# The Horizon of the Heart and Spirit

When the heart is mentioned, the first thing that comes to our mind is the organ resembling a pine cone in the left part of the chest, just under the left breast, which has both nerves and muscles, atriums and ventricles, which acts autonomously and is the root and center of veins and arteries, and which is also related to respiration and the movements of the lungs. However, what we mean here by the word *“heart”* is the spiritual or divine faculty, which is one of the four basic elements of the conscience, and the center of our world of feelings, thoughts, consciousness, sensing, cognition, and spirituality. It is the heart in this sense which is the essence of the truth of being human.

The faculty to which we refer with the word heart is a stairway leading to human perfection, a projection of the realms beyond in the corporeal world, the largest door within the human body open to spirituality, the sole laboratory where our selfhood is formed, and the most important criterion of telling right from wrong. Our relation with our spirit, making use of our minds in a positive way, and studying and analyzing our human inclinations are all reliant on this center. So it is this heart which becomes over time the sight and hearing of our spirit; in accordance with the *“point of reliance and point of seeking help”* (nokta-i istinat, nokta-i istimdat), which are deeper dimensions of the heart, our sensations and perceptions become the heart’s sight, our mind becomes its analyzer, and our willpower its director and administrator.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The source of provision or nutrition for this spiritual heart is faith, and its way to contentment is the continuous remembrance of God. As the Qur’an states:

Be aware that it is in the remembrance of, and whole-hearted devotion to God, that hearts find rest and contentment (Ra‘d 13: 28).

Only in this way do the pains in the soul abate, and stresses and depressions are overcome. And then the breezes of contentment start to blow in our world of feelings. This is because everything started with God. He is the Primary Source such that all causes, which seem to extend as if in unending cycles or links, finally end in Him. All desires, wishes, and expectations conclude in Him in the end. He is the First, before Whom there was nothing and with Whom there is nothing like the second; He is the final Refuge, after Whom there is nothing. Neither in the corporeal world nor in our inner world and faculty of conscience can we talk about anything beyond Him. He is the ultimate beyond, with nothing further beyond. When He is remembered in full recognition, human thought reaches its ultimate horizons, intellect and logic reach the level of bewilderment and amazement,[[2]](#footnote-2) and the spirit reaches the farthest point which mortal beings can possibly reach. This is the point where all expectations may come true, where all worldly anxieties turn out to be groundless, where causes topple over one by one and everything is dyed in Divine Oneness.

While until this point everything humankind turns toward— blessings and gratitude, joys and relief, finding and contentment— takes place with the aim of reaching for the better, everything suddenly finishes on reaching this very point. After having reached Him, all desires and wishes end, all the excitements of spiritual journeying instantly cease and feelings and thoughts become mercy, like moisture condensing into dew. Then all the wishes to ascend within the domain of causality come to an end, and the need to seek an authority vanishes from minds. And one feels joy as if they were strolling up the long path they had been following. From then on, however, the journey continues with breezes of tranquility, which blow beyond all the measures of quantity and quality in different wavelengths of Divine manifestations and are combined with uninterrupted love and joyful zeal and feelings of reunion.[[3]](#footnote-3)

This spiritual heart within the human essence has a mysterious relation with the physical heart, similar to that between the body and soul. However, it has not so far been possible to say anything definite about the nature of these two relations. We acknowledge in principle that almost all of what has been said about this topic up to today can refer to any aspect of the truth; however this subject is not essential to our discussion here.

The spirit’s relation to the *“spiritual life”* and *“spirituality”* is very obvious.[[4]](#footnote-4) The Qur’an says,

“the spirit is of my Lord’s command” (al-Isra 17:85).

This statement is extremely meaningful in terms of emphasizing the fact that the reality of the spirit is something only the Creator can know; nobody but God can know the truth of the spirit.

The spirit is a law with external existence, a law with consciousness from the Realm of Divine Commands and the Divine Attribute of Will, just like the laws of creation, which are fixed realities with continuous existence. Both the spirit and the laws operating in the universe are of the same nature, and they come from the Realm of Divine Commands. They are identical with respect to their source and their being perpetual. Said Nursi explains the spirit as follows: *“If the Divine Power clothed the laws operating in the universe with external, perceptible bodies, they would become spirits. On the other hand, if God stripped consciousness from spirits, they would become laws, like the different laws operating in the universe.”*[[5]](#footnote-5) This pithy explanation of the truth of the spirit, to which the Qur’an alludes in a few words, is strong enough to put an end to all the metaphysical arguments about its essence and reality. As a matter of fact, every Divine act is instantly realized without requiring the existence or intermediary function of any physical cause, condition, means, or material. When He wills to create something, He just gives the command *“Be!”* and it is. This command is sufficient for anything to come into external, perceptible existence. In other words, it is sufficient for something to be with a certain nature that God Almighty wills it to be. Even though the continual instances of coming into existence like this seem to the mind like ordinary happenings, it is impossible for them to be accounted for without attributing them to the real Giver of commands.

