

## SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND DIVINE KNOWLEDGE IN THE THOUGHT OF AYATULLAH HASAN ZADEH AMULI

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Article Info	Abstract
<p><i>Article History</i> Submitted: 18 April 2025 Accepted: 26 May 2025 Published: 1 June 2025</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Self-Knowledge; Divine Knowledge; Hasan Zadeh Amuli; Philosophy; Mysticism</p> <p><i>Correspondence:</i> <a href="mailto:ready.irawan30@gmail.com">ready.irawan30@gmail.com</a></p>	<p><i>This research critically examines the relationship between self-knowledge and Divine knowledge in the thought of Hasan Zadeh Amuli, a contemporary Iranian thinker who combines the traditions of Islamic philosophy, irfan, and Quranic exegesis. Based on the hadith “man ‘arafa nafsahu faqad ‘arafa rabbahu,” Amuli not only establishes it as a spiritual foundation but also as an ontological basis that connects the structure of human existence with Divine manifestation. Through the approach of islamic philosophy and theoretical irfan, he explains that the essence of the human self is a mirror of God; thus, the path to Divine knowledge is not through the negation of the world, but through witnessing the depths of self-existence. This research aims to trace the philosophical and irfani arguments used by Amuli, particularly the concept of Insan kamil. Using a philosophical-hermeneutical approach and textual analysis of Amuli’s works, the findings of this research show that self-knowledge is both an epistemological and ontological path to God, as well as opening a new horizon of understanding in the study of theoretical irfan and contemporary Islamic spirituality. He made a significant contribution by demonstrating that Sufism is compatible with philosophy. In several of his works, he interprets Sufi theories using arguments from Islamic philosophy.</i></p> <p>Penelitian ini mengkaji secara kritis hubungan antara pengetahuan diri dan pengetahuan Ilahi dalam pemikiran Hasan Zadeh Amuli, seorang pemikir Iran kontemporer yang memadukan tradisi filsafat Islam, irfan, dan tafsir Al-Quran. Berdasarkan hadis “man ‘arafa nafsahu faqad ‘arafa rabbahu,” Amuli tidak hanya menetapkan sebagai landasan spiritual tetapi juga sebagai landasan ontologis yang menghubungkan struktur eksistensi manusia dengan manifestasi Ilahi. Melalui pendekatan filsafat Islam dan irfan teoritis, ia menjelaskan bahwa hakikat diri manusia adalah cermin Tuhan; dengan demikian, jalan menuju pengetahuan Ilahi bukanlah melalui negasi dunia, tetapi melalui kesaksian kedalaman eksistensi diri. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melacak argumen filosofis dan irfani yang digunakan oleh Amuli, khususnya konsep Insan kamil. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan filosofis-hermeneutis dan analisis tekstual atas karya-karya Amuli, temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pengetahuan diri merupakan jalan epistemologis dan ontologis menuju Tuhan, sekaligus membuka</p>

	cakrawala pemahaman baru dalam kajian irfan teoritis dan spiritualitas Islam kontemporer. Ia memberikan kontribusi signifikan dengan menunjukkan bahwa tasawuf selaras dengan filsafat. Dalam beberapa karyanya, ia menafsirkan teori-teori Sufi dengan menggunakan argumen-argumen dari filsafat Islam.
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## INTRODUCTION

A classic question in Islamic epistemology “How do humans know God?” has received various answers, ranging from normative theological approaches to mystical experiences. One of the central points in this discourse is the famous hadith: “*Man ‘arafa nafsahu faqad ‘arafa rabbahu*” (Whoever knows himself, knows his Lord). Even Hasan Zadeh Amoli, in one of his works, says, “O Divine, how can I say I do not know You when I have known You, and how can I say I know You when I do not know You?”<sup>1</sup>. This paradox encapsulates the depth of the self–God relationship in Islamic gnosis. Understanding the self is not limited to psychological or empirical dimensions, but involves a layered investigation into the physical, spiritual, and existential aspects of human reality. In this view, the journey of self-discovery becomes a pathway to encountering the Divine, since the human being is regarded as a mirror in which the manifestations of God are reflected<sup>2</sup>.

The other scholars analyze human existence from two perspectives: first, as individual beings and second, as social beings. Each person seeks to realize their potential, embracing their individuality and unique identity<sup>3</sup>. As social creatures, humans exist in a delicate balance between their personal identity and their connections with others. Religion emphasizes the importance of self-awareness, urging individuals to recognize and address mental health issues that can be harmful, as well as the means to heal. Beyond personal growth, experts stress the necessity of being mindful of social and personal responsibilities, fostering a sense

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1 Allameh Hassan Zadeh Amoli, *Elahi Nameh* (Qom: Intishārāt-e Būstān-e Kitāb, 2024), 6.

