *al-muḥāsaba* brings about, this also has an effect in

¹²¹² This is obviously intrinsically linked to the first quality.

¹²¹³ This is obviously intrinsically linked to the previous quality.

¹²¹⁴ I will only mention the characteristics themselves here, whereas al-Muḥāsibī provides an introduction and conclusion to the topic, as well as describing the benefits of having such qualities.

¹²¹⁵ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa 'l-Rujū' ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 229.

¹²¹⁶ Ibid., p. 230.

¹²¹⁷ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, p. 123 and al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Naṣā'ih*, ed. Aḥmad, pp. 55.

the divine realm as al-Muḥāsibī considers such people to have attained a noble rank and position with Allāh (*maqām sharīf/manzila sharīfa*) due to their sincerity to God.¹²¹⁸

Conversely, the negative effects of not carrying out the process of *al-muḥāsaba* are equally disastrous as al-Muḥāsibī observes, “The farthest person from justice and the most heedless of them is the one who examines his soul the least (*aqallahum muḥāsabatan nafsihi*).”¹²¹⁹

Similarly, when describing a person’s slippery slide into sin and disobedience al-Muḥāsibī observes:

The beginning of indifference is laziness (*al-kasāʾ*), so if ‘concern’ (*al-rīʿāya*) has any power over him then laziness will be suppressed but if not, then it will increase until it becomes ‘uneasiness’ (*jazīʿ*); so if compassion prevents him he desists [from uneasiness] but if not then it will increase until he becomes averse to obedience; so if he has softness in his heart he desists but if not he will become astray and we seek shelter in Allāh from that. Thus, if he was astray he has exited the authority of fear and left to the deception of security¹²²⁰; then he will increase in error to the abode of destruction, the veil of integrity will be lifted from him and he will be disgraced by the witnessing of glory¹²²¹. And this is all due to a lack of examining the soul (*muḥāsabat al-nafs*).¹²²²

Therefore, the solution and cure to all of the aforementioned ailments is the application of this facet of the purification process. In addition, it is also worth noting that *al-muḥāsaba*’s effect is not only limited to the soul but also, its sphere of influence extends to the heart also, as al-Muḥāsibī explains:

The basis of the heart’s corruption is abandoning examining the soul (*al-muḥāsabat li ’l-nafs*) and being deceived by high hopes (*al-ightirār bi tūl al-amaʾ*). So if you wanted to reform your heart then pause to examine your intention and every fleeting thought, accepting that which is for Allāh, abandoning that which is for other than Him and seeking aid against high hopes with consistent remembrance of death.¹²²³

It is also worth noting however, that with respect to the application of introspective examination of the soul, al-Muḥāsibī distinguishes between two categories of *al-muḥāsaba*, which he terms examining the soul regarding future actions (*muḥāsabat al-nafs fī mustaqbal al-ʾamāl*) and examining the soul regarding past deeds (*muḥāsabat al-nafs fī*

¹²¹⁸ See al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Maʿrifa wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, pp. 31 and 57.

¹²¹⁹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, ed. al-Sayyid, p. 74.

¹²²⁰ Meaning: that he is deceived by thinking he is secure.

¹²²¹ Meaning: by believing in the glory of God’s mercy and pardon only and not taking into account his punishment and wrath he will be disgraced.

¹²²² Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasḍ wa ’l-Rujūʿ ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 228.

¹²²³ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*, ed. Abū Ghudda, pp. 110-11.

mustadbar al-a'māl).¹²²⁴ With regard to the first category, al-Muḥāsibī states, “It is to contemplate while proceeding cautiously before slipping into error, to discern that which harms you from that which benefits you, such that you abandon that which harms you according to knowledge and you act in accordance with that which benefits you according to knowledge.”¹²²⁵ This being the case, even before performing an action *al-muḥāsaba* is employed to differentiate between good and evil actions to act as a preventative measure and thus, it limits the potential to commit sins before the action even takes place.

As for the second category of *al-muḥāsaba*, examining the soul regarding past deeds, then this - as the name suggests - takes place after the action has been completed. In this sense the deed is evaluated in its every aspect and a series of questions need to be posed, such as: ‘Why and for whom?’ regarding the intentions behind the action, ‘How would it be if it were presented in front of the Creator?’, ‘Has it been performed in a way it would be pleasing to Him?’ and ‘Was it completed in the way that He commanded?’. Depending on the answers to these questions the person performing these deeds will then need to make amends for the deficiencies therein by seeking God’s forgiveness and repenting or finding a way in which the deed can be consequently made acceptable.¹²²⁶

Furthermore, to make this process effective, al-Muḥāsibī suggests that the following three qualities be observed:

Firstly, to sever oneself from the relationships that hinder focussing one’s concern on *al-muḥāsaba*, as whoever wanted to take his debtor to account, emptied his heart of all preoccupations. Secondly, to dedicate oneself to it out of choice because of the benefit that is hoped for from it and thirdly, the fear that Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted will ask him concerning what he neglected concerning that which reached him upon the tongue of His Prophet, peace be upon him, when he said, “The believer should be seen at four ‘hours’: [from them] an hour in which he examines his soul (*yuhāsib nafsahu*).”¹²²⁷

However, people vary in their ability to apply this process of *al-muḥāsaba* as al-Muḥāsibī observes:

People with regard to assessing their deeds are of two types: firstly, a person who evaluates his soul and examines his habitual practice and when he finds out that the burden of proof is established against his soul, he casts it aside and as a result, falls into the snare of Iblīs. Secondly, a man who evaluates his soul and made his intellect the burden of proof between him and his desires, so whatever was found to be acceptable by his intellect he

¹²²⁴ See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, pp. 65-77 *passim*.

¹²²⁵ Ibid., p. 70.

¹²²⁶ Ibid., pp. 73-4.

¹²²⁷ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qasd wa 'l-Rujū' ilā Allāh* in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā, p. 230.

accepted it and whatever was found to be unacceptable by his intellect he discarded it. Therefore, this man knew his faults through examining his soul (*muḥāsabat nafsihi*) and opposing his desires (*mukhālafat hawāhu*), such that he continued to change until he became from the party of Allāh (*ḥizb Allāh*), the Exalted, and became one the most anxious and worried of people in the worldly life, until death came to him and he was apprehensive, afraid and trembling.¹²²⁸

Thus, the effect that *al-muḥāsaba* has on those who apply it is tremendous and as such, it is an essential feature of the purification process. As testimony to this, after elucidating the state of the worst of God's servants, al-Muḥāsibī then says:

Then there is the servant who is an aspirant and is concerned with his soul, who is heedful of the book of Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted and the *sunna* of His Prophet, may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him, whose aspiration is examining his soul (*muḥāsabat nafsihi*) to distinguish his inner thoughts; [ask yourself] with which of them is Allāh more pleased and with which of them is He more angry?¹²²⁹

Therefore in summary, we may conclude that the practice of introspective examination (*muḥāsabat al-nafs*) has a deep-rooted basis in the Islamic revelatory sources and in addition to this has been developed further by al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī into an in-depth, insightful, precise and exact examination of the soul and its qualities, to the extent that he became synonymous with the practice he played a huge role in developing. In addition, this process takes into consideration not only the past deeds of a person but also his future actions and thus, subjects them to a simple, yet strict set of criteria to establish their validity in the religious context. As such, it can be observed that the practice of *muḥāsabat al-nafs* has numerous beneficial results and conversely there are equally numerous negative consequences in not applying it. Consequently, we can see that this contemplative and highly spiritual exercise has a profound effect on the soul and as such, is an essential and vital facet of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī's methodology of *tazkiyat al-nafs*.

Conclusion

In summary, one is able to provide a variety of conclusions regarding al-Muḥāsibī's methodology of *tazkiyat al-nafs*: firstly, although he does not use the term '*tazkiya*' in the technical sense used in the current thesis, his in depth knowledge and insight regarding the nature of the human soul and its consequent nurturing and disciplining, intrinsically link al-Muḥāsibī's teachings with the process of purification and development indicated by the

¹²²⁸ Al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-Ma'rifa wa Badl al-Naṣiḥa*, ed. al-Shāmī, p. 83.

