# Conscience[[1]](#footnote-1)

Literally meaning the essence of human existence and a person's perception of themselves, wijdan (conscience) is a spiritual mechanism composed of the willpower, which chooses between good and evil, the spiritual intellect (fuad), which is the inner, most essential dimension of the heart, the inner power of perceptiveness (sensation or feeling), and consciousness. It is a mechanism through which a person perceives themselves, and feels or experiences and interprets existence and its relationship with God, providing for humans a window opening on belief, knowledge and love of God, and yearning for Him in proportion with the vitality of the above-mentioned four pillars. In this mechanism, which has various metaphysical depths, we can sense the voice of willpower, the discernments and observations of the spiritual intellect, the mind's acquired knowledge, fed or filtered by consciousness, and the sensations of the power of perceptiveness and the gifts of Divine knowledge that flow into it.

The conscience is also a conscious observer and interpreter in the sense that being aware of the innate powerlessness, poverty, and neediness of humanity, it feels the necessity of applying to and relying on a power that can satisfy humans in respect of these basic shortcomings in them. Consequently, the conscience takes refuge in the Divine Being with belief, submission, and reliance, and turns to Him with knowledge and love of Him and yearning for Him. In addition to studying, reflecting on, analyzing, and synthesizing the messages of all things and events in the name of knowledge and knowledge of God, the conscience has such a subtle, transcending power of expression based on its own dynamics and pillars that those who can hear its voice and judgments do not need anything else to understand the meaning of the messages of existence.

In thus speaking, I in no way mean that there is no need for rational knowledge, or that scientific research, experimental knowledge, or information acquired as a result of centuries-old experiences are insignificant. On the contrary, I would like to emphasize that, in addition to the assessment and benefit that we can derive from conclusions reached through reason, the results of experiences, and the perceptions of the five external senses, each according to their own value, there is another source of knowledge, which is based on inner experiences and intuitions and which can be attained without any means. This source, which leads humans to true knowledge through personal inner experiences without needing any means to discover or establish the truth, is the conscience. Even though such knowledge may sometimes be regarded as subjective, it is as important for those who are open to life at the level of the heart and spirit as the kind of knowledge acquired through known means of learning. Therefore, there have always been many who accept the conscience as a source of knowledge. According to these people, since the conscience leads us directly to the truth itself, rather than presenting to us its map or diagram, it is more significant and reliable as a source of knowledge. Even though the observation and study of things and events and the process of analyzing and synthesizing them enable us to observe the truth from afar and approach it to a certain extent, it cannot provide exact knowledge of it in its true nature and identity. However, the conscience perceives the truth without any means, examines it, and draws a decisive conclusion about it. Those who approach things and events from outside cannot go farther than studying or having some knowledge of these things according to their limited horizon of knowledge, their scope of observation, and personal viewpoints. Therefore, their conclusions are only of a relative value. But the conscience comprehends these regarding what and how they are in their true identity and nature. It transcends matter, is saved from the confines of space, and can grasp the truth itself in proportion to its purity and profundity.

In some of his treatises, Bediüzzaman draws a somewhat different picture of conscience and attributes important functions to it. According to him, the conscience is a conscious, innate mechanism of the same kind as Divine laws of *“nature.”* Resembling the law of growth in seeds, the laws of creation in sperms or eggs, and the freezing and expansion of certain fluids, the conscience is a conscious law equipped with willpower which issues from the Divine Will, the spiritual intellect, consciousness, and the power of perceptiveness. It is an important tongue that sees, judges, and speaks correctly in proportion to the vitality of such pillars. Even though reason may err in its views, reflections, or judgments, the conscience always proclaims the existence of God in the language of its nature and pillars; it breathes with its vision of Him, contemplates and feels Him; and like a sunflower, driven by a sense of reliance and seeking help which is ingrained in it, it always fixes its eyes on Him. Its intuition always calls on it to remain wakeful; inspiration constantly illuminates its horizon; yearning, which can be regarded as accumulated knowledge of God, continuously indicates Him; and burning Divine love and the zeal to meet Him uninterruptedly invite it to the observation of the All-Known One with His Attributes, Names, and acts, whispering to it the fascinating aspects of life beyond carnality.

