Slaying the ego: moral education of the Self in Sufism and its relations to virtue ethics

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Slaying The Ego | Moral Education of The Self in Sufism and its Relations to Virtue Ethics

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Acknowledgments

To my father who has inspired me to love everything that I now love, and do every-thing that I now do. May we stay united till we meet again.
Introduction

There are a variety of conceptual frameworks in moral philosophy for approaching concrete ethical issues. This includes theories of value, normative theories, and meta-ethical theories. Concerning normative moral theories, a major ethical tradition is virtue ethics—the view that character and behavioral dispositions are of primary normative significance in ethical deliberation, and not particular actions. Typically, philosophers within this tradition have emphasized the necessity of moral education and character cultivation. Nevertheless, there are a variety of distinct positions under the umbrella of ‘virtue ethics’ that have manifested in cultures that have not necessarily engaged with each other. Nonetheless, such cultures have in common various foundational approaches to moral virtue. To take but one example: the notable emphasis on the role of moral exemplars as reliable epistemic guides to ethical behavior.

One of these traditions is the Sufi tradition in Islamic thought. Sufism has often been interpreted as having an ethical dimension very close to a form of virtue ethics (e.g. Sherif, 1975; Bucar, 2014, 2018; Attaran, 2015). According to this interpretation, moral perfection is attainable only after battling with and overcoming the ego [Nafs]. This view holds that all vice is rooted in the ego, thus the Sufi tradition offers a unified and hierarchal account of the nature of vice; one that is distinctive in its critical attention to the nature and influence of the ego.
The aim of this thesis is to attempt an exegetical work within the Sufi tradition about the ego, expose and critically examine such Sufi principals and teachings in this ethical tradition with a special focus on the ego, and to draw resemblances between Sufism and virtue ethics. The main objective of the thesis is to reveal the richness of the Sufi tradition that holds exceptional accounts on morality and egoism.

The thesis contains three main chapters. The first chapter is on Virtue Ethics, where significant conceptual distinctions are presented concerning the ethical framework. As for the second chapter, it is dedicated to explore the world of Sufism and closely examine the ego using Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī’s (d. 505/1111) magnum opus Iḥyā’ ʿUlūm al-Dīn (The Revival of Religious Sciences) as the primary reference for this work. Before the summarizing conclusion of the thesis, the third chapter navigates first from the exhaustive focus on the ego towards exploring key views of morality in Sufism, ending the chapter with identifying the common links between Sufism and virtue ethics.

There are critical findings that gradually unfold throughout the thesis and are tightly tied to previous understandings of addressed notions, hence I encourage the reader not to advance with the sections unless the reader is sure that the principle introduced is well comprehended.

Finally, it is worthy to mention that this work intends to revive the primacy of moral philosophy and proposes key routes that could lead humanity back to its goodness.
Chapter 1: What is Virtue Ethics?

In this chapter I aim to identify the essential features of Virtue Ethics so as to understand how it is to be distinguished from other moral theories, Moreover, I aim to explore areas of tension with other moral theories.

Virtue Ethics (VE) is often considered to be a fundamental theory in normative ethics that is traced back to Plato and Aristotle in the western context (Hursthouse and Pettigrove, 2018). In VE, moral actions are not based on duty or obligations to do a certain deed, nor does the agent engage in moral actions out of consideration of their consequences, aiming to maximize well-being. Instead, a moral action in VE is one that is grounded in right motivation, intention and character: right actions flow from good, stable dispositions (i.e. virtues) that the agent was successful in cultivating within their character. A broad definition for VE is to look at it as a coherent account of virtues that are desirable and attempt to classify such traits and highlight their moral worth. As for moral education, it would be the matter of development of such traits based on the virtue ethical theoretical framework (Carr and Steutel, 1999, p. 5).

One thing that differentiates VE from deontology, aretaic from deontic, is the predicate used to express a moral judgment. Aretaic judgments would include the concepts good, bad, courageous, unkind, hostile, etc. while deontic judgments involve concepts limited to right, obligatory, wrong, forbidden, which reflects the nature of the parameters of each moral position. The ultimate goal of human life on an
Aristotelian version of VE is *eudaimonia*; flourishing, which could be attained by the attainment of moral virtue (Han, 2015). This is one of the unique notions of VE, which differs to deontology or consequentialism in that they are only concerned with presenting a framework that identifies moral good *actions* from others. Aristotle, however, attempted to not only bring a worked out moral framework but rather present it as an answer to man’s existence and purpose where man could bring harmony and meaning to his life by pursuing morality and the attainment of virtue. It is worthwhile to note that Aristotle’s version of happiness is one that is not individualistic but rather *communal*; meaning that *eudaimonia* is not reached in solitude but rather the perfect good is in part constituted by relations to one’s family, friends, and fellow citizens as man is a social being (Aristotle, 1999, Book 1, VII 1097b, 10). The virtuous agent isn’t just concerned to reaching their own version of happiness; instead the virtuous agent recognizes that *eudaimonia* is the whole goal of the community. A virtuous agent is one that can and will promote goodness and happiness to the whole community.

Aristotle’s emphasis on the integral role that communal involvement plays in attainment of virtue and eudaimonia cannot be neglected. This aspect of VE is particularly appealing in contrast to competing moral theories to it as it appeals to two types of people (1) those who are in pursuit of holistic and existential truths, and how they link that with morality since VE offers a solution for leading a *purposeful and meaningful* life that is in pursuit of attaining virtue (2) those who are not just rationally driven but also care for their emotional wellness and are in pursuit of living a *happy* life that is in accordance with morality.
It is also worthwhile to note that the move from hedonistic to eudaimonistic accounts of wellbeing is being considered in modern psychology, in an attempt to reach more valuable happiness and abandon pleasure based notions presented by positive psychology (Han, 2015, p. 445). According to Han, it was realized that the hedonistic model positive psychologists use doesn’t provide the person with long-term satisfaction and fulfillment, hence the raise of interest in exploring the flourishing-based moral philosophy brought by Aristotle that could potentially bring more answers on wellness. This suggests that, with the increasing interest of the use of the eudaimonistic approach as mentioned by Han, it could be noted that VE provides more than just a moral theory but also sort of a guide to leading a prosperous life and achieving psychological wellbeing.

An important understanding of virtue is that it is a state or disposition (Greek: Hexis), and not a sort of mindless habit (Copp and Annas, 2006). The distinction between habit and virtue is that a habit on its own has absolutely no active understanding of the reasons for the action, and hence has no moral worth. In contrast, virtue requires an involvement of the agent’s practical reasoning, as it will shortly be clarified in the section explaining practical wisdom.\(^1\)

A virtue is also defined as a character trait that is desirable and worth having, the trait could be considered worthy of having due its moral worth presented in the ethical tradition. This excludes skills that are not traits of the character yet are desirable—e.g. charm, wit, mathematical acumen, etc. that is because these skills have no

\(^1\) For Aristotle this is a “hexis meta logou”, that is a "habit with reason."
moral worth but are rather instrumental—and vices that are not worth having yet are traits of the character—e.g. cowardice, stinginess, etc. (Car, 1999, p. 4).

Although Aristotle is considered a paradigmatic proponent of virtue ethics (VE), it is important to note that VE is a moral theory that is independent from one particular philosopher, just as deontology is not exclusive to Kant; instead Aristotelian and Kantian contributions or views belong to their respective moral theories rather than define them (Swanton, 2015, p. 20).

*Prohairesis*, which might translate as will or intention, is the peculiar mark of the virtuous agent (Chamberlain, 1984, pp. 147-157). Aristotle divided the soul into two parts; rational and irrational (where emotions and desires lie). The agent who has a weak will—those suffering from *Akraasia*—is someone who is considered to be acting contrary to his *prohairesis*; as *prohairesis* is understood to come from the rational part.

“Not only does the irrational soul need the help of the rational soul, but in turn, as the irrational soul becomes more disciplined, it enables the other side to arrive at a more correct account of the mean.” (Chamberlain, 1984, p. 147)

This theme in the above quote is common with the Sufi paradigm and is considered to be a primary role in understanding and dealing with the ego, as it will later on be demonstrated. Arthur Schopenhauer also identified the limitations of defining
an action’s moral worth; since an egoistic motive could be the source of a seemingly good action and it is never possible to view anything except the agent’s empirical deed (Hassan, 2019, p. 14).

Non-Eudaemonistic versions of VE have been identified in the work of Hume (Slote, 2001); Nietzsche (Swanton, 2015); Schopenhauer (Hassan, 2019); and Confucius (Yu, 2007). While these traditions differ, I consider VE a ‘family resemblance’ theory comprised of the following four typical key features that I would like to identify for the purpose of this thesis; (1) Practical wisdom (2) Moral exemplarism (3) Moral education and habituation (4) No struggle for virtuous actions.

Practical Wisdom

Practical wisdom, phronesis, is what allows the virtuous agent to make unerring moral judgments and emotional responses. Frans Svensson, a contemporary virtue ethicist, writes of phronesis in that:

“It provides its possessor with the ability to see things as they really are and to appreciate the salient features determining what would constitute the appropriate thing to do or feel in particular situations” (Svensson, 2010, p. 256)

To have practical wisdom for Aristotle is for the agent to have the ability to recognize opportunities in order to achieve higher ends or value goals. Aristotle believes that one cannot be morally virtuous without having practical wisdom, and at the same time one cannot have practical wisdom without becoming morally virtu-
Hence, Aristotle emphasizes the unity of having practical wisdom and becoming morally virtuous (Aristotle, 1999, Book VI).

**Moral Exemplars**

The moral exemplar plays an important role in VE as it is concerned with the attainment of virtues of the character; hence the learning primarily comes through encountering and learning from, and attempting to emulate moral exemplars whom were able to embody such virtues and reach practical wisdom. Moral exemplars act like living books for students of morality to read, observe, discover, and learn from. As the guiding reference for a deontologist could be the text that holds the law and breaks down its analyses, a virtue ethicist would have the moral exemplar as their reference that holds and embodies the virtues that are sought.

A study published by Anne Colby and William Damon in 1992 under the name of *Some Do Care*, aimed to investigate deeply the lives and work of 23 moral exemplars who were nominated by a mix of ethicists, moral philosophers, theologians, and social scientists (Moshman, 1995). The study showed that each of them showed a long-term commitment and disposition to act upon moral principles. One of the most profound conclusions from that study was that even though these moral exemplars were acting consistently with their moral beliefs, yet they denied that these actions were courageous or self-sacrificing. The authors theoretical interpretation of this is that is not because they reached some sort of an advanced stage of moral development, but because it is a matter of moral identity since these exemplars see themselves in moral terms; meaning they see these values as essential to who they
are and what they need to do. It is also suggested in this study that exemplars show great empathy towards others as well as they tend to be more affectionate than strict, hinting that virtuous agents can demonstrate more levels of compassion and emotional dealings than other moral figures (Han, 2015, p. 449).

In some traditions, the moral exemplars have active roles in educating their students to reach moral excellence through engaging them in personalized activities that will help them attain certain virtues. Moral exemplars are not the only means towards attaining virtue, but they are primary, which means that their role in moral education is primary yet it is not impossible to learn about virtue without them. One initial objection to exemplarism may be that it is rare or even impossible to find this agent or exemplar that was able to attain virtue, which might make us assume that it is inadequate to consider moral exemplars as primary sources of moral education as mentioned. This makes us briefly recognize the opinions regarding the unity of virtue to demonstrate how the role of the exemplar could always be consistent and primary in attaining virtue. The unity of virtue could be read in two different ways:

(a) All virtues are one, the agent is only virtuous when he is in mastery of all virtues, or;

(b) The view that it is possible for the agent to possess certain virtuous traits, even if they couldn't master all virtues, and still be considered virtuous in respect to the attained ones.
In both cases it wouldn’t affect the primary role the moral exemplar plays for the following reasons. Firstly, if we agree on the latter view, then it is possible to learn from the ‘imperfect exemplar’ only specific and separate virtues, like courage, patience, etc. Secondly, if we agree on the first view, then it is still possible to even perceive a fictional exemplar (if none could be found in reality) that has perfected all virtues, and anticipate through thought experiments this character’s reactions and dealings.

**Moral Education**

This leads to demonstrating the next point concerning moral education and habituation, which plays an important theme in this thesis: VE typically emphasizes that virtues can be taught and developed, especially through habituation (Aristotle, 1999, Book II). In the hope of acquiring a virtue, the agent could repeat certain actions that will lead them to cultivate the virtue itself. As the modern phrase has it: “fake it till you make it”.

