Mysticism is a universal spiritual urge dating back to the early history of humanity. It indicates a certain type of spirituality, gnosis and practice and diver gently emerges in different cultures of the world. Al-Grünayd al-Bagdādī, who lived in the beginning of the third century after Hijra, is one of the greatest mystics of Islam. He is commonly known among sufi(s as the "leader of the community of mystics" (saryid at-ta'ifa). In his view, mysticism (tasawwuf) consists of following divine rituals and observations without any compromise. It is a path to Allah through which disciples (salik) travel under the guidance of a master (murīd). This path is exclusively for the lovers of God and for the ones who like to purify themselves by submission to His will. Progress in the path is through stations (maqāmat) the first of which is repenting from sins while last is the acquisition of a special knowledge about the unity of God (tawhid). This paper will explore all the stations al-Grünayd explained such as asceticism, poverty, patience, contentment and reliance on Allah. The core of all stations, for al-Grünayd, is a ceaseless awareness about all-encompassing divine presence (murākaba). Al-Grünayd's mystic views met a notable acceptance in the lower and higher ranks of Muslim community and survived until today among Muslim mystics. This, I will argue, because he grounded his path on the Qur'an and the Sunna while also emphasising that the highest station for a human is to be a perfect servant of God, which is in accordance with the common Islamic theology.

Islamic mysticism, which is commonly known as tasawwuf, is usually traced back to a well-known saying of the Prophet Muhammad where he stated that the most perfect state in religion (al-ihsān) is attained by worshipping God as if you see Him, even if you do not seem He sees you1. Yet, it is easily observable that mysticism, in the broadest sense of the word, is used to refer to a particular attitude towards life and to the question of knowledge, which exists in all the major cultures of the world. Mysticism is, therefore, a universal phenomenon that transcends beyond the boundaries of particular national and religious cultures and civilisations. It thus constitutes its own nation with a distinguished concept of civilisation and religion. Mysticism is, then, a spiritual urge which exists where man is. Its core is abstention from mundane pleasures, and its final destination is the Heavens. It is the source of all goodness, blessing and illumination. From this perspective, tasawwuf is the name for the intellectual and spiritual endeavour some Muslims undertake with the purpose of knowing God through experience and getting close to Him through pious deeds. The sufi(s, who were sincerely loyal to their religion and civilisation, followed within

1 Ibn Hanbal, Musnad II, 426, IV, 129, 164; al-Buḫārī, Sahih: Imān 37; Tafsīr sūra 31; Muslim, Sahih: Imān 1; Abū Dawūd, Sunan: Sunan 16; at-Tirmidī, Sunan: Imān 5; Ibn Māğa, Sunan: Muqaddima 9. See for further explanation: Muslim Sahih 1, 157-158.
Islam a particular way to reach to Allah and formulated, in accordance with it, an ideal way of life. This paper analyses the teachings of al-Gunayd who was one of those righteous ascetics who strictly observed the rules of religion and thus reached the highest spiritual states and levels. A sūfī according to al-Gunayd is a migrant to Allah and to his Prophet Muhammad who was the most knowledgeable about Allah and the most strict in the worship to him. The focus of the paper is on the views of al-Gunayd on this spiritually elevating journey which involves going through several stations called ḍuwaṣ and levels called maqamat.

al-Gunayd al-Bağdādī

al-Gunayd lived in the third century of Islam (d. 279/909) during which tasawwuf began to reach its maturity. This was observable in the life style, intellectual and esthetic products. In this age, the principles for the study of tasawwuf had also been developed whereby most of them endeavoured to develop a spiritual philosophy, occasionally resembling to the puritan (ṣaḥāfi) religious attitude. al-Gunayd also contributed to this process. His views on cleansing the heart had been distinguished occasionally resembling to the puritan sayyid at-ta'i fa), from others with their clarity. Eventually, he gained the title "leader of the community" (ṣayyid at-ta'i fa), that is the leader of the sūfīs.

His full name is Abu 1-Qasim al-Gunayd ibn Muhammad. He is considered one of the most leading figures in the field of tasawwuf who set the signs in the path to God in an understandable way. Many ascetics benefited from him. His family came from Nihawand but he was born and educated in Iraq. His father was Abu Yabi az-Zagāg. For this reason, he was called qaवrī, the glass seller. He was a jurist in the school of Abu Ṭawr, who was the friend of as-Ṣafī, al-Gunayd began issuing religious verdicts (fatwa) at the age of twenty in the presence of his teacher. His opinions were regarded by respect. He died in 297/909 in Baghdad. His grave still draws visitors.

al-Gunayd is considered one of the leaders, imām, both in the external (zāhir) and internal (bātin) sciences. His knowledge was a consequence of his sincerity in his relationship with God and his abstention from using the human free will against the Divine will.

