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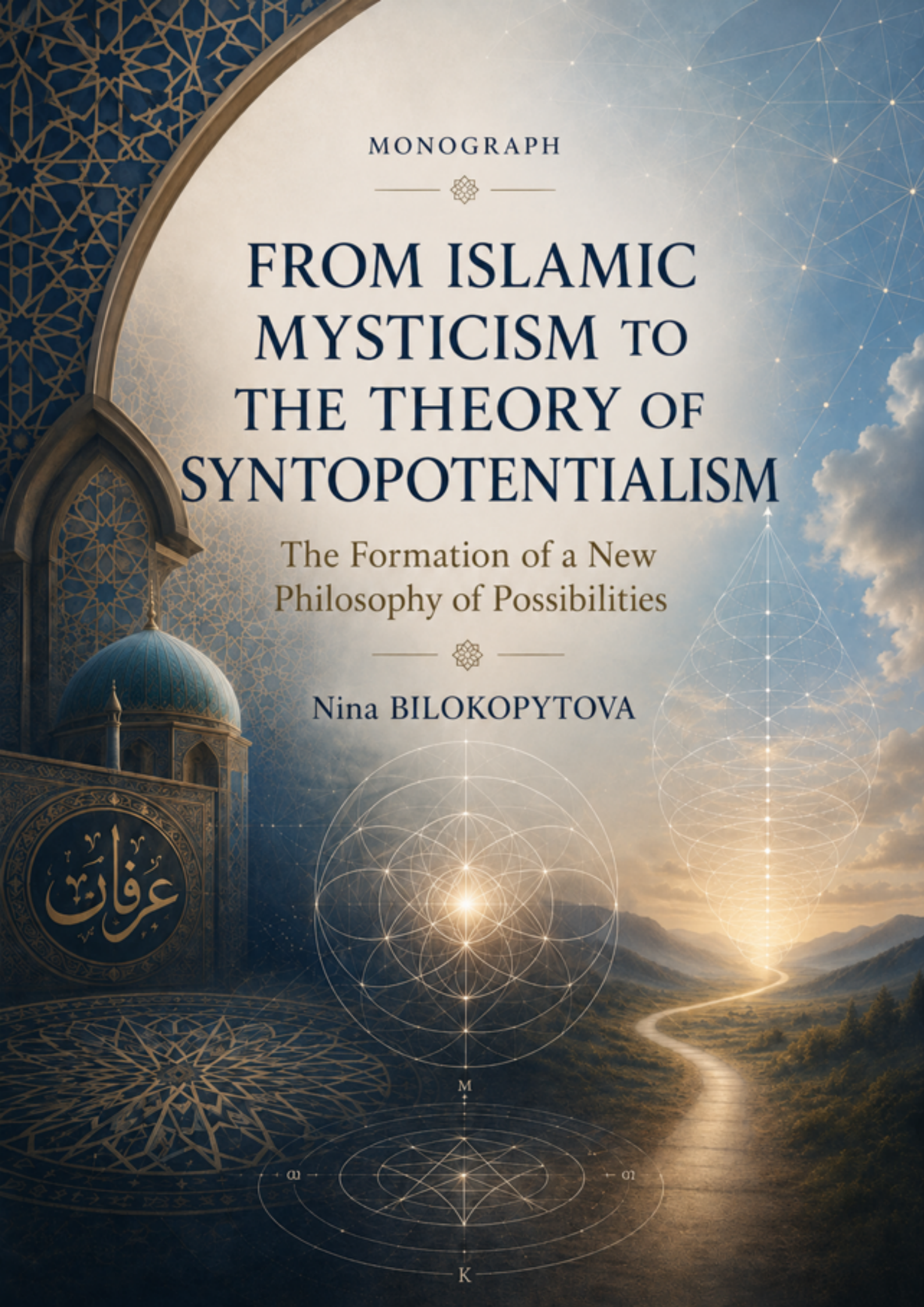


FROM ISLAMIC MYSTICISM TO THE THEORY OF SYNTOPOTENTIALISM

The Formation of a New
Philosophy of Possibilities



Nina BILOKOPYTOVA



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The monograph is devoted to the development of syntopotentialism as a new meta-ontological concept that interprets reality through the category of potential and a relational-topological structure of being; it reinterprets Sufi metaphysics through the lens of contemporary cognitive science, synergetics, topology, and complexity theory. Ultimately, the work reframes philosophy around a central question: not what exists or how existence unfolds, but what possibilities reality contains and how they become actualized.

The monograph may be useful for researchers, university lecturers, and anyone interested in current trends in the development of philosophy of mind, the metaphysics of possibility, cognitive science, complexity theory, and social ontology, as well as in interdisciplinary studies at the intersection of Islamic mystical tradition and contemporary theoretical thought.

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INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the twenty-first century has been marked by profound transformations in the ways reality, human beings, and society are understood. The rapid development of cognitive science, neuroscience, complexity theory, synergetics, quantum physics, digital technologies, and artificial intelligence has prompted a fundamental reconsideration of many traditional assumptions concerning the nature of being, consciousness, and social development. It has become increasingly evident that classical explanatory models of the world, grounded in the principles of linearity, determinism, and substantialism, are no longer sufficient to account for the complexity of contemporary reality. As a result, contemporary philosophy and science have increasingly turned their attention to such concepts as processuality, uncertainty, self-organization, emergence, and potentiality.

At the same time, the humanities have witnessed a growing interest in intellectual traditions that, over the course of centuries, developed alternative ways of understanding human existence and the structure of reality. Among these traditions, Sufism occupies a distinctive place. As the spiritual and philosophical dimension of Islamic civilization, Sufism has produced one of the most sophisticated conceptions of consciousness, self-knowledge, and the unity of being. Although Sufism is often interpreted primarily as a mystical or religious phenomenon, its intellectual heritage contains highly developed reflections on the structure of reality, the nature of cognition, the dynamics of consciousness, and the relationship between the actual and the potential dimensions of existence.

In the works of Ibn al-'Arabi, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, and other representatives of the Sufi tradition, a number of philosophical concepts were developed that can today be reinterpreted within the frameworks of contemporary philosophy of consciousness, cognitive science, and social theory. In particular, such notions as *Wahdat al-Wujūd* (the Unity of Being), *A 'yān Thābita* (Immutable Entities), *Tajallī* (Divine Self-Disclosure), *Khayāl* (Creative Imagination), and *al-Insān al-Kāmil* (the Perfect Human) represent not only religious and metaphysical constructs but also

a distinctive model of the organization of consciousness and reality, grounded in the principles of multiplicity of possibilities, nonlinear development, and continuous becoming.

Contemporary interdisciplinary scholarship increasingly demonstrates that many of the fundamental intuitions of classical Sufism are conceptually close to the central ideas of post-nonclassical science. The Sufi understanding of the world as a process, reality as a network of interconnected levels, consciousness as a dynamic space of transformation, and the human being as an agent capable of actualizing latent potentials finds remarkable parallels in synergetics, cognitive science, complexity theory, and contemporary models of consciousness. This convergence makes it possible to reinterpret the Sufi tradition not merely as a historical or religious phenomenon but as a source of conceptual frameworks capable of contributing to the development of new philosophical paradigms.

One of the most promising avenues for such a reinterpretation is the reconstruction of the **cognitive geometry of Sufism**. In the present study, *cognitive geometry* is understood as the system of spatial, topological, and dynamic relationships that determine the structure of consciousness, the logic of its development, and the mechanisms through which it interacts with reality. From this perspective, cognitive processes are conceived not as isolated mental operations but as trajectories unfolding within a multidimensional space of meanings and possibilities. Core Sufi concepts including *maqāmāt* (stations), *aḥwāl* (states), the hierarchical levels of the *qalb* (heart), *khayāl* (creative imagination), and *‘aql* (intellect), can be interpreted as constituting a conceptual map of a multidimensional cognitive space. Rather than representing exclusively spiritual or theological categories, these notions describe distinct modes of cognition, transformation, and self-organization that govern the dynamics of human consciousness.

Viewed in this way, Sufism emerges not merely as a path of spiritual perfection but as a sophisticated model for navigating a multidimensional landscape of meaning, possibility, and transformation. Its cognitive architecture anticipates several ideas that have become central to contemporary cognitive science, complexity theory, and the

philosophy of mind, including nonlinear development, self-organization, emergent order, and multidimensional cognitive structures.

The reconstruction of this cognitive geometry leads to a broader philosophical question: is it possible to formulate, on the basis of Sufi experience, a universal model of reality suitable for describing not only spiritual processes, but also general patterns of the development of consciousness, culture, and society? This question is the original intention of this monograph.

The paper proposes that behind the diversity of Sufi concepts lies a special ontology of possibilities, in which reality is viewed not as a set of completed entities, but as a multidimensional field of potentialities that are in the process of constant actualization. From this point of view, being is not a static fact, but a dynamic process of unfolding the possible. Consciousness, in this case, appears not as a passive reflection of the world, but as an active factor in the formation and navigation of spaces of possibilities. Further development of this idea leads to the formation of the concept of syntopotentialism.

Unlike traditional ontologies, which proceed from the primacy of being, matter, or consciousness, **syntopotentialism** is grounded in the primacy of **potentiality** as the universal principle underlying the organization of reality.

The theoretical foundations of this approach draw upon both classical philosophical conceptions of possibility: from Aristotle and Leibniz to Bergson, Whitehead, Heidegger, and Deleuze as well as contemporary research in synergetics, complexity theory, cognitive science, and the philosophy of consciousness. Of particular significance are the works of Hermann Haken, Ilya Prigogine, Erich Jantsch, Edgar Morin, Stuart Kauffman, Peter Gärdenfors, and other scholars who have understood the development of complex systems as a process of the emergence of new structures of possibility.

The present monograph argues that the Sufi tradition may be understood as an early historical model of potential reality, while its cognitive architecture can be interpreted as a precursor to the development of a contemporary philosophy of possibility. At the same time, syntopotentialism is neither identified with nor reduced

to Sufism. Rather, it represents an attempt to universalize selected principles of the Sufi worldview and integrate them with the achievements of contemporary science within the framework of a new interdisciplinary philosophical paradigm.

The study pays special attention to the transition from individual consciousness to collective forms of organization of social reality. If classical socio-philosophical concepts mostly described society through institutions, structures, norms or communication systems, then the syntopotentialist approach suggests considering sociality as a dynamic field of interacting potentials. In such a perspective, social consciousness acquires a topological character and appears as a complex network of semantic, cognitive and value connections that determine the trajectories of collective development.

The aim of the monograph is to reconstruct the cognitive geometry of Sufism and to substantiate on its basis syntopotentialism as a new philosophical paradigm that combines the ontology of possibilities, the theory of consciousness and a new social ontology. To achieve this goal, the following tasks are envisaged:

- to investigate Sufism as a special ontological model of reality;
- to reconstruct the cognitive geometry of the Sufi tradition;
- analyze the potential dimension of Sufi metaphysics;
- identify conceptual connections between Sufism, cognitive science and the theory of complex systems;
- substantiate the basic principles of syntopotentialism as a metaontology of possibilities;
- formulate the universals of the syntopotentialist worldview;
- reveal a new understanding of consciousness as navigation in the space of potentialities;
- explore the topological structure of social consciousness;
- outline the prospects for the formation of a new social ontology in the context of syntopotentialism.

The scientific novelty of the monograph lies in the fact that for the first time a systematic reconstruction of the cognitive geometry of Sufism is carried out as a basis

for the formation of syntopotentialism, a new philosophical paradigm in which the category of possibility acquires the status of a fundamental ontological principle. The paper proposes the concept of the topology of social consciousness, formulates the universals of the syntopotentialist worldview, and substantiates approaches to building a new social ontology based on the idea of interaction and actualization of collective potentials.

Thus, the monograph represents an attempt to move from a historical-philosophical analysis of the Sufi tradition to the creation of a generalized theoretical model capable of explaining the processes of the formation of consciousness, the development of social systems, and the evolution of reality through the categories of possibility, potentiality, and self-organization. In this sense, syntopotentialism appears as one of the possible metaparadigms of the 21st century, combining the spiritual experience of humanity and the achievements of modern scientific knowledge in a single conceptual space.

CHAPTER 1.

SUFISM AS A PROTOTYPE OF THE ONTOLOGY OF POSSIBILITIES

In contemporary historical and philosophical scholarship, Sufism is traditionally understood as the mystical dimension of Islam, a system of spiritual practices, or a distinctive form of religious experience. Such interpretations, however, capture only part of its intellectual significance. In fact, Sufism constitutes one of the most sophisticated metaphysical systems of medieval philosophical thought, within which original conceptions of being, consciousness, cognition, and human development were formulated.

A distinctive feature of the Sufi worldview is that it transcends the classical dichotomies of subject and object, spirit and matter, the transcendent and the immanent. Sufi metaphysics seeks to describe reality as an integral process of the continuous self-disclosure of the Absolute, in which all forms of existence remain in a state of dynamic becoming. Unlike most classical ontological systems, where being is treated as an already given reality and serves as the central philosophical category, Sufi thought is primarily concerned with the processes through which being emerges, manifests itself, and continuously unfolds. For this reason, Sufism may be regarded as one of the earliest historical expressions of what contemporary philosophy can describe as an ontology of possibilities.

For Sufi thinkers, the world is not a collection of completed or self-sufficient entities. Rather, reality is understood as a continuous process of transition from the hidden to the manifest, from the potential to the actual. Absolute Being not only exists but continually gives rise to new forms of its own self-manifestation. This idea is expressed most fully in the works of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī (1165–1240), whom many scholars regard as the architect of the most highly developed ontological system within the Sufi tradition.

According to Ibn al-‘Arabī, reality is an infinite process of divine self-knowledge in which every form of existence represents a particular manifestation of the limitless

multiplicity of the Absolute's potential possibilities¹ (Ibn al-‘Arabī, 1980). In this sense, Sufism may be understood not only as a religious and mystical tradition but also as an early model of a processual, dynamic, and potential ontology.

Sufism is a living river of spirituality that originates in the heart of the Prophetic Revelation and flows through the centuries, changing its outward forms while preserving its inner essence the quest for Unity. Its history is not merely a succession of schools or eminent figures but a fractal dynamic in which each historical epoch reflects the same underlying principle: the return to the Center (whether understood as God or, in a more philosophical interpretation, as a transcendent determinant of reality). From this perspective, the historical evolution of Sufism may be broadly divided into several stages: the early ascetic period, the classical mystical period, the philosophical–metaphysical period, and the *ṭarīqa* (Sufi order) period. In addition, one may distinguish a modernist phase and a contemporary post-traditional phase of Sufism.

1. Early Ascetic Sufism (8th–10th Centuries): God as Absolute Transcendence

During the formative stage of Sufism, God was conceived as the radically transcendent Absolute, surpassing all categories of human cognition and existence. This perspective reflects the broader Islamic theological emphasis on *tanzīh*, the apophatic affirmation of God's absolute incomparability with creation which, in early Sufism, acquired a profound existential dimension. Human beings were not merely expected to acknowledge the distance between themselves and God; they were called to experience it as an ontological abyss. (Schimmel²; Melchert³). In this context, *khawf* (fear of God) and reverential awe become not merely moral emotions but forms of cognitive-existential orientation that structure the consciousness of the spiritual seeker.

The Sufi path is defined through the practices of *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the self) and radical *zuhd* (ascetic renunciation of the world), which may be interpreted as a process of deconstructing the ego-centered identity. As al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī

¹ Ibn al-‘Arabī. *The Bezels of Wisdom* (Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam) / translated by R. W. J. Austin. New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1980.

² Schimmel, A. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 1975

³ Melchert, C. *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law*. Leiden: Brill. 1997

observed, "The world is but a passing shadow; hold fast to that which does not pass away" (by cit. Arberry⁴). In this sense, asceticism is not a rejection of the world as such but rather a method of reorienting attention and desire toward the Absolute. In terms reminiscent of later philosophical thought, it may be described as a form of negative phenomenology of the subject, in which purification signifies the removal of the illusion of the autonomous self.

An important conceptual shift within this period is marked by the emergence of the notion of *maḥabba* (divine love), particularly in the teachings of Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya. Her well-known declaration, "I love God neither out of fear of Hell nor in hope of Paradise, but for His own sake," signifies the transition from an ethics of fear to an ontology of intentionality, in which love functions as the light that purifies the heart and transforms the very mode through which reality is perceived. (Smith⁵). Here, love is no longer simply an emotional state, but acts as a cognitive mode that opens up a new type of relationship between man and the Divine.

Already at this stage, one can discern the emergence of what may provisionally be described as the fractal principle of Sufi anthropology: the path to God is conceived as an inward journey in which the inner world of the human being (microcosm) reflects the structure of Divine Reality (macrocosm). As al-Junayd would later formulate it, "Water takes on the color of the vessel that contains it," emphasizing the interdependence between the subject's inner state and the manner in which truth is disclosed. In this sense, early Sufism already contains an implicit model of self-similarity: the purification of the heart is not merely a moral act but a process through which the structure of consciousness is gradually attuned to reflect the Divine.

Thus, despite its strong emphasis on divine transcendence, early ascetic Sufism laid the foundations for the subsequent immanent interpretation of the experience of God. The tension between distance and proximity, fear and love, purification and knowledge constitutes a dynamic matrix that would later unfold into the more sophisticated metaphysical and cognitive models of the Sufi tradition.

⁴ Arberry, A. J. *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam*. London: Allen & Unwin. 1950

⁵ Smith, M. *Rābiʿa the Mystic and Her Fellow-Saints in Islam*. Oxford: Oneworld. 1994

2. Classical Sufism (10th–12th Centuries): God as Inner Presence

During the classical period, Sufism evolved from a collection of ascetic practices into a coherent spiritual system in which the concept of the *ṭarīqa* (the spiritual path) emerged as a structured process of the transformation of the self. This development was accompanied by a shift in emphasis from the radical transcendence of God toward the integration of *tanzīh* (divine incomparability) and *tashbīh* (divine nearness or similarity), making it possible to experience the Divine as an inner presence within the human heart ⁶. As al-Qushayrī states, "The heart is the place upon which God's gaze falls" (*al-qalb maḥall naẓar Allāh*), emphasizing that the knowledge of God is attained not through rational speculation but through inner transformation ⁷.

The human being, within this model, is understood as *sālik*, a spiritual traveler who advances through a hierarchy of spiritual stations (*maqāmāt*) and states (*aḥwāl*). Whereas a *maqām* represents a stable ethical and spiritual disposition attained through discipline, practice, and sustained effort, a *ḥāl* is a divinely bestowed and transient state that cannot be directly controlled (al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma'*; Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*). This dynamic introduces a sophisticated processual model of consciousness in which the subject is shaped through the interplay of human volition and divine grace. Al-Junayd expresses this relationship by stating that "water takes on the color of the vessel that contains it," indicating that divine revelation is mediated and modulated by the individual's inner state ⁸.

In this context, Sufi teaching acquires a systematic character. The concept of *adab* emerges as an ethic of proper conduct that simultaneously constitutes an aesthetics of the spiritual life. *Adab* governs not only outward behavior but also the subtle cultivation and attunement of inner states, transforming the life of the Sufi into a kind of work of art, in which every gesture reflects harmony with the Divine order. As al-Ghazālī writes, "The purification of the heart is the polishing of the mirror in

⁶ Chittick, W. C. *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*. Albany: SUNY Press. 1989

⁷ Al-Qushayrī. *Al-Risala al-Qushayriyya*. Translated by A. D. Knysh. Reading : Garnet Publishing, 2007. 448 p.

⁸ Sells, M. *Early Islamic Mysticism*. New York: Paulist Press. 1996

which truth is reflected" (*Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*), emphasizing the epistemic dimension of ethical practice.

At the same time, a fundamental shift occurs from the ascetic rejection of the world toward the mystical recognition of the Divine Presence within all created things. The world is no longer perceived as an obstacle to spiritual realization but as a field of *āyāt* (signs) that point toward God. In this sense, a hermeneutics of presence takes shape: every phenomenon can be interpreted as a manifestation of Divine Reality, provided that the subject has attained the requisite degree of inner receptivity and spiritual sensitivity⁹. This is in line with the Quranic principle: "We will show them Our signs, on the horizons of the heavens and within themselves, until they realize that it is the truth!" (Qur'ān 41:53¹⁰), which in Sufism is interpreted as a call to integrate the external and internal dimensions of experience.

From a philosophical perspective, this period may be understood as the emergence of a processual ontology, in which God is conceived not only as the absolutely Other but also as a dynamic Presence that becomes actualized within human consciousness and existence. It is here that the fractal principle becomes more explicit: the structure of the *ṭarīqa* (spiritual path) reproduces self-similar patterns across different levels, from ethical practices to mystical experience. Each *maqām* contains a reflection of the entire path, while each *ḥāl* functions as a local singularity of experience in which the infinity of the Divine is disclosed.

Thus, classical Sufism develops an integrative model in which transcendence and immanence, ethics and aesthetics, practice and experience are united within a single dynamic system. It is precisely this synthetic character that provides the foundation for the later metaphysical developments of mature Sufism, most notably the ontology of the Unity of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*).

⁹ Chittick, W. C. *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*. Albany: SUNY Press. 1989

¹⁰ Преславний Коран, переклад смислів українською мовою. Переклад М.Якубович, Центр імені Короля Фагда з друку Преславного Сувою, 2018, 994с.
https://d1.islamhouse.com/data/uk/ih_books/single/uk_meanings_of_Quran_in_Ukrainian.pdf

3. Philosophical and Metaphysical Sufism (12th–14th Centuries): God as the One Being

During the mature philosophical phase of Sufism, a fundamental shift takes place from an ethical and practical model toward an ontologically rich metaphysics, in which the question of God is no longer understood merely as a matter of the spiritual path or mystical experience, but as a question concerning the very structure of Being itself. In the thought of Ibn al-‘Arabī, God is conceived neither as a distant Transcendent nor merely as an inner Presence, but as the one and only reality of Being (*al-wujūd*), which manifests itself in the multiplicity of forms through the process of self-disclosure (*tajallī*). (Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*¹¹; Chittick¹²). The well-known formula traditionally associated with this school "There is no being except the Being of God" (*lā mawjūda illā Allāh*), does not deny empirical multiplicity; it reinterprets it as a modality of a single ontological principle.

This signifies a radical reinterpretation of the relationship between transcendence and immanence: God is no longer conceived as existing outside the world, but rather as the profound condition of the world's very possibility of existence. As Ibn al-‘Arabī writes, "Glory be to Him who manifests all things while being their very essence" (*Subḥāna man aẓhara al-ashyā’ wa huwa ‘aynuhā*), emphasizing the paradoxical unity of that which is manifested and the One who manifests it.¹³ In this sense, the world appears as an endless theophany - a network of manifestations in which the Divine continuously reveals its names and attributes.

The central anthropological concept of this period is that of the Perfect Human (*al-Insān al-Kāmil*), who functions as the complete mirror of Divine Reality. The human being is no longer understood merely as a *sālik* (spiritual traveler), but as the locus of the Absolute's ontological self-reflection. As Ibn al-‘Arabī states, "The human being is the mirror in which God contemplates His Names"¹⁴. This mirror is not

¹¹ Ibn al-‘Arabī. *The Bezels of Wisdom (Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam)* / translated by R. W. J. Austin. New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1980.

¹² Chittick, W. C. *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Metaphysics of Imagination*. Albany: SUNY Press. 1989

¹³ Chittick, W. C. *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Metaphysics of Imagination*. Albany: SUNY Press. 1989

¹⁴ Ibn al-‘Arabī. *The Bezels of Wisdom (Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam)* / translated by R. W. J. Austin. New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1980.

passive; rather, it implies active participation in the process of knowledge, in which self-knowledge and the knowledge of God ultimately coincide: "Whoever knows himself knows his Lord"¹⁵ (a well-known Sufi aphorism).

Within this context, the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (the Unity of Being), later systematized by Ibn al-‘Arabī's interpreters, most notably Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī, constitutes a comprehensive metaphysical model in which multiplicity is understood as the differentiation of a single field of Being. As William Chittick has demonstrated, this model does not reduce diversity to unity; rather, it renders diversity transparent to its Divine source¹⁶. Thus, the ontology of Sufism acquires the character of a dynamic unity, where each form is at the same time distinct and identical in its root.

The poetic tradition, especially in Jalal al-Din Rūmī and Farid al-Din ‘Attar, appears not only as an artistic expression of these ideas, but as an alternative form of metaphysical thought. In Rumi's *Mathnawī*¹⁷ the recurring motifs of love, separation, and reunion form a kind of spiral structure, where each new turn repeats the previous one at a higher level of intensity: "You are not a drop in the ocean, you are the ocean in the drop" (a paraphrase of a popular motif reflecting the Sufi idea of the identity of the part and the whole). Similarly, in ‘Attar's *Manṭiq al-ṭayr* the birds' journey to the Simurgh ends with the discovery that the sought is identical with the seeker, a classic allegory of the self-reflexive structure of being.¹⁸

From a philosophical perspective, this period may be described as the emergence of a processual ontological monism, in which Being is conceived as an infinite act of self-disclosure. It is precisely here that the fractal interpretation becomes particularly relevant: the process of *tajallī* may be understood as a self-similar unfolding in which each level of reality reflects the structure of the whole. The human being, as the microcosm, constitutes a local instantiation of this process, while the cosmos represents its expanded macrostructure. The recurrence of motifs in the poetry of Rūmī and ‘Aṭṭār,

¹⁵ Küçük H. Commentary of the Saying "He who knows himself, knows his Lord." from the Angles of Sufism and Anatomy. *JISS*. 2022;1(1):129-141. doi:10.32739/ustad.2022.1.21

¹⁶ Chittick, W. C. *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-‘Arabī's Metaphysics of Imagination*. Albany: SUNY Press. 1989

¹⁷ Rūmī, J. *The Masnavi*. Trans. Jawid Mojaddedi. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2004.

¹⁸ ‘Aṭṭār, F. *The Conference of the Birds*. Trans. A. Darbandi & D. Davis. London: Penguin. 1984

together with their cyclicity and variation, indeed resembles fractal patterns, in which difference does not negate unity but rather serves as its mode of manifestation.

Thus, the philosophical Sufism of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries developed a mature metaphysical model in which God, the world, and the human being are understood as interconnected modes of a single Being. It is not merely a theological doctrine but also a sophisticated cognitive-ontological system that integrates experience, language, and thought into a unified dynamic of the Absolute's self-knowledge through the multiplicity of forms.

4. *Sufi Orders (14th–18th Centuries): God as the Living Center of the Community*

During the post-classical period, Sufism became institutionalized in the form of established Sufi brotherhoods (*ṭuruq*, singular *ṭarīqa*), transforming the individual mystical path into a collectively organized spiritual practice. Whereas classical Sufism emphasized the inner development of the *sālik* (spiritual traveler), the focus now shifted toward the community as the primary locus for the actualization of the Divine Presence. God came to be understood not only as the inner reality of the individual but also as the living center of the collective heart (*qalb al-jamā'a*), revealed through the shared practices of *dhikr* (remembrance of God), *samā'* (spiritual audition), and the disciplined life of the Sufi brotherhood¹⁹.

The institution of the shaykh (murshid) assumes a central role as the bearer of spiritual authority and the pivotal link in the silsila (chain of transmission), connecting the contemporary disciple to the Prophetic source. Within this context, the spiritual path is no longer understood merely as an individual quest but as an entry into a living tradition, in which repetition (taqlīd in its positive sense of faithful imitation) becomes a means of reenacting the primordial spiritual experience. As al-Ghazālī observes, "He who has no shaykh has Satan as his shaykh," emphasizing the necessity of spiritual guidance along the path²⁰. At the same time, in later Sufi orders such as the *Naqshbandiyya* and the *Qādiriyya*, increasing emphasis is placed on the disciple's inner

¹⁹ Trimingham, J. S. *The Sufi Orders in Islam*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1971

²⁰ Al-Ghazālī: The Principles of the Creed, Translated by Khalid Williams, Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2016, <https://www.ghazali.org/rrs-ovr/>

connection with the shaykh as a subtle form of spiritual resonance rather than merely an external hierarchical relationship.

Within this model, the human being is understood not only as a *sālik* (spiritual traveler) but also as a bearer and transmitter of the tradition who reenacts the archetypal gesture of the order's founder. This is reflected in ritualized forms of conduct, speech, and even bodily comportment, giving rise to a distinctive embodied hermeneutics of Sufi experience. As Annemarie Schimmel demonstrates, the repetitive formulas of dhikr function not merely as acts of remembrance but as a means of embedding the Divine Name within the very structure of consciousness.²¹

The *ṭarīqas* themselves acquired a complex symbolic and organizational structure that mirrored the order of the cosmos. The institutional spaces of Sufi life *khānqāh*, *zāwiya*, and *tekke* functioned as microcosms, in which the hierarchy of roles (the *shaykh*, *khalīfa*, and *murīd*) corresponded to the broader ontological hierarchy of Being. As J. Spencer Trimingham observes, Sufi orders may be understood as a form of "socialized metaphysics," in which cosmological principles are embodied in the structures and practices of communal life²².

In this sense, the fractal principle becomes even more pronounced, extending beyond the level of individual experience to encompass the level of collective structures. Each *ṭarīqa* functions as a self-similar model of the whole: within it, the structure of the spiritual path, hierarchical organization, and Divine Presence are recursively reproduced. The repetition of rituals, the cyclical rhythm of communal gatherings, and the *silsila* (chain of spiritual transmission) together generate patterns that may be described as recursive, with each generation reproducing the preceding one while simultaneously adapting it to its own historical context.