2 Alaeddin Malekoff, *Nazariyeh Insan e Kamil Az Didgha e Irfan va Falsafeh* (Qom: Al-Mustafa International Center for Translation and Publishing, 2016), 30.

3 Dkk Siti Muthmainnah, “Manusia Dan Eksistensinya Dalam Pandangan Filsafat Islam,” *Referensi Islamika: Jurnal Studi Islam* 1, no. 2 (2023): 2–3, <https://journal.lontaradigitech.com/RI/article/view/196> .

of social accountability. In Islam, spiritual well-being is intricately linked to the welfare of the community<sup>4</sup>.

Humans are inherently social creatures who rely on one another for support. Murtadha Muthahari emphasizes that social life is intrinsic to our nature (fitrah) and existence<sup>5</sup>. While some individuals possess unique talents, others bring different skills to the table. This interdependence highlights our fundamental need for connection. In a society, collective interests must take precedence over individual desires. If everyone focuses solely on their own interests, the common good, which ultimately includes their own well-being, will be overlooked. Consequently, some individuals choose to sacrifice for the greater good<sup>6</sup>.

One of the most important benefits of self-knowledge is the realization that a person is a creation of Allah, who is perfect and valuable. This understanding elevates them beyond viewing themselves merely as animals driven by basic needs<sup>7</sup>. Those who possess self-awareness recognize their esteemed position in the eyes of God and refrain from degrading themselves to an animalistic level. Indeed, some hadiths state that humans are created in the image of Allah. A true understanding of oneself fosters a reluctance to commit sins that could create a rift between them and God. The Prophet Muhammad said that one who knows themselves knows their Lord. In this context, Hasan Zadeh Amuli, a contemporary thinker who combines Sadrian philosophy and Ibn ‘Arabi’s irfan, offers a distinctive reading: self-knowledge is not merely a psychological recognition but an ontological dive into the structure of human existence as a Divine manifestation.

Amuli interprets the hadith not merely as a moralistic or conventional Sufi meaning but as a metaphysical indication of the essential connection between the human soul and the existence of God. The urgency of this study lies in the effort to re-understand the relationship between humans and God not as a separate

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4 Sukardi Bay, “Mengenal Diri Dalam Al-Qur’an,” *Islamida: Jurnal Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2022): 45,

<https://ejournal.staidarussalamlampung.ac.id/index.php/islamida/article/download/324/327>.

5 Murtadha Muthahhari, *Masyarakat Dan Sejarah* (Bandung: Mizan, 1993), 17.

6 Murtadha Muthahhari, *Dasar-Dasar Epistemologi Pendidikan Islam*, Terj. Muhammad Bahrudin (Jakarta: Sadra, 2011), 251.

7 Muhammad Ali Shamali, *Mengenal Diri: Tuntunan Islam Dalam Memahami Jiwa Watak Dan Kepribadian Anda* (Jakarta: PT Lentera Basritama, 2001), 71.

transcendent-immanent dichotomy but as an ontological continuity rooted in human existence itself. Through a critical analysis of Amuli's thought, this research aims to demonstrate that *ma'rifat al-nafs* in this context is not merely an ethical or spiritual path but a cosmological as well as epistemological foundation toward God<sup>8</sup>. In this study, the author explores the connection between self-knowledge and the knowledge of Allah, posing the question: how does understanding oneself lead to a deeper knowledge of Allah? To address this inquiry, the author analyzes the works of contemporary Iranian philosopher and Sufi, Ayatullah Hasan Zadeh Amuli.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a library research method with a descriptive-analytical approach. The primary sources analyzed are the original works of Ayatullah Hasan Zadeh Amuli that directly address the epistemological relationship between self-knowledge (*ma'rifat al-nafs*) and knowledge of God (*ma'rifat Allah*), with particular focus on the hadith “*man ‘arafa nafsahu faqad ‘arafa rabbahu*” (“Whoever knows himself, knows his Lord”). The selection of Amuli's texts, such as *Insān Dar ‘Urf e Erfān*, *Uyun Masa'il Nafs* and *Durus Makrifat Nafs* is based on the frequency and depth of discussion concerning key concepts like *nafs*, *tajallī*, and *insan kamil*.

The analysis involves thematic and conceptual reading, tracing the philosophical and mystical terminology across Amuli's works. A philosophical-hermeneutical framework is employed to unpack the multilayered meanings of the texts, particularly those with symbolic and metaphysical significance. In addition to Amuli's writings, comparative references are drawn from selected Sufi and philosophical sources to contextualize his thought within broader traditions of Islamic metaphysics and theoretical *irfan*.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

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<sup>8</sup> Zailan Moris, *Revelation, Intellectual Intuition and Reason in the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra* (London: Routledge, 2003), 112–15.