¹²²⁹ Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. al-Barr, p. 160.

term '*tazkiya*'. Indeed, it is his profound knowledge of the intricate workings of the inner sanctuary of the human soul that make his work unique and to try and encapsulate his ideas regarding it is by no means an easy task. It may be remembered from chapter five that Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. ʿUmar al-Mursī (d. 686/1287) said regarding al-Muḥāsibī's *al-Riʿāya*, "Two words will suffice you concerning everything which is in this book: worship Allāh with knowledge and don't ever be satisfied with your *nafs*,"¹²³⁰ and since *al-Riʿāya* is al-Muḥāsibī's masterpiece in this field, one may summarise his methodology regarding *tazkiyat al-nafs* in much the same way.

However, the discussion in this chapter has also shown that al-Muḥāsibī's thought regarding the purification of the soul was very much an 'Islamic' understanding, since it was found that al-Muḥāsibī's exposition of the *nafs*, its faults and consequent training, have a strong grounding in Islam's revelatory sources namely the Qurʾān and the *ḥadīth*, as many of the concepts and terms alluded to in chapter two are reiterated in our subject's works. As such, al-Muḥāsibī gives importance to both the divine and prophetic facets of the process of *tazkiya* but at the same time, by far the greatest emphasis is given to the personal element in this process, as it the individual who is ultimately responsible and has an vital role to play. Similarly, although he makes brief reference to the two 'higher' forms of the soul, i.e. 'the self reproachful (*al-nafs al-lawwāma*)' and 'the tranquil (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʿinna*)', it is the base form of the soul, the 'soul inclined to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi 'l-sūʾ*)', which the target of al-Muḥāsibī's exposition, as it is this internal adversary that threatens the individual's ultimate destruction and as such, must be transformed. In addition however, al-Muḥāsibī does not only suffice by explaining such concepts, as many authors have attempted¹²³¹ but rather, he develops them further introducing his own vernacular regarding the *nafs* and provides practical, methodological advice regarding the purification of the soul.

Al-Muḥāsibī's methodology as described here revolves around an in depth and intimate knowledge (*maʿrifā*) of the *nafs* and its nature, which thus provides the basis for the reformation of the soul, since one could possibly bring about this change without first knowing the 'enemy within' and the enormity and complexity of the task. Thus, al-Muḥāsibī provides a practical method in dealing with such a 'rebellious' soul that revolves around the individual continually maintaining of God's observance of him (*al-murāqaba*), out of fear of His punishment and wrath and out shame (*ḥāyaʿ*) of committing an offence in His

¹²³⁰ See footnote 716, p. 199 above.

¹²³¹ See section 1.1.1 above.

'presence' thus by doing so, reaching the state of spiritual excellence (*iḥsān*) described by the Prophet.¹²³²

Similarly, bearing in mind the soul's nature i.e. that it is inclined to evil (*ammāra bi 'l-sū'*) and the negative personal and moral qualities associated with it, al-Muḥāsibī also suggests a continual striving against the *nafs* (*al-mujāhada*), including censuring it (*al-mu'ātaba*), imposing penalties upon it (*al-'uqūbāt*), causing it to proceed cautiously (*al-tathbīṭ*) and restraining it (*al-habs*) and averting it from its nature (*al-inṣirāf*) to reform it (*al-iṣlāḥ*) and ultimately eradicate evil from it and its actions.

In addition, an intrinsic part of the aforementioned process is an assessment of one's external state through an introspective analysis of one's motives and intentions (*al-muḥāsaba*) to ascertain their sincerity for God. This is not only undertaken regarding past deeds as one may expect but also in the present before one even acts, in an attempt to avoid an indiscretion before it even takes place. This consequently facilitates the initiation of repentance (*al-tawba*) for past misdeeds, further instils the maintaining of God's observance of one's state (*al-murāqaba*) and if negative elements are found, the extent to which the soul is to be combatted (*al-mujāhada*). As such, *al-muḥāsaba* is pivotal in governing and regulating the other various facets of the purification process.

Therefore, in addition to the multi-faceted and multi-level exposition of *tazkiyat al-nafs* within the Islamic paradigm supplied in chapter two, al-Muḥāsibī through his knowledge of this and his development of a methodology regarding it, has provided an equally multi-faceted approach to *tazkiyat al-nafs* so as to bring about the reform of the human being as a whole and thus, reach the perfection of the human state described as 'the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭma'inna*)', which is both satisfied with its Lord and has, at the same time, attained its Lord's satisfaction.

¹²³² See footnote 304, p. 80 above.

Conclusion

From the outset and as the title of this thesis indicates, the current study is concerned with two major features of the Islamic tradition, namely the concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, as manifested in this tradition and the life and works of al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī. This being the case, the researcher has produced a series of chapters and discussions to fulfil this goal and ultimately derive a methodology of purifying the soul, as presented in this author's extant works. In doing so six extensive chapters have been written and the goal of this conclusion is to survey each of these to identify the most important findings and major conclusions as presented in this study.

Starting at the beginning with chapter one, which served as the introduction to the current thesis, the primary section of the study was concerned with evaluating the existing literature in the various fields concerned with the subject area in question. Thus, this section was then divided into literature that deals with *tazkiyat al-nafs*, literature that deals with al-Muḥāsibī and literature that is concerned with Sufism. Although Sufism provides a genre of literature that is very useful, in reality it still plays only a subsidiary role in the current thesis. As such, the major concentration here will be on literature related to the first two topics mentioned above.

With regard to literature concerned with *tazkiyat al-nafs*, it was found that although the term and concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* is part of the Qur'ānic paradigm, there are virtually no works in the classical literature that deal with this topic specifically and this is most probably due to the fact that since this subject is perceived to be 'spiritual' or even 'mystical' field of study, it was normally dealt with within the sphere of Sufism. However, with the rise of reformist movements in the twentieth century there seems to have been an attempt to reclaim this concept and term and to project it as being an 'orthodox' version of spirituality in Islam vis-à-vis the 'innovative' version propagated by Sufism. This has been particularly true of the Salafī denomination and we can regard the vast majority of material produced in this field and indeed, those examples discussed in chapter one, to be from this limited perspective. It was also noted that such works are mainly concerned with what has been termed here as a 'practical' approach to *tazkiyat al-nafs*, meaning that to implement the process of purification means essentially to apply the commands, prohibitions and etiquettes of Islam as a whole. Although there is nothing essentially wrong with this understanding, for the most part it fails to take into account the deep, introspective and psychological

element of purifying the soul and as such, in many ways merely projects an outward image of 'purification'. In addition to this shortcoming, although a variety of works have been authored on the topic of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, as the literature review suggested and with the possible exception of the work of Karzūn, very little of this material has been of a truly academic nature. Moreover, even less has been written in English and the only work in this sense that could even claim to be semi-academic is Zarabozo's *Purification of the Soul - Concept, Process and Means*. As such, the need to produce an academic appraisal of this subject was paramount and this researcher feels that this goal has now been achieved as was made clear in chapter two, which will be discussed shortly.

Similarly, despite the various entries regarding al-Muḥāsibī in the copious volumes of biographical and historical works of Islamic literature, it was not until the twentieth century that a separate, dedicated study was produced regarding al-Muḥāsibī and his life and works - this of course being the pioneering work of Margaret Smith entitled *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*. It was this in-depth study of al-Muḥāsibī that really introduced the English speaking world to the value and importance of this scholar. Smith's work is indeed admirable since that she had to work almost exclusively with manuscripts and moreover, because her work is intuitive, extremely well written and comprehensive. This did not hinder further studies regarding al-Muḥāsibī but rather seems to have given impetus to a number of researchers of her generation such as Arberry, Maḥmūd, Schoonover and al-Yasū'ī, who have all provided valuable contributions. The next major study came at the capable hands of van Ess and along with the early work of Smith, is possibly one of the most important studies of our author. In more recent times equally important work in the realm of bringing the works of al-Muḥāsibī to a published form have been made most notably by 'Aṭā but his work has also been supplemented by al-Khusht, al-Sayyid, Mazālī, al-Quwwatī and Roman. On the strictly academic front articles by authors such as Ṭāhir and Ja'far have been equally useful and have been supplemented by the academic theses of Ḥusayn and al-Khaṭīb. Thus, al-Muḥāsibī has generated a limited but steady stream of scholarship over the last seventy years or so, but one will also notice that most of this material is still in Arabic and the work carried out in Western languages has been limited. This being the case, the current study is therefore unique, as it examines a previously undiscovered aspect of al-Muḥāsibī's thought, i.e. his specific methodology regarding *tazkiyat al-nafs* and therefore, denotes a valuable contribution to the body of literature on this topic.

