The Classification of Sciences

بِالسَنَدِ المُتَّصِلِ إِلَى أَفْضَلِ المُحَدِّثِينَ وَأَقْدَمِهِمْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ رِضْوَانُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ الحَسَنِ وَعَلِيِّ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنْ سَهْلِ بْنِ زِيَادٍ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عِيسَى عَنْ عُبَيْدِاللهِ بْنِ عَبْدِاللهِ الدَّهْقَانِ عَنْ دُرُسْتَ الوَاسِطِيِّ عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ بْنِ عَبْدِالحَمِيدِ عَنْ أَبِي الحَسَنِ مُوسَى عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: دَخَلَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ المَسْجِدَ فَإِذَا جَمَاعَةٌ قَدْ أَطَافُوا بِرَجُلٍ فَقَالَ: مَا هَذَا؟ فَقِيلَ: عَلَّامَةٌ. فَقَالَ: وَمَا العَلّامَةُ؟ فَقَالوا لَهُ: أَعْلَمُ النَّاسِ بِأَنْسَابِ العَرَبِ وَوَقَائِعِهَا وَأَيَّامِ الجَاهِلِيَّةِ وَالأَشْعَارِ العَرَبِيَّةِ. فَقَال النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: ذَاكَ عِلْمٌ لا يَضُرُّ مَنْ جَهِلَهُ وَلا يَنْفَعُ مَنْ عَلِمَهُ. ثُمَّ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: إِنَّمَا العِلْمُ ثَلاثَةٌ: آيَةٌ مُحْكَمَةٌ أَوْ فَرِيضَةٌ عَادِلَةٌ أَوْ سُنَّةٌ قَائِمَةٌ، وَمَا خَلاهُنَّ فَهُوَ فَضْلٌ.

With my chain of transmission reaching up to the best and the earliest of traditionists, Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni (R) from Muhammad ibn al-Hasan and 'Ali ibn Muhammad, from Sahl ibn Ziyad, from Muhammad ibn 'Isa-, from 'Ubayd Allah ibn 'Abd Allah al Dihqan, from Durust al-Wasiti, from Ibrahim ibn 'Abd al-Hamid, from Abu al-Hasan Musa (A) that he said: The Messenger of Allah (S) once entered the mosque where there were a group of people surrounding a man. "Who is that?" inquired the Prophet (S). He was told, "He is an Allamah, (i.e. a very learned man)." "What is an Allamah?" asked the Prophet (S). They told him, "He is the most learned of men regarding Arab genealogies, past episodes, the days of the Jahiliyyah and Arabic poetry." The Prophet (S) said, "That is a knowledge whose ignorance does not harm one nor is its possession of any benefit to one." Then the Prophet (S) declared, "Verily, knowledge consists of these three: the firm sign, the just duty and the established sunnah. All else is superfluous."[1]

Exposition

might مَا هَذَا .Who is that?) in some manuscripts) مَا هَذَا Who is he?) instead of) مَن هَذَا There is have been said to express contempt. Allamah is a derivative (sighah) that expresses extremeness (mubalaghah) and its ta is for the sake of (further) exaggeration. It means 'very very knowledgeable'.

who) is used for questioning concerning a person) مَــنْ You should know that in logic the word what) for questioning concerning a given reality or for explaining an abstract) مــا and the word noun. Since they told the Noble Messenger (S) that this man is an Allamah, that master questioned them concerning the meaning of Allamah in relation to the character and content of Epithets .ما the knowledge that they attributed to him. Hence, he put the question with the word

are at times made a means for questioning concerning essence, for instance, where the meaning of an attribute is known but not the person to whom the attribute relates. But if the مَــن العَلَّامَــةُ. and it becomes مَــنْ In that case, the question is nut by using the word person be known and the attribute be unknown, or when the purpose be only to know the and the question then relates to finding out the مـــا attribute, the question is put with the word attribute, not the person attributed with it, nor the attribute and the person attributed with it as well. In this noble tradition, since it was remarked that this man is an 'Allamah, the Prophet's purpose behind the question was to find out the meaning of the attribute that they ascribed to the man. Hence, he asked, 'What is an Allamah?' and not, 'Who is an 'Allamah?' or 'Why and for what reason is this man an 'Allamah?'