### **The Birth and Social-Religious Background of Ayatollah Hasan Zadeh Amuli**

Ayatollah Hasan Zadeh Amuli was born in 1929 in the city of Amul, a region in Mazandaran Province, northern Iran<sup>9</sup>. The city of Amul has a long history as a center of Islamic culture in the Caspian Sea region and is known for its strong scholarly traditions in the fields of jurisprudence, philosophy, and mysticism. Born into a religious family, Hasan Zadeh received a rigorous basic religious education from an early age, including lessons in the Quran, Arabic language, and the fundamentals of religious knowledge through traditional methods practiced in the local hawzah. The religious life and intellectual atmosphere in this region laid the early foundation for his spiritual and intellectual development.

Furthermore, the social context of Iran at that time also played an important role. The early 20th century was a transitional period between the legacy of classical Islamic scholarship and the wave of modernity entering the Islamic world, including Iran. Nevertheless, the Mazandaran region, including Amul, continued to preserve the classical Islamic scholarly heritage, particularly within the Imamiyah Shia tradition. In this environment, the young Hasan Zadeh grew and shaped his scholarly character a blend of commitment to the Sharia and a deep inclination towards the dimensions of philosophy and Islamic spirituality. This intellectual tradition will later lead him to further academic and spiritual journeys to larger centers of Shia studies, such as Qom, and become an important foundation in his works of philosophy and mysticism specially on the concept of self-knowledge.<sup>10</sup>

### **Traditional Education - Hawzah and Philosophy**

After completing his basic education in his hometown, Hasan Zadeh Amuli pursued his studies in the hawzah scientific environment in Amul, where he learned fundamental religious sciences such as nahwu, sharaf, logic (mantiq), and fiqh from local teachers within the traditional system. He then migrated to Qom, which had emerged as the foremost Shiite intellectual center in modern Iran. In Qom, Hasan Zadeh studied under several esteemed scholars who significantly shaped

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<sup>9</sup> Mehdi Golshani, *Ayah Hassan: Jasynehname Bazargdasyt Ustadz Hassan Zadeh Amuli* (Tehran: Institute For Humanities and Cultural Studies, 2004), 14.

<sup>10</sup> Golshani, 14.

contemporary Islamic thought. Among them was Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, a prominent thinker in the philosophy of hikmah muta'aliyah and a renowned Quranic interpreter known for his work, Tafsir al-Mizan. Under Tabataba'i's mentorship, Hasan Zadeh not only explored philosophy and exegesis but also ventured into theoretical and practical irfan, particularly influenced by the ideas of Ibn 'Arabi and Mulla Sadra<sup>11</sup>.

Hasan Zadeh Amuli is a direct student of Allamah Thabathabai and substantially inherits an integrative approach that combines philosophy, irfan, and the interpretation of the Qur'an. The concept of ma'rifat al-nafs developed by Amuli is heavily influenced by the transcendental framework of Mulla Sadra, which also serves as the foundation of Thabathabai's thought<sup>12</sup>. Thabathabai emphasizes the dimension of substantial motion. Amuli then developed this idea into a more profound spiritual reading, emphasizing inner experience as a means of unveiling God within oneself. Thabathabai's harmonious approach between philosophy and irfan provides a solid methodological foundation for Amuli.

He also had the opportunity to study under Ayatollah Khomeini, focusing on Islamic metaphysics and practical irfan, alongside several other teachers who imparted knowledge in astronomy, mathematics, and classical logic. This diverse education enriched his philosophical and structural understanding of reality. As a result, Hasan Zadeh Amuli emerges not only as a jurist and philosopher but also as an 'arif billah in a deeply profound sense. He said: I am Hasan Hasan Zadeh Amoli, a student of Ayatullah Muhammad Hussein Fadil Tuni, who was a student of Agho Mirza Hashem Rashti, who was a student of Agho Muhammad Reza Qomshaei, who was a student of Seyyed Razi Lari Jani, who was a student of Mirza Agho Rabi Shirazy. In the pursuit of the science of mysticism, one must endure great hardships; they have endured such hardships<sup>13</sup>.

### **The Mastery of Knowledge and Major works Of Ayatullah Hasan Zadeh Amuli**

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<sup>11</sup> Golshani, 16.

<sup>12</sup> Hadi Mousavi, , *Mas'ale Ye Nafs Va Badan Dar Hekmat e Sadra'I Ba Negihi Be Dukhaste Gera'i* (Qom: Islamic Science and Culture Research Institute, 2017), 55–58.