At the same time, this period illustrates the integration of Sufism into broader social and political structures. Sufi orders frequently assumed educational, charitable, and even administrative functions, becoming important mediators between the individual and society. As a result, mystical experience underwent a certain

²¹ Schimmel, A. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 1975

²² Trimingham, J. S. *The Sufi Orders in Islam*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1971

externalization: the Divine Presence was no longer experienced solely as an inner reality but also became institutionally embodied and organized.

Thus, institutional Sufism developed a model in which God is conceived not only as the center of individual consciousness but also as the living center of communal life. The community becomes a locus of theophany, while tradition serves as the mechanism through which this theophany is transmitted across generations. Within this configuration, the individual and the collective, the inner and the outer, personal experience and institutional structure are integrated into a single dynamic system capable of sustaining and reproducing itself through time.

5. Reformist and Modernist Sufism (19th–20th Centuries): God as the Principle of Spiritual Activity.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Sufism entered a period of profound transformation shaped by colonial domination, modernization, and an increasingly intensive dialogue with Western philosophy and science. Within this new historical context, the mystical tradition was reinterpreted not as an isolated path of personal spirituality but as a source of ethical renewal, social reform, and cultural regeneration. God came to be understood not merely as the object of mystical contemplation or the metaphysical Absolute, but as a dynamic principle actualized in history and human action, a kind of *creative Reality*²³.

This shift is particularly evident in the philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal, who reinterpreted the Sufi heritage through the lens of process ontology and the idea of creative becoming. For Iqbal, God is not a static being but the "*Ultimate Ego*", the highest form of self-consciousness, engaged in a continuous act of self-creation. Consequently, the universe is understood as an open process of co-creation rather than a finished order (*in his "The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam"*). Within this framework, the human being is no longer merely a contemplative observer or a passive "mirror" of the Divine, but an active participant in the cosmic process, entrusted with the realization of the latent potential of existence.

²³ Iqbal, M. *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1930

This perspective leads to a radical reinterpretation of the role of the subject. The human person becomes a moral and spiritual agent who actualizes the Divine attributes in the world through love (*maḥabba*), service (*khidma*), and action (*ʿamal*). As Iqbal emphasizes, "Faith is not an escape from life; it is a force that transforms life"²⁴. In this sense, the classical Sufi ideal of self-knowledge evolves into a concept of self-realization, in which spiritual growth is inseparable from ethical responsibility and active engagement in society.

At the same time, Sufism underwent a process of rationalization and ethical reconfiguration in the works of thinkers such as Fazlur Rahman, who argued that authentic Islamic spirituality must be integrated with an ethics of action and social reform. Rather than viewing mysticism as withdrawal from the world, Rahman maintained that spiritual consciousness should inspire responsible participation in history and the transformation of society. In his interpretation, the Qur'anic worldview calls for a dynamic synthesis of inner faith and outward action, making moral responsibility an essential expression of religious experience (*Rahman, 1982*)²⁵. Sufism increasingly came to be understood as the inner, spiritual dimension of Islam, one that should be reconciled with modern conceptions of rationality, justice, and human dignity. Rather than opposing modernity, many contemporary Muslim thinkers sought to demonstrate that the ethical and spiritual insights of the Sufi tradition could provide a foundation for a humane and intellectually robust engagement with the challenges of the modern world.

Within this context, a significant shift occurred from the predominance of contemplative practices toward an "*ethics of creativity*," in which spiritual purification (*tazkiya*) is understood as the prerequisite for active participation in the world. Mystical experience is no longer confined to the inner realm of personal consciousness but is externalized through forms of social engagement, education, political responsibility, and cultural renewal. Spiritual transformation thus becomes inseparable from the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Rahman, F. *Islam*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1979

transformation of society, while the realization of the Divine within the individual is expressed through concrete acts of service, creativity, and ethical commitment.

From a philosophical perspective, this stage may be described as the emergence of an "active metaphysics," in which being is understood not merely as a theophany but as a task to be realized. Whereas in classical Sufism God reveals Himself in the world through the process of *tajallī* (self-disclosure), here the human being is called to participate actively in that revelation through conscious action, ethical responsibility, and creative engagement with history. Divine self-disclosure thus becomes not only an ontological event but also a moral vocation entrusted to humanity.

This transformation gives rise to a new configuration of the relationship between transcendence, immanence, and historicity. God remains transcendent in essence, yet His presence is manifested through human agency within historical reality. Consequently, history itself is no longer viewed as merely the temporal backdrop of spiritual life but as the very arena in which spiritual potential is actualized. Human creativity, freedom, and responsibility become integral dimensions of the ongoing realization of the Divine purpose in the world.

Thus, Reformist and Modernist Sufism articulates a model in which God is understood as the principle of spiritual activity, while the human being is conceived as a responsible co-creator of history. Within this framework, spirituality is no longer defined by withdrawal from the world but by the capacity to transform it in accordance with ethical and transcendent values. The realization of the Divine is expressed through creative action, moral responsibility, and the continual actualization of human potential in both individual and collective life.

This perspective opens the possibility of integrating mystical experience with an ethics of action, repositioning Sufism within the broader framework of contemporary humanistic discourse.

6. Contemporary Post-Traditional Sufism (20th–21st Centuries): God as a Network within Meta-Consciousness.

In the second half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, Sufism has increasingly been interpreted not only as the mystical tradition of

Islam but also as a universal model of spiritual experience that has attracted the attention of philosophers, psychologists, cognitive scientists, and scholars of complex systems. The works of Henry Corbin, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, William Chittick, Toshihiko Izutsu, as well as representatives of transpersonal psychology, have contributed to the emergence of a new interpretation of the Sufi intellectual heritage, in which its traditional concepts acquire a universal philosophical significance.

In contemporary intellectual discourse, God is increasingly understood not only as the transcendent Creator but also as the universal ground of meaning, consciousness, and the interconnectedness of all forms of being. Whereas classical Sufi metaphysics described the Absolute as the One Being, contemporary interpretations increasingly employ concepts such as network, field, wholeness, or universal informational space. These concepts do not, of course, replace traditional theology; rather, they provide a new conceptual language for articulating the same fundamental metaphysical intuitions.

Within this perspective, reality is understood as a multi-layered network of interconnected processes, in which every form of existence is not isolated but embedded within a broader system of interdependencies. The human being is no longer conceived as an autonomous subject standing in opposition to the world, but rather as an integral component of a complex self-organizing system, continuously exchanging information, energy, and meaning with its environment. Such an understanding resonates strongly with contemporary complex systems theory, network science, and synergetics (Haken²⁶; Jantsch²⁷; Barabási²⁸; Capra & Luisi²⁹).

This model may be interpreted as meta-consciousness an integral space of interaction among individual consciousnesses, cultural meanings, and potential forms of reality. Meta-consciousness is neither a separate "super-consciousness" nor an

²⁶ Haken, H. *Synergetics: An Introduction*. 3rd ed. Berlin: Springer. 1983.

²⁷ Jantsch, E. *The Self-Organizing Universe: Scientific and Human Implications of the Emerging Paradigm of Evolution*. Oxford: Pergamon Press. 1980. <https://monoskop.org/images/9/9e/166495032-The-Self-Organizing-Universe-by-Erich-Jantsch.pdf>

²⁸ Barabási, A.-L. *Network Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2016. <https://eravilaipnada.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/barabasi-2012.pdf>

²⁹ Capra, F., & Luisi, P. L. *The Systems View of Life: A Unifying Vision*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2014. https://docdrop.org/download_annotation_doc/Fritjof-Capra_Pier-Luigi-Luisi---The-Systems-View-of-Life_--9y66j.pdf

independent substance; rather, it denotes a level of organization at which distinct cognitive systems constitute a unified field of interrelations and the mutual generation of new possibilities. In this sense, God may be understood as the ultimate principle of unity, ensuring the coherence of this field and the infinite unfolding of its potential.

Within this worldview, the human being appears not as an isolated entity but as a cognitive node within a multidimensional network of being. Human development is determined not merely by the accumulation of knowledge but, above all, by the capacity to establish new connections between different levels of reality, integrate experience, and actualize latent possibilities. Each individual represents a local configuration of the universal field of potentialities, while his or her inner evolution contributes to the integrity and dynamic development of the network as a whole. This perspective is closely aligned with contemporary approaches in cognitive science, network theory, and systems thinking, which emphasize distributed cognition, relationality, and emergent organization (Capra & Luisi, 2014; Barabási, 2016; Haken, 1983). Within this context, love (*maḥabba*), which occupies a central place in the Sufi tradition, acquires a new philosophical significance. It may be interpreted not merely as a moral virtue or a mystical experience, but as a universal principle of integration that enables the emergence of connections among the elements of a complex system. This interpretation is consistent with the writings of Ibn ‘Arabī and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, for whom love is the primary dynamic of creation and the force through which multiplicity returns to unity (Chittick, 1989; Corbin, 1998).

Thus, the post-traditional interpretation of Sufism opens the possibility of integrating it with the contemporary philosophy of consciousness, cognitive science, complexity theory, and the study of social networks. Whereas classical Sufism described the human journey toward God, its contemporary philosophical reinterpretation reveals it as a universal model of the development of consciousness and the unfolding of reality's potential. It is precisely this interpretation that provides an essential conceptual bridge from the Sufi ontology of possibilities to syntopotentialism as a meta-ontology of potential.



Figure 1. Periodization of Sufism: The Evolution of the Concept of God and the Human Path
 (Source: author's conceptual model; visualization created using generative artificial intelligence).

1.1. The Concept of the Unity of Being (*Waḥdat al-Wujūd*) and the Problem of Multiplicity.

One of the central concepts of Sufi metaphysics is the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* ("the Unity of Being"), which received its most systematic formulation in the works of Ibn 'Arabī. According to this doctrine, only the Absolute (*al-Ḥaqq*) possesses true Being. All other forms of existence lack independent ontological status and constitute merely modes of manifestation of the One Being. At first glance, this doctrine may appear similar to classical monism. However, its internal structure is considerably more complex. Ibn 'Arabī does not deny the multiplicity of the world; rather, he seeks to explain how the infinite diversity of forms emerges from absolute unity. In our view, this problem can be resolved through the introduction of the category of potentiality. The multiplicity of the world is not a multiplicity of independent entities; instead, it is a multiplicity of modes through which the single source of Being manifests itself.

Ibn 'Arabī holds that absolute being (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*), which is not limited by any determinations, belongs exclusively to God, who is the Necessary Being (*wājib al-wujūd*), existing through His own essence. The opposite of Necessary Being is absolute non-being (*al-'adam al-muṭlaq*), which bears no relation whatsoever to being. At the same time, things do not emerge from absolute non-being, but from relative non-being (*al-'adam al-idāfī*). Therefore, the thinker distinguishes between being (*wujūd*) and subsistence/ontological fixedness (*thubūt*), stating: "Things can be contemplated in a state of non-being; however, although they do not yet possess actual existence, they nevertheless remain fixed." He likens being to light and non-being to darkness. The *a'yān al-mumkina* (possible essences), deprived of the light of being, remain non-existent, yet already possess the status of fixedness (*thubūt*), although they have not yet acquired the status of actual existence (*wujūd*)³⁰.

³⁰ Gümüšoğlu, Hasan. "İbnü'l-'Arabî'nin Vahdet-i Vücutçuluğuna Eleştirel Bir Yaklaşım". *Mesned İlahiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, c. 14, sy 1, Haziran 2023, ss. 1-20, doi:10.51605/mesned.1265638

In effect, Ibn ‘Arabī dismantles the binary scheme of Being - Non-being and introduces a third category: Being - Potentiality - Non-being. This three-level structure later becomes the theoretical foundation of syntopotentialism, in which potential is granted the status of an independent ontological category.

Thus:

- unity belongs to the level of the Absolute;
- multiplicity belongs to the level of manifestations;
- the connection between them is mediated through the space of potentialities.

In fact, *wahdat al-wujūd* describes reality as a system in which an infinite number of possibilities exist within a single ontological field and are actualized in the form of concrete phenomena. In contemporary terminology, this can be interpreted as a model of a multidimensional space of possibilities, in which the actual world is only one of the realized configurations.

WAḤDAT AL-WUJŪD: UNITY OF BEING AND THE PROBLEM OF MULTIPLICITY

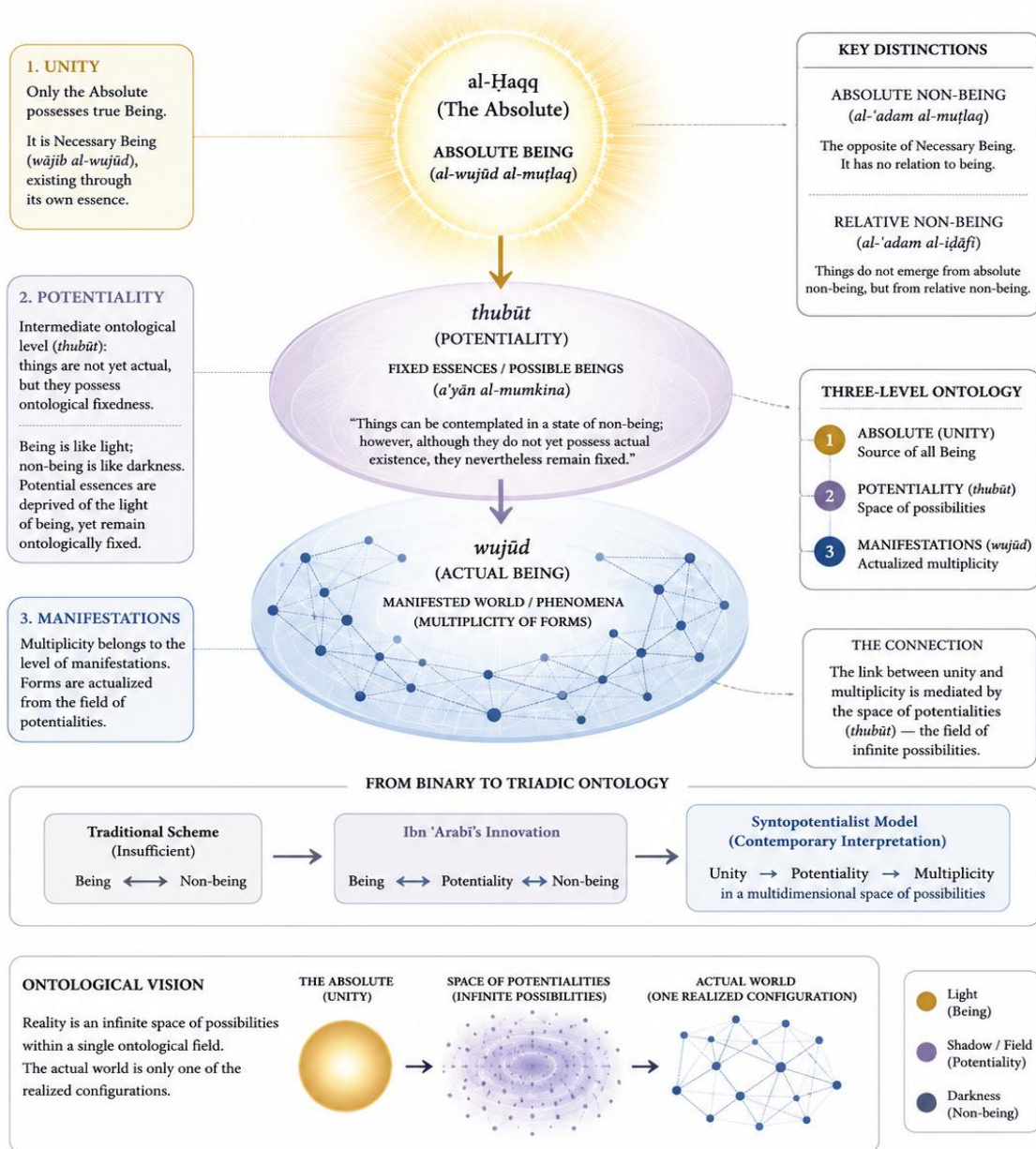


Figure 2. The Triadic Ontology of Being in Ibn 'Arabī's Waḥdat al-Wujūd
(Source: visualization created using generative artificial intelligence).

1.2. *Between Being and Non-Being: The Ontological Status of “A’yān Thābita”.*

A special place in Ibn Arabi's ontology is occupied by the concept of *a’yān thābita* - "unchanging entities". This concept belongs to the most complex and at the same time the most important elements of Sufi metaphysics. *A’yān thābita* are not really existing objects. They do not have actual being. At the same time, they are not simple abstractions. They can be defined as potential forms of existence that are in divine knowledge until the moment of their actualization. In our opinion, every thing exists twice: as a potential possibility; as an actualized form. Before appearing in the world, any form of being is already present as potentiality.

This understanding resonates, to some extent, with Aristotle's classical distinction between potentiality (*dynamis*) and actuality (*energeia*). In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle defines potentiality as the principle governing a thing's capacity to pass into another mode of being³¹. Yet while, for Aristotle, potentiality remains an attribute of an already existing substance, in Ibn ‘Arabī's ontology it assumes a far more fundamental ontological status, preceding the very emergence of essence itself.

In this regard, the *a’yān al-thābita* exhibit conceptual affinities with Plato's Forms, Leibniz's monads, Jungian archetypes, and the notion of conceptual spaces in contemporary cognitive science. Yet they differ from each of these in essential respects. The *a’yān al-thābita* are not immutable or static entities; rather, they function as loci of potentiality through which the Absolute manifests its inexhaustible possibilities. From this perspective, Ibn ‘Arabī can be understood as articulating one of the earliest philosophical models of a universe grounded in ontological potentiality.

From the perspective of the proposed theory of syntopotentialism, the *a’yān al-thābita* may be interpreted as the primary units of the field of possibilities distinctive "quanta of potential" from which the structure of reality is constituted. If the *a’yān al-*

³¹ Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. Translated by W. D. Ross. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1924. 2 vols., 1046a.

thābita describe the domain of potentiality, then the concept of *tajallī* provides an explanation of the mechanism by which the possible is transformed into the actual.

Literally, *tajallī* means "self-disclosure," "manifestation," or "epiphany." For Ibn ʿArabī, the world was not brought into existence through a single, once-and-for-all act of creation. Rather, it continually comes into being through an unceasing process of divine self-disclosure. Every moment of existence constitutes a new act in the manifestation of reality. Consequently, the world is never complete or finalized; it exists in a perpetual state of becoming. In this sense, *tajallī* functions as the ontological mechanism through which structures of potentiality are actualized into concrete forms of existence.

This process may be schematically expressed as: Absolute - Potentiality - *Tajallī* - Actuality - Renewed Potentiality. Such a model exhibits remarkable conceptual affinity with contemporary theories of self-organization, according to which complex systems evolve through the continuous generation and actualization of new possibilities.

In synergetic theory, analogous dynamics are explained through the concepts of bifurcation, attractors, and emergence. Within the framework of syntopotentialism proposed in this study, *tajallī* can be interpreted as a universal ontological principle of potential actualization, one that operates not only in the spiritual realm but equally within cognitive, social, and cultural processes.

From a philosophical perspective, however, *al-Insān al-Kāmil* may be interpreted in a considerably broader sense. It represents a model of the fullest realization of human potential. Unlike traditional anthropological conceptions, which define the human being in terms of already existing characteristics, Sufism understands the human being through the horizon of its possibilities. A human being is not merely what he or she is; rather, a human being is what he or she has the potential to become. This insight constitutes one of the foundational intuitions underlying the proposed theory of syntopotentialism. In this framework, *al-Insān al-Kāmil* represents a state of maximal cognitive complexity, spiritual integration, semantic coherence, and creative productivity.

In contemporary theoretical terms, the Perfect Human may be described as a system possessing the highest capacity for the generation, integration, and actualization of possibilities. From this perspective, Sufi anthropology may be regarded as offering one of the earliest philosophical models of the potential development of consciousness.

The foregoing analysis therefore makes it possible to understand Sufism not merely as a mystical current within Islam, but as a comprehensive metaphysical system that contains the conceptual foundations of an ontology of possibilities. The present analysis suggests that the central categories of Sufi thought: *waḥdat al-wujūd*, *a 'yān al-thābita*, *tajallī*, and *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, form a coherent metaphysical model of reality organized around the principle of potentiality as the fundamental ground of existence.

The doctrine of the Unity of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) demonstrates that the multiplicity of the world may be understood as a multiplicity of modes through which the single source of reality manifests itself. Through the concept of *a 'yān al-thābita*, Sufi metaphysics effectively introduces the notion of a realm of potential forms of being that precede their actualization. The concept of *tajallī* accounts for the ontological transition from possibility to actuality, while the ideal of *al-Insān al-Kāmil* embodies the anthropological dimension of the fullest realization of human potential.

From our perspective, these concepts collectively allow Sufism to be interpreted as an early historical precursor to an ontology of possibilities, in which reality is understood not as a collection of fully constituted entities but as a dynamic process of the continuous unfolding and actualization of potentialities. This philosophical legacy, we argue, provides the conceptual groundwork for the subsequent analysis of the cognitive geometry of Sufism and for the further articulation of syntopotentialism as a universal meta-ontology of possibilities.

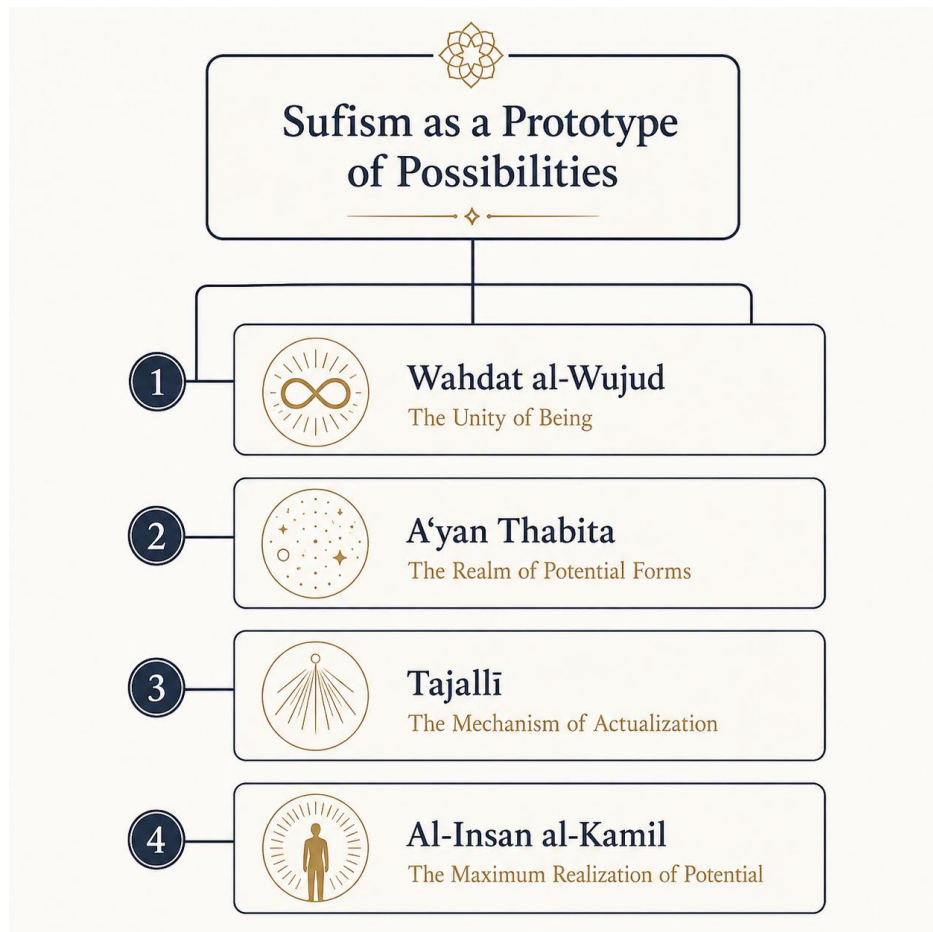


Figure 3. The Metaphysical System of Sufism as the Foundation of an Ontology of Possibilities

(Source: author's conceptual model; visualization created using generative artificial intelligence).

Particular significance for the contemporary understanding of this subject has been provided by the works of the French philosopher and Islamic scholar Henry Corbin. In his analysis of Ibn 'Arabī's thought, Corbin drew attention to the existence of a distinct ontological level, which he termed *mundus imaginalis*, the "imaginal world" or "imaginal reality"³². Unlike ordinary imagination or fantasy, the *mundus imaginalis* is understood as an autonomous ontological realm occupying an intermediate position between the purely spiritual and the material worlds. According

³² Corbin H. *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969. https://maypoleofwisdom.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/henry_corbin_creative_imagination_in_the.pdf

to Corbin, it is within this realm that archetypal images, symbolic forms, and structures exist prior to their full actualization in empirical reality.

Within the context of the present study, the concept of *mundus imaginalis* assumes particular significance because it allows the *a 'yān al-thābita* to be interpreted not as abstract ideas but as ontologically real structures of potentiality. Consequently, an intermediate realm of possibilities emerges between Absolute Being and the empirical world, within which potential forms acquire ontological determination before their actualization. This interpretation establishes a conceptual bridge between Sufi metaphysics and contemporary models of an ontology of possibilities.

CONCLUSIONS TO CHAPTER 1

1. The analysis has demonstrated that Sufism is not merely a mystical tradition within Islam but also a sophisticated metaphysical system that offers an original model of being, consciousness, and human development.
2. It has been established that the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujūd* transcends the classical opposition between unity and multiplicity by interpreting the world as a multiplicity of manifestations of the one Absolute Being.
3. The study has shown that Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine of *a 'yān al-thābita* presupposes a distinct ontological level of potential forms of being that do not yet exist in actuality but nevertheless possess the status of ontological determination (*thubūt*).
4. It has been argued that the category of *thubūt* makes it possible to interpret Sufi metaphysics as a three-tier ontological model: Non-Being - Potentiality – Being, thereby opening new perspectives for the contemporary philosophical reinterpretation of the problem of possibility.

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CHAPTER 2.

THE COGNITIVE GEOMETRY OF SUFISM: THE TOPOLOGY OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND SPACES OF POSSIBILITY

Contemporary philosophy of consciousness has increasingly moved away from understanding consciousness as a static entity and instead conceptualizes it as a dynamic space of possible states. Within cognitive science, consciousness is commonly described as a complex, multilayered system characterized by nonlinearity, self-organization, and emergent properties (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch³³; Tononi³⁴; Dehaene³⁵). This shift reflects a broader transition from substance-based models of mind toward process-oriented and dynamical approaches, in which consciousness is understood as a continuously evolving configuration of cognitive, affective, and experiential states.

This conceptual shift provides the theoretical background for interpreting consciousness as a geometrically structured space of possibilities rather than as a fixed substance. From this perspective, cognitive processes can be understood as trajectories within a multidimensional landscape of potential states, an approach that opens new avenues for the philosophical interpretation of Sufi models of consciousness.

The Sufi tradition likewise presents a spatial conception of consciousness, according to which human cognition unfolds as a progression through different levels of awareness. In contemporary theoretical terms, this model may be interpreted as a cognitive manifold, a multidimensional space in which each state of consciousness is represented by a distinctive configuration of cognitive relations³⁶.

³³ Varela, F. J., Thompson, E., & Rosch, E. *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*. MIT Press. 1991.

³⁴ Tononi G. Consciousness as integrated information: a provisional manifesto. *Biol Bull.* 2008 Dec;215(3):216-42. doi: 10.2307/25470707. PMID: 19098144

³⁵ Dehaene, S. *Consciousness and the Brain: Deciphering How the Brain Codes Our Thoughts*. Viking Penguin, 2014. <https://www.softouch.on.ca/kb/data/Consciousness%20and%20the%20Brain.pdf>

³⁶ Gärdénfors, P. *Conceptual Spaces: The Geometry of Thought*. MIT Press. 2000.

2.1. The Sufi Cognitive Architecture: Levels of Organization and Mechanisms of the Self-Organization of Consciousness

One of the most distinctive features of Sufi anthropology is its understanding of the human being not as a static entity but as a multilayered system of consciousness capable of continuous transformation. In contrast to rationalist models, which tend to locate cognition primarily within the domain of discursive thought, the Sufi tradition develops a sophisticated architecture of inner experience encompassing multiple levels of perception, reflection, intuition, and spiritual awareness (Nasr³⁷; Chittick³⁸). Within this framework, consciousness is conceived as a dynamic and hierarchical process whose transformation is inseparable from spiritual development and existential self-realization.

In classical Sufism, the central components of this cognitive architecture include *qalb* (the heart), *'aql* (the intellect), *rūh* (the spirit), *nafs* (the lower self), *sirr* (the innermost secret), *barzakh* (the intermediary realm or ontological boundary), *dhikr* (the remembrance of God), *maqāmāt* and *aḥwāl* (spiritual stations and states), *maḥabba* (divine love), and other interconnected dimensions of the spiritual path. (Al-Ghazali, Chittick; Ernst³⁹; Schimmel⁴⁰).

Nafs as the Primary Level of Cognitive Organization

Within the Sufi tradition, the concept of *nafs* is commonly translated as the *soul* or the *ego*. From a cognitive perspective, however, *nafs* represents the foundational level of human psychological organization, encompassing instinctual drives, emotions, automatic responses, and mechanisms of self-preservation. Rather than functioning merely as a moral category, *nafs* may be understood as the primary layer of cognition that mediates the individual's immediate engagement with the empirical world.

³⁷ Nasr, S. H. *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition*. HarperOne. 2007. <https://traditionalhikma.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/The-Garden-of-Truth-The-Vision-and-Promise-of-Sufism-Islams-Mystical-Tradition-by-Seyyed-Hosseini-Nasr.pdf>

³⁸ Chittick, W. C. *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination*. State University of New York Press. 2007. <https://reverthelp.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/The-Sufi-Path-Of-Knowledge-William-C.-Chittick-compressed.pdf>

³⁹ Ernst, C. W. *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*. Shambhala.1997.