The explanation given above is clearer than what the authority (muhaqqiq) among the philosophers and the philosopher among the authorities, Sadr al-Muta'allihin (Q) says in his exposition of this noble tradition, which we shall refrain from citing due to fear of prolixity and for its being outside the scope of our discussion.

Section 1

We have mentioned earlier that man, to put it briefly, is confronted with three worlds, stations and phases of life: first, the world of the Hereafter, which is the hidden world ('alam al-ghayb) of spirituality and the intellect; second, the phase of Barzakh, which is the world of khayal lying between the other two worlds; third, the phase of this world, the domain of mulk (corporeality) and the world of appearance ('alam al-shahadat).

Each of these phases has its own special perfection and training and requires action appropriate to it. The prophets (A) have been encharged to instruct the people concerning those actions. Hence all beneficial sciences are divisible into these three 'ulum (sciences): the 'ilm (science) that relates to the excellences (kamalat) of the intellect and spiritual duties, the science that relates to the acts of the heart and its duties, and the science that relates to bodily acts and the duties of the self's outward life.

As to the sciences that play a strengthening and educative role in the sphere of the spirit and immaterial intellect, they consist of the knowledge of the sacred Essence of God and that of His attributes of Beauty and Majesty, as well as the knowledge of the immaterial hidden spheres, including the angels of all kinds, from those of the higher levels of the higher jabarut and higher malakut to the lower levels of the lower malakut and the earthly angels and the armies of God, Glorious and Exalted, in addition to the knowledge of the prophets and the awliya' and their stations and degrees, the knowledge of the revealed scriptures, the character

of the descent of revelation (wahy), angels and the Spirit, as well as the knowledge of the world of the Hereafter and the character of the Return of the creatures to the world of ghayb, the reality of the world of Barzakh and Resurrection with their details, and, in a word, the knowledge of the origin (mabda') of existence, its reality and degrees, with its expansion (bast) and contraction (qabd), and its manifestation (zuhur) and return (ruju'). The bearers of this knowledge, after the prophets and the awliya' (A) are the philosophers and the masters among the hukama', the 'urafa' and the mystics.

The sciences that deal with the discipline and education of the heart and its esoteric actions consist of the knowledge of moral dispositions that lead to salvation (munjiyat) or perdition (muhlikat). That is the knowledge of moral virtues, such as forbearance (sabr), gratefulness (shukr), shame (haya'), humility (tawadu'), resignation (rida), courage (shuja'ah), generosity (sakhawah), piety (wara') God-fearing (taqwa) and other moral excellences and the knowledge of the ways and means of acquiring them and their related causes and conditions, as well as the knowledge of moral vices, such as envy (hasad), pride (kibr), enmity (hiqd), deceptiveness (ghishsh), the love of position, the love of the world and the self, etc., and the knowledge of their causes and the ways of obtaining freedom from them. The bearers of this knowledge, too, after the prophets and their designated successors (awliya') (A) are the experts in the science of ethics and the learned in the spiritual disciplines and mystic teachings.

The science that deals with the education of the exoteric being and its disciplining consists of the science of fiqh, its preliminaries, and the science of etiquette (adab), social intercourse (mu'asharat), management of home (tadbir al-manzil), and politics or civic administration (siyasat al-mudun). The bearers of this knowledge are the learned in the exoteric (ulama' al-zahir,) the fuqaha' (legists) and the muhaddithun (traditionists), after the prophets and the awsiya' (A).

You should know that each of these threefold human spheres mentioned are interrelated in such a manner that the influence of each of them-whether it is positive or negative-percolates to the others. For instance, if one takes upon himself the performance of the duties of worship and exoteric rites as one should perform them in accordance with the prescriptions of the prophets that will produce effects in his spirit and his heart, improving his moral character and perfecting his beliefs and convictions.

Similarly, if one should engage in his moral improvement and the beautification of his inward being (batin), that will produce a positive effect in the other two spheres. 5o also the development of one's faith and the strengthening of beliefs is effective in the other two stations. This is on account of the very intimate connection between these different stations.

In fact (they are so closely related that) the word ‘connection’ also fails to express it fully.