**No Struggle**

This leads to the forth point where the agent reaches the juncture of having no internal struggles when encountering situations that require moral judgments and actions. Virtue demands the agent not to have an internal opposition while doing the right thing for the right reason (Carr and Steutel, 1999). An agent experiencing signs of internal conflict would not be considered to be genuinely virtuous, even if the moral action produced was aligned with the agent’s motivation. This should not be a
problem for VE, unlike Kantian moral philosophy that emphasizes that the highest moral actions are the ones that go against the desires in pursuit of doing the right thing, since the case in VE is that highest moral actions flow naturally from the character. If the agent is virtuous then he desires the right thing and he knows how to reach the right thing. While if the agent exhibits non-virtuous temptations or desires even if he did not act upon them, they would be signs for the agent’s incompletion of virtue attainment. Such critical details and accounts of the character and morality are unique features of VE and Sufism, which not only suggest their great harmony but also show how these traditions distinctively bring their moral framework in ways that are not found in other moral theories.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that some ethicists in the contemporary secondary literature have questioned the uniqueness of VE as a normative theory. There are two camps that give different verdicts regarding whether to consider VE a third moral framework, distinct from consequentialism on the one hand, and deontology on the other, as for example, G.E.M. Anscombe and Jason Kawall argue for the distinctiveness of VE. On the other hand ethicists like Martha Nussbaum, believe that it is just another form of expressing consequentialism or deontology. But Anscombe, famously for defending and reviving VE in the mid-twentieth century, not only refused to accept that VE is a way to express deontology, she further argued that it was not possible to make sense of deontology as a moral framework independent of its relation to a divine command theory, i.e. without believing in God, highlighting that duty and obligation are residuals of Christian thought (Anscombe, 1958, p. 4). Kawall criticizes a deontological argument that defines a virtue as a mere disposi-
tion to perform one’s duty, and described this as “reductive deontologism” (Kawall, 2009, p 4). He offers an example of the actions of someone who is in love who will have actions flowing from this emotional state. It wouldn’t be sensible to describe this person as having a disposition to perform certain actions or follow specific set of rules. This analogy gives us a better way to understand how VE could be easily interpreted and captures the hidden essence of this character centered theme, where the agent is acting out of his state and virtue of love not in a systematic or linear fashion but rather using a dynamic and improvised approach. Similarly, an agent who possesses a virtue of honesty will genuinely respond and react out of this virtue with no required high level of moral reasoning. The agent will still be rationally conscious in performing such moral action, since practical wisdom is an essential component of a virtuous action, nor will the agent be experiencing inner struggle when put in such situation.

Kawall also argued that there are some actions for which people possess various virtues that do not require complex reasoning. For example, watching a puppy being tortured will be seen as wrong immediately, and that is due to our possession of basic compassion and justice.

Moving to the other camp, Nussbaum denies that Kant’s moral philosophy could be understood as just being obsessed with duty and neglecting character formation and training of passions, and that he offers detailed analyses of some virtues and vices (Nussbaum, 1999, p. 165). Nussabaum lists three main claims that are promoted by the defenders of VE, which are:
“A. Moral philosophy should be concerned with the agent, as well as with choice and action.

B. Moral philosophy should therefore concern itself with motive and intention, emotion and desire: in general, with the character of the inner moral life, and with settled patterns of motive, emotion, and reasoning that lead us to call someone a person of a certain sort (courageous, generous, moderate, just, etc.).

C. Moral philosophy should focus not only on isolated acts of choice, but also, and more importantly, on the whole course of the agent’s moral life, its patterns of commitment, conduct, and also passion.”

Nussabaum’s point is that Kant and mainstream Utilitarian thinkers would agree with all three points, suggesting that there is no need to have a separate third moral theory for VE when it’s all covered in Kantian and Utilitarian views. There are, however, several shortcomings of such an argument. The first is that Kant brings direct criticism to any moral framework except his deontological version, clarifying that it is not moral to act upon anything but duty, which is the reason based universal moral law (Kant, 1998). Hence, the general claim that Kant’s moral philosophy could go hand in hand with VE is mistaken, according to Kant himself. Secondly, Kant wouldn’t agree on point A, since he believes that the moral law is the only reference. Like Utilitarians, virtue is only valuable for Kant instrumentally: it ought to be developed because it helps us do our duty. This is out of step with traditional VE, since VE holds virtues are good for their own sake. Thirdly, Kant also wouldn’t agree with
point B—that mentions that emotion, along with motivation and reason, could lead us to call a person who has a particular virtue—because he clearly states that emotions have no role in adding moral worth to an action, let alone it being the case that emotions cause a person to be perceived as virtuous, and similarly with the third point. Fourth, the three points seem to be a hasty attempt to summarize what VE is and what virtue ethicists are calling for, as there is more to virtue ethics than what Nussbaum proposes, as we shall explore in the chapters to follow.

It is more plausible to argue that deontology as a theory could have a common ground with VE than to claim that its Kantian variety has a common ground with VE, since Kant is very clear about his views regarding the inadequacy of all other moral theories as well as how he presents his contribution as the only unique valid option (Kant, 1998). Therefore it would have been more sensible if the claim was not about Kantian views and was about how deontology in general can work with VE. As a matter of fact, as the paper will unfold, it will show that Sufism has worked out this blend between deontology and VE in a unique manner.

A very important link is important to disclose that would appropriately bridge VE and Sufism is Asceticism. We can work with a general understanding of Asceticism, which involves deliberate actions that involve self-denial for the sake of cultivating a good moral character, while self-denial means resisting and not submitting to internal struggles that incline one to seek sensual pleasures or avoid sensual pain related experiences. Brian Besong gave very focused efforts to demonstrate how asceticism is essential in VE as recognized by many philosophers as means for
reaching virtue (Besong, 2019). He also used empirical research to draw on the importance of self-control as well as responded to criticisms of asceticism, one of which is that asceticism is only used for religious purposes, which he claims isn’t quite the case, and that it is considered an integral part of acquiring virtue. There are several plausible points from Besong’s work that are important to highlight and digest before exploring the world of Sufism.

Firstly, is that ancient philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Diogenes, and Seneca all were referenced to support the understanding that deliberate actions of self-denial are important in the pursuit of virtue as such actions will allow mastery over oneself. This indicates a remarkable commonality with the main theme of this thesis and one of the important themes in Sufism, which also proscribes conquering one’s self in order to reach virtue. Second is that there are corporeal and incorporeal practices of asceticism that allow the agent to experience more resilience in submitting to pleasurable or irrational desires that stand in the way of becoming virtuous. This means that what asceticism really provides the agent is the ability to choose according to the agent’s best judgment instead of acting or being affected by immoral or irrational desires. Hence asceticism is not valuable for its own sake, but only morally worthy when it is done for the sake of reaching virtue. Finally an important note that will be elaborated upon later in more detail, one that aligns greatly with the Sufi paradigm on the stages of the self, is the focus on the agent’s experience of pain as a result of being pulled in opposing directions in contexts where doing what is pleasurable and doing the right thing are contradictory.
With this being added to the big picture of VE, we shall now explore Sufism as to be able to construct a bigger picture that tells us how both traditions come together.

Chapter 2: Sufism

In this chapter we will explore in depth the holistic Sufi paradigm concerning morality, the purification of the Ego, and the strategy and methodology of reaching the Sufi goal: reaching “union with God”, as in the words of William Chittick who is an interpreter of classic Islamic philosophical and mystical literature, may also be expressed as “realization of human perfection” or “actualization of the divine image in which human beings were created” (Chittick, 2008, p. 20). As it will be demonstrated in the ending of the chapter, virtue could mean one of two things 1) an isolated, individual disposition or specific virtue or 2) the whole or sum of all these ‘specific’ virtues—whole virtue. In this chapter, and for the purpose of better navigation within the Sufi context, we shall use the word virtue to mean the ‘specific virtue’, and ‘Sufi virtue’ to mean the whole complete virtue as per the Sufi point of view. This Sufi virtue is referred to as ‘al-insān al-kāmil’, the perfect man, in Sufi literature. It will be demonstrated in this chapter that attaining this state of perfection requires first the abandonment of vices, then the fulfillment of virtues.
An Overview on Sufism

There is no common agreement between Islamic scholars on what the word Sufism originally meant or literally means but rather they have discussed different possible interpretations (Chittick, 2008, p. 3). One of the proposed literal translations of Sufism is that it means “one who wears wool”, which referred to people with ascetic practices that led them to wear uncomfortable clothes as part of their inner combat (jihād al-nafs) in letting go of worldly pleasure as to reach higher meanings, which in a way yet to be specified, does capture the overall spirit of the tradition. In this section I intend to give a general interpretational analysis of Sufism that doesn’t aim to confine Sufism to these points but rather to help understand its main defining unified elements that are Theological, Philosophical, and Spiritual.

Sufism is an Islamic tradition that presupposes Islamic theology. Its main goal is achieving union with Allah, the name of God in Islam, through actualizing purification from one’s ego and detaching from all objects except Allah (Chittick, 2008, p. 20). In Sufism, the primary guide for moral beliefs would exist within the scripture of the Quran and the character of the prophet himself as an exemplar. There is also great emphasis on scholars and saints whom have inherited Islamic knowledge that are traced all back to the prophet in what is called as silsila, which translates as the chain that verifies the authenticity of the transfer of knowledge through verified means (Chittick, 2008, p. 28). This knowledge could either be related to theological content that is concerned with rational and law based sciences known as Knowledge of Shari’a (‘ilm al-shari’a), or spiritual knowledge, known as Knowledge of Reality
(‘ilm al-haqīqa) that refers to knowledge of God, that could be transferred through tarbiya, moral education or discipline of one’s character (Janssens, 2011, p. 627).²

This brings us to explaining the second element, which is the Spiritual one. It is what the Sufi tradition offers in a unique way as an eloquent guide for those who want to advance in the spiritual path to remove the barrier and obstacles that stand between the murīd, the seeker of God, and God. Al-Ghazālī’s testimonial in his al-Munqīdhi min al-Dalāl (The Deliverance from Error) stated that he acknowledged that Sufis are people of taste (dhawq) and state (ḥāl), and not people of words (DFE). This explains a traditional understanding in Islamic thought that conceptualizes two approaches towards truth, one through intellectual discourse and other through experience and taste. There is great wealth of aesthetic practices in the Sufi tradition that helps stimulate the dhawq experience through Islamic practices primarily done by hymn and mantra like remembrance (Dhikr) and contemplative reflective thought activities (Fikr) (RRS). The Spiritual domain gives comprehensive theoretical and practical accounts on the ego; its ontology and how to reach purification from it along with other vices and barriers. The removal of these obstacles and veil are necessary for a person to reach God. A typical example of these practices, which have an ascetic nature, is enduring hunger as means to counter greed or staying in silence as to cure the agent from cursing or backbiting (Alavi, 2007, p. 314).

Fundamentally, al-Ghazālī explains that ascetic practices are rooted in four areas: food, sleep, relationships, and speech, suggesting that isolation, silence, hunger,

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² See also: A. Al-Ḥasanī, (2002), p. 272
and vigil are core for the advancement of spiritual flourishing (RRS, p. 120). al-Ghazâlî stated that Spiritual revelation is accounted as one of the epistemological means of acquiring truth, which he came to acknowledge as a result of his recovery from a two-month period of skepticism:

“And that [his recovery from skepticism] was not through a systematic argument and classification of words, but through a light that Allah has sent inside the chest, and that light is the key of the most/highest of knowledge, so whoever assumed that kashf [intellectual intuition] is limited to disclosed arguments, he has limited/narrowed Allah’s vast mercy, and when the prophet was asked about sharh [expansion]... he answered it is a light that is sent by Allah in the heart... so it is from this light that revelation should be sought” (DFE, p. 30)

It is within this Spiritual domain where the beginning (done with repentance) and ending of the murîd’s journey is since ‘devotionally seeking Allah’ is the actualization of man’s purpose as mentioned in the Quran “And I have not created the jinn and the humans except to worship me” Qur’an [51:56].