<sup>13</sup> Mohammad Reza Qomshah, *Majmu e Athar Agha Mohammad Reza Qomshah Hakim Sahba, Researcher and Editor: Hamed Naji Isfahani Volume 1 Introduction* (Isfahan: Research Center, 1999), 57.

Ayatullah Hasan Zadeh Amuli is celebrated as one of the leading contemporary intellectuals and sages, having achieved remarkable mastery across various classical Islamic sciences. In the Islamic scholarly tradition, such individuals are often referred to as ‘allamah or hakim muta’alihin, indicating a philosopher who is both rational and deeply engaged with divinity and spirituality.

Hasan Zadeh explores Islamic philosophy, particularly Sadrian muta’alihin wisdom, as well as logic (mantiq), mathematics, astronomy, and Islamic cosmology. His command of these disciplines is not only technical; he integrates them to create an ontological framework that elucidates the relationship between God, the universe, and humanity. This holistic approach is evident in his study of ma’rifat al-nafs, which encompasses not just psychological insights but also ontological and cosmic dimensions. In addition to these fields, he excels in the interpretation of the Qur’an, hadith, ushul al-fiqh, and fiqh, with a particular focus on both theoretical and practical irfan. His expertise in irfan is rooted not only in the textual analysis of scholars like Ibn ‘Arabi and Haidar Amuli but also in his own profound spiritual practices.

This intellectual wealth is reflected in over a hundred written works. Among his key contributions on the themes of ma’rifat al-nafs and the relationship between humans and God are:

- 1) *Insan dar urf e Irfan: Man in the View of Irfan*. This work analyzes the existential position of humans as a reflection of Divine manifestation<sup>14</sup>.
- 2) *Uyun Masa’il Nafs*<sup>15</sup>: In this book, Hasan Zadeh Amuli explores various aspects of the metaphysics and epistemology of the soul (nafs) within the Islamic philosophical tradition. He examines the connection between self-knowledge and knowledge of God, demonstrating how understanding the soul can lead to makrifatullah. His approach synthesizes peripatetic philosophy, hikmah muta’alihin, and theoretical irfan.

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14 Allameh Hasan Zadeh Amoli, *Ensan Dar Urf e Erfan* (Qom: Soroush, 2019).

15 Allameh Hassan zadeh Amoli, *Uyun Masa’il Nafs: Translated by Ebrahim Ahmadian and Seyyed Mostafa Bayae’i* (Tehran: Buka Publications, 2014).



- 3) *Durus Makrifat Nafs*<sup>16</sup>: This multi-volume series presents systematic lessons on self-knowledge, blending philosophical, irfani, and interpretative approaches. Amuli emphasizes the significance of spiritual journey and introspection as pathways to makrifatullah.

These works highlight the depth of Hasan Zadeh Amuli's exploration of ma'rifah al-nafs and its connection to ma'rifah Allah. He adeptly integrates rational and spiritual perspectives in his interpretation of the hadith, establishing it as a significant reference in contemporary Islamic philosophy and irfan.

As a scholar who delves into Islamic philosophy and the interpretation of the Qur'an, Hasan Zadeh Amuli develops a multidisciplinary approach to explaining the concept of self-knowledge. From philosophy, he adopts the principle of substantial movement, which positions humans as beings that continuously evolve toward existential perfection. Meanwhile, from interpretation, he frequently uses verses such as QS Al-Dzāriyāt [51]:21 and QS Fuṣṣilat [41]:53 to demonstrate the relationship between the signs of the external world and the self. His interpretation is not merely exoteric but also irfanī, making the reading of the self not only symbolic but also existential and transcendent. Within this framework, self-knowledge means recognizing the presence of God as the deepest reality of human existence. The discipline of philosophy provides an argumentative structure, while interpretation adds spiritual depth to Amuli's conceptual framework.

### **Dimensions of Human Existence**

The examination of the dimensions of human existence has a long history. Some physicalists focus solely on the physical aspect of humans and deny the existence of the immaterial soul. In contrast, some believe that humans are composed of both a material body and an immaterial soul. Therefore, the importance and status of the physical and material aspects of humans cannot be overlooked. Humans are beings made up of both material and non-material dimensions. Philosophers and scientists have sought to prove these various

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<sup>16</sup> Allameh Hassan Zadeh Amoli, *Durus Makrifat Nafsm Volume 3* (Tehran: Scientific and Cultural Publications, 1996).



dimensions of human existence. Some of them, in the first stage, have established the dual nature of human existence and argue for its immaterial aspect<sup>17</sup>.