Hence one must say that they are a single reality with (different) manifestations and aspects. Thus, development and perfection in each of the three stations is interlinked. Hence no one should imagine that he can acquire a perfect faith and a refined moral character without performing exoteric works and bodily worship, or that when his moral character (khulq) is defective and unrefined his conduct can be complete and whole and his faith perfect, or that without faith in his heart his exoteric acts can be complete and his moral excellences can be perfect.

When one’s bodily (exoteric) actions are defective and not in conformity with the prescriptions of the prophets, that gives rise to obfuscations within the heart and obscurities in the soul, which obstruct the light of faith and conviction. Similarly, if one has base moral dispositions in the heart, they obstruct the light of faith from entering it.

Hence, it is essential for the wayfarer of Hereafter and the straight path of humanity to pay an acute care and attention to each of these three aspects and to reform and exercise himself in their regard and not to neglect any of the theoretical and practical excellences. He should not imagine that sole refinement of moral character or sole strengthening of beliefs or sole conformity to the exoteric aspect is sufficient for him, as believed by some experts of each of these three disciplines.

For instance, the Shaykh al-Ishraq, at the beginning of his work Hikmat al-’ishraq, divides the perfect into these three categories: those who are perfect in knowledge and action, those who are perfect in action, and those who are perfect in knowledge. This suggests as if perfection of knowledge can coexist with inadequacy of action or vice versa. Moreover, he considers those who are perfect in knowledge to be the felicitous sincere linked with the world of ghayb and immateriality, treading the path of the highest heavens (‘Illiyyun) and associating with the archangels.

There are some scholars of morals and esoteric science who consider the attainment of moral moderation and the refinement of the heart and esoteric acts as the source of all excellences and attach no worth to intellectual truths and exoteric rules. On the contrary, they even consider them as thorns on the wayfarer’s path. There are some scholars of the esoteric aspect who consider the intellectual and the esoteric sciences and mystic teachings as perfidy and infidelity and are hostile to their scholars and students.

Each of these three groups, who hold these false beliefs, are withheld from each of the three spiritual stages and all the three spheres of genuine human existence. They have not rightly reflected concerning the sciences of the prophets and the awliya’ and hence there has always

been antagonism between them. Hence, each of them attacks the others considering them as pursuing falsehood, although it is incorrect to separate the stages. In a sense, each one of them is right in repudiating the others, not because their learning or action is wholly invalid, but because the limits set by them for the various human levels and their confining of human knowledge and excellences exclusively to their own discipline is contrary to fact.

The Noble Messenger (S) has in this noble tradition divided the sciences into these three parts, and there is no doubt that these threefold sciences pertain to these threefold planes. This claim is testified to by the divine scriptures, the traditions of the prophets and the Infallible Imams (A) for their teachings are classifiable into these three classes. One of them consists of the knowledge of God, angels, scriptures, the Messengers and the Last Day, and the heavenly scriptures-especially the all-inclusive divine scripture, the Lord's Holy Qur'an-are all full of it. Rather, it may be said that that which the Book of God teaches more than anything else is this class of knowledge. It consists of the call to God as the origin and end (mabda' wa ma'ad) of all creation through valid rational arguments and with perfect clarification, as pointed out by the authorities. In fact the other two aspects occupy a somewhat lesser position in the Book of God in comparison to this aspect, and the ahadith of the Imams (A), too, are full of it and beyond enumeration, as will become clear by a reference to reliable books which are accepted by all the Imams (R) such as the noble al-Kafi and al-Saduq's Kitab al-Tawhid.

Similarly, the attention given to spiritual refinement and moral reform and moderation in the Book of God and the traditions narrated from the Ahl al-Bayt (A) is beyond what one would expect. However, these books and these chapters have remained in oblivion, without receiving the due attention and credence by us, unfortunate ones in the bondage of futile hopes and expectations! The day will come when God Almighty will question us and establish His accusation against us on the basis of their evidence and the Immaculate Imams (A) -may God be our refuge- will dissociate themselves from us due to our abandoning their traditions and sciences. I seek refuge in God, the Exalted, from wretchedness of the ultimate outcome and an evil end.