As for the philosophical domain, it is argued that al-Ghazâlî was inspired by Avicenna, who was known to be influenced by western classical philosophical translations especially of Aristotle, and made use of several of his theories and views (Trei ger, 2012). Some of these principles, like the golden mean, which will be explained later, were used by al-Ghazâlî to articulate Sufi notions and give concrete analysis of
morality. It is however the case that without the other two domains the efforts of reaching virtue would be insufficient for reaching one’s purpose, as being ‘virtuous’ isn’t the end goal in Sufism as the whole moral worth isn’t found in merely being virtuous for the sake of anything but being virtuous for the sake of God and the afterlife (RRS, p. 79). The potential value presented in engaging with philosophy in the Sufi tradition, such as aesthetics and ethics, is that it holds technical and practical methods and theories that could be used in dissecting the relations between virtue and its installment in a character, as in the case of VE. It is hence useful to deploy the studies and practices found in VE in following the divine teachings. I would argue that, if this domain were not part of the Sufi scheme, there would be less articulation of accounts, principles, and theories that are related and valuable to understanding virtue, and which would help us better recognize and shape a moral character.

In sum, the model I am proposing that best explains Sufism is threefold: Sufism is founded in Islamic theology, which is considered to be the groundwork of the Sufi tradition; it entails a portion of philosophy (mainly found in epistemology, metaphysics, ontology, aesthetics, and ethics); and it actualizes a paradigm of spirituality that holds objective experiences with the world of the unseen. The framework could be represented in this manner:
The model doesn’t suggest that the Sufi must engage in high-level philosophical discourse, in fact al-Ghazālī stated that the discipline of philosophy (mainly referring to metaphysics), should be kept away from the masses and isn’t worthy of pursuing except it is necessary for a group within the Islamic community who should be able to protect and respond to false claims that could disturb the faith of the people, known as *mutakallimun* (*DFE*, p. 30). Despite of al-Ghazālī’s criticism to philosophy he did praise the study of logic and he also stated that any Muslim must be able to intellectually believe in God’s existence and to assert that with certainty even with the simplest forms of arguments that are essentially deduced and analyzed from theological references (*RRS*: 2, Ch. 2). He even clarified that the layman’s faith is stronger and better rooted than the *mutakallim*, the specialized rational theologian who engage in argumentation regarding proofs of God’s existence and is easily
swayed between different proofs instead of experiencing truth in the plurality of ways in which it can be apprehended especially through engaging in other forms of activities like the ones that involve ascetic practice, which is still considered as engagement with philosophy of ethics in this case. So in this context al-Ghazālī is not criticizing philosophy as a sum, but in actual fact he is merely exposing how pure rational thought is insufficient to spiritual flourishing, although the consideration of ethics and other principles found in philosophy could be beneficial to one’s spiritual path. Also al-Ghazālī’s main criticism to philosophy is directed at metaphysical views, which hold non-theological contradictory assumptions regarding divine revelation and truths. In fact, al-Ghazālī claims that political and moral philosophy were inspired by wisdom found in teachings of ancient prophets and saints who are or alike to Sufis that were consumed with ascetic practices to pursue closeness to Allah and held divine knowledge. Later the philosophers borrowed such concepts and fused them with their work that is free from theological assumptions (DFE, p. 49).

Sufism implicitly involves philosophy because in order to take theological truths and infer their consequences for ethics and apply them in ethical life, one must use philosophy. The model doesn’t suggest that the Sufi need to study classical philosophy in a traditional manner, but rather suggests that the Sufi always holds philosophical views and insights and has some degree of involvement with philosophy (in its authentic meaning of love of wisdom) in at least one of its branches, so long as they are aligned with the ground of Islamic theology. In the Sufi tradition, philosophy in the sense of ‘love of wisdom’, isn’t at all divorced from religion, in fact it is core in the spiritual path of the Sufi to involve in contemplative and reflective think-
ing as well as to explore in different depths the secrets of morality, aesthetics, and Spiritual truths. Having love for wisdom in Sufism entails appreciation of divine knowledge and spiritual truths, an attitude that is important in the advancement of the murīd in his quest of knowing God since ‘knowledge’ is of a high spiritual rank (SA , p. 27). This hints to how the deontological account presented in the Islamic Shari’a can coincide with other accounts that are fixated on the flourishing of the soul.

Al-Ghazālī gives a detailed account in the ‘Marvels of the Heart’ book from the Iḥyā‘, on the ego (RRS: 3); the main vices of man; practices and treatments for the vices; as well as a description of the virtues. I shall now include the main themes from his book that will help explore in detail the Sufi paradigm.

Examining the Heart

It is important to first understand that many Sufis, including al-Ghazālī, view the ego, soul (rūḥ) (RRS: 3), heart (al-qalb), and intellect (al-‘aql) as different parts of the human each with its own spiritual counterpart and essence. For the purposes of this study we will examine deeply al-Ghazālī’s analyses on the heart and the ego. The heart, explained by al-Ghazālī as the most important organ by first referencing to physical heart not just because it is served by all other organs, but most importantly because its spiritual counterpart makes it the only knower of Allah and receiver of divine revelation and knowledge. A view that could be considered inspired by Avicenna who mentioned the body to be an instrument of the soul
(Janssens, 2011, p. 616). The heart is also considered to be the most important part for Sufis as the prophet said “In the body there is a tissue if it is good the whole body becomes good and if to goes bad/corrupt the whole body becomes bad/corrupt, that is the heart” (Bukhari, 2018, p.14). This Hadith, narration by the prophet, holds a spiritual meaning, which is emphasizing the influence of the heart on the whole of the person and that it is the core where either goodness or corruption lies.

It is worthwhile to note that the Arabic word used for corrupt is fasada, which is also used to describe a food that has gone rotten and is inedible\(^3\). This implies that the heart’s purpose, telos, is to become good, and that if it doesn’t achieve what it was meant to achieve it becomes bad or corrupt. The prophet also said “Allah does not look at your bodies nor your outer images but looks at your hearts” (ibn Hassan & al-Bukhari, 2008, p.117), which doesn’t literally mean that Allah doesn’t see our bodies or outer realities since He is all-seeing and all-knowing, but rather it means that the heart is the center point of Allah’s pleasure or dissatisfaction of a person. A sound heart as stated by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (691/1292), one that is accepted by Allah, is one that is free from worship of anything except Allah (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 2011). On the other hand, a heart that is immersed with other than Allah is veiled from Him. This aligns greatly with Islam’s prime spiritual expression, Shahada, which is; there is no God except Allah. The Shahada is divided into two opposing halves of negation and affirmation; the negation of the reality of the self and the world, and the affirmation of the absolute unity and sovereignty of Allah (Chittick, \(^3\) See https://www.almaany.com/ar/dict/ar-ar/فَسَدَ/
This provides a lens to understand how the Sufi’s foundation is centralized on attaining the sound heart that receives God’s knowledge and satisfaction.

_Takhallī, Taḥallī, Tajallī_

Another important Sufi 3-step principle that resonates with this same theme is _Takhallī_ (emptying/ disclaim/ abnegate), _Taḥallī_ (adorned/ fulfillment/ wearing of jewelry), and _Tajallī_ (revelation/ enlightenment) (Nakissa, 2019, p. 112). Which applies in applying _Shahada_ in the heart by negating and abandoning anything the heart is immersed in or attached to, whether it be ego related or something of the world, which is the first part of _Shahada_, removing all from the heart except God. Following that affirming and adorning God as the step of _taḥallī_, which will then lead to the third and final step of _tajallī_, that is revelation and being illuminated with the knowledge from God. Al-Ghazālī uses the same approach and strategy in his work as he first deals greatly with the removal of the vices (_takhallī_), then with the explication of the virtues (_taḥallī_), and finally with chapters on love and devotion to God (_tajallī_). This gives us answers to potential inquires regarding whether it is sufficient to remove vices to reaching virtue. The removal of vices leads to the attainment of some virtues, yet not all virtues are reached just by the removal of the vices. As is demonstrated, the removal of vices is considered to be a separate first stage towards divine union. It is in this first stage of _takhallī_ in which the slaying of the ego occurs, which represents the resolution of vices and attainment of corresponding virtues. In the second stage, it is the Sufi’s attitude to adorn himself with additional virtues and traits; as Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 1240 CE), a prime Sufi the-
orist, explains as acquiring and internalizing the morals of God (*al-takhaluq bi akhlaq Allah*) or internalizing the names of God (*al-takhaluq bi asma Allah*), both indicating the same meaning (Chittick, 1989, p. 14). A way to see it is like cleaning a mirror (the heart) from all impurities and dust (*takhallī*), facing this mirror towards the desired object (*taḥallī- traits of God*), receiving the reflection on the mirror of the desired object (*tajallī*). Reaching Sufi virtue is reaching that heart that has the vices removed from, had God traits adorned with, and is in reception of God’s revelation.

This gives us an understanding of a whole other domain of virtues that is distinguished from the ones acquired by successfully slaying the ego and is only attained after the diminishing of the ego. In this way, the becoming of the Sufi virtue or *al-insān al-kāmil* is possible.

“Perfection of īmān is based on purifying the heart from those qualities disliked by Allāh, and then adorning it with those qualities beloved to Him. Thus purification is half of īmān.” (*FFR*, p. 64)

*Examining the Nafs*

The second most important part of the human for the Sufis, I would argue, is the self or the ego, *al nafs*. That is because it is considered to be the veil between one and God. The prophet also referred to *al-nafs* as one’s worst enemy (ibn Hassan & al-Bukhari, 2008, p.122). I would claim that the ego is what poisons the heart and that it is the cause of its illness. Hence the purification, *tazkiya*, would require two things 1) getting rid of the ego and 2) resolving its effects on the heart.
Al-Ghazâli gave a crucial definition of \textit{al-nafs}, which I find this part to be one of the most critical examinations in this thesis that allows us to uniquely understand the ontology of the ego within the Sufi context. He said it could be understood in two completely different ways. First meaning of \textit{al-nafs}, is “the inclusive meaning of potencies of anger and temptation” \textit{(RRS, p. 4)}. This meaning, al-Ghazâlî noted, is the one that is commonly used by Sufis.

“...since they (Sufis) want from the ego (\textit{nafs}) is the origin that combines all vices of the human, so they say it is necessary to struggle with the ego (\textit{nafs}) and break it.” \textit{(RRS, p. 6)}

“... and he (Sahl Ibn Abdullah Al Tustarî) said: and know that there is no salvation for anyone in this era except by slaying one’s ego (\textit{thabh nafsuho}) and killing it by hunger, sleeplessness, and effort/struggle.” \textit{(RRS, p. 133)}

For the purposes of this thesis we shall refer to this version of the nafs as ‘ego’. It is important to mark that there is no negative connotation in this primary and core definition of the ego although it is clear that the ego that is ought to be fought. Nonetheless, stating that it is the combining meaning of anger and temptation implies a morally neutral standpoint, as it will be further discussed that it is only the imbalances and excess of these potencies that yield vices and immoral behavior. On the other hand virtues and moral behavior are found in balancing these potencies. That gives us an important hint that within the Sufi view, humans are not perceived by all
means as intrinsically evil. In actual fact it is the mission of man’s journey to God and morality to *restrain not purge* anger and temptation as to advance in spiritual and moral ranks.

As for the second meaning of *nafs*, al-Ghazālī defines it as follows:

"... and it is the gentle (laṭīfa) that we mentioned [he previously defined the soul and before that the heart], that is truly the human, and it is the self of the human and his identity, but it gets described with different descriptions in relation to the changes of its states." *(RRS, p. 6)*

What is worthy of examination is al-Ghazālī’s use of the word laṭīfa, which as a word could be translated as gentle, nice, pleasant, kind, friendly, good-natured, and what is likely referred to here: subtle. This other reference to the *nafs* implies goodness that in his words describe the essence of human beings, which says that humans are intrinsically good-natured (Chittick, 2008, p. 7). Intrinsically good-natured could mean that we have innate dispositions to cultivate virtue, or that we already in a sense have such goodness within. From al-Ghazālī’s words, it could be noted that the human holds a ‘gentle’ part within, which is good-natured and subtle. It could then be presumed that the knowledge of such goodness is reached by the removal of the ego. Hence the understanding that the removal of vices and cultivation of virtues, according to the Sufi way, cause the flourishing of the goodness that is already within. Another reference is made in the Quran [7:173] that refers to a previ-
ous form of the world⁴ where all humans existed in a different form and were given a direct speech by Allah where He asked them to “witness on themselves” that He is their God and Lord. The nafs used in this verse could imply the nafs we are referring to as self, that is not only aware of God but has witnessed and experienced His divine address. Leaving us with a more concrete understanding of the deep intrinsic good nature of man. It could be then understood that the Sufi path is one that reconnects with this inner essence that has divine secrets (Umar Faruq Abd-Allah, 2014).