They state that material beings have three characteristics: first, the ability to change; second, the ability to be divided; and third, existence in the temporal dimension. Any object that possesses these three characteristics is material, and if these characteristics are not found in an object, then that being is immaterial. The human soul, since it takes shape in childhood and remains constant in old age, is stable and unchanging. Second, the human soul has a simple nature that does not allow for quantitative division, meaning that spiritual perfections such as courage or knowledge cannot be divided into two and a half. Therefore, if the spiritual perfections that depend on the soul are indivisible, certainly the soul itself will also be indivisible. Third, the human soul, which is independent of the material body and timeless, remains stable because old age and change pertain only to the body, and this is evidence of the immateriality of the human soul. For this reason, it can be said that since the human soul lacks any of the characteristics of matter, the human soul is immaterial. If the spirit or soul leaves the physical body, it becomes inert<sup>18</sup>. Some believe that the most important characteristic of material beings is their extension, meaning that these beings have three dimensions: length, width, and height. However, immaterial or abstract beings lack these characteristics of extension<sup>19</sup>.

Many verses of the Holy Quran refer to two existential dimensions of human beings. In some of these verses, humans are described as having both an outer eye and an inner eye. In verse 72 of Surah Al-Isra, it is mentioned: "*So whoever is blind in this [life] will be blind in the Hereafter and more astray in the way.*" Additionally, in another verse, it states: "*Do they not travel through the earth so that they may have hearts by which to understand or ears by which to hear? For indeed, it is not the eyes that are blinded, but it is the hearts that are within the*

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17 Safdar Elahi Rad, *Ensan Shenasi* (Qom: Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute Publications, 2019), 42.

18 Mohammad Mahdi Ghaemi Amiri, *Ensan Va Jahan Dar Shenakhte Maktab e Eslam* (Qom: Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute Publications, 2013), 31–32.

19 Elahi Rad, *Ensan Shenasi*, 43.

*chests*" (Surah Al-Hajj, verse 46). Several narrations also indicate that the vision of Almighty God is not possible with the physical eye, but the seeker of God can perceive Him with the inner eye. For this reason, when Amir al-Mu'minin, Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib, was asked if he had seen God, he replied: "I do not worship a God that I have not seen." He further added that God is never seen with the physical eye but can be observed with the eye related to the truths of faith.

Quoted from Malekoff, Alaeddin in one of his works *Nazariyeh Insan e Kamil Az Didgha e irfan va Falsafeh*, Ibn Arabi believes that everything that emerges from the body is a result of the influence of the soul. The soul perceives the body, and the body has awareness of the soul; neither is hidden from the other. However, since the soul is a separate essence, it is not visible; that is, the body is apparent, while the soul is concealed. Their relationship is that of the apparent and the manifestation. The human spirit is a separate essence, and the body and its faculties are considered manifestations of the spirit; for example, the spirit is the manifestation of hearing in the auditory organ<sup>20</sup>.

Likewise, Ghaemi Amiri, Mohammad Mahdi, in his work *Ensan Va Jahan Dar Shenakhte Maktab e Eslam* said that Ibn Arabi introduces man as the microcosm and this world of existence as the macrocosm, believing that man is the vicegerent and representative of God on earth. However, in his thought, he regards man as small from a physical perspective and considers his contingent nature insignificant. For this reason, Ibn Arabi and Hamza al-Ansari divide the ranks of humanity into two sections: the perfect human and the animal human, which does not transcend its material limits and physical dimension. The perfect human represents the elevated aspect of humanity, as he is an intermediary between God and the animal human. Reflecting on the essence of man and his celestial aspect reveals numerous verses that address this dimension. For this reason, the Almighty God refers to man as "the best of stature" at the time of creation. However, if a person cannot control his soul and falls under the influence of carnal and satanic temptations, he will lose his human rank and may even descend to the lowest of the

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<sup>20</sup> Malekoff, *Nazariyeh Insan e Kamil Az Didgha e Irfan va Falsafeh*, 197.

low. The Holy Quran states in this regard: "*They are like cattle; rather, they are more astray.*" (Surah Al-A'raf, Verse 179)<sup>21</sup>.

As we have observed, humans possess all the perfections of the beings in the universe. They encompass everything from the mineral stage to the highest rank of angels; in mystical terms, the journey of a human is from the realm of the material to the realm of the divine. Therefore, humans are beings that contain all dimensions of existence and serve as examples from the lowest of the low to the highest of the high, while other beings are confined to specific limits. Angels are unaware of the material world, and animals lack rationality, but humans possess the perfections of all ranks and realms, from the material and plant worlds to the realm of intellect, angels, and beyond the stars<sup>22</sup>.