Now, let us take an overview of the spiritual intellect, willpower, and consciousness, and the power of perceptiveness, which are the pillars of conscience.

**The Spiritual Intellect**

Each of the pillars mentioned has an inner and outer dimension that relates to the Realm of the Transcendental Manifestation of Divine Commands and the Corporeal Realm, respectively. What we call *“the bosom,”* which is the outer, corporeal dimension of the spiritual intellect, is a covering of the inner depths of conscience and its aspects that relate to the Realm of the Transcendental Manifestation of Divine Attributes and Names. The bosom is like a picture of the meaning or spirituality of matter. The heart, which is within the bosom, is a house for the Transcendental Manifestation of Divinity, which receives the Divine gifts or radiations that emanate on different wavelengths; the spiritual intellect (fuad) is a polished mirror that has the potential to reflect the Divine Attributes and Names, and is a special observer of the Realm in which they are transcendently manifested in proportion to the degree of its expansion. The spiritual intellect is also where the light of belief and conviction manifests itself and where the moon of knowledge of God rises. It receives inspirations and transmits Divine gifts and radiance. Due to its position and mission, the spiritual intellect has a furnace-like depth in which it produces flames of love for God and yearning for His reunion. As for what is called *“the secret,”* with its incomprehensible dimensions, it is a telescope or a polished mirror that rests on the shoulder of the spiritual intellect, and which is directed toward the Realm of the Transcendental Manifestation of Divinity. The *“secret”* has always been regarded as a palace in the human heart for God to *“visit.”* So long as it remains purified, it can always entertain its *“Guest.”* In order for this visit to be continuous, the faculties of consciousness, perception, and receptiveness should be purified of all pollution of carnality. How beautiful the following couplet by Nabi is:

Purify your mirror of perception of whatever is other than Him;  
Be ashamed of any pollution, for the Monarch does not come to a dirty house.

We read the same consideration in the following couplet by Ibrahim Haqqi of Erzurum, who emphasizes the importance of nighttime for such visits:

The heart is a house of God, purify it of whatever there is other than Him,  
So that the All-Merciful may descend into His palace at night!

He invites his audience to remain awake at nights, because nights are more appropriate for turning toward the immaterial Realms of Divine manifestations.

Humans have more even subtle faculties than the heart and the secret. They are *“the private,”* and *“the more private.”* These faculties always turn toward a horizon, the identity of which is impossible to perceive, and are absorbed in their instances of turning; each is a ball of mysteries—a source of amazement and astonishment. Together with *“the secret”* and the spiritual intellect, these faculties are honored with special manifestations of God.

The spiritual intellect is like the pupil in the eye, the center of sight in the brain, the living room in a house, the core in a seed, the wick in a lamp, and the Ka'ba on the earth. Belief diffuses its light from the horizon of this faculty, and the fundamentals of journeying toward knowledge of God such as reverence, piety, love, resignation, certainty, reliance, composure or self-possession, wakefulness, fear, and expectation grow on its slopes. The spiritual intellect is such a mystery of Divine Oneness in His particular manifestations that its light shines in the hands of the willpower stretched toward Him, the comprehensions of the power of perceptiveness, and the position of consciousness before Him. When the spiritual intellect's connection with God is severed, then its light is extinguished, and it loses its real identity. The spiritual intellect preserves its identity so long as it remains connected with Him through belief, conviction, righteous deeds, and knowledge of Him, with its light shining brightly; and it becomes a mechanism to observe His Essential Attributes, or it acts as an observer of them. The spiritual intellect is an element that distinguishes between our feelings, sensations, and impressions; it is a mine of knowledge of God and the spirit's source of light and vitality. Due to its nature, we can regard the spiritual intellect to be unrestricted in space. It is the “touchstone” of our knowledge, the most vital depository of our perceptions, and so long as it is not paralyzed or killed through unbelief or other types of misguidance, it is the focus of attention of God Almighty, or the pavilion of His manifestations.