All theses require that they follow a certain methodology to be employed during the writing process and it was decided in chapter one that phenomenology be the methodology on which the current thesis is based. It was further proposed that the research is carried out using the phenomenological method outlined above as phR, since the area of research fell under the umbrella term of religion. Of the two types of phR that were discussed, the type termed 'concrete phR' was employed here as we will deal with one religion specifically, i.e. that of Islam, including its historico-cultural context and the 'unique' meaning it has for the believers, as opposed to a comparative approach adopted in essential phR. Concrete phR was also employed here because we did, for the most part, describe a specific aspect of Islam, i.e. that of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, which will require that we rely on the believers' perspective of this discipline. Since *tazkiyat al-nafs* is an internal aspect of the Islamic faith it seems appropriate that the proposal to adopt *verstehen* as a phenomenological method, is also employed here to study, understand, describe and arrive at the essence of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, from the practice of one of its most famous proponents, i.e. al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī. This has now been achieved as the discussions of chapters two and six will show.

Furthermore, bearing in mind the nature of al-Muḥāsibī's discourse it was equally important to comment regarding spirituality and mysticism in general, so as to understand where both he and *tazkiyat al-nafs* 'fit' in the overall picture. Indeed, both of these terms prove - most probably due to their intrinsic nature - traditionally difficult to define. Despite this, our discussion showed that essentially spirituality may be referred to as an attempt to grow in sensitivity - to the self, to others, to non-human creation and to God, being associated with the longings of the human heart for the permanent, eternal, everlasting - for wholeness, peace, joy and bliss. Alternatively, mysticism is often described as a fundamentally unitive experience of love and communion with God, being an experience beyond ordinary human experience and reason but at the same time is not antagonistic to them.

Thus, if we were now to attempt to identify the concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* with either of these disciplines, we would find that this spiritual tradition of disciplining the soul in Islam has far more in common with spirituality rather than mysticism, since in spirituality, the longings of the human heart for the permanent, eternal and everlasting would easily fit in with the concept of the tranquil soul elucidated in chapter two. Conversely, *tazkiyat al-nafs* has little to do with mysticism's quest for a unitive experience of the divine, since this concept has not even been alluded to once during the examination of this term and thus, we may conclude that *tazkiyat al-nafs* is essentially a spiritual quest rather than a mystical one.

In addition, it should also be noted that from the very outset al-Muḥāsibī was regarded by Smith - as the title of her book suggests - as a mystic, seemingly based primarily on his exposition of divine love in the treatise *Faṣl al-Maḥabba*.¹²³³ However, upon examining this work and the remainder of al-Muḥāsibī's 'mystical' teachings, it emerges that they are not as 'mystical' as Smith suggests but rather fall within the realms of Islam's broader teaching. This is especially true when examining the remainder of al-Muḥāsibī's works, as one finds that they are usually within the precepts of Islam's ascetic and spiritual tradition and have a strong theological basis in both of Islam's revelatory sources. Indeed, if one were to characterise al-Muḥāsibī, it would be more appropriate to perhaps consider him as a 'introspective moral psychologist' as his teaching revolves around the reformation of the moral, esoterical nature of man, rather than a mystic seeking experience of unity of the divine, which is a concept that has not presented itself even once in this study.¹²³⁴

Since Islam has its own manifestation of spirituality and mysticism, namely *taṣawwuf* or Sufism, it was equally appropriate that this subject area be discussed to see where both *tazkiyat al-nafs* and al-Muḥāsibī may be placed within this tradition. It was found that Sufism terminologically at least had no basis in the primary sources of Islam but seems to have some link with practice of the early Muslim community. This is particularly true of the early ascetical tradition that was common in Basra and developed in the new Abbāsīd capital of Baghdad, where the paradoxical schools of 'sobriety' and 'intoxication' existed. This was further enhanced with the passing of time into a fully developed Sufi tradition that was epitomised by its own dedicated genre of literature and eventually led to formation of brotherhoods and the mystical theosophy associated with the likes of Ibn ʿArabī. With regard to the relationship of Sufism with the two topics of *tazkiyat al-nafs* and al-Muḥāsibī, one has to begin by posing the question, "What form of Sufism do we mean?" Indeed, if we mean the ascetical tradition prevalent in the first two Islamic centuries, then there is a strong suggestion that in both cases a link may be established, since the concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* and teachings of al-Muḥāsibī bear a strong resemblance to the early ascetical teaching of the likes of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, for example. However, if we mean by the term 'Sufism' the intoxicated mysticism of al-Ḥallāj or the mystical theosophy of Ibn ʿArabī, then one would have to conclude that there is no evidence in this study to suggest a close relationship between these contrasting approaches.

¹²³³ See Smith, *An Early Mystic*, pp. 57-8 and 222-52.

¹²³⁴ Indeed, al-Muḥāsibī was extremely critical of expressions of such unitive and mystical experiences as the incident with Abū Ḥamza related by al-Hujwīrī in his *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* indicates. See pp. 155-6 above.

Concerning al-Muḥāsibī specifically, there is clearly a tangible link to the sober mysticism associated with the Baghdadi school and with al-Junayd in particular, but since this will be dealt with in more detail in the appraisal of chapter three, it will not be discussed further here. Thus, we may conclude that *tazkiyat al-nafs* is not exclusive to the Sufi tradition, despite the concept being present in this teaching. By the same token, it is equally difficult to attribute the term ‘Sufi’ to al-Muḥāsibī in the strict sense since, as was noted in the discussion above both he and his teaching were not especially ‘mystical’.

One of the main focuses of this study was to provide a working definition and understanding of the phrase ‘*tazkiyat al-nafs*’ and in this regard, chapter two provided much of the information that would be vital for the rest of this thesis. This chapter discussed both the terms ‘*tazkiya*’ and ‘*nafs*’ and the compound phrase of ‘*tazkiyat al-nafs*’ in a variety of contexts to reach a fuller understanding of this concept. Therefore, the discussion began with the examination of these terms in the Arabic language, since this is the vernacular of Islam’s revelatory sources. By examining the linguistic and lexicographical sources it was seen that the term *al-nafs* in particular has a variety of connotations within the usage of the Arabic language, many of which, however were clearly not related to the religious context of Islam. Nevertheless, it was found that even at a linguistic level the form II constructions that form the basis of the term *tazkiya*, in conjunction with the various appropriate meanings of the word *al-nafs*, we could derive the following definition: “The growth, augmentation, reform and development of a human being’s soul, intellect, body and self.” This brief and uncomplicated description consequently defined the area of research and indeed, its subject matter.

From this basic starting point these concepts were thus developed by then consulting Islam’s revelatory sources so as to contextualise the study further and to narrow the field of research. Therefore, starting with the Qur’ān it was found that from the linguistic uses of the word ‘*tazkiya*’ in the Qur’ān, a process of purification is implied that was found to be multi-faceted, incorporating divine guidance, prophetic example and personal effort. Similarly, when addressing the term ‘*al-nafs*’ a number of usages are noticed including: the *nafs* meaning the soul (*al-rūḥ*); the *nafs* meaning the human being’s power of understanding (*al-quwā al-mufakkira*); the *nafs* meaning the heart (*al-qalb*); *nafs* meaning the inclination to good and evil (*quwā al-khayr wa ’l-sharr*) and the *nafs* meaning the human being (*al-insān*). Moreover, upon examining the Qur’ānic text the *nafs* is also attributed with having a number of qualities that indicate its dual potentiality to both positive and negative attributes that in turn determine its state. Consequently, three states

of the soul can be identified: the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʿinna*), the self-reproaching soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāma*) and the soul inclined to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi 'l-sūʾ*), which indicate the highest, intermediate and base forms of the soul respectively.

