

Concerning Souls (nufus) And Spirits (arwah)

Says the Shaykh, may the mercy of Allah be on him: Our belief regarding souls (*nafs*, plural *nufus*) is that they are the spirits (*ruh*, plural *arwah*¹) by which life (*hayat*) is maintained, and they were the first of created things. This follows from the saying of the Prophet, the blessings of Allah be upon him: The first things which Allah created out of nothing (*abda'a*)² were the blessed and pure souls (*al-muqaddasa, al-mutahhara*) and compelled them to affirm His unity.³ Thereafter He created (the rest of creation).

And concerning the souls, we believe that they were created for eternal existence (*baqa'*), and not for extinction (*fana'*). For the Prophet has said: You were not created for extinction, but for eternal existence⁴ and you will only be transferred from one abode to another. Verily the souls are strangers in the earth and imprisoned in the bodies. And our belief concerning them is that after their separation from the bodies, they survive, some of them in happiness, others in torment, until Allah, in His power, causes them to return to their bodies.

(Once upon a time) Jesus, the son of Mary, said to his disciples: I tell you, forsooth, nothing rises up to heaven except what has come down from it. And Allah, glorious be His praise, says:

“And had We willed We would have raised him by their means (that is, by signs), but he clung to the earth and followed his own lust” (Qur'an 7: 176).

Therefore that soul among them which is not raised to the Divine Kingdom remains forever hurled down in the burning fire (*hawiya*).⁵ And this is because both in Paradise and in Hell, there are stages (*darajat and darakat*)⁶. And the Mighty and Glorious says:

“The angels and the Spirit ascend unto Him” (Qur'an 70:4).

And He says:

“Lo! the righteous will dwell among gardens and rivers, firmly established in the favor of a Mighty King” (Qur'an 54:54-55).

And He says:

“Think not of those who are slain in the way of Allah, as dead. Nay, they are living. With their Lord they provision. Jubilant (are they).....” (Qur’an 3: 169-170).

And He says:

“And call not those who are slain in the way of Allah dead” (Qur’an 2: 154).

And the Prophet said: The souls are like a collection of armed forces (*junudun mujannadatun*)⁷; those among them that are well acquainted with one another are united; while those who are not, are disunited. And Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq has said⁸: Verily, Allah has inculcated fraternity between souls in the World of Shadows two thousand years prior to the creation of bodies.

If our Steadfast Ones (*qa’imuna*), the People of the House, had been present (at that time), verily the brother who had fraternized in the World of Shadows⁹ would have inherited in preference to the real brother.

And as-Sadiq has said: Verily the souls meet one another in the ethereal world (*al-hawa’*) and make inquiries¹⁰ – about one another. When a soul from the earth approaches them, the souls (in the ethereal world) say: Leave it! for it has come from an awful place. Then they ask it: What did so and so do? Whenever the returned soul said, “He is alive”, they hoped to meet him. And whenever the returned soul said that he had died, they said: He has perished, he has perished! And He, Who is Exalted above all, says:

“And he on whom my wrath cometh is lost indeed” (Qur’an 20:81).

And He says:

“As for him whose balances are light, his mother is hawiya! And knowest thou what that is? A raging fire!”¹¹ (Qur’an 101:8-11).

The story of the world and its inhabitants is the story of the ocean, the sailor and the ship. Luqman said to his son: O my little one, verily the world is a deep sea, in which many people have perished.¹² So make faith (*iman*) in Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, your ship in it; and the fear of Allah, your provision; and trust in Allah, your sail. And if you are saved, it will be by the mercy of Allah; and if you perish, it will be by your own sins, not because of Allah.

The most trying moments for the sons of Adam are three: the day of birth, the day of death and the day of resurrection. And Allah has greeted the Prophet Yahya (John) with peace in these moments and said:

“Peace on him the day he was born, and the day he dieth, and the day he shall be raised alive!” (Qur’an 19: 15).

And Jesus has greeted himself on these occasions and said:

“Peace on me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive!” (Qur’an 19:33).