The phrase by Sheikh Muhyiddin in the chapter on humanity, which states, "and he is for the truth like the eye of a human," refers to the proximity of obligations that pertains to the annihilation of the essence of the seeker and the consumption of their creative direction in relation to the truth, indicating the permanence in God at the station of differentiation after the gathering. At this station, the perfect human becomes the hearing and seeing of God. The proximity of obligations is a rank higher than the proximity of supererogatory acts. For this reason, the Almighty God states in a verse of the Holy Quran, "*Indeed, we created man in the best of stature.*"

### **The Existence of the Abstract Soul**

To understand this matter, it is necessary to clarify the precise meaning of the term "abstract." In the context of philosophy and mysticism, the term "abstract" is used in contrast to the term "material." There are various opinions regarding the existence of the soul and its relationship with the body. Some earlier philosophers consider the soul to be an eternal and ancient entity that belongs to the body, while others regard the soul as a contingent phenomenon and believe that the abstract soul has a managerial relationship with the body. As we observe, the most important

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<sup>21</sup> Hamzah Fansuri, *Asrar Al-Arifin, Research and Translation by Amir H. Zekrgoo and Leyla H. Tajer* (Tehran: Miras-e maktoob, 2018), 83.

<sup>22</sup> Ghaemi Amiri, *Ensan Va Jahan Dar Shenakhte Maktab e Eslam*, 31.

characteristics of corporeal beings are their extension; that is, they possess three dimensions: length, width, and height, which allow for their division. In contrast, the abstract is an entity that lacks the characteristics of matter. In this discussion, the terms "nafs" and "ruh" refer to the same concept, denoting the second realm that is distinct from the body and lacks material characteristics<sup>23</sup>.

Philosophers have presented multiple rational arguments to prove the existence of the immaterial soul in humans. The first argument is the indivisibility of the "self." According to them, when a person reflects on their existence, they realize that the "self" is a simple and indivisible entity that cannot be divided into two or half "selves." Since one of the main characteristics of material beings is divisibility, the "self" must therefore be immaterial. The second argument is the unity of identity. A person perceives themselves as singular from the moment of conception until death, and considering the continuous change of the body's cells, there must be another aspect of humans that serves as the stable and unchanging source of the "self".<sup>24</sup> The relationship between the soul and the human body can be examined in this way:

- 1) Plato believes that the soul was created before the physical body and then became attached to it<sup>25</sup>.
- 2) Avicenna holds that the soul is created along with the physical body and considers the relationship between the soul and the body to be like the relationship between form and matter. And Mulla Sadra believes that the human soul is a created entity and maintains a belief in the persistence of the immaterial soul. According to his theory, the human soul comes into existence through substantial motion from the body<sup>26</sup>.
- 3) Zoroastrians believe in the immortality of the soul and the eternity of the spirit. According to them, the soul remains in the realm of Barzakh after

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<sup>23</sup> Elahi Rad, *Ensan Shenasi*, 43.

<sup>24</sup> Elahi Rad, 43–47.

<sup>25</sup> Mohammad Mahdi Naderi, *Muraqat: Cegunegi Delalat Makrifat e Nafs Bar Makrifat e Rabb e Mutaal Dar Hadits Man Arafa Nafsahu Faqad Arafa Rabbahu* (Qom: Islamic Wisdom Publications, 2023), 136.

<sup>26</sup> Mousavi, , *Mas'ale Ye Nafs Va Badan Dar Hekmat e Sadra'I Ba Negihi Be Dukhaste Gera'i*, 298.

leaving the body until the Day of Resurrection. They also believe that the measure of human deeds determines heaven and hell. In Zoroastrian beliefs, heaven is similar to that of Muslims, but hell, due to the sacredness of fire in Zoroastrianism, is a cold and dirty place where various creatures torment the sinners<sup>27</sup>.

- 4) In Jainism, humans possess both a material and a spiritual dimension. Human suffering begins with the intertwining of these two dimensions, and one must strive for salvation to separate the pure spirit from matter. When the human spirit moves and performs actions, a subtle material "karma" forms and surrounds it. Due to undesirable actions, this material becomes denser, and if the actions are highly polluted, this material halo may become so hard that salvation from it becomes impossible, causing the person to fall to the lowest state. Thus, humans are trapped in the cycle of samsara and reincarnation, and their salvation depends on breaking this prison in one of their lives and freeing their spirit to reach nirvana<sup>28</sup>.
- 5) One of the teachings of mysticism and Sufism is that death is perceived as the transition of the soul from this world to another.

Concrete examples and illustrations, such as narratives of spiritual or mystical experiences and phenomena of consciousness, can demonstrate the existence and role of the soul in daily human life. Examples include autoscopic experiences, near-death experiences, and telepathy<sup>29</sup>.

