

The Analysis of the Possibility of Supra-Rational Immateriality of the Soul in Ibn 'Arabī's Thought

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Introduction

The question of the soul's immateriality and its levels is among the most fundamental topics in theoretical Sufism. Ibn 'Arabī occupies a distinctive position in articulating the structure of cognition, the gradations of the soul, the human journey toward perfection, and the relation between intellect, unveiling, and ultimate reality. Beyond affirming the immateriality of the soul, he posits higher stages culminating in supra-rational immateriality, wherein the intuition of immediate witnessing (*al-shuhūd al-ḥudūrī*) replaces discursive knowledge and conceptual intellect (*al-'aql al-naẓarī*). This stage, described as "a state beyond the state of intellect" (*al-ṭawr warā' al-ṭawr al-'aql*), underpins his doctrines of the Perfect Human, *'ilm ladunnī* (divinely bestowed knowledge), the Muhammadan Reality (*al-ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*), *fanā' fī Allāh* (annihilation in Allah), and the metaphysical structure of *wahdat al-wujūd*.

Method

By revisiting Ibn 'Arabī's works and those of major commentators such as Jāmī, Jandī, Ibn Turkah, 'Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī, Qaysarī, and Ḥasan-zāda Āmulī, this research analyzes the possibility of supra-rational immateriality of the soul within his system. The study demonstrates that this possibility is rooted in Ibn 'Arabī's ontological and epistemological foundations. The research method is analytical–interpretive, based on extracting concepts from primary mystical texts and examining their internal coherence.

Findings of Research

The findings of the study include:

1. **The Place of "Beyond the State of Intellect" (Warā' al-Ṭawr al-'Aql) in Ibn 'Arabī's Epistemology:** Ibn 'Arabī divides knowledge into three levels: the conceptual intellect (*al-'aql al-naẓarī*), the knowledge of states (*'ilm al-aḥwāl*), and the knowledge of secrets (*'ilm al-asrār*). the conceptual intellect is the initial stage of knowledge, based on conceptual analysis, yet inherently limited and incapable of grasping true unity. The knowledge of states is grounded in the experiential and intuitive transformation of the

- seeker. The knowledge of secrets is divinely bestowed (*ladunnī, wabhī*) and belongs exclusively to those who attain *fanā' fī Allāh*; it lies “beyond the state of intellect.” This tripartite division shows that the transition from the conceptual intellect to unveiling and the intuition of immediate witnessing (*al-shuhūd al-ḥuḍūrī*) is the condition for entering the higher domain of knowledge.
2. ***The Immateriality of the Soul and Its Relation to the Body:*** For Ibn ‘Arabī, the human soul is an immaterial substance of luminous nature. Through its governing relation to the body, it actualizes its latent capacities. In other words, the soul’s connection to the body is intrinsic to its mode of existence, with the body serving as an instrument and agent, and thus not an obstacle to immateriality. Through intensity of being (*ishtidād wujūdihā*), the soul transcends the levels of sense, imagination, and intellect, reaching the supra-rational stage. This intensification forms the foundation for the possibility of supra-rational immateriality.
 3. ***The Intermediary Nature of the Soul and Its Seven Levels:*** By presenting the soul as an intermediary between the realms of creation (*‘ālam al-khalq*) and command (*‘ālam al-amr*), Ibn ‘Arabī assigns it seven ascending levels. The highest level is liberation from dualizing constraints and rational limits, culminating in the witnessing of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. At this stage, the knower, the known, and knowledge itself are unified, and cognition assumes a direct, unitary form.
 4. ***The Role of the Nafas al-Raḥmān (the Breath of the all-Merciful) in Supra-Rational Immateriality:*** The *nafas al-raḥmān* is the first Divine self-disclosure and the origin of multiplicity. The human soul is a mirror of *the Breath of the all-Merciful*, and this existential relation enables its ascent to higher immateriality and the witnessing of truth. In the Perfect Human, this mirror attains complete transparency, reflecting the Divine names and attributes in their fullness. Thus, the possibility of supra-rational immateriality of the soul is directly linked to the ontological structure of the cosmos.
 5. ***The Distinction between the Rational Governing Soul and the Immaterial Rational Soul:*** Ibn ‘Arabī distinguishes two aspects of the soul:
 - (a) The rational governing soul, bound to the material world and its determinations.
 - (b) The immaterial (*mujarrad*) rational soul, whose cognition of reality transcends the limits of the conceptual intellect and is realized only through unveiling (*kashf*), taste (*dhawq*), and witnessing (*shuhūd*). This distinction provides the conceptual basis for affirming the supra-rational immateriality of the soul.
 6. ***The Role of Purified Imagination in the Soul’s Ascent to the Supra-Rational Level:*** Imagination, which in Ibn ‘Arabī’s mysticism mediates between the sensible and the intelligible, once purified, becomes a bridge from conceptual knowledge to immediate witnessing. Purified imagination serves as the soul’s instrument for transcending discursive cognition and attaining the level of secrets and realities.

7. ***Wilāya, the Muhammadan Reality, and the Final Realization of Immateriality:*** In Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought, *wilāya* is a rank higher than legislative prophethood. The realization of supra-rational immateriality is a prerequisite for attaining this station. The Muhammadan Reality (*al-ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*) is the supreme manifestation, encompassing all Divine names. The Perfect Human, by reaching the consummation of this reality, attains the highest level of witnessing. The Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) is the most complete embodiment of this station and the Seal of *wilāya*.

Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis of Ibn ‘Arabī’s mystical and ontological foundations shows that the supra-rational immateriality of the soul is not merely a possibility but a logical necessity of his doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (unity of being) and epistemological system. The human soul, by virtue of its intensity of being (*ishtidād wujūdihā*) and its ontological relation to the *Nafas al-Raḥmān* (*the Breath of the all-Merciful*), possesses the capacity to transcend the conceptual intellect and attain *‘ilm ladunnī* (divinely bestowed knowledge). At this stage, immediate witnessing replaces conceptual cognition, and the seeker reaches the unity of experiential knowledge. The realization of this level occurs only in the purified (*muzakkā*) soul, guided by Divine light, and most perfectly in the Perfect Human. Therefore, supra-rational immateriality is the condition for attaining true knowledge, the witnessing of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, and the full manifestation of the Muhammadan Reality (*al-ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*). The findings of this study indicate that within Ibn ‘Arabī’s mystical system, without achieving this stage, the human being cannot reach his ultimate existential telos, and his knowledge remains confined to the level of the conceptual intellect and conceptual cognition.

Keywords: Ibn ‘Arabī; the possibility of the soul’s supra-rational immateriality; *‘ilm ladunnī* (divinely bestowed knowledge); necessity; Perfect Human (*al-Insān al-Kāmil*).