It is plausible to draw a connection that ties this nafs with the soul and the heart, since the three were described using the same word, latîfa. This version of the nafs is contrary to the previous one that incites immoral actions due to irrational influences and accordingly veils one from God, as this version is the praised and worthy one since it is capable of knowing God. More clarification on the composite of both versions of the nafs will be explored and demonstrated in the coming sections. We shall use ‘self’ when referring to this version of the nafs. Hence when we talk about slaying the ego, we do not promote any suicidal or self-destructive notions nor do we imply degradation of the human’s worth, but rather the slaying of the nemesis of the self that in fact brings degradation and corruption to the inner and outer worlds.

This distinction resolves a seemingly problematic inconsistency in al-Ghazâlî’s work regarding the notion of ‘greatness of the soul’ (kîbar al-nafs). Typically since al-Ghazâlî’s pronouncements on the ego that it needs to reach humbleness, it is expected for the greatness of the soul to be a vice that implies arrogance and pride. It

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⁴ Often referred to as world of ‘atom’ (‘ālam al-dharr) or world of ‘covenant’ (‘ālam al-mithâq)
is however the case that Abū ‘Alī Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ya‘qūb ibn Miskawayh (932-1030) claimed, closely following Aristotle, that greatness of soul is a virtue (Miskawayh, 1911). What even might appear as more peculiar is that al-Ghazālī himself considered ‘smallness of the soul’ (sighar al-nafs) as a vice (RRS, p. 87).

The way to understand and dissolve this apparent contradiction is to employ al-Ghazālī’s twofold definitions of al-nafs, which would make us dismiss the first meaning that signifies ego and consider the second meaning that we named ‘self’. In this understanding, it would be sensible to consider greatness of the soul as a virtue and branching out of courage, as Miskawayh noted, since the self withholds great potential of goodness that is dignifying to man, due to its intrinsic potential of knowing God. This would also allow for interpreting smallness of the soul or self as a vice since this is a mere degradation of human potential that is ought to be actualized. On the other hand, if we took al-Ghazālī’s reference to sighar al-nafs to mean smallness of the ego as a vice, then it would contradict all of his accounts on the ego since it has been disclosed that the ego not only needs ‘smallness’ but ‘breaking’ and ‘removal’. It then follows that sighar al-nafs means not the smallness of the ‘ego’, but the smallness of the ‘self’.

The Moral Subject

Al-Ghazālī highlights five main components of the moral subject. He distinguishes the self from the ego (both referred to as nafs), as well as referring to the soul, heart, and intellect. In the final sections, an illustration will be presented as to show how these components link with each other. It is necessary however to clarify
at this point that in Sufism there is a strong acknowledgment of the theological ties between the soul and divine command in Islam, where morality is essentially emphasized to bring the murīd closer to God by progressing in the stages of the self, as will be explained in the coming section. What is similar for VE, especially through Aristotelian notions, is the acknowledgment of the existence of the soul. But Aristotle’s epistemic approach to define such soul and identify its components remains questionable. Unlike the Sufi’s classification of the human’s components, Aristotle mentions only the soul as the non-material form within the human (Aristotle, 2006). It is clear that both traditions, Sufism and VE, assume relations between morality and flourishing of the human soul, noting that Aristotle doesn’t fully present why morality does flourish the soul the same way Sufis do.

States and Stages of the Self

In Islam, there are Quranic references to three main states of the self: (1) evil commanding self (*nafs ammāra b-il-sū*), which refers to the domination and sovereignty of the ego over the self (2) blaming self (*nafs al-lawwāma*), which means that the self is blaming the individual whenever he is involved in immoral actions\(^5\) (we’ll describe this state as ‘struggling self’ since this denotes a meaning that refers to the self being in battle with the ego); and (3) the serene self (*nafs al-muṭma’inna*) (*RRS*, p. 6). Al-Ghazālī clarified that the condition for reaching this state is that the *nafs*

\(^5\) al-Ghazālī mentioned that the self is blaming its owner for its shortcomings, which might raise an inquiry of an existence of a third entity (owner) that is different from ego and self. Meaning is the owner of the self a different being than the self and the ego? If it is a different part then the ontology of the self is threefold, but it could also be interpreted that the self blames the ego for ‘its’ shortcomings, which in this manner preserves the dual ontology of the ego and self.
come peacefully obedient and become free from disturbance that results from going against the desires. Therefore according to al-Ghazâli’s account, slaying the ego is sufficient and necessary for reaching *al-nafs al-muţma’inha*. It is very important to note that it is not the case that what we earlier referred to as Sufi virtue is a condition for reaching *al-nafs al-nafs al-muţma’inha*, since al-Ghazâli only stated in defining *al-nafs al-muţma’inha* that it requires redemption from the ego. He did not identify its relations to attainment of Sufi Virtue. Slaying the ego is necessary but not sufficient for reaching Sufi virtue. More on this will be disclosed in the ending of the chapter.

The holistic way to see the states of the self is to understand it through a three-step process. This process aims to transform and liberate the person from the sovereignty of the ego over the self, going through an inner struggle between the ego and the self, in order to finally achieve mastery and sovereignty of the self over the ego (*RRS*, p. 84). This happens in the form of sequential stages that represent advanced states of the self; meaning that the second state is higher than the first one and the third state is higher than the second one. It could be inferred that struggle and inner combat happens only in the second state where the self and ego are in conflict for dominance. This battle for dominance shouldn’t be thought of as a battle between two alike materialistic entities since the ego and the self have their own metaphysical truths, which bring many limitations to our efforts to fully capture the essence of this reality. Nonetheless it could be conceptualized that since al-Ghazâli relates the self to the soul and heart by using the same word *laţīfa* in describing the three (self, soul, and heart), then it is associated with good morality and intellect.
While, as stated above, the ego could be considered a faculty that is non-rational and merely holds the potencies of anger and temptation, it will be explained in coming sections how al-Ghazālī maps out the vices that come out of excessive and deficient balances of these potencies. These potencies are beautified when they are in moderation to represent bravery (beautification of anger potency) and temperance (beautification of temptation potency):

“And the goodness of the anger potency and its moderation is expressed by bravery. And the goodness of the temptation potency and its moderation is expressed by temperance/integrity (‘iffa)...” (RRS, p. 86)

He then continues to explain in the following lines that if the ‘anger potency’ reached excess it would be called recklessness, and its deficiency would be called cowardice. Same with the ‘temptation potency’ that its excess would lead to lust/gluttony and its deficiency would lead to insensibility. In describing the golden mean considering these two areas, it is clear that al-Ghazālī does not use bravery and temperance, but rather uses anger and temptation potencies to describe their lack of moderation. It doesn't seem that al-Ghazālī gives a clear account on why he believes that bravery is the moderation of the anger potency and temperance is the moderation of the temptation potency. In a few passages later he adds:

“... And we mean by bravery: the anger potency being in submission/lead by the intellect in its release and its restrain. And by temperance (‘iffa) we
mean: the discipline of the potency of temptation in accord with the intellect and Islamic law (shar')” (RRS, p. 86)

Al-Ghazālī didn’t justify why exactly is it the case that regulating anger leads to bravery. Nonetheless, Aristotle stated that temperance is reached by ‘abstaining’ from pleasures, but linked courage with the moderation of fear not anger (Aristotle, 1999, Book II: 9). However, it is in Plato’s Republic that the relations between anger and courage is described (Parry, 1996).

It is however sufficient for this section to know that these two potencies represent two main cardinal virtues of morality along with two other virtues that don’t reside in the ego, which are justice and wisdom, yet are needed to be used to slay the ego. This restates an important claim: slaying the ego is understood as merely the adjustment of one’s levels of anger and temptation sufficient for a person to reach al-nafs al-muṭma’inna, yet necessary but insufficient for a person to reach Sufi Virtue. This is because the Sufi virtue would entail excellence in all morality that includes other virtues, not just moderation in anger and temptation. More importantly, in Sufism it is viewed that the prophet is the only person to have reached excellence in virtue (RRS, p. 87), Sufi virtue. Nonetheless, reaching al-nafs al-muṭma’inna is not exclusive to the prophet due to his attainment of excellence in virtue, but rather it is the condition for the ‘slaying of the ego’ as mentioned earlier⁶. Therefore,

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⁶ See page 30
reaching *al-nafs al-muṭma’īnna* is separate from attaining excellence in virtue or Sufi virtue.

The struggle, *jihād*, could be hence conceptualized as a result of the awakening or determination of the self to seize control over the levels of anger and temptation that reside within the individual under the label of the ego, and adjust them to courage and temperance instead of having no restrictions over them. This is similar to Plato’s accounts of the psychic conflict in which the intellect establishes power over anger and appetite (Buccioni, 2002).

*The Anatomy of the Nafs*

It is these two potencies, anger and temptation, that determine the ego’s main anatomy. Referring to al-Ghazālī’s important note that ascetic practices on the *nafs* should be stopped once it reached moderation (*RRS*, p. 153), which means that the only purpose for ascetic-like practices is to bring the potencies to moderation. It is not implausible to suggest that the ego is the persona of the *imbalance* of these two potencies coming together; hence when we say ‘untamed ego’ we mean the same thing as when we say ‘untamed potencies’ that operate with minimal or no intellec-
tual or moral authority. This personified ego possibly shares a metaphysical reality corresponding to the reality of these potencies that compose it. Which means that Sufis commonly portray the personified ego as an entity that behaves in certain ways and patterns, when referring to ‘nafs’ in the ego context, like for example comparing it with a child that behaves irrationally or an entity that sneaks to trick its possessor into vice. Regardless of the truth of that persona, we now know that its off button is in regulating its potencies. Hence it is clear that by appropriately regulating the levels of these potencies, the ego diminishes and perishes completely with the agent’s attainment of moderation. As it only comes to existence as long as there are imbalances occurring in the levels of the potencies, as per our analyses of al-Ghazālī’s description of the ego, and should be tamed and fought then. The real question that needs to be asked here is: what tells us that these potencies are in moderation? What standards should be met in order for an agent to achieve moderation? What is it to strike and maintain the right balances of anger and temptation?

It is possible for different virtue ethicists to have differing and subjective views of what constitutes ‘moderation’ with respect to anger and temptation, but this is not the case for Sufis as there is one universal standard for morality and moderation exhibited in (1) theological references found in the Quran and (2) one primary human standard for morality, which is the prophet Muhammad. As it will be explored later, reaching moderation in Sufism requires considering spiritual truths and practices, because there are vices that are found in Sufism that are not as highlighted in other virtue theories such as love of dunyā (this earthly life) and riyā’ (ostentation), primarily due to their association with insincerity with Allah. The goal of regulating
temptation or anger could be achieved through the removal of the corresponding vice. This means that moderation for a Sufi is different than moderation for an Aristotelian even if both are talking about the same potencies, and this distinguished the Sufi goal and path from other virtue theories. That is because the Sufi and the Aristotelian will both acknowledge a virtue of generosity that an agent holds, yet this agent, even if had attained *phormesis* as Aristotle defines it, will still be considered by Sufis to have missed the attainment of other certain virtues and would still need to remove some vices that are not mentioned by Aristotle. Accordingly Sufism aims to provide, what the Sufis claim to be, a more complete picture of virtue that includes spiritual realities: one offering a more comprehensive, cohesive, and analytical accounts of virtue and egoism.

It is also inferred from the states of the self that the ego is unchallenged and obeyed in the first state since there is no struggle that is taking place, and is completely at rest in the third state as the self is purified from the ego. This makes us draw a similarity between the first and third stage that both share something in common, which is that there is no diminishing of the ego that is taking place in either states. If we agree that diminishing the ego is the goal for the *murīd* and this could only be done through combating the ego, *jihād al-nafs*, then we need to assert that this *jihād* is only in occurrence as long as the second state of the self is in action. That is to say that all the attempts and actions that aim to achieve moderation in the potencies happen in this state. The closer the potencies get to moderation, the closer the *murīd* gets to *al-nafs al mutmaena*. 
We will use a few geometrical representations that could enable us to better conceptualize the relations between diminishing or slaying the ego\(^7\), and reaching moderation and achieving the golden mean.

The first graph will show the relations between the states of the self represented by the x-axis, and the manifestation of the ego represented by the y-axis.

![Graph](image)

The graph illustrates the manifestation or level of the ego, showing the diminishing of the ego as progression occurs in the states of the self. Point A (-2,0) represents the *nafs ammāra b-il-sū’,* point B (-1,0) represents the peak of *al-nafs al-lawwāma,* and point C (0,0) represents the *al-nafs al-muṭma’inna.*

\(^7\)A question could be asked whether the slaying of the ego is irreversible, meaning could the ego come back after being slayed? The answer is that it is possible since Sufis believe that only prophets are immune to mistakes, but saints however are ‘protected’ from the ego and its possibility to rise again. Death of the ego for the saints and the ones reaching *al-nafs al-muṭma’inna* would technically mean the preservation from the ego, since it is only the prophets who are undoubtedly had no possibility of the ego manifesting by God’s will.
Considering the y-axis, value (1) represents maximum manifestation of the ego while value (0) signifies zero ego or death of ego. It is the case that point B marks a midway position in the level of the ego.