The path (tariq) according to the People of True Knowledge (ahl al-haqiqa) consists of observing the rituals and respecting the rules through the best conduct by staying away from permissible acts (al-Gurghānī, Tarījāt 61). The tasawwuf in Islam has two levels: Path (tariq) and Truth (haqiqa). The former is called the science of conduct while the letter is called the science of exploration. In other words, they are called vocation (ṣulūk) and gnosis (ma'rifā). Tariq, as-al-Gurghānī defines, is a special vocation for the seekers specialising in how to go through the spiritual states and levels.

Spiritual progress, according to the Prophet Muhammad, requires the greatest of all struggles. On the way back from a battle, he is reported to have said that: "now we are going from the smaller struggle to the greatest struggle". It is interpreted that he meant the struggle against the passions and mundane desires. The Qurān also states that "Those who struggle for Our cause, surely We will show them our paths. Allah is with the those who try to attain perfection in their conduct" (Q. 29.69). al-Gunayd also followed the same tradition. According to al-Gunayd, the ideal path to Allah never allows a person to abandon observing religious rules and regulations because one, regardless his spiritual level, is always a servant of Allah. Abu 'Abdallah as-Sulami narrated from Abu Bakr who related from Abu Muhammad al-Gari who said: "I heard al-Gunayd while he was talking to a man who mentioned from gnosis (ma'rifā) and said that the people who reach to this level are allowed not to perform five daily prayers and other acts of worship for Allah. al-Gunayd said to him: This is the opinion of a group who advocate that the obligation to worship ends for some people. Yet for me continuing the worship is the best way. Those who commit adultery and steel other's property are in a better spiritual state than those who advocate such a view. The Gnostics (al-ārifun bi-lldh) took the forms of worship from Allah and they always refer to him on this issue. If I live for a thousand years, I would never decrease the worship I am performing now unless it becomes..."
Islam a particular way to reach to Allāh and formulated, in accordance with it, an ideal way of life. This paper analyses the teachings of al-Ǧunayd who was one of those righteous ascetics who strictly observed the rules of religion and thus reached the highest spiritual states and levels. A sūfī according to al-Ǧunayd is a migrant to Allāh and to his Prophet Muhammad who was the most knowledgeable about Allāh and the most strict in the worship to him. The focus of the paper is on the views of al-Ǧunayd on this spiritually elevating journey which involves going through several stations called ḍawāl and levels called maqamat.

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The path (ṭariq) according to the People of True Knowledge (ahl al-haqq) consists of observing the rituals and respecting the rules through the best conduct by staying away from permissible acts (al-Gurğānî, Taʾrifāt 61). The ṭasawwuf in Islam has two levels: Path (ṭariq) and Truth (haqq). The former is called the science of conduct while the latter is called the science of exploration. In other words, they are called vocation (ṣulāh) and gnosis (maʾrifā). Ṭariq, as al-Gurğānî defines, is a special vocation for the seekers specialising in how to go through the spiritual states and levels.

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2 The Prophet is reported to have said: “It is I who is the most respectable to Allāh and the most knowledgeable about Him”. In another narration: “By God! I know Allāh most and I am the most fearing of Him”. See: al-Buḥārī, Sahih: Imān 13; Pitām 5.

3 The following report sheds light on this issue: Abū Muhammad al-Harīrī narrated that he heard al-Ǧunayd saying: “We have not acquired ṭasawwuf from hear say but from hunger, thirst, abstention from worldly pleasures, quitting the habits and comfort, for ṭasawwuf is the purity of relationship with Allāh, and its core is staying away from mundane goals. The companion of the Prophet Harīthah stated this as follows: “I kept my soul away from worldly pleasures until its gold and stone looked the same for me. I stayed up praying during the nights and remained thirsty (i.e. I fasted) during the day time”. See: as-Sulami, Taḥqīqat 158; as-Ṣawāyir, Risāla 1, 106; al-Ḥācitib al-Ǧaġdādi, Taʾrifūl VII, 246; al-ʾIṣfahānī, Ḥilya X, 277-278; Abū Yaʾţa, Taḥqīqat I, 128; ʿAṣif n.d.:397.

4 as-Subki said about him: “The leader of the Community [of sūfīs], the forerunner of the Congregation [of sūfīs], master (imām) of the People of ḥirka (humble sūfī dress), guide of the sūfī path, the flag of the saints in his time and the champion of the gnostics”. as-Subki, Taḥqīqat II, 26.

There is the Path (tariqa) to Allah, the seeker (salik) who enters the path and the Guide (mursid) leads the seeker through the pitfalls and passages of the way. The Prophet Muhammad is seen as the first Guide after he learn the true faith. He is the one who opened the way to perfection in worship to Allah while he retreated to the cave of Hira' where he completely dedicated himself to supplication, prayer, worship and contemplation. One enters the Path through an act of allegiance to the Guide. The beginner in the path is called Murid who after passing the elementary stages becomes salik. Those who complete the progress are called al-mursid al-mubaqqiq.