### **Knowing God Through Knowing the Self**

In Hasan Zadeh Amuli's thought, the concept of nafs serves as the primary gateway to recognizing God (ma'rifatullāh). He regards specific hadith as the "key to the metaphysics of human existence." According to Amuli, understanding the structure and true essence of the human self is essential for knowledge of God. This idea is rooted in the traditions of Ibn 'Arabi and Mulla Sadra, which assert that

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27 Hossein Tofighi, *Ashna 'I Ba Adyan e Bazargh* (Tehran: Samt University's Organization for the Study and Compilation of Religious Sciences Books, 2012), 66.

28 Abdolrahim Soleimani Ardestani, *Adyan e Zandeh Jahan* (Qom: Taha Book Publishing, 2021), 70–71.

29 Elahi Rad, *Ensan Shenasi*, 52–53.

humans are a microcosm ('alam saghir) reflecting the entirety of existence (wujud).

In *Durūs Ma'rifat al-Nafs*, Hasan Zadeh outlines several existential levels of nafs:

1. Nafs Jismaniyah: The soul associated with the body, functioning as a biological mover<sup>30</sup>.
2. Nafs Natiqah: The soul capable of thought, comprehension, and realizing transcendent truths<sup>31</sup>.
3. Nafs Ilahiyyah: The soul that has attained al-insān al-kāmil, becoming a perfect mirror of God<sup>32</sup>.

In "uyun Masail al-Nafs," Ayatullah Hasan Zadeh Amuli explores the varying degrees of the soul's abstraction. Many Islamic philosophers consider the animal soul to be abstract, but its abstraction is not complete. Animals have the faculty of imagination and perceive their essence in specific forms. Imagination exists in a realm between the material world and the world of separation, which contributes to the incompleteness of the animal soul's abstraction. While the animal soul is abstract due to its imaginative capacity, it lacks universal perception and rationality, resulting in incomplete abstraction. In contrast, the human soul, which also has imaginative capabilities, achieves a level of imaginative abstraction but possesses higher degrees of abstraction as well. The human soul can perceive universals, granting it complete rational abstraction. Professor Hassan Zadeh asserts that the ultimate evidence of the human soul's complete rational abstraction is its role as the vessel of knowledge. Unlike other containers that fill to capacity, the vessel of knowledge expands rather than constricts. Additionally, the human soul attains a level of abstraction that transcends rationality<sup>33</sup>.

Hassan zadeh Amoli believes that self-knowledge is a great door and gateway from the world of nature to the infinite realms beyond it, and whoever solves this riddle for themselves will find that most of the riddles of the world are solved. In the *Elahi Nameh*, it is stated: "Worship without knowledge is like a heap

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30 Amoli, *Durus Makrifat Nafsm Volume 3*, 324.

31 Amoli, 329.

32 Amoli, 333.

33 Amoli, *Uyun Masa'il Nafs: Translated by Ebrahim Ahmadian and Seyyed Mostafa Bayae'i*.

of mustard seeds; therefore, we will not establish for them on the Day of Resurrection any weight. Blessed is he whose scales are heavy."<sup>34</sup>

Ibn Arabi considers the only way to know God is through self-knowledge. In *Fusus al-Hikam*, he states that a person's knowledge of their own self precedes their knowledge of their Lord, as knowledge of the Lord is the result of knowledge of the self<sup>35</sup>. Therefore, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said, "Whoever knows themselves knows their Lord." It is permissible to interpret this narration as a prohibition of knowledge and an inability to achieve it, and it is also permissible to interpret it as an affirmation of knowledge. In the first meaning, a person will never truly know their own self and thus will not recognize it, while in the second meaning, if a person knows their own self, they will also know their Lord. Perhaps one of the meanings of this narration is that knowing the self, as it should be, is not attainable, and when a person is unable to know themselves, how can they come to know the truth of their Lord and Creator?<sup>36</sup>

Since man is the manifestation of the Exalted and Most High, and in reality, the knowledge of the self is a means and a ladder for the knowledge of the Lord, the Exalted and Most High, this implies that due to his own identity, he is veiled from the Truth and lacks the ability to know the Truth and the perfection of knowledge regarding the Almighty. He also lacks the ability to know his own self<sup>37</sup>.

In this way, it becomes clear that the perfect human is the totality of the truths of the universe, or the comprehensive being. When he recognizes himself through his truths, it becomes necessary for him, in his capacity as the perfect being, to dedicate himself to the worship of the entire universe. If he does not do this, he has not recognized himself in terms of his truths. When he observes the truths, he is aware that nothing is devoid of the Divine Truth, and if this were not the case,

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34 Amoli, *Elahi Nameh*, 16.