As for the x-axis, the justification of the allocation of the nafs ammāra b-il-sū‘at point (-2,0) is because the nafs ammāra b-il-sū‘ is thought to be a negative state of the self, which advances to actualize better states represented in progression along the x-axis. As for the conceptualization of having al nafs al moutamena at the zero mark symbolizes two things: 1) the end of the negative states of the self and 2) the inauguration of infinitely incrementing higher states of the self beyond that point.

It could be inquired whether if the nafs al-lawwāma is exclusive to point B or not? Or in other words, where does it start and where does it end? The answer is simply that it is the region in the x-axis that starts right after point A and ends right before point C {A<x<C, where x represents al-nafs al-lawwāma}. Which means that maximum ego level declines as al-nafs al-lawwāma advances till it reaches to the point of zero struggle exhibited in al-nafs al-muṭma‘inna (0,0). The general idea is that commitment to ascetic-like practices that aim to reach moderation for the ego’s potencies are correlated to the advancement of the states of the self, which indicate the level of the ego’s manifestation. It is important to note that slaying the ego and al-nafs al-muṭma‘inna are conjuncts; the slaying of the ego means that the self is arriving at al-nafs al-muṭma‘inna, and the self’s attainment of al-nafs al-muṭma‘inna means the slaying of its ego.
Another graph conceptualizes the change in resistance (against the self) or struggle of the ego in relation to the states of the self in linear and non-linear representations. It is worthy to note that these two representations are the simple possible graphical illustrations of three known points. With the x-axis representing the states of the self and the y-axis representing the resistance of the ego. The justification of this graph relies on the selection of the three main points demonstrated in the following paragraph.

Similar to the previous graph; point A (-2,0) represents the first state of the self where the ego is in its most manifestation. The ego is not in resistance because it is unchallenged and is in no struggle with the self hence assigned the value (0) for its y-axis. As for point C (0,0) that represents al-nafs al-muṭma‘inna where the ego is perished, the ego is not in resistance since the ego is no longer manifested hence assigned the value (0) for its y-axis. While point B (-1,1) represents peak ego resistance with peak self struggle, hence assigned maximum value (1) in the y-axis.
The zone between points A and C indicates that there is resistance occurring by
the ego that increments towards closeness to point B moving from its initial state
that is point A, and such resistance decrements from point B till it reaches point C.

Such illustration reveals the change in intensity of the ego’s struggle as the self
advances in its states.

As for this graph, it represents the relations between the principle of the golden
mean (y-axis) and the states of the self (x-axis). The y-axis demonstrates the golden
mean’s threefold components of excess, deficiency, and golden mean. The representa-
tion of (1) on the y-axis represents maximum excess, (0) represents golden mean,
and (-1) on the y-axis represents deficiency of any given virtue. Point A on the x-axis
(-2,0) still represents the *nafs ammāra b-il-sū’* where the maximum ego is manifest-
ed, while point C also represents *al-nafs al-muṭma’īnna*. This time point A conjoins
two points on the y-axis represented in the graph at X (-2,1) and Y (-2, -1). X repre-
sents maximum ego level and maximum excess, while Y represents maximum ego
level and maximum deficiency. Which uniquely highlights the relations between the
ego level found in the state of the self and the closeness of the virtue towards reach-
ing moderation and the golden mean. The final graph emphasizes and makes clear of al-Ghazālī’s remark concerning stopping ascetic practices on the ego once moderation is achieved (RRS, p. 153). That is because as long as the ego manifests, the golden mean wouldn’t be achieved and that it is the case that achieving the golden mean correlates with the death of the ego.

*On Unity of Virtue and Unity of Nafs*

In order to reach concluding analysis from the above mentioned graphs, we need to recognize the main opinions regarding the unity of virtue that is the view that traces back to Plato and Socrates that gives an understanding of the oneness of virtue (unity of virtue reference). What we will refer to as Unity of Virtue A will denote to the interpretation that all virtues are one in the sense that the agent is virtuous and has attained whole virtue only when he acquires all the individual virtues or, as we might say the ‘parts’ of virtue. What we will refer to as Unity of Virtue B refers to the other opinion that suggests that mastering one virtue means that the agent will automatically have the other parts virtues.

An important argument could be then deduced after such illustrations and analyses:

P1: The attainment of virtue requires slaying the ego (Golden Mean Graph)

P2: Unity of Virtue A indicates that there are two possible manifestations of virtue: part virtue or whole virtue
C1: Slaying the ego requires two possible manifestations: part ego or whole ego

P3: Slaying the ego and *al-nafs al-muţma‘inna* are conjuncts

C2: *Al-nafs al-muţma‘inna* requires two possible manifestations: part *nafs muţma‘inna* or whole *nafs muţma‘inna*

This argument demonstrates that *al-nafs al-muţma‘inna* could be looked as either part or whole as a consequent of slaying the ego of part or whole. Meaning that slaying the whole ego of man will lead his whole self to venture the state of *al-nafs al-muţma‘inna*. Also the slaying of the ego concerning certain vices will lead to venturing part of *al-nafs al-muţma‘inna*. It is possible to have part of the whole ego slayed and part not depending on the vices resolved, similarly it is possible to have part of the whole *nafs al-muţma‘inna* experienced and part not also depending on the vices resolved. This view remarkably presents how the individual could engage with the three states of the self in a dynamic multilateral way instead of thinking that a person is either one state or the other. This resolves possible tensions in understanding how could the three states become relatable to almost any individual, and also regarding understanding the nature of alternating between these states. It is now clear that a person could experience part of *al-nafs al-muţma‘inna* concerning a certain aspect, yet at the same time experience the other two states concerning other areas. I shall refer to this contribution as *unity of nafs*, as it is inspired from the unity of virtue account.
For this work to present even clearer accounts on the ontology and anatomy of the ego, a map will be presented in the coming chapter that will classify the vices that need elimination for the ego to be slayed and for the self to reach *al-nafs al-muṭma‘inna*.

**Chapter 3: Morality in Sufism, and Relations with Virtue Ethics**

A famous Hadith describes the prophet’s mission regarding morality is often translated as: “I was sent to perfect/complete good/noble moral character traits” (Bernard & Chittick, 1994, p.48). The Arabic word *makārim* is translated to noble and the word *akhlāq* is the plural word of morality, so the prophet states that he is sent to perfect *makārim al-akhlāq*, translated above as noble morality. I will provide however another interpretation, hence translation, to these words that could possibly clarify deeper implications of this Hadith. The word *makārim* also means ‘generosities’, which could be then used to mean, “I was sent to perfect/complete the generosities of morality”. This suggests that morality is ‘generous’ (rich with things to give) to its agent, which means that it gives its agent almost unending benefits (could be pleasures, satisfaction, closeness to God, happiness, etc.) upon its attainment. As far as the prophet’s mission is concerned, he is sent to complete this ‘generous’ offering that morality could provide to its agent and bring it to its full poten-
tial by providing mankind with the Islamic paradigm that allows any individual to establish a flourishing relationship with God.

The prophet is considered by Muslims to be the epitome of human excellence, let alone morality. According to this interpretation, the prophet attained himself the maximum ‘generosities’ of morality, since his excellence of morality. Nonetheless, his mission is to guide mankind to follow his teachings, attitude, behavior, and practices as to allow agents reach perfection of morality and its generous offering. This interpretation asserts the prophet’s use of the word ‘completion’, where he did not use either ‘elimination’ or ‘innovation’ to describe his mission on morality. This means that he accepted preceding accounts and interpretations of morality and is only claiming to complete what has been missing by these accounts. This gives us a clearer understanding of the Islamic view of morality, as mentioned in the beginning of the second chapter and as will be further demonstrated, that the Islamic or Sufi view gives a wider and a more complete moral framework than other moral theories.

Interestingly, morality in Arabic as defined by al-Ghazālī, is inherent in one’s character. Al-Ghazālī highlights that the word ‘khalq’ describes one’s outer form, while ‘khuluq’ (which is the same root word and consists of the exact same letters but with different accent), describes one’s inner image (RRS, p. 84). He describes that when a person is labeled ḥasan (good) al-khuluq, then the person is praised for his outer image, and when the person is labeled hasan al khuluq, then the person is

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8 ‘Khalq’ also means ‘creation’
praised for his inner image, that is his morality. He further explains that a human consists of body and soul, the body part (outer) is perceived with sight of the eye, basar. As for the soul part (inner), it is perceived with insight (spiritual sight), başıra. Morality could not be ‘seen’ or detected by the physical ‘eye’, that can only detect corporeal matters. Instead, since its nature, it could only be perceived by one’s spiritual disposition, the soul, that relates to God. It is worthy from this point to highlight the existing links in Sufism between aesthetics and morality, perhaps an appealing area of research that requires further investigations.

Al-Ghazālī presents another key definition of morality that was translated in Hamid Reza Alavi’s paper as “A stable state of the soul” (Alavi, 2007, p. 313). Yet I don’t find this translation to be adequate for choosing the three words “stable” to translate rāsikha as I believe that ‘rooted’ is more accurate to translate the word. ‘Form’ is more accurate than ‘state’ to translate hay’a, and ‘self, as described through the paper, is more appropriate than ‘soul’ to translate nafs. My translation for his essential definition of morality would be “A form that is rooted in the self (nafs)” (RRS, p. 84).

He continues to describe that from this ‘rooted form’:

“...actions are made easily and effortlessly without the need of thought or calculation... because he who puts an effort to spend money or become silent when in anger with effort and calculation, he cannot be described to have the virtues of generosity and patience/tolerance” (RRS, p. 84)
Both definitions, especially the second one, already assume the strong ties between Sufism and VE. Both have the ‘character’ as focal to morality and it is clear from the second definition how it exactly describes the VE view.

Al-Ghazālī considers four cardinal virtues to be: wisdom, bravery, temperance, and justice, these same virtues appear in Plato’s Republic (Parry, 1996, p. 38). All other virtues, according to al-Ghazālī, branch out from these cardinal ones. He claims that only the prophet reached perfection in moderation regarding these four virtues (RRS, p. 87). We have previously explored in depth the virtues of bravery and temperance since they are directly linked with the thesis’ main theme, as their attainment is a direct manifestation of slaying the ego. As for wisdom, defined by al-Ghazālī as the awareness of distinguishing right from wrong actions, it too has an underlying potency that needs to reach moderation for this virtue to be attained. This potency is ‘knowledge’ (‘ilm) potency. Justice, however, is the only trait that is referred to by al-Ghazālī as a ‘potency’ and as a ‘virtue’. He clarified that justice is used to restrain and adjust the other potencies of anger and temptation under the command of the intellect and al-shar’ (RRS, p. 86).

It is sufficient for this part to present the general view of morality and virtue according to al-Ghazālī. In the coming section, we will bring an in-depth analysis on the vices, which their removal is requisite for slaying the ego and reaching al-nafs al-muṭma’īnna.
A Map of the Vices

Al-Ghazālī dedicates almost a quarter of his books in *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* to giving detailed accounts on the vices of the ego. In his book forty foundations of religion, which is a summary of *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, he clustered the vices he explained in *Iḥyā’* to ten. Three other vices of the heart were mentioned by Ahmad Ibn Zayn al-Ḥabashi (d.1733)⁹ in his book “*Risalat al-Jami’a*” (The Encompassing Epistle) (Al-Hanshi, 2016)¹⁰. He added 1) having doubt in Allah, 2) feeling safe from His punishment, and 3) having despair from His mercy.

These three vices have direct ties with Quranic verses (add references), but it is unclear whether they fit with al-Ghazālī’s framework since they seem to stem from the rooted vices mentioned by al-Ghazālī. This is because, I claim, that they are the *effects* not the *cause* of an impure heart. Hence we should not include these three vices to our analyses.

I will split two of these ten vices into two making them twelve vices in total, for reasons that I will come to explain. The ordering of the vices is an attempt to group them together according to the main potency that is related to the corresponding core vice, yet this doesn’t suggest any exclusivity between the vices and their respective groups as all the vices are believed to be intertwined with one another. The first group matches the vices that are close to lack of regulation of anger, while the second group brings the vices that are close to lack of regulation of temptation.