With the eyes of this faculty, which the Sufis call *“insight,”* people see everything just as it is, interpreting all they see correctly, and draw correct conclusions. Under its light, they rise to the horizon of spiritual discovery and observation, and penetrating beyond *“the secret,”* they begin to imagine the peaks of *“the private”* and *“the more private.”* But if this faculty—the spiritual intellect—is contaminated with sins and exposed to any kind of misguidance, including unbelief, then as declared in the Qur'anic verse, But what they themselves have earned has rusted upon their hearts (83: 14), all of its horizons are darkened, and it begins to perceive white as black and vice versa, and God seals it, as indicated in the verse, God has set a seal upon their hearts (2: 7). It becomes extremely difficult, even impossible, for it to recover its initial purity. While established belief and regular worship and doing righteous deeds are favored with endurance or steadfastness, sins, so long as they are not eliminated through repentance, penitence, and contrition, cause people to suffer swerves in the heart. Each sin is a door to unbelief.

Both the spiritual intellect and the Supreme Preserved Tablet are each a mirror to God, according to their own capacities. With its contents, the Supreme Preserved Tablet remains unchanged. But the spiritual intellect can always display changes of color, shape, and design under the influence of different failures. Therefore, those who are aware of this apply to the Divine Court many times a day, entreating, *“Our Lord, do not let our hearts swerve after You have guided us!”* (3: 8)

So long as it remains intact and is preserved from deviations, the spiritual intellect is an excellent student of Divine Attributes, a polished mirror of Divine favors, an important stimulant to knowledge and love of God and yearning for Him, as well as to feeling an attraction toward and being attracted by Him. With the eyes of this faculty, people can observe the realms beyond; with its ears, they can listen to mysterious sermons that are given without words or voices, and guide others to the holiest manifestations by means of it. They can do all these as long as they can preserve this faculty with its primordial purity and decorate it with belief, knowledge, and love of God. Let us put an end to the discussion of this faculty with the following couplet of Hanifi:

Come O Sufi, purify the inside of your heart to attain love,  
For one who desires the Guest should certainly decorate his palace.

**Willpower According to the Basic Principles of the Islamic Creed**

Four ways of thought and belief have come into existence regarding the view of this human faculty:

1. Those who deny it and therefore consider humans to be devoid of any free will like inanimate objects that have no say in their actions. This way is known as fatalism, or absolute determinism (jabr mutlaq).
2. Those who accept that, although humans have some degree of free will and power, their will and power play no part in their actions. Whenever they display an inclination to perform an action, God creates the power and capacity in them to do it. This is known as relative fatalism (jabr mutawassit).
3. Those who attribute all human actions to human free will and power and claim that humans are the creators of their actions. According to them, God has delegated His creativity to humans themselves with respect to their actions. This way is called absolute delegation (tafwiz mutlaq).
4. Those who reject both absolute fatalism and delegation and affirm that it is humans themselves who will and perform their actions, while it is God Who creates their actions. According to these people, doing and creating are different things, and humans are responsible for their actions as agents or doers. This is clear in the verse, In its favor is what ever (good) a soul earns, and against it whatever (evil) it merits (2: 286). This is the way of the Maturidis.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Humans have both a certain degree of free will and power to execute their will. They show a tendency to do something and have a capacity to put it into action. Although God is, in principle, never obliged to give existence in the physical realm to whatever humans will or do, He creates the human deeds that are performed as a result of their tendency or free will. For humans are responsible for their will and deeds. If God did not create their will, actions or deeds, human responsibility would have been meaningless.

According to the Maturidis, along with whatever we have, including our free will and power, we are created beings. However, both human power and free will are of two kinds:

1. The universal will
2. The particular will

The *“universal will”* is a potential power of will or choice, created together with ourselves and inculcated in our being. It is an established pillar of the mechanism of conscience, whether we use it or not, and it is ready to use. Our use of this potential power for any activity is described as the *“particular will.”* We can also call using our potential willpower for a particular activity our *“intention,” “tendency,” “resolution,”* or *“choice.”*

The perfect, requiring, or essential reason (raison d'être) for the occurrence of any action is the execution of human intention or inclination by the Divine Will and Power. Both Will and Power are essential to the Divine Being and beyond our capacity for comprehension; both the human universal will and particular will are each only a particular manifestation of Divine Will, the former being created by Divine Power and the latter having only the nominal existence that was endowed on humanity by its Creator.