As to the traditions relating to fiqh and exoteric rites, it need not be said that all our books are full of them. Thus, we come to know that the sciences of the Shari'ah are confined to these three kinds in accordance with the needs of man and the threefold human aspects. None of the scholars of any one of these sciences has a right to find fault with the others. It is not right to repudiate a science if one is ignorant of one of these sciences and to be irreverent towards one who is learned in it. In the same way as a sound intellect considers the affirmation of something that one does not know as an ethical vice, so also is the denial of something one

has no conception of; rather the latter attitude is worse and more vicious. If God, Blessed and Exalted, should ask, for instance, “You did not know the meaning of the unity of being (wahdat al-wujud) in accordance with the doctrine of the hukama’ and neither did you receive instruction concerning it from those adept in it, nor did you study that science and its preliminaries. Then why did you blindly accuse them of unbelief and insult them?” What answer shall one have to give in God’s sacred presence except bending down one’s head in shame? Of course, a pretext such as “I thought it to be so” will not be acceptable. Every discipline has certain essentials and preliminaries, without whose knowledge it is not possible to understand its conclusions. This is especially true of such a subtle issue as this whose actual reality and meaning is not well understood even after a lifetime of effort, and here you are who want to apprehend with your inadequate intellect after reading, for instance, a book or two or some verses out of al-Rumi’s Mathnawi something the philosophers and the hukama’ have been discussing for several thousand years and dissecting its issues. Obviously, you will not make anything out of it:

رَحِمَ اللّٰهُ امْرَءاً عَرَفَ قَدْرَهُ وَلَمْ يَتَعَدَّ طَوْرَهُ.

May God have mercy upon the man who knows his own worth and does not transgress his limits.[2]

Similarly, if a pseudo-philosopher or mystic were to be asked, ‘On what religious basis did you call the fuqaha’ superficial and extroversive, finding fault with them or, rather, with a branch of religious sciences brought by the prophets (A) from the Lord of all lords for the perfection of human souls, denying its worth and insulting them? On what rational and shar’i grounds did you consider affront towards a group of scholars and legists as permissible?” What answer will he offer in the presence of God, Blessed and Exalted, except bowing his head in shame and discredit? In any case let us leave this irksome part to pass on to the rest of the discourse.

Section 2

Having known that the threefold sciences referred to by the Noble Messenger (S) are the same as the three mentioned above, the question remains as to how each of these expressions corresponds with each of these sciences. Although this matter is not of much importance -for that which is important in this regard is the understanding of the principles of these sciences themselves and the effort to learn them but it is essential for the exposition of the noble

tradition.

The eminent ulama (R) who have undertaken the exposition of this noble tradition have differed among themselves, and to preoccupy ourselves with the differences of their opinions and their examination will needlessly prolong our discussion. Hence, I will confine myself in this regard to what appears to me, with all my inadequacy, to be correct, citing such supporting evidence as has not been mentioned (by anyone). Thereafter I will mention an important point mentioned by our revered shaykh, the perfect ‘arif, Shahabadi, may his shadow over our heads endure forever.

You should know that the expression ‘firm sign’ (ayatun muhkamah) implies the rational sciences and the true doctrines and divine teachings. ‘Just duty’ (faridatun ‘adilah) implies the science of ethics and self-purification. ‘Established sunnah’ (sunnatun qa’imah) refers to the science of the exoteric aspect and the bodily conduct (i.e. involving some kind of physical activity). The reason for this correlation is that the word ‘ayah’ means ‘sign’ and is appropriate for the rational and doctrinal sciences, for they deal with the signs of the Divine Essence, Names, Attributes and other matters, and there is no precedent of the use of the word ayah for other sciences.

For example, in the Book of God, in many cases, after offering proofs for the sacred existence of the Creator or the Names and Attributes of His sacred Essence, or for the existence of Resurrection and its characteristics, or the world of Ghayb and Barzakh, such a statement as this follows as a reminder: “This is a sign” or “These are signs for those who think” or “These are signs for those who have intellects”. Ayah is a word whose use in relation to these sciences and teachings is quite common. But should the sentence “This is a sign” be mentioned following the mention of a legal or ritual issue or after an ethical principle, that would obviously not be devoid of impropriety.