⁴⁰ Schimmel, A. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. University of North Carolina Press. 1975.

Al-Ghazālī characterizes the *nafs* as a faculty inclined toward illusion, attachment, and limited modes of perception, thereby constituting one of the principal obstacles to genuine knowledge and spiritual realization (Al-Ghazālī⁴¹; Griffel⁴²). Its transformation (*tazkiyat al-nafs*, the purification of the self) therefore represents a central objective of the Sufi path.

From the perspective of contemporary cognitive science, the *nafs* may be compared to the automatic and intuitive mechanisms of cognition that Daniel Kahneman conceptualizes as System 1 - a mode of thinking that operates rapidly, effortlessly, and largely outside conscious deliberation⁴³. Although such mechanisms are indispensable for adaptive behavior and the efficient functioning of the organism, they are also associated with cognitive biases, heuristic judgments, and perceptual limitations.

Accordingly, the *nafs* may be interpreted as the foundational level of Sufi cognitive architecture: it ensures the organism's adaptive functioning while simultaneously imposing cognitive constraints that must be transcended through spiritual discipline, self-reflection, and contemplative practice.

Qalb as the Center of Cognitive Integration

The most fundamental category of Sufi psychology is *qalb* (the heart). In the Western intellectual tradition, the heart is generally associated with the sphere of emotions. In Sufism, however, *qalb* performs a far more comprehensive function. It is understood as the central organ of the perception of reality and the integration of knowledge⁴⁴. Rather than referring merely to an emotional faculty, *qalb* denotes the spiritual and cognitive center through which human beings perceive truth, attain intuitive knowledge (*ma'rifa*), and integrate diverse dimensions of experience.

⁴¹ Al-Ghazālī. *The Alchemy of Happiness* (C. Field, Trans.). Kazi Publications. 2016 (Original work composed c. 1105).

⁴² Griffel, F. *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2009.

⁴³ Kahneman, D. *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 2011.

<https://dn790002.ca.archive.org/0/items/DanielKahnemanThinkingFastAndSlow/Daniel%20Kahneman-Thinking%2C%20Fast%20and%20Slow%20%20.pdf>

⁴⁴ Murata, S. *The Tao of Islam: A Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought*. State University of New York Press. 1992.

Ibn ‘Arabī emphasized that the heart is the only structure of human consciousness capable of embracing the apparently contradictory aspects of being while integrating multiplicity into a coherent unity (Ibn ‘Arabī⁴⁵; Chittick⁴⁶). Owing to its capacity for continuous transformation, the heart functions as the locus in which the diverse manifestations of reality are reconciled without eliminating their differences.

From a cognitive perspective, *qalb* may be interpreted as the integrative center of consciousness that coordinates multiple dimensions of cognition, including:

- rational thought;
- emotional experience;
- intuitive perception;
- meaning-making.

This integrative function bears a conceptual resemblance to contemporary theories of the Global Workspace, according to which consciousness emerges through the integration and global broadcasting of information originating from multiple specialized cognitive systems (by Baars⁴⁷; Dehaene⁴⁸). Although the analogy is not one of direct equivalence, both perspectives emphasize that coherent conscious experience depends upon the dynamic integration of diverse cognitive processes into a unified experiential field.

‘Aql as the Mechanism of Cognitive Differentiation

The concept of *‘aql* is traditionally translated as *reason* or *intellect*. In the philosophical writings of al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) and numerous Sufi thinkers⁴⁹, *‘aql* performs the functions of analysis, discrimination, and the logical structuring of reality⁵⁰. Whereas *qalb* integrates experience into a coherent whole, *‘aql* differentiates, analyzes, and organizes that experience into intelligible forms.

⁴⁵ Ibn ‘Arabī. *The Bezels of Wisdom (Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam)* Translated by R. W. J. Austin, Paulist Press. 1980.

⁴⁶ Chittick, W. C. *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-‘Arabī's Metaphysics of Imagination*. SUNY Press. 1989.

⁴⁷ Baars, B. J. *A Cognitive Theory of Consciousness*. Cambridge University Press. 1988.

⁴⁸ Dehaene, S. *Consciousness and the Brain: Deciphering How the Brain Codes Our Thoughts*. Viking. 2014.

⁴⁹ Fakhry, M. *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (3rd ed.). Columbia University Press. 2004. P. 111-132, <https://cssplatformbytha.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Majid-Fakhry-A-History-of-Islamic-Philosophy.pdf>

⁵⁰ Nasr, S. H. *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origin to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy*. State University of New York Press. 2006. <http://ndl.ethernet.edu.et/bitstream/123456789/37763/1/56.pdf.pdf>

From the perspective of contemporary cognitive science, these functions correspond to such cognitive processes as:

- categorization;
- abstraction;
- conceptualization;
- the construction of mental models.

Peter Gärdenfors, in his theory of *conceptual spaces*, argues that human thought operates through the construction and navigation of multidimensional cognitive structures rather than through the manipulation of symbolic representations alone⁵¹. From this perspective, *‘aql* may be understood as the cognitive operator responsible for navigating conceptual space, distinguishing meaningful patterns, and organizing knowledge into coherent conceptual structures.

Rūḥ as the Level of Metaconsciousness

The category of *rūḥ* (spirit) occupies a distinctive place within Sufi anthropology. Unlike *nafs* and *qalb*, which are primarily associated with individual experience and subjective awareness, *rūḥ* is understood as a transpersonal dimension of consciousness. According to Ibn ‘Arabī, *rūḥ* functions as a channel of interaction between human consciousness and the universal order of being, enabling the individual to participate in realities that transcend the limitations of ordinary perception and cognition (by Chittick, 1989).

In contemporary terminology, *rūḥ* may be interpreted as a level of *metaconsciousness*, the capacity to become aware of one's own cognitive processes and to transcend a purely local or egocentric perspective. From this standpoint, *rūḥ* represents a mode of awareness that not only reflects upon mental activity but also situates individual consciousness within broader horizons of meaning and existence.

Comparable perspectives can be found in contemporary research on *metacognition*, which emphasizes the ability to monitor and regulate one's own

⁵¹ Gärdenfors, P. *Conceptual Spaces: The Geometry of Thought*. MIT Press. 2000.

cognitive processes⁵², as well as in theories of *integral psychology*, where higher levels of consciousness are associated with increasing capacities for self-reflection, integration, and transpersonal awareness⁵³. Although these approaches emerge from different intellectual traditions, they share the recognition that human consciousness possesses the capacity to transcend immediate experience and attain more comprehensive levels of self-awareness and understanding.

Sirr as the Deep Level of Cognitive Potentiality

Particular attention is devoted in the Sufi tradition to the concept of *sirr* ("the innermost secret" or "the secret"). According to al-Qushayrī, *sirr* represents the deepest level of inner experience, a dimension of consciousness in which the distinction between subject and object has not yet emerged⁵⁴. At this level, knowledge is experienced not through discursive cognition but through immediate, unmediated awareness.

Within the framework of the proposed theory of syntopotentialism, *sirr* may be interpreted as the domain of *cognitive potentiality*, a space in which meanings, images, and forms of cognition have not yet been actualized into determinate cognitive structures. Rather than representing the absence of cognition, *sirr* constitutes a generative field of latent possibilities from which new modes of thought, insight, and understanding may emerge.

From this perspective, *sirr* functions as the deepest layer of Sufi cognitive architecture, preserving the unrealized potential of consciousness and serving as the source from which novel cognitive configurations become possible. It is within this domain that genuinely new possibilities of thought arise before they are differentiated by the intellect (‘aql) or integrated into conscious experience through the heart (qalb).

⁵² Flavell, J. H. Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of cognitive-developmental inquiry. *American Psychologist*, 34(10) - 1979, 906–911.

<https://jgregorymcverry.com/readings/flavell1979MetacognitionAndCognitiveMonitoring.pdf>

⁵³ Wilber, K. *Integral Psychology*. Boston, MA: Shambhala, 2000.

⁵⁴ Al-Qushayrī. *Al-Qushayrī's Epistle on Sufism (Al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya)* Translated by A. Knysh, Garnet Publishing, 2007.

Maqāmāt and Aḥwāl as the Dynamics of Cognitive Development

Classical Sufism describes the development of consciousness through two interrelated categories: *maqāmāt* (spiritual stations) and *aḥwāl* (spiritual states). A *maqām* denotes a relatively stable level of spiritual and cognitive development attained through sustained inner discipline, ethical refinement, and contemplative practice (by al-Qushayrī, 2007). By contrast, a *ḥāl* refers to a transient state of consciousness that arises spontaneously, often as a result of divine grace, and is therefore neither permanent nor fully subject to the seeker's volition⁵⁵.

From the perspective of contemporary complexity theory, *maqāmāt* may be interpreted as *attractors* within a cognitive state space that is, relatively stable configurations toward which the dynamics of consciousness tend to converge. *Aḥwāl*, in turn, may be understood as transitional states through which consciousness moves while shifting from one attractor to another. Although these analogies are heuristic rather than historical, they illuminate structural similarities between classical Sufi psychology and modern dynamical systems theory.

From this perspective, the Sufi model of spiritual development may be viewed as an early description of the nonlinear dynamics of consciousness, anticipating key ideas later articulated within synergetics and the theory of complex adaptive systems.

Khayāl as the Cognitive Space of Possibilities

One of the most profound concepts in Ibn 'Arabī's thought is *khayāl* (the imaginal faculty or imaginal imagination). For Ibn 'Arabī, *khayāl* is not equivalent to fantasy or mere imagination. It constitutes an intermediate ontological realm mediating between potentiality and actuality (Ibn 'Arabī, 1980; Corbin, 1969; Chittick, 1989). It is through *khayāl* that potential forms acquire concrete images and become accessible to human consciousness.

From the perspective of contemporary cognitive science, analogous functions are performed by cognitive mechanisms involved in:

- future simulation;

⁵⁵ Schimmel, A. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. University of North Carolina Press. 1975.

- predictive processing;
- the generation of alternative scenarios;
- the construction of possible worlds.

Accordingly, *khayāl* may be interpreted as a cognitive space of possibilities, a generative domain in which unrealized potentialities are imaginatively configured before they are actualized. Within the framework of the present study, *khayāl* occupies a pivotal position, providing the conceptual bridge between classical Sufi metaphysics and the proposed theory of syntopotentialism.

Dhikr as a Mechanism of Cognitive Integration and Self-Organization

Dhikr (the remembrance of God) occupies a central place within the Sufi cognitive architecture. In the classical Sufi tradition, *dhikr* extends far beyond the verbal repetition of sacred formulas. Al-Qushayrī defines it as the continuous state of consciousness in the presence of God⁵⁶, while al-Ghazālī regards *dhikr* as a means of purifying the heart from cognitive and spiritual distortions that obscure the perception of truth⁵⁷.

From the perspective of contemporary cognitive science, *dhikr* may be interpreted as a mechanism of *cognitive integration* that synchronizes multiple levels of consciousness. Whereas *nafs* generates automatic responses, *‘aql* performs analytical processing, and *qalb* integrates heterogeneous forms of experience, *dhikr* maintains their coherent interaction within a unified cognitive system. In this sense, it functions as a process of continuous recursive reorientation of consciousness toward its integrative center.

From the standpoint of *complex systems theory*, *dhikr* may also be understood as a mechanism of *self-organization* that reduces cognitive entropy and promotes the emergence of stable patterns of conscious functioning. Analogous to the way repeated interactions in nonlinear systems facilitate the formation of new attractors⁵⁸ (Haken,

⁵⁶ Al-Qushayrī. *Al-Qushayrī's Epistle on Sufism (Al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya)* Translated by A. Knysh, Garnet Publishing. 2007.

⁵⁷ Al-Ghazālī. *The Revival of the Religious Sciences (Iḥyā' ‘Ulūm al-Dīn): Book XXII: Disciplining the Soul and Book XXIII: Breaking the Two Desires* Translated by T. J. Winter, Islamic Texts Society. 2013.

⁵⁸ Haken, H. *Synergetics: Introduction and Advanced Topics* (3rd ed.). Springer. 1983.

1983), the sustained practice of *dhikr* gradually reorganizes the structure of cognitive space, increasing its coherence, connectivity, and internal integration.

Within the framework of the proposed theory of *syntopotentialism*, *dhikr* may be defined as a *cognitive operator of potential actualization*. Its function extends beyond the preservation or recollection of existing knowledge; rather, it enables the emergence of new configurations of meaning, the integration of previously disconnected cognitive structures, and the expansion of the space of possibilities available to consciousness. In this respect, *dhikr* may be understood as a universal cognitive mechanism that mediates the transition from potentiality to actuality within human consciousness.

The Neuroanthropology of Dhikr: A Perspective from Cognitive Science. Contemporary neuroscience provides new conceptual and methodological tools for understanding phenomena that were once regarded as exclusively spiritual. Research on meditation, prayer, and other contemplative practices has demonstrated that such practices can influence both the structure and the functional organization of the brain (Lazar et al.⁵⁹; Newberg & Waldman⁶⁰; Davidson & McEwen⁶¹).

From this perspective, *dhikr* may be understood as a contemplative practice capable of modulating neurophysiological processes associated with attention, emotional regulation, and self-awareness. Emerging evidence suggests that repetitive contemplative practices may activate the parasympathetic nervous system, reduce physiological markers of stress, and promote states of relaxation and psychological well-being (Newberg & Waldman, 2009). Although direct neuroscientific studies of *dhikr* remain relatively limited, findings from research on related contemplative practices indicate that sustained repetition and focused attention may facilitate functional and structural changes in neural networks involved in attention, affective regulation, and self-referential processing.

⁵⁹ Lazar SW, Kerr CE, Wasserman RH, et al. Meditation experience is associated with increased cortical thickness. *Neuroreport*. 2005;16 (17):1893-1897. doi:10.1097/01.wnr.0000186598.66243.19

⁶⁰ Newberg, A. B., & Waldman, M. R. *How God Changes Your Brain: Breakthrough Findings from a Leading Neuroscientist*. New York: Ballantine Books. 2009.

⁶¹ Davidson RJ, McEwen BS. Social influences on neuroplasticity: stress and interventions to promote well-being. *Nat Neurosci*. 2012;15(5):689-695. Published 2012 Apr 15. doi:10.1038/nn.3093

From the standpoint of contemporary neuroscience, such changes may be interpreted as manifestations of *neuroplasticity*, the brain's capacity to reorganize its structural and functional connectivity in response to repeated cognitive and behavioral activity (Davidson & McEwen, 2012). Within this framework, the repeated practice of *dhikr* may contribute to the gradual reorganization of neural circuits underlying attention, emotional regulation, and self-consciousness, thereby supporting long-term cognitive and psychological transformation.

Neuroanthropology as an interdisciplinary field (Downey⁶², Whitehouse⁶³, McNamara⁶⁴) studies how cultural practices influence neuropsychophysiological mechanisms.

Neurocognitive Effects of Dhikr. The practice of *dhikr* has been associated, in studies of contemplative and repetitive meditative practices, with changes in brain-wave activity, including increased *alpha* and *theta* oscillations, reduced activity in cortical regions associated with executive self-referential processing, enhanced limbic synchronization, and modulation of neural reward circuits involving dopaminergic pathways (Cahn & Polich⁶⁵; Newberg & Waldman⁶⁶; Lomas et al.⁶⁷). Although direct neuroscientific evidence specifically examining *dhikr* remains limited, findings from related contemplative practices suggest that comparable neurophysiological mechanisms may be involved.

Regular engagement in rhythmically structured *dhikr* may therefore contribute to:

- enhanced *neuroplasticity* through the repeated activation of emotionally salient cognitive states;

⁶² Downey, G., & Lende, D. (Eds.). *The Encultured Brain: An Introduction to Neuroanthropology*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2012

⁶³ Whitehouse, H. *Modes of Religiosity: A Cognitive Theory of Religious Transmission*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press. 2004

⁶⁴ McNamara, P. *The Neuroscience of Religious Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2009

⁶⁵ Cahn BR, Polich J. Meditation states and traits: EEG, ERP, and neuroimaging studies. *Psychol Bull.* 2006;132(2):180-211. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.132.2.180

⁶⁶ Newberg, A. B., & Waldman, M. R. *How God Changes Your Brain: Breakthrough Findings from a Leading Neuroscientist*. New York: Ballantine Books. 2009.

⁶⁷ Lomas T, Ivtzan I, Fu CH. A systematic review of the neurophysiology of mindfulness on EEG oscillations. *Neurosci Biobehav Rev.* 2015;57:401-410. doi:10.1016/j.neubiorev.2015.09.018

- improved attentional stability and affective regulation;
- the development of deeper bodily–emotional integration and psychophysiological coherence.

These effects are consistent with contemporary theories of contemplative neuroscience, according to which sustained repetitive practices promote long-term functional and structural reorganization of neural networks supporting attention, emotional regulation, and self-awareness (Davidson & McEwen⁶⁸; Tang, Hölzel, & Posner⁶⁹).

An additional perspective on the neurocognitive mechanisms underlying contemplative practices is provided by research on the affective processing of speech sounds. In their neuroimaging study, "*Sound of Words Evokes Affective Brain Responses*" (2018), Arash Aryani, Chun-Ting Hsu, and Arthur M. Jacobs⁷⁰ investigated how the acoustic properties of words evoke emotional responses in the brain. They identified significant blood oxygenation level-dependent (BOLD) responses in the *superior temporal cortex*, the *insula*, and the *premotor cortex*, suggesting that the affective qualities of speech sounds are processed by neural networks that also respond to other forms of emotional vocal communication.

The authors conclude that their findings provide the first neuroimaging evidence for a phenomenon long recognized in poetry and the arts: the capacity of specific sound patterns to evoke affective and aesthetic responses independently of semantic content. Their results further demonstrate that individuals remain sensitive to the affective information conveyed by the sound of words even when their attention is not explicitly directed toward this dimension (by Aryani et al., 2018).

From the perspective of the present study, these findings are particularly significant because they suggest a plausible neurocognitive mechanism through which the rhythmic and phonetic structure of *dhikr* may influence consciousness. Beyond the

⁶⁸ Davidson RJ, McEwen BS. Social influences on neuroplasticity: stress and interventions to promote well-being. *Nat Neurosci.* 2012;15(5):689-695. Published 2012 Apr 15. doi:10.1038/nn.3093

⁶⁹ Tang YY, Hölzel BK, Posner MI. The neuroscience of mindfulness meditation. *Nat Rev Neurosci.* 2015;16(4):213-225. doi:10.1038/nrn3916

⁷⁰ Aryani A, Hsu CT, Jacobs AM. The Sound of Words Evokes Affective Brain Responses. *Brain Sci.* 2018;8(6):94. Published 2018 May 23. doi:10.3390/brainsci8060094

semantic meaning of sacred formulas, their repetitive acoustic patterns may contribute to emotional regulation, attentional stabilization, and the integration of cognitive processes. Within the framework of syntopotentialism, this supports the interpretation of *dhikr* not merely as a religious ritual but as a cognitive practice capable of facilitating the actualization of latent potentials through the dynamic reorganization of consciousness⁷¹.

If a person engaged in *dhikr* concentrates the entirety of the mind upon a single point, recites it in a state of complete spiritual absorption, contemplates its meaning deeply, and repeats it continuously with a steady rhythm and a sincere heart, the practice gives rise, within the realm of the heart, to divine light, spiritual nourishment, inner comfort, profound tranquility, and an intimate experience of unity.⁷²

The multilayered effects of *dhikr* on the human organism suggest that it should be understood not only as a spiritual practice but also as a psychophysiological phenomenon. The physiological responses documented in the experiment including alterations in skin conductance, tear secretion, cardiac activity, and emotional arousal demonstrate that *dhikr* exerts measurable effects across multiple dimensions of human functioning. These observations have been reported by H. Küçük and Z. Yeğin⁷³ In their study, *Sufism and Medicine: The Physiology of the Benevolent Heart*, H. Küçük and Z. Yeğin argue that as the remembrance of God (*dhikr*) becomes progressively more deeply rooted in the heart, its effects extend throughout the entire body. According to the authors, the initial response is manifested in the skin, accompanied by piloerection ("goosebumps"). As the intensity of the experience increases, blood flow is directed toward the brain, reflecting the organism's response to the significance of the experience. When the heightened physiological arousal generated by this process is balanced by the tranquility and assurance experienced in the heart, tears may arise. If the experience deepens further, its effects extend to the soul (*rūh*), giving rise to

⁷¹ Aryani A, Hsu CT, Jacobs AM. The Sound of Words Evokes Affective Brain Responses. *Brain Sci.* 2018 May 23; 8 (6): 94. URL: <https://doi.org/10.3390/brainsci8060094>

⁷² Suhreverdi, E. S. Gerçek Tasavvuf (The Knowledge of the Gnostics: True Sufism) (D. Selvi, Trans.) İstanbul: Semerkand Publishing, 2010, 723 p

⁷³ Küçük, H., & Yeğin, Z. A. Tasavvuf ve tıp: Selim kalbin fizyolojisi (Sufism and medicine: The physiology of the benign heart) İstanbul: Ensar Nəşriyyat, 2016. 407 p

profound spiritual arousal that may be accompanied by a sensation of bodily constriction, particularly in the chest or waist region. At its most intense, this state may culminate in spontaneous cries or exclamations a phenomenon that, according to the authors, has been observed among certain accomplished Sufi practitioners⁷⁴.

Recent research in the field of modern neuroscience has begun to reveal the scientific basis of the practices of dhikr, which have played an important role in Sufi traditions for centuries. These studies show that dhikr is not only a spiritual experience, but also a complex neurophysiological process that has a specific effect on brain function. Thus, E.İgalçı notes that the dhikr techniques used in Sufi teachings create activity in different areas of the brain, regulate electromagnetic waves and help develop cognitive functions (attention, cognition, focus and memory). This method simultaneously affects both the psyche and the physiology of a person. Neurological studies show that the activity of brain areas associated with cognitive processes and the dynamics of brain waves confirm the functioning of consciousness at a high level⁷⁵.

"Dhikr" and the impact of its practice on psychological adaptation. Mental health is defined in the dictionary as the absence of symptoms that cause anxiety and loss of functionality, adaptation to the society in which a person lives and the roles assigned to him by society, as well as the ability to cope with the demands and negative aspects of everyday life. Mental health has two main components: the first is the absence of negative symptoms and the presence of positive indicators of mental activity. The second includes such positive characteristics as high adaptability, success in social relationships, mental balance, self-esteem, self-control, maturity and stress resistance. The concept of mental health is defined by seven main criteria: the absence of mental disorders, behavior in accordance with social norms, freedom from anxiety and guilt, personal skills and self-management, the level of self-affirmation and self-

⁷⁴ Küçük, H., & Yeğin, Z. A. Tasavvuf ve tıp: Selim kalbin fizyolojisi (Sufism and medicine: The physiology of the benign heart) İstanbul: Ensar Nəşriyyat, 2016. P.313

⁷⁵ İgalçı, E. E. Ç. Sûfî eğitimde zikir ve bilişsel farkındalığa etkisi. (Dhikr in Sufi education and its effect on cognitive awareness) Amasya İlahiyat Dergisi, 22, 2024, 375–408. P. 379-382 URL: <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/3753514>

development, full and proper integration of the personality, as well as flexibility in thoughts and the ability to adapt in behavior ⁷⁶.

There is no universally accepted, comprehensive, and standard definition of mental health. However, in addition to the requirement of the absence of physical and psychological disorders mentioned in various definitions, it can be concluded that a person can be considered mentally healthy if he has a positive attitude towards himself and the world around him, his behavior, activities, and spiritual qualities, is at peace with himself, and has inner balance and harmony⁷⁷.

The World Health Organization, when defining mental health, took as a basis the harmony of a person with himself and with society. On the one hand, the harmony of a person with himself, his inner world, his "I", and on the other hand, with the people around him and society is not static, but requires constantly changing and updated mental functions. Mental health is a dynamic process that is constantly developing and constantly updated⁷⁸.

Through the practice of dhikr, a person better understands himself, his inclinations, preferences and choices. Dhikr is also closely linked to subjective well-being (feeling good), thanks to which sadness and stress are replaced by positive emotions such as love, happiness, optimism, joy and satisfaction. Studies show that with increasing intensity and regularity of dhikr, the level of subjective well-being increases accordingly. Based on the analysis, it was determined that the contribution of understanding developed through dhikr to happiness is 33.64%. Qualitative studies also show that dhikr increases the level of mental health. In psychological practice, the practice of dhikr is used as an effective method of calming people who are experiencing anxiety (severe anxiety) crises. Studies conducted in particular on cancer patients have shown that the practice of dhikr significantly reduces anxiety levels and improves quality of life. However, the main limitation of this method is that it is mainly intended

⁷⁶ Gencer, N. Ruh sađlıđı ve din: Genel deđerlendirme. (Mental health and religion: A general evaluation.) İstanbul: Ertem Kafkars Yayınları 2024. P.10, URL: <https://academygate.org/docs/article/pdf/files/1124.pdf>

⁷⁷ Gencer, N. Ruh sađlıđı ve din: Genel deđerlendirme. (Mental health and religion: A general evaluation.) İstanbul: Ertem Kafkars Yayınları 2024. P.11, URL: <https://academygate.org/docs/article/pdf/files/1124.pdf>

⁷⁸ Pınar, Z. Duanın ruh sađlıđı üzerindeki etkileri (Sivas/Şarkışla ilçesi örneđi) (Yüksek lisans tezi). (The effects of prayer on mental health (Case study: Sivas/Sharkisla district) (Master's thesis)) Erciyes Üniversitesi. 2013. P.33

for Muslim patients. However, alternative methods, such as repeating different words or phrases, are used to achieve a similar therapeutic effect for non-Muslims. This approach expands the scope of religiously-related interventions in psychological therapy⁷⁹.

Maḥabba as a Principle of Cognitive Integration and the Generation of Potential

The concept of *maḥabba* (divine love) occupies a central place in Sufi anthropology. Unlike ordinary emotional affection, *maḥabba* is understood in the Sufi tradition as a fundamental ontological and cognitive principle that unites the human being with the Absolute. Rather than representing merely an emotional state, divine love is conceived as a transformative force through which consciousness attains a deeper mode of knowing and participation in reality.

Al-Ghazālī regarded *maḥabba* as the highest stage of spiritual development, arising from profound knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of God⁸⁰. Ibn ʿArabī, in turn, interpreted divine love as a universal principle underlying the very process of creation. According to his metaphysical vision, love is not simply one of the attributes of existence but the dynamic force through which the Absolute continuously discloses itself in the multiplicity of being⁸¹.

Metaphysical Aspects of Divine Love: The Ontological Structure. In Sufi metaphysics, divine love (*ʿishq, maḥabba*) is understood not merely as an emotional or psychological state but, more fundamentally, as an ontological category of central importance for comprehending the structure of being. It constitutes the primordial impulse of creation: according to numerous Sufi authors, it was divine love that motivated the Absolute to manifest the world in its multiplicity. Accordingly, love is

⁷⁹ Sağır, C. Benötesi psikolojide yer bulan tasavvuftaki manevi uygulama ve ahlaki değerler. (Spiritual practices and moral values in Sufism within the context of transpersonal psychology) *Tekirdağ İlahiyat Dergisi*, 9(2) 2023, 1365–1406. S. 1377 URL: <https://doi.org/10.47424/tasavvur.1356883>

⁸⁰ Al-Ghazālī. *The Alchemy of Happiness* (C. Field, Trans.). Kazi Publications. 2016 (Original work composed c. 1105).

⁸¹ Chittick, W. C. *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-ʿArabī's Metaphysics of Imagination*. State University of New York Press. 1989.

conceived as the inner dynamic of the cosmos, uniting the transcendent and the immanent within a single metaphysical order.

A particularly significant contribution to this understanding is found in the metaphysics of Ibn 'Arabī, who regards love as the axial principle of being. He emphasizes that love makes possible the movement from non-being to being and from potentiality to actuality. Through love, the continuous effusion of existence (*al-fayḍ al-mutaṣīl*, "the uninterrupted divine outpouring") is sustained, whereby the cosmos is perpetually renewed and continuously returns to its divine source. Love is therefore not merely an affective quality but the *metaphysical dynamic* that preserves the coherence, unity, and ongoing unfolding of the cosmos⁸².

The embodiment of this dynamic finds its highest expression in the concept of *al-Insān al-Kāmil* (the Perfect Human). The Perfect Human constitutes the anthropological center of the ontological structure of love, for it is in this being that the complete integration of the Divine Names and attributes is achieved. In essence, the Perfect Human reflects the Absolute, while in action it realizes the harmony between the celestial and the terrestrial. Thus, *al-Insān al-Kāmil* becomes not merely an exemplar of spiritual perfection, but also an ontological nexus in which the universality and wholeness of being are united.

From this perspective, love in Sufism fulfills a dual function. As a metaphysical category, it establishes the bond between the Absolute and the world, serving as the energy of creation and the preservation of being. As an anthropological principle, it attains its culmination in the human being, who is capable not only of experiencing love for God, but also of becoming its bearer and mediator within the cosmos.

Thus, the ontological structure of love in Sufism is multilayered, extending from its transcendent source in God, through the cosmological unfolding of the Divine Names and attributes, to its anthropological embodiment in *al-Insān al-Kāmil* (the Perfect Human). This framework allows divine love to be understood as a universal

⁸² Ibn al-'Arabī. *The Bezels of Wisdom (Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam)*. Translated by R. W. J. Austin. New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1980.

principle of being that integrates the spiritual, cosmic, and human dimensions of existence.