From the earliest times of human existence, many people have supposed their partial will to have a certain creative power like Divine Will and Power; therefore, they have regarded themselves as free and powerful enough to be able to do whatever they wish. This has caused them to deviate into ways of misguidance as far as associating partners with God. Many an arrogant man, many a tyrant, and many a lord of power have come into and departed from this world, leaving behind some cursed traces in people's memories. However, there have been many others who, although belittled by others, have comprehended and admitted their innate powerlessness and poverty, and thus have relied on Divine Power; these people have been favored with extraordinary accomplishments. They continue to live in our hearts as people of blessed memory, encouraging us to put our present plans into action and energizing our hopes and expectations for the future.

What this historical fact teaches us is that it is the Divine Power Which both brings us and our actions into existence, and equips us with certain special capacities. That infinite Power is not, as some assert, an inactive Power Which created the universe with whatever is in it and then entrusted its operation and maintenance to certain laws or forces. Rather, it is the Power Which does whatever It wills, Which existed eternally before all else came into existence, and Which will continue to exist eternally after the death of everything. It is also this self-existing and self-sustaining Power Which maintains everything else. While some of those who are unable to comprehend this essential truth or follow it, being partly under the influence of the deterministic-seeming operation of the universe and their innate powerlessness and neediness, have swerved into fatalism, others, intoxicated with a favorable turn of events and their apparent accomplishments, have been so arrogant as to suppose themselves to be the creators of their actions and therefore have attributed all of their accomplishments to their own supposed powers and abilities. However, humankind stands at the junction of the body and the spirit, the heart and reason, capacity and favor, the observation of necessary rules and the fulfillment of requirements and belief in and full reliance on the Creator of those rules and requirements, and free will and dependence. Humankind is different from all other creatures, being both effective and affected, free and compelled, and a possessor of heart and reason, yet in need of mercy and help. Humans need Divine illumination, and when they turn to God to be illuminated, they are illuminated. With their very being, humans are restricted, never being able to transcend the limits that have been placed on them. For this reason, those who are immured in fatalism are attributing wrongdoing and injustice to God, knowingly or unknowingly; while others who suppose humans to have absolute free will and power to be able to do whatever they will are deifying humanity. The people of the middle, straight way neither accept fatalism nor regard humans as having sufficient absolute freedom or power to do whatever they will. On the contrary, they perceive human innate powerlessness and poverty as a truth-speaking witness of the One of infinite Power, and regard their wishes and will as favors of mercy from the Divine Will. Ever conscious of their restrictions, they are representations of constraint and neediness, but thanks to Divine Mercy they have a certain degree of free will and power. The people of the middle way believe that all favors and accomplishments are from God. However, they also believe that in order to be able to receive these favors and be honored with accomplishments, they must do whatever falls to their share as responsible beings. Such people never forget that they will be treated by God according to their tendencies, choices, and actions.

We always try to follow this way of thought, creed, and action, and regard ourselves as the doers of our actions, called *“the actions related to human free will,”* deeming it harmless to say, *“We have eaten; we have drunk; we have slept; we have sat down; and we have stood up; and son on.”* Nevertheless, we also believe that the essential or primary cause and creator of all our actions is the sole Creator of everything. Like all other secondary causes, we are also a veil before His acts. It is our creed that matter is inactive, all secondary causes are unconscious, we are beings desiring and doing, and God is the sole Creator. Those who regard their free will and tendencies or wishes as the origin and primary cause of their actions have always suffered deviations of thought and creed. When they see that their wishes and demands are not fulfilled, they are not able to save themselves from going to the opposite extreme, thus drowning in fatalism and despair. It is absolutely true that God Almighty is the All-Compelling and the All-Overwhelming, Who can absolutely do and have others do whatever He wills. But this does not mean that He does not consider the free will He has bestowed on humanity. In addition to being the All-Compelling and the All-Overwhelming, He is also the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate, the All-Just, and the All-Wise.

The people of sainthood have perceived human free will or willpower along with inclination, intention, and resolution in the attainment of such virtues as truthfulness, trustworthiness, purity of intention or sincerity in faith, performing religious deeds, being pleasing to God, and striving to exalt the Religion. They have always considered it in relation with the commandments and deeds that pertain to the other world. They have regarded a life of deviation, in which one pursues worldly gains in return for religious deeds, spends one's life in worldly expectations, and contaminates one's projects and endeavors with ostentation, hypocrisy, and even by associating partners with God, as forms of disrespect toward the willpower endowed on humanity and insolence toward God Who has given it.