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⁹ Imam Ahmad was one of the main students of Abdallah Ibn ‘Alawi al-Ḥaddād (d.1720) who is believed to be the spiritual renewer (*mujaddid*) of the twelfth Islamic century and a direct descendent of the prophet.

¹⁰ *Risalat al-Jami’a* is considered to be a summary of a summary of a summary of al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn.*
The 12 vices are:

- Lack of regulation of anger
  - Pride and arrogance (*kibr wa ghurūr*)
  - Self Admiration (*'ujb*)
  - Jealousy (*hiqd wa ḥasad*)
  - Stinginess (*bukhl*)
- Lack of regulation of temptation
  - Food and sexual desires (*kasr al shahwatayn*)
  - Love of world (*ḥub al-dunya*)
  - Love for wealth (*ḥub al-māl*)
  - Love of status and fame (*ḥub al-jāḥ*)
  - Ostentation (*Riyā’*)
  - Vices of the tongue (*āfāt al-lisān*)

As discussed previously the vices are directly tied to the ego, which only exists as a result of imbalances of the anger and temptation potencies. There is no mention of other root vices that could be found elsewhere in the *nafs* other than these according to al-Ghazālī’s classification. I have rearranged their order in a way that aligns with the themes suggested throughout the thesis. We could think of a couple of vices that could seemingly not fit such outline, yet here are a couple of examples that would demonstrate how they would still be linked to these fundamental vices. A vice such as cowardice is considered to be the lack of bravery (Aristotle, 1998, Book II: 8), and al-Ghazālī stated that the regulation of the potency of anger leads to the
attainment of the virtue of bravery, as mentioned earlier. Therefore, the vice of cowardice is rooted in the lack of regulation of anger, which is exhibited in the map. Another vice that we could try out is ‘absence of modesty/shyness’ (haïya’), this could be rooted in the vice of love of dunya where the person becomes lustful and proud of attaining worldly pleasures of which is justified by the love of this world.

Al-Ghazālī considers the lack of regulation of anger as a vice of its own, but didn’t consider lack of regulation of temptation to be a vice of its own and did not give any account on this vice or concept. Instead he primarily addressed food and sexual desires as the direct manifestation of lack of regulation of temptation. Yet again, he didn’t address lack of regulation of temptation in the same way he did with anger. This was the main alteration of my two amendments to the map, that I added the vice of lack of regulation of temptation as to balance the one with the lack of regulation of anger. Similar to considering anger as a disposition that needs regulation and not to be purged, temptation belongs to the same concept. It is not the case that a human should not experience enjoyment or have desires for objects, but in fact it is the case that such pleasures should aid one to reach closer and higher stations with Allah and that one would be able to desire his Lord and His closeness. It is problematic when the desires and temptation are exercised on things other than for the sake of Allah, but that is not the problem of temptation but it is the problem of the subject. That is to say that temptation as a disposition, just like anger, needs regulation not eradication (SA, p. 90).
These two vices are each considered as vices of their own, rather than only referring to them as the main potencies that are combined and form the ego. From this, for the sake of clarification and ease, I have been inclined to cluster the vices to ‘potency’ and ‘core’ vices.

The potency vices are the vices of lack of regulation of anger, and lack of regulation of temptation. The core vices influence these potency vices. Also the core vices are the cause of the existence of the potency vices. But even if the potency vices seem to be regulated, the core vices would still need to be fixed as they contain the real and hidden vices of the heart. It could be stated that *the core vices are vices of the heart and the potency vices are the vices of the ego*. This means that, as al-Ghazālī mentioned, the ego is where the potencies of anger and temptation reside. Where do the core vices reside then? These core vices are not descriptive of but are still linked to anger and temptation. This leaves us with an important critical finding that is slaying the ego, which is achieving moderation of its two main potencies, can only happen through fixing the vices of the heart. We could think of it in this way: an ill person has his temperature rise, and all what the doctor would care about is reducing this temperature back to normal and not performing full diagnosis in an attempt to identify the reason behind the temperature rise. Is this doctor really curing the diseased man? Or is he just containing the symptoms?

Similarly we could think of the potency and core vices in the same way. The potency vices are the symptoms of the core vices. It is important to note that both need treatment, like the doctor wouldn’t ignore the temperature rise and would try to
treat the patient for the underlying disease. The doctor however should treat the
temperature rise and treat the underlying disease as well. Analogously, treatment of
the potency vices should not be sufficient for the full treatment of the core vices.
That is exactly why I believe it is important to address the potency vices along with
the core vices when it comes to slaying the ego, which is what Ghazālī does through-
out *Iḥyā‘*. It is not going to be sufficient to deal with the core vices alone and neglect
the potency vices or assume that they will be fixed on their own. The account of the
12 mentioned vices hence are very important to be done altogether, regardless of
the strategy of the treatment, in order to achieve the slaying of the ego. It could be
drawn that the vices of the heart causes the vices of the ego that causes the vices of
the body. *The vices of the ego are symptomatic to the vices of the heart, and the vices
of the body are symptomatic to the vices of the ego.* That doesn’t eliminate the possi-
bility of a dual influence between the heart and the ego, where the heart could be
‘contaminated’ by the ego, or even the body. A diagram will explore these relations
in the conclusion section.

So resolving the *potency vices* would be insufficient to reach moderation of the
*potencies of the ego*. This is a clear distinguishing element (the core vices and its re-
lation to the moderation of the potencies) and a contribution that highlights the
richness of Sufism’s account of virtue and moderation from any other tradition.

Al-Ghazālī states that anger is the result of the deprivation of what is loved by a
person, meaning that a person feels anger when they lose what they love, and that it
should only be permissible in a way that aligns with the intellect and the Islamic law (shari’a) in two scenarios:

(1) When deprivation of the basic necessities of the person occurs; such as food, shelter, clothes, and health

(2) When deprivation of some necessities of the person occurs that is relevant to their context: such as a book for a scholar or tools for merchant (RRS, p. 271).

However it is not at all permissible to allow anger for lacking things that are unnecessary for all humans: such as status, fame, wealth, etc. The solution in this case according to al-Ghazālī is to remove the love for these things, which suggests how the core vices are intertwined and are essential to reaching regulation for the potency vices and the whole potencies.

It is also critical to note that the recovery from the core vices could not be attained by applying the principle of the golden mean as it only applies to the potency vices, that is because *the core vices are direct manifestations of excessiveness or deficiencies of Sufi Virtue*, hence moderation cannot be applied to the vices themselves. For example, there is no moderation to love of wealth. It is a vice that needs direct removal because it will always be a vice to love wealth, and it can’t be perceived that one should love wealth less or love wealth in moderation. In Sufism, moderation is the complete removal of the love of wealth.
The same thing applies to pride, as the prophet said, “He who possesses at his heart the weight of one atom of pride will not enter heaven (Jannah)”. This direct and clear command is to completely and critically remove pride from one’s heart. This does not mean that a virtuous person cannot become wealthy or cannot be famous since these vices are concerned with the heart and it is only the love and longing for these matters that is considered to be immoral.

Same thing applies to the love of dunyā. Where it might be misunderstood that Sufism endorses monasticism; being in isolation of worldly activities and being devoted in spiritual exertions that is found in Christianity in Catholic and Orthodox traditions as well as Buddhism and Hinduism, this could be confused as the ‘go-to’ notion as to avoid from the vice of loving dunyā. In Sufism communal work, service, and engagement are integral to one’s duties and spiritual journeying (sulūk) as the path towards moral perfection is not found in withdrawal from society (Bucar, 2018, p. 214). While the isolation and demise of attachment to dunya is the only required notion to be applied to the heart of the murīd not to his physical practices. The murīd is encouraged to actively engage with the society and worldly dealings like trading, fighting injustice, helping the needy, etc. While it is undeniable that isolation, ‘uzlia, is an essential part of the path, it is understood that isolation is not where that path ends but rather its one of the means and practices that is needed for the murīd to be able to advance in his path. Hence, we can understand that isolation, when done, is temporary and aims to have a certain effect on the murīd, not offer a lasting sanction to him.
The love of wealth and stinginess were categorized by al-Ghazâlî as one vice in the book of forty, but I chose to split them into two separate vices as to match love of wealth with temptation related vices and stinginess with (cowardice) anger related vices. Love wealth is drawn near to temptation potency since the vice is related to the love of possessions and desire to own wealth. al-Ghazâlî stated that generosity is a result of bravery\textsuperscript{11}, that is why stinginess is related to the potency of anger since anger is related to the disposition of bravery, as discussed earlier. The relation between stinginess and cowardice is found in one’s fear of poverty and fear of spending as to lose one’s possessions and that is contradictory to the belief that Allah is the bestower of properties, money, etc. The 	extit{murîd} needs to have the bravery as to conquer all fears except the fear of Allah.

In 	extit{Iḥyā’} he also talks about both as two separate vices yet they share the same section and title in the book, which makes him consider them both as a sort of ‘two faces of the same coin’ and account them as the same vice in his summary, forty.

In sum, the way to ‘slay the ego’ and reach \textit{al-nafs al-muṭma‘înna} is through achieving regulation of the two potency vices and removal of the 10 core vices.

This may be presented as follows:

Purification from core vices and regulation of potency vices \xrightarrow{} Moderation of potencies in ego = Slaying of the ego = \textit{Al-nafs al-muṭma‘înna} \xrightarrow{} Readiness to adorning of Godly virtues \xrightarrow{} Sufi Virtue

\footnotetext{11}{al-Ghazâlî, "\textit{Iḥyā’ \textit{"Ulûm al-Dîn}"}, p. 87}
Al-Ghazālī suggests ‘remedies’ and ways to cure from all the mentioned vices, except for lack of regulation of temptation since he didn’t identify it as a vice of its own. They mainly involve contemplation (fikr), remembrance (dhikr), and physical practice (‘amal). It could be conceptualized that these tools are directed from the rational part of the nafs (self) to the irrational (ego). Fikr is where the murīd needs to contemplate and challenge intellectually certain notions, some that might by exhibited by the ego, in such way the murīd can fix the respective vice by engaging in a thought process. Like conversing with a child, a theme that often occurs by Sufi preachers who resemble the nafs (ego) as a child, when acting and behaving irrationally but needs rational and wise intervention by his caretaker. Reason and justification are practiced using fikr that potentially influences the behavior and the activity of the ego. This resembles the modernly known psychotherapy treatment, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, which aims to challenge and alter thinking patterns as well as core beliefs that influence the subject’s behavior and attitude. A demonstration of that is part of al-Ghazālī’s contemplative solution on the vice of ‘ujub:

“Intelligence demands that one remains grateful to Allah for His bounties, and he should understand that it is Allah’s great favour that He has bestowed so much of His Kindness upon us initially, whereas we were undeserving. He should realize that he has been granted the bounty of knowledge and intelligence, in front of which wealth has no reality. Thereafter Allah even granted

one the favour of worshipping Him and thanking Him, whereas others are deprived of this; and this deprivation was not due to some previous sin or the recompense of some weakness. When one continuously ponders over this, then Divine Fear will be created. One will realize that if the Being who granted me His Bounties, without me being deserving of them, snatches them away without any cause or sin, then what right do I have to complain? What will I do if these bounties upon me are only temporary and deceiving, and will eventually lead to punishment and harm to my life?” (FFR, p. 115)

Dhikr is important too in Sufism since it acts like a spiritual practice that provides the murid with spiritual aid needed in overcoming the vices. Dhikr could be interpreted as the remembrance of the abovementioned related fikr and intellectual concepts, in the sense of affirmations given to the self. This technique is also encouraged within the framework of modern psychology that links ‘self-affirmations with the subject’s attitude and wellbeing (Howell, 2017). Dhikr also means the recitation of spiritual texts like Quran, prophetic prayers, names of Allah, etc. each having its own spiritual reality and effect on the murid’s state and nafs. This could also, but not necessarily, include the remembrance of the abovementioned fikr through such recitations.

An important element for the attainment of virtue and good habit is ‘amal.
“To acquire virtue, man must practice good deeds so that they become habits for him... In order to be just for example, one must first behave in a just manner” (Sherif, 1975, p. 33).

It resembles the ascetic exercises that help in disciplining the ego and forming its tendencies by either engaging in abstention or consumption depending on the state of the murīd. This will be further elaborated in the coming section.