Through love, the *qalb* (heart) is liberated from attachment to the material world and directed toward its ultimate source the Divine. Spiritual practices such as *dhikr* (the rhythmic remembrance of the Divine Names), *murāqaba* (contemplative meditation), and poetic immersion in the symbols of divine love function as means of facilitating this inward spiritual journey.

The culmination of the journey of love is the attainment of the states of *fanā'* and *baqā'*. *Fanā'*, the "annihilation" of the individual ego through dissolution in the Divine Reality, signifies not the loss of personhood but its transformation, whereby the self (*nafs*) ceases to exist as a separate and autonomous principle. *Baqā'*, "abiding" or "subsistence" in God, represents a new mode of being in which the individual retains personal identity, yet now exists as a bearer of divine love and a channel through which that love is manifested in the world⁸³.

Love as the Path to Ontological Union with the Absolute. In Sufism, love constitutes the path toward ontological union with the Absolute. It transforms the human being, making them a participant in the Divine mode of being and contributing to the realization of the ideal of *al-Insān al-Kāmil* (the Perfect Human), who embodies spiritual depth, moral integrity, and the capacity to reflect the universality of God.

Cosmological Implications. Within Sufi cosmology, love also functions as the principle that structures the universe. Creation is fundamentally understood as a reflection of God's Beauty (*Jamāl*) and Majesty (*Jalāl*), while love is the force that unites these two dimensions in a single harmonious reality. According to the Sufi tradition, divine love is the very cause of creation: God brought the world into existence out of love so that His Divine Names and attributes might become manifest in the multiplicity of created forms. In this sense, love fulfills the function of a cosmic *rābiṭa*

⁸³ Khan, Amina Kausar, On becoming naught: reading the doctrine of fana and baqa in the Mathnawi of Jalal al-Din Rumi. MTh(R) thesis. University of Glasgow 2017, p.8 <https://theses.gla.ac.uk/8222/7/2017KhanMThR.pdf>

(bond or connection), sustaining the order, interrelation, and continuous development of all levels of existence, from the spiritual to the material.

The cosmological dimension of love in Sufism is manifested in two principal aspects: first, as an ontological principle that grounds the very existence of the cosmos; and second, as a dynamic force that directs all creation toward its return to its primordial source the Absolute.

Thus, within the Sufi tradition, love is not confined to the sphere of personal mystical experience. Rather, it possesses universal significance, providing an explanation for both the structure and the meaning of the cosmos as a manifestation of the Divine.

The Human Being as the Bearer of Divine Love. In Sufism, love is understood not only as a cosmological and metaphysical principle but also as a fundamental anthropological category that defines both the nature and the vocation of the human being. Through love, the human person realizes the capacity to serve as a mediator between the transcendent Absolute and the created world while simultaneously actualizing his or her own spiritual essence.

Central to this anthropological perspective is the doctrine of *al-Insān al-Kāmil* (the Perfect Human). At the anthropological level, human perfection consists in the capacity to assimilate the totality of the Divine attributes into one's being, to reflect them in one's life, and to embody them within the social and cultural sphere. In this context, love is not merely an inner emotion but a transformative power that guides the individual along the path of spiritual growth, self-transcendence, and existential fulfillment.

In the poetry of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, love is portrayed as a purifying fire that burns away egocentrism and the lower self (*nafs*), thereby opening the human heart to union with the Absolute⁸⁴. The anthropological function of love is to dissolve the barriers between the "I" and the "Thou,"⁸⁵ between the particular and the universal, and between

⁸⁴ Khan, Amina Kausar, On becoming naught: reading the doctrine of fana and baqa in the Mathnawi of Jalal al-Din Rumi. MTh(R) thesis. University of Glasgow 2017, p.8 <https://theses.gla.ac.uk/8222/7/2017KhanMThR.pdf>

⁸⁵ The phrase "between the 'I' and the 'Thou'" refers to the foundational philosophy of dialogue introduced by the Jewish existentialist thinker Martin Buber in his 1923 book *I and Thou* (originally *Ich und Du*).

the human being and God. In this sense, love constitutes the ontological condition of spiritual perfection, without which the attainment of the state of perfection is impossible.

Particular attention should be given to the socio-ethical dimension of love's anthropological significance. Unlike a purely individualistic understanding of mystical experience, the Sufi tradition conceives of love as a paradigm for human relationships within society. One who has come to know divine love becomes capable of mercy, compassion, and selfless service to others. In this way, love shapes the ethical framework of the Perfect Human, encompassing both the personal and the collective dimensions of existence.

The anthropological dimension of love is further manifested in spiritual practices designed to integrate the human being into the Divine order. Practices such as *dhikr* (the continual remembrance of God), *murāqaba* (meditative contemplation), ritual chanting, and poetic expression function as means of transforming love from a transient emotional state into a mode of being. Through these practices, love becomes not merely a mystical experience but a permanent anthropological reality that forms the human being as an integrated and spiritually complete person.

Thus, the anthropological dimension of divine love in Sufism can be considered in three main aspects:

1. Intrapersonal, purification of the heart and overcoming egocentrism;
2. Social-ethical, formation of relationships based on mercy, compassion and service;
3. Spiritual-practical, realization of love in mystical practices that transform a person into a bearer of divine attributes.

In the cognitive dimension, *maḥabba* (divine love) may be interpreted as the principle of the integration of consciousness. Whereas *ʿaql* differentiates experience, *qalb* unifies it, and *dhikr* maintains cognitive coherence, love provides the highest level of connectivity among all components of the cognitive architecture. It overcomes the fragmentation of thought by integrating knowledge, lived experience, intuition, and values into a unified system of meaning.

From the perspective of complex systems theory, *maḥabba* may be understood as a mechanism for increasing coherence. The self-organization of complex systems occurs not only through the exchange of information but also through the strengthening of interconnections among their constituent elements (Haken⁸⁶; Jantsch⁸⁷). In an analogous manner, Sufi love functions as the force that enhances the internal coherence of the cognitive space, rendering it more integrated, stable, and resilient.

Within the framework of the syntopotentialist conception, *maḥabba* may be defined as a metacognitive principle of potential actualization. It not only integrates existing cognitive structures but also opens new developmental trajectories by expanding the individual's space of possibilities. Accordingly, love should be understood not merely as an ethical ideal but as a universal operator that enables the transition from a multiplicity of potential states to their coherent actualization.

Classical Sufi anthropology may, in fact, be regarded as one of the most sophisticated pre-scientific models of the cognitive architecture of consciousness. Its key concepts: *nafs*, *qalb*, *ʿaql*, *rūḥ*, *sirr*, *dhikr*, *maqām*, *ḥāl*, *khayāl*, and *maḥabba*, describe not only the dynamics of spiritual experience but also different levels of cognitive organization, the mechanisms governing their development, and the processes through which potentiality is transformed into actuality. For this reason, the cognitive geometry of Sufism may be viewed as a historical prototype of the contemporary ontology of possibilities and the syntopotentialist conception of consciousness.

2.2 Cognitive Dynamics of Sufism: Maqāmāt, Aḥwāl, and al-Insān al-Kāmil as a Global Attractor.

One of the most complex problems in contemporary cognitive science is explaining how consciousness transitions from one state to another while simultaneously preserving the integrity of its structural coherence. In classical

⁸⁶ Haken, H. *Synergetics: An Introduction. Nonequilibrium Phase Transitions and Self-Organization in Physics, Chemistry and Biology* (3rd ed.). Springer. 1983.

⁸⁷ Jantsch, E. *The Self-Organizing Universe: Scientific and Human Implications of the Emerging Paradigm of Evolution*. Pergamon Press. 1980. <https://monoskop.org/images/9/9e/166495032-The-Self-Organizing-Universe-by-Erich-Jantsch.pdf>

mechanistic models of cognition, such changes were often interpreted as a linear process of knowledge accumulation. However, contemporary complex systems theory has demonstrated that the development of cognitive structures is inherently nonlinear and unfolds through successive phases of instability, reorganization, and self-organization.

Interestingly, a comparable model had already been developed within the Sufi tradition long before the emergence of modern science. Sufi thinkers described human development through the categories of *maqām* (spiritual station) and *ḥāl* (state).

In its classical sense, *maqām* denotes a “station,” “degree,” or “level of spiritual development” attained through sustained inner effort and self-discipline⁸⁸. Each *maqām* represents a relatively stable state of consciousness characterized by a specific configuration of values⁸⁹, modes of perception, and behavioral patterns. In contrast, *ḥāl* refers to a transient state or experiential condition that arises spontaneously and cannot be fully controlled by the individual⁹⁰. Sufi authors describe *aḥwāl* as momentary flashes of insight, love, inspiration, or spiritual illumination.

If interpreted through the language of contemporary science, *maqāmāt* may be understood as attractors within the cognitive space, while *aḥwāl* correspond to transitional phases between attractors. In dynamical systems theory, an attractor is a state toward which a system tends to return after external or internal perturbations⁹¹. In an analogous way, a *maqām* can be considered a stable configuration of consciousness that determines an individual’s patterns of thought and behavior.

Thus, the Sufi path can be described as a sequence of cognitive reconfigurations during which shifts between different attractors of consciousness take place. Development is not limited to the accumulation of experience; rather, it involves a restructuring of the cognitive space itself. Within the framework of syntopotentialism,

⁸⁸ Al-Qushayrī. *Al-Qushayrī's Epistle on Sufism (Al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya)* Translated by A. Knysh, Garnet Publishing. 2007.

⁸⁹ Білокопитова, Н., & Ель Гуессаб, К. Когнітивна модель «чотири брами – сорок стоянок» (dört kapı kırk makam) у бекташизмі: структурний підхід. Філософія та управління, 6 (10) - 2025. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70651/3041-248X/2025.6.02>

⁹⁰ Schimmel, A. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. University of North Carolina Press. 1975.

⁹¹ Kelso, J. A. S. *Dynamic Patterns: The Self-Organization of Brain and Behavior*. MIT Press. 1995.

this implies that the evolution of consciousness occurs through the expansion of the field of possibilities and the increase in the number of accessible cognitive trajectories.

al-Insān al-Kāmil as a Global Attractor of Cognitive Evolution

In classical Sufi anthropology, the culmination of the spiritual path is the concept of *al-Insān al-Kāmil* (the “Perfect Human”), most fully elaborated by Ibn al-‘Arabī⁹². Traditionally, it describes a human being who has fully actualized the Divine Names and attributes, thereby becoming a complete reflection of the Absolute. However, within the framework of cognitive geometry, this concept may be reinterpreted as a model of the limiting state of consciousness development.

One of the key aspects of the concept of *al-Insān al-Kāmil* is its ontological function within Sufi metaphysical structure. The idea of the Perfect Human teaches that this being functions as an intermediary between the transcendent Absolute (*al-Haqq*) and the created world (*al-khalq*). According to Ibn al-‘Arabī, the Perfect Human is the “seal” of the Divine Names and attributes, through which the Divine becomes manifest in phenomenal existence. It contains both the macrocosm and the microcosm, thereby functioning as a universal node of unity for all existence.

The central claim is that *al-Insān al-Kāmil* is not merely an individual category but rather a universal ontological principle. It represents a mode of being that allows the Absolute to be known within the world while preserving its transcendence. Through the Perfect Human, a dynamic relationship is established between the “inner” (*bāṭin*) and “outer” (*ẓāhir*) dimensions of reality.

In this regard, *al-Insān al-Kāmil* can be seen as an analogue of the cosmic Logos, through which the Divine Word receives concretization in creation. In such a perspective, he is not only an anthropological ideal, but also a structural condition of the very existence of the world. In “*Fusus al-Hikam*”⁹³, Ibn ‘Arabi emphasized that the perfect man is a “mirror” in which God contemplates his own fullness. This means that

⁹² Ibn al-‘Arabī. *The Bezels of Wisdom (Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam)*. Translated by R. W. J. Austin. New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1980.

⁹³ Ibid.

human existence in its perfect dimension becomes a place of self-revelation of the Absolute.

«God created the human being as a mirror in which He beholds His Names. And were it not for this mirror, the Divine Names would not have become fully manifest»⁹⁴. The passage belongs to *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, the “Adamic Wisdom” (*Ḥikma Ādamiyya*), where Ibn ‘Arabī explains the status of Adam as the first Perfect Human. At its core lies the idea of the human being as a reflection of God.

Thus, the ontological dimension of *al-Insān al-Kāmil* reveals it as a key category of Sufi metaphysics, without which a coherent understanding of the relationship between the Divine and the created world would be impossible. It functions as a principle of unity that connects the infinite and the finite, the transcendent and the immanent, and for this reason occupies a central position within the system of Sufi thought.

The anthropological aspect of the concept of *al-Insān al-Kāmil* in Sufism is associated with the understanding of the human being as a microcosm reflecting the macrocosm, while simultaneously containing within itself the potential of the Divine Names and attributes. In this sense, the Perfect Human appears not as an abstract category but as a real possibility of spiritual development and self-creation, open to every human being.

In the Sufi tradition, the path toward “perfection” is understood as a process of inner transformation realized through spiritual practice (in particular, *dhikr*, meditation, and the mystical audition of *samā’*). A person who follows this path gradually overcomes the limitations of the ego (*nafs*) and discovers within themselves the Divine center that renders them a reflection of the Absolute. From this perspective, the Perfect Human represents the highest stage of personal becoming, in which individuality and universality achieve a harmonious unity.

The anthropological dimension of the concept also implies a new vision of freedom and responsibility. To be a perfect human being means not only achieving

⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 50.

ontological unity with the Divine, but also realizing one's ethical and spiritual potential in the world. This is why the doctrine of *al-Insān al-Kāmil* combines metaphysics with practical anthropology: perfection is not only a transcendental state, but is manifested in the ability to act as a conduit of divine wisdom in human life.

In the works of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī⁹⁵ this anthropological dimension is expressed through the symbolism of love, which dissolves egocentrism and opens the human being to the boundless horizon of the Divine. For Rūmī, the Perfect Human is, above all, one who, through love and spiritual purification, becomes a “mirror” of Divine beauty.

Thus, the anthropological dimension of *al-Insān al-Kāmil* emphasizes that it is not merely a metaphysical archetype, but a concrete existential possibility. The Perfect Human is simultaneously both goal and process: a path leading from empirical limitation toward universal wholeness, and a state in which the human being becomes a bearer of Divine presence in the world.

The idea of *al-Insān al-Kāmil* in Sufism cannot be reduced to an abstract philosophical category, it is embodied in the rich symbolism of texts and poetic imagery⁹⁶. Its meaning requires a hermeneutic approach capable of accounting for the multilayered nature of mystical language, where each concept operates across several semantic horizons metaphysical, anthropological, cosmological, and existential.

The most developed theoretical articulation of the category *al-Insān al-Kāmil* is found in the works of Ibn ‘Arabī, particularly in *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (The bezels of wisdom)⁹⁷, and *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (The Meccan Revelations)⁹⁸.

Here, the Perfect Human appears as the “true mediator” between God and the world, in whom the two dimensions of reality, the transcendent and the created are united. The mirror symbolism in Ibn ‘Arabī signifies that it is through the human being

⁹⁵ *The Masnavi of Rumi*, translated by E.H. Whinfield (1898), New York 1975, <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.65659/page/n3/mode/2up>

⁹⁶ Білокопитова, Н. І. Концепція досконалої людини «al-Insān al-Kāmil» у суфійській метафізиці: філософські та антропологічні виміри. Вісник гуманітарних наук, 2025 (11). <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17255965>

⁹⁷ ‘Arabī, Muhyiddin-i. *FUSUS UL HIKEM, Çeviren Nuri GENCOSMAN*, Istanbul, 1992, <https://www.profdrosmanegri.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Muhyiddin-Ibn-i-Arabi-Fususul-Hikem.pdf>

⁹⁸ Ibn ‘Arabī. *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* [The Meccan Revelations]. Cairo : al-Hay’a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma lil-Kitāb, 1980. 560 p.

that the Absolute contemplates its own fullness. Such a hermeneutic perspective allows us to see the Perfect Human not only as an ideal but also as a key to the structure of being.

In Rūmī's poetry, the concept of *al-Insān al-Kāmil* acquires a more emotional and existential character. Symbols of love, wine, dance, and the burning heart become modes of expressing the same truth: the Perfect Human is one who, through love, transforms the self and becomes similar to the Divine. In the *Mathnawī*, Rūmī frequently refers to the figures of the teacher and the friend, who serve as concrete embodiments of the Perfect Human within the life of the community. The hermeneutics of Rūmī's poetry reveals that *al-Insān al-Kāmil* is understood not only as a metaphysical principle but also as a lived experience of spiritual transformation.

“Man is a mirror. Look into it and you will see the images of heaven and earth. But when it is pure, only the Sun shines in it.” A passage from the first book of the *Masnavī* illustrates the existential experience of the state of the “perfect man.” Unlike Ibn ‘Arabi, who emphasizes the cosmological function, Rumi brings to the fore the moral and inner-spiritual process. In this form, the image becomes closer to practical anthropology – a synthesis of mysticism and ethics.

Further interpretations. In the later Ottoman and Persian Sufi tradition, the concept of the perfect man develops in two directions: theoretical and practical-mystical. Ottoman thinkers such as Dawud al-Qaysari⁹⁹, attempted to systematize Ibn ‘Arabi's legacy and place *al-Insān al-Kāmil* within the broader context of Islamic philosophy. Persian poets, in turn, deepened the existential and ethical interpretation of this image, emphasizing its significance as a living example for the spiritual community.

In a hermeneutical sense, *al-Insān al-Kāmil* appears as a symbol with multi-level semantics: it simultaneously denotes a metaphysical archetype, an ideal of the spiritual path, and a concrete experience of personal transformation. It is the polysemy and

⁹⁹ Dawud al-Qaysari (d. c. 1350) was an Ottoman Sufi and philosopher, one of the main interpreters of Ibn Arabi. He was the first rector of the madrasa in Iznik (1326) and had a great influence on Ottoman mystical philosophy.

flexibility of this symbol that has ensured its long-term relevance in Sufism and made it one of the central concepts of Islamic philosophical anthropology.

In studying the concept of *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, it is advisable to apply a phenomenological approach that allows us to reconstruct the internal experience of the transformation of consciousness. This involves focusing not only on the doctrinal constructions of Sufism, but also on the “lifeworld” (*Lebenswelt*) of the mystical subject who is in the process of spiritual ascent.

According to E. Husserl, “phenomenology must return us to things themselves” (*zu den Sachen selbst*)¹⁰⁰, and thus, to the immediate experience of consciousness. In this context, the Sufi mystical path can be interpreted as a movement from the “natural attitude” (in which the world appears as a multiplicity of phenomena) to a “transcendental attitude,” in which the unity of being is disclosed. The experience of *fanā*’ (self-annihilation) and *baqā*’ (subsistence in God) may be interpreted as a phenomenological reduction that leads the subject beyond the objectified world toward the immediate givenness of the Absolute.

M. Merleau-Ponty emphasized: “Consciousness is always consciousness of something, but this relation is not external it is embodied in the very mode of existence of consciousness”¹⁰¹. This approach makes it possible to understand that mystical experience in Sufism is not an abstract withdrawal from the world, but rather a new mode of “embodied presence” within it. In Rūmī, the image of the “Perfect Human” as a “purified mirror,” from a phenomenological perspective, acquires the meaning of an internal transformation of the embodied-conscious structure of the subject, where love and humility become a new mode of world-disclosure.

Thus, elements of the phenomenology of consciousness in the spirit of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty allow us to show that the formation of *al-Insān al-Kāmil* is not only

¹⁰⁰ Husserl, E. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*. First Book (Ideas I). Martinus Nijhoff Publishers 1983 p.61, <https://www.finophd.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Husserl-Ideas-First-Book.pdf>

¹⁰¹ Merleau-Ponty, M. *Phenomenology of Perception*, Routledge 2012, p. 159
<https://ia600600.us.archive.org/17/items/G.BachelardThePoeticsOfSpace/Phenomenology%20of%20Perception.pdf>

a metaphysical construction, but also a concrete experience of “changing the horizon of consciousness”, in which the integrity of being is revealed.

The concept of *al-insān al-kāmil* in Sufism is not limited to Islamic mysticism, but has broad parallels in the history of philosophy and religious thought. Its analysis in a comparative context allows us to identify universal anthropological intuitions underlying different spiritual traditions..

From the perspective of dynamical systems theory, *al-Insān al-Kāmil* can be interpreted as a global attractor of the cognitive space. If individual *maqāmāt* represent local attractors that stabilize specific stages of development, then *al-Insān al-Kāmil* represents an integral state toward which the entire trajectory of consciousness evolution is directed. It is not a static final point, but rather a limiting horizon of maximal cognitive, spiritual, and ontological integration.

Within the framework of the syntopotentialist conception, *al-Insān al-Kāmil* may be defined as a state of maximal actualization of potential. Such a state is characterized by the highest level of cognitive coherence, the capacity to integrate heterogeneous semantic structures, openness to the generation of new possibilities, and the harmonization of interaction between individual and universal consciousness. Accordingly, human development appears not as an accumulation of knowledge, but as a progressive approximation to this integral attractor.

In this interpretation, the Sufi model of development acquires a distinctly topological character. Consciousness does not move through a linear sequence of stages; rather, it evolves within a multidimensional space of possibilities, where individual *maqāmāt* function as local centers of stabilization, *aḥwāl* facilitate transitions between them, and *al-Insān al-Kāmil* determines the global direction of self-organization of the entire cognitive system.

2.3 Ricci Flows and the Self-Organization of Cognitive Space

Epistemological Status of the Model. This section develops an *analogical formal model* in which concepts from differential geometry are employed as a heuristic framework for describing structural dynamics in cognitive and experiential systems.

The model does not assume ontological identity between geometric and cognitive domains. Rather, it operates as a *second-order structural analogy*, identifying correspondences between organizational principles across heterogeneous domains.

Epistemologically, the framework is situated at the intersection of:

- formal mathematical modeling (Ricci flow theory),
- dynamical systems theory in cognitive science,
- phenomenological descriptions of experience,
- symbolic-interpretive Sufi anthropology.

Accordingly, the Ricci flow is not treated as a physical or neural mechanism of consciousness, but as a *formal structural analogue* for processes of cognitive self-organization.

Formal Mathematical Background. The Ricci flow, introduced by R. S. Hamilton and later developed by G. Perelman, describes the evolution of a Riemannian metric g_{ij} under curvature-dependent deformation (Hamilton¹⁰²). In this framework, geometric irregularities are progressively reduced through a nonlinear smoothing process, leading to increased global coherence of the underlying structure.

From a formal perspective, the Ricci flow is governed by the evolution equation:

$$\frac{\partial g_{ij}}{\partial t} = -2Ric_{ij}$$

where g_{ij} is the metric tensor and Ric_{ij} is the Ricci curvature tensor.

Formally, the equation defines a curvature-driven smoothing process in which regions of higher curvature evolve more rapidly toward geometric regularization, leading to increased global coherence of the manifold.

In the present model, this formal structure is not transferred to cognition in a literal sense but is used as a *structural template for interpreting systemic reorganization processes*.

¹⁰² Hamilton, R. S. Three-manifolds with positive Ricci curvature. *Journal of Differential Geometry*, 17(2) 1982, 255–306. <https://projecteuclid.org/journals/journal-of-differential-geometry/volume-17/issue-2/Three-manifolds-with-positive-Ricci-curvature/10.4310/jdg/1214436922.pdf>

Cognitive Structural Interpretation. Within the cognitive domain, experiential reality is modeled as a *high-dimensional relational manifold* composed of interconnected cognitive states (perceptions, beliefs, affective configurations, and semantic structures).

Within this framework:

- *Metric structure* (g_{ij}) represents relational proximity between cognitive states.
- *Curvature* (Ric_{ij}) is interpreted as a measure of structural tension, inconsistency, or fragmentation within the system.
- *Flow dynamics* are interpreted as processes of continuous reconfiguration of cognitive relations.

Cognitive instability, contradiction, and fragmentation are therefore modeled as regions of high structural curvature, whereas integrated and coherent cognitive states correspond to low-curvature configurations.

Consequently, cognitive development is interpreted as a *curvature-reduction process*, in which the system tends toward increasing global coherence through progressive structural reorganization.

Sufi Anthropological Model as Structural Analogue. Classical Sufi anthropology provides a structurally compatible descriptive system through the distinction between *maqāmāt* (stations) and *aḥwāl* (states).

Within this interpretive framework:

- *Maqāmāt* correspond to *stable cognitive configurations* (metastable attractor states), acquired through sustained ethical and contemplative discipline.
- *Aḥwāl* correspond to *transient dynamical fluctuations*, representing non-stable transitions between configurations.

The spiritual path (*ṭarīqah*) is therefore modeled as a *nonlinear trajectory in a multidimensional cognitive space*, characterized by transitions between attractor-like states and episodic reconfigurations.

This interpretation remains strictly structural and does not imply identity between Sufi categories and formal dynamical objects, but rather a correspondence of organizational roles within their respective systems.

Cognitive Development and Structural Reorganization. Within this model, cognitive and spiritual development is not understood as cumulative acquisition of informational content, but as a *restructuring of relational configuration space*. The concept of *al-Insān al-Kāmil* (the Perfect Human) functions as a *limiting ideal of maximal structural integration*, in which cognitive, ethical, and existential dimensions of experience achieve systemic coherence. In dynamical terms, this state may be interpreted as a **global attractor** of the cognitive system, representing a limit configuration toward which trajectories of self-organization converge.

Entropy, Disintegration, and Reintegration. Within Sufi discourse, states of cognitive dispersion are described as *ghaflah* (heedlessness), characterized by fragmentation of attention and loss of experiential unity (by al-Ghazālī). Conversely, contemplative and ascetic practices (*dhikr*, reflection, disciplined attention) function as *mechanisms of cognitive reintegration*, supporting transitions toward more coherent configurations.

In the present model, these processes are interpreted as:

- reduction of structural entropy,
- increase in systemic coherence,
- stabilization of relational cognitive geometry.

Unity of Consciousness and Topological Analogy. The problem of the unity of consciousness remains a central issue in cognitive science (Tononi, 2008)¹⁰³. In Sufi metaphysics, this unity is articulated through the principle of *tawḥīd*, which denotes both ontological and experiential integration. Within the present framework, *tawḥīd* is reinterpreted as a *topological property of cognitive space*, characterized by the absence of internal fragmentation in experiential structure.

¹⁰³ Tononi G. Consciousness as integrated information: a provisional manifesto. *Biol Bull.* 2008;215(3):216-242. doi:10.2307/25470707

In analogy with Perelman's resolution of the Poincaré conjecture (Perelman, 2003), the notion of simple connectivity is employed as a *formal metaphor for cognitive integration*:

- fragmented cognition corresponds to topologically non-trivial structures (discontinuities in meaning and experience),
- integrated cognition corresponds to a simply connected cognitive manifold.

This analogy is strictly structural and does not imply mathematical formalization of consciousness.

Methodological Constraint and Interpretation Limits. To ensure epistemological clarity, the model distinguishes three levels of statement:

1. Structural-analogical statements.

(mapping organizational principles across domains: curvature - fragmentation, flow - integration)

2. Phenomenological statements.

(descriptions of lived experience: unity, dispersion, attentional coherence)

3. Symbolic-interpretive statements.

(Sufi conceptual language: *tawḥīd*, *maqāmāt*, *aḥwāl*)

No ontological equivalence is assumed between these levels. The model operates exclusively through *controlled structural correspondence*, not reduction or identity claims.

Concluding Synthesis. The Ricci flow model, when applied as a structural analogy, provides a formal heuristic for understanding cognitive self-organization as a curvature-driven process of relational reconfiguration.

Within this framework:

- Ricci flow functions as a model of structural smoothing,
- cognitive systems are interpreted as evolving relational manifolds,
- Sufi anthropology provides a phenomenological-symbolic mapping of developmental dynamics.

The convergence of these domains yields a unified interpretive hypothesis:

Cognitive and spiritual development can be modeled as a curvature-dependent process of self-organization within a high-dimensional space of experience, characterized by progressive increases in structural coherence. This formulation preserves methodological boundaries while allowing productive structural correspondence between mathematics, cognitive science, and Sufi metaphysical anthropology.