Those endowed with knowledge of God are grounded in rational proofs at the beginning of their spiritual journey; they always follow the Divine Speech—the Qur'an—strictly at every step, and try to attain knowledge of God. These are considered to be the initial attempts required by being endowed with willpower. One who is able to maintain these inclinations in this direction is called *“the one willing,”* or *“the willing one.”* As a result of continuing in this direction, God opens the willing one's eye of the heart to look toward Him. This is the stage where *“the willing one”* becomes *“the willed one.”* That is to say, an initiate who tries to *“find”* the True, Ever-Constant One in this degree of endeavor is loved and desired by the residents of the heavens, and becomes a focus of God's attention.

In the same way that willpower is a tendency, endeavor, and resolution, it is also an important means for reaching God when it is honored by a feeling of attraction toward God and a feeling of being attracted by Him. Through the value attached to willpower by God Almighty, a person lives in the world as if living in the Hereafter aided by resolution, endeavor, and steadfastness. Without expecting or aspiring to any pleasures, be they material or spiritual, he or she transcends normal human dimensions, being one who has renounced all else other than God. Once a person is intent on the true goal—this is what he or she can do—in the first step the spirit is freed from heedlessness by God's will and help, and reaches the horizon of wakefulness. He or she spreads *“his or her prayer rug”* on the ground of repentance, penitence, and contrition; begins breathing piety, righteousness, and abstinence; inhales truthfulness, and sincerity; acts with self-criticism and self-supervision, and finally advances toward the peaks of reliance, surrender, and commitment.

Using willpower in this way means committing oneself and all one's deeds and plans to God Almighty in full submission to Him. An initiate submits their will first to the will of their guide, and in the words of the Master of creation, upon him be peace and blessings, experiences “revival after death.” While engulfed in temporary annihilation in the rays emanating from this horizon, they find themselves in a deep experience of absolute annihilation under the intense manifestation of Divine Will. If we call this state *“annihilation in respect of will,”* the following experience of self-transformation may be called *“subsistence through willpower.”* In the view of an initiate who has reached this point, everything created, which the theologians call “realities of contingency,” seems non-existent, and the person observes nothing but *“the Truth of All Truths.”* The words, *“O God! Renouncing all my desires and aspirations, I only seek whatever You will and are pleased with,”* is what those who pursue this horizon utter frequently.

These are the Divine favors that come in return for directing willpower to endeavor, faithfulness, and sincerity. Those who are still at the beginning of the journey cannot experience them. Awareness of willpower as an important means to reach God is the first step or mansion on the way to God. An initiate in this mansion is usually occupied with gaining knowledge and pursuing proofs of Him. In the second step, initiates combine theoretical knowledge about and proofs of Him with spiritually experienced knowledge of Him and they begin to feel light pouring down into their eyes and hearts. At the third step, they are exhilarated with the observation of their hearts in the horizon of Divine Attributes. If they are able to take a further step, they direct their telescope of *“secret”* to the horizon of Divinity and start to experience *“amazement”* and *“passion”*[[3]](#footnote-3) according to their capacity.

Some Sufi scholarly guides who view willpower only from the perspective of endeavor and resolution maintain that first the heart turns toward the All-Sought One with faithfulness and sincerity. This requires steadfastness in using willpower in the right direction— regular worship, doing righteous deeds, and avoiding all evil and sins. While the initiate is advancing in this way, they begin to feel attraction toward and are attracted by God. This is the point where the initiate begins to suffer no hardship in fulfilling their duties. When the breezes of nearness to God begin stroking the spirit, the initiate finds themselves enveloped by unbearable feelings of love and yearning. Without being able to resist any longer their exuberant desire to meet Him, they sigh with utterances at every breath: *“My liver has been roasted; / Is there no cure for my suffering?”* Such a hero, who has fulfilled all the requirements of having willpower to the greatest degree possible, even forgets love, and begins living in absorption. Even if they are together with the Beloved, they dream about Him and burn with longing for Him. One who has not tasted does not know; one who has not experienced does not understand; those who have tasted do not relate their experiences, and even if those who have tasted it do say something, people do not believe what they say.