The sūfi is on constant migration towards his Lord. His acts are entirely intended to please Allah, not even to gain Paradise nor to save himself from Hellfire. The spiritual migration is then either a migration to Allah which is in the heart and soul, whose principle is the strong will, constant awareness and sincerity, or it is a migration to the Prophet whose pillar is the submission to the law of God which is conveyed by his Messenger and to the example of the Prophet in all the acts, speeches and relations. al-Ǧunayd used to say: “The path to God is entirely closed to all others except for those who follow the footsteps of the Prophet, peace and greetings be upon him, in the field of law and customs, and strictly adhered his path. Then the gate of all good things become open for him” (as-Sulami, Tabaqat 159).

He was asked about the interpretation of the following verses from the Qurʾān: “We will read it for you, then you do not forget” (Q. 78/6). al-Ǧunayd said, “We will read” that is the Qurʾān with recitation. “You do not forget”, that is to say do not forget to practice it. The address is for the general people although it was initially addressed to the Prophet.

Signs of the Path

This path to Allah is peculiar to the friends of Allah (awliyaʾ:Allāh), and to those who love him because of the purity of their souls in their relationship with Allah. It is the journey of the seekers to Allah as they go through stages and levels. It consists of the beginning and the end of the path as well as the stages in between. The beginning is repenting (tawba) while the end is Allah, his knowledge and faith about his oneness. As to the stages they are states (ḥāl) and levels (maqām). Repenting is the first level. The sūfis explained its prerequisites as follows: faith (iman), persistence (qabāt), intention (niyya), truthfulness (ṣidq) and sincerity (bihās). Thereafter, the levels follow each other with the states in between them.

Given the rule that the paths to Allah is equal to the number of the children of Adam, as the sūfis say, then the number of the states and levels vary from one sūfi to the other because their experiences and potentials also vary. Some said there are seven levels while others said there are nine or ten levels. Some others increased it even to hundred. All these indicate the variance in the sūfi experience and show the absence of a single paradigm or a binding principle. But the sole principle almost all the sūfis accept is the necessity of a comrade (rafiq) or a guide (mursid), food and preparation. The comrade is the šaykh who earlier completed the journey in the path learned is risks and secrets. As to the food it is the dikr or the constant remembrance of Allah. The šaykh and the dikr are two pivotal principles of in the sūfi education. During this education, the most important phase is cleansing oneself from the attributes of common people and internalising the attributes of God. This is a consequence, on the moral level, of the sūfi education which is called journey (sulik). The sulik is completed by the perfection of sincere worship (ubūdīyya) to Allah as the will of Allah becomes the will of the servant. Yet the real goal is obtaining the true knowledge about Allah, which is an aspect the sūfi does not speak about with others in public.

It is known that al-Imām al-Ǧunayd spoke about tasawwuf with clarity that both commoners and the educated groups understood his message. Both the critics and advocates of tasawwuf acknowledged this superior quality of him at every age (as-Sulami, Tabaqat 155; as-Subki, Tabaqat II, 260; Corbin 1977:212). Yet, at the same time, there are some highly refined remarks by al-Ǧunayd that some found difficult to interpret (Ateş 1993:VIII, 121).

al-Ǧunayd proclaimed his faith in tawhid and accepted that Allah is beyond any limitation and imperfection. He refused reincarnation of God into a person. Regardless how many secrets are unveiled to a person in the path to Allah, it is not permissible for him to claim that he passed the level of worship and God reincarnated in him (as-Sulami, Tabaqat 158-159; al-İsfahâni, Hilya X, 278; al-Manûfî 1967:II, 151). Thus it would be a mistake to accept the claim that al-Ǧunayd talked about the reincarnation of God into man. In reality, al-Ǧunayd was convinced with the ḥadīt qudsi of the Prophet Muhammad where he relayed from Allah that “I will be his hearing with which he hears”11. He strictly remained faithful to the mainstream creed and spoke with caution which does not allow any objection against it. He uses the terms “divine gift” (lutf), “divine guidance” (bida’āya), “divine endowment of

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success" (tasfiq) or "divine support" (ta’hid). It is impossible to find any expression in the writings of al-Gunayd that implies reincarnation.

al-Gunayd derived the basic principles of the sufi path to Allah from the Qur’ān and the Sunna of the Prophet Muḥammad which made his teaching more appealing to the majority of the Muslims. Regarding this issue, he used to say: “Our knowledge is anchored in the Book and the Sunnah. If someone does not memorise the meaning of the Qur’ān, he must have its knowledge and a deep understanding about it. If he does not write hadīt, nor does he study Islamic law (fiqh), he is not qualified to be followed.” He used to say: “The path to God is entirely closed to the creation except for those who follow the footsteps of the Prophet, peace and greetings be upon him, in the field of law and customs, and strictly adhered his path. Then the gate of all good things become open for him.”