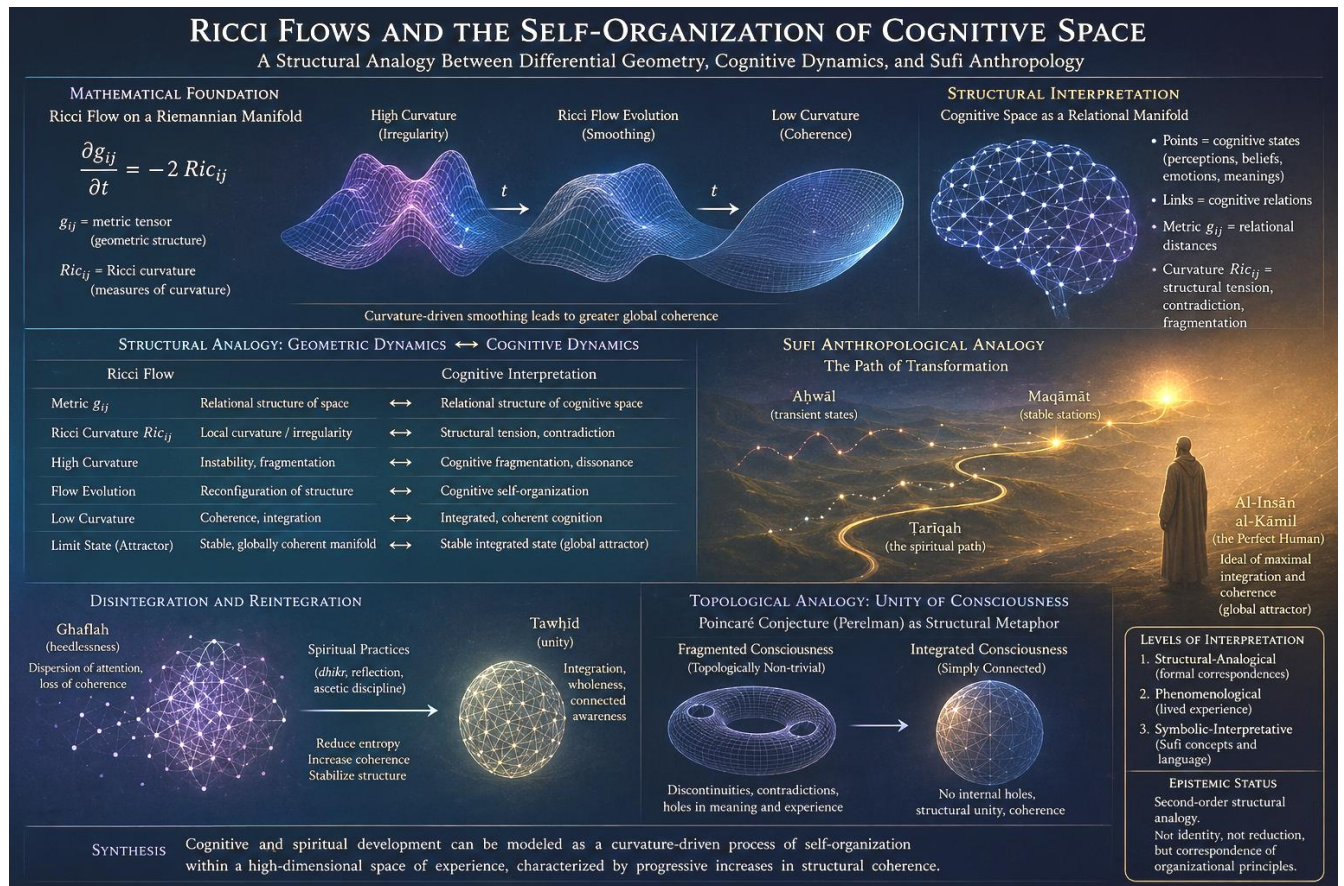


Figure 4. Structural Model of Cognitive Self-Organization Based on the Analogy between Ricci Flow and Sufi Cognitive Anthropology
(Source: author's conceptual model; visualization created using generative artificial intelligence).

2.4 Fractal structure of Sufi cognition.

Fractality as Recursive Spiritual Dynamics. Recent interdisciplinary research has demonstrated that the logic of Sufi spirituality may be understood not merely through symbolic or metaphysical categories but also through recursive processual structures. Rather than representing a sequence of linear stages culminating in mystical

union, the Sufi path unfolds through continuous cycles of stabilization, transformation, and renewal. Within this perspective, recursion becomes not simply a mathematical property but a fundamental characteristic of spiritual development ¹⁰⁴.

This interpretation substantially extends classical understandings of fractality. In Mandelbrot's geometry, recursive iteration generates increasingly complex structures while preserving an invariant organizational principle¹⁰⁵. Analogously, Sufi spirituality reproduces its own fundamental structure at every scale of spiritual life. Every act of *dhikr*, every ethical discipline (*adab*), every *maqām*, and every *ḥāl* embodies the entire logic of the path rather than functioning merely as an isolated stage.

Bilokopytova argues that the essential characteristic of classical Sufi spirituality is not linear ascent but *recursive temporality*, in which repetition performs a constitutive rather than merely instrumental function. Spiritual transformation therefore proceeds through continual reconfiguration rather than irreversible progression. States (*aḥwāl*) remain temporary, stations (*maqāmāt*) require continuous stabilization, and every new *tajallī* simultaneously renews the entire structure of consciousness.

This recursive interpretation finds direct support in the writings of the major Sufi masters. Al-Qushayrī distinguishes temporary spiritual states from acquired stations requiring constant effort. Al-Ghazālī emphasizes continual renewal of intention and uninterrupted ethical discipline. Ibn ‘Arabī formulates the principle that divine self-disclosure never repeats itself in the same form, while Rūmī repeatedly describes spiritual life as perpetual renewal occurring "with every breath." Collectively, these authors describe spirituality as an open recursive process rather than as a completed mystical achievement.

Consequently, fractality within Sufism should not be understood merely as morphological self-similarity but as *recursive self-renewal*. Each repetition does not reproduce the previous state identically; instead, it generates qualitative transformation

¹⁰⁴ Bilokopytova N. From Mystical Experience to Spiritual Process: A Metamodern Framework for Sufism, *Spirituality Studies* 2026 - 12 (1), 100-117, <https://www.spirituality-studies.org/volume12-issue1-spring2026/>

¹⁰⁵ Mandelbrot, B. B. *The Fractal Geometry of Nature*. New York: W. H. Freeman and Company. 1982. <https://lab.semi.ac.cn/library/upload/files/2019/1/412557940.pdf>

while preserving structural continuity. This corresponds closely to Barnsley's concept of iterative generation, where repeated application of simple transformational rules gives rise to increasingly complex global structures¹⁰⁶.

The same logic resonates with Deleuze's philosophy of repetition. In *Difference and Repetition*¹⁰⁷, repetition is never simple recurrence but the production of difference through recursive becoming. Likewise, every act of *dhikr* constitutes a renewed encounter with divine reality rather than a mechanical reiteration. As Ibn 'Arabī famously states, *al-tajallī lā yatakarrar* ("theophany never repeats in the same manner"), indicating that repetition itself becomes the source of ontological novelty.

Edgar Morin's theory of complexity¹⁰⁸ further illuminates this recursive organization. His hologrammatic principle maintains that every part contains information about the whole while simultaneously contributing to its continual reconstruction. A remarkably similar intuition underlies the Sufi conception of the human being as *al-insān al-kāmil*, where the microcosm mirrors the macrocosm and every individual spiritual transformation reflects the universal process of divine self-disclosure.

The poetry of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī perhaps expresses this recursive ontology most vividly. Rather than portraying mystical realization as a final destination, Rūmī continually returns to the image of perpetual becoming, where "renewal reaches us in every breath." Spiritual life therefore consists of endlessly renewed participation in the unfolding of Being rather than attainment of a fixed metaphysical state.

Within the framework of *Syntopotentialism*, these insights acquire a broader ontological significance. Fractality describes not only the recursive organization of consciousness but also the architecture of the space of possibilities itself. Every actualized possibility generates a new field of potentialities, while every cognitive transformation reorganizes the topology of subsequent possibilities. The recursive

¹⁰⁶ Barnsley, M. *Fractals Everywhere*. Boston: Academic Press Inc. 1988. http://lib.ysu.am/open_books/418197.pdf

¹⁰⁷ Deleuze, G. *Difference and Repetition*. New York: Columbia University Press 1995.

<https://mumbletheoryhome.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/gilles-deleuze-difference-and-repetition-columbia-university-press-1995.pdf>

¹⁰⁸ Morin, E. *On Complexity*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2008.

temporality identified in Sufi spirituality thus becomes a manifestation of a more general ontological principle governing the continuous self-generation of potentiality.

Imagination as the Space of Transition between Potentiality and Actuality: A Cognitive Topology of Possibilities. One of the most profound and, at the same time, one of the least understood concepts in Sufi metaphysics is *khayāl* (imagination, the imaginal world, or the world of images). Within the Western philosophical tradition, imagination has long been regarded as a secondary psychological faculty associated primarily with fantasy, mental imagery, or the reproduction of sensory representations. In Sufi thought particularly in the philosophy of Ibn al-'Arabī *khayāl* acquires a fundamentally different status. It is understood not as a subjective faculty of the mind but as a distinct *ontological domain* in which the transition from potentiality to actuality takes place (by Ibn al-'Arabī, 1980; by Chittick, 1989).

Ibn al-'Arabī describes the *'ālam al-khayāl* (the Imaginal World) as an intermediate mode of reality situated between the purely spiritual realm and the material world of sensible phenomena. Rather than constituting an illusory sphere, the imaginal realm mediates between invisible intelligible realities and their concrete manifestations. The imaginal world is the locus in which meanings assume forms and forms disclose meanings¹⁰⁹.

This conception implies that imagination is not an escape from reality but one of the fundamental mechanisms through which reality becomes manifest. Through the imaginal faculty, potential forms acquire symbolic structure, cognitive organization, and the conditions necessary for their actualization. William C. Chittick emphasizes this ontological function of imagination: "For Ibn al-'Arabī, imagination is not fiction but an ontological bridge between Being and becoming"¹¹⁰. Accordingly, imagination functions as a mediating interface between the realm of possibilities and the realm of realized forms, enabling the continuous transformation of potential into actuality.

¹⁰⁹ Chittick, W. C. *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination*. Albany: State University of New York Press. 1989.

¹¹⁰ Chittick, W. C. *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination*. Albany: State University of New York Press. 1989. P.118.

Conceptual Spaces and the Geometry of Imagination. Remarkable conceptual parallels to the Sufi understanding of imagination can be found in Peter Gärdenfors' theory of *conceptual spaces*¹¹¹. According to Gärdenfors, cognition cannot be adequately explained solely in terms of symbolic logic or linguistic representation. Instead, concepts are organized within multidimensional geometric spaces, where meaning is constituted through relations of proximity, similarity, and structural organization.

Within this framework, imagination performs the function of *navigating conceptual space*. It enables the cognitive system to explore configurations that have not yet been realized by establishing novel relationships among concepts, simulating alternative future scenarios, and constructing previously unavailable semantic structures. Consequently, imagination becomes a mechanism for cognitive exploration rather than a passive repository of mental images.

From the perspective of *Syntopotentialism*, imagination may be interpreted as the principal mechanism for exploring the *space of possibilities*. It enables consciousness to:

- transcend the limitations of immediate experience;
- model states that have not yet been actualized;
- evaluate alternative developmental trajectories;
- generate novel semantic and cognitive configurations.

Within this theoretical framework, imagination is understood not as a storage system for representations but as a *dynamic topological field of potentiality*, in which new structures of meaning continuously emerge through recursive processes of cognitive self-organization.

Rather than merely reproducing existing reality, imagination functions as an operator of possibility, mediating the transformation of virtual structures into actual forms of cognition and experience. In this sense, *khayāl* represents not simply an

¹¹¹ Gärdenfors, P. *Conceptual Spaces: The Geometry of Thought*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 2000.

anthropological faculty but a fundamental principle governing the dynamics of consciousness itself.

Topology of Possible Worlds. A further perspective on the cognitive function of imagination is provided by the theory of *possible worlds*, developed in modal logic and philosophical semantics through the works of Saul A. Kripke¹¹², David Lewis¹¹³, and subsequent scholars. Within this framework, reality is not restricted to the actual world alone but encompasses a plurality of *possible worlds* alternative configurations of events, states, and relations that possess modal significance.

Human consciousness continuously engages with such possible worlds. It anticipates future events, constructs alternative courses of action, evaluates the consequences of different decisions, and generates novel cultural and social scenarios. Imagination thus functions as the cognitive mechanism that enables transitions between the actual world and multiple possible worlds.

From this perspective, *khayāl* may be interpreted as a *topological space of possibilities*, within which numerous potential configurations of reality coexist prior to their realization. It is within this imaginal domain that future realities first emerge as structured possibilities before becoming actualized.

Phase Transitions, Bifurcations, and Cognitive Dynamics. An additional conceptual parallel emerges from *synergetics* and the *theory of complex systems*, according to which the evolution of complex systems proceeds through *bifurcations* - critical points at which multiple developmental trajectories become simultaneously available (Haken¹¹⁴; Prigogine and Stengers¹¹⁵).

At a bifurcation point, the future state of the system has not yet been determined; rather, the system temporarily occupies a field of alternative possibilities. A comparable process may be observed within human cognition. Prior to any significant decision, consciousness constructs multiple hypothetical scenarios by exploring

¹¹² Kripke, S. A. *Naming and Necessity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1980.

<https://neuroself.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/naming-and-necessity-full-text.pdf>

¹¹³ Lewis, D. *On the Plurality of Worlds*. Oxford: Blackwell. 1986.

¹¹⁴ Haken, H. *Synergetics: An Introduction. Nonequilibrium Phase Transitions and Self-Organization in Physics, Chemistry and Biology* (3rd ed.). Berlin: Springer. 1983.

¹¹⁵ Prigogine, I., Stengers, I. *Order Out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature*. New York: Bantam Books. 1984.

alternative actions, anticipating their consequences, and evaluating emerging opportunities.

In this sense, imagination creates a *field of potential future states*, within which alternative trajectories are cognitively simulated before one of them becomes actualized. Imagination therefore functions as a *cognitive bifurcation zone*, mediating the transition from multiple virtual possibilities to a single realized outcome.

Within the framework of Syntopotentialism, imagination may accordingly be defined as the principal mechanism for the *exploration, evaluation, and selection of potentialities*.

Imagination as an Operator of the Actualization of Possibilities. Within the Syntopotentialist framework, imagination acquires the status of a *fundamental cognitive operator* governing the actualization of possibilities. If consciousness is understood as a navigator within the multidimensional space of potentiality, imagination constitutes the mechanism through which consciousness is able to:

- identify latent potentials;
- construct novel configurations of reality;
- evaluate alternative developmental trajectories;
- transform potential states into actual forms of experience.

In this respect, imagination performs a function analogous to that of *khayāl* in Ibn al-'Arabī's ontology. It serves as the mediating domain between the invisible and the visible, between potentiality and actuality, enabling the emergence of determinate forms from an initially indeterminate field of possibilities. Henry Corbin characterizes Ibn al-'Arabī's imaginal world as "a third realm between pure spirit and matter, where spiritual realities become embodied in imaginal forms"¹¹⁶.

Although Corbin's formulation is rooted in the language of Islamic metaphysics, it also lends itself to a contemporary cognitive interpretation: imagination may be understood as the intermediate domain in which future structures of experience first become cognitively conceivable before entering empirical reality.

¹¹⁶ Corbin, H. *Creative Imagination in the Sūfism of Ibn 'Arabī*. Translated by Ralph Manheim. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 1969. P.8.

Barzakh concept (*barzakh*, برزخ) is in fact a natural extension of the concept of *khayāl* in Ibn Arabi's metaphysics. If *khayāl* can be seen as a space of forming possibilities, then *barzakh* is the principle that makes possible the connection between different levels of reality.

Barzakh as a topology of transition between the possible and the actual. In the classical Islamic tradition, the term *barzakh* means "obstacle", "boundary", "isthmus" or "intermediate space". In the Quran, this word is used to denote the boundary between two seas: "He has let loose the two seas, meeting each other. Between them is a *barzakh*, which they cannot cross" (Quran 55:19–20).

Barzakh in Classical Sufi Metaphysics. In the Qur'ān, the term *barzakh* denotes a barrier or partition separating distinct domains. It appears, for instance, in reference to the separation of two bodies of water: "He released the two seas, meeting [side by side]; between them is a *barzakh* they do not transgress"¹¹⁷, as well as in an eschatological context describing the interval between death and resurrection¹¹⁸. In these usages, *barzakh* signifies not merely separation, but a structured boundary that both distinguishes and regulates interaction between different orders of reality.

In Sufi metaphysics, particularly in the works of Ibn 'Arabī, the concept is significantly expanded into a central ontological principle. Ibn 'Arabī defines *barzakh* as "that which separates two things while not belonging exclusively to either" (*mā huwa ḥājiz bayna al-shay'ayn wa-lā yatamayyaz 'an kull wāḥid minhumā*)¹¹⁹. This definition captures the paradoxical structure of *barzakh*: it is neither reducible to one pole nor the other, yet it is the necessary condition for their relation.

This paradox is further elaborated in Ibn 'Arabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, where he describes *barzakh* as a reality that possesses a "two-faced" (*dhū wajhayn*) nature, turning toward both the divine and the created without collapsing into either¹²⁰. In this

¹¹⁷ Qur'ān 55:19–20

¹¹⁸ Qur'ān 23:100

¹¹⁹ Ibn 'Arabī. *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 90

¹²⁰ Ibn 'Arabī *Futūḥat-i mekkiyye*, (The Meccan Revelations: volume 1 Of 18), Çeviri: Ekrem Demirli, İstanbul: Litera Yayıncılık - 2007. I:304, <https://archive.org/details/futuh-at-i-mekkiye-18-muhyiddin-ibn-arabi/F%C3%BCt%C3%BChat%C4%B1%20Mekkiye/F%C3%BCt%C3%BBh%C3%A2t-%C4%B1%20Mekkiye%20-%201%20-%20Muhyiddin%20C4%B0bn%20Arab%C3%AE%20%282007%29>

sense, *barzakh* is not a static intermediary but a dynamic locus of manifestation (*mazhar*), in which the unseen (*ghayb*) becomes perceptible through form.

Closely associated with this concept is the notion of *‘ālam al-mithāl* (the imaginal world), extensively elaborated in later Islamic philosophy and mysticism, particularly by Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī and further interpreted in the Sufi tradition. This imaginal realm is described as an ontologically real domain that mediates between the purely intelligible and the purely sensory. As Suhrawardī writes, it is a “suspended world” (*‘ālam mu‘allaq*) in which forms exist independently of material substrates while remaining perceptible¹²¹.

Within this framework, *barzakh* functions as the structural condition of possibility for imaginal perception. It is the domain in which meanings (*ma‘ānī*) take on forms (*ṣuwar*), allowing the knower to encounter metaphysical realities in symbolic and visionary modes. Ibn ‘Arabī emphasizes this function in his discussion of dreams and visions, noting that “the meanings become embodied in forms in the imaginal presence” (*tatamaththalu al-ma‘ānī fī al-ṣuwar fī al-ḥaḍra al-khayāliyya*)¹²².

A similar understanding can be found in the works of al-Ghazālī, who, while not employing the term *barzakh* in the same ontological sense, nevertheless describes an intermediate mode of perception in which spiritual realities are apprehended through symbolic forms. In *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, he writes that higher truths are «represented in forms accessible to the imagination»¹²³, suggesting a functional equivalent to the barzakhian mediation between intelligible and sensory domains.

Thus, in classical Sufi metaphysics, *barzakh* emerges as more than a boundary or interval. It constitutes an intermediate ontological layer that is irreducible to both subjectivity and materiality. It is neither purely mental nor purely external, but rather a relational domain in which the distinction between inner and outer, spiritual and material, is both maintained and traversed. As Chittick emphasizes, *barzakh* is not a

¹²¹ al-Suhrawardī, Abū l-Futūh Shihāb al-Dīn Yahyá ibn Ḥabash. “*Kitāb Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*.” Majmū‘ah-i duwwum-i Muṣannafāt-i Shaykh-i Ishrāq Shihāb al-Dīn Yahyá al-Suhrawardī dar ḥikmat-i ilāhī. Edited by Henry Corbin. 1-260. Tehran: Institutū Īrān va Farānsah, 1952.

¹²² Ibn ‘Arabī *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, II:313

¹²³ al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights (Mishkāt al-Anwār)*. Royal Asiatic Society, London 1924.

third entity but a «relational reality that discloses the interdependence of opposites»¹²⁴. As Izutsu demonstrates, Sufi metaphysics operates through a semantic field in which binary oppositions are transformed into relational polarities rather than mutually exclusive categories¹²⁵. This dual function simultaneously separating and connecting renders *barzakh* a fundamentally paradoxical structure. It is precisely this paradoxicality that allows it to serve as a locus of manifestation, mediation, and transformation. As such, *barzakh* provides a premodern articulation of a non-dual yet non-reductive ontology, one that resists both strict dualism and monistic collapse.

A Cognitive Interpretation of Barzakh. Whereas *khayāl* designates the imaginal domain in which forms of possibility emerge, *barzakh* may be interpreted as the principle that mediates transitions between distinct ontological or cognitive configurations. In Ibn al-'Arabī's metaphysics, *barzakh* denotes an intermediate reality that both separates and unites two different domains of existence (Ibn al-'Arabī, 1980; Chittick, 1989; Corbin, 1969). Within the present study, this concept is employed as a *heuristic model* for describing transitional processes in cognition rather than as a direct scientific equivalent.

From this perspective, several structural analogies with contemporary cognitive science may be identified.

First, *barzakh* may be understood as an *interface between unconscious and conscious cognition*. Novel insights rarely emerge as fully articulated thoughts. Instead, they initially appear as intuitions, preconceptual impressions, vague images, or latent semantic potentials before becoming explicitly conceptualized. This transitional phase may be interpreted as a cognitive *barzakh* situated between unformed and fully structured knowledge.

Second, *barzakh* may be viewed as a *boundary region between conceptual domains*. Within Peter Gärdenfors' theory of conceptual spaces, conceptual categories possess flexible rather than rigid boundaries, and conceptual innovation frequently

¹²⁴ Chittick *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabī's Metaphysics of Imagination*, p.118.

¹²⁵ Izutsu *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts*, Lahore: Suhail Academy 2005, 67. <https://traditionalhikma.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Sufism-and-Taoism-by-Toshihiko-Izutsu.pdf>

arises through interactions between neighboring semantic regions (by Gärdenfors, 2000). From this standpoint, *barzakh* represents a space of conceptual intersection in which creative cognition becomes possible through the emergence of new semantic relationships.

Third, *barzakh* may be interpreted as a *cognitive bifurcation zone*. According to synergetics and the theory of complex systems, nonlinear systems approaching a phase transition enter a state in which multiple developmental trajectories coexist simultaneously (by Haken, 1983; Prigogine and Stengers, 1984). At such critical points, the future organization of the system has not yet been determined. Structurally, this transitional condition closely resembles the function attributed to *barzakh* within Sufi metaphysics: an intermediate domain in which alternative possibilities coexist before one trajectory becomes actualized.

Barzakh and the Topology of Possibilities. Within the framework of Syntopotentialism, *barzakh* may be conceptualized as a topological transition space connecting different levels of reality, cognition, or possibility. Classical ontology generally distinguishes between two principal categories, potentiality and actuality. The present model introduces an intermediate transformational domain that mediates between these two states: *Potentiality - Barzakh – Actuality*.

In this interpretation, *barzakh* is not an additional ontological level but the dynamic condition that enables the transition from possibility to realization. Without such a mediating domain, potentiality would remain merely potential and could not become actualized.

Accordingly, *barzakh* should be understood not as a static state but as a *dynamic operator of transformation*. It performs processes of mediation, translation, recoding, and structural reorganization through which potential configurations become progressively actualized.

Within this conceptual framework, the relationship between *khayāl* and *barzakh* may be expressed schematically: *khayāl* generates the multidimensional field of possible configurations, whereas *barzakh* governs the transformational pathways through which movement among these configurations becomes possible.

Barzakh and Social Consciousness. The concept of *barzakh* may likewise be extended heuristically to the analysis of social systems. Transitional zones frequently emerge at the boundaries between traditions and modernity, cultures, religious and scientific worldviews, or individual and collective consciousness. Such liminal spaces often become loci of innovation, where new cultural meanings, institutional forms, and social structures are generated. From this perspective, social development may be interpreted as a sequence of transitions across successive *barzakh*-like structures, each mediating the transformation of inherited possibilities into new historical realities.

A Syntopotentialist Definition of Barzakh. Within the Syntopotentialist framework, the following definition is proposed: *barzakh* is a topological space of transition between different levels of reality, consciousness, or possibility, within which potential configurations are transformed into actualized forms through processes of interaction, recoding, and self-organization. In a more compact form, *barzakh* may be defined as *the operator of transition within the ontology of possibilities*. Accordingly, the dynamics of ontological actualization may be represented by the following conceptual sequence:

A 'yān al-Thābitah → Khayāl → Barzakh → Tajallī → Actual Reality

This model should be understood as a theoretical reconstruction rather than a historical interpretation of classical Sufi metaphysics. It constitutes the conceptual foundation of the proposed *Syntopotentialist ontology of possibilities*, in which the emergence of actuality is interpreted as a nonlinear process of mediated transformation connecting latent ontological potentialities with their realized forms.

2.5 Literary Representation of Syntopotential Ontology: Elif Shafak's The Forty Rules of Love as a Narrative Model of the Topology of Consciousness

The Syntopotentialism as a metaontological framework grounded in Sufi metaphysics, cognitive geometry, and the theory of complex systems opens a new interpretative horizon for reading literary texts that emerge from or engage with the Islamic mystical tradition. Within this perspective, Elif Shafak's novel *The Forty Rules*

of Love (2009)¹²⁶ acquires a significance that exceeds its genre boundaries as a historical novel or spiritual fiction. It may instead be interpreted as a narrative topology of consciousness, in which love functions as a generative mechanism of ontological and cognitive transformation.

Syntopotential theory thus gains a particularly strong explanatory value. It allows the novel to be read not merely as a literary account of the relationship between Rumi and Shams of Tabriz, but as a map of the topological evolution of consciousness, in which subjectivity is continuously reconfigured through relational intensities, symbolic disruptions, and shifts in meaning-space. In this sense, the novel becomes an illustrative model of how potentialities are activated, transformed, and reorganized within a relational field.

Ella Rubinstein as an Example of Cognitive Reconfiguration. At the beginning of the novel, Ella exhibits a high level of cognitive curvature: a disjunction between inner and outer life; loss of existential meaning; dominance of social roles; fragmented identity. In terms of Syntopotentialism theory, this corresponds to an initial topology of consciousness.

Love as a Mechanism of Ontological Reconfiguration. In *The Forty Rules of Love*, love is not presented as a psychological state or emotional attachment but as a transformative principle that dissolves fixed identities and opens new existential trajectories. This aligns directly with the syntopotentialist claim that potential is not an intrinsic property of entities but emerges through relational reconfiguration. One of the most frequently cited formulations in the novel expresses, the path to Truth is a labour of the heart, not of the head. Within a syntopotential framework, this statement can be interpreted as the primacy of affective and relational cognition over purely rational structures. The “heart” (*qalb*, in the Sufi sense) functions as a topological operator of transformation, enabling transitions between different cognitive and existential states.

Shams of Tabriz as a Topological Disruptor of Identity. The figure of Shams operates in the novel not as a stable teacher but as a catalytic presence that destabilizes

¹²⁶ Shafak, Elif. *The Forty Rules of Love*. London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2010.

existing identity structures. His arrival in Rumi's life triggers a radical reconfiguration of meaning, perception, and spiritual orientation.

This dynamic corresponds to what syntopotentialism conceptualizes as a reconfiguration event in a relational potential field, where a new set of possibilities becomes accessible only through structural disruption. Shafak describes this transformative encounter through another key formulation, that I am not this hair, I am not this skin, I am the soul that lives within. This passage illustrates a decentering of substance-based identity in favor of a relational and interiorized ontology of becoming. From a syntopotential perspective, identity is not a fixed essence but a temporary stabilization of a dynamic field of potentials.

Rumi as an Emergent Consciousness in a Field of Potentials. Rumi's transformation throughout the novel can be interpreted as a transition from structured identity (social, juridical, and theological) to a state of expanded cognitive and spiritual potentiality. This corresponds to the syntopotentialist idea that consciousness is not a container of knowledge but a multidimensional space of navigable trajectories. The novel repeatedly emphasizes that transformation occurs not through accumulation of knowledge but through reorganization of relational structures particularly through love as an ontological force.

Narrative Structure as a Model of Cognitive Topology. The structure of *The Forty Rules of Love* itself interweaving contemporary narrative with historical episodes of Rumi and Shams can be interpreted as a literary analogue of topological thinking. Rather than linear causality, the novel operates through resonance, recursion, and parallel transformation of narrative layers. In syntopotential terms, the novel does not describe a fixed ontology but performs a dynamic mapping of possibility-space, where each narrative strand activates different regions of a shared ontological field.

Love as the Generator of Potential Fields. The central syntopotentialist reinterpretation of the novel lies in redefining love not as emotion but as a generator of potential configurations. Love does not merely connect two individuals; it transforms the entire relational topology within which individuals exist.

Thus, in Shafak's narrative universe: love destabilizes fixed identities, reorganizes cognitive and spiritual structures and expands the space of possible being. This aligns with the syntopotentialist principle: Potential does not precede relations; it is generated by relations.

The Novel as a Map of Topological Consciousness. Within the syntopotentialist framework, Elif Shafak's *The Forty Rules of Love* functions as a narrative simulation of a relational ontology in which consciousness is continuously reshaped through affective, symbolic, and spiritual interactions.

Accordingly, syntopotential theory acquires a particularly strong explanatory significance. It allows the novel to be read not merely as a literary narrative about Rumi and Shams, but as a cartography of the topological evolution of consciousness, where love operates as the primary mechanism of potential generation and actualization. In this sense, the novel becomes an aesthetic articulation of a deeper ontological intuition: reality is not a fixed structure of beings, but an open field of becoming in which love functions as the force that expands the horizon of the possible.

Here, our theory acquires very strong explanatory significance. It allows Elif Shafak's novel to be read not merely as a literary narrative about Rumi and Shams, but as a map of the topological evolution of consciousness. It also demonstrates the universality of our conceptual framework: if the cognitive geometry of Sufism explains not only classical texts but also a contemporary novel, then it functions as a tool for philosophical analysis of different cultural forms.

CONCLUSIONS TO CHAPTER 2

1. Sufi metaphysics reveals a multidimensional ontology in which *wahdat al-wujūd*, *a 'yān al-thābitah*, *khayāl*, *barzakh*, and *tajallī* constitute an integrated system describing the transition from potentiality to actuality.
2. The concepts of *khayāl* and *barzakh* can be interpreted as cognitive mechanisms mediating between latent possibilities and actual experience, thereby providing a bridge between classical Sufi thought and contemporary cognitive science.