When we consider spirit, we sometimes refer to the Supreme Spirit (Ruh al-A‘zam), which is a breath of God Almighty and denotes the most perfect level of spiritual existence. We do so because it is from God, and it is this spirit which is nearest to Him, and inherent in it are the secrets belonging to the Realm of Transcendental Manifestations of Divinity. Also, humankind’s being God’s vicegerent on earth is because of their having such a spirit. This spirit within human beings is both a gift from a realm having nothing to do with materiality to the corporeal realm and like a tongue, a translator, of metaphysical considerations. First of all, this essence, which we call the spirit, is a manifestation from both the Realms of Divine Knowledge and Existence; it is a conscious law from the Realm of Divine Commands because of its relation to the Divine Essence, and is luminous and transparent due to its perfect capacity to learn and know its Creator. If one wishes to be open to Divine secrets—given that everybody is created with the necessary potential to realize this—this will be possible only through the heart and spirit. As the secrets related to the truth of Divinity can be viewed only from the horizon of the heart through the eye of the spirit, so nearness to God beyond intellect, logic, and reasoning, and beyond all causes can be realized only by means of the spirit and the rules of the heart.

The spirit is an observer and the heart is its special observatory; the spirit is an athlete on the path to God and the heart is its most vital source of energy; the spirit is a traveler and the heart is a guide leading it to its destination; we can even say that the heart is a mysterious meeting place of the soul with its true Beloved beyond any measures or modalities of quantity and quality. For this reason, if one is to turn toward eternity, they should first of all turn toward the door of heart, they should keep telling stories of the heart, mingle with people of heart, and make their spirit wear feathers from the wings of the heart, so that they may not be hindered by the obstacles of the physical world. On the way to eternity, the heart is a person’s hand or wing; it is a dynamo taking its energy from the realms beyond. Those who have the support of the power of the heart and set about the journey toward the heavens under its guidance do not need any other means whatsoever. They keep up their journeying abreast with spirit beings. These souls who run to he nearness of the Divine Throne without tiring are like riders of the heart who have largely freed themselves from carnal concerns. The sounds of angels’ wings are heard all the time in the very realms where they flap their wings.

With its intermediary existence between this world and the next, the inner and outer dimensions of existence, the physical and metaphysical worlds, the heart, which has been created at the intersection point of spiritual and material realms and bears the seal of the Creator, is like a Universal Human among human beings. It has a very extensive area of contact. With such extensiveness, it is that which is enveloped at the same time as it is that which envelops, and something which encompasses while it is encompassed. While inside the body, the heart is the true source of its life; it is the body’s guide on the path to eternity even though it seems to be bound to physicality. The spirit is open to illuminations due to the light of the heart, and it is attractive owing to its essential attractiveness.

Within human nature, the physical form and life are like secondary elements in the tow of the heart’s essence. In fact, the value held by both the appearance and life completely derives from the heart. The intellect has always woven its most lasting works in the atmosphere of the heart. When the inspirations of the heart surround the mind from all sides, all the false lights related to logic and reasoning disappear; only and nothing but the candle of the heart, whose wax and wick have their source in the realms beyond, keeps shining brightly.

Pure clear waters keep flowing in the fountain of the heart, which is supplied from infinity. Around the lantern-glass of the heart, whose light and color comes from the realms beyond, spirit beings keep circling like butterflies all the time. Those who manage to reach such a fountain of life can be considered to have laid their prayer mat on the same green sward as Khadr.[[6]](#footnote-6) And those who have this lantern-glass in their pupils do not wish to part from that source of light again. The raising of the veil on the face of the heart and the awakening of the heart’s eye to eternity depends completely on time and active patience. Since the eyes of the hearts of those who make good use of time and practice this patience will certainly open, tomorrow if not today, it should not be doubted that their tongues will become waterfalls of proclamation in time. When the time comes and their hearts are enlightened with the lights of the horizons they have reached, and when their tongue is unbound, they perform such lovely melodies that they charm everyone.

The heart is a horizon that is so open to divine secrets that the commotion of angels and the wing claps of spirit beings are heard a mere two steps away. For those who reach such a station of secrets, the Sidra[[7]](#footnote-7) and the Ka‘ba virtually become an integrated whole. The Prophet’s Rawda[[8]](#footnote-8) becomes a cover of the Paradise of Firdaws.[[9]](#footnote-9) The divine name Al-Awwal[[10]](#footnote-10) assumes the color of Al-Akhir[[11]](#footnote-11)… Al-Zahir[[12]](#footnote-12) is dyed in the color of Al-Batin[[13]](#footnote-13)… one’s feelings are struck with the utmost astonishment,[[14]](#footnote-14) the spirit feels amazement… speech takes a step back… the heart sets about speaking through the tongue of the soul. And everything is charmed with the charm of infinity.