Tag ad-Din as-Subki said about him the following: “al-Gunayd ibn Muhammad ... the leader of the Community and the guide of the Congregation. He is the imām of the people of hirqa, simple sufi dress. Master of the sufi path. He was the highest of the saints in his time and the champion of the Gnostics” (as-Subki, Tabaqat II, 260).

Spiritual Levels (maqāmat)

al-Gunayd explained that the path to Allah begins with repenting sincerely (tawba an-nasih) which is uprooting all the sins. A man asked him: “How is the path to Allah?” He said: “It is repenting (tawba) that prevents from insisting in mistakes, fearing (ḥawf) that cleans pride, hoping (raġa’) that motivates to performing good deeds, and observing Allah’s actions in what emerges in your heart” (al-Isfahānī, Hilya X, 269; Ḩan al-Gawzī, Sīfa II, 42; as-Subki, Tabaqat II, 260). He also added that: “Tawba is based on three principles: the first one is regret, the second one is determination to leave what is forbidden and to perform what is required, and the third one is work to pay the rights of others” (al-Quṣayrī, Risālā I, 258-259). The one who repents and unites the rob of innocence in the mistakes keeps moving forward in the ladder of tasawwuf and levels of mystic knowledge until he reaches to a level whereby he forgets all the sins which kept him away from reaching Allah. Thereafter, he reaches to a high state where he does not remember anything except for Allah. This is the level of those who have the true knowledge, al-muḥaqqiqūn.

The seeker continues in the path to Allah not only by making all his material gains legal (balāh) but at the same time by staying away from speechs Allah is not pleased with. This principle is probably derived from the following hadith: “Keep your tongue from errors!”

Thus he reaches to the level of asceticism (zuhd) the core of which, according to al-Gunayd, is cleansing the heart from mundane passions until the servant never forgets Allah. Once al-Gunayd was asked about asceticism, he responded: “It is cleansing the hands from belongings and cleansing the heart from desires”. When he was asked about mundane desires (dunyā), he said: “What is it? It is what approaches the heart and keeps it away from Allah” (as-Sarrāqī, Luma’ 72; al-Manufī 1967:II, 151).

The level of asceticism overlaps with the next level, satisfaction (qanā’), which is feeling satisfied with what is available without desiring what is far away. This way, the heart becomes ready to receive the wisdom from Allāh as it becomes empty from everything else.

The level of poverty (faqr) is the principle of those who aim getting close to Allāh through worship in seclusion. Poverty may have visible signs that distinguish its different types from each other. They are the real poor before Allāh externally and internally. The level of poverty is what distinguished the Prophet Muḥammad from other prophets. Once al-Gunayd said while he was talking about tasawwuf: “Tasawwuf is built upon eight principles. Each principle is borrowed from a Prophet, peace and greetings be upon them. Generosity (sahā) is from Ibrāhīm. Contentment (ridā) is from Iṣḥāq. Patience (sabr) is from Ayyūb. Traveling (isra) is from Zakariyyā. Seclusion is from Yāhūyā. Wearing wool is from Mūsā. Travelling is from ‘Īsā. Poverty (faqr) is from Muḥammad, peace and greetings be upon him” (as-Ṣārānī, Tabaqat I, 73). The truthfulness in poverty leads the poor to stay away from asking from people due to a complete reliance to what is in the presence of Allāh instead of what is in the hands of people. This also leads to staying away from debate and argumentation about religion. He does not argue with anyone. If someone wants to draw him in an argumentation he keeps silent.

The level of patience (sabr) indicates enduring the difficulties that come from Allāh. Allāh sends them to sincere believers who mix good deeds with mistakes as punishment for their sins, to the truthful believers as a cleansing from their sins, and to the Prophets for a reason no one knows save Him. The core of the path to Allāh is faith in Allāh the Most High. A believer is required to continue his journey with patience yet the journey sometimes requires higher qualities other than patience which are possessed only by a few people. Regarding this, al-Gunayd said: “The
success" (tawfid) or “divine support” (tayid). It is impossible to find any expression in the writings of al-Ǧunayd that implies reincarnation.

al-Ǧunayd derived the basic principles of the sufī path to Allāh from the Qur’ān and the Sunna of the Prophet Muḥammad which made his teaching more appealing to the majority of the Muslims. Regarding this issue, he used to say: “Our knowledge is anchored in the Book and the Sunnah. If someone does not memorise the meaning of the Qur’ān, he must have its knowledge and a deep understanding about it. If he does not write hadīt, nor does he study Islamic law (fiqh), he is not qualified to be followed.” He used to say: “The path to God is entirely closed to the creation except for those who follow the footsteps of the Prophet, peace and greetings be upon him, in the field of law and customs, and strictly adhered his path. Then the gate of all good things become open for him”11. Tāǧ ad-Dīn as-Ṣubkī said about him the following: “al-Ǧunayd ibn Muḥammad ... the leader of the Community and the guide of the Congregation. He is the imām of the people of ḥiṃa, simple sufī dress. Master of the sufī path. He was the highest of the saints in his time and the champion of the Gnostics” (as-Ṣubkī, Tabaqāt II, 260).