35 Muhid al-Din Ibn Arabi, *Fusous Al-Hikam: Translated by Mohammad Khawaji* (Tehran: Mauli Publications, 2015), 9.

36 Naderi, *Muraqat: Cegunegi Delalat Makrifat e Nafs Bar Makrifat e Rabb e Mutaal Dar Hadits Man Arafa Nafsahu Faqad Arafa Rabbahu*, 73.

37 Allameh Hassan Zadeh Amoli, *Mumid Al-Himmam Dar Sharh e Fusous Al-Hikam* (Tehran: Printing and Publications Organization and Ministry of Islamic Guidance, 1999), 57.



God would not be divine, because it would imply that the universe is independent and self-sufficient without the Highest, which is impossible. The absence of the Divine Truth from the universe is an impossibility, meaning that knowledge of the self is knowledge of the degrees of the universe, and the universe itself is a manifestation and reflection of the Divine Truth. Therefore, knowledge of the degrees of the universe is knowledge of the names and attributes of the Divine Truth. It can be said that the perfect human perceives the Divine Truth through the unveiling of insight, and for this reason, the Prophet said that knowing oneself is knowing God: "He who knows himself has known his Lord<sup>38</sup> "

The mystics believe that self-knowledge is the best way to reach the Divine Truth. The question that arises is how self-knowledge can lead to the knowledge of God Almighty. In response to this question, it can be said that the path to knowing God through self-knowledge is achieved in such a way that if a person sees themselves as experiencing absolute poverty and utter dependence on the existence of the Divine Truth, this absolute poverty requires an absolute richness. From that absolute poverty, one is transferred to absolute richness. The seeker must not attribute independence and self-sufficiency to any being and must see all beings and identities as perishing in the existence of that pure essence<sup>39</sup>. In another context, Ayatollah Javadi Amoli states that the meaning of poverty is not the lack of something, but rather the lack of an independent essence. In other words, poor beings are those that are inherently needy and dependent on God and possess nothing of their own<sup>40</sup>. Ayatullah Hassan Zadeh Amuli details the concept of Shamadi monotheism in one of his works titled "*Ensān dar 'Urf e 'Irfān*," stating that the peak of a person's practical journey is when they reach a station known as Shamadi monotheism, which is the recognition of Allah<sup>41</sup>.

In this regard, it can be said that anyone who knows the perfect human knows God Almighty. This is because the Divine Truth is manifested in the

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38 Bahman Sadeghi Mazdah, *Taalim e Ibn Arabi va Amuzeh Haye Teachings and Shi'i* (Tehran: Shafi'i Publications, 2016), 119–20.

39 Abdullah Javadi Amoli, *Tahrir e Risalah Al-Vilayah Syams Al-Wahy Tabrizi, Allamah Sayyid Hussein Tabatabaei* (Qom: Isra Publishing Center, 2014), 88.

40 Abdullah Javadi Amoli, *Tafsir-e Tasnīm, Vol 2* (Qom: Nashr-e Asr-e Jawād, 2003), 115–18.

41 Amoli, *Ensan Dar Urf e Erfan*, 13.

existence of the perfect human and has not made itself a treasure except in the perfect human. Therefore, it can be said that knowledge of the perfect human is knowledge of God, the Highest.

## CONCLUSION

Hasan Zadeh Amuli's thoughts on ma'rifat al-nafs reject the dichotomy between the subject that knows and the object that is known. His ideas demonstrate that ma'rifat al-nafs is not merely a preliminary step toward God, but rather an ontological reflection of ma'rifatullah itself. Within Amuli's framework, the human self is the site of tajalli and existential participation in the absolute being. Therefore, the recognition of the self is not merely a psychological or reflective process, but a metaphysical journey toward the divine reality that resides in the depths of human existence. In his view, humans do not know God from the outside, but from within that is, from the innermost aspect of themselves as a manifestation of God's existence. Thus, knowing the true self means unveiling the veils of individuality to witness the essence of existence that is centered on God. This thought not only enriches the discourse of theoretical Sufism but also emphasizes that the path of irfani knowledge is an authentic way to understand God through humanity itself.

Practically, this framework provides valuable guidance for spiritual development in modern contexts. The path of ma'rifat al-nafs offers a structured method of self-transformation rooted in introspection, remembrance (dhikr), and ethical purification, which can be adapted to support mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Moreover, this vision has great potential for integration with contemporary psychological paradigms. The emphasis on inward divine presence can serve as a transformative resource for those seeking meaning, identity, and connection in increasingly secular or fragmented societies.

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