*The Heart and Jawāriḥ*

Al-Ghazālī points out a duality between the physical limbs and the tongue (*jawāriḥ*) and the heart (*RRS*, p. 94). This could be understood as addressing the heart in its metaphysical manner as explained earlier, metaphorically addressing the tongue referring to what it utters (speech), and physically addressing the rest of the limbs. This dual link expresses that engaging with effort in the acts of *jawāriḥ* at the beginning could lead one to obtain or adjust an internal disposition or virtue at the heart. Then, however the internal disposition becomes, it effortlessly influences the actions of the *jawāriḥ* and is always produced out of this disposition or virtue (*SA*, p. 97). This is in alignment with the notion of Islamic commands and teachings that very critically consider and account for harmonious adjustments of body, intellect, and heart as to reach union with God. This tripartite classification is tied to a famous Hadith, where the angel Gabriel demonstrated the spiritual reality of such classification through his conversation with the prophet (Chittick, 2009, p. 4). This is to highlight the presence of the link between the actions of the physical body and one’s spiritual state since the divine command that requires attunement of the body,
as well as the intellect and heart. This will be further illustrated in the conclusion section.

Heart \( \text{jawāriḥ} \)

I would argue that the phase where the \textit{murīd} commits to doing the moral action by \textit{jawāriḥ even if not yet linked by the heart is the same phase of slaying the ego where the \textit{murīd} tries to influence his internal disposition and heart by engaging in physical practices that challenges such disposition that might be void of meanings of devotion and love. That is because worship out of devotion and love belong to the highest ranks a person could reach.

\textit{Examining the Moral Subject’s Motivation}

In Sufism, there are three main motives for worshipping Allah. This threefold definition of the states of the intention is attributed to the early Sufi Ma’ruf al-Karkhi (d. 815) by Shaykh `Abd al-Rahman al-Sufuri (d. 1488) in his "\textit{Nuzhat al-Majalis}" (Saffuri, 2013).

The least rank of worship is the worship of the slaves (‘\textit{abīd}), and that is worshipping Allah only out of fear of His hellfire. A higher rank of worship is one that is of the merchants (\textit{tujjār}), and that is the worship of Allah due to desire of something
in return of the worship like paradise or any other pleasure. The third and highest rank of worship is the one that is of the free (ahrār), and that is the worship of Allah for the sake of Allah and is pure from any other motivation. The Sufis believe that only the third type is a moral type of worship. However, the first two types are still aligned with sharia’a and grant the individual a place in heaven. This makes a clarification that Allah grants heaven for the three types yet holds different ranks between the three. Even if the first two types are considered to be immoral, they are sufficient for entering paradise. One of the most famous Sufi female saints, Rābi’a al-’Adawiyya (d. 801) famously wrote:

"O Lord, if I worship You because of Fear of Hell,
then burn me in Hell;
If I worship You because I desire Paradise,
then exclude me from Paradise;
But if I worship You for Yourself alone,
then deny me not your Eternal Beauty" (Barnstone and Barnstone, 1992)

I would argue that it is normal for a murīd in the beginning of his journey to commit to worship of Allah for the first two reasons, and that is appropriate since the murīd is seeking moral excellence and if he had already reached the highest of ranks in worship then he wouldn’t need to learn or acquire virtue nor get rid of the vices. My argument is that pleasure and pain are useful tools to tame the ego in order to slay it and reach moral excellence. It is not sensible that one should be ex-
pected to experience sincere love for Allah when the person is still suffering from impurities in the heart. Hence when the ego is still manifested in the person, the person can still commit to worship of Allah till they try to advance in their spiritual rank. The only way for the murīd to maintain such commitment given the manifestation of the ego in him is through pleasure and pain, since the ego would not be able to comprehend the pure meanings of love, as these meanings are only to be received by the purified self and heart. Therefore it is not implausible for the murīd who is in combat with his ego to use pleasure and pain as short-term motivations in his spiritual journey, which aims to reach a point of pure level of selfless worship and devotion to Allah.

Reaching this level of pure selflessness in worship, attributed to saints, does not imply any sort of doing ‘less’ of God’s divine command, if any it would imply doing ‘more’, as demonstrated by the prophet. Given that he is believed by the Sufis to have reached human perfection, it is certainly the case that he reached perfection in motivation for worship. The prophet acknowledged his chief rank of spirituality and morality and still did the same basic worship rituals of the layman and in fact did extra (than the necessary rituals) types of worship. This clarifies an important notion of whether the deontic commands in Islam are followed in order for the agent to reach virtue or is virtue found in following such commands?

I believe that it is both: deontic orders leads to the attainment of virtue as well as knowledge and union with God, while it is also the case that in following these deontic commands and rituals the agent is being virtuous by knowing, submitting and fol-
lowing God’s will. This retells the initial claim presented in this thesis of the unique blend that Sufism achieves between deontology and VE. If it was the case that at some point divine rituals are no longer necessary for the agent who reached virtue, like praying for example, then the prophet would have stopped doing it. It might be the case however for some ‘extra’ ascetic practices that are not obligatory for all Muslims to follow and were assigned for the agent to overcome certain vices to be no longer relevant to the agent who already reached that practice’s objective. This elaborates greatly that in Sufism one must follow the deontic commands and attain virtue through flourishing their character, self, and soul.

_Selfish and Selfless Dialectic_

This takes us to another important tension that this thesis could be able to resolve regarding the problematic distinction between selfless and selfish motivations. The dilemma usually revolves around the same mentioned point regarding the moral worth of the motivation behind the action. For example, we can ask is it moral to serve others for the sake of seeking a pleasurable outcome and feeling good about ourselves? Does this make the action moral? Or when we help others just to avoid feeling bad about ourselves, is this considered to be a moral intention? Most importantly we should ask, is it even possible to do any kind of action without any sort of personal gain? Because it seems like even when someone is motivated to help others without wanting anything in return, they are doing so because they ‘want’ to be good and do the right thing. Doesn’t this too count as a selfish intention?
I believe that using al-Ghazâlî’s distinction of al nafs could bring this perplexity to rest. I first argue that for the human condition, having a motivation presupposes either a need to be fulfilled or a goal to be reached, or both. In either case, the human is in a state of need and aims to move to a state of fulfillment. This means that it is never the case that a human could have a motivation to act without any sort of desire to attain fulfillment behind such action. Hence we shall explore the two different possible understandings of ‘selfish’ motivations: serving the ego vs. serving the self.

We might want to consider the difference between (a) someone wanting to help others just so the person could increase their reputation and status among people, and (b) someone who wants to help others for the sake of spreading goodness that will cause the person to feel good as he would feel that he has done the right thing. It is not sensible to judge both as acting upon ‘selfish’ motivations. It is clear that for the first scenario the person is driven by a selfish motivation. We might say that this person is serving their nafs, the ‘ego’ part, as the person is consciously seeking praise and cares for fame and status. As for the second scenario, it is not that the person is serving his nafs but rather he is serving a cause that his nafs, the ‘self’ part, is gaining something out of and benefiting from this positive impact and exchange of goodness. We cannot say that the person is selfish because his ‘self’ part of the nafs is gaining something since it could be argued from the previously mentioned sections that the gain of the ‘self’ is the loss of the ‘ego’. Meaning that the self is always in a state of progression in relation to the slaying of its ego, which is in the nature of the self that it lacks perfection, given that it is a created being, to seek perfection by uniting with the only perfect being, God. So it is not immoral for the self to need
seeking union with God, in fact it is its genuine purpose that it needs to fulfill. In actual fact, what could be argued as immoral from the Sufi paradigm is claiming or assuming that a self is not in need of its Lord.

“O people, it is you surely who are in need of Allah, and Allah is the self-sufficient, immensely praiseworthy” [35:15]

“As for he who was a miser and thought himself self-sufficient. And disbelieved in goodness. Surely We will ease him towards difficulty” [92:8-10]

For a murīd to assume that they should deny their needs of the ‘self’ is assuming that they are self-sufficient in the respective issue, and that is an exclusive property of God. The sufficiency comes for a murīd by achieving union with God, i.e. by needing God. It is immoral for the murīd to assume that they do not need God in any aspect of their lives: in obtaining sustenance, knowledge, good health, etc. Even when in sickness the murīd shouldn’t assume that the medication he is taking has any intrinsic power of healing, but rather should believe that the healing comes only from Allah. More details on this view could be found in al-Ghazālī’s account of occasionalism (IP).

This explains the reality for the moral subject in Sufism that presents the murīd as a seeker of Allah, setting the whole spiritual journey to find and know God, something which the murīd’s ‘self’ intrinsically wants and longs for. The murīd is expected
to become selfless, in the sense of losing his ego and prioritize God’s commands and goodness over his own desires of the ego.

The desires of the ego are selfish, the longing of the self to unite with God is self-fulfilling, and the way to reach so is to become selfless and have only God as the moral subject. By doing so, one would have reached excellence in terms of moral intentions within the Sufi context.

One could question whether if it is moral to ‘use’ people as means to reach another end, which is God, or not. For the Sufis, I would argue that the answer would be yes and no. Yes, as disclosed previously, the only one end for a person should be to know God. In fact having multiplicity in the ends is contradictory to declaration of shahada and appreciation of God’s oneness. And no because the framing of ‘using people as means’ could connote dehumanization or degradation of human’s worth that is degradation of God’s creation. It could be formulated in a different way instead of coining terms like ‘using people’ or ‘using God’s creation’ to know God, that it becomes ‘knowing people’ or ‘knowing God’s creation’ to know God. That makes the murid’s serventhood for others an extension of his serventhood to God. As well as his serventhood and care for all creations, animals and environment too, an extension of his gratitude and devotion to God.

Therefore as a conclusion, it is worthy to highlight the problematic choice of the terms ‘selfish’ and ‘selfless’ to describe the discussed meanings as they both refer to what we defined as ‘ego’. It is as if we’re saying (selfish=egotistical), and (selfless=non egotistical).
So the real dialectic is between ego-driven motivations and non-ego driven motivations. It could never be the case, as explained earlier, that there would be non-self driven motivations; hence they all are self-driven but not necessarily ego-driven.

Relating this to the previously mentioned classification of the ranks of worship, we could say that they obtain the same notion: one not wanting punishment or hell fire, one wanting pleasure or heaven, and one wanting God. The three forms require the self to ‘want’ something even when it comes to what the Sufis consider as moral ‘want’, it is still a ‘want’ of the self. My argument is that it is inescapable for the self to ‘want’, but the question of morality comes in what is it that the self ‘wants’.

A vital remark al-Ghazālī makes is the essential role that the moral exemplar authority/spiritual guide/mentor (shaykh) plays in the solouk of the murīd. The murīd needs a shaykh in order to advance in the spiritual path. The shaykh in Sufism is an essential figure to spiritual flourishing, especially that the shaykh needs to be part of the chain (silsila) that is linked back to the prophet himself. The shaykh offers a personal guidance and a spiritual bond with the murīd that helps him in identifying the obstacles that prevent him from progressing spiritually. The shaykh assigns the mentioned tools to the murīd depending on his judgment and knowledge of his Hal (state). Not only that the shaykh directly gives guidance to the murīd through these means, but also the shaykh acts as a moral exemplar where the murīd is able to learn by observing the shaykh’s behavior and attitude with other individuals and when is engaged in spiritual practices or prayers. There is great emphasis in Sufism in the company (suhba) of the shaykh, saints, and good individuals.
This takes us to the final section in the thesis that will aim to draw the commonalities between Sufism and Virtue Ethics where we will tie the points of similitude from what was disclosed in the three chapters.

**Moral Exemplars**

As we just discussed the importance of moral exemplars in Sufism, it was mentioned in the first chapter also that moral exemplars are essential in VE given that this branch of ethics is centralized on the character; hence the exemplification of morals must be through a virtuous character.

**Duality of Rational and Irrational Parts of the Soul**

As it was mentioned the main theme in Sufism regarding the ego is one's battle between the self and the ego, the good vs. the bad, the rational vs. the irrational. Aristotle too, as well as Plato, have classified the soul to these main two parts and gave accounts on the inner conflict between them. Highlighting the ties between morality and the conquest of the rational part.

**Moral Education and Habitation**

Al-Ghazālī often mentions in Ḳiyā’ that virtues are learned and acquired through practice (*ryadah*) and that habituation is successful to reaching virtue. Same essential notion exists in VE where the agent habituates the character to become virtuous especially through a ‘fake it till you make it’ strategy. al-Ghazālī principally adds the
element of ‘divine assistance’ as a necessary condition to the effect of habituation, and that moral education would be impossible without it (Attaran, 2015, p. 49).

**Definition of Morality**

There is a clear resemblance from al-Ghazālī’s definition of morality with VE as he noted that morality is within one’s nafs and from it actions are produced effortlessly, and that a virtuous character emits virtuous actions. That is surely the underlying principle of VE.