Spiritual Levels (maqāmāt)

al-Ǧunayd explained that the path to Allāh begins with repenting sincerely (at-tawba an-nasib) which is uprooting all the sins. A man asked him: “How is the path to Allāh?” He said: “It is repenting (tawba) that prevents from insisting in mistakes, fearing (ḥayāt) that cleans pride, hoping (raǧā’) that motivates to performing good deeds, and observing Allāh’s actions in what emerges in your heart” (al-İsfahānî, Ḥiyya X, 269; Ibn al-Ǧawzī, Sīfa II, 42; as-Ṣubkī, Tabaqāt II, 260). He also added that: “Tawba is based on three principles: the first one is regret, the second one is determination to leave what is forbidden and to perform what is required, and the third one is work to pay the rights of others” (al-Qušayrî, Risāla I, 258-259). The one who repents and unites the rob of insistence in the mistakes keeps moving forward in the ladder of tasawwuf and levels of mystic knowledge until he reaches to a level whereby he forgets all the sins which kept him away from reaching Allāh. Thereafter, he reaches to a high state where he does not remember anything except for Allāh. This is the level of those who have the true knowledge, al-muḥaqiqūn.

The seeker continues in the path to Allāh not only by making all his material gains legal (ḥalāl) but at the same time by staying away from speeches Allāh is not pleased with. This principle is probably derived from the following hadīth: “Keep your tongue from errors!”14.

Thus he reaches to the level of asceticism (zuhd) the core of which, according to al-Ǧunayd, is cleansing the heart from mundane passions until the servant never forgets Allāh. Once al-Ǧunayd was asked about asceticism, he responded: “It is cleansing the hands from belongings and cleansing the heart from desires”. When he was asked about mundane desires (dunyā), he said: “What is it? It is what approaches the heart and keeps it away from Allāh” (as-Sarrāǧ, Luma’ 72; al-Manūfî 1967:11, 151).

The level of asceticism overlaps with the next level, satisfaction (qanā’i), which is feeling satisfied with what is available without desiring what is far away. This way, the heart becomes ready to receive the wisdom from Allāh as it becomes empty from everything else.

The level of poverty (faqr) is the principle of those who aim getting close to Allāh through worship in seclusion. Poverty may have visible signs that distinguish its different types from each other. They are the real poor before Allāh externally and internally. The level of poverty is what distinguished the Prophet Muḥammad from other prophets. Once al-Ǧunayd said while he was talking about tasawwuf: “Tasawwuf is built upon eight principles. Each principle is borrowed from a Prophet, peace and greetings be upon them. Generosity (ṣabīḥ) is from Ibrāhīm. Contentment (ridā) is from Išāq. Patience (ṣabr) is from Ayyūb. Pointing (isrā) is from Zakariyyā. Seclusion is from Yahyā. Wearing wool is from Mūsā. Travelling is from ‘Īsā. Poverty (faqr) is from Muḥammad, peace and greetings be upon him” (as-Ṣa‘rānī, Tabaqāt I, 73). The truthfulness in poverty leads the poor to stay away from asking from people due to a complete reliance to what is in the presence of Allāh instead of what is in the hands of people. This also leads to staying away from debate and argumentation about religion. He does not argue with anyone. If someone wants to draw him in an argumentation he keeps silent.

The level of patience (ṣabr) indicates enduring the difficulties that come from Allāh. Allāh sends them to sincere believers who mix good deeds with mistakes as punishment for their sins, to the truthful believers as a cleansing from their sins, and to the Prophets for a reason no one knows save Him. The core of the path to Allāh is faith in Allāh the Most High. A believer is required to continue his journey with patience yet the journey sometimes requires higher qualities other than patience which are possessed only by a few people. Regarding this, al-Ǧunayd said: “The

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13 See: as-Sulāmī, Tabaqāt 159; as-Ṣubkī, Tabaqāt II, 274; al-Manūfî 1967:11, 149.

14 at-Tirmīḍī, Sunan: Zuḥd 60; See also: al-İsfahānî, Ḥiyya X, 269; al-Qusayrî, Risāla I, 284.