3. Fractal geometry and complexity theory offer productive heuristic models for interpreting the recursive organization of Sufi cosmology, consciousness, and spiritual development without reducing mystical experience to mathematical formalism.
4. The recursive dynamics of Sufi practice expressed through *dhikr*, *maqāmāt*, *aḥwāl*, and continuous *tajallī*, demonstrate that spiritual transformation proceeds through iterative self-renewal rather than linear progression.
5. The philosophy of complexity (Morin), fractal geometry (Mandelbrot, Peitgen, Barnsley), and process philosophy (Deleuze) provide complementary conceptual frameworks that illuminate the nonlinear and self-organizing character of Sufi cognition.
6. Rūmī's poetic vision and Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysics converge in presenting reality as recursively structured, where each level of existence reflects and participates in the totality of Being.
7. Within the framework of Syntopotentialism, potentiality is understood as the fundamental ontological principle governing the recursive generation, actualization, and continual expansion of the space of possibilities.
8. The proposed interdisciplinary synthesis demonstrates that Sufi metaphysics can be reinterpreted as a coherent cognitive-ontological model, capable of contributing to contemporary discussions in philosophy of consciousness, complexity science, cognitive studies, and the ontology of possibilities.
9. Shafak's novel confirms the heuristic universality of syntopotentialism, which reveals the ability to describe not only Sufi texts but also contemporary literary forms as dynamic maps of the formation of consciousness and the space of the possible.

Thus, the cognitive geometry of Sufism serves as a conceptual bridge between the classical Sufi ontology of possibilities and the syntopotentialist metaontological potential. If the first section answered the question "where are possibilities?", then the second section showed "how does consciousness interact with possibilities?". The next step is to clarify the question: "what is potential as a fundamental category of reality?"

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CHAPTER 3.

FROM COGNITIVE GEOMETRY TO SYNTOPOTENTIALIST METAONTOLOGY.

The history of European philosophy can largely be understood as the history of the search for the fundamental nature of being. From Parmenides to Hegel, dominant ontological paradigms conceived reality as a system of stable entities, substances, or universal structures. Despite the profound differences among materialism, idealism, and dualism, these traditions shared the assumption that reality is grounded in an ultimate principle determining the nature of existence. Classical ontology therefore focused primarily on the question of *what exists*, seeking the immutable foundations underlying the multiplicity of phenomena¹²⁷.

The scientific revolutions of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have substantially transformed this classical understanding of reality. Quantum mechanics demonstrated that physical phenomena are characterized by fundamental indeterminacy rather than deterministic certainty¹²⁸. Synergetics and the theory of self-organizing systems revealed that order may spontaneously emerge from nonlinear interactions without external control (by Haken; Prigogine and Stengers). At the same time, developments in cognitive science challenged the representational view of mind by demonstrating that consciousness does not function as a passive mirror of the external world but actively participates in the construction of experienced reality through embodied and enactive cognitive processes (by Varela, Thompson, & Rosch¹²⁹; Clark¹³⁰).

¹²⁷ Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. Translated by W.D.Ross, Oxford: Clarendon press, 1924

<https://ia802806.us.archive.org/30/items/aristotlesmetaph0001aris/aristotlesmetaph0001aris.pdf>

¹²⁸ Heisenberg, W. Über den anschaulichen Inhalt der quantentheoretischen Kinematik und Mechanik. *Zeitschrift für Physik*, 1927, 43, 172-198. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01397280>

¹²⁹ Varela, F. J., Thompson, E., & Rosch, E. *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*. MIT Press. 1991, https://monoskop.org/images/2/21/Varela_Thompson_Rosch_The_Embodied_Mind_Cognitive_Science_and_Human_Experience_1991.pdf

¹³⁰ Clark, A. *Being There: Putting Brain, Body, and World Together Again*. MIT Press. 1998 <https://faculty.sites.iastate.edu/tesfatsi/archive/tesfatsi/BeingThere.AClark1998.EntireBook.pdf>

Consequently, increasing attention has shifted from substance-based ontology toward processual, relational, and dynamic conceptions of reality. Rather than treating being as a fixed state, contemporary philosophy increasingly emphasizes becoming, emergence, interaction, self-organization, and possibility as fundamental ontological categories. Reality is understood less as a collection of completed objects than as a continuously evolving network of relations and transformational processes (by Whitehead¹³¹; DeLanda¹³²; Barad¹³³).

Within this intellectual context, there arises a need for a new metaontological framework capable of integrating insights from contemporary science, philosophy, and the experiential knowledge preserved within the world's spiritual traditions. Such a framework should not merely reconcile different disciplines but provide a common conceptual language for describing the dynamic relationship between potentiality, cognition, and the actualization of reality.

The concept of possibility occupies a central place in the history of philosophical thought. Aristotle was the first to formulate its systematic ontological significance through the distinction between *δύναμις* (dynamis) potentiality and *ἐνέργεια* (energeia) actuality. In *Metaphysics* (Book IX), he argues that development consists in the transition from what exists potentially to what exists actually, thereby establishing one of the foundational principles of Western metaphysics (by Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IX, 1046a–1051a¹³⁴). Potentiality is therefore not equivalent to mere logical possibility but represents the intrinsic capacity of a being to realize forms that are not yet actual.

This Aristotelian distinction has profoundly influenced subsequent philosophical traditions, from medieval scholasticism to contemporary metaphysics. Nevertheless, classical ontology generally regarded potentiality as subordinate to actuality, interpreting the actual as the fulfillment or completion of what was merely possible.

¹³¹ Whitehead, A. N. *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (Corrected ed., D. R. Griffin & D. W. Sherburne, Eds.), New York: Free Press, 1978.

¹³² DeLanda, M. *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*. London: Continuum. 2006, https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9781441151742_A23999354/preview-9781441151742_A23999354.pdf

¹³³ Barad, K. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. London: Duke University Press. 2007. <https://smartrnightreadingroom.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/meeting-the-universe-halfway.pdf>

¹³⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IX, 1046a–1051a <https://isidore.co/aquinas/english/Metaphysics9.htm>

Contemporary developments in complexity theory, quantum physics, and cognitive science invite a reconsideration of this hierarchy by suggesting that the field of possibilities itself possesses an autonomous ontological status. Within this perspective, actuality represents only one realization among multiple potential trajectories rather than the exclusive culmination of ontological development.

The present study develops this intuition into the framework of Syntopotentialist Metaontology, which proposes that potentiality constitutes the primary ontological dimension from which actuality continuously emerges through recursive processes of cognitive, social, and cosmological self-organization. Accordingly, consciousness is interpreted not simply as a representational system but as an active operator navigating, selecting, and transforming multidimensional spaces of possibilities. This shift from an ontology of substances to an ontology of potentiality provides the theoretical foundation for the subsequent analysis of cognition, social evolution, and spiritual transformation presented in this chapter.

In modern times, the problem of possibility gained a new dimension in the works of Gottfried Leibniz¹³⁵, who put forward the idea of a multiplicity of possible worlds. In the 20th century, this issue gained particular relevance in the philosophy of process of Alfred North Whitehead¹³⁶, the ontology of becoming of Gilles Deleuze¹³⁷, and the existential philosophy of Martin Heidegger¹³⁸. Post-nonclassical science also increasingly works not with the actual states of systems, but with spaces of possible states. In the theory of complex systems, the concept of phase space becomes key, in evolutionary biology - adjacent possible¹³⁹, and in cognitive science - conceptual

¹³⁵ Leibniz, G. W. *Philosophical Essays* (R. Ariew & D. Garber, Trans.). Hackett Publishing. 1989, (Includes *Monadology*, originally published 1714)

¹³⁶ Whitehead, A. N. *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (Corrected ed., D. R. Griffin & D. W. Sherburne, Eds.). New York: The Free Press. 1978 (Original work published 1929)
https://www.palmyreoomen.nl/uploads/pdf%27s/A.N.Whitehead_Process-and-Reality.pdf

¹³⁷ Deleuze, G. *Difference and Repetition*. Translated by Paul Patton, New York: Columbia University Press. 1995 (Original work published 1968) <https://mumbletheoryhome.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/gilles-deleuze-difference-and-repetition-columbia-university-press-1995.pdf>

¹³⁸ Heidegger, M. *Being and Time* (J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Trans.). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 1962, (Original work published 1927)
[https://altair.pw/pub/lib/Martin%20Heidegger%20-%20Being%20and%20Time%20\(translated%20by%20Macquarrie%20&%20Robinson\).pdf](https://altair.pw/pub/lib/Martin%20Heidegger%20-%20Being%20and%20Time%20(translated%20by%20Macquarrie%20&%20Robinson).pdf)

¹³⁹ Kauffman, S. A. *Investigations*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2000.

spaces¹⁴⁰ (Gärdenfors, 2000). All this indicates a gradual shift in the ontological focus from being to potentiality. Reality increasingly appears not as a set of ready-made objects, but as a field of possibilities in the process of actualization.

3.1. The Ontology of Potentiality as the Fundamental Category of Syntopotentialism

Most existing philosophical theories regard potentiality as a derivative category that is, as a property of something more fundamental, whether substance, process, event, or structure. Within such frameworks, potentiality possesses no independent ontological status but functions merely as an attribute of an already existing reality.

Syntopotentialism proposes a fundamentally different perspective. It argues that potentiality is not a property of reality but its primary ontological mode. Rather than emerging from pre-existing entities, potentiality constitutes the generative dimension from which entities, processes, and structures themselves arise through processes of actualization. Within the framework of Syntopotentialism, potentiality may be defined as the ontologically real capacity of a system to generate a multiplicity of alternative states that can be actualized under specific conditions of interaction.

This definition incorporates several fundamental principles. First, potentiality is ontologically real. It should not be understood as a purely logical abstraction, epistemic uncertainty, or hypothetical construct, but as an objective dimension of reality that exists independently of human cognition or observation. Second, potentiality is not identical with possibility. Possibility denotes a logical or conceptual condition of what may occur, whereas potentiality refers to the intrinsic generative capacity of a system to produce new configurations. In this sense, possibility describes a relation, while potentiality denotes an ontological power.

Third, potentiality necessarily implies multiplicity. Every system contains not a single predetermined future but a structured field of alternative trajectories whose realization depends upon internal dynamics and external interactions. Actualization

¹⁴⁰ Gärdenfors, P. *Conceptual Spaces: The Geometry of Thought*. MIT Press. 2000.

therefore represents a process of selection from a multidimensional space of potential configurations rather than the inevitable unfolding of a predetermined state. Fourth, potentiality exists independently of its realization. The ontological reality of potentiality does not depend upon whether a particular possibility is eventually actualized. Unactualized potentials are not unreal; rather, they remain constitutive elements of the system's overall space of possibilities.

The Three Modes of Reality

On this basis, Syntopotentialism proposes a three-level ontological model of reality, distinguishing between non-being, potentiality, and actuality as three fundamentally different ontological modes.

1. Non-Being ($\emptyset$). Absolute absence of any determination, differentiation, or ontological structure. Non-being represents the complete negation of existence and contains no latent capacities or potential configurations.

$\emptyset$

2. Potentiality (P). The structured field of possible configurations that may emerge under specific conditions of interaction.

$$P=\{S_1, S_2, S_3...S_n\}$$

where each S_i denotes a possible state of the system.

3. Actuality (A). The realized state of the system resulting from the actualization of one configuration within the field of potentiality.

$$A=S_i$$

Accordingly, the fundamental ontological sequence proposed by Syntopotentialism may be represented as follows:

Non-Being – Potentiality - Actuality

This sequence should not be interpreted as a simple chronological progression but as a **metaontological schema** describing the logical organization of reality. Non-being signifies the absence of ontological determination; potentiality constitutes the structured domain of latent generative capacities; and actuality represents the temporary realization of one configuration selected from the broader space of possibilities. Reality is therefore understood not as a static collection of completed

entities but as a continuous process of transition from potentiality to actuality, within which every actualized state simultaneously generates new fields of potentiality for subsequent development.

Within this perspective, *potentiality becomes the primary ontological principle governing the emergence, transformation, and evolution of all natural, cognitive, social, and spiritual systems*. Consequently, Syntopotentialism shifts the focus of ontology from the study of what *is* to the investigation of *how new forms of being become possible* through the recursive dynamics of potentiality itself.

Potential is neither pure absence nor complete presence. It represents an unrealized, but already structured possibility. It is here that the conceptual affinity with the idea of a'yan thabit in Ibn Arabi is traced.

The property of potential. Potential has five fundamental characteristics:

1. Plurality. Each potential contains a set of possible states.
2. Openness. The future is not determined in advance.
3. Coherence. Potentials interact with each other.
4. Emergence. The combination of potentials generates new potentials.
5. Self-organization. Potentials can form complex structures without external control.

The Principle of the Conservation of Potentiality. One of the fundamental principles of Syntopotentialism may be formulated as follows: *Potentiality is not extinguished through actualization; rather, it is transformed into new configurations of potentiality.*

Every act of actualization generates a new field of possibilities. Consequently, the development of reality should not be understood as the progressive exhaustion of potentiality but as its *recursive unfolding*, in which each realized state gives rise to further horizons of possible emergence.

This principle implies that actuality does not represent the endpoint of ontological development. Instead, every actualized configuration becomes the source of new potential structures, thereby continuously expanding the multidimensional space of possibilities. Reality is therefore characterized not by the depletion of its

generative capacities but by the ongoing recursive transformation of potentiality into ever-new forms of becoming.

Table 1. Potential as a universal unit of description.

Domain	<i>Space of Potentiality</i>
Physics	Possible states of a system
Biology	Evolutionary trajectories
Consciousness	Cognitive possibilities
Culture	Semantic possibilities
Society	Social possibilities
Civilization	Future scenarios

Criteria for Measuring Potentiality. For *potentiality* to function as a scientifically meaningful category, it is necessary to establish measurable indicators by which it can be assessed. Within the framework of *Syntopotentialism*, the potentiality of a system may be evaluated according to the following parameters:

1. The number of alternative states available to the system.

The greater the range of possible developmental trajectories accessible to a system, the higher its potentiality. This principle corresponds to Ross Ashby's Law of Requisite Variety¹⁴¹, according to which the adaptive capacity of a system depends on the diversity of states it can generate and manage.

2. The degree of interaction among the system's elements.

The greater the number and quality of productive interconnections within a system, the greater its capacity to generate novel configurations and expand its space of possibilities. High connectivity enhances both systemic coherence and creative emergence.

3. Adaptability.

The ability of a system to reorganize its internal structure in response to changes in its environment while maintaining its functional integrity. Adaptability reflects the system's capacity to preserve and transform its potentiality under changing conditions.

¹⁴¹ Ashby, W. R. *An Introduction to Cybernetics*. London: Chapman & Hall. 1956, (Reprinted, London: Methuen, 1964) <https://ashby.info/Ashby-Introduction-to-Cybernetics.pdf>

4. **Productivity.**

The number of novel configurations or alternative states that a system is capable of generating within a given period of time. Productivity reflects the dynamic efficiency with which potentiality is transformed into new opportunities for development and subsequent actualization.

These four indicators provide a conceptual framework for evaluating potentiality across physical, biological, cognitive, social, and cultural systems. Rather than measuring only realized outcomes, they assess the *generative capacity* of a system its ability to produce, sustain, and expand the multidimensional space of future possibilities. This shift from outcome-oriented to potential-oriented evaluation constitutes one of the defining methodological features of Syntopotentialism.

Mechanisms of Potentiality Actualization. Potentiality does not become actualized automatically. Its realization depends upon specific generative mechanisms through which latent capacities are transformed into concrete configurations of reality. Within the framework of *Syntopotentialism*, four fundamental mechanisms of potentiality actualization may be distinguished.

1. Self-Organization. New structures emerge through the internal interactions among the components of a system without the need for external control. Through nonlinear dynamics and cooperative interactions, systems spontaneously develop higher levels of order and complexity. Self-organization thus serves as one of the primary mechanisms by which potentiality is transformed into actuality (by Haken, 1983).

2. Bifurcation. At critical points of development, a system encounters multiple alternative trajectories and undergoes a transition toward one of several possible future states. Bifurcation represents the moment at which latent potentialities diverge into distinct pathways of actualization, making development inherently nonlinear and contingent (by Prigogine & Stengers, 1984).

3. Cognitive Navigation. Consciousness functions as an active agent in selecting among alternative possibilities, thereby shaping the future configuration of reality. Rather than passively representing the external world, cognition navigates

multidimensional spaces of potentiality by evaluating, selecting, and actualizing particular developmental trajectories. Cognitive navigation therefore constitutes the mechanism through which intentionality participates in the transformation of potentiality into actuality.

4. Syntopy. Syntopy is the process through which multiple independent potentialities become integrated into a new and more complex system of possibilities. Rather than merely combining existing elements, syntopy generates qualitatively new configurations characterized by emergent properties that cannot be reduced to those of their individual components. It is through syntopy that higher levels of organization, increasing complexity, and novel ontological structures arise. Within Syntopotentialism, syntopy represents the principal mechanism of *emergent ontological innovation*, enabling reality to expand recursively through the continuous integration and transformation of existing fields of potentiality.

Together, these four mechanisms describe complementary pathways through which potentiality is actualized across physical, biological, cognitive, social, and cultural systems. They demonstrate that actualization is not a deterministic transition from possibility to reality but a dynamic, nonlinear, and recursive process in which new structures, meanings, and forms of organization continuously emerge from the evolving space of potentiality.

Potentiality as a Universal Measure of Development. Within the framework of *Syntopotentialism*, development is defined not by the accumulation of resources but by the *expansion of potentiality*. The primary criterion of development is therefore not the quantity of material, informational, or energetic assets possessed by a system, but its capacity to generate new opportunities for further transformation and growth.

Accordingly, the *universal indicator of a system's development is its capacity to generate an increasingly greater number of interconnected and productive potentialities*. A highly developed system is characterized not merely by complexity or stability but by its ability to continuously expand the multidimensional space of possible future configurations while maintaining coherence among its constituent elements. From this perspective, *biological evolution, cultural development, the*

evolution of consciousness, and social transformation can all be understood through a common ontological parameter the expansion of the space of potentialities. Development thus represents the recursive enlargement of a system's generative capacity, whereby each realized configuration gives rise to new fields of potentiality and increasingly diverse trajectories of future actualization.

This conception shifts the focus of developmental theory from measuring accumulated outcomes to evaluating *the productive capacity of systems to create new possibilities*. Consequently, Syntopotentialism proposes that the true measure of development is neither wealth, power, nor informational complexity in themselves, but the extent to which a system enhances its ability to generate, integrate, and actualize progressively richer and more interconnected fields of potentiality.

3.2. Theoretical Foundations of Syntopotentialism

The emergence of Syntopotentialism is grounded in several interrelated scientific and philosophical traditions that have fundamentally transformed contemporary understandings of reality, complexity, and cognition. Collectively, these approaches challenge the classical view of the world as a collection of stable objects governed by deterministic laws and instead emphasize emergence, self-organization, nonlinear dynamics, and the generative role of potentiality.

First, Hermann Haken's theory of synergetics¹⁴² demonstrated that complex systems are capable of spontaneously generating new forms of order without external control or centralized coordination. In this perspective, order is no longer understood as the consequence of an external organizing principle but as an emergent property arising from the internal dynamics of interacting components. Self-organization therefore becomes a universal mechanism through which latent possibilities are transformed into new structures and higher levels of systemic complexity.

¹⁴² Haken, H. *Synergetics: An Introduction: Nonequilibrium Phase Transitions and Self-Organization in Physics, Chemistry, and Biology* (3rd ed.). Berlin: Springer. 1983.

Second, Ilya Prigogine's theory of dissipative structures¹⁴³ fundamentally revised the classical understanding of stability and equilibrium. Prigogine showed that instability, nonequilibrium conditions, and fluctuations are not merely sources of disorder but can become the driving forces of development, innovation, and evolutionary transformation. At critical moments of bifurcation, systems encounter multiple alternative developmental trajectories, making the future intrinsically open rather than rigidly predetermined. Development is thus interpreted as a continuous process of selecting among competing possibilities emerging within an evolving field of potentiality.

Third, advances in cognitive science have demonstrated that consciousness functions not as a passive mechanism for representing reality but as an active system for generating, simulating, and evaluating possible future scenarios. Contemporary theories of predictive cognition argue that the human mind continuously constructs internal models of potential states of the world, compares predictions with incoming sensory information, and updates its representations through ongoing interaction with the environment¹⁴⁴. Human cognition therefore operates not only with what currently exists but also with what may exist, constantly navigating multidimensional spaces of possibility.

These developments collectively indicate a profound transformation in the scientific worldview. Contemporary science increasingly shifts its attention away from the description of actual states toward the investigation of potentialities, alternative trajectories, and spaces of possibility. Reality is no longer conceived as a fixed collection of completed entities but as an open, evolving system characterized by continuous emergence, nonlinear interactions, and recursive processes of actualization.

Within this intellectual context, Syntopotentialism proposes a metaontological synthesis that integrates these scientific insights into a unified philosophical framework. It argues that potentiality is not merely an epistemic category describing

¹⁴³ Prigogine, I., & Stengers, I. *Order Out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature*. Bantam Books. 1984.

¹⁴⁴ Clark, A. *Surfing Uncertainty: Prediction, Action, and the Embodied Mind*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2016.

uncertainty or unrealized options but the primary ontological dimension from which actual reality continuously emerges. Consequently, self-organization, bifurcation, cognitive modeling, and emergent complexity are interpreted as complementary mechanisms through which the space of potentiality is progressively transformed into the actuality of physical, biological, cognitive, social, and cultural systems.

Therefore, we consider it necessary to propose the author's etymology: Syntopotentialism (*syn–topos–potentia*) is a philosophical concept according to which reality is a multidimensional space (*topos*) of interconnected potentialities (*potentia*) that are integrated (*syn*) in the process of self-organization and actualization.

The name itself already contains the entire architecture of the concept: *Syn – Topos – Potentia*, where *Syn* – connectivity; *Topos* – space; *Potentia* – possibility. From the point of view of classical philology, the word syntopotentialism is a hybrid: *syn* – Greek; *topos* – Greek; *potentia* – Latin. Dozens of terms have been constructed in this way: psychobiology; sociocultural; neurophilosophy; geopolitics, etc.

Syntopotentialism emerges as an attempt to integrate several intellectual traditions: Sufi ontology of possibilities; process philosophy; synergetics; cognitive science; complex systems theory; modern topology and information theory. Within the framework of this study, syntopotentialism is defined as: a meta-ontological and cognitive concept that views reality as a multidimensional field of interconnected potentialities, and development as a process of increasing the connectivity, complexity, and productivity of the space of possibilities.

Unlike classical ontologies, syntopotentialism does not proceed from the primacy of being or consciousness, but from the primacy of potentiality. In traditional epistemology, consciousness was usually considered as a mechanism for reflecting external reality. However, modern cognitive research shows a much more complex picture. According to the concept of the predictive brain, consciousness constantly generates models of the future and compares them with current experience (by Clark, 2016). The brain functions as a prediction system. Within the framework of syntopotentialism, consciousness is defined as: a generator, integrator and navigator of the space of possibilities. Its main function is not to reflect the world, but to explore

potential development trajectories. Intelligence in this perspective is the ability to: see alternatives; generate new possibilities; evaluate their productivity; navigate the space of potentials. Thus, the development of consciousness means expanding its horizon of possibilities.

Classical philosophy considered the fundamental units of reality as substances, atoms, monads or events. Syntopotentialism offers another initial category - potential. Potential can be defined as: the ability of a system to generate a set of possible future states, scenarios. In this sense, any object is not a completed structure, but a node of potentialities. Man is the potential of many possible forms of life. Culture is the potential of future meanings. Society is the potential of new social configurations. Even matter in modern physics is increasingly described through a spectrum of possible states, rather than through static characteristics. Therefore, potential acts as a universal ontological unit that combines material, cognitive and social processes.

3.3 Potentiality and the Problem of First Principle: A Dialogue with Competing Ontologies.

One of the main questions of any ontology is to determine the fundamental principle of reality. Classical metaphysics sought it in substance, process philosophy in event and becoming, information ontology in information, social theory in communication or networks of relations. Syntopotentialism offers a different solution: the primary characteristic of reality is not what already exists, but what can arise.

The question is why potentiality should be considered a more fundamental category than process, event, information, relationship, or communication.

Process or potential? A polemic with Whitehead. In the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, reality consists not of things, but of processes and “actual occasions”¹⁴⁵. The world appears as a continuous flow of becoming. However, the process already presupposes a certain actualized dynamics. In order for the process to occur, there must be a set of possible directions for its development. In other words,

¹⁴⁵ Whitehead, A. N. *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (Corrected ed., D. R. Griffin & D. W. Sherburne, Eds.). New York: The Free Press. 1978 (Original work published 1929)

the process is not primary, but derived from the space of possibilities within which it unfolds. From the point of view of syntopotentialism: *Potential - Process - Result*. The process acts as a mechanism for actualizing potential, not its source. Therefore, potentiality has a broader ontological status than process.

Event or potential? Dialogue with Deleuze. Gilles Deleuze views reality as a field of virtualities that are actualized through events ¹⁴⁶. A significant part of his philosophy is close to the logic of syntopotentialism. However, for Deleuze, the central category remains the event as an act of the emergence of the new. In syntopotentialism, an event is only one of the possible ways of transition from the potential to the actual. An event does not create a possibility. On the contrary, it realizes one of the already existing possibilities. Therefore: Potential > Event in the ontological sense. An event is a manifestation of potential, but not its basis.

Information or Potentiality? A Dialogue with Floridi. Luciano Floridi proposes an *informational ontology, according to which information constitutes the fundamental fabric of reality*. Within his Philosophy of Information (PI), reality is understood as an informational environment (infosphere) composed of informational entities and their interactions. From this perspective, information is not merely a property of reality or a means of describing it; rather, it is regarded as the primary ontological category underlying both physical and digital existence¹⁴⁷.

Undoubtedly, information has become a key concept of the digital age. However, information already describes a certain structured difference or certainty. Potential is a broader concept. Not all potential contains information, but any information implies a certain field of possibilities for its use and interpretation. Information answers the question: What is? What already exists? Potential answers the question: What can be? That is why potentiality has a more fundamental nature.

¹⁴⁶ Deleuze, G. *Difference and Repetition* (P. Patton, Trans.). Columbia University Press. 1995, (Original work published 1968) <https://mumbletheoryhome.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/gilles-deleuze-difference-and-repetition-columbia-university-press-1995.pdf>

¹⁴⁷ Floridi, L. *The Philosophy of Information*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

Relation or Potential? A Debate with Barbour. In John Barbour's relational ontology¹⁴⁸, reality is constituted not by objects but by the relations among them. However, relations can arise only between elements that already exist within a given system. Potential, by contrast, precedes the formation of any particular configuration of relations. Moreover, relations themselves may be understood as mechanisms through which potential is actualized. Consequently, relations do not represent the deepest ontological level of reality; rather, they are structural manifestations of potentiality.

Communication or Potential? A Discussion with Luhmann. Niklas Luhmann defined society as a system of communications¹⁴⁹. Within his social systems theory, communication constitutes the fundamental operation through which social reality is reproduced. Syntopotentialism does not deny the central importance of communication; rather, it interprets communication as one of the mechanisms through which social potentials are actualized. Communication is not the ultimate source of social change. Instead, it functions by opening or constraining particular trajectories of development. Accordingly, the ontological sequence may be expressed as:

Potential → Communication → Social Structure

Within the framework of syntopotentialism, potentiality constitutes a deeper ontological stratum than communication. Communication does not generate reality ex nihilo; rather, it serves as the mechanism by which latent possibilities inherent in the field of potentiality are selected, structured, and actualized, giving rise to the formation and transformation of social structures.

Argument for the Primacy of Potentiality. Potentiality possesses a unique ontological property: it encompasses all other fundamental categories as its particular manifestations.

- **Processes** are the actualization of potentials.
- **Events** are points at which potentials become actualized.

¹⁴⁸ Barbour, J. *The End of Time: The Next Revolution in Physics*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2000.

¹⁴⁹ Luhmann, N. (1995). *Social Systems*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. https://raggeduniversity.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/1_x_NiklasLuhmannSocialSystems1995-StanfordUniversityPress_compressed.pdf

- **Information** is the structured form of potentiality.
- **Relations** constitute the topology of potentiality.
- **Communication** is the mechanism through which social potentials are actualized.