And the belief concerning the spirit is that it is not a kind of body, but is a different creation, on account of His word:

“And then (We) produced it as another creation” (Qur’an 23: 14).¹³

And our belief concerning the prophets (anbiya¹), the apostles (rusul) and the Imams is that there were five spirits within them: [110] the Holy Spirit (ruhu'l-qudus), the spirit of faith (-iman), the spirit of strength (-quwwa), the spirit of appetite (-shahwa) and the spirit of motion (-mudraj).¹⁴ True believers (mu'minin) possess four spirits: the spirit of faith (iman), of strength (quwwa), of appetite (shahwa), and of motion (mudraj). The unbelievers and beasts possess three spirits: the spirits of strength, appetite and motion. And as for His saying, Exalted is He above all:

“They will ask thee concerning the Spirit (ruh). Say: the Spirit is an affair of my Lord” (Qur’an 17:85).

For verily it is a creation greater than Gabriel and Michael.¹⁵ It always accompanies the Messenger of Allah and the angels and the Imams, and it belongs to the celestial world (malakut). I shall compose a work concerning this subject, in which I shall fully comment on the significance of these propositions.¹⁶

1. On nafs and ruh see the full discussion by E. J. Calverley in EI, iii. 827–830; MB, ruh, 184–187; nafs, 349–351; Tahinawi, Dic. of Tech. Terms, ruh, i. 540–547; nafs, ii. 1396–1403. Nafs is rendered soul, and ruh, spirit, by all modern authors. Affifi (index) ; Ivanow in FC, nafs, 11,61; ruh (aniyya), 50. But frequently the terms are interchangeable, see Ivanow, Kalami Pir, p. xlviii, etc., and also the use of the two terms by al-Qummi in the opening para. of this section (ch. 14).

Although it is difficult to lay down a hard and fast rule, it is probably correct to say generally that soul (nafs) represents "the animal life" in the human organism, while spirit (ruh) represents the "rational principle" (Affifi, 120). For a contrary view, see Calverley in EI, iii. 828 (top). It appears therefore that three views are prevalent: (a) that nafs and ruh are synonymous, (b) that nafs represents the living, conscious principle, and ruh, the intelligent and rational principle of life, and (c) vice versa. Nafs may be of five kinds; (1) ammara (acting evilly) ; (2) lawwama (the blaming one) ; (3) mutma'inna (peaceful) ; (4) radiya (satisfied); (5) mardiya (giving satisfaction), also called mulhima (MB, 350, mid.). On the five kinds of ruh, see below, note 126, p. 131.

2. *إبداع* is strictly creation out of nothing, creation ex nihilo (MC, 210 et seq.), whereas *خلق* appears to be akin to shaping, fashioning. The creation of matter out of nothing is *ibda`*; the shaping of matter, created though shapeless, is *khalq*. The word *khalq* however is also used for creatio ex nihilo, EI, ii. 829, s.v. *khalk*. For the usual Shiitic view, see MB, *بدع* and *خلق*. Among the Western Ism'd'ilis the distinction between *ibda`* and *khalq* is very carefully preserved, FC, 11, 30 (no. 19), 32, etc.

3. Reading with N *فأنتطقها*; D err. *فانطلقها*.

4. On the indestructibility of the soul the Urdu translator has a very interesting note. He say: "Shaykh Mufid says that this is an isolated hadith (ahad) [for such traditions see Abdur Rahim, Muhammadan Jurisprudence, 7 3 (top); Taftazani, Ta'awuh (Cairo, 1327 A.H.), 3 sqq.; Mu'a'timu 'd-din fil-Usul (Tehran, 1312 A.H.), 183; Aghnides, Muhammadan Theories of Finance, Introduction, p.44, (2) and (3)] ; it is not proved that it is an authentic report. It is not correct to believe that souls are not destructible, because in the Qur'an we have: `Every one that is thereon (the earth) will pass away; there remaineth but the

countenance of thy Lord of Might and Glory' [55,26–271. Therefore souls (nufus) will also perish. To believe in the perpetual existence of the soul is to accept the view of the Greek philosophers. It is possible that the tradition refers to the perpetual existence of those sanctified spirits whom Allah created first, and it is possible to support this by various traditions". MB has a very full discussion of ruh and nafs.