Hence, we learn that ayah, sign and mark is something that is appropriate for and special to the (intellectual and spiritual) sciences related to doctrine (‘ulum al-ma’arif). Similarly, the characterization of ayah as muhkam (firm, unambiguous, precise) is also in conformity with these sciences, for these sciences are subject to intellectual criteria and based on firm rational proofs (burhan al-muhkam). However, the other sciences, in accordance with their character, do not possess firm and steady rational proofs.

The reason for considering the expression faridatun ‘adilah (just duty) as referring to the science of ethics is the characterization of duty as ‘adilah (lit. just, moderate, balanced). That is because virtue (khulq al-hasan), as established in that science, consists of keeping distance from either of the two extremes of excess and neglect (ifrat and tafrit) and each of the two

extremes of excess and neglect is blameworthy, and justice (‘adalah), which signifies the golden mean and the point of moderation between them, is praiseworthy.

For example, courage (shuja’ah), which is one of the principal virtues and a moral excellence, is represented by the middle point and moderate position between the extremes of rashness (tahawwur, which is absence of fear in situations where fear is proper) and timidity (jubn), which amounts to being afraid in situations where fear is improper.

So, also, wisdom (hikmah), which is also a principal moral virtue, consists of the middle point between the vice of cunning (jurbuzah), which is the use of the thinking faculty in matters it is improper to use it, and the vice of stupidity, which is suspension of the thinking faculty in matters where it should be used. Similarly, continence (‘iffah) and generosity (sakhawah) are virtues represented by the middle position between the vices of covetousness (sharah) and apathy (khumud) and between prodigality (israf) and stinginess (bukhl) respectively.

Thus the attachment of the adjective ‘adilah to faridah indicates that the expression faridatun ‘adilah corresponds to the science of ethics (akhlaq). Moreover, the term faridah by itself affirms such a connotation, for since faridah here-which has been put here in opposition to sunnah, signifying the third part of knowledge-is something which can be known by the means of the intellect, as is the actual case in the science of ethics (‘ilm al-’akhlaq), contrary to sunnah which refers to matters where the criterion is pure obedience (ta’abbud) and which the intellect is incapable of apprehending. And that is why we have said that the expression sunnatun qa’imah refers to the science, which deals with the acts of obedience and the rites of the Shari’ah, which have been called ‘sunnah’ here.

Their general nature is such that the intellect is incapable of apprehending their rationale and the Sunnah is the only means of proving and apprehending them. So, also, the use of the adjective qa’imah in characterizing sunnah here is also congenial to the obligations (wajibat) of the Shari’ah, for it is common, as well as correct, to speak of the iqamah (establishment) of wajibat and the iqamah of salat, zakat and so on. This word (i.e. iqamah) is not used in the other two sciences and its usage therein would be incorrect. This is all that can be said in regard to correlation on the basis of congenialities.

وَالعِلْمُ عِنْدَ اللهِ.

And all knowledge is with God.

Section 3

Now we shall mention the point that we promised to discuss. It is this that in the noble tradition the science of doctrines and ma'arif has been referred to as ayah and ayah means sign, symbol, and mark. The point that relates to this term is that if the doctrinal sciences and doctrinal truths are studied for their own sake and if all the related concepts, terms, high-sounding expressions, and embellished juxtapositions of terms be learned for the sake of showing off to feeble minds and for the sake of obtaining worldly status, then they cannot be called ayat muhkamat; rather they must be named obscuring veils and hollow fantasies. That is because if one's purpose in learning the sciences should not be to reach God, the Exalted, and to realize the Names and Attributes and to mould one's self in accordance with the Divine character (takhalluq bi akhlaq Allah), each of such acquisitions of his is a dungeon of hell and a black veil that darkens his heart and blinds his insight, making him one of those to whom this noble verse applies:

﴿وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْ ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَى.﴾

But whosoever turns away from My remembrance, his shall be a life of narrowness, and on the Resurrection Day We shall raise him blind. (20:124)

Then he will find himself blind in that world and will complain to God saying, "O my Lord, why hast thou raised me blind, while I was blessed with sight in that world?" The answer will come: "You were blind in that world too, for you did not see Our signs and you neglected them." The criterion for sight in the world of the Hereafter is the vision and insight of the heart; the body as well as its faculties there are totally subject to the heart and the intellect (lubb). (The body being an image of the soul in that world), the conformity of an image to its object shall be complete and the image of something deaf, blind and dumb is such.