Consequently, **potentiality exhibits a higher degree of ontological universality** than these categories, since each can be understood as a specific mode of the manifestation, organization, or realization of potentiality. This hierarchy may be represented schematically as follows:

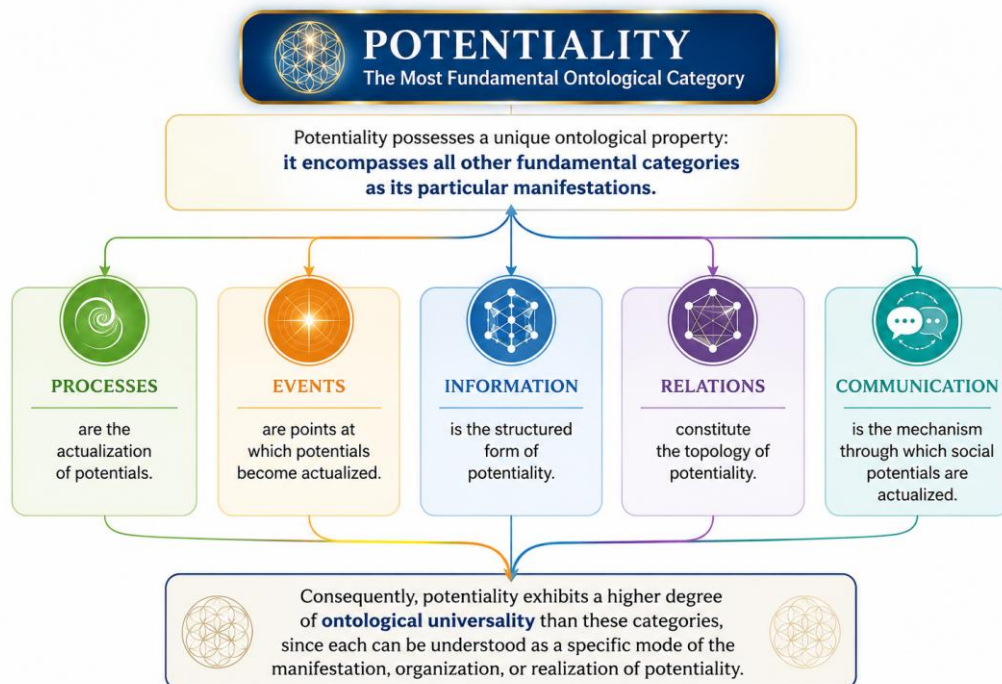


Figure 5. Potentiality as the Foundational Ontological Category and the Highest Level of Ontological Universality

(Source: author's conceptual model; visualization created using generative artificial intelligence).

According to syntopotentialism, reality constitutes a multidimensional field of potentialities, while processes, events, informational structures, relational networks, and communication are interpreted as different modes through which these potentialities become actualized.

3.4. The Fundamental Universals of Syntopotentialism, the Ontological Status of Potential, and Its Operationalization.

The syntopotentialist worldview is grounded in a number of fundamental principles.

1. The Principle of the Primacy of Potentiality. Possibility precedes actuality. Every form of being arises through the actualization of potential.
2. The Principle of the Multiplicity of the Future. The future is neither singular nor predetermined. Every system contains multiple alternative trajectories of development.
3. The Principle of Increasing Connectivity. Development consists in enhancing both the quantity and the quality of connections among the elements of a system.
4. The Principle of the Self-Organization of Potentials. New structures emerge through the interaction of already existing possibilities.
5. The Principle of Cognitive Navigation. Consciousness functions as a mechanism for exploring and selecting possibilities.
6. The Principle of Fractality. Potential structures are reproduced across different levels of reality, from individual consciousness to social systems.
7. The Principle of Syntopy. Development proceeds through the integration of potentials into new configurations of greater complexity.

An analysis of contemporary philosophy, cognitive science, and complexity theory makes it possible to identify the emergence of a new ontological paradigm in which the category of potentiality occupies a central position. Unlike classical ontologies, which are primarily concerned with describing already existing being, post-nonclassical thought increasingly focuses on the investigation of the possible, the alternative, and that which has not yet been actualized.

Within this context, syntopotentialism emerges as a meta-ontological conception that integrates the achievements of Sufi metaphysics, synergetics, cognitive science, and complexity theory. Its central category is potential, understood as the fundamental unit of reality and the primary source of development. It is argued that consciousness performs the function of both a generator and a navigator of the space of possibilities,

while the development of any system consists in expanding its field of potentiality, increasing its connectivity, and enhancing its complexity. The universals of syntopotentialism formulated here provide the conceptual foundation for constructing a new ontology of consciousness and social reality.

The Problem of the Ontological Status of Potential. If syntopotentialism is to claim the status of an autonomous meta-ontology, it is necessary to determine the ontological status of its fundamental category “potential”. In classical philosophy, potentiality has generally been understood as a property of a thing, that is, as the capacity of an object to transition from one state to another. Within syntopotentialism, however, such an interpretation is insufficient because it leaves potential dependent upon already existing entities.

Syntopotentialism proceeds from the opposite assumption: potential is not a property of a thing; rather, a thing is the actualization of potential. Consequently, potential cannot be reduced to a particular characteristic of an object.

What Potential Is Not. Potential is not merely a property. A property always belongs to a particular bearer. Potential, however, may precede the very emergence of its bearer. For example, a biological species, a scientific theory, or a social institution may not yet exist, while the possibility of its emergence is already present within the structure of the system. Therefore: *Potential* $\neq$ *Property*

Potential Is Not Merely a Relation. Relations arise only between elements that already exist. Potential, by contrast, may exist prior to the formation of any specific network of relations. Relations constitute a mode of organizing potential, but they are not potential itself. Therefore: *Potential* $\supset$ *Relations*

Potential Is Not Merely Information. Information describes a particular state of determination. Potential describes a set of possible states. Consequently, information is a local actualization of potential. Therefore: *Potential* $>$ *Information*

Potential Is Not Merely Structure. Structure fixes the organization of elements. Potential describes the possibility for the emergence of new structures. Structure is the result of the actualization of potential.

What Is Potential? Within the framework of syntopotentialism, *potential* is defined as *an ontologically real field of not-yet-realized but structurally organized possibilities capable of generating multiple alternative configurations of being*.

This definition implies that potential possesses its own ontological status. It is neither an actual entity nor a merely abstract possibility. It occupies an intermediate position between the two. The most adequate ontological model of potential is that of a *field*. Just as a physical field cannot be reduced to individual particles, a field of potentiality cannot be reduced to individual possibilities.

Potential therefore constitutes:

- a space of alternatives;
- a multiplicity of trajectories;
- a system of latent configurations;
- a source of future actualizations.

Accordingly, within syntopotentialism: ***Reality = Field of Potentials***

Potential may also be understood as a *metastructure*. Whereas a structure determines what *is*, a metastructure determines what *can emerge*. For this reason, potential does not belong to the level of actual being; rather, it belongs to the level of the *conditions of possibility of being*.

Potential as an Emergent Possibility. One of the most important characteristics of potential is its *emergent* nature. Potentials do not merely accumulate; they interact with one another and give rise to new potentials.

In this sense: $P_1 + P_2 \neq P_3$, $a P_1 + P_2 \rightarrow P^*_3$,

where P^*_3 - represents a novel emergent potential that was not explicitly contained in either of the preceding potentials. It is this emergent property that constitutes the foundation for the development of consciousness, culture, and society.

Operationalization of Potential. In order for potential to function as a scientific category, it is necessary to define the parameters by which it can be assessed. Within the framework of syntopotentialism, these parameters include:

- Multiplicity – the number of available developmental trajectories.
- Connectivity – the number of interconnections among possibilities.

- Flexibility – the capacity to transition between alternative states.
- Generativity – the ability to generate new potentials.
- Resilience – the capacity to preserve possibilities despite external changes.

Based on the foregoing discussion, the following basic definition may be proposed:

Potential is an ontologically real field of structured possibilities that precedes processes, events, informational structures, relations, and communications, serving as the source of their emergence, development, and transformation.

One of the principal conditions for establishing potential as a fully developed scientific category is its operationalization, that is, the identification of parameters through which potential can be described, compared, and analyzed across different ontological, cognitive, and social systems. If potential is understood as a fundamental category of reality, it must possess not only a philosophical definition but also a system of characteristics that enables the investigation of its manifestations.

1. *Multiplicity*. The first characteristic of potential is the number of possible developmental trajectories that a system is capable of realizing.

In Sufi metaphysics, an analogue of such multiplicity is provided by the concept of *a'yān thābita* (immutable entities). Ibn al-‘Arabī argues that all possible forms of existence already reside within Divine Knowledge as immutable entities, although they have not yet acquired actual existence. Reality therefore contains an innumerable multitude of potential configurations, only some of which become actualized. From the perspective of syntopotentialism, this means that the greater the number of alternative scenarios contained within a system, the greater its potential.

2. *Connectivity*. The second parameter is the degree of interconnectedness among possibilities. In Sufism, the integrative function is performed by the *qalb* (heart). Ibn al-‘Arabī describes the heart as the locus capable of embracing the multiplicity of manifestations of the One, whereas the intellect tends toward division. Consequently, the heart is not only an organ of spiritual knowledge but also the center of the integration of meanings. In contemporary cognitive science, a comparable role is played by integrative models of consciousness, particularly Global Workspace

Theory¹⁵⁰, according to which the level of consciousness depends upon the degree of information integration. Accordingly, the potential of a system increases with the growth in the number of productive interconnections among its elements.

3. *Flexibility*. The next characteristic is the ability to transition between alternative states without compromising the integrity of the system. In the Sufi tradition, this aspect is expressed through the concepts of *maqāmāt* (stations) and *aḥwāl* (states). The *maqāmāt* denote relatively stable states of consciousness, whereas the *aḥwāl* represent temporary transitions, illuminations, and inner transformations. In the terminology of dynamical systems theory, this corresponds to transitions between attractors through regions of instability (Kelso, 1995). Consequently, the development of consciousness is a nonlinear process, and its potential is determined not by the amount of accumulated knowledge but by the capacity to reconfigure its own cognitive space.

4. *Generativity*. Potential is also characterized by the capacity to generate new possibilities that did not previously exist as actual states. In Sufi ontology, an analogue of this process is *tajallī* the continuous self-disclosure of the Absolute. For Ibn al-ʿArabī, the world is not a completed structure; every moment constitutes a new manifestation of Divine Being. Reality therefore continually produces new configurations of possibility. Within syntopotentialism, generativity denotes the capacity of a system not merely to actualize existing possibilities but also to generate entirely new fields of potentiality.

5. *Resilience*. The final parameter is the capacity to preserve the field of possibilities despite external changes and internal crises. In the Sufi tradition, this dimension is reflected in the concept of *ṣabr* (patience and spiritual steadfastness). Al-Ghazālī emphasized that *ṣabr* enables the individual to maintain inner equilibrium during trials, thereby ensuring the continuity of spiritual development. From the standpoint of contemporary science, this corresponds to the concept of resilience in

¹⁵⁰ Baars, B. J. *A Cognitive Theory of Consciousness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1988
<https://ccrg.cs.memphis.edu/assets/papers/1988/Baars-A%20Cognitive%20Theory%20of%20Consciousness.pdf>

complex systems their capacity to maintain functionality following disturbances¹⁵¹. Accordingly, potential is not eliminated by crises; rather, it can reorganize into new configurations and open alternative pathways of development.

The Integral Criterion of Potential. Within syntopotentialism, the overall level of potential of any system is determined not by a single indicator but by the combined expression of all the parameters discussed above. The greater the multiplicity of possibilities, the higher their degree of interconnectedness, the more flexibly the system transitions between states, the more productively it generates new possibilities, and the more resiliently it preserves them under changing conditions, the greater its potential.

This may be expressed schematically as a function: $P=f(M,C,F,G,R)$,

where: **P** (*Potential*) integral potential of the system; **M** (*Multiplicity*) as variety of possibilities; **C** (*Connectivity*); **F** (*Flexibility*); **G** (*Generativity*); **R** (*Resilience*).

This formula is not a mathematical equation in the strict sense, but is a conceptual model of operationalizing potential that can be adapted to philosophical, cognitive, social, and cultural research.

Generalized definition. Based on the analysis, potential can be defined as follows: potential is an ontologically real field of structured possibilities that precedes processes, events, information structures, relations and communications and serves as a source of their emergence, development and transformation. Its fundamental characteristics are diversity, connectivity, flexibility, productivity and sustainability, which determine the ability of the system to generate, integrate, actualize and preserve the space of possibilities.

¹⁵¹ Holling, C. S. Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems. *Annual Review Ecology, Evolution, and Systematics*. 1973, 4:1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.es.04.110173.000245>

Table 2. Operational parameters of the potential in syntopotentialism: Sufi and modern scientific counterparts:

Potential Parameter	Sufi Concept	Contemporary Scientific Analogue
Multiplicity	<i>A 'yān thābita</i>	State space; set of possible configurations
Connectivity	<i>Qalb, Maḥabba</i>	Information integration; network connectivity
Flexibility	<i>Maqām / Ḥāl</i>	Transitions between attractors; cognitive plasticity
Generativity	<i>Tajallī, Khayāl</i>	Emergence; generation of novel states
Resilience	<i>Ṣabr, Dhikr</i>	Resilience; self-organization

3.5. Comparative Analysis of Syntopotentialism and Modal Potentialism

The emergence of modal potentialism within contemporary analytic metaphysics has significantly renewed philosophical interest in the concept of potentiality. While classical metaphysics, beginning with Aristotle, interpreted potentiality primarily through the distinction between *dynamis* (potentiality) and *energeia* (actuality), recent philosophical research has sought to reconsider the ontological and modal status of potentiality beyond the framework of traditional possible-world semantics. Among the most influential contributions in this direction are the works of Barbara Vetter, Jessica Leech, Samuel Kimpton-Nye, and Jonas Werner, who examine the relationship between potentiality, modality, grounding, and modal logic.

Barbara Vetter's *theory of modal potentialism* (2015) represents one of the most systematic contemporary attempts to ground modal truths in the real potentialities of existing entities rather than in abstract possible worlds¹⁵². Subsequent discussions by Jessica Leech¹⁵³ ¹⁵⁴(2017), Samuel Kimpton-Nye¹⁵⁵ (2021), and Jonas Werner¹⁵⁶ (2022) have further refined this framework by investigating its metaphysical assumptions and its compatibility with formal modal systems, particularly S5 modal

¹⁵² Vetter, Barbara. *Potentiality. From Dispositions to Modality*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, 321pp.

¹⁵³ Leech, Jessica. Essence and Mere Necessity. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 2018, 82: 309-332. DOI 10.1017/s1358246118000139

¹⁵⁴ Leech, Jessica. Potentiality. *Analysis* 2017, 77 (2): 457–67. <https://doi.org/10.1093/analys/anx047>

¹⁵⁵ Kimpton-Nye, Samuel. Can Hardcore Actualism Validate S5? *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 2021, 102 (2): 342–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phpr.12656>

¹⁵⁶ Werner J. Potentialism and S5. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*. 2022;52(6):622-635. doi:10.1017/can.2023.2

logic. Together, these studies have established modal potentialism as an important direction within contemporary analytic metaphysics.

At first glance, modal potentialism and syntopotentialism appear to share a common conceptual foundation, since both employ the category of potential as a central philosophical notion. Such a similarity, however, is largely terminological. A closer examination reveals that these theories belong to different philosophical traditions, pursue different research objectives, and operate at different levels of philosophical analysis.

Modal potentialism is primarily concerned with the metaphysics of modality. Its central question is how modal propositions concerning possibility and necessity are grounded and what ontological basis justifies statements about what could or could not occur. Within this framework, potentiality functions as the metaphysical foundation of modal facts and is generally conceived as a property, disposition, or power possessed by existing entities.

Syntopotentialism, by contrast, addresses a fundamentally different philosophical problem, than asking how possibilities are grounded in existing objects, it asks what constitutes the most fundamental ontological principle from which objects, processes, consciousness, information, and social reality themselves emerge. Accordingly, syntopotentialism does not treat potential merely as a property of entities but elevates it to the status of a metaontological category that precedes and generates all forms of actuality. In this perspective, reality is understood not as a collection of substances endowed with potentialities but as a multidimensional topology of interconnected potentials continuously undergoing processes of generation, interaction, integration, self-organization, and actualization.

Consequently, despite their shared terminology, modal potentialism and syntopotentialism represent two distinct philosophical paradigms. The former remains within the analytical investigation of modality, whereas the latter proposes a comprehensive metaontological framework encompassing ontology, philosophy of consciousness, complexity theory, cognitive science, and social philosophy. Their conceptual overlap therefore lies primarily in the use of the notion of potential, while

their explanatory ambitions, ontological commitments, and methodological orientations differ substantially.

Table 3. Fundamental conceptual differences between Potentialism and Syntopotentialism

Potentialism	Syntopotentialism
Potential is a property of a thing or subject.	Potential emerges within a system of relations among the subject, the environment, and the space of meaning.
Essence is primary.	The configuration of relations (topos) is primary.
Actualization depends on the intrinsic properties of an entity.	Actualization depends on the reconfiguration of relational structures.
Potential exists independently of context.	Potential is a contextual and relational property.

Potentialism. In the classical tradition (Aristotle and medieval scholasticism), potential (*dynamis*, *potentia*) is understood as an intrinsic capacity of a thing. For example: an acorn is potentially an oak tree; a child is potentially an adult human being. In other words, potential is already "contained" within the essence of the entity. In this sense, potentialism is fundamentally a substantialist theory: the source of possibility resides within the object itself.

Syntopotentialism. Syntopotentialism proceeds from a fundamentally different principle. Potential is not a predetermined property of an object, it emerges only when an object enters a particular configuration of interactions. For example, an individual may possess the same abilities, yet different potentials will be actualized depending on whether that person exists within:

- different cultures;
- different linguistic environments;
- different spiritual traditions;
- different social networks.

Consequently, potential is a function of the topology of relations. This constitutes the fundamental conceptual distinction between syntopotentialism and classical potentialism.

Why the prefix "Synto-"? The prefix *σύν* (syn) in the term *syntopotentialism* signifies more than simple combination. It denotes co-being, co-constitution, and relational emergence. Accordingly, potential does not belong to an isolated subject, it belongs to the entire relational configuration. For example, it is not the individual alone who thinks. Instead, *human being + language + tradition + memory + symbols + society + spiritual practice* constitute an integrated system within which new potential emerges. For this reason, syntopotentialism is a relational ontology.

The Central Thesis. The central proposition of syntopotentialism may be formulated as follows: *Potential does not precede relations, potential is generated by relations.*

This represents a fundamentally different philosophical position from classical potentialism, where potential is regarded as an inherent property of an individual substance.

Connection with Cognitive Geometry. At this point the theory reaches its systematic completion. If potential is determined by the topology of relations, then:

- changes in cognitive geometry;
- transformations of semantic metrics;
- reductions in cognitive curvature;

do not merely alter the state of consciousness.

They generate new potentials that did not previously exist, not only as actual realities but even as realizable possibilities within the previous relational configuration. Consequently, cognitive geometry functions as the mechanism, whereas syntopotentialism provides the ontology.

Syntopotentialism is a relational-topological metaontology according to which the potentials of being are not intrinsic properties of substances but emerge through the interactions of elements within a structured space of meaning. The actualization of

potential is determined not by the nature of an isolated entity but by the configuration of its relations with its social, cultural, linguistic, cognitive, and spiritual environment.

This definition distinguishes syntopotentialism from both classical Aristotelian potentiality and contemporary modal potentialism by relocating the source of possibility from substance to relational topology, thereby making the generation of potential itself an emergent property of interconnected systems.

CONCLUSIONS TO CHAPTER 3

1. Syntopotentialism is formulated as a new metaontological framework in which potentiality, rather than substance, process, or information, constitutes the primary ontological category.
2. Reality is interpreted as a multidimensional field of structured potentialities, while actuality represents the temporary realization of one configuration within this field.
3. The chapter demonstrates the ontological primacy of potentiality over competing foundational categories including process, event, information, relation, and communication by showing that each can be understood as a specific mode of the actualization of potential.
4. The ontological status of potential is established as an autonomous field of structured possibilities that precedes and generates objects, structures, processes, and social formations.
5. The fundamental universals of syntopotentialism is primacy of potentiality, multiplicity of the future, increasing connectivity, self-organization, cognitive navigation, fractality, and syntopy, provide the conceptual foundations of the theory.
6. The chapter develops an operational model of potential, introducing five measurable parameters: multiplicity, connectivity, flexibility, generativity, and resilience, which enable the comparative analysis of physical, cognitive, social, and cultural systems.

7. A conceptual bridge is established between Sufi metaphysics and contemporary scientific paradigms by demonstrating the correspondence between key Sufi concepts and modern theories in cognitive science, complexity theory, and systems thinking.
8. The proposed syntopotentialist metaontology provides an integrated theoretical framework for investigating the evolution of consciousness, society, and culture as recursive processes of the generation, integration, and actualization of expanding fields of potentiality.
9. The comparative analysis of syntopotentialism and modal potentialism demonstrates that, despite their shared reliance on the concept of potentiality, they represent fundamentally different philosophical frameworks. Modal potentialism remains within the scope of analytic metaphysics and seeks to ground modal truths in the dispositional properties of existing entities, thereby treating potentiality as an intrinsic feature of substances.
10. Syntopotentialism, by contrast, redefines potentiality at a metaontological level, shifting its locus from individual entities to relational and topological configurations. In this framework, potential is not a pre-given property but an emergent effect of structured interactions within a multidimensional space of relations. Thus, while modal potentialism explains how possibilities are grounded in what exists, syntopotentialism explains how both entities and possibilities themselves emerge from a more fundamental field of relational potentials. This shift from substance-based to relation-based ontology marks the decisive conceptual divergence between the two approaches.

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CHAPTER 4.

THE TOPOLOGY OF SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE PROSPECTS OF A NEW SOCIAL ONTOLOGY.

Beginning in the nineteenth century, social philosophy developed around several fundamental paradigms: *structural functionalism* (representatives Durkheim¹⁵⁷; Parsons¹⁵⁸), *Marxism* (Marx¹⁵⁹), *symbolic interactionism* (Mead¹⁶⁰), and *systems theory* (Luhmann¹⁶¹). Despite their significant differences, all of these approaches conceived society as a structured whole whose constituent elements interact according to relatively stable patterns.

Émile Durkheim defined *social facts* as realities existing independently of individuals and exerting coercive influence upon them. For Talcott Parsons, society was a system of interrelated institutions that maintained the equilibrium of the social order. Karl Marx regarded the structure of the relations of production as the foundation of society, determining the historical dynamics of social formations. George Herbert Mead emphasized the processes of symbolic interaction through which the social self is constituted. Finally, Niklas Luhmann conceptualized society as a self-reproducing system of communications sustained through its own operations.

Despite their theoretical differences, these approaches share a common assumption: social reality is conceived primarily as a structure, system, or order that has already acquired a definite form. Their principal focus lies on existing institutions, norms, roles, classes, communications, and functions. Even in the most dynamic versions of social theory, development is generally described as structural transformation rather than as the unfolding of a field of possibilities.

¹⁵⁷ Durkheim, É. *The Rules of Sociological Method*. New York: The Free Press, 1982, https://monoskop.org/images/1/1e/Durkheim_Emile_The_Rules_of_Sociological_Method_1982.pdf

¹⁵⁸ Parsons, T. *The Social System*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 2005, <https://voidnetwork.gr/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/The-Social-System-by-Talcott-Parsons.pdf>

¹⁵⁹ Marx, K. *Capital, Vol. I*. Hamburg: Verlag von Otto Meissner, 1867.

¹⁶⁰ Mead, G. H. *Mind, Self, and Society*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1934.

¹⁶¹ Luhmann, N. *Social Systems*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1995, https://raggeduniversity.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/1_x_NiklasLuhmannSocialSystems1995-StanfordUniversityPress_compressed.pdf

By the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, however, this picture began to change significantly. *Globalization, digitalization, network communication*, the development of *artificial intelligence*, the widespread diffusion of social media platforms, and the rapidly increasing complexity of social processes have called into question the capacity of classical models to adequately explain contemporary reality, by Castells¹⁶²; Urry¹⁶³. Social systems increasingly resemble *complex adaptive networks* rather than mechanical structures, exhibiting self-organization, emergence, and unpredictable evolutionary dynamics.

Analyzing the Information Age, Manuel Castells observed that "*the network is the fundamental unit of social organization in the Information Age*" ¹⁶⁴. Within the network society, decisive importance lies not merely in the possession of resources but also in the capacity to establish connections, integrate information flows, and create new configurations of interaction. Consequently, social reality is increasingly determined not by static structures but by the dynamics of connections and possibilities.

Particularly significant in this transformation have been studies of *complex systems*. Hermann Haken demonstrated that self-organization emerges when a system reaches a critical level of interaction among its constituent elements. Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers argued that complex systems are capable of generating new forms of order under conditions of instability. Stuart Kauffman further showed that the evolution of complex systems proceeds not only through the selection of existing forms but also through the continual expansion of the *adjacent possible*. This insight is particularly compatible with the syntopotentialist perspective.

In contemporary social reality, *potential developmental trajectories* become increasingly more significant than existing institutional structures. Digital networks, collective intelligence, global communication, virtual communities, and algorithmic systems create conditions in which society functions as a space of continuous

¹⁶² Castells, M. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2010.

¹⁶³ Urry, J. The Complexity Turn. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 2005, 22 (5), 1-14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276405057188>

¹⁶⁴ Castells, M. *The Rise of the Network Society*. P.469.

generation of new possibilities. Social processes increasingly exhibit nonlinear dynamics, where minor changes may produce large-scale transformations and where the future is not rigidly predetermined.

Under these conditions, there emerges a need to move from a *structural model* toward a *potential-oriented model* of social reality. Whereas classical social ontology asked, "*What structures exist?*", the syntopotentialist perspective asks a different question: "*What field of possibilities exists within a social system?*"

From the standpoint of syntopotentialism, society cannot be fully described solely in terms of institutions, roles, or communications. Rather, it constitutes a *multidimensional field of potentialities* within which new forms of interaction, new meanings, new identities, and new social configurations continuously emerge. Social consciousness appears not as the sum of individual consciousnesses but as a complex topological network of interconnected cognitive processes that collectively generate a shared space of possibilities.

Within this framework, society may be defined as a *system of interacting potentials*. Every individual, social group, institution, or cultural tradition constitutes a carrier of a particular field of possibilities. Social development therefore proceeds not only through conflict or functional adaptation but also through the mutual expansion, limitation, and recombination of these potentials. Consequently, the key categories of the new social ontology include not only structure, power, and communication but also *connectivity, flexibility, generativity, resilience*, and the capacity of society to generate new developmental trajectories.

Of particular importance is the concept of the *topology of social consciousness*. Unlike traditional spatial approaches, topology investigates not geometric dimensions but the structure of relationships. In the social context, this means that the decisive factor is not simply how many elements a society contains but how those elements are interconnected. Two societies may possess the same number of individuals, resources, or institutions while differing radically in their degree of internal connectivity and developmental potential.

Just as mathematical topology is concerned with the invariant properties of space, *social topology* focuses on stable patterns of interaction, trust, information exchange, and collective meaning-making. These patterns determine the capacity of society for self-organization, adaptation, and the generation of new possibilities.

In this sense, *social consciousness* may be understood as a particular form of ***metaconsciousness***, within which individual cognitive processes become integrated into a unified network structure. Collective intelligence emerges not merely as the sum of individual knowledge but as an emergent product of interactions among numerous cognitive nodes. As Pierre Lévy observes, "No one knows everything, everyone knows something; all knowledge resides in humanity" ¹⁶⁵. It is precisely this distributed organization of knowledge that provides the foundation for the emergence of new social potentials.

Thus, the new social ontology developed within the framework of syntopotentialism shifts the analytical focus from existing structures to fields of possibilities, from static order to the dynamics of potentiality, and from isolated individuals to the topology of interconnected consciousnesses. Within this perspective, society appears not as a completed system but as an open space of continuous actualization of possibilities, where the future is determined not only by what already exists but also by what may emerge through the interactions among consciousnesses, cultures, and social networks.

Key Thesis of the Chapter. Classical social ontology described society as a system of structures. Syntopotentialist social ontology conceives society as a topological field of potentials, in which the principal resource is not merely power, capital, or information, but the capacity of collective consciousness to generate, integrate, and actualize new possibilities.

¹⁶⁵ Lévy, P. *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace*. Cambridge: Perseus Books 1999. P.13

4.1 Social Consciousness as a Multidimensional Cognitive Space.

Traditionally, social consciousness has been understood as a set of ideas, values, beliefs, and forms of collective experience characteristic of a particular historical community. In the classical works of Karl Mannheim, it appears as a socially conditioned system of knowledge, within which an individual's mode of thinking is determined by their belonging to a specific social group. According to the researcher, there are modes of thought which cannot be adequately understood as long as their social origins are obscure¹⁶⁶. Thus, individual consciousness is not formed in isolation, but within a field of collective meanings, cultural traditions, and historical experience.

The subsequent development of social philosophy significantly expanded this understanding. Maurice Halbwachs¹⁶⁷ showed that even individual memory exists through social frameworks that determine ways of interpreting the past. Pierre Bourdieu¹⁶⁸ explained the reproduction of social practices through the concept of habitus a system of durable cognitive and behavioral schemes shaped by the cultural environment. Niklas Luhmann, in turn, argued that society does not exist as a collection of individuals but as a network of communications: "Society consists not of human beings but of communications"¹⁶⁹.

Despite the differences between these approaches, they all primarily interpret social consciousness as the result of interaction between individuals. However, contemporary cognitive science and complexity theory make it possible to take a further step. Social consciousness can be understood not only as a product of interaction, but as an autonomous multidimensional cognitive space in which new meanings, new forms of knowledge, and new developmental potentials emerge.

From the perspective of syntopotentialism, social consciousness represents a multidimensional cognitive space in which individual, group, cultural, and civilizational structures of meaning interact. It cannot be reduced either to the sum of

¹⁶⁶ Mannheim, K. *Ideology and Utopia. An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited, 1936. <https://archive.org/details/in.emet.dli.2015.187027/page/n19/mode/1up>

¹⁶⁷ Halbwachs, Maurice. *The Collective Memory*, New York : Harper & Row, 1980.

¹⁶⁸ Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge University Press, 1977.

¹⁶⁹ Luhmann, N. *Social Systems*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1995, https://raggeduniversity.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/1_x_NiklasLuhmannSocialSystems1995-StanfordUniversityPress_compressed.pdf

individual consciousnesses or to a set of social institutions. It possesses its own laws of self-organization, its own topology, and its own dynamics of potential actualization.