The speaking of heart-oriented people is without letters and words; they always speak through their spirits. As Rumi also expressed it, they converse with one another without tongues or lips… . They keep smiling at one another from the color of their hearts, which is reflected in their faces like roses. Among these souls who have completely immersed themselves in the dye of the heart, the idea of *“you”* or *“I”* completely disappears and what remains behind is a relative *“us,”* which depends on *“Him.”* In this respect, they never compete with one another, do not try to extinguish the light of the other, and they do not seek priority and say, *“my candle”* or *“my torch.”* As a matter of fact, light does not challenge another light, spring does not fight against greenery, the sea does not dry a drop. One shining thing only makes another shine more, the rays of one light come to the aid of another, the spring lives intermingled with greenery, the sea paves the way to immortality for the drop…. Every single thing and whispers to us poems of being *“us.”*

As far as a person depends on his own person, he cannot be saved from being an atom, a drop, and even a nothing. On the other hand, when people shatter the glass of the ego and merge with others in the immensity of their heart and attain a different nature out of their own narrow world, they immediately become a sun, an ocean, and a universe. Like raindrops which unite and become a waterfall, they virtually become rivers and take the path to infinity, and they rise to a surpassing value. And if they fail to attain such a value, they remain within worldly and material values whose worth only lasts until the grave. When they die one day, everything ends, and they just drift away like dried leaves in fall. As for the roses, the flowers of the heart’s garden, they remain ever fresh and never fade. Here are a few beautiful words expressing the suffering of a soul who has attached everything to worldliness:

Some of them hurt the conscience, and some the body;

Whatever I did for pleasure, I regretted.

*Namık Kemal*

And listen to these hopeful words, all of which are the voice of the heart:

In this world all the flowers wither,

The sweet songs of the birds are brief;

I dream of summers that will last

Always!

…

In this world every man is mourning

His lost friendship or his lost love;

I dream of fond lovers abiding

Always!

*Sully Prudhomme*

And now let us listen to these prayer-like words which relate everything to the delight of an immense appreciation of the divine:

…I am mortal, but I do not want the mortal.

I am impotent, so I do not desire the impotent.

I surrendered my spirit to the All-Merciful One,

so I desire none else.

I want only One Who will remain my friend forever.

I am but an insignificant particle,

but I desire an everlasting sun.

I am nothing in essence,

but I wish for the whole of creation.

*Said Nursi (Seventeenth Word)*

Undesirable things are those that will leave us after two steps. And what is truly desirable is the Beloved One, Who is always beheld on the horizons of the heart. Those who ascend to the peaks of the heart and behold[[15]](#footnote-15) Him through the eye of the soul can be considered to have found everything and to be saved. As for those who live unaware of such a point of observation, they eternally moan with longing and grief. And the way to ascend such a citadel depends on ridding oneself of the wall of biological life and turning toward the life levels of the heart and spirit. The fastest means to do this, which helps a rapid ascent, is to be constantly open to the truths of faith, divine oneness, and knowledge of God.

1. See Wijdan (Conscience) in Gülen, Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism Vol. 3 for more discussion on the four components of conscience and how they are related: the heart, the willpower, the mind, and the power of perceptiveness. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For an explanation of *“amazement”* (hayra) in the Sufi sense, see Dahsha and Hayra in Gülen, Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism, Volume I. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid. Asq and Ishtiyaq [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. These two epistemological concepts need further analysis independently studied under the discipline of Sufism. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. From “Seeds of Truth” in the Damascus Sermon of Said Nursi, No. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Khadr (Khidr): A blessed person who represents eternal enlivening or the gaining of eternity through elixir. (Tr.) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Sidratul Muntaha, or the Lote Tree of the Farthest Length, is the name of the spiritual station the Prophet reached during the night of Ascension and it denotes the ultimate proximity to God. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The Garden of the Prophet, or Rawda, is the area between his blessed tomb and pulpit where he used to deliver his sermons. It is reported that the Prophet once said, “Between my home and pulpit lies a garden of Paradise.” [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Highest abode in Paradise. The Prophet said, “Ask God for the Firdaws, for it is the highest abode in Paradise.” [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The First, Whom there is none that precedes. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The Last, Who eternally exists while all other beings are perishable. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The All-Outward, Who encompasses the whole of existence from outside, and there is none that encompasses Him. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The All-Inward, Who encompasses the whole existence from within in His knowledge. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. see Dahsha and Hayra in Gülen, Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism, Volume I. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. What is translated here as “behold” (tamasha) denotes an awareness of God, rather than a literal seeing, which is impossible. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)