Hence, one should not imagine that those who are well-versed in concepts, terms and expressions and have books and writings by heart are those who have the knowledge of God, the angels and the Last Day! If their learning is a sign and mark, why has it not produced its luminous effect in their own hearts? Why has it even increased the darkness of their heart and the corruption of their morals and conduct? The Noble Qur'an has mentioned the criterion for identifying the genuine Mama' when it says:

﴿إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ.﴾

Even so only those of His servants fear God who have knowledge. (35:28)

The fear of God is the specific characteristic of the ulama (the learned) and every one who does not possess the fear of God, the Exalted, is outside the ranks of the ulama. Now let us consider ourselves. Is there any trace of that fear in us? If there is, why does it not show any effect in our outward personality?

In the noble al-Kafı, al-Kulayni reports with his isnad the following tradition on the authority of Abu Basir:

قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ (أَوْ أَبَا جَعْفَرٍ) يَقُولُ: كَانَ أَمِيرُ المُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولُ: يَا طَالِبَ العِلْمِ، إنَّ العِلْمَ ذُو فَضَائِلَ كَثِيرَةٍ: فَرَأْسُهُ التَّوَاضُعُ، وَعَيْنُهُ البَرَاءَةُ مِنَ الحَسَدِ، وَأُذُنُهُ الفَهْمُ، وَلِسَانُهُ الصِّدْقُ، وَحِفْظُهُ الفَحْصُ، وَقَلْبُهُ حُسْنُ النِّيَّةِ، وَعَقْلُهُ مَعْرِفَةُ الأَشْيَاءِ وَالأُمُورِ، وَيَدُهُ الرَّحْمَةُ، وَرِجْلُهُ زِيَارَةُ العُلَمَاءِ، وَهِمَّتُهُ السَّلامَةُ، وَحِكْمَتُهُ الوَرَعُ، وَمُسْتَقَرُّهُ النَّجَاةُ، وَقَائِدُهُ العَافِيَةُ، وَمَرْكَبُهُ الوَفَاءُ، وَسِلاحُهُ لِينُ الكَلِمَةِ، وَسَيْفُهُ الرِّضَا، وَقَوْسُهُ المُدَارَاةُ، وَجَيْشُهُ مُحَاوَرَةُ العُلَمَاءِ، وَمَالُهُ الأَدَبُ، وَذَخِيرَتُهُ اجْتِنَابُ الذُّنُوبِ، وَزَادُهُ المَعْرُوفُ، وَمَاؤُهُ المُوَادَعَةُ، وَدَلِيلُهُ الهُدَى، وَرَفِيقُهُ مَحَبَّةُ الأَخْيَارِ.

*Abu Basir) says: I heard Abu ‘Abd Allah (A) —Abu Ja’far, according to another manuscript—) say: Amir al-Mu’minin (A) used to say: “O seeker of knowledge, knowledge has many merits. (If you imagine it to be a human being then) its head is humility, its eye is freedom from envy, its ear is understanding, its tongue is truthfulness, its memory is research, its heart is good intention, its intellect is the knowledge (ma’rifah) of things and matters, its hand is compassion, its foot is visiting the learned, its resolution is integrity, its wisdom is piety, its abode is salvation, its helmsman is well-being, its mount is faithfulness, its weapon is softness of speech, its sword is satisfaction (rida), its bow is tolerance, its army is discussion with the learned, its wealth are refined manners, its stock is abstinence from sins, its provision for journey is virtue, its drinking water is gentleness, its guide is Divine guidance, and its companion is the love of the elect.”*3

These are the signs of the ulama and the effects of ‘ilm mentioned by Amir al-Mu’minin (A). Hence, if one is learned in the traditional sciences but is devoid of these things, he must know that he has not partaken of knowledge. Rather he is one of the ignorant and lost ones and in the other world his concepts and his wares of learning, each of which embodies compound ignorance, will become darkening blinders for him and his regret on the Day of Resurrection shall be the greatest of regrets.