15 Once a man brought al-Ǧunayd five hundred dinar and said to him: “Distribute this money to your community”, al-Ǧunayd asked him: “Do you have money other than that?” The man said: “Yes”. al-Ǧunayd asked: “Do you want more than what you have?” The man said: “Yes”. al-Ǧunayd said to him: “Take your money back, because you need it more than we do. The need for money is taken away from us”. See: as-Ṣa‘rānī, Tabaqāt I, 72-73.
The journey from this world to the next is easy on the believers. Separation of people from Allah is very difficult to endure. Travelling from ego to Allah is hard and highly difficult. Patience with Allah is even harder (al-Quṣayrī, Risāla I, 397-398; as-Subki, Tabqaṭ II, 264-265).

Contentment (ridā), in al-Ğunayd’s view, is a level which does not contain any element of free choice. It requires complete submission to the eternal will of Allah. The elimination of free will, in this context, does not mean that the servant becomes “predetermined” (maṣbūr) in his wilful actions. Contentment means gladly accepting what Allah chooses for one as a trial. The servant does not have any control on these trials anyway. Contentment, correctly understood, indicates a high level in the knowledge of Allah. al-Ğunayd says on this issue: “The contentment (ridā) is the second level of gnosis. Whoever shows ceaseless contentment his knowledge about Allah reflects the truth”.

The last level according to al-Ğunayd is “reliance on Allah” (tawakkul). It means trusting Allah about the sustenance of all living creatures as Allah states in the Qur’an: “There is no moving creature on the earth whose sustenance is not taken care of by Allah” (Q. 11.6). When al-Ğunayd was asked about the meaning of tawakkul, he said, “reliance of heart to Allah” (as-Sarrāğ, Luma’ 79). For him, reliance on Allah is not simply saying it verbally but it is a state of consciousness that covers one’s complete existence and puts his hearts trust in Allah. al-Ğunayd, therefore, said about the level of tawakkul: “Tawakkul was a piece of knowledge, but now it became a reality” (al-Isfahānī, Hīya X, 267). Yet some people find it difficult how to combine the faith about reliance on Allah for everyone’s living, and working to meet the requirements of life. Likewise, Islam encourages the servant to have complete confidence in Allah’s support and working for a living. Speaking from an Islamic perspective, there is no conflict between the two teachings. al-Ğunayd set a concrete example on this issue by his way of life: His father was selling glass and he was selling construction materials. While he was working in his shop, his daily custom was to make three hundred rak’a voluntary salāt with a thousand tasbih, praise for Allah.

This is how al-Ğunayd interpreted the spiritual levels. For him, the path to Allah required one go through levels. Each level consisted of various type of sincere worship by the saints and selected servants of God.

The Essentials of the States (ahwāl)

The state (ḥāl) in the terminology of the ṣūfīs, is a meaning that comes to heart, without an effort on the part of the person, such as sorrow, sadness, anxiety or joy. These states are replaced by other states, which may be similar or not, as other qualities of soul become manifest. If a state continues and becomes a property, then, it is called a level (maqām). The states are gifts from Allah while the levels are earned by people. The states spring from the fountain of divine generosity yet the levels emerge out of efforts spent to gain them (al-Ġurgānī, Taʿrifāt 36). The level is not other than some religious rules concerning the etiquette. The ṣūfī applies them with no compromise. He spends his utmost effort to bring about a living image to the real world. But the states are the outcomes of these levels on the spiritual level such as the feeling of “passion”, “anxiety” and “joy”. The one who belongs to a level resides in his level yet the one who is on a state moves forward from that state. Occasionally, a state serves as an indication of the arrival to a new level but sometimes it is an indication of the level one is at. The state is called state because of its changing nature while the level is called level because its durability.

al-Ğunayd presents us an interpretation of the states that constitute along with the levels the essence of tasawwuf.

The state of observing Allah’s actions (muḥaqqaqah) is the highest state of understanding true faith in the oneness of Allah. It involves thinking that the universe received its initial existence as well its continuity from Allah the Most High. According to al-Ğunayd, the more the servant gets closer to Allah, Allah also further approaches towards him.

As to the love for Allah (mahabbah), it is the losing sight of himself on the part of the servant because he is preoccupied with the love of Allah as he is in constant remembrance of him. He pays his rights and submits his heart and life entirely to Allah. Occasionally, the excess in love leads the lovers to a kind of drunkenness and to say words that are hard to interpret from an orthodox and rational perspective. Yet al-Ğunayd was for accepting the excuse of the true lover while at the same time he put the rule that the lovers must always hold Allah beyond any imperfection. He said, “the passion is excessive inclination without union”.

See as-Sulāmī, Tabqaṭ 162.

They asked al-Ğunayd: “Should we look for our living?” He said: “If you know where it is, look for it”. They said: “Should we ask from Allah?” He said: “If you know that He forgot you, then reminded Him”. They said: “We stay home and rely on Allah?” He said: “The experience is doubt.” They said: “What is the solution?” He said: “Living up the search for solutions.” See al-Quṣayrī, Risāla I, 376; Ibn Taḡrī Birdī, Nuṣājām III, 168-169; as-Subki, Tabqaṭ II, 264.