**Principle of the Golden Mean**

“And that which is praised is the middle, and that is virtue. And the two ends are condemned vices” (RRS, p. 86)

As we have investigated throughout the thesis, al-Ghazālī clearly makes use of the principle of the golden mean. Which is one of the known doctrines addressed by classical philosophers and mainly Aristotle. al-Ghazālī also brings theological references to support such notion like the prophet’s saying “moderation is the best of things” and a Quranic verse that addresses spending in moderation after mentioning the two extreme vices of spending and stinginess.

**Eudaimonistic Virtue Ethic**

This is a common theme between Sufism and VE that ‘happiness’ or fulfillment comes with one’s advancement towards their purpose. In Aristotelian VE the pur-
pose of man is reaching happiness, *eudaimonia*, while in Sufism the purpose is union and knowledge of God. If we bring together the two accounts, it is not implausible to claim that true *eudaimonia* is reached with union with God. Eudaimonistic virtue expresses that moral progress is impossible unless the agent has a strong unifying motivation for happiness or self-fulfillment. *Not only* is the Sufi driven by a desire to unite with God, but, from a Sufi perspective, this desire is the only possible motivation sufficient to account for moral progress.

*Promotion of Communal Happiness and Wellness*

Another common theme between the two traditions is the emphasis on communal rather than individualistic wellness. Community plays an integral part concerning the attainment of virtue in both traditions; a virtuous person demonstrates care for the community reaching virtue and happiness.

*Asceticism*

As demonstrated earlier, the ascetic practices are found in both traditions remarking a great commonality between them. Asceticism highlights the role of self-control in one’s formation of virtues, which is a core element in the conflict of vice and virtue found in doing the right thing despite feeling otherwise (Besong, 2019). This is has been greatly used by Sufis as to allow the slaying of the ego and the taming of its potencies.
Importance of Intentions and Motivations

Both traditions accept that the intention is fundamental in evaluating a moral action. The intention is in fact more important than the apparent action for the virtuous character. As mentioned in the first chapter, it is important that the actions that are done out of habit are not ‘mindless’ in the sense that they don’t engage practical wisdom, yet could mean that they are mindless in the sense of not requiring struggle with the irrational part or the ego.

Unity not Multiplicity of Goal

Ending with this interesting common principle, Aristotle advocates for the importance of having unity not multiplicity of a goal. It is evident that the Sufis share the same or even provide deeper accounts of unity exhibited in the goal of the murīd as well as other ontological views.

Conclusion

A Conceptual Model of the Five Human Elements

It would useful to put together a conceptual framework that illustrates how the parts of the self come together in the light of what has been disclosed. The model illustrates the suggested links between the five main spiritual components of the human according to al-Ghazālī, those are: soul, nafs, intellect, heart, and body. The diagram could be expressed in three formats, in alignment with the previously discussed division of the states of the self. Those three versions have these same five parts, except that the changes exist in the nafs. The first diagram represents al-nafs
al-muṭma‘inna suggesting that the nafs contains only the self, the second represents al-nafs ammāra b-il-sū’ suggesting that the nafs contains only the ego, and the third represents al-nafs al-lawwāma suggesting that the nafs contains both; the self and the ego. The green arrows denote pure good influence, the black arrows denote pure bad influence, and the red arrows denote combat type of influence that could be good or bad. The dotted line is used once in the model that illustrates the special link between the soul and the heart, which is consistent in the three versions, that explains the potential direct illumination that could happen to the heart regardless of the state of the self. al-Ghazālī addressed this light as being directly sent from Allah not from the soul, as the model might convey, yet this doesn’t conflict with the model as the model is still suggesting that the illumination directly comes from Allah and merely assumes mystic ties between the soul and divine revelation/speech, all that is sent and facilitated by Allah.
Generally the model suggests that the soul is the only part that only sends and doesn’t receive any influence from the other parts. Other than the mentioned special link with the heart, the soul mainly influences the nafs. The nafs is in mutual influences with the intellect, the body and the heart. The intellect doesn’t directly influence the body or the heart because the intellect is instrumental and needs a nafs for it to function. That is why purification precedes rational knowledge in order and importance in Sufism; the nafs that is putting the intellectual faculty into use needs to be cleansed for it to reach the truth. Also the intellect influences the body through the nafs, this justifies why the intellect would want the body to behave in a certain way but it doesn’t, and that is due to the resistance or the disobedience by the nafs. The body is hence respondent to the nafs, nonetheless it can influence the nafs in two ways 1) through bodily cravings and desires or 2) through ascetic and pious practices. The model suggests another special direct relationship that was mentioned in earlier sections between the body and the heart, as referred to by al-Ghazālī in his demonstration of the ties between jawāriḥ and the heart. The final relation is the one between the nafs and the heart, which is essential to capture the analyses of al-Ghazālī’s description of the two parts. The nafs, ego dominant, could either corrupt the heart and cause it illness, or it could reach purification have the heart spread its good and virtuous moral intentions and actions. It within the ties of the nafs and the heart where moral virtue is instilled and where two important Quranic references point out the significance of both parts concerning understanding the assessment of morality; “He who purifies it (nafs) succeeds” [91,9] and “Except Him (who will be saved) who brings to Allah a sound and pure heart” [26,89].
The *nafs* and heart are focal areas for morality in Sufism, this is yet another common view between Sufism and VE that is centered on the character. It is important to finally highlight that the only version where all the parts are in complete harmony is at *al-nafs al-muṭma’inna*.

**Critical Arguments**

In this section I aim to summarize the *main* critical views and arguments discussed in the thesis in the same order they were unfolded.

**Explaining Sufism through the threefold way**

We presented a threefold view to understand Sufism, which highlighted its inclusion of Islamic theology, philosophy, and spirituality. The three domains, as explained earlier, work together and bring about the character of the Sufi.

**Are Humans intrinsically Good or Evil or Neither in Sufism?**

We elaborated that in Sufism, the notion is that all humans are intrinsically good since the ties between the soul, self, and divine blessing. It was also clarified that the ego, is the source of all evil acts exhibited by the individual or within a community. Hence, humans are intrinsically good yet, they have an inner ‘evil force’ that requires *slaying* and purification as to flourish the deeply rooted intrinsic nature of goodness that allows knowledge and unity with the divine, which is man’s sole purpose of existence.
The Anatomy of the Nafs and the Ego

Through careful exegetical efforts to al-Ghazālī’s beginning chapter of Marvels of the Heart of the Ḥiyā’, we were able to properly distinguish between the two disclosed meanings of the nafs that allowed us to understand the difference between what we referred to as self and ego. This separation allowed for clearer analyses and resolutions concerning references to the nafs and critically review associations linked to it. Moreover, we drew more examinations to identify the anatomy of the ego and emphasize its main components, which are the potencies of anger and temptation.

How is Kibar al-Nafs a Virtue?

We addressed the possible tension from al-Ghazālī and Miskawayh’s accounts on agreeing that kibar al-nafs is a virtue, while holding on the view that one should get rid of their nafs to reach virtue, not grow it. The presented solution was to look at it with al-Ghazālī’s distinction of the nafs as to understand that ‘greatness of the nafs’ is referred to the ‘self’, that is good, not the ‘ego’, that is evil.

The Selfish and Selfless Reality in Sufism Morality

We elaborated that all human actions necessarily require an interest on the ‘self’. Hence, nothing is moral or immoral about this ontological notion, which is that humans are always in need since their ‘needy’ and ‘imperfect’ nature. If the interest feeds the ego, then we could refer to this as ‘selfish’, and this is immoral. On the oth-
er hand, if the interest feeds the self then this is moral because this is what humans were created for, and this will lead the person closer to God.

Worship by Fear, Desire, and Love

We also highlighted the three different motivations for worship suggested by Al Karkhi. Two of them are considered to be void of morality for Sufis, yet are valid in the Islamic shari’a, those are the ones of fear of God’s punishment and seeking God’s reward. We could realize that they are valid within the Islamic shari’a given that these two motivations are feeding the ‘self’, since the way to actualize the ends of these motivations would still require the discipline of the ego and would not feed the ego. It could be also realized that although these two motivations would not feed the ego, which is why they are considered to be moral according to the Islamic shari’a, yet these motivations will not flourish the self to reach its potential of reaching high levels of knowledge and unity with the divine. The saints who are able to worship God, in what the Sufis consider as the moral motivation for worship, who are able to worship God only for the sake of Him, actualize this potential of the self. We finally added that it is plausible to consider that the first two motivations are appropriate when one is still having their ego present, since it is the removal of the ego that will grant one the third praised motivation for worshipping God.

Unity of the Nafs

Inspired from the account of the unity of virtue, it was appropriate to consider the states of the nafs, as well as the manifestation of the ego, in a similar manner. A
person could experience different states of the *nafs* according to the corresponding virtue attained or unattained. The ego of a person as well could be viewed as a collective account of its manifestation in different parts of vices.

*Slaying the Ego, al-nafs al-muṭmaʿinna and Sufi Virtue*

The important relations between slaying the ego, *al-nafs al-muṭmaʿinna* and Sufi virtue were explored in the thesis. Slaying the ego is necessary but not sufficient to reaching Sufi virtue. As explained, after slaying the ego, there is an important step of adorning the traits of God, which will lead to Sufi virtue. Nonetheless, slaying the ego is necessary and sufficient to reaching *al-nafs al-muṭmaʿinna*.

*Slaying the Ego is the Moderation of Potencies*

As being one of the primary arguments and contributions presented in the thesis, this claim describes since the ego is manifested due to the lack of moderation of anger and temptation potencies, therefore the way to slay the ego is to achieve moderation, *not elimination*, to the potencies of anger and temptation (*SA*, p. 80). Only then, these potencies will transform to virtues of courage and temperance, which are two of four cardinal virtues that are the roots of all good morals. The coming section is *complementary* to this part as to understand how to reach the slaying of the whole ego.
Potency and Core Vices: Between Moderation and Purification

What I consider as another prime contribution for this work, this explanation expanded our understanding of the view of morality in Sufism by bringing critical analysis to the view of the main vices. We explained that there are vices of the ego, which we called potency vices, where the principle of golden mean could be applied, which means that moderation is the way to obtain virtue in this case. As for the vices of the heart, we called them core vices. Moderation is not applicable in this case, but purification is. Each of these core vices needs to be ‘removed’ and eliminated, and have the heart purified from. It was suggested that even if the ego could be a main factor of ‘contaminating’ the heart, yet the ego could also be symptomatic to the illness of the heart. The core vices are the underlying, rooted, and hidden vices that need removal, along with the moderation of the potencies, for the slaying of the ego.

Commonalities Between VE and Sufism

In many parts of the thesis, especially through the part that was dedicated to specify these points, the relations between VE and Sufism were made clear. The areas of differences were also identified.

A Conceptual Model of the Five Human Elements

A model was illustrated that attempted to conceptualize the relations between the nafs and the other human parts: heart, soul, intellect, and body. The illustration included the links that were mentioned throughout this work between the nafs and some of these parts, as well as suggested new ones mainly related to the intellect,
which was sort of the least mentioned part among the five. This model could hope-
fully bring a new and clearer insight for understanding the relations between these 
five elements in the light of the three different versions of the states of the self.

**Answering the Research Question**

The thesis’ main objective was to argue that Sufism not only assumes relations to 
the tradition of virtue ethics, but also offers more accounts especially on the *nafs*, its 
virtues and vices. It was shown how the Sufi literature is rich, and provides unique 
and critical accounts on the character and morality. The harmonies between both 
traditions were shown as well as part of the wider paradigm that Sufism holds re-
garding the nature and truth of the self and morality.

**Future Work**

I consider this work to be an initiation of a bigger project that could build new 
routes from authentic traditions of virtue ethics and Sufism in particular, all the way 
to our modern view of the self. This philosophical investigation could help us better 
understand the ontological and psychological nature of the human self, which might 
fulfill a need for “a coherent etiological theory” that is still missing when it comes to 
dealing with anxiety disorders, which is considered to be the most common psych-
ological disorder mental health professionals deal with (Alladin, 2015, p. 1). Although 
this paper was concerned with theoretical critical examinations of the self from a 
focused angle, more theoretical inquiries could be explored like relations between 
aesthetics and morality, morality and wellbeing, as well as more accounts on the self
from different scholars and philosophers of both traditions. Furthermore, this work could inspire empirical efforts and studies that could assess the practicality of these theoretical findings, which can hopefully offer valuable insights and solutions for better understanding the human self, and help it fulfill its potential and reach possible ways to serenity.
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