Hence the criterion in knowledge is that it should be sign, symbol and mark (of the Divine), and there should be no ego or egoism in it. Egoism gets dissolved and obliterated in knowledge,

instead of it itself becoming a cause for vanity, narcissism, ostentation and arrogance. The noble tradition further characterizes the ayah as muhkamah, because true knowledge with its light and luminosity creates conviction in the heart and wipes away doubt and uncertainty. It may happen that a man spends all his life in the study of the preliminaries and proofs and commits to mind several proofs and numerous arguments in support of each of the divine doctrines and overwhelms his associates in debates and controversies, without that knowledge producing any effect in his heart. Such a man not only does not achieve conviction, even his learning multiplies his doubts, uncertainties, and ambiguities. Hence, the mere collection of concepts and abundance of terms has no benefit. Rather it makes the heart preoccupied with non-God and the learned man forgetful and negligent of God's Sacred Being.

My dear, the remedy-or rather the complete remedy-is that if one wants his learning to be divine he should purify his intention and purpose with all the seriousness and effort that he can muster while entering upon the study of any branch of knowledge. The capital of salvation and the fountainhead of all grace lies in the purification of intent and the sincerity of purpose:

مَنْ أَخْلَصَ للهِ أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحاً جَرَتْ يَنَابِيعُ الحِكْمَةِ مِنْ قَلْبِهِ عَلَى لِسَانِهِ.

*Whoever devotes himself in sincerity to God for forty days, the springs of wisdom flow out from his heart to his tongue.*4

Such are the effects and benefits of forty day's sincerity (ikhlas)! But here we are with forty years or more spent in the effort at collecting terms and concepts related to every discipline. You consider yourself to be an Allamah in the sciences and count yourself among the army of God, yet you do not find any trace of wisdom in your own heart nor a drop of it on your tongue.

You should know that your learning and labor have not been with a sincerity of intention. Rather, you have labored for the sake of Satan and selfish desire. Now that you see that these sciences have not produced any spiritual quality or state in you, make an effort to cultivate sincerity of intention and purify your heart from obscurities and vices. If you see any result, go on. And even though the mere motive of experimenting is inimical to sincerity, it is possible that the effort may open a window and the incoming light may guide you.

In any case, my dear, you stand in need of the true divine doctrines and the veritable sciences as well as good morals and righteous works. At whatever level you may stand, endeavor to increase your sincerity and purge the egoistic fancies and satanic insinuations from the heart. Of course, that will produce results for you and you will find the way to the reality, and the path of guidance will open for you. May God, Blessed and Exalted, succor you. ('rod knows, if we

should depart from this world with this false and futile learning, these degenerate fancies and depraved morals of ours to the next world, what tribulations and calamities will await us and what narrow passages and what dungeons of hell we shall have to encounter and what darkness, what terrors and flames this learning and morals of ours shall prepare for us!

Section 4

The authority amongst philosopher, Sadr al-Hukama' al-Muta'allihin (Head of the philosophers and theosophists, viz. Mullah Sadra) —may God sanctify his soul and reward him abundantly— in Sharh Usul al-Kafi gives a long quotation from Shaykh Ghastly in which the latter has classified the sciences into 'worldly' and 'Hereafterly' ones, putting the science of fiqh amongst the 'worldly' sciences and dividing the sciences of Hereafter into the sciences of mukashafah (mystic intuition and apprehension) and mu'amalah (social intercourse, conduct, transactions; in Ghastly, the science of moral purification and spiritual cultivation).

He considers the science of mu'amalah as the knowledge of the states of the heart and the science of mukashafah as a light that is attained in the heart after it is purified from blameworthy characteristics. Through that light realities are discovered, to the extent that true knowledge of the Divine Being, Names and Attributes as well as Acts and the wisdom underlying them is acquired and other truths are known.

Now since this authority (i.e. Mullah Sadra) accepted this classification, he says in the exegesis of the hadith under exposition that, "Apparently this classification and limitation made by the Noble Messenger (S) pertains to the sciences of mu'amalat. For it is these sciences that most of the people derive benefit from. But the sciences of mukashafah are attained by a small number of people and they are rarer than the philosopher's stone (kibrit al-ahmar), as is also indicated by the ahadith of "Kitab al-'iman wa al-ku'fr that will come hereafter." This was a condensed translation of his statements.