**The Mind**

The mind is the faculty for learning and remembering, a pool or library of the activities of consciousness. Acquisitions through conscious and subconscious activities flow onto the diskette of the mind, pour into the memory, and are recorded as ready to remember and use.

Consciousness is an important element of the mind. As it studies and evaluates other things, it is also aware of itself. Consciousness has equipment to form both simple and compound or composite sensations, impressions, and perceptions. Since it is aware of its content and has a connection with reason, some also regard it as a faculty open to the world of inner and outer sensations, sentiments, and feelings.

However, there are some Muslim scholars who see consciousness as the opposite of negligence and forgetfulness. According to them, consciousness is, as the first step of perception, the first impression that is received through initial contact with things or the source of the knowledge which has not yet been absorbed by reason or memory. From this viewpoint, we can regard consciousness as the first bridge of the spirit to reach the meaning or essence of things. This can also be explained by the following process: If the spirit has had contact with something in its true nature, this is *“conception.”* If these first impressions are recorded and kept ready to study and evaluate, this is *“memorization.”* If these acquisitions can be remembered for evaluation, this is *“recollection.”*

In one respect, consciousness is the first and weakest stage of knowledge. Until it is established in the mind, it cannot be fully evaluated. Consciousness is like a seed in comparison with a tree, or a sperm in comparison with a living being. Although of weak nature, it has a capacity to gain stability, and is an important pillar of conscience. In one respect, it is based on the outer senses and external impressions, feeding the mind with its acquisitions.

There is another matter that should be mentioned concerning consciousness. The Sufi scholars also speak of a soul's being aware of itself, which is called *“the inner perceptiveness.”* It is in fact this dimension or form of consciousness which is one of the important pillars of conscience. It is ready to be recollected, evaluated, studied, reflected, and reasoned out. This is no longer a matter of simple consciousness, but rather a multi-dimensional consciousness that is suitable for analyzing and synthesizing. Analyzed and synthesized, this degree of consciousness takes on a mental shape in memory, becoming employable by reason. It is after this step that knowledge begins to be formed. Reason always begins to work through the stimulation of consciousness, thus triggering the power of thinking and reflection. This activates the faculties or powers of conception, reasoning, and reflection, with the result that the information waiting in the consciousness begins flowing to the filters of analysis and synthesis in the laboratories of the mind. This is followed by the emergence of new compositions, which take on the color of the spiritual intellect and the design of willpower.

The mind is always fed through the channels of consciousness. It records the information it gains and prepares it for various faculties to use. In turn, consciousness has an important source of information: it is the power of perceptiveness.

**The Power of Perceptiveness**

The power of perceptiveness is the power with which people sense, feel, or perceive the things around them. A person has two powers or faculties of perceptiveness, namely the outer power of perceptiveness and the inner power of perceptiveness.

In addition to the external five senses or powers of sight, touch (feeling), hearing, smell, and taste, a person also has certain inner senses or powers such as the faculties or powers of imagination, will, conception or conceptualization, manipulation, understanding, supposition, and recollection. All of these faculties are in close coordination with the other pillars of the conscience, and each faculty gives its color to the acts related to itself and, if it preserves its vitality, directs them to the purpose of its creation.

If the things perceived through either the external senses or the inner faculties have a perceptible existence, then this perception is an *“objective”* sensation, and it is in this sensation that the scientific, objective value of consciousness lies. But if we cannot help but feel a tendency toward something under the influence of an indefinable drive which we call *“the sense of impelling”* or *“a drive,”* or if we rejoice or feel stimulated because of something unknown under the direction of what we call *“the sense of enthusing”* or *“enthusiasm,”* this is an inner, subjective sensation and therefore it does not have much scientific value. If, like the occurrence of a joyful event, or the body's shivering because of cold, or becoming sweaty due to heat, or the appearance of a light in the darkness, or a sound striking the ears, there is a concrete reason for any feeling, it is an objective sensation related to the consciousness. However, we can perceive only the outer, corporeal sphere of existence with our external senses. The metaphysical realms are beyond our sensations. The Prophet Moses' desire to see God was answered with, *“You will never be able to see Me!”* (7: 143). But there are many who accept that during his Ascension, the Prophet Muhammad, the Master of creation, upon him be peace and blessings, was honored with a *“vision”* of God, according to the capacity of the mirror of his spirit. This happened when he reached the rank of being as near to God as the nearness of *“two bow-lengths adjacent to each other,”* (53: 9) which is the rank where the external sensations disappear and the body becomes nearly as refined as the spirit, being a polished mirror to the realms beyond. A Muslim saint expressed this experience of the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be the most perfect of blessings, as follows:

O Messenger of God, your face became a mirror to God,  
Where the holy, pure secret of Divine Essence manifested Itself.  
Your body is the book of our Lord's secrets throughout;  
Where the signs (verses) of God are read in the sura of your appearance.