See as-Sarrāğ, Luma’ 85.

The issue of love was raised in Mecca during the period of Pilgrimage where by the ṣawārawī expressed their views. al-Ğunayd was the youngest among them. Finally his turn came. They said to him: “O the ṣawārawī! Tell us what you have!” He bowed his head while tears came from his eyes and said: [A lover] is a servant who gives up himself, continuously connected to the remembrance of Allah, vigilant to observe
journey from this world to the next is easy on the believers. Separation of people from Allāh is very difficult to endure. Travelling from ego to Allāh is hard and highly difficult. Patience with Allāh is even harder" (al-Quṣayrī, Risālā I, 397-398; as-Subkī, Tabqaṭ II, 264-265).

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Fear (hawâf) from Allâh is another state. It indicates that the consciousness of the seeker is controlled by a fear of punishment from Allâh for his mistakes at any time. Thus he does not become arrogant with his good deeds because fear of punishment takes pride away 21.

Hope (ra'â) from Allâh is also another state which motivates the servant to do more good deeds out of expectation from the mercy and forgiveness of Allâh (as-Subki, Tabaqät II, 264). The passion towards Allâh (kawâf) is according to al-6unayd another spiritual state which urges the seeker to union when he faces an obstacle in the path to Allâh. al-6unayd used to control himself while he is at this state with the purpose of not to speak anything that may cause misunderstanding for the general public out of respect to Allâh the Most High 22.

Intimacy (uns) is also another state which manifest itself in the soul out of joy by observing the greatness of Allâh. When al-6unayd was asked about it, he said: "Increase of owe with the existence of respect" 25.

As to witnessing through the heart (mušâhdáda), it is a kind of knowledge about the secrets of the invisible world, or more precisely, it is the knowledge about the invisible. Those who reach to this level are given the name of muš̱ham̱un, receivers of news. There are stories from the time of the Prophet about such people. For instance, it is narrated that the third Rightly Guided Caliph 'Umar, cried Sariya, the commander of Muslim armies in Iraq, from the pulpit during his Friday sermon: "O Sariya! The mountain! The mountain!" 24.

As to the certainty (yaqīn), it is, according to al-6unayd, accepting the creed with not doubt in the heart, which can happen by cleansing the heart which bring one to the level of opening (kašf) and receiving knowledge directly (ilham). This type of certainty is not an outcome of studying the evidences as in the case of Theology. al-6unayd said: "certainty is the clearance of doubts". Once he was passing by people the nights of Allâh, looking towards Him with his heart, when he speaks it is from Allâh, when he moves it is with the order of Allâh, when he rests he is with Allâh. He is with Allâh (bi-llâh), for Allâh (li-llâh) and with Allâh (ma’a-llâh)." The Sufi cried and said: "There is nothing to add on that. May Allâh protect you o the crown of the gnostics." See al-Qusayri, Risâla II, 617, 623.

21 See: al-Qusayri, Risâla I, 310; as-Subki, Tabaqät II, 264.
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Education and Moral Growth in Practical Life

Despite all these constructive teachings by al-6unayd, he was subject to trials as he had to face a plot against him by Gulâm Halîl. The result was execution of seventy sufis and the imprisonment of al-6unayd. Gulâm Halîl was known as someone who fabricated hadith. He was jealous of al-6unayd as more and more people were attracted to his teachings. Yet he was not considered a reliable scholar 27. This shows that the plot against al-6unayd was due to a slander by Gulâm Halîl against al-6unayd who came to be known as the leader of the Community 28.

At the end, I would like to include a story which give an idea about how al-6unayd educated his disciples and the methods he used to make them grow in education and moral growth. This story will also illustrate the way Sufi way of live is implemented in the practical life.

As-Siblî was a pupil of the famous theosophist al-6unayd al-Bagdâdî. On a conversion, he asked al-6unayd: "They tell me that you possess the pearl of divine knowledge: either give it to me or sell it". al-6unayd answered: "I cannot sell it, for you have not the price thereof; and if I give it to you, you will have gained it who immersed themselves in finding rational evidences to prove that Allâh is away from imperfection, he said: "Trying to disprove the existence of a shame where there is no shame is a shame" 29. Certainty leads to kašf (opening) which was denied by those who did not experience it (Haggâq 1978:24).

These are the spiritual states, according to al-6unayd, in the path to Allâh. It is path to follow for those who want to make journey to Allâh. The Sufi must strictly observe the rules of the path regardless to his level and state. One saw al-6unayd in his dream. He was carrying a rosary (tasbih) in his hand. The person who saw the dream asked him: You reached a high level, why do you still carry a rosary? He responded: "This is the means with which I reached high levels. I do not leave it." He always encouraged his students to worship which required them to spend a great effort in the struggle against ego and mundane desires. Therefore he was always saying: "When you oppose your ego’s desire, its poison becomes a medicine for you" 28.