Just as an individual thinks within a conceptual space described by Peter Gärdenfors, society operates within a space of collective meanings. Gärdenfors defines conceptual space as a geometric structure in which the proximity between concepts determines their semantic similarity¹⁷⁰. If this model is transferred to the social level, it can be assumed that civilizations also possess their own conceptual spaces shaped by cultural memory, language, religion, symbols, and historical experience.

Within such a coordinate space, the following elements function as axes: fundamental values; cultural codes; religious and worldview models; social norms; historical memory; collective narratives; symbolic systems; representations of the future.

The configuration of these coordinates determines the topology of social consciousness. A similar conclusion is reached by Albert-László Barabási¹⁷¹, who shows that the properties of a network are determined not by the number of nodes, but by the nature of their interconnections. Network links determine the speed of information diffusion, the formation of new meanings, and the emergence of collective decisions.

From the standpoint of syntopotentialism, this means that social consciousness is characterized not only by the volume of accumulated knowledge, but primarily by the structure of potential connections. The greater the number of possible cognitive trajectories between individuals, groups, or cultures, the higher the developmental potential of the entire social system.

In this context, the concept of topology becomes especially significant. Unlike classical geometry, which describes the shape and size of objects, topology studies the invariant properties of their relationships. As Henri Poincaré¹⁷² noted, it is the relations between elements that define the structure of space more than their absolute

¹⁷⁰ Gärdenfors, P. *Conceptual Spaces: The Geometry of Thought*. MIT Press. 2000.

¹⁷¹ Barabási, Albert-László. *Linked: the new science of networks*, Cambridge, Mass.: Perseus Pub. 2002.

¹⁷² Poincaré, Henri. *Science and Hypothesis*. London and Hewcastle-on-Cyne: THE WALTER SCOTT PUBLISHING CO., LTD 1905. <https://dn790006.ca.archive.org/0/items/scienceandhypoth00poinuoft/scienceandhypoth00poinuoft.pdf>

characteristics. Transferring this principle to social philosophy implies that what matters is not the number of social institutions or individuals, but the nature of the connections between them.

Therefore, within syntopotentialism, social reality appears not as a collection of institutions, but as a topology of meanings, where individual ideas, values, symbols, and cultural practices form a multidimensional network. The modification of even a single node in such a network can transform the configuration of the entire cognitive space, which explains the nonlinear nature of social transformations.

An important property of this space is its *fractal nature*. Just as individual consciousness possesses its own cognitive architecture, society reproduces analogous structures at a higher level of organization. The values of an individual become integrated into the value system of a community; individual narratives contribute to the formation of collective memory; personal cognitive maps become components of civilizational worldviews. Thus, social consciousness can be understood as a fractal extension of individual consciousness, in which similar principles of self-organization manifest themselves across different scales.

Within the proposed *syntopotentialist* framework, social consciousness may be defined as a *topological field of potential meanings*, in which the generation, integration, and actualization of new possibilities occur continuously. Whereas classical social ontology described society through the categories of structure, function, or communication, syntopotentialism proposes understanding it primarily as a field of interconnected potentials. Within such a field, development is determined not only by what already exists, but above all by the new semantic, cognitive, and social trajectories that may emerge through the interaction of its constituent elements.

Accordingly, the concept of a *multidimensional cognitive space* makes it possible to move beyond classical social theory toward a *new topological social ontology*. From this perspective, society appears as an open system that continuously expands its own field of possibilities. It is precisely this capacity to generate new configurations of meaning, knowledge, and interaction that constitutes the principal

resource of civilizational development and, at the same time, represents the central category of syntopotentialism.

4.2 Collective Intelligence and Network Structures of Potentiality

The concept of collective intelligence has been developed in the works of Pierre Lévy¹⁷³, James Surowiecki¹⁷⁴, and Henry Jenkins¹⁷⁵. Collective intelligence emerges when the interaction of numerous agents generates cognitive capabilities that are inaccessible to individual participants within the system. From the perspective of syntopotentialism, networks are not merely channels for the transmission of information; rather, they function as networks of potentiality. Each node within a network contains a multiplicity of possibilities that become actualized through interaction with other nodes. Consequently, the potential of the system grows not linearly but exponentially as the number of connections increases.

Fractal Topology of Social Interaction. Fractal structures are characterized by self-similarity and scale invariance (by Mandelbrot, 1982). In social life, this principle manifests itself with remarkable clarity. The family, community, nation, and civilization exhibit analogous mechanisms of: cooperation; conflict; communication; self-organization.

Processes occurring at the level of the individual are often reproduced at the levels of groups, societies, and civilizations. Edgar Morin described this phenomenon as the recursive organization of complex systems¹⁷⁶. Consequently, social consciousness possesses a fractal structure in which each level reflects the properties of the whole.

Social Attractors and the Mechanisms of Societal Self-Organization. In synergetics, an attractor is understood as a state toward which a system tends during its evolutionary development. Social systems likewise possess their own attractors,

¹⁷³ Lévy, P. *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace*. Translated by Robert Bononno. New York: Plenum Trade, 1997.

¹⁷⁴ Surowiecki, J. *The Wisdom of Crowds*. New York: Doubleday, 2004.

¹⁷⁵ Jenkins, H. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press. 2006.

¹⁷⁶ Morin, E. *On Complexity*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press. 2008.

which may include: religious ideals; political projects; cultural archetypes; visions of the future; civilizational missions.

These attractors determine the direction of collective energy and coordinate the dynamics of social evolution. From the standpoint of syntopotentialism, societal development proceeds through the competition, interaction, and transformation of social attractors.

Classical sociology described society in terms of institutions, roles, and structures. Syntopotentialism proposes a different perspective. Society can be defined as a field of interconnected potentialities undergoing continuous processes of actualization. Within this framework:

- culture constitutes a field of semantic possibilities;
- the economy constitutes a field of productive possibilities;
- politics constitutes a field of possibilities for collective choice;
- education constitutes a field of cognitive possibilities;
- technology constitutes a field of technical possibilities.

Accordingly, social development can be understood as the continuous expansion and increasing interconnectedness of these fields of potentiality.

4.3 The Syntopotentialist Model of Social Development

Throughout most of the history of social thought, societal development has been defined in terms of quantitative indicators, such as population growth, production, economic prosperity, urbanization, or technological progress. Classical economic theory associated development with the accumulation of capital by Smith, (1776); Marxism linked it to the transformation of relations of production (1867); functionalism understood it as the increasing complexity of social institutions by Parsons, (1951); and modernization theory interpreted it as the transition toward industrial and post-industrial society by Bell, (1973).

Despite their significant differences, all of these approaches share a common assumption: development is understood as the transformation of already existing

structures. They pay relatively little attention to the question of how new possibilities emerge prior to the appearance of new social forms.

Within the framework of syntopotentialism, a different logic of social development is proposed. The fundamental unit of analysis is neither the institution, the resource, nor even information, but potential. Accordingly, development is determined not by the scale of achievements that have already been realized, but by society's capacity to continuously expand its field of possibilities. Thus, the principal criterion of development becomes the growth of the potentiality of the social system.

From this perspective, a developed society is one that:

- generates a greater number of alternative developmental pathways;
- sustains cultural, cognitive, and social diversity;
- stimulates innovation;
- ensures a high degree of cognitive freedom;
- creates new opportunities for individual self-realization;
- is capable of rapidly adapting to emerging challenges.

In this sense, the indicator of development is not the volume of material resources, but the density of the field of potentialities that is, the number of possible trajectories that the system is capable of generating and sustaining.

This approach bears a certain resemblance to the capability approach proposed by Amartya Sen. Sen argued that development should be evaluated not merely in terms of income, but primarily in terms of people's real opportunities to lead the kind of life they have reason to value: "Development can be seen as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy"¹⁷⁷. However, whereas Sen focuses primarily on the freedoms and capabilities of the individual, syntopotentialism extends this logic to the level of society as a whole. The object of analysis is no longer the capabilities of isolated individuals, but the potentiality of the social system as an integrated and self-organizing whole.

¹⁷⁷ Sen, A. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1999. https://kuangaliablog.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/amartya_kumar_sen_development_as_freedombookfi.pdf

One of the most significant transformations of the twenty-first century is the gradual shift in emphasis *from structures to possibilities*.

Industrial civilization was built around stable organizations, rigid institutions, centralized governance, and standardized production. Predictability and stability were regarded as the primary conditions for efficiency.

A similar argument is advanced by Richard Florida, who demonstrates that the principal driver of the development of contemporary cities is the concentration of creative potential. In his words, human creativity is the ultimate economic resource¹⁷⁸.

From the perspective of *syntopotentialism*, creativity is only one manifestation of a broader category *potential*. It is potential that gives rise to creativity, innovation, new forms of communication, and new social institutions.

The continued development of digital technologies further reinforces this tendency. Luciano Floridi argues that humanity is gradually entering a new *infosphere*, in which digital and physical processes are becoming increasingly integrated¹⁷⁹. Yuval Noah Harari likewise emphasizes that the twenty-first century will be shaped not primarily by competition for material resources, but by the struggle for control over information flows and algorithms¹⁸⁰.

From the standpoint of syntopotentialism, however, *information itself is not the ultimate foundation of development*. Rather, information represents only one form of *actualized potential*. More fundamental is the field of possibilities within which information emerges, circulates, and is transformed.

A central role in this new model of development is played by *self-organization*. Hermann Haken demonstrated that order in complex systems arises not only through external control but also as the result of interactions among a large number of elements. Similarly, Ilya Prigogine argued that "*Order out of chaos*" is a defining characteristic

¹⁷⁸ Florida, R. *The Rise of the Creative Class*. New York: Basic Books, 2012.

¹⁷⁹ Floridi, L. *The Fourth Revolution: How the Infosphere Is Reshaping Human Reality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. https://issc.al.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/05/Luciano-Floridi-The-Fourth-Revolution_-_How-the-infosphere-is-reshaping-human-reality-Oxford-University-Press-2014.pdf

¹⁸⁰ Harari, Y. N. *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2018.

of complex systems. Stuart Kauffman further showed that complex systems continuously expand their own space of possibilities through internal self-organization.

Accordingly, syntopotentialism interprets social development not as the consequence of external design or planning, but as a continuous process of generating new potentials. On this basis, the fundamental principles of the syntopotentialist model of social development may be formulated.

Fundamental Principles of the Syntopotentialist Model:

Principle of Potentiality. Social structures are not primary; rather, they emerge from an underlying field of possibilities.

Principle of Networkedness. Social reality is constituted through networks of interactions rather than isolated individuals.

Principle of Self-Organization. A new social order emerges as an emergent consequence of interactions among large numbers of agents.

Principle of Cognitivity. Social development is determined primarily by the production of new meanings, knowledge, and models of the future.

Principle of the Open Future. The future does not exist as a predetermined scenario. Instead, it constitutes a space of potential trajectories that become actualized through human activity.

Principle of Potential Redundancy. The most resilient societies are those that preserve a multiplicity of alternatives rather than reducing their development to a single trajectory. The greater the number of available developmental pathways, the higher the adaptive capacity of a social system in the face of crises and unforeseen change.

In the twenty-first century, humanity is entering a period of *unprecedented expansion of the space of possibilities*. Artificial intelligence, biotechnology, quantum computing, global digital networks, synthetic biology, and neurotechnology are fundamentally transforming the very nature of social evolution. Under these conditions, it is appropriate to speak of the emergence of a *civilization of expanded possibilities*.

Its defining characteristics include: high cognitive connectivity; global collective intelligence; continuous generation of innovation; openness to the recombination of

knowledge; multilevel network interaction; the rapid emergence of new social configurations; the continuous expansion of both individual and collective potentials. Within such a civilization, the principal strategic resource is no longer territory, capital, or even information, but *society's capacity to generate new possibilities*.

Thus, social development can be understood $\approx f(P,C,L,A)$;

where: P (Potentiality); C (Connectivity); L (Learning); A (Actualization).

The analysis conducted in this chapter demonstrates that contemporary society can increasingly no longer be adequately described through the classical categories of *structure, function, or institution*. Instead, it emerges as a *complex topological network of interconnected potentials* that continuously generate new forms of social organization. Within the framework of *syntopotentialism*, social development is determined not merely by the accumulation of resources or by technological progress, but primarily by the increasing *density of the field of potentialities* that is, by the expansion of the number of available cognitive, cultural, technological, and social trajectories. Accordingly, the principal indicator of development is not the volume of achievements that have already been realized, but rather *society's capacity to continuously generate new possibilities and to actualize them in response to the challenges of the future*.

CONCLUSIONS TO CHAPTER 4.

1. *A new social ontology is proposed*, in which society is understood not as a static system of structures or institutions, but as a *topological field of interconnected potentials* continuously generating new forms of social organization.
2. *Social consciousness is conceptualized as a multidimensional cognitive space* possessing its own topology, dynamics of self-organization, and mechanisms for the generation and actualization of new meanings and developmental possibilities.
3. *The topology of social consciousness* is determined primarily by the quality of relationships among cognitive, cultural, and social elements rather than by their quantity, making connectivity the principal source of societal development.

4. *The fractal nature of social consciousness* explains the recursive reproduction of cognitive and organizational patterns across different levels of social reality, from individuals to civilizations.
5. *Collective intelligence is reinterpreted as a network of potentiality*, in which interactions among cognitive agents generate emergent capacities and developmental opportunities unavailable to isolated individuals.
6. *Social development is redefined* as the continuous expansion of the field of potentialities rather than the accumulation of material resources or the transformation of existing institutional structures.
7. *The syntopotentialist model* identifies potentiality, networkedness, self-organization, cognitivity, the openness of the future, and potential redundancy as the fundamental principles governing the evolution and resilience of contemporary societies.
8. *In the emerging civilization of expanded possibilities*, the principal strategic resource is no longer territory, capital, or information, but the capacity of collective consciousness to generate, integrate, and actualize new cognitive, cultural, technological, and social possibilities.

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CONCLUDING SYNTHESIS

Syntopotentialism emerged as a result of reinterpreting Sufi metaphysics through the lens of contemporary cognitive science, synergetics, topology, and complexity theory. The starting point of the study was the Sufi concept of *wahdat al-wujūd* (the unity of being), the doctrine of *a'yān thābitah* as potential forms of existence, *tajallī* as a mechanism of the actualization of possibilities, as well as the concepts of *khayāl* and *barzakh*, which describe the transitional space between the potential and the actual. The analysis of these categories demonstrated that Sufism in fact contains one of the most developed historical models of an ontology of possibility, in which reality is not understood as a set of completed essences, but as a dynamic field of potentialities. The interpretation of Sufi anthropology through the language of cognitive geometry made it possible to view consciousness as a multidimensional space in which navigation occurs among alternative developmental trajectories.

On this basis, syntopotentialism was formulated as a *meta-ontological concept*, according to which the fundamental unit of reality is not substance, object, or process, but *potential* that is, the capacity of a system to generate a multiplicity of possible states. In this perspective, reality appears as a multidimensional space of interconnected potentialities, while development is understood as the process of their actualization, integration, and increasing complexity.

The further extension of this logic to the level of society led to the formation of a *topological social ontology*, in which social reality is understood as a network of interacting spaces of possibility. Society is no longer defined solely through structures, institutions, or roles, but emerges as a field of collective potentials that self-organize through cognitive, cultural, and communicative interactions.

Thus, syntopotentialism can be seen as a contemporary reconstruction and development of certain ontological intuitions already present in the metaphysics of Ibn 'Arabī. The path from Sufism to syntopotentialism passes through the cognitive geometry of consciousness and culminates in the formation of a new social ontology,

where the central categories become potentiality, connectivity, self-organization, topology of possibilities, and the open future.

If classical philosophy asked, “What exists?”, and existentialism asked, “How does the human being exist?”, syntopotentialism poses a different question: “*What possibilities does reality contain, and according to which laws are they actualized?*” This question becomes the foundation of a new meta-ontology, a cognitive theory of consciousness, and a topological social philosophy of the twenty-first century.

AFTERWORD

From Mystical Experience to the Ontology of the Future

Every philosophical concept is born not merely as an answer to questions already posed, but above all as an attempt to perceive questions that have not yet been formulated. The history of philosophy demonstrates that the greatest intellectual breakthroughs have occurred precisely when thought dared to transform not simply individual theories but the very way reality itself is perceived. Thus, emerged Plato's ontology of Ideas, Aristotle's metaphysics, Descartes' concept of the subject, Kant's critical philosophy, Husserl's phenomenology, Heidegger's hermeneutics, Whitehead's process ontology, Prigogine's synergetics, and the contemporary theory of complex systems.

Each of these conceptual frameworks revealed a new dimension of being. At the same time, each left behind new questions that gradually became the foundation for the next intellectual epoch. Today humanity finds itself at precisely such a historical juncture. The world is becoming increasingly difficult to describe using the language of classical categories. Being no longer appears static. Space and time have ceased to be regarded as absolute. Consciousness is no longer understood merely as a product of the brain. Social reality has proven to be far more complex than a collection of institutions, and knowledge far more dynamic than the accumulation of information.

Before us emerges a world, whose defining characteristic is no longer completion but openness; not structure but becoming; not form but process; not givenness but possibility. It is precisely this transformation of philosophical perspective that became the principal motivation for writing this monograph.

The point of departure for this study was Sufism. At first glance, it may seem surprising that a medieval mystical tradition should serve as the foundation for a new philosophical conception. Yet a careful reading of the works of Ibn 'Arabī, al-Ghazālī, Rūmī, al-Qushayrī, Suhrawardī, Mullā Ṣadrā, and other thinkers reveals a remarkable pattern. They were concerned not merely with the question of what exists, but far more profoundly with the question of how existence itself becomes possible.

Behind the language of symbols, theological imagery, and mystical practice lies one of the most coherent models of a dynamic worldview in the history of philosophy. *Wahdat al-Wujūd* ceases to be merely the doctrine of the unity of being and becomes a model of an integrated ontological field. *A 'yān al-thābitah* appear not simply as "immutable essences," but as a realm of potential forms of reality. *Tajallī* describes the mechanism through which possibility becomes actuality. *Insān al-Kāmil* emerges as the image of the maximally actualized human potential. It is for this reason that Sufism is approached in this work not as a completed system of answers but as one of history's earliest attempts to understand the world through the category of possibility.

The next step was to reconsider the nature of consciousness itself. For centuries, the Western philosophical tradition described consciousness primarily as the bearer of knowledge or the center of rational thought. Contemporary cognitive science, however, increasingly portrays consciousness as a complex nonlinear system capable of self-organization, integration, and the continuous generation of new structures. Within this perspective, the cognitive architecture of Sufism acquires an entirely new significance.

Qalb is no longer simply the heart; *'aql* is no longer merely the intellect; *rūḥ* is no longer simply the spirit; *khayāl* is no longer merely imagination. Instead, they come to represent distinct levels within the organization of a multidimensional cognitive space. It is here that the concept of the cognitive geometry of Sufism emerges an attempt to interpret mystical experience through the language of contemporary science without sacrificing its internal integrity.

Yet this work was never intended merely as a reconstruction of the Sufi tradition, it sought to take a further step by asking a different question: what happens if the category of potentiality is taken beyond the boundaries of Sufism and elevated to the status of a universal category of philosophy? From this question arose syntopotentialism. Within this conception, potential ceases to be merely a property of things or a hidden possibility of their development. Instead, it acquires the status of an autonomous ontological category. Reality is no longer conceived as a collection of already existing objects. Rather, it appears as a continuous field of interconnected potentials. Processes, events, information, relationships, communication, cultures,

civilizations, and even consciousness itself become different modes of the actualization of potentiality.

Under this interpretation, being itself ceases to be primary. The primary reality becomes the field of the possible. Perhaps this is the most controversial thesis advanced throughout the monograph, for it calls into question much of the history of European ontology. It proposes a shift in the center of philosophical analysis:

- from substance to potential;
- from essence to configurations of possibilities;
- from structure to topology;
- from a completed world to an open universe.

Such a transformation cannot, of course, claim finality. Every new paradigm begins not with definitive answers but with a new language. Syntopotentialism therefore does not present itself as a completed philosophical system, it offers a new lens through which reality may be perceived differently.

The social dimension of this conception is of particular significance. Humanity is entering an era in which the speed of change increasingly exceeds the adaptive capacity of classical institutions. Artificial intelligence, biotechnology, digital networks, global information flows, climate challenges, and geopolitical instability are transforming not merely individual spheres of life but the very mode of existence of civilization itself. Under these conditions, explanatory models that interpret society solely through institutions, economic relations, or political structures become progressively less convincing. Perhaps the principal resource of the twenty-first century is not information. Not capital. Not technology. Not even knowledge.

The principal resource is society's capacity to generate new possibilities.

This idea forms the foundation of the topological social ontology proposed throughout this work. If potential is primary with respect to social structures, then development is determined not by what society already possesses but by the horizons it is capable of opening. At the same time, this monograph makes no claim to conclude the discussion. On the contrary, it merely opens a new direction for philosophical inquiry. Many questions remain to be explored:

- Can potential be mathematically formalized?
- Is it possible to construct a topology of potential?
- Can potential be measured quantitatively?
- Are there universal laws governing the generation of potentials?
- How are potentiality and freedom related?
- What is the relationship between potential, information, and consciousness?
- Is a physics of potential possible?
- Could there be a biology of potential?
- Can a sociology of potential be developed?

These questions remain open. For this reason, syntopotentialism does not conclude the conversation, it begins it. Perhaps the greatest value of any philosophical conception lies not in providing a final explanation of the world, but in making it impossible to perceive the world in quite the same way as before.

If, after reading this monograph, the reader pauses, even for a single moment, to consider that reality may consist not only of what already exists but also of what is still capable of becoming, then this work will have fulfilled its principal purpose. For perhaps the history of the universe is not the history of things. Nor the history of processes. Nor even the history of consciousness. Perhaps it is the history of possibilities gradually finding form. And the human being is not merely a creature living within the universe, the human being is the place in the universe where possibility first becomes conscious of itself.

If this is indeed the case, then the future of humanity will be determined not by the quantity of knowledge or technology it accumulates, but by the depth of its capacity to discover new horizons of the possible. It is for this reason that syntopotentialism proposes to regard potential not merely as one philosophical category among others, but as a new language for describing reality, a language in which being appears as the continuous unfolding of possibilities, consciousness serves as their navigator, and human history becomes the process of their creative actualization. In this sense, philosophy returns to its most fundamental vocation: not merely to explain the world, but to discover new ways of thinking it.

GLOSSARY OF KEY CONCEPTS

I. SUFI METAPHYSICS AND ONTOLOGY

A‘yān Thābita (Fixed Entities) – “Fixed essences” or archetypal forms of things that exist in Divine Knowledge prior to their actual manifestation. In the syntopotentialist interpretation, they may be understood as ontological potentials.

‘Adam (Non-being) – Non-existence. In Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought, a distinction is made between absolute non-being (*al-‘adam al-muṭlaq*) and relative non-being (*al-‘adam al-idāfī*).

Barzakh – An intermediate ontological reality between two levels of being. In this monograph, it is interpreted as a transitional zone between the potential and the actual.

Waḥdat al-Wujūd (Unity of Being) – A concept developed by Ibn ‘Arabī. All that exists is a manifestation of the One Absolute Being.

Wujūd (Being, Existence) – Being or existence. In Sufi metaphysics, absolute *wujūd* belongs only to God.

Dhikr (Remembrance) – The practice of continuous remembrance of God. In cognitive interpretation, it functions as a mechanism of cognitive self-organization and restructuring of consciousness.

Insān al-Kāmil (Perfect Human) – The Perfect Human. A model of the maximal realization of human potential.

Qalb (Heart) – The heart. The central organ of spiritual cognition in Sufism.

Maqām (Station) – A stable spiritual state or stage of consciousness development.

Aḥwāl (States) – Transient spiritual states arising during processes of consciousness transformation.

Rūḥ (Spirit) – The spirit. The highest level of human spiritual organization.

Thubūt (Stability, Fixity) – Ontological constancy. The status of the *a‘yān thābita* prior to their actual existence.

Tajallī (Self-disclosure / Epiphany) – The self-manifestation of Divine Being through multiplicity of forms.

Tawḥīd (Divine Unity) – Monotheism. The principle of the unity of all existence.

Khayāl (Imagination / Imaginal Realm) – Imagination or imaginal reality. A transitional space between the possible and the actual.

‘Aql (Intellect) – Intellect, the rational faculty of cognition.

II. COGNITIVE GEOMETRY

Multidimensional Cognitive Space – A model of consciousness as a system of interconnected cognitive dimensions.

Cognitive Architecture – The structural organization of thinking, memory, attention, and consciousness processes.

Cognitive Flexibility – The ability to transition between alternative modes of thought.

Conceptual Space – A theoretical model by Peter Gärdenfors in which knowledge is organized as geometric structures.

Cognitive Navigation – The capacity of consciousness to select trajectories among multiple possibilities.

Mental Landscape – The structure of interconnected cognitive states.

Space of Possibilities – The set of all potential states of a system.

III. SYNTOPOTENTIALISM

Syntopotentialism – A philosophical and meta-ontological framework that regards potential as the fundamental category of reality, and consciousness as a generator and navigator of a multidimensional space of possibilities.

Potential – An ontologically real field of structured possibilities capable of generating multiple alternative configurations of being.

Potentiality – The capacity of a system to generate future states.

Actualization – The transition from a potential state to an actual state.

Space of Potentials – The set of possible developmental trajectories of a system.

Syntopia – The process of combining different potentials into a new system of possibilities.

Potential Topology – The structure of interrelations among possibilities.

Meta-ontology – A level of philosophical analysis focused on the fundamental principles underlying ontological systems. Unlike ontology, which studies what exists, meta-ontology examines the conditions of possibility of existence and the categorical foundations of describing reality. Within syntopotentialism, meta-ontological analysis leads to the conclusion that potential is primary as the universal foundation of all forms of being, becoming, and interaction.

Meta- prefix – From Ancient Greek μετά (*meta*), meaning: after; beyond; above; across; at a higher level of analysis. In modern philosophy and science, the prefix *meta-* usually denotes reflection upon something, investigation of its conditions, or analysis at a higher level of generalization.

Ontology → Meta-ontology – Ontology asks: *What exists?* Meta-ontology asks: *What does “to exist” mean? What categories do we use to describe existence? How are ontological systems constructed?*

Language → Metalanguage – Language describes objects. Metalanguage describes language itself.

Cognition → Metacognition – Cognition: I think. Metacognition: I am aware of how I think.

Theory → Metatheory – A theory explains a phenomenon. A metatheory explains the principles by which theories are constructed.

If syntopotentialism is a meta-ontology, it does not propose yet another ontology alongside materialism, idealism, process ontology, or informational ontology, it seeks to answer a more fundamental question: *Which category underlies any possible ontology?* **Our answer: not substance, not process, not information, not relation, but field of potential.** Therefore, syntopotentialism claims not merely the status of a new ontology, but that of a meta-ontology of potentiality a theory explaining why all forms of being, processes, events, information, and social structures emerge from a more fundamental level of potentiality.

IV. THEORY OF COMPLEX SYSTEMS AND SYNERGETICS

Attractor – A state or region toward which a dynamical system tends.

Bifurcation – A branching point in the evolution of a system’s trajectory.

Emergence – The arising of new properties that cannot be reduced to the properties of individual components.

Nonlinearity – A relationship in which output is not proportional to input.

Self-organization – The spontaneous formation of ordered structures without external control.

Complex adaptive system – A system capable of changing its structure in response to its environment.

Synergetics – An interdisciplinary theory of self-organization in complex systems.

Phase transition – A sudden, discontinuous change in the state of a system.

V. MATHEMATICS, TOPOLOGY AND GEOMETRY

Poincaré Conjecture – A fundamental problem in topology proved by Grigori Perelman.

Ricci Flow – A differential equation: *(incomplete in source text)*

$$\frac{\partial g_{ij}}{\partial t} = -2Ric_{ij}$$

it describes the evolution of the geometric structure of space.

Metric Tensor – A mathematical object that defines the geometry of a space.

Riemannian Manifold – A multidimensional geometric space equipped with a defined metric.

Topology – The study of structures that are preserved under continuous deformations.

Topological Invariance – The preservation of fundamental properties of a system under transformations.

Fractal – A structure that exhibits self-similarity across different scales.

Fractal Dimension – A measure of the complexity of a fractal structure.

VI. SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL ONTOLOGY

Collective Intelligence – The ability of a group to generate knowledge and solutions that exceed the capabilities of individual members.

Networked Consciousness – A system of distributed cognitive processes within social interaction networks.

Social Self-Organization – The spontaneous formation of social order without external control.

Social Attractor – A stable state or behavioral pattern of a social system.

Social Potential – The total set of developmental possibilities of a society.

Topology of Social Consciousness – The structure of interrelations between individual and collective forms of consciousness.

Civilization of Expanded Possibilities – A hypothetical future form of society in which development is measured by the growth of potential rather than the accumulation of resources.

VII. KEY AUTHORS OF THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Ibn ‘Arabī – Metaphysics of the *waḥdat al-wujūd* (unity of being) and *a‘yān thābita* (fixed entities).

Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī – Dynamic ontology of spiritual becoming.

Henry Corbin – The concept of the *mundus imaginalis* (imaginal world).

Peter Gärdenfors – Theory of conceptual spaces.

Hermann Haken – Synergetics.

Ilya Prigogine – Theory of self-organization and bifurcations.

Grigori Perelman – Proof of the Poincaré conjecture.

Alfred North Whitehead – Process ontology.

Gilles Deleuze – Ontology of the virtual.

Niklas Luhmann – Theory of social systems.

Luciano Floridi – Philosophy of information.