Each human external or internal power, or faculty, of perception has both sensations and inner experiences. Objective sensations provide the material for scientific knowledge, while inner experiences are of a subjective nature, differing from one person and state to another. The Sufis categorize sensations or *“objective”* perceptions and inner experiences or *“subjective”* perceptions as follows:

The initiates who are yet at the beginning of the spiritual journey have contact with the corporeal and incorporeal realms with the superficial perceptions of their powers of sense.

The relationships of those who have been distinguished with a certain degree of nearness to God with both the corporeal and incorporeal realms exist through their intellectual and spiritual faculties. They are candidates for a vision of what lies beyond the *“observable horizons.”*

As for those who are most advanced in knowledge of and nearness to God, who live at the level of the heart and spirit, they are honored with the particular favor of having relations with God through the telescope of their spiritual intellects and *“secrets.”* Those veiled by the perceptions of their external senses are restricted by the Divine declaration, *“You will never be able to see Me!”* (7: 143), in the sense that they will never be able to have a *“vision”* of Him.[[4]](#footnote-4) While those with refined, illumined spirits—those who have taken off on the wings of the inner senses of perception or inner experience— receive the glad tidings of *“You will see Me!”*[[5]](#footnote-5)

Let us end this important topic with a meaningful, concise consideration by Beidüzzaman Said Nursi:

The human conscious nature, which we call conscience, and which distinguishes between what is good and evil, which feels pleasure and exhilaration in what is good, and suffers from and is grieved by what is evil, consists of four basic elements, namely the spiritual intellect, willpower, the mind, and the power of perceptiveness. These four elements are also regarded as the senses of the spirit. In addition to their different duties and functions, each of these senses has an ultimate purpose for its existence. The ultimate purpose for willpower is worshipping God; for the mind, it is having knowledge of God; for the power of perceptiveness, it is love of God; and for the spiritual intellect, it is vision of God. What we call taqwa (piety and righteousness), which is the perfect form or degree of worship, is the result of the functions of all these four senses. The Shari'a feeds them so that they develop, equips them with the necessary material, and directs them to the ultimate purposes for the existence of each.[[6]](#footnote-6)

O God! Help us to be able to mention You, thank You, and worship You properly!  
O God! Favor us with a good end in all of our affairs, and save us from humiliation in the world and punishment in the Hereafter! Bestow Your blessings and peace upon the Key of creation and the whole created realm, and the Conveyor and Teacher of the Qur'an, and upon his good, upright, and pure Family and Companions altogether, so long as days and nights continue.

1. Wijdan. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Maturidis are the Muslims who follow Muhammad ibn Muhammad Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (d. 944), who was born in Samarqand, in present day Uzbekistan, and studied theology, jurisprudence, and Qur'anic commentary. The Maturidis and Ash'aris, belonging to Sunni Islam, have always made up the overwhelming majority of Muslims. Maturidis assert that humans have free will and are doers of their actions, while it is God Who creates both their will and actions. (Tr.) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For the “amazement” and “passion,” see, M. Fethullah Gülen, Emerald Hills of the Heart – Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism, The Light, NJ, 2004, vol. 2, pp. 39–44, 52–55, respectively. (Tr.) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, certainly was not veiled by the perceptions of his external senses. Like everybody else, he was only prevented from physically seeing God while in the world. (Tr.) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The respected author refers to the hadith, *“Certainly you will see (have a vision of) your Lord (in Paradise), as you see this moon, and you will have no trouble in seeing Him.”* (al-Bukhari, *“Tawhid”* 24; Muslim, *“Masajid”* 211.) (Tr.) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, Khutba-i Shamiya (“The Sermon of Damascus”), the Second Part of the Second Addendum. (Tr.) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)