Furthermore, when examining the singular verse containing a related construction of the phrase '*tazkiyat al-nafs*' it was found that God created the soul in a state of equilibrium, inspiring it to the potentialities of both good and evil and as such, whoever complied with the positive component of the soul and abandoned the negative would be purified, whereas whoever complied with the negative aspects of the soul and suppresses the positive would be defiled. Many of these Qurʾānic concepts such as the multifaceted nature of the *tazkiya* process and the duality of the soul were also seen when examining the Prophetic *ḥadīth*, further enhancing the Qurʾānic vision of the *nafs* and in addition, indications of how the soul should be purified such as combating the soul (*mujāhadat al-nafs*) and examination of the soul (*muḥāsabat al-nafs*), were also alluded to. Basing their views on these two principal Islamic sources, Muslim scholars have also contributed greatly to both the understanding and concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* and in doing so have developed the purification process further, which was also indicated in this chapter.

Despite the best efforts of Muslim scholars however, they have failed for the most part to provide a comprehensive working definition of the term '*tazkiyat al-nafs*' based upon all the factors mentioned thus far and in this sense, the current study has succeeded in furnishing such a working understanding for this term, which may be considered to be: the growth, augmentation, reform, development and purification of the human soul, via divine guidance, Prophetic example and individual effort, to attain its most elevated form, that of the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʿinna*). This process involves the nurturing of its positive potentialities and eradicating its negative inclinations, to bring about its purification (*tazkiya*) and eliminate its defilement (*tadsiya*). This in turn is attained by executing a balanced and integrated process of punitive measures, such as striving against it (*al-mujāhada*) and taking it to account (*al-muḥāsaba*), as well as implementing both the basic beliefs and practical actions of Islam, to bring about a richness of the soul (*ghinā al-nafs*), which is indicative of the soul's success (*falāḥ*) in both this life and the next.

Having determined the nature of *tazkiyat al-nafs* in Islam, it was then time to turn our attention to the second major feature of this thesis, i.e. the life and works of al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī. The discussion of the life of any scholar requires first that both the period and environment of such a personality be examined to assess the extent as to which this influenced his life and works and indeed, with regard to al-Muḥāsibī these factors were

discussed in chapters three and four. As such, chapter three began with the discussion regarding the historical period in which al-Muḥāsibī lived. Al-Muḥāsibī was born into an extremely interesting and important period of Islamic history and if we are to believe that he was born in 165/781, as researchers have suggested and died in 243/857 as the biographical sources confirm, then he lived well into his seventies and thus, his life spans the greater period of the initial Abbāsīd era. In this regard there is a great deal of information concerning this part of history and indeed, the problem lay in exactly what to include. It was therefore decided to attempt to discuss the factors of this period of history that may have affected al-Muḥāsibī directly and with this goal in mind the discussion began in chapter three with an appraisal of the early ‘Abbāsīd caliphs whose policies in many ways shaped religious and social life during al-Muḥāsibī’s time. It will also be remembered that during al-Muḥāsibī’s life eight caliphs reigned and this is significant in itself, since it was during this era that the first occurrence of fraternal regicide took place with al-Maʿmūn’s execution of al-Amīn and this incident would subsequently colour the later ‘Abbāsīd reign, as royal executions were perpetuated by the treachery of the then ascendant ‘Turkish’ generals and thus this feature led to a general lack of stability within the regime.

Despite this however, the same period is often regarded as the ‘Golden era of Islamic learning’ since it was also in this period that Muslim scholarship developed its own unique character. In fact this is the first time that we find a major influx of ‘foreign’ sciences such as mathematics, astronomy, philosophy and medicine into the Muslim world, being fuelled by a vibrant translation movement that in turn was actively supported by the government and the wealthy elite of the society. In addition, the development of Arabic poetry and prose writing continued and was supplemented by the development of the linguistic sciences of grammar and philology. The religious sciences were equally well represented however and the now familiar topics of Prophetic narration (*al-ḥadīth*), Prophetic biography (*al-sīra*), jurisprudence (*al-fiqh*) and scholastic theology (*al-kalām*) were all developed and in addition, were subject to written codification.

Moreover, the two places where al-Muḥāsibī was born and lived were also examined; with regard to his birthplace, Basra, it was found that this was a city developed almost exclusively by the expansion of the Islamic empire, being established initially as a cantonment for the government’s troops stationed along the borders of the fledgling empire. Due to its geographic location and strategic significance however, Basra soon became a thriving city that attracted a variety of visitors and settlers who added to its cosmopolitan

nature. This in turn is thought to be significant in the development of two distinctive trends within the city; the first of these was an ascetical trend and this was most probably a reaction to the new found affluence in Muslim lands and the desire to return to the simple life of the Prophet and his Companions. In addition however, this form of teaching had also been inherently present from the time of one of its early governors, the Prophetic Companion Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī and culminated in the personality of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. The second trend was also related to the teaching of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī but from a different perspective, since it is commonly held that the beginning of a inclination to rationalising, scholastic theology that ultimately manifested itself as Mu‘tazilism, is thought to have originated in the teachings of his repudiated student Wāṣil b. ‘Aṭā’.

Consequently, the significance of Basra as an ancient and thriving city was only undermined with the advent of the new ‘Abbāsīd state capital, Baghdad. With the development of a new capital the emphasis on the other provincial cities in the Islamic state diminished, since it attracted a variety of people from the outlying areas, most probably seeking a better life and in this case the family of al-Muḥāsibī was no different, as he moved with his family to Baghdad in his youth. The cultural, social and even religious diversity in Baghdad equally contributed to the development of intellectual trends comparative to those and in many ways, extensions of those in Basra. As such, a similar spiritual trend was developed in Baghdad by the likes of Ma‘rūf al-Karkhī, Bishr al-Ḥāfi and Sarī al-Saqāṭī and in addition to the influence of the likes of al-Muḥāsibī, was exemplified by his most famous student Abū ‘l-Qāsim al-Junayd, being known as ‘the Mystical School of Baghdad’. In addition to the spiritual teaching prevalent in Baghdad, the school of rationalising theology in Basra had its equivalent in Baghdad also and in fact, many of the Basran Mu‘tazilites later transferred to the new capital. However, Mu‘tazilism was not a populist movement amongst the masses and in fact, if it had not received government backing, may well have been relegated to the pages of subsequent heresiographical works. It was, however, the object of caliphal support in the person of al-Ma‘mūn, who adopted their principles and eventually made them state policy, most famously in the case of the ‘created Qur’ān’, which consequently led to the most important religio-political event of the period - that of the ‘inquisition’ (*al-miḥna*). This policy was implemented by al-Ma‘mūn and his successors for more than fifteen years under the influence of its real architect and arch-Mu‘tazilite, Aḥmad b. Abū Du‘ād and resulted in the place of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal being secured in Sunni hagiographic history due to his opposition to the policy.

Thus, these two environments then were the places where al-Muḥāsibī was born and lived and therefore, the next task of the thesis was to portray the actual events of al-Muḥāsibī's own life, to shed light on his existence in this world. It was noted that this is not a particularly easy task, bearing in mind that most of the information that we have regarding this scholar is constituted by no more than anecdotal statements, whose veracity is impossible to establish. However, in the absence of any other verifiable material and bearing in mind that the methodology of the thesis is phenomenology, a reconstruction of al-Muḥāsibī's life from childhood to adulthood was successfully attempted, this being the first effort of its kind. This, along with the other anecdotal statements related regarding al-Muḥāsibī, provided us the image of a scrupulous, righteous, uncompromising and erudite individual, who was a picture of pietistic virtue, which is typical of the hagiographic images portrayed in the biographical and historical literature. In addition, the traditional enumeration of al-Muḥāsibī's teachers was supplied and it interesting to note that his major fields of learning included grammar and Qur'ānic sciences, jurisprudence (*al-fiqh*) - where he was seen to be an adherent of al-Shāfi'ī, Prophetic narration (*al-ḥadīth*) - where it was seen that he studied with the foremost traditionists of his day and perhaps most significantly, scholastic theology (*al-kalām*). The depth of his scholarship was also evidenced by the extensive range of sources al-Muḥāsibī quotes and indeed, by the number of students who associated with him, the most important of whom was without doubt the celebrated al-Junayd.