25 He also said: "Certain knowledge (yaqīn) is the stability of knowledge in the heart in a way that does not change, nor does it gets transformed or modified." See al-Qusayri, Risâla I, 392; as-Subki, Tabaqät II, 270; as-Sarrâj, Lumâ'a 103.
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cheaply. You do not know its value. Cast yourself headlong, like me, into this ocean, in order that you may win the pearl by waiting patiently”.

ās-Sibli asked what he must do. “Go,” said al-ʿUnayd, “and sell sulphur”. At the end of a year he said to ās-Sibli: “This trading makes you well known. Become a dervish and occupy yourself solely with begging”. During a whole year ās-Sibli wandered through the streets of Baghdad, begging of the passers-by, but no one heeded him. Then he returned to al-ʿUnayd, who exclaimed: “See now! You are nothing in people’s eyes. Never set your mind on them or take any account of them at all. For some time you were a chamberlain and acted as governor of a province. Go to that country and ask pardon of all those whom you have wronged”.

ās-Sibli obeyed and spent four years in going from door to door, until he had obtained an acquittance from every person except one, whom he failed to trace. On his return, al-ʿUnayd said to him: “You still have some regard to reputation. Go and be a beggar for one year more”.

Every day ās-Sibli used to bring the alms that were given to him to al-ʿUnayd, who bestowed them on the poor and kept ās-Sibli without food until the next morning. After a year had passed this way, al-ʿUnayd accepted him as one of his disciples on condition that he should perform the duties of a servant to the others.

After a year’s service, al-ʿUnayd asked him: “What do you think of yourself now?”. ās-Sibli replied: “I deem myself the meanest of God’s creatures”. “Now,” said the master, “your faith is firm”.

In sum, the path to Allah, according to al-ʿUnayd requires strictly obeying its rules through struggle against ego. al-ʿUnayd called to the implementation of sufī principles in the practical life as he advocated that everyone, regardless to the spiritual level he reached, is obliged to carry on his moral and religious duties.

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B. Secondary sources

In Ep. 7 On the theoretical arts of the encyclopaedia of the Pure Brethren (I, 267, 4-11), the Ihwān list six kinds of “legal sciences for the cure of the souls and the search for the hereafter”: 1) the science of revelation; 2) the science of interpretation; 3) the science of traditions; 4) the science of the Law, traditions and norms; 5) the science of memory and spiritual admonitions, of asceticism and of Sufism; 6) the science of the interpretation of dreams. These sciences belong, respectively, to: a) the readers of the Qu’ran and those who know it by heart; b) the imāms and the vicars of the Prophets; c) the authors of hadīts; d) jurists; e) worshippers, ascetics, monks and the like; f) interpreters.

Again, in Ep. 9 On habits (I, 322, 3-323, 20) the Ihwān speak of the eight basic principles of the Law, represented by eight groups of followers and companions of the Lawgiver, who all have the task of perpetuating the memory of the Law, and hence allowing its implementation: 1) reciters of the Holy Book and those who know it by heart; 2) abḥūr-tellers, hadīts-transmitters and those who keep by heart the sīra of the Prophet; 3) students of the Law and those who are learned in the Law and in its sunna; 4) commentators of the literal meaning of their expressions; 5) the fighter ansār; 6) vicars of the Law-giver and those who supervise the sāri‘a by ordering that which is good and interdicting that which is forbidden; 7) ascetics and worshippers, monks and those who stand up in the temples; preachers in the pulpits; 8) those who are learned in the ta’wil, and those who are experienced in the theological sciences and knowledge, that is to say, the rightly guided (al-mahdiyyūn) imāms and the orthodox (ar-rāṣīdūn) caliphs.

As we see, these lists are very similar, and the encyclopaedia of the “Pure Brethren” often deals with each of these categories. But I should like to address here the fifth category of the first passage, that of “al-‘ubbād wa z-‘ubhād wa r-‘ubbān wa-r-‘ubban wa-man šakalabum”, which corresponds to the seventh of the second passage, that of “az-‘ubhād wa l-‘ubbād fi l-masā‘id, wa-r-‘ubbān wa-l-quwwām fi l-hayākil, wa-l-huṭaba’ alā l-manābīr”.

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1 Here the Ihwān use the typical mu’tazili expression: al-amr bi-l-ma‘ruf wa-n-nahy ‘an al-munkar.

2 For instance, Ep. 22 On animals, II, 299, 18-20 looks especially significant. This passage is related to the well-known assertion, which the Ihwān also repeat, that “religion and kingship are twins”. See also, in the same Epistle, 301, 17-20 and 367, 20-369, 14 passim; Ep. 8 On the practical arts, I, 292, 9-18 and, more specifically on kingship: Ep. 31 On the languages, III, 173, 17-175, 14 and 176, 2-177, 2.