This writer says: There is an ambiguity in Shaykh Ghazali's statements, and if they be presumed to be admissible then there remains another thing objectionable in the statements of the Akhund, i.e. Mullah Sadra, (M). As to the objection pertaining to his statement-on the basis of assumption of validity of Ghazali's statements-it lies in this that Ghastly has considered the science of mu'amalat as pertaining to the states of the heart; that is, those qualities which result in redemption, such as patience, gratitude, fear, hope and so on, as well as those which lead to perdition, such as malice, envy, deceptiveness, imposture and so on.

Accordingly, the threefold sciences mentioned by the Messenger of God (S) cannot all pertain to the sciences of mu'amalat; rather only one of them, i.e. faridatun 'adilah, as explained in

detail earlier, corresponds to them. However, there are two objectionable things in Shaykh Ghazali's statements.

Firstly, he has considered 'ilm al-fiqh as belonging to worldly sciences and the fuqaha' as worldly scholars, whereas it is one of the most valuable sciences of the Hereafter. And this ambiguity arises from self-love and the love of the discipline one of whose experts he imagines himself to be, i.e. the science of ethics, in the commonly used sense.

Accordingly, he has repudiated the other disciplines, including the rational sciences (such as philosophy). Secondly, he conceives mukashafat as forming a part of the 'ulum and includes them in his classification of them. This is contrary to fact, for that which is right is to consider as 'ilm that which is subject to inquiry, thought and proof and wherein ratiocination has a role.

The mukashafat and mushahadat are at times the result of the study of the sciences of doctrines ('ulum al-haqiqiyyah) and at times the consequence of spiritual acts (a'mal al-qalbiyyah). To be brief, mushahadat, mukashafat and realization of the realities of the Names and the Attributes should not be included in the classification of science. These and the 'ulum are separate things, and this is quite plain.

Section 5

You should know that many of the sciences, from a certain aspect, fall under one of the categories mentioned by the Noble Messenger (S). For instance, the sciences of medicine, anatomy, astronomy, astrology and the like, when looked upon as Divine signs and symbols, and the science of history and the like, when looked upon as a means for drawing lesson, are included in ayatun mukhamah, for by their means the knowledge of God or the knowledge of Resurrection is attained or confirmed. At times, the learning of the sciences falls under faridatun 'adilah and at times under sunnatun qa'imah. But if their pursuit should be for their own sake or for other purposes and if they should lead us to neglect the 'ulum of the Hereafter, they become blame worthy by accident (madhmum bi al-'arad) on account of this neglect. Otherwise, (in themselves) they are neither beneficial nor harmful, as pointed out by the Noble Messenger (S). Thus, all the sciences are divisible into three kinds: first, those sciences, which are beneficial to man in view of the other stages of existence, success wherein is the ultimate purpose of creation. This is the category, which the ultimate Prophet has considered as 'ilm, dividing it into three parts. The second kind consists of those which are harmful for man and lead him to neglect his essential duties. This kind consists of the blameworthy sciences-such as magic, jugglery, alchemy and the like- and one must refrain from their pursuit.

Thirdly, there are those which are neither harmful nor beneficial, like those which one pursues

in his hours of leisure for amusement's sake, such as mathematics, geometry, astronomy and the like. It would be much better if one could relate the pursuit of these sciences to the threefold 'ulum (mentioned by the Prophet), otherwise it is better to refrain from, them as far as is possible.

That is because when a sensible person knows that he cannot acquire all the sciences and achieve all the excellences due to shortness of life, scarcity of time and abundance of obstacles and accidents, he would reflect about the sciences and devote himself to the acquisition of. those which are more beneficial for him. Of course, amongst the sciences that which is better than all the rest is that which is beneficial for man's eternal and everlasting life and that is the science which the prophets (A) have commanded and encouraged man to seek. That science consists of the threefold 'ulum, as mentioned. And all praise belongs to Allah, the Exalted.

Notes

1. Al-Kulayni, al-Kafı, i, "kitab fadl al-'ilm", "bab sifat al-'ilm wa fadluh", hadith no. 1.
2. Al-'Amili, Ghurar al-hikam, "bab al-ra'."
3. Al-Kulayni, op. cit., "bab al-nawadir", hadith no. 3.
4. See 'Allamah Bahr al-'ulum's Risalah f'i al-sayr wa al-suluk, 22-23, footnote.