The main bulk of this chapter however, was devoted to elucidating a major feature of his life that equally affected his reputation after his death - Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's repudiation of al-Muḥāsibī. Nevertheless, this was also made difficult by the very nature of Ibn Ḥanbal's warning regarding keeping the company of al-Muḥāsibī, since Aḥmad first praises al-Muḥāsibī and then warns against him, without further qualifying his statement. This has led to a great deal of speculation in this regard and it was seen that there are various theories in dealing with this issue, including that Ibn Ḥanbal rejected al-Muḥāsibī due to: his spiritual station (*maqām*) and discourse being too advanced for his students; his spiritual method being innovative (*bid'a*); his unreliability in *ḥadīth* (*ḍa'f*) or due to the fact that he and Ibn Ḥanbal were contemporaneous (*aqrān*). Although any of these possibilities or indeed, a combination of them remains viable, it was concluded that Ibn Ḥanbal's repudiation of al-Muḥāsibī was essentially due to the latter's utilisation of scholastic theology (*ilm al-kalām*). In this regard the current study has provided the most

comprehensive, in-depth and unique exposition of the reasons behind Ibn Ḥanbal's deprecation of al-Muḥāsibī to date.

Thus, in attempting to assess the influence of al-Muḥāsibī's environment on his life, we can conclude that al-Muḥāsibī was indeed, 'a product of his time' in the sense that even from an early age he benefited from the nascent education system within the Muslim world and the general intellectual atmosphere in the ʿAbbāsīd era, which was brought to fruition in adulthood with the writing of his works. In addition, one may observe that he was fully conversant with the prevalent linguistic and religious disciplines of his day including grammar and Qurʾānic sciences, jurisprudence (*al-fiqh*), Prophetic narration (*al-ḥadīth*) and scholastic theology (*al-kalām*), which he studied with the foremost authorities of his era. In this regard however, there is much work to be done, in the sense that these facets of al-Muḥāsibī's intellectual life are yet to be fully explored.

For example, with regard to the sciences of the Qurʾān it will be clear from the discussion of al-Muḥāsibī's work *Fahm al-Qurʾān* in chapter five that al-Muḥāsibī had clear notions of various Qurʾānic concepts, such as the abrogated and abrogating verses (*al-nāsikh wa 'l-mansūkh*); its precise and ambiguous verses (*al-muḥkam wa 'l-mutashābih*); the general and specific verses (*al-ʿāmm wa 'l-khāṣṣ*), as well as the unusual vocabulary (*gharīb al-Qurʾān*)¹²³⁵ and as such, to examine these expositions in the light of other works of a similar genre is extremely important to assess al-Muḥāsibī's contribution as a whole. Similarly, one of the earliest and most important Qurʾānic exegesis (*al-tafsīr*) is that of Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī and little has reached us before his crucial work¹²³⁶, but as Maḥmūd notes al-Muḥāsibī had already developed a methodology of exegesis¹²³⁷ and indeed, many of his works contain references to early exegetes and their opinions, one of the best examples of this being *al-Riʿāya li Ḥuqūq Allāh*. Thus, the importance of al-Muḥāsibī's contribution to the science of *tafsīr* cannot be underestimated and therefore, requires that it be studied in detail.

Similarly, with regard to the sciences involved with Prophetic narration (*al-ḥadīth*), it was shown in chapter four that he was a known and reliable narrator and also, that he studied with some of the major traditionists of his period such as Yazīd b. Hārūn, to the extent that both he and his adversary Ibn Ḥanbal shared some of the same *shaykhs*. In chapter four there was also an indication to al-Muḥāsibī's view of the application of *ḥadīth* especially

¹²³⁵ See pp. 225-9 above.

¹²³⁶ This is why Qurʾānic exegesis (*al-tafsīr*) was not included in the historical survey, since, although it was an ongoing process in terms of teaching, its codification was still somewhat limited and few early examples have reached us.

¹²³⁷ See Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʾirīn*, pp. 97-107.

when they are inauthentic and this preliminary indication requires that it be followed with a more in-depth survey of al-Muḥāsibī's transmission of *ḥadīth* and his views regarding its implementation.

It was also shown in chapter four that al-Muḥāsibī is closely linked with the Shāfi'ī school of jurisprudence and indeed, was considered to be from the first generation of scholars who adopted al-Shāfi'ī's methodology and application of *fiqh*.¹²³⁸ However, when one surveys the works of al-Muḥāsibī, in particular *al-Masā'il fī A'māl al-Qulūb wa 'l-Jawāriḥ*, *Fahm al-Ṣalāt* and *al-Makāsib*, one finds that he was a capable jurist in his own right, both quoting the opinions of the jurists of his period and deducing law with its appropriate evidence. Thus, the question that is raised is: did al-Muḥāsibī merely relate this from his *fiqh* teachers or did he himself reach a level where he was able to deduce law on his own? Therefore, it is equally important to examine the legalistic views of al-Muḥāsibī and since both al-Shāfi'ī's *al-Umm* and *al-Risāla* have reached us, make a comparative study of these opinions and reach a conclusion regarding the assumption that he was a Shāfi'ī scholar.

Furthermore, the fact that al-Muḥāsibī even used *kalām* as a method in refuting the Mu'tazilites is also indicative of the effect of his environment upon him, since, despite being brought up in and living most of his life in two renowned centres of Mu'tazilism, he clung to 'orthodoxy' in much the same way that his Basran compatriot and predecessor al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī did before him. In addition, however, al-Muḥāsibī also took the defence of his doctrine to another level by employing scholastic theology to deal with the Mu'tazilites, using their own methodology and vernacular to 'beat them at their own game' and it was this that Ibn Ḥanbal seemingly objected. This was because firstly, from the outset he rejected *kalām* as a method and secondly, as was suggested in this thesis, it seems that al-Muḥāsibī may have written his refutations of the Mu'tazilites in the post-*miḥna* period when Sunnism was in the ascendancy and it was safe to do so. This may have enraged Ibn Ḥanbal even further since he had been tortured because of the state imposition of the created Qur'ān creed, as well as the fact that there was simply no need to do so since this tribulation was now well and truly 'over'.

Moreover, the discussion involved with the controversy surrounding Ibn Ḥanbal's repudiation of al-Muḥāsibī was also productive in the sense that it helped show the subtlety and depth of al-Muḥāsibī's arguments regarding theological issues. Indeed, this is a facet of al-Muḥāsibī's scholarship that remains largely unexplored. In fact, when surveying material

¹²³⁸ See pp. 146-7 above.

related to al-Muḥāsibī's theological views, he is almost exclusively associated with the 'semi-rationalism' of 'Abd Allāh b. Sa'īd b. Kullāb and the school that developed from his teaching known as 'al-Kullābiyya'.¹²³⁹ Since many of al-Muḥāsibī's theological views are known from a variety of his works and especially from *Fahm al-Qur'ān*, it is appropriate to challenge this notion and examine his in the light of Ibn Kullāb's theological stance and indeed, Ibn Taymiyya's *Minhaj al-Sunna* is invaluable in this regard. Similarly, in studies of al-Muḥāsibī we are given the impression that he was representative of the 'semi-rationalist' group of Sunni scholastic theologians, such as Ibn Kullāb and al-Qalānisi, who could be described as 'proto-Ash'arites'.¹²⁴⁰ This being the case, it is also suggested that, since al-Muḥāsibī and his other Sunni scholastic theologians are viewed as an intermediate stage in the transition between the strict, non-scholastic theology of the Ḥanbalites and the rationalist tendencies of al-Ash'arī, who epitomises Sunni *kalām*, a comparative study also be made between the theological and methodological approach of al-Muḥāsibī in his works and the same facets of al-Ash'arī's teaching within his *al-Luma'*, *al-Ibāna* and *al-Maqālāt*, to assess the similarities between early, nascent Sunni *kalām* and its 'final' form.