5. Hawiya is a word giving rise to much philological discussion. Jeffery, 285–286; Ajabnama (A volume of Studies presented to E. G. Browne, Cambridge, 1922), 464 – 471.

6. Daraja is one stage higher than another (in Heaven) ; and daraka is one stage lower than another (in Hell).

7. MB, 2117–8 explains the expression mujannada as majmu`a. The author also gives a long account of how the ranks of the angels are formed and mobilized.

8. Here the translator says that the present hadith, together with the one that precedes and the one that follows, is handed down from a single authority (ahad), and need not be accepted.

9. N err. الأضلة D corr. الأظلة so also Tehran ed. MB, s.v. 502 ظَلَّ (seventh line from bot.), explaining this hadith says: و كان المراد بالأظلة عالم المجردات فإنها أشياء لا كالأشياء فليست بأشياء كما في الظل إلخ

10. N err. تسائل D تساهل

11. See note 117 above.

12. Reading with D قد هلك فيه عالم كثير N قد هلك عالم كثير.

13. This is explained in the Majma`u'l-Bayan, as the process of endowing the lifeless body with life (Urdu translator).

14. The Urdu translator explains: The Holy Spirit (qudus) is a soul whereby the prophets and apostles know the realities of things. They do not need to think, nor to experience. The spirit of faith (ruhu'l- iman) is one with which a man worships God, and avoids both polytheism and atheism. The spirit of strength (ruhu'l-quwwa) is one whereby every living being tries to gain his livelihood, and repels the attacks of enemies. The spirit of passion (ruhu'sh-shahwa) leads one to desire food and drink, and makes the male seek the female and vice versa. The spirit of motion (ruhu'l-mudraj) is that whereby every living being moves and acts. This is the spirit which cares for the body; and when it lessens, leads to physical weakness, and its extinction means death.

MB, 185 (4th line from bot.) has 5 kinds of ruh: (1) ruhu'lqudus, (2) –Iman, (3) –quwwa, (4) –shahwa, (5) –badan. The last is also called – mudraj. The prophets possess all five; true believers, the last four; and the Christians and Jews, the last three, Further explanation is given s.v. the Dict. of Tech. Terms, i. 540–548, ruh is of three kinds: (1) hayawani, (2) nafsani, and (3) tabi'i The relation between body, soul and spirit is explained as follows:

(i. أجمع الجمهور على أن الروح معنى يحيي به الجسد و في الأصل الصغار ان النفس جسم كثيف و الروح فيه جسم لطيف و العقل فيه جوهر نوراني 5421–2)–

According to the Mishkatu'l-Anwar of al-Ghazali (ibid., 543), we have the following nomenclature: (1) ruhu'l-hassas, (2) – khayali, (3) –`aqli, (4) –dhikri (fikri), and –qudusi (or –nabawi). Browne, iv. 389.

15. The Urdu translator says (p.38, note) that ruh is an enormous angel and gives a graphic description of it.

16. The Sunnite creeds studied by Wensinck apparently do not give such graphic descriptions of the soul and spirit. The traditions however do record a few details, Wensinck, Handbook of Early Muhammadan Traditions, s.v. "soul", 219. Neither in the Tawhid, nor in BHA is there any reference to these questions; but as to nafs ammara, see BHA, p.97, note a to no. 139.

On Ibnu'l-`Arabi's notion of the soul generally, see Affifi, 120 sqq. and on spirit, 1–22. The spirit, according to Ibnu'l-Arabi, is "a simple substance, different from the dark and complex material substance"; "This substance is the chief of all the three souls and the prince (amir) of all the powers which serve it and obey its commands" (loc. cit.). According to him the spirit (ruh) is "the rational principle, the sole purpose of which is to seek knowledge"; while the soul (nafs) is "the animal life in the human organism" (p. 120). This is generally the accepted view; per contra Taju'l-Arus, cited in EI, iii. 828 (top), where nafs is applied to the mind, and ruh to life.

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