Even though both Basra and Baghdad were centres of Mu'tazilism, they were also home to spiritual traditions that were unique to both of them. It was clear from the discussion in chapter three that the ascetic tradition that existed in Basra began at an early stage and went through a number of developmental phases before it culminated in the personality of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. We may also observe that, although the tradition of spiritual asceticism continued after al-Ḥasan's death, none of its subsequent exponents achieved his status or notoriety. Indeed, in addition to the above discussion regarding whether or not al-Muḥāsibī was a mystic, it is worth mentioning here that al-Muḥāsibī's teachings resembled the spiritual asceticism of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī rather than even the form of 'sober' mysticism associated with his student al-Junayd. In fact when examining the works of al-Muḥāsibī to compose chapter six, the researcher was surprised at the similarity between the concepts provided by quotes from al-Ḥasan by al-Muḥāsibī in his works and his reliance on the former scholar's teaching. As such, this also requires that further studies be carried out to assess the true influence of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī on al-Muḥāsibī not only by examining the quotes al-Muḥāsibī provides in his works from his predecessor but also from other works, so as to compare the concepts provided by the former scholar on the teachings of the latter,

¹²³⁹ See p. 119 above.

¹²⁴⁰ Ibid.

which may prove al-Muḥāsibī's link to the Basran tradition, albeit in a Baghdadi environment.

In addition, since al-Muḥāsibī spent most of his life in Baghdad and since his most famous student al-Junayd is considered to be the foremost exponent of the Baghdadi school, al-Muḥāsibī has been closely associated with the mystical school affiliated with his adopted city. This is further enhanced by the indication that the questioner in the works of al-Muḥāsibī is al-Junayd, which is supported by the latter's own admission.¹²⁴¹ Indeed, since the influence of al-Junayd is tangible in a variety of Sufi concepts, practices and brotherhoods, al-Muḥāsibī has been afforded a great deal of indirect influence via his student. A good example of the far reaching influence of al-Junayd both in terms of time and location is the following statement by the celebrated 17th century scholar Ibn ʿĀshir [ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Andalusi] (d. 1040/1630), who says in *al-Murshid al-Maʿīn*, - his didactic poem on religious practice, "... and I am a traveller upon the path of al-Junayd."¹²⁴² The influence of al-Muḥāsibī on this 'path of al-Junayd' becomes apparent, however, when Ibn ʿĀshir explains the practice of Sufism and says that a person should, "Take his soul to account (*yuhāsib al-nafs*) for its every breath and weigh his fleeting thoughts upon the scales" and three lines later, "Combat his soul (*yujāhid al-nafs*) for the Lord of the Worlds and adorn himself with stations of certainty."¹²⁴³ Thus, the influence upon these notions is plain to see and indeed, this raises the question of whether the Baghdadi school, with which al-Junayd is accredited, was in reality the product of his teacher's thought? Therefore, it is also suggested here that further research be carried out on the teachings of the personalities affiliated with this school and al-Junayd in particular through his extant works, to assess the true impact of al-Muḥāsibī's teaching on this influential school of Islamic mysticism.

Thus in summary, we can see that al-Muḥāsibī was a multi-faceted scholar, with a polymathic knowledge of the Islamic sciences, who was unique within the scholarship of his period, yet many of the facets of his teaching still need to be studied and understood fully.

One of the outstanding features of al-Ḥarith al-Muḥāsibī that distinguishes him from his contemporaries and indeed, the vast majority of the early scholars of Islamic spirituality and mysticism is that he was a prolific writer, reportedly authoring more than two hundred

¹²⁴¹ See p. 154 above.

¹²⁴² Al-Fāsi, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad [Mayāra], *Mukhtaṣar al-Durrar al-Thamīna*, an exposition of *al-Murshid al-Maʿīn ʿalā 'l-Ḍurūrī min ʿUlūm al-Dīn* by ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Andalusi [Ibn ʿĀshir] (d. 1040/1630), edited by Muḥammad Ṣidqī (Casablanca, Dār al-Rashād al-Ḥaditha, n.d.) p. 10.

¹²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

works.¹²⁴⁴ This being the case, it is imperative to examine the content and availability of such works to assess their importance and this was the goal of chapter five. This chapter not only provided an overview of the works of al-Muḥāsibī but also supplied the reader with extensive accounts of the availability of these works both in terms of unpublished material in the form of manuscripts and the works themselves published as books.

It is noticeable in the early research that only a limited number of al-Muḥāsibī's were identified; for example, both Smith and Maḥmūd locate no more than twenty-five works. It is not until we reach the treatise of van Ess that the picture becomes clearer and the clearest account of this author's works thus far was provided by Mazālī. It was seen in this chapter that we can identify eighteen published works by al-Muḥāsibī, nine works in manuscript - excluding those that appear to be copies of another work, seven lost works and two works wrongly attributed to our author, giving a grand total of thirty-four books and treatises that we can confirm as being credited to al-Muḥāsibī. This number is by no means the two hundred works that al-Subkī suggests that al-Muḥāsibī wrote, but nevertheless, it is a considerable number and is possibly the most extensive collection of works that has reached us from this period. Similarly, in addition to the volume of material, the importance of these works lies in their diversity since as has been noted, al-Muḥāsibī was an erudite scholar who wrote on a variety of topics and so he provides a unique window on religious life and learning in his era generally and an inimitable expose on the field of Islamic spirituality specifically. It is the diversity of al-Muḥāsibī's writing that furnishes many of the suggested research topics described above and in addition to these, it is also suggested that the remainder of al-Muḥāsibī's works surviving in manuscript be brought to the light of publication, so as to complete the picture regarding his works and to further enhance the understanding of his thought.

Moreover, one of al-Muḥāsibī's most important works, *Kitāb al-Tawahhum*, requires further attention for a number of reasons; firstly, this remains one of the earliest examples of prose literature in Arabic, being written in an elegant and emotive language and due to this, deserves a literary appraisal of its content and style. Secondly, it has been noted by Asín Palacios in his *Islam and the Divine Comedy*, states that Dante's famous work may well have been influenced by the descriptions of the Prophet's night journey and ascension into heaven (*al-isrā' wa 'l-mi'rāj*), provided in works such as al-Ma'arrī's *Risālat al-Ghufrān* and

¹²⁴⁴ See p. 193 above.

Ibn ʿArabī's *Kitāb al-Isrāʾ*¹²⁴⁵, yet an equally influential book on these works by Muslim scholars and subsequently, on Dante's *Divine Comedy* may well have been al-Muḥāsibī's *Kitāb al-Tawahhum*, since this remains a pivotal work on Islamic eschatology and as such, further research is required.

In addition to the discussion surrounding the availability and content of al-Muḥāsibī's works, chapter five has also attempted to provide a practical appraisal of the chronological order of this author's books and treatises by examining the proposals made by both Maḥmūd and al-Quwwatī in this regard. As was noted in the appropriate section, many of these suggestions are purely deductive, as there is no way to produce a definitive chronology, but nevertheless, there are clear differences in both the content and style of his works, indicative of developmental changes in his writing style that give some credence to the proposals made. However, what is perhaps more significant bearing in mind that the current thesis is concerned with the process of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, is that al-Muḥāsibī wrote various concise works, which were expounded in later, more expansive ventures and as such, it further proves his ability as a teacher and a spiritual guide, as each of these treatises was written with a specific goal, or specific students' needs in mind. Thus, a more appropriate question to pose, due to its methodological significance, is not when al-Muḥāsibī's works were written but why were they written and for whom were they written? This once again is a subject for future research. In summary, taking all of these factors into consideration, it is felt that this chapter has provided the most complete and in-depth appraisal of al-Muḥāsibī's works thus far.

The culmination of this thesis then, having surveyed both the concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* in Islam and the life and works of al-Muḥāsibī, lies in examining this author's own concept, theory and methodology, as manifested in his extant books and treatises and this was the goal of chapter six. This chapter was constructed around a similar format to that of chapter two, so a comparison could be made and it was found that when examining al-Muḥāsibī's concepts of purification (*tazkiya*), the concept of the word *nafs* and the facets of *tazikiyat nafs*, they were all found to be similar, if not identical with, the exposition of these features of the purification process as elucidated in chapter two. With regard to this latter feature, i.e. the facets of *tazikiyat al-nafs*, it was found that although al-Muḥāsibī alludes to both the divine and Prophetic facets of *tazkiya*, his major emphasis is on the individual's role in carrying out this practice and as such, this forms the basis of his approach to purifying the

¹²⁴⁵ See Asín Palacios, Miguel, *Islam and the Divine Comedy*, translated and abridged by Harold Sutherland (London, John Murray, 1926).

soul as he clearly understands verse (91:9) to mean, “He who has caused his soul to be purified has indeed attained true success.”¹²⁴⁶ Similarly, al-Muḥāsibī makes reference to virtually all of the qualities of the soul indicated by both the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* but it is worthy of mention that he pays particular attention to the attributes of the desires (*al-hawā*) and the appetites (*al-shahawāt*), since both these negative facets of the soul are the most destructive for the human being and are manipulated by the aspirant’s second adversary, Satan.

It is little surprise then that despite al-Muḥāsibī alluding to the two more ‘elevated’ states of the soul, i.e. the self-reproaching soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāma*) and the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʿinna*), it is the third, base state of the soul, the soul inclined to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi ʾl-sūʾ*) that al-Muḥāsibī is almost exclusively concerned with. Bearing this in mind, al-Muḥāsibī continually reminds his readers of the dissension of the soul (*munāzaʿat al-nafs*); the enticement of the soul (*taswīl al-nafs*); the doubts of the soul (*rayb al-nafs*) and warns against its sinister aspirations (*amānī*). Moreover, he also makes clear to his readers the dangers of the destruction of the soul (*halk/talif al-nafs*); its procrastination (*taswīf al-nafs*) regarding the performance of righteous acts; its wickedness (*sūʾ al-nafs*) that leads to it committing offences (*jināyāt al-nafs*) and the many faults of the soul (*ʿuyūb al-nafs*), which constitute the many things that it conceals and attempts to keep hidden (*khabāyā/khafāyā/sarāʾir al-nafs*). Indeed, he takes great pains to clarify that the cunning nature of the soul lies in its deception (*khidʿat al-nafs*), deceit and falsehood (*kidhb al-nafs*) and the subterfuge and various stratagems (*ḥiyal al-nafs*) it employs to ensure that its appetites and desires are fulfilled.

It is due to these negative qualities and the soul’s inclination to evil that make it necessary to purify it and with this goal in mind al-Muḥāsibī provides a series of measures to ensure the success of this process. What is surprising about al-Muḥāsibī’s approach, however, is that for the most part it does not exclusively employ a ‘destructive’ approach to the *nafs* but rather, utilises both a ‘negative’, disciplinary approach combined with a ‘positive’, developmental method. Thus, he applies the punitive concepts of dispraisal of the soul (*dhamm al-nafs*); the accusation of the soul (*ittihām al-nafs*); having contempt for the soul (*izdirāʾ al-nafs*); that the soul be ‘broken’ (*inkisār al-nafs*); that the soul be abased (*muhānat al-nafs*) and that the soul be coerced (*ilzām al-nafs*), but at the same time, also suggests that one should have both care (*riʿāyat al-nafs*) and concern (*al-ʿināya bi ʾl-nafs*)

¹²⁴⁶ See p. 75 above.

for the soul; counsel and exhort the soul (*waṣīyat/naṣīhat al-nafs*); be concerned with its state (*al-ishtighāl bi'l-nafs*) and even on occasion have gentleness with the soul (*al-rifq bi/al-shafaqa 'alā 'l-nafs*). Thus, there is an overall balance within al-Muḥāsibī's approach to the purification of the soul, which is dependent on its state and which, is also reminiscent of the Prophetic view of this practice.¹²⁴⁷

More specifically, however, it was also deduced that al-Muḥāsibī employed a specific methodology of *tazikiyat al-nafs* that was a multi-faceted process that comprises: intimate knowledge of the soul (*ma'rifat al-nafs*); the continual observance of God (*al-murāqaba*); combating or struggling against the soul (*mujāhadat al-nafs*) and introspective examination and taking the soul account (*muḥāsabat al-nafs*). Therefore, the very foundation of purifying the soul depends on one's knowledge and insight into its nature, qualities and motives as alluded to in the above paragraphs, which instils in the mind of the aspirant the necessity of disciplining the soul and at the same time, aids it in this process. This is then combined with the constant cognisance of divine observance of every thought, word and deed (*al-murāqaba*), which in turn inculcates a feeling of shame before God that prevents the committing of sins and transgression and at the same time, causes the heart to experience the intimacy of being in the 'presence' of its Lord. However, due to the continual presence of the desires and appetites and their manipulation by Iblīs, another facet of *tazkiya* is employed by al-Muḥāsibī, which is the combating of the such detrimental features and the soul's proclivity to impatience inherent within it (*al-mujāhada*), to purify it and instil in it satisfaction with its Lord. To ensure that this is in fact the case and act as criterion for the soul's motives and deeds, al-Muḥāsibī also utilises the practice of in-depth examination of the soul (*muḥāsabat al-nafs*), which is not only employed regarding past actions to ascertain their deficiencies but also in future actions before their performance, so as to ensure the sincerity of such acts for God. As such, *muḥāsabat al-nafs*, with the simple criteria of seeking God's pleasure, acts as a safety mechanism to affirm the correctness of a deed, whether it be internal or external and at the same time evaluates the measure of discipline that the soul requires. Thus, al-Muḥāsibī's theory and methodology of *tazikiyat al-nafs* is a subtle interplay of these various facets with the goal of purifying the soul from the negative detrimental qualities that dwell within it, to gain the pleasure of its Lord and thus, enter His paradise in its most elevated state, that of the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭma'inna*).

¹²⁴⁷ See p. 86 above.

Bearing in mind the unique nature and depth of the discussion in this chapter, it is felt that this is a positive and valuable contribution, which is exceptional in the field of Islamic studies in general and to the understanding of early Islamic spirituality and mysticism in particular.

Bearing in mind the deep and insightful knowledge of al-Muḥāsibī manifested in the current study, it is little surprise that outside fanatical Ḥanbalite circles al-Muḥāsibī enjoyed a great deal of praise and influence.¹²⁴⁸ Indeed, one may attribute this to the relevance of his works in every age, since from the Islamic perspective and as al-Muḥāsibī himself notes, the nature of human souls is quite similar¹²⁴⁹ and as such, for aspirants on the path to God his works are as relevant today as they were when he first wrote them.

In conclusion, when considering the important findings of the current thesis, one would have to include that the study of al-Ḥarīth al-Muḥāsibī is far from being an area of research that is completely exhausted. Similarly, it has been shown that far from being a simple Sufi, al-Muḥāsibī was a multi-faceted and multi-talented scholar who wrote in a variety of fields of Islamic learning and as such, made a considerable contribution to the Islamic tradition as a whole but most notably in the field of *tazkiyat al-nafs*. Bearing these two factors in mind, it is the goal of this researcher to continue in this area of study and dedicate his future research to the goal of shedding further light on this outstanding scholar, who graced the Muslim community with his presence in the 2nd/8th-3rd/9th centuries and the likes of whom have rarely been seen since.

Perhaps it is fitting to end with a quote from the most famous of the later Ḥanbalite scholars, the celebrated *shaykh al-Islām* Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, who did not follow his spiritual ancestor in repudiating al-Muḥāsibī but rather, appreciated the value of his teaching saying, “He possessed knowledge, virtue, asceticism and discourse regarding the spiritual realities (*al-ḥaqā’iq*), which has been widely celebrated.”¹²⁵⁰

¹²⁴⁸ The influence of al-Muḥāsibī has not been dealt with in the present study since the researcher feels that this topic would require a separate thesis. In addition, this work has been started by Smith who has unequivocally shown the influence of al-Muḥāsibī on al-Ghazzālī, which in itself is a significant enough finding. However, this is only preliminary effort as the various future research proposals indicate in the above discussion. See Smith, *An Early Mystic*, pp. 269-91 and “The Forerunner of al-Ghazālī” in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (January, 1936) pp. 65-78.

¹²⁴⁹ See pp. 274 above.

¹²⁵⁰ Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘at al-Fatāwā*, vol. 6, p. 521.

Appendices

Appendix 1:

An Appraisal of the singular *ḥadīth* containing the term '*tazkiyat al-nafs*'

حَدَّثَنَا بِذَلِكَ صَالِحُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، عَنْ لَيْثٍ، عَنْ مُجَاهِدٍ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبَّاسٍ، بِنَحْوِهِ.

٨ - باب حَلَاوَةِ الْإِيمَانِ

٢٥ - حَدَّثَنَا عُمَرُ بْنُ أَبِي عُمَرَ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بْنُ الْعَلَاءِ الزُّبَيْدِيُّ الْحِمِصِيُّ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنِي عَمْرُو بْنُ الْحَارِثِ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ سَالِمِ الْأَشْعَرِيِّ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ الْوَلِيدِ الزُّبَيْدِيِّ، عَنْ يَحْيَى بْنِ جَابِرٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ جُبَيْرِ بْنِ نُفَيْرٍ حَدَّثَهُ، أَنَّ أَبَاهُ حَدَّثَهُ، أَنَّ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ مُعَاوِيَةَ الْغَاضِرِيَّ أَخْبَرَهُ: أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ قَالَ:

«ثَلَاثٌ مَنْ فَعَلَهُنَّ طَعِمَ طَعْمَ الْإِيمَانِ: مَنْ عَبَدَ اللَّهَ وَخَدَهُ بِأَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ، وَأَعْطَى زَكَاةَ مَالِهِ طَيِّبَةً بِهَا نَفْسُهُ، وَلَمْ يُعْطِ الْجُرْبَةَ وَلَا الدَّرَنَةَ وَلَا الْمَرِيضَةَ، وَلَكِنْ مِنْ أَوْسَطِ أَمْوَالِكُمْ، فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَأْمُرْهُ بِخَيْرِهِ وَلَمْ يَأْمُرْكُمْ بِشَرِّهِ، وَزَكَّى نَفْسَهُ»، فَقَالَ رَجُلٌ: مَا تَزَكِيَةُ نَفْسِهِ؟، قَالَ: «أَنْ يَعْلَمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَهُ حَيْثُ كَانَ».

٩ - باب حُبِّ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ

٢٦ - حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ بَشَّارِ الْعَبْدِيُّ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ جَعْفَرٍ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، عَنْ مُسْلِمِ الْأَعْوَرِ، عَنْ حَبَّةِ الْعُرَيْبِيِّ، عَنْ عَلِيٍّ، قَالَ: جَاءَ رَجُلٌ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ فَقَالَ: مَتَى السَّاعَةُ؟ قَالَ: «وَمَا أَعَدَدْتَ لَهَا؟» قَالَ: حُبَّ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ، قَالَ: «فَأَنْتَ مَعَ مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ».

Appendix 2:

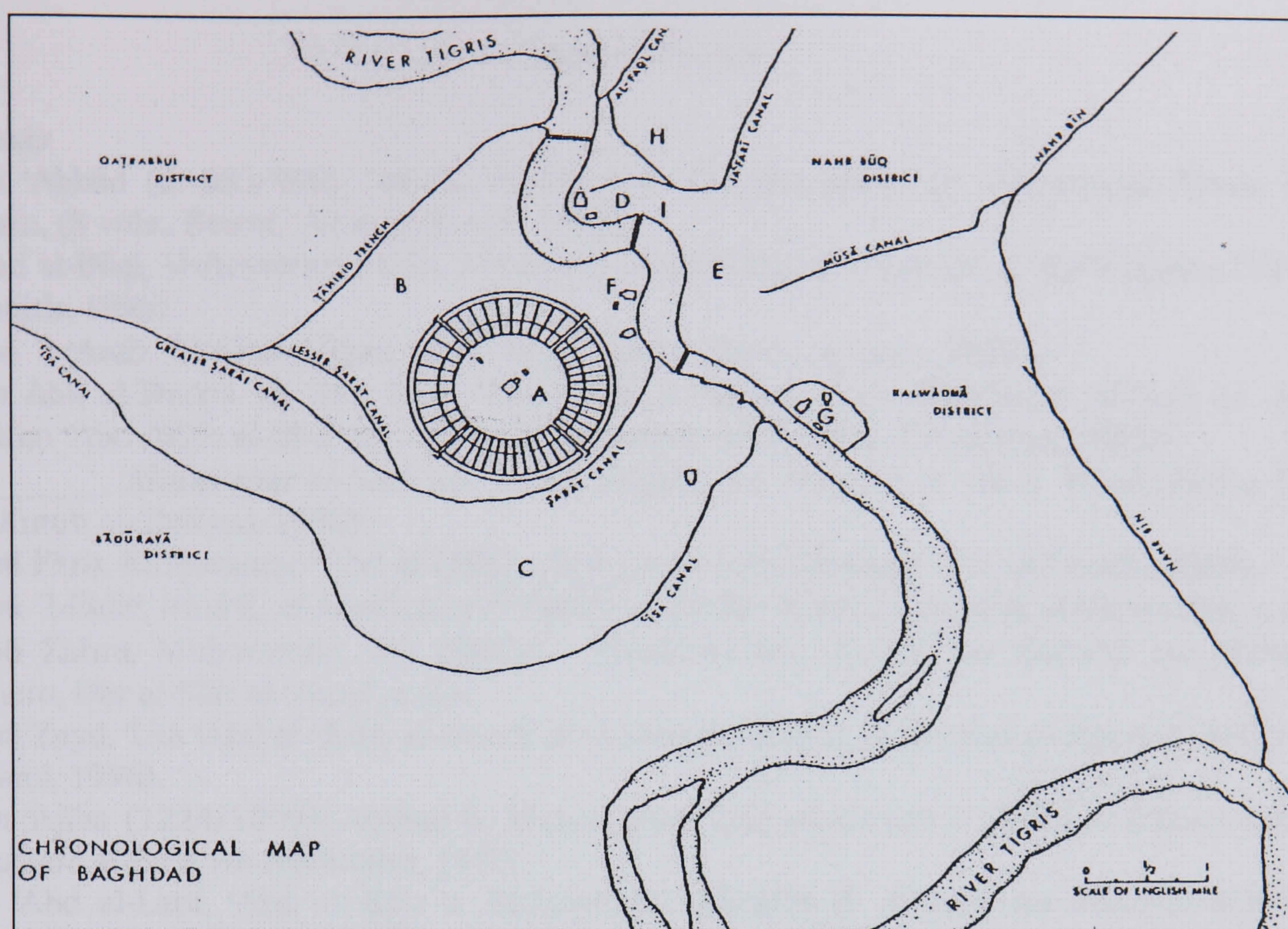
Map of Iraq and its surrounding
regions at the time of the early
ʿAbbāsids



Map of Iraq and its surrounding regions at the time of the early 'Abbāsids adapted from Shaban, M. A., *Islamic History A New Interpretation* (2 vols., London, Oxford University Press, 1976) vol. 2, pp. 48-9.

Appendix 3:

Map of Baghdad at the time of the
early ʿAbbāsids



LEGEND

- A. The Round City, also known as Madīnat al-Manṣūr. The first palace complex of the 'Abbāsīd Capital, it contained the palace-mosque of the Caliph, the administrative agencies of the government, and the residences of various public officials. Construction began in A.H. 145 and was completed in A.H. 149.
- B. Al-Ḥarbīyah. A suburban area north of the Round City, it contained the military cantonments of the Khurāsānī army stationed at Baghdad. Its development was concurrent with the construction of the Round City, with its major growth in A.H. 151 and 157.
- C. Al-Karkh. The great market suburb of the greater urban area, it was occupied in Pre-Islamic times, with large-scale development concurrent with the construction of the Round City. It was redeveloped in the suburban expansion of A.H. 157.
- D. Al-Ruṣāfah. The Palace complex of the Caliph al-Mahdī, it contained his residence and a second principal mosque. Construction began in A.H. 151 and was completed in A.H. 159.
- E. Al-Mukharrim. A residential district, it was possibly occupied as early as A.H. 151, with significant development after A.H. 159.
- F. Al-Khuld. Al-Manṣūr's second residential palace, it was built in A.H. 157 and later occupied by Ḥārūn al-Rashīd and Muḥammad al-Amīn.
- G. Dār al-Khilāfah. The third palace complex, it was built by the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs in stages, subsequent to their return from Sāmarrā in A.H. 279.
- H. Al-Shammāsīyah. Originally a staging ground for military reviews and a camping ground, it was developed as a palace area by the Būyīd amīrs in the tenth century.
- I. Bāb al-Ṭāq. Contained the commercial section serving al-Ruṣāfah and the upper reaches of al-Mukharrim. The general area probably underwent some development as early as A.H. 151 with great expansion after A.H. 159.

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¹²⁵¹ Key: n.d. no date of publication, n.pub. no publisher quoted, n.p. no place of